CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

15th International Conference Innovation in Language Learning

Hybrid Edition

Florence, Italy, 10-11 November 2022

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INDEX

Blended Learning

The Methodological Sudden Shift Brought about By COVID-19 in the Teaching & Learning of Italian LS in Malta: Perceptions, Reactions & Way Forward

Fiorella Marie Sadowski

Gems World Academy (United Arab Emirates)

Abstract

Online Teaching has been a topic of major interest widely spoken, written and discussed about in the past couple of years, especially recently when the world was hit by the Coronavirus pandemic. In an era focused primarily on technology as made clear also by Selwyn, multimodality & multimedia: synchronous, asynchronous, blended, the Maltese education system had no other choice than to swiftly adapt, distancing itself from the traditional classroom with face-to-face instruction in favour of distance online learning, leaving educators on their own to experiment, practice and evaluate various teaching techniques and online platforms available for their perusal on the Web. This paper looks at the perceptions and reactions of Italian LS teachers in secondary schools in Malta as they swiftly shifted their practice to online modes of teaching and learning during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic. My study focused mainly on data collected through an online questionnaire which captured the views of almost 30% of Italian LS educators in Malta and Gozo, working with learners aged ten to sixteen years. Using a series of open and closed-ended questions, compelling data was yielded on the techniques' language teachers were adopting to deliver learning. Findings indicate teachers used a multimodal approach in most cases. Advantages and limitations of both systems emerged from their feedback. Moreover, the study also sets light on the inadequate preparation in distance learning as perceived by educators while observing what activities, techniques and methodologies were put into practice. The results show how much language teachers still feel unskilled technologically speaking yet how much aware and conscious they are about the benefits of a blended approach to language teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Education Technology (Edtech), blended learning, integrated digital learning, distance learning, professional development*

1. Introduction

The worldwide health emergency brought about by Covid-19 in early 2020 lead educational institutions to act swiftly and as efficiently as possible to meet the needs of the learners in what can be described as an unprecedented moment in human history. Notwithstanding the sudden shift, teachers, from the early years up to tertiary education, reacted swiftly keeping at heart the tremendous impact that such a pandemic would impinge on the learner's educational progression. In most cases only a couple of days were required to shift to online and distance learning, adopting educational software and digital platforms already available thanks to e-learning. Nevertheless, this transition

wasn't all smooth and perfect and with time problems started to increase, especially due to the physical and mental side effects caused by the everyday and lengthy use of these devices. Moreover, in the Maltese context, the educational system was even adapting and implementing a new learning methodology called the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF). This, added to the inevitable health emergency created anxiety and added stress in most teaching staff and education stakeholders. It was imperative and indispensable for teachers to meet the needs of the reality surrounding them to self-teach how to use adequately and competently the various digital platforms chosen by schools and institutions to reduce as much as possible the negative effect of the "wasted transition time" from an on-site traditional setting to the online and distant one.

The research carried out zooms in and analyses the effects of distance and online learning of such context in Malta and how these affected on one side students but also teachers and educators. The research had the intention of highlighting the advantages as well as the disadvantages of synchronous and asynchronous modes of online/distance learning and come up with a possible integration of digital methodology to the already known traditional methods of face-to-face education after providing the necessary adaptations and professional development to all stakeholders.

1.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divulged to all teachers teaching Italian as a foreign language in all education sectors in Malta: private, church, and public. The questionnaire was primarily divided into two sections: the first part that had to do with the type of lessons that were conducted during the pandemic and their modality (synchronous & asynchronous). The professionals gave insight on what kind of modality did they prefer to use during such an emergency and what supplementary platforms were used to meet the needs of the learner in such circumstances. In the second part of the study the questions centred around the concept of potential and limits of distance and online learning also shifting the observation on the concept, validity and way forward as regards to evaluation, self-evaluation and testing in online and distance learning. Educators expressed their opinion on which skills were the easiest to evaluate and reliable against the ones who were deemed difficult to evaluate based on their own practice during Covid-19. Towards the end of the questionnaire, the idea and concept of blended learning was discussed offering another option to the already existing idea of online learning, e-learning and distance learning.

1.2 Results

From the results collected by the educators it was observed that 98% of all respondents never had any prior experience with online nor distance learning, suggesting the inadequacy of the educators in adapting to this methodological shift without the specific and requested training done. As Kearsley and Blomeyer (2004:49) discussed a teacher or an educator needs to meet a list of prerequisites before he or she even decides to opt for an online learning setting: optimal & stable Internet connection as well as excellent competence and skill in the various e-learning platforms needed and used.

1.2.1 Synchronous vs. Asynchronous

It was observed that when asked about the type of modality used during COVID-19, most teachers opted for a blended type. Nevertheless, another point that emerged from the study was the increased amount of time needed by educators to prepare for the desired materials and resources and to think about ways and measures where each skill will be assessed and evaluated. It was interesting to note that around 20% of participants opted for an asynchronous mode because of various reasons but mainly because they were feeling unprepared, unskilled to conduct lessons in real time, they didn't have the required devices or the required Internet network connection for real-time videoconferencing. Most Italian teachers (82%) made use of Microsoft Teams for synchronous online and distance learning while those who opted for asynchronous modality still preferred to make use of Microsoft PowerPoint (65.4%) and digital handouts (57.7%). One can notice that these teachers continued to make use of the resources that they were accustomed to use in class in a traditional setting despite the class being transferred from a physical environment to a virtual one.

Those, however, who preferred an asynchronous approach to learning have resorted to an innovative way to teaching by introducing the flipped learning: sending video-presentations, slides, links to various resources and digital notes before sending the actual recorded lesson. Without doubt the flipped approach to learning made the students more responsible and autonomous in their learning progression as previously discussed also by Novello in Caon, Serraggiotto (2012:90).

1.2.2 Engagement, Feedback and Assessment

Feedback and assessment can also have different effects on the learner, depending on the modality and the skill being assessed. For speaking skills, sending oral feedback can be seen as being more coherent to the skill assessed however, it is also timely as it would be immediate and in real time but on the other hand there is the uncertainty that the message could be misunderstood or not clear enough for the learner. Besides that, learners may not feel at ease having their feedback exposed to other learners of the class. On the contrary, if the feedback is given in an asynchronous modality, there is the certainty that the message conveyed would be clear and personal, it can be read and reread by the learner and it wouldn't put the learner in an uncomfortable situation of showcasing one's areas for improvement in front of the other learners however, there is no guarantee that the feedback would be read by the learner once it is sent.

30% of the educators noticed that the majority of students were not particularly engaged during an asynchronous approach because of the lack of immediate feedback usually given in class by teachers (58.8%), technological frustration due to lack of connectivity or sometimes the absence of it (73.5%) and due to a significant decrease of intrinsic motivation to learn (50%). As discussed by Nuzzo(2013L25) in an asynchronous distance learning environment feedback is not timely, hindering as such the correct educational development and progression for the student.

From the teacher's perspective, online learning seems to somewhat create feelings of anxiety due to an increase in preparation time when compared to in-person learning, it increases fatigue after a day's work, and it requires the acquisition of specific ICT skills

of various online platforms and applications fundamental for the smooth progression of distance learning.

In fact, when asked about the awareness, knowledge and implementation of specific education platforms created for educators and to enhance and increase engagement with students, only a relatively small percentage of the respondents made use (sporadically or regularly) of them during COVID-19 lockdown: Kahoot (25%), Quizlet (13.8), Edpuzzle (10.8%).

Finally, towards the end of the study, questions were asked to teachers regarding the validity and difficulty in conducting assessments based on the various skills. It is clear from the replies that as regards the Maltese context, there seems to be a common consensus among teachers that the speaking skill was the most complex to tackle and evaluate during lockdown mainly due to time constraints and validity reasons.

2. Way forward: Proposals

After observing the above-mentioned results and attitudes gathered by teachers and educators of Italian as a foreign language in Malta together with insights on what is considered nowadays as good quality education, some proposals were drawn up to give more insight, suggestions and ideas to educators as to how to better tackle distance learning even when the health emergency of COVID-19 would be far behind us. The approaches were drawn up based on a blended model of learning and could be adopted in synchronous or asynchronous modes rendering the learning progression more flexible, inclusive, innovative yet effective, engaging and personalised to the learner's needs.

In fact, it was observed that through Mentimeter teachers could create presentations that are highly more engaging and inclusive than Slides or PowerPoint, it is highly engaging and keeps the learner on his/her toes throughout the presentation thanks to moments of interaction that the teacher would insert throughout his/her lesson or presentation (Mayhew et al,2020:8). It has various advantages like the integration of other multimedia, importing from Google slides or PowerPoint, creating quizzes and polls and making participation anonymous, reducing that fear of failure and fear of being judged in front of peers. It doesn't require any download, making it quick at accessing the software as well as making it the ideal application to use when opting for a blended approach to learning as it also shifts away from a traditional approach to learning centred around the teacher to a more modern and open one centred around the learner.

Apart from Mentimeter, Padlet can also be an innovative way of tackling production tasks and giving formative, effective feedback as well as being an outstanding tool to develop peer-assessment and shifting the focus from product-based tasks to process-based tasks. As previously discussed by Beck, Tsaryk & Rybina (2020:10) Padlet is a better reflection of the learner's reality as it mirrors the use of posts, multimedia and content creation that is what the learners are more accustomed to in their regular use of social media.

3. Conclusions

As we have seen, the issue with online learning and distance learning is more complex than it may seem. It always must keep in mind various factors such as the context in which it is being adopted, its sustainability and efficiency of the various activities proposed (Favaro 2012:82) in various modalities, the inclusion of all learners and the shift in learning from a dogmatic one (teacher based) to a student-centred learning. The pandemic emergency of COVID-19 should also shed light on the need to better equip teachers and student teachers with skills, competencies and by providing professional development opportunities that are relevant to today's age and needs (Lawless & Pellegrino 2007:575-614). It's imperative, however, to understand that the efficiency of online and distance learning is not based on using a myriad of software applications and platforms available online in all of our lessons be it if done synchronously or asynchronously but rather on the professional skill that the educator would have acquired from his/her PD opportunities, various trial and errors and experimentation to understand what platform, software or other resources are needed to guide all learners irrespective of their learning or educational needs to achieve the desired objectives as outlined in the planning documentation.

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Curriculum Development

The Role of the Correct Use of Scientific Language and Scientific Researches in Improving the English Language In Universities. The Relationship between English Learning and Research Writing

Shkelqim Hajrulla[1], Arban Uka[2,] Loubna Ali[3]

[1,2] Epoka University, Albania
[3] Tartous University, Syria

Abstract

In several previous researches, the focus was on creating greater opportunities for student mobility and producing the use of the English language through practiced activities. We studied a mobility program which was developed for several schools of different countries in Albania. This program focused on developing a more competitive higher education by integrating the Adriatic school system. Statistically, we showed how the program achieved its goal through exposure to different cultures, languages, and curricula, with great effect in terms of intercultural competences and newly acquired skills. In particular, we focused on language acquisition, as well as the intercultural experiences. Similarly, this paper addresses the correct use of scientific English as a framework for the development of new skills, opportunities and pathways to be followed in university studies according to which the student's challenge is practical. Our work shows how students from different levels can improve upon scientific language by practicing ongoing interactions with each other.
The results of our research show that in order to achieve these goals, a university's primary focus should be the development of students' academic mobility, the learning and using of the scientific English language, and the development of research writing [2]. In our research, we kept statistics to compare the results of the achievement and approximate the results achieved with those predicted. Finally, we show them statistically and lay out the conclusions.

Key words: *integrate systems, language learning, curricula, academic mobility, research writing*

1. Introduction

For several years, only valuable things have created a tradition that will continue to create a valuable work. It was this idea that created the possibility of a mobility program some years ago in high education schools of Adriatic Sea countries. The joint program has developed for four months in some experimental classes of three high schools in Albania. Students from six countries like Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Monte Negro and Albania took part. This program was implemented to lay the foundations for a unique educational program and for other mobility programs. The program aimed to create an international educational experience, as well as a premise for other mobility programs to transmit knowledge and culture.

We analyze steps of improving students' skills toward international collaboration [1]. We see how a mobility program create the potential to extend to a more comprehensive mutual recognition of schools, offering intercultural and multilingual experiences, capable of improve their English language.

For the purpose of our study, we deal with English language acquisition [9], as well as the learning of new skills. This experience created the opportunity to see achievements in several directions. From the system data, we concluded statistically based on the following questions.
- How did the students participating in the program improve their English language?
- How did the students gain knowledge and new skills about the cultures of the participating countries?

At the end of the program, a scientific committee tested the students through a questionnaire and very satisfactory results were achieved, expected in accordance with the purpose of the program. From the system data, a sample of the results of 20 students is taken at random. Compared to the results at the beginning of the program, the results of this sample showed that 16 students had a significant improvement in English, i.e. 80% of the students.

Based on the experience, something similar was implemented in our university. This research is guided by the principle of correct use of the scientific language in English. The coordination of lecturer-student work leads us to the following questions: How can lecturers teach their students the correct use of scientific language [7]? How much and how will students be able to use the English language perfectly in the classroom, in practice and in research? The exploration of the above questions leads to the content of our article and leads to the question: What would be the ways of coordination to achieve this goal?

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether or not the students have visible improvements related to their growth in English vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, taking into account contextual factors that serve as barriers to independent scientific reading and writing [5]. The internationalization of educational programs [1] involves attracting and training students from outside the borders of nation states; elaboration and implementation of academic mobility programs for teachers and students; organization of scientific and academic events, where the exchange of good practices takes place [6].

Some of our practical course focuses on mastering the research articles [3], but while the lecture so doing, the lecturer also teaches students to edit each other's work and to learn from this as well as from editing of their scientific and English writing. We implement some methods to specify the results [2]. For this purpose, we used computerized scientific management programs.

Language acquisition can thus be seen as a type of skill acquisition, using similar mechanisms to those involved in learning in front of white boards, in labs, in auditors, in workshops and the need to acquire knowledge of the abstract structure of language is dissolved based on learn management philosophy [5].

The process of our research is stimulated by the requirements of the competitive conditions in the educational environment [7]. The analysis of strategies aimed at improving the level of foreign language proficiency of all participants, motivation, methodology of applicants, research, academic mobility programs and international research projects are the prospects for further research.

2. The procedure of scientific English literacy development

2.1 Independent reading related to the growth of students' scientific vocabulary

The students of our study are not native English-speaking students. Twenty students participated in the experimental class of a selected subject course.

Our experimental research started 3 weeks before the beginning of the academic year. During this preparatory phase, which is the first stage of our research 20 students of the experimental class were asked to read and write as many scientific topics as possible that were previously sent by the lecturer during the study period. This was an obligation for this experimental class. The students in the other two classes of the same course were asked to read as much as possible during the study period. The amounts of readings that students engaged in was up to them. Our study determined whether independent reading was related to students' growth in scientific reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge [2]. The following questions guided our research of English literacy. See the table as follows.

Table 1. Demographic table for English literacy

Nr.	questions guided our research	Experimental class 1	Class 2	Class 3
1	Did the students have adequate access to lectures?	100%	100%	100%
2	Did the students engage in independent reading?	95%	72%	60%
3	Did scientific reading relate to growth in comprehension?	80%	68%	56%
3	Correct scientific expressions used	84%	68%	58%

We used the computerized management programs for the evaluation of results as shown in the data table above. For the point 3 in the table, we have created a quiz to check the growth of knowledge and understanding of the scientific English language. For each student's quiz taken, the software recorded (1) number of questions answered correctly and (2) the difficulty level. Our program uses different quizzes, so data of the table were analyzed by number of quizzes taken. As we concluded after analyzing the results obtained, by reading the data that was collected we concluded that the experimental class got better results.

2.2 Scientific vocabulary used by students

In the second stage of our research, the first 4 weeks of the academic year, our experimental research continued for all three classes. We made the lectures possible in three different ways:

1. The experimental class received the lectures in classroom by implementing the lesson with a video projector and notes on the white board. All students took notes by correctly implementing each scientific term in the English language.
2. The second class received the lectures only with a video projector in the classroom.
3. The third class received the lectures only with online video presentation implementing the Hy-Flex system. A Hy-Flex class makes class meetings and materials available so that students can access them online.

After four weeks, we tested the students of the three classes. To estimate students' English vocabulary, data on the exact answers of questions were collected. The questionnaire was based on (1) receptive vocabulary, (2) expressive vocabulary, (3) correct vocabulary and correct scientific expressions used and (4) correct expressions of mathematical formulations.

The following questions guided our research of scientific English vocabulary. See the table as follows.

Table 2. Demographic table for scientific English vocabulary improvement

Nr.	questions guided our research	Experimental class 1	Class 2	Class 3
1	Receptive vocabulary	80%	66%	65%
2	Expressive vocabulary	88%	72%	64%
3	Correct scientific expressions used	88%	72%	68%
4	Correct expressions of mathematical formulations	86%	68%	66%

Students were required initially cycle the exact solution as the first part of questionnaire quiz. This part of the questionnaire deals with the first 2 questions in the table. The task was discontinued once student made three consecutive errors. The scores and percentile scores were calculated for each student.

The second part of the questionnaire quiz deals with the last 2 questions in the table. In this task, students were given a list of scientific expressions and expressions of mathematical formulations, both out of context asked to write exactly as many as they can. The scores and percentile scores were calculated for each student. We used the computerized management programs for the evaluation of results. As can be seen again, the class with the best results was again the experimental class.

3. Practicing English language in laboratories and student's research

Introducing interests in the development of language skills in science education, the work as a scientific language support has given the opportunity to witness some challenges and how to use the Language of a lab report [8]. Introducing some of the issues related to practice language instruction to the students, we created the questionnaire for the

students of each class. These academic questions of a science lab report require careful use of language to communicate. We are prepared to analyze and teach the language functions required in a science lab report.

For about six weeks, in the third stage of our research we give students the possibility to extend their research. Students are expected to design their own experiments with increasing competence. In order to reach the highest levels of academic achievement, students are expected to explain scientific ideas, using correct scientific reasoning, interpreting data and finding out the conclusions.

The students of the experimental class participated in the scientific project that we had in our department. This class was at every moment in practical contact with the instructor. We feel confident to teach the scientific language and using it in research. By exact scientific language structures, we mean the specific features of academic language used for specific purposes, like explanation, hypothesis, procedure, and analysis [4]. For this class we used teaching and learning strategies related to language in science that could help their students communicate scientific ideas with scientific language.

The students of the other two classes worked on the research topic independently, but still under the guidance of the lecturer and could also use the laboratory at any time. It was clear that the students' writing was not achieving the desired goals. Working together, not independently they could do that.

Table 3. Demographic table for students' research project

Nr.	questions guided our research	Experimental class 1	Class 2	Class 3
1	Receptive vocabulary	84%	68%	70%
2	Expressive vocabulary	88%	74%	66%
3	Correct scientific expressions used	90%	80%	74%
4	Correct expressions of mathematical formulations	90%	76%	72%

4. Expectations for scientific reports

Our research requires following the ways to achieve the objectives regarding the correct use of scientific English language. According to these expectations, students must use correct scientific language in their research. They have to formulate the problem correctly they have to use the correct formulations using scientific reading and writing as well as collecting and processing data in the right way. Everything must be presented with scientific reasoning [3]. Finally, the methods used in the scientific language should be analyzed to achieve the predicted expectation. These expectations represent a variety of structures in scientific English. The language data is then analyzed for successes, errors and improvements. We present them in the following tables. Table 4 presents the results as a function of English language subgroup. Table 5 presents the means and standard deviations for the English language as a function of all stages of research.

Table 4. Demographic table for the results as a function of English language subgroup

Nr			Class1	Class 2	Class 3
1	Questionnaires taken	*M* (arithmetic mean)	98.1	88.02	88.62
		SD (standart deviation)	(88.4)	(68.3)	(68.9)
2	Avg % correct	*M* (arithmetic mean)	88.8	70.2	66.6
		SD (standart deviation)	(22.1)	(15.2)	(14.1)
3	Avg class level	*M* (arithmetic mean)	8.8	7.01	6.4
		SD (standart deviation)	(2.1)	(1.6)	(1.4)
4	Points earned	*M* (arithmetic mean)	56.6	44.2	40.1
		SD (standart deviation)	(90.1)	(76.2)	(68.1)

Table 5. Growth comparisons for all stages of research as a function

Nr			Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
1	Avg % correct in the first stage	*M* (arithmetic mean)	86.33	69.33	58.02
		SD (standart deviation)	(23.8)	(15.1)	(12.9)
2	Avg % correct in the second stage	*M* (arithmetic mean)	85.5	69.5	65.8
		SD (standart deviation)	(22.1)	(15.2)	(14.1)
3	Avg % correct in the third stage	*M* (arithmetic mean)	88.1	74.8	70.1
		SD (standart deviation)	(25.1)	(20.6)	(18.4)
4	Avg **total** % correct of research	*M* (arithmetic mean)	86.64	71.21	64.64
		SD (standart deviation)	23.66	16.96	15.13

Table 6. Demographic table for the results as a function of scientific English language

Nr.		Experimental class 1	Class 2	Class 3
1	*M* (Arithmetic mean)	86.6	71.2	64.6
2	*SD* (Standart deviation)	(23.7)	(17.0)	(15.1)

Table 6 presents the average number as a function of scientific language.

Based on the tables 5 and 6, our computerized program revealed a significant main effect of scientific English language. There were significant differences in the average percentage correct on English language of three classes. Also, there was a statistically significant difference in the average class level and total number of points earned.

5. Conclusions

Our research was based on the challenges students face in using scientific language correctly and the complexity of the language structures of scientific writing. Our article actually helps students understand how important it is to write precisely in the scientific structures of the English language. Furthermore, our subtopics of this research convince the students of the need to teaching scientific language in science subjects in some different ways.

The results of our research can contribute to the deepening of students' scientific knowledge and understanding, correcting the teaching of scientific language at any time. Combining classroom learning with practical scientific work in the laboratory, as well as

with scientific research, can be a powerful combination to support student achievement in the correct use of scientific language.

Our research indicates that scientific science lecturers and the English lecturers are teaching students how to write exactly in the subjects of science. It is clear that language in scientific subjects is complex and unique. This shows how important it is for lecturers to feel prepared for this task. Some of the following writing instruction strategies: editing, revising, emulating good models, and combining sentences are very important.

We have introduced the importance of practical interactions and the readiness that science lectures have to use scientific English correctly in classrooms, laboratories and projects. Based on the students' expectations, we have proposed some questions to guide our research. After the obtained results, we have written a scientific report based on tabular results.

With the data we collected and the statistics we formed we realized how different scientific English is from everyday language. We aim to provide methods for building stable structures of scientific language in a relationship of scientific activity, teaching practice as well as classroom teaching.

Our article shows that for the correct use of English in university science departments, the main focus should be the learning and use of scientific English, the correct use of research writing, and the practice of interactions.

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Engagement in Language Learning

The Interpretation of Ellipsis and Reduced Utterances in the Development of Speaking Skills of Iraqi EFL College Students - An Experimental Study

Bushra Saadoon Mohammed Alnoori
Al-Mansour University College

Abstract

Spoken language differs from written language in several aspects. Competency in speaking depends upon pragmatic features, Grice's Conversational maxims, complementary non-verbal cues etc. Ellipsis and reduced utterances are a common feature of conversation, which are generally neglected by language teachers. EFL learners remain ignorant about these features, which affects their conversational skills to a great extent. An understanding and interpretation of ellipsis and reduced utterances helps speakers as well as listeners to contribute substantially to conversation. The aim of this experimental study is to study the effect of creating awareness about the features in EFL Iraqi students. The experiment was conducted on 30 first year college students. A program was prepared for creating awareness about ellipsis and reduced utterances in conversation with the help of examples from plays. Results showed that students began to use reduced utterances consciously during conversation.

Keywords: Reduced utterances, ellipsis, conversation, pragmatics, conversational maxims

Introduction

Spoken language differs from written language in several aspects. Competency in speaking depends upon pragmatic features, Grice's Conversational maxims, complementary non-verbal cues etc. Ellipsis and reduced utterances are a common feature of conversation, which are generally neglected by language teachers. EFL learners remain ignorant about these features, which affects their conversational skills to a great extent. An understanding and interpretation of ellipsis and reduced utterances helps speakers as well as listeners to contribute substantially to conversation. The aim of this experimental study is to study the effect of creating awareness about the features in EFL Iraqi students.

The basic aim of language use is communication, the ability to speak and converse face-to-face with others. Herein come features like pragmatics, speech acts, non-verbal cues and so on. These are difficult to learn as well as teach; they develop gradually with practice and persistence.

When foreign learners learn English as a second language, they are very particular about constructing complete grammatical sentences, pronunciation and all the features that they are taught during instruction of second language. They are conscious, especially adult learners lest they should make mistakes while speaking. Listening and reading are

receptive skills; while writing, they have scope for making changes and corrections. However, speaking is directly open to scrutiny and judgment by the listeners.

While teaching, teachers or instructors focus on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Most of the pragmatic features are not emphasized. As a result, the speaking skills of second language learners sound unnatural and show effort on their part. This study is a report of an experiment conducted in order to make second language learners aware and conscious about ellipsis and reduced utterances, that are so common in natural speech of native speakers.

The assumption in this study is that if awareness about such features is created among learners, it will help them to sound more natural and perfect in conversational situations and would boost their confidence. Features like pragmatics and speech acts are common in almost all languages. However, there are certain features typical to the English language. Two unique features of natural speech in English are ellipsis and reduced utterances.

Importance of the study

Communication across the globe is no longer restricted to the written mode. Cell phones enable conversation to people in any part of the world. Although business chiefly depends upon written communication with a view to documentation, certain issues can be cleared only through speech communication. Ellipsis and reduced utterances are typical features not only of spoken English, but all languages across the world. An awareness about the same certainly helps participants to converse in a more natural way and prevent miscommunication. Ellipsis is generally neglected in English teaching as a foreign or second language. As a result, learners tend to construct grammatically complete utterances. Limited knowledge of grammar leads to errors. Hence, it is advisable to use ellipsis and reduced utterances, and eliminate repetition of words and phrases which can be understood from the context in a continuous dialogue.

Aims of the study

- To discuss the concepts of ellipsis and reduced utterances in English conversation
- To prepare a programme for creating awareness about the features of English speech
- To implement the programme
- To test the effectiveness of the programme

Research questions

- Does the interpretation of the awareness about ellipsis and reduced utterances improve the speaking skill of EFL Iraqi learners?
- Does the use of ellipsis and reduced utterances make speech of EFL learners sound more natural?

Ellipsis

The word 'ellipsis' means omission. In linguistics, it means the omission of an equivalent word or words which need not be repeated because they can be understood from the context. This does not imply that every grammatical construction that is incomplete and not explicit is ellipsis. According to Winkler (2005:10), the term ellipsis, from Greek 'elleipsis', refers to the omission of linguistic material, structure and sound. Ellipsis is a kind of grammatical link (MacCarthy, 1991:43). Ellipsis gives us a minor sentence instead of a long one and helps to economize speech. Usually, ellipsis refers to the omission of words and is represented by three dots.

Reduced Utterances

In natural conversation, syllables, words or sounds are often deleted. Sometimes, the utterances are not clear. This does not normally happen while reading aloud or while speaking formally. However, it is common in casual informal speech. This is a common feature of all languages. The interesting part is that it does not affect communication. In spite of the deletions, the listeners are able to get a clear and precise message. This is because speech takes place in a context.

The experiment

The participants were chosen from a purposive sample of 30 Iraqi EFL students studying in second year of college in Al Mansour University College, Department of English, In Baghdad. The sample size was limited to 20 because the utterances of each participant were analyzed individually. The pre-test and post-test design was used.
Each participant responded to 10 utterances on the basis of their knowledge of English. They were then exposed to selected extracts from plays where ellipsis and reduced utterances were present. It was explained how the playwrights had achieved economy in dialogue and how it would have sounded without the ellipsis and reduction, thus drawing their attention to these two aspects of speech communication.
The same utterances were presented to the students in the post-test and the differences in their responses were noted down, to check their use of reduced utterances and ellipsis. Conclusions were drawn on the basis of the responses.
The data was statistically treated by calculating the mean, SD and t -score of the Reponses in pre-test and post-test.

Observation and results

It has been observed that second language learners take a longer time to master the art of speaking English compared to other language skills. It is a fact that language is best learnt in the natural way, as one learns the mother tongue (MT). While learning the MT, listening and speaking develop first and reading and writing come later. However, while teaching English as a second language (SL), learners are first taught to identify, read and spell out letters and words. Writing is a formal mode compared to speaking so when they write, learners are instructed to write in complete sentences. They become habituated to complete grammatically correct sentences which does not sound natural when speaking. Moreover, it is not in accordance with Grice's maxim of quantity. In a natural conversational situation, when speakers converse face-to-face, they are aware of the context. Hence, repetition of several words, phrases and sentences becomes

unnecessary. Moreover, as a characteristic of natural speech, one needs time to frame an utterance. While doing this, some sentences are left incomplete, some words or phrases are repeated and a number of filler words are used by speakers. SL learners feel that it is inappropriate to utter incomplete sentences or falter, that it affects fluency and they try their utmost to be as fluent as possible. Fluency is one thing while ellipsis and reduced utterances are another. When a speaker stutters or stammers, it is said that he is not fluent. It is different from ellipsis and reduced utterances. They are commonly used in all languages, including the MT of SL learners. Fluency may be social or psychological (Feng R. and Guo Q. (2022).

It can be concluded that it is necessary to make SL learners of the way they can achieve economy in speech by using ellipsis and reduced utterances, as they do in their MT. The aim of this paper is to create awareness through dialogues and exchanges in plays.

According to Jennifer S and Hendriks P. (2005), the function of ellipsis is not very clear. Sometimes, it makes the meaning of a sentence clear while at other times, it confuses the listener. However, at times, it is the only way to express the desired meaning. Whatever the case, it must be said that ellipsis an important phenomenon of natural speech. According to Jonathan White (2013), the use of ellipsis is a strong marker of interaction in spoken discourse.

In conclusion, if ellipsis and reduced utterances are common characteristics of natural speech and if they perform various important functions, they should not be neglected while planning courses of SL learners of English.

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Facing the Challenges of Language Teaching and Learning in the New Normal

Prof. Mario Pace
University of Malta, Malta

Abstract

One of the most worrying effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is the amount of challenges and uncertainties that have marked the lives of adolescents. These include, amongst others, disruptions to social connections, health concerns (both mental and physical), socio-economic worries, qualms about catching COVID-19 or with infringing restrictions, uncertainties about the future, and motivation challenges. To further compound matters, during the 2 years of the pandemic, when all teaching and learning was transferred online, students were deprived of personal interaction with teachers and peers, considered as one of the most fundamental aspects in language learning, with the result that they became far less likely to be motivated to learn. In fact, languages are considered, by many students, as not being practical in nature and relevant to their lives. Students are often reluctant to study languages as they do not find them appealing to their interests, they do not consider them as being relevant to their future careers, and they often find it difficult to transfer the language skills they have acquired from the classroom to their everyday life. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges faced by language teachers is finding ways to motivate their students to complete language courses. Very often the root of the problem is that the existing language courses offered in schools focus too narrowly on the most urgent need of meeting language requirements and give little importance, if any, to the students' needs. Today, more than ever before, to make language learning effective in this post-pandemic era is for teachers to focus on 3 key aspects of motivation, namely autonomy, competence and social relatedness.

Keywords: New normal; motivation; language learning; challenges; relevance.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic will be remembered for the way it has suddenly altered our ways of living and how, in a matter of days, has significantly disrupted our lives in various ways. The pandemic has had huge disruptive effects on normal life, difficult as it already was in many countries. For schools, students and parents, the impact of closed schools and children stuck at home with little or no access to learning, the effect has been devastating. As far as adolescents are concerned, social distancing and the interruption of typical school routines have been extremely challenging and have left a whole trail of repercussions. The sudden ban on social connections and social distancing requirements have not only left a huge emotional and developmental impact, but they have also presented a number of unprecedented challenges, namely health concerns (both mental

and physical), socio-economic worries, qualms about catching COVID-19 or with infringing restrictions, uncertainties about the future, and motivation challenges.

The pandemic has also changed the whole dynamics of education. From the conventional classroom model of learning, we shifted to modern technological means with practically all educational institutions in the world having completely transferred their teaching and learning process to online mode. As Comer and deBenedette (2021: 305) [1] point out, such a situation, which was imposed by institutions rather than chosen by instructors or learners, "brought into the world of remote teaching and learning practitioners and students who otherwise might never have considered delivering or receiving language instruction online" and practically covered all areas and academic subjects. On the other hand, however, for those thousands of students with little or no access to remote learning, the impact of closed schools has had huge disruptive effects, with experts estimating that a whole cohort of students could be permanently lagging behind in their learning given that in many countries teaching-learning programs and examinations of primary, secondary, and tertiary levels have been postponed. And language teaching and learning was no exception. As a matter of fact, we have moved from a situation wherein formal language lessons took place in a classroom and online lessons were the exception and regarded as too risky and complicated to organize to a reality where almost all schools embraced the virtual classroom and many have taken their language teaching online. Distance learning solutions were developed and a wide range of Distance Learning Tools were created with the result that the essential role of teachers has been put into question. All this has highlighted the need for better training in new methods of language education delivery, as well as support for the teaching profession.

2. Challenges of Language Teaching and Learning during the pandemic.

Without doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed the lives and professional practice of language teachers and the learning strategies of the students. In a matter of days, most language teachers and students were compelled to shift their teaching and learning from face to face to online mode, having to face all the resulting challenges and difficulties without the required professional preparation and the necessary shift in mentality. In fact, whereas prior to the pandemic face to face activities were the order of the day in most language classes, in a matter of days these had to be replaced by distance learning modalities through a variety of formats and platforms. As stated by Gacs, Goertler, and Spasova (2020) [2] the relative speed with which crisis-prompted remote teaching was adopted in 2020 meant that there was little time for most teachers used to face-to-face instruction to think about how to implement these online practices in an intentional way following best practices in instructional design. Most teachers in fact, who were previously used to textbook teaching, were obliged to learn further more than their students to make their online classes seamless and engaging, given the immense technological evolution in the educational industry with the creation of a very broad range of distance learning solutions and distance learning tools. Many educators found themselves having to re-evaluate not simply their roles as language teachers but also their teaching skills and expertise in a bid to find new ways to motivate their students, highlighting the need for better training in new methods of language education. The students' first reaction, on the other hand, was quite positive, believing and arguing that they could learn everything and access all study material from the comfort of their homes. As the days ticked by however, teachers and students alike soon realized that although no one can ignore or underestimate the benefits of online remote

teaching and learning, technology is not all that matters after all and that notwithstanding the creation of a multitude of platforms intended to facilitate language learning, many of the existent problems were not solved while new ones were created. One of the most pressing of these new problems is that suddenly teachers realized they" ... must be proficient in a variety of information processing activities, as well as have the know-how to effectively teach the type of 21st-century global communication required of an international language. These new technologies challenge not only pedagogical certainties but also professional identities as teachers become discouraged and frustrated if the software or skill required has a high degree of complexity". Lorimer (2020) [3].

3. Direct Implications on the Language Classroom.

All this has direct implications on the language classroom and a number of considerations have to be highlighted. First of all, it must be ascertained that the educators know how to make the best use of the technological resources available in class in the best interest of their students. Given that the most important change-agents in class are the teachers themselves, "… the process of effective technology-based education without teachers' adequate skill and dedication will not be successful even if schools are sufficiently equipped with sophisticated technology". Bećirović, Brdarević-Čeljo, Delić, (2021). [4]. In fact, the teacher's attitude is a major enabling factor in students' adoption of technology, which should never be regarded as the solution to the learning crises, but rather as a tool to help teachers to be as effective as possible. The role of technology in language teaching is to equip educators with various tools, apart from resources like textbooks and worksheets, to help students develop a better understanding of the target language. But the question is whether adequate technical support in schools/classrooms is being offered and whether language classrooms are adequately equipped. Apart from the fact that training is often not prioritized as it can be expensive for schools to undertake and it takes up precious limited time, not all schools and governments can afford to invest in the latest high-tech equipment and adequate infrastructures such as computer labs, protected software and high-speed internet. This may often lead to interruptions to the service and disconnections which can be extremely frustrating both for the teachers as well as for the students. Furthermore, purchasing and investing in the right hardware is only the beginning of such an investment as curriculum, assessment, and instruction must all work together with the hardware to leverage its potential, requiring considerable costs for planning, design thinking and ongoing training. This calls for appropriate access to technical support, both within and outside of classrooms, to address possible technical faults in time so as not to hinder the smooth flow of classes, availability of an adequate infrastructure, clear policies and time allocated to incorporate such new technologies as well as technology-oriented policies in order to avoid any possible administrative barriers in the execution of digital programs on time.

4. Language Teaching and Learning in the New Normal.

In view of the above, the way languages are taught and learned in the new normal is different to what it used to be before the pandemic, with most countries having to adopt and adapt new approaches to overcome the difficulties and face the challenges encountered in class. To further compound matters, during the 2 years of the pandemic, when all teaching and learning was transferred online, students were deprived of personal interaction with teachers and peers, considered as one of the most fundamental

aspects in language learning, with the result that they became far less likely to be motivated to learn. In fact, languages are considered by many students as not being practical in nature and relevant to their lives. Students are often reluctant to study languages as they do not find them appealing to their interests, they do not consider them as being relevant to their future careers, and they often find it difficult to transfer the language skills they have acquired from the classroom to their everyday life. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges faced by language teachers is finding ways to motivate their students to complete language courses. Very often the root of the problem is that the existing language courses offered in schools focus too narrowly on the most urgent need of meeting language requirements and give little importance, if any, to the students' needs. Today, more than ever before, I strongly believe that to make language learning effective in this post-pandemic era is for teachers to focus on 3 key aspects of motivation, namely autonomy, competence and social relatedness.

The so called 'New Normal' is a time characterized by uncertainties, even where language teaching and learning is concerned. A lot of what we took for granted about language, culture, intercultural communication, communication in itself, is not what it was prior to the pandemic. Teaching methods have changed; our modes of communicating have changed; the way people speak and interact with each other has changed; the scope/s of learning a language have changed. To be able to respond to these evolving needs and to be able to remodel and create new programmes of study, it is pertinent to ask ourselves three vital questions, namely: Who are our students? What are the main challenges and difficulties that need to be faced and overcome in order to successfully motivate our students? Where do we want to arrive?

The social changes that have occurred in these last couple of years compel us to adapt to new social, cultural and linguistic realities: young people's language use, their way of doing things, their way of studying today is very different to what it was prior to the pandemic. If we, as language teachers, do not keep in mind who our students are, their characteristics, their way of doing things, their study habits, we risk running a situation where we honestly believe that our message is getting through, we are convinced that our teaching is effective when in fact learning is not taking place, or rather only a fraction of what we are trying to teach is being learnt. I will only mention (due to word limit constraints) one such characteristic which is of fundamental importance in language teaching and learning. I am referring here to the main mode of communication of adolescents, which is digital. And we all know that the language used when we communicate on the social media (the way we write, etc.) is at times totally different from the language we find and teach in class, in textbooks, at University, etc. This, very often, not only results in students feeling frustrated at the fact that they have studied the language for a number of years and know it is not the language they use in everyday life, but they also consider it as being irrelevant to their needs and not practical for their everyday communication needs, especially now that learning is not solely confined to the classroom during the prescribed hours of lessons, but students have countless options outside the "classroom hours" to further their learning by means of an infinite choice of technological tools.

5. Conclusion

To make language teaching and learning pertinent to the students' needs, language teachers have to keep abreast with all these developments and changes taking place both within and outside the classroom. Keeping the pace with language change has always been a difficulty, but with social media and the NET, this has become a much bigger challenge given that the pace with which language is changing has lately become much faster. One of the reasons for this is the Internet, which is fostering new experiences faster than ever before and whereas up to some decades ago, it used to take a generation to accept or introduce a new word, today all you need to do is put a new word/phrase on the social media and everyone starts using it immediately, very often creating new varieties of the same language in the process. The challenge is that while it is important to retain the respect of the "traditional accent or language", it is equally important to make students aware of other varieties given that one of the main taxing aspects of communication is being able to interact fluently with people of different backgrounds, cultures and interests. Not understanding what someone else is saying due to language varieties often leads to embarrassment, rejection, or misunderstandings and this gives rise in students to frustration and lack of self-confidence. The philosophy of the classroom should therefore be to expose students to as many different varieties of the language as possible, using different means and channels with the ultimate aim of helping them become autonomous learners.

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Redefining the Students' Contact with Literature through Creative Writing and Reading

Afroditi Athanasopoulou, Marili Douzina
University of Cyprus, Cyprus
Arsakeio General Lyceum of Psychico, Greece

Abstract

How can Creative Writing – and Creative Reading as a related activity – enhance the teaching of literature, annihilating, or at least reducing, the students' resistance to it? Despite voices that question the utility and necessity of Creative Writing, it is proved – through Creative Writing applications and research in typical junior High School classrooms as well as in Creative Writing Workshops – that this medium reduces the students' fear towards mistakes, promotes literacy, empowers creativity in learning, and last but not least, enhances creative attitude towards life in general. Creative Writing permits a combination of reception/reading, analysis and practice, which are basic ingredients of creative literary education. Creative Writing, in other words, transforms literature teaching into a constructive art, based not only on literary records but mostly on literary action. Teaching literature through Creative Writing and Reading, teachers can exploit and combine different pedagogical and methodological tools: the Objective Theory (focus on critical reading and writing), the Mimetic Theory (focus on mimesis writing), the Expressivist Theory (focus on free expression through free jotting, automatic writing etc.) and the Pragmatic Theory (focus on reader-response and on polyphonic reading and writing). Creative Writing, in connection to Creative Reading, not only leads to reading and critical efficiency but also to imaginative exploration and accomplishment. How can one assess the students' texts in a Creative Writing classroom or Workshop? For the assessment of Creative Writing and its related dilemma, it is up to the teacher to sustain an equilibrium: on the one hand, assessment is important, as it leads to improvement, on the other hand it must be moderated so as not to impose the teacher's "authority" on students' creativity. Creative Writing and Creative Reading, applied in a typical classroom as a tool of teaching literature as well as in a Creative Writing Workshop as a tool of self-expression, can transform radically and positively the way students confront literature: indifferent or resistant students who don't enjoy literature or question its utility seem to discover, through Creative Reading and Writing, the textual power that derives from the literary text as well as from their own imagination.

Keywords: *Creative Writing, Creative Reading, Teaching of Literature, Critical Literacy, Assessment*

1. Introduction

How can Creative Writing – and Creative Reading as a related activity – enhance the teaching of literature, annihilating, or at least reducing, the students' resistance to it in a typical classroom where often boredom is the case? Teaching literature through Creative Reading and Creative Writing seems to transform positively the way students react towards literature, provided that a certain methodology of how Creative Reading and Creative Writing can be taught and assessed is known and fruitfully applied by the teacher. In this paper, a short theory frame is presented along with selected examples of Creative Reading and Creative Writing Activities, that can facilitate the integration of Creative Reading and Writing in the literature course or in the Creative Writing Workshop. The theory developed in this paper and the proposed activities derive from experience and research of several years in teaching literature through Creative Reading and Writing in High Schools of Greece and of Cyprus, and in teachers' training courses on the didactics of literature.

2. Creative Reading and Writing

2.1 Definition

The paternity of the term "Creative Reading" belongs to Ralph Waldo Emerson (2001: 60). Its correlation with the term "Creative Writing" is traced in Emerson's phrase "There is then creative reading as well as creative writing" (Richardson, 2009: 7). According to Emerson, the act of creative reading enhances the act of creative writing. Creative Reading presupposes the transaction between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1994; 1995) and is described as a creative adventure, a "poetic" event [*poiein* = create] (Rosenblatt, 1994: 12, 20-21). Rosenblatt also introduces the term of "aesthetic reading"– as opposed to the term of "efferent reading"– in order to point out the reader's mental and emotional involvement (*pleasure*) while reading and inspired by the literary text.

Creative Writing, on the other hand, among its multiple definitions, can be described in, at least, three basic ways (Berry, 1994: 56): (a) as a procedure of creative reaction to the text which requires reading efficiency, critical thought, and the activation of imagination and of fluctuating freedom as well (Harper, 2013; Gross, 2010); (b) as a pedagogical method of experiential approach of the literary text, and (c) as a new literature theory established by the transaction between reader and text and based mostly on the reader/writer's creativity (Kotopoulos, 2012; Kotopoulos & Nanou, 2015). The benefits of Creative Writing can be seen as a product of four itineraries (Dawson, 2005): i. of creative self-expression (Creative Writing becomes a way of expression and of self-discovery), ii. of literacy (Creative Writing aims at the acquisition of writing efficiency), iii. of craft (Creative Writing presupposes the theory and praxis of writing, i.e. knowledge of texts and techniques), and iv. of reading "from the inside" (Creative Writing leads to the acquisition of reading proficiency as well). Therefore, we strongly support the thesis that Creative Reading and Creative Writing presuppose one another.

2.2 Creative Reading and Creative Writing Pedagogy

Regarding how Creative Reading and Writing can be taught, a combination of pedagogical and methodological approaches can be functional; we name the following (Donnelly, 2009/2012): the Objective Theory (focus on critical reading and writing), the

Mimetic Theory (focus on writing via mimesis), the Expressivist Theory (focus on creative expression through free jotting, automatic writing etc.), and the Pragmatic Theory (focus on reader-response and on polyphonic reading and writing). The Objective Theory employs tools from the New-Critic theory, such as close-reading and the analysis of figures of speech and of narrative techniques; in this case, however, literature teaching is not focused on a new-critical reception of the text, but *basic theoretical knowledge* is provided for students to understand and form an interpretation of the text, based on critical thinking, and subsequently to adapt this knowledge and critical thinking in the creation of their own texts inspired by the original literary text. The Mimetic Theory permits activities upon the literary text where mimesis is activated. This "mirroring" technique (writing *à la manière de…*) enhances attention and observation of the original text and, ultimately, leads to the development of a personal (re)creative filter towards it. The Expressivist Theory encourages the students to freely express themselves through activities such as free jotting, automatic writing etc. The Expressivist Theory appears in the "expressivist curriculum" inaugurated by Hughes Mearns, who first replaced the traditional literature class by Creative Writing courses (Myers, 1996: 103), aiming at *teaching the students and not teaching literature*. Finally, the Pragmatic Theory, based on reader-response, centers on the students' reception of the text *in its cultural and historical context* and makes their act of reading and writing more "suspicious" about their *own* experiences and beliefs as well. Through these theories – provided that the teacher has the knowledge and the experience to keep a balance between them – Creative Reading inspires Creative Writing and vice versa.

2.3 Creative Writing Assessment

How can one assess Creative Writing? The assessment dilemma (Hugo, 1992) is related, negatively, to the authority that derives from the one who assesses (Brophy, 1994), authority that can intimidate the student-writer, and, positively, to the fact that the appropriate assessment is a precondition for self-improvement. Given that Creative Writing is inserted in the school environment, in which assessment plays a significant role, and that an "easy A" on Creative Writing course leads to its underestimation, while a strict assessment risks to enhance the writer's block, we suggest a variety of assessment strategies, such as descriptive assessment, encouraging assessment, and occasionally no feedback (Zeigler, 1989) in evaluation-free zones (Elbow, 1993).

3. Teaching Literature through Creative Reading and Creative Writing

3.1 Creative Reading Activities

During the process of Creative Reading, questions/prompts that combine critical and creative thinking (Runco, 2003; Langer, 2012) enhancing a variety of cognitive and emotional skills can be employed, such as:

- Emotional-response questions/prompts (What were your feelings during reading? Where you touched most by this text? Did this text revive any memories? Did you identify with persons or circumstances presented in the text?) (Bleich, 1975a; 1975b).
- Cognitive questions/prompts (Present/Describe the heroes and the era of the story. Who is narrating the story? Is he/she participating in it?).
- Interpretative questions/prompts (Explain the phrase/the verse… How would you explain the writer's/poet' s choice to…? Locate analogies and differences between…).

- Evaluative questions/prompts (Did you like the text or not? Why? Would you recommend this text to a friend?)
- Different techniques can also be used to enhance the process of Creative Reading, such as:
- Text scanning: observation of external characteristics of the text format, such as structural and morphological features of the poem or the narrative.
- Segmental reading: reading of the text with breaks made by the teacher in order to stimulate imagination (Iser, 1980) and the readers' expectations and interest.
- Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) (Hunt, 1970; McCracken & McCracken, 1978), in order to imitate private deliberate reading for pleasure (McCracken & McCracken, 1978; Spiegel, 1981).
- Improvised dramatization: transformation of scenes/episodes of the text's plot, chosen by the students or the teacher, into short theatrical parts.

3.2 Creative Writing Activities

In parallel with Creative Reading activities, various Creative Writing activities can also be employed in the Literature course. Some of them are anchored to the literary text, such as rewriting a passage through a different narrative angle or point of view, completing the narration's gaps, proposing a different start or ending, rewriting a poem with or without rhyme, playing with the characters or the style of the text and so on (Queneau, 2013).

Several Creative Writing activities, quite original and customized to the needs and the level of Primary and High School students, are provided in the book "Creative Writing: Navigation Instructions" by M. Souliotis and his team (2012), which is part of the teaching aids used in Cyprus's education since 2011 in the framework of the new Literature Curriculum (Athanasopoulou et al. 2010). The aim of this book is to support the students' practice in Creative Writing by offering a variety of applicable activities in order to develop their reading and writing efficiency in the Literature course. Some indicative examples of Creative Writing activities from this book are listed below:

- Texting/SMS (Souliotis et al., 2012: 94).
In this "warming up" activity students are asked to write messages as if they were texting on their smartphones, and then to transform them into a form of slam/oral poetry. The use of adolescent "slang" renders this activity attractive to the students; at the same time, unconsciously, they are introduced in the *symbolic and elliptic* poetic language (These features are common to their texting as well.)

- Escalation/Climax (Souliotis et al., 2012: 123).
Students are asked to escalate random words belonging to the adolescents' "slang" and related to certain human characteristics, such as "bold", "beautiful", "innovative" etc. The words are written on the whiteboard in an ascending or descending scale according to their meaning. Through this activity, students realize the different levels of semantic weight that words may denote as well as their metaphorical sense, which is a basic feature of poetic language.

- Literal vs Metaphorical meaning (Souliotis et al., 2012: 127).
Students are asked to write a poem using only literal meanings and to rewrite it through metaphors. This replacement exercise helps students realize the difference between the

common and the poetic language and, more importantly, the power of the metaphorical meaning in literature.

Example:

By the roads of the city	By the roads of my mind
I wait alone	I sit on the rock of solitude
My heart beats fast	My heart dances on the beat of agony
I am afraid	Like a frightened deer

• Poetic recipe (Souliotis et al., 2012: 141).

Students are asked to write the "recipe" of a feeling, of a situation etc. Through this playful activity they realize the particularity of poetic language which lies in the unexpected combinations of words.

Example: "The love recipe"

Ingredients

2 hearts

1 spoon of trust

3 promises that won't be kept

1 cup of tears

....

Performance

We open the heart like a book. We add the trust, the tears and the promises, we stir them lightly and we boil the mixture, not too much, for the eternity…

• Weather forecast (Souliotis et al., 2012: 112).

Using stereotype phrases from weather forecasts, we encourage students to express a feeling. Through this activity "lower" textual genres, such as the weather forecast, are elevated in literary texts, while students exercise their imagination and language creativity.

Example:

Cataractous rains will fall during your absence
Violent winds will be raging in the coast of memory…

• Textual Montage (Souliotis et al., 2012: 127).

Sergei Eisenstein stated that the art of montage was applied in literature before its application in cinema. There are numerous examples of "shots" and "montage" in narrative and poetic texts that can be used as a study field for students to observe and to apply. The literature montage activity, i.e. the application of cinematographic techniques to the writing of literary texts helps students understand in a direct and not a theoretical way the narrative techniques in literature.

4. Conclusion

Creative Reading and Creative Writing can elevate the teaching of literature and improve the way students communicate with literary texts. Through carefully selected activities of Creative Reading and Writing, students are able to realize the form and the power of literature language, cultivate their creativity and divergent thinking, develop skills of critical literacy and experience the delight of reading and writing. A creative approach in teaching literature presupposes an experienced teacher, who believes in teaching as a means of boosting creativity and permits his students' voices to be heard. In a Literature class or in a Creative Writing Workshop, the coexistence of Creative Reading and Writing can transform spectacularly the reception of literary texts and the students' stance towards literature. Fortunately, in Greece and in Cyprus, Creative Reading and Creative Writing are applied in literature teaching in a fruitful way, thanks to the integration of Creative Writing in the Literature Curriculum.

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Social Learning Space: Redefining Academia within a University Setting

Ellie Law[1], John Della Pietra[2], Paul Pan[3]
Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong[1,2,3]

Abstract

'Internationalization' represents an important strategic focus of many universities around the world. To pursue this goal, many universities in Hong Kong have been committed to developing students' cross-cultural skills and bringing diverse global perspectives to the campus to inform and enrich students' worldview. Although many local Hong Kong students are enthusiastic about enhancing their English speaking, skills and cultural competence, and international students are striving to integrate into the local community, there are limited social integration opportunities available on campus to bring the two groups together in everyday contexts. To this end, a Social Learning Space (SLS) has been established in a Hong Kong university, aiming to provide organic learning opportunities by enabling students to exercise their agency as they interact with each other through language learning and cultural exchange activities and discussion groups conducted by a Communication Advisor along with a team of local and international Student Ambassadors. This paper offers an account of trialling social language learning and cultural exchange activities in the SLS. Questionnaire results collected from 136 participants and feedback of committed service users collected from semi-structured interviews will be presented. Suggestions on ways to enhance the effectiveness of the SLS activities and increase student engagement in language learning will be explored.

Keywords: *Social learning space, social communication skills, student engagement, cultural exchange*

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, 'internationalization' represents a key strategic goal of many universities. However, research has found that merely incorporating internationalization at the policy level does not sufficiently develop students' intercultural competence [1]. The evidence from research suggests that universities may need to do more to offer opportunities for both local and international students to enhance their social communication skills and intercultural knowledge in real-life contexts on campus.

The paper presents the experience of trialling social language learning and cultural exchange activities in the Social Learning Space (SLS) in a Hong Kong university. The Space facilitates organic learning opportunities by enabling students to exercise their agency as they interact with each other, engaging them within various stages of learning and offering them an active voice and stake in their own learning community.

2.   Examples of social English and cultural exchange activities in the SLS

Activities conducted in the SLS can generally be categorized into four strands: current affairs, cultural exchange, social meet-up, and game sessions, all of which aim at providing a platform for students with different interests and cultural backgrounds to come together in a social setting.

Students exhibited a preference for activity themes resonant with their lives. Indeed, topics related to food, drinks, travel, art and pronunciation were often the most well-received. To ensure each participant has ample opportunity to speak, a limited quota of 10-12 people is applied to each session. Apart from the group activities, one-on-one speaking consultation sessions were provided to cater for students with specific needs.

3.   Opportunities and Challenges

The pandemic has brought both opportunities and challenges for the SLS. Students' demand for social interaction seemingly reached an unprecedented level as many were stuck at home, isolating them from their peers and the university community at large. By switching to online activities via Zoom, the SLS served as a virtual extension of campus life to some extent.

Inevitably, however, the compromised authenticity of interaction, limited activity format and variety, lack of commitment from participants and inadequate promotion channels emerged as top challenges for the Space.

4.   Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key findings identified from the post-activity questionnaires collected and individual semi-structured interviews with four committed service users of the SLS.
Below is a summary of key items from the post-activity questionnaire:

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The content of the workshop/activity was interesting.	81.07%	16.25%	2.68%	0%	0%
The workshop/activity has developed my skills for communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.	79.82%	17.44%	2.14%	0.65%	0%
Overall, I enjoyed the activity/workshop.	85.65%	13.45%	0.89%	0%	0%

Table 1 Summary of participants' evaluation of the SLS activities
Participants generally enjoyed the activities, while expressing a high degree of satisfaction with the content and skills offered within the activities.

4.1 Staying "down-to-earth" with topic selection

C: *…for me I'm not very experienced person in art and culture, then maybe when the other participants were talking about the museum art work and the pieces then I'm quite lost.*

C: *…closer relates to our life or maybe pop culture… if all are social issues topic then maybe it's too boring, like news channel.*

Participants spoke to the importance of selecting topics of optimal resonance in their daily lives. Topics perceived as relatively more "down-to-earth" were often more well-received as the focus was more on encouraging sharing of experiences or thoughts without the need for extensive background or specialist knowledge. Additionally, this view seems to lend support to the idea that topics for activities should be selected according to "students' own interests and experiences" [2, p. 308]. Conversely, more esoteric or niche topics were often accessible only to a small fraction of the participants and were thus regarded as less stimulating. With more challenging topics, many participants found they were simply unable to engage in the discussion due to their lack of knowledge base in that particular area.

4.2 Viewing "Non-academic" communication as a valuable commodity

F: *…my family knows my things already, so it's like not like, not get a very hard time to understand or like how to use the skill. but like if you knew some new, new friends or new classmates, that is a different situation like me to like, how to modify yourself to express yourself...*

F: *like even like I don't know the student or classmates, the names, but I can still chatting with them and relax myself, maybe reduce my pressure yeah.*

Participants regarded opportunities for interaction in the SLS as distinctly valuable as they viewed such communication as fundamentally different from the type of communication they experience at home or in other on-campus setting. This sentiment seemed to point to the role of SLS served as a space in which students could engage with a community to practice language outside of their family and conventional academic environments. Indeed, other studies of similar social language learning spaces have observed a similar connection between the inherent link between making social connections and language practice [3] [4].

4.3 Appreciating diverse perspectives

F: *I heard many people drink this one, but I didn't drink, some time I want to know why they really like they are really, how to say, they willing to pay like 40 dollars… I want to chat with some they are like this and then understand what they're thinking.*

C: *I think I can meet a lot of people with different backgrounds… and I wish to talk to them more in order to broaden my horizon, so I kept coming back.*

Participants spoke to the perceived value of interacting with peers from different backgrounds, as well as the experience of appreciating different points of view. According

to participants, this aspect of their experience in the space afforded a unique opportunity to gain insight into viewpoints and opinions dissimilar to their own, such as understanding something as simple as the justification for making certain food purchases. This general espousing of plurality of views extended to the participants' cultural and academic backgrounds, a finding echoed by Murray and Fujishima [3].

5. Communication Advisor's reflection

Three areas were identified as key lessons learned from the project. The first pertained to student confidence. More than half of the participants revealed a lack of confidence in using English in both academic and social settings. As a result, they were less motivated in speaking English in and outside of classrooms. To address this issue, the team adopted a more interactive and inviting approach to develop a stress-free environment for the participants to practice speaking. A general increase in confidence was perhaps evidenced by an increase in the frequency of visitors to the Space.

Secondly, the activities seemed to improve the relationship between students, especially under the pandemic. Turning off cameras and microphones seemed to be the norm for students in attending online lessons or virtual events. But in SLS activities, students were willing to communicate with their camera on, thus somewhat reducing the distance to make interactions more authentic.

Lastly, inclusivity is essential. One of the aims of SLS is to connect local and international students, which requires an inclusive mindset. With the help from the Student Ambassadors, the team was able to facilitate dialogues among students from different backgrounds. Based on the current model, the team would like to build a community of practice on campus where members can learn from each other through a wide range of activities.

6. Implications and recommendations

6.1 Topics of the activities in the SLS

The popularity of the activities and feedback from committed service users indicate that topics related to students' everyday life and interest (e.g. food, music, travel, cultural differences, social media) can more successfully engage students. Student Ambassadors thus can offer the Communication Advisor key insight into interests of university students.

6.2 Format of the activities in the SLS

SLS activities during the pandemic have been conducted synchronously online via Zoom and also in face-to-face mode in the past year. It is suggested that effective and evidence-based approaches for both modes are necessary. For example, participants tend to be more quiet on Zoom. Therefore, more input of information on the workshop topics is needed to activate the participants' schemata and optimize engagement. Conversely, in the face-to-face setting, assigning students a high volume of structured activities (in pairs/small groups) appears to maximize speaking opportunities. Regardless of delivery mode, providing participants a voice and listening to them genuinely appear to increase engagement and enjoyment. These principles seem to be requisite elements to increase future participation in SLS activities.

6.3 The 'social' value of the SLS

The SLS plays a pivotal role in creating a vibrant and supportive campus environment by emphasizing the 'social' dimension of learning, which is independent of academic studies. It fosters a sense of belonging and community among students [4], and promotes co-construction of knowledge. Therefore, to achieve the objective of promoting social language learning, the SLS should engender a conducive environment for socialization language development, and cultural exchange.

6.4 Learning as the production of identity

The social aspect of learning emphasizes that learners are social participants who establish identities through meaning-making in the social world [5]. All aspects of a learner experience in the process of negotiation of meaning constitute and shape the identity of a learner. The SLS provides an authentic social context for participants to interact and negotiate meaning with other learners, through which they gradually develop their identity in the knowledge building process.

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Students' Engagement and Written Production in Project-Based Language Learning: The Potential of Using Learner-Generated Content

Christine Fredriksson[1], Marjan Asgari[2,] Ferran Suñer[3]
[1]University of Gothenborg, Sweden
[2]Free University of Bozen, Italy
[3]Universitè Catholique de Louvain, Belgium

Abstract

The present paper presents an interventional study on the implementation of a Learning Scenario (LS) [1] that aimed at better integrating learner-generated and personalized content into the task and thus increasing students' behavioral (e.g., spent time, text length), affective (e.g., enjoyment, interest), and cognitive (e.g., syntactic elaborateness) engagement [2] [3]. The study was carried out with a group of N=23 students in their 6th year of L3 German at a Swedish upper secondary school. The students produced informative texts on their favorite feel-good places, enriched them with their own pictures and published their productions in the form of an integrated digital city tour using the tool Thinglink®. We documented the implementation of the LS through video-recorded sessions, students' productions, a questionnaire on students' perceptions, and a teacher interview. In this paper, we will discuss the benefits of integrating learner-generated content in terms of students' engagement and writing performance as well as the implications for the teaching practice.

Keywords: *Engagement, L2 writing, Project-based language learning, Learning Scenario*

1. Introduction

The introduction of the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach has stressed the importance of developing language skills through tasks that reflect or are directly anchored in real life [4]. Accordingly, tasks should include communicative and meaningful situations based on learners' personal experiences, be linked to functional language use, and state a clearly defined outcome that might require learners mobilizing linguistic and non-linguistic resources [5] (p. 223), [6] (p. 124). Although TBLT has proven to be efficient in supporting learners' language development when compared to more teacher-centered approaches, e.g., [7], some authors have suggested that tasks based on teacher-generated content might not always sufficiently consider learners' intrinsic interests and real-life experiences, which in turn can lead to decreased motivation and disengagement during task performance [8]. In this context, the choice of the topics and the contents for the task are deemed essential for promoting meaningful language use and facilitating learners' engagement in discourse communities. Against this backdrop, the present paper reports on the implementation of a Learning Scenario (LS) that uses learner-generated content to increase students' cognitive (e.g., questioning and evaluating the quality of the ideas, searching for information), behavioral (e.g. getting actively involved

in class activities, discussing ideas with peers), and affective (e.g., enjoyment, interest) engagement when writing on their favorite feel-good places. We also analyze the syntactic elaborateness of students' text productions (i.e., the sophistication of the syntactic patterns used) as an indicator of their cognitive engagement and text length as an indicator of their behavioral engagement.

2. Method
2.1 Research design and participants

In this project, 23 students of L3 German in Swedish upper secondary school, 14 girls (Pseudonym F) and 19 boys (Pseudonym M), participated in working with one of the Learning Scenarios (LS) developed in co-operation of teachers and researchers in the Erasmus+-project "E-LearnScene". The students had learnt German for an average of 5 years. They were informed about the project and had given their agreement to participate and being filmed when working with the LS. The teacher was handed out the materials and was given a tutorial on the technical aspects of the tool *Thinglink®.* Although he was used to teaching learner-centred, he had no previous experience in implementing such LS.

2.2 Treatment and materials

A LS is characterized by a fixed structure of several phases and activities that guide the working process as a whole: introduction to the context and the task, planning of (language) activities and determining learners' roles, preparations, and performance of the task, and finally, presentation and evaluation of the final product. It also provides language resources concerning vocabulary and grammar.
According to the instructions of this specific LS, the learners visited and took pictures of their favorite places in their neighborhood, and they wrote descriptions which they posted on a virtual map created with the tool *Thinglink®* (see Figures 1 and 2).
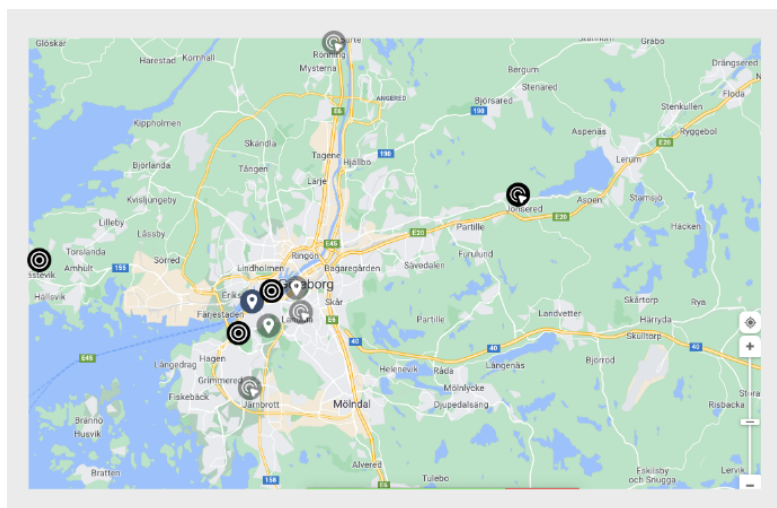
Figure 1. Overview of students' productions on the map with clickable symbols
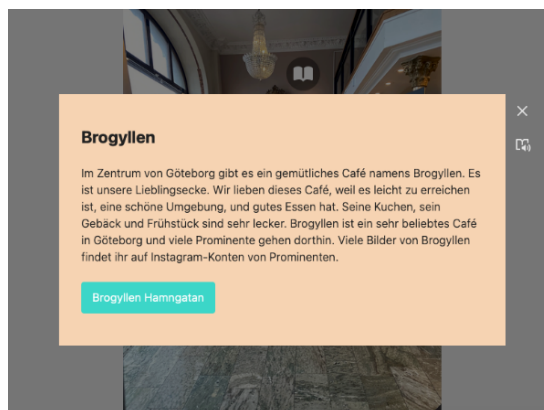
Figure 2. Example of a description of a feel-good place.

The final product was a virtual tour to the students' favorite places, which was undertaken in whole class in the last lesson (see table 1). After the teacher's introduction to the LS in the first lesson, the students worked on the task during the three subsequent lessons, which included visiting the places outside of the school. As they were free to work individually or in small groups, the texts about the places were written groupwise (1 group with 5 students, 3 groups with 3 students) in pairs (3) or individually (3 students) in *Google Classroom®*. The teacher functioned as a back-up for learner questions and filmed the students when working with the activities in class. Before publishing the final product on *Thinglink®*, the teacher reviewed and corrected the first draft of students' texts. The time frame for the project and the activities in each lesson are listed in Table 1.

Timeframe October 2021		Activities
Week 1	Lesson 1	Introduction/ impulse/exchange/
	Lesson 2	Introduction to the tool (Thinglink) /Planning
Week 2	Outside of the classroom	Visit of the places
	Lesson 3	Text production in class
Week 3	Lesson 4	Final text production and publication
	Lesson 5	Virtual tour on Thinglink/discussion Online survey about attitudes

Table 1. Time frame and activities of the LS

2.3 Data collection procedure

For purpose of this study, in the last lesson, students voluntarily (n=16) completed a questionnaire with open questions on their perceptions and attitudes towards working with the LS. The questionnaire was conducted in *Google Forms®*. The video-recordings, the students' answers, the first drafts, and the corrected versions of the texts were made available to the researchers by the teacher. Each group compiled their texts in a single word document, i.e., a total of 10 documents were analyzed. The teacher was also interviewed orally regarding the implementation of the LS.

The answers to the questionnaire were analyzed by using qualitative content analysis following the first level of the Documentary Method [9]. The analysis of the students' texts was conducted in *Atlas.ti* by using a coding scheme based on "Learner Profile Analysis" developed by Grießhaber [10] (p. 3). According to Grießhaber, there are seven levels of syntactic complexity determining learners' syntactic elaborateness in L2-German written production: Level 0 comprises fragmentary clauses; level 1 comprises main clauses with canonical word order (SVO); on level 2 are clauses with the infinite verb in final position (e.g., modal constructions); level 3 refers to clauses with SV inversion, and level 4 to subordinate clauses with the finite verb in final position; level 5 comprises embedded subordinate clauses, and level 7 complex noun phrases. By relating each clause of a text to one of the seven levels, the proportional distribution of low-level clauses and high-level clauses can be calculated so as to determine the overall learner's profile.

3. Results and discussion

In the following, we present the results from the analysis of students' text productions, the questionnaire, the teacher interview, and the video-recordings and discuss their implications regarding students' engagement in scenario-based language learning.

3.1 Text length and syntactic elaborateness

The results concerning text length as a measure for behavioral engagement, and elaborateness as a measure for cognitive engagement, are shown in table 2.

Group	Mean length of text	Level 0: fragmentary clauses	Level 1: Main clause	Level 2: Position Verb 2	Level 3: Inversion	Level 4: Position finite verb in subordinate clause	Level 5: Embedded subordinate clauses
M01	62	0	7	1	**3**	0	0
M02	113	0	13	1	0	**3**	0
F04	113	0	5	2	7	**2**	0
M03, M04	30	0	4	3	3	0	0
M05, M06	46	1	5	1	4	**3**	0
M08, M09	50	1	10	0	1	**2**	0
F01, F02, F03	68	1	12	1	9	**4**	0
F05, F06, F07	28,3	0	7	1	2	2	**1**
F08, F09, F10	35,3	1	4	1	4	**4**	0
F11, F12, F13, F14, M07	64,4	0	13	6	14	8	**1**
Total	55	4	80	17	44	28	2

Table 2. Results from the analysis of students' written productions.

The mean length of the texts, calculated by word account, is 55 words for all students. With a range from 28, 3 to 113 words, the text productions vary considerably in quantity between groups. However, since there was no specification of expected text length in the task, this result rather shows the different approaches of the students to presenting their favorite places, whereby pictures also served as an important means of expression.

As far as the syntactic elaborateness of the texts is concerned, the students mainly use low-level clauses (Level 0 to 2: 58%), which may relate to the text type used in the LS, i.e., descriptive texts. However, there is also a very strong tendency to use structures at higher levels (Level 3 to 5: 42%).

According to Grießhaber's [9] "Profile Analysis", five texts reached level 4, three texts reached profile level 3, two texts reached profile level 1. The range between profile level 1 and profile level 4 in second language acquisition shows the need for internal differentiation, which can be achieved through teaching methods such as the one underlying the LS implemented in our study.

What is striking here is that learners used structures that were made available to them as linguistic resources in the LS such as "Wenn…, dann…" (Engl. *If …, then …*), which is a conditional subordinate clause followed by a main clause with SV inversion. Out of 28 subordinate clauses (level 4) 16 clauses follow this pattern, contributing to an increase of high-level structures of various scope and content. This result, concerning elaborateness, indicates that students dealt with the content of the LS, which also can be related to the students' cognitive engagement when working with the LS.

- o *Wenn Sie die Tür öffnen*
- o *Wenn Sie das nächste Mal Brogyllen besuchen*
- o *Wenn ich eine Pause brauche*
- o *wenn du willst*
- o *wenn du Lust auf Eis hast*
- o *Wenn ich manchmal müde bist,*
- o *Wenn ich irritiert oder gestresst bin*
- o *Wenn Sie Lust auf Kaffee oder etwas Gutes zu trinken haben*
- o *Wenn Sie hungrig sind*
- o *und wenn man in diese Restaurant gehen*
- o *Wenn wir in der Cafe gehen*
- o *wenn sie einen Tagesausflug zu de schönen Inseln unternehmen*
- o *Wenn Sie hungrig auf Kaffee oder hungrig sind*
- o *"Wenn ich traurig/müde bin,..."*
- o *Wenn ich mich ärgere,*
- o *Wenn ich schlechte Laune habe,*

4. Perceptions and attitudes

A written anonymous survey with a semi-open design asked how students perceived the learning scenario after they had completed it. The questions explored students' behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement. 92% of the students said they would like to do a learning scenario again during class in the future, 8% answered "maybe" to this question. They emphasized the free movement outside of school, which supported the learning process in German as a foreign language: "It was fun to do something new

in class and to leave the classroom and work together with others. You could also learn new German words because we didn't work with the places before" (anonymous). As is clear from the questionnaires, most groups were able to benefit from collaboration during the writing process. In one group, individual responses to the topic at hand led to the creation of individual written products: "In my group we all had different places, which meant that we were all actually working for ourselves, so it didn't really become a group effort. If we had all chosen one or two places, we could have written together" (anonymous). However, the majority of the respondents stated that the task was appropriate (100%) and that it was easy to cope with the task through group work (86%). Overall, the questionnaires show a high behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement of the students. Also, the video-recordings of activities in class show the students' active engagement, and a deliberate use of German in planning and evaluation activities.

When asking the teacher about his impressions about working with the LS, the following issues were mentioned:

- The material could be used directly
- The learners immediately understood their task
- They used the language resources provides by the LS
- Collaboration worked well
- Text quality was beyond expectation in terms of length and elaborateness
- Students were engaged and motivated to present their places.

5. Outlook

When implementing TBLT approaches, teachers are expected to select relevant content and determine the focus of the task, ideally based on their relevance to students' personal experiences, interests, and specific needs [11] (p.166), see also [12]. However, the results from the present project suggest that including learner-generated content might be even more useful than teacher-generated content in terms of students' engagement, which is in line with findings from some previous studies [8]. For example, students appreciated having an out-of-class activity that included exploring place-based contexts and performing embodied interactions, undoubtedly a way to increase behavioral engagement and to "rewild" language learning (see [13]). Also, the analysis of the syntactic elaborateness in students' written productions showed students' tendency to use more sophisticated syntactic patterns, which is associated with an increased cognitive engagement. However, it should be mentioned that the small number of students participating in the project and the relatively short duration of the intervention do not allow us to make strong claims. Future research should consider looking into longitudinal effects as well as controlling for individual variables, e.g., whether students with a higher proficiency level benefit more from learner-generated content compared to less proficient students who might be somewhat overwhelmed due to their lack of linguistic autonomy.

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Including Social Justice in an Intermediate Spanish Course Using Two Articles from Mario Vargas Llosa

María-Elvira Luna Escudero-Alie,
Montgomery College (United States)

Abstract

Social Justice is a crucial topic to be discussed in World Language classrooms, not just in order to use the target language via relevant and fascinating contexts, but also as a tool to give students the opportunity of applying critical thinking. The learning outcome, therefore, and -from a cultural- responsive teaching perspective- would be not only preparing students to improve their four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using realia, but giving students the possibility to enhance their sense of social responsibility, and social justice. The ideal learning outcome would be to guide students to be global citizens, ones that will feel compelled to be involved in trying to make better our contemporary, and often turbulent world. I argue, that the Spanish 201 course: Intermediate Spanish I, is the perfect linguistical milieu to share through the cultural themes of the course, many important elements of social justice, and discussed them with students. I consider that two journalist articles written by Mario Vargas Llosa (2010 Nobel Prize Winner of Literature): "The Immigrants" and "Fataumata's Feet" are quite effective and linguistic appropriated for the students to engage them in fruitful debates and passionate discussions.

Keywords: *Social Justice- Mario Vargas Llosa- Immigration*

1.Introduction

We will start by defining the concept of "Social Justice", then a brief description of the Spanish 201 course, follow by a general information of Mario Vargas Llosa, and his relevance in the Hispanic Literature. We will give a brief summary of the two journalistic articles wrote by Mario Vargas Llosa: "The Immigrants" (1996), and "Fataumata's Feet" (1999), next we will comment in the ways these two articles will be integrated in the Spanish 201 course, and finally we will share a conclusion.

2. Social Justice

According to the definition of United Nations, "Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth."
The National Association of Social Workers defines social justice this way: "Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need."

Finally, the Center for Economic and Social Justice has the following definition: "Social Justice encompasses economic justice. Social justice is the virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development."

3. Spanish 201 Course

Spanish 201, is an intermediate I course, the third one after Elementary Spanish I, and Elementary Spanish II. This course consists in an intensive review of basic Spanish grammar directed at building fluency and proficiency in oral and written Spanish while learning more about relevant Hispanic culture topics. The prerequisite for Spanish 201 is Spanish 102, or two years of high school Spanish, or the equivalent. Spanish 201 carries 3 credits.

Upon completion of Spanish 201, students will be able to communicate in the target language at an intermediate level in the skill areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They will be able to apply advanced grammatical structures, such as complex verb forms, that support communication at the intermediate level of proficiency.

4. Mario Vargas Llosa

MVLI is a prolific Peruvian writer, essayist, journalist, politician, and university professor. He wrote nineteen novels, three books of short-stories, twenty-four books of non-fiction (including *The Language of Passion*, 2001, where the two journalist articles that we are referring to are included). Mario Vargas Llosa is a brilliant author whose texts have been translated into several languages. For his books he received multiple and well-deserved recognitions including, among the most prestigious ones: in 19967 the Rómulo Gallegos Prize, in 1986 the Prince of Asturias Award, in 1994 the Miguel de Cervantes Prize, in 1995 the Jerusalem Prize, in 2012 the Carlos Fuentes International Prize, in 2018, the Pablo Neruda Order of Artistic and Cultural Merit. In 2010, Mario Vargas Llosa got as well the most important of all the literary awards: the Nobel Prize of Literature, "for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat." As listed in the page of the Nobel Prize Organization.

5. "The Immigrants"

This journalistic article was written in 1996, for the column: "Piedra de toque", in the Spanish newspaper, El País. Vargas Llosa, shares in this emblematic article his views about the polemical topic of immigration, and he does it from a perspective of solidarity and ethical responsibility. Vargas Llosa narrates the life of several immigrants from different countries and their struggles to first get to their new country, then to establish themselves, and then bring their families there. Vargas Llosa is in favor of immigration and supports it as a crucial human right to look for a better life. Vargas Llosa believes that immigrants are an "injection of life, energy, and culture", and therefore immigrants should be welcome in all countries.

6. "Fataumata's Feet"

This article was written in 1999 for the same column: "Piedra de toque", in the Spanish newspaper, El País. In this article Vargas Llosa uses the clever metaphor of the feet of an African immigrant, from Gambia, whose house in Barcelona, Spain, was vandalized by teenagers. Vargas Llosa uses the metaphor of Fataumata's to illustrates how many and incommensurable hardships and challenges, immigrants encounter when they are making their path to a better future. Definitely, Vargas Llosa wrote this article from the point of view of solidarity and human compassion.

7. Integrating Social Justice Activities in Spanish 201

Students will have the opportunity to watch in class a video of an interview of Vargas Llosa about his views in immigration. This way they will have the chance to practice their listening skills, and will start thinking in the topic. Students will do a close reading of the articles in class, practicing then their reading skills, and later on, their speaking skills, as soon as they are placed in groups to discuss the articles while using their critical thinking skills, and enhancing their intermediate Spanish vocabulary.

Students will be divided in groups of four to discuss the topic of immigration using these two articles. In each group, students will be either in favor of immigration, against it, or totally neutral. Students will make a poster graphically representing the perspective of the group about the topic of immigration.

After they present in class their posters, students will work in their same groups to prepare a debate which will have the same three possibilities of the posters: in favor, against, or neutral. In the debate students will have the opportunity to practice besides their critical thinking skills, their oral skills. As a final assignment, students will work individually to write a composition where they will express their real view on immigration, rather that the one given to their group. By writing heir compositions, students will be able to enhance their vocabulary and practice their writing skills.

8. Conclusions

We are convinced that students will benefit a great deal by being able to interact, in several ways, with authentic materials (realia) of a high caliber. In fact, by reading and analyzing these two journalistic articles: "The Immigrants" (1996), and "Fataumata's Feet" (1999) where Vargas Llosa expressed in a clear manner, and in a beautiful fashion his perspective on immigration, students will learn a lot. Vargas Llosa's articles are well-informed, and extremely well-written. Since the level of Spanish proficiency of the intermediate I students is good enough to understand the two articles, students will lower their affective filter by feeling really confident as they were able to read, understand, debate, and even write about a high polemic topic based in two journalistic articles written by a Nobel Prize of Literature.
In a perfect world, the hope would be that students will feel incline to use more often their critical skills, and will try, not only to read more texts by Mario Vargas Llosa, but also to become global citizens.

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E-Learning

Teaching Linguistic Landscape to Future English Teachers Supported by the Moodle Application

Petra Jesenská

Matej Bel University, Slovakia

Abstract

Teaching linguistic landscape classes is a very dynamic process because the linguistic landscape (LL) itself has a very dynamic character stemming in its nature. The LL is quite a new enormously and dynamically developing anthropocentric multidisciplinary field of linguistic science with a plethora of interdisciplinary overlaps in geosemiotics, geopolitics and history, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, culturology and arts, multimodal cultural linguistics as well as cultural semiotics, architecture and many others. However, the having the solid foundations of systemic linguistics is crucial in the master's program of teaching and translation/interpreting of English language and culture at Matej Bel University (MBU), Faculty of Arts, Dep. of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. The pandemic situation has led to a shift in teaching to the online space, even at universities looking for suitable distance learning tools. The Slovak MBU was ready for the second wave. The training took place through the MS Teams and Moodle applications. The aim of our paper is to introduce the Moodle application in teaching linguistic landscape classes focused on theoretical and research direction, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages to which the participants were exposed. However, the multidiciplinarity of the LL is a suitable springboard for teaching English as a foreign language to future English language teachers as well as supporting discipline in the education of intercultural communication and the promotion of soft skills, not to mention the cross-cutting themes of active civil society in the presentation of regional culture and history in secondary schools. *This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract no. APVV-18-0115 and Erasmus+ 2020-1-BE02-KA226-SCH-083039.*

Keywords: *Linguistic Landscape, cross-cutting themes, English language teaching, Moodle Application*

1 Introduction

Students of the master's degree should be given the opportunity to get to know the beauty of empirical research and the feeling of adventure from learning about language, culture, history, etc. own village directly in the field. Emotional involvement strengthens the inner motivation to explore, research, learn more using one's own creative methods and procedures [1]. The beauty of getting to know and discovering one's own roots with a connection to the study program of teaching academic subjects or translation and interpreting is an investment in their personal, intellectual and professional equipment. As bachelor's degree graduates, they have a solid foundation in systems linguistics,

enabling them to draw their attention to superstructure interdisciplinary contexts, which are also part of their daily lives. The aim of the paper is to describe the experiment of including the topic of the linguistic landscape in the academic subject in the master's program.

2 Linguistic Landscape

During the recent thirty years, research attention in linguistics has been paid to the linguistic landscape (hereinafter referred to as LL). It is an anthropocentrically oriented interdisciplinary oriented scientific field using the procedures of researching systems linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, multimodal semiotics, history, geopolitics, etc. Country (or landscape) is becoming a central concept of research. It is a view of the landscape through signs and symbols that people have intentionally created and which they are constantly surrounded by for various reasons. Context, situationality, time and space play a significant role in this. The basic LL unit is considered to be the sign, resp. multimodal sign [2]. The first LL studies have been carried abroad for several decades - overseas, Asia and Europe. Among the first areas studied were Toronto, Tokyo, New York, Munich. In Slovakia, continuous and systematic multidisciplinary research of the LL has been taking place since 2019 in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Komárno (and incl. others), within the particular projects. The aim is to comprehensively map the linguistic landscape of selected cities from synchronous and diachronic point of view from the beginning of the 20th century to the present and to analyze using quantitative-qualitative analysis for the purpose of their subsequent comparison. One of the sub-objectives is therefore the creation of sub-databases, the data of which will then be stored in one central database, the corpus data of which will be freely available.

In order to obtain objective and real data, it is necessary to map a total of 4,000 meters of the selected LL in each urban area that is the subject of the survey. It is necessary to capture the area and then systematically process it in order to insert it into the created database in order to create an extensive corpus of the language landscape. The creation of the database is conditioned by the search for such a formal standardized structure, which would allow the capture of annotations according to the monitored criteria with the ability to evaluate data in terms of quantitative-qualitative analysis and subsequent comparison with other language countries in other countries [3].

For objective reasons, it is not always possible to involve students in a specific project, e.g. simply because the research is not limited to the teaching part of the semester (resp. the term), but also takes place during holidays, holidays, during the holiday period, during the exam period, etc. During the teaching part, however, it is possible to convey methods and findings to students and stimulate a deeper interest in the issue.

2.1 How and why to teach the Linguistic Landscape

We experimentally included the issue of LL in the selective academic course of the master's study within the *English Lexicological seminar* and later on invented a single course named the *Linguistic Landscape*. We pursued several intentions. We wanted to increase awareness and interest in the environment in which students move every day. We also intended to achieve that the graduates of the course, even under the influence of this study-empirical experience, further spread the ideas of positive civic activism and interest in their environment. We worked with the thesis that stimulating interest in the known environment (in this case about LL) leads to care, and thus to the active protection of the known environment, e.g. also through

appropriate teaching materials and the introduction of a new academic subject focused on LL, in which students will notice the use of multimodal characters and their connection with architecture and other components of the urban environment. At the same time, attention was paid to such phenomena as the typology of multimodal characters, mono- / bi- / tri- and multilingualism, the function of the language in LL, the use of English as a lingua franca, etc. Our perception of LL-y is based on Bauko's definition, in which he does not explicitly use the term LL, but speaks of a proprietary-semiotic image of the landscape consisting of proper nouns of various kinds found on such multimodal (mostly linguistic) signs, such as labels, posters, buildings, tombstones, plaques, etc. and also extralinguistic signs, such as ´photographs, statues, emblems, drawings, etc. which point to their own names´ [4]. Our aim is to lead students to autonomy, independence, openness, interest in public affairs and creativity, as well as the ability to argue and justify their attitudes in relation to their immediate surroundings. The result of the academic effort will be a student community that:

1. is able to identify, collect, sort, classify, analyze, synthesize, explain and interpret (i.e. process and evaluate) the obtained raw research material,

2. is subsequently able to independently find and connect connections and further work creatively with them and draw conclusions from them,

3. is able to apply the acquired knowledge and research skills in further creative student work as well as professional practice in the future,

4. is able to present its findings, opinions and attitudes autonomously [2].

The mentioned academic skills were presented by the students in the form of a final semester presentation of their independent student research in a well-known urban environment focused on a selected specific area of the issue, e.g. for the use of English as a lingua franca in a language country, the ratio of non / official inscriptions, etc.

2.2 Pros and cons of the LL academic course

The entire academic course is available to students online in Moodle application (https://lms.umb.sk/course/view.php?id=5249&notifyeditingon=1), where they can find the organization of the course, information sheet of the course, the structure of seminars depending on the time allowance and study schedule (thirteen-week semester) as well as a brief syllabus of the course with an emphasis on the LL of the selected area, research methods and methods of processing the obtained data, basics of scientific work in field practice (method of data collection), LL with regard to the use of English as the language of the lingua franca, LL with an emphasis on the depiction of men and women in public space, etc. Emphasis is placed on acquainting students with the latest trends in the dynamics of language research and the involvement of students in these research activities, e.g. through the examination of LL within their creative activity in the design of the final (bachelor's or master's) thesis.
The academic course is multilingual, resp. trilingual, because the language required to complete the course is the English B2-C1 level as well as the Slovak language and occasionally the Czech language with regard to the diversity of recommended literature

and other sources suitable for study. This requirement is viewed positively as well as negatively by students. It depends on their command of required languages.

The whole course had to be taken online which suggest the internet accessibility as well as a PC and the fact that technology can be broken any time (e.g. signal may be gone or weak).

The total time of workload of the student during the semester is 90 hours, of which 13 hours include combined study (seminars and consultations) and 26 hours homework, self-study and preparation for the final presentation is allocated 51 hours of preparation. Continuous assessment consists of active participation in seminars during the teaching part of the semester (0 - 20 points), home preparation for seminars (0 - 20 points) and the final student presentation at the end of the semester (0 - 60 points). In the context of the credit study, credits will then be awarded in the final assessment to the learner who has obtained a minimum of 65 out of a maximum of 100 points for meeting the specified conditions [2]. In total, active participation of each student (whether present online or in person) as well as emotional involvement is expected.

3 Conclusion

Completing the specific course has helped students realize that public space is a lasting value worthy of perception, assessment and protection. For prospective teachers, the course was a beneficial opportunity to apply their academic skills and knowledge, acquired during the course, in pedagogical practice. For students of translation and interpreting, the course was a contribution to the future profession of translator / interpreter in the form of language skills and multimodal semiotics. The added value is the students' awareness of many new interdisciplinary scientific areas acquired during the new academic course. Last but not least, students gained a new perspective on the familiar but unexplored urban environment from different viewpoints [3].

We proceeded from the assumption that after a deeper knowledge of their environment, they would acquire a different, warmer, relationship with it, which would be transformed into their interest in public affairs. Students will care about the environment they have learned, in which they move and which they understand thanks to the findings from the study of its synchronous-diachronic sociolinguistic, pragmalinguistic, geosemiotic and geopolitical, historical-cultural, etc. background.

In general, it can be concluded that teaching and learning the LL has more advantages for students than disadvantages, regardless whether the process occurs online or in person face-to-face.

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Digital Toolbox for an EFL Teacher - Teaching Inclusively

Aleksandra Maryniak, Alicja Wujec-Kaczmarek
MCWE, Poland

Abstract

The use of technology in educational environments introduces numerous benefits and opportunities for inclusion. The main aim of the presentation is to promote the inclusive use of digital tools in enhancing the process of teaching a foreign language. Inclusiveness refers to social, cultural, personal and gender differences and does not cover children with special educational needs (SEN).

The article provides snippets of an e-learning course on inclusive language teaching. The course has been designed for in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers within the Erasmus+ project entitled TOOLS. The course aims to raise English teachers' awareness of how to engage students of different social, economic, digital and cultural backgrounds in learning a foreign language.

All the applications in the course materials section called Digital Toolbox have been successfully tested in school environments and will be presented in the practical context of an EFL classroom. The digital toolbox comprises apps supporting the development of all productive and receptive skills. Moreover, the applications for vocabulary and grammar presentation and practice are discussed.

Keywords: *inclusive education, technologically enhanced learning*

1. TOOLS

The Erasmus+ project entitled Technologically Enhanced Online Opportunities for Language Learning in Inclusive Education (TOOLS) has been created by a consortium of four universities (Opole University, Poland; VIC University, Spain; WWW Munster, Germany; University of Cyprus, Cyprus), one college (Kaye College, Israel) and two teacher training centres (Zentrum fur Schulpraktische Lehrerausbildung, Germany; Miejski Ośrodek Wspomagania Edukacji in Opole, Poland). The participating institutions come from five countries in and outside Europe, with Opole University being the project coordinator.

It is worth mentioning that the University in Opole has already been successfully involved in an inclusive project entitled http://dystefl2.uni.lodz.pl/ whose main aim was to reach the students excluded from the learning process due to their dyslexic problems.

In the TOOLs project, the issues identified as excluding factors were those that characterize children as diverse. Based on those needs, the TOOLS project parties have accepted a definition of inclusion. For this article, inclusive education comprises a learning environment where students of different social, economic and cultural

backgrounds are actively involved in classroom activities without any gender inequality or judgmental approach. All this happens in a technologically rich environment led by inclusion-conscious and digerati teachers.

Since the idea behind the TOOLS project was to draw teachers' and educators' attention to the need for inclusive education in increasingly diversified environments, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom seemed to be the most convenient place to start. As it is put forward in the project mission statement, implementing an inclusive teaching approach "forms a compelling platform for enhanced education and personal development for learners with different individual needs" [1].

EFL teachers face mixed-ability groups and must deal with students from various cultural and social backgrounds daily. These digital apps often come in handy as tools to promote inclusion. Thus, accepting EFL lessons as a starting point, the project partners decided to provide pre-and in-service EFL teachers with strategies and resources to create a learning environment that meets all students' needs.
To fulfil the goal, the partners built a platform demonstrating the following project products:

- Blended-learning course on inclusive learning for pre-service EFL teachers;
- E-learning course on inclusive learning for in-service EFL teachers;
- Resource materials on inclusive learning (such as Digital Toolbox and materials on Accent Bias)

Additionally, the project outcomes have been promoted at national and international events, conferences, and publications on project resources and activities. Once the project activities are over (30 November 2022), the outcomes will be available online with open access.

The digital tools collected in the section entitled Digital Toolbox have been selected to help students develop their language skills and to support teachers in creating an inclusive environment. The chosen Web 2.0 tools are only good examples of specialized software, and the permissions to present them have been obtained. They are free to use, and registration is mainly not required.

One of the areas covered in Digital Toolbox is speaking in a foreign language, which seems to be the most difficult one to teach and learn. When we talk about speaking skills, we can observe that L2 speakers have problems being accurate, appropriate, and fluent [2]. They need to produce spoken language under time pressure in the presence of various audiences. They lack native speakers' strategies for gaining time to think and plan, such as using hesitation devices.

Several practical strategies for L2 students concerning speaking are offered by Harmer [3]. The first is to plan and rehearse what they will say beforehand by formulating ideas silently in their heads. Alternatively, the students can record what they want to say and then listen to and analyze a spoken sample. By practicing speaking and recording, the students also memorize the structures, or chunks, of language. Using the recordings as preparation, they do not have to go again through formulating the concept and the language; instead, they can concentrate on other aspects of language. Furthermore, the classical, old-school strategy brought to the attention of educators is repetition. Repetition

helps students to recall and retrieve lexical items. And the possibility of repeating the chunks of language by computer programs seems to be an effective solution for particular learners.

One difficulty in teaching students speaking skills is giving all in the class a chance to talk. There is never enough time to practice speaking in a classroom, so a valuable and practical task smoothly supported by technology is oral homework. Teachers can ask their students to record any utterance on any topic and share them—for example, short talks, picture descriptions or presentations of facts, news and opinions. Such a recording can be done individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Several excellent sites on the Internet can be found to prepare a task based on recording speech. ESL Discussions -- https://esldiscussions.com/ -- offers the topics and ready-made questions to record students' interactions. If teachers prefer to rely on their students' discussion choices, they may want to brainstorm them digitally – collecting thoughts and presenting them to other students. This way, teachers can increase students' motivation and engagement and inspire them to participate. Answer Garden is a free educational tool available to do so at https://answergarden.ch/.

To create recordings, any recording device can be used; however, a handy app for this purpose is called Vocaroo – https://vocaroo.com/. It is enough to visit a website, click a recording button, and record a speech for up to 3 minutes. Then, students can preview, or rather pre-hear, their recording and save it if they are satisfied or try again.

An excellent idea for oral homework, worth trying, especially before any oral exams, is providing students with a PowerPoint presentation with a topic, an image, and some typical questions. As they answer the questions prepared by the teacher or do any task required during the exam, they can record themselves directly on the presentation slide. Moreover, as more modalities of language chunks are provided, the words are learnt more efficiently [4] [5].

Some students will always avoid talking both in their native and foreign languages. They feel shy about speaking in public, afraid of making mistakes, saying something inappropriate, and losing face. Gaining confidence assuming another personality is associated with Suggestopedia, a method of learning languages developed in the 1970s. In Suggestopedia, students took on different names and identities to remove the stress from producing language since it was another self-making error. The pictures of the avatars acted like masks and allowed the students to express sides of the personality which are often hidden' [6]. Thus, the idea of audio-only recordings or letting the students hide behind an avatar could be even more effective and stress-free.

Thus, one way to ensure everyone speaks is to ask students to create an avatar and add a voice recording. It can be done by simply linking the recorded voice to a picture and publishing the set on the class blog or website. Numerous free websites can be used to create an avatar, e.g. https://avatarmaker.com/. Moreover, the avatar can be made based on a student's photo. It can move and speak with a recorded voice or be supported by text-to-speech software, such as https://l-www.voki.com/. A teacher or students can use video recording devices or apps; however, it is associated with complicated issues of users sharing intimate images and may not be allowed by some institutions.

The vast exposure to a foreign language is crucial for every learner who wants to master it. Apart from the spoken English delivered by a teacher, a wide variety of recorded/video materials accompanying every English coursebook can be applied. Moreover, abundant audio and visual materials online can satisfy learning needs at every level of language proficiency. There are some salient reasons for implementing them in the language classroom:

- the visual context supporting conveying the message and the non-verbal aspects of communicative competence, especially in a cross-cultural context
- activating a subconscious learning mechanism, allowing the students to get information about grammar structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, pitch, and stress,
- availability of listening experiences for students to choose from, which promotes independent learning,
- the exposure to native speakers, authentic speech with various accents, the importance of which is discussed in an Accent Bias Section.

The sites that provide plenty of supplementary materials, accompanied by the context description, transcripts, and related exercises, are Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (http://www.esl-lab.com) and English Listening Lesson Library Online (http://www.elllo.org).

English Listening Lesson Library Online (http://www.esl-lab.com) is divided into listening activities/lessons according to the difficulty level: easy, intermediate, and complex. However, listening activities can be found in Academic Listening, Basic English Quizzes, English Culture Videos, ESL Vocabulary Quizzes, Live Broadcasts, etc. Moreover, each listening activity (lesson) is constructed to follow the classic methodological prescription for listening material. First, the activities are described: level, topic, type (conversation), speakers, and length. This is followed by a pre-listening exercise, a listening exercise with the recording, an interactive comprehension quiz, post-listening training, additional suggestions for further online investigation and finally, a listening script. Everything is organized neatly and in an easy-to-grasp way.

English Listening Lesson Library Online (http://www.elllo.org) is divided into interviews/talks with seven difficulty levels and hosts grammar talks, one-minute English and more. The activity includes the video file, which makes listening more attractive, allowing students to rely on the visual context and non-verbal signs. The exciting feature of the interviews is that the interlocutors communicating in English often come from various parts of the world, highlighted by a small national flag. Additionally, you can find a script and a comprehension quiz below. Listening materials in both repositories are preceded by the list of topics, making searching for needed audio/video files quick and efficient.

Furthermore, a site where we can find very authentic listening on a broad range of subjects is TED Talks https://www.ted.com/talks. Apart from being a collection of lectures, the website has invaluable features that can help find and use spoken text in teaching listening. The talks are engrossing, with a list of topics provided at the beginning that touch upon the most current issues which might help engage students. Educators can choose the lecture's length, ranging from very short (5-6 minutes) to relatively long (20-25 minutes). There is a practical option for turning on/off subtitles in English and many

other languages. The most popular talks are translated into more than 60 languages. More advanced students can participate in the voluntary activity of providing translations. Following the talk's transcript is possible on the site as well.

To summarize, the widely available digital tools such as educational and generic programs, software and applications can be successfully used to support the development of foreign language skills. They can also help teachers of a foreign language create an inclusive learning environment where students learn at their own pace, focus on their most important intellectual and emotional needs and finally reach success in their lives.

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The Emerging Post Pandemic New Species of ELT Online Teachers

George Kokolas
ULS Systems, Ireland

Abstract

This paper will pinpoint pivotal practices fostered and delivered by the aforementioned practitioners, in English language teaching contexts, as they emerged during this whole new teaching process. It will explore the effectiveness of these practices with testimonies, examples and scientific references. These practices refer to: online presence, content preparation and delivery of successful ELT lessons, effective online tasks which promote communicative language objectives, ways of assessing language learning objectives and online engagement techniques for social connection in teacher- parent relationships. Having been forged under such difficult circumstances, during COVID-19, it might be the time for it to be massively fortified, widely spread and skillfully practiced by the vast majority of ELT teachers.

Keywords: online teaching, remote teaching, online

In March 2020 the global teaching community went online, literally, overnight! The impact of the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic was profound. [1] (Barron, Romani, Munoz-Najar, Sanchez, 2021). The idea of "the expert ELT online teacher" was also powerfully transformed by this. The frontline of ELT online teaching became a long frontier across the world with many "untrained soldiers" who had to struggle for their "online classroom survival".

As a result of this disruptive event, the DNA of traditional teaching (and ELT) professions was altered. Many of these "inexperienced online teachers" not only managed to survive but also returned from the aforementioned frontline as winners. They learned the hard way by having to adapt face-to-face language learning curricula into online versions, and learn how to use technological tools that they had not known existed, to fight new diseases like "zoom fatigue" or "online burnout". Finally, they faced significant psychological pressure, put on them by themselves, their students and, in many cases families. Teaching online appeared to be a dirty job that someone had to do.[3] (De Cotto, I., & Estaiteyeh, M., 2022).

For the teachers to come through these daily adaptability requirements for effective online sessions, they had no other way but to strengthen their resilience levels. There wasn't any other option anyway. Lessons needed to continue and teachers had to deliver online. That was the exact reason why many scholars referred to this situation as "emergency remote learning" [4] (Mavridi, 2022) and not as a standard "online remote learning".

As a result of this emergency, we saw a new hybrid type of teacher rising, who would match more the profile of the ELT online teacher practitioner rather than the one of a

simple "online teacher". Someone not labelled as an "expert" but someone who has become a fully prepared skillful professional, ready to deliver online ELT classes at any time, for any level, to any age group.

Of course, in this process, there were problems, disruptions, lack of resources and motivation [4] (Mavridi, 2022) but the "show was going on". It was because of these problems that the "exclusive offline teachers" managed to become "mandatory online practitioners" by finding solutions to problems they have never thought of before.

This paper will pinpoint pivotal practices fostered and delivered by the aforementioned practitioners, in English language teaching contexts, as they emerged during this whole new teaching process.

The paper will also try to serve as a point of reference or as a comprehensive, fundamental outline for ELT teachers who would like to enrich their existing online classes or start teaching online.

The paper consists of four different sections. A brief SWOT analysis from the perspective of the teacher as a professional and three consecutive sections as to what is recommended to do as a teacher before, during and after the lesson. All the ideas and suggestions presented in this paper have been practiced by the author of the paper in various online teaching contexts and they are cross-referenced and justified by data drawn from the literature.

A Brief SWOT Analysis of Online Teaching as a Business Opportunity for ELT Teachers Today

The prevalence of online learning may have forced teachers to go online and teach but it may also open new ideas on how to expand their business as teachers in a continuously demanding market for online learning. It might be the case that even before the forced shift to online teaching, the teacher had an introverted attitude and could never think of themself as someone who could offer their services to the world or even increase the marketing value of their lessons. Proof of this is that many online private marketing companies have increased their clientele by setting up online teaching businesses for teachers from all over the world like the Balkan countries, Ukraine, Spain and even North Africa.[7] (Paul Sallaway,2021).

Some points that could be considered as strengths for expanding business with online teaching could be the following:

- **Flexibility in schedules and number of students -** Restrictions that may refer to limited spaces or matching schedules to accommodate people in the same classroom may not exist. Teachers may spend more time teaching online but this automatically increases their flexibility regarding the number of slots they have available and the number of students they can teach.

- **Cheaper than running a physical school -** Even by having your school or working at a physical school, the cost of running classes online is cheaper. This allows teachers with a smaller budget to still be able to create a viable online teaching business and with the right promotion to increase their profit.

- **Presents different opportunities for collaboration and creativity for "digital natives". -** Following Mark Prensky's definition of the "digital natives", we should not be excluding the possibility that the majority of the students, during COVID, did enjoy the experience of having a lesson with the assistance of technology. Whether this "learning opportunity" was sufficiently supported by teachers worldwide is another story. But the teachers who did perceive technology as a "vehicle for knowledge" and not as an enforced means did experience moments of collaboration and creativity at a large scale and literally from distance. [4] (Mavridi, 2022)

- **The teaching community has discovered the benefits of asynchronous learning.** It looks as though we completely neglected the power of asynchronous learning but COVID-19 could have been a wonderful opportunity to revive it. It was the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning that may have given a different dimension and splendor to our online classes. It seemed like teachers re-discovered how they could expand their learning time outside the classroom with techniques like project-based learning, flipped classroom, online presentations etc. On the other hand, students rediscovered the comfort of studying at their own time and pace, outside of the strict timeline of a classroom session.

- **Precious feedback from recorded lessons**. Findings from recent research point out that "...recording sessions is much easier online than face to face and this can provide useful opportunities for assessment and reflection on the teaching experience". [4] (Mavridi, 2022)

Suggestions for Teachers' Preparation Before the Lesson

- **Choose the right tools and keep looking for better ones.** The market has a very wide range of hardware tools that can suit any taste, any subjective convenience or even financial status. Teachers can make their research and discover the hardware that suits them. It does not matter if it will be cheap or expensive. What matters is if it will work for them and if it can ensure a technical flow for their lessons. This can only be established by a non-stop trial and error period and the openness to testing new devices. It is recommended that teachers do not change a particular tool if it suits them and before they find a new, better one.

- **Prepare and Practice in Advance.** In the same way that a teacher needs to have very thoroughly prepared before entering a physical class, the same stands for the teacher delivering an online class. This goes both ways regarding lesson planning and testing of hardware/software programs. Compatibility between different software/hardware programs may be an issue that can only be cured with procurement and testing. Every single new device or software needs to be tested again and again before everyday usage.

- **Prepare to Troubleshoot.** There is no guarantee that things will run smoothly during an online lesson. No matter how many rehearsals or tests one might do, the possibility of a technical glitch, while greatly diminished, will never be fully eliminated. That is why it is always recommended that teachers have different troubleshooting scenarios for various problems that may arise. Usual problems that may occur are internet connectivity problems, connectivity with a low Wi-Fi signal, incompatibility of

software or simply a computer crash. Have your troubleshooting manual ready for any of these scenarios. All of these problems can be equally particular and general at the same time; hence, those aforementioned manuals will be useful even in the case of troubleshooting from the students' perspective.

- **Reset your Students' Timeline.** Even though now students might be quite accustomed to the practice of online learning, one of the main complaints from teachers during the pandemic, was that the whole lesson flow was slowed down, which sounds like a very reasonable cause to consider. By default, during the pandemic everyone was unprepared and by nature, it takes more time to finish certain tasks online compared to a face-to-face setting. A well-prepared teacher can deliver a lesson with great flow online but resetting the timeline of the lesson might be something that will be needed, to avoid frustration, and anxiety to meet curriculum deadlines and above all, kill students' motivation. It is highly recommended that all parties are on the same page regarding the timeline of the class/course.

Suggestions for Teachers' Preparation During the Lesson

- **Break materials into chunks -** Students may be less receptive to sessions with many learning objectives. Try to teach materials in small chunks.

- **Generate frequent interactivity -** Integrate many interactive tasks to generate attention and participation.

- **Offer frequent feedback -** According to Prensky "digital natives" love frequent, on-the-spot feedback. Thus, their learning process becomes more meaningful.

- **Assessment should be digitalized as much as possible.** Maybe remote learning environments can stand as an opportunity to check alternatives to testing assessment techniques like for example, project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and video presentations. The use of gamified assessment has proved to be very successful in online learning environments.

Teachers should have a more than decent screen presence - It is highly recommended that teachers make a lot of eye contact during the delivery of the lesson, use a lot of body language, maintain an upright posture, use their voice differently, be off screen during intervals and have a rather professional outfit or look (something that won't provoke students' negative comments and distract them from their lesson).

Suggestions for Teachers' Preparation After the Lesson

- **Try to give students an off-camera hook connecting the online lesson to activities outside the online classroom. "**Flipchallenges" refer to flipped classrooms, project-based learning or even connecting certain online activities to physical books.
- **Involve the Parents by keeping them fully up to date with the activities and the work you deliver online.** Have regular updates regarding the performance of their children. Invite them to attend, in the background, any online class of yours to see how the whole online learning environment works and make them part of this process.
- **Do individual check-ins with the students either for encouraging them on this whole process or to discuss particularities that may refer to any difficulties they face.**

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XR Enhanced Learning: an A1 Level Gamified MOOC for Italian Learning

[1]Daniele Zolezzi, [2]Saverio Iacono, [3]Micaela Rossi, [4]Gianni Viardo Vercelli

[1,3] University of Genoa - DLCM, Italy
[2,4] University of Genoa - DIBRIS, Italy

Abstract

The past three years have seen increasingly rapid progress in using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), i.e., education delivered online on specific platforms to refine or teach several subjects. The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the planet pushed many people towards finding new tools to experience and learn. This contribution examines how the use of Gamification mechanics and rules can be used to increase motivation and trigger the interest of foreign students enrolling at the University of Genoa to learn A1 Level Italian through an extended MOOC. Topics will be delivered on the EON-XR platform, enabling students to access brief texts and/or audio contributions as well as 3D models related to concepts dealt with by lecturers in class.

Keywords: *XR, Language Learning, Gamification, MOOC*

1. Introduction

The past three years have seen increasingly rapid progress in using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), lessons delivered online on specific platforms to refine or teach new subjects. The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the planet has pushed many people to the need to find new tools through which they can obtain distance learning simply, effectively, and directly at home. There are many platforms and sites capable of offering distance learning courses open to everyone, such as EdX (42 million users in 2021), Coursera (97 million users in 2021) or Swayam (22 million users in 2021) [1]. The high level of interest around this type of cultural delivery, combined with the ease of access to information that can be obtained anywhere and at any time, leads to the increasingly widespread use of MOOCs. This situation is further accelerated by the reduced possibility of travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led people to move as little as possible away from their homes. The language courses on these platforms are numerous and have a very high number of registered users. During 2020 there was impressive growth in the number of new registered users and the topic 'Foreign Language' entered the top-ten of learning interests via MOOCs for the first time [2]. Universities have also started to provide online courses to support classroom lectures through the traditional method. This gave rise to the idea of creating a course integrating MOOCs, Gamification and Extended Reality to teach Italian in an effective and immersive way to foreign students who decide to enroll at the University of Genoa.

2. A Gamified Approach to Teaching Italian

Gamification has become one of the most used educational tools of recent decades. According to Werbach & Hunter, Gamification is 'the use of game elements and game-design techniques in non-game contexts' [3]. This design methodology is based on the stimulation of cognitive processes that satisfy certain intrinsic characteristics of the human being, (e.g., competitiveness or the satisfaction of winning), encouraging people to carry out activities they would not otherwise do. Despite the benefits that this approach has shown over the years, there are few experiences applied to teaching a new language that are not based on the mere use of the pointification technique. Gamification is often equated with the triad 'PBL', i.e. Points, Badges and Leaderboards, the only necessary elements that can be easily integrated everywhere. Of course, gamification is not that, it cannot be integrated into everything, and it is also unthinkable that it is always useful for the purpose, rather it should be seen as a tool to be associated with healthy and not unhealthy experiences. Kapp already defines it as not perfect in every situation [4] while Werbach and Hunter, in the re-edition of 'For the Win' [5], correct the definition by calling it a mistake to consider PBL as the solution. Instead, they expand on the concept by pointing out that adopting overly competitive approaches would put those who do not feel triggered by the competition at a disadvantage and end up feeling demotivated by finding themselves at the bottom of the league table. The literature related to this topic is the initial point of an analysis that leads to the creation of hypotheses regarding innovative ways of teaching through:

- Blended activities deliverable via MOOCs with a micro-credentials approach.
- Integration of audio or video contents in SAAS (Software As A Service) platform of content delivery.
- Realization of MOOCs structured according to the theories of Serious Games and Gamification.

According to the Ministry of University and Research, 3326 foreign students were enrolled at the University of Genoa in the academic year 2020/21, of whom 634 were newly enrolled [6]. Each of these freshmen comes from different countries and cultures, bringing with them different levels of Italian language skills. Therefore, each year University of Genoa organizes a series of courses, sorting the students into different classes according to the level of preparation shown during an entrance test. Lessons are conducted online using the classic face-to-face approach in which the lecturer explains and interacts with the students to carry out exercises together and ask questions to see if they have understood the concepts expressed during the course. Although the approach used has led to satisfactory results over the years, we wondered whether the possibilities offered by Extended Reality combined with the use of a more engaging and enjoyable system for the learner could improve the level of satisfaction and language acquisition.

3. A University Survival Guide for Foreign Students

The experimentation aims to construct a MOOC that exploits the rules of gamification to teach the Italian language to foreign students enrolled at the University of Genoa. The research goal is to find a practical solution to the construction of a language course based on typical game rules that goes beyond the simple accumulation of points (pointification) or positioning within a ranking. The course is using Extended Reality technologies to deliver the proposed training content. Extended Reality (XR) is an umbrella term that

contains Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR) technologies [7]. The lessons try to show the practical usefulness of language knowledge in everyday life, creating a sort of 'University Survival Guide' for foreign students in often difficult environments such as secretariats, lectures or canteens. The project considers the differences between Erasmus students, foreign freshmen, and/or students who decide to move to attend in presence the educational activities. These learners who need to take the Italian language course should, for statistical purpose, be divided into two groups each consisting of an equal number of people chosen randomly from those enrolled in the student language courses. The first group is following the 'Traditional Course', i.e., the class organized yearly to accompany foreign students in their knowledge of the Italian language to attend university life. The second group is following the 'Gamified Course', i.e., an Italian language MOOC based on game's mechanics and rules to entice students to learn while having fun.

The level of both courses is A1, i.e., the basic level of language knowledge. The choice is dictated by a practical indication: the participants in this course are those who have shown to have almost no knowledge of the Italian language and therefore represent the best individuals to record improvements after the course. The results obtained, taking into account, however, possible internal factors (such as, for example, the actual interest in knowing the language and consequently the commitment to passing the course) and external factors (such as the set of linguistic inputs that the student will have at his disposition in everyday life and that will lead him to internalize notions unconsciously), are an important index of the progress achieved by following both types of course.

4. Methodologies & Goals

The experience delivered in XR is based on a playful component able to involve the student in what he/she is studying, immediately placing him/her in common life scenarios. The experience uses videogame's mechanics and rules combined with a storytelling able to make the understanding of the Italian language more immediate. The methodology described above will then be used to produce use cases that can be transformed into Extended MOOCs. The idea is to create immersive lessons with specially designed 3D models for each topic treated as 'packages' of a more articulated training course. Each package should have at least one learning outcome that can be classified and linked to at least one micro-credential. In this way, it will be possible to build Extended MOOCs exploiting not only pedagogical methodologies but also those of Game Design and Gamification to work on some degree courses of the University of Genoa.

Topics are delivered on the EON-XR platform [8], service offered by EON Reality for sharing 3D models and creating lessons from them. The students are not only able to manipulate specially made 3D models with his/her own hands, but also have at disposal texts, videos and audios designed to accompany him/her in language acquisition and in the everyday university world. The decision to use this platform was prompted by the desire to make the content created easily available on any existing device. Students do not need to have powerful hardware to be able to enjoy the lessons, but with an Internet connection they will consult the entire course. The approach used creates opportunities for interaction and collaboration using Extended MOOCs as a key feature of the learning experience. In fact, the platform provides the possibility of shared lessons between several users, thus making the experience livable with other course mates.

Furthermore, the intention is to understand the actual effectiveness of the chosen learning method by comparing the results obtained by students who underwent the 'Gamified Course' and those who followed the 'Traditional course' provided by the University of Genoa. Data will be collected through profit tests given at the end of the teaching modules to assess the differences between the skills obtained by the group using the gamified version of the MOOC and the control group of those following the traditional course. The tests will present closed-ended questions to facilitate the evaluation and quantification of the result obtained. There will be exercises with True/False questions, targeted cloze, reordering, matching and multiple-choice questions. The results obtained will show us whether the playful approach we have chosen has been correct or whether it needs corrections in the content offered and the mechanics chosen.

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Formative Assessment

Integrating Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory with Diagnostic Assessment in Language Learning

Hanwei Tan
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, USA

Abstract

Diagnostic Assessment directed learning is well accepted, discussed, and applied in many foreign or second language-teaching settings. It provides instructors with "lab tests" for individualized teaching and guidance for effective learning.

This study presents Taoist-based Traditional Chinese Medicine theory (TCM) for diagnostic assessment (DA) of learning. It borrows TCM thinking, which seeks solutions for the recovery of the entire body's health. Just as van der Greef, a professor of analytical bioscience points out, Chinese medicine provides diagnoses through patient symptom descriptions and appearance, and then it seeks to address the overall systemic problem. The integration of this thinking with diagnostic assessment, teaching, and learning efficiency, as observed in practice, has both boosted and achieved long-term effectiveness. This is due to the approach to the learner's learning style, personality, and motivation in diagnostic assessments is a survey or experiment-based process, as well as a bottom-up process that is effective in the short term. When joined with TCM thinking, the same problem will be examined and reviewed from a holistic perspective. Factors that shape the learner's learning style, personality, and motivation such as family, education, culture, and environment are all taken into consideration. Thus, a comprehensive treatment plan for the same problem is "put into action" and the expected learning results are achieved.

This study is composed of three parts:

1. *Discuss DA-directed learning and features of survey-based DA tools such as Barsch Learning Style inventory, E & L learning style questionnaire, Cattell's 16 Personality Factors Test, and motivation questionnaire and their applications in short and long-term classrooms.*
2. *Discuss features of TCM thinking and its application and effectiveness in both short and long-term foreign/second language teaching and learning settings.*
3. *From products to practice, demonstrate how Chinese medicine thinking and diagnostic analysis of learning are integrated to achieve effective teaching and learning.*

At the end of the presentation, the audience will have a clear idea of how DA-directed learning and TCM thinking affect effective learning, respectively, and how the combination of both works even better.

Keywords: *Integration, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Diagnostic Assessment, Language Learning*

Introduction

In this paper, I will cover three subtopics: The first is diagnostic assessment (DA)-directed teaching and learning. DA is a problem-solving approach based on Western science. At the Defense Language Institute (DLI), the most commonly used DA tools include the Barsch Learning Style Inventory (BLSI), the Ehrman–Leaver (E&L) Learning Style questionnaire, the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), and the Online Diagnostic Assessment (ODA). These tools are not perfect, but they have proven effective in learning problem-solving and have greatly improved teaching. The second subtopic is traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) thinking, one of the experiments conducted in Chinese basic and intermediate schools at DLI. The ideas of four TCM diagnosis methods—observe, listen, ask, feel—yin-yang balance, and overall treatment of problems are well implemented to make up DA-directed teaching and learning. TCM thinking works especially well in overcoming learning barriers when the students get stuck at a certain level. The third subtopic is called From Products to Practice. The three case studies demonstrate how products in TCM thinking and DA can be integrated to improve learning at different venues.

Da-Directed Teaching and Learning

Let us first look at some features of DA-directed teaching and learning.
1. The BLSI. The BLSI is an effective tool to assess students' learning styles, including visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. "By knowing the preferred learning style of the students in a classroom, a teacher can better construct their teaching methods to match and thus help facilitate better learning" (Cesar Bazo).
2. The E&L Learning Style Questionnaire. Learners' cognitive styles are assessed based on "synoptic vs. ectenic" perceptions. Synoptic learning is the perception of phenomena as a whole. Ectenic learning is the perception of phenomena as composites. There are 10 categories under each of the two perceptions; for example, "global vs. concrete "or" inductive vs. deductive. "These cognitive approaches help teachers perform individualized instruction.
3. The MBTI. Personality studies help teachers build environments that equally favor students of different personalities.
4. The MSLQ. The MSLQ is a self-report instrument designed to assess students' motivational orientations. It has three components: (a) value components that include intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, and tasks value; (b) expectancy components, including control beliefs and self-efficacy for learning and performance; and (c) effective components of test anxiety.
5. The ODA. The ODA is an assessment tool that assesses what students have learned and their learning level. Content and linguistic questions cover six parts: the main idea, supporting ideas, vocabulary, subject area, structure, and discourse. After the test, a personal profile is automatically generated, and the learners' advantages, weaknesses, and both level- and subject-appropriate lessons can be suggested.

In practice, these five tools can help DA specialists create students' DA profiles (see Fig.1 below).

Fig.1

BLSI	Visual 40, Kinesthetic32, Tactile 20, Auditory 10
MBTI	ISFJ/INFJ
MSLQ	Intrinsic Goal Orientation 5.5 Extrinsic Goal Orientation 6.75 Task Value 5.83 Control Beliefs 6.6 Self-Efficacy for Learning & Performance 5.88 Test Anxiety 6.6
ODA	Reading L2 grammar 0/3 L3 Main idea 0/6 Listening L1+ Main Idea 1/3 L2 Main idea 2/6 Supportive Ideas 2/12
E & L Cognitive Styles	

Synoptic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ectenic
1. Field Sensitive								▨		Field Insensitive
2. Field Independent		▨								Field Dependent
3. Leveling				▨						Sharpening
4. Global		▨								Particular
5. Impulsive						▨				Reflective
6. Synthetic							▨			Analytic
7. Analogue				▨						Digital
8. Concrete						▨				Abstract
9. Random						▨				Sequential
10. Inductive								▨		Deductive

This profile (Fig. 1) allows instructors to implement individualized instruction and tailor teaching accordingly. For example, as a primarily visual learner, the student's ODA results show she is weak in grammar and main ideas. In the MSLQ, her Extrinsic Goal Orientation score of 6.75 out of 7 is high, which indicates that, to her, "engaging in a learning task is the means to an end. "Her personality type is INFJ, that is, introverted (she is energized by quiet time alone), intuitive (she sees patterns and possibilities), feeling (she prioritizes people and emotions), and judging (she prefers structure and order).

In addition, in the E&L cognitive style chart, we see how she learns. Item 1, Field Sensitive vs. Field Insensitive, shows she is a learner who does not learn by "osmosis". As a deductive learner, when learning grammar, for example, she prefers to learn grammar rules first before applying the rules to example sentences. Based on this information, the DA specialist made a complicated and time-consuming tailored teaching schedule, and recommended an individualized learning plan to the student. The plan worked for a short time, but it did not achieve the results as planned. As the course progressed, she struggled even more.

Tcm Thinking

TCM thinking has two parts:
1. Four diagnosis methods, including (a) observation (of the mind and the complexion); (b) auscultation (listening) and olfaction (smelling); (c) inquiry; and (d) pulse feeling and palpation.
2. Yin and yang balance. The yin–yang theory holds that all phenomena consist of two opposite aspects, yin and yang. It also holds that the basic causative factor of disease is an imbalance between yin and yang. TCM doctors treat the human body as a universe wherein yin and yang are balanced by nature. Therefore, treatment must readjust yin and yang to their basic state of relative balance. This results in more holistic treatment, which makes TCM different from Western medicine, which only treats symptoms.

In practice, the instructors used the four diagnoses to look for factors that cause learning imbalances, such as the learners' native language proficiency level, education, family, and cultural background—in addition to the factors listed in DA profiles. The wider the discrepancies among these factors, the more imbalances will occur and the more difficulty students will have in learning. Any factors that cause imbalances in language learning will be treated the same way that "diseases" are treated in TCM.

From Products to Practice: Integrating TCM with DA

Case 1
Based on the student's DA profile (Fig. 1) and after the four TCM diagnosis methods were applied and studied, the instructors decided to focus on her motivation. Because her MSLQ scores in extrinsic goal orientation and test anxiety were both high, she was encouraged to work on her motivation and test anxiety. There was an imbalance between her initial goal and the currently assigned task. The instructors wanted to seek balance in her learning, so they worked to balance her value components by promoting her intrinsic goal orientation to make her participation in the course an end-all. They enrolled her in the Learning Beyond Curriculum program, in which she had a chance to get involved in many Chinese cultural elements like animation, kung fu, and Go, to name a few. As a result, her love for Chinese language grew, and the barriers she had to studying fell away. In the end, she passed with high scores.
From this case, we can conclude the teaching team did not have to specifically target her DA features. It was not a miracle. When the right pulse was caught and overall treatment was applied, the balance was achieved, and the "diseases" were cured.
.
Case 2
In Fig. 2, we see an example of TCM treatment integrated with an individual DA element—an auditory learner. Auditory learners usually do well in the first semester but slow down as more Chinese characters are involved. The typical symptom is they become less proficient in reading. Usually, DA-directed learning would suggest some learning strategies (see Fig. 2). For this student, however, these strategies were short-lived. As a result, his reading and listening skills got worse. The advantage he had as an auditory learner no longer helped him. See details in Fig. 2.

Fig.2

Auditory Learner	DA	TCM
Diagnosis	Prefer material to which they can listen.	Observation: Puzzled and confused when he saw Chinese characters that if read out by someone else, he knew them immediately. Listen: Ask him to read after a sound file with his eyes on the characters and read aloud again without listening to the sound file.
Treatment	Read an assignment Read aloud all underlined material. Underline main points Try to form a study group with classmates	Balance Reading and Listening: 1.Read after the speaker to get familiar with the pronunciation, tones, and sound. 2.Do dictation and write down the characters heard. 3.Paraphrase and write down the main ideas in Chinese characters.

Case 3

Students who get stuck at a level often encounter barriers that are hard to overcome. TCM thinking and DA-directed learning integration are practiced here in a different approach.

The instructor had students read two different translations of an ancient *Tao Te Ching* text (Fig. 3).

Fig.3

The brave soldier is not violent; The good fighter does not lose his temper; The great conqueror does not fight (on small issues); The good user of men places himself below others. - This is the virtue of not-contending, Is called the capacity to use men, Is reaching to the height of being Mated to Heaven, to what was of old. -- Trans. (Lin Yutang)	Warriors who excel do not parade; Commanders who excel do not anger; Victors who excel don't lightly engage; Skilled managers of men are humble: This defines the power of no-conflict, The way to manage men's strength, The union with heaven, the acme of old. –Trans. (Roberts)

The students were asked to compare the translations to find similarities and differences before general comprehension was discussed. Here is what happened in the class.

Student A saw similar things in the two translations. He pointed out the similarities in both translations, such as "not lose temper = not anger"; "not fight = don't lightly engage (in war or battle)"; "Place himself below others = being humble"; "not-contending is like no-conflict;" and so forth.

Student B saw differences. She said Ross Roberts's version is more clear in "that warriors do not parade" is more clear than "the brave soldiers... not violent." "Soldiers fight", and soldiers "being not violent" doesn't make sense. Student B applied logic to her understanding, which brought her closer to the original Chinese text.

Here we see the balance is reached through the two different learning styles: leveling and sharpening.

Next, the instructor, presented the following text:

善为士者，不武。善战者，不怒。善胜敌者，不与。善用人者，为之下。是谓不争之德

，是谓用人之力，是谓配天，古之极。

He then explained the text by pointing out some key concepts, such as the character "士", which means "warrior" rather than "soldier" in the context. After that, the instructor introduced the modern translation. As a result, the students found they now fully comprehended the meaning.

After studying the modern Chinese version and the English translation and hearing other students, student C spoke out. She shared the story of her son, who learned martial arts. When a boy at school challenged him, he kicked over his head to scare him away. She said that is her understanding of "Warriors who excel do not parade" and "Victors who excel don't lightly engage."

We can see that a top-down approach is applied to achieve the effect of an overall treatment. The discussion thus takes different types of learners beyond their preferences to a more holistic understanding.

Summary

TCM thinking is a much easier and more reflective tool than DA instruments. However, that does not necessarily mean it is better than DA tools. Integrating the two will make teaching assessments more accurate and learning more effective.

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Teachers' Attitude toward Bloom's Taxonomy Model in Designing Formative Assessment in EFL Classroom, Saudi Arabia

Norah Hussain Banafi[1]
Ahmed Altayeb Alhaj[2]
King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia
Jazan University, Jazan, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Bloom's Taxonomy Model 'BTM' that can be used to help teachers to design formative assessment in EFL classroom. This study has become a fundamental educational tool to show teachers how to evaluate their students throughout the educational process. 'BTM' allows teachers to move their students' skills from lower to higher levels when they study in each class. As being lecturers of English language for many years in Saudi Arabia, it is observed that, in Saudi universities, teachers are not consistent with formative assessment and have not been encouraged to implement formative assessment as a tool for increasing students' achievement levels. This study aims to investigate the teachers' attitude regarding the using formative assessment in teaching English as a foreign language. It shows in brief how instructors can design activities in teaching and evaluating students through the Bloom's taxonomy model in literature review. The study adopted descriptive and analytical methods. The researchers used a survey that distributed in the second semester (2021) to 64 participants in Saudi higher education to examine teachers' attitudes regarding utilizing formative assessment. The results showed that the teachers have positive attitudes toward using formative assessment in classroom. Therefore, this paper sheds light with some strategies that allow instructors to enhance their students' English level by increasing their cognitive skills.

Keywords: Assessment, Formative, Strategies, Bloom's Taxonomy, Cognitive

1. Introduction

The main theoretical framework underpinning the present study includes the cognitive dimension of '*BTM*'. According to (Krathwohl 2002), Blooms' Taxonomy model created by Benjamin Bloom and some his colleagues in1956. Further, the Bloom's Taxonomy model was set into two dimensions: knowledge dimension 'knowing what', which includes four categories: factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge. It is the teacher's responsibility to move the students from factual knowledge to metacognitive knowledge. Generally, control how is learning is defined, control how learning, happens, and control how learning is measured. (Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., 2001). The pyramid below represents a hierarchy, which represents types of tasks that are of increasing six

levels of cognitive complexity: Remember, understand, application, analyzing, evaluation, and creation that will be discuss in details in literature review below.

The taxonomy is represented as a pyramid (Figure 1).

1.2. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the study was to examine teachers' attitudes in using formative assessment in the EFL classroom in improving both lower and higher thinking skills through Bloom Taxonomy Levels 'BTL'.

1.3. Questions of the Study:

What do EFL teachers think about the use of formative assessments in their EFL class?
Q1. To what extent do teachers use formative assessment to improve Saudi EFL students' lower thinking via'BTL'?
Q2. To what extent do teachers use formative assessment to improve Saudi EFL students' higher thinking via'BTL'?

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Formative Assessment and Bloom's Taxonomy Model

Formative assessment has various shapes ranging from easy to complex (Molly Russell Underwood, 2012). According to (Alotabi, 2014) the formative evaluation is very necessary to follow up the learners and enhance their educational process. Faculty need to follow 'BTL' example to help them be challengers and think critically and analytically by applying formative assessment measures such as individual observation, reviewing learners' classwork and homework, un-ended questions, self-evaluations and reflections (McGlamery & Shillingstad, 2017). Ostrowski, Sabrina (2014) mentioned that such Bloom model has a great influence on the students' motivation in-depth evaluation and creation.

2.2 Formative Assessment for remember Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Remember Level" in Bloom's Taxonomy means that teachers need to design for the students' activities that help them to motivate the students' exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers. An instructor can use (K–W– L) which stands for (know, want to know, and learned; Ogle, 1986). In addition, according to Willingham (2008) the teachers can use a technique called "Asking Why" to motivate the students' memory.

2.3 Formative Assessment for Improving Understanding Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Understanding Level" in 'BTL' activities help them to demonstrate understanding of acts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating and stating main ideas. In addition, paraphrasing technique can encourage, lead, and affect the students' understanding (Hans, 2017). Oshima and Hogue (1983) set four steps. The instructor can have students follow which are: a) students have to read target text many times, b) they should be given enough time, c) they should be involved in writing out the main idea and secondary ideas of the target text d) the teacher asks them to rewrite the text by using different terms and structure.

2.4 Formative Assessment for Applying Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Applying Level" in Bloom's Taxonomy means that teachers need to design for the students' activities that help them to solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts techniques and rules in a different way. There are terms associated with third level (Apply) that are describing intellectual behaviors of "Apply Level" such as apply, dramatize, solve, prepare, draw, produce, show, choose, paint, Apply, build, choose, construct, develop, model. etc. The teacher can evaluate the students' applied knowledge by looking at their performance in doing applied activities such as "Application cards". This exercise aims to improve students' ability of creative thinking, to apply learned rules and theories to a new problem and situation, to draw interferences from observation (Rüütmann & Kipper, 2011).

2.5 Formative Assessment for Analyzing Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Analyze level" in 'BTL' means that teachers need to design for the students' activities that help them to examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. They can compare, analyze, classify, infer, test, etc. According to Küçükoğlu, (2013) there are different activities that teachers can use to improve the students analytical reading skills like:

2.6 Inferring Strategy

Inferring refers to reading between the lines. Students need to use their own knowledge along with information from the text to draw their own conclusions.

2.7 Making Connections

Learning becomes meaningful when the learner connects the ideas of classroom lectures to their experiences and beliefs, e.g., "text-to-text, text-to self, text-to- world" strategy.

2.8 Formative Assessment for Evaluating Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Evaluate level" in 'BTL' means that teachers design activities that help their students to present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) stated portfolios are a great strategy for allowing students to edit and review their course work before the final evaluation.

2.9 Formative Assessment for Creating Level

According to Anderson, Krathwohl, et al., (2001) "Create level" in 'BTL' means that teachers need to design for the students' activities that help them to compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or creating their own projects. "Create Level" such build, change, combine, compose, create, etc. Wijayati, et al., (2019) stated that project tasks such as giving presentation, creating poster, writing research paper, which motivate students' skills in planning to apply the higher 'BTL'.

3. Methodology

This study aims, to explore EFL teachers' attitudes regarding the use of formative assessments in their classes. This study conducted at King Khalid University and Jazan University during the academic year 2021. It is descriptive study, intended to explore the participants' perception toward using 'BTL' to design formative assessments. All participants are members of EFL Institutes in the study setting. The most of them are the doctorate of philosophy holders and have enough experience of more than seven years of teaching English at university level in King Khalid and Jazan Universities. Convenient sampling method been used for the study period from 11-1-2021 to 30-4-2022.64 English teachers were participated in the study. Online a 15-item-questionnaire used for data, which consist of 15 statements.

4. Results and Discussion

This study is in the form of tabular charts, and the analysis done in the form of the comparison of percentage of groups of 64 participants.

Table (1) Formative Assessment for Remember Level
I like to engage my students in activities that motivate the previous and existence memory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strrongly disagree	3	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	1	1.6	1.6	6.3
	Neutral	1	1.6	1.6	7.8
	Agree	24	37.5	37.5	45.3
	Strongly agree	35	54.7	54.7	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Table (1) shows majority of English teachers like to engage their students in activities that motivate the pervious memory. Therefore, the data-based shows that (if we merge the strongly agree and agree) about 92.2% of the participants agree to use the formative

assessment in activities to motivate their students' memory and understanding. About 6.3% disagree to use the formative assessment to evaluate their students and 1.6% of them are not sure to use it. Therefore, the majority of the participants agreed to motivate their students via formative assessment.

Table (2) Formative Assessment for Understanding Level
2.I evaluate students' comprehensive activities in my practice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strrongly disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Disagree	1	1.6	1.6	3.1
	Neutral	4	6.3	6.3	9.4
	Agree	30	46.9	46.9	56.3
	Strongly agree	28	43.8	43.8	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

Relating to the above table (2) about 90.7% of the participants evaluate their students' comprehensive activities in their EFL practices. About 3.2% of them disagreed to evaluate their students through formative assessment and 6.3% of the teachers are not sure to use such form of evaluation. Results showed teachers have positive attitude toward using formative assessment. The participants' mean score was quite positive and the majority (58 out of 64=90.7%) use understanding level in Bloom Taxonomy in their activities.

Table (3) Formative Assessment for Applying Level
3.I let my students to evaluate themselves by solving problems.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strrongly disagree	2	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Disagree	3	4.7	4.7	7.8
	Neutral	8	12.5	12.5	20.3
	Agree	35	54.7	54.7	75.0
	Strongly agree	16	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that clear in the above table (3) results explained that about 79.7% of the participants agreed to apply solving problem strategy as a formative assessment. About 7.8% of them disagreed to let their students evaluate themselves via formative assessment application. There are about 12.5% of them neutral and have not decided yet to use applying formative to evaluate students. Results showed that teachers have positive attitude toward giving students many opportunities to evaluate themselves by applying solving problems.

Tables (6) shows Teachers' Formative Assessment for Analysis Level

Items	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Neut.	Freq	Disag.	Freq. T	Cu. Per.
I try to understand why my students succeed or failed in exams	54	84.4%	7	10.9%	3	4.7%	64	100.0%
I always use formative assessment activities.	36	56.3%	17	26.6%	11	7.1%	64	100.0%
Students need opportunities to re-evaluate their understanding of the content.	52	81.2%	9	14.1%	3	4.7%	64	100.0%
The homework grade is important to understand the student learning.	46	71.9%	13	21.9%	4	6.2%	64	100.0%
I like to use a continuous assessment to involve my students.	53	82.8%	7	10.9%	4	6.3%	64	100.0%
Mean		75.3%		16.88%		7.8%		100.0%

In regards to the above table (6) about 54 of (84.4%), 36 (56.3%), 52 (81.2%), 46 (71.9%) and 53 (82.8%) and the general mean of 75.2% of the participants believe that students need opportunities to re-evaluate their understanding of the content. About 3.1 % of them disagreed to analyze the results of the English subjects. In the same time, about 18% of the participants are not sure to re-evaluate assessments on improving students' performance. And 4.5% disagreed to use formative assessment in home grade. The majority of participants who are (49 out of 64=76.5 %) having positive attitude regarding using analysis level activities in Bloom Taxonomy.

Table (7) Formative Assessment for Evaluation Level

Items	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Neutral	Freq.	Disag.	Freq. T	Cu. Per.
I assess my students through quizzes and final evaluation only	22	34.4%	12	18.8%	30	46.8%	64	100.0%
My students use graphic organizer to be evaluated.	17	26.6%	24	37.5%	23	35.9%	64	100.0%
I have my students using self and peer assessment via formative evaluation.	38	59.4%	15	23.4%	11	17.2%	64	100.0%
Mean		40.1%		26.6%		33.3%		100.0%

Concerning tables (7) There are 22 participants of percentage (34.4%),17 of percentage (26.6%) and 38 of percentage (59.4%) and general mean (40.1%) in this study found that teachers evaluate their students via formative assessment by quizzes and final evaluation, using graphic organizer, self-assessment emerging the three statements. In the same time consequently about 30 participants of 46.9%, 23 participants of percentage 35.9% and 11 participants' equals 17.2% of the participants disagreed to use quizzes, self, and peer-evaluation via formative assessment only. It means that, they do not let their students to evaluate themselves.

Table (8) Formative Assessment for Creation Level

Items	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Neutral	Freq.	Disagree	Freq. T	Cu. Per.
I have my students to create their own project at the end of the term.	35	54.7%	16	25.0%	13	20.3%	64	100.0%
I have my students create their own research projects.	26	40.6%	20	31.3%	18	28.1%	64	100.0%
Mean		47.6%		28.2%		24.2%		100.0%

Another possible explanation for this is that in the above table (8) there are 35 participants of (54.7%) and 26 participants of percentage (40.6%) and, about 13 of the sample equals 20.3% of the participants disagree and in the same regards almost 18 participants of 28.1% also disagree to let their students create their own projects. The participants' mean score variable on analyzing student's results were quite positive and the majority of them (54 out of 64=84.4%) the general mean of 47.6% of the participants believe that students can create their own projects such e-book.

Tables (9) Teachers' Formative Assessment Attitude

Items	Frequency	Agree	Freq.	Neutral	Freq.	disagree	Freq.	Cu. Per.
Assessment is a tool used only by the teacher	18	28.1%	18	28.1%	28	43.8%	64	100.0%
I use formative assessment every day in my classroom	32	50.0%	19	29.7%	13	20.3%	64	100.0%
Mean		53.1%		28.2%		24.2%		100.0%

This result may be explained by the fact that formative assessment is a tool not used only by the teacher which is clear in table (9) 28 out of 64 that means (43.8%) of the participants disagree by using such type of evaluation, while about 18 out of 64 (38.1%) of them agreed to use formative assessment in general level. In the same regards, about 32 out of 64 (50%) of the participants agreed to use it every day in general level, the general mean is 53.1% which is high level, but 13 out of 64 (20.3%) of them disagreed to use it always in their classes. The results show that, there is a significant positive attitude towards using formative assessment in different ways.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

Based on the findings, it is clear that teachers' attitude has some strengths in lower-level thinking rather than higher levels. Although, the teachers have positive attitude to motivate students' lower thinking skills: knowledge (92.2 %) and understanding (90.7 %), but they have moderate attitude toward utilizing assessment in applying knowledge (79.7 %). In the light of the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that: from the data analysis, results indicate that, the teachers' attitude regarding higher level thinking skills: analyzing (75.2%), evaluation (47.7%) and creation (47.7%) which show that, the participants have some weakness in higher-level thinking. Therefore, they need a type of a new pattern of training and innovative approaches by giving students many opportunities in exploring, creating projects evaluating themselves, solving problems and, writing research papers. Moreover, the researchers suggest that, policy-makers, educators and teachers focus on learning, teaching and formative assessment can design different types of strategies and assessment forms to develop teaching process.

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ICT for Language Learning

Do use Google Translate!
Machine Translation as a Tool for Language Learning

Barbara Bakker

Dalarna University, Sweden

Abstract

Machine translation, and specifically Google Translate, is becoming a favourite tool for language learners. As it is freely available across a variety of platforms for both desktop and mobile devices, students tend to rely on it excessively for solving their course assignments, which is ultimately detrimental to their language learning. However, the functionalities of machine translation can be exploited proactively within the curriculum and activities involving its use can be included in a course in order to increase language awareness and ultimately language learning. This paper is a contribution to the research field of machine translation in language pedagogy and reports the results of an empirical study conducted on students of an Arabic beginner's course at a Swedish University. The study aimed at making the most of the students' attitude of relying on Google Translate, while at the same time taking advantage of GT's capabilities and limitations as a tool for language learning. A brief introduction covers machine translation and the reasons for GT inconsistencies with translating Arabic. This paper then presents two assignments given to the students at two separate moments of the term, accounting for their scope and execution. An analysis of the results follows, highlighting the students' performance and reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of GT.

Keywords*: Arabic, machine translation, language learning, language pedagogy, language learning tools.*

Introduction

The widespread availability of Google Translate and its ease of use have transformed the way students engage with a foreign language. Machine translation (MT) - the umbrella term used in the research literature to indicate such free online tools like Google Translate, Bing Microsoft Translator, Reverso and DeepL Translator - is freely available across a variety of platforms for both desktop and mobile devices. Language students tend to rely on it excessively, a practice that in most cases is detrimental to their language learning process and that affects, more generally, their behaviour during their academic studies. In fact, not only is MT, and in particular Google Translate, largely employed to solve foreign languages course assignments, but its use has also been observed as a widespread strategy for authoring research assignments, ultimately resulting in various forms and degrees of plagiarism (Ducar & Schocket, 2018 [1]; Mundt & Groves, 2016 [2]). Therefore, rather than to prohibit, with obviously questionable results, the use of MT for language studies, it is becoming more and more necessary to find ways to incorporate MT technology into the curricula as well as to explore instead how students can engage with it proactively and ultimately benefit from it - parallels have been drawn with the

introduction of the electronic calculator in the classroom when teaching mathematics (Groves & Mundt, 2015 [3]). Indeed, several studies have proved that exploiting MT tools potential and integrating them into language courses may lead to increased language awareness and ultimately support language learning (see for ex. Clifford, Merschel & Munnè 2013 [4] and Hellmich 2021 [5]).

Machine-translated texts have been getting more and more reliable because of the evolution of MT technology, which went from the traditional SMT, or Statistical Machine Translation, "the dominant translation paradigm for decades", to NMT, or Neural Machine Translation, able to "learn directly, in an end-to-end fashion, the mapping from input text to associated output text" (Wu et al. 2016, p. 2 and p. 1 respectively [6]). In other words, NMT systems can provide quite accurate results because they use "artificial intelligence to represent all the sentences in the target language at once, instead of breaking them into small chunks such as phrases or words" (Abdelaal & Alazzawie, 2020 [7]).

However, in the case of Arabic, the translated results are not always as accurate and reliable as with other European languages such as English, French, German, or Spanish, due to a variety of factors that affect language use and that are strictly related to the Arabic language. The first and probably the most relevant of them is the phenomenon of diglossia that characterises the Arabic speaking world. In his seminal article, Ferguson defined diglossia as "a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language […], there is a very divergent, highly codified […] superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature […], which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation" (1959, p. 336 [8]). In fact, the written language (Modern Standard Arabic, or MSA), learnt in school and used in literature, news and more formal contexts, is thoroughly regulated within the framework of the Arabic grammar tradition, but it is not used in common spoken contexts. What is used in every day's life is a multitude of so-called dialects, or vernaculars, which vary from country to country and even, within the same country, from region to region - with phonological, morphological, syntactical and even lexical differences (see for example Ryding 2005, pp. 5-8 [9]).

The second, but not less relevant, factor is related to MSA morphology. MSA is based on consonantal skeletons, the elements of which are called radicals, or roots; the roots work together with sets of prefixes and infixes forming specific patterns, as well as with diacritics representing short vowels – which are normally not marked because they are naturally inferred by native speakers. This entails that both a context and a deeper knowledge of Arabic morphology are necessary in order to translate a word, as it is usually spelt only with its consonants. A simple example is *mustamiʿ* 'listener', compared to *mustamaʿ* 'listened to', active and passive participles respectively of the verb *istamaʿa* 'to listen': in standard texts, i.e. non-religious and/or not aimed at learning MSA, both participles are spelt in the same way, that is only with their consonants *m s t m ʿ*, as the differentiating vowels *i* and *a* are diacritics usually not written down and inferred from the context. For students of MSA, this precise and complex root system also entails learning how to look up words in Arabic bilingual dictionaries, as they are typically alphabetically ordered by root: the same verb *istamaʿa* 'to listen' would not be found under the letter '*i*' as it is a derived form (constituted by the three basic roots *s m ʿ*, preceded by the prefix *ist*), and is therefore found under the first root, i.e. the letter '*s*'.

The many spoken varieties of Arabic, together with their differences when compared to MSA as well as MSA's morphological system, create a number of inconsistencies in machine-translated texts - for a major survey of Arabic MT issues, see Hadj Ameur et al. (2020 [10]). In addition, several studies have accounted for specific MT issues: for example, both Ali (2020 [11]) and Al-Khresheh & Almaaytah (2018 [12]) compared the effectiveness of MT applications in translating English into Arabic, while Bin Damash (2020 [13]) investigated the attitudes towards MT of Arabic students of English. In addition, it is necessary to mention that, as Harrat, Meftouh and Smaili specifically point out, Arabic dialects are "under-resourced languages" and they lack basic Natural Language Processing tools "these dialects are not enough studied regarding to NLP area. Most MSA resources and tools are not adapted to them and do not take into account their features" (2019, p. 263 [14]).

GT as language learning tool: two assignments

The empirical study presented in this paper was conducted within the frame of a MSA course for beginners, taught at Dalarna University, Sweden. The course is assessed continually in weekly mandatory classes and through weekly homework assignments, as well as with one mid-term take home exam and online final written and oral exams at the end of the term.

The theoretical framework for this study loosely draws on the three-levels model of activity as presented by Engeström and Miettinen (2012, p. 4 [15]), with the top level being "driven by an object-related motive" (i.e. the reason for doing an activity), the middle level "driven by a goal" (i.e. what is being achieved with the activity) and the lowest level "driven by the conditions and tools of action at hand" (i.e. what means are employed in order to carry out such activity). Within a language learning environment, these three hierarchically ordered levels of an activity may rather be viewed as concurrent, i.e. three converging / combining aspects (Case 2015 [16]) and may be exemplified by any kind of course assignment. While the top and the middle levels are inherently implied in the course curricula (e.g. learning objectives and pedagogical implications of the assignment completion), the third aspect may consists in laying the focus on the employment of a specific tool for carrying out the activity.

During spring term 2022, the students were given two homework assignments, hereafter termed GT1 and GT2, where they were expressly requested to work with Google Translate. The GT1 instructions specifically explained the reasons for the unreliability of GT when translating into Arabic, thereby, in terms of levels of activity, also relating to the second level or aspect (what is being achieved). The GT2 instructions encouraged the use of GT as a language learning tool, therefore also providing a reason for employing MT (top level of the activity). In terms of timing, GT1 had to be handed in before the mid-term take home exam, i.e. after six weeks study. At this moment in the course, the students have just learnt how to read and write Arabic letters and their knowledge of Arabic is limited to very basic grammar rules, such as personal pronouns, gender and number agreement, as well as nominal sentences (i.e. simple sentences with only the copula in the present tense, which is normally not expressed in MSA) and a vocabulary of approx. 130 lemmas. The assignment consisted in translating, from English into Arabic, 12 short sentences comprising the grammar and the vocabulary issues covered during the first six weeks of the course, and then in comparing own translations with the translations provided by GT. The sentences were tested *a priori* with GT and purposely

formulated so that GT would provide either grammatically incorrect translations, unknown vocabulary or dialectal formulations, or even advanced grammatical constructions, suitable for more formal MSA contexts but not covered yet in the course. Seven of the 12 sentences, when translated with GT, resulted in at least one grammatical mistake each: three of them in an incorrect demonstrative pronoun (proximal instead of distal), three showing incorrect gender (of a conjugated and as yet unknown verb, of the noun or the pronoun) and one resolving a predicate of a nominal sentence through a dialectal grammatical construction, i.e. not MSA. Moreover, a total of seven sentences translated by GT contained vocabulary and/or grammatical constructions that had not been encountered yet in the course - with, among them, three constructions formulated in a grammatically incorrect way. For this GT1 assignment, students were also asked to find, and to the best of their knowledge explain, any differences and/or mistakes, as well as identify words or expressions used by GT and not yet met during the course.

In the GT2 assignment, to be handed in around the end of the course, the students had to choose a news article from a provided list of Arabic online newspapers and translate it with GT into English or Swedish. In particular, the assignment consisted of three parts. Firstly, they had to account for their course of action (for example copy the whole text directly into GT vs copying & pasting small chunks, adjusting possible spelling complications, etc) as well as discuss the correctness and the intelligibility of the translation. Secondly, they had to briefly sum up (max 30 words) the contents of the article, to prove that they had understood it correctly. Thirdly, they were requested to identify three words, understood as keywords and therefore relevant for the topic of the article, and analyse them in terms of word class, roots and already known words, if any, sharing the same roots. This task was so construed in order to show a number of reasons for using GT. First of all, it demonstrated GT's usefulness when it comes to roughly comprehend and quickly overview the contents of any incomprehensible text in any foreign language - in fact, although almost at the end of the course, the students are still at a beginners' level and do not know enough MSA in order to read, understand and summarise a news article by themselves. It also aimed at showing GT's potentiality within the framework of vocabulary learning strategies - use the dictionaries, find synonyms, set words in context, etc.

Both assignments' instructions were accompanied by information on the research project, including purpose, research responsibility and personal data management. Students were asked to express their consent if they agreed that their assignments would be used for this research study and they were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time. Students were also guaranteed total anonymity and notified that their assignments would be graded regardless their giving or not giving their consent.

Results and discussion

Only a total of 28 GT1 and 20 GT2 assignments were available for the analysis, as several students did not expressly consent to their assignments being used for research purposes - whether this was intentional or just simple oversight on their part goes beyond the scope of this paper.

The GT1 assignments were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, on the basis of the students' comparisons between their own translations and GT's. Of 28 students, 13 students reported and explained differences in all the sentences, 7 in 11 of the 12

sentences and 4 students found discrepancies in 10 sentences. This equals to 86% of the students able to identify find at least 83% of the differences - an extremely positive result, considering their very limited knowledge of Arabic grammar at this point of the course. Several students also questioned GT's ability to translate gender agreement correctly and reported how GT translations changed when adjusting the English text, for example writing "my female friends" or "my girlfriends" instead of "my friends (f)", as was instructed in the assignment. Comments like "Google Translate is not good at understanding masculine or feminine" point at the students' awareness and comprehension of the gender agreement rules in Arabic and the exceptions discussed in class. Some students also speculated on GT's choice of demonstrative pronouns, as GT used proximal instead of distal demonstrative pronouns in all instances. A few students reflected on the reason of the discrepancies and wondered if they were caused by dialectal variation, different vocabulary choices or higher language register. Three students reported some advantages with GT, as the GT translations made them aware of a number of spelling mistakes and pointed at their own grammar mistakes: "Google reminds me of number agreement, which I had missed in this sentence".

The GT2 assignments were analysed qualitatively. Of 20 students, 14 translated an article into Swedish and 6 into English. All of them expressed their surprise at the accuracy of GT translation, as the translation was intelligible and comprehensible enough to let them understand the contents of the article in a very good way. Two students compared a double translation of their chosen article, i.e. first into Swedish and then into English, and reported that the English one was more grammatically correct and formulated in a slightly more comprehensible way. Several students reported some difficulties or encountered issues in connection with the procedure of the translation, for example the need to break down a longer text into smaller chunks, in order to allow GT to "make sense of the context", and GT's somewhat weird word choice sometimes, arguing that some nouns and/or verbs were not entirely proper in the context, although quite close synonyms. A couple of students pointed at GT's inconsistency in terms of rendering the spelling of proper names of persons or products, as they were spelt differently within the same article translation. Interestingly, three students reflected on the GT's features of automatic transcription of the Arabic words into Latin letters as well as GT's audio rendering of the Arabic: while they noted that both features may be useful and helpful in a language learning context, they argued that there was no way to know if the transcription and the sound were correct, because the copied and pasted Arabic text was not vocalised. Finally, two students noted that GT is definitely better at translating from, rather than into, Arabic. All the students satisfactorily summarised the contents of the article of their choice, which proves that GT had fulfilled its purpose in terms of enabling the students to comprehend a text otherwise for them impossible to grasp at this stage of the course. All of them also identified three relevant keywords for the article of their choice, providing correct details about their grammatical and morphological features. As for identifying the roots of the words of their choice, only approx half of the students were able to correctly deduce them and consequently find the words in the dictionary: as mentioned before, the Arabic morphological structure is a complex system and the skills necessary to know how to "go-back-to-the-roots" are taught and developed throughout several terms of Arabic studies. However, in several instances students reflected on the procedures necessary to identify them and reported their findings, asking for explanations. Eventually, the GT2 assignment also encouraged the students to work with Arabic authentic texts despite their limited knowledge of Arabic and made them get

acquainted with Arabic websites and Arabic sources, which also, ultimately, may enhance their critical thinking.

This study has obviously no claims in terms of the possibility of generalising its results, mostly because of the small amount of data available, but also because GT is a NMT system and GT translations will therefore change (and possibly improve?) over time, despite the complications arisen from diglossia mentioned above. Moreover, it is also important to notice that the validity and the reliability of the results of the two assignments may also affected by a number of factors beyond the teacher's control, for example the fact that some students may already know (some) Arabic and/or may have asked an Arabic speaker for help in order to complete the assignments. Evidence of such instances is for example the fact that in GT1 a few students were able to correct those GT's wrongly formulated grammatical constructions that were "new", i.e. not covered yet in the first 6 weeks of the course.

The main scope of this paper is to provide an example of how MT may be employed to both the students' and the language course's benefits, in order to enhance language learning, and specifically grammar and vocabulary.

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Development and Implementation of Soft Skills in English Lessons During Online Teaching

Eva Homolová[1], Alena Štulajterová[2]
Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica**, Slovakia**[1, 2]

Abstract

Soft skills are important in the life of each individual and affect their success in personal and professional life. Experts point out that soft skills are often more important than hard ones. The concept of soft skills covers a wide range of skills, personality traits and competencies. These are manifested in relation to oneself and other people and thanks to them one works effectively in various social situations [1]. Their definition and classification varies depending on the authors´ point of view. In general, soft skills are divided into categories based on their nature: personal skills, social skills and professional and situational skills. In the school environment, each subject offers opportunities to develop them. In connection with the pandemic, teaching has moved to online space. This change had an impact on all aspects of the teacher's and learner's work and also affected the development of soft skills. The aim of our article is to identify which soft skills have come to the forefront of teachers' interest as nature of online teaching primarily required them and enabled their development. Our interest also lies in identifying those skills that have remained unchanged compared to in-class teaching and which could not be developed more intensively during online teaching. To achieve our aim, a group interview will be set up to find out the perception of the importance of selected soft skills among teachers of lower secondary education.
The study is the outcome of the research project KEGA 016UMB-4/2021 Global skills and their implementation in foreign language teaching in secondary schools as a means of developing students' key competences and the professional identity of future teachers in the context of the 21st century.

Key words: *soft skills, online/in-class classes, interpersonal/intrapersonal skills, methods*

Introduction

The global development of the learner's personality is the goal of every society. For a fulfilling life, an individual needs to have opportunities to develop not only hard but also soft skills. In the 21st century, soft skills are an important aspect of success not only in career but also in the personal sphere, especially in building interpersonal relationships, personal development and achieving self-satisfaction. For this reason, the development of soft skills should also be included in every subject in lower secondary education, not excluding English. The pandemic has caused both learners and teachers to be exposed to stress and the transition to online teaching has meant that everyone has had to cope with an unfamiliar reality and adapt to new situations. According to psychologists, stressful situations create the space to develop particularly soft skills.

1.1 Characteristics of soft skills

In general, we divide skills into soft and hard skills. Hard skills include those that are learnable, measurable and can be assessed. Thus, they are knowledge that is subject-specific in nature and can be referred to as a person's know-how. On the other hand, soft skills are trans-subject in nature and need to be developed through various methods and techniques. There is no single definition of soft skills but in general, they include a person's behavior, personality traits and attitudes, communication skills, social skills, and emotional intelligence [4]. Hence, soft skills belong to many areas such as communication, empathy, motivation, self-management, etc. Due to their subjectivity, it is difficult to assess or measure them.

Several authors have characterized soft skills as mental abilities that enable us to cope not only with people and their behavior, but also with ourselves. They can be compared to social competences, such as cooperation, communication, conflict management and others [2]. In view of the diversity of categorization and the plurality of opinions, we have narrowed down the number of soft skills and focused on those that are relevant for 10-15 years old and can be developed in both in-class and online English classes. We will focus on two groups of soft skills, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

1.2 Interpersonal skills

The prerequisite for developing interpersonal skills is cooperation and interpersonal interaction which are acquired and used in interaction with other people. Considering the age group, we will focus on interaction with classmates and the teacher during instruction.

Communication skills

The ability to communicate is one of the most important skills and is the foundation for other skills. It enables the learner to react promptly and solve different problems. Interpersonal relationships cannot be built without communication and communication is a means of expressing feelings, needs or states. The exchange of information has an important role in both real and online spaces. Learners should be able to communicate in a relaxed, clear, unambiguous way, formulate statements and discuss not only in Slovak but also in English. Having communication skills means the learners are good listeners, can express themselves and they can eliminate differences between what they mean and what they say through communication. In this way, they learn to be responsible for the clarity of their utterance [4].

Presentation skills

These skills are similar to communication skills because communication is its foundation. However, when presenting in public, the learners are required to have their own and unique set of communication skills in order to make the speech clear, confident, logical and should impress the audience. In addition to verbal communication, non-verbal communication and the ability to incorporate digital skills when presenting audio-visual material is also important.

Empathy

The ability to empathize with other people's thoughts and feelings forms the basis of effective communication because about 90% of communication takes place without words [1]. Learners acquire a lot of information through gestures, mime and silence. These are expressions of emotion, which learners should learn to identify and take into account in communication. This means registering the wishes and needs of others, understanding and anticipating their reactions, and looking at something from the different point of view. We cannot assume that everyone feels the same way and that our point of view is the only correct one [4].

Social skills and conflict resolution

Social skills are important in building and maintaining relationships, resolving conflicts, helping the learner to become a member of a group and function successfully in a team. They can be seen as a kind of superstructure of empathy, i.e., perceiving emotional signals in people who are different from us, and adjusting one's actions accordingly [3]. They also include conflict management and resolution. Conflicts are a part of life and learners should learn to perceive them in the face of increasing differences in our society. Nowadays, knowing how to act calmly and listen to a point of view without an aggressive tone is very important.

Team skills

Teamwork is one of the best skills to develop because the school creates a natural "spring board" for their use. Many complex learning tasks are organized as group work. Such work requires learners to work together to achieve a goal, pursuing common interests as their own and subordinating themselves to them. Learners will become a team player if they are able to integrate into a team, perform assigned tasks and act beyond duties. By adopting this attitude, they will motivate others to perform better. Learners not only learn to accept the rules, the group hierarchy and their role but also develop other skills such as self-criticism, empathy, resolve conflicts, or engage creativity [2].

1.3 Intrapersonal skills

These skills are based on the personality of the learner and include emotional self-regulation, creativity and flexibility.

Emotional self-regulation

Feelings influence our behavior and it is essential to work with them in ways that are beneficial. The learners should be aware of their feelings and know how to deal with them, as the lack of self-control can result in the burst of negative emotions. Emotional self-regulation allows us to manage feelings so that we behave appropriately to the circumstances. It is necessary for the learner to realize that positive feelings promote success and negative feelings hinder it. Those who can control themselves are better able to overcome failure, frustration, influence the quality of thinking and not give up. Inappropriate behavior can also affect the teacher's work and the learner's assessment.

Creativity

Creative activities provide useful original ideas, thoughts or solutions. Being successful requires approaching tasks flexibly and creatively. Everybody can be creative because creativity is a natural aptitude at a different level at each age. School subjects can stimulate imagination, curiosity and encourage original results. ELT uses a wide range of open-ended tasks that allow solutions to be grasped in an unconventional way. Learners work voluntarily and the teacher should praise but not formally evaluate their efforts. The project method is the most striking example of encouraging the development of learners' creativity.

Flexibility

This skill is very necessary in today's changing environment. Our lives are accompanied by uncertainties - the most significant societal changes are the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Experts consider this skill to be one of the most important as the pace of changes accelerates [2]. Learners need to get used to change and not to take it as a danger but as a challenge. In today's world, it is necessary to learn new things, shift the traditional view and be able to adapt to the given situation. Flexibility is also important in teamwork, because nobody can be seen as an individual, but should be subordinate to the group.

Organisational skills

Self-management is another important skill that affects one's success in life. Good organization of the tasks to be performed by the learner saves not only time and effort, but also other resources, and thus makes the activity significantly more efficient. To accomplish all the duties, the learner needs stamina and motivation, which will prevent panic and stress. Organizational skills are the stepping stones to achieving goals and developing autonomy.

1.3.1 Methods of developing soft skills in the English language classroom

The following table lists some methods English teachers use in their lessons to develop the communicative competence while developing selected soft skills.

Table 1. Overview of methods and soft skills

methods/soft skills	intrapersonal	interpersonal
communicative methods dialogue, monologue, storytelling, direct method, communication games	self-esteem, self-awareness emotional self-regulation creativity, flexibility	communication skills presentation skills empathy, social skills conflict resolution
situational and problem-solving methods	self-control, creativity flexibility, organisational skills time management	communication skills, empathy team skills, critical thinking conflict resolution
discussion method discussion, debate	self-confidence, self-awareness emotional self-regulation creativity, flexibility	presentation skills communication skills, empathy critical thinking, social skills conflict resolution
project method	self-management creativity, flexibility organisational skills emotional self-regulation	presentation skills, team skills communication skills critical thinking, self-management
dramatic methods, role plays simulations	creativity, flexibility emotional self-regulation organisational skills	empathy, social skills communication skills presentation skills
didactic games cooperative/competitive/creative	self-regulation, creativity, flexibility, self-esteem	team skills, social skills empathy, conflict resolution

2 Research

The aim of our research is to identify which soft skills have been in the focus of teachers' interest as nature of online and in-class teaching and enabled their development. Our interest also lies in identifying those soft skills that have remained unchanged compared to in-class teaching and which could not be developed more intensively during online teaching.

2.1 Research method

As a research method, we chose a group interview focusing on the following areas:
- soft skills in in-class teaching and online teaching
- the absence of some skills among learners in online lessons
- effective methods of developing soft skills in ELT
- problems of developing some skills in in-class/online teaching

2.2 Research questions

We have stated following research questions:
- Do you consider the development of soft skills to be important during English lessons?
- Which skills does English language teaching allow you to develop naturally during in-class and online lessons?
- If you compare online and in-class teaching, is there any skill that was neglected during online or in-class teaching?
- Which skill did you find most lacking in your learners during online teaching and you had to focus on it more intensively?

2.3 Research sample

Seven qualified female teachers (aged 34-47) participated in interviews. All had experience of in-class and online teaching during the pandemic. At the same time, they had also integrated Ukrainian learners in their classrooms for several weeks. The interview took place in June 2022.

2.4 Discussion

All teachers understand their role not only in terms of developing communicative competence but also in terms of the global development of the learner's personality. They stressed that diverse topics focusing on everyday life and ordinary situations from learners' lives create natural starting points for incorporating soft skills. They mentioned topics of texts for developing receptive skills followed by discussions, games and the focus of learners' projects as suitable examples. They also stressed the importance of digital platforms and authentic materials that respond to current societal issues and can be at least marginally addressed in the classroom.

In the teachers' opinion, they consider project work to be the most appropriate method that naturally develops multiple skills such as teamwork, presentation skills, planning, self-management, decision-making, creativity in in-class teaching. Teachers also stressed the importance of self-assessment and critical thinking. Storytelling, role-plays and drama activities were also considered as appropriate methods. By applying the above methods in in-class lessons communication skills, self-confidence and creativity can be developed.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the online environment caused chaos and stress. Teachers had to deal with technical and organizational problems and the related absence of some skills in learners e.g. lack of self-confidence, emotional self-regulation and self-management. It was necessary to very slowly and patiently instruct learners on how to solve technical problems, helping them to build their self-confidence, support them, motivate them, while managing own stress. Thus, online teaching provided a natural environment to develop more intrapersonal skills.

In the first phase of online teaching, developing communication skill was in the background and one-way interaction prevailed. Slovak was often used in the lessons. Due to the initial unfamiliarity with communication platforms, teamwork, presentation skills and creativity were eliminated. Learners´ self-assessment came to the fore due to web-based applications that provide immediate feedback from tests and games. The focus was on developing flexibility, the need to adapt to a completely new situation and

function in it without emotional shifts. During online classes, teachers mostly lacked learners´ self-management e.g. being connected on time, having everything ready, being attentive, etc. Some learners lacked empathy with classmates who had inferior devices and slower internet. Creative learners were not able to reach their full potential in the online space.

Conclusion

In general, we can state that foreign language teaching provides a very natural environment for the formation of the learner's personality and the development of soft skills. The objective, topic and type of lessons provide the basic platform for their development. Face to face teaching offers a more appropriate environment for the age group mainly because of the consolidation of social relationships and the use of elements of non-verbal communication. This environment allows for better development of interpersonal relationships. On the one hand, online teaching has encountered its limits especially in the area of social interaction and the possibilities of using certain types of activities. On the other hand, it was possible to develop intrapersonal skills. Despite this finding, the interviewees preferred in-class teaching supported by online learning.

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University Students' Perceptions of Online Instructional Modalities in EFL Courses and Online Classes in General

Andreja Kovačić[1], Goran Bubaš[2]
University of Zagreb, Croatia[1,2]

Abstract

This paper deals with students' perceptions and preferences regarding online instruction in two EFL (English as a Foreign Language) courses after five semesters of the COVID-19 pandemic at a higher-education institution (HEI) in Croatia. A brief overview is provided of recent studies on students' experiences with various instructional practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic in the general higher education context as well as the specific context of EFL. Our paper reports on a survey performed at the end of May 2022 among students (N=121) who attended two EFL courses at a HEI in the northwestern part of Croatia. Based on the results of our survey students' preferences for, respectively, fully on-site (face-to-face) teaching, fully online (synchronous or asynchronous) teaching, and a (hybrid) combination of on-site and online teaching were analyzed. Most of the surveyed students indicated satisfaction with the hybrid and fully online teaching in those two EFL courses. Advantages of online teaching of EFL as well as different problems and obstacles were also reported by the students. Our survey revealed that, if given a choice, most of the students would prefer fully online or some combination of online and on-site (face-to-face) delivery of their EFL courses.

Keywords: *higher education, online instruction, EFL, perceptions, survey*

1. Introduction

After the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic several large national and international surveys were performed that investigated various obstacles to online learning, as well as students' satisfaction with the online delivery of teaching at higher education institutions. A survey conducted in the USA (in the period from May to June 2020; N=22,519 for undergraduate and N=7,690 for graduate students) revealed that the most influential obstacles to transitioning to online learning were lack of motivation for online learning, lack of interaction with other students, inability to learn effectively in an online format and distracting home environments or lack of access to appropriate study spaces [9]. A survey performed in 41 European countries from April to May 2020 [4] uncovered that even though the surveyed students (N=9,132) stated that their study workload with *online* learning was larger after *on-site* (face to face) classes were cancelled, the average rating of their satisfaction with online teaching was still in the range from M=2.89 (for online seminars and practical classes) to M=3.13 (for online lectures) on a 1-5 points scale (1=not at all satisfied; 5=extremely satisfied). In a more global study (performed from May to June 2020; N=30,383) [1]) similar students' ratings on a 1 to 5 points scale were found for real-time

video conferencing (M=3.30) and video recordings of lecturing (M=3.26). Finally, a national survey (N=4,273) performed in Croatia [5] later into the COVID-19 pandemic (in September 2021) uncovered that students' satisfaction with online teaching was considerable and that the majority of the surveyed students (70%) stated that they would prefer either fully online teaching or a combination of online and on-site (e.g. *hybrid*) teaching in the forthcoming 2021/2022 academic year.

The previously mentioned large-scale surveys motivated the study that is presented in this paper, which deals with students' satisfaction with and preferences for, respectively, *fully online* and *hybrid* (partly on-site and partly online) delivery of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses in higher education.

2. English as a Foreign Language teaching during the pandemic

Numerous research papers were published regarding EFL and English as a Second Language (EL2) teaching at higher education institutions from diverse parts of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the studies dealt with evaluation, satisfaction with and attitudes toward online teaching, reporting rather mixed results. For instance, one study from the Czech Republic [8] indicated that most of the students preferred printed materials and *face to face* classes in comparison with *online* language classes. On the other hand, a study conducted in Indonesia revealed high positive evaluations of various aspects of an English language course delivered with the use of a learning management system [7]. A Portuguese study that included various English language classes determined that the satisfaction with their online delivery measured on a 1 to 5 points scale increased from "slightly above average" (M=3.71) after the lockdown in the period from March to May 2020 to an "overall high level of satisfaction" (M=3.94) after another lockdown in the period from January to April 2021 [6]. A comprehensive study conducted in China among students who participated in online EFL instruction during COVID-19 pandemic [3] indicated numerous elements that may contribute to the effective use of online teaching and generally more positive than negative average students' evaluations of most of those elements. Various moderating factors that may have an impact on the effectiveness of online EFL instruction were also investigated. For example, a South Korean study examined the influence of social presence on the evaluation of learner-teacher and learner-learner interactions, as well as on expected course outcomes [2]. It must be noted that the study that is presented in this paper complements the aforementioned previous empirical investigations of EFL teaching during the pandemic.

4. Research questions and methodology

The main goals of the study are related to the investigation of (1) higher education students' satisfaction with fully online and hybrid (partly on-site and partly online) delivery of EFL courses, (2) potential advantages and problems/obstacles in online teaching of EFL, and (3) students' preferences for fully on-site, hybrid or fully online delivery of EFL courses at one higher education institution.

4.1 Research questions

The following research questions were defined for our study:

RQ1. What is the interest of students enrolled in EFL courses in the online delivery of teaching of their EFL course?

RQ2. How satisfied were the students with fully online and hybrid – partly online and partly on-site – modes of delivery of EFL courses?

RQ3. What advantages and problems/obstacles are most frequently perceived by the students regarding the online delivery of EFL courses?

RQ4. How do students evaluate EFL lectures and exercises performed in different modalities of delivery: on-site, online synchronous and online asynchronous?

RQ5. What would be the preferred mode of EFL teaching delivery if the students were given a choice between fully on-site, hybrid or fully online mode at the beginning of a semester?

4.2 Methodology

The respondents in our study (N=121) were students of two EFL courses at a higher education institution in the northwestern part of Croatia. Both courses were delivered during the summer semester of the 2021/2022 academic year as a combination of fully on-site, hybrid (partly on-site and partly online) and fully online teaching in a period of 14 consecutive weeks. Other methods of e-learning used in the courses included: video streaming of lectures / exercises delivered in the classroom, only online synchronous videoconferencing, and asynchronous assignments for lectures / exercises. The survey with items that addressed the research questions was administered in a paper-and-pencil form during the 14th week of the summer semester (e.g. in June 2022).

5. Results of data analyses

5.1 Students' preferences for different instruction modalities in EFL teaching

The preferred teaching delivery mode by the students (N=121) in our study was investigated with the survey question "Which mode of teaching in this course do you prefer (choose only one of the answers)?" as can be concluded from the data presented in Figure 1, only 27% of the respondents preferred *fully on-site* teaching in the classroom, and as many as 73% of them preferred some modality of *hybrid* or *fully online* teaching. The most preferred modality of *hybrid teaching* were synchronous online lecturing and exercises performed on-site in the classroom (29%), followed by *fully online* teaching and predominantly synchronous lectures (16%), hybrid teaching (online lecturing and the rest on-site) with predominantly asynchronous lecturing (16%), and fully online teaching that is predominantly asynchronous. These results indicate a very high interest in the online delivery of EFL instruction with respect to the students who were enrolled in the two courses in our study.

Preferences for various modes of teaching delivery in two EFL courses

Mode	Percentage
Everything online, predominantly asynchronous	12%
Hybrid (lecturing online, the rest on-site), with online predominantly asynchronous	16%
Everything online, predominantly synchronous	16%
Hybrid (lecturing online, the rest on-site), with online predominantly synchronous	29%
Everything on-site	27%

Fig. 1 Students' preferences for different modes of teaching delivery in two EFL courses (N=121)

5.2 Students' satisfaction with fully online and hybrid EFL teaching

The responses to the survey questions "To what degree are you satisfied with the performed hybrid mode of teaching in this course?" and "To what degree are you satisfied with the part of teaching that was performed at a distance (online teaching) in this course?" are displayed in Figure 2. The results of data analysis indicate that only 4-5% of the students were *unsatisfied* (e.g. "Mostly dissatisfied" or "Totally dissatisfied") with hybrid or fully online teaching. As many as 85% of students responded with "Totally satisfied" or "Mostly satisfied" in relation to hybrid teaching and 84% of them provided the same responses regarding fully online instruction. These results at least partly explain the students' preference for online teaching of the two EFL courses that was revealed by the data presented in Figure1.

Satisfaction with hybrid and fully online teaching performance

	Totally satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Partly satisfied	Partly dissatisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Totally dissatisfied
Hybrid	35%	50%	11%	1%	2%	1
Fully online	44%	40%	11%	2%	2%	1%
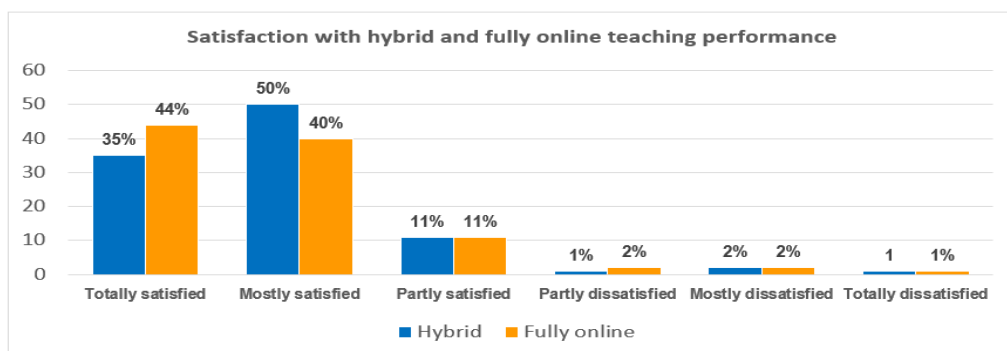
Fig. 2 Students' satisfaction with online modes of teaching delivery in two EFL courses (N=121)

5.3 Advantages and problems/obstacles in online teaching of EFL

To investigate the possible advantages of online teaching of EFL courses during the pandemic the following survey question was used in our survey (N=121): "What do you consider to be the greatest advantage of online teaching of this course?" According to the students' responses, the greatest advantages were (percentage of responses is given in brackets): the students were able to do everything from home and did not have to come to college (68%); the students were mostly able to choose the time to learn (13%); the students were able to manage the process of learning by themselves (11%); it was more

interesting for the students to learn from home than in the classroom (4%); and the teachers had improved the learning materials (4%). In addition, to further identify the potential advantages of online teaching of EFL courses the following statement was also included in the survey: "Online teaching of this course was more interesting to me than live (face to face) teaching". Possible responses to this survey item were "Totally disagree", "Mostly disagree", "Partly disagree", "Partly agree", "Mostly agree" and "Totally agree". It must be noted that 70% of the respondents expressed some level of agreement with the statement that online teaching was more interesting than the face-to face modality.

Potential problems in online teaching of EFL courses were investigated with the survey question "What do you consider as a greatest problem in online teaching of this course?" The most frequent problems with online learning reported by the students were predominantly associated with: (a) more difficulty in the communication with the teacher, with 46% of students reporting this as a problem; (b) online teaching being generally boring, as was indicated by 26% of students; and (c) the need to have equipment for participating in online instruction, which was stated by 25% of the students (it must be emphasized that the respondents were asked to select more than one problem from a predefined list). Interestingly, only 7% of the respondents reported their not being instructed on how to learn in the online environment as a problem, and also only 4% of them indicated the possible problem of teaching not being adapted to online delivery.

The potential obstacles to online delivery of teaching of EFL courses were also investigated with the question "What were the obstacles that you have most frequently encountered having in mind online teaching (both synchronous and asynchronous) of this course?" (more than one answer was allowed). The most frequent obstacles were lack of motivation for online learning, which was reported by as many as 55% of the respondents, followed by lack of interaction with other students, which was specified by 24% of the respondents. A distracting environment for learning at home and the inability to learn effectively in the online environment were also frequently experienced obstacles in relation to online teaching.

5.4 Comparative evaluation of on-site and online EFL lectures and exercises

To compare the delivery formats (on-site, online synchronous and online asynchronous) of lectures and exercises of two EFL courses the respondents were asked to evaluate lectures and exercises using a 1 ("Poor") to 5 ("Best") point Likert type scale. Their evaluation of lectures (on-site, online synchronous and online asynchronous) is presented in Figure 3.
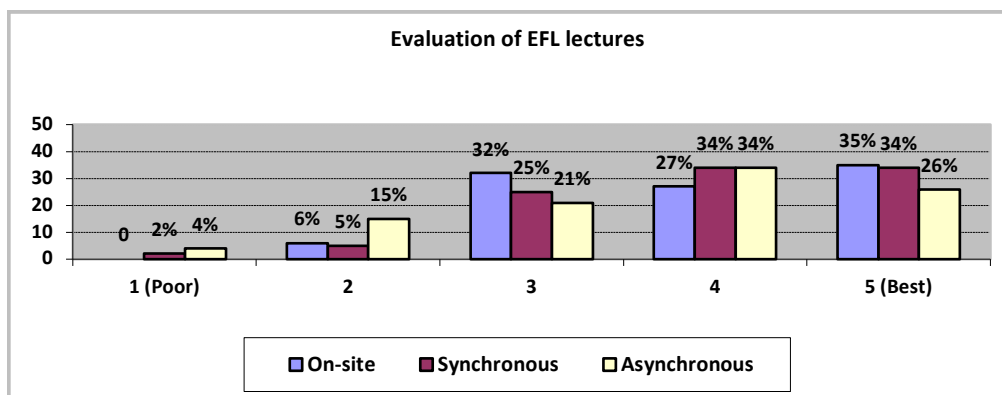
Fig. 3 Students' evaluations of <u>lectures</u> in EFL courses (rating scale: 1-Poor to 5-Best; N=121)

The data presented in Figure 3 indicate that on-site, synchronous online and asynchronous <u>lectures</u> of two EFL courses (with a total number of 121 enrolled students) received a similar and rather favourable evaluation. In fact, from 60% to 68% of students rated the three formats of the delivery of lectures with the highest values (4 and 5). Similar findings were obtained regarding the delivery of on-site, synchronous online and asynchronous <u>exercises</u> in two EFL courses (N=121; not shown in a graphic representation), which also received a rather favourable evaluation, with 73% of students providing evaluations 4 and 5 for on-site exercises, 70% of students providing such evaluations for online synchronous exercises, and 61% of students favourably evaluating online asynchronous exercises.

5.5 Students' preference for flexibility in choice of delivery modes of EFL teaching

To further investigate the students' interest for flexibility in course delivery, the following question was also included in the survey (N=121):"If you had been given a choice at the beginning of the summer semester of the 2021/2022 academic year, how would you have mostly preferred (provide an approximate estimate) that the teaching in this course be delivered to you?". From the data on students' responses that are presented in Figure 4 it can be concluded that only 24% of the students would have preferred fully on-site (in college) delivery of teaching in their EFL courses, while 50% of the students would have preferred some ratio of hybrid or combined on-site and online teaching (from 1/3 online and 2/3 on-site to 2/3 online and 1/3 on-site). Also, as many as 26% of the students would have preferred fully online teaching delivery.
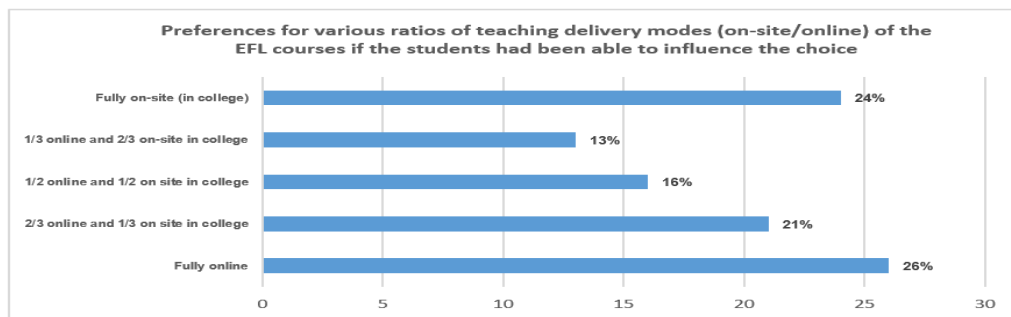
Fig. 4 Students' preferences for various ratios of teaching delivery modes in case they had been given a choice regarding the teaching mode at the beginning of the summer semester of the 2021/2022 academic year (N=121)

As can be concluded from the data presented in the previous section and its Figure 3, the three different formats of delivery of lectures and exercises of the EFL courses received rather similar students' evaluations. These data are important for interpretation of the students' responses regarding their preferences for different instruction modalities in EFL teaching: fully on-site, hybrid (with synchronous or asynchronous lecturing and the rest on-site) and fully online teaching (synchronous or asynchronous) that are presented in Figure 1. It can be concluded that the quality of various formats of delivery of lectures and exercises (on-site, hybrid or fully online) was very similar and therefore probably did not influence students' preference for specific instruction modalities that are shown in Figure 4.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has initiated a continuous positive change in students' perceptions of academic online teaching delivery and an increased interest for various modalities and ratios (fully online or hybrid) of teaching delivery in general, as well as in the specific disciplines of EFL and EL2. The results of our study are summarized as answers to the previously defined research questions (RQ1 to RQ5).

In response to the ***first research question*** (RQ1) the data presented in Figure 1 indicate a predominant preference for *online* teaching of EFL, with 28% of students interested in fully online teaching (of both lectures and exercises; synchronous or asynchronous) and 45% of students interested in hybrid teaching (with synchronous or asynchronous, but fully online lectures, and on-site exercises). Having in mind the ***second research question*** (RQ2) the data displayed in Figure 2 reveal a rather high level of satisfaction with both fully online and hybrid (partly online and partly on-site) teaching of EFL courses. With respect to the ***third research question*** (RQ3) it can be concluded that the greatest perceived advantages of fully online and hybrid teaching modes were that the students could do everything from home and did not have to come to college, while they also perceived online delivery of EFL teaching as more interesting. The greatest problems/obstacles were related to difficulty in communication with the teacher, lack of interaction with other students, lack motivation for online learning, and more time needed for performing asynchronous online activities. As a response to the ***fourth research question*** (RQ4), it can be concluded that the evaluation of both EFL lectures and exercises in all modalities was favourably evaluated by most (i.e. 60% to 73%) of the students. The response to the ***fifth research question*** (RQ5) is that most of the students would have preferred hybrid teaching delivery of EFL if given a choice. Also, some form of online teaching delivery (fully online or hybrid) of EFL

would have been preferred by 76% of the students, while only 24% would have preferred fully on-site teaching.

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Teachers' Attitude Toward On-line Courses During the Pandemic: A Multinational Study

Nahid Zarei

Department of English, Maragheh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Maragheh, Iran

Abstract

Although digital learning had started way before the pandemic in various educational settings throughout the world, the pandemic made the use of this mode an obligation rather than an option even in the countries in which it had not been tried before either because of educational practitioners' resistance or poor technology-related facilities. This study set out to explore university teachers' beliefs about the efficacy of this mode in presenting the course content during the pandemic. For this purpose, 15 university lecturers, assistant professors and associate professors from the United States, Canada, France, Sweden, Kuwait, Italy, Malaysia, Lithuania, Australia and Iran participated in the study. The teachers were contacted via the social networks- Facebook, LinkedIn- or e-mail. An open-ended questionnaire including six questions was sent to the participants and they were requested to express their personal experience concerning the use of technology during this period. After gathering the questionnaires, the answers were read carefully and content analysis was conducted. The results showed that the teachers found this method of presentation a mixed blessing. The results of the study have implications for the curriculum planners and material designers of modern-day system of education, educational practitioners and technology providers.

Keywords: Learning management systems, Advantages, Disadvantages, Online classes, Technology

1. Introduction

When Covid 19 broke out, it disrupted every aspect of social life including education. Although it was a threat to both local and global economy, education was the main source of concern because it is a prerequisite for every aspect of human life in the modern world. Thanks to technology it did not take long for the education to restart in its new form and on-line teaching and learning replaced the physical face-to-face classes from primary studies to post graduate ones throughout the world.

This evolving system of teacher-student interaction motivated a plethora of research to evaluate the efficiency of on-line courses. The results of these studies have shown that this system of education have both benefits and downsides. Kebritchi et al.'s [1] review of literature reported that learners' identity change and poor participation, communication problems arising from computer mediated teaching, some teachers' lack of interest in technology were some of the challenges of this medium. Boothe [2] conducted a multinational study of on-line learning and found out that this medium of education

afforded an easy and efficient way of learning; however, there were some concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning, lack of socialization and interaction, lack of technological devices for financially disadvantaged students, teachers' lack of preparation, and easy and unchallenging content. Similarly, Bordet's [3] study revealed that in spite of providing an efficient way of learning, it caused some challenges, such as communication and interaction problems between the teachers and students and connection problems.

Whilst recent studies have investigated the role of on-line classes in teaching-learning endeavor, very few of them have delved into this issue internationally. Therefore, this study set out to understand the views and experiences of university teachers from around the world toward computer mediated teaching during the pandemic. Investigating teachers' attitude is critically essential in our understanding of the effectiveness of this medium of education if it is going to be a dominant approach to education today and in future.

2. Method
2.1. Participants

Participants of the study were 15 lecturers, assistant professors and associate professors of the universities from Australia, Malaysia, France, Canada, Lithuania, Kuwait, Italy, USA, and Iran.

2.2. Instrument

An open-ended researcher made questionnaire consisting of six questions was used to gather the data. The questions addressed the type of learning management system and the application used, the problems the teachers faced during their teaching, their previous experience of on-line learning, how useful they found the new system of teaching, if they would like teaching on-line and their overall evaluation of the medium. The questionnaire also included demographic information, such as teachers' nationality, workplace and age.

2.3. Procedures

After the questionnaire was designed with reference to the related literature, it was proofread and checked with a colleague for any possible wording and content problems. It was then sent to 100 participants from different countries via the e-mail. Unfortunately, just 15 teachers whom the researcher had already met and known completed and returned the questionnaire.

2.4. Data Analysis

The answers provided by the teachers were read several times and content analysis was carried out inductively following Creswell's [4] method of content analysis. Three main themes positives, negatives and teachers' general evaluation and some subthemes of on-line education emerged as a result of the analysis.

3 Results

Different applications and softwares were used to deliver the courses on-line. According to the teachers some of these softwares ran smoothly and were satisfactory; however, the teachers experienced a few problems with some others. (see table 1)

The Applications and Softwares Used by University Teachers during the Pandemic

Country	Application	Satisfaction
Kuwait	SharePoint/OneNote	No problems
France	Zoom/TEAM	
Canada	Zoom/Google Classroom Avenue. Ca	A few problems
Lithuania	Microsoft TEAMS Moodle Platform	No problems
Malaysia	Zoom/Google docs	A few problems
USA glitches	Blackboard/Canvas	Constant
Australia	Not mentioned	No problems
Iran	Adobe Connect	A few problems
Italy	Microsoft Teams, Big Blue Button, Moodle	No problems
Sweden	Zoom	No problems

Three main themes emerged as a result of the content analysis.

(1) Advantages of on-line teaching, (2) Disadvantages of on-line teaching, and (3) Teachers' overall evaluation

Advantages

Availability and Feasibility

Some of the teachers (96%) believed that this medium of delivery was convenient because it could reach their students every time and everywhere. It also allowed the education not to stop when the world faced a lockdown. Boothe (USA) noted that "graduate students appreciate asynchronous courses that allow them to work at their own pace and time period." One of the lecturers asserted "These courses are perfect for moms with little children, seniors and people with physical disabilities who cannot commute every day" (Reyhane, Canada). Another lecturer said that it was the best way to break geographical borders and teach students from other countries (Mina, Iran). Luisa, an experienced and qualified online language teacher, from Italy believed that "Online courses provide greater work/life balance and flexibility and financial savings from not having to travel to work."

Creative ways of delivering the lessons

Some of the teachers thought that presenting the lessons on-line was very easy (81%) because they were able to use the affordances of the multimedia, such as sound, image and text together. They could share power point slides without experiencing the technical problems of overhead projectors in their physical classes. They also noted that they could share the websites with their students, when necessary, especially in Master and Doctorate classes. Rana from Kuwait asserted "students can customize their both

learning experience and expression." "It is very effective since it employs technology which is the need of the hour." She also added "online education allows synchronous and asynchronous monitoring of students." Reyhane, from Canada, noted "students had unlimited online resources to use." "The e-activities were more interesting to them than the previous paper worksheets."

Disadvantages

Interaction and Communication Problems

As the interaction between teachers and students is mediated in on-line system of delivery, it may cause a friction in interaction pattern (98%). As Adrian (Australia) said the main problem is the "lack of real contact." "Language is a contact thing." He added "Language proceeds better face to face." "Reactions are responded to." Another lecturer emphasized that teaching crowded classes did not let all students become involved and most often the teacher was the sole speaker (Guller, France). Nazila (Iran) complained "as there is no eye contact with students, you can't notice whether they've got what you teach, you also can't make sure they are really present in the class or not."

Discipline Related Problems

Most of the teachers (82%) emphasized that this way of presentation caused more problems than face-to- face classes. The teachers complained about absenteeism, students' engagement with other activities during the class, lack of concentration, their joining late to the class, and their leaving the class without permission. One of the assistant professors said

> Fortunately, our university switched to on-line teaching only after a month and sent educational videos to the teachers to learn how to use the system. However, our main problem, especially in undergraduate level, was the students wouldn't join the class. They didn't take it seriously at all. The university had to contact them individually to persuade them. Finally, out of 20 students four attended the classes (Sima, Iran).

Reyhane (Canada) complained about the quality of assessment "The problem was the authenticity of the assessments." "I didn't have full control of what was happening on the students' side." "They could cheat if they wanted!" Reza (Iran) said "the students lost their self-discipline and would even go on a picnic while attending the class!" One of the teachers (Farnaz, Iran) admitted that some students wouldn't turn on their cameras because they were joining the class from their beds in their pajamas!

Students' Motivational Problems

Another serious problem which concerned teachers was students' lack of motivation or low motivation. Some teachers (64%) said most of their students were passive and silent and wouldn't participate in class activities. Anna (Sweden) said "Students' motivation gets spoiled – quite a few students left their educations, or took a break during the pandemic. "Another teacher complained that as the exams were on-line and the students had the chance of cheating even in master levels, they didn't take the classes very seriously (Sima, Iran).

Teachers' Overall evaluation

Some teachers found adaptation to the new mode of delivery difficult and some others expressed their satisfaction with it. 53.8% preferred face-to-face teaching. Adrian (Malaysia) stated "I think that I wasn't making best use of what the technology had to offer, and the classes were just the same as they would have been, except that they are on-line." Another teacher asserted "Even though I enjoyed staying in my home office and working in my comfort zone, frankly talking this wasn't what I wanted" (Guller, France). An associate professor criticized "On-line mode of delivery is commodification of education and in the long run it may ruin the education irreversibly" (Davud, Iran). Anna (Sweden) emphasized "On-line courses cannot replace on-site education". However, some other teachers (38.4%) preferred hybrid mode. "I would like to teach blended classes; some days online and some days in class to take advantage of the benefits of both" (Reyhane, Canada). Olga (Lithuania) stated "I would prefer BLENDED teaching/learning – just to keep up the HUMAN constituent of the process."

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study revealed both the negatives and positives of on-line classes. Although the results are similar to the previous studies, it also shed light on the issue from multinational perspective. As revolutionary changes are happening in the world, education cannot be an exception. However, when it comes to education especial care is required in order to make better use of technology to motivate the future generation to gain knowledge. The results of this study have implications for technology designers and manufactures for educational purposes, curriculum designers and material developers to make necessary adjustments for the new mode of teaching and learning and protect this important aspect of modern life (education) from any possible threats.

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Computational Modeling of Morphology in Albanian Language: The Case of Verbs

Adelina Çerpja[1,] Anila Çepani[2]

[1] Institute of Linguistic and Literature, Academy of Albanian Studies, Albania
[2] Faculty of History and Philology, University of Tirana, Albania

Abstract

The Albanian language is synthetic-analytical and, as a language with developed inflection, it has a rich system of grammatical forms. To prepare applications for spelling and grammar in a language, as well as several NLP applications, the development of computer models of morphological forms is particularly important. This process in the case of the Albanian presents many difficulties and challenges. In this paper, we describe the process of creating a computational morphological model of the verbal system in the Albanian language. The verb in Albanian has the grammatical categories of person, number, tense, mood, and diathesis. The grammatical meanings of these categories are expressed with an exceptionally considerable number of grammatical forms, which are constructed with different means, which serve to express grammatical meanings: personal endings, alternations of the stem of the verb, inflectional suffixes, suppletion, and/or combinations between these. To create digital morphological models of verbs in the Albanian language and to assign morphological labels and lemmas, it was necessary to prepare different formulas based on different stems of the verbs, which serve to generate all verb forms for each mood, tense, person, number, etc. These are a small group of inductive and representative models that, despite the structural complications and diverse means of verb forms, result in the most accurate and automatic completion of the forms for each verb in the Albanian language.

Keywords: *Albanian language, software, digitalization, morphology, verb*

1. Introduction

The Albanian language forms a separate branch in the family of Indo-European languages. It is a synthetic-analytical language, with a predominance of synthetic features and a tendency towards analyticity. Albanian is considered a language with developed inflection and consequently has a rich system of grammatical forms, especially for nouns and verbs.

During the development of successful models for their analysis a special importance is given to morphological analysis in terms of preparing applications for proofreading and editing in a certain language and in several natural language applications.

Morphological analysis is essential and forms a core subsystem for other NLP applications. The morphological level is concerned with several tasks that focus on the internal structure of words and how they are realized in language. These tasks are

otherwise called the normalization of the text, which means converting it into a more suitable and standard form.[1]

This paper describes the process of creating computational morphological models of verbal system in Albanian language, considering that the many Albanian morphological forms pose special challenges to computational natural language processing systems.[2] This work is part of the project "Albanian language in the digital era", which is carried out by the Center for Educational and Promotion (https://gjuhashqipe.com), Prishtina, supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation in Kosova.

To create computer morphological models of verbs in the Albanian language, to determine morphological labels and lemmas, it was necessary to prepare different formulas based on verb stems, which serve to generate all verb forms for every mood, tense, person, number etc. These are inductive models that, regardless of structural complications and the variety of means and verb forms, result in the most accurate and automatic completion of the forms for each verb in the Albanian language.

2. General knowledge of the verbal system of the Albanian language

The verb in the Albanian language is characterized by several special grammatical categories,[3] as the category of person, number, mood, time and diathesis, which are expressed by special endings, inflectional particle, and auxiliary verbs (*kam* and *jam*).

The inflectional forms of the verbs in Albanian are synthetic and analytical.

Synthetic forms of the verb are built: by endings (*la* -j, *la* -n); by phonetic changes (*dal: del, njoh: njeh*); by personal endings and phonetic changes (*dal: dol-a, thye-j: the-va*); by inflectional suffixes, sometimes with personal endings (*la-fsh-a, la-rë*); by suppletive forms with personal endings or inflectional suffixes (*jam: qe-shë: qe-në*).

Analytical forms of the verb are built: by the auxiliary verbs *kam* and *jam* used before the participle of the main verb (kam *larë,* jam *larë*); by inflectional particles (duke *larë,* u *lava*).

The Albanian verbs are grouped into three conjugations, divided into classes and subclasses, and the irregular verbs.

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[3] For this general knowledge, we are based on the chapter of the verb in *Grammar of the Albanian language,* I, Academy of Sciences of Albania, Institute of Linguistics and Literature, Tirana, 2002.

3. Representative models of the verbs in the Albanian language

CONJUGATION I (Verbs ending in the consonant *j*)	Class I	Subclass 1	*punoj, rrëfej, shkruaj, lyej*
		Subclass 2	*blej*
	Class II	Subclass 1	*arrij, mbaj, ruaj*
		Subclass 2	*bëj*
CONJUGATION II (Verbs ending in a consonant)	Class I	Subclass 1	*hap, mas*
	Class II	Subclass 1	*dredh, nxjerr, pjek, djeg, dal, marr*
		Subclass 2	*përkas*
		Subclass 3	*shkas*
CONJUGATION III (Verbs ending in a vowel)	Class I		*vë*
	Class II		*di*
	Class III		*pi*
	Class IV		*shtie*
IRREGULAR	Class I		*jam*
	Class II		*them*

4. Wordform generation formulas for each pattern and statistic

As we noted above, the verb in the Albanian language has different grammatical categories and a variety of forms for each category. Each of the moods of the verb has a certain number of tenses which depending on the formal aspect, are simple tenses (*synthetic*) and compound tenses (*analytical).*

We should note that some verb forms are the same in different persons, tenses, and moods. The number of forms about one verb is 480, but the number of non-repetitive forms varies from 429 to 432.

The challenge of designing this algorithm is the generation of all verb forms in the Albanian language, which starts with the selection of the verb class and continues with the automatic generation of verb forms based on the models with which this algorithm is equipped. An important process here is the determination of the different stems of a verb, since, as Baerman points out[4], stems and the changes they undergo behave similarly to affixes and are therefore evaluated with the same parameters as affixes.

We are giving below the different stems of a verb (*mësoj-learn*), on which the generation of all forms of this verb is performed, and the corresponding explanations.

Table 0-1: **Basic stems for the verb MËSOJ (learn).**

The verb MËSOJ (*learn*)		
Formula	**Grammatical features**	**Stems**
F1=headword -j	present I, singular	*mëso*
F2=F1	present II, singular	*mëso*
F3=F1	present II, plural	*mëso*
F4=F1	simple past I, singular	*mëso*
F5=F1 (o>ua)	simple past I, plural	*mësua*
F6=F5+r	participle	*mësuar*

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[4]Matthew Baerman, Scott Collier, Stem in a database of morphological complexity, 14th International Morphology Meeting, Budapest, Hungary, Workshop *Stems in inflections and lexeme formation.*

Several steps must be followed for the operation of this algorithm, which are related to the different stems of the verb:

1. The user chooses the type of verb considering the changes it undergoes in the present tense, simple perfect and participle.
2. F1 - the first-person singular stem of the present indicative, is automatically filled in.
3. F2 - the stem of the second person singular of the present indicative, changes in some verbs and doesn't change in others, and in this case F2 = F1.
4. F3 - the stem of the second person plural of the present indicative, differs in a considerable number of verbs. This stem is also used for all passive forms built with the respective endings.
5. F4 - the stem of the singular simple past tense is one of the stems that most often undergoes changes, either in vowels or in consonants, and for many verbs it serves as the stem of other forms, such as the simple forms of the optative and admirative mood.
6. F5 - the stem of the plural simple past tense, often is the same as F4, but there are verbs in which it undergoes changes, so it is left as a separate stem.
7. F6 - the participle, is an important stem, which appears in all verb forms of compound tenses, which occupy a considerable number in the group of forms of a verb.

Starting from the final sound of the stem of the representative form of verbs (F1), as well as from the type and number of phonetic changes they undergo, we have compiled 25 representative models of formulas for the automatic generation of different verb forms in the Albanian language, which are illustrated with the verb *MËSOJ* (*learn*). According to this model there are automatically generated the forms of about 2990 other verbs.

Since the verb in the Albanian language has many forms, we are giving here only the models of how the formulas work for the present tense, simple past and perfect indicative tense, in all persons, singular and plural.

The verb *MËSOJ* (Conjugation I; class I; subclass 1; stem in -*o*) – **Indicative mood**						
	Simple Present	**Formulas**	**Simple Past**	**Formulas**	**Perfect**	**Formulas of present perfect**
unë	mësoj	F1+j	mësova	F1+va	kam mësuar	kam F6
ti	mëson	F1+n	mësove	F1+ve	ke mësuar	ke F6
ai/ajo	mëson	F1+n	mësoi	F1+i	ka mësuar	ka F6
ne	mësojmë	F1+jmë	mësuam	F5+m	kemi mësuar	kemi F6
ju	mësoni	F1+ni	mësuat	F5+t	keni mësuar	keni F6
ata/ato	mësojnë	F1+jnë	mësuan	F5+n	kanë mësuar	kanë F6

In the following list there are the formulas for the tenses of every mood, active and passive form, only in first singular person:

INDICATIVE MOOD

Present: *mësoj* (F1+j)
Imperfect: *mësoja* (F1+ja)
Simple past: *mësova* (F1+va)
Future: *do të mësoj* (do të F1+j)
Future II: *kam për të mësuar* (kam për të F6)
Future perfect: do të kem mësuar (do të kem F6)
Present nonactive: mësohem (F1+hem)
Imperfect nonactive: mësohesha (F1+hesha)
Simple past nonactive: u mësova (u F1+va)
Future nonactive: do të mësohem (do të F1+hem)
Future II: kam për t'u mësuar (kam për t'u F6)
Future perfect nonactive: do të jem mësuar (do të jem F6)
Present perfect: kam mësuar (kam F6)
Past perfect: kisha mësuar (kisha F6)

Pluperfect: pata mësuar (pata F6)
Future in the past: do të mësoja (do të F1+ja)
Future in the pat II: kisha për të mësuar (kisha për të F6)
Future perfect in the past: do të kisha mësuar (do të kisha F6)
Present Perfect nonactive: jam mësuar (jam F6)
Past Perfect nonactive: isha mësuar (isha F6)
Pluperfect nonactive: qeshë mësuar (qeshë F6)
Future past nonactive: do të mësohesha (do të F1+hesha)
Future past II: kisha për t'u mësuar (kisha për t'u F6)
Future perfect in the past nonactive: do të isha mësuar (do të isha F6)

SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

Present: të mësoj (të F1+j)
Imperfect: të mësoja (të F1+ja)
Present nonactive: të mësohem (të F1+hem)
Imperfect nonactive: të mësohesha (të F1+hesha)
Present perfect: të kem mësuar (të kem F6)

Past perfect: të kisha mësuar (të kisha F6)
Present Perfect nonactive: të jem mësuar (të jem F6)
Past Perfect nonactive: të isha mësuar (të isha F6)

ADMIRATIVE MOOD

Present: mësuakam (F5+kam)
Imperfect: mësuakësha (F5+kësha)
Future: do të mësuakam (do të F5+kam)
Present nonactive: u mësuakam (u F5+kam)
Imperfect nonactive: u mësuakësha (u F5+kësha)
Future nonactive: do t'u mësuakam (do t'u F5+kam)

Present perfect: paskam mësuar (paskam F6)
Past perfect: paskësha mësuar (paskësha F6)
Present nonactive: qenkam mësuar (qenkam F6)
Imperfect nonactive: qenkësha mësuar (qenkësha F6)

SUBJUNCTIVE- ADMIRATIVE MOOD

Present: të mësuakam (të F5+kam)
Imperfect: të mësuakësha (të F5+kësha)
Present nonactive: t'u mësuakam (t'u F5+kam)
Imperfect nonactive: t'u mësuakësha (t'u F5+kësha)
Present perfect: të paskam mësuar (të paskam F6)

Past perfect: të paskësha mësuar (të paskësha F6)
Present Perfect nonactive: të qenkam mësuar (të qenkam F6)
Past Perfect nonactive: të qenkësha mësuar (të qenkësha F6)

CONDITIONAL MOOD

Present: do të mësoja (do të F1+ja)
Present II: kisha për të mësuar (kisha për të F6)
Present nonactive: do të mësohesha (do të F1+hesha)

Present II nonactive: kisha për t'u mësuar (kisha për t'u F6)
Present perfect: do të kisha mësuar (do të kisha F6)
Present Perfect nonactive: do të isha mësuar (do të isha F6)

OPTATIVE MOOD

Present: mësofsha (F1+fsha)
Present nonactive: u mësofsha (u F1+fsha)
Present perfect: paça mësuar (paça F6)

Present Perfect nonactive: qofsha mësuar (qofsha F6)

IMPERATIVE MOOD

Present: mëso (F1); mësoni (F1+ni)

Present nonactive: mësohu (F1+hu); mësohuni (F1+huni)

5. Conclusions

This algorithm has taken into account the verbs from the lexicon of Albanian vocabulary (https://gjuhashqipe.com/apps/fmgjsh).
Manual choice of the concrete verb conjugation is done for new verbs that are created or borrowed in Albanian, and then the algorithm performs the appropriate actions for the generation of all verb forms.
In case has been made an incorrect choice of the verb conjugation, the wrong forms are visible, and it only takes one more click to make the correct selection and the automatic generation of all verb forms. The results of this algorithm and research on the use of natural language inform us about the practical extent of morphological complexity for a language like Albanian and allow us to identify ways to improve the model.

Although we have worked on the morphological generation, this is very important even about the morphological analysis of Albanian language.

This software, as an application of the morphological structure of words, is closely interconnected to the software for Albanian spellchecker for MS Office (https://gjuhashqipe.com/softueret/drejtshkrimori). It is also of special importance in terms of preparing applications for tagging words in the corpus, for parsing, lemmatization, and in several natural language applications: text generation, machine translation, document retrieval, etc.

It can be used for genuine linguistic studies, but also for the acquisition of the language by the ordinary user, specifically the forms of words and their grammatical categories. Digital Morphology (https://gjuhashqipe.com/apps/kulla) is useful for both students and teachers of the Albanian language, because using this software students can test, evaluate, and improve their knowledge, while teachers can use it to perform practical tasks with examples from the vocabulary of the Albanian language, making learning the morphology of Albanian even more attractive and interactive.

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A Road Map for Language Teachers on How to Extract Accurate Data for Research from Inside a Quest 2 Virtual Reality Environment: The Case of The Social VR Application Altspacevr

Dimitros Boglou[1], Kristi Jauregi-Ondarra[2], Maria Christoforou [3]
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus[1, 3]
Utrecht University, Netherlands[2]

Abstract

Virtual Reality has permeated our educational landscape in various forms and has unequivocally created new opportunities for language learning. As many VR devices became more accessible and mainstream, many educators have taken the opportunity to experiment with some kind of Virtual Reality. From simple smart phone-supported devices to more advanced and tethered VR systems that require extensive technical experience and a healthy budget in order to achieve the desired immersive experience that could be exploited for educational purposes. Nevertheless, as there are various VR systems and a myriad of applications constantly becoming available on various online platforms, a lot of research needs to be done by educators in order to establish the efficacy and impact of the chosen VR system or application. As language teachers, we might lack the technical experience and understanding of this tool. Furthermore, we might not have the required technical support in order to successfully capture and extract data that is necessary for research from inside the Virtual Reality world. These aforementioned aspects can be discouraging for language teachers when conducting VR-related research. This paper describes the challenges, technical steps, and technical requirements that were necessary to overcome the obstacles that I encountered in order to record and extract data for analysis of the virtual interactions from inside the virtual world of the social VR app AltspaceVR for a Virtual Exchange research project in 2022 with the VR headsets Oculus Quest 2.

Keywords: *Virtual Reality, Social VR Applications, AltspaceVR, Oculus quest, Makerspaces*

1. Introduction

Virtual Reality (VR) has been around for many years, but the first VR / AR head mounted display was created in 1968[1]. The high price, complex technology and lack of accessibility made this technology unattractive for many educators, including language instructors, as many of them did not have accessibility, proper funding or knowledge to use this technology [2]. Nevertheless, in 2017 a fully immersive VR system became mainstream with Oculus Rift [1]. The arrival of this more accessible VR device didn't change the aforementioned challenges as the equipment remained expensive and technical knowledge was still required to effectively employ such a powerful and enticing tool in the language classroom [3].

The arrival of stand-alone VR head-mounted display (HMD) such as Oculus Go and Oculus Quest changed the standing of VR in the educational world as VR became accessible and much more affordable. The permeation and proliferation of VR in our language classrooms triggered an increased desire to conduct various research in order to establish and uncover VR affordances, efficacies and usability in language learning. Even though many language instructors, including the language instructors at the Cyprus University of Technology were introduced and trained in various educational e-tools during the Covid-19 pandemic, certain technologies still require the user to have or gain specific knowledge before being capable of utilizing these technologies successfully for enhancing their classroom environment and research. Such technical shortcomings were uncovered when it came to collecting data from inside the 3D virtual world VE interaction.

This paper focuses on the obstacles, I and my team faced in collecting clear and valid data during a Virtual Exchange project between Dutch students from Utrecht University and Cypriot students from the Cyprus University of Technology during the Fall semester 2022, using AltspaceVR as a social meeting platform and the solutions that were implemented to overcome difficult technical issues regarding the recording from inside the 3D AltspaceVR world. This paper also functions as a guide for inexperienced language educators that would be interested in conducting similar research utilizing Virtual Reality in their language classrooms.

3. Benefits of VR in Education and Language Learning

Virtual reality has many benefits as it amplifies students' motivation and it stimulates their engagement through the immersive experience [4]. In addition, studies have also highlighted the fact that VR improves students' academic performance and interactions. [5]

4. Why Oculus Quest and AltspaceVR

Oculus Quest and Oculus Quest 2 were chosen as the main HMD as they were available in both universities. Furthermore, Oculus Quest is a stand-alone HMD, very affordable and allows participants to fully immerse themselves in the Virtua World.
AltspaceVR was chosen as it is free to use and its functions would cover the need of the project. In addition, both parties had experience in using this application.

5. The Obstacles and the Methods

Prior to commencing the project two main obstacles had to be addressed in order to conduct a successful Virtual Exchange (VE).

The first one was the familiarization with the Oculus Quest 2 headset and its functions and the second one was the recording of data from the VE from inside the 3D VR environment. In order to successfully overcome this hurdle a CUTing Edge Makerspace team, which was made up of university Information Technology students, was put together to work in collaboration with the researchers to provide solutions for the two major obstacles that were identified as a priority.

5.1 Familiarization with Oculus Quest and AltspaceVR

After participants became familiar and more comfortable with the new technology, they were instructed to create AltspaceVR accounts and Avatars. The major problem that we faced during this step was the creation of outlook accounts so that the participants would be able to connect with AltspaceVR as the application was owned by Microsoft. In order for participants to sign-in into their AltspaceVR application they received a code. This code had to be verified though the Microsoft verify your device webpage. This created some issues as participants were receiving the code in their AltspaceVR app as they were wearing their Quest 2 and had to physically enter the code into their account. This was solved by having participants read out loud their code and staff member inserted the code into the verification webpage.

5.2 The Obstacle of recording from inside the VR environment

5.2.1 The challenge

From the beginning of the project, Dr. Kristi Jauregi-Ondarra, an experienced researcher in VE [6,7] and project manager for this VE exchange, mentioned the major difficulties she faced in previous VE projects during the recording of the VE oral interactions inside the AltspaceVR world by using external devices such as smartphones. It was a major challenge as a more effective way was needed to enhance the recording quality to achieve an acceptable level of the interactions' recording so that the data that would be extracted would be clear and audible.

5.2.2 The search for a solution

As it was mentioned before that as language instructors our technical knowledge regarding this issue was limited. Nevertheless, having the CUTing Edge Makerspace team, it was decided to initiate a two-pronged search approach to find a solution to the recording challenge. The first prong was to research various online webpages and watch YouTube videos dealing with such issues. The second prong was to identify a simple, free and effective recording tool that would capture the oral and visual interaction clearly.
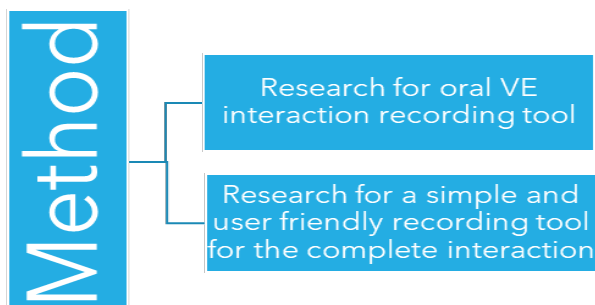
The first prong led us to the Microsoft webpage, which is the owner of the AltspaceVR. The description of the recoding process mentioned on the webpage required a time-consuming setup and other software, which was not feasible for the center as the setup was time consuming and it would need additional manpower, which was not available. Furthermore, the webpage description only described the recording from a 2D environment which was not the desired setting. Nevertheless, based in the Microsoft webpage and the various roles that could be assigned to individuals, it was decided that a moderator would enter the interaction to act as microphone inside the VR environment. The moderator was called a "pilot".

5.2.3 The function of the pilot

Figure3: Pilots in action

The requirement to add a third person a "pilot" into the AltspaceVR environment in order to record the VE required that an additional user had to enter the Altspace VR room with the participants who would conduct the VE. The "pilot" had to create an avatar like the participants and the pilot was named "the Random Guy" in order to distinguish itself from the dyad that would be recorded. The "pilot" was not allowed to interfere or to talk as its function was act as the microphone. However, during the recording the "the pilot" had to be close to the dyad in order to get a clear recording but had to have a distance in order not to be visible during the recording. After creating and inserting the pilot into the AltspaceVR environment, test recording commenced to establish the quality of the recording and an acceptable distance between the pilot and the VE dyad interaction.
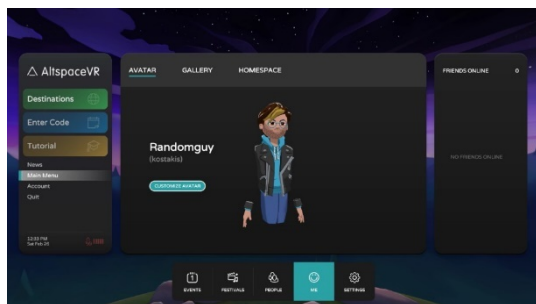

Figure4: Creating the "Random Guy"

5.2.4 The Alt-Z eureka moment

The search for the free and simple video recording tool came to an end as one of the CUTing Edge staff members suggested that we should use a computer that has an NVDIA graphic card as NVDAcards have the capability to record the screen through its Shadowplay program, the GeForce experience.

The program opened the GeForce experience with the Alt-Z combination. The GeForce menu was clear and easy to follow. The program allowed the user to record the screen, take pictures, take screenshots and many other capabilities. Its functions were tested thoroughly, and the program was chosen to be the main recording tool for the VE project as it had to capability to record participants' visual and oral interaction.
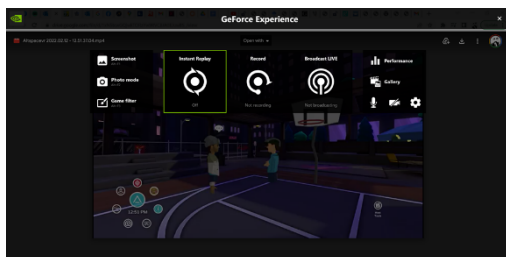
Figure5: GeForce Experience

5.2.5 Recording the VE interaction

In order to start the recording, the first VE dyad immersed themselves into the AltspaceVR in 3D mode with the Quest2 VR headsets. The "pilot" entered the AltspaceVR through the 2D desktop environment, as AltspaceVR allows you to enter in both modes. By doing that the "pilot" was able to see the participants and approach them until their voices were audible and clear. Once the conversation was clear, the record button in the GeForce recording tool was utilized to start the recording. After the interaction, the recording was saved in the file that the GeForce user had identified prior to the recording. More than 30 VE recording were successfully conducted and saved with clear and audible VE interactions that made it easy for researchers to transcribe and analyze the data without any interferences.

6. Conclusion

Effective data recording from inside a high immersion VR in language learning such as in VE project can be achieved for any language instructor regardless of the technical background if a support team is present to train the participants and oversee the progress during such recordings. Finally, I think that the technical tools employed in this project go beyond those that are listed in this paper. Investigating other tools is necessary, and the findings should be disseminated.

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Paving the Way for English Language Teaching and Learning through the Integration of ICT

Diane Boothe
Boise State University, USA

Abstract

This study/presentation examines the integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching and learning in the United States and Europe. The research investigates ICT tools and strategies addressing different styles of English education structured in a comparative analysis. English language learning is an ongoing factor linking leadership, teacher education and a wide range of intellectual disciplines. Technology has resulted in a digital culture demonstrating tremendous advances in language learning [1]. English language teaching has a unique set of challenges providing an overarching opportunity to impact success and serve as a catalyst for expansion of learning. Strong programs incorporating ICT in English language teaching leading to quality educational experiences designed to meet the unique needs of learners are particularly valuable. They further address the linkages between countries providing an innovative, transformative, and equitable educational environment that prepares students for success and advances English learning throughout the world.

Keywords: *ICT, English Language Teaching/Learning*

1. Introduction

The goal of this study focuses on investigation and implementation of quality ICT instructional strategies by engaging in information gathering regarding ICT language learning methods and processes employed in varied locations and situations. Preliminary results leading to a more comprehensive study are shared in this manuscript. The methodology of this study utilizes a multi-case design for the purpose of conducting comparative research in English language learning in schools in the United States and Europe. Authentic accounts of English language learning will be gained through interviews of educational leaders, observations, and review of selected relevant literature. Further collaboration with colleagues leads to in depth exploration of ICT and systematic collection of data providing opportunities to gain further access to resources, methodological tools, and best practices. The pedagogical potential including meaningful research opportunities and analytics, as well as strategies for educators to frame best practices focused on the diverse learning needs of students strengthens success. Further data will be used and analyzed to construct a matrix comparison between the two learning environments. Embracing English language learning, new technologies, and initiating change through proactive ICT educational strategies will lead to relevant and purposeful accomplishments.

2. Review of the literature

Throughout the USA and Europe, there are standards and requirements for teaching emergent bilingual learners and developing their English language skills. It is necessary to use modern approaches and tools of ICT to develop better understanding and acquisition of basic skills of the English language, and ICT makes the English language environment interactive, flexible, and innovative [2]. There is a continuing demand for English language proficient citizens in both the USA and throughout Europe. The purpose for mastering English in both locations may vary, but the motivation and accomplishments of English learners is clearly evident and the role of ICT in this endeavor is integral to students' success. ICT breakthroughs have brought new opportunities to restructure the language learning/teaching settings and ICT has opened new avenues and brought interesting challenges to language learners and teachers [3]. Oliver recognizes ICT as a change agent and further points out its valuable role in positively impacting students in higher education during the 21st century. He suggests that ICT has "blazed a trail in our learning, work and lives" [4]. When students are exposed to the ICT world, it will help them to communicate effectively locally or globally, and, as a result, the students are able to improve their communication skills and they will be expected to communicate in English embracing its use and continuing to strengthen their skills [5]. Educators in both the USA and Europe need to be afforded the opportunity for professional development experiences that include the incorporation of ICT in their classroom. Unfortunately, they may have been subjected to professional development schemes that haven't provided the support required to sustain educational change and reform [6]. Paving the way for successful ICT strategies requires professional development that is relevant and appropriate for teaching English language learners, and further provides collaborative experiences with educators and students as both become part of a professional learning community.

3. English language teaching in the USA

In the USA, increased emphasis is being placed on the development of language skills for Emergent Bilingual (EB) students. Evidence-based instructional practices are incorporated into the curriculum to strengthen language and literacy development while accelerating learners. The WIDA framework has been embraced across the USA as a valuable asset featuring English language development standards and a foundation for curriculum, instruction and assessment for multilingual learners [7].

Scientific inquiry and ICT tools are utilized to serve as exemplary components of instruction that is engaging and interactive. Culturally responsive education is at the forefront of educational practices as educators strive to meet the needs of a multiplicity of diverse ethnic groups, educational experiences, and abilities within unique educational communities. The strengths associated with valuable professional development are tantamount to teacher and student success. This professional development addresses myriad ICT teaching strategies tailored to grade, language, and ability level. Online and virtual instruction are integral components of English language development and educators are encouraged to become familiar with and address the standards that have been developed for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in order to maximize language development. Another key area that is being emphasized for language proficiency is content area education. Educators who may be teaching in specific subject areas or addressing content other than English language learning are encouraged to gain a better understanding of learning styles for students grappling with content in Science,

Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. There are excellent ICT subject specific tools available. Collaboration among students and teachers is another key to promoting meaningful interaction and learning for English language learners (ELLs) and new Americans. Educators emphasized the value of discussion boards, videos, breakout rooms, multimedia chats, and online virtual platforms available worldwide for interactive online learning. Co-teaching has also been another successful strategy for meeting the needs of students and ICT is a valuable tool for supporting students across various teaching models. The *Standards for Initial TESOL Pre-K–12 Teacher Preparation Programs* outline the unique content, pedagogical knowledge, and skills necessary to prepare effective Pre-K–12 TESOL educators in the United States [8]. In addition, emphasis is placed on connecting families within the school and community. Educators are encouraged to become familiar with the area in which they teach and focus on culturally relevant pedagogy. Meeting and interacting with parents to gain a better understanding of their students is emphasized and interpersonal relations are viewed as essential.

4. English language teaching in Europe

The strengths and accomplishments of ICT in Europe are significant, and the information provided by educators throughout Europe supports the need to build on programs that have been successful. This is further recognized by the European Commission who has stated that, "The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is vital for Europe's competitiveness in today's increasingly digital global economy. Over €20 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was available for ICT investments during the 2014-2020 funding period. These investments are vital for the success of the Commission's objective of making Europe fit for the digital age." [9] At Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, tremendous effort is devoted to educational technology and opportunities for students to learn English and excel in media and technology. The university offers a combination of practical English courses and language studies field-specific seminars and lectures. The Technical University of Berlin offers an ICT program designed to strengthen ICT skills and qualifications of graduates. Numerous other German universities feature programs and seminars for educators that focus on ICT skills. In France, national policies and practices for education advocate and support more efficient use of ICT-related resources through strengthening of ICT-sharing partnerships, and ICT coordinators were added to assist educators to integrate ICT activities into their teaching. [10]. Pixel international educational and training institution in Florence, Italy, brings educators together annually for an international conference on ICT for language learning. This valuable experience affords the opportunity for educators to collaborate and share information, research, and expertise on ICT. The dynamics of learning English in Europe differ from those in the USA due to the purpose behind the challenge. English is recognized as a global language and European students often have the desire to add this to their repertoire of skills and accomplishments. In Europe, students continue to use their home language throughout the day and the use of English is an additional asset that they are endeavoring to acquire. Throughout Europe, with the exception of some rural areas, ICT is available in schools and at home through various forms of computer software, educational tools, and digital infrastructures. Students have access to global networks as well as ICT programs and curriculum in their schools and at home. For some students, learning English is more difficult because they do not have the reinforcement of being surrounded by English speakers or the opportunity to utilize the English language on an ongoing basis. ICT opportunities and their English-speaking

counterparts, teachers and colleagues can provide valuable support for their learning. Professional development in ICT strategies and technologies is essential and preparing educators to provide a quality education for their students is tantamount to their success. An innovative curriculum for English learners in Europe that includes ICT opportunities and best practices for implementation of ICT technologies will provide a high-quality education and successful English language instruction.

5. Conclusions and future recommendations

European and USA educators embrace ICT and realize the value of ICT opportunities for their students. ICT has the capability to make English learning come alive and become more relevant than a textbook can do. Sharing the exemplary components of ICT program will provide a framework to expand collaborative educational endeavors within professional educational communities in the USA and Europe. ICT has the capability to empower educators and impact instruction. Increasing the achievement of English learners is essential and preparing educators to provide quality educational experiences through ICT is valuable and essential. The innovative strengths of ICT are significant and support the need to build on and expand existing programs and opportunities. Professional development to increase educators' knowledge of ICT and implementation of ICT tools will make a positive impact. The expansion of this study, further data collection, analysis, and recommendations for ICT in English language acquisition are suggested for strengthening student and educator performance and achievement.

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Enhancing the ESP Lesson with IMMERSE: a Pedagogical Example of a Metaverse Language Learning Platform

Maria Christoforou
Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

Abstract

Virtual Reality (VR) is becoming significantly prevalent in the field of education and has been proven, among others, to increase student motivation and commitment to the lesson, to simulate contextualized scenarios for learning and to help students practice their public speaking skills. This innovative technology has provided unprecedented opportunities for student interaction with the lesson content which is achieved through the multisensory experience it offers and the replacement of interaction with immersion. In fact, some VR-related impediments, such as the high cost of the hardware (for tethered headsets), the set-up of the computer hardware and correct connection of the Head Mount Display (HMD), are gradually being overcome due to the emergence of more commercially accessible VR standalone headsets (in price and ease of equipment use), like Oculus Quest 2. However, even though the number of VR applications has been exponentially increasing, most of these applications are not designed to support teaching practices and they lack pedagogical foundation. The field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a field which can benefit from VR since the latter can provide ESP learners with virtual trips to professional contexts, it can increase their experiential element and simulate authentic conditions, and it can also help with vocabulary retention. This paper aims to theoretically propose ways that IMMERSE, an educational metaverse language learning platform, can enhance the learning experience of ESP students. Specifically, it is believed that the affordances of the platform (various real-life contexts, high levels of immersion and interactivity) as well as its fundamental elements of language immersion practice (functional language, culture, and community building) can enhance the ESP lesson and provide more contextualized opportunities for students to practice the language.

Keywords: *IMMERSE, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), immersive learning, Virtual Reality-assisted language learning (VRALL)*

1. Introduction

Innovative technologies like VR and, generally, immersive media have become more mainstream and more affordable for educational use in the past decade. Some older affordable VR devices included Samsung Gear VR, Oculus Go, and Oculus Quest. Currently, some popular standalone VR headsets which do not require a smartphone and do not need to be tethered to a computer are Oculus Quest 2 and HTC Vive Focus 3. As for language learning, all these devices have provided learners with more exciting opportunities for interactive and experiential lessons since VR, in general, has paved the

way for immersive and simulated practice of a language, which was not previously possible with other technologies. As for the selection and potential use of VR applications in the language classroom, a common problem that may occur is that most of these applications are not exclusively designed for educational purposes which could pose as an impediment for educators in supporting the pedagogical implementation [1] of these applications in the lesson. Regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages through VR, some applications commonly used are Mondly VR [2] and ImmerseMe [3]. In Mondly VR, the user can interact with a pedagogical avatar in authentic scenarios with speech recognition and feedback. Moreover, according to Berti [4], ImmerseMe is more suitable for learners who do not have access to the target language outside the formal instructional setting, not so much for students.

The teaching of ESP is goal-oriented and based on the specific needs of students. The use of technology in ESP contexts has drastically transformed the ESP learning environment since learners can become more autonomous in the learning process and they can benefit from more communicative and interactive activities related to their profession [5]. As for VR and ESP, Dashtestani & Stojković [5] cite virtual worlds/serious games in ESP instruction in their literature review, emphasising the lack of evidence for learning outcomes in the literature. The implementation of VR in the context of ESP is still in its infancy. This paper aims to fill in that gap by theoretically proposing ways that IMMERSE, an educational metaverse language learning platform, can pose as a pedagogical example for ESP learners and how it can enhance their learning experience. Moreover, it aims to introduce ways this platform can help ESP language instructors and practitioners to integrate VR in the lesson.

2. IMMERSE

Founded in 2017, IMMERSE has revolutionized the field of VR language teaching and learning. Having, both, a social and educational character, one of its pillars is the concept of 'community'. It aims at creating a sense of community among learners with common interests and learning needs who will conversate with real people in realistic immersive contexts. Moreover, IMMERSE is the first synchronous VR language teaching and learning platform [6], and has focused ever since on long-term linguistic interactions and not on rudimentary understanding of vocabulary and sounds. At present, it is the leading metaverse language learning platform and it has launched a Spanish language learning programme, followed by French, English, and Japanese in the upcoming months. "Metaverse" is currently a popular term and according to Ball [7], it is "a massively scaled and interoperable network of real-time rendered 3D virtual worlds that can be experienced synchronously and persistently by an effectively unlimited number of users with an individual sense of presence" (pp. 29).

2.1 Practising functional language in the IMMERSE "experiences"

Teaching ESP requires the knowledge and practice of functional language within a real-life professional context. Students need to have a clear understanding of phrases and concepts related to their field of study. This involves specialized language students are required to use in workplace settings. Traditionally, this would revolve around vocabulary activities from a textbook or listening exercises in short dialogues. In IMMERSE, instructors can create scenarios and assign groups (Figure 1) of students within authentic contexts. Figure 2 also shows some of the "experiences" (the locations) where students

can practice contextualized language. Some examples of "experiences" that are suitable for ESP purposes are the Networking Event, the News Station, the Hotel Room, the Resort, The Airport Departure, The Doctor Office, etc. Many disciplines could benefit from this type of practice such as "Public Communication", "Tourism and Hospitality Management", "Nursing", etc.

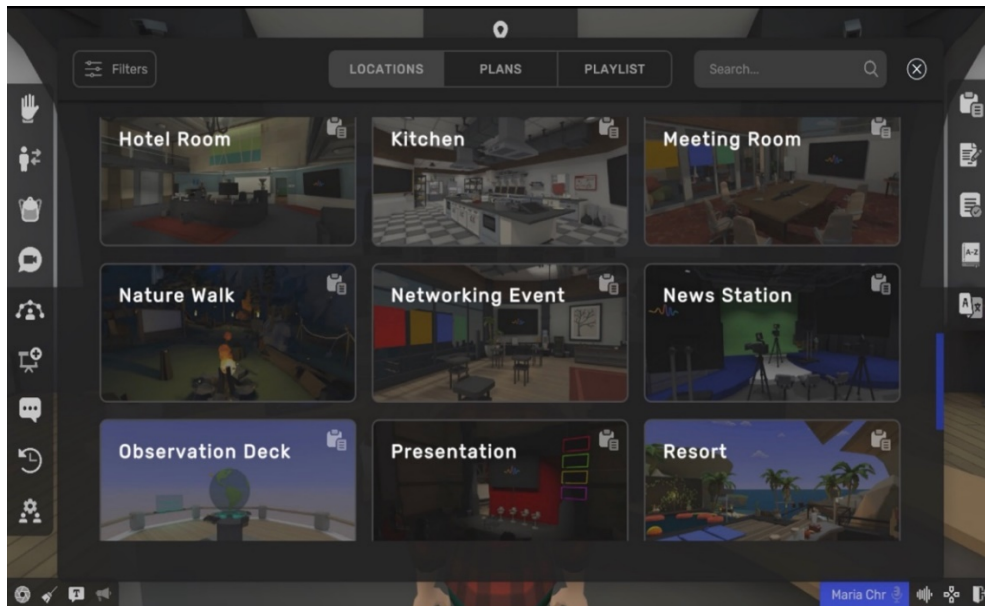Figure 1: The "Emergency" experience (Image Credit: IMMERSE)

Figure 2: Some of the "experiences" in IMMERSE (Image Credit: IMMERSE)

2.2 Developing Soft Skills

ESP teachers are expected to teach their students about the culture of their future workplace settings within the classroom, which is not always feasible. Currently, the development of soft skills in students is more necessary than ever. The practice of soft skills could help students meet the demands of the job market to a great extent, especially in today's globalized world. The difference between hard skills and soft skills is that hard skills can be measured and evaluated more easily (technical and academic skills) like language proficiency, knowledge of interface design, etc., whereas soft skills depend on a person's interpersonal skills, for example, convincing skills, problem-solving skills, etc. IMMERSE's novel approach to language immersion can offer opportunities for students to co-exist with students of common professional interests in environments which simulate real-life workplace settings. Through Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), language instructors can design pedagogical, meaningful tasks students can carry out towards a common goal [8] and customize their lessons. TBLL is a communicative approach that focuses on the implementation of real-life tasks, using the target language. Figure 3 shows a realistic setting where students can practice their presentation skills and express themselves in front of a real audience in an immersive environment.
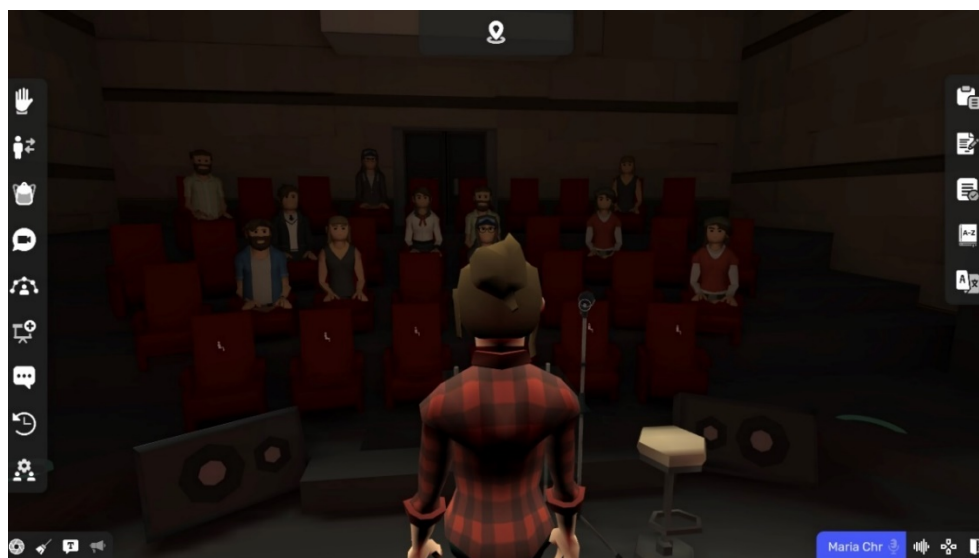
Figure 3: Building Presentation skills in front of an audience (Image Credit: IMMERSE)

These kinds of tasks help students overcome their fear of public speaking, especially in a second or foreign language like English, mainly for two reasons. The first reason is that the use of an avatar could possibly make students more comfortable with speaking in L2 and lower their anxiety, and the second one is because the setting is more contextualized, which is something a real ESP classroom cannot offer. Moreover, Figure 4 demonstrates the News Station "experience". A possible scenario could involve students performing a task to practice their problem-solving skills related to a work emergency like broadcasting the latest news. Figure 4 shows a realistic television setting with cameras, a seating area, screens etc.

Figure 4: News broadcasting in the "News Station" (Image Credit: IMMERSE)

Figure 4 also contains a visual of the "Placeables" which is a very interactive feature of the platform with many affordances. Through the "Placeables", teachers can place items within the specific room they are in, for example, a whiteboard or a scoreboard. Moreover, there is a possibility to upload a video from YouTube while being immersed in the specific "experience".
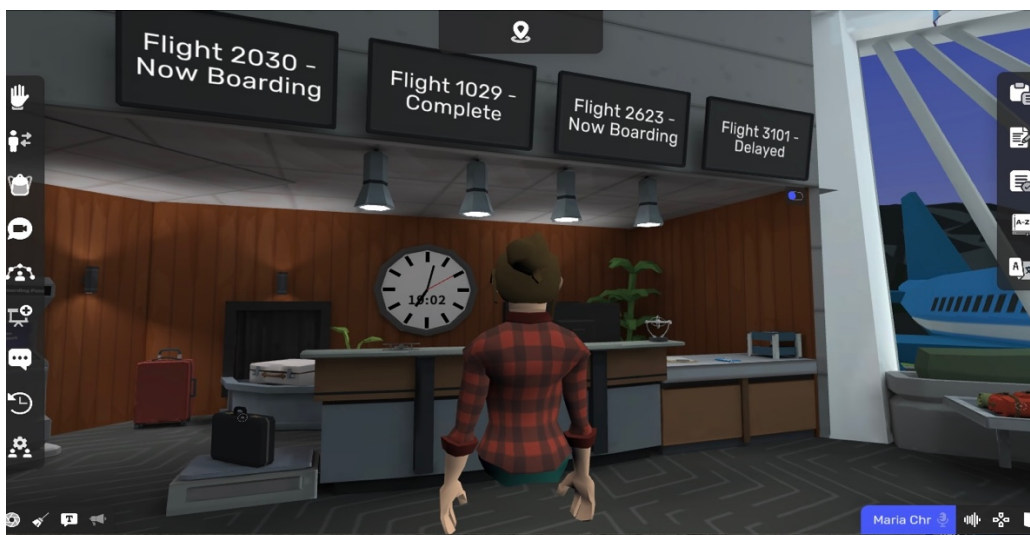
Figure 5: The Airport Departure "experience" (Image Credit: IMMERSE)

Problem-solving skills and communication skills can also be practiced and developed in the Airport Departure location. Figure 5 offers a visual representation of a check-in desk with flight information on each screen and depending on the scenario, students can

acquire different roles, for example, a passenger, a flight attendant, etc. Students can also change their characters from a member of the staff to a passenger and vice versa.

2.3 Building a sense of "community"

All ESP students will enter a community of practice (CoP) in their future workplace, comprised of people with mutual interests, common knowledge, and need for knowledge sharing and building. An ESP lesson in the varying locations found in IMMERSE is more than the simple practice of English for professional purposes since students can collaborate, they can mutually guide each other towards the completion of tasks, and they can learn to negotiate meanings socially in a simulated professional context, acting as a virtual CoP. An immersive, interactive 3D environment can nurture a sense of 'togetherness' in students who will learn through experience.

Conclusion

This paper has theoretically proposed ways that IMMERSE, an educational metaverse language learning platform, can enhance and transform the learning experience of ESP students. It also aimed at introducing this platform to ESP language instructors and practitioners who wish to provide their students with more engaging ways of communicating, interacting, and collaborating in contextualized settings. The pedagogical use of VR for language learning is gaining attention. VR is an integral part of the Metaverse technologies, which makes it necessary for ESP instructors to implement this technology in their lessons and for ESP students to familiarize themselves with it.

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Supporting Italian Language Learning through Digital Tools: the 5 Most Common Difficulties of Greek Cypriot Dialect Speakers and Ways of Enhancing Learning through Technology

Eftychia Xerou
Cyprus University of Technology Cyprus

Abstract

Nowadays there is a large number of available digital technologies to enhance foreign language learning (learning applications [15], digital games [22], etc.) and improve one or more of the four different basic skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening). Digital technologies are transforming the way a foreign language is taught, learnt, and used, such as creating contextualised learning scenarios [9], through dialogic interactive media for speaking [21], with the use of chatbots for improving writing skills [2], etc. In this study five of the most common difficulties that Greek Cypriot dialect speakers have, during Italian language learning are presented and the types of the errors are briefly analysed. Furthermore, ways of improving the process of Italian language learning through the integration of specific digital tools into teaching and learning are presented, aiming for the improvement of those specific difficulties. Language teachers today are faced with so many options for using technology to enhance language learning that it can be overwhelming and challenging to identify the tool for a particular goal [13]. The present study aims to demonstrate the most common learning difficulties Greek-Cypriot speakers face when learning Italian as a foreign language. As it is a completely under-researched field, the study also aims to propose technology-oriented solutions to these difficulties and challenges.

Keywords: *Italian language; difficulties; digital tools; technology;*

1. Introduction

Within the fascinating field of foreign language learning, many attempts have been made to explain challenges that interfere with success in learning a foreign language [8]. A variety of factors are affecting the levels of success in foreign language learning such individual factors: learners characteristics [6], learning styles [8], affective components [14], motivation [22], beliefs [12], attitude and character [22] and external factors: different types of technology for innovation [4], [19], political factors [22]. It is stated that first language interferes with second language learning through different ways. For example, the level of proficiency of the first language seems to have positive or negative impact in second language learning [22], the age [6], etc. Human beings approach any problem with an existing set of cognitive structures and calling upon prior experiences and cognitive structures to find a solution [6]. Regarding language learning, the interference effect of the native language on the target (the second language) is very common ([6]

and one of the main consequences of this language transfer are the interference errors [24].

2. Literature review

2.1 Linguistic Landscape of Cyprus

The Greek Cypriot community is diglossic, or triglossic [17] as the language of instruction is Standard Modern Greek (SMG) whereas the mother tongue of the students is Greek Cypriot Dialect (GCD) [17], [18], and katharevousa, 'Puristic Greek' [19] (used in religious ceremonies) is simultaneously used. Furthermore, the English language has a spread and growing influence in Cyprus [20].

2.2 Second Language Acquisition and the Interference

Even though the research on second language acquisition has been under the way for a long time and on a large scale, many researchers and educators try to find out the factors affecting second language Acquisition (SLA) [22]. Many theories have been created to meet the needs of the learners of specific time periods [7] The Communicative language Teaching is one of the latest humanistic approaches [25]and is the prevalent approach of the last decades and it emphasize on communication [8] as it makes use of real-life [2]. The first language interferes in the acquisition of the second language and it is applicable universally [1]. The native language interference is the most immediately noticeable source of error among second language learners, however, is often positively transferred as well [8].

2.3 Technology and Language Learning

Computers have been used for language teaching since the 1960s [26] and are widely used. They are considered an important element of language learning and teaching [26]. Furthermore, information and communication technologies (ICT) have improved the quality of educational services provided [5].

3. Five Most Common Difficulties of Greek Cypriot Dialect Speakers and Ways of Enhancing Learning through Technology

3.1 The Formal Form – Lei formale

Addressing someone formally in Greek, the second person plural is used (pronoun "You" in plural). In Italian language the second person singular, Tu (You) is used for informal, written, or oral interactions and the third person singular Lei, (She) is used to address someone formally in written or oral interactions. A very effective method to affront this difficulty is to offer to the students the possibility of interacting with both ways (formal and informal). This can be done through platforms and sites that offer the creation of interactive activities and creation of quizzes (multiple choice, true or false, short answers etc.) like Socrative, where both ways to address a person can be used and students can interact.

3.2 The Sound of The Letter H

In Greek, the letter H, is always pronounced and it has two distinct pronunciations: [ç] and [x]. In the Italian language the letter H is not pronounced, it has a graphic meaning, and it is also used to give a stronger sound ([k]). This represents an important phonetic difficulty since one of the first verbs that a student learns in Italian Language is the verb "Avere", (to have), that contains the letter H in 4 different persons (I, you, she/he, they). A very effective method of learning is to allow students to observe their written production and listen to it at the same time. This possibility is offered by Book creator. In this content creator platform, a student can create his book, add characters, images etc., and hear the books as well. Students can share their books through a link.

3.3 The e and the è

An additional difficulty usually encountered by students and not specifically by students with Greek as their mother tongue, is the distinction of e and è. While the sound is very little different è is pronounced as /ɛ/, and è is pronounced as /e/, they differ in written production. "E" means "and", and it is a conjunction used for connecting words and phrases. È is the third person of the verb essere (to be). Recording applications are very important to distinguish the differences between e and è, students have the possibility to hear their voice and reflect on the pronunciation (Audacity, Vocaroo).

3.4 The Noun Genders

In Greek language there are three genders of a noun, masculine, feminine and neutral. In Italian language there are two genders of nouns (masculine o feminine), which are not associated with the characteristics of the noun. For example, il gelato (the ice cream eng., το παγωτό ελλ.) is masculine in Italian and neutral in Greek. This often confuses the students since there is not a similarity with the previous languages the learnt. A very interactive way of practising the classification of the nouns is practising gender division through applications and create short phrases with nouns and adjectives, through animation applications (like PowToon, Pixton, Storyjumber etc). In those applications short comics could be created, with dialogs, and the addition of context (characters, background etc.).

3.5 The Double Consonants

A difficulty that seems to remain even after years of learning the Italian Language is the recognition of double consonants in oral and in written production. The double consonants in Modern Greek do not have different pronunciation (only in few cases). The double consonants in Italian language are very frequent and they are representing a longer sound in spoken production and in reading. The importance of the double consonants relies on the fact that in some cases they can modify the meaning of a word, for example: cassa (cashier) and casa (house), nono (ninth) and nonno (grandfather) etc. One effective way of recognizing and learning the words is a flashcard activity, as students mentally link the image to the correspondent word and help them memorize the connection between them (Canva and Quizlet).

4. Conclusion

An understanding of the L1 syntactical structure and the type of errors made in L2 will assist the teaching and learning process by allowing an individualised learning program for each learner [5]. It is also suggested that teachers should always employ the appropriate teaching and learning methodologies and strategies based on the needs and expectations of their students [10]. It is very important to understand student's linguistic background and motivate them in learning a new foreign language and understand structures and uses.

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Artificial Intelligence for Language Learning

Letizia Cinganotto[1]
University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy[1]

Abstract

The use of technologies for language learning has been recommended by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, as also highlighted in the Council Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019). In remote and blended or hybrid educational scenarios, such as the ones related to the pandemic, learning technologies are crucial and they will likely remain essential in the future of education. Within this framework, ICALL (Intelligent Computer Assisted Language Learning) has been exploiting the potential of Artificial Intelligence for developing and improving language competences.

In the academic year 2020-21, a research project was carried out with a sample of Italian university students, to experiment a program for language learning, based on Artificial Intelligence, named "SmartClass" by Robotel in the English syllabus. The research aimed at investigating the potential of Artificial Intelligence for learning English as a Foreign Language, adopting a multi-method approach, and using mainly qualitative tools. Through this program, it was possible to create tailored interactive activities, to assign them to the students and to grade them quickly. The program helped students practice all language skills, and increase their speaking practice-time by using audio recording, video recording and AI technology-based pronunciation exercises. AI has turned out to be the added value of the program, according to the students' feedback collected during the focus groups. A specific virtual classroom was created on the university platform, so that the students could interact and exchange ideas and doubts in the forum and in the live sessions with the professor and the tutor. The forum offered the opportunity to discuss relevant linguistic and sociolinguistic issues, an alternative way to teach and learn a foreign language. The SWOT analysis posted by the students in the forum provided interesting input related to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the program. The students particularly appreciated the modular tailor-made pathway, the immediate feedback, the possibility to record one's own voice and to improve pronunciation and oral skills. They all recognized the added value of Artificial Intelligence for language learning.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, ICT, English as a foreign language, language learning.*

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium, profound changes have affected educational contexts and beyond. The evolution of information and communication technologies, European and global strategic policies, and new pedagogical paradigms have greatly impacted learning processes and contexts, including language teaching and learning. Increasingly, experiences that feed on informal environments to complement the formality of educational institutions have occurred, especially in these post-pandemic times, which

lead us to overcome the boundaries of school walls, by moving into a digital dimension and taking advantage of mobile fruition, without spatial-temporal borders. Relational and interaction dynamics have changed, processes around which today's society revolves. New learning environments are mainly interactive, in the modularity and flexibility of the furnishings, as well as devices (blackboards, PCs, tablets, smartphones), and digital creativity software are interactive, granular, and modular, thanks to the phenomenon of Open Educational Resources (OER). All this is happening in a scenario that is also undergoing a major transformation: the era of Web 3.0 in which it is no longer just people who are connected (as in the era of Web 2.0) but also meanings. The intelligence that governs the new processes becomes artificial, and technologies will become more and more crucial in the next future educational scenarios, as also foreseen by the OECD in the "Four OECD Scenarios for Schooling"[1].

The European Commission [2] and the Council of Europe [3] had encouraged the use of technologies for enhancing language learning and CLIL long before the pandemic, highlighting the potential of webtools, repositories and Open Educational Resources to increase the students' motivation and participation, to improve their learning outcomes and to foster deep learning.
Among the different research strands on the use of technologies for language learning, ICALL [4], or Intelligent Computer Assisted Language Learning can unveil new scenarios and new opportunities for 21st century students.

2. Artificial Intelligence for language learning

Artificial intelligence is "the final frontier of technological progress, potentially determining the trajectory of humanity." This is according to Sam Altman, CEO of OPEN AI, a nonprofit research center for ethical and fair artificial intelligence, born in 2015 from an insight of visionary Elon Musk and since July 2019 consortium in partnership with Microsoft. "A melting pot of innovation, technology, expertise and desire for change" with the goal of "bringing the artificial intellect not only to emulate what humans can do but indeed to exceed in the future what human capabilities are."

What exactly is meant by 'Artificial Intelligence'? There is no single, unanimously accepted definition of "artificial intelligence", nor is it to be understood as a technology in its own right, but rather a combination of different technologies that, put together, enable machines to act with seemingly human-like levels of intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is thus the set of algorithms, technologies and techniques that make devices and software smarter and provide them with capabilities that mimic human behavior.

Artificial intelligence techniques are also dramatically expanding automatic language processing capabilities. From the emergence of voice assistants (Siri, Alexa, Google, etc.), to computer-assisted machine translations, the evolution of AI is virtually unstoppable: language interfaces with interactive functions (chatbots), adaptive pathways, and virtual learning environments with pedagogical agent systems are the latest application experiments of the new web age that can really enhance the effectiveness of online language learning.
"ICALL has made great strides computationally, linguistically, and pedagogically in its almost forty years of existence. […] Yet, ICALL systems are not in widespread use and

the group of researchers in ICALL remains small. The main underlying reason for this is that the development of intelligent language tutoring system is a complicated and labour-intensive process" [4].

This quotation highlights the challenges of ICALL that should be further explored and investigated in future research.

3. A research project

In academic year 2020-21 a research project was carried out on a sample of University' students, within an academic course of English language delivered fully online as a part of the telematic curriculum provided by Università Telematica degli Studi IUL, Italy. The project was aimed at experimenting the potential of an English program based on Artificial Intelligence, named Robotel, SmartClass[5].

SmartClass is an innovative artificial intelligence-based language learning program created by a Canadian company, Robotel and launched in Italy by "La Scuola Sei" publishing group.

The program allows teachers to create interactive activities of various types, to assign them to students based on their level of language proficiency, and to quickly assess them. It is an innovative and engaging learning experience that aims at developing and reinforcing all language skills in an integrated way. The added value of the program is especially the audio and video recording and speech recognition of pronunciation, made possible by Artificial Intelligence-based technology. Audio and video activities are recorded and delivered in order to foster authentic exposure to the language.

The Artificial Intelligence system offers immediate feedback to students that allows them to truly reflect on their learning and progress, activating meta-cognition and meta-reflection, and aiming at one's continuous improvement.

SmartClass English curriculum has over 2,500 activities covering the A1 to B2 levels. Almost 50% of these are auto-graded, saving enormous time for teachers. These exercises cover all linguistic skills with a focus on speaking and pronunciation activities. Students love the engagement provided by the digital content, its dynamism, and originality. The platform and content can be used with computers, tablets, and smartphones in class or remotely.

IUL University students were offered the opportunity to experiment the SmartClass program for English free of charge, after administering a learning-styles test and an entry test that would assign a learning path appropriate to their level of language proficiency.

The research project aimed at monitoring the learning outcomes and reactions of the students, through qualitative tools such as forum posts, interviews and focus groups carried out online, considering the challenges due to the pandemic.

Results and findings were analyzed and commented following the thematic analysis [5] which allows the researcher to group comments and reactions according to main categories. A final report of the results of the project was published in Italian [6].

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[5] https://www.robotel.com/

The reactions of the students were particularly rewarding: they really enjoyed the program because of the ease of use and technological settings and the effectiveness of the exercises, especially those based on speech recognition.

"Pronunciation was my weak point, now I am confident that I can repeat, repeat and improve."

"I would recommend the program to my colleagues, especially if you work, you can save time and study English."

"I practice with SmartClass twenty minutes every morning before going to work. This is my suggestion for my colleagues to make the most of the course."

These are some of the comments from the students, showing their enthusiasm and interest in the program.

The modularity and flexibility of the course are some features of the program highlighted by the students: the program can be adapted to their actual skill level, overcoming the most common problems related to heterogeneous ability classes typical of Italian schools and universities.

3.1. The forum

The virtual classroom created on the University platform was the main learning environment where students could share their ideas and feedback about the program, and it also provided the opportunity for further reflections and insights on various issues related to language learning.

For example, a very interesting discussion was held in a specific thread in relation to the varieties of the English language adopted by the Robotel "SmartClass" program: reflections on the differences between British English and American English were elicited, also referring to the relevant cultural background. The forum post of a student provided an opportunity for an interesting linguistic reflection involving the entire virtual class, emphasizing the close relationship between language and culture, and guiding the students toward greater "language awareness", the linguistic awareness referred to in the Council Recommendation [3]. This may represent an alternative way of teaching language and grammar to students, starting from their own doubts and curiosities emerged from using a program such as SmartClass. Forum discussions could be the starting point for further investigation of the actual pragmatic application of grammatical rules, through a sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspective, contextualizing and making more meaningful the use of the program.

A specific thread of the forum was dedicated to the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats): each student was asked to post reflections and considerations about the program. Here is an example:
S: The exercises for comprehension and the opportunity to speak and record one's own voice in English to improve dialogue skills were very interesting.
W: Feedback and corrections were not always readable (for example dictations). I also had difficulty understanding what exercises have already been completed (end point).

O: Opportunity to improve comprehension and dialogue, review grammar and vocabulary.
T: The placement test was difficult to me compared to the exercises related to my level. The risk is that if you practice things you already know, the course becomes boring.

Another weakness highlighted by the students was the individual dimension of practice and exercise, with no exchange or interaction with peers provided by the program itself: completing exercises individually and recording one's own voice, with no interaction with other learners, may become boring.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The students' reflections collected through forum posts, interviews and focus groups showed overall satisfaction with the program, especially with its potential related to immediate feedback and speech recognition, with particular focus on receptive and productive oral skills, which are not easy to find in other similar programs.

Some slight criticism also emerged, such as the excessive rigidity in terms of punctuation, capitalization, and lowercase, which the system counts as errors, as well as the lack of a check-list of tasks already completed that could help guide students in the next steps.

Another weakness is the lack of a general community of learners also at international level, which could allow learners from all over the world to get in touch with each other, to exchange ideas, suggestions, doubts, which would place the dimension of social learning also informal, alongside formal learning.

Therefore, it is worth noting that, synchronous and collaborative tasks, fostering exchange, socialization and group work would represent an added value to the program. In fact, it was perceived by the students as effective and interesting but lacking social interaction with peers: oral and online interaction would be appreciated and would help foster the four modes of communication, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Companion Volume (2020): reception, production, interaction, mediation.

The students appreciated the role of the teacher and the tutor who responded to various needs, assigned scores, changed the tasks, if necessary, according to any problems encountered, and this fostered participation in discussions on various language issues, providing constant valuable feedback to learners.

As general concluding remarks, Artificial Intelligence may really help improve language skills, provided that the learner does not feel isolated, but as a member of a virtual classroom or of a larger community of peers, where he/she can interact, exchange opinions, receive and provide feedback, also under the guide and supervision of teachers/tutors.
Artificial Intelligence can be more effective if integrated by human relationships, also enhancing socio-emotional learning.

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Student- Oriented-Learning Strategy for Learning Chinese Numerical Proverbs Based on Natural Language Processing Online Database

He Zongjin[1], Wong Ling Yann[2], Adi Yasran Abdul Aziz[3]
University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

As a result of the global advancement of Intelligence technology, a growing number of academics are attempting to enhance their classroom innovation by employing a variety of virtual learning strategies. In the past 10 years, numerous experts have sought to innovate the language-learning process by advocating a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered instructional approaches. As one of the most difficult languages in the world, Chinese is steeped in history and culture that dates back thousands of years. Students' ability to comprehend the semantic meanings of proverbs is influenced by these traits. In order to increase students' comprehension and application of Chinese numerical proverbs, this study will present an innovation method based on a Natural language processing online database, which will serve as an online platform for non-native Chinese learners learning Chinese proverbs. This online database, referred to as the Thousands of Chinese Studies website, can assist learners in obtaining comprehensive information on Chinese numerical proverbs, thereby saving search time and enhancing study efficiency.

This study employs an enhancement task design for learning numerical Chinese proverbs in order to compare the amount of knowledge acquired through student-centered learning strategies by using online resource which has been well developed and can be effectively functioned through natural language processing searching keys. This is an experimental study related how to use online resource to lead the learners to acquire knowledge of Chinese numerical proverbs through enhancement tasks designed by the researchers of this study.

This study will shed light on how the enhancement tasks designed by this study can be used to measure meta-learning abilities of learners in comprehending numerical concepts of Chinese proverbs based on online language resources, and adopting proper knowledge to conduct homework related to Chinese proverbs.

Keywords: *Student-oriented-learning; Natural Language Processing; Chinese numerical proverbs; meta-learning*

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition of Natural Language Processing

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is the computerized approach to analyze text based on theories and technologies (Elizabeth D. Liddy, 2001). Meanwhile, it has always been used to analyze and represent naturally occurring texts at one or more levels of linguistic

analysis to achieve human-like language processing for various activities or applications. In this study, NLP can be used as an online platform for language learners to learn Chinese proverbs.

1.2 Definition of Chinese numerical proverbs

The Chinese numerical proverbs are a distinct subset of Chinese proverbs. The recognition of numbers in proverbs and the profound connotations reflect Chinese ancestors' cultural thoughts on many important issues (primarily philosophical and sociological ones) related to the ancient Chinese society. Hence, the accurate definition of Chinese numerical proverb is that it is a type of traditional Chinese idiomatic expression, most of which consist of four characters and two characters are figures. Numeral conceptions of Chinese proverbs can be categorized into different semantic meanings such as "cause and effect", "plurality", "all sort of", "few", "unhappy event", "traditional ethical practice", "talent", "identity of ancient people", "career", "rhetorical style", "perfect level", "a mess" and "direction and locality". Meanwhile, Chinese numerical proverbs carry three layers of meanings- literal, semantic and cultural meanings. For example, in "五花八门" (miscellaneous), the literal meaning is "five flowers and eight doors", and semantic meaning is "all kinds of", and for cultural meaning is that "五花" refers to five characters in Ancient Chinese alchemy which includes gold, wood, water, fire and soil. The term of "八门" refers to "Bagua Zhen" in ancient Chinese geomantic omen which includes eight directions- Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, North, South, East and West. The cultural meaning of this proverb indicates "many and manifold", normally refer to social changes in ancient Chinese society. The literal and semantic meanings can be explained by NLP but except cultural meaning of numerical proverbs.

1.3 Connections between Natural Language Data Processing and Chinese Numerical proverbs

Thousands of Chinese Studies is one of online resources which can better help non-native learners to study Chinese numerical proverbs.
Learners may use a student-centered learning skill which is proposed by this study to help non-native non-native Chinese learners to learn semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through NLP searching functions.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study focused on knowledge relate formations and structures of Chinese numerical proverbs, applications of NLP and student- centered learning skill to help non-native language learners for comprehending semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs. There are three research objectives in this study:
1. To explore formations and structures of Chinese numerical proverbs
2. To analyse numerical conceptions conveyed by Chinese numerical proverbs
3. To examine non-native learners in comprehending literal, semantic, and cultural meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through enhancement tasks.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Natural Language Processing

The NLP translation of Chinese numerical proverbs lacked cultural contexts since the translator ignored cultural meaning of numerical conception, for example, "低三下四" (humble) means "drop 3 or 4 pegs", the numeral conception of this proverb ignored well explained in the level of literal meaning. Language learners can further search semantic meaning of this proverb through the NLP searching functions and online resources related to Chinese proverbs such as Reverso and *Chengyu* Great Dictionary. This NLP searching functions and online resources help researchers understand the numeral conception of "three" and "four" are used to indicates attitude lower social status people. Meta-learning strategy is one of the learning skills can be applied in Chinese classroom to examine comprehending ability of non-native Chinese learners in reflecting semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through oral and writing expression.

2.2 Chinese numerical proverbs

In recent decades, online dictionaries became one of the popular learning and teaching materials for non-native Chinese learners to obtain knowledge about Chinese proverbs, however these materials have limitations due to the large quantity of Chinese proverbs had been created during each era of Chinese history.
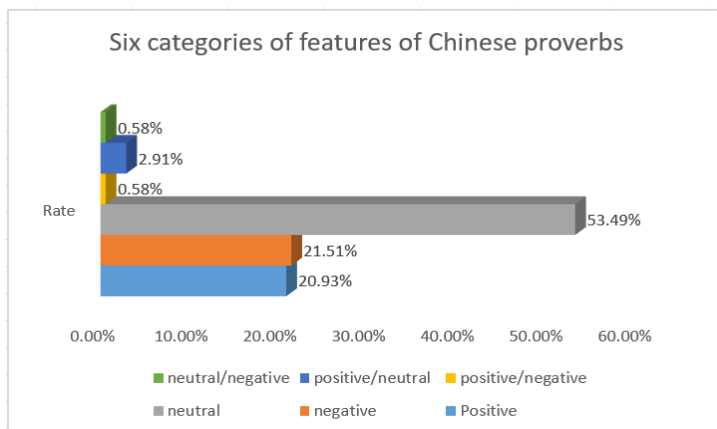
Fig.1: Six categories of features of Chinese proverbs

Characteristic in Chinese numerical proverbs refer to the language features of Chinese proverbs. According to the Fig. 1, Chinese numerical proverbs can be divided into six categories. Consisting neutral meaning is majority, followed by language features reflecting negative meaning proverbs, third is proverbs expressing positive meanings, fourth is proverb indicating positive and neutral meanings, and the last two are the proverbs carrying neutral and negative meanings and, positive and negative meanings.
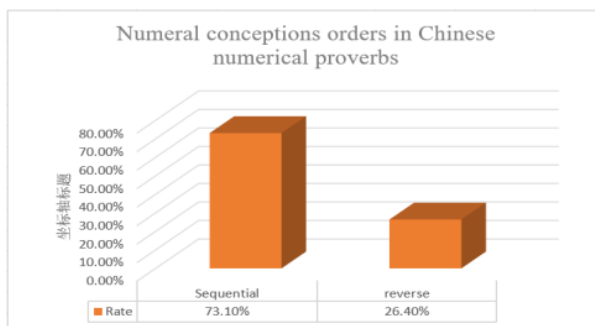
Fig.2: Numeral conceptions orders in Chinese numerical proverbs

Fig 2 illustrated the figure orders of Chinese numerical proverbs, they are two types, mostly are sequential, small figure followed big figure like "一举两得" (serve a double purpose). Another are reverse, big figure placed before small figure, for instance, "九死一生" (barely to avoid death).
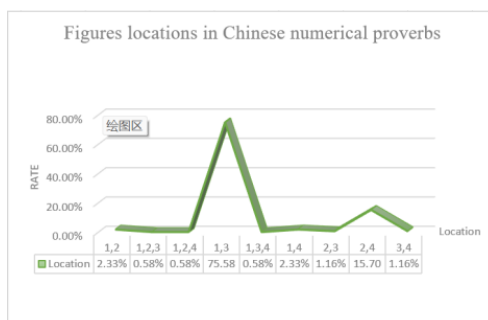
Fig.3: Data collection of Chinese numerical proverbs' location and structure

There are eight locations of figures can be found in Chinese numerical proverbs, the first combination is located in the first and third characters, such as "五大三粗" (big and tall), the second combination is placed in the second and fourth characters, like "独一无二" (the one and the only).

3. Methodology

3.1 Natural Language Processing method

NLP is a subfield of AI that helps people and computers communicate. It evolved from Machine Translation (MT) during World War II (1999). First, computers were used to translate human languages like Chinese to English. Information is sent via the combined symbols of data. Converting human language to computer language made communicating with machines easier. In this study, NLP can facilitate non-native Chinese learners to learn Chinese numerical proverbs through online data resources.

3.2 Natural Language Processing Application

NLP integrates computational linguistics (modelling of human language based on rules) with statistics, machine learning, and deep learning models. Together, these technologies allow machine to interpret human language in the form of text or speech. NLP can help non-native Chinese learners understand Chinese numerical proverbs in various aspects. For example, the Thousands of Chinese Studies website used the NLP approach as a theoretical framework to explain knowledge and semantic meaning of Chinese numerical proverbs such as amounts of characters to form proverbs, grammatical functions and rules to form proverbs, structures of the proverbs, literal and semantic meanings of proverbs, and so on. Through this information, non-native learners can understand the formations, structures and semantic meanings. In this study, enhancement task is used to identify correctness of non-native Chinese learners in comprehending semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through various translation methods.

In addition, there are few online resources applied NLP methods as searching functions, such as Reverso, one of the online data resources focuses more on languages used to apply translation methods to help language learners for comprehending semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs. literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs.

3.3 Student-Oriented Learning

Student-oriented learning aims to build learner autonomy and independence by giving students the skills, foundation, and schemata needed to achieve performance objectives. Students will learn how to use *Hanyu Daquan*（《*汉语大全*》）(A complete collection of Chinese) search engines to self-study Chinese numerical proverbs online and enhance their skills. This study illustrates how successfully respondents use NLP to learn Chinese numerical proverbs.

3.4 Enhancement Task

Enhancement task is adopted to examine the comprehending ability of non-native Chinese learners in perceiving literal, semantic and cultural meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through NLP searching functions and students-centered learning skill. In this task, there are 12 questions related to literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs. The target respondents of this study are Malay and Indian learners.

Target respondents will be given 30 minutes to answer this enhancement task. They are allowed to use NLP searching functions from the internet and refer to online resources to search and learn the knowledge, formations, structures and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs showed in the enhancement task. They will apply student-centered learning skill to acquire literal and semantic meaning of Chinese numerical proverbs showed in the enhancement task. These respondents are without knowledge of Chinese numerical proverbs before they participated in this task. They only have basis Chinese language proficiency to recognize the characters formed from the Chinese numerical proverbs. Each question in this enhancement task is showed in the Fig 4:
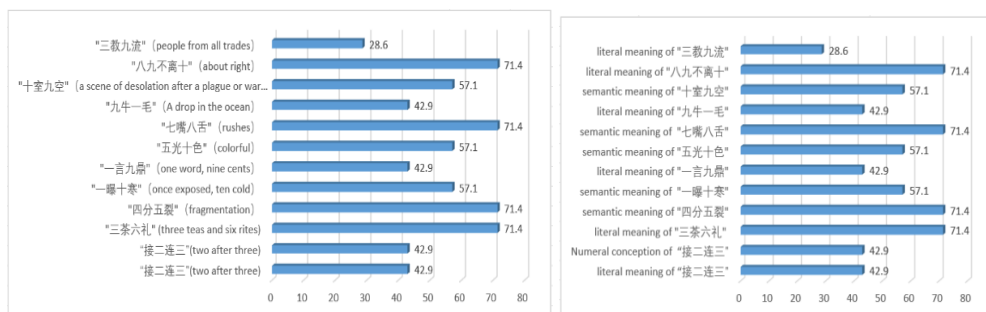
Fig. 4. The Correctness of Target Respondents in Perceiving Literal and Semantic Meaning of Chinese Numerical Proverbs

The statistical figures show in the Fig.4 reflected the correctness of each question answered by the target respondents.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

From the respond of target respondents, this study can summarize the research outcome below:

To perceive the literal meaning of "接二连三" (two after three), almost 40% of respondents were able to comprehend the literal meaning of this proverbs. To comprehend the numeral conceptions of "接二连三", almost 40% of respondents were able to answer correct. To perceive the literal meaning of "三茶六礼" (three teas and six rites), almost 70% of respondents were able to understand the literal meaning of this proverb and its cultures. To understand the semantic meaning of "四分五裂" (fragmentation), almost 70% of respondents were able to comprehend the semantic meaning of this proverb. To comprehend the semantic meaning of "一暴十寒" (once exposed, ten cold), more than 50 % of respondents were able to answer the semantic meaning of this proverb correct. To identify the literal meaning of "一言九鼎" (one word, nine cents), almost 40% of respondents were able to guess correct. To perceive semantic meaning of "五光十色" (colorful), more than 50% of respondents were able to comprehend correct. To guess the semantic meaning of "七嘴八舌" (rushes), more than 70% of respondents were able to answer correct. To comprehend the literal meaning of "九牛一毛" (a drop in the ocean), almost of 40% were able to provide accurate answer. To perceive the semantic meaning of "十室九空" (a scene of desolation after a plague or war when the population is decimated or fleed), more than 50% of respondents were able to guess correct. To perceive the literal meaning of "八九不离十" (about right), more than 70 % of respondents were able to choose the correct answer. To perceive the literal meaning of "三教九流" (people from all trades), less than 38% of respondents were able to provide correct answer.

The research finding of this study showed that non-native Chinese learners were able to comprehend the literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through the NLP searching function and the knowledge of online resources. The translations' method adopted by the translators and the editors to explain literal, semantic meanings of Chinese proverbs and various languages especially in English helped the respondents further understood the actual meaning of Chinese numerical proverbs either literal or

semantic meanings. Translation methods also played an important role into guide the respondents comprehend numeral conceptions of Chinese numerical proverbs, therefore, they were able to perceive the numeral conceptions of the Chinese numerical proverbs in this enhancement task. The target respondents were able to adopt student-centered learning skill to find out the knowledge related to the formations, structures, literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs in the enhancement task. Only the respondents were not familiar and understand the actual meaning of numeral conceptions of Chinese numerical proverbs. They found low percentage of correctness in comprehending the literal meaning and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs such as the proverb- "三教九流".

Meta-learning skill helped target respondents knew how to choose the correct answer to reflect literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs. They noted down their understandings about the actual meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through writing short notes in their enhancement task, so that the Chinese teachers could examine their comprehending abilities through their writing notes.

Concluding Remarks

Comprehending the numeral conceptions is the important key for understanding literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs. The NLP searching functions, online resources and students-centered learning skill can be applied in the Chinese classroom to help non-native Chinese learners without high Chinese language proficiency to learn knowledge and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs independently. This study revealed that non-native Chinese learners were able to comprehend literal and semantic meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through this learning methods. To enhance comprehending ability of non-native Chinese learners, enquiring knowledge of Chinese numerical proverbs, more enhancement tasks should be designed and developed. In order to guide them more familiar to the searching functions of NLP, meta-learning skills used in reflecting the literal, semantic and cultural meanings of Chinese numerical proverbs through reading online original texts.

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Implementation of the Hybrid Modality as a Consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ana Guadalupe Torres
Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico[1]

Abstract

Due to the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), educational institutions in Mexico and the world began to close their schools to avoid risks of contagion. With the implementation of this measure, all students and teachers changed their face-to-face sessions and activities to the virtual modality in an emergent way, which caused various problems for both teachers and students who were not prepared for this sudden change but which were gradually resolved. At the beginning of the decline of the pandemic, the University of Veracruz selected the hybrid learning modality as an alternative to start a safe and orderly return to the classrooms. This article describes the implementation of hybrid learning at the Poza Rica Language Center and the advantages and disadvantages appreciated by the pioneer teachers in this modality. For this research, we implemented a qualitative methodology whose paradigm focuses on getting a deep knowledge about people, communities, contexts, variables or situations from the participants' very own words. The data collection was carried out from a semi-structured interview. Findings suggest that although hybrid learning is here to stay, continuous training of technicians and educators is necessary to achieve a better academic experience for both teachers and students.

Keywords: *Education, Hybrid learning, technology, console.*

1. Introduction

SARS-Cov-2 is a highly contagious virus that caused the disease called COVID-19 (coronavirus) and spread to all continents of the world causing a pandemic. The World Health Organization, through the Strategic Plan for the preparation and response to the new coronavirus, called on world leaders to take the necessary measures to prevent further spread of it, through national strategies to contain community transmission. One of these strategies was the closure of non-essential workplaces and educational establishments [1].

In Mexico, the Ministry of Public Education in conjunction with the country's Ministry of Health agreed on preventive measures for public educational institutions at all levels, including participation in voluntary isolation and the adoption of distance learning [2].

Two years into the pandemic, having implemented suggested strategies to contain it, the world has never been in a better position to end COVID-19 as a global health emergency as the number of reported weekly deaths nears an all-time low since the pandemic began and two-thirds of the world population have been vaccinated [3].

In Mexico, the return to face-to-face classes began to be planned in May 2021 [4], to be carried out in the 2021-2022 period in a voluntary, responsible and orderly manner in

compliance with the provisions of the health authorities to basic, upper middle and higher education [5].

At the University of Veracruz, the start of face-to-face activities was also given voluntarily for those students who did not know the facilities due to the pandemic and it was estimated that by April 2022, 75% of the students would already be in the classrooms [6]. Finally, the return to the facilities was established for all members of the university community in August 2022 [7].

Thinking about a safe return to classes, the current university administration proposed in advance the creation of hybrid classrooms as a new way of working: virtual, face-to-face and bimodality after the pandemic. For this, a total of 430 hybrid classrooms were installed in the different faculties of the five university regions [8].

The Poza Rica Language Center benefited from 4 classrooms equipped for this learning modality, which began to be piloted by volunteer teachers at the end of the 2021-2022 school year and are now used normally in the current 2022-2023 period. It has been noted that teachers have experienced various problems both in piloting and in current classes.

Therefore, this research work aims to describe the implementation of hybrid learning at the Poza Rica Language Center and the advantages and disadvantages appreciated by the pioneer teachers in this modality. For this, the following questions were posed: What are the advantages and disadvantages of this modality so far? What are the main problems that teachers have faced? Questions that must have an immediate answer to provide better attention to students who choose to learn a language in this learning.

2. Background

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers around the world went through adverse situations as they were not prepared to work in the virtual modality. Authors such as Alcántara (2020) [9] and Malo (2020) [10] agree that one of the greatest impacts of emerging digital education in times of pandemic has been the poor preparation of teachers in managing educational platforms to teach online classes. Students also faced stressful situations due to internet connection problems, mainly in rural areas [11]. Due to these situations, both teachers and students learned resilience, a positive and adaptive characteristic that human beings have in the face of traumatic, stressful or painful events (Masten, cited by Becoña, (2006) [12], and they had to adapt to the new normality and to work online. When migrating to the online modality, educational authorities and teachers reflected on the need to be prepared for emergency situations with different learning modalities. In all parts of the world, the COVID-19 crisis has required substantial efforts to create new infrastructure to enable more demanding forms of technology-enhanced learning, such as video conferencing [13].

In this sense, the hybrid teaching-learning model, which emerged some time before the pandemic, combines elements of the traditional face-to-face modality and the virtual mode. Hybrid learning is also known as mixed or combined learning that first arose with the aim of reducing the mobility of students to schools [14]. This type of learning was adopted at the University of Veracruz in 2016 as mixed or multimodal learning characterized by combining face-to-face and virtual sessions in the teaching-learning process using information and communication technologies (ICT) [15].

Differences have now been made between what is known as the hybrid learning model and the blended or mixed modality: Hybrid and blended learning are often confused, and both have many of the same instructional components. However, both are different learning models. Blended learning combines face-to-face instruction with asynchronous learning methods, in which students complete exercises online and watch instructional videos in their spare time. Hybrid learning is a teaching method in which teachers simultaneously instruct in-person and remote students. Asynchronous teaching methods may be used to complement synchronous face-to-face instruction in hybrid learning models [16].

The University of Veracruz has already begun its return to face-to-face classes in the period August 2022-January 2023 with a total of 434 hybrid classrooms in order to promote a diversity of learning environments using a variety of media and resources where the interaction between students and their teachers is established [8].

The Poza Rica Language Center has offered seven English hybrid courses in this period, favoring the method of simultaneous instruction to face-to-face and remote students, who have been working since August 2022. Before this, the teachers had to attend training sessions given by academic technicians from the institution who indicated how to use the technological tools of the hybrid classroom that allow communication with remote students. These tools are:

- A console or hub as controller of the necessary components for video conferences.
- A desktop computer and an HDMI adapter with 3 ports to allow communication between the computer and the console.
- A Main camera to transmit different parts of the classroom.
- A content camera that focuses on the front of the classroom where the content board and display stand are located.
- A microphone that allows to clearly transmit audio from anywhere in the classroom.
- A speaker that allows sound to be heard clearly throughout the classroom.
- A screen that displays remote participants or shared content.
- A projector to transmit content.
- Acoustic insulators that cancel external noise and improve the quality of audio transmission.

Work in the hybrid modality is carried out mainly using the Microsoft Teams application through which remote students are connected and the videoconference is transmitted [17].

All of these implements must be carefully used to work optimally, otherwise various problems can arise when trying to start the hybrid class.
The following section describes the methodology used to investigate the experience of teachers who piloted this modality last semester and those who are currently working on it.

3. Methodology

For this research the qualitative methodology was implemented. It focuses on understanding phenomena and exploring them from the perspective of the participants in their natural environment and in relation to the context. This type of research usually raises questions before, during and after data collection and analysis [18].

3.1 Instrument

Data collection was carried out from a semi-structured interview based on a set of issues or questions that serve as a guide, and where the interviewer is free to ask additional questions to specify concepts or obtain more information [18].
The interview focused on 4 main categories: technical issues, academic issues, advantages and disadvantages in the perception of the teacher. The results obtained were concentrated in a condensation table.

3.2 Participants

The participants were 8 teachers from the Poza Rica Language Center who participated in the previous piloting and the ones who are currently working in the hybrid modality.

4. Results

During the February-July 2022 semester, the piloting of the hybrid classes was implemented with the participation of four teachers and with students from the Language Center. This piloting could only be carried out at the end of the period, which was the time when the classrooms were finished being installed. Currently, 7 hybrid courses are being taught with the participation of 6 teachers.

The results of the semi-structured interview conducted with 8 of the 9 pioneer teachers in this modality are shown below. These results follow up on the research objective and were recorded by means of one concentration table in which the educators' main ideas on technical and academic issues, as well as advantages and disadvantages are summarized.

HÍBRYD MODALITY	
TECHNICAL ISSUES	The training was adequate, but technical problems arose in practice.
	Configuration problems have been faced with the console (hub).
	When the console is unconfigured, remote students do not hear room audio.
	The Teams app sometimes freezes their own dialog boxes that don't allow you to see the class content in the screen.
ACADEMIC ISSUES	Teachers rely on the digital book to project it.
	They use digital material designed during the pandemic for digital classes.
	Most use the project-based methodology.
	Student-student interaction occurs mainly among those who attend the face-to-face class.
ADVANTAGES	The main advantage of this modality expressed by teachers is the opportunity for students with mobility problems to attend a remote class from wherever they are.
	Students can choose to take the class in person or virtually depending on their activities or needs.
	Students spend less on transportation.
	The sound and protection equipment is excellent for face-to-face students, also for remote ones as long as there are no faults.
DISADVANTAGES	It is difficult to control the work of a remote student who is not dedicated to studying.
	If the internet connection fails, remote students lose signal.
	When the class stops due to signal failures, the in-person students must wait.
	If you have a good activity to work in-person, sometimes it does not work with remote students.
	WhatsApp and other chats are a good link when the connection is lost, but if a remote student loses the connection, it is difficult for the teacher to know immediately because he is also giving the class in person.

Table 1. Teachers' experiences in the hybrid mode.

It is important to point out that all the participants agreed in the importance of a continuous training in order to remember the steps that must be followed in this model and remain updated in the handling of the equipment.

5. Conclusions

In this investigative work, the implementation of the hybrid modality in the English courses of the Poza Rica Language Center was studied. The results of the research include the concentration of the information provided by eight teachers who have worked with this mode since May 2022. Four categories were examined: technical issues, academic issues, advantages and disadvantages. Regarding the technical aspects, most of the participants agreed that they had had problems with the console and with the audio and

that most of the technical problems were unforeseen and had not been contemplated. Regarding academic aspects, teachers make use of the authorized digital book and teaching material of their authorship. The interaction between the students is carried out mainly with the students who attend in-person. The advantage that all the participants agreed on is the ease for students who cannot attend school to take their class at home and the main disadvantage of this modality is the time lost from the class when a technical failure occurs.

Therefore, it is concluded that the participants are in a stage of trial and error from which the positive and negative experiences must be rescued to contribute to the improvement of this modality and provide better attention to the students.
It is necessary that the students who choose this modality know in advance the technical requirements necessary to be able to study it successfully.

It is indispensable to work hand in hand with the technicians through a scholar group to publicize the aforementioned experiences and create manuals and tutorials that guide teachers in solving unforeseen problems and making decisions regarding how to evaluate learning as well as proposing guidelines on the way of working in this modality.
It is also important to accurately monitor the academic performance of students in this modality in order to take the necessary actions in the event that the failure and dropout rates are high.
The implementation of a research project that collects the perception of students regarding their learning of English in this modality is recommended.

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Language and Society

Impacts of Music on Disadvantaged Foreign Language Learning Contexts. Multimodal Insights from Bataan.

George Cremona
University of Malta, Malta

Abstract

This paper deals with one main research question: Can music serve as an adequate pedagogical tool when teaching foreign languages in a socio-economically disadvantaged area? The answers to this question will be based on the outcomes of the *Multimodal advantages: The Bataan Case study*, an ongoing sub-project of the *Multimodality in Practice* research project [1]. To answer this question, the paper adopts a socio-semiotic theoretical framework [2] based on Multimodal principles [3]. This framework is used for the analysis of a set of qualitative empirical data [4] i.e. fieldnotes, observations, teacher interviews and lesson plans designed and used to teach foreign languages to students attending the Jose De Piro Education Centre for Arts [5] in the poverty-stricken town of Pagalanggang in the Bataan region of the Philippines [6]. The paper as its main results (and as a sound answer to the research question) presents five insights derived from the socio-semiotic evaluation of a set of practical student-centered [7] music-related task-based [8] pedagogical activities which were used during lessons conducted in this disadvantaged learning context. Later, as its main conclusion, the paper suggests that notwithstanding the limitations encountered in similar disadvantaged learning contexts, even the teachers working in seemingly advantaged contexts can learn a lot from the way teachers and students use music while teaching and learning foreign languages in these at-first-glance disadvantaged and deprived situations.

Keywords: *Foreign Language teaching, Teaching through music and songs, Multimodality*

1. Introduction: The Filipino Setting

According to Termes et al [9] the Philippines is a poor country with high inequalities. In fact yearly published statistics issued by UNESCO [10] indicate a constant trend of a high majority of the whole Filipino population living below the national poverty line. The situation got even more concerning due to the Covid Pandemic. In fact, a report by the World Bank [11] indicates that:

"The Covid-19 pandemic has reversed part of the gains achieved in poverty reduction and shared prosperity. With the economic recession, the upsurge of unemployment, and fall of remittance inflows, poverty incidence has increased from 21.1 percent, in the first semester of 2018 to 23.7 percent in 2021".

Therefore, while the state – according to the 1987 Constitution [12] - guarantees the right of quality education to every Filipino at all levels and promises to take the necessary steps to make education accessible to all, and while Filipino parents are frequently willing to try their best to educate their children [13], on the other hand, Maligalig et al [14] suggest that 'with a poor family's severely limited resources, education tends to be less

prioritized over more basic needs such as food and shelter' and thus the opportunity for a family to truly move out of poverty are very limited.

In this light, as a recently published UNESCO document indicates, notwithstanding budget prioritization for Education and the intention of increasing access, Philippine education still faces a number of pertinent issues such as: "high dropout rates, a high number of repeaters, low passing grades, lack of particular language skills, failure to adequately respond and address the needs of people with special needs, overcrowded classrooms and poor teacher performances. These problems in turn resulted in a considerable number of illiterate Filipinos and out-of-school youths and graduates who are not prepared for work" [15]. To add to this, one also observes a discrepancy among the 81 provinces in the Philippines. While all the provinces face the abovementioned situation, certain provinces are poorer than the less poor ones [16].

2. Proactive drops in an ocean

Together with the goodwill of the people to evaluate this situation and its impacts, the Filipino Government frequently accepts to endorse proactive initiatives through which improvement might be sought. This, for example, happened back in 2005 when the Jose De Piro Education Centre for Arts was founded [1] in the village of Pagalanggang in the Dinalupihan Municipality of the Bataan Province. Since then, as clear through the Centre's mission statement [17] the Missionary Society of Saint Paul has launched a free-for-all education institution, which as suggested by Mallia [18] aims to reach three main goals:

1.   uses music (theory and practice knowledge) as a tool through which children and adolescents of the province are supported to keep away from perils and vices in the surrounding streets;
2.   equips students with foreign language skills through the use of music (and the students' musical knowledge) as a pedagogical tool;
3.   focuses on the students' spiritual and personal formation, therefore implementing principles of holistic education.

The Jose De Piro Education Centre for Arts has its headquarters in Pagalanggang but then also caters for 4 schools which are close to the Parish and also for a school on the Bachawan mountain.

3. Research Question and Methodology

Keeping in mind the challenges referred to above (i.e. in Section 1), specifically focusing on the mentioned lack of language skills prevalent in the Filipino context, through a case study (i.e. as a first step focusing on one particular learning context from the Philippines), this paper intends to evaluate insights obtained from qualitative data [4] collected from the Jose De Piro Education Centre for Arts and presents answers to one particular research question:

Can music serve as an effective adequate pedagogical tool when teaching foreign languages in (such) a socio-economically disadvantaged area?

The data sets analysed include field notes, observations, and lesson plans designed and used to teach foreign languages, particularly English, German and Italian to 11 to 15-year-old students attending the Centre and the schools it caters for. These data sets were collected during my three (one-month each) visits to the Centre between 2017 and 2019. After the transcription of each data set was completed, the data was interpreted by adopting the original MIRROR framework [2] based on multimodal discourse analysis principles [3].

4. Results and discussion

The socio-semiotic multimodal analysis points out five insights that clearly serve as reflections and outcomes of this research venture.

To start with, two results are directly linked to the use of music during foreign language lessons.

- Music is present and used as a pedagogical tool even in very resource-deprived and economically-disadvantaged contexts. To reach the school located on the Bachawan mountain one requires almost a two-hour off-road trip from the Jose de Piro Centre. The school is situated in an area with limited electricity and water facilities. However, as the collected data indicates, in this very deprived learning context, teachers and students still made use of music particularly through self-made instruments and singing. Furthermore, to create student-centered learning activities, teachers narrated how they frequently dedicated part of their low salary (i.e. around 400 to 500 Euro a month depending on their scale), to buy music resources for classroom use [similar to 19].

- The data also shows that based on the fact that the majority of students have music theory and practice lessons, even if not expecting high music levels, foreign language teachers use this music knowledge to conduct creative task-based foreign language learning activities [20] frequently involving students not only as passive listeners of songs but also as active composers and critics of music.

Together with these two results directly linked to the use of music in foreign language learning context, there are three other results that came out indicating that music can also serve as a tool through which deeper culture-related insights might be obtained.

- Music serves to highlight a need of change in the concept of time: Data tends to indicate that the use of music used as a pedagogical tool during foreign language lessons, serves as a motivator for students to understand and become more familiar with the concept of time, in a culture where time is not prioritized [same as 21]. One of the teachers indicated how – because of the use of music and through the use of music-related content and tools – students are intrinsically motivated to be more punctual instead of coming 'sometimes even a day late'[6] for the foreign language lesson.

- Music highlights different aspects of the concept of poverty: Several students (excluding the ones in Bachawan mentioned above) who attend the Centre have smartphone mobiles and buy internet load which they continuously use to chat, listen to music and to watch music videos. Teachers too frequently make use of these resources

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[6] Quote taken from one of the teachers' interview transcript.

while teaching foreign languages. However, this music-related situation and the way students have mobiles and use them to access their favourite music videos even during their free time indicates the result that within the same particular 'disadvantaged' situation different forms of poverty reside [same as 22]. This poverty ranges from lack of money to lack of account-keeping skills and money mismanagement, where families buy an expensive smartphone and top up their internet load but then find they do not have the necessary money for necessities such as food. Linked to this is also social poverty where family members leave the country to go and work abroad and sustain their family members by sending money from abroad. While doing this, primary caregivers such as the father and/or the mother. frequently are obliged to leave their children deprived of their presence and the longed for attention.

-      Music serves as a tool highlighting the negative aspect of competition: Results indicate that the way music is used during foreign language lessons serves to help in reducing competition among students. Whereas the national school system in the Philippines encourages students to involve themselves in all sorts of competition [same as 23] including music competitions, which frequently are sought because they increase the status of the school and of the class, all the students at the Jose De Piro Education center for arts, are constantly reminded that notwithstanding their abilities and the different levels reached, they still fit in the system, are welcome, have potential and should feel all equal.

5. Conclusion

Therefore, the abovementioned findings and their discussion serve as very valid insights through which one can answer the main research question of this paper through an affirmative reply since:

- Music (such as songs, videos and students' own compositions) effectively serves to improve the linguistic skills of the students in the Foreign language classroom, involve them and put them at the center of the lesson, and to motivate them further while learning;
- The way music is used also serves to indicate other insights related to the Filipino culture specifically linked to the way Filipinos define time, poverty and competition.

Therefore, the first conclusion reached in this paper is that the way music is used in Filipino foreign language learning contexts indicates that while many [as in 14 above] suggest that improving education levels in such disadvantaged contexts depends on improving the socio-economic poverty-stricken situation, the results above also indicate that in these people (ie. the Filipinos) there is hope that things also go the other way round i.e. that poverty could be improved through education.

Furthermore, the results above should also be followed-up through a further *so what* question. Now that these insights came out as results of this paper, one should plan future studies through which suggestions required to bring about change may be formulated[7].

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[7] This is being proposed as a suggestion for future studies due to the word-count limit in this paper.

While acknowledging the importance of embarking on this next research venture, a second conclusion from this paper should be that anyone conducting research in similar disadvantaged contexts, needs to adopt a humble open non-judgmental attitude towards what is considered or viewed as 'disadvantaged'. This attitude is required because through similar research ventures like the one presented in this paper and others that I plan to do in Bataan in the very near future, one can hopefully start moving away from the often patronising state of 'false generosity' through which educators from the West very willing often seek to just help, save and change these seemingly disadvantaged contexts (Freire, 1996).

Instead of adopting this attitude, one should seek to initiate the gradual self-evaluating process through which one learns more about himself than about the disadvantaged. To one's surprise, this evaluative non-judgmental attitude might indicate that after all others considered disadvantaged might show the advantaged ones that they too, have their own disadvantages to deal with.

Acknowledgments

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Teaching and Learning Russian as a Foreign Language at the Estonian Military Academy Nowadays.

Anna Hainoja
The Estonian Military Academy (EMA)

Abstract

The issue of learning the Russian language in Estonia has been acute for decades. In the light of today's geopolitical situation, when Estonia's Eastern neighbor unleashed a bloody war in Ukraine, the issue of learning or not-learning the Russian language is ethically and socially more important than ever. Nevertheless, this paper doesn't aim to present a full analytical review on the geopolitical, sociological nor ethical inquiries of Russian learning and teaching in Estonia. It is about the Russian language learning and teaching particularly at the Military Academy of Estonia today at its specific development and conditional point within the local society. The author of this paper tries to analyze the reasons of learning Russian, general motivational aspects of the students, give a brief overview on a short but intensive teaching period and to formulate possible ways of teaching and learners' motivating development and improvement.

Keywords: *The Estonian Military Academy, students´ motivation, Russian language learning.*

1. Introduction. Background and context.

Estonia, as a multilingual society during its whole history[8] [14], has become an Independent State since 1991 with Estonian as the state language. Before that, during the Soviet occupation period[9], Russian in Estonia was a dominant language and was taught in all the schools as a compulsary subject.

For the last 30 years the situation has been changing[10] and the role of Russian in society nowadays in general is decreasing[11]. Nevertheless the "language question"[12] is a stumbling block at many different levels of the society, especially educational — secondary education in Russian, Russian language learning and teaching as a foreign language in Estonian-medium schools etc.

As Martin Ehala puts it in the article "Ethnolinguistic Vitality and Acculturation Orientations of Russian Speakers in Estonia" even during the USSR period the Russian language skills varied according to different needs of people. For instance, "despite the fact that

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[8]"According to Hennoste (1997: 48) nine sociolinguistic periods with different characteristics for Estonian can be distinguished" *Cited by [14].*
[9] See [12].
[10]"<…> in the last 30 years, geopolitical changes such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonia's EU membership, migration process, and language policies, contributed to the increased share of speakers of Estonian as L2" [8].
[11] See [15].
[12] See [11].

Russian was a compulsory subject in all Estonian-medium schools, proficiency in Russian among Estonian speakers varied according to personal needs occupation, work requirements and region of residence" [2]. Years have passed and since 1991[13], when the Republic of Estonia was restored *de facto* and the Estonian language has become the *sole official language,* the imposing of studying Russian has been eliminated, we continuously evidence the fact, that Russian skills are needed accordingly. The reasons are mostly the same: regional, individual (icl. working, official duties, social network), generational [2].

The spread of Russian among the Estonian-speaking population is less intense in comparison with Soviet times. Estonian proficiency among Russian-speaking citizens is noticeably increasing. On the other hand, the use of Russian by the Russian-speaking part of the population is still very high and a complete transition to the Estonian language in our small society is much more difficult than in a country with a population of many millions. The latest Estonian census was carried out in 2021, and its latest data has been published just recently. The general trend has remained unchanged over the years: the share of people who consider themselves to be ethnic Russians remains close to a quarter of the entire Estonian population (23,7%). The share of the Estonian-mother tongue population has not increased (69,1%), but there has been a significant rise in the number of languages spoken as the mother tongue (6,8%) [13].

2. Language studies at The Estonian Military Academy

The Estonian Military Academy (EMA) trains and educates senior non-commissioned officers, as well as junior and senior officers for the Estonian Defence Forces, National Defence League, and other military institutions [4]. Along with the subjects of the professional content the curricula of applied higher education in military leadership and the curricula of advanced officers´ course (a MA level programme) provides the cadets and the officers with a possibility to study foreign languages. As the general level of knowing English is on a par with upper-intermediate or advanced level, the cadets and the MA officers have to choose to learn French or Russian language. 16/20 (80%) of the officers and 40/60 (67%) of the cadets[14] are learning Russian this academic year.

The working hypotheses before the research:
- the role of socio-cultural and geopolitical features of Estonia should be high in reasoning and motivational aspects of the students;
- assumption that the cadets and students study Russian largely in the current academic year due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and, as a result, want to know better the language of the "enemy"[15];
- the assumption, based on four-month observation of the educational process: the cadets, as a younger generation, should see less value and be less motivated in learning Russian nowadays.

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[13] See also [17] about the Russian emigrants of the 4th wave.
[14] 2021/2022: 11/30 (37%) — officers, 4/55 (7,3%) — cadets; 2020/2021: 16/27 (63%)— officers, 11/41 (27%) — cadets.
[15] In this context, Dörnyei's words seem more relevant than ever "<…> since people are unlikely to be successful in learning a language whose speakers they despise" [1].

3. The results of the research

There was used a short questionnaire to confirm our working hypotheses. The letter was filled by the cadets and officers studying Russian this year[16]. 80% of the officers and 82% of the cadets have taken part in this survey. At the time of answering the questions, the cadets had been studying the language for 2.5 months, and the officers had completed their 78-hour course, which lasted 3.5 months. Separate interviews with language learners were not conducted, however, the author of this paper, being also a teacher of 75% of the target-group, observed and talked with students throughout this time and can share some of her personal observations.

3.1   Knowing Russian

The first and very important remark that deserves attention is: despite the cadets' young age and the lack of rich life and worldly experience, nevertheless, most of the respondents believe that knowledge and study of Russian in Estonia is necessary today. This surprises us a lot, especially in the light of what is happening in the world (so-called "Russian culture cancelling", which Russian propaganda is desperately talking about) as well as active conversations within Estonian society (including at the level of the Ministry of Education[17] and the most influential media channels[18]) about a possible abolition of Russian as a foreign language in schools. The answers given by the officers are identical – 75% have voted pro and 25% contra.
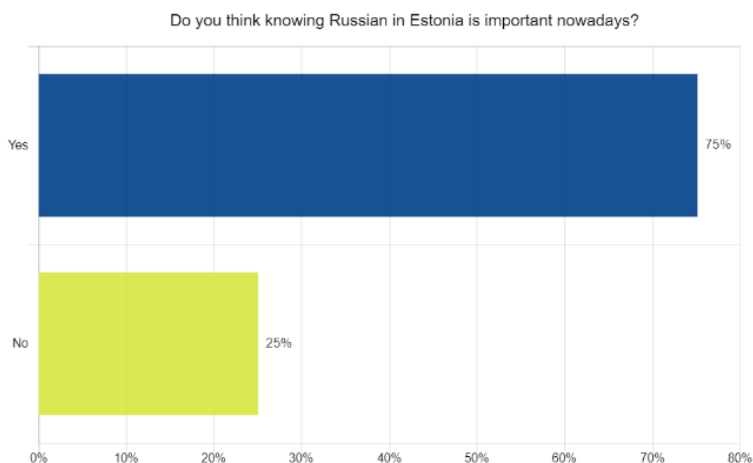
Fig 1. Answers given by the cadets and the officers (identical percentage)

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[16] The author thanks her students, who kindly participated in this survey and answered all the questions in the most detailed way possible.
[17] The minister of Education stated in August 2022, that "The dominance of Russian as a B language in Estonia is not normal" [10].
[18] E.g. Priit Hõbeägi, an experienced journalist, in the article "Let's stop Russian language teaching" declares that "There is no reason or need to learn Russian in Estonian schools" [7].

The explanations given by the cadets and the officers[19] regarding the knowledge and study of the Russian language are varied, but they can be divided into 4 groups:

a) Communication with Russian speakers;
b) Knowledge of any language is enriching;
c) Russian helps to perform official duties;
d) Russian is not needed.

3.2 Learning Russian

There is no big difference between the answers to the question about the need to learn/teach Russian in Estonia among the cadets – 78% pro and 22% contra, while among the officers this percentage is higher: 83,3% pro and 16,7% contra. It is clearly seen that the officers are more tolerant towards the Russian language usage and learning the language. One of the officers explains: "language barriers must be broken from both sides as much as possible", besides that, other add "speaking Russian varies according to the working needs" and "in Estonia one should speak Estonian on a daily basis". Despite the clearly formulated message of some students[20] that only Estonian should be in use in the country[21], most of them are ready to work hard and learn Russian. With different explanation and reasoning[22] the output that the cadets and the officers come to can be formulated as: There are different mother tongue speaking people in Estonia, both sides should work to understand each other and in order to be understood.

3.3 Reasons to learn Russian

The Master students find the official duties to be the most important reason of their Russian learning. Some of them mention, that knowing Russian even on a basic level is helping them to achieve a better communication scale with the subordinates.

It is interesting to evidence, that the second most relevant reason the officers point out is the curiosity that leads them to the decisions to learn Russian. As Hugh Wagner puts it: "Curiosity might be based on a need to be aware of the environment so as to be able to respond efficiently, for example to threat". [16].

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[19] Separately, should be emphasized that some officers in their answers do not distinguish between Russians and Estonians, but speak about Estonians, whose first language is Russian. It is an important remark (and a big step forward) for the general rhetoric of our country.

[20] From the students´ answers: "I understand that it will be useful, but we still live in Estonia, and it should rather be the responsibility of Russian speakers to learn Estonian"*; "*I remain convinced that the schools of Ida-Virumaa must be forcibly Estonianized, so that people do not even have the opportunity to study in Russian"; "Better to know than mandatory. I consider it right that we still have 1 national language". (*A.H.*)

[21] From the students´ answers: "I have always believed you don't need to know Russian when you live in Estonia. For too long, the life of Russian-speaking citizens has been made too easy with Russian-language signs and service".

[22] From the students´ answers: "Because the Russian-speaking community is quite large in Estonia"; "There are people who speak only Russian, both in civilian and in the service"; "Learning Russian doesn't mean we speak less Estonian. It helps us understand Russian-speakers living in Estonia. And that way we can help them to learn Estonian". (*A.H.*)

Surprisingly, "The war in Ukraine (e.g. reading news, watching videos etc.)"did not come out to be the main reason for learning Russian among the EMA students. It gained only 15,4% of popularity among the cadets and 13% among the officers.

3.4   Learning motives
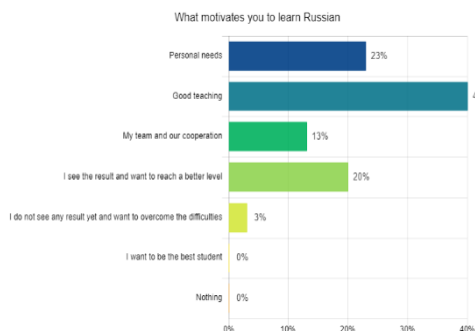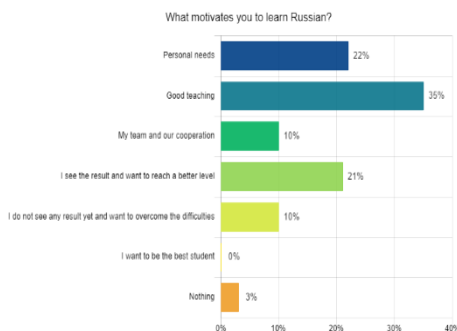
Fig 2. The officers.   Fig 3. The cadets

The social facilitation and a motive of cooperation are other highly significant factors that should be considered in the context of other cognitive and social motives. The officers have pointed out that "our team and cooperation" and the reason of seeing the result and therefore willing to reach a better level are important to them. Cadets see this aspect as less motivational, maybe due to a less quality-time spent together as a team. It is interesting to notice that one of the main motivational reasons[23] for learning a language for students is an achievement motivation. As Wagner explains the hope of success balanced against a fear of failure[24] [16]. Following the Wagner´s theory of the psychobiology of human motivation, we note that social motivation and cooperation, as the main components of cognitive and social motives, are fully represented both among cadets and among officers. However, their significance does not allow interpreting it as the main component of EMA students' motivation. Personal needs, as the second most common motivational explanation, correlates with what Wagner calls "self-presentation". It can also relate to impression management in some extent and is considered one of the most fundamental human motives in life [16]. Yet most important for both target-groups in the field of Russian learning motivation is a "good teaching" aspect[25]. This may not be the most important factor for language schools or universities with a wider range of language classes, however, for our specifically directed area, these students´ statement should be considered more than significantly. The students from both target groups emphasize that the "free atmosphere", "a lot of speaking exercises", "good and relaxed learning environment", "various methods", "no pressure", "personal approach", "a good

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[23]"We have no ready panacea for solving the problems of student motivation, but it seems reasonable to suggest that the learning contest and specifically the provision of high-quality feedback and the adoption of appropriate assessment systems are at least part of the answer" [6]; see also [9].

[24] <…> A person´s tendency to take on the challenge (approach) is determined by the combination of the person´s need for achievement, the perceived probability of success and the intensive value (reward)" [16].

[25]"Sometimes a small personal word of encouragement is sufficient"[1].

teacher, "teacher's personality and the attitude" are the factors that make Russian learning acceptable and even enjoyable ("It's not as formal as I would've imagined and that is why learning Russian is so enjoyable"). There should be more physical time spent by teachers for preparation and it requires a better emotional involvement into the teaching process in order to achieve this beneficial type of teaching/learning. However, it is what motivates the students mostly and helps to achieve better results and maybe helps to smooth out the rough edges of the "language question" in society, at least at the level of a small group.

Conclusion

The presented short information about the state of Russian in Estonia eloquently makes it clear that the issue of learning or not learning the language is acute in society. The number of Russian-speaking people in the country implies the need for knowledge of the Russian language at the level of understanding.
The assumptions made that the EMA cadets, to a lesser extent than the MA level officers, consider the study of the Russian language to be unnecessary, did not find confirmation.

The expectation that language learners are motivated to learn the language solely because of the military situation in Ukraine has also not materialized.

Both cadets and officers made it very clear that their motivation lies in the quality of teaching and the attitude of the teacher towards them, as well as towards the subject. This in turn allows to outline the next vector for studying the issue, namely, to study in detail the methods and the direct learning process.

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Greek as a Second/Foreign Language for Children with a Refugee and/or Migrant Background: Language Policy under the Microscope

Konstantinos D. Chatzidimou, Foteini Kalogerogianni
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

Already since the mid-20th century, the industrial societies of the European North have witnessed the phenomenon of movement and relocation of people, which is due either to refugee flows, or to the forced or voluntary migration of people seeking better professional prospects. Over the last three decades, this phenomenon has spread to countries in the European South. Greece is a case in point as it is a gateway to the countries of the European Union, receiving considerable numbers of refugees and/or migrants and exporting migrants to the European North. As a result, the implementation of policies for the educational reception and integration of children with a refugee and/or migrant background is a major challenge for the Greek state. The present paper focuses on the language education of children with a refugee and/or migrant background in Greece approaching bilingualism as an important asset in today's multilingual society. The emergence of bilingualism or multilingualism raises the question about language maintenance or language shift of refugee and/or migrant populations as to which of the two developments is the appropriate strategy in terms of the educational and social integration of these populations. Without overlooking the influence of a family's practices on the issue of language education, school policy has a significant impact on the way students are linguistically educated in a way that leads to the acquisition of the language competence that a citizen of a modern democratic society needs to be able to participate with relative self-reliance and adequacy in communication. After a brief overview of the policies implemented in Greece in the last decades regarding the education of children with a refugee and/or migrant background, some thoughts are presented approaching the language education of these children in Greek schools as an educational challenge of great importance.

Keywords: *Intercultural Education, Second/Foreign Language Teaching, Language Education, Language Policy*

1. Introduction

Intercultural-inclusive education as a basic dimension in the design of modern educational programmes for children from different backgrounds is a major challenge for today's educational systems. This approach focuses on learning as the main vehicle for a functional cultural transition of children in their first and/or second host country and at the same time values the different identities that each student brings with him/her [1].

Although the Greek educational system has traditionally had a strong monocultural orientation [2], its practices seem to be shifting towards a direction of recognizing and promoting bilingualism and/or multilingualism, at least from a theoretical point of view. Moreover, emphasis has been placed in recent years on the teaching and learning of Greek as a second/foreign language, with the aim of providing foreign students with the linguistic competence that will help them more broadly in understanding the world and acquiring the skills necessary for the modern competent democratic citizen. Both school and family language strategies [3] play an important role in achieving this goal, as the latter has a significant influence on the degree of the child's participation in the new educational and social reality.

It should be noted that modern migration to European countries such as Greece has increased due to the escalation of wars in the Middle East, the neo-liberal economic policy and growing hopelessness among refugees. The fact that Greece as a country was not ready in various aspects to receive so many migrants is demonstrated by the story of camps like Moria on Lesbos. Moreover, the critical collapse of the Greek economy in 2008, the strict policies of containment and the rise of a virulent and racist neo-nazi movement ("Golden Dawn" rose electorally in the period of the economic crisis and from 2012 to 2019 it was represented in the Greek Parliament; in 2020, "Golden Dawn" was unanimously judged to be a criminal organization, and its leaders have been convicted of running it) can be seen as factors that have accentuated the need for better planning and for actions to help improve the lives of these people. Therefore, it is vital that they are provided with every possible skill that will contribute to their escape from the difficult situation they find themselves in.

2. Language policy in Greece for children with a refugee and/or migrant background

Greek educational policy sets the formation of the intercultural-inclusive school of the 21st century as a basic goal of its educational system. To this aim, it reinforces the school units with Reception Preparatory Classes for primary and secondary pupils who do not know Greek or speak it only at a rudimentary level. In addition, Reception and Refugee Education Facilities (DYEP) have been established, which, as a rule, operate in the school premises during the afternoon hours as an early stage of integration of children in the educational process through the learning of Greek as a second and/or foreign language, psycho-social support and identity strengthening. At the same time, interpretation services, teaching and learning material, and teachers' training on issues related to education and the inclusion of pupils from different backgrounds into the school environment are meant to be provided [4], at least on a theoretical level. Nevertheless, in the field of research on issues regarding the education of refugees and immigrants in Greece, significant obstacles to the effective inclusion of these pupils into the educational system (and society in general) can be observed. These obstacles are mainly due to the lack of appropriate educational material and teacher training, the pupils' situation (traumatic experiences, long periods of de-schooling, lack of familiarity with Greek and difficult living conditions), and the contact between the families of these children and the school [5]. Reflecting on the policies and practices that should be implemented regarding the education of migrants and/or refugees, issues concerning the co-education of students or the attendance of preparatory classes before integration into the typical class – and, consequently, the way of teaching especially the Greek language – are highlighted. The necessity of learning Greek or English as the language they will need

most in their lives, the gap between the proclamation and the actual teaching of Greek or English as a second/foreign language, and the distance between the theoretical announcements and the actual teaching of Greek or English are issues to be discussed. Incorporating interculturality as a principle that permeates the school environment implies the recognition of the needs and identities of the "other", which should be considered in various aspects: designing curricula, writing of school textbooks, planning the initial and in-service teachers' training, and the making of educational policy in general – this remains a desideratum. In this process, an overemphasis of the different identities is to be avoided. The focus ought to be on the enrichment of students' multiple identities and the acquisition of the skills necessary to function as tomorrow's citizens in a complex world [7].

3. Greek as a second/foreign language: research data

The teaching of Greek as a second and/or foreign language is a field of research interest, both theoretical and practical, which has showed significant development in Greece in recent years. One of the indicators of the increasing interest in this field is the teachers' awareness within the framework of their initial or further education, as the number of courses offered in this subject at university departments responsible for educating prospective teachers at both under- and postgraduate level is increasing significantly. At the same time, several continuing education and in-service training programmes related to this subject are offered for the professional development of teachers. At a theoretical level, the distinction between second and foreign languages is related, among other factors, to which language a child learns first. What usually happens is that the learning of the mother tongue comes first, followed by the learning of a foreign language which may eventually become a second language. However, this temporal sequence is not always observed in children with a migrant/refugee background, as in this case the learning of the foreign language may take place before, at the same time or after the learning of the second language [8]. For children with a migrant/refugee background coming to Greece at a school age, perceptions of what constitutes a first and a second language may differ as opposed to migrant/refugee children who are born in Greece. Family language practices may influence children's perception of Greek as first or "heritage" language as well as their attitudes toward linguistic assimilation or heritage language maintenance [9]. As to the positive effects of bilingualism in word recognition and reading comprehension research data indicate that literacy patterns (monoliteracy vs. biliteracy) may influence the results [10, 11].
On a practical level, teaching models of second and/or foreign languages have been developed and applied in the case of Greek, while teaching and learning material has been produced to meet the needs of teaching Greek as a second and/or foreign language, mainly through the implementation of programmes related to the educational inclusion of foreign and returning students, Greek diaspora students and, more recently, students with a refugee/migrant background.

Although some research data about teachers' attitudes and perceptions as to the benefits of bilingualism and the necessity of incorporating heritage language teaching into the main curriculum are found [12], data about the competence of learners of Greek as a second/foreign language are rather scarce and fragmentary. Research data on teachers of Greek as a second/foreign language indicate that only a few of them can be considered as interculturally competent, which might have as a result that many teachers do not utilize cultural variety in their classroom as a beneficial condition for learning [13].

4. Family language policy and language competence in modern democratic societies

The impact of family language policy [3] on intra-family communication plays an important role in the development of bilingualism and interlanguage competence of children with a migrant/refugee background. Adopting practices that only reinforce first language learning and usage may work to inhibit broader state language policies, while adopting multiple language usage strategies contributes to the development of early bilingualism [14, 15]. This need to link the macro- with the micro-level is highlighted in recent surveys on parents and students with a refugee and/or migrant background in Greece [16].

Language competence, which encompasses the linguistic and communicative competence of the learner and makes her/him a learning agent, is a prerequisite for the development of the communicative competence necessary for understanding and participating in the modern world. Adequate knowledge and management of the language in which communication is conducted in a modern state in all its four dimensions – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – is essential for the full participation of the student and future citizen in society. In the modern era, where the concept of citizenship [17] is expanding, as it is strongly characterized by mobility, a new identity of citizenship is taking shape with elements of universality [18], focusing not only on a state's official language, but on more languages, since the individual ensures direct access to the international sphere of communication through the learning and adequate use of a second and/or third language. In the case of pupils with a migrant/refugee background who start from a different linguistic heritage, the school needs to find ways to help them learn the official language of the state, so that it becomes the linguistic instrument in which they can become proficient, a condition necessary to ensure equality of educational opportunities. At the same time, it should also promote the learning of other languages to broaden their communication skills at a European and universal level [19].

5. Conclusion and further perspectives

Recent research on the school integration of pupils with a migrant/refugee background points to the key role of learning the language of the host country, which also happens to be the language of the school, in the pupil's academic achievement. In school programmes for the inclusion of refugee pupils in Greek education, priority is indeed given to the learning of the Greek language, without, however, having any measurable results of this effort at a country level to date. Given that Greece has only become a refugee host country a few years ago and given that a significant proportion of refugees consider Greece as a stopover point for their transition to one of the economically prosperous countries of the European North, it is necessary, in addition to the emphasis on the Greek language, that students acquire proficiency in at least one of the foreign languages taught in Greek schools (English, French, German). Further research that would investigate the degree of proficiency of students with a migrant/refugee background in both Greek and foreign languages is necessary.

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Language for Specific Purposes

Modification of the Illocutionary Force by Information Technology Students in In-Class Debates

Eva Ellederová

Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Communication
Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic

Abstract

Information technology (IT) students are a specific discourse community whose oral communication in English for specific purposes (ESP) predominates at all levels of their university studies and future workplace activities in the multinational IT sector. Since IT students' pragmatic competence in performing communicative functions is essential for their effective communication in an academic setting and a global work environment, it is important to investigate this aspect of their language systematically and carefully. Accordingly, this paper deals with IT students' modification of the illocutionary force while participating in structured in-class debates on controversial issues related to their field of study. In-class debates enable ESP learners to develop the ability to collect, organize and critically evaluate information from different sources, clearly communicate ideas, examine and evaluate evidence, and effectively present, consider and refute arguments. Since in-class debates are based on learners' spontaneous communication and immediate responses, they seem to be a suitable instrument for eliciting samples of learner language. Identification and analysis of metadiscourse markers, in particular boosters and hedges, were made through the corpus-based analysis of transcribed debates in Sketch Engine. The analysis revealed that students used different boosters and hedges for both increasing and reducing the illocutionary force. Besides, the ways IT students used boosters and hedges reflect how they assume and share their professional knowledge and experience in their discourse community.

Keywords: *ESP learners, in-class debates, pragmatic competence, illocutionary force, boosters, hedges*

1. Introduction

In ESP language teaching and learning context, in-class debating is consistent with a learner-centred approach since it encourages authentic interaction between learners as active agents who share their own knowledge, experience, skills and ideas. Besides, structured in-class debates enable ESP learners to improve communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, enhance disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning, provide a very unique educational experience, and offer excellent pre-professional training [7, 9, 17]. Given that ESP learners' pragmatic competence in performing communicative functions is essential for their effective communication in an academic setting and a global work environment, it is important to investigate how they modify the illocutionary force especially through corpus analysis. The key methodological issue for

investigating learner language is"what kind of performance provides the most valid and reliable information about competence"[8, p. 21]. Since in-class debates are based on learners' spontaneous communication and immediate responses, they seem to be a suitable instrument for eliciting samples of learner language. As Ellis and Barkhuizen [8, p. 26] note, the'vernacular style' (or'casual style') represents"what learners are capable of producing when they are not consciously focused on form, "thus it reflects their implicit rather than explicit knowledge of English as a second language (ESL).

This paper deals with ESP learners' modification of the illocutionary force in in-class debates on controversial issues related to the field of IT. The paper undertakes to discover which metadiscourse markers learners used to increase and reduce the illocutionary force.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Modifying the Illocutionary Force

The illocutionary force can be either increased (accentuated) or reduced (attenuated). The differentiation between attenuation and accentuation should be understood as a'dine' or'illocutionary force gradation' reflecting the degrees of the speaker's commitment to the content of the message [19, p. 67]. Both accentuation and attenuation of the illocutionary force reflect the speaker's relationship with members of a discourse community [15]. Communicative strategies used for increasing or reducing the illocutionary force are boosting and hedging [11, 14, 19]. Boosters and hedges are considered as complementary devices, so their role in argumentative discussions is to maintain stability between conflictive objectives. Their use can tell us something about the force the speaker uses to make their assertion, and their estimation of the situation. Through boosting"the meaning becomes reinforced, underlined, exaggerated, explicit, "through hedging it becomes"subdued, indirect and implicit"[19, p. 66]. Through hedging, the speaker implies that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than on certain knowledge, and it allows the audience certain freedom to dispute it, whereas boosters allow the speaker to negotiate the status of their information, help them to establish its perceived truth by strategically presenting it as consensually given [11, 14].

Van Eemeren et al. [20, p. 29] use the alternative terms "propositional attitude indicators" for boosters and "force modifying expressions" for hedges, and they classify them as "indicators of standpoints". They further explain that when the speaker uses a propositional attitude indicator (e.g. *I really believe that, I think that, I'm sure that*) they not only make it obvious that they believe something, but they also "assume that the listener needs this extra information to understand that the assertion involves a (subjective) notion of the speaker", and similarly, the speaker who uses a force modifying expression (e.g. *in my view, it is quite certain that, of course*) does not only signal that they want to assure the listener of something, but they also assume that, "without this addition, the listener would not understand that they want to assure him of something".

2.2 Empirical Studies on the Modification of the Illocutionary Force in ESL Learners' Spoken Discourse

Empirical research into attenuation and accentuation of the illocutionary force in ESL learners' spoken discourse is relatively rare. Müller [16] analyses and compares how native (Americans) and non-native (Germans) speakers of English use metadiscourse markers *so*, *well*, *you know* and *like* during retelling and discussing a silent movie. Aijmer's [2] analysis of similarities and differences between native and non-native (Swedish) speakers of English showed that Swedish learners overused *well* as a fluency device to cope with speech management problems, but they underused it for attitudinal purposes. Probably most empirical studies dealing with metadiscourse markers used by ESL learners were published by Buysse [5, 6] who investigates the metadiscourse markers *so, well* and *you know*. While all the empirical studies reviewed focus on a particular metadiscourse marker used by ESL learners in a general academic English context, a more complex and systematic analysis of ESP learners' spoken technical discourse focused on modification of the illocutionary force is still missing. For this reason, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What metadiscourse markers did IT students use for increasing/reducing the illocutionary force?

RQ2: What functions did the different metadiscourse markers perform in relation to IT students discourse community?

3. Methodology and Data

3.1 Participants and Corpus

A total of 34 students of the first year of the bachelor's study programme at the Faculty of Information Technology at Brno University of Technology in the Czech Republic participated in eight debates that lasted 131 minutes in total. The students' English language level is B2 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). Students discussed the following propositions related to their study programme focused on IT: 1) Human labour should be replaced with artificial intelligence*;* 2) The Dark Net should be regulated like the rest of the Internet; 3) Closed platform is better than open platform and 4) Firefox is better than Google Chrome. Each of these propositions was discussed twice by two different teams, so the learners' corpus consists of eight debates in total.

Transcripts of all debates were uploaded and analysed in a corpus manager and text analysis software Sketch Engine. The whole corpus of IT students' online debates includes 8 transcribed debates, 20,052 tokens, 17,016 words and 1,110 sentences.

3.2 Identification and Analysis of Boosters and Hedges

Two methodological approaches were used to analyse modification of the illocutionary force: a corpus analysis and a manual analysis. The aim of the corpus analysis was to consider typical boosters and hedges which contribute to the modification of the illocutionary force and analyse their functional and distributional patterns. In some cases, there were also different meanings of some words and expressions (e.g. *just*, *like, I think, you know*), so these had to be assessed manually. Table 1 shows the most frequent boosters and hedges students used in in-class debates.

Booster	Number of Hits	Percent of the Whole Corpus	Hedge	Number of Hits	Percent of the Whole Corpus
will (not)	89	0.4438	would (not)	102	0.5087
just	61	0.3042	like	81	0.4039
really	55	0.2743	well	66	0.3291
I/we think	46	0.22956	should (not)	54	0.2693
believe	31	0.1546	I/we think	53	0.2643
actually	23	0.1147	just	24	0.1197
very	21	0.1047	could (not)	20	0.09974
true	16	0.07979	I mean	19	0.09475
so	15	0.07481	probably	19	0.09475
always	10	0.04987	might (not)	15	0.07481
I, we (all), they know	10	0.04987	you know	14	0.06982
pretty	10	0.04987	may (not)	13	0.06483
definitely	9	0.04488	maybe	13	0.06483
sure	9	0.04488	possible	13	0.06483

Table 1. Occurrence of boosters and hedges in in-class debates.

As Table 1 demonstrates, the most frequent booster was *will*, which corresponds to the findings of other studies focused on the modification of the illocutionary source [14, 15]. Students used *will* to put forward their propositions with confidence (Example 1) and express certainty of their predictions (Example 2).

(1) *We **will** do our best to lay out the bright sides of this topic.*
(2) *So just monitoring the traffic like this **will** not really fix anything.*
     Speaker-oriented attitudinal boosters *I believe*, *I/we know* (Example 3) and *I/we think* emphasize the students' subjective attitudes and make their utterance more assertive.
(3) *As **I believe**, **we** all **know** that the more eyes that view code the quicker you can catch errors and make the necessary changes to uphold quality source coding.*

Assurances such as *actually, definitely* and *sure* belong to highly assertive speaker-oriented boosters that reflect students' certainty and conviction. Similarly, emphasizers *really, pretty, very, always* and *so* intensify the meanings of gradable adjectives, adverbs, verbs and quantifiers [10, 15]. Students used them to attract their listeners' attention and stress the relevance of their arguments for their opponents (see Examples 4, 5, 6 and 7).

(4) *Well you don't **really** need DNS if you want to connect to a server...*
(5) *I think this is a **pretty** big detriment to your arguments.*
(6) *PlayStation Nintendo and Xbox have had a history of success, and they have **always** been **very** popular among the customers.*
(7) *The risk isn't **so** high.*

Students used boosters to increase the illocutionary force of propositions and demonstrate commitment to their statements, thereby asserting their conviction and restricting the negotiating space available to their opponents. However, the boosters can also serve the ends of positive politeness because they reflect the respect for their

opponents' views and the assumed background professional knowledge in the discourse community of IT students.

The metadiscourse marker *just* belongs to context-sensitive markers that can have different functions in different contexts [12, 13, 19]. *Just* was one of the most frequent markers occurring in debates. Despite Brown and Levinson's [4] and Wierzbicka's [21] claim that *just* reduces the illocutionary force, Aijmer [1] and Beeching [3] argue that *just* can either reduce or increase the illocutionary force. In the minimising contexts, Beeching [3] relates *just* to the conventional implicature of 'merely', which applies at the speech act level, rather than at the word level. Erman [1997, as cited in 3] observes that in particular young people often use *just* to maximise the effect of their utterance. Aijmer [1] points out that *just* as a booster occurs in collocations with attenuating markers (such as *might* in Example 8 and *a bit* in Example 9), gradable adjectives, exaggerative prosody, and in negated sentences when the speaker wants to dispute a point, while *just* as a hedge often occurs in requests and it reflects negative politeness (see Example 10).

(8)   …*because you might **just** get scams and not get anything at all.*
(9)   *It is **just** a bit easier to track down the users who are participating in these activities…*
(10) *… and let me **just** say something that might not have been said so that everybody's in the loop.*

Another context-sensitive marker was *I/we think*. Example 11 illustrates *I think* as a 'deliberative' booster in the initial position with level stress to add weight to his statement and express certainty and reassurance. *I think* as a "tentative" hedge occurred more frequently in the corpus. Example 12 illustrates the occurrence of *I think* in the final position pronounced with falling intonation which expresses uncertainty and tentativeness [12] and acts as a softener or negative politeness marker, expressing primarily affective meaning.

(11) *So, **I think** that the Dark Web should be either regulated or as visible as a regular web.*
(12) *It automatically offers you to translate this page, **I think**.*

The negative politeness strategy employed through modals, such as *would, could, might* and *should*, reflects the students' need to avoid face-threatening acts when discussing controversial and to a certain extent sensitive topics. Similarly, the purpose of *like* (Example 13) is to hedge the potentially critical and emphatic stance the speaker could be perceived as taking.

(13) *That's my point **like** that you can download pretty much anything.*

Besides, the use of *would*, *could, possible* and *probably* (Example 14) demonstrates the need to signal the lack of relevant information when making their judgements. They also demonstrate students' doubt and respect for the opposing teams' views and indicate that information is presented as an opinion rather than an officially recognized fact.

(14) *But in order to monitor the internet as we said before it **would probably** have to be... er... not encrypted.*

The speaker-oriented hedge *I mean* (Examples 15) functions as a conversational gambit opening a new topic or suggesting a new viewpoint.

(15) ***I mean*** *if you want security, you should just download the Blueberry or something like that.*

We can see that while hedging functioned as a referential means (expressing uncertainty, doubts, assumption, lack of competence to make a judgement) and an affective means (showing tact), boosting enabled students to assume common ground with their opponents and emphasize discourse community membership [see also 18, 19].

4. Conclusion

IT students as a specific discourse community are a very complex group encompassing many specializations whose goals may vary with the rapid development in their field. Members of this community communicate with each other by attending lectures, seminars, meetings, workshops and conferences within an international environment. Their pragmatic competence is therefore indispensable for achieving success in both academic and future professional settings. Increasing the illocutionary force functioned as a positive politeness device and indicated that students assumed shared ground and stressed their discourse community membership. Boosters thus allowed students to negotiate the importance of their information and establish its perceived truth by strategically presenting it as something consensually given. Asserting, disagreeing and rebutting during a debate also constitute face-threatening acts or impositions on the self-image of their opponents which students mitigated by using different types of hedges.

This paper might be regarded as a contribution to the studies of learner language. The results of the analysis show that focusing on metadiscourse markers is a crucial aspect of ESP learning and teaching and should not be neglected and that research on learners' spoken language might provide interesting and valuable insights for ESP teachers. Even though ESP coursebooks and learning materials usually include sections with linguistic means to express different communicative functions, analysing ESP students' use of metadiscourse markers in in-class debates might help teachers to identify both frequent and rare metadiscourse markers and adapt the learning materials accordingly. Moreover, by engaging in a variety of different speaking activities (debates, role plays, simulations, etc.) with different purposes, students can develop and improve their pragmatic competence.

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Teaching Romanian for Specific Purposes in a Gamified Environment

Răzvan Săftoiu[1], **Andreea Nechifor**[2], **Georgiana Burbea**[3], **Ionuț Căpeneață**[4]

[1,2,3,4] Transilvania University of Brașov, Romania

Abstract

In recent years, the educational market has been challenged by the unprecedented use of technology for instructional purposes. Educators and students have started to approach teaching and learning in a more engaging way to bridge the gap between face-to-face education and the opportunities of the online environment. In this paper, we address the issue of teaching Romanian for Specific Purposes (RSP) in a blended form, designing face-to-face activities according to a gamified environment that is meant to increase involvement and make learning engaging and entertaining. Using the methodological approach of design-based research, we discuss how activities and syllabi of courses in RSP can be macro-designed according to gamification principles so that it could offer the students the opportunity to immerse themselves in a complex system of interactions whose main purpose is to boost motivation during the process of learning. The target group consisted of 20 international students who had studied the Preparatory Year in Romanian for 5 months, reaching the CEFRL A2 level of Romanian, before starting the classes for specific purposes. The main fields of study were Engineering, Medicine and Sports. The research was carried out from late February 2022 until early June 2022 and was tailored to address the productive language skills, as well as the specialised terminology in the fields mentioned above. Thus, after deciding upon the main frames of gamification to be applied in class, we also selected various applications to cater for the specific needs of our students, through which we customised the learning experience in the form of games (GooseChase, Storyjumper, Plickers, Wordwall, Kahoot) that could be played either individually or as a team. The platform used for interaction was ClassDojo, which opened options for other activities such as online portfolio design, poster presentation, or interactive written assignments. The gamified environment created a sense of community and built on their intrinsic motivation since students were required to practice their vocabulary in the real world or to get involved in creative activities. In the blended class, students are actively engaging in their language learning and are building their linguistic competence.

Keywords: *digital teaching, communicative teaching, gamification, game-based learning*

1. Introduction

For almost 20 years, since the term was coined in 2002 by Nick Pelling, gamification, i.e. "use of game design elements within non-game contexts" [7], has gained more and more importance in various fields of activity such as retail, banking, politics, healthcare, IT and telecom to increase user engagement and productivity. According to Fortune Business

Insights (2019), the retail sector adopted the most gamified solutions, while education seems to be the next most popular sector.

The turn of the century brought about new challenges for the educational market as one could witness an unprecedented rise in the use of technology for instructional purposes. Educators and students have started to approach teaching and learning in a more engaging way to bridge the gap between face-to-face education and the opportunities of the online environment. The surveys carried out by LMS Talent (2014, 2018, 2019) showed that almost 80% of the learners said that they would be more productive if their university were more game-like, over 60% of learners would be motivated by leader boards and increased competition among students, and 89% would be more engaged if the class had a point system (http://elearningindustry.com/30-facts-gamification-in-elearning).

The introduction of gamification in education starts from the premise that the principles of gaming and its specific mechanics are likely to increase students' motivation to engage in learning activities [1]. To date, studies focusing on gamification in education ([10], [9], [2]) have highlighted its primary benefits: increasing motivation, with an emphasis on intrinsic motivation, and engagement, particularly if individuals are free to select a preferred mode of learning [9]. Students perceived gamified courses to be less boring and more motivating, interesting, and helpful for learning than others ([8], [9]). Although gamification can be said to motivate extrinsically, because users are rewarded with points and badges, we consider that teachers should focus on boosting the enjoyment of the class, projecting positive feelings about the subject, and supporting students to become a better version of themselves by delving in real-life experiences, all of which are examples of intrinsic motivation.

In her study, Sitzmann [17] showed that gamification in education can boost knowledge retention, while Faiella and Ricciardi [9] revealed that gamification helps diminish anxiety or worry over the consequences of not doing well. In addition, they also argue that gamification can be useful in building communities, especially where participants celebrate accomplishments at the level of the whole class, not only at the level of high-achievers. At the same time, they found out that ongoing, immediate, and meaningful feedback can have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

Although schools already have game-like elements (e.g., points for completing assignments correctly, rewards in the form of grades, levelling up when moving to the next academic year etc.), it appears that "students disengage at a social and emotional level" [16] because schools have formal rules. Gamification is an opportunity for teachers and learners "to experiment with rules, emotions, and social roles" [13] and can help learners become who they want to be, i.e., students can develop new frameworks for understanding their school-based activities and even change their self-concept as learners [12], their sense of identity and their social positioning [13]. Thus, gamification in education focuses on helping learners see the progress they are making.

In this paper, we address the issue of teaching Romanian for Specific Purposes (RSP) in a blended form, designing face-to-face activities according to a gamified environment that is meant to increase involvement and make learning engaging and entertaining. Our research can be included in the *micro-gamification* of the learning experience since we

implemented it at a small scale, within one academic programme, the Preparatory Year for Foreign Citizens at *Transilvania* University of Brașov.

2. Methodology

Using the methodological approach of design-based research (DBR), i.e., conducting research in context, we discuss how activities and syllabi of courses in RSP can be macro-designed according to gamification principles so that it could offer the students the opportunity to immerse themselves in a complex system of interactions whose main purpose is to boost motivation during the process of learning. We consider DBR as the best-suited methodological approach for our study because it starts from the premise that researchers create, "test and refine educational designs based on principles derived from prior research" [5, p. 15]. In other words, previous curricula, practices, software, or tangible objects beneficial to the learning process are revised according to the actual context so that the required changes can be made quickly and students benefit the most. In DBR, students are not only beneficiaries, i.e., passive receivers, but they become active agents since they are seen as contributors and collaborators, who "formulate questions, make refinements in the designs, evaluate the effects of the experiment, and report the results of the experiment to other teachers and researchers" [4, p. 4-5].

The target group consisted of 20 international students, 8 girls and 12 boys, aged between 19 and 22, who had studied the Preparatory Year in Romanian for 5 months, reaching the CEFRL A2 level of Romanian, before starting the classes for specific purposes. The main fields of study were Engineering, Medicine and Sports. The research was carried out from late February 2022 until early June 2022 and was tailored to address the productive language skills, as well as the specialised terminology in the fields mentioned above.

3. Results

Before the beginning of the 2nd semester of the academic year 2021-2022, we decided to implement gamification during our RSP classes. We started from the premise that we should build on students' intrinsic motivation by taking into account the three basic psychological needs proposed in self-determination theory [6]: Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness, which are promoted through game mechanics. Since the mechanics should be engaging, we had to give students simple instructions, introduce scaffolding (i.e., level up), offer options so that students are challenged appropriately and can weigh their options against their skill level to make calculated choices, and customize the learning experience by providing various choices (e.g., submit a classic assignment, design a poster/ YouTube video, create an online book etc.). Apart from that, we needed a platform to connect and provide support for our students as well as to provide regular feedback and rewards so that students could be given a boost of accomplishment.

To create a sense of community, we built the online groups on ClassDojo so that we could connect, communicate, and share learning experiences with our students. This platform offers the option of customizing avatars once the "monster" (Fig. 1) hatches from a giant egg after one week.
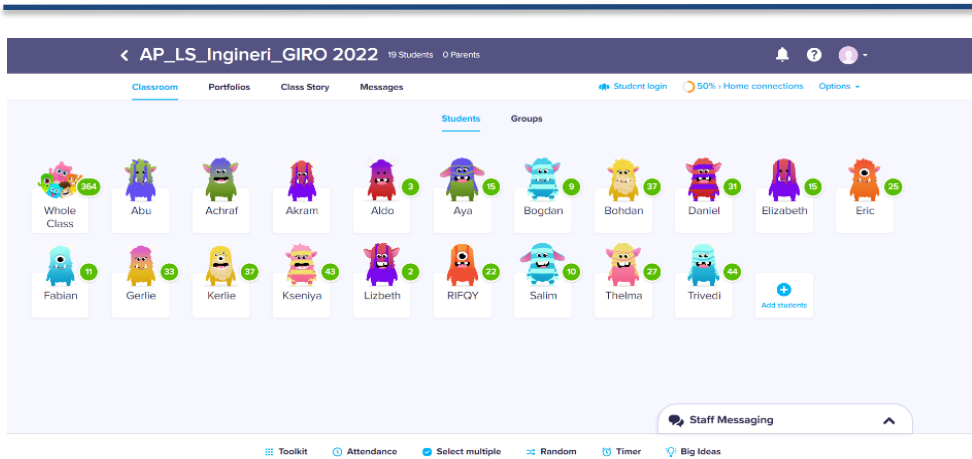
Fig. 1 Customized avatars

From the beginning, the platform included one of the most favourite gamification techniques – customization of avatars – and successfully created a sense of expectation since students were keen on discovering what their avatar would look like. The platform opened options for other activities such as online portfolio design, poster presentation, or interactive written assignments.

One of the most effective game elements is a system of points, badges and leader boards (PBLs). Points (or achievements) are given for accomplishing something in the system, such as finishing a task in a set amount of time; badges are often given for interacting with the system, such as logging in every day for a week; leader boards show a user's ranking in comparison to other users. In our groups, we created a system of points that either could be awarded for positive actions (see Fig. 2) related to the activity during the class (e.g., giving a great answer, putting forward a great idea, being involved in teamwork activities) and to home assignments, as well as for actions that needed further work or could be redeemed for lack of involvement or for being off task (see Fig. 3).
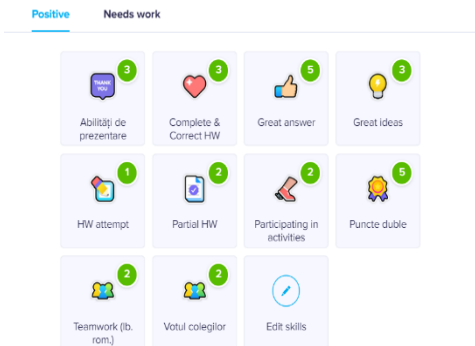
Fig. 2 Positive actions   Fig. 3 Actions that needed further work

After deciding upon the main frames of gamification to be applied in class, we also selected various applications to cater for the specific needs of our students and to

customise the learning experience in the form of games (Wordwall, GooseChase, Storyjumper, Plickers) that could be played either individually or as a team. In choosing the online applications, we started from the premise that *the core mission* during the RSP class is *learning and practising new vocabulary*. We wanted students to immerse themselves in the gamified lesson/ string of lessons and also relied on their creativity when preparing and delivering presentations.

Learning new vocabulary is a challenge and may be achieved in various ways. Since we wanted our students to delve into real-life experiences and learn the specialised language in a fun way, we designed team activities in GooseChase as missions (Fig. 4) that needed to be carried out in Romanian, throughout the city.
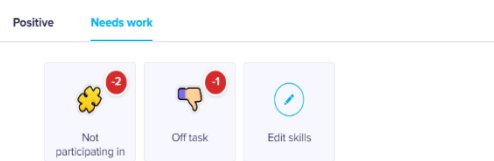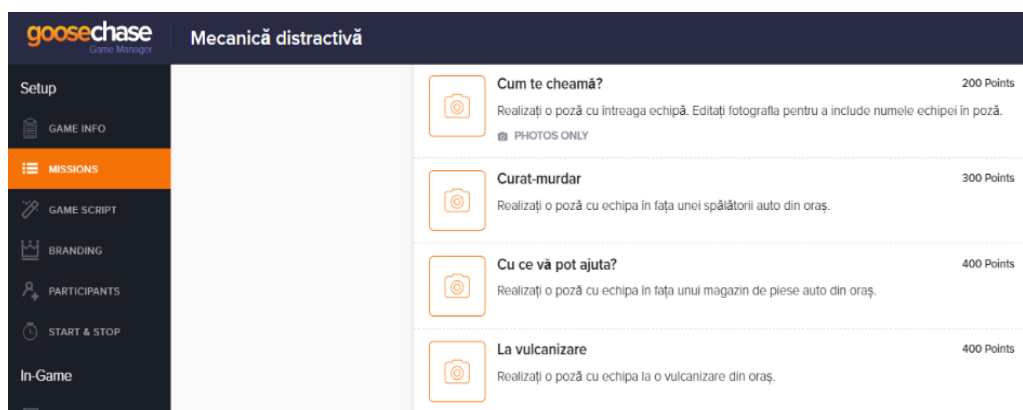

Fig. 4 Missions in GooseChase

Apart from the linguistic component (i.e., comprehension of instructions and production of oral/ written messages), such an activity dwells on the cultural element since students were asked to identify various places in Brașov (e.g., car wash, tyre repair business etc.). Getting around the city involved the participation of all members of the team and coordination of activities, thus emphasizing the sense of togetherness and shared achievement.

We used interactive word search with instant feedback (in Wordwall) to reinforce the learned vocabulary at the end of the Mathematics unit. To create a sense of expectation, but also to get students to review the specialised vocabulary, we sent a message four days before the actual task began, announcing the students that the activity will take place onsite and that they will receive a QR code to do the activity individually. We also instructed students that the points will be awarded to the student who finishes the fastest, but who also has the highest score. This created a sense of competition and, at the end of the activity, some students felt motivated to do the word search again until the instruction was achieved. We assert that the quick feedback gave students a better grasp of where they stood, by identifying the vocabulary items they had learned with the correct definitions. At the same time, giving them the chance to retry if they performed poorly is in close connection with reframing failure as a learning opportunity so that they study more [3, p. 42] before the exam at the end of the semester.

When it came to practising new vocabulary, we wanted to emphasize students' creativity and suggested that they should write an online book in groups of three. For this purpose, during one of the classes dedicated to the Physics unit, we invited students to choose an

optical instrument and design an online book (in Storyjumper) about it using some of the previously taught vocabulary. At the end of the class, the books were presented orally by the team leader.

4. Conclusions

At a *cognitive* level, gamifying RSP means that students get to explore specific vocabulary through active repeated experimentation (e.g., doing an activity until he/she is in first position) and discovery (e.g., GooseChase). We believe that having a specific goal with immediate or short-term measurable results is motivating for learners.

At an *emotional* level, gamifying RSP means that students get to experience a wide range of emotions, from curiosity to frustration, from anxiety to surprise and joy (also in [11]). If the stakes are low, students risk very little by failing; if the stakes are high, students experience frustration, anxiety, or negative social comparison [14]. If feedback cycles are fast, students get a chance to review their mistakes and learn by repeating the same issue until they get it right; if feedback cycles are long, students do not get a chance to try again. Thus, in a gamified environment, failure is reframed as a necessary part of learning, which means that the effort to reach a personal objective is rewarded.

At a *social* level, gamifying RSP means that students get to try on new identities and roles. It may be a fictional character or they may explore new sides of themselves (e.g., being a teacher for one class and rewarding his/her classmates with in-game currency/points).

We are aware that not all types of learning objectives may be equally gamified. That is why, game mechanics (points, badges, and leader boards) should interact with pedagogical principles, learning objectives and learning activities. Gamification of learning is most effective when the principles of gaming (challenge, clear vs. fuzzy objectives, established expectations/ success criteria, use of rewards, the introduction of a sense of fun and competition in interaction) and learning are aligned and operationalized through game mechanics [15].

In the blended class, students are actively engaging in their language learning and building their linguistic competence. During the RSP classes, we introduced fun as a component of gamification, "a useful tool to achieve a greater outcome" [3, p. 37]. The gamified environment in the RSP classes fostered a sense of community and built on students' intrinsic motivation since they were required to practice their vocabulary in the real world or to get involved in creative activities.

Acknowledgement

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Enhancing Students' Learning Motivation in ESP Course Instruction

Naira Poghosyan
Brusov State University, Republic of Armenia

Abstract

The target goal of the current paper is to thoroughly analyze and introduce the characteristics of enhancing students' learning motivation in the acquisition of "English for Specific Purposes". 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. An ESP program is therefore built on the assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required. As a matter of fact, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation. The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, in turn, improve their ability to acquire 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, 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.

Keywords: *ESP, learning motivation, language acquisition*

Motivation has a great impact on the learning process. While some people learn more by outside influences, others may achieve more by their personal aspirations. Whatever the situation, everyone involved in any learning process should know how motivation affects learning. For teachers, a lack of motivation has long been one of the most frustrating obstacles to student learning. While the concept of motivation may intuitively seem fairly simple, a rich research literature has developed as researchers have defined this concept in a number of ways.

Social scientists and psychologists have approached the problem of motivation from a variety of different angles, and education researchers have adapted many of these ideas into the school context. While there is a great deal of overlap between motivation theories,

researchers differ in their identification of the underlying belief systems leading to motivational variation. Some theorists emphasize belief in oneself and one's competency, others prioritize goal orientation, and a third group argues that the difficulty of the task shapes individual motivation.

In the current paper our aim is to provide an introduction to various theories of motivation, explain the importance of motivation for learning, and outline several practical strategies that ESP teachers can use to support and promote student motivation in ESP course instruction.

Of a fair number of existing researches, we would like to highlight four major theories of motivation. Attribution theory suggests that our actions are the result of making sense of our environment, the search for causes to perceptions, feelings and events creates a behavioral dynamic of socially constructed reality.

As Wilson suggests, motivation is the term to explain why we act in certain behavioral patterns at given times, and is a "force which starts and sustains our activities towards goal achieving"[6]. Motivation has both intrinsic and extrinsic causations and is often predicted on a mixture of self-determined and environmental conditions. Consequently, there is a distinction between performance approach goals and performance avoidance goals. Performance approach goals refer to orientation toward demonstrating high ability whereas performance avoidance goals refer to orientation towards demonstrating low ability. If a performance orientated student has high motivation without an internal interest, then it is more likely for them to adopt approaches to learning that are "surficial". This emphasizes the need in some learning situations for intrinsic goal setting rather than over-reliance on external goal setting. Surface learning is thought to be a characteristic of 'performance avoidance' students; whereas 'performance approach' students adopt a more strategic approach to learning in which intellectual achievement is valued and obligations are intended to be fulfilled.

In comparison, expectancy value theory suggests that the amount of motivation or effort for a task is dependent on the expectant value of success. The fact that individuals calibrate themselves or set goals based on interpretations of past achievements is the basis for self-efficacy theory. Fourthly, goal orientations explain how we view success give orientation toward a particular activity [6]. The mastery of goal expectation is based on a desire for increased understanding which is more likely to occur in learning environments in which students receive sufficient feedback in response to learned competencies.

As Deci suggests, "Deadlines, imposed goals, surveillance and evaluations undermine intrinsic motivation. People experience them as being antagonistic to their autonomy, so these events drain people's sense of enthusiasm and interest in controlled activities"[1].

In the education context overly-controlling behavior is thought to reduce choice, diminish autonomy and if applied in too rigid an environment, leads to reduced motivation. However, if such controls are delivered in such a way to make them appealing, with corresponding intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, learners may feel more motivated to accomplish them.

Thus, motivational values such as desire to learn, personal incentives (intrinsic and extrinsic) and striving for excellence may be affected from such conditions as: interest,

learning from others, taking responsibility for learning, intrinsic and extrinsic task and social rewards [7]. Moreover, instructors who maintain highly structured, organized and outcome-focused lessons are more likely to inspire motivational learning confidence in students.

People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. In this view, ESP is a powerful means for such opportunities. Students will acquire English as they work with materials which they find interesting and relevant and which they can use in their professional work or further studies. The more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they hear or read, the more they are successful; the more they have to focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures, the less they are motivated to attend their classes. Thus, in contrast to a General English teacher, the ESP teacher is faced by a group of learners with certain expectations as to the nature, content and achievement of the course. The learners come to the ESP class with a specific interest for learning, subject matter knowledge, and well-built adult learning strategies. They are in charge of developing English language skills to reflect their native-language knowledge and skills.

As learners, the ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on the assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required. From this viewpoint, we can make a basic distinction between ESP learners' **target needs** (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and **learning needs** (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn).'Target needs' is something of an umbrella term, which in practice hides a number of important distinctions. It is more useful to look at the target situation in terms of **necessities, lacks and wants** [3]**.**

We can call '**necessities'** the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. For example, a businessman or -woman might need to understand business letters, to communicate effectively at sales conferences, to get the necessary information from sales catalogues and so on. He or she will presumably also need to know the linguistic features - discourse, functional, structural, and lexical - which are commonly used in the situations identified. This information is relatively easy to gather. It is a matter of observing what situations the learner will need to function in and then analyzing the constituent parts of them.

To identify necessities alone, however, is not enough since the concern in ESP is with the needs of particular learners. You also need to know *what the learner knows already, so that you can then decide which of the necessities the learner **lacks**. One target situation necessity might be to read texts in a particular subject area. Whether or not the learners need instruction in doing this will depend on how well they can do it already. The target proficiency in other words, needs to be matched against the existing proficiency of the learners. The gap between the two can be referred to as the **learner's lacks**.*

We have stressed above that it is an awareness of need that characterizes the ESP situation. But awareness is a matter of perception, and perception may vary according to

one's standpoint. Learners may well have a clear idea of the 'necessities' of the target situation: they will certainly have a view as to their 'lacks'. But it is quite possible that the learners' views will conflict with the perceptions of other interested parties: course designers, sponsors, and teachers.

*Bearing in mind the importance of learner motivation in the learning process, learner perceived **wants** cannot be ignored. What this means in practical terms is well illustrated by Richard Mead's (1980) account of his research into the motivation of students following ESP courses in the faculties of Medicine, Agriculture and Veterinary Science at a university in the Middle East.*

The students were all given ESP courses based on texts from their subject specialties: Medical texts for the Medical students and so on. This, it was assumed, would motivate the students because of the apparent relevance to their course of study. When Mead enquired into the interest the students had in their specialties, however, he discovered that only the Medical students were really motivated by their subject-specific texts. The Agriculture and Veterinary students were not motivated by their subject-specific texts, because they didn't really want to study those subjects. They had wanted to be medical doctors, but there were not enough places in the medical faculty to accommodate them all. They had opted for their specialties as very poor second bests. Agricultural and Veterinary texts, therefore, were like salt in a wound. They had a de-motivating effect, because they reminded the students of their frustrated ambitions. We might represent the necessities, lacks and wants in Mead's analysis as in figure given below [3]:

	OBJECTIVE: as perceived by course designers	*SUBJECTIVE:* as perceived by learners
NECESSITIES	*The English needed for success in Agricultural or Veterinary Studies*	*To reluctantly cope with a 'second-best' situation*
LACKS	*(Presumably) areas of English needed for Agricultural or Veterinary Studies*	*Means of doing Medical Studies*
WANTS	*To succeed in Agricultural or Veterinary Studies*	*To undertake Medical Studies*

Fig. 1

It can be seen from this analysis that objective and subjective views of needs can, and do, conflict, with a consequent de-stabilizing effect on motivation. What should the teacher do in such a situation? There can be no clear-cut answers. Each situation must be judged according to the particular circumstances. What is important is that the ESP course designer or teacher is aware of such differences and takes account of them in materials and methodology. There is little point in taking an ESP approach, which is based on the principle of learner involvement, and then ignoring the learners' wishes and views.

As for the subject-specificity of the ESP course, so, in the ESP class, students are shown how the subject-matter content is expressed in English. The teacher can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter, thus helping them learn English faster. The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, in turn, improve their ability to acquire English. Subject-matter knowledge gives them the context they need to understand the English of the classroom. Thus, the ESP students are particularly well disposed to focus on meaning in the subject-matter field. 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.

From the ESP teacher's perspective, it is important to note that the ESP teachers are supposed to go beyond the first stage of Needs Analysis: Target Situation Analysis which identifies key target events, skills and texts - to observe as far as possible the situations in which students use the identified skills, and analyze samples of the identified texts. As part of this process, ESP teachers generally need to be able to carry out research to understand the discourse of the texts that students use.

In another case, 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 the objectives they have. 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. 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. Thus, the institutional and cultural expectations of the learners must be taken into account. One group of learners may welcome the teacher's adoption of a facilitator role; another may find it completely alien; but this does not mean that attitudes cannot change or be changed.

All in all, ESP teachers do not need to master specialist subject knowledge. They require three things only:
- *a positive attitude towards the ESP content;*
- *a knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area;*
- *an awareness of how much they probably already know [3].*

This can be summed up as 'the ability to ask intelligent questions.' Many ESP teachers are surprised at how much knowledge of the subject matter they 'pick up' by teaching the materials or talking to students.

On top of that, sometimes the ESP teacher may also have to negotiate in a more physical sense. Cramped classrooms often in inconvenient locations, badly ventilated or heated, with a great deal of outside noise, are only too common. Equally, the teaching may take place in workshops or on the factory' shop floor', or on the premises of businesses and other concerns, often without such basic classroom 'apparatus' as a blackboard. The role ESP teachers are called on to play here is obviously one of adaptability and flexibility. They need to be prepared to accept such conditions as to some extent inevitable, to strive to improvise while also patiently campaigning for improvements with the sponsors.

Furthermore, 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 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. All this places high demands on the materials and great pressure on materials writers. Not surprisingly, producing good learning material gobbles up hours of preparation time. Each stage of finding suitable carrier content, matching real content to learning and real-world activities, planning an effective layout, is time-consuming. Preparing new materials from scratch for every course taught is clearly impractical, even if every teacher actually had the ability. What all ESP practitioners have to be is good providers of materials. A good provider of materials will 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 input).*

The balance between these will vary from course to course, situation to situation. Initial questions to ask when selecting materials include:

- *Will the materials stimulate and motivate?*
- *To what extent does the material match the stated learning objectives and your learning objectives? (It is rare for a single set of published material to match the exact learning needs of any one ESP learner group; and activities do not always meet the stated objectives.)*
- *To what extent will the materials support that learning [3]?*

Very often it is not a whole book we need to evaluate but a unit or just an activity. Identifying and separating the real content (exploited and exploitable) and the carrier content of particular activities is crucial to this process. The carrier content must be appropriate and the real content must match the course objectives. In our experience, the only way to check this is to 'be a student' and do the activities, thinking carefully about what we are actually having to do to complete them successfully.

There is no black-and-white dividing line between modifying materials, supplementing with extra input and activities, and preparing materials from scratch. In each case it is a question of degree and perspective. T*he 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.*
Learner-generated materials can provide both carrier content and activities. Another way in which learners can provide carrier content is through framework materials. Thus, preparing materials benefits from a co-operative effort because the exchange of ideas, availability of different abilities and strengths, and piloting that can take place are invaluable for the quality of the final material.

When the real and carrier content are matched, the next stage is to draft activities. The likely resources, group sizes, approaches to learning and target activities must be considered when selecting activities so that they are appropriate for the learning environment.

To conclude, in ESP the learners are not primarily language learners; they are or have been learners of other disciplines and this has to be a major consideration in the devising and delivering of a course. To maximize learning means activating all existing learning

strategies. In this regard, 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. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners. Thus, the ESP course combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whether it be accounting, business management, economics, computer science or tourism. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation.

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Aeronautical Engineering Students' Perceptions of ESP as Preparation for EMI in Higher Education

Dietmar Tatzl[1]
FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences, Austria[1]

Abstract

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) focuses on English language education in professional and academic settings. In internationalised higher education, ESP thus plays a dual role: first, to equip students with language skills required in the global workplace, and, second, to support learners during their studies in English-medium contexts. The interface of ESP and English-medium instruction (EMI) has started to attract increased attention from the scientific community. This contribution centres on the interplay of ESP and EMI, as it explores undergraduate engineering students' perceptions of ESP as preparation for an English-taught aeronautical master's programme. The sample (N = 26) consisted of 24 male and 2 female students, with a median age of 21 years, ranging from a minimum of 19 to a maximum of 27 years. This second-year bachelor's group who had received ESP instruction was given the Oxford placement test (OPT) [4] to determine its general English level and a questionnaire survey on ESP. The survey sheet contained demographic items and questions on students' experiences with ESP concerning EMI, their confidence when using English, and their self-assessment of English skills improvement. The group achieved an OPT median score of 44 points, with a minimum of 34 and a maximum of 54 points. Preliminary results indicate that participants perceived considerable improvement of their language skills through ESP. It is hoped that these results contribute to an increased awareness of the importance that ESP may assume for students enrolled in EMI programmes.

Keywords: *ESP, EMI, Internationalization, tertiary education, students, engineering*

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) caters for English language education of students in professional and academic contexts. In tertiary education, its main goal is to prepare learners for linguistic tasks at work and during further academic studies, for instance in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes. Already Bartik [1] pointed to the goals of undergraduate content-related language courses to provide learners with academic literacy skills and genre knowledge necessary for following Master's courses in English. This contribution treats the interface between ESP and EMI by exploring undergraduate engineering students' perceptions of ESP as preparation for an EMI master's programme in aeronautics.

There are indications in the literature that students struggle with EMI because of their English language proficiency. Soruç et al. [2], for instance, found that students' general English competence predicted challenges they had with academic language use in EMI.

Another study [3] discovered that academic English in EMI caused difficulties for learners with regard to speaking and writing. In this context, it was deemed interesting to probe into students' opinions on the role of ESP with a view to postgraduate EMI studies.

2. Methods

A second-year bachelor's group who had taken an ESP course on technical English was given the Oxford placement test (OPT) [4] to estimate its general English skills. The students also received a survey sheet with demographic items and questions on their experiences with ESP regarding EMI, their confidence when using English, and their self-assessment of English skills improvement [5]. The questionnaire consisted of nominal and 5-point Likert-scale items. IBM® *SPSS® Statistics* [6] software was employed for descriptive statistical data analysis.

3. Results

The sample (N = 26) was characterised by a median age of 21 years, ranging from a minimum of 19 to a maximum of 27 years. It comprised 24 male and 2 female students, with a median duration of 10 years' previous English language education. In the Oxford placement test (OPT) [4], the group achieved a median score of 44 points, with a minimum of 34 and a maximum of 54 points. The results further revealed that only one student had already taken an EMI course at university. Table 1 shows the detailed descriptive statistics for the sample demographics.

Table 1   Descriptive statistics for biographical variables

VARIABLE	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*MIN*	*MAX*
Age (in years)	21.5	21	1.9	19	27
English language study (in years) [a]	10.4	10	1.7	8	15
OPT score (0 to 60)	44.2	44	5.9	34	54

VARIABLE	LEVEL	FREQUENCIES	PERCENT
Gender	Male	24	92.3 %
	Female	2	7.7 %
Extracurricular English lessons	Yes	22	84.6 %
	No	4	15.4 %
EMI courses taken at university	Yes	1	3.8 %
	No	25	96.2 %

Notes. $N = 26$; *M* = arithmetic average; *Mdn* = median; *SD* = standard deviation; *MIN* = minimum in sample; *MAX* = maximum in sample
[a]Missing values because of nonresponse: *n* = 1

Table 2 depicts students' sense of being prepared for EMI on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*yes, completely prepared*). The survey question asked if learners felt prepared to study a content programme or course taught through English after the ESP support they had received during the semester under consideration. The majority of learners felt rather well (50.0 %) and completely prepared (19.2 %) for EMI.

Table 2   Students' perceptions of being prepared for EMI

FEELING PREPARED FOR EMI	FREQUENCIES	PERCENT
Not much	1	3.8 %
To some extent	6	23.1 %
Rather well	13	50.0 %
Yes, completely prepared	5	19.2 %
Missing	1	3.8 %

Note.   N = 26

Table 3 contains the group answers to the question whether students planned to take an EMI course in the near future, either in their own university or as part of a mobility programme. Here, the group was divided into two similar halves between having such plans and having none.

Table 3   Students' plans to take EMI in the future

PLANS TO TAKE EMI	FREQUENCIES	PERCENT
Plans to take an EMI course	15	57.7 %
No plans to take an EMI course	11	42.3 %

Note.   N = 26

Table 4 reveals the group answers to the question if the course helped students to improve their confidence in academic or professional communication in English. A clear majority of 84.6 % provided an affirmative reply to this item.

Table 4   Students' perceptions of communicative confidence

CONFIDENCE	FREQUENCIES	PERCENT
Improved confidence	22	84.6 %
No improved confidence	4	15.4 %

Note.   N = 26

Participants also perceived substantial improvement of their language skills through ESP. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for learners' self-assessment of their improvement during the course. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*very little*) to 5 (*very much*). Items with the highest improvement ratings were *Vocabulary*, *Reading*, familiarity with written and spoken technical English, and *Spoken interaction*.

Table 5   Descriptive statistics for students' self-assessed improvement during the course

ITEMS	Range	*MIN*	*MAX*	Mode	*Mdn*	*M*
Vocabulary	2	3	5	4	4	4.00
Reading	3	2	5	4	4	3.77
Familiarity with technical English (written)	3	2	5	4	4	3.65
Familiarity with technical English (spoken)	4	1	5	4	4	3.54
Spoken interaction (dialogue)	3	2	5	3	3	3.15
Spoken production (monologue)[a]	3	1	4	3	3	2.92
Pronunciation	4	1	5	3	3	2.92
Listening	3	1	4	3	3	2.65
Grammar	3	1	4	2	2	2.42
Writing	3	1	4	2	2	2.19

Notes. $N = 26$; *MIN* = minimum in sample; *MAX* = maximum in sample; *Mdn* = median; *M* = arithmetic average
[a]Missing values because of nonresponse: $n = 1$

4. Discussion

These results suggest that structured and systematic ESP support can effectively prepare students for EMI programmes (Table 2). They further indicate that the current ESP course achieved its aims of developing learners' written and spoken technical English skills, vocabulary knowledge, and spoken interaction competence (Table 5). Speaking and writing academic English are precisely those skills that have been identified as challenging for students in other contexts [3]. The fact that the general language skills of listening, grammar, and writing were rated lower in terms of improvement may be due to the less prominent space that these areas were given in the course. However, it should be noted that learners' general English language proficiency may significantly contribute to their academic language success [2]. In a secondary-school context, Bruton [7] argues that whether or not equipping curricula taught through a foreign language with such foreign language classes is a key issue, which means that it may represent a major contributor to the success or failure of EMI programmes. In addition to the potential linguistic merits of ESP for EMI programmes, there is the boost in communicative competence that participants identified as a beneficial aspect of this English language course (Table 4). This finding is corroborated by a broader study among two Spanish and

the current Austrian higher-education institution [5]. It is thus reasonable to assume that ESP courses in content disciplines may also increase the linguistic confidence of students.

5. Conclusions

ESP and EMI are closely interlinked fields where ESP focuses on learners' linguistic improvement, while EMI tends to cater for students' content knowledge. This paper is expected to raise the awareness of the crucial role that ESP may assume for students of EMI programmes. Researchers have called for institutionalised language support that focuses on productive skills with discipline-specific orientation [3, p. 12] to prepare students for EMI. Soruç et al. [2] further demand that also students enrolled in EMI programmes should receive "continuous language support throughout the duration of their studies" [p. 10]. To this end, Little [8] demands that English language specialists should be involved in EMI programme design. The socioeconomic importance of English in global industries, "has the potential to immediately exclude individuals who are not proficient in the language from educational and professional opportunities" [9, p. 84], which means that the presence or absence of ESP in certain regions and institutions may determine the careers of students and graduates. In that sense, ESP may be regarded as high-stakes instruction, as the economic lives of individuals partly depend on their English skills improvement, not to mention the personal fulfilment and access to social participation it entails.

This study allows for the tentative conclusion that participants found merit in the current ESP course for future EMI, although this cannot be generalised and should be treated as a case from one tertiary setting. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this case inspires similar investigations from higher-education institutions where both ESP and EMI have been implemented to improve student learning. The potential for fruitful interaction between ESP and EMI is considerable and may become decisive for future engineering students and graduates in the aeronautical and further sectors.

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Local Aspects of Internationalization of Higher Education

Ľudmila Hurajová [1], Jana Luprichová [2], Gabriela Chmelíková [3]

The Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Faculty of Materials Science and Technology in Trnava, Slovakia

Abstract

The process of Internationalization of higher education triggered by globalisation differs in various aspects, such as purpose, goals, human resources, education system, geopolitical situation, etc. At present, there is no standardisation of this process and the Internationalization of higher education can take several forms: student and teacher mobility, international projects, research teams, branch campuses, Internationalization of home (IoH), etc. This paper provides an insight into the concepts of internationalization process, specifically concepts of IoH in different higher education institutions (HEIs). Besides, findings in the field of IoH based on research and experts' experience are presented. The findings indicate that local context matters and should be considered before starting, developing, and fostering the process of IoH. This paper illustrates the situation in HEIs in eastern Europe and selected west Balkan countries regarding IoH, and how interdisciplinary cooperation of teachers might accelerate the IoH process. Local aspects of IoH in the context of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, particularly at the Faculty of Materials Science and Technology (MTF) in Trnava are introduced and the results of applying CLIL in enhancing IoH are described. The roles of English and ESP teachers within the IoH process are debated. Finally, as far as IoH is concerned, the findings and results are discussed with some recommendations for future research and an effective IoH process in HEIs.

Keywords: *Internationalization of Higher Education, CLIL, ESP, interdisciplinary cooperation, English Education Environment, Internationalization of Home*

Introduction

The issue of Internationalization of higher education has been a topic discussed among researchers for decades. Globalisation, the opening of the global labour market, and the solution of global problems in environmental or other areas trigger the pressure on the prototype of the university graduate, which led to the process of Internationalization of higher education in several dimensions. The level of mobility of university students and teachers is increasing worldwide, international projects and teams have been formed, university campuses have been built abroad, especially by American and English universities, and joint or dual study programmes have been created. Internationalization of higher education in many cases means developing an English Education Environment (EEE) to stay open for the other scholars, students, and teachers. This trend affects not only students and teachers but also the administrative staff of universities, who are pressured to increase their competence in English or other foreign languages. The same

pressure is exerted on the management of universities. In the literature, we have come across the terms Internationalization of Home (IoH) more often in terms of the Internationalization at Home (IaH) – which deals with the forms of Internationalization process inside a higher education institution.

1. Internationalization at Home (IaH)

Beelen and Jones [1] deal with the definition of the term IaH, providing a range of IaH concepts and understandings. They see the importance of IaH in providing an enriched and attractive environment not only for incoming mobility students but also for domestic students of Higher Education Institutions (HEI). On the other hand, they see some pitfalls in the misunderstanding of the IaH concepts and they define IaH as "*the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments". (2015, p.69).*

Witt and Leask [2] emphasize the need to involve all students in the international education environment and they state that there is no standard model of the Internationalization for all HEIs. Local contexts, discipline and other aspects must be considered.

1.1 IaH in Slovakia

The process of the Internationalization of higher education, accelerated by the Bologna Process, has been developed in HEIs across Europe for several decades. EU state political representations gradually adopted national strategic programmes to guide their HEIs on how to start and set up the process of the Internationalization within Higher Education. Slovakia has adopted such a document only recently as one of the last, if not the last, EU countries. In the given document (National Strategy of Internationalization of schools till 2030), the issue of the Internationalization at home is introduced based on the definition of Beelen and Jones, stated in this article. The Internationalization is not perceived as a goal but as a way to improve the quality of Higher Education. The document has mentioned activities that helped accelerate the process of the Internationalization of higher education in the past, but they have been only individual and isolated initiatives of individual institutions. The goal of the strategy is to set a framework with relevant aims for the process of the Internationalization of higher education so that it can be implemented in all higher education institutions in Slovakia. Additionally, to other specific goals, the document also has commented on the support for the development of study programmes in foreign languages, especially joint programmes with institutions abroad. One of the aims is to increase the level of promotion of studying in Slovakia and provide information for potential foreign students at least in English or other foreign languages. Activities and programmes using digital and information technologies more intensively in the framework of the Internationalization and building the so-called "Collaborative Online International Learning" will be supported as well.

1.2 IaH at STU MTF

The Internationalization process at the Slovak University of Technology, Faculty of Materials and Technology, where the authors of this article work, has included mainly the mobility of students and teachers and international research or pedagogical projects. The level of students' interest in studying abroad increased slightly, but the interest of foreign students to study at the Faculty stagnated. The process of the Internationalization of the curriculum has been done sketchily, some subjects were converted and offered to students in English, but there was very low interest shown from domestic students, and foreign mobility students mainly studied via individual consultations and guidance by the teachers of the subjects they applied for. The Internationalization at Home was the subject of interest for ESP experts who initiated several research projects with the aim of determining the readiness of students and teachers for building the English Education Environment.

1.3 Research projects at STU MTF

ESP teachers with some expertise in CLIL, after gaining experience from an international project in the ERASMUS+ Scheme, considered the CLIL approach to be a suitable form for setting up an EEE in a local context with the aim of accelerating IaH. The first institutional project (**INTER MTF I**) was focused on the readiness of disciplinary teachers for setting an EEE from both linguistics and didactics perspectives. In the second follow-up project (**INTER MTF II**), they focused on students, their readiness for an educational environment in the English language and their attitudes to studying selected subjects in the English language. The findings from the institutional projects were the basis for the international project **CLIL teachers** – **CLIL HET** (Visegrad+), in which six project partners, among other things, prepared a didactic material for disciplinary teachers with the aim to support them in using the CLIL approach when setting up an EEE.

1.4 Findings

The first institutional project **INTER MTF I** was carried out in 2017-2018. To find out the linguistic readiness of teachers and their attitudes towards establishing an EEE within their discipline subjects, two methods were used: a questionnaire and the electronic standardized language diagnostic test – CEPT Reading and Listening of Cambridge. One hundred respondents took part in the survey, most of whom were working on a permanent employment contract at the given time, which means that mainly key employees of the Faculty participated in the questionnaire. Sixty-eight% of the respondents declared their willingness to teach their subjects in English, even though most of them had no experience in teaching in English either at home or abroad. In this research project, we also focused on the knowledge or experience of teachers with the CLIL approach, which we found as a suitable form for setting up an EEE in HEIs, where non-English speaking people prevail. More than 90% stated no experience or knowledge in CLIL. The questionnaire respondents also stated their subjective perception of their language competences and their readiness for teaching in the English language. They felt to be the strongest in their professional terminology register and the least skilled in using grammar and communicating with students in the English language. Only 54 participants of the questionnaire took part in the language diagnostic test. The data we obtained cannot be generalized, but they indicate the situation in the language readiness of disciplinary teachers for setting an English Education Environment. In terms of the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), 18 disciplinary teachers reached level C1 and above and nine reached level B2, which could be sufficient for CLIL lessons preparation of. From the given data, we can only assume that from a linguistic perspective, approximately 25% of the Faculty's teachers in the given period were prepared to teach in English, and most of them would be willing to set up an EEE. The disciplinary teachers declared a lack of didactic competence so this should be fostered if considering the setting of an EEE.

Students – one of the main stakeholders within Higher Education were asked to be involved in the next institutional project **INTER MTF II** conducted in 2019-2020. We investigated the students' language readiness and attitudes towards the teaching of discipline subjects in English. Here, 365 students participated in the questionnaire survey. Only 304 students completed the language non-standardized test (by OXFORD). After analyzing the pseudomised data of the participants, a data set of 251 students, who participated in both the questionnaire and the test, was generated. In the questionnaire, we asked students not only about their attitudes towards the teaching of discipline subjects in English but also about the form of such an educational environment. As far as the level of English competence was concerned, the majority of students reached the A2/B1 level in language testing (30.3%/31.3%),18.8% of students achieved level B2 and only 8.2% of students demonstrated level C1. We selected several findings from the students' attitudes towards learning discipline subjects in English expressed in the questionnaire:

- Students with the level of language competence B1 and above more positively inclined to study discipline subjects in English,
- The achieved level of language competence does not affect the students' preferences, they prefer selected lectures or partial teaching in English (regularly 20-30 minutes in a given subject), and obtaining more credits for such a subject than the same one taught in Slovak,
- Students with levels B1 and B2 would welcome the evaluation of the student's performance in English (subjects/courses taught in English),
- Students across the levels of language competence preferred to study in English particularly the subjects related to their main study focus.

The preference of students to study discipline subjects/courses in English only partially, confirmed our assumption that CLIL would be a suitable approach when establishing and setting up EEE in Higher Education to foster IaH. However, students expressed the need for language support in case of studying a professional subject in English. They would prefer a supportive language programme in an online environment, or an intensive language training (min. 120 hours) before starting to study the subjects in question in English.

The initiation of the international project in the Visegrad+ Scheme – **CLIL-HET** – was based on the findings of the above-mentioned INTER MTF I and II projects. The goal of the international cooperation was to create a digital platform for two professional communities of teachers in Higher Education, ESP/CLIL experts and disciplinary teachers, to connect them for deeper cooperation in setting up an EEE in their HEIs. The results of the project as well as the research part of the project are part of the portal at www.clil-het.eu. The local contexts of the HEIs in the project partner schools in Hungary, Serbia, and Poland were very similar in terms of teacher and student readiness for an

EEE. The situation was different only in Albania, as the HEI is a private educational institution, and the education language is English. In other countries, both linguistic and didactic readiness of disciplinary teachers to establish and lead an EEE, seemed to be the challenge The project findings indicate that the interdisciplinary cooperation between ESP/CLIL and disciplinary teachers is the way to an effective set of an EEE within disciplinary subjects/courses and thereby enhance IaH.

2. Roles of teachers in IaH context

As mentioned in Chapter one of this paper, the term IaH arose in Europe in the late 1990s because of the insufficient Internationalization of Higher Education that focused predominantly on students and staff mobility, however, with minimum collaboration of particular universities. The first steps with the intention to change the direction of the European Higher Education were made at the Ministerial Conference in 2007 in London where Ministers adopted the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting". It introduced some priorities, including intensifying policy dialogue, strengthening cooperation based on partnership, promoting European Higher Education to enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness, as well as furthering the recognition of qualifications [5]. Later on, the European Commission launched the strategy called "The European Higher Education in the world" in 2013 whose aim was to increase not only the mobility of students and staff but also increase the cooperation of the EU countries themselves and EU and non-EU countries. The strategy involved the following key areas – international student and staff mobility; the Internationalization and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships, and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy" [6]. Meeting these goals requires a change in the perception of the role of teachers themselves in Higher Education and, at the same time, the teachers in the IaH context. Generally, the academic staff at universities is represented by subject or disciplinary teachers whose role is to teach in the fields they are experts in. Secondly, in non-philological universities, language support for students is covered by so-called ESP teachers. The key role of all staff and stakeholders in the future should lead to the development of such IaH programmes that are more student- and staff-centred, thus involving them more in the process as beneficiaries and key the drivers of a change. Launching this process should be also preceded by internal audits examining how staff and students perceive and make sense of the IaH policies, strategies, and initiatives at their home universities. Subsequently, all interested parties can contribute to the implementation of an intercultural dialogue in HEIs, which entails for example "preparation/training for staff in working in international teams", "programmes of integration of international students and staff AND home students", "engagement with the wider society" [7].

2.1 Roles of ESP teachers in IaH

The concept of Internationalization at Home is an important pillar in the Internationalization strategy, as not all stakeholders have the opportunity to study, work, teach, or execute research abroad. IaH prepares an international environment not only for students and teachers, but also for the administrative staff, to build a real international campus. Once the university admits this process, the first step should be initiated by ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teachers. ESP teachers at HEIs are usually English teachers with university diplomas covering the content from specific disciplines in their

classes in the English language but, on the other hand, they usually do not have a sufficient degree of knowledge in any subject taught by disciplinary teachers. The package of knowledge that students acquire in ESP lessons also contributes to a better orientation within exchange programmes at foreign universities where the students face new experience, and at the same time, prepare their students to meet the high requirements of the current international global job market [8]. So, the ESP teachers are the right employees who have the adequate knowledge about the Internationalization process. As IaH deals with aspects of Internationalization in a home university, ESP teachers and other stakeholders can start implementing some activities that involve the development of international curricula and programmes, modification of the teaching and learning process, staff development and training, and enhancement of extra-curricular provision [9].

As stated above, the authors have recently successfully finished the Visegrad+ project whose aim was to develop a professional platform to enhance the Internationalization process in HEIs in V4 and Western Balkan countries. In the stated region, it was the pioneer project in the field. The project aimed at grouping ESP and CLIL experts to prepare an online platform for networking within the involved countries to support the disciplinary teachers (DTs) working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to set up an English Education Environment. The project partners have decided to pilot the CLIL approach to education in their HEIs. As the CLIL application in disciplinary courses requires close cooperation with disciplinary teachers in HEIs, and as already mentioned ESP/CLIL experts cannot cover professional fields as deeply as disciplinary teachers can, DTs' cooperation in the preparation of the courses was very significant [4].

2.2 Roles of disciplinary teachers in IaH

Subject or disciplinary teachers at universities are experts in specific fields, who predominantly teach in their mother tongues, as well as they design, prepare and develop courses, modules and teaching materials. Moreover, they undertake individual and collaborative research projects that are published in peer-reviewed journals and actively contribute to the institution's research profile, to professional conferences and seminars in their fields of expertise, being able to operate abroad, too. This means, the disciplinary teachers with a good command of the foreign language have experience with the IaH at universities abroad and are ready to implement its strategies in their home universities. It also highlights Beelen and Leask that Internationalization at Home is a set of instruments and activities 'at home' that aim at developing international and intercultural competencies in all students. Just as with the Internationalization of the curriculum in general, IaH is specific to the context of a discipline and, within that, to a programme of study in each university [10].

The idea of IaH was also reflected in the project mentioned above. The role of disciplinary teachers, who already had some experience with the English Education Environment, together with CLIL and ESP experts was to prepare their lessons, as a whole or partially, in the English language, while applying the principles of CLIL methodology. Obviously, it was preceded by two phases – in the first phase of the Project, the Project partners compiled a Didactic Material for DTs based on the principles of CLIL methodology. In addition, a linguistic test was prepared for DTs to assess their language level. During the second phase of the Project, DTs who taught their courses completely or partially in English, received tutoring from the ESP teachers involved in the Project, and discussed

the lesson plans prepared by the DTs. Then, video recordings were made of the classes taught by the DTs, while being observed by ESP teachers. An integral part of the Project was also the design of an online platform including three important parts: Community Corner, Didactic Corner and Research Corner. The main goal of the Community Corner was to build professional communities of CLIL and ESP experts and DTs around Europe, to provide a platform to contact each other and share experience and best practices related to setting up an English Educational Environment at home universities.

Conclusion

The individual initiative of ESP/CLIL experts in the local context of a Slovak university resulted in three projects with the aim of finding out the most effective way of setting up an EEE to support the IaH process. We assumed, and are still convinced, that the CLIL approach is the right choice when setting up partial teaching of discipline subjects in English. In our context, we identified several areas that needed support. A) Linguistic programmes for students and also for disciplinary teachers to develop their level of language competence, B) Didactic programmes for disciplinary teachers to foster their skills for establishing an EEE within their subjects. C) Reward system for teachers to support them in setting an EEE. D) Assessment system for students' performance within the EEE. Beelen and Jones [1] oppose that "*simply providing a program in English is insufficient for it to be considered an internationalized curriculum*" (2015, p. 61) and suggested some ways how to internationalize the curriculum for example by "*comparative international literature, guest lectures by speakers from local cultural groups or international companies, guest lecturers of international partner universities etc*. "We agree with them, however, we think we should start with establishing an EEE within discipline subjects/courses first to be able to enrich such an environment with the instrument proposed. Wilkinson and Gabriels [3] raised some questions about "*Englishization*" and its impact on cultural identity, the academic and scientific world, and how EMI programmes have changed the environment of academia. It seems that global and local contexts and their requirements must go hand in hand to provide a rich environment for students so that they can become professionals with their own cultural identity and competences for international teamwork to solve global tasks. Without deep interdisciplinary cooperation within academia, this mission is not possible.

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Student Feedback on the Implemented Language Learning System of Professional Higher Education Institutions in Estonia

Elen Laanemaa, **Aida Hatšaturjan, Triin Kibar**
Language Centre at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Estonia

Abstract

The current paper discusses the results of the study conducted in 2020-2022 between the three largest Estonian state professional higher education institutions – Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Tallinn University of Applied Sciences, Tallinn Health Care College. The research provides an opportunity to learn and adopt the best practices, methods and approaches implemented by other higher education institutions. The results of the current research may be of interest to universities practicing LSP teaching.

Keywords: *Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), student feedback, professional higher education*

1. Introduction

Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (hereinafter EASS), Tallinn University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter TUAS) and Tallinn Health Care College (hereinafter THCC) have a long tradition of teaching the Estonian, English and Russian languages for specific purposes (LSP). LSP stands for the language used in professional communication, where vocabulary, terminology and language elements are determined by specific needs and competences (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley Evans & Saint Johns, 1998; Laurence, 1998; Swales, 2000). The long-term experience in teaching LSP in the institutions gave us the idea to compare the structures of three language teaching systems through the analysis of student feedback.

The role of professional higher education nowadays has changed due to the new challenges in the labor market. Contemporary society requires professionally competent specialists, who must be able to apply their specific skills including different languages. The study was initiated by the need to revise the system of teaching foreign languages, especially LSP, and, if necessary, improve the quality of language teaching in the above-mentioned institutions.

Students were asked to provide feedback on the language teaching system of their higher education institution. Each institution was interested in its students' assessment and feedback on their institutions' language teaching system. Student feedback was also used to highlight and analyse the main problems that students faced when learning a language for specific purposes. A comparison of the results showed the similarity in the problems faced by the language teaching systems of the three higher education institutions.

2. The methodological tools of the research

In order to achieve the research objective, the following research tasks were presented: to compare the language teaching systems of the three institutions of professional higher education; to analyze student feedback; to identify the development areas of language learning systems; to make a list of recommendations to the language teaching systems of the three institutions of professional higher education.

The survey data were collected from January to June in 2021. The survey sample was composed of students from the three institutions: 83 respondents from EASS, 161 respondents from TUAS and 48 respondents from THCC. The research method used was a questionnaire survey (self-fill-in form) and a combined qualitative content analysis and quantitative (statistical data analysis) method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Denscombe, 2010). The questionnaire contained 45 questions and included both open and closed questions. The Likert scale was also employed. The survey was conducted in three stages:
● piloting, during which it was determined whether the eight students of EASS understood the questions (December 2020);
● questionnaire survey in three professional higher education institutions (January 2021);
● second (repeated) questionnaire survey in three institutions (April 2021).

When analyzing the data of the study, a phenomenological method was used, the purpose of which is to study human experience and perception of phenomena (Smith, 2009). Students' responses and comments were grouped into thematic categories and subcategories.

3. The results of the study: How satisfied are the students of the three professional higher education institutions in Estonia with the LSP teaching system in their institution?

3.1. Category I: Benefits of professional language learning

The students of all three professional higher education institutions found that they have benefited the most from learning professional vocabulary: 94% for THCC, 88% for TUAS and 85% for EASS. The lowest efficiency is shown in gaining experience in international communication and these indicators are respectively 10% at TUAS, 16% at EASS and 17% at THCC. One of the reasons for this result for THCC and EASS is that the students from THCC were unable to participate in student exchange programmes as much as before, and the students of EASS would rather not go abroad as exchange students.

All three institutions have highlighted the importance of linguistic competence: 77% for THCC, 73% for EASS and 71% for TUAS. For students, the ability to express themselves on professional topics is also important: 63% at EASS, 58% at TUAS and 60% at THCC.

Students of EASS appreciate the effort of the institution to contribute to the training of foreign language competences for future officials, while students of TUAS are not very satisfied with the volume and duration of the provided language courses and expect more opportunities for students with a lower language level. The students of THCC would like

to learn Russian because there is no Russian language in the curricula anymore and it is possible to study Russian only as a selective subject.

Students highly appreciate LSP courses and are content with the possibilities to learn professional vocabulary and they are mostly satisfied with it. Everyone sees the practical value in learning a professional language. On the other hand, longer courses and a more diverse range of languages are also expected.

3.2. Category II: Motivation of learners

The respondents were asked to assess their motivation for learning foreign languages (Estonian, English and Russian). The relevant indicators vary from institution to institution, but as a large number of respondents consider it highly necessary (EASS 76%, TUAS 69% and THCC 69%) and none of the students see it unnecessary, the motivation of the students can be assumed.

The motivation of students to learn **Estonian** is the highest at EASS compared to the other two institutions, with 92% of the respondents rating it with maximum points on a five-point scale. The indicators of sufficiently high motivation at THCC are 59% and at TUAS 54%. According to the data there were no very low-motivated and unmotivated students at any of the three institutions. Only 7% of students manifest very little motivation. The reasons given for high motivation include the importance of having a sufficiently good command of Estonian as the official language, including the necessity to speak Estonian at least at C1 level (THCC and TUAS), the need to cope with future work-related situations and communication (EASS and THCC), and the intention to be competitive on the labor market (TUAS).

Respondents' motivation to learn **English** is also high: 60% of EASS students rate their motivation as 5 out of 5, and 27% as 4. In TUAS, 51% of respondents rated their motivation to learn English very high and 34% high. The respective indicators for THCC are 47% and 45%. TUAS and THCC have 2% respondents with very low motivation and none with no motivation. At EASS, the latter indicators remain at 0%.
Students at EASS are motivated by the need to use English in work-related situations, professional development and participation in international communication. The high motivation indicators for TUAS are due to the need to improve their language skills, as language proficiency is essential in their field of specialization in order to communicate successfully on an international level and to improve their professional knowledge. The use of English in everyday work is also mentioned as a motivating factor for language learning. Students at THCC emphasize the importance of the English language skills in professional situations, working in an international company, reading professional literature and for self-development as a reason for their motivation.

The motivation to learn **Russian** is the lowest in all three institutions, with 26% of respondents rating their motivation as 5 on the scale of 5, 40% as 4, and 11% of respondents rate their motivation extremely low. At TUAS, 33% of the students are highly motivated to learn the Russian language, 27% are motivated and 7% are unmotivated. The respective figures for THCC are 35%, 39% and 4%. There are no unmotivated respondents at EASS and THCC. Respondents emphasize the practical need to use Russian at a sufficient and good level in work-related situations as a motivating factor.

3.3. Category III: Comparison of teaching methods

A comparative analysis of students' assessments of teaching methods at the three institutions revealed both similarities and differences between the institutions. Learners of all institutions rated highly the usefulness of vocabulary games and vocabulary learning applications (e.g., Quizlet). The tasks in the online environment actively engage learners and allow vocabulary acquisition through interactive activities. The activities can be done on smart devices and on the computer, and learners can do them at a time and place of their choice. Pair work and discussion were also seen as effective learning methods, and the importance of simulation was highlighted. These learning methods require collaborative skills, which are needed in all disciplines.

The students of TUAS and THCC would rather not do project writing and role-playing, as these methods were rated with average scores. The learners at TUAS indicated that they do not like traditional teaching methods, such as filling in worksheets on texts, as they were considered uninteresting, but at the same time they would like to learn grammar in depth. On the other hand, the students of EASS do not prefer to study grammar in depth, claiming that it reduces the motivation to learn the language. Students at EASS and THCC rated home reading very low, whereas students at TUAS rated it higher. The students of THCC also mentioned peer teaching as an effective method, while the students of TUAS and EASS did not rate that as high. Writing professional texts is difficult for the students and requires specific knowledge of grammar and professional vocabulary, which is why report writing is not regarded as important. The lowest rated is video-related tasks: for instance, video dubbing, as it is time-consuming and requires technical skills that learners may not be experienced in. The learners at EASS are not in favor of using smartphones in language learning.

To sum up, students at the three institutions provided relatively similar assessments for the effectiveness of similar teaching methods. Although the specifics of the three institutions differ, it seems that learners equally value teamwork and mastering the professional vocabulary. There is a greater preference for practicing professional language in active and real-life communication situations, where attention is paid to the message to be conveyed rather than to its grammatical correctness.

3.4. Category IV: Barriers to student motivation

The factors hindering the motivation of learners in the three universities of applied sciences were analyzed according to four subcategories: motivation, teaching methods, learning environment and the role of the learner and the teacher in the language learning process. A comparison of the results of the survey reveals that students from all three institutions have similar perceptions. In the category of motivation, students from the three institutions agree that the main factors hindering motivation are: fear of speaking in a foreign language and making mistakes, insufficient language skills, lack of interest in the language and students' own laziness. Students at EASS and TUAS have also referred to excessive study workload as an obstacle to dedicated language learning.

Comparison of the results in the category of learning methods reveals that for the students of EASS and TUAS the factors hindering motivation include the lack of up-to-date and boring study materials and unmotivating assignments that do not involve the students enough. Students at EASS also mention an excessive focus on grammar.

Learners do not perceive grammar as a necessary element of language proficiency, however, without grammar proficiency it is complicated to acquire and develop linguistically correct and competent speech. According to the students of THCC, the main obstacle is that the teaching materials used tend to be designed for students with a higher language proficiency.

In terms of the learning environment, students from all three institutions consider that the main factor hindering motivation is the heterogeneous level of language skills in the classroom. Students at TUAS similarly point to overly large language groups. Students also mention the ineffectiveness of distance learning in language learning, despite the wide range of technical facilities in the e-learning environment and the software supporting active learning. Distance learning is considered by respondents to be only one form of learning and not suitable as a permanent language learning environment. The students of EASS also consider the irregularity of the timetable a problem.

Comparing the results of the categories of the role of the learner and the role of the lecturer, it is apparent that the communication skills of the lecturer are considered essential by the students of both EASS and TUAS. According to the respondents from the latter institutions, unfriendly communication of the lecturer and the excessive demands on students hinder motivation the most and create a feeling of fear in the students. Furthermore, students mention the fast pace of instruction in classes. The students of EASS also consider that the lecturers' lack of involvement of all students is a hindrance to learning. The students of TUAS claim that motivation is also hindered if the lecturers are not sufficiently prepared for the class. THCC does not have this category at all.

Conclusion

A student satisfaction survey carried out by the three institutions of applied sciences showed that the overall satisfaction with the language learning system is above average in all institutions: 72% at EASS, 84% at TUAS and 54% at THCC. At EASS and TUAS, 6% are not satisfied with the language learning system at all, while in THCC only 2% are not satisfied.

Students in all institutions found learning foreign languages to be useful and necessary, and they felt that they had benefited most from learning professional vocabulary: 94% at THCC, 88% at TUAS and 85% at EASS. Professional language skills and the competency of self-expression in a foreign language in professional topics were also considered important. International communication is assessed to be less important for various reasons: students' lack of motivation and opportunities in TUAS; lack of opportunities in THCC due to Covid-19.

The motivation of students to study Estonian is very high at EASS (92%), at THCC it is 59% and at TUAS 54%. The reasons given are the importance of attaining a sufficiently good level of Estonian as the official language, the necessity of language skills in connection with professional duties and the desire to be sufficiently attractive on the labor market. The motivation to learn English is also high: 87% at EASS, 85% at TUAS and 92% at THCC. Students are motivated to use English in their daily life and for self-development. Compared to English, the motivation to learn Russian is lower in all three institutions: 66% in EASS, 60% in TUAS and 74% in THCC. The motivation for learning

Russian is the practical need to use Russian at an independent user level in professional communication.

Teaching methods include vocabulary games, tasks in the online environment, interactive activities and collaborative tasks: pair work, discussion, simulation exercises. Less value is placed on project work, role-play, traditional learning methods (fill-in-the-blanks, grammar and homework), video-related tasks.

Fear of speaking in a foreign language and of making mistakes, insufficient language skills, lack of interest in a particular language, laziness and excessive workload were considered as factors hindering learners' motivation. Learning materials that are boring and not up-to-date, unmotivating tasks that do not sufficiently involve learners, and learning materials that are not appropriate for the language level are also seen as obstacles. Motivation is similarly hampered by the heterogeneous language level of learners in the classroom, large language groups, distance learning, the fast-paced learning, unfriendly communication and excessive demands from the lecturer.

Students see the practical value of LSP and appreciate the institutions' contribution to the training of professionals but make suggestions for improving the language learning system. They expect a more homogeneous classroom, less distance learning, a more varied choice of foreign languages, more sustainable language learning process throughout their studies, and more language courses at different levels.

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Media and language Learning

Potential Risks of Bringing Authentic Materials to an ESP Classroom or the Media Manipulative Techniques EFL Students should be Aware of

Alexey Tymbay

Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic

Abstract

Studying a foreign language at upper-intermediate and advanced levels inevitably involves a close contact with authentic materials coming from multiple media sources. However, research identifies a high amount of headline/article discrepancies in the corpora of online articles, especially on sensitive political topics, which can establish false logical sequences and form wrong causative implicatures that may affect inexperienced readers, in particular, EFL students. Language means and manipulative strategies employed by the authors vary considerably, ranging from unintentional extensive use of expressive language, style variation to intentional information substitution, subjective modality and selective citations. Complete avoidance of authentic materials in the classroom can demotivate students and restrict their contact with "real" language; therefore, raising students' awareness about the possible language manipulation means is seen as the best means of working with authentic texts. It is suggested developing a teaching strategy incorporating regular text analysis exercises into EFL classroom routine for the students to be able to "decrypt" the online articles' style to prevent the potential harm from misinformation and manipulation techniques in the authentic materials. As a result, advanced EFL students are expected to become less susceptible to different types of misinformation.

Keywords: *headline, manipulation, metaphor, modality change, misinformation.*

1. The role of headlines in news perception

Although initially considered a phenomenon predominantly found in English-speaking countries, English newspaper headline style has transitioned to other journalistic traditions with the spread of online communication. Its current global prevalence proves that catchy headlines have become a universal rather than a culture-specific feature essentially characterized by its pragmatic function.

Influencing the reader directly through the headlines can be effective due to the following factors: the headline serves as a guide for the reader in the search and selection of preferred sources of information and relevant material; the headline often operates in the lack of a context environment, creating an information gap and multiple inferences; and there is an increasing tendency to get information from the media by viewing only the headlines.

Dor considers a headline a "multi-author and fostered text" [4]. Sub-editors and their teams often design headlines with attention attracting constraints and commercial interests in mind. They occasionally work with little collaboration with the journalist who has authored the news story itself and, as a result, are frequently criticized for creating titles that have little or nothing in common with the content they are meant to introduce. As a result, such headlines do not always objectively reflect the political reality or even the very articles they lead [1].

First of all, "space limitations make it impossible for headlines to tell the whole story; they [headlines] inevitably enhance or play up some information while suppressing other information" [12]. Secondly, the author's interpretation of the news and their commentary and assessment of the events contribute to creating a particular ideological background or a system of partisan influence. Thirdly, headlines trigger specific cognitive processes by framing the issue at hand and selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality [to] make them more salient in a communicating text" [5]. Consequently, the reader's ideas about current events in the world and attitudes to specific phenomena are often determined by the author's personal bias, the editor-in-chief's views on the headline composition, and the strategic interests of the publishing house.

Regarding the functions that are fulfilled by headlines, Dor [4] broadly divides them into:
    (a) informative (or summarizing), giving the reader a general or specific idea about the topic of the story;
    (b) indicative, addressing what happened in the news story;
    (c) eye-catching, designed to draw readership's attention to the news event.

Following John Searle's classification of illocutionary speech acts [11], informative headlines can be identified as "assertives", or rather speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition; indicative headlines can be classified as "expressives" or, in other words, speech acts that define the reporter's attitudes and emotions towards the proposal; eye-catcher headlines (also known as "clickbait") become "directives", that is speech acts which cause the website user "to take a particular action, e.g., click the hyperlink for further details" [10].

This work, however, seeks to identify another function that headlines have acquired in the information age, that of manipulation.

The scope of false information and its speed proliferates online are connected with these online networks' nature and technical capabilities.

By distorting (deliberately or not) the information in the article, an electronically multiplied headline can significantly change the reader's perception of reality and instantly become a powerful source of propaganda or misinformation. The internet empowered manipulative headlines start to function as Searle's "declaration" acts, i.e., communicative acts that "change the state of the world in an immediate way" [11].

Carston posits that almost every headline contains an implicature, which is defined as "an ostensibly communicated assumption that is inferentially developed from one of the incomplete conceptual representations encoded by the utterance" [3]. Although it is generally problematic to tie implicatures to a particular type of text, headlines, or rather the authors of headlines, often use them as assertions that convey information about the

article's content. Therefore, implicatures as contextually inferred meanings can be viewed as a potential source of manipulation.

All types of implicatures that are not supported by the text of the article are referred to as "false implicatures". Previous research studying headline implicatures of Russian headlines claims that 40% of all cases where implicatures were identified contained false implicatures [1], which means that nearly half of the headlines containing implicatures were made up to distort the original article.

The studies concerned with the effects of unassisted news dissemination concluded that novelty, sensationalism, and negative emotions triggered by headlines become important impact factors promoting their broader appeal. To fully understand the dissemination dynamics of manipulated headlines, one must consider how it affects people's psychological make-up and who might be particularly susceptible to believing and sharing false news and rumors. In the research studying manipulative influence of news, Pennycook et al. prove that "participants were only slightly more likely to consider sharing true headlines than false headlines, but much more likely to consider sharing politically discordant headlines than politically concordant ones" [7], which means that the so called "hard news" on controversial political topics have a higher dissemination potential.

Scott, Edy, and Phalen studied the general effects of using leads and headlines on people's perception of news stories. The case study comparing *New York Times* articles and the headlines concluded that "we should not expect too much of the Index, for its use is fraught with pitfalls that may trap the unwary" [9]. They believe that the absence of a precise mechanism of generating a headline turns the whole process into "wild guessing" when a certain percentage of headline information "no longer accurately reflects the content of the *Times*, and more importantly, that the direction of the distortions is unpredictable".

Black compared news headlines to "media-generated shortcuts for heuristic information about politics" [2]. Relying on previous research that demonstrated potentially powerful framing effects of headlines, Black compared headlines with the stories covering the 2004 Canadian elections. The analysis showed a considerable difference between articles and their headlines in terms of emphasis and issue salience. Black demonstrated that both the content of the article and the slant of the headline matter. He also showed how the tone of the coverage appeared to change when viewed exclusively through the lens of headlines versus the reading of complete stories. Hence, according to Black in political discourse, "voters who scanned headlines were supplied with a different set of heuristic cues than those paying closer attention" [2].

The accuracy of headlines introducing environmental topics in the Danish press was studied by Vestergård, who found differences in the way participants remembered and interpreted negative headlines versus positive and neutral ones. The study also concluded that quality newspapers are only "moderately inaccurate" in quoting science publications. However, it also showed that 7% of headlines exaggerated the scientific claims [14].

Considered together, the cumulative results of these experiments suggest that headlines play a crucial role in the way people understand the news. However, although a certain number of headlines is distorted, only limited attention has been paid to the role of

language in these changes. Therefore, an attempt should be made to devise a more or less comprehensive classification of language contributing to the distortions.

2. Types of distortions

Rigotti divides all manipulations into three groups in accordance with their nature, namely organizational (procedural), logical and psychological. The first ones are the actual speech acts, e.g. interruptions in a dialogue, aimed at achieving a certain goal, for example, changing the topic. The intentional deception of the reader by the deliberate use of logical errors in a headline belongs to the second group, i.e. logical manipulations. The third group is formed by psychological techniques, such as creating the readers' feeling of outrage or flattering the audience in order to lull their vigilance [8].

However, this grouping of news is hard to apply in practice. The author's intent, such as to confuse the public, slant the reader's opinion, or cause harm, is not always transparent to the news consumer or even an expert. The typology mentioned above does not include many propaganda sources, nor does it accommodate half-truths and other misleading techniques.

This suggests that it is vital for the reader to monitor the relationship that actual mass media headlines have with the rest of the story they precede.

The web resource *The Global Investigative Journalism Network*, which belongs to an international association of journalist organizations and supports the professional training and information sharing among investigative and data journalists, mentions six methods of information warfare that unreliable media use to create compelling headlines:

- complete disinformation (publishing an actual piece of news under a false title);
- concealment of essential information (neglecting important details stated in the article that completely change the context of the report)
- presentation of opinions as facts (including those of pseudo-experts and think tanks, twisting experts' statements or faking them);
- exaggeration (sensationalism, misinterpretation of results);
- understatement for disinformation purposes;
- displacement of concepts (substitution, invalid comparisons).

Following our research objectives, we would like to emphasize those methods where manipulating the audience is achieved exclusively by language means. For these ends, special attention in this grouping should be paid to exaggeration, understatement, and displacement of concepts in the headlines. These manipulations are conducted mainly by introducing metaphors, subjective modality, and style variation in the headlines.

One likely reason for difficulties in understanding the role of the language in the manipulation process is the type of discourse where these manipulations occur. Certain types of media texts, like adverts or political reports, are more prone to media bias and low-key objectivity, whereas reporting scientific data is expected to be more accurate and impartial. Most linguists, therefore, analyze a specific kind of media text and use a specially devised distortion classification.

Besides manipulations on the structural and semantic level, consuming news through online media itself poses certain risks. Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, and Hertwig specified the digital challenges that readers of online content can face [6]:

1) Persuasive and manipulative choice architectures. These are clickable hyperlinks aimed at directing readers' choice of media content and steering their online behavior in commercial or misinformation interests;
2) AI-assisted information architectures or, in other words, algorithmic tools that filter and mediate information online, providing a personalized curation of news feeds;
3) Digital environments optimized to monopolize readers' attention and online behaviors;

The nature of digital communication is becoming more and more complex. The very detection of many of the techniques mentioned above poses a severe challenge for a researcher. In this multi-layer environment, only the last instance concerning creating inciting content seems to be achieved by purely linguistic means. An appeal to readers' feelings through the cognitive framing of an event can be viewed as a basis for emotive implicatures.

3. Implications for teaching

The first obvious conclusion that can be made from the analysis of headline distortions is that the active engagement of students in the discussion of problematic issues is an essential pre-condition of effective classroom procedure. It instills the atmosphere of openness and contributes to effective problem resolution, which may prove useful in further students' contacts with authentic language. Classroom research results prove that specially designed follow-up activities and student-led discussions are the best way of balancing sensitive materials' authenticity and the ESP agenda [13]. It has also become evident that studying the language for specific purposes is impossible without immersing the class in the current media content. Although most teachers prefer to distance themselves from the censor's role and stand up for greater authenticity of the content as long as an alternative point of view is provided, we believe that some premeditation of the ESP courses is necessary to avoid one-sided political coverage or strongly biased discussions of current events. Finally, respectful and productive classroom communication creates an opportunity for reflection and the ability to weigh the evidence in and outside the classroom, including broadening students' consideration of other people's perspectives and enhancing their professional skills.

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Primary Education

The Storias Project: Developing Young Children's Literacy and Language Skills

**Stefan Colibaba[1], Irina Gheorghiu[2], Adrian Dinu[3],
Carmen Antonita[4], Cintia Colibaba[5]**

[1,2] Al. I. Cuza University Iasi, Romania
[2]Albert Ludwigs University Freiburg, Germany
[4]Scoala Primara Euroed Iasi, Romania
[5]University of Life Sciences Iasi, Romania

Abstract

The article is a study based on the European Storias project, developed under the Erasmus program, KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices and KA220 - Collaborative partnerships in school education. Five institutions (schools and non-governmental organizations working in the field of education) from Belgium, Greece, Poland, Italy, and Romania are carrying out the initiative. The Storias project's main objective is to help children between the ages of 5 and 10 acquire fundamental reading skills by utilizing writing, storytelling, and creativity in an innovative and inclusive approach. To this end, the project provides teachers with pedagogical resources as well as practical tools centred on literacy, storytelling and inclusion. The article outlines the objectives, methodology and outputs of the project. The project's methodology proposes activities ranging from participatory stories to story boxes that involve multiple experiences of multisensory storytelling, which will allow children to learn through visual, kinesthetic and auditory practices. The article also emphasizes the importance of storytelling as a means of communication and a vital tool in the development of young children's literacy skills in their mother tongue or foreign languages.

Keywords: *literacy, inclusion, children, storytelling, participatory stories, story boxes*

1. Introduction

In today's world, searching for information, selecting, digesting, evaluating and using it is essential. Literacy includes reading, writing, and reading comprehension skills and is crucial to early academic achievement and later success in life. That is why mastering literacy skills has become so vital for children. On the other hand, mastering literacy skills depends on how effective the teaching of literacy skills is in children's first school years. Teaching literacy requires inclusive pedagogical approaches based on thorough knowledge and understanding of students' diverse needs. In this respect, there is not enough material and training for teachers of children with learning disabilities whose intelligence sometimes helps them find strategies to make their problems detectable only later in life.

2. The Storias project

The Storias project, an Erasmus+ project co-financed by the European Commission, aims to promote an innovative way of teaching which will open the doors to literacy to children through storytelling, creativity and inclusive practices. The Storias project is developed within a partnership of schools and educational institutions from Belgium, France, Italy and Romania. The project addresses children in preschool and primary education (5 - 10 years) and their teachers. It aims to produce creative pedagogical resources enabling teachers to develop children's basic literacy skills and engage them in a wide range of experiences of multisensory storytelling, which allow children to learn through visual, kinesthetic and auditory practices. The main results are storyboxes, participatory stories, a pedagogical guide, a creation manual and an implementation guide.

2.1 Storyboxes

The Storyboxes section comprises ready-to-use kits designed to engage and fire children's imagination and creativity in partners' languages in an inclusive format. The method is innovative for reasons including the use of storytelling to teach specific literacy skills and the development of story boxes with guidelines for teachers on inclusive practices. Storytelling is something the children are used to, so it makes them feel secure. The strategy helps teachers fulfil the needs of the students with learning disabilities by offering inclusive strategies. It also increases children's confidence in their skills to engage in the activities [1,2].

The Storiaskits contain a selection of 24 tales that not only represent the traditions of the contributing nations but also those of "all European countries". The partners agreed on 12 common European tales, including 12 national tales centred on historical figures and 12 myths, legends, and fables. Three categories (including eight stories each and corresponding to age ranges and, thus, learning challenges) represent the 24 Storias kits. These stories are told using a variety of storytelling techniques, including puppet shows, silent book theatre and kamishibai, depending on the age of the children.

Every Storiaskit comes with a basic kit that is the same for everyone: the Activity book with the selected story, handwriting "exercises" for the child and writing techniques for the teacher to help all children feel more confident in their writing skills and support students with learning disabilities. The Activity Book is the foundation for connecting writing, reading and storytelling. Along with the stories, the Storiaskits include a variety of tools to help teachers engage their children. Among the tools are puppets, dolls, story cut-outs, story cards, story muppets, story tapestry, music and video tools, a story basket with useful material (soft toys, farm zoo animals, lego figures, etc.), interactive games, quizzes, puzzles, and links to sound generators.

A storybox's main goal is to give children interactive literacy experiences so they can learn new things, develop new ideas, and comprehend the world around them better. The storybox invites children to explore the narrative while also letting them interact with letters, words, cutouts and images so they can add to the narrative or come up with their own. Children explore the storybox by engaging in a variety of inclusive activities focusing on reading, writing, sketching, and using manual abilities, which promotes brain activity. They gain knowledge of how things link and give words meaning thanks to the practical

experiences; for all children, learning to read and write, literacy, originates from practical experiences.

Young children experience the story and use the story box through a series of workshops. This type of workshop has a stimulating effect for children's manual dexterity (the child has to cut out, glue, etc) and memory processes of storing and retrieving information.

2.2 Participatory stories

Participatory stories combine storytelling, reading and performances to allow children to create their own stories in time. This process also helps children develop their literacy skills in a fun storytelling environment, which is the best way to boost motivation [3]. The partnership decided to produce 24 Participatory Stories (tales, myths, legends and stories about historical figures) to foster language development and written literacy in a narrative setting. The pre-primary and primary instructors can use this output to help the children improve their written literacy abilities.

This approach enables all children to participate fully in the storytelling activities, even those with learning disabilities. The idea of "telling stories" is often used in teaching and learning but it typically has to do with improving students' listening abilities or helping them understand morals and arguments. The term "participatory storytelling" refers to a more interactive, student-centred method of delivering stories in which children take on the role of active players rather than passive listeners as they "develop" the story over time.

The stories, divided according to three age groups, cover many technical and stylistic aspects of literacy, including vocabulary (adjectives, nouns, prepositions, etc.), grammar (conjugations, tenses, pronouns, etc.), spelling, punctuation, sentence structure (simple, compound, complex), and type (affirmative, interrogative, negative, imperative, exclamatory), as well as story elements (setting, plot, conflict, resolution). A recording of each participation narrative in the partnership languages is included with the written text of the stories so that children may listen to them at home.

The participatory stories can serve as a guide for parents and teachers to increase the level of participation in the Storiakit: after reading or listening to the story once (through the Storiakit), adults and children can retell it together by acting out one episode of the story each, turning the story into a play in which every child plays a part, or adapting the story into a Muppet show (having every child

controlling a muppet). Setting the scene with background music, having students role-play (wear costumes/change their voices), allowing all students to have their voices heard to determine the course of a story, and adding elements to the stories can make the participatory stories more inclusive to all members of the target group.

Children's involvement in the participatory stories is unparalleled. Children have to alter the ending, offer a different resolution or conclusion, update character names, decide which characters are good or bad, modify personality traits or abilities, introduce new characters to the story, and use alternative plotlines using the "what if..." storytelling technique. That is why participatory stories have fixed elements for the children to follow and flexible elements for the children to complete or create. Thus, all stories comprise an introduction and the main body text but they also contain elements left at the children's

choice: an unclear ending to the story, no clear-cut approach for the characters to handle things, one of the events in the story is missing, etc. Children's creativity is fully exploited by choosing which words are appropriate when summarising the story, deciding how and where to put the elements from the Storiaskits in the story they are working on, and determining the evolution and outcome of each story.

Children are encouraged to "rewrite" the story through participation stories by recreating the characters and the plot in their own unique and personal ways. This occurs as the story develops through co-creation or enriching activities. Participatory stories help children further develop their literacy skills. Tasks get more complex depending on the children's age. Thus, by adding adjectives that describe the people or the settings, colours and feelings, young children can expand the basic text and make it more complex until they construct a full story. Participatory stories designed for older students (ages 9–10) target more advanced writing skills and can therefore include exercises such as identifying synonyms and antonyms, using various types of adjectives, verbs and adverbs, adding various other story elements so the children can expand their vocabulary, diversify sentence structure and have more freedom to modify the story as they see fit.

2.3 Further development

The future development of the project focuses on providing teachers with suitable materials and training them to develop children's literacy. Thus, the pedagogical guide trains teachers to adapt their lessons and use the new method based on creativity and storytelling in their classes. The guide covers topics from storytelling to literacy, pedagogical practices and comes with a comprehensive booklet on teaching literacy based on inclusive principles. The Manual provides teachers with useful instructions on how to develop their own story boxes, engage children in participatory stories and look for or create resources tailored to their children's needs. The implementation guide provides teachers with best practice examples to follow and testimonials of teachers who participated in the piloting of the produced learning materials. All the project's outputs will be piloted in schools and modified to meet the needs of teachers and children.

3. Conclusions

The project's goal is to create innovative teaching tools that will help teachers improve their students' fundamental literacy abilities and involve them in a variety of multisensory storytelling activities. The method's use of storytelling to teach particular literacy skills and the creation of story boxes with instructions on inclusive teaching techniques for educators are innovative. The method relies on a hands-on self-created approach to literacy, which enhances creativity and imagination and is key to children's cognitive development, especially for those with special needs.

The feedback we got was positive. The teachers we interviewed appreciated the activities as "innovative and fun". They also supported the use of stories that "usually contribute to children's moral development" to help them with their reading and writing skills. The new usage of storytelling creates a whole new setup and experience and has a great potential for helping children tune their manual dexterity. The Activity Book offers beneficial support for students to start thinking about the story, concentrate on the story and the upcoming task and stay engaged. The Activity book encourages children to practice and improve

their manual skills, which are important while doing later stages of participatory storytelling with storyboxes. This then gives children the confidence to act and start using their abilities.

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Studies on Language Learning

Rhythmical Patterns of Joe Biden's Political Speeches: An Analytic Study

Rasim Tayeh Jehjooh
Imam Al-Kadhum College

Abstract

In general, rhythm is defined as a movement in a regular sequence with strong or weak vocal tones. One of the most significant components of a political speaker's delivery is the employment of rhythmical and musical patterns in order to capture the audience's compassion and sympathy on the one hand, while also persuading them of the content of his speeches on the other. The purpose of this work is to identify the rhythmical patterns and types of stress–unstressed arrangements in three Joe Biden's speeches. Biden's speeches are found to follow no set pattern or iambic style, but he tries to give each theme its own pattern. In each theme, the quantity of meters or feet is basic. Roach's Model (2002 is followed in the analysis of Biden's speeches. One of the main conclusions of this paper is that for each theme a number of feet is used by Biden as a strategy in all his speeches.

Keywords: connected speech, Joe Biden, political speech rhythm, stress

Introduction

Crystal (2019:417) claims that rhythm embodies the apparent consistency of significant components in speech phonologically. These rhythmical symmetries can be expressed as patterns of stressed vs. unstressed syllables, syllable length (long vs. short), pitch (high to low), or a combination of these variables. "Stressed time rhythm or syllable time rhythm are two types of rhythmical patterns. The major focus of this investigation is a stressed time rhythm. It refers to the relative power or emphasis placed on a particular syllable or phrase in a speech to make it stand out from other syllables or words (like in Joe Biden's speeches). These types are used to confirm the substance of the speech. When Joe Biden became President of the United States in 2021, this research was applied to his speeches.

Rhythm and political Discourse

Humans speak rhythmically, according to Roach, 2002 and many other linguists such as Carr (2013). They use regular beats in the speech signal to engage in the act of speaking. Those rhythms can be heard in English phrases like "Biden stated a year ago, the country was" struck by a virus that was treated with quiet and denial. "The music is playing. People do not necessarily put a beat on every syllable in most variants of English. There is no beat on the preposition(with) or the two instances of "a and the" in this phrase. Because English is stress-timed, unlike several other languages, the rhythmic beats only fall on stressed syllables. In the above example, only (Biden, said,

year, ago, country, hit, virus, met, silence and denial) are stressed, so the beats fall only on those. English, is unlike many other languages like Arabic in this respect .The rhythm of a language, according to Skandera (2005:87), is the recurrence of major parts of speech at what are considered to be regular intervals of time. The type of rhythm is a characteristic of supra-segmental qualities, or prosodic features, of any given language's pronunciation". *(*kreidler, 2013:140)

The second theory, namely syllable –time rhythm in languages like (e.g. French, Telugu, Yoruba). All syllables, whether stressed or unstressed, tend to occur at regular time intervals and the time between stressed syllables will be shorter or longer in proportion to the number of unstressed syllables. (Roach, 2002:118). In the absence of any cognitive awareness of what 'stress' could be, English speakers can discern which syllable in a word receives the most stress. While the native speaker may not be aware of the concept of stress. However, we emphasize the importance of mastering these abilities. The preacher is the people's language and tongue. He must be the most eloquent and powerful among them in eloquence, as well as the most precise in discourse. Voice intonation involves a preacher raising his or her voice to break out of the monotony that many preachers fall into. This will capture the inattentive attention and awaken the same. Speaking with a cadence and tempo is proportional to the psychological mood of the sermon first, and the ability of the audience to follow the rhetorical parts. Second, in terms of the sermon's psychological atmosphere, the issues of the sermon, for example, do not suit a quick pace, but rather require a slower rhythm and a slower pace than educational, political, or intellectual matters This is an issue to which people should pay close attention. (Al-Ghababshi,2014, Issue 324).

Phonological Patterns in Political Speech

Political discourse is characterized by a set of features. Among these are the following: It contains many details about the main topic of the discourse. Maintains reference to general topics, which are related to public affairs. It helps in defending the decisions issued by an entity, which may face criticism from the individuals targeted by these decisions. It is also based on praising and praising a particular policy that is followed in society or the opposition and protesting and criticizing this policy. Defending programs and tests of a political nature that are developed by a certain party, or finding alternative programs and methods for the existing and followed programs. Its goal may be to spread optimism and hope for the future, or it may work to find a different political vision by seeing the discourse by the majority

The Case Study: Rhythmic Patterns in Joe Biden's Speeches

In Biden's speeches, one can identify the notion of rhythm which involves some noticeable event happening at regular intervals of time; one can detect the rhythm of a heartbeat, of a flashing light or of a piece of music through listening to Biden's various speeches. The researcher follows certain procedures to study Bidens' rhythmical patterns. Three Speeches have been chosen: President Biden at the National Veterans Day Observance, Joe Biden's DNC speech and his speech after 100 days of his entrance to the white house. Phonemic transcription has been done to discover the rhythmical patterns. This analysis has depended on the themes that were included in his speeches.

Results of the study

Identifying rhythmical patterns depends mainly on the theme that the president wants to convey to his public. The results report a variant number of feet to express a theme. It has shown that Biden used this procedure successfully to reveal that a theme can be simple in sense but may be represented differently. For example, the theme of 'trust' is represented by three, four or five feet. But this is not obligatory; it means that if we analyze other speeches, a bigger number of feet can reveal this theme.

The same is true for other themes. Also, the other point here is the number of feet coincides with the type and importance of themes. For example, Biden used a small number of feet (two or three for expressing happiness) and a large number for more complex themes (like 19-28 for adhering to the previous instruction of virus). The phonetic analysis states that there is no consistency in the pitch of voice of the speaker through depending on the distribution of more muscular energy on certain syllables and less than that on others. The phonetic analysis is based on the sentence level rather than on the line level in poetry since the aim is thematic. Whenever the President wants to convey an important thing or a specific message to the public, he tries to raise his voice by stressing the required utterances. Having a look at these speeches of Biden, and through expected out-of-the research data, one can recognize easily how the American President depended on the sound engineering and its relevance to his emotions in conveying several messages to the audience.one can notice the President did not raise the voice for non-necessary, and do not lower it so that he becomes bored by the hearing.

Because those who address them are not on the same level in terms of being affected, some of them are sufficient for the slightest sign, and some of them do not preach except by raising their voice and warning by word, and an explanation of that will come. Besides, it is also evident that Biden did not used one sequence of rhythmic patterns; instead, different sequences were used, regardless of the theme under emphasis. But what is interesting is that the influence of age and his way of delivering a speech, of course colored by smiling and turning around to his crew, the domain of weak or unstressed syllables is very clear. This is represented by using slow way of delivering, accompanied by changing some short and long vowels into shwa /ə/. This pattern is not the actual pattern of using English by American presidents, if Biden compared with Trump or Obama, where the two are known by their loud delivery of speech.

Conclusion

It seems that Biden succeeds in achieving the effect in the public's opinion through using rhythmical patterns. This effect has been achieved in two ways.one is related the process of hearing which is a way to calm one's self through using pronunciation, style and the method one presents his speech through sound and stress. Here, Biden has the ability to affect the addressee's opinions. Moreover, through this phonological analysis, we noticed that Biden through using rhythm take the task of convincing by stirring people's thoughts and feeling together. In Biden's speeches, the rhythm was the outcome of repetition, sound harmony, and parallelism between sentences as in /It iz roŋ. it iz ʌn əmerikən and it mʌst stop/. In short, we can conclude those sentences contain emphasis only in words that are important in speech. Thus, the stress rhythm is Perhaps a characteristic of a single style of speech, not speaking in English as a whole;

One always talks at smart a certain degree of rhythm. We expect to have shown the importance rhythm in determining the realization of segments in Biden's speeches, indicating the morphemic and syntactic function of elements, and structuring information in the sentence. It follows from this that stress and rhythm are basic for intelligibility, adequacy and fluency in speech and that they should be consistently practiced by foreign learners, if possible, in the early stages.

We have concentrated on the production side of English stress and rhythm, which will contribute to more intelligible speech and how the practice of stress and rhythm helps to understand running speech. Since stress highlights the most important words in the message, a rhythmical approach to English pronunciation will help the foreign listener to concentrate on the meaningful utterances in the message and to strengthen the links between pronunciation on the one hand and grammatical structure and meaning on the other one.

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The Influence of Orthography in the English Phonological Acquisition by Arab ESL Learners

Eman AlJuhani
Jubail Industrial College, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Orthographic patterns can influence pronunciation in a second language (L2). It is unclear if the same orthographic structure affects L2 speech and language comprehension. In both output and observation tasks, Arab ESL learners employed vowel and consonant length discourse in their second language (Watson, 2021). This article indicates that word identification tasks are very challenging for Arabic ESL learners. Arabic learners tend to be inaccurate in managing vowels in English phrases (Alotaibi et al., 2018). They are more prone to making mistakes involving vowels than individuals of other native language backgrounds. This suggests that even a little instruction in phonetics may increase output in the chosen language, which should be noted as a facilitator of the speaking skill that Arabs go through on their way to becoming more proficient in English (Alhazmi et al., 2019). Hence, the same orthographic phenomena directly influence pronunciation and language comprehension. Different studies have found a correlation between competence and orthographic impact, although these correlations are different in naturalistic and taught circumstances (AlKendi, 2020; AlJarf, 2019; Brosh, 2019). The goal of this exhaustive review is to gain a better understanding of the impacts that orthography has on L2 phonology by correlating the effects of influences on phonetics and verbal fluency. ESL classrooms should focus on phonetics instructions in teaching Arab ESL learners.

Keywords: *orthography; L2; L1; phonological awareness*

Introduction

The way L2 speakers generate and interpret L2 sounds might be influenced by the orthographic patterns of their second language (L2). Research on L2 phonology, however, tends to focus on small-scale studies examining the effects a certain orthographic form has on the generation of a single sound. Furthermore, no studies show how orthography influences L2 speakers' phonological representations by influencing their output. As a result of these studies being so small, it has not been feasible to look at criteria such as competency, selective memory, and length of time spent in a target language setting that might predict the influence of orthography on L2 speech output. Orthography was shown to influence English phonological learning in Arab ESL learners, according to the findings of 17 separate research conducted over the previous five years that were evaluated and analysed.

Impact of Orthographic Patterns on the Creation of Second Language Speech

It can be challenging to master the phonology of a second language (L2). It is essential to note that second languages are typically learnt through a combination of spoken and written information and that the learning of phonology in a native tongue can be hampered by the use of orthographic forms (alphabets) of the foreign language. Many studies show that L2 speakers' speech production and understanding are influenced by a language's orthographic patterns and structures. Even though orthographic effects might lead to sound substitutes, the most typical results are sound enhancements (Abu-Rabia & Kitany, 2022). In most cases, L2 speakers replace another sound for a target sound because of how the sound is spelled. There have even been reports of L2 speakers producing sounds that do not correspond to the intended language's alphabet. Especially in the first phases of second language acquisition, the interpretation and synthesis of speech tones in the second language are influenced by the orthographic patterns of the second language, which might result in pronunciation that is not native-like. For example, native learners of American English L2 can generate the identical destination flap / as [t] whenever the wording is t> and as [d] when the word is d>, as in the terms "lady" and "beauty". Some replacements occur because of incongruences between the grapheme-phoneme forms of communication of the native language (L1) and the target language (L2). This happens when speakers wrongly assimilate a phoneme from their L2 language with a phoneme from their L1 when the identical grapheme expresses both phonemes. For instance, some EnglishL1 novice learners of Arabic L2 generate [v] in Arabic words beginning with a [v] because this is what the syllable [v] symbolizes in their native English. In contrast, it symbolizes [b] in Arabic, and [v] does not prevail. This occurs because the grapheme [v] signifies a different sound in English than in Arabic, where [v] does not exist. It has been found repeatedly that language learners are susceptible to the impacts of native grapheme-phoneme notations.

The inter-orthography effect may be seen in the following case. Using L1 rules, an L2 speaker can encode a piece of text into a piece of sound in the L2, for example, to produce an orthographic effect. According to previous studies, these effects have been linked to a lack of unity between L1 and L2 grapheme-phoneme interactions, disrupting sound discrimination in novice and non-native listeners. Good replacements in L2 speech output are influenced by the number of characters in the wording of a sound's pronunciation. The native grapheme-phoneme messages of L2 users influence the recompilation of English orthographic forms, as Saeed Al-Sobhi et al. (2017) discovered in a set of experiments. As with vowels, Arabs wrote the identical English long vowel sound as long when using double syllable letters. In cross-orthographic testing, the findings were validated by English L2 users who were also native Japanese learners. This language uses stylistic length for vowels and consonants but is written in a script other than the Arabic alphabet.

In another study, researchers found that the long-short phonological disparity is authentic: Native Arab speakers of English generated homophonic English words as minimum pairs separated by a short or long vowel, for example, creating finish as [fn], with a solitary [n], and Finnish as [f], with a descriptive [n] (Fragman & Mor-Sommerfeld, 2021). Orthographic impacts on native phonology have been explained in two ways in the literature. There are orthographic impacts on speech production and perception in text-literate individuals because of the influence that orthographic forms have on phonological perceptions.

Phonological Awareness as a Function of Orthographic Forms

Orthographic forms have influenced native language phonological recognition tests since the 1970s. Masrai's (2020) research has shown that using so-called silent characters in orthography causes native users to count more morphemes in phoneme-counting activities. Despite the reality that orthographic patterns have been shown to influence both linguistic knowledge in native languages and expressive language in L2 speakers, there has been little study on orthographic impacts on linguistic knowledge in L2 speakers.

A closer look at Jiang's (2018) findings shows that naive Arabic learners added syllables by inserting an epenthetic sound into the printed language of L2 words. The consonant cluster was lessened when they solely learned the spoken version of the L2 terms (Jiang, 2018). Further investigation into whether orthography impacts pronunciation and phonological processing in second-language speakers is critical. Researchers looked at how the number of letters in a word affected phonemic awareness and output in adult Arabic L2 learners (Jiang, 2018). L2 Arab learners skipped one syllable in output and phoneme awareness tests when the triphthong was written with two characters but not when it was written with three. It is impossible to draw definite conclusions from these studies because of the differences in the students' phonological awareness and technical abilities. Students who participated in both activities were examined for their phonological awareness and ability to produce natural-sounding language, and we looked at whether the impact of orthographic on phonological awareness might be used to model the impact of orthographic on pronunciation (Jiang, 2018). Proof that orthography influences phonological conceptions in the minds of L2 speakers would be obtained if the impact was seen in both pronunciation and metalinguistic consciousness tests.

The L2 Phonology Predictive Model for Orthographic Effects

Research on speaker-related factors, which may combine with orthographic impacts to influence phonological acquisition, is virtually nonexistent. Researchers have examined several factors to see if they affect L2 pronunciation (Chen & Schwartz, 2018). Most of the time, they thought of it as a foreign accent or a foreign-looking person. At the age when acquisition began, competency in L2, training and exposure levels, motivation, and aptitude levels, were all considered. However, it is unclear which of these factors will impact L2 phonology in the form of orthographic consequences.

L2 pronunciation benefits motivation, especially integrative motivation. The value placed on sounding like a native speaker is directly related to how similar the two speakers' sound. Language aptitude has two individual parts that have a function in L2 pronunciation, according to Hayes-Harb & Barrios (2021). Two examples of phonemic coding abilities are the ability to distinguish novel sounds and recall them from memory. Similarly, there is strong evidence that better short-term memory benefits.

The highest correlation between native likeness and selective memory in the L2 was seen in one research. L2 English learners with less auditory short memory than those with stronger linguistic short memory rely more on syllable length to identify English vowels, which is critical for this study (Al-Khalefah & Al-Khalifa, 2021). Researchers that focused on the impact of orthographic information on L2 phonology discovered a connection between exposure time and L2 orthographic phonology. There was, however, no

connection with the length of stay (Watson, 2021). In this study, we looked at whether orthographic impacts on L2 language output and language comprehension may be influenced by some of the characteristics that affect L2 speech native similarity.

How Consonant Span Awareness Affects Consonant Output

In learners' pronunciation, orthographic forms had less impact if learners were more conscious of the length of consonants. For example, if learners felt English contained singleton and geminate vowels, they were more likely to generate long vowel sounds in words typed with double characters in their writing (Alhazmi et al., 2019). A strong connection between linguistic knowledge and verbal fluency supports the idea that orthography-induced phonological concepts generate orthographic influences on L2 speech production. Due to the major factors that contribute to phonetics and orthography, there must be no orthographic impacts on second languages because phonetics and orthography are co-activated in the formation of words.

Since instructed second language students are often subjected to orthographic information from the preschool level and frequently in significant amounts, the impacts on speakers of a second language (L2) may be higher than those seen in native speakers (Alhazmi et al., 2019). Even though l2 learners experience orthographic aspects of the second language after becoming educated in a first language, these learners can decipher the orthographic aspects of the second language by employing the mapping that exists between the typographical and orthographic units of their first dialect (Alhazmi et al., 2019). These kinds of inter-orthographic effects are impossible for multilingual native speakers to experience. The Speech Adaptive Learning and the Sensory Assimilation Model, currently the two most prominent theories of L2 learning vocabulary, do not consider orthographic input. More data is required to have a meaningful theoretical argument about the impact of typography on L2 phonology. Additionally, more data are required for L2 phonology research to contribute to the knowledge of native phonetics.

Almuslimi's (2020) study reveals that L2 orthographic patterns, rewritten according to L1 grapheme-phoneme notations, can cause trained L2 users to make a phonological distinction in their L2 output that does not appear in the original language. Therefore, Arabic L1 speakers who also spoke English L2 rendered the same English syllable in two distinct ways: their pronunciation was shorter than that of native English presenters when the goal syllable was worded with a single syllable, and it was lengthier than that of native English presenters when it was worded with a double letter. This indicates that Arabic developed two separate categories, but native English users only had one classification, and its length was somewhere in the middle of that of Arabic's two categories.

The preceding study was supported by a study that was conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2018). This study found that Arabic L1 users' geminates were, on mean, 1.7 times as long as their singletons. The current study confirmed such effects empirically, in contrast to the prior anecdotal data by Almuslimi (2020), which indicated that a lengthy consonant was created in a single phrase by a small sample of primary school students. Arabic respondents not only generated lengthier syllables than native English speakers in double-letter phrases, but they also generated longer sounds than the native users in single-letter terms. This provides more evidence that Arabic produced two phonological categories, each corresponding to a single target group, and that Arabic was responsible for establishing a phonological contrast in L2 English between geminates and singletons.

Importantly, these effects were seen among L2 speakers with over ten years of L2 exposure. The existence of orthographic input did not influence the appearance of orthographic effects since these effects were observed while reading aloud and when performing a delayed repeat of a native speaker's output. Moreover, the phonological pattern of native homophones did not modify the orthographic impact since there were often no variations in gemination when the native dialect included a cognate word or loanword. Although the borrowed words floppy seemed to vary from other words containing the letter p in the study conducted by Almuslimi (2020), similar effects were not seen in the research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2018). In further investigations, it will be essential to investigate the factors influencing orthographic consequences.

Orthographic Effects on Consonant Output: Predictive Models

The L2 speakers' level of English competence predicts the degree of the orthographic influence on their speech output. Higher CEFR scores among bilinguals and greater results on the Oxford Aptitude Test indicated a lesser orthographic influence on consonant production (Al-Jarf, 2019). In the past, previous studies have revealed no association between segment nativeness and proficiency. Recognizing that English does not include long consonants may impact fluency more than the multiple sophisticated talents necessary to recognize and generate non-native language parts.

In bilinguals, poor memory may play a role in linear regression. According to earlier research, a short attention span is a powerful predictor of native-like speech. However, naturalistic and instructional environments appear to have different orthographic impact predictions (Almuslimi, 2020). The reason is that while short-term memory might be effective when native speakers encircle one, it is less so in a class situation when input is typically limited and non-native. The correlation between orthographic impact and the percentage of written intake among speakers of other languages was unexpected. To some extent, the lack of consonant duration disparities between speech and writing can be reconciled via additional exposure to writing under realistic conditions (Alotaibi et al., 2018). This is a surprising finding that calls for more investigation. A lower amount of consonant gemination was anticipated among students who expressed a wish to improve their pronunciation.

Vowel Synthesis and Comprehension in Orthographic Forms

Speech output was not altered by vowel spelling. Rather, metalinguistic knowledge was unaffected. In the delayed repetition task, vowel length was impacted by the number of characters in the pronunciation of an English vowel. Using a digraph to spell the same vowel gave it a longer length than using a single vocal letter (Bassetti et al., 2021). Vowel spelling appears to have a greater influence on bilinguals than on first-language speakers, which implies that some first-language speakers may not be aware that English has a variety of vowel sounds (Biglari & Struys, 2021). As well as its size and complexity, it is a distinct category.

Only a quarter of L2 speakers judged that fool and rule did not pair when asked about their knowledge of vowel length during the rhyming assessment test, and fewer than half of those respondents ascribed this to vowel pitch. Vowel length proportions in speech production did not affect the accuracy of L2 speakers in the test. The participants were evaluated on their ability to recognize that consonant orthography does not correlate to

varied consonant lengths. In contrast, vowel rhyming judgment examined participants' understanding of how words are spoken.

Regarding vowel production, students with a greater motivation to acquire English speech had a reduced tendency to create homophonic vowels. They used a variety of durations to match the results for sounds (Brosh, 2019). It indicates that students who are more motivated to improve their English pronunciation are also good at learning to pronounce certain words.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, the study found that Arab native speakers of English could form a long-short contrast and employ vowel and consonant length discourse in their second language. In addition, they discovered that the phonological consequences of orthographic changes were predicted by proficiency. In addition, a variety of self-reported characteristics were used in this historical preview. Self-ratings were appropriate for exploratory historical preview, but quantifiable metrics may provide different outcomes, at least for those factors where there is no indication that self and quantitative measurements are connected. This article provides an overview of studies that are significant for investigating the influence of orthography on the acquisition of English phonology. This historical preview aims to establish a correlation between the effects of various influences on phonetics and verbal fluency to achieve a more profound comprehension of orthography's effects on the phonology of L2s.

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Errors, (Legitimate) Deviations from the Standard, or What? An Analysis of Errors in Essays Written in English by Italian University Students

Paola-Maria Caleffi
University of Bologna, Italia

Abstract

A number of studies have highlighted a widespread 'writing emergency' amongst Italian university students, who seem to show poor writing skills in their mother tongue [1]. Less attention has been paid to Italian (under)graduates' performance in EFL writing [2], despite the fact that, given its role as the lingua franca of academia [3], English is increasingly being adopted worldwide as the medium of instruction (EMI) [4] in the process of Internationalization of higher education [5]. This study reports on the errors made by a sample of Italian university students when performing written assessment tasks in English. The study is based on a balanced corpus of 150 essays produced by Italian student teachers in the first and second years of a single-cycle degree in Primary Teacher Education. Firstly, the errors made by the first-year and second-year students are classified separately according to the traditional linguistic category and surface strategy taxonomies [6]. Secondly, they are analyzed, compared, and commented on, taking into account the impact that both the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and Internet-based communication are having on the very notion of 'error' [7]. Finally, the paper discusses the implications, for English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners, material developers and language testers, of a careful evaluation of students' errors in the light of the occurring changes in the nature and role of English.

Keywords: *English writing, error, ELT, EFL, ELF.*

1. Introduction

The debate around what constitutes an error in the oral and written production of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners has long been based on the assumption of a monolithic Standard English (SE) corresponding to Native-Speaker (NS) usage [8] and conceived as "the prototypical model of correct English" [9:64]. Yet, both notions – 'standardness' and 'NS usage' – are in themselves fairly slippery and may be inadequate to function as a yardstick against which errors are judged as such. This is particularly evident when it comes to English. The instrumental role of English as *the* lingua franca (ELF) allowing active participation in a globalized society cannot but have implications for English Language Teaching (ELT) stakeholders. Even in the Expanding Circle, English is no longer 'simply' a Foreign Language (EFL) which is taught at school with the aim to enable learners to speak like (and only with) native speakers. As Ur [10:5] maintains, "this is for most learners an inaccessible goal; and these days it is not even an appropriate one". It appears that the ultimate goal of ELT has changed: teaching how to use English

fluently is still important, but using English fluently may no longer necessarily mean complying with the conventions of SE/NS usage. Rather, it means being able to *use* English to communicate effectively with international interlocutors in variable and dynamic contexts, where creativity [11] – often implying non-compliance with 'standard' norms – may in fact help interactants get their message across. As Wang and Jenkins [12:39] remark, "researchers have uncovered how ELF users, instead of conforming to established norms of English, adapt their way of using English to cope with international communication in various contexts". Against this changing scenario, in which "the reality of English as the primary world language is that of an unstable, plurilithic, *de-standardized* language" [9:57], it seems worth reflecting on what constitutes 'correct' or 'incorrect' usage in EFL learners' production.

2. The notion of error and the 'new' EFL learner

In ELT, errors have broadly been conceived as 'learners' deviations from native-speaker standard norms" [9:49]. In fact, today's use of English as the global contact language in multilingual/multicultural ELF contexts is bound to impact on such notion and may offer further reasons to explain – and even legitimate – EFL learners' deviations from the norm. Indeed, the 'new' EFL learner is both a *student* and a *user* of English. As a *student*, he/she is required to give primacy to formal accuracy by conforming to an (assumed) monolithic form of SE; as an ELF *user*, the EFL learner needs, instead, to find – and even create – the forms and solutions that best meet his/her communicative objectives. As Grazzi [9:67] contends, EFL and ELF show "a tendency to converge and be complementary in the speaker/learner's performance inside and outside the learning environment", wherefore the objectives of ELT need to consider the wider framework of the current sociolinguistic reality/ies of English.

The 'plurilithic' and global nature of English is not the only reason why the traditional notion of error in ELT may no longer hold. There are also factors more broadly related to the major changes that have been occurring in communication practices. One such change has to do with the advent of digital communication. As the 'new' ELF learner today performs a great deal of their writing in technology-mediated settings, we can reasonably expect online-writing practices and the "in-between-ness" of digital language [13] to have an impact on writing in educational contexts [5], and on its norms.

3. Classifying errors

Dulay, Burt and Krashen [6] suggest a categorization of errors based on observable surface features rather than on their (inferred) sources, and propose descriptive taxonomies of errors which depend on the criterion of observation, as shown in Table 1.

Linguistic taxonomy	Surface strategy taxonomy	Comparative taxonomy	Communicative effect taxonomy
Morphological errors	Omission errors	Developmental errors	Global errors
Syntactic errors	Addition errors	Interlingual errors	Local errors
	Misformation errors	Ambiguous errors	
	Misordering errors	Other errors	

Table 1. Taxonomies of errors proposed by Dulay *et al*. (1982)

Dulay *et al.*'s descriptive taxonomies have been widely used as a framework for error classification. Indeed, they provide a 'concrete' guideline for ELT practitioners. A classification based on observable surface features which can be measured against fixed SE/NS-usage parameters arguably offers a clear grid for teachers when assessing their students' production.

4. The study: An analysis of EFL students' errors in essays

4.1 Corpus and methodology

This paper focuses on errors in the *writing* of EFL learners by analyzing a corpus of 150 essays on a variety of topics produced by two groups of Italian student teachers in academic year 2020/2021 during their final formal assessment following a 32-hour English laboratory. The two groups were formed by students on a Primary-Teacher Education single-cycle Master's Degree, in the first and second year respectively. Two different subcorpora were created, one for the first year (Subcorpus 1, 75 essays, 11.065 running words), and one for the second (Subcorpus 2, 75 essays, 11.033 running words). All the essays were manually analysed to detect the presence of surface features deviating from the rules of SE/NS usage. The errors were then classified bearing in mind Dulay *et al.'s* [6] taxonomies. As shown in Table 1, these include the linguistic (morphological and syntactic errors), and the surface strategy (omission, addition, misformation and misordering) taxonomies. Given that surface-strategy errors are in themselves either morphological or syntactic errors, I decided to group linguistic and surface-strategy errors into the two broad categories of morphology and syntax. I identified as'morphological errors' those concerning word number (e.g. *A lot of flower*), word form (e.g. *instead of keep*), and word class (e.g. *punishments aren't frequently*), whereas I classified as'syntactic errors' those concerning subject-verb (S-V) agreement (e.g. *She prefer*), prepositional phrases (PP) (e.g. *A meeting for describe the activity*), cohesive devices (e.g. *There are many actions who people do*), word order (WO) (e.g. *Show children how important is nature*), omission (e.g. *Is important to know that…*), addition (e.g. *We can reduce the pollution*), verb pattern (e.g. *I say them*), verb tense (e.g. *She has had 5 children while she was at university*), and active/passive (A/P) construction (e.g. *Finally the departure date was arrived*). I also thought it helpful focusing on another type of'surface' errors, that is, lexical errors. Lexicon appears to be the area where the creativity of today's students/users manifests itself most patently in their endeavour to communicate [11], whatever their grammatical accuracy. In the'lexical errors' category I identified deviations concerning lexical phrases – fixed expressions (e.g. *I think it*), collocations (e.g. *Do some changes*), phrasal verbs (e.g. *I had to ask help* – and word choice (e.g. *I have very good reminds of my school*).

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Subcorpus 1

The results of the manual count of errors in Subcorpus 1 are reported in Tables 2 to 5 below.

Morphology

Number	Word form	Word class	Total
50	78	40	168

Table 2. Occurrences of morphological errors in Subcorpus 1

Syntax

S-V agreement	PP	Cohesion	WO	Omission	Addition	Verb pattern	Verb tense	A/P	Total
32	8	15	28	58	41	44	29	12	267

Table 3. Occurrences of syntactic errors in Subcorpus 1

Lexicon

Fixed expression	Collocation	Phrasal Verb	Word choice	Total
51	16	18	43	128

Table 4. Occurrences of lexical errors in Subcorpus 1

Category	Subcorpus 1
Morphology	168
Syntax	267
Lexicon	128
Morphology+Syntax+Lexicon	563

Table 5. Total number of occurrences of errors in Subcorpus 1

As we can see from the Tables above, the highest number of errors in Subcorpus 1 is in the area of syntax. The most recurrent error is omission, with articles (e.g. *To become teacher, I need…*) and subjects (e.g. *For pupils is very important to change*) being the most frequently omitted components (26 occurrences each). The definite article is omitted (e.g. *During Covid period*) more frequently than the indefinite, and the omission of the subject mainly concerns the 'dummy *it'* (e.g. *When I buy online is because I want…*). The main verb is omitted in 4 cases (e.g. *Students didn't the homework*), and the auxiliary in 3 (e.g. *We done online classes*). As for addition, the most frequently added items are articles, mainly the definite article (e.g.*The online teaching is…*). The problems with cohesive devices mostly concern the use of relative pronouns (e.g. *The T-shirt who I have bought*). As for morphology, the most recurrent error concerns word form (e.g. *They can improve theirselves*), while with reference to lexicon, most errors concern the use of fixed expressions (e.g. *For me it is a bad action because…*). About word choice, of the 43 occurrences, 9 are false friends (e.g. *An interesting argument to talk about*), 24 words with the wrong meaning (e.g. *Students do not wear aprons but normal clothes*), 10 invented words (e.g. *I was introvers*).

4.2.2 Subcorpus 2

The results of the manual count of errors in Subcorpus 2 are reported in Tables 6 to 9 below.

Morphology

Number	Word form	Word class	Total
68	95	44	207

Table 6. Occurrences of morphological errors in Subcorpus 2

Syntax

S-V agreement	PP	Cohesion	WO	Omission	Addition	Verb pattern	Verb tense	A/P	Total
51	22	8	33	68	67	29	29	3	310

Table 7. Occurrences of syntactic errors in Subcorpus 2

Lexicon

Fixed expression	*Collocation*	*Phrasal Verb*	*Word choice*	*Total*
50	49	21	92	212

Table 8. Occurrences of lexical errors in Subcorpus 2

Category	Subcorpus 2
Morphology	207
Syntax	310
Lexicon	212
Morphology+Syntax+Lexicon	729

Table 9. Total number of occurrences of errors in Subcorpus 2

Also, in Subcorpus 2 the highest number of deviances from SE is in the area of syntax. Here, again, the most recurrent error is omission. Most of the times, omission concerns either articles (e.g. *Protect environment*), or subjects (e.g. *Is important to know that*…), with 28 and 25 occurrences respectively. In almost all occurrences of article omission, the definite article is left out (e.g. *We went to lake*). As for the omission of the subject, in nearly all cases it occurs with the 'dummy *it*' (e.g. *Moreover, is expensive*). In 9 cases, the main verb is omitted (e.g. *I very happy with myself*), especially when there is an auxiliary in the same clause (e.g. *The recycle will possible*). In turn, the auxiliary verb is sometimes (6 occurrences) left out (e.g. *While I washing my teeth*), with negative forms occasionally presenting only the negative particle *not* (e.g. *Until she not tries on her own*). Examples of addition are also recurrent. Articles are mostly added, mainly the definite article (e.g. *The water is important for the life*). Interestingly, there are also 5 occurrences of double subject (e.g. *My family and I we decided to go*…), and 3 cases of double main verb (e.g. *Last year was be a particular year*). The problems with cohesive devices are all related to the use of relative pronouns (e.g. *There are many actions who the people do*). As for morphology, the most recurrent error concerns word form (e.g. *Now humans must change his habits*). Finally, with reference to lexicon, most errors concern word choices. Some words (42) have a meaning which does not suit the context (e.g. *Take cure of the environment*), some others (22) are false friends (e.g. *I have an agenda in my bag*), others (17) are invented (e.g. *Separing rubbish is very important*). In 4 examples, there are words in the student's L1 (e.g. *I can close the rubinetto*).

5. Discussion of findings

Against approximately the same number of running words in the two subcorpora, my data show a higher number of errors in the essays produced by the students in the second year. Considering that the students involved in the present study received ELT instruction throughout the first and second years (besides having received English instruction for at least eight years before university), one may infer that such instruction is not enough or adequate to achieve the formal accuracy required of EFL students. Indeed, the highest number of errors in both subcorpora is in the area of grammar (syntax and morphology), an area on which the teaching of English in the Italian educational context is primarily based.

In line with the findings of ELF research into the morphosyntactic features of ELF [14], my data show that elements perceived as unnecessary to transfer the message – for example the dummy subject, auxiliary verbs, the third person -*s*, and even the plural -*s* – tend to be omitted. Vice versa, unnecessary elements that are deemed to reinforce the message – for example double subjects – may be added. Deviances from SE are mostly present in the use or articles, with the definite article being the most frequently added and at the same time omitted determiner in the corpus. This might have to do with the fact that the definite article is used differently in different languages, or with the fact that NSs themselves often have doubts about how to use it, or – again – with the perception that articles are not essential for intelligibility, wherefore they may or may not be there. As for the use of linkers like relative pronouns, *who* and *which* are used interchangeably in the corpus. Finally, the data also show a tendency to use the prepositional phrase *for*+bare infinitive instead of the *to* infinitive.

With reference to lexicon, three main aspects are worth mentioning. First, my data suggest that EFL students seem to have problems with the use of lexical phrases. A reason could be that the meaning of fixed expressions, collocations, and phrasal verbs is perceived as opaque and therefore not communicative. Consequently, the student tends to adopt solutions that he/she deems clearer, for example by using non-idiomatic forms or by adapting them to his/her L1. Secondly, it is quite interesting to notice that EFL students may switch to their L1 when they do not know the word in the L2, showing a trend to exploit their whole linguistic repertoire. Thirdly, my data confirm the lexical creativity of EFL students in their solving their vocabulary-shortage problems by trying out invented words that allow them to maintain the flow of communication. In this regard, it seems reasonable to assume that the lexical creativity fostered by online writing practices is 'intruding' into academic writing. Indeed, the user-centred context offered by online communication does encourage verbal creativity, which inevitably implies deviance from (or flouting of) the norm.

6. Conclusions

Despite the unquestionably limited amount of data of the present study, this paper aims at encouraging a new approach to the notion of 'error', one that considers not only the ever-changing nature of English as a globally-spread language in the hands of an increasingly higher number of NNSs, but also the new kind of literacy that today's EFL learners bring with themselves into the classroom. ELT teachers, material designers and language testers may find it worth considering a notion of proficiency that is based on EFL learners "Englishing" [8] – that is, what *students/users* can actually do to

communicate effectively in *the* global language – rather than on compliance with an alleged monolithic standard.

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Am I Aware of My Level in English? — Comparing Students' Perception of Cefr Levels and Diagnostic Test Results

Ana Albuquerque

Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal)
CECC, Research Centre for Communication and Culture

Abstract

University students in Portugal are often required to certify their level of English before, after or during their course of studies, either as a degree or international studies program requirement. Consequently, at the Catholic University in Lisbon, students are often asked to take writing and speaking diagnostic tests in order to assess their proficiency in the foreign language and place them into the right Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level. Although students in Portugal are generally aware of the different levels, they seldom lack specific knowledge concerning the objectives or descriptors that the reference involves and hesitate when asked what is their level of English as a Foreign Language. This lack of knowledge constrains one of the advantages of the CEFR for learners which would be"to encourage practitioners in the language field to reflect on their current practice, particularly in relation to learners' practical language learning needs, the setting of suitable objectives and the tracking of learner progress" (North, 2006). It would be desirable that such framework, which seems to offer such clear guidance for teachers, would also be beneficial for the students, particularly at tertiary level, given that most graduate and post-graduate course requirements around the world are now aligned with the CEFR standards. This study compares students' diagnostic test results to their perception of their own CEFR levels. The data include a speaking interview to assess oral skills, a written diagnostic test to assess grammar, vocabulary and writing and a questionnaire based on the CEFR self-assessment grid. Two undergraduate classes enrolled in the Media Studies course participated in the study which main goal was to achieve a better understanding of students' perception of the CEFR levels and, ultimately, to help increase student's awareness of the language learning process.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics, Action Research, EFL, CEFR levels, Language Learning Awareness

1. Introduction

Back in 2006, when I was overseeing the implementation of the English as a Foreign Language Curriculum in a private school in Lisbon, which had recently inaugurated its middle school and secondary school branches, the headmistress and I had a meeting with Desmond Rome, the Cambridge University Press manager in Portugal at the time. Speaking enthusiastically, as he always did, about the art of English language teaching and the importance of the CEFR levels to measure learners' progress, Desmond pointed a finger at each one of us and said: "You're a C2 and you're a C1, did you know that?" Although the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment" had been published in 2001, the changes were still gradually being introduced in foreign language education policies and practices in Portugal and,

other than the language teachers themselves, not all educators were aware of the impact that the CEFR woud have on the foreign language teaching and learning field.

By the end of the meeting, the headmistress asked: "I'd like all our students to be C2 at the end of the 12th grade, is that possible?". My answer must have been something politically correct such as "we can try..."

As a matter of fact, in spite of the advantages that the international standardization had brought to the educational community, particularly in terms of syllabi and assessment, it also presented several challenges, including the fact that educational policies in Portugal do not contemplate streaming based on proficiency levels. Multi-level classes deal with different levels of learners expertise and that is a challenge to overcome when trying to apply the CEFR framework to the curriculum. On the other hand, mixed ability classes also inhibit learners perception of the CEFR levels overall, as well as the perception of their own personal level and progress.

As a complement to the EFL school curriculum, many students in Portugal are exposed to English as a foreign language learning and testing outside school, particularly in private language centres or tutors. Cambridge exams have long been popular in Portugal and are promoted by several state and private schools around the country, particularly since the *Cambridge English: Key for Schools*, — a joint effort between *Cambridge Assessment English* and some Portuguese leading private companies and foundations, — was implemented in 2014.

Although *Key for Schools Portugal* only covers levels A1 to B1 of the CEFR, according to Nigel Pike (2022), Director of Assessment for Cambridge Assessment English, the aim would be to give students "an internationally recognised qualification and an excellent first step towards more advanced certificates such as the famous *Cambridge English: First* and *Cambridge English: Proficiency*" (*ibidem)*.

Cambridge English works closely with the teachers, naturally within the CEFR guidelines, the national syllabi and materials are also designed with reference to the framework levels, so by the time students enter tertiary education, they would be expected to have a notion of their level of English within the CEFR framework

Specific university courses require different levels of English, particularly the ones that include international programmes, and so university students are often asked about their level of English language proficiency. However, some students knowledge about the CEFR levels, as well as the perception of their personal level of English proficiency, is often vague and imprecise.

This fact seems to contradict one of the CEFR 2001 main aims which is "to encourage practitioners in the language field to reflect on their current practice, particularly in relation to learners' practical language learning needs, the setting of suitable objectives and the tracking of learner progress" (North, 2006: 1). However, the general perception of EFL teachers at university is that students often lack this kind of knowledge and reflection. This observation led to the questions on this study.

Overall, the research hopes to obtain a better understanding of the CEFR levels from the learner's perspective as well to gauge the use of the framework as needs analysis tool.

Ultimately, it aims at analyzing whether an increased awareness of such levels can help to determine the gap between learners existing knowledge and the desired knowledge, by creating learning objectives around the students specific needs in English as foreign language.

The following research questions were addressed:
1. What is university students understanding of CEFR levels and what is the perception of their own level of English language proficiency compared with the results obtained by the teacher assessment?

2. Can improved knowledge of the CEFR levels and descriptors help students reflect on the process of language learning and enhance motivation to improve performance in the foreign language?

2. Methodology
The methodology used for the purpose of this study is based on Nunan's approach to the action research/ case study method (1992: 77), which, according to the author "typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit", in this case two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes at the Catholic University in Portugal, in the hope that the "insights yielded by the case study can be put to immediate use" in its particular context *(ibidem:* 78).

Although the observations in this paper draw basically from the initial phase of the study, the aim was that both the teaching and learning processes could benefit from the information collected by the teacher at the beginning of the academic year and that the exchange of information between teacher and students would be reflected in the students' performance and achievements throughout the semester.

The data was collected from the diagnostic test results that students are usually given during the first week of classes, which was completed with a brief questionnaire aimed at guiding students' reflection on their level of EFL proficiency based on the CEFR.
The same test and questionnaire were given to 41 Media Studies students, twenty enrolled in a first-year class and twenty-one in a second-year class.

A brief explanation about the CEFR levels, as well as copies of the global scale descriptors was also provided for students' reference. The test and the questionnaire were answered on the same day and students took between 60 to 90 minutes to finish both tasks.

Speaking proficiency was assessed during individual interviews with the students, which also included further clarification on how the framework could help to check progress and be used as needs analysis tool.

3. Results

Out of the 41 participants in the study, 31,7% had taken one of the Cambridge exams and were divided as follows:
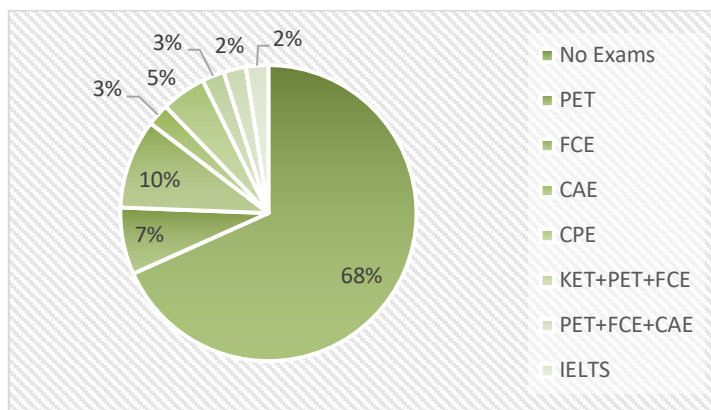

Generally speaking, three out of the twenty English students who participated in the study answered that they "didn't know" what was their level of English as a Foreign Language overall, but provided a level for all the other skills; while in the English III class, three participants answered "I don't know" for all skills, including the overall level.

Only one of the students who answered "I don't know" for the overall level provided a level to individual skills. Overall, 19,5% of the total number of participants replied that didn't know what was their level of English proficiency.

When questioned about these answers, most students said that they had never been officially assessed, so they weren't sure about their levels, others said they couldn't clearly understand the descriptors.

The results obtained by the two classes were analysed separately in an attempt to check whether there would be any discrepancies between first year and second year students perceptions of CEFR levels.
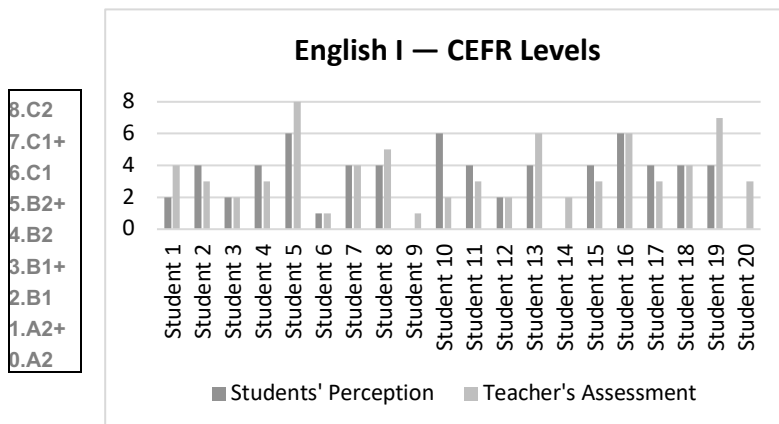
The graph clearly shows that most students' perception of their CEFR levels differs from the results obtained in the diagnostic and speaking tests evaluated by the teacher. Only

in five cases do the levels coincide. Overall, 55% of the students answers differ from the teacher's assessment results.

However, some discrepancies are greater than others, the most significant being the three students who replied that they "didn't know" what their level of English was and who were evaluated as A2+, B1 and B1+, generally lower than the general average, as well as student 10, who selected the C1 level, but was evaluated by the teacher as B1. He/she admitted he/ she had misunderstood the information provided.

On the other hand, student 19, who selected the B2 level but was evaluated C1+ by the teacher is a very confident and outspoken learner, but said that he/ she had never taken an official exam and, therefore, was unsure of the level.

The remaining cases, where students' perceptions differed one level from the teacher's evaluation, do not seem as relevant, although it should be noted that the majority of students perceptions of their level tend to be higher than the teacher's assessment.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, in the English I class, this difference is not significant, as the number of students who evaluated their CEFR level higher than the teacher is very close to the number of students who evaluated their CEFR level lower than the teacher.
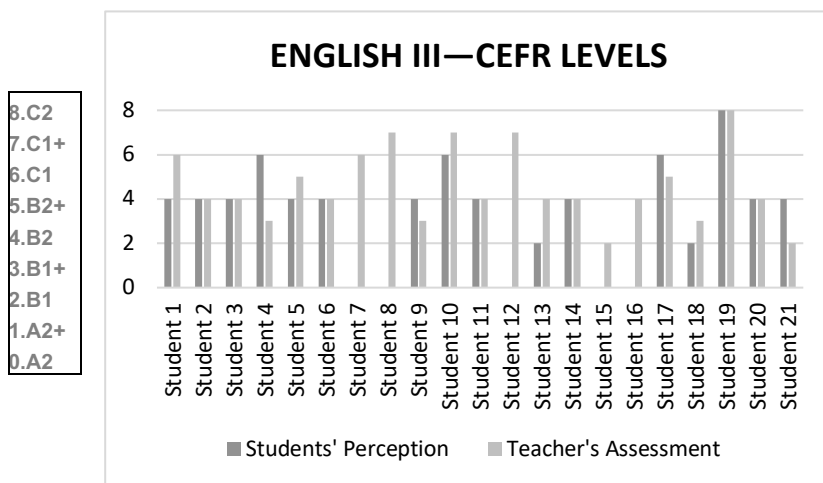
Although the observations drawn from the English III class do not differ substantially from the English I class, some aspects are interesting to note. The percentage of students whose answers differ from the teacher's assessment results is lower, around 43%, however, the number of students who replied "I don't know" was higher than in the English I class.

Two of these students who were evaluated C1+ said they had achieved a high level of English proficiency in non-academic environments and, therefore, had no knowledge

about the CEFR levels. The other three students simply said that they were unsure of their level of English.

Just as in the English I class, five students perceptions of CEFR levels differed only one level from the teacher evaluation, which is probably not very significant, although the discrepancy is greater in four other cases. Again, the difference between the number of students who evaluate their CEFR level higher or lower than the teacher is not significant.

Overall, taking both classes observations into consideration, 48,8% of students' perceptions of CEFR levels differed from the teacher's assessment results, 31,7% of students' perception of English proficiency matched the teachers evaluation results and 19,5% of the number of students who participated in the study had no perception of their CEFR at all.

4. Conclusions and further research
The research questions that guided this study aimed at helping university students and teachers understand whether the students' perception of their level of English proficiency matched the results obtained by the teacher assessment.

Furthermore, it intended to observe if students' analysis and reflection about their CEFR levels would help the process of language learning and enhance motivation to improve performance in the foreign language.

Although the results reveal that the majority of students had no precise knowledge of their CEFR level, and some even avoided suggesting a point on the scale, during the interviews, most students showed interest in getting more input about the framework and knowing their exact level of English proficiency.

Further research is needed to understand if the reflection and analysis of CEFR levels and descriptors actually supported students' confidence to establish personal short and long term learning objectives and monitor progress in the foreign language learning ladder.

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Teacher Professional Development

An Application and Re-Evaluation of Borg's Self-Assessment Tool for English Language Teachers (2018) in the Iranian EFL Context88

Roya Khoii, Saeedeh Sargolzehi

Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch, Iran

Abstract

Due to the growing universal interest in teaching quality and methods of evaluating teaching efficiency, teacher self-assessment could enhance teachers' sense of agency and contribute formatively to their personal and professional development. This study aimed to apply and re-evaluate Borg's Self-Assessment Tool for English Language Teachers (SAT) (2018) in the Iranian context. To collect the required data, the original questionnaire, consisting of 48 Likert Scale questions in nine thematic areas, along with eight additional open-ended questions developed by the researchers was administered to 102 professors at Islamic Azad University (North, Central, and South branches) teaching TEFL and English Translation courses at different academic levels. The qualitative and quantitative analyses of the responses to the Likert Scale questions revealed relative but not complete conformity with those of Borg (2018). Some major differences were observed between the frequencies of the options chosen by the participants in both studies with Iranian professors having provided a more positive self-assessment of their abilities in different areas. There were also differences between the ways in which the participants assessed themselves in terms of the nine categories of the questionnaire. Moreover, in response to the open-ended questions of the present study, some of the participants stated that the questionnaire is biased both educationally and culturally and in favor of ESL teachers in developed countries. Therefore, the researchers find the questionnaire still far from vast usage and, in line with Borg [1], believe that its content demands further study.

Keywords: *Re-evaluation, Self-assessment, Teacher evaluation, Teacher self-assessment*

1. Background

Reflecting on the result of one's work or assessment is a crucial factor in improving oneself. To meet this goal, both teachers and learners must be evaluated in a dynamic educational system [1]. Researchers, educators, and policymakers across the political spectrum acknowledge the critical role that teachers play in students' academic (and non-academic) achievements. This has led governments, states, and local districts around the world to apply an array of policy measures concerning teacher licensure, salary, and evaluation in the hope of increasing the quality of their teaching force.

Teacher evaluation should draw on multiple sources of information. One such source is teacher self-assessment [2]. It is claimed that self-assessment is a global growing concept in evaluation through creating autonomy in the area of self-improvement and self-efficacy [3]. Self-assessment is a powerful method for personal development. In the theory of teacher change, self-assessment is recognized as an enabling factor in professional growth [4]. Teacher self-assessment may be defined as "the process of self-examination in which the teacher uses a series of sequential feedback strategies for the purpose of instructional self-improvement" [5].

The focus in self-assessment is on formative development as opposed to summative evaluation. The underlying assumption is that teachers are capable of functioning in an autonomous manner for the purpose of improving their instruction [5]. In other words, self-assessment empowers teachers and allows them to take charge of their own improvement. Furthermore, the involvement of teachers in the process of evaluation is identified as the key element of noticing their status as professionals [6]. Moreover, Self-efficacy is a capacity that is believed to be an indicator of a teacher's confidence that they can successfully perform specific teaching acts. self-efficacy contributes significantly to human motivation and attainment. Both teachers' motivation to use formative assessment and their ability to do so are related to their relevant self-efficacies [3]. Based on the reported benefits of teacher self-assessment all around the world, self-assessment is much more recommended than other methods of teacher assessment [1]. Consequently, the main focus of this study was a re-evaluation of Borg's questionnaire, which is the most recently developed questionnaire in the field of teacher self-assessment.

2. Method

2.1 Research Questions

This study targeted the following questions:
1. To what extent does Borg's self-assessment tool for English Language Teachers (2018) produce consistent results in the Iranian EFL context?
2. What are Iranian EFL teachers' comments on the relevance, clarity, coverage, and value of this questionnaire?
3. In what ways could the questionnaire be further developed in the view of Iranian EFL teachers?
4. What is the overall attitude of Iranian EFL teacher towards this questionnaire?

2.2 Instruments

A questionnaire consisting of 48 multiple-choice Likert Scale items in nine sections (Borg's SAT [1]) and 8 open-ended questions was used to collect the required data for this study.

2.3 Participants

A total number of 130 male and female 130 professors teaching TEFL and Translation courses at different branches of Islamic Azad University participated in this study. They were between 40 to 60 years of age. The majority of the participants had less than 10 years of teaching general English experience; however, most of them had taught academic English for more than 25 years.

2.4 Procedure

Initially, the questionnaire was given to the participants. To obtain the cooperation of the teachers and increase the accuracy of their responses, the researchers explained the purpose of the research to them and guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. However, only 102 questionnaires were returned. There was no time limit for answering the questions. The data were collected over a three- month period, and once the filled questionnaires were received from the participants, the researchers went through the process of data analysis.

3. Results

First, descriptive statistics were computed for the respondents' scores on each section of the questionnaire as well as for their total scores on the same device. Then the normality of score distributions was checked. The Cronbach Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was equal to 0.93, which was satisfactory. The percentage frequency distribution of the nine sections of the questionnaire is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage Frequency Distribution of the Nine Sections of the Teachers' Self-Assessment Questionnaire

	I am not sure how to do this.		I can do this but not very effectively.		I can do this quite well.		I can do this very well.	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
(1)	0	0	1	1	9	8.9	92	90.1
(2)	1	1	2	1.8	13	12.8	86	84.4
(3)	0	0	2	2	9	8.9	91	89.1
(4)	0	0	8	7.9	29	28.5	65	63.6
(5)	1	1	4	3.9	9	8.9	88	86.2
(6)	0	0	3	3	20	19.5	79	77.5
(7)	0	0	6	6	20	19.7	76	74.3
(8)	0	0	0	0	7	6.9	95	93.1
(9)	2	2	19	18.6	21	20.6	60	58.8
Total	0	0	2	2	19	18.6	81	79.4

The primary analysis of the data revealed that, similar to Borg's study [1], the professors' responses across the nine sections of the SAT questionnaire were positive. When the overall mean score of the multiple-choice items was calculated for each participant, it was found that 18.6% of the responses were "I can do this quite well", and 79.4% of the responses were "I can do this very well" in this study, while in Borg's study 44.9% of the responses were "I can do this quite well", and 53.6% of them were "I can do this very well". In both studies, the participants chose "I can do this quite well" or "I can do this very well" across the nine sections more than the other responses.

The SAT questionnaire also included eight short-end items about the participants' views of certain aspects of the questions such as their clarity, coverage, and relevance. In Borg's study the responses to this part of the questionnaire were quite positive in general. However, in the present study, some of the participants found the questionnaire biased and in favor of ESL teachers in developed countries. Some other participants believed

that this method of assessment is not reliable enough because in some communities, particularly in the East, people are not used to giving direct responses to the questions, and that is why they often provide an understatement or overstatement of their own capabilities.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

In this study, the primary analysis of the data revealed that self-assessment across the nine sections of the (SAT) questionnaire was positive and in line with the findings of Borg [1]. The respondents' high self-assessment scores in both studies could be a reflection of their profile as experienced university professors in the present study and a self-selecting group voluntarily engaged in a professional development MOOC on ELT offered by a British university in Borg's study [1]. Nevertheless, the researchers found that there was a statistically significant difference among the Iranian respondents' mean scores on the nine sections of the questionnaire. The participants obtained the highest mean score on the section on "Assessing the Learners", believing that they had a higher level of competence in this area. However, in Borg's study, the teachers believed in their higher level of competence in "Managing resources".

Furthermore, the results confirmed that in both studies, the lower part of the list was dominated by the items related to 21st century skills (for example, critical thinking and problem solving or leadership and personal development). As mentioned before, in response to the open-ended questions of the present study, some of the participants believed that the questionnaire is educationally and culturally biased and working in favor of ESL teachers in more developed countries. However, in Borg's study, the responses to this part of the questionnaire demonstrated the participants' positive attitude to SAT in general. Some other participants in both studies believed that this method of assessment is not reliable enough because teachers inevitably are susceptible to inflated self-assessment since admitting limited competence may function as a threat to their professional identity and status.

The findings of this study demonstrated the fact that the SAT questionnaire is still far from global use. Moreover, as also emphasized in Borg [1], the SAT questionnaire needs further study in terms of its content. It also seems necessary to combine the SAT questionnaire with classroom observation to provide a more revealing picture of what teachers are really capable of doing. In addition, the inclusion of the participants' demographic features in interpreting the results of the questionnaire is a must in case the ultimate purpose is to introduce it as a globally reliable and valid teacher assessment tool. This study aimed to re-evaluate Borg's questionnaire in the Iranian EFL context. However, to the extent that the participants may not have accurately reflected the entire population of EFL teachers, the interpretations of the results of this study could not be widely generalized.

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V:InD:O:W
Inclusion from an International Perspective

María-Elena Gómez-Parra[1]
Joanna Pfingsthorn[2]
Julia Weltgen[3]
[1] University of Córdoba, Spain
[2,3] University of Bremen, Germany

Abstract

The dropout rate of students with various learning disabilities is increasing across European higher-education institutions, and the reasons vary among individual or institutional characteristics, or interactions within colleges [1] [2]. In this context, the European project V:InD:O:W (Virtual - Inclusive - Diversity focused - Open educational - Work Modules) (KA203-34ECD999) has been granted by the European Commission on the basis that the design of digital resources can assist teachers in the integration and academic progress of students with different abilities. Thus, V:InD:O:W aims at creating digital learning modules for tertiary foreign language teacher education, which demonstrate how the principles of inclusion –in their broad, diversity-oriented interpretation– can be applied in the field of foreign language education. Specifically, the project has developed virtual digital courses that include theoretical, empirical and evidence-based knowledge, insights from language teaching practice and educational policy guidelines about different topics, among which multilingual/multicultural challenges in the foreign language classrooms is included (together with autism, dyslexia, or neurodiversity, among others). V:InD:O:W modules offer an interdisciplinary foundation of the topic. In addition, these digital and virtual modules also address the question to what extent and in what ways digitalization of learning materials can prove an asset in inclusive learning environments. The primary target group of V:InD:O:W is foreign language teacher educators, who would use these modules in the teaching of pre- and in-service foreign language teachers (secondary target group). V:InD:O:W has already designed and piloted the first set of modules during the academic year 2021-2022. This research will analyse the data from the implementation of the multilingual/multicultural module with one group of participants: A group of Master language teacher students from the University of Parma (n=17), which was delivered online during the month of February 2022. A validated questionnaire through the Delphi method has been used as the instrument for the analysis of data, which are both quantitative and qualitative. A mixed-methods research will be conducted to scrutinize such data, whose results indicate that teachers highly value as positive both the contents and the competences obtained through this module, and they mostly find it innovative and revealing. Discussion will be focused on the fact that teacher educators should be equipped with innovative tools in order to promote an inclusive and holistic approach to foreign language learning, which can demonstrate that the principles of inclusion –in their broad, diversity-oriented interpretation– can be applied in the field of foreign language education.

1. Theoretical background

Learning disabilities are identified as one of the main causes of school dropout by the literature [1] [2]. Moreover, social justice and democratic values have been in the foreground of second language education for a long time [3]. Learning a foreign language can often prove challenging, especially to learners with special educational needs, as they experience pedagogical disadvantages because of a range of conditions stemming from biological, environmental, and psychosocial causes which have an impact on their cognitive development and educational attainment [4]. International organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD have already acknowledged this risk, so they promote the implementation of inclusive education systems that enable all learners to actively engage in learning and reach their potential. However, on a practical level, neither all educational systems nor all stakeholders within them are truly ready for such task on a daily basis. Some foreign language teachers even report strong feelings of being overwhelmed and disillusioned with the prospect of offering equal opportunities to all their students [5].

In this context, V:InD:O:W (Virtual - Inclusive - Diversity focused - Open educational - Work Modules) (KA203-34ECD999) has been granted by the European Commission (German National Agency) on the basis that the design of digital resources can assist teachers in the integration and academic progress of students with different abilities. Thus, V:InD:O:W aims at creating digital learning modules for tertiary foreign language teacher education, which demonstrate how the principles of inclusion –in their broad, diversity-oriented interpretation– can be applied in the field of foreign language education. Specifically, the project has already developed five virtual digital courses that include theoretical, empirical and evidence-based knowledge, insights from language teaching practice and educational policy guidelines about different topics, among which multilingual/multicultural challenges in the foreign language classrooms is included (together with autism, dyslexia, or neurodiversity, among others). V:InD:O:W modules offer an interdisciplinary foundation of the topic. In addition, these digital and virtual modules also address the question to what extent and in what ways digitalization of learning materials can prove an asset in inclusive learning environments. The primary target group of V:InD:O:W is foreign language teacher educators, who would use these modules in the teaching of pre- and in-service foreign language teachers (secondary target group).

2. Methodology

The methodological procedure of this study has followed the next steps: (i) Design of V:InD:O:W modules by the research members of the project. (ii) Peer-review of the modules (2 rounds) along one academic year (2021-2022). (iii) Piloting of the V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module among a group of Master language students (University of Parma). (iv) Distribution of the survey (instrument of this research) to collect data on participants' opinion on V:InD:O:W modules. (v). Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

2.1. Description of the context and the participants

V:InD:O:W modules have been specifically designed to assist language teachers on inclusive learning environments. This study will analyse the data from the implementation of the multilingual/multicultural V:InD:O:W module. The population is a group of 17 language teachers doing a Master programme at the University of Parma. Piloting was carried out as online teaching during the month of February 2022. In terms of gender, 70,59% were women (n = 12) and 29,41% were men (n = 5).

2.2. Instrument

The questionnaire of V:InD:O:W consists of 6 questions, out of which 2 (i.e, questions no. 2 and 3) contain both quantitative and qualitative data on the content of the modules, and the other 4 (i.e., questions 1, 4, 5 and 6) contain only qualitative data on the skills obtained by participants, and their opinions on the module. Quantitative data were ranged in a 1-5 Likert scale, where 1 means 'Not at all' and 5 means 'Very much'. This research will analyse quantitative and qualitative data from questions 2 and 3.
This instrument obtained a Cronbach alpha of 0.871, showing high reliability according to Oviedo and Campo-Arias (2005) [6].

Scale Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's α
scale	0.871

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha of the
V:InD:O:W instrument.

2.3. Procedure

An exhaustive scrutiny of the data has been carried out through Jamovi (v. 1.2.5.) for quantitative data and through content analysis for qualitative data. As a result, 17 students' questionnaires were considered for further analysis. Qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire items 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

Our analysis yields the following results, which can be found herein into two different sets for quantitative and qualitative data.

3.1. Quantitative data

Data on participants' answers to the two quantitative questions of the questionnaire can be found at Table 2:

Questions	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all				Very much
Q2. *How interesting was this set of activities for you?*	-	-	-	23,53%	76,47%
Q3. *How informative/helpful was this set of activities?*	-	-	-	52,94%	47,06%

Table 2. Quantitative data of V:InD:O:W piloting of the multilingual/multicultural module.

3.2. Qualitative data

The qualitative answers of V:InD:O:W participants can be summarized in the following two sets of content:

3.2.1. <u>Interest and understanding of the content</u>: Participants showed high level of interest in the V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module, as they mostly declared not to be familiar with the contents delivered by these modules before this implementation. These are some representative quotations:

> P. 5: "*I found every aspect of the lesson very interesting. As a student of foreign languages, I found it really helpful because it made me learn some new things that I didn't know but at the same time it helped me to improve my knowledge with some concepts I had already studied. For example, the concept of culture...*"
> P. 12: "*The unit is very interesting because it offered new content for me. Also, I found that it will be important for most language teachers, who often deal with learners of different countries.*"
> P. 14: "*I felt very interested and excited to learn new topics.*"

3.2.2. <u>Helpful and informative activities</u>:

> P. 2: "*The activities, in my opinion, weren't difficult. They helped me to understand the concepts and, for sure, I think I will use some of them for my teaching with my diverse Secondary Education students. It is crucial to be aware of diversity in the 21st century, and I think teachers must be specifically trained to do so in a proper and sensible way.*"
> P. 9: "*In my opinion activities weren't that much difficult; everything was very simple and well explained. I think I will use some of the concepts with my students when I become a teacher, though I will have to adapt them to the level of my pupils (Primary Education).*"
> P. 15: "*I was familiar with some of the concepts because I'm attending a course where the main topic is the culture, as well as the connection and communication among different cultures. During this class I have found a lot of themes that can help me understand better all the ideas behind this subject. I think that I will be able to implement many of them in a near future. This module has helped me to be aware of how important it is to cope with diversity from languages and cultures in a not-so globalised world.*"

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The first piloting of V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module among Italian language teachers can be assessed as satisfactory by researchers of this project in some different and at the same time complementary ways.

On the one hand, the hot topic contents covered by V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module on both language teaching - such as the concept of culture and how difficult it is to grasp - have been valued by participants as either interesting or very interesting (values 4 and 5 of the Likert scale for question no. 2 are 100%). Participant number 5 declared that the knowledge acquired though the session "helped me to improve my knowledge with some concepts I had already studied". The qualitative data of this analysis confirm quantitative results, as participants have mostly stated their satisfaction with the contents because they were either new for them or because the module helped students to improve their already-existing knowledge on the content. The theory of Funds of Knowledge / Identity (FoK/I) "makes a plea for teaching that draws on students' knowledge, skills and experiences" [7, p. 1]. Although some of the concepts were new for participants in this module, the general frame and contents dealt with were known by students. So, our data concord the study by Volman and Gilde [7], who state that "Drawing on students' FoK/I was initially mainly related to the domains of qualification. It was argued that it yields academic outcomes and improves students' learning" (p. 1). Following Piccardo et al. [8]: "The theoretical construct of funds of knowledge is explicitly incorporated into the approach as a way of integrating linguistic and cultural diversity and culturally-specific ways of knowing into the design of language education." (p. x). In this line, the results of our research indicate that participating language teachers can envisage the usefulness of V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module to cope with diversity of students who come from different nationalities (participant no. 12). Finally, motivation towards new learning can also be observed among participants of this module (e.g., participant number 14).

On the other hand, the helpfulness of activities proposed by this module has also been positively rated by participants, as quantitative data yields 100% for values 4 and 5 for question no. 3. Qualitative data support this idea, as most participants explain that they will be able to use the knowledge acquired in their (future) teaching. Students have acknowledged the possibilities that this module has opened for language teaching in a world where diversity is the key. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards language learners and diversity seem to be positively changing in the last decades [9], so the declarations of this group conform to this new stance of language teachers.

Successful design of V:InD:O:W modules has entailed transnational dialogue between various agents engaged in foreign language education (e.g., teacher educators, researchers, applied linguists, neurolinguists, engineers, experts on digitalization as well as pre-/in-service teachers and students), who have combined knowledge and experience to deliver solutions for a more sustainable implementation of the inclusive approach to foreign language education that can be generalized to many contexts. The unique experiences with inclusive education through the piloting of this V:InD:O:W multilingual/multicultural module has brought to the table interesting insights, such as participants' acknowledgement of the need of coping with diversity, as well as the new conceptualization of the diverse language learner in the 21st century.

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The Role of IMID (Idaho Museum of International Diaspora) in Fostering Global Skills, as well as Emotional and Cultural Intelligence in Trainee Teachers at Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia)

Palina Louangketh[1], Anna Slatinská[2]
[1]Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (IMID), Boise, Idaho, USA
[2]Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore specific skills and competences deemed necessary to future profession of trainee teachers, focusing predominantly on the global skills, as well as the emotional and cultural intelligence which are central to their future practice. We introduced thirteen university teachers at Matej Bel University (MBU), Banská Bystrica, Slovakia to a selection of authentic and expert materials produced by Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (IMID). We suggested the integration of these materials into participants' teaching of compulsory and optional courses in ELT methodology, EL practicum, American and British literature, sociolinguistics, and other related areas. We aimed to research more into how the opinions of university lecturers have evolved on the topic of diaspora and culture during the period of intensive immersion in IMID scope of focus. The data was collected through interviews and online focus-group discussions. These were then immediately analysed. Another of the study's central aims was to research the potential of IMID´s online materials in elevating the global skills, emotional and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers studying English language and literature and other subjects at the Faculty of Arts at MBU. The findings showed that integration of IMID´s freely accessible online materials can have a substantial benefit on the professional and personal development of trainee teachers.

Keywords: *global skills, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, trainee teachers, IMID, MBU, human journey stories*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of Idaho Museum of International Diaspora´s publicly accessible (digital) audio-visual materials in fostering the global skills, and the emotional and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers studying at the Faculty of Arts (Matej Bel University) in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Our initial aim is to find out to what extent and in which way, Department of English and American Studies university teachers, who are in charge of the cohort of trainee teachers, will avail of the given materials during their seminars and lectures in 2022/2023 academic year and whether these materials will be used to enhance necessary professional skills of their students.

Education today must cover more than just traditional areas connected with teaching basic language skills and language systems. Therefore, we suppose that future global skills educators should be well-equipped in the following areas, (5 clusters of global skills) [1]: 1. Communication and collaboration; 2. Creativity and critical thinking; 3. Intercultural competence and citizenship; 4. Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing; 5. Digital literacies.

We assume that navigating our students through global skills, supporting their levels of emotional, and cultural intelligence, and exposing them to a range of life-skill fostering activities, can enable them to deal with the impact which global issues (such as pandemic, war, international conflicts, environmental issues, arrival of refugees from Ukraine, diasporas, etc.) can have on their lives. In *Psychology Today* it is stated that "emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Cultural intelligence, on the other hand, has been defined as "the skill or ability to relate to and work with groups of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences", as well as "a person´s capability to function and manage him- or herself successfully in culturally diverse settings."[2] Based on this, we opine that our students need to be exposed as much as possible to such tasks and activities which are global skills-oriented, meaningful, real-life based and which provoke their thinking skills, fostering their emotional, and cultural intelligence. "*If they are to benefit now and in the future, learners need to learn the skills – referred to as global skills -that are critical for lifelong learning and success in these difficult years."* [3]

Arising out of this, it is important to educate candidate teachers in such a way that they will be able to pass down their skills to their future learners. [4] This led us to explore more about how IMID´s online repository could help university teachers to elevate their students´ global skills as well as emotional, and cultural intelligence.

1.2 Purpose of the article

Teachers in our small-scale survey are taking a model from an established institution - the IMID, to incorporate selected aspects of that model into their lessons and syllabi, making sure that they are taking specific examples aimed at global skills, emotional, and cultural intelligence development into their courses´ design. The research cohort provides education and training for trainee (candidate) teachers. We suggest that thanks to IMID´s model applied in the curriculum aimed at candidate teachers, they will be able to recognise how our behaviour might impact others, and how this behaviour might be contradictory to someone´s else´s, how respecting diversity matters, and how important it is to be emotionally, and culturally intelligent in order to lead an effective and successful intercultural communication, and how crucial it is to become a critically thinking individual, and a role model for learners. To summarize, our purpose is to contribute to a transformational change through exposing university academics to IMID´s materials and see how those could help them to prepare trainee teachers for their job.

2. Why IMID and why their materials?

Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (abbrev. IMID), located in Boise (Idaho, USA) is a multipurpose museum which strives to foster and support human journey stories dialogues across the globe and to initiate similar initiatives worldwide. [5] In Slovakia there is not such an institution which would house under one roof all minorities or ethnic

groups located in the region. There are individual small museums (Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia, Museum of Ruthenian Culture, Museum of German Culture, etc., and all of them are museums of national (historical) minorities) governed by the Slovak National Museum. IMID provides us with a good example of the broader understanding of local and international heritage, creating space for expressing multiple identities living in Idaho, USA. IMID creates, fosters and promotes not solely material artefacts (as tangible heritage) from the past, but also current narratives and oral histories (stories) (intangible heritage), human journey stories of people (former refugees), etc.

Slovakia has become a direct observer of the war on Ukraine invaded by Russia in 2022, breaking all international peace laws. As a result of all harsh conditions put on the victims (citizens of Ukraine), thousands of them decided to flee to Slovakia, especially mothers and their children who are now enrolled in the Slovak education system. The trainee teachers have already been confronted with this situation in schools. Based on this, it would be essential for them to come into contact with diaspora topics as soon as possible and IMID could help in this context via sharing diaspora heritage in the broader community. The case of Boise´s IMID is very exceptional as the key aim of this institution is to value and celebrate human journey stories, which is also the main reason why we selected IMID´s publicly available online materials for a deeper scrutiny in terms of its use in the education of trainee teachers. The students will surely come across such terms as trauma, adaptation, identity, heritage, etc. during their studies, but will they be given the chance to think about them in a more detailed way? Our long-term intention is to integrate those topics (inspired by IMID) into the teaching program curriculum. We were motivated especially with how IMID as a museum (as well as an education institution) deals with the trauma incurred by members of diaspora, or what lenses it uses to portray the diaspora heritage of individual identities living in Boise while being a representative of all Idaho diasporas. In this sense we agree that a/the museum in this case can be a place of therapy for those exposing their story and personal objects, not just solely of commemoration. In this sense, IMID has a potential to serve as a role model for other museums in the world based on the fact that it resembles a place where past is viewed from the lenses of the current representatives of diaspora, fostering their identity, and personal story through sharing human journey experiences with the local community, and contributing to fostering collective identity of the people living in Idaho. To sum it up, IMID stores a range of materials which could be used across the Slovak education system. Given the fact that the narrative of this museum is to show the human journey story and to celebrate it, IMID has become a new prototype for a museum which is fed from the past, nurtured by the present and fostered by the future of communities.

3. Research methods

In this chapter we will take a closer look at opinions held by university teachers at MBU's Department of English and American Studies, regarding IMID´s audio-visual digital materials. A short-term qualitative survey was undertaken to explore more about where the university teachers see IMID´s materials positioned in their syllabi.

There were 13 university teachers (from English and American Studies Department) who undertook interviews and focus-group discussions in July 2022. We also explored how they viewed the special role of IMID in diaspora heritage support, cultivation, promotion, as well as in elevating global skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers. We suggest that IMID´s materials could help trainee teachers to

recognise how our behaviour might impact others, and how this behaviour might be contradictory to someone´s else´s, supporting our students global skills (critical thinking, intercultural communication, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, etc.). We also opine that this inspiration could contribute significantly to transformational changes in education and training of trainee teachers.

3.1 Results of Survey

The university teachers who participated in our small-scale survey took a model from an established institution, i.e. IMID to incorporate it into their lessons and syllabi. They were welcomed to pick up whatever they needed specifically for the objectives of their courses. They had a chance to go through the digital repository of IMID located in a publicly available website, online domain and take the materials which inspired them into their curriculum design in order to develop global skills of their students, as well as their emotional, and cultural intelligence. As can be viewed below, the selected participants of our small-scale survey viewed integration of IMID´s materials into their courses as very adequate and plausibly applicable in the short-term horizon.

"It is possible to use such topics at any time. I would definitely use it at the English Through Literature seminar, where we deal with topics such as: The position of women in society; Otherness; Indifference; War; (Im) migration, etc." (respondent no. 1., woman).

"In English lexicology or Sociolinguistics, I would be able to connect with the topic of intercultural communication. I would confront the diversity and non/acceptability of cultural-communication codes of other cultures in Slovakia." (respondent no. 1., woman).

Except for the *English Through Literature*, *English Lexicology,* and *Sociolinguistics*, there were other respondents who saw IMID´s materials well applicable in other courses as evident in the next paragraphs, which makes us conclude that the IMID´s materials are flexible enough to be integrated on a wide scale in the teaching program curriculum established at Faculty of Arts, in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia:

"I could apply IMID´s materials in American Studies, especially those about human journey stories, such as one about Palina Louangketh and her immigration/refugee story and other issues about how humanity can protect the environment and vice versa." (respondent no. 3., woman)

Trainee teachers have to attend a prescribed number of compulsory subjects which fall into the area of linguistics, cultural studies, and English language methodology. We assume that IMID´s materials could create an interesting added value to the content of specific courses such as: *American Studies, British studies, Intercultural studies, Sociolinguistics, ELT methodology, and English through literature*.

Respondent no. 9., who teaches American studies, stated how important it is to discuss diaspora, immigration, and refugee topics with his students, who come on regular basis into contact with Ukrainian students or those from other cultural background:

"One more idea: given that Slovakia is not generally known for the visibility of its diasporic and immigrant communities, it might be interesting to discuss the various such communities present here in Slovakia, at least according to students' personal

*experiences, and compare them with the list of diasporas present in Idaho." (*respondent no. 9., man) "*If material on specific diasporas, Idaho communities or individual stories is added, this could indeed serve useful purposes in my course, providing specific examples of diasporas in the American experience and adding more detail on the cultural fabric of the Rocky Mountain region (a region whose cultures are often underrepresented in overviews of US culture)."*

Another argument for using IMID´s materials came from the lecturer teaching an American literature course, the respondent no. 8. (woman) mentioned that
"*The Idaho Museum of International Diasporas website proves to be a useful resource in my course focused on ethnic literatures, explaining in an accessible way how diasporas have been formed in the U.S. and implicitly explaining how diasporas relate to current events in Europe. "*

As can be deduced, this university teacher (respondent no. 8., woman) referred implicitly to the war waged by Russia against Ukraine. She also mentioned the life story of the museum's founder, prof. Palina Louangketh (founder and executive director of IMID), published in USA Today, which could be used in her course as a text to discuss the social mobility of refugees in the U.S., with a focus on raising awareness of the issue of forced emigration and the need for civic engagement. [5]

Next respondents were inspired by Cross-cultural voices curriculum and the power of storytelling which they suppose as useful in their ELT-methodology oriented courses.

"*I do think that IMID´s cross-cultural voices project could be used to inform my classes aimed at future teachers´ education and training. The lessons designed according toGlobal Leadership Curriculum could elevate my students´ global skills, emotional, as well as cultural intelligence." (*respondent no. 5., woman)

"*Through all the materials presented on the IMID´s website, I deduce that most of them can serve really well as a platform for testing the power of storytelling in our English language methodology lessons, that could be elaborated and used in our ELT-oriented seminars…" (*respondent no. 7., woman). In the case of this respondent, it would be plausible to also invite guest speakers to speak about their experience with involuntary displacement from their country of origin, or the experiences of their family members, etc., in order to elevate students' emotional as well as cultural intelligence.

Respondent no. 6. viewed IMID´s materials as motivational, and possibly applicable in *Intercultural studies, American studies,* and *American literature*.

"*There is an experience at the department – experience of otherness and I do also have personal experience of being a Canadian immigrant´s granddaughter. I agree with the fact that we need to innovate, doing something unconventional in order to make our teaching program sustainable." (*respondent no. 6., woman)

It was inspiring to see how our respondents aligned the IMID´s materials with the topics of their courses in order to elevate their students´ emotional and cultural intelligence.

"*I would rather go the way of updating and applying to the situation connected with the current geopolitical situation affecting Slovakia. I am thinking of the invasion of Ukraine*

*by the Russian Federation. I am thinking of the 6 million Ukrainian refugees, migrants, detainees (whatever we call them), not to mention the internally displaced persons inside Ukraine who have been forced to flee their homes." (*respondent no. 1., woman)

As respondent no. 1 indicated, she is motivated to use the IMID sources to challenge the opinions and mindsets of future teachers related to the current situation connected with the war in Ukraine. With this said, it is evident that respondent no. 1 aims to develop not only subject-related skills of future teachers but align them also with more practical global skills, which are generally all transferable and possible to integrate into any subject. All in all, the opinions of all respondents created a solid basis for further development of pedagogical implications made by authors of the article.

4. Implications for Education and Training of Candidate Teachers

Based on our analysis of interviews, focus-group discussions, and email communication, we assume that IMID´s materials generate a useful source for university lecturers in the Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. As it was stated several times by our respondents, the IMID´s materials were viewed as motivational, inspirational, and worth integrating in the courses offered for trainee teachers. All of our respondents agreed on the importance of elevating global skills, as well as the emotional and cultural intelligence of their students. These two intelligences were also mentioned because students´ concentration has been impacted negatively during COVID-19 restrictions when most teaching moved online Thanks to IMID´s human journey stories integrated in the lessons, it would be possible to work with students´ senses, to involve them emotionally. This aligned with ethics and diversity principles of both institutions.

Conclusion

The university teachers in Department of English and American Studies expressed their interest and motivation to integrate the following topics in their courses (based on their immersion in IMID´s online repository): The power of storytelling related to the human journey story; Cross-cultural voices of diaspora; Cross-border voices of diaspora; Cross-culinary voices of diaspora; Revitalization of culture of indigenous people in the USA; Immigration to the USA; Selected aspects of emotional intelligence; Selected aspects of cultural intelligence; Intercultural communication, intercultural encounters; Otherness; Indifference; War; (Im)migration; Social inclusion and exclusion; Protection of human rights; Diversity and non/acceptability of cultural-communication codes of other cultures in Slovakia, and the USA; Values and their importance in the 21ˢᵗ century, and many others. Based on the respondents´ answers, trainee teachers´ critical thinking and other global skills can be very well trained by introducing them to IMID´s diverse online materials which provide them with the opportunity to learn, discover, and explore. To wrap up, the survey carried out in the Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, was just a small-scale one. However, its implications can be transferred across various courses aimed at trainee teachers, in a manner which aligns with the long-term goal of: IMID and Matej Bel University, which is to transform the minds of future generational leaders by fostering their emotional, and cultural intelligence.

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Integrating (Digital) Cultural Heritage into Secondary School Education

Anna Slatinská
Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

Abstract

The integration of digital cultural heritage into compulsory secondary education has become quite topical in recent years and several European Commission-supported projects aimed at professional development of secondary school teachers have been initiated in order to improve their digital skills. This study will focus on the results obtained through qualitative research related to the integration of digital cultural heritage into the compulsory education at lower and upper secondary level schools by selected teachers who were involved in the Erasmus+Cherished project. Our research cohort, i.e. 15 secondary school teachers, participated in a professional development activity (LTTA – Learning and Teacher Training Activity) in Nicosia, Cyprus in the period from 6th to 9th July 2022. This workshop was organized by Synthesis (Centre for Research and Education) and attended by other EU cultural and educational institutions such as Matej Bel University (by Faculty of Arts´ members, one of them is the author of this article) - Slovakia, SPEL - Portugal, SDT - Belgium, Instituto Ikigai - Spain and Ki Culture - Netherlands. The LTTA emerged as one of the outcomes of Erasmus+Cherished project no. 1. 2020-1-BE02-KA226-SCH-083039, coordinated by Square Dot Team from Belgium. In addition to interviewing Slovak teachers, we also reflected on the views and opinions of teachers from other project countries, i.e. Spain, Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands. Thanks to our interviews and online questionnaire, being the primary research techniques, we explored the challenges, experiences, as well as strengths and weaknesses that secondary school teachers face when applying digital cultural heritage into their teaching. Using the mentioned methods of qualitative research, we were able to reveal more about the secondary school teachers´ opinions on LTTA in Cyprus, especially what benefits they gained in terms of their professional development, what specific skills they improved and what needs they still have in terms of digital cultural heritage integration into their lessons. We built the study on the premise that using digital sources of cultural heritage can foster not only teachers´ digital skills, but also students' global skills, cultural awareness and cultural intelligence.

Keywords: *secondary school teachers, professional development, digital sources of cultural heritage, Learning and Teacher Training Activity (LTTA)*

1. Introduction

Teachers' world-wide have been facing a variety of educational, cultural, and socio-political challenges which impact their pedagogical work. One of these challenges lies in the application of digital sources to teaching at secondary schools. In our study, we focus on digital cultural heritage sources, which, if used effectively in class, can contribute to enhancing global skills, as well as the cultural and emotional intelligence of learners. We presume, based the Digital Education Action Plan for 2021-2027 and the Education in Cultural Heritage report [9], that there is an increasing need for developing educators' digital skills as part of their lifelong pedagogical learning to adapt teaching to new

conditions, based on the significant changes in education in the last 3 years since the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. Digital cultural heritage

The integration of digital cultural heritage into secondary school education is more important than ever. Digital sources provide teachers with a range of ideas and tips, but also challenges. We consider digital cultural heritage sources as an effective tool which can be used in a wide range of subjects, starting with the best-known platforms such as European and continuing with various other digital databases. EU initiatives, such as Erasmus+ projects, are responding to the need to introduce digital cultural heritage into compulsory education curricula. In this study, we view digital cultural heritage as cultural heritage which has been digitized in order to be kept for future generations. [6] "Digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software, and web pages, among a wide and growing range of formats. They are frequently ephemeral, and require purposeful production, maintenance and management to be retained." [7] There is a probability that digital cultural heritage will become more important in the future based on the fact that many organizations and communities are using digital technologies in order to preserve their valuable materials (galleries, museums) and share them with current as well as future generations.

3. Professional development of teachers in the 21st century

Starting from the mission of the teacher's work, it is probably right to note that the teaching profession requires lifelong learning and continuous development. Pedagogical thinking is therefore subject to constant transformation and the teachers themselves should (ideally) use the opportunity to reflect the challenges that 21st century brings. A characteristic feature of such transformative thinking and education is based on the fact that the teacher does not overload pupils with an excessive new information in the belief that the pupil will absorb it over time. [1] If we start with transformation, the change should be in grasping the knowledge that the learner has and using his/her skills to transform/change it into something new, something to create, design, construct, etc. in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy. [5] The premise of such learning is that the learner is personally engaged, participating in a task that is close to his or her heart, drawing on real life, so that he or she sees the potential of connecting to what he or she is experiencing, dealing with, perceiving, struggling with, etc. Our learners benefit from creative use of information, applying their critical thinking, reflection, and activating their other higher cognitive processes (analysis, synthesis, comparison, etc.). All learning is individual and each pupil must be treated individually. Transformative education has the potential to encourage pupil autonomy (responsibility for one's own learning), to increase intellect, to develop relationships, to promote social and emotional learning, to make the core values of education visible, and last but not least, to encourage pupils to be active. [2], [8] We believe that the implementation of digital cultural heritage sources within compulsory education at secondary level can contribute to the holistic development of the learner.

The application of digital cultural heritage sources to teaching might be quite challenging. It is up to the teacher how much use he/she makes of digital sources in the classroom; it is important to know how to use these digital resources effectively and appropriately. The selected teachers from five EU countries attended an interactive educational and

practical workshop in Cyprus between the 6th and the 8th July 2022 to test their digital skills and support their further (lifelong) pedagogical development in the area of digital cultural heritage. Arising out of the fact that the teachers are educating future empowered citizens and leaders, their profession today can hardly do without basic digital skills that help them to effectively manage not only online learning but also the application of digital resources in their classroom. Based on this requirement and challenge, the Learning and Teacher-Training Activity (abbr. LTTA) in Cyprus has attempted to meet these needs through supporting the pedagogical development of teachers via micro-learning course, e-learning platform, pedagogical framework and self-assessment tool.

3.1 Innovative steps in education in the 21st century

The integration of digital cultural heritage resources into the curriculum of compulsory education appears to be innovative and effective enough to enhance students' global skills, as well as their cultural and emotional intelligence. New challenges in education, and challenges arising in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, have resulted in the emergence of new online educational resources and e-learning methods. The cultural and educational sector has had to adapt to this challenge and step forward towards the creation of digital content materials usable in education in order to facilitate the work of the teachers and to offer new ways to convey content in a different, less traditional, digital form, which is already viewed as part of our lives and the educational system. [3]

The question is, however, what innovative steps can teachers take to motivate pupils to go further, to progress and not to lose interest in learning and in their own development of knowledge and honing their skills? To this end, a workshop in Cyprus for teachers was designed to help teachers in lower and upper secondary education to effectively integrate digital resources of cultural heritage into their teaching. The workshop's primary aim was to help teachers navigate the different types of digital cultural heritage related to their subject's educational objectives. It was intended to develop teachers' skills in designing and creating their own digital resources for teaching purposes. [3]

3.2 Learning and Teacher Training Activity (LTTA) in Cyprus

Fifteen teachers from 5 EU countries, i.e. Spain, Portugal, Slovakia, Belgium and the Netherlands, to participate in the LTTA as part of the Erasmus+Cherished project. [4] The condition for participation was that the teachers should teach pupils aged between 11 and 18. The selected teachers had to fulfill several requirements, namely: an active interest in the use of digital heritage resources and in inclusive digital education, and a willingness to share the methods and techniques used in the integration of digital cultural heritage from the curriculum. In addition to improving teachers' digital skills in using digital cultural heritage resources, the workshop had several other sub-objectives.

These included: intensifying contact between workshop members regarding the application of digital heritage resources in the curriculum; highlighting adequate digital cultural heritage resources that could be applied in humanities and science subjects; training teachers in the use of digital cultural heritage resources via a newly designed microlearning course developed by Erasmus+Cherished members; improving teachers' digital skills in using digital cultural heritage resources with regard to inclusive approaches; taking advantage of opportunities for teachers to self-assess their own skills after the workshop; encouraging collaboration among teachers, helping them increase

their self-confidence in the reuse of digital cultural heritage resources and in the use of inclusive approaches in education; initiating teacher collaboration after the Erasmus+Cherished project. [3] In terms of professional development, the workshop was also beneficial because it facilitated teachers' understanding of the following topics: Inclusive digital learning; Benefits of using digital heritage resources in the classroom; Methods and techniques for teaching with digital material; Navigation in digital heritage resources; Teaching sensitive "complex" cultural heritage through digital resources; Interdisciplinary approaches in teaching; Cooperation between schools and cultural institutions; Collaboration of secondary school teachers in the integration of digital cultural heritage resources; Reflection on pedagogical principles and methods used in teaching sensitive "complex" heritage; Developing lesson plans using digital heritage resources in lower and upper secondary education. The topics above are also beneficial in that they provide the 21st century teachers with the opportunity to improve their digital (technical) skills, working with digital material on a variety of topics, all in line with inclusive and global education and culturally-responsive pedagogy which are crucial in terms of school curriculum.

4. Methodology

Since the aim of this study was to convey teachers' views on how they perceive the integration of digital cultural heritage resources into their teaching, what they struggle with, what challenges they face, and what their strengths and weaknesses are in using digital resources, etc., we decided to carry out an anonymous questionnaire and subsequent interviews with teachers participating in the workshop. The workshop was organized by Synthesis, Centre for Research and Education, one of the partner institutions in the Erasmus+Cherished project. The research material collected from fifteen teachers from different EU countries was subjected to a detailed analysis. In the corpus we tried to identify key themes such as: professional development, successes, failures, evaluation, change, transformation, challenges, digital resources, cultural heritage, and others. For our purposes, we also classified respondents' answers in terms of whether they reflected the educator's knowledge, actions, awareness, and development. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the pedagogical framework and microlearning course that was developed by project members to facilitate the implementation of cultural heritage digital resources in compulsory education. Finally, they were able to assess their digital skills through a self-assessment tool developed by Synthesis (Centre for Education and Research in Cyprus) in collaboration with other members of the Erasmus+ Cherished project. All respondents were from lower and upper secondary schools employed Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain and Portugal. Members from the following institutions were present too: Matej Bel University in Slovakia, Instituto Ikigai in Spain, SPEL in Portugal, Stichting Ki Culture in Netherlands, and Square Dot Team in Belgium.

4.1 Survey results

The first item in the questionnaire was the pedagogical framework proposed by the Erasmus+Cherished project members. Respondents were asked to rate which items are most important to them in their daily practice. 90% of respondents considered professional development (professional engagement) and the same percentage considered empowering learners as key items. Also worth mentioning is the item connected with facilitating learner's digital competence, which was viewed as a key

aspect by up to 60% of respondents. An interesting finding was that all respondents perceived positively the implementation of digital cultural heritage resources in teaching and also positively evaluated the important role of cultural institutions (galleries, museums) in this area. In this context, the respondents also had the chance to comment in a semi-structured interview on the microlearning activities carried out during the workshop in Cyprus. Teachers evaluated the microlearning course as follows:

"I enjoyed my time spent doing micro-learning activities. The most valuable source was to learn how education works in other countries and how they apply digital cultural heritage sources in their classes. "

"I appreciate sharing of knowledge among the colleagues from different countries with different history, cultural heritage and different points of view. I felt very inspired. "

It is evident from the respondents' answers that during the workshop it was not only their knowledge in the field of digital resources but also their digital skills which were enhanced by sharing experiences and examples from practice with other workshop members. The majority of respondents expressed that the microlearning course met their expectations and that they would like to attend a similar course in the future as can be viewed here:

"This was one of my best learning experiences. I learnt a lot about how to integrate effectively digital cultural heritage sources into my teaching. "

"I had a chance to cooperate with my colleagues on creating a lesson plan in which the central idea evolved around integration of digital sources. This was very useful, a nice hands-on experience. "

As the micro-learning course was a success, we asked respondents which lessons within the course they liked best. Obviously, respondents saw the most benefit in the following topics: difficult heritage, pedagogical approaches to teaching with digital cultural heritage, and best practices in using digital cultural heritage. The last item was the opportunity to assess their digital skills after the course, which again was seen positively by respondents as an opportunity to reflect on their own development. The final discussion was along the lines of recommendations from course participants that may take the microlearning course to a higher level in the future.

"Thanks to the LTTA in Cyprus I reached a better understanding of digital cultural heritage and its application in teaching. "

"I feel I am taking progress in integrating digital cultural heritage sources into my courses."

4.2 Discussion

The results of the survey indicate that the digital and cultural competences of the selected teachers in the use of digital cultural heritage resources have improved, which, in addition to the educational activity in Cyprus itself, was also contributed to by the two previous pilot workshops carried out in each of the partner countries in the winter term 2021 and in the summer term 2022. For the integration of digital cultural heritage into the compulsory school curriculum to be successful, support is also needed from the school leadership at the local scale, and especially support from the Ministry of Education, and policy makers in the respective country at the national scale. Indeed, digital cultural heritage provides teachers with a variety of material that they can work with effectively (including lesson plans such as the European platform or the Centropa digital archive, and others) in developing students' global skills, ranging from critical thinking, creativity, global citizenship, to values education such as respect, tolerance and supporting overall inclusion. The research corpus revealed that the educators who participated in the workshop have knowledge about different digital cultural heritage resources. However, they lack concrete examples, suggestions and tools to work with the material in the classroom in the form of worksheets and lesson plans. According to their statements and the findings of the questionnaire, we conclude that the workshop in Cyprus was successful. It provided teachers with the opportunity to actively participate in the development of the curriculum using digital heritage resources and also provided teachers with concrete opportunities to improve in this area, to navigate the vast range of internet resources, especially in how to work with them and where to look for them.

Conclusion

Every educational institution is to some extent exposed to the challenges of the 21st century. Among such challenges which we have included in the study is the gradual implementation of digital cultural heritage resources in teaching at lower and upper secondary levels. In order to face this challenge and to deal with it creatively, various European projects (e.g. Erasmus+project Cherished) funded by the EU have been developed to help the teachers of the schools in question to manage the often difficult transition from traditional education to an innovative form of education. These projects use digital cultural heritage resources, delivered by teachers trained in this field. Based on a questionnaire and interviews with teachers from five EU Member States, we concluded that while digital heritage resources provide a myriad of material for the teacher. unless the material is used logically and in parallel with the lesson plan, its effect on improving pupils' key competences is only minimal. This challenge was also reflected in an educational and practical workshop held in Cyprus (as part of the Erasmus+ project Cherished), which, in addition to providing an orientation on the various digital cultural heritage resources, also provided teachers with concrete examples of how to work with this type of teaching material. Developing digital skills is not easy. Teachers´ power to apply digital cultural heritage sources in their classes is conditioned by their digital skills, professional competences, and reflective capabilities.

The activities carried out by educators in order to hone their pedagogical competencies can contribute to the overall improvement of teaching and learning. To sum up, the LTTA in Cyprus helped remove some obstacles teachers face in integrating digital cultural heritage sources in mainstream compulsory secondary education. It also offered the list of best practices which can be cascaded in their institutions in the future. Selected

educators from five EU countries showed not only their expertise and skills, but also enthusiasm and willingness to integrate the digital cultural heritage modules into their own teaching, which we consider as the most successful output of the Erasmus+Cherished project.

The study is the outcome of the research project KEGA 016UMB-4/2021 aimed at global skills development.

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Participation and Engagement in Language Learning. Implications for Teaching

Luisa Panichi
University of Pisa, Italy

Abstract

When discussing learner participation in language learning the emphasis is in general on learner verbal activity which can be measured. However, research on online language learning highlights how learner participation can also emerge through non-activity and how it can be measured as non-verbal [1]. This paper will explore a number of additional notions that are used in the literature to discuss learner participation such as learner engagement [2] and willingness to communicate [3]. Examples will be provided from both face-to-face contexts and online learning. The paper will also examine learner participation from the point of view of teacher participation and will attempt to illustrate how conceptualizations around the teacher's role and teaching and learning may impact on what emerges as participation and play an important role in curriculum development and testing. The final part of the paper will take a look at how traditional and Anglocentric discussions of language learner participation in the literature may be providing a narrow take on participation and actually be limiting in terms of language learning and measuring performance. The paper will also present a reflective practice exercise for teachers who are interested in gaining insight into how their classroom practice may be impacting on student participation.

Keywords: *learner participation, engagement, willingness to communicate*

1. Participation

Over the last 20 years, with the increasing endorsement of socio-cultural theories of learning within second and foreign language instruction and in web-based education, greater attention has been placed on *learner participation* as a key component of learning (Panichi, 2015). In the literature, participation is generally understood as some form of *linguistic activity* or *interaction* in the target language. According to van Lier (2004), foreign and second language learning are perceived as the learner's ability to engage with the environment in relation to its affordances. Along similar lines, Lantolf (2000) refers to participation as learner activity at it arises in relation to specific tasks of the learning context. Furthermore, by participating in the discursive practices of the target community the language learner develops as a speaker of the target language and progressively becomes a member of the community (Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000). Breen (2001) goes on to analyze learners' contributions to their own learning whereby participation can be equated with classroom talk and discourse in which interaction with teachers also becomes relevant. Finally, Norton (2001) discusses participation from the point of view of "non-participation". According to Norton, participation also requires some form of emotional connection with the target language. Learners may well be

engaging with activities in the classroom in the sense that they are carrying out the prescribed tasks, but this is no guarantee nor indication of emotional engagement. The fact that students may not be able to perceive themselves as belonging in some form to the community of native speakers whose language they are investing in may lead to student drop-out, for example.

1.2. Online participation

While teacher-student interaction in face-to-face contexts is easy to observe either because the student is talking or using body language of some sort (i.e. nodding, smiling, making eye contact, turned towards the teacher or their peers, etc.), this is often not the case in online contexts where a number of factors can intervene to hide or distort student interaction and participation: connection, video and sound issues, technological problems and lack of adequate support, lack of familiarity with the medium by the student and the teacher, to name just a few. If we take a look at online educational settings such as virtual worlds, for example, the idea of participation takes on additional connotations.If students and teacher are represented by an avatar, participation is no longer about body language and eye gaze or video "on" or video "off" but may be determined by avatar movement and activity inthe virtual space.

In addition to this, in his discussion of online participation contributions in writing in an organizational and management learning context, Hrastinski (2008) lists in addition to "doing" and "communicating" issues such as the learner's sense of belonging, feelings, and their relationships with others. He also shows that online participation also reflects what is going on "offline" thus suggesting that, when discussing participation, learner activity in an educational setting needs to be seen in a continuum and not limited to only one mode or setting.

1.3. Learner engagement

Another conceptualization worth mentioning as it has implications for understanding participation is that of learner engagement. Learner engagement is discussed in the literature as a dynamic, multidimensional construct comprising situated notions of cognition, affect and behaviors – including social interactions – in which action is a requisite component (Hiver, 2021). Again, as in the discussionabove on participation, the notion of engagement would seem to imply activity in a meaningful context.

1.4. Willingness to participate

Willingness to participate (WTC) is understood as the extent to which a learner is prepared to take partin the interaction required for participation and is connected with cultural, political, social, identity, motivational, emotional, pedagogical and other issues learners face in their educational settings(MacIntyre, 2020). As such, unlike the notion of engagement which overlaps with that of active participation in the literature cited above, WTC can be seen as a state or trait that has an impact on participation yet precedes the act of participation itself.

1.5. Teacher participation

If the learning context is to be understood as one where social interaction takes place, it makes sense to take a look at the teacher's role in our discussion. In their study, Young and Miller (2004) develop an understanding of participation as co-participation involving not only the learner but also the teacher.They show how participation patterns of both the learner and teacher change over time and how student increased proficiency in the target language leads to shifts in the participation of the teacher.In this sense, they view learning as involving changing participation

2. A critical view of participation

In *The politics of participation in international English Education* by Holliday (1997) the author discusses participation from the point of view of culture and power. By introducing the concept of "discourse of participation" he challenges our understanding of participation by looking at the way we refer to student behavior in our professional language-teaching discourse and settings. For example, Holliday suggests that the BANA (British, Australasian, North American) language teaching and learning methodology is biased in the sense that is it based on Western dominant conceptualizations of participation as "active" participation which may not be relevant or appropriate in other contexts.

3. Implications and conclusions

As teachers, advisers, designers of materials and syllabi and examiners we are called upon to observe, interpret, measure and comment on learners' *performance* in the target language in multiple contexts and via different media. In our professional roles, it is often the case that learner participation understood as some sort of activity carried out or performed by the student in the target language is seen positively and, conversely, limited participation may be viewed negatively. In this sense, a link is created between performance and activity which has implications in terms of our evaluation of learners. Sometimes our observations and interactions with students are one-off occasions; often our professional activities span over a full term or year. However, whatever the amount of exposure to learner performance (speaking, writing, online, offline, blended, etc.) a deeper and broader understanding of participation may enable more accurate observations and interventions. The following is a non-comprehensive list of questions to encourage teacher reflection based on the issues around participation presented in this paper:

- Does the learner perform better under certain circumstances compared to others?
- What might be causing this difference in performance?
- To what extent and at what level are the activities learners are engaged in actually meaningfulto them?
- Is assessment of students based on a narrow or broad understanding of participation?
- What do I mean by participation in my specific context?
- Are their cultural issues surrounding participation in my specific context?
- Are the teaching materials in use in my context suitable for different cultural understandings ofparticipation?

- Does the social context of the classroom favour greater participation by some students overothers?
- Do I have information about student activity which I cannot observe directly but which mayrelevant to their participation and learning?
- How do we read and react to what may seem to be non-participatory behavior?
- What might my bias or that of my institution be in relation to our conceptualization ofparticipation and the value we attribute to it?
- Do we share an understanding of participation with our learners?
- Do we share an understanding of participation with the communities we serve and ourstakeholders or is it simply assumed?

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Translation

The Role of Machine Translation in Language Studies and Beyond: Evaluation and Future Directions

Iglika Nikolova-Stoupak
Kyoto University, Japan

Abstract

It is hard to deny the significance of the role that machine translation has taken in the routine of businesses, translation specialists and even young language learners today. Studies show that the use of machine translation by translation students leads to a number of benefits, including enhanced understanding of language, higher speed of translation and even increased creativity. To go further, the computational or mathematical aspect has so much as seemingly been "pushing away" the language-related side of computational linguistics as an academic field. The reason behind such a trend can be traced to a more general association of language and mathematics, accounted for in Tanaka-Ishii's elaborate study, "Statistical Universals of Language" (2021). Is the study of language(s) becoming obsolete? On the contrary, an adequate reaction on the side of humanities studies would be an adaptation of curricula that accounts for the role of technological and research advancements in the field of translation and language studies. In fact, language could fit more than neatly in the historically highly mathematical curriculum of Computer Science. This paper will provide specific guidelines as to novel modalities through which language studies can be incorporated in a middle school curriculum.

Keywords: *translation studies, machine translation, computational linguistics*

1. Introduction

Machine Translation or the automatic translation of text from one language to another by means of computer software is a technological advancement that is difficult to bypass as it has made its way and continues to become ingrained in the experience of individuals and business entities; in personal and professional activities. The technology's role in education is especially visible when one peeks into university-level translation curricula, but even much younger students use it in their foreign language classes. One may so much as say that the definition of translation itself has changed as a result of Machine Translation technology [3]. This paper will firstly examine the role that automatic translation currently accommodates within education. Then, the vastness of this role will be presented as a result of a more generalized tendency of "mathematisation" of language as visible within the growing field of Computational Linguistics. Finally, a natural path for the re-introduction of language learning will be suggested.

2. Machine translation in education

This part of the paper will examine the current role that Machine Translation has in different facets of education. Most studies on the topic discuss university-level studies, specialized in translation, and little place is accorded to general language-learning practices as well as to earlier education, when a number of crucial habits are formed. One should note that in most cases, English is considered as the target language of translation and the most popular automatic translation tool, Google Translate, is often emphasized.

Deng and Yu (2022) offer a contemporary literary review of 26 articles on the use of automatic translation in language learning. Some common activities that students (mostly, at university level) are involved in for the purpose of practice with the technology involve comparison of human and machine-translated text and analysis and editing of errors [1, p.82]. The authors come at the natural conclusion that automatic translation provides help to students in various ways, such as through improving the quality of their work and boosting their confidence, whilst the technology may be detrimental if relied on excessively and without sufficient critical thinking. A prevailing opinion of students is that additional training with automatic translation would be of help [1, p.76].

Yanti and Meka (2019) point out that undergraduate translation students demonstrate the correct intuition that Google Translate is useful at word-level and less so sentence-level and paragraph-levels [9, p.132]. Insightfully, the participants voice an opinion that the acquisition of good grammar skills in their target language helps prevent mistakes that may stem from automatic translation [p.135].

An experimental task with two mixed groups of BA- and MA-level translation students, one of which is allowed to resort to an initial machine-translated text, reveals the following additional benefits of using the technology: less time spent on the task, a higher understanding of complex terms and even higher creativity as proven by the variety of word choices applied [6, pp.174-177]. Also, problems such as too literal translation are shown not to be more frequent within the work of the aided group [p.174].

Kenny and Doherty (2014) propose a holistic approach to translator training, through which human translators are encouraged to participate in all stages of an automated translation process as opposed to simply when it comes to editing or evaluation of output. The authors also point out that it is crucial to provide a common ground between different professionals, thus avoiding a situation where Google Translate' speed and accuracy give a wrong idea of the implied work of either human translators or computer scientists [3, p.14].

Turning to EFL education, Raza and Nor (2011) point out that the use of automatic translation may be especially useful in cases when teachers do not speak a student's native language and can therefore not use translation as a means of teaching [7].

Examining the dynamics in a highly international EFL class in Malaysia, Jaganathan (2014) reveals the practices of the highest scoring students: they do not highly rely on automatic translation in order to understand the meaning of text and they refer to additional sources, such as dictionaries as well as critically examine all matching translations prior to selecting one [4, p.6]. To sum up, just like students in specialized

translation classes, EFL students can benefit from automatic translation when they use it optimally.

3. Underlying trends in computational linguistics

Machine Translation subscribes within Natural Language Processing, which in turn is associable with the more general scientific field of Computational Linguistics; that is to say, all technology-aided modelling and representation of natural language. As the name implies, the domain requires and produces knowledge of both computing (and the implied mathematics and logic) and linguistics. However, as will be shown in this section, the former seems to be increasingly overpowering the latter. A comprehensive contemporary work that is worth mentioning as a milestone in Computational Linguistics is Tanaka-Ishii's *Statistical Universals of Language* (2021). The study offers an exhaustive yet understandable presentation of a number of mathematical trends in human language that are statistically-provable through modern corpus technology (such as Zipf's Law and several of its derivatives) as well as discusses them as a measure of the validity of computer-generated language models. Tanaka-Ishii admittedly takes a step back from language as the tool of communication we are familiar with in order to shed light on its inner workings [8, p.185]. The "meaning" that is intrinsic to language is notably omitted from the vast majority of the discussion.

In order to further analyze the relationship of leading researchers in the field of Computational Linguistics with language and linguistics, the author of this paper conducted a survey among students in a Natural Language Processing laboratory in the University of Kyoto. The very rigorous entrance exam that students are required to take prior to admittance is built on a strong basis of advanced mathematics and computing theory. The seven respondents unambiguously showed a personal interest in language, 85.7 % of them indicating an advanced to proficient level of English as a foreign language. Also, all of the respondents indicated knowledge of at least one additional foreign language. To go even further, when prompted to freely describe the main reasons for their choice of specialization, two students indicated a shared interest in language and computing, and one underlined their eagerness to help facilitate communication between "people with different language backgrounds".
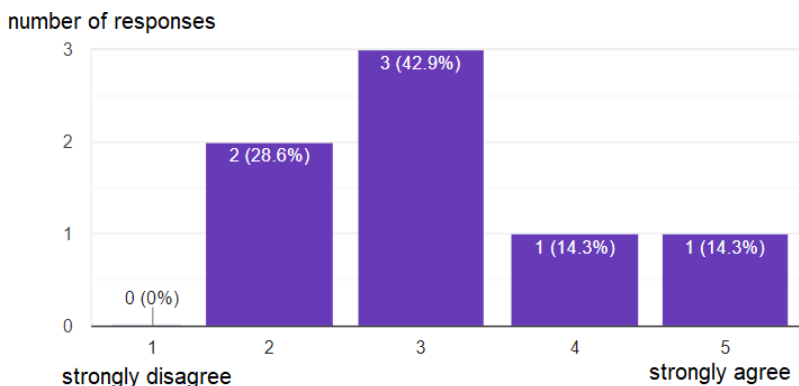

Figure 1. "I think that additional training in language/linguistics would benefit my academic work."

However, the voiced interest in language seems to not have made it to professional activity, all students indicating a prior background in Computer Science or related scientific fields as well as admitting to a larger interest in the "sciences" rather than "humanities". 71.4% of the students have conducted research involving a human language they are not personally proficient in. An enquiry on students' interest in deepening their professional knowledge of language and linguistics is met with varied responses (Fig. 1).

number of responses
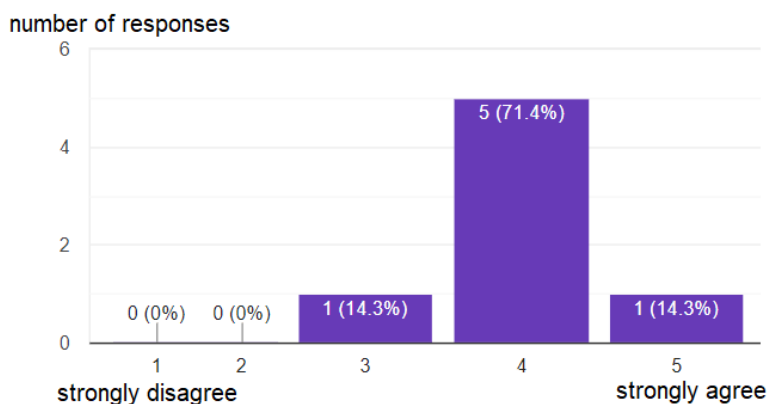
Figure 2. "I think that machine translation can replace human translation."

The respondents' opinion concerning the current place and future potential of technological advancements like Machine Translation proves highly optimistic: 85.7% disagree that computers will always demonstrate limitations in the understanding and production of language and, relatedly, the same number of students agree that machines can replace human translation (Fig. 2).

4. An early "Computational Linguistics" curriculum

Whilst the ongoing trend for the automation and mathematisation of language is both undeniable and understandable, this bringing together of the two once seemingly irreconcilably different scientific and educational spheres implies just as strongly that language now has a place within curricula that have traditionally been almost exclusively mathematical, such as computer studies. Of course, there are good reasons for mathematics to play a major role in introductory computer science. As Henderson (2005) explains, a computer scientist needs to possess logical and abstract thinking skills, a sensitivity to patterns and the ability to move from specific to general. Interestingly enough, however, computing is also comparable to mathematics on grounds of its use of symbols and role in communication [2], features that are also readily associable to language. The following is a preliminary curriculum, meant to integrate the notion of computational linguistics within the study of computing as early as in middle school (or the beginning of high school, with minor modifications). Special focus is placed on machine translation due to its already active role in students' personal and educational lives.

Weeks 1-2: Machine Translation: Fails

The topic can be entered gradually and cheerfully as students are shown a variety of thematic memes and google-translated songs. The YouTube channel "Twisted Translations" has especially hilarious, children-friendly content, and the process of generating lyrics can be recreated as an activity. A discussion may issue about the types of mistakes artificial technology makes, the reasons behind them and the limitations of a computer's "thinking". A notion is to be established that automatic translators rely on a large corpus i.e. a large number of examples that they have "seen" previously.

Weeks 3-4: Machine Translation: Efficient and Ethical Use

A discussion may be initiated about students' current habits of using tools like Google Translate. By means of demonstration, students are to be let know that automatic translation can provide wrong output when text is extensive or ambiguous. An overreliance on the tool is to be emphasized as detrimental to one's language acquisition as well as unethical. A link is to be drawn with plagiarism and it is to be noted that machine-translated writing is in fact recognizable by a variety of modern tools.

Weeks 5-6: Machine Translation: Activities

In accordance with class-appropriate foreign language studies, students are to be given in-class translation tasks that consist in 1) translating a short text while not having access to automatic translation tools 2) automatically translating and then post-editing a short text. The experience is to be critically evaluated and compared.

Weeks 7-8: Natural Language Processing: Discovery of Modern Tools

Students are to be let discover and experiment with a variety of technological tools, such as state-of-the-art chatbots, a converter to Shakespearean English, generators of images from text, etc. Specific tools may be selected and presented by students, and an exhibition of generated creative output may be hosted.

Weeks 9-10: Grammar in Computational Linguistics

A parallel is to be drawn with students' first language grammar classes. For instance, the parts of a sentence can be automatically annotated and illustrated with easy-to-perceive schemes, and words can be brought to their most basic forms (tokenisation). The concept of "context-free-grammar" is to be defined and illustrated by means of simple examples; students are to create their own simple "language" with a very limited set of symbols and rules.

Weeks 11-12: Language as Code

Students may be introduced to the principles of cryptography and asked to complete simple tasks, such as the application of a provided key to reveal a message. Then, examples of programming languages from binary code to natural language are to be shown in a historical perspective.

Week 13: Conclusion and Personal Thoughts

Students are to present their thoughts on a relevant topic of their choice in the form of an essay or presentation. Example topics: Will human translators still be needed in the future? Will computers ever be able to think? What is the difference between natural and programming language?

5. Conclusion

This paper has looked at current facts related to the role of machine translation in different types and levels of education as well as discussed, the deeper cause behind the escalating association between computing and language. To meet this trend, a provisional middle school curriculum of computational linguistics has been offered. Of course, this curriculum is to be adapted in accordance with advancements in the fast developing field. It can also be taken as a baseline and adapted to different levels of study and even to teacher training.

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Language Teaching Strategies

Theoretical Overview on the Inclusion of Cinema in the Teaching of French as a Foreign Language

Estefanía Sánchez Auñón[1], Imad Boussif[2]
University of Murcia, Spain[1,2]

Abstract

The teaching of French as a foreign language (FFLT) often becomes a tough task owing to different factors, above all, students' demotivation, which has been shown to be rather common. Thus, there is a need for more dynamic and appealing teaching strategies which stimulate learners. Research indicates that the seventh art is a helpful didactic resource in this respect. Nonetheless, it is not commonly used for TFFL, and there is scarce academic production on this topic as most studies on the educational use of cinema focus on the teaching of languages in general or of other disciplines. Thus, the present paper is aimed at providing a theoretical background which synthesizes recent findings on the use of films for TFFL. Firstly, the authors discuss the main challenges French instructors face when teaching the language, and the effectiveness of cinema to face such obstacles. Afterwards, a brief literature review is presented, highlighting the main research gaps in this field. Then, the authors detail the linguistic, cultural, and motivational advantages of films for TFFL, fostering, in such a way, its implementation. Several concluding remarks and suggestions for future research are provided at the end.

Keywords: *French as a foreign language, French teaching, cinema, linguistic competence, culture, motivation.*

1. Introduction

One of the major obstacles to learning French as a foreign language (FFL) is students' demotivation. French learners find instructors' teaching practices unappealing because many of them still adhere to outdated textbook based methodologies **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Moreover, the didactic materials French teachers commonly use hardly contemplate the global spread of technology, which, in accordance with Zaki **Error! Reference source not found.**, is already present in every aspect of our lives. Consequently, instructors struggle to adapt the teaching process to the students' experience **Error! Reference source not found.**, creating an isolated and monotonous classroom environment which does not stimulate them to learn.

The seventh art has been shown to be an effective solution to this problem for diverse reasons. Firstly, most French learners enjoy watching films, and they have expressed a positive attitude towards the exploitation of cinema for the teaching of French as a foreign language (TFFL) in several studies **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.**. Secondly, the film-based approach allows FFL teachers to target varied learning styles, benefiting,

especially, visual and auditory language students who may improve at a slower pace in a traditional classroom setting **Error! Reference source not found.**.

In spite of this, French teachers rarely introduce cinema into their lessons **Error! R eference source not found.**, and research on the exploitation of films for TFFL is scarce. Plentiful scholars have examined the implementation of the seventh art in the teaching of second and foreign languages in general **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**; and there is much academic production on the use of films when teaching other particular languages such as English **Error! Reference source not found.**, Portuguese **Error! Reference source not found.**, or Indonesian **Error! Reference source not found.**. Nonetheless, the greatest amount of available information on the inclusion of cinema in the teaching of FFL corresponds to master's degree dissertations and doctoral theses, and there is very little research on this topic in standardized scientific sources. As for the latter, the bibliographic search conducted has revealed that recent research on this field is mainly empirical **Error! Reference source n ot found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**, and that some scholars have concentrated their studies on only some of the advantages of the film-based approach when learning the French language. Pereira and Pinheiro-Mariz explore the implementation of cinema to teach reading skills **Error! Reference source n ot found.**, and Tjahjani and Jinanto deal with the cultural aspects of films **Error! Reference source not found.**. Hence, the aim of this paper is to present a comprehensive theoretical overview on the main findings concerning the exploitation of the seventh art for TFFL in order to show the diverse benefits it has for French learners and to promote the implementation of this method in the FFL class.

2. Benefits of cinema-based French teaching

Research has demonstrated that working on cinema has several advantages for French learners which are related to their linguistic and cultural knowledge and that, besides, it is highly motivational. Nevertheless, playing a film in the classroom is not enough to take full advantage of this material. Scholars' advice teachers to implement carefully planned film-based tasks which tackle all language competences for French students to achieve the desired learning outcomes **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference so urce not found.**. Also, when planning these activities, FFL instructors have to consider key factors such as the appropriateness of the film to be used as regards the learners' age, language level, and necessities **Error! Reference source not found.**. The currently a vailable data on the benefits of cinema for TFFL will be detailed below, which have been classified into different categories.

2.1. Linguistic aspects

Most available results on the effect of cinema on FFL learning are related to linguistic improvements. Essentially, researchers claim that working on francophone cinema allows French learners to enhance the four language skills. They can improve their oral comprehension because, apart from listening to what the actors say, they receive visual input such as gestures and expressions, which facilitates understanding **Error! R eference source not found.**. French teachers may design listening comprehension tasks on short selected excerpts, script dictation, or even activities in which learners

compare different French accents **Error! Reference source not found.**. Since films represent authentic oral interactions between French native speakers, showing the day-to-day language, and the actors' word articulation, students may try to repeat this speech afterwards, enhancing their oral expression too **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Indeed, as students feel pleased when watching films, the cinema-based approach reduces the anxiety many language learners feel in the classroom, and this stimulates them to speak because they feel comfortable **Error! Reference source not found.**. Concerning reading skills, French students may practice their reading ability if the film is played with French subtitles **Error! Reference source not found.**, and they may be asked to read film reviews too **Error! Reference source not found.**. Moreover, as stated by Perira and Pinheir-Mariz, studying the language through films encourages learners to read other text genres **Error! Reference source not found.**. French teachers may also plan film-based writing tasks such as writing an opinion essay or a report on the topics depicted throughout the film **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Furthermore, the authentic input French students receive when watching films helps them to learn grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. As learners see how certain grammatical structures are used in a realistic communicative interaction, they understand them better than when reading sentences in a text **Error! Reference source not found.**. Such input also allows them to enrich their vocabulary because, throughout films, they discover colloquial lexical items and expressions **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Besides, when working on specific scenes, they can learn technical words related to the field of cinema **Error! Reference source not found.**. Regarding pragmatics, films usually reflect communication problems such as distraction when conveying the speaker's message or expression failures, and, therefore, French students learn how to face these types of situations when speaking in French **Error! Reference source not found.**.

2.2. Cultural aspects

The seventh art also addresses cultural knowledge, which, as supported by countless scholars, is essential when studying a foreign language **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Many French learners do not have the opportunity to experience firsthand the French culture; however, francophone films give them a true insight into the target community as they often show French people's customs, daily routines, education, religion, geography, music, and social relationships, among other key features of the society **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Proof of this is Helda et al.'s study, in which learners themselves affirmed that film viewing helps them to comprehend cultural characteristics more easily than written materials because they can see them in a visual and contextualized way **Error! Reference source not found.**.

2.3. Motivational aspects

Since the seventh art is familiar to most students, they feel happy and entertained when watching films in class **Error! Reference source not found.**. As asserted by multiple researchers, these feelings contribute to turn the FFL classroom into a pleasant environment which stimulates French students to learn **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**. Apart from the motivating nature of cinema

per se, French learners may be asked to produce a short film themselves at the end of the semester and watch them together in class so that they can notice their progress and achievements. According to Jabbarova and Umarkhanova, this will further stimulate them to continue studying the language **Error! Reference source not found.**. This benefit has a lso been empirically verified in some studies, in which FFL students have confirmed that the cinema-based approach makes French learning more appealing than when doing traditional language activities **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference so urce not found.**.

3. Conclusions

In brief, FFL teachers need to make formal language instruction more attractive to French learners so that it can be effective. They can do so by using additional resources which complement conventional approaches such as the seventh art. As argued above, cinema is an excellent material to this end because it forms part of students' lives, and, besides, it allows French instructors to individualize teaching and to introduce technology into education. Thus, the film-based approach contributes to humanize French language teaching while adjusting education to an everchanging society. Beyond that, working on films has been proved to have linguistic, cultural, and motivational benefits for French learners which help them to hone varied competences. This paper provides a synthesis of recent research on the use of films for FFLT, which might foster its implementation in the French classroom. Still, further research should be carried out on this topic. Especially, future studies should explore the impact films have on French students' language learning holistically, that is to say, tackling all its benefits either empirically or theoretically.

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Teaching English Listening through the Use of Authentic Material in Class

Susanna Asatryan
Brusov State University, Republic of Armenia

Abstract

In the domain of communicative language teaching four language skills - listening, speaking reading and writing are of equal importance. Within the language teaching context teachers must focus continuously on these communicative skills. But research on listening in general language is very limited as the Cinderella skill in language teaching practice. Being one of the key skills for communication, listening refers to the ability of the learner to introduce and expose the language appropriately and purposefully in different communicative contexts.

The main goal of the current paper is to introduce and consider some methodological issues related to the development of the learners' listening skills through the use of authentic material in class.

Within the scope of this study we tried to observe and analyze the problem of its development, accentuating the significance of authentic material produced and used for real-life communicative purposes. Correspondingly different exercises and techniques have been elaborated and introduced to specify and highlight the effectiveness of teaching English listening through the authenticity.

Keywords: *listening skill, authentic material, meaningful language practice, group task, authentic texts/topics/situations, self/peer assessment.*

The purpose of the article is to consider the issues related to the development of the learners' listening skills through the use of authentic material in class.

Within the language teaching context teachers must focus continuously on four language skills. Reading and writing together with speaking are frequently accentuated and assessed. Moreover, of the four language skills, listening is the least practiced. Research on listening in general language is very limited as the Cinderella skill in language teaching practice. Listening as a major component in language learning and teaching first hit the spotlight in the late 1970s with James Asher's (1977) work on Total Physical Response, in which the role of comprehension was given prominence as learners were given great quantities of language to listen to before they were encouraged to respond orally. So, the teachers consider some specific questions about listening comprehension:

- What are listeners "doing" when they listen?
- What factors affect good listening?
- What are the characteristics of "real-life" listening?
- What are the many things listeners listen for?
- What are some principles of designing listening techniques?

How can listening techniques be interactive?   Rost   and   Wilson   present   five predominant active-listening techniques frequently adopted by language teachers within language teaching process. [7]

Theoretical Framework	Focus
1. **Affective frame**	Focus on enhancing the listener's personal motivation and involvement.
2. **Top-down frame**	Focus on deepening the understanding of ideas and making stronger interpretations.
3. **Bottom-up frame**	Focus on perceiving sounds, recognising words and syntactic structures more accurately.
4. **Interactive frame**	Focus on building cooperation, collaboration and interdependence during the listening process.
5. **Autonomous frame**	Focus on developing effective learning strategies.

In teaching listening comprehension one of the most factors which should be paid attention by teachers is the material. One way to prepare English language learners to encounter with real language is to apply real language or authentic language material in class.

Writers define authentic material in different ways. D. Nunan defines authentic material as material not specifically designed for teaching purposes [6; p. 238-41]. McGrath and Foppoli state that authentic materials are designed to communicate to native users of the language, not for language learners. According to McGrath "authentic texts were written to convey information, transmit ideas, express opinions and feelings, entertain". Combining these definitions, we can consider that authentic materials are materials not specifically designed for language teaching and learning, everything that teachers use in class is originally intended for native speakers.

Several writers promote the general use of authentic material in language classrooms and specify many advantages that authentic material brings to learners as well as teachers. They insist that authentic material is important because it allows learners to connect to the real world outside the classroom, which gets them accustomed to listen to native as well as Language 2 speakers. Furthermore, the authors state that using authentic material motivates students, so teachers and students are more stimulated by authentic material than inauthentic material. Implementing different kinds of authentic material learners are introduced to language used by real speakers rather than scripted, graded or contrived material. This in turn better prepares learners for the language they will hear and use outside the learning environment. Based on these advantages, the inclusion of authentic material particularly in upper-secondary school listening lessons increases learner motivation.

We teachers are concerned about choosing materials and deciding how to use them. Before starting listening we must consider about what kind of recorded texts make good listening – authentic or scripted? Wilson suggests the following components for considering the level of their effectiveness:

Feature	Questions to ask
1. Interest	Will this be interesting for my students?
2. Cultural accessibility	Will my students understand the context and ideas?
3. Speech act/discourse structure	Does it discuss abstract concepts or is it base on everyday transactions?
4. Density	Does the information come thick and fast or are there moments in which the listener can relax?
5. Language level	Is the majority of the vocabulary and grammar appropriate for my students?
6. Length	Will I need to cut part of the recording because it is too long? Is it long enough?
7. Quality of recording	Is the recording clear? Will background noise affect comprehension?
8. Speed of speech	Do the speakers talk too fast for my students?
9. Number of speakers	Are there many voices, potentially causing confusion?
10. Accent	Is the accent familiar? Is it comprehensible?

[9; p. 33]

Most teachers use the material in meaningful and interactive ways in order to make learners acquire as much new knowledge of the target language as possible. So, to put another way, implementing authentic material in listening lessons equips learners with the listening skills required to participate and communicate in and for real-life purposes.

Authentic material can help students develop knowledge of language and the surrounding world so that they have the ability, desire and confidence to use English in different situations and for different purposes. Authentic material has the possibility to provide students with texts of different kinds and for different purposes. Besides, using authentic material can help the student become familiar with living conditions, attitudes, values and traditions, as well as social, political and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Actually, textbooks can do a good job at providing subject areas related to learners' educational lives, but no textbook can cater to every learners' social life, opinions, experiences and feelings, etc.

Of course, authentic materials are more interesting and students read them while travelling, studying abroad or using the language in other contexts outside the classroom. Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom, in real life.

We know that classroom time is limited. So, teachers' work is just one of the learning resources for the students. Teachers should raise students' motivation to contribute active participation. On the other hand, he/she must raise the learner's cultural awareness and encourage them to learn the target culture by themselves.

Authentic materials can include:
- **Listening:** TV shows, radio, commercials, news broadcasts, documentaries, movies, phone messages, etc.
- **Visual:** photographs, art works, signs with symbols, postcards, picture books, etc.
- **Printed:** restaurant menus, newspaper articles, bulletin board advertisements, company websites, coupons, sales catalogues, travel brochures, maps, telephone books, signs, blogs, movie posters, food labels, etc.

Following steps are suggested for applying authentic material in class:
1. The teacher divides the whole class into four groups.
2. The teacher provides four topics for each group. Then they are expected to search as much information as possible on the selected topic. After this they should hold a discussion with their group members on the found information and decide how and who gives the report.
3. On the "report day" the four representatives give their reports one by one. Instead of reading the report, they are asked to retell what they have prepared. The rest of the students should regard this class as a listening practice and respond to it after the report.
4. When the reporter finishes, students can ask questions related to the report. If the reporter cannot give the answers, he/she can turn to his/her group members. The students may benefit in two ways if they carry on this plan. First, in the report section, students in fact make a listening class by themselves. Every student is getting involved in this process, so they are highly motivated and willing to listen to each other very carefully. Second, in the preparing process, students may read quite an amount of cultural information, and deal with various authentic materials. Their knowledge on culture is enriched. Day by day, when they come back in the listening classroom, they may find that the authentic listening materials are no longer so difficult, and when they go outside the classroom, they may find it easier to communicate with native speakers.

We can activate learners' listening skills in association with writing through the use of dictation exercises. Davis and Rinvolucri state: "Decoding the sounds and recoding them in writing is a major learning task" (1988). As for Frodesen dictation can be "an effective way to address grammatical errors in writing that may be the result of erroneous aural perception of English.

In all cases dictation texts must be selected taking into account the students' abilities. The teacher must not select material that is too different from the students' language learning norms, in terms of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Steps for dictation:

1. The teacher reads the text (it can be authentic as well) at normal speaking speed. The students must only listen.
2. The teacher then reads a second time at a slightly slower speed. The students begin transcribing. The teacher stops after each phrase or meaningful unit and also calls out punctuation, which the students must include in their transcriptions. If a student asks for a word or phrase to be repeated, the teacher repeats.

3. The teacher reads the dictation through a third time at normal speaking speed, again including punctuation. During this reading the students check their work and make last changes.
4. After finishing the dictation, the teacher allows the students a couple of minutes for final corrections. The learners make self-corrections. The teacher can instruct the learners for peer-correction and the students correct each other's dictations.

A good time to deliver a dictation is at the beginning of class. Before beginning the dictation, the teacher writes on the board any proper nouns, abbreviations (*etc., e.g., i.e.,* and so on), acronyms, or foreign or specialized words within the dictation that he or she has not previously explained. The teacher also writes on the board the chosen spelling for any word that is commonly spelled in more than one way (e.g., *rock and roll/rock'n'roll*).

While evaluating learners' transcriptions the teacher distinguishes comprehension errors and spelling errors. Comprehension errors include both phonological mistakes and grammatical mistakes. A phonological mistake would be the spelling of the word *physics* as *fyzics*; a grammatical mistake would be transcribing *Yesterday he worked* as *Yesterday he work*.

Picture dictation

The teacher describes a simple picture and the students draw it. The next step is to get the students working in pairs doing the same thing with other pictures. A nice touch is to use famous works of art that the students may recognize. Paintings with clear lines and not too much detail work best: da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Van Gogh's chair, etc. A final stage is to display the students' drawings next to the pictures of the originals on the walls. The students wander around as if in an art gallery and make comments either orally or in writing [10; p. 92].

The main benefits of using authentic English are clear. By using authentic materials **students encounter words and language structures that they have never seen in formal language materials.** Instead, teachers prefer authentic material because it allows to introduce diverse topics which students and teachers find more interesting than inauthentic material and because authentic material connects better to the world outside of school. In other words, implementing authentic material allows learners to take part in and become accustomed to the natural language, as it is used by native and foreign speakers of English.

Authentic materials stimulate interaction in class. Through interactive listening learners appear in small groups. They receive new information, identify them continuously, they work out the problems of understanding each other and formulate responses. For this account group surveys, self-introductions, short speeches, chatting and discussing, exchanging news and views, interviewing and being interviewed etc. might be appropriate and effective.

"False Facts" dictation

This activity involves making deliberate factual mistakes in the dictated passage. The mistakes could refer to general knowledge or to something the class has studied recently.

Some teachers use this activity to review texts, dictating a summary with, say five factual mistakes. The students either make the corrections silently, before checking in groups, or noisily, shouting out every time they hear something erroneous. Here is an example of a "False Facts" dictation done after watching the film Green Card.

> *In Green Card the main character is a piano player from France. At the beginning of the film he gets <u>divorced</u> because he needs a green card to stay in the USA. The woman marries him because she wants to rent a flat which is only available to <u>single women</u> [9; p. 92].*

So, dictation is an effective language learning device. We agree with Finocchiaro's (1969) statement: "Dictation ensures attentive listening; it trains pupils to distinguish sounds, it enables pupils to learn to transfer oral sounds to written symbols, it helps to develop aural comprehension and it assists in self-evaluation."

Authentic material is beneficial not only for the development of the learners' listening skills but also their overall communicative competence, it boosts their confidence and **experience with** the support of **"real" language** and constructive feedback.

Listen and Describe

In this activity the teacher tells a story but stops regularly and asks the students to write or give a description. For example, the teacher begins, 'I was walking close to my home when I met a girl. What did she look like?' The students then write a one line description, e.g. 'She had green hair and big hands'.

This activity works well as a way for students to generate language. At the end the teacher should tell the whole story with no interruptions, as this provides an extended and more enjoyable listening experience.

Below is the list of common differences between authentic and scripted speech:

Authentic	Scripted
Overlaps and interruptions between speakers	Little overlap between speakers
Normal rate of speech delivery	Slower may be monotonous delivery
Relatively unstructured language	Structured language, more like written English
Incomplete sentences, with false starts, hesitation, etc	Complete sentences
Background noise and voices	No background noise
Natural stops and starts that reflects the speaker's train of thought and the listener's ongoing response	Artificial stops and starts that reflect an idealized version of communication (in which misunderstandings, false starts, etc. never occur)
Loosely packed information, padded out with fillers	Densely packed information

[9; p. 30]

So, in order to develop the skills and strategies necessary to cope with natural speech, learners need to be introduced to an authentic or authentic-sounding texts on a planned basis. Their confidence can be built up by a judicious choice of texts and activities [8; p. 27].

While selecting texts for listening lessons – either authentic or inauthentic, teachers must take into consideration some definite factors we have already mentioned above. As for activities, they must be subdivided into three main stages: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Both teachers and learners must identify the particular role and purpose of each stage activity(ies), for example,

- **Pre-listening stage activities:** They prepare the learners towards the text to listen.
- **While - listening stage activities:** They activate the learners' listening skills.
- **Post - listening stage activities:** Teacher checks the learners understanding of the text and their language knowledge.
-

Actually, we appreciate any kind of listening material (authentic, scripted or semi-scripted), if they foster learners' motivation and engagement in class. The important question is – how well these materials are relevant to the students' language-communicative skills, their background knowledge and culturality.

Conclusion: One way to define authenticity may be to say that if the text exists for communicative purposes other than teaching language, then it is authentic. As the authentic material is produced by/for native speakers and is used for real-life purposes teachers of secondary school should strongly consider the importance of implementing them in listening lessons. The use of authentic materials in the language classroom must be strongly encouraged as they have a positive impact on the development of students' linguistic skills and their life competences as well.

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GIRO – Towards a Gamified Approach to Teaching Romanian as a FL

Andreea Nechifor[1], **Răzvan Săftoiu**[2], **Georgiana Burbea**[3], **Ionuț Căpeneață**[4]

[1,2,3,4] Transilvania University of Brașov, Romania

Abstract

Grounded in gamification against the background of the communicative era of teaching, but very much in debt to the digital approach, the research undertaken by our team of linguists delves into boosting motivation with the students from the Preparatory Year when learning Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL). Working with the modern research framework offered by design-based research (DBR), we were able to observe while teaching, teaching while applying and adapting while using different gamified concepts within the teaching continuum during the experimental semester. Starting from the direct observation method which enabled us to measure low levels of motivation in our students, we decided to change the techniques in the second semester and to gamify the entire learning experience of our 27 students for 5 months, while developing their B1 level of language acquisition, both within the general module and as part of their specific vocabulary acquisition classes. Thus, capitalising on the extensive experience gathered as a result of both attending dedicated courses focused on the tandem gamification and education, and of the activities performed as members of the GIRO nationally funded project, we focused our teaching intention on creating a gamified setting for the first time in an academic environment, in Romania. Moreover, a new methodology was applied to RFL teaching, in which PBLs, SDT, the sense of belonging to a community, freedom of choices, learner engagement, scaffolding, boss fights, alongside game-based activities, such as: GooseChase, Storyjumper, Plickers, Wordwall, Kahoot, all supported by the ClassDojo platform, contributed to changing the habits of language learning and results achievement. Not dismissing the negatives of the approach, which only triggered valuable insights regarding the frame applied, but positively exploiting the benefits conveyed by it, the paper pragmatically indicates that a change in education can be the case when rooted in gamification.

Keywords: *gamification, game-based learning, motivation, digital era, communicative frame*

1. Introduction

Motivation has always been one of the key-concepts in education, but nowadays its importance has become exponentially more important, as the generation of learners engaged in the literation process, from official instruction to private tutoring or self-education, is one who needs to recognize similar discursive patterns to theirs. That is why, motivating the beneficiaries represents a real challenge these days, as the methodology of teaching based on the communicative approach has undergone significant updates once technology has elbowed its way into the classroom. Consequently, a real and successful impact, in terms of motivation, is directly related to

the digital approach to teaching and concepts like gamification have turned into buzz words in this context. Born on territories outside the academia, and successfully applied into companies, marketing, human resources, business, administration, gamification may be the approach to re-establish the equilibrium among all the parties involved in the instructional process and to re-pin the complexity of motivation on the educational map.

Determination and motivation have established a supra-ordinated relationship, the first one being rooted in the second one, motivation fuelling determination, either intrinsically or extrinsically as the literature review shows when analysing its dynamics ([8], [13], [9], [16], [3]). Deci monitored the evolution of human motivation from 1975, with his study on *intrinsic motivation* [4], until 2000, when he profiled the self-determination theory (SDT) [5]. He proved that the path towards successful accomplishments starts from eliminating amotivation, the state in which nothing motivates one, passes through the state of extrinsic motivators, which act as stimuli for triggering a reaction towards achievement, and ends on the territory of internal psychological drive, where people can become the better versions of themselves. In 2001, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, reflected on the concept of *positive psychology* [12], in 2016, Berger talked about the *hidden forces that shape behaviour* [1], while Pink returned in 2011 to Ryan and Deci's SDT, when releasing *the surprising truth about what motivates us* [10] thus transposing the discussion into the business world to make it useful to companies for greater success achievement.

SDT, in Deci and Ryan's vision [5], is based on 3 powerful concepts: *competence,* grounded in skills, enabling one to successfully finish activities and tasks, *autonomy* founded on the idea of freedom of choice-making and independent decision-making with no impositions from the outside, and *relatedness,* built on communication, sharing, community and socialisation. All this establish a direct connection to the world of games, which are approached by children, teenagers, and adults alike exactly because everyone wants to experiment learning with curiosity, learning, joy and fun based on pleasant avatar onboarding, challenges, freedom of choices, boss fights, scaffolding, setbacks, feedback, etc.

Consequently, gamification, according to its early definition provided in 2002 by Pelling (in [6]), "the use of game design elements within non-game contexts", consists of extracting the core elements that create and organise the fictional world of games and applying them in different areas, in real-life, in order to re-/create a more pleasant working environment in which the beneficiaries are encouraged to be original, creative, free, full of initiative, motivated, and thus entertained within the limits imposed by the frame of rules, absolutely necessary, like in any game, in order for disorder not to occur.

Grounded in psychology and the complexity of motivation, Werbach and Hunter's studies on gamification ([14], [15]) minutely depict how *the components (C)*–accomplishments, boss fights, collections, avatars, content unlocking, rewarding, leader boards, missions, social graphs, insignia, and virtual goods, *the mechanics (M)*–challenges, cooperation and competition, feedback, resource acquisitions, and transactions and *the dynamics (D)*–constraints, emotions, narrative, progression and relationships of any game creation can benefit companies, institutions, educational establishments and any life-experience if only the most appropriate elements are selected from this pyramidal structure to be applied and the overall experience offered to the participants is ultimately aimed at.

2. Methodology

The present research is part of the nationally funded project *Gamification-Based Instruction for Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language* which aimed at introducing the concept of gamification not only in the Romanian academic world, but more specifically in the classes of teaching Romanian as a FL. Consequently, the students targeted were those enrolled in the Preparatory Year at the Faculty of Letters from *Transilvania* University of Brașov. The trial started in the second semester of the 2021-2022 university year, after the focus group, consisting of 27 international students, 9 girls and 18 boys, aged between 19 and 22, had studied Romanian for 5 months, reaching the CEFRL A2 level. The research spanned between February-June 2022 and was interested in developing the productive language skills, as well as the specialised terminology in the fields of Engineering, Medicine and Sports.

Defined by Durrheim as "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the execution or implementation of the research" ([7], p. 34), the methodology used was qualitative, i.e., the naturalistic method, due to its non-obtrusive and accurate manner of reporting the real-world events and practices. According to Hammersley and Atkinson's view over the naturalistic research from 1995, (in [11]), the world in a particular context, in our case that of a classroom, is studied as far as possible in its natural setting and the observers do not temper with the behaviour of those whom they are observing. Thus, using first of all a cross-sectional approach, as the subjects were monitored at one specific point in time, the data collection involved observation and field notes in the first-semester in order for weak points to be identified, and afterwards, followed into the footsteps of the methodological framework that best suited the context of our experiment, i.e., design-based research (DBR), in the second semester. This approach enabled us, according to its main feature, i.e., "test and refine educational designs based on principles derived from prior research" ([2], p. 15), to implement the new methods we aimed at, to measure the impact of their usefulness alongside our students' reactions and to adjust on the way, as a result of the feedbacked obtained on the spot from our beneficiaries, anything necessary. Thus, our students were not only passive recipients of a new methodology, but also active participants in tailoring the best practices for them, turning into designers of good practices.

In terms of research methodology ethics, the students were invited to give their consent regarding their participation in this research (see figure 1), their overt approval being obtained in the comments section of the official announcement posted on the Class Story section of the Class Dojo platform (see details below).
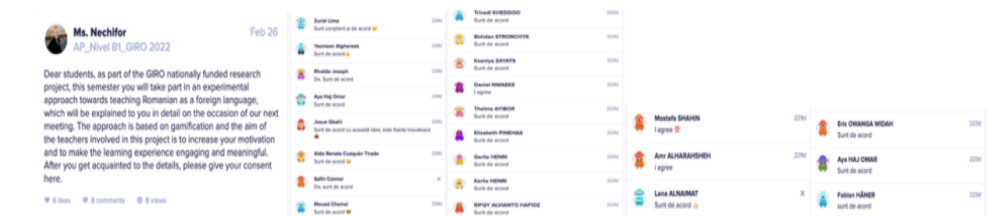

Fig. 1 – Students' consent

3. Results

As a result of identifying problematic areas concerning motivation, engagement and contribution to the instructional process in our students in the first semester, mainly because of cultural and language level acquisition differences, powerful gamification methods were implemented during the second semester in order for self-determination to be boosted.

The first decision that we made was to introduce, as a working instrument, the ClassDojo platform instead of Moodle, as the former is specifically designed to incorporate gamified elements. Thus, our students were invited to choose an avatar to represent their selves in the online environment of the educational experience, and already started to have a lot of fun while onboarding (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2 – Choosing avatars for a new educational experience

Deriving from choosing to work with ClassDojo, other extremely important issues could be solved, as a points-badges-leader boards (PBL) system was introduced by means of virtual points allotted or subtracted for specific aspects which needed improvement. Mentioned should be made that from the very beginning the students were informed in clear terms about the way in which the points would be transformed into real appraisal badges at the end of each week, which they were asked to physically collect. Afterwards, the leader board resulted would be displayed on an external platform, i.e., www.leaderboardhq.com, and invitations to check progress were posted on the Dojo Class Story every Friday (see Figure 3). At the end of the semester, the entire gamified engagement of the students was rewarded in real terms, by transforming the virtual ranking into either final marks or percentages of marks in their final exams.

Fig. 3 – The leader-board

Motivation regarding homework engagement was particularly addressed, the professors deciding to award points as follows: 1p for homework attempt, 2p for partial homework, and 3p for complete and correct homework, as prior student dedication for this assignment was very low. In this way, students started to progressively apply themselves to solving homework, as they could practically see their effort rewarded. Other aspects which could be amended through the PBL system included: presentation skills (3p), great answer (5p), great idea (3p), participating in activities (2p), teamwork (2p), colleagues'

vote (2p), best score in partial test (5p), event contribution (5p), helping others (1p), working hard (2p), subtraction targeting only: not participating in activities (-2p) and being off task (-1p) (see Figure 4).
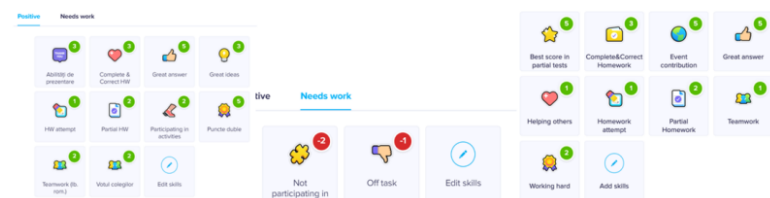

Fig. 4 – Assigning / subtracting points

Great answer, in terms of language correctness, and great idea, in terms of original contributions, worked hand in hand, encouraging both attention to language and originality, in this way students being motivated not only to express themselves, but to express themselves as correctly as possible.

Participating in activities, teamwork, colleagues' vote and helping others were all related to feeling part of a community, socialising, sharing, and even competing depending on the type of task, thus creating a sense of belonging and involvement, which is part and parcel of any game-like environment. Therefore, students started having fun, becoming more active, communicating with each other and practising their speaking continuously. For this, Goose Chase was used, a specially designed application which reunites working in teams with applied vocabulary, which we decided to implement for applied language in the specialised areas of Medicine, Sports and Engineering our students were interested in. Thus, we designed original tasks for field practice, our students being supposed to provide real evidence via the mobile application of their vocabulary orientation in the real world (see Figure 5).
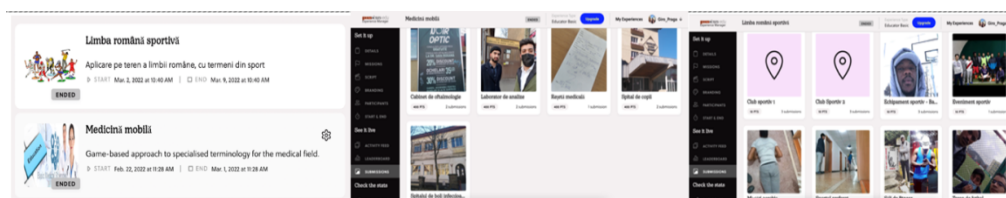
Fig. 5 – Goose chasing specialised terminology

Presentation skills and event contribution aimed at further developing speaking skills at the same time as building confidence and encouraging initiative taking. These particular entries on the points list enabled us to create a scaffolding type of moment, as a two-step activity was designed for our students: first, we organised an internal event in which all of them were encouraged to participate, and for which they were invited to prepare individual presentations in Romanian about their home countries. The event generated a lot of enthusiasm and involvement on the students' side, ending in colleagues' vote, points allocation and clear ranking. What triggered this particular moment was a level-up game-like situation, as only the first four positions could access the next level by participating in a national conference dedicated to foreign students studying the Romanian language, which was specially dedicated to cultural and civilisations aspects related to the home countries of the participants, under the form of on-line presentations,

in Romanian. And it was with great satisfaction that our four best positioned students participated in this event, as a reward for their contribution to the internal competition. Figure 6 below displays moments from both the domestic moment and the external one, alternatively, in this order.
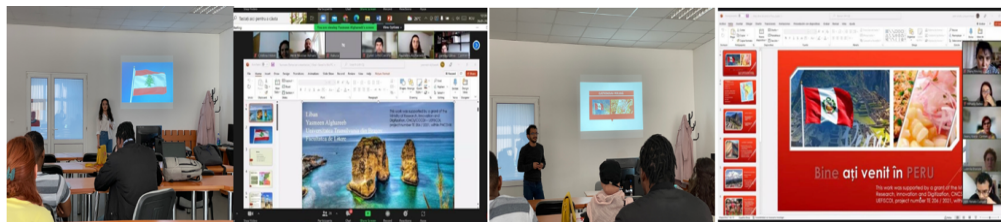

Fig. 6 – Scaffolding with student competitions

Last, but not least, offering feedback in a very fun and friendly manner, as part of the continuous type of assessment approach and in direct connection to what the world of games displays for the players within its quest trials, offering advice as well as the chance for the participants to go back and try again from another perspective, with a different approach, represented a desire for us in order to motivate our students to learn progressively, all the time. For this, we used the Plickers platform (www.plickers.com) which not only opened us the possibility to build a very dynamic and interactive way of assessing our students' performance, but it also enabled us to offer feedback in a very fun and constructive way (see Figure 7). This platform facilitates original test items design, but also interactive feedback, especially in its QR code version, which activates on a screen the results of the students by simply phone scanning their answers. Depending on the position in which they raise the code, automatic display of the ranking is displayed on the board. The online version is no less interesting as it permits the teacher to see in real time how students provide their answers, in terms of quickness and mind changing, thus collecting valuable information regarding test construction and students' problems with certain items.

Fig. 7 – Offering feedback in a gamified manner

4. Conclusions

Gamification, as a macro-vision over a teaching process, mixed with game-based, project-based, and task-based approaches, alongside traditional manual-based teaching within a communicative framework, can represent the corollary of the digital era we live in by recreating in classrooms the 3F (friendly, familiar and fun) dimension our students are so attached to, i.e., that of gaming. Rooted in the psychology of self-determination, gamification plays the game of motivation, reorienting the darts, concentrically, towards the inner self and its recompensing.

Thus, at the level of *dynamics*, emotions, constraints, narrative, progression and relationships were all catered for in our experiment, as the grammar of the teaching process enwrapped the vision of the approach in all its details: boosting students' motivation by engaging them in dynamic activities to establish relationships, offering them freedom of choices within the boundaries imposed by certain limitations, in order for their diverse cultural background and their personal emotions to be considered.

Regarding the *mechanics*, challenges were offered to our students, the elements of chance appeared when exposed to different competitions and leader boards, rewards were offered all throughout, as well as feedback, cooperation being the main focus of the experiment.

Last but not least, in terms of *components*, the majority of the items profiling this ground level of professors Werbach and Hunter's pyramidal vision over gamification were activated, starting with avatars, teams, content unlocking, PBLs, gifting, physical goods, collections and achievements.

In this way, motivation was boosted and the experiment was more than successful meeting the desired objectives that it started from. At the same time, we managed to supervise the progression of the only negative aspect which occurred on the way, that of points chasing by some students, by alternating teaching methods and not relying exclusively on gamification throughout.

Acknowledgement

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Creativity in Media Language and Social Communication Mechanisms

Sadiq Hassan Kadhim Imam
Al-Kadhim College, Iraq

Abstract

This paper introduces the special issue of creativity in media language and social communication mechanisms. Current interest in language creativity is located within a wider interest in creativity in everyday life, evident across the humanities and social sciences. The paper argues that such vernacular creativity is particularly relevant to the concerns of sociolinguistics language, especially media language, is one of these things where every individual (the sender - the receiver) find themselves forced into acquiescing to it, and if anyone dared to go out of range even inadvertently they shall see great resistance from public opinion, a resistance strong enough to set things into their right path once again, and to punish those in the wrong. and all of that because media language is considered a part of the Prevalent general linguistic system, and if this language was to stray from the general linguistic system, then it's doomed to be rejected by the listener.

Keywords: Language, semantic, media

Language, semantics and media communication:

Semantics experts proved that words affect the human nervous system, and sorting out which words are appropriate to say helps control how people act and behave, and since media experts wish to correct Behaviors and form opinions that gain people's support and to mobilize their emotions via Awareness and enlightenment, and so it would lead to healthy social behaviors, the results that the semantics field comes up with is one of great benefits to these experts. Based on that, it can be said that linguistics has achieved, with its methods that are based on analyzing the structures and semantics, a high degree of accuracy, and many people who work in mass communication science are applying the Methodological foundations of linguistic analysis or the analysis of linguistic structure in researching communication methods with a variety of masses, and so we start to recognize the difference between the Descriptive and evolutionary studies of such structure.

Language is the most reliable hold that that make communication a social process, which determines the social structure of media communication and whether it agitates or not when facing the standard that society sets in terms of appearance and behavior, and so on the media researching method in language aims to look into "what makes up language" for it's a way of communication that people who work in media use, the whole method is based on researching media language as a whole, on both a scientific and social level, because language is regarded as its own private entity that's unique in its Features and traits, for it's by itself independent from the original language with its two

levels that consists of an aesthetically artistically tasteful level and a scientific abstract one, meaning that media language isn't concerned with appealing to the reader's sense of beauty but on the contrary, it ensures a successful connection based on clarity and ease.

Media language and harmony between communication elements

Language holds a primary position in the process of media communication that runs through all of society, on many different levels in which language and symbols are used, considering that media message is one of the most important elements in process of media communication, with its psychological, social and cultural dimensions, which is why the traditional phrases (who, what did he say, to whom, and how, and in which effect) define the communication process, the most fundamental element of connection is seen in "language" or "media message" in which one individual is in contact with another individual or in contact with a different party, and by the virtue of its nature language is necessary in maintaining the cohesion of society. a single individual of society (sender or receiver) has to abide to other individuals point of view, observing and researching matters does not only concern the person's individuality alone, it's a joint process between the person and the others for they are considered partners in such process, or contracting parties, because it is a joint project, the means of communication between the sender and the receiver becomes collaborative, and then if the language is lucky enough such collaboration becomes general and objective, so, sound linguistic understanding done through message is the one that achieves a successful communication process.

The mechanism of communication and reception is subjected to the receiver and sender. The more the basic foundations they share, such as expertise, social, economic, psychological, political, cultural, geographic, historical and emotional conditions, helps the communication process become clearer, faster and demolishes confusion. The amount of confusion in the reception process is subjected to the "message mold", as the sender must frame his message in a specific way or form of words and symbols, because if the sender has weak writing or has Self-confidence problems or isn't informed enough about the subject, this shall negatively affect communication, likewise, the medium in which messages are being transferred played a vital role in the communication process, as it must be strong, durable and flexible so the signals reach the future in the appropriate times and place, regardless of any interference or competition by other means, also the future plays its own role - as we saw before - the more likely it is to decode the sender's message in the required manner, the more likely the communication process is prone to be successful.

Media language and levels of linguistic expression

There are three levels of linguistic expression: first of all, artistic and aesthetically tasteful level and it's used in literature and art, the second one is the abstract theoretical scientific level which is used in science, the third one is the ordinary social scientific level that is used in the press and media in general. these three levels exist in every human society, the difference between a healthy integrated society and a diseased dissolved society, is the proximity of linguistic levels as a start, and the divergence between them at last, the proximity between the levels of linguistic expression is evidence of the homogeneity of society and the harmony of the social strata, and the vitality of its culture, hence its

integrity and sanity. It is well established that the ages where harmony prevails among the scientific, literary and practical levels, are often the most glorious and the most prestigious of ages. but if each linguistic level is astray from one another, then it is evidence of schizophrenia in such societies, which leads to deterioration, degeneracy, aging, and decay.

The media language and meanings plurality

Possession of language is one of the professional conditions required for being journalist, the lack of knowledge regarding language and being inexperienced in using such abilities to achieve the required goals can non the less make a journalist's work less convincing and rather helpless, the meaning of some words and expressions relies not just on the word itself, but on what is surrounding it too, for there are many arguments regarding the usage of words that cannot be expressed in a clear manner but only be presumed, Since almost all words do not have one meaning, but several meanings, Since almost all words aren't limited one meaning, but several meanings, the same things could either be named differently or could have a group of different names, one of the main difficulties that occur to speakers is achieving equal understanding despite the fact that words generally have many meanings. The Modern Literary Arabic Dictionary indicates that there are 17 different meanings for the ordinary chapter, for example, the word "stood up" might mean standing on one's feet - strike a position - motionless - jobless - temporarily positioned - occupying a combat position - living - present. The meaning of plurality in a single word is something that must be understood, a journalist must use words in their appropriate position, a position in which the word can only present the intended meaning that must be conveyed to the recipients.

Media language between classicism and colloquialism

If the Arabic language is really the poet or the poetic language as described by Professor Al-Akkad, a language built upon poetry patterns in its artistic and musical origins, in its entirety it's a coordinated art, the sounds are inseparable from poetry when words are composed, because the Arabic language is also a media language, hence it's a language built on the modern concept of media art layout, it presents simplified materials that the masses find easy to comprehend, and it goes abreast with the Society's values, customs and traditions, the arabic words indicate words indicate how Arabs think and view things. and the Arabic language is an indicative language, that aims to simulate and simplify through a method of assigning new meanings for words, hence to choose a characteristic, part, aspect, or what might define the function and usage of a word that is to be named.

The researcher "Feryal Muhanna" attributes the media language delinquency language and the usage of slang to several reasons, hence the mass media companies has created an audience with illiterate or semi-illiterate segments, both alphabetically and culturally, which has shaped classical language an insurmountable idiomatic, communicative and influential barrier unless one seeks slangs.

(1) some media outlets that support the usage of slang in most of their materials believe that it's the ideal way of attracting an audience, driven by the belief that keeping up with the time, technology and abreastness of other nations requires avoiding classical language and resorting to colloquially.

(2) the degeneracy present in some materials (shows) especially the ones concerned with entertainment, necessitates the usage of slangs, because by virtue of its nature, classical language doesn't go abreast with this type of entertainment.

(3) some cultures and academic circles adhere to the literacy of the traditional Arabic language to the point of prejudice, which pushes many media executives towards the gradual abandonment of classical language.

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Too Much Tech? Teaching English in a New Educational Environment

Richard Chapman
The University of Ferrara, Italy

Abstract

We as teachers are only too aware of the sudden and dramatic changes affecting society (and our work) in the present era. We have all adapted our techniques of instruction to the requirements of online teaching, and we have quickly learned to make use of (some of) the vast array of software and hardware available to us. At the same time, we find ourselves dealing with the significant social and political pressures exerted by a difficult international situation and an ever-changing media and social media environment. This paper attempts to take stock of what we have learned as teachers over the last few years, what new skills we have, and what genuinely useful devices we have at our disposal. But it aims to ask a series of further questions: what are the central points in language teaching? What are our core values as language teachers, and how can these inform our practice in the classroom? How does the present political and economic climate affect the role of teachers? What should language teachers really be doing in the second phase of the 21st century? The paper suggests possible answers to these questions, emphasizing the particular importance of language teaching in developing, not only the capacity for communication and interaction, but also modes of thought. The modest solutions proposed aim to marry the socio-cultural and political needs of our students with cognitive aspects of language learning, suggesting a new approach to English language teaching and the process of learning. Ideas such as the learner as a social agent and the role(s) of the English language internationally are taken into consideration.

Keywords: *Techniques; core values; social-cognitive learning*

1. Introduction

There is little doubt that we as teachers have adapted quickly and quite nimbly to the effects of the pandemic; maybe we have even surprised ourselves with our 'grace under pressure' in using ERE (emergency remote education), and attempting to squeeze the very most from new technological devices. But is adaptation enough? As we return to in-class teaching, we are faced with a hybrid environment, often with institutional pressure to continue with some distance learning, even while we work with a class, and a generalised feeling that teachers 'should know' how to get the best out of various learning apps, technical teaching aids and advanced software.

All this is occurring in highly changed circumstances: the war in Ukraine has transformed the political status quo in Europe (and even further afield) and significant questions as to truth, political extremism and climate security render the context of teaching much more complex than it was, even ten years ago. This brief paper is an attempt to reflect on what

we have learned as teachers, on what new skills we need to make our own, and on what knowledge and abilities we should be aiming to develop in our students.

2. Did anything useful come from our pandemic experience?

As teachers we probably each have our own special favourites as regards devices and software applications we discovered during lockdown, some of which we still use in class. However, rather than simply compare notes as to which innovation we like best, there is a clear need to underpin our choices of technological supports and affordances with explicit philosophical and cognitive awareness. Clearly, we should not be deceived by the 'bells and whistles' of modern technology, but instead always have an eye as to the effectiveness of each activity we decide to work on. It is not simply a good or entertaining class we want, but cognitively valid work, that encourages socially valid behaviour. We should always be mindful of the tech choices we make, from a methodological point of view.

2.2 Lasting change from our experience

All teachers have been faced with a different array of solutions to distinct teaching situations, but we can group permanent changes to the immediate teaching context into two contrasting areas: firstly, the simple technological opportunities that have become readily available to us, or which we have discovered thanks to the Covid 19 emergency. We have more strings to our bow, and some of these have won a permanent place in our teaching armoury. Secondly, we might be treating our teaching materials differently: much more of our 'hard' text and information for use in class may be digital, and the classes themselves have a heightened online presence, giving public structure and record to lesson content, and preserving teaching material in easily accessed spaces for students (and other stakeholders) to refer to (e.g. Google Classroom enables teachers to deposit all teaching materials in a shared, easily accessible space which naturally becomes a chronological record of the course).

The effects of this are to enrich the possibilities of activities that can be done in class, and to add an asynchronous perspective to our work. It is not just homework that can be found online after class, but (potentially) a digital copy of everything touched on in class, with links, YouTube videos and the like. Even using the most familiar of technological supports, our basic teaching environment has been transformed.

2.3 Awareness of the significance of changes

Whether changes in classroom activities or teacher behaviour are the result of the inventiveness of teachers and learners, or are due to institutional demands, matters little in terms of the efficacy of the actual lessons or courses that are taking place. What is fundamental is the cognitive work that is going on. When we employ an app in a segment of a lesson, or expect it to be used to complete an assignment, we should always be mindful of the cognitive activity that is involved. Knowledge of the cognitive processes in learning has increased significantly over the last twenty years [1] and so there is little excuse for not bearing this in mind with every tech solution we decide to use. We have new channels of communication available to us, but these channels should be used in a way that is consistent with the message and consonant with the types of interaction we are intending to practice. Using *Kahoot* [2] in class, for example, can be fun and involve

students actively, but there is always the need to think about the *language content* of the game or quiz employed and what the learning outcome really will be. Most apps carry the risk of offering little new or complex language and so require substantial contextualisation and exploitation to be truly effective in class (rather than being merely entertainment or light relief).

The most significant change language teachers need to recognise and deal with is the advent of new channels and means of communicating, still using language but in innovative or slightly unfamiliar ways. Traditionally, teaching (and indeed linguistics) divided language into the binary contrast of writing and speaking. This dichotomy, never truly satisfactory, is wholly inadequate now. From emails that are written, but in a spoken, colloquial style to tweets that often carry embedded videos and always have a non-verbal aspect to their message, our students are faced with highly multi-modal interaction, and this should be reflected in our choice of activities, and in the way we teach students to interact, linguistically and non-verbally. If we are tempted to use a blog, tweet or even the rather old-fashioned Facebook post in class, we have to approach these from a multi-modal point of view [3], helping our students deal with digital communication with more finesse, and in a more informed manner.

Indeed, the ability to communicate skilfully and with the right pragmatic effect is a 21ˢᵗ century life skill, and one that is largely left untaught in schools: witness the sometimes disastrous effects of blog posts or Instagram stories on young people [4]. If we are to expect our students to become social agents [5] then our teaching must be socially aware, and with deep, professional understanding of how digital communication works. We have the electronic tools readily available, the ice has been broken by the emergency we have endured, but we still need to perfect the ends of post pandemic teaching.

3. Underlying Questions

The advent of new technological affordances actually poses age-old questions. We might have many new tools, but the skills required are little changed. Decisions about what devices to use in lessons, and to what purpose, actually hinge on our core values as teachers. Language teaching involves not only instruction in grammar and vocabulary, or developing the traditional four skills; it is also intimately bound up with questions of identity, our roles in society, how to communicate well and, ultimately, how to live together. These issues will always inform our teaching, if we are not married to an exclusive method that promises only to impart mechanical ability in learners. If there is a feeling that colourful, stimulating novelty in a language class has little real lasting effect on students, it is because the choice of that new device does not fit directly and explicitly with the central points of our idea of language education. In other words, first we should choose and understand our task, then we can select the best tool for the job.

Language teaching is the most *social* of all educational activities: it is easy to reflect on the social significance of gaining new ways to talk to new people from different parts of the globe. But it is also an opportunity to address some social ills, perhaps most of all, *fake news*. Critical thinking can be nurtured during language lessons, which, of necessity, focus on understanding. We can develop this further by emphasising pragmatics and showing students *how* people communicate. As an example, analysing video clips from well-known TV series culled from YouTube offers an easy way to combine the vast offer of digital technology with highly meaningful and useful language learning. Close, guided

observation of intonation, gesture and non-verbals will enhance students' understanding of their own language as well as the target, and will go towards aiding their development as citizens. The same procedure can be done with a series of tweets: pointing out the modes of communication, the layout and framing, and pragmatic effects.

The last fundamental question facing us as language teachers regards the world political situation. Language teaching is, by definition, an activity that looks outwards, it has an international attitude at its core. This gives English the advantage of curiosity and a certain glamour when we work with students, as well as enjoying the claim that our subject is essentially *useful*. But the present crisis (the war in Ukraine, the effects of the pandemic and the threat of climate catastrophe), represents a danger that we will see a collapse of the global: assumptions as to the purpose of learning English may be very different in ten or twenty years' time, and we should be ready to adapt to this.

4. Conclusions

Having entered the second phase of the 21st century, we need to answer these questions if we are to teach languages effectively and to the benefit of society. Here we can offer a few modest suggestions as to what our tasks should be.

There is no question of having 'too much tech': if it is there, we have to accept and exploit it. In doing so, we realize that language teaching has an especially important role in education: it deals explicitly with communication, and this is the great question of our era (how can we share information, ideas, and roles and socialize peacefully on digital media?). Using the devices and software at our disposal we should engage learners in cognitively challenging but supportive ways, and do this with awareness of the social messages that are hidden but ever-present in exchanges on social media platforms (e.g. ways to present oneself, engage in discussion with others, feel membership etc.). Lastly, we must encourage our learners to become, not merely speakers of English (or whatever language), but to become *skilled users* of language, able to navigate a hyper-complex world with confidence and deftness.

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Dialogic Reading in Infancy and Early Childhood Education: Setting the Stage for a Preliminary Analysis of Educational Materials in Specific EFL Contexts

Linda Vacondio[1], Licia Masoni[2]
University of Bologna, Italy[1, 2]

Abstract

Dialogic Reading refers to a multi-faceted approach to reading picture books with young children that revolves around the selection of appropriate materials, "scaffolded adult-child interactions", and carefully constructed feedback [12]. The diverse initial conditions for this approach to be implemented in an EFL context may require careful assessment, possibly resulting in adaptations to match the age and language skills of the relevant actors and target audience. Studies have already outlined the need for adjustments to traditional Dialogic Reading activities under certain conditions [7]. An ideal context for selected inquiries into Dialogic Reading has been provided by Hearing and Feeling English (and Other Languages) in Infancy and Early Childhood, an ongoing three-year action-research project funded by the Region Emilia-Romagna and the University of Bologna (Italy). The project is now in its second year, and its main aim is to extend free language education to a growing number of children (6-36 months) by bringing the sounds of English—and, to a lesser extent, other languages—into the daily routines of public and private nurseries by means of Dialogic Reading activities. Firstly, this analysis aims to pinpoint the variables involved in choosing picture books and crafting reading guides for Dialogic Reading experiences in English conducted by Italian nursery staff with little or no knowledge of the language and aimed at children whose receptive skills in English tend to be equally limited. To support effectual decisions, this paper will explore assessment criteria including age-specific constraints, local factors, issues to do with the native language and culture of the actors involved, and their personal, linguistic, and professional sets of skills, thus sketching one possible approach to adapting Dialogic Reading activities for an Early Years EFL environment [8]. Finally, further developments and research questions will be outlined to offer an initial contribution in shaping a comprehensive framework supporting the real-life application of EFL Dialogic Reading in Italian contexts.

Keywords: *Dialogic Reading, Early Years, EFL, action-research project*

1. Introduction

In educational settings, Dialogic Reading (DR) has been clearly linked to boosts in emergent literacy, generally defined as "the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are […] developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing […] and the environments that support these developments" [9, p.849]. Thus, DR can aid language acquisition, and the environments where DR is applied deserve close attention; backgrounds involving specific variables and initial conditions may call for adaptations of

traditional DR guidelines [see 1, 2, 3, 7, 8]. Working towards a reliable framework for assessing conditions and making informed decisions would require pinpointing one context and analysing two foundational issues for DR to take place: book selection and preparation.

To this purpose, we intend to investigate specific Early Years EFL environments within Hearing and Feeling English (and Other Languages) in Infancy and Early Childhood, an ongoing three-year action-research project funded by the Region Emilia-Romagna and the University of Bologna (Italy). The project is now in its second year, and its main aim is to extend free language education to a growing number of children (6-36 months) by bringing the sounds of English into the daily routines of public and private nurseries, supporting future language acquisition with DR activities. DR is implemented by Italian nursery staff with diverse fluency levels and aimed at children whose receptive skills in English tend to be rudimentary; FL reading activities are based on selected picturebooks and detailed reading guides, which offer practical suggestions for interactive, scaffolded reading, along with phrases and complete sentences for nursery staff to use. As Panza remarks, "a distribution of books accompanied by guides on how to read in a dialogic way is a virtuous path to improve […] shared reading and educational capacity" [6, p.101, translated from Italian]. This line of action—in accordance with project objectives—brings the need for DR training and pre-while-post reading support to a whole new level [11].

2. Hearing and Feeling English: book selection

From an FLT perspective, the picturebooks chosen for DR within the project should be age-appropriate, authentic, and linguistically relevant. Age-appropriate books would contain language that supports the processes underlying early language acquisition; they should present comprehensible and compelling language with repetitions, concise and transparent utterances with nouns and activity verbs that unequivocally match the context [5]. Incidentally, this sort of simplicity may contribute to lower anxiety levels when less proficient caregivers are involved.

Authentic picturebooks written for English speakers are reliable sources of language in use "within the domain of children's/childhood discourse"; phrases and expressions contained therein "realize speech acts" that open the doors to "a speech […] and discourse community […] [reflecting] the target language culture". Adult readers can rely on high-quality input during DR and simultaneously develop "critical language [and intercultural] awareness", experiencing the kind of language featured in real-life child-adult interactions—language which is not often explicitly taught [4, p.1-2]. In-service Italian nursery staff are not required to master foreign languages and receive training in FLT. With a view to decision-making within the project, developing caregivers' skills through extensive training would be advantageous but only partially feasible.

From a traditional DR perspective, readers should opt for books containing "clear illustrations, relatively little text, and an engaging story" [12, p.7]. They should have "illustrations that could serve as a basis for introducing new vocabulary" and they should "support a story narrative through the illustrations alone"; these features elicit interactive reading styles and maximize children's chances for active participation [11, p.682]. One of the books chosen for the project is *I touch* by Helen Oxenbury, containing six nouns, the subject pronoun *I*, and the verb *to touch*. Language and content are concise and transparent, insomuch as the book introduces words that are amongst the first to be

acquired at a very young age [5], supporting vocabulary growth and DR practices in which adults encourage children to notice the relationship between words and real objects. The book may lack explicit narrative, but it lends itself to verbalizing basic derivative narratives based on illustrations. The underlying logic is reiterative and consistent; research shows that adults with less advanced reading skills interact more when dealing with predictable texts [12].

3. Hearing and Feeling English: reading guides

Adults trained in DR strategies tackle videos, assignments, and role-playing materials [11, 12], but most of those adults seem to have a good command of the target language, just like the majority of the children involved [2]. The implications DR may have in an FL environment require further exploration, even more so when the research context does not allow for large-scale, regular contributions by proficient English speakers.

As far as caregivers' training is concerned, Zevenbergen and Whitehurst mention six points [12], some of which we intend to discuss considering excerpts from the reading guide provided to nursery staff for the book *I touch* by Helen Oxenbury. We will concentrate on the reading materials relating to the first page, which shows a smiling baby lying face down on a colourful ball:

-         "Ask *What* questions", "Follow answers with questions", "Repeat what the child says", and"Help child as needed"[12, p.3-4]. To allow for less proficient caregivers and children to operate in their Zone of Proximal Development [8], the suggested approach must be linguistically progressive in terms of difficulty and sought-after reactions. The guide starts with basic reading suggestions such as *A ball. Look! Baby's on the ball*, then moves on to *Can you touch the ball?* to elicit active participation, although still silent. Given the specific context, caregivers should refrain from asking *What* questions that require verbal production until later, once the children have developed the necessary confidence and are ready to utter the words—this is instrumental in avoiding common pitfalls, such as the tendency to identify comprehension objectives with production ones and to formally instruct children. Besides, if free to improvise, nursery staff with limited language proficiency may confirm and/or model incorrect/inaccurate language, or they may feel inadequate to the detriment of their motivation and self-efficacy. Motivation towards the project and the need to provide reliable linguistic input to children must be prioritized, along with repetition and reinforcement.

-         "Praise and encourage" [12, p.4]. This can be done by reinforcing appropriate formulaic language, using expressions such as *Well done*!

-         "Follow the child's interests" and "Have fun" [12, p.4-5]. Our guide allows for a degree of flexibility and personalization because it offers three levels of suggested interactions to play with words and ideas and to allow nursery staff to expand upon their initial utterances when ready. Examples are: 1) *I touch a ball.* 2) *Baby's on his tummy.* 3) *Baby's rolling back and forth.*

The underlying spiral approach, which allows actors to feel more confident and empowered as they progress, contributes to keeping DR activities fun and engaging.

4. Conclusions

Researchers have been administering questionnaires concerning the perceived efficacy and feasibility of the suggested EFL DR activities within the project. Preliminary results seem to provide evidence for benefits to be gained by selecting authentic picture books with specific features, paying close attention to the processes underlying language acquisition in the early years, and producing tailor-made reading guides to maximize effectiveness and assist nursery staff in day-to-day practice, language improvement and professional development. The guides and selected adaptations of DR strategies seem to offer scaffolding for the actors involved, contributing to self-efficacy, and ensuring quality input in terms of FL, thus confirming the significance of variables such as initial objectives, actors involved, personal skills and local/cultural factors when modifying traditional DR. In addition, a significant number among nursery staff has informally reported engagement, motivation, and well-being among the children who have consistently taken part in the proposed activities. All in all, further analysis of the collected and incoming data is required, especially in terms of fidelity to the suggested approach; for example, we plan to investigate possible relations between the nature of project materials (books and reading guides, as presented in this paper) and reasons why some nursery staff have not fully complied with guidelines, since studies have shown that consistency and fidelity are among the variables that can heavily influence the outcomes of DR activities [12].

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EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practice of Reading Strategy
Instruction in Secondary Schools in China

Leijun Zhang
University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Abstract

Reading literacy has become a powerful tool for academic success and an essential goal of education (Kilpatrick, Joshi, & Wagner, 2019; Koda & Zehler, 2008; Oyetunji, 2013). The ability to read is not only fundamental for pupils' academic success, but also prerequisite for successful participation in today's vastly expanding multi-literate textual environment. Nowadays, in many educational settings, students are expected to learn a foreign/second language for successful participation in the increasingly globalized world. Therefore, it is crucial to help learners become skilled foreign-language readers. Research indicates that students' reading comprehension can be significantly improved through explicit instruction of multiple reading strategies. Despite a wealth of research identifying numerous reading strategies for assisting students in understanding specific texts, there has been little that has shone light on whether these reading comprehension strategies are used in classrooms, especially in Chinese academic settings. Given the central role of 'the teacher' in reading instruction, the study investigates EFL teachers' attitudes towards reading comprehension strategies and their classroom employment of those strategies in secondary schools in China. It also explores the efficiency of reading strategy instruction on pupils' reading comprehension performance. As a mixed-method study, the analysis drew on data from a quantitative survey and interviews with seven teachers in three different schools. The study revealed that the EFL teachers had positive attitudes toward the use of cognitive strategies, despite their insufficient knowledge about and limited attention to metacognitive strategies and supporting strategies. Regarding the selection of reading strategies for instruction, the mandated curriculum and high-stakes examinations, text features and demands, teaching preparation programmes and their own EFL reading experiences were the major criteria in their responses, while few teachers took into account the learner needs in their choice of reading strategies. Although many teachers agreed upon the efficiency of reading strategy instruction in developing students' reading comprehension competence, three challenges were identified in their implementation of the strategy instruction. The study provides some insights into reading strategy instruction in the Chinese context, and proposes implications for curriculum innovation, teacher professional development, and for reading instruction research.

Keywords: *EFL reading instruction; language teacher cognition; reading comprehension strategies; teacher education*

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension, as a fundamental goal of reading literacy, has become the foundation for active participation in today's expanding multi-literate textual environment and increasingly digital society (Concannon-Gibney & Murphy, 2012; Grabe, 2009; PISA, 2019). It is also important to recognize that, in many educational settings, students are expected to learn a foreign/second language for successful participation in the increasingly globalized world (Grabe, 2009). Therefore, it is vital to help learners become strategic L2 readers.

As an ultimate goal of reading process, comprehension became a recognized field of study with the burgeoning interest in understanding what good readers do when they read (Dole, 2000). The studies of proficient readers have established that good readers use strategies and comprehension is a strategic process, and that instruction can result in improved strategy use and reading comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2018). Therefore, many researchers made the strategic nature of reading comprehension the focus of their efforts, examining what reading strategies to teach and how to provide effective strategy instruction (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009; Oxford, 1990; Pressley et al., 1989). The more recent research advocates the teaching of multiple strategies and the flexible coordination of them.

From the sociocultural view of reading, researchers argue that comprehension involve three dimensions: "the reader, the text and the activity/context" (Snow, 2002, p.11), which are influenced by, and in some cases determined by a larger sociocultural context (i.e., classroom). Ruddell and Unrau (2013) suggest that the sociocultural contexts, specifically in social contexts of the classroom, involve "the reader, the text and classroom context, and the teacher" (p.1015). They emphasize the need to value the perspective of "the teacher" in conceptualizing the reading process, with the view that "it is the teacher who frequently assumes major responsibility for facilitating meaning negotiation within the social settings of the classroom" (Ruddell & Unrau, 2013, p.1015). Indeed, the teacher orchestrates reading instruction and the meaning-construction process. Given the central role that "the teacher" plays in the reading classroom, the present study aims to explore the EFL teachers' views and classroom employment of reading comprehension strategies in secondary schools and also the effectiveness of reading strategy instruction on students' reading comprehension achievement, in the belief that the enhanced knowledge in this vein will be of great value and interest to EFL senior high school reading instructors, policymakers and those involved in EFL teacher development programs in China.

The research questions are as follows:
1. How important do EFL teachers consider reading comprehension strategies to be taught in reading classes?
2. What is EFL teachers' frequency of use of reading comprehension strategies in senior high schools in a town in south of China?
3. How effective is reading strategy instruction on students' reading comprehension performance?

2. Research design

2.1 Participants

The study involved a sample of 30 EFL teachers from three public senior high public schools in a common district in the south of China. All participants taught EFL students in mixed-abilities classes from various grades. Table 1 summarizes demographic information of the surveyed teachers.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Category	Level	N	%
Gender	Male	11	36.67
	Female	19	63.33
Years of English Teaching Experience	Less than a year	1	3.33
	1 year – less than 5 years	9	30.00
	6 years – less than 10 years	2	6.67
	More than 10 years	18	60.00
Degree of Education	Bachelor	29	96.67
	Master	1	3.33

N = 30

2.2 Instruments

A mixed-method approach was employed to address the 'what' (quantitative data) and "how and why" (qualitative) types of the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 25). The instruments consisted of a questionnaire-based survey and a semi-structured interview. In the questionnaire, 13 reading comprehension strategies, derived from a wealth of research pertinent to reading comprehension strategies were examined. An online survey software was used to gather data from participants to yield responses to the first two research questions regarding the importance and frequency of use. The participants were given a week to complete the questionnaire. Upon the completion of quantitative data gathering, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 teachers.

2.3 Data analysis

2.3.1 Analysis of questionnaire findings

The quantitative data analysis involved using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate means and standard deviations of each item of reading strategies in both Importance Survey and Frequency Survey. The 13 reading strategies were divided into four categories (see Table 2) for deeper analysis, for example, testing the impact of variables including gender and years of teaching experience.

Table 2: Categories of the reading strategies

Category	Items
Cognitive strategies	Scanning text for specific information; Skimming for main ideas; Handling unfamiliar words using context clues; Summarizing what they read; Making predictions before and during reading
Metacognitive strategies	Monitoring reading comprehension constantly; Asking questions to check comprehension; Think-aloud
Conceptually-driven basis	Activating background knowledge about the reading content; Using text structure to support comprehension
Supporting strategies	Using reading schemes; Using visual support; Using efficient silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension

2.3.2 Analysis of qualitative data

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken following the analysis of the quantitative data. The qualitative data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the researcher. Additionally, thematic analysis was undertaken to make meaning of the interviewees' accounts before generating the categories.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Perceived importance of reading comprehension strategies

The study manifested general acknowledgement of the importance of teaching reading strategies in order to facilitate students' reading comprehension. The results revealed that the participating teachers gave prominence to teaching 'strategies such as skimming and scanning, using text structure and summarizing' in EFL reading classes. The findings also exhibited that the surveyed teachers had positive attitudes towards the instruction of cognitive strategies (Mean 4.28), conceptually-driven basis (Mean 4.14) and metacognitive strategies (Mean 4.00), while the supporting strategies (Mean 3.97) were the least important strategies in the survey. These results are aligned with Chou's study (2008) with EFL teachers in Taiwan.

3.2 Frequency of classroom implementation of reading strategies

The results of the Frequency Survey demonstrated the underutilization of reading strategies (Total mean 3.93), compared with the results of the Importance Survey (Total mean 4.10). This could result from the fact that the majority of the teachers focused on helping students achieve better reading scores in exams rather than helping them become strategic learners. Moreover, the participating reading instructors relied much on the implementation of cognitive strategies (Mean 4.13), while the other categories of strategies, namely, metacognitive strategies, conceptually-driven basis and aided strategies revealed lower utilization in reading classes (Mean<4). The high classroom implementation of cognitive strategies is in line with the findings in Cabaroglu and Yurdaisik's research (2008) in Saudi reading classes.

Although further analyses of both surveys were conducted across variables including gender or years of teaching experience, no significant differences were exposed in the data. Additionally, the most frequently overlooked reading comprehension strategies in both surveys were "activating background knowledge", "using visual support" and "thinking aloud". The participants indicated that they tended not to hold great importance to or teach them frequently in class. The underutilization of these strategies was mainly a result of the teachers' inadequate knowledge of the crucial role of these strategies play in facilitating students' reading comprehension, which is consistent with the results from Morsy's study (2017) in Qatar government schools.

3.3 The efficiency of strategy instruction on learners' reading comprehension performance

Most participants identified positive outcomes of strategy instruction in terms of students' improved comprehension, increased reading scores in examinations and more quality classroom response to the questions they asked related to text. They noted that these outcomes were evident among proficient readers. The efficiency of strategy instruction, however, was temporary in general. The respondents also pointed out the challenges of implementing efficient strategy instruction, including students' lack of fluency and motivation, inability to decode words because of inadequate L2 vocabulary knowledge, the scarcity of authentic reading materials in the prescribed textbooks and the constraints of their institutional environments (i.e., high-stakes exams, large class size and heavy workload).

4. Conclusion

A number of implications can arise from the findings of the research. However, in the study, teachers' insufficient knowledge of reading strategies and neglect of strategy instruction are obvious obstacles. Therefore, teacher training programmes should be revisited, re-evaluated and redefined to ensure that due attention is paid to equip teachers with adequate knowledge of reading strategies and develop their competence of reading strategy instruction. The study provided ample evidence that the surveyed teachers focused much on the confines of mandated curriculum and public examinations in strategy selection, while paying little attention to learner variables, for instance, the individual learner's strengths and needs, motivation toward reading and their English language proficiency. Thus, they should adjust instruction to fit the needs of individual learners at various points in their development. They are encouraged to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses in reading through efficient comprehension assessment. Additionally, it is clear in the study that the high-stakes exams strongly influenced the teachers' attitudes towards reading strategy instruction and the learners' motivation of reading process. There was much evidence that teachers tended to be obsessed with excessive coaching for reading assessments and purposively ignore the strategies and activities that did not contribute directly to increased reading scores of students, which calls for the urgent attention of the policy makers and the Ministry of Education regarding the washback of national examinations.

Drawing on the current study, future researchers can conduct further examinations of the reading comprehension strategy instruction in similar contexts in China. The majority of participating teachers had a bachelor's degree and only one teacher held a masters' degree. Therefore, it was hard to identify the influence of teachers' education levels on

their strategy instruction. Studies are welcomed to determine the relationship between EFL teachers' educational backgrounds and their attitudes towards and practice of reading strategy instruction. It should be noted that, to be fully effective, future research must account for the adaptations of strategy instruction appropriate to the target classroom settings and institutional and sociocultural constraints and integrate those adaptations with knowledge of how teachers and learners make sense of strategic reading.

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Authors