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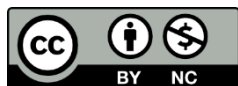
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## **The literature of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - characteristics of the Tatar writings and areas of research**

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### **Abstract**

The literature of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania constitutes the most important and richest part of their cultural heritage, as well as a lasting trace of Tatar settlements in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The literature that flourished during the spiritual revival of the Renaissance and Reformation somewhere in the seemingly God-forsaken, remote Eastern Borderlands has not been forgotten; on the contrary, it has been recognised as a unique phenomenon of great spiritual, literary and cultural value. This phenomenon manifests itself in the extraordinary combination of the Oriental Islamic culture and Christian culture, two components that appear to be mutually exclusive but are in fact in perfect harmony with each other, both in the life of society and in the literary works of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars.

The paper is dedicated to literary manuscripts of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, including their genesis at the background of the Tatar settlement in the territory of the Republic of Poland, characteristic features and typology of the manuscripts on the basis of the criteria of form and content. Furthermore, the author discusses the research areas, beginning with the description of the state of research on Tatar manuscripts from the point of view, through the characteristics of the current research on this matter, as well as reporting the institutions running and coordinating the interdisciplinary and international activities within the scope of the research, editing and popularization of the issues connected with the kitabistics.

**Key words:** kitabistics, Tatar manuscripts, Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Arabic script in Belarusian and Polish

### **Genesis of the literary manuscripts of the GDL Tatars<sup>1</sup>**

The development of the Tatar literary manuscripts and its unique character are inseparably connected with the history of the settlement of this tribe originating from the steppes of Mongolia in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (following works discuss the history of the Tatar settlement in the territory of the former Republic of Poland: Talko-Hryncewicz, 1924; Kryczyński, 1935; 1938; 1997-1998; Tyszkiewicz, 1989; 2002; 2008; Sobczak, 1984; Borawski, 1983, 1986, 1991; Borawski & Dubiński, 1986; Grygajtis, 2003; Łowmiański, 1983; Dumin, 1991, 2006; Kołodziejczyk, 1997; Konopacki, 2006, 2010; Dziadulewicz, 1986; Katalogi zabytków tatarskich: Gutowski, 1997; Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 1999, 2000; Kołodziejczyk, 1998). Its outset dates back to the time of King Gediminas's reign (1305-1341), and the first reference to Tatars living in Lithuania appears in the chronicles of the Italian Franciscan, Lucas Wadding: "Our brothers departed to proclaim the teachings of Christ in the Lithuanian lands, where they found a whole nation engulfed in the barbarian errors and dedicated to the cult of fire, among them the Scythians, coming from the country of a khan, who use Asian language in the prayers" (Borawski, 1986, p. 5), while the first information about Tatars with the name of this ethnic group is noted in Jan Długosz's chronicle: "Alexander or Vytautas the Duke of Lithuania, having reconciled with Svitrigaila, wanted to prove himself to be a Christian duke, embarked on the first raid against the Tatars. He attacked the main settlement of them, called the Horde, and many thousand barbarians with their wives, children and cattle were taken to Lithuania" (Łyszczař, 2013, p. 74).

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<sup>1</sup> Scholarly literature uses, often interchangeably, the following terms: "Polish and Lithuanian Tatars", "Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian Tatars", "Polish Tatars", "Lithuanian Tatars", "Belarusian Tatars", "Tatars of the Republic of Poland", "Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania". The author uses the last one, referring to the descendants of the Golden Horde who reached the Baltic and Slavic lands in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (in order to emphasize the Turkish – Mongolian descent), due to the fact that the term "Tatar" seems to be not very precise and is used to refer to various tribes, including Turkish-Mongolian tribes, nomads who came to Middle Asia and Middle East, settlers in Russia and Crimea, members of the Golden Horde and Crimea Khanate. The terms such as "Polish Tatars", "Lithuanian Tatars", "Belarusian Tatars", based on the geographic connotations, define the contemporary national affiliation. Bearing in mind the fact that the subject of the author's discussion is the literary heritage and cultural output of the descendants of its citizens, the term "Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (further: GDL) seems to be most appropriate.

The Tatar settlement proceeded in two main stages, the first occurring in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was connected with the flow of the Tatars from the empire of the Golden Horde and khanates located on the banks of the Volga River. This migration movement was based on the compulsory Islamization conducted by Uzbeg Khan (1312-1342), but in the end, migration to the west of Asia had not protected the Tatars from Islamization. The development of the Tatar settlement of this period can be attributed to the Grand Duke of Lithuania - Vytautas (1392-1430), who granted Tatars the land and privileges (guaranteeing the freedom of religion at the same time) in exchange for military service and help in fighting the Teutonic knights, which contributed to the massive relocation to Lithuania. The second stage of the settlement occurred between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, at first due to the settling of the war prisoners captured during the war with the Crimea Horde, and then because of the migration of the civilians from Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates fleeing from the Russian occupation. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Tatars settled in the territory of the Crown where King John III Sobieski granted them the demesnes in Podlasie district (the contemporary history of the Tatar community is discussed in the following works: Miśkiewicz, 1990, 1993, 2009; Miśkiewicz & Kamocki, 2004; Czerwonnaja & Chazbijewicz, 2014; monographs dedicated to the issues of this community include: Warmińska, 1999; Łyszczarz, 2013). After the partitions and fall of the Republic of Poland the majority of territories settled by the Tatars became part of the Tsardom of Russia, after World War I (apart from the Kaunas province belonging to the Republic of Lithuania) it was within the territory of the independent Poland. After World War II, when the Kresy (Eastern Borderlands) were lost by Poland the Tatars have been living in territory of Poland, Lithuania and Belarus (brief description of the history of the Tatar settlement in the territory of Poland, including the genesis, waves of migration, social and legal status of the settlers and their role in the military can be found in Konopacki, 2010, p. 22-58). Six hundred years' long presence in these territories (including 350 years within the current borders of Poland) made them a part of Polish nation, in particular distinguishing themselves in the military history of the Republic of Poland by participation in the fight for freedom, independence and playing an important part in all the major military events in the history of Poland: Thirteen Years' War (1458-1466), the raid of Vladislaus II of Hungary to the Czech Republic (1471), battles of Buczyna (1588), Cecora (1620), Chocim (1621), Beresteczko (1651), Polish-Swedish war (1655), Bar Confederation (1768-1772), Kościuszko Uprising (1794), November Uprising (1830) January Uprising (1863), World War I and II.

An introduction to the characteristics of the Tatar literary manuscripts should consist in their genesis, including the sources and provenance and definition of the period when they developed. As much as the discussion of the conditions of the development and traditions it is deeply rooted in is not a difficult task, the indication of the moment in time when the writings of the GDL Tatars come into existence is almost impossible. The Tatars' literary heritage includes exclusively religious literature; they had not produced (until the end of the Republic of Poland) any historic or polemical works. The only exception is the non-preserved, but mentioned in the later sources, work of Azulewicz *Apologia Tatarów*, issued in 1630 in Vilnius as a reply to the squib of Piotr Czyżniewski (see Konopacki, 2014). There are no relics representing the earliest period, and the first text recognized by the scholars which describes the Tatar society does not mention any literary activity (hence it can be deduced that Tatar books had not been written at that time), which gives rise to authenticity reservations (*Risale-i Tatar-i Leh, Traktat o Tatarach polskich*, of 1558, Polish translation A. Muchliński in 1858). Indirect presumptions including textological and philological analysis of the content and research on the historic context (including the influence of reformation and counter-reformation) give a basis to the assumption that the birth of the Tatar literary manuscript occurs in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The determinants assumed as reasons of its development can be brought down to two factors. The first is the process of linguistic assimilation, which caused the Tatars, who were the ethnic, cultural and religious minority of the new country, to lose command of their own language (Turkic dialects) and oriental languages facilitating contacts with their co-religious (Turkish) and religious practices (Arabic) for the languages functioning in the GDL – Polish and Belorussian. The process which had been in continuous progress since the 15<sup>th</sup> century and ended in the second half of the next century was one of the causes for undertaking the activities regarding the translation of the religious books into Slavic languages known by the Tatars, since on the one hand the doctrinal issues forced them to use the Arabic texts in the rites and liturgy, and on the other hand these texts became – under conditions of isolation from the sources and roots of Islam – the only carrier of their religious knowledge. According to Szynkiewicz (1935a, p. 141), the archetype of the manuscripts were the books written in Chagatai language, brought by the members of the Golden Horde, which seems to be confirmed by texts in this language including supplications for the religious services and the *Quran* surah *Ja Sin* present in the Tatar literature. These books were to become the basic binder allowing the GDL Tatars to retain their ethnic



distinctiveness and cultural identity (Zakrzewski, 1989; Borawski, 1992), which in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – as it seems – had been identified exclusively by their denomination - Islam (religious services and practice of the Tatar society are discussed in Konopacki, 2010). The process of the linguistic assimilation of the Tatar community was probably based on the fact that its members varied as far as their origin is concerned and used different dialects. In the light of the lack of the earlier developed feeling of the ethnic community (such a community was not created until the period of the GDL, and it was not joined by the ethnic and linguistic factors, but by a political one), their languages (dialects) originated in the steppes were not a unifying determinant, especially due to the fact that they were not the carriers of the religious traditions (Łapicz, 1986b, p. 29-30, 52-54). It is worth emphasizing that the rank of the sacral language is reserved for Arabic, as the language of the Holy Book, *The Quran*. However, in the Tatar liturgy and writings Turkish also played this role. In the sphere connected with religion, Tatar language was replaced by the so called Belarusian ethnolect functioning in writing and in speaking. In the sphere of the daily communication, the Tatars used Belarusian dialects, accompanied among the elite – since 16<sup>th</sup> century – by Polish language of the northern Kresy borderland (further discussion of this subject: Drozd, 2000b; Radziszewska, 2010, p. 10-11).

The other element which certainly influenced the shaping and development of the Tatar literary output is set in the historical context, and is connected with the cultural and spiritual revival of the Republic of Poland attributed to the Renaissance and the Reformation which caused the Tatar society to create their own literature reflecting its distinctiveness and providing the core of their cultural heritage (works discussing Tatar literature and linguistic heritage - in Polish literature: Kraczkowski, 1952; Szynekiewicz, 1935a, p. 138-143; Szynekiewicz, 1932, p. 188-195; Szynekiewicz, 1935b; Woronowicz, 1935, p. 376-394; Zajaczkowski, 1851, p. 307-313; Konopacki, 1966, p. 193-204; Łapicz, 1986; Łapicz & Jankowski, 2000; Łapicz, 2008, p. 31-49; Drozd, 1999; Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2004, 2013, 2015).

### **Characteristic features of the literary manuscripts of the GDL Tatars**

Among the characteristic features of the literary output of the GDL Tatars the following attributes have to be listed in the first place: the manuscript-like form of the books; anonymity of the authors, multilingualism resulting from the presence of the Slavic (Polish and Belarusian) and oriental (Arabic, Turkish, Persian) linguistic layer, heterogenic character (in relation to volume, genologic classification and themes), and, finally, the most distinguishing element of this

literature - the way of notation consisting in the exclusive usage of the Arabic alphabet to write down the texts (both oriental and Slavic) included in the content of the books.

Two factors decided about the manuscript-like character of the Tatars' literary output. The first of them, particularly significant, was surely the reference to the literary output present in the world of Islam, especially regarding religious literature, which due to the high rank of the calligraphy was subjected to printing process quite late (calligraphy had been one of the key forms of art in the light of the ban on figurative representation) and in the context of the religious texts, manual copying of books became ritual in form. Additionally, the manuscript form was favoured by the local cultural context, namely the return to the manuscripts characteristic for the period of Sarmatism, for this is the period when the formation and development of the Tatar works of this kind took place (Drozd, 2000b, p. 24-26).

Anonymity, as a typical feature of all the manuscript literature, is also characteristic for the discussed Tatar works. Only two names of authors, regarding these works, are known: Hodyna (Kitab of 1645) and Uriah son of Ismail (Tafsir dated for 1686), as opposed to the scribes who often disclosed their names in colophons. Surely, bearing in mind the excellent command of Arabic and other Oriental languages and the general erudition of the Tatar authors, resulting from the character of their work, including the compilation and adaptation of the texts of Slavic and Middle Eastern provenance, they were representatives of the intellectual elite of the Tatar society. What is significant in this context, the impossibility of discovering their personal information, and the following anonymous character of the Tatar literary output implicates a major hindrance in the process of chronological definition, which can only be based on the indirect presumptions: philological and contextual analysis, dates of the subsequent copies of the books, historical, social context, etc. (the subject of the authors and scribes is discussed in: Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2013, p. 57-58, 93-97, 108-110; Drozd, 2000b, p. 33-34; Konopacki, 2015, p. 271-286).

Another, immanent, feature of the Tatar manuscript output is multilingualism, reflected in the mutual interleaving of the oriental layer, in the form of such languages as Arabic, Turkish and, to a lower extent, Persian, and the Slavic layer represented by Polish spoken in the northern Kresy borderlands in the initial stage of its development and the old-Belarusian language (Drozd, 2000b; Łapicz, 1986a; Akiner, 1973, 1980). The latter contains numerous borrowings and oriental influences (Turkish and Tatar, Arabic, Persian), mostly in the range of lexis and phraseology regarding the rituals and religious beliefs. The oriental

texts are, first of all, connected with the liturgy and prayer body, mostly the verses and surahs of the Quran in Arabic, as well as Arabic and Turkish prayer formulas (Drozd, 2000b, p. 17-21; Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2013, p. 60-63; Łapicz, 1986a, p. 217-218). The study of such a vast and linguistically varied text requires the continuous cooperation of Slavists (especially Polonists and Belarutenists) and orientalis (especially Arabic scholars and Turkologists), due to the necessity of connecting the knowledge on Polish and Belarusian diachronic linguistics with the wide orientalist competence (Arabic, Turkologic, Islamic) as well as theory and history of the translation of the sacred books, including theolinguistics.

As far as the most distinguishing element of this literature is concerned, namely – the way of notation, consisting in the exclusive usage of the Arab alphabet to write down both the Oriental and Slavic layer of the texts (the subject of manuscript transliteration and transcription of the Tatar literature is discussed in *Teoretyczne aspekty badania piśmiennictwa Tatarów – muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego oraz Praktyka badawcza: systemy transliteracji i transkrypcji* – Łapicz & Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2015, p. 29-202), it was the reference to the manuscript culture, especially of religious character, present in the world of Islam. The basis of adopting the Arabic alphabet instead of using the Slavic graphs, was surely a particular respect paid to religious books and Arabic writing (which was used to write down *the Quran*), because the sacral value was contained not only in the content of the books but also in the form of the graphs used in the notation. The Arabic alphabet was also functioning outside the Tatar literary manuscripts, namely the grave epitaphs, sacral ornamentation, and often in private writings (letters, documents, signatures of the documents), all the more that the Tatars preserved the ability to use the Arabic writing until 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though their excellent command of this language was lost in the course of centuries. What is particularly significant in this context, the Arabic alphabet must have been adapted to write down the Slavic texts, or to be more precise the phonologic system of these languages through the introduction of the additional graphemes and change of the phonetic value of some existing letters.

It seems that adopting the classification proposed by Drozd (1995, p. 33-47) is most justified for the detailed and clear characteristics of the Tatar literary output. It is based on the criteria of content and form, which allows the delineation of the following types of the manuscripts: basic books including the manuscripts of *The Quran*, tafsirs, kitabs and chamails; auxiliary books including tajwids, sufras, vocabularies, amulets represented by dalawars, hramotkas and nuskas, and finally the last group: tables and muhirs.

**Manuscripts of *The Quran*** (ar. *Al-Qur'ān* – „recitation”) – are among the most popular, apart from chamails (prayer books) Tatar relic manuscripts whose basic element is the full text of the Holy Book of Islam in Arabic, enriched by sets of prayers (ar. *ṣalāt*) and guidelines regarding the rules of the recitation (ar. *tağwīd, tilāwa*), placed in the first and the last pages. Sometimes, apart from the above mentioned content components, additional information occurs, such as the list of intentions (ar. *niyya*), where the appropriate verses of *The Quran* were to be recited (ar. *ayāt al-Qur'ān*), or the text of the 36<sup>th</sup> surah Ya-Sin. Manuscripts of *The Quran* usually number 200-300 pages, of the dominant size of 20 x 17 cm. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries they were owned by the majority of the Tatar families and were passed down from generation to generation. The relics of this kind are present, among others, in the following museums: Museum of History in Białystok, Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, Belarusian National Museum of History of Religion in Grodno, History and Archaeology Museum in Pskov, and in the library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in Minsk (more on this issue see in Drozd, 2000b, p. 12-13; Konopacki, 2010, p. 132-137; catalogue of the *Quran* manuscripts: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 49-50).

**Tefsirs** (ar. *tafsīr* – „comment, explanation”) – are quite vast works containing full text of *The Quran* with the interlinear translation into Polish complemented with the exegetic layer. Similarly to the above described manuscripts of the Holy Book, the additional elements of the content include prayers and description of the ritual of *The Quran* recitation which are written on the opening and closing pages of the tafsirs. Due to the fact that these works often numbered 400-500 pages (of a set size of 35x20 cm) they were often ordered by a whole group of “parishioners” as a wakf (ar. *waqf*) for the mosque. What's quite relevant, up until the appearance of the Polish translation of *The Quran* in 1858, these works had remained the basic source of the Tatars' knowledge regarding the content of the Holy Book. Tafsirs are in the collections of the following museums: Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, in the library of the Vilnius University, Library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, Library of the Oriental Department of St. Petersburg University and F. Skoryna Belarusian Library in London (most comprehensive characteristics of this type of manuscripts was written by Suter, 2004; see also Drozd, 2000b, p. 13; Konopacki, 2010, p. 137-139; catalogue of tafsirs: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 48-49; the research on the so called Tafsir of the GDL Tatars has been conducted since 2012 by the international research team headed by prof. Łapicz of UMK in Toruń, full description of the research project can be found at the Project TEFSIR website.

**Kitabs** (ar. *kitāb* – „book, booklet”) – are the relics of the manuscripts of a varied content and volume, being a type of reading matter playing educational role, usually dealing with religious matters. They contain the stories of prophets (ar. *anbiyāʾ*) and other renowned characters of Islam, stories based on the Muslim traditions (ar. *sunna*), apocrypha, *The Quran* (ar. *Al-Qurʿān*) and the Holy Bible (ar. *Al-Inǧīl*), eschatological visions, moralizing, devotional and prayer texts, hadiths (ar. *ḥadīṯ*), comments to some surahs of *The Quran*, descriptions of rites and rituals (ar. *farāʾiḍ*, *arkān ad-dīn*), elements of the Muslim law (ar. *ṣarīʿa*), religious discussions, magic texts, vocabularies of Turkish and Arabic, tajwids (ar. *tagwīd*), and rarely, non-religious texts among which the oriental and Old-Polish texts dominate. Kitabs usually number 150-300 pages, and their sizes usually range from 35x20 cm to 20x17 cm. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, books of this type were owned by one per few or even several Tatar families. This type of the manuscripts is available in the collection of the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, and the collection of the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Kazan University Library, British Library in London (for more on this issue, see Drozd, 2000b, p. 13-14; Konopacki, 2010, p. 139-140; catalogue of kitabs: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 50-54; detailed description of the so called *Milkamanowicz Kitab* is contained in the works by Łapicz, 1986a; 1991, p. 161-191; the relic in the collection of the London Museum is described by Akiner, 2013, p. 103-123; the so called *Lebiedź Kitab* is characterized by Starastsina, 2013; Lithuanian kitabs are discussed in Mischkinienė & Temczyn, 2013).

**Chamails** (ar. *ḥamāʾil* – „something one carries with themselves”) – are decidedly the most popular kind of Tatar manuscripts, bearing some features of a prayer book, and, as such, containing various texts of religious themes: practical descriptions of the Muslim rituals, including ablutions (ar. *wuḍūʾ*), prayers, rites of the cycle of life, name giving (ar. *ādān*), circumcision (ar. *ḥitān*), wedding (ar. *zawāǧ*), sets of Arabic and Turkish duai prayers (ar. *duʿāʾ*), occasional formulas and devotional texts such as zikhrs (ar. *ḍikr*), chikmiets (ar. *ḥikma*), charts with Muslim calendar (*at-taqwīm al-ḥiǧrī*). Quite often chamails contained magic texts: prayers for chanting (curing the psychical diseases with the exorcisms), prognostics of faʿl (*faʿl*), short prayers and magical-curing formulas talsims (ar. *talsīm*). Classifying the chamails regarding the content and purpose, two types can be distinguished: mullahian serving mullahs to do rituals and for faǧǧejs (people specializing in sorcery) to do magic and fortune telling. However, very rarely do they occur in the pure form, usually they are of universal character, including both the elements of the communal rites and magical practices and the individual rites and prayers. Chamails contain 100-300 pages, their dominant

sizes are 10x8 cm or 15x10 cm. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries each Tatar family possessed one or more prayer books. Chamails are quite common in both private and museum collections, including, among others, Historical Museum in Białystok, Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, Belarusian National Museum of History of Religion in Minsk, National Public Library in Lvov, Library of the Arab and Islamic Studies Department of the University of Warsaw, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk, Library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in Minsk, Library of the Oriental Department of St. Petersburg University, University Library in Liepzig, and in British Library in London (more on chamails in Drozd, 2000b, p. 13-14; Konopacki, 2010, p. 141-151; Chamail catalogue: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 54-60; a few monographs describe the so called Aleksandrowich Chamail: Szachno-Romanowicz, 1997, p. 7-25; Dziekan, 1998, p. 27-43; Dziekan, 2008, p. 81-89; Dziekan, 2013, p. 125-133; see also Radziszewska, 2013, p. 231-251; Radziszewska, 2010 - electronic copy).

**Tajwids** (ar. *tagħwīd* – „The Quran recitation learning”) – are particular type of the lectures in Turkish explaining the rules of articulation (ar. *qirāʾa*) and recitation (ar. *tilāwa*) of the Holy Book of Islam with the interlinear Polish-Belorussian translations. Books of this type occur sporadically; sometimes they comprise an additional element of the content of other relics of Tatar literary manuscripts such as kitabs and chamails. Relics of this type can be found in the collection of the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius and in the collection of the Library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in Minsk (for more comprehensive characteristics of tajwids, see Drozd, 2000b, p. 14; Konopacki, 2010, p. 153-154; catalogue of tajwids: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 60).

**Sufiras** (ar. *sifr* – „book”) – are small manuscripts containing a thirtieth part of *The Quran* (ar. *guz*), a type of didactic booklets used for teaching the children and including the prayers for the dead during the night preceding the funeral (ar. *ṣalāt al-ġanāza*).

**Vocabularies** (the name given by the scholars) – are the manuscripts containing – in accordance with the etymology of the name – lexical resources, phrases and expressions together with their translations into Polish and/or Belarusian. This type of a manuscript can be found in the collection of the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius (catalogue of vocabularies see: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 60).

**Dalawars** (tur. *duʿālar* – „prayers, collection of prayers”) – are the prayer scrolls put in the grave together with the deceased and they are the most lively type of the Tatar literary manuscripts since they function up till today. They

consist of the excerpts of *The Quran* (chosen surahs and verses) and the principles of the faith (ar. *īmān*), penitential prayers (*tawba*) and deliverance prayers (*du'ā'*), which are to support the dead in achieving the positive outcome of the Final Judgement (ar. *Yawm ad-Dīn*, *Yawm al-Ḥisāb*). The main part (5-15m long and 8-15 cm wide), folded into a flat package or scrolled, is put directly on the body right after it is put in the grave, while the additional parts, so called *nuskas* (ar. *nusha*) in the form of small cards are put on the dead man's forehead, mouth, chest and in their hands; slightly bigger fragments – *muhirczyks* – are nailed overhead to the planks fitted on the walls of the grave and hanged at the height of the dead man's chest on the perpendicular stick fixed to the wall of the grave. *Dalawars* are collected in the collection of the Historical Museum in Białystok and Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius (for more on this issue see Drozd, 2000b, p. 14; Konopacki, 2010, p. 152-153; catalogue of *dalawars*: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 60-61).

**Hramotkas** (Belarusian: „writing, small writing”) – are the prayer scrolls worn by living people, and most rifely – apart from *chamails* and *dalawars* – represented relics of literary manuscripts of Tatars. They are also called *dalawars*, like the scrolls placed in the graves (they are made in a similar way and after being folded into a small package, they are worn in a little holder placed under the right arm), hence the division into funeral (sepulchral) and protective *dalawars*. *Hramotkas*, whose length is usually 2-6 m and width is 4-12 cm, contain the protective *Quran* verses, principles of faith, prayers (ar. *du'ā'*) ensuring the forbearance of sins and success in the temporal life, magic formulas and shapes – talismans (magical practice of Tatars is discussed in Dziekan, 2000, p. 44-47; Borawski, 1986; Aleksandrowicz, 1935; Konopacki, 2010, p. 143-149; and also elaborations on *chamails*). Among the protective *dalawars* a particular group consists of children's *hramotkas*, additionally containing the formulas protecting from the diseases and handed to children during the name giving celebration. Manuscripts of this type have not been included in the collections of the museums and libraries which store other relics of the Tatar manuscript output, they are in the private collections (more in Drozd, 2000b, p. 15; *hramotkas* catalogue: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 60-62).

**Nuskas** (ar. *nusha* – „piece, manuscript”) – are relics of the Tatar literary manuscripts whose character is close to *hramotkas*, they are often referred to as *duajkas* (ar. *du'ā'*), since they come in the shape of small pieces of paper containing the excerpts from the *chamail* – texts of Arabic prayers, protective or healing magic formulas and shapes. They are worn in holders hanged at various parts of the body or nailed over the door-frames and dug under the doorsteps.



Nuskas are in the collection of the Historical Museum in Białystok, among others (characteristics of nuskas can be found in Drozd, 2000b, p. 15; nuskas catalogue: in Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 62).

**Muhirs** (tur. *muhir* – „stamp”) – are the ornate cards of fabric pieces containing the inscriptions or pictures of items, buildings, or places of sacral or magical character. Their function was ornamental, enriching the interiors of the houses and temples; and magic, protecting the houses and their residents. In the content of muhirs, there is a dominating motif of the text of an inscription (descriptions of rituals, prayer texts, chosen *Quran* verses with their translations, ethical guidelines) or presentations of the holy places accompanied by calligraphic, geometric, plant-based, architectural motifs or Muslim emblems, hence the classification according to theme criteria dividing them into inscriptional muhirs and presentation muhirs. Separate group consists of the relics whose content is in accordance with the etymology of the name – stamp muhirs, however, these occur most rarely. Muhirs are a rich part of the collection of the Historical Museum in Białystok, Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius and Museum of the History of Religion in Grodno, they are also owned by many private owners and mosques in Kruszyniany, Bohonie, Sorok Tatary, Navahrudak, Iwie, Niemież, Śmiłowicze (detailed description of muhirs can be found in Drozd, 2000a, p. 38-43; catalogue of muhirs: Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 67-80).

**Tables** (the name given by the scholars) – are paper or cardboard boards of the didactic and devotional character, placed in houses or mosques, resembling muhirs both in the form (board, sometimes framed), usage (hanged on the wall) and the content (descriptions of the rites, prayer formulas, chosen verses from *The Quran* with the translation, ethical guidelines). Tables are included in the collections of Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius and in the mosque in Iwie (for catalogue of tables see Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000, p. 62-63).

### Areas of research of the literary manuscripts of the GDL Tatars

As far as the subjects regarding the history, religion and the culture of the Tatars of the GDL are widely covered by scientific and scholarly literature, the issues connected with the Tatar's literary manuscripts are discussed in quite a limited number of the publications. Research covering the Tatar manuscripts was undertaken mostly by orientalists and Slavists from Polish and foreign scholastic institutions, and the first author to include the information on the literary heritage seems to be an orientalist, Fleischer (1838). The catalogue he created, in the part regarding the oriental manuscripts, describes a manuscript specified by



the recognized languages as Arabic-Tatar-Polish (Fleischer & Delitzsch, 1838, p. 450). The manuscript which we today know as the *chamail* of Leipzig is a part of the collection of the library of the University of Leipzig, belongs to the oldest and the best preserved and available manuscripts of the Muslims of the GDL (it originates from the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries).

The characteristics of the state of the research on Tatar literary manuscripts up to 1966 is discussed in a paper by Konopacki (1966) entitled *Piśmiennictwo Tatarów polsko-litewskich w nauce polskiej i obcej* (*The literary writings of Polish and Lithuanian Tatars in Polish and Foreign science*) which was later complemented by Reichmann (1970); according to the authors the issue became a centre of the research of the following scholars: Muchliński, and orientalist and forerunner of the research on Tatar manuscripts (1857), Łuckiewicz (1920), author of the first information regarding the 18th century kitab of Sorok-Tatary, Stankiewicz (1933, 1952) who researched the above mentioned manuscript, Szynekiewicz (1932, 1935a, 1935b), Woronowicz (1935), who described the textual content of the kitabs, Kryczyński (1935, 1938), Zajączkowski (1951), the author of a significant scholastic work dealing with the Tatar manuscripts, namely a sketch on the *chamail* of 1804 in the collection the Institute of the Orient in the University of Warsaw, Szachno-Romanowicz (1997), who – among others – dealt with the fortune-telling and magical-protective texts in the manuscript known as the Aleksandrowicz *chamail* and, finally, Antonowicz, the author of one of the most significant work in the history of the research on the Tatar literary manuscripts: *Белорусские тексты, писанные арабским письмом, и их графико-орфографическая система* (Антонович, 1968). In this work he characterized 23 Tatar manuscripts in the form of books (starting from the oldest preserved and available specimens to 20th century's manuscripts) and one official document of 1759 including the state, age, form, and content with quotes of selected passages, as well as graphical and spelling features of the manuscripts' language. He also developed a system of the transliteration of the texts written with the Arabic alphabet, building the foundations for the development of the branch of science currently known as *kitabistics*.

The next stage of the research on the Tatar literary manuscripts is marked by the works of London scholars: Meredith-Owens and Nadson (1970), who described three manuscripts from the collection of the British Museum: *tafsir* of 1725, *chamail* of Mustapha Bohdanowicz of Słonim (1828) and *kitab* of the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as Akiner (1973), the author of a paper containing a glossary of oriental terms used in the manuscripts, developed on the basis of a *kitab* whose content was analyzed in the earlier publication by

Meredith-Owens and Nadson (1970). The latter was also the subject of the author's later works (Akiner, 1978, 2009).

Particular contribution to the research of the Tatar manuscripts was brought by Łapicz in the form of a monograph (Łapicz, 1986a; Jankowski & Łapicz, 2000) and paper (1991) describing the kitab of Milkamanowicz of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and also numerous publications treating the literary output of the GDL Tatars in general and particular approach containing the textual criticism and philology analysis of the researched materials (Łapicz, 1986b, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2015).

Tatar manuscripts have also become an object of interest of a Turkologist Drozd who dedicated some of his works to Sobolewski's chamail dated of 1905-1914 (Drozd, 1993), chamail of Petersburg of 1770 (Drozd, 1999) and chamail of Gdańsk from the collection of the library of Gdańsk branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Drozd, 1996a). In his numerous works the scholar analyzes the Tatar manuscripts in many aspects, including the influence of the Slavic surroundings on the textual content (Drozd, 1996b, 1997, 2000). The subject of kitabs has been raised a number of times by an Arabist Dziekan who dedicated some of his papers to the culture of the GDL Tatars, including the content of the Aleksandrowicz chamail from the collection of the Department of the Arab and Islamic Studies of the University of Warsaw (Dziekan, 1997a) and the analysis of the sections of this manuscript (among others, Dziekan, 2008) complementing this way the information regarding the manuscript analyzed earlier by Szachno-Romanowicz (see above). A collective achievement of both orientalists, Drozd and Dziekan, in cooperation with Majda, is the catalogue of Tatar manuscripts accessible in the territory of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Tatarstan, Germany and Great Britain (Drozd, Dziekan, & Majda, 2000).

Miškinienė of Lithuanian academic centre is the author of numerous papers discussing the religious writings of the GDL Tatars; she also developed a Turkish-Polish dictionary being a part of the kitab of Jakub Chasiniewicz of 1840 (Miškinienė, 2008) and characterized in detail (transliterating the content and translating it into Lithuanian and Russian) three manuscripts: chamail of Leipzig, kitab of Kazan and half-kitab of Petersburg (Miškinienė, 1990, 1994a,b, 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1999, 2008). She also stood behind *Каталог арабскоалфавитных рукописей Литовских татар* (Мишкинене, Намавичюте, & Покровская, 2005), containing the description of 83 historic manuscripts, including religious books (59 manuscripts) and single cards (24).

Catalogues (*Рукапісныя і друкаваныя кнігі*, 1997; *Рукапісы беларускіх татараў*, 2003) and publications regarding the Tatar literature are also created in Belarussian scientific centres: in their papers Tarełko and Synkowa are

ordering the information about the known Tatar manuscripts, and are also analyzing the particular texts and issues (Тарелка, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2008, 2013; Сынькова, 2008, 2013). A book by Tarełka and Synkowa (2009) is, in turn, an elaboration concerning the religious polemical texts of the 18th century manuscript, containing the transliteration and translation as well as a linguistic, textological, historical commentary and a glossary of terms.

A detailed study of the issues connected with the type of a manuscript which is the tafsir and generally with the religious writings of the GDL Tatars is the work of a Swiss Slavist and Arabist Suter (2004).

In the recent years, Tatar literary manuscripts have become the subject of the research of an Arabist, Lewicka who, apart from papers dedicated to kitabistics as a new scientific sub-discipline (Lewicka, 2015b, 2015c), concentrated her research interest on the Arab linguistic layer of the literary output of the Tatars of Great Duchy of Lithuania (Lewicka, 2015a, 2015d, 2015e). Arabic linguistic layer of the Tatar manuscripts has not been analyzed until now, since all the undertaken research concentrated on the Slavic layer (Polish and Belarusian languages), including the present inclusions from the oriental languages (mostly Arabic and Turkish), and aimed at reading, identifying and transliterating the textological content. The material became the basis of the scholastic research of the philological nature due to the presence of the unexplored grammar and linguistic layers of the Polish spoken in the Kresy borderlands in the period of 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and interference and transference phenomena occurring within Slavic languages and Slavic-Arabic contacts on all the linguistic layers. As far as the research of the Arabic linguistic layer shall not yield such spectacular results (due to the lack of the specificity characterizing the Slavic layer with its multilingualism and one of a kind way of notation with the Arabic alphabet), they are still substantial since they allow replying the research questions and theses arising in the context of the analyses of the Tatar literary manuscripts, such as – based exclusively on the Arabic layer – the ones regarding the language competence of the authors and scribes of the manuscripts and sources of the oriental texts, or – on the basis of the comparative analysis of both layers – the issues connected with the translation of the Arabic texts into Slavic languages. First of all, the subject of the research shall be the remaining copies of the 16<sup>th</sup> century's Tafsir of the GDL Tatars preserved until contemporary times, which compose a chain of copies created in the span of four centuries (16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>), not only in different periods but also in different locations and by scribes with a various level of the command of Arabic, which will allow the comparative analysis aiming at defining the range of the variations in the content and

linguistic (and religious) competence of the particular scribes (see Lewicka, 2015a, 2015d). Subsequent stage of the research undertaken by the author shall then include the research work on the reading, transliteration, and identification of the texts present in kitabs, tafsirs, and chamails, and in turn, the textological and philological analysis of these texts.

Literary output dedicated to the Tatar manuscripts is being constantly complemented by scholars from Polish and foreign academic centres; currently the most intense works are carried out by an international team appointed in 2012, headed by professor Łapicz of Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń. Since 2012, scholars from Poland, Lithuania, Russia and Belarus (more information about the project team can be found on the Project TEFSIR website, section “zespol-projektowy”) have been working in the team realizing the project of philological and historical elaboration and critical publication of the so called tafsir of the Tatars of the Great Duchy of Lithuania (the Project TEFSIR website). The project's nature consists in the long-term team work on the documentation, research and editing of the manuscript of fundamental meaning for the heritage and culture on both national and European level. The subject of the scientific research is the first Slavic (Polish/Belarusian) - and at the same time third, after the Latin (published in 1543) and Italian translation based on it (published in 1547) – direct translation of *the Quran* from the Arabic original to a European language. The translation originated in the second half of the 16th century – in the period of the Reformation, when the translation of sacral books (*the Bible*, among others) into vernacular languages. Following the Muslim rule of *i ʿġāz* (that is ban on translating the original Arabic *Quran* into other languages) this translation took a form and status of *tafsir*, or „comment, interpretation, explanation”. In reality, though, the manuscript tafsirs of Tatars, the Muslims of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania contain an accurate, interlinear translation of the Holy Book of Islam into contemporary Polish with elements of the (old) Belarusian. The works have been divided into four stages, the first of which consisted of the development of the rules of transliteration and transcription into the Latin alphabet of the Tatar literary manuscripts, where Polish and Belarusian languages had been written down in Arabic alphabet, and subsequently, the activities leading to standardization of the aforementioned rules and their popularization in the international kitabistic research (more information regarding the rules of transliteration and transcripition of the Tatar historic manuscripts, developed by the team can be found at the Project TEFSIR website – section “monografia”). The second stage was concentrated on the reading of the interlinear translations of *the Quran* into Polish and Belarusian in the carefully

selected manuscript tafsirs written in Arabic alphabet and performance of the transliteration adhering to the unified, practically verified (for authorial transliterations and transcriptions see the Project TEFSIR website – section “autorskie-transliteracje”) rules developed by the team. The objective of the third stage was to specify the research areas and development of the methodological tools for the many-sided philological and historical description of the manuscript tafsirs of the GDL Tatars (about the research activities see the Project TEFSIR website – section “projekcie”). The fourth stage is dedicated to the preparation of an online publication and making the original philological resources in the form of the manuscripts of Polish and Lithuanian Tatars available in this form to scholars and researchers.

Research works that have been in progress since 2012 were one of the causes of convening a new -first on the national and then on the international scale - research and scholastic unit called the Centre of Kitabistic Research (Centrum Badań Kitabistycznych, CBK) operating within the Philology Department of Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń. The Centre is headed by Kulwicka-Kamińska (Polish Language Institute) in cooperation with professor Łapicz (Russian Philology Department) and Lewicka (Arabic Language and Culture Department). The tasks of CBK include the initiation, conduction and coordination of interdisciplinary and international activities of scientific, research, editorial and popularizing character involving the kitabistics.

## **Conclusion**

Manuscripts of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, being the most important and richest part of their heritage and a sustainable remnant of the Tatar settlement in the territory of the Republic of Poland, have been recognized as a particular aspect, a phenomenon of a kind, to which a great spiritual, literary and cultural value is ascribed. On the one hand, it is indeed an extremely rich literary output – an individual, separate literature with features which are difficult to be encountered in the literary heritage of other nations or ethnic groups. On the other hand, however, it remains a proof of a close connection between the multi-layered culture of the Great Duchy of Lithuania and the civilization of Islam, which is expressed in the extraordinary fusion of the seemingly opposed and mutually excluding elements, yet perfectly coinciding in social life and in the literary output of Polish and Lithuanian Tatars, namely – the oriental Muslim culture with Christian culture. Finally, it is a particularly valuable source of the research material, not only of philological character, but also the basis for conducting interdisciplinary, historic, ethnographic, cultural and

religious studies, as well as in the range of the history of art, since some of these relics of the literary manuscripts remain on the border of the literary output and religious art.

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## The problematic issue of grammatical gender in Arabic as a foreign language

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### Abstract

Many languages of the world have a grammatical gender system that divides all nouns into gendered categories. The gender assigned to a given noun requires gender agreement with associated items in the sentence, such as: determiners, adjectives, and demonstrative pronouns. Research in the area of grammatical gender acquisition has found that this grammatical category poses considerable difficulty for L2 learners. However, rarely was this area of difficulty the focus of L2 studies in Arabic. The present study focuses on the problematic issue of grammatical gender in Arabic as a foreign language. It examines advanced Arabic L2 learners' written errors of gender assignment and agreement in the Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC) v2, compiled by Alfaifi, Atwel, and Hedaya (2014). Based on the classification and analysis of the errors, possible factors of the difficulty facing L2 learners in assigning the correct gender are discussed, and recommendations to reduce their effects are suggested.

**Key words:** gender assignment, gender agreement, Arabic L2 errors

### Introduction

Grammatical gender is a noun classification system that is found in many languages throughout the world. It divides all nouns, including inanimate ones, into gendered categories, and marks associated elements in the sentence for gender agreement (Comrie, 1999; Corbett, 1991). The grammatical gender of a noun is both a lexical and a syntactic property of this noun. "The assignment of gender to nouns," Sabourin (2003, p. 15) explains, "is considered a lexical property while gender agreement is considered to be part of syntax". Grammatical gender should be distinguished from natural gender, i.e. gender based on biological sex feature. Though the two concepts sometimes correspond, they do not always match. For example, in Dutch the noun *meisje* 'girl' has neuter gender and not feminine gender (Comrie, 1999).

This system is considered one of the significant areas in which languages differ. Some languages do not have grammatical gender system such as Chinese and Malay whereas others have a very complex ones such as German and Arabic. Within gendered languages, there is a considerable variety of possible gender systems. There are languages that classify nouns into two gender categories, and others that display three or more grammatical gender distinctions (Corbett, 1999). Languages also vary in elements that are marked for gender agreement. These elements could be verbs, adjectives, pronouns, determiners, among others.

Gender classification of nouns can be specified based on semantic criteria or formal properties. Nouns are assigned to a gender either by their animate/inanimate, human/non-human, or male/female features, or by their morphological or phonological features (Comrie, 1999; Corbett, 2006). When semantic cues are not available, the relation between a noun and its gender is arbitrary; thus, the same noun can have a different gender in different languages. For example, 'moon' is masculine in German, feminine in French, and neuter in Greek (Holmes & Segui, 2006).

Grammatical gender is considered one of the most challenging structures for L2 learners. Research in the area of L2 acquisition has found that this grammatical category poses serious difficulty even for advanced learners (Scherag, et al., 2004). Yet, rarely was this problematic area in L2 acquisition the focus of Arabic L2 studies. The goal of the present study is to investigate the problematic issue of grammatical gender in Arabic as a foreign language. It examines the errors of gender assignment and gender agreement in the written production of advanced L2 learners in the Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC) v2, compiled by Alfaifi, Atwel, and Hedaya (2014). In what follows, the study starts with a review of previous research on L2 grammatical gender acquisition in general, and on Arabic L2 grammatical gender research in particular. Then, the main features of the Arabic grammatical gender are introduced. This is followed by a description of the data and methodology used in the study. Finally, the results of the analysis and a discussion of these results are presented. This will be summed up in the conclusion at the final section.

### **Grammatical gender and L2 acquisition**

Grammatical gender is one of the earliest properties to be mastered in first language acquisition (Franceschina, 2005). When acquiring the gender system of their native language, children rely on the different types of gender cues that their language provide, i.e. formal (phonological and morphological), semantic (natural gender), and syntactic (agreement) cues. At the early stages of their



language development, they seem to rely mostly on phonological and morphological cues and to a lesser extent on semantic and syntactic cues. As children grow older, however, their awareness of semantic and syntactic cues increases. This means that they begin to pay more attention to the meaning of the gendered nouns and the grammatical categories involved in the gender system of their language, such as articles, adjectives, and verbs (Berman, 1986; Franceschina, 2005; Koehn, 1994; Levy, 1983; Mills, 1986).

In second language acquisition, however, grammatical gender has proved to be particularly difficult to learn. Many studies show that most L2 learners, adults and children, have serious difficulties with this grammatical category, and that the problem persists even at advance levels (Bruhn de Garavito & White, 2002; Carroll, 1989; Dewaele & Véronique, 2001; Franceschina, 2005; Hulk & Cornips, 2006a; Scherag, et al., 2004). L2 learners experience difficulties with both the lexical and syntactic properties of the gender system. Assigning the correct gender to nouns as well as applying gender agreement are problematic for L2 learners (Sabourin, 2003). Importantly, L2 learners show fossilisation, as they often fail to get past the overgeneralization stage (Franceschina, 2005; Hulk & Cornips, 2006a). Research concerning grammatical gender in L2 acquisition has examined different aspects of this issue. A number of studies have focused on the type of cue sensitivity demonstrated by L2 learners, comparing it to that of native speakers or other L2 learners with different language backgrounds. Others have examined the differences in the learning strategies employed by L1 and L2 learners, or analyzed L2 learners' speech or written production errors of gender agreement, or investigated the teaching practices that could improve L2 learners' performance with grammatical gender (Andersen, 1984; Cain et al., 1987; Delisle, 1985; Desrochers et al., 1989; Finneman, 1992; Hardison, 1992; Harley, 1979; Roger, 1987).

Several suggestions have been put forward to explain the difficulties adult L2 learners experience with grammatical gender. Some L2 researchers emphasize the effect of L1 transfer on acquiring L2 grammatical gender by adult learners. According to this view, the absence of a grammatical gender system, as well as the differences between this system in L1 and L2, negatively influence the acquisition of the L2 grammatical gender system (Carroll, 1989; Franceschina, 2005; Hawkins, 1998; Sabourin, 2001; Tsimpli & Mastropavlou, 2007). However, the findings of some studies challenge this explanation. They indicate that the problem with gender can also be found in adult L2 learners whose L1 does have a grammatical gender system. Moreover, other studies show that there are adult L2 learners with no gender system in their L1 who were able to acquire this



grammatical category (Bond et al., 2011; Bruhn de Garavito & White, 2002; Ellis et al., 2004, 2012). While the effect of L1 transfer may not be a key factor in acquiring L2 grammatical gender, some studies indicate its importance in facilitating the process, especially at the initial stages of language acquisition (Sabourin et al., 2006).

Other L2 researchers argue that the learning strategies that adult L2 learners use to acquire the grammatical gender may account for the difficulties they face with this grammatical category. While L1 learners rely on phonological and morphological cues for gender assignment at initial stages, some studies show that adult L2 learners take natural gender and syntactic cues into consideration to assign gender to nouns (Andersen, 1984; Cain et al., 1987; Finneman, 1992). Another view proposes that the difficulties with gender may be due to an underspecification of the gender feature. This happens when L2 learners are already aware of gender but do not have a complete knowledge and do not know the right gender specification yet, which may causes them to overgeneralize. This stage of overgeneralization is also common in L1 learners; however, whereas L1 learners progress beyond this stage and gain complete knowledge of the gender feature, L2 learners seem to fossilize in this developmental stage (Hulk & Cornips, 2006b; Brouwer et al., 2008).

While the problematic issue of grammatical gender in the field of L2 acquisition has been extensively studied in many languages, in Arabic, the acquisition of this grammatical category by L2 learners is relatively under-researched. Current research on the L2 acquisition of Arabic has reported persistent problem with Arabic grammatical gender. A number of studies that have been carried out to identify the type of errors L2 learners of Arabic make in their written production found grammatical gender to be one of the most challenging structures to L2 acquirers (Al-'axTaa' l-lughawiyyah, 1982; Al-Faaori, 2009; Mann, 1992). In Mann's (1992) study, the findings indicated that errors in gender agreement formed 85% of the L2 learners witting errors. Yet, only few studies were devoted to investigating this problem in Arabic.

Two issues concerning gender acquisition have been investigated in Arabic L2 acquisition studies; the order in which L2 learners of Arabic acquire certain grammatical features of the gender system, and the effect of the L1 on the acquisition of some grammatical features of the L2 grammatical gender. Both Nielsen (1997) and Alhawary (2003) explored the acquisition order of two gender agreement structures, i.e. noun-adjective agreement and subject-verb agreement, in adult L2 learners. Nielsen's (1997) study showed both structures to emerge at the same time in some participants while neither of them was

present in other participants. However, the majority of the participants in Alhawary's (2003) study acquired the subject-verb gender agreement structure before the noun-adjective one. In two later studies, Alhawary (2005, 2009) examined the acquisition of nominal gender agreement and verbal gender agreement by L2 adult learners of different L1 backgrounds to explore the effect of the presence or absence of the gender system in the L1 on acquiring the L2 grammatical gender agreement. The results of both studies indicated that with subject-verb gender agreement there was no significant difference between participants whose L1 language has a grammatical gender system and participants with no gender system in their L1. However, a significant difference was found between the two groups in the case of noun-adjective gender agreement. The results also showed that although the former group outperformed the later in the nominal gender agreement structure, the performance of some advanced participants of the second group was relatively comparable to that of the first. A recent study that has been carried out to investigate the effect of L1 transfer is Al-Amry's (2014). In his study, he examined the acquisition of the subject-verb gender agreement structure in Arabic by adult L2 learners who have different L1 backgrounds that vary in their gender system. The results of the study were in line with Alhawary's (2005, 2009) findings. No significant difference in acquiring the verbal gender agreement structure was found between learners who have a grammatical gender system in their L1 language and learners who do not.

### Arabic grammatical gender

Arabic has a two-gender system that classifies all noun, animate and inanimate, as either masculine or feminine. Verbs, nouns, adjectives, personal, demonstrative, and relative pronouns that are related to the noun in the syntactic structure of the sentence show gender agreement. The assignment of gender is usually based on semantic criteria, i.e. natural gender, as well as formal properties, i.e. morphological form. The gender category assigned to a given noun is semantically arbitrary, e.g. *baab* 'door' (m.), *shajar-ah* 'tree' (f.), except when it conforms with natural gender, e.g. *walad* 'boy' (m.), *'umm* 'mother' (f.).

The masculine is the default unmarked form whereas the feminine is usually the marked one. Most feminine nouns are morphologically marked for gender by one of the three feminine suffixes: *-ah/ -at*, e.g. *shajar-ah* 'tree' (f.), *-aa'*, e.g. *SaHr-aa'* 'desert' (f.), and *-aa*, e.g. *dhikr-aa* 'remembrance' (f.). The *taa'* *marbuuTah* suffix *-ah/ -at*, pronounced *-ah* in pausal form and, for the sake of simplicity will henceforth be referred to in its pausal form, is the most common feminine

marker. Less often feminine nouns are suffixed by 'alif mamduudah -aa' or 'alif maqSuurah -aa.

As a general rule, an Arabic noun that does not have a feminine suffix is masculine. However, a number of masculine words are suffixed with the feminine suffix -ah, e.g. *Hamz-ah* 'a male name' (m.), *'allaam-ah* 'great scholar' (m.). These Cryptomasculine nouns, as referred to in the literature (Ryding, 2005), are few and low frequent words in the language.

On the other hand, the feminine gender of a noun is generally overtly marked by a feminine suffix. However, there are feminine nouns that have no marked endings. These nouns are semantically marked when they refer to natural gender, e.g. *zaynab* 'a female name' (f.), *bint* 'daughter' (f.), so their feminine gender is realized through the semantic meaning. But when the referent of the unmarked feminine noun is inanimate, e.g. *naar* 'fire' (f.), *shams* 'sun' (f.), which is referred to as Cryptofeminine nouns, neither the form nor the meaning of the noun indicates its gender. The gender for each noun in this group has to be acquired individually. An observation that is useful for language acquirers in identifying the gender of some words in this group is that all cities, most countries, and most body parts that come in pairs are feminine.

Non-human plural nouns, be they living creatures or inanimate things, are also treated like singular feminine nouns although they are not suffixed with a feminine marker. Elements that are related to these nouns in the sentence structure, i.e. verbs, nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, display feminine singular agreement, e.g. *al-funuun* (n.) *l-mu'aaSir-ah* (adj.) 'contemporary (f.sg.adj.) arts (f.pl.n.).'

### Data & methodology

The data used in the present study was extracted from the Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC) v2, a freely available open-source of data that was developed at Leeds University by Alfaifi, Atwel, and Hedaya (2014). The corpus includes 282,732 words produced by 942 male and female students between the age of 16 and 42, who were studying at pre-university and university levels in 2012 and 2013. The participants come from 67 different nationalities and 66 different L1 background. The ALC contains Arabic written and spoken data, i.e. essays and recordings, collected from native and non-native learners of Arabic in Saudi Arabia. To serve different research interests, the learner corpus consists of a number of sub-corpora designed according to the following criteria: native vs. non-native speakers, males vs. females, pre-university vs. university, and written vs. spoken (Alfaifi, Atewl, & Hedaya, 2014). The corpus site, however, provides its

users with a searching tool that enables them to select the data they need according to a number of specifications.

The data extracted from the ALC to be examined in the present study is the written production of advanced, adult L2 learners of Arabic with diverse L1 backgrounds, who were studying the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. In order for the data to serve the goal of the present study, it was selected based on three specifications for the participants, i.e. non-native speakers, learning Arabic for four years or more, and have spent two years or more in Arabic countries, and two specifications for the texts, i.e. written texts, produced in class. The proficiency level of the participants was not determined according to the level or semester of study because the different language programs in which the participants are enrolled organize the levels of proficiency differently. Instead, the learners' level of proficiency was based on the number of years of learning the Arabic language as well as the number of years spent in Arabic countries. The criteria set in the present study to define the advanced level learners are: four years or more of learning Arabic and two years or more of staying in Arabic countries. The data was restricted to the written texts produced in class to ensure that it represents the learners' actual competency since they do not have the option of consulting grammar books or language dictionaries.

The specifications used to select the data rendered a corpus of 18,152 words, produced by 110 male and female adult, advanced non-native Arabic learners between the age of 20 and 35, who were studying Arabic as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. The participants are from 38 different nationalities with 42 different L1 backgrounds. The corpus contains a collection of 127 narrative and discussion essays written in class. The language used in the texts is MSA, which is the form of the Arabic language taught to the corpus producers.

The goal of this study is to analyze the errors of grammatical gender in the written production of advanced, adult L2 learners in the Arabic Learner Corpus v2 (ALC). To this end, the study starts by identifying the gender errors in the data, then the errors are classified and described. Two aspects of the grammatical gender errors are examined: the gender assignment to the noun, and the gender agreement patterns between the noun and related elements. Errors other than the ones in the grammatical gender are ignored. Errors concerning gender agreement between numbers and their referents, e.g. *thalaath-ah kutub* 'three' (f.) 'books' (f.pl.), are not taken into consideration because this grammatical structure does not follow the rules of the grammatical gender system. It follows a different complicated system that is problematic even for native speakers.

## Results

Analyzing the grammatical gender errors in the present study involves two steps: identifying the errors in the data, then classifying and describing them. The number of the grammatical gender errors found in the 18,152 word corpus that consists of 127 texts is 453. This means that the average text of 143 words in the data contains about four gender errors. The gender errors identified in the data are classified and described in terms of two properties of the grammatical gender system: gender assignment to the noun, and gender agreement with the noun.

442 errors in assigning gender to nouns are found in the data of this study. These errors are classified into three types based on the gender features of the noun, i.e. errors in nouns marked by a feminine suffix, errors in nouns with no gender suffix, and errors in assigning the feminine gender to non-human plural nouns. The three types of the gender assignment errors are illustrated in the following examples.

- (1) *al-san-ah*<sup>2</sup> *l-maaDii*\*  
the year (f.n.) the last (m.adj.)  
'The last year'
- (2) *makaan-Φ* *xaTiir-ah*\*  
place (m.n.) dangerous (f.adj.)  
'Dangerous place'
- (3) *haadha l-'amaakin*\*  
this (m.sg.demons.) places (f.pl.n.)  
'these places'

Gender assignment errors in the above examples are realized through gender agreement with related elements. Examples (1) and (2) show no agreement between the nouns and the adjectives. In example (1), the feminine noun with the gender suffix *al-san-ah* 'year' (f.) is modified by a masculine adjective *al-maaDii* 'last' (m.), which indicates that the noun is assigned masculine gender. However, the feminine adjective *xaTiir-ah* 'dangerous' (f) in example (2) that modifies the unmarked masculine noun *makaan* 'place' (m.) is an indicator that the noun is assigned feminine gender. Example (3), on the other hand, demonstrates error in assigning the feminine gender to non-human plural nouns. The non-human plural noun *al-'amaakin* 'places' (f.pl.) is referred to by the masculine singular demonstrative *haadha* 'this' (m.sg.demons) instead of the feminine singular one

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity the *taa' marbuuTah* suffix *-ah/ -at*, will be referred to only in its pausal form-*ah* in pausal form.

*haadhihi* 'this' (f.sg.demons.) which means that the noun is assigned masculine gender.

The data analysis indicates that almost all errors in gender assignment involve inanimate nouns that refer to things or concepts, e.g. *madiin-ah* 'city' (f.) and *makaan* 'place' (m.). While no error was found in the data in assigning gender to natural gender nouns with a gender marker, e.g. *baqar-ah* 'cow' (f.), only three errors were found in assigning gender to natural gender nouns with no gender marker, i.e. *Taalib* 'student' (m.), and four errors in assigning feminine gender to non-human plural nouns that refer to natural gender, e.g. *Tuyuur* 'birds' (f.pl.).

The analysis also shows that all errors in assigning gender to nouns marked by a feminine suffix in the data involve feminine nouns assigned masculine gender, as in example (1). Errors in assigning the feminine gender to non-human plural nouns show also a similar pattern, i.e. feminine nouns assigned masculine gender, as in example (3). However, errors in gender assignment to nouns with no gender marker found in the data are all in assigning feminine gender to unmarked masculine nouns, as example (2) demonstrates. The number of errors occurred in the data in each type of the gender assignment is indicated in table 1.

| Type of error  | Number of errors | Percentage of errors in each type |
|--|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a- Errors in nouns marked by a feminine suffix                       | 134              | 30%                               |
| b- Errors in nouns with no gender suffix                             | 214              | 49%                               |
| c- Errors in assigning the feminine gender to non-human plural nouns | 94               | 21%                               |

Table 1: Errors in gender assignment to the noun in the data

While the gender assignment errors identified in the data are 442 errors, errors in gender agreement reached 453 error. This is because different agreement structures are related to the same noun in the sentence. Gender agreement errors are classified into six types according to the grammatical agreement categories involved in the Arabic gender system. The six gender agreement structures are: subject-verb, subject-noun, noun-adjective, noun-demonstrative pronoun, noun-pronoun, and noun-relative pronoun. The following examples illustrate these six types of gender agreement errors.

- (4) *ta'axxara l-Haafil-ah\**  
is late (m.v.) the bus (f.subj.)  
'The bus is late'
- (5) *al-jaami'-ah jamiil\**  
the university (f.subj.) is wonderful (m.n.)  
'The university is wonderful'
- (6) *madiin-ah raa'i\**  
city (f.n.) beautiful (m.adj.)  
'A beautiful city'
- (7) *hadhaa l-manTiq-ah\**  
this (m.sg.demons.) the region (f.n.)  
'This region'
- (8) *al-masjid fii-haa\**  
the mosque (m.n.) in-it (f.pron.)  
'In the mosque'
- (9) *al-'ilm l-atii ta'allamtu-ha\**  
the knowledge (m.n.) that (f.sg.rel.pron.) I learnt  
'The knowledge that I have learnt'

The above examples show all the types of gender agreement errors occurred in the data. They demonstrate the mismatch between the gender of the noun and the gender of the related elements. In example (4) the masculine form of the verb *ta'axxara* 'is late' (m.v.) does not agree in gender with the feminine subject *l-Haafil-ah* 'the bus' (f.subj.). There is also no agreement in example (5) between the masculine predicate *jamiil* 'is wonderful' (m.n.) and its feminine subject *al-jaami'-ah* 'the university' (f.subj.). Likewise, the masculine form of the adjective *raa'i* 'beautiful' (m.adj.) in example (6) does not agree in gender with the feminine noun *madiin-ah* 'city' (f.n.). Examples (7), (8), and (9) also demonstrate mismatch in gender between the feminine noun *l-manTiq-ah* 'the region' (f.n.) and the masculine demonstrative noun *hadhaa* 'this' (m.sg.demons.), the masculine noun *al-masjid* 'the mosque' (m.n.) and the feminine pronoun *-haa* 'it' (f.pron.), and the masculine noun *al-'ilm* 'knowledge' (m.n.) and the feminine relative pronoun *al-atii* 'that' (f.sg.re.pron.).

The data analysis in this study shows that out of the 453 gender agreement errors in the data, 121 are in the noun-adjective structure. This indicates that this structure is the most problematic gender agreement structure for adult L2 learners. This is consistent with Alhawary's (2003) study that found the noun-adjective gender agreement structure to pose serious difficulties for adult L2

acquirers. No significant effect of the distance between the noun and the elements involved in the gender agreement process was realized in the data. Gender agreement errors occurred in the data in long-distance dependency structures such as: *ma'had ya'tii l-Tullaab li yata'allamuu fii-haa* 'an institute where students come to learn,' where there is no gender agreement between the masculine noun *ma'had* 'institute' (m.n.) and the pronoun *-haa* 'it' (f.pron.), as well as in local dependency structures as the examples (1) - (9) demonstrate. What was noticed from the analysis, however, is that in some gender agreement structures the noun agreed with some elements while disagreed with others. The following example illustrates this situation.

(10) *haadhihi l-fikr-ah jaa'anii mundhu l-Sighar\**

this (f.sg.demons.) idea (f.subj.) occurred (m.v.) to me in my childhood  
'I had this idea since my childhood'

In example (10), two elements in the sentence should agree in gender with the feminine noun *fikr-ah* 'idea' (f.n.); the demonstrative and the verb. However, only the feminine demonstrative pronoun *haadhihi* 'this' (f.sg.demon.) shows agreement in gender with the feminine noun. The verb with its masculine form *jaa'anii* 'occurred to me' (m.v.) shows no gender agreement with its subject, i.e. the feminine noun *fikr-ah* 'idea' (f.n.). The number of errors occurred in the data in each of the six gender agreement structures is indicated in table 2.

| Type of error   | Number of errors | Percentage of errors in each type |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a- Errors in subject-verb agreement structure               | 97               | 21%                               |
| b- Errors in subject-noun agreement structure               | 82               | 18%                               |
| c- Errors in noun-adjective agreement structure             | 121              | 27%                               |
| d- Errors in noun-demonstrative pronoun agreement structure | 41               | 9%                                |
| e- Errors in noun-pronoun agreement structure               | 90               | 20%                               |
| f- Errors in noun-relative pronoun agreement structure      | 22               | 5%                                |

Table 2. Errors in gender assignment structures in the data



## Discussion

The analysis of the data in the present study shows that grammatical gender is problematic for advanced adult L2 learners of Arabic. Most of these learners have been learning Arabic for an average of seven years; nevertheless, they do not seem to have overcome their difficulties with this grammatical category. Arabic L2 learners experience difficulties with the grammatical gender system in both assigning the correct gender to the noun and producing the correct agreement form of the associated elements. The data analysis in this study suggests that the complexity of the Arabic grammatical gender system as well as the strategies employed by L2 acquirers in learning this system are two possible factors that seem to be contributing to the L2 learners' difficulties with grammatical gender.

The grammatical gender system in the Arabic language is a very rich and complex one. This complexity is evident in the many exceptions that the general rules of gender assignment display. Masculine nouns are sometimes suffixed with feminine markers, and feminine nouns are sometimes unmarked just like the masculine nouns. The analysis of the data shows that assigning gender to unmarked nouns is very problematic for adult L2 learners unless the noun has a natural gender referent. 48% of the noun gender assignment errors are of this type. The absence of morphological and semantic gender cues renders the noun ambiguous and confusing for learners. In such cases, learners tend to overgeneralize the feminine gender to both masculine and feminine nouns. The fact that many grammatical structures are involved in the gender agreement process in Arabic is also a major cause of the complexity of the Arabic gender system. As mentioned previously, there are six gender agreement structures: subject-verb, subject-noun, noun-adjective, noun-demonstrative pronoun, noun-pronoun, and noun-relative pronoun. The learners not only need to recognize these structures, but they also have to choose the correct gender agreement form in each structure.

On the other hand, the learning strategies that adult L2 learners employ in acquiring the Arabic grammatical system could also be contributing to the complications that these learners experience with the grammatical gender system. The analysis of the data show that the number of errors in assigning gender to nouns with feminine suffix is high. 30% of the errors found in gender assignment are of this type. This is an indication that the learners fail to activate the morphological gender cue in the noun. The data analysis also demonstrates that nouns with natural gender, marked or unmarked, do not pose any difficulty to L2 learners in gender assignment. Errors in gender assignment involve only

formal gender nouns, i.e. nouns with inanimate referent, whether marked or unmarked.

The fact that L2 learners of Arabic do not use the morphological gender cue but they use the semantic gender cue demonstrates a semantic approach to gender assignment. It suggests that the strategy that guides the L2 learners' choice of gender is based on the meaning of the noun and not its form. This learning strategy that is common among L2 learners may account for the difficulties these learners face with grammatical gender. Some grammatical gender studies in L1 acquisition found that L1 learners use an opposite strategy that relies on phonological and morphological cues for gender assignment at initial stages rather than semantic cues. These learners end up acquiring the system perfectly (Andersen, 1984; Cain et al., 1987; Finneman, 1992).

On the other hand, the data analysis demonstrates two different patterns of gender assignment errors. Feminine nouns that are marked by feminine suffix are assigned masculine gender while masculine nouns with no gender marker are assigned feminine gender. The learners overgeneralize the masculine gender in the former and the feminine gender in the later. Treating the two types of nouns, i.e. the marked and the unmarked, differently suggests that the learners are aware of the marker's presence. However, although they do realize the presence of the marker, they do not seem to be able to activate it as the analysis suggested above. This indicates that their knowledge of the gender marker's function is still not specified. The learners' awareness of the gender marker, i.e. the morphological cue, did not develop until later stages, and it still did not reach the stage of complete knowledge. For those of them who have been learning the language for more than ten years, this seems to suggest fossilisation in an incomplete stage of acquisition.

Hulk and Cornips (2006b) and Brouwer et al. (2008) suggest that the underspecification of the gender feature is what causes L2 learners to overgeneralize. Learners are aware of gender and gender cues but do not have complete knowledge of the gender system rules. This is a normal developmental stage that even L1 learners go through. However, while L1 learners progress beyond this stage and attain complete knowledge of the grammatical gender system rules, L2 learners don't. Their knowledge of the gender system remains incomplete. This incomplete knowledge of the grammatical gender system that L2 learners have is evident in the data in some gender agreement structures where the noun shows agreement with some elements while disagree with others.

It is possible that applying simple strategies in teaching the Arabic grammatical gender system may reduce some of the difficulties L2 learners experience with this grammatical category. The complexity of the Arabic gender system may be simplified by introducing the learners at the beginning level only to the general rules of assigning gender to nouns. At this initial stage, moreover, it is important to increase the learners' awareness of the gender morphological cues. Once the learners are able to assign gender to nouns according to the general rules, exceptions to these rules may be presented to them gradually. On the other hand, when teaching the grammatical system, the emphasis should be on the noun and its gender features. Gender agreement structures should not be introduced in details until the learners attain good knowledge of assigning gender to nouns.

### **Conclusion**

Research in the area of L2 acquisition attests that grammatical gender is one of the most challenging structures for L2 acquirers even at advance levels. The present study explores this problematic issue of grammatical gender in Arabic L2 acquisition; an area that did not receive enough attention in Arabic L2 studies. Its goal is to examine grammatical gender errors in the written production of advanced, adult L2 learners of Arabic. The 18,152 word corpus analyzed in the study was extracted from the Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC) v2 developed at Leeds University by Alfaifi, Atwel, & Hedaya (2014). The 453 gender errors identified in the data were classified and described according to the two aspects of the grammatical gender system: gender assignment to the noun, and gender agreement with the noun. The data analysis shows that advanced L2 learners have no difficulty in assigning gender to natural gender nouns. However, nouns with formal gender, i.e. inanimate nouns, proved to be challenging for them, especially when no morphological gender cues are available. On the other hand, the most problematic gender agreement structure for advanced L2 learners is found to be the noun-adjective gender agreement structure.

To sum up, the findings of this study indicate that grammatical gender is a challenging grammatical category for advanced, adult L2 learners of Arabic. These learners experience difficulties with both gender assignment and gender agreement. Although most of the text producers have been learning Arabic for an average of seven years, they are still struggling with this complex system. It seems that the grammatical gender system that these learners have developed did not progress beyond the developmental stage of overgeneralization. Some of them seem to have fossilized in this incomplete stage of acquisition. The

complexity of the Arabic grammatical system as well as the learning strategies that L2 learners use in acquiring this system are possible causes of the difficulties facing L2 learners with the grammatical gender in Arabic. Further research in this problematic area of Arabic L2 acquisition is needed to explore the factors creating this difficulty and finding ways to reduce its effect.

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## The use of English language outside the classroom

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### Abstract

This article presents a study which aimed to explore in what ways Armenian EFL students use their English language knowledge outside the classroom. The study involved 38 EFL learners of different English proficiency levels, ages, and genders. Data were collected using surveys and in-depth interviews. Findings indicate that most of the Armenian EFL learners use English out of the class very often, especially with social media, listening to songs, watching movies and clips, as well as travelling and searching on the Internet. Based on the findings, specific recommendations are offered to bring the students' interests into the classroom.

**Key words:** English, language, EFL, students, learners, outside the classroom, learning, teaching, study

### Introduction

Nowadays, most teenagers are learning English at a fast pace. This is mostly due the advancement of technology and the fact that English is more and more the pop culture of the world. Armenian teenagers are no exceptions. They also follow this stream and use it on a daily basis. Teenagers are very fortunate since they have a variety of avenues to choose from to learn and strengthen their knowledge in English and develop their proficiency. On the one hand, technology tools such as the Ipad, Internet and smart phones, are at their fingertips which gives them the opportunity to use English outside the classroom. On the other hand, if new technologies are not easily accessible, students can watch movies, listen to music, read journals, magazines or books.

### Purpose of the study

American University of Armenia organizes Experimental English Classes (EEC) with 10 week course duration. Students are in English class for two hours



and more every week to learn the English as a foreign language. But what would be best for them is to develop their proficiency with the use of these communicative classes and outside of class as well, since that will be very useful for them in the future. It is also interesting to see in which ways they use the language during their free time. The purpose of this study was to find out and explore how much and in which ways the students of the EEC use English outside the classroom.

A research question of this study was: *How do the EEC students use English outside of classroom?* To answer these research question a mixed-method study was designed with three EEC groups of EFL learners from different proficiency levels, level, age, and gender.

### Literature review

Research has been done about the use of English outside the classroom. The article by Grau (2009) mentions how German teens use English words and expressions learned through music lyrics, since it remains to be a very prominent source. Another source of English use, in Germany, is the advertisement slogans and expressions. Moreover, other findings showed that in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France, teenagers are in constant contact with English in three ways: (1) media, (2) personal contacts, and (3) travels (Berns, de Bot, & Hasebrink 2007, as cited in Grau, 2009).

The study done by Grau (2009), aimed to investigate and compare how German High school students use English outside their classroom and then in the classroom. Its objective was to study the ways in which English is used during their free time; be it by watching TV, listening to music, playing computer games, surfing on the Internet and traveling.

The author studied and compared the results between males and females. For data collection questionnaire and interviews were used. The study was conducted in two parts. The first part was led in the summer 2004 using standardized questioners for students and teachers. The second part was done in spring 2005 and as a follow up to the first one, interviews were conducted.

The results showed that German students use English much during their free time outside the classroom. There was also statistically significant difference between boys and girls. Boys prefer more playing computer games while girls watch English programs and listen to music. The findings also indicate that teachers' and learners' opinion about using English during free time are mostly similar.

Another research was done by Ranta (2010), in order to find out how the

Finnish students of upper secondary schools use English in and out of classroom. To collect data the researcher used surveys. Findings of the study revealed that about 80% of the students studied English and most of the time they use English to communicate with other non native speakers. According to the surveys other areas where Finnish students used English were music, internet and computers, as well as TV programs. The students were also asked what they will need English for in the future, to which they answered that those fields are travelling, future work, and studying in Finland and abroad.

On the other hand, the study done by Hyland (2004), found out that many student teachers use English outside the classroom mainly for listening and reading but not for speaking. The most likely reason why EFL learners do not use English for speaking is that they are afraid of making mistakes while speaking and using the language incorrectly (Hyland, 2004). Barker (2004), also agrees that for many students speaking outside the classroom may be a problem. To overcome their anxiety Barker (2004), suggests giving students speaking homework assignments, which will make them communicate t each other.

Waite (2011), claims, that when learners enjoy their studying they receive better results. He adds that students, especially children, enjoy as well as become more engaged and interested in learning when their interests and outdoor activities are brought into the class. Also, there is evidence that when EFL students, including young learners, are given choices in activity planning are more involved and demonstrate higher usage of language (Waite, 2011). Participants of the research done by Hyland (2004), suggested different kind of activities like reading newspapers and magazines, writing emails or speaking with friends for improving the language. Nearly the same results received Pickard (1996), examining outside the classroom activities and language learning strategies of German EFL learners. Other activities of using English students suggested were writing emails, reading academic books, and searching the internet Hyland (2004), Robb and Kano (2013) did a large scale experiment and found out that in the language learning outcome there was a huge difference between those students who did extensive reading outside the classroom and those who did not. Creating and involving students in real life activities outside the classroom enlarges students' learning environment (Guo, 2011). It is also worth to mention that the study done by Guo (2011), showed that students often do not notice the language such as signs, restaurants menus, etc., in the environment outside the class. Therefore, teachers should bring their students' attention to those learning opportunities as well Guo (2011).

## **Methodology**

This is a mixed-method study which was conducted over a period one week.

### **1.1 Participants**

The participants of this study we chose in the Experimental English courses (EEC) according to the following criteria:

- number of participants: 38 (16 boys, 22 girls)
- age: 11-16
- gender: boys and girls
- level of proficiency: pre-intermediate (11-13 years old, 6 boys, 7 girls), intermediate (13-14 years old, 4 boys, 5 girls), high-intermediate (15-16 years old, 6 boys, 10 girls)

### **1.2 Instruments**

For data collection, two instruments were used – a survey and an interview. First individual interviews were conducted to six EEC learners. After analysing the answers of the interview, the survey questions were formulated. Then, with the help of the survey, the students' attitude toward the usage of English outside the classroom found out.

### **1.3 Procedure**

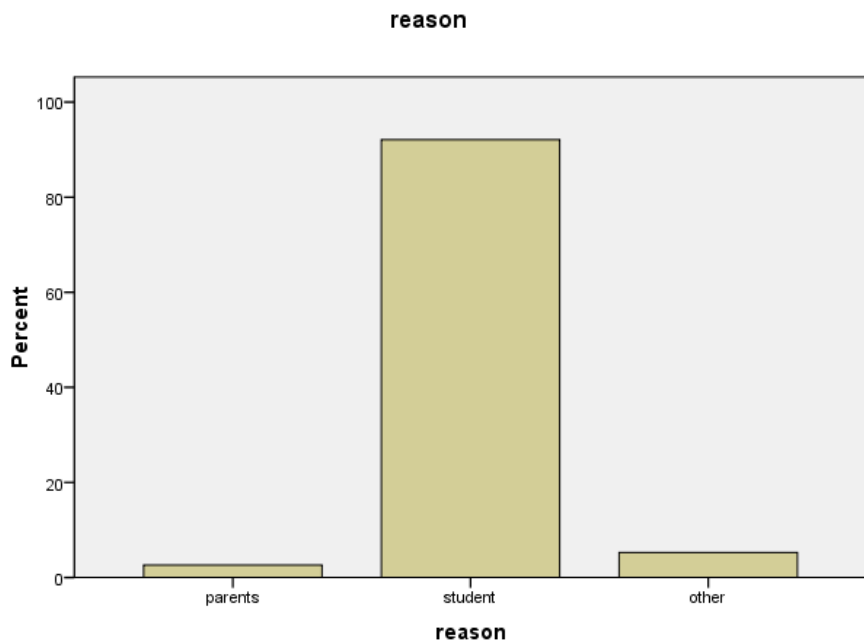
As it was already mentioned above, this study lasted one week. EEC students have English classes twice a week for one or two hours, depending of their level. At first, the interviews about their use of English outside the classroom were conducted (see Appendix 1) to 6 students in order to find out their likes, dislikes and needs. Then, the questionnaires was written upon their responses and 3 days later, were conducted the surveys (see Appendix 2) to three different levels spread on two days. After analyzing the results of the interview with the help of SPSS analyzer and collecting all data from the surveys, the results from both instruments were compared and conclusions were drawn.

## **Results**

After collecting the surveys from 38 EEC students, the data in the SPSS analyzer was compiled to find out the frequencies and the correlation. The research reveals that the EEC learners taking part in our 20-question survey use English for a significant part of their free time. Different analyses showed that 92% of the learners attend EEC from their own will.

Table 1: Reason

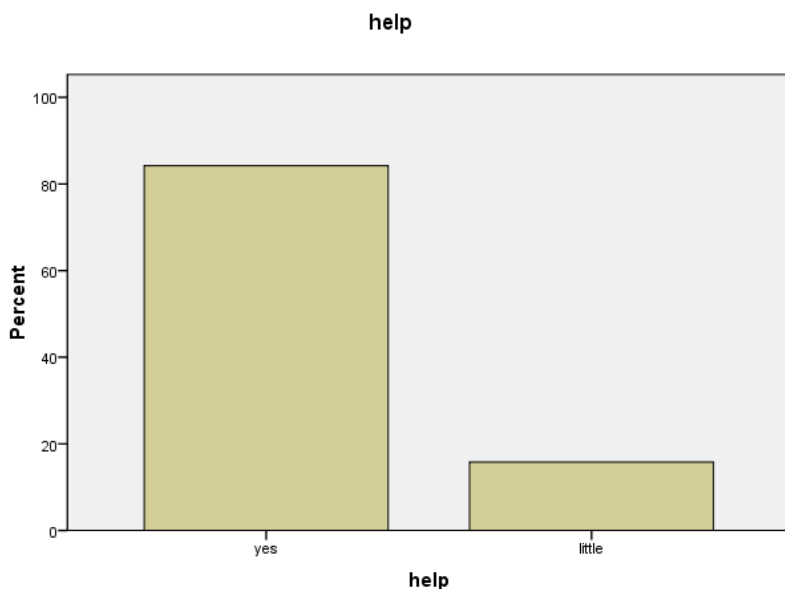
|       |         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Parents | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
|       | Student | 35        | 92.1    | 92.1          | 94.7               |
|       | Other   | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 100.0              |
|       | Total   | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



This shows that their motivation is linked to their willingness to learn English. Plus, 84% stated that EEC helps them use English in their free time.

Table 2: Help

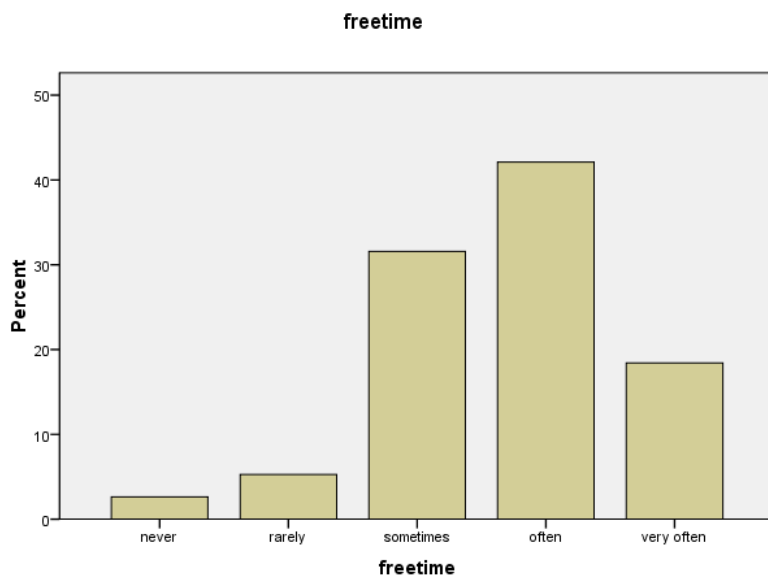
|           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid yes | 32        | 84.2    | 84.2          | 84.2               |
| little    | 6         | 15.8    | 15.8          | 100.0              |
| Total     | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



From 14 out of 20 questions Likert scale of 1 to 5 (5 being “very often”), was used. As for the use of English outside the classroom 18.4% (7 out of 38) replied very often, 42.1% often (16 out of 38), 31.6% sometimes (13 out of 38), 5.3 rarely (2 out of 38) and surprisingly 2.6% (1 student) replied never.

Table 3: Free time

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Never      | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
|       | Rarely     | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 7.9                |
|       | Sometimes  | 12        | 31.6    | 31.6          | 39.5               |
|       | Often      | 16        | 42.1    | 42.1          | 81.6               |
|       | very often | 7         | 18.4    | 18.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

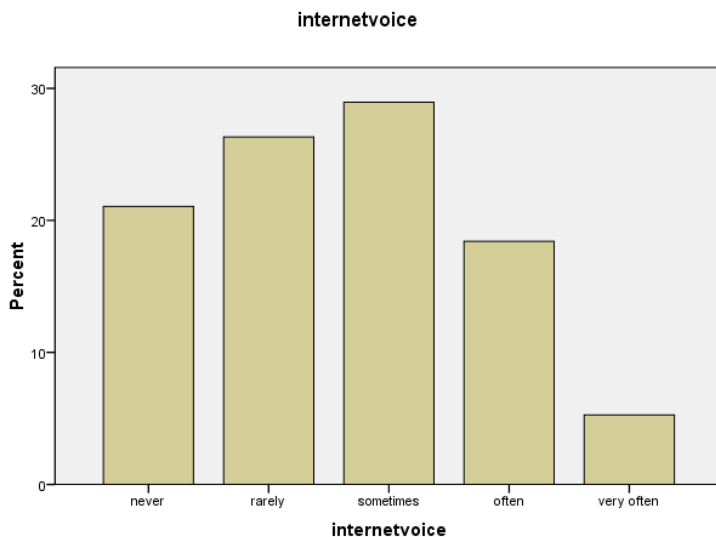


Does the learner speak in English with their friends via Internet voice (example: Skype)?

28.9% replied sometimes, 26.3% - rarely, 21.1% - never, 18.4% - often, and 5.3% - very often.

Table 4: Intervoice

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Never      | 8         | 21.1    | 21.1          | 21.1               |
|       | Rarely     | 10        | 26.3    | 26.3          | 47.4               |
|       | Sometimes  | 11        | 28.9    | 28.9          | 76.3               |
|       | often      | 7         | 18.4    | 18.4          | 94.7               |
|       | very often | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

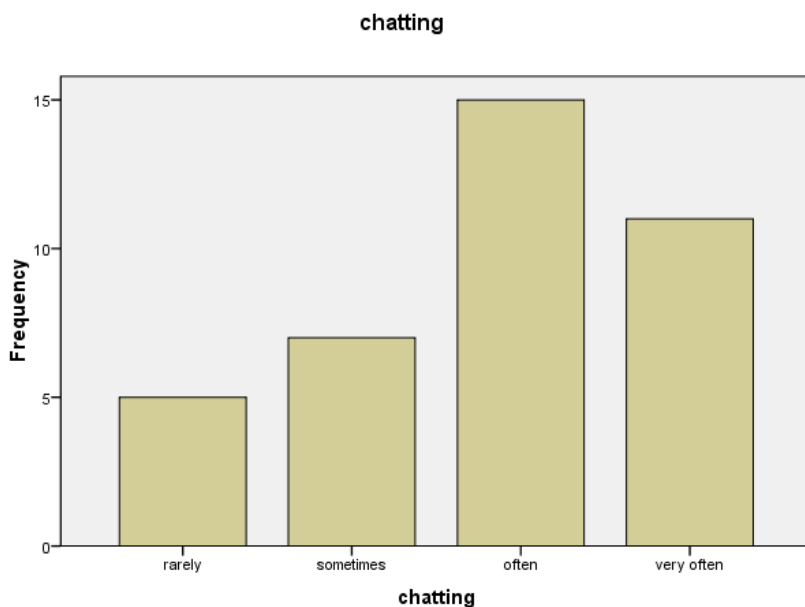


Does the learner use English for chatting or messaging?

39% said that they use English often, 28.9 – very often, 18.4% - sometimes, and 13.2% - rarely.

Table 5: Chatting

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | rarely     | 5         | 13.2    | 13.2          | 13.2               |
|       | sometimes  | 7         | 18.4    | 18.4          | 31.6               |
|       | often      | 15        | 39.5    | 39.5          | 71.1               |
|       | very often | 11        | 28.9    | 28.9          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



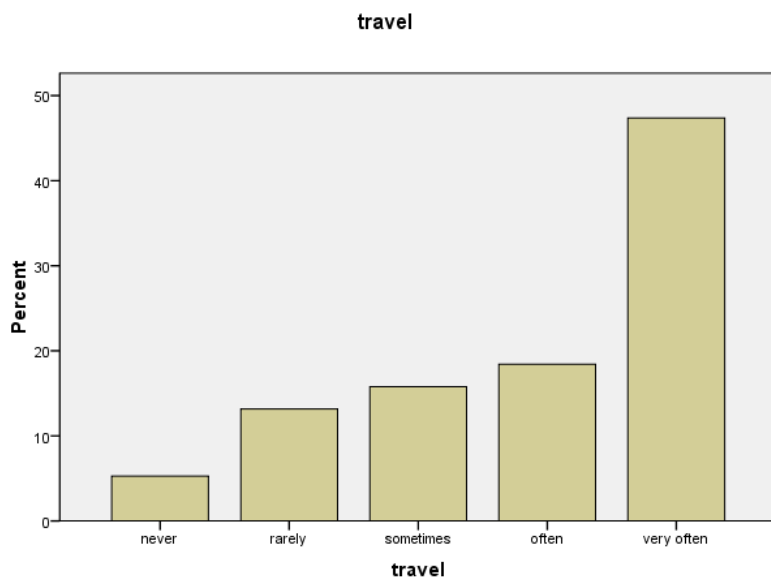


Does the learner use English while travelling?

47.4% responded very often, 18.4% - often, 15.8% - sometimes, 13.2% - rarely and only 5.3% - never.

Table 6: Travelling

|             | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid never | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 5.3                |
| rarely      | 5         | 13.2    | 13.2          | 18.4               |
| sometimes   | 6         | 15.8    | 15.8          | 34.2               |
| often       | 7         | 18.4    | 18.4          | 52.6               |
| very often  | 18        | 47.4    | 47.4          | 100.0              |
| Total       | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

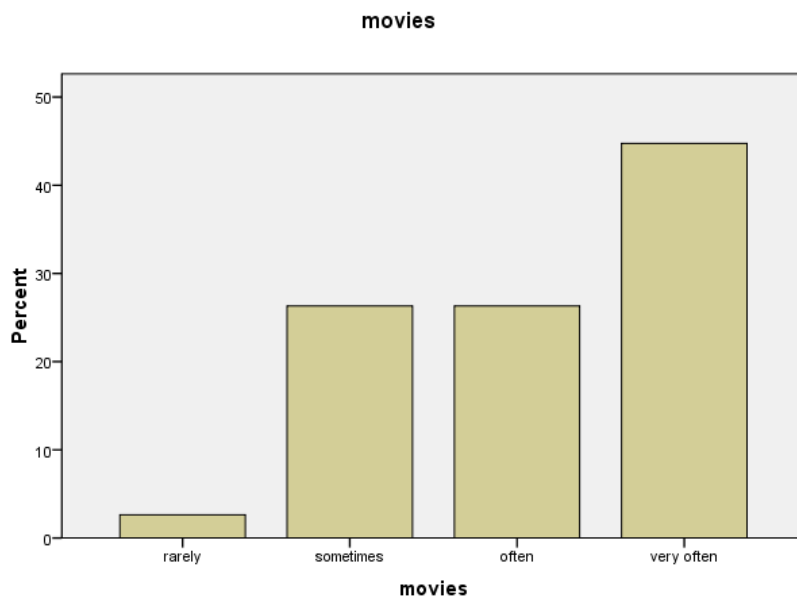


Does the learner watch movies in English?

44.7% replied very often, 26.3% - often, 26.3% - sometimes, and only 2.6% rarely watch movies in English.

Table 7: Movies

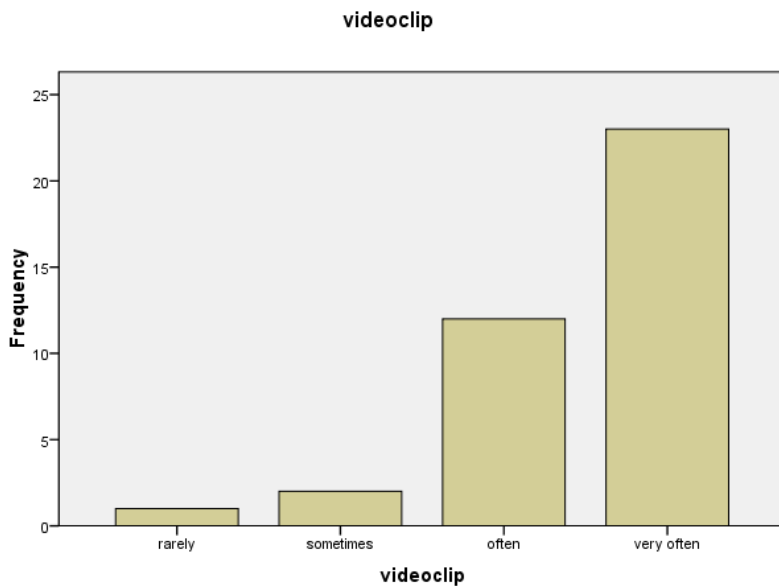
|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | rarely     | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
|       | sometimes  | 10        | 26.3    | 26.3          | 28.9               |
|       | often      | 10        | 26.3    | 26.3          | 55.3               |
|       | very often | 17        | 44.7    | 44.7          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



Does the learner watch videos or clips (ex: YouTube) in English? 60% replied very often, 31.6% - often, 5.3% - sometimes, and 2.6% - rarely.

Table 8: Video clips

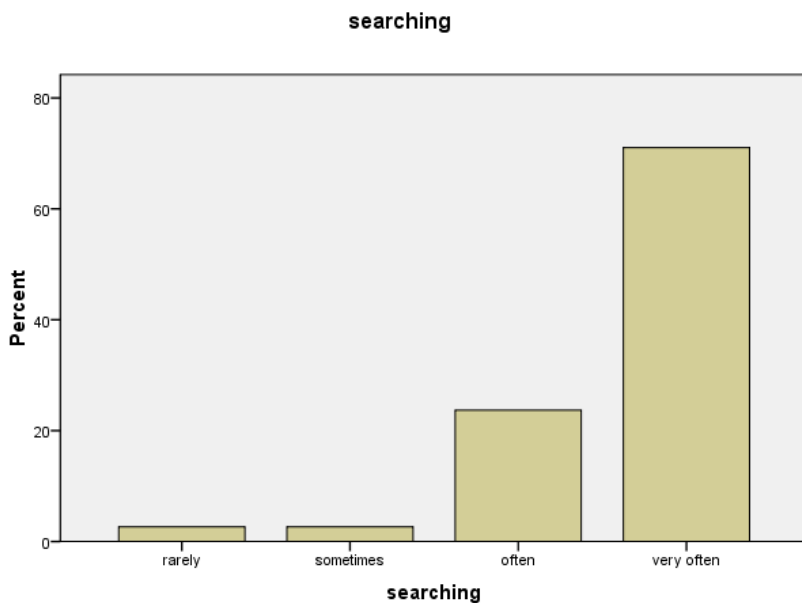
|              | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid rarely | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
| sometimes    | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 7.9                |
| often        | 12        | 31.6    | 31.6          | 39.5               |
| very often   | 23        | 60.5    | 60.5          | 100.0              |
| Total        | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



When searching on the Internet how often does the student use English? 71.1% replied very often, 23.7% - often, 2.6% - sometimes, and 2.6% - rarely.

Table 9: Searching

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | rarely     | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
|       | sometimes  | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 5.3                |
|       | often      | 9         | 23.7    | 23.7          | 28.9               |
|       | very often | 27        | 71.1    | 71.1          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

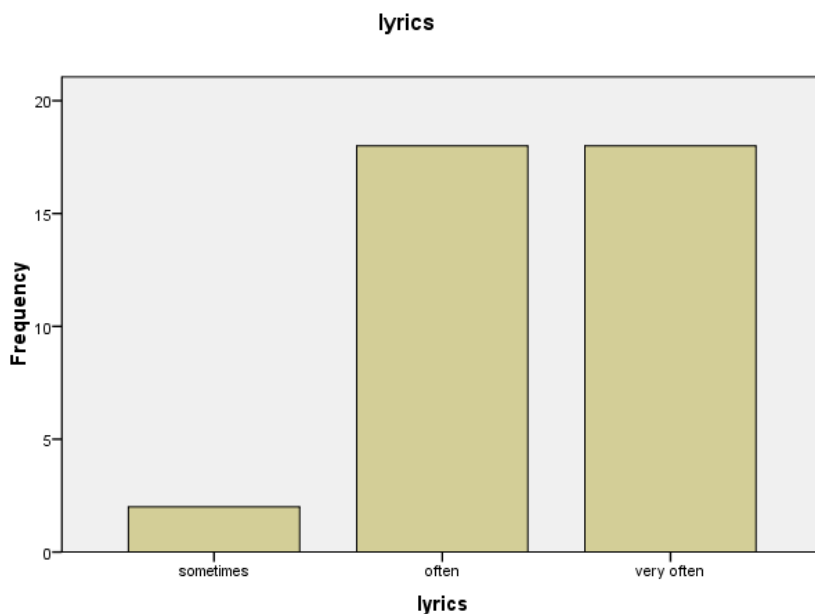


Does the student understand the lyrics of English songs?

47.4% said that they understand the words often, 47.4% - very often, and only 5.3% - sometimes.

Table 10: Lyrics

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | sometimes  | 2         | 5.3     | 5.3           | 5.3                |
|       | often      | 18        | 47.4    | 47.4          | 52.6               |
|       | very often | 18        | 47.4    | 47.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

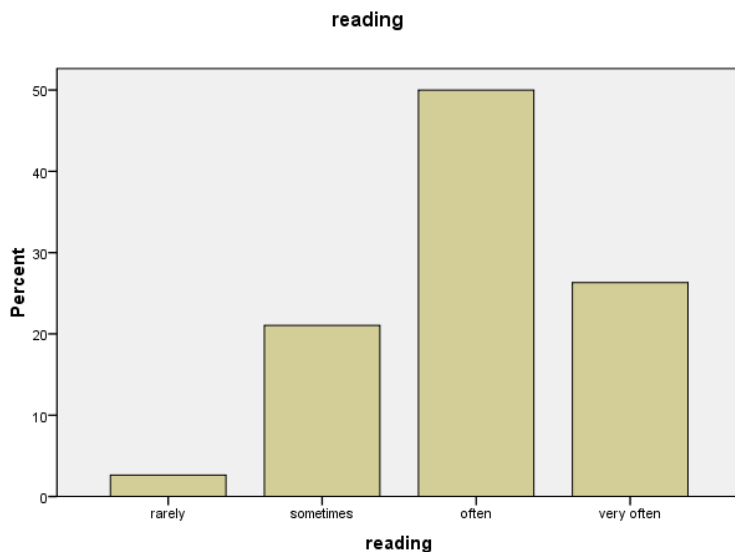


Does the student read in English?

50% replied often, 26.3% - very often, 21.1% - sometimes, and 2.6% said that they rarely read in English.

Table 11: Reading

|       |            | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | rarely     | 1         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 2.6                |
|       | sometimes  | 8         | 21.1    | 21.1          | 23.7               |
|       | often      | 19        | 50.0    | 50.0          | 73.7               |
|       | very often | 10        | 26.3    | 26.3          | 100.0              |
|       | Total      | 38        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |



For the **correlation** part of the analysis, five questions were chosen to correlate with the "Use of English during their free time" item, to find out how they spend their time outside the classroom with the use of English. In this study Spearman's analysis instead of Pearson was used, since the correlation was done with 1 to 5 numbered scales and not percentages.

- 1) *Use of English during their free time and chatting in English were not correlated, since  $r = .015$  and  $p > .928$ .*

|                |           |                         | free time | chatting |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Spearman's rho | free time | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000     | .015     |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .         | .928     |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38       |
|                | chatting  | Correlation Coefficient | .015      | 1.000    |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .928      | .        |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38       |

- 2) *There was no correlation of .078 ( $p = n.s$ ) between *use of English during their free time* and *writing emails in English*.*

|                |           |                         | free time | emails |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Spearman's rho | free time | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000     | .078   |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .         | .640   |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38     |
|                | emails    | Correlation Coefficient | .078      | 1.000  |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .640      | .      |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38     |

- 3) *Use of English during their free time and watching movies* were significantly correlated since  $r = .382$  and  $p < .05$ .

|                |           |                         | free time | movies |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Spearman's rho | free time | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000     | .382*  |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .         | .018   |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38     |
|                | movies    | Correlation Coefficient | .382*     | 1.000  |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .018      | .      |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38     |

- 4) *Use of English during their free time and watching video clips in English (Ex: You Tube)* were significantly correlated since  $r = .322$  and  $p < .05$ .

|                |           |                         | free time | video clip |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Spearman's rho | free time | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000     | .322*      |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .         | .049       |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38         |
|                | videoclip | Correlation Coefficient | .322*     | 1.000      |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .049      | .          |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38         |



- 5) There was a non-significant correlation between *use of English during their free time* and *listening to songs in English* since .233 and  $p = n.s$

|                |           |                         | free time | songs |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Spearman's rho | free time | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000     | .233  |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .         | .159  |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38    |
|                | songs     | Correlation Coefficient | .233      | 1.000 |
|                |           | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .159      | .     |
|                |           | N                       | 38        | 38    |

### Discussion and conclusion

The research question of this study was: "How do the EEC students use English outside of class?" The findings reveal that nearly half of the EEC students use English outside the classroom very often, especially with:

- social media (more than half, often and very often),
- listening to songs, watching movies and clips (more than half),
- travelling (47%),
- searching (71%).

The results also show that there was no correlation between the *Use of English during their free time* and *Chatting in English*; *Use of English during their free time* and *Writing emails in English*, as well as *Use of English during their free time* and *Listening to songs in English*. However, there is significant value between *Use of English during their free time* and *Watching movie sand Use of English during their free time* and *Watching video clips in English*.

Two instruments show that:

- EEC helps most of the students to use English outside the classroom.
- Many learners think that it is the pop culture of the world; and that they would use English anyway.

### Limitations

1. This research study was based on self-evaluation only.
2. The EEC students were not observed, therefore we have doubts as for their complete honesty.

3. Our doubts are based on the fact that English remains to be a popular language, and the students want to look trendy by admitting that they are frequent users of the language.

### **Recommendations**

Since the results of this study show the ways in which the EEC students use English we recommend the following:

1. The extra materials should be in the format of using current songs and written materials linked to social media.
2. That class discussions should include the movies or programs that the EEC students watch.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Please know that your answers are to remain confidential. We do not need your name, only your information for our study. So, please be as honest as you can.**

1. How old are you?
2. How old were you when you started to learn English (EEC or elsewhere)?
3. What is the role of English in your life?
4. What is the importance of English in your life?
5. How did you come to that conclusion?
6. How do you feel using English at school, EEC and during the free time, which one do you enjoy more?
7. What is the role of teacher for learning English?
8. Why are you studying at EEC (your parents make you study, your friends are studying here, you want to study at EEC, etc.)?
9. Do you like coming to EEC? Why, or why not?
10. Do you use English outside the classroom?
11. If yes, how do you use it (speaking with your friends via Skype, listen to the songs, watching movies, programs, reading books, writing mails, SMS...)?
12. Where do you use English (at home, in the street...)?
13. How much do you use it?
14. Do you think the English you learn at EEC helps you for outside of class activities or events conducted in English? If yes, how?

## Appendix 2

### RESEARCH SURVEY

The following questions are to help us collect data for our research project. You do not identify yourself, therefore, your answers remain confidential. Thank you for your time and honesty.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Read the following questions
- Circle the right answer for you

1. What is your gender? a) boy b) girl
2. How old are you? a) 11 b) 12 c) 13 d) 14 e) 15 f) 16
3. Where were you born? a) Armenia b) elsewhere.  
Specify: (name of country) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you study at EEC? (You may circle more than one answer)  
a) My parents' wish b) I want to learn English c) My friends come to EEC  
d) Other: please explain. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you like studying at EEC?  
a) Yes, a lot b) A little c) No. Not really
6. Does EEC help you use English during your free time?  
a) Yes, a lot b) A little c) No. Not really

| For the following questions, circle the right number in the scale.                          |            |       |            |        |       |
|---|------------|-------|------------|--------|-------|
|   | very often | often | some-times | rarely | never |
| 7. Do you use English during your free time?  | 5          | 4     | 3          | 2      | 1     |
| 8. Do you speak in English with your friends?   | 5          | 4     | 3          | 2      | 1     |
| 9. How often do you socialize with English-speaking friends?                                | 5          | 4     | 3          | 2      | 1     |
| 10. Do you speak in English with your friends via Internet voice call (ex: Skype or other)? | 5          | 4     | 3          | 2      | 1     |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Do you use English for chatting or messaging (ex: SMS, Skype, Facebook or other)?*             |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Do you write emails in English?*   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. Do you use English while travelling?   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Do you watch movies in English?  |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Do you watch TV and other programs in English?   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. Do you watch videos or clips (such as YouTube) in English?                                     |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. When searching on the Internet, how often do you search in English?                            |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. Do you listen to English songs?  |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. Do you understand the lyrics of English songs?   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. Do you read printed materials (books, articles...) written in English?                         |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| <b>*For the questions 7 and 8, we mean using the English language and not the English letters.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Thank you again :)</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |

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## **Classification and quality criteria for Open Educational Resources in the field of foreign language learning**

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### **Abstract**

Foreign language teachers use online repositories on everyday basis to find appropriate activities for their lessons. The question is: How can content providers support them in finding exactly what they need and in retrieving high quality resources?

This question has been discussed in the context of the European project "Open Discovery Space". The answers are: a taxonomy of searching mechanism and quality criteria of online resources from the methodologic point of view. Correspondingly, this paper introduces a classification of digital resources according to the four skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening/watching) and two language use types (grammar, vocabulary), representing the changing paradigm of foreign language teaching and learning. Further the paper identifies quality criteria for designing online learning materials with regard to content, methodology, technic and design. Finally, the findings are illustrated by an example of a learning scenario.

**Key words:** e-learning, classification, quality criteria, OER, foreign language learning

### **Introduction**

The Open Discovery Space<sup>3</sup> Portal (ODSP) is one of the richest online repositories providing teaching material for education. The overall goal of the ODS project is to develop and implement a web-based access point where teachers can find educational resources made by others. Teachers can readily use these materials in their own classes, or adapt them to better match their particular educational context and the capabilities and learning styles of their students.

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<sup>3</sup> Open Discovery Space is a European project funded by the Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP).

To successfully develop a purpose-built portal, the users and their needs and their expectations towards such a portal are the key to establish a sustainable pan-European ODS portal of educational resources (Laurillard, Oliver, Wasson, & Hoppe, 2009).

One question is central to this issue: what do teachers need in order to uptake resource-based e-learning? With this question in mind first we focus on the needs and expectations of teachers towards the ODSP.

In order to find out what teachers need for the adaptation of e-learning, stakeholders in the context of school education across Europe were invited to 92 workshops in 19 European countries. 2300 participants attended the workshops: school teachers (in-service or pre-service) of all education levels, teacher trainers, curriculum developers, and educational policy makers from local/regional/state level, students and parents participated.

The goal of the workshops was to build an initial contact with these stakeholders, to explore their teaching praxis and raise awareness of resource based learning (RBL). At the same time the visionary workshops aimed to gain their feedback, as well as their reflections and needs for the repository. The methodology of the survey followed a holistic approach: a questionnaire with multiple-choice and with open-ended questions was filled in by teachers and interviews were conducted. The survey and its detailed results can be found in separate papers (Clements, Krajcso, Moises, Lazonder, & Pirkkalainen, 2013; Pirkkalainen 2013), within this article we outline only the most significant outcomes of the needs analysis.

First of all, teachers need high quality resources. Furthermore, the pool of resources must be big enough to offer something for many. The searching mechanism for the resources is also crucial; teachers need efficient ways for searching and finding materials (reached within three clicks) from different curricula backgrounds (classification by subject, topics and level).

The last requirement means that a portal should use a Controlled Vocabulary (via IEEE LOM) in order to ensure the effectiveness of information storage and resource search. A high quality controlled vocabulary will help the user to identify and locate desired educational content easily and though save time.

In the context of the ODS project, a suggested vocabulary covering all domains of the school education was developed. In this paper we focus on a vocabulary and quality criteria for OER (Open Educational Resources) in the field of language teaching.

### Classification theory

In this context the design of language teaching methods include four components: learning and teaching environment, teacher, learner, and activity (including materials/resources). Resource-based learning is a view which gives prominence to the role of resources in the teaching and learning process.

The classification theory of language teaching activities determine different factors playing a role in their design and implementation: age of the learner, teaching approach, topic, form of cooperation, type of the activities, task, assessment, equipment, technical and other pre-requisites, etc. (Häussermann & Piepho, 1996; Segermann, 1994; Neuner, Krüger, & Grewer, 1981). Further classifications exist from the technical point of view (Felix, 2002; Rösler & Ulrich, 2003; Tiutenko & Koller, 2007; Westhofen, 2001), categorizing on-line activities: virtual classrooms, Hot Potatoes, WebQests, etc.

The classification theory lacks the user involvement and though remains to be the domain of experts rather than users. When teachers look for a learning activity for their teaching goal and specific target group, they want to find resources as quickly as possible, probably within three clicks (Clements et al., 2013; Pirkkalainen, 2013).

Considering the teachers' practice, it can be stated that practitioners search by learning activity type, topic and level, as these three factors seem to be the most informative and decisive. The rest of the factors build an additional information category (called advanced search) – but they are not a core for the first searching mechanism. For a better understanding, these three key factors are described in the following paragraph. The most recently and commonly used guideline which describes the achievement *levels* of foreign language learners is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), containing six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. The required *topics* depend on the institutional purpose (curricula), the goal of the whole class and also each and every individual taking part in the course; and can reach from everyday life themes to complex special issues.

The last category *learning activity type* is much more demanding, as the concept of language teaching has changed radically during the last years. Whereas in former days, it was mainly characterized by written grammar and translation exercises, nowadays more skill-oriented activities are prevalent (Bausch, Herbert, & Krumm, 2003; DESI-Konsortium, 2008; Hinkel, 2006; Richards & Renandy, 2002). This applies also for the context of school (Pinter, 2006). In the next chapter a complex classification of learning activities will be proposed.



### Classification of learning activities

According to the “new” paradigm of language teaching, language learning activities, exercises and tasks - independent from the language - can be classified as follows (see also Frimmel & Krajcso, 2013a, 2013b; annex I. *Language learning classification*):

- **Skills**
  - Active skills
    - Speaking
    - Writing
  - Passive skills
    - Reading
    - Listening and watching
- **Language use**
  - Grammar
  - Vocabulary

When teaching a foreign language in class, it is essential to foster all four skills mentioned above (speaking, writing, reading, listening and watching). For this purpose, it is important to subdivide these rubrics into pre-, during- and post-activities. Young, Hofer & Harris (2011) explicitly suggest this subdivision only for the passive skill of reading and the active skill of writing. However, this sub-classification makes sense for all four skills.

According to the paradigm transformation in language teaching theory *language use activities* (grammar and vocabulary) should be embedded in the activities of the skills. Here they build a separate element – as users are used to search materials with keywords grammar and vocabulary. Anyway they should be linked to the specific skill they refer to and in a later stage they could be completely integrated to the used skill.

The skills are subdivided into pre-, during- and post-activities (see also annex I. *Language learning classification*) At the beginning of a learning scenario, knowledge should always be activated or generated in some way, e.g. by brainstorming, researching, etc. This means that students can activate their prior knowledge or research a new topic before they start with the during-activity. Also information on the educational purposes and objectives should be part of the pre-activity, which helps learners in terms of focus and comprehension (Young et al., 2011). During-activities deal with new learning insights in a specific field of language learning. After the during-activity, a post-activity can involve a knowledge/competence deepening task (mainly active skills activities e.g. text

production), a reflection sequence on the during-activity, e.g. students can discuss what has been dealt with in the during-activity with their peers, share content with other students, perform their finished work in class, etc. Also the evaluation of work and the assessment of goals' achievement can be a post-activity (Young et al., 2011).

### **Quality theory**

Classification as such is crucial for the search mechanism, but quality factors determine the long-term successfulness of digital resources on the users' side (Ehlers, 2002; Lehmann & Bloh, 2010). In the case of OER these factors relate to input (quality of the structure and potential), implementation (process) and output (outcome) aspects (Bloh, 2010, p. 18ff). In this paper I focus on the input quality criteria of OER and summarize the main results of the research in the context of language learning and teaching in order to determine quality characteristics for OER. Although building the basis for high quality learning scenarios, these criteria catalogue has not been proven as causal for the learning effect yet (Kerres & Preußler, 2015, p. 46). More research is needed to confirm and extend the following quality criteria.

By the categorization of OER quality requirements a user-friendly version is chosen (for a more complex one see e.g. Fey, 2015, p. 74ff). These traditional requirements refer to the following four main categories, which may partly overlap each other:

1. Content
2. Methodology
3. Design
4. Technic

In comparison to traditional learning objects digital resources should have an added value, which justifies the additional effort in design and which should be also transparent for the learner (Rösler & Ulrich 2003:141, Kreidl 2011).

### **Content**

Content deals with learning topics and subtopics and their educational appeals and the context of language learning. Characteristics of digital learning resources basically do not differ from traditional ones. The content must be chosen on the basis of:

1. context of learning (educational or professional context),
2. target group (its specific conditions, interests, knowledge, etc.),
3. educational purpose.

Following the literature in the field of language learning (Niehoff 2003:36, Westhoff, 2008, Meyer 2004, Bratengeyer & Bubbenzer & Jäger & Schwed 2015) the content display following aspects, here categorized in general characteristics, attitudes and knowledge factors.

#### *General characteristics*

- up-to date and/or updatable, but at the same time reusable,
- authentic,
- informative,
- factual correct,
- understandable, technical terms are explained,
- clear structured, coherent, complex issues are organized meaningfully and understandably, avoiding redundancies
- the sample of content is transparent and well founded
- links to background information for deepening knowledge and know-how are available
- dictionary / glossary / explanations are/may be integrated

#### *Attitudes*

- including educational appeal, stimulating learners to up-take attitudes,
- motivating, having a relevance for the learner, his/her attention is captured and maintained,
- polarizing meanings, generating tension, which is the basis for “authentic” interaction,
- vivid, including examples, novel, uncertain events and/or sense of humor,
- free from strong or mistakable stereotypes, meanings and positions, obscene and radical illustrations, etc.

#### *Knowledge/competence*

- linked to the learners’ professional (e.g. curriculum, occupation) context, life and experiences, e.g. activate and recall prior knowledge,
- varied, include more than one perspective of a topic, motivating learners to decision making,
- besides information it includes also know-how (strategic competence) aspects,
- one step/level over the learners’ knowledge regarding complexity of vocabulary.

## **Methodology**

Methodology refers to the didactical principles, learning theory and praxis, purposes and design of tasks and takes into account the up-to-date research in the disciplines psychology, sociology, education, linguistics and neurophysiology (Arnold, Koch-Priewe, & Lin-Klitzing, 2007, p. 32ff).

In context of OER approved methodologic concepts remain valid, when ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is implemented as an instrument for a didactically meaningful purpose. The didactic concept is the most crucial aspect for the acceptance and success of the ICT implementation. According to literature (Niehoff, 2003; Meyer, 2004) the methodology is divided into goals, activities and tasks.

### *Goals*

- oriented towards the learners' context,
- oriented towards the methodological variety,
- learner-centered (oriented towards the learners' interests, abilities, learning progress and other specific conditions),
- coherent and structured into main purposes and sub-goals,
- in a transparent way represented (purposes and benefits are recognizable), so that the learner is able to develop consciousness for the learning purpose,
- the achievement of goals is provable in some way.

### *Activities*

- are clearly structured and coherent,
- oriented towards the methodological purpose and linked to the content,
- divided in pre- during- and post-activities (see chapter Classification of learning activities),
- foster decision-making, autonomous, critical and life-long learning processes,
- foster varied learning possibilities,
- foster not only individual work, but also interaction and communication if necessary,
- provide feedback, review, information on assessment, to foster the learners' acknowledgment.

### *Tasks*

- varied, fostering the learners' intrinsic motivation,
- different levels of difficulty (at the beginning easy, later more complex),

- also the dimension of media competence is taken into account (competence of media critic, usage, design and publishing),
- clearly structured and coherent,
- also coherent (e.g. instructions follow nominal or verbal style, formal or informal form), correct terminology and free from failure,
- meaningful for the purpose and the learner,
- praxis and real-life oriented, realistic problem solving, fostering the acquisition of application-oriented knowledge.

### **Design**

Design involves all aspects we can sense with our organ of perception: visual and auditory issues (text, graphic, symbolic, color, background, picture, video, sound, etc.). High quality design reflects following characteristics (Frey, 2015; Niehoff, 2003):

- user-centric,
- appropriate and didactically meaningful chosen (oriented towards educational purposes, context, learners' specifications and content),
- functional, logic and focused,
- consistent, coherent and complementary,
- integrated in a learning motivating way,
- ergonomic (e.g. color contrasts are pleasant),
- aesthetic (attractive to the learners),
- high-quality,
- is in any way harmful to anybody,
- the written or oral text is well readable, audible,
- appealing and clear layout.

### **Technic**

In this paper the category of technic deals with the pedagogical view of learning systems, their functionalities and possibilities; and does not include implications to hard-, software or engineering issues.

The implementation of LMS (Learning Management System), media and tools should be oriented towards the methodology: goal, task, content, specification of the learner and the context. In case of e-learning the didactical purpose is in the middle of attention and not technic or tools. The rule is: as much technic as necessary, and as little as possible. According to the literature (Salmon, 2004; Niehoff, 2003; Hemsing, 2015; Mikuszeit & Szudra, 2009) the different technical arrangements work immaculate and fast and fulfil following prerequisites:

- functionality,
- intuitive usage, the user should feel a certainty by using ICT,
- support (information on different technical possibilities, user guidelines, contact),
- clear, consistent and user-friendly regarding structure, terminology of the tools and their use (e.g. navigation),
- continuity regarding learning objects, tools, LMS,
- user-friendly surface (as simple as possible),
- possibilities of individual, cooperative, synchrony and asynchrony learning/work on content (e.g. groupware),
- different communication channels (chat, mailing list, video conferencing, news-groups),
- possibilities for upload, store, edit, reuse and transfer of different learning materials,
- possibilities for learning assessment, automatic documentation of achieved goals.

These recommendations are crucial for ensuring quality criteria and simplifying searching mechanism, but how does a high quality learning scenario look like in real-life?

### **Implementation to praxis**

For illustration reasons the resource portal Learn English of the British Council (see references) has been chosen. The example learning scenario presented in this paper is called "The Fridge". It is about a man who sends a Facebook friendship invitation to a woman who he met in a restaurant. However, before accepting his invitation, she first wants to get to know him better. Therefore, he invites her for dinner to his place and cooks lasagna for her.

This learning scenario involves a pre-, during- and a post-activity. In the pre-activity, vocabulary that is used in the during-activity, i.e. the film, is dealt with – words have to be matched with definitions. In the during-activity, the student watches a short film (the man who invites a woman for dinner tells the whole story outlined above). It is possible to have a look at the transcript of the film at any time during the whole learning scenario.

In the post-activity, the learner has to put given sentences in the correct order so that they describe the story presented in the film. Afterwards he/she has to indicate if given sentences about the film are true or false. Finally, the recipe of the lasagna the man has cooked is given. There is also a forum where people can discuss the film, the recipe, etc.

This learning scenario was chosen as an example because it illustrates how important it is to offer students a variety of activities, e.g. vocabulary exercise (pre-activity), watching a film (during-activity) and putting sentences in the correct order, true-false-exercise and discussion (post-activity). "The Fridge" also shows how different learning styles and paces can be coped with as students can take as much time as they need for completing the scenario, and moreover, it is possible to have a look at the transcript of the film at any time. This supports self-controlled learning and students' autonomy and may enhance the learning intensity.

Furthermore, this learning scenario is especially suitable for language teaching and learning purposes as learning processes and knowledge construction are focussed – students have to match words and definitions themselves. In addition it is functional and user-oriented, i.e. the learning scenario presents a useful result - here, the lasagna recipe is given, and, it fosters personal reflection and interaction – in the discussion forum, students can discuss the film, the recipe, etc.

From the content point of view this learning scenario is real-life-oriented because a recipe is given that can actually be tried by the students and because the discussion forum allows students to exchange their experience with the lasagna, the film, etc. Moreover, social activities on Facebook represent the starting point of the during-activity, which are an important part of young people's life. This makes it especially vivid and interesting for them to complete the learning scenario. Further the learning scenario "The Fridge" is up-to-date and authentic as it deals with getting to know new friends and adding them in Facebook – this attracts the students' attention. Furthermore, it is informative including background information like an explanation for the term "lasagne" and presents how a lasagna recipe can be tried by the students (representing know-how). Narrating the happenings by talking into the inside of fridge / to us – makes the monologue of the actor vivid and gives the learning scenario an unexpected plus.

The visual design of the learning scenario is simple and practical. The colours are reduced to grey and green and their shadows have a clean appearance. In addition they make a good detail contrast (e.g. by defining the content areas and dividing the activities into different sections) and match the websites' main colours. But, the typography - especially the font size - could be more consistent, gaining a more professional effect.

The technical realisation of the learning scenario is functional, the site works fast, the navigation bar is simple, it is clear what is clickable. The icons are

transparent, understandable and make the activities easy to use. However, according to the postings some users have difficulties to play the video, but a link with a description is provided and technical support is given through the LearnEnglish Team. Anyway, the technical support/link should be placed more transparently, perhaps included in the right column – in case of following the two-column layout meaningfully. The answers can be checked at the end of every activity and are also included in the pdf version of the learning scenario.

As far as the use of technologies is concerned in language learning, this example has shown that technology enhanced materials do have a lot of potential. Anyway it is challenging to design effective online resources for language teaching and learning purposes. Therefore content providers should take into account the quality catalogue and the classification – presented in this paper. Employing the principles offered in the corresponding chapters will help all stakeholders to ensure that their efforts are rewarded, ultimately, with satisfied users.

### Conclusion

This paper described the outcomes of the ODS needs analysis carried out with 1175 participants from 19 European countries. According to the main findings of the needs analysis teachers have to be prevented from getting overwhelmed by the mass of resources that can be found in the World Wide Web. It is crucial to support them to find high quality resources and to retrieve easily what they need for their purposes. Accordingly recent research on classification and quality criteria for open educational resources has been described, and, a taxonomy and quality catalogue have been outlined. Furthermore, the outcomes of the paper were illustrated via a real-life learning activity.

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# **Annex I. Language Learning Classification**

|         |                           |                                     |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Reading | Pre-Reading Activities    | Activating / Generating knowledge   |
|         |                           | Making predictions                  |
|         | During Reading Activities | Aesthetic reading                   |
|         |                           | Analytical reading                  |
|         |                           | Authentic reading                   |
|         |                           | Consulting resources                |
|         |                           | Content-oriented reading            |
|         |                           | Detailed reading                    |
|         |                           | Directed / Guided reading           |
|         |                           | Dramatic reading / Reader's theatre |
|         |                           | Global reading                      |
|         |                           | Independent reading                 |
|         |                           | Literature circles or book clubs    |
|         |                           | Literature reading                  |
|         |                           | Literature study                    |
|         |                           | Nonfiction reading                  |
|         |                           | Orientating reading                 |
|         |                           | Reading other forms of text         |
|         |                           | Rereading                           |
|         |                           | Selective reading                   |
|         |                           | Sustained silent reading            |
|         | Post-Reading Activities   | Completing scales                   |
|         |                           | Creating text-related artifacts     |
|         |                           | Critical analysis / Reflection      |
|         |                           | Descriptive analysis                |
|         |                           | Discussion                          |
|         |                           | Finding information gaps            |
|         |                           | Making comparisons                  |
|         |                           | Quizzing / Testing                  |
|         |                           | Reading discussion                  |
|         |                           | Reconstituting / Reconsidering text |
|         |                           | Sharing / Collaborating             |
|         |                           | Summarizing                         |

|          |                            |   |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
| Writing  | Pre-Writing Activities     | Brainstorming/Listing                               |
|          |                            | Choosing form / genre                               |
|          |                            | Doodling  |
|          |                            | Higher-order webbing / Clustering                   |
|          |                            | Identifying purpose / audience                      |
|          |                            | Researching   |
|          |                            | Sequencing / Outlining / Storyboarding              |
|          |                            | Webbing / Clustering / Semantic mapping             |
|          | During Writing Activities  | Conferencing  |
|          |                            | Drafting  |
|          |                            | Editing   |
|          |                            | Establishing a coherence                            |
|          |                            | Free-writing / Guided free-writing                  |
|          |                            | Guided writing                                      |
|          |                            | Note Taking   |
|          |                            | Productive writing                                  |
|          |                            | Revising  |
|          |                            | Reproductive-productive writing                     |
|          |                            | Reproductive writing                                |
|          |                            | Writing Fiction                                     |
|          |                            | Writing Nonfiction                                  |
|          |                            | Writing Other Forms of Text                         |
|          | Post-Writing Activities    | Performing  |
|          |                            | Presenting relevant information                     |
|          |                            | Publishing  |
|          |                            | Sharing   |
| Speaking | Pre-Speaking activities    | Activating knowledge                                |
|          | During Speaking activities | Discussing literary texts, culture and other topics |
|          |                            | Game tasks with different levels of complexity      |
|          |                            | Instruction tasks                                   |
|          |                            | Performance / Production                            |
|          |                            | Speaking / Speech                                   |
|          |                            | Story telling                                       |

|                        |                             |  |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
|                        | Post-Speaking activities    | Evaluating / Criticizing Speech / Production |
| Listening/<br>Watching | Pre-Listening activities    | Activating / Generating Knowledge            |
|                        |                             | Brainstorming                                |
|                        | During Listening activities | Analytical understanding                     |
|                        |                             | Detailed listening                           |
|                        |                             | Global listening                             |
|                        |                             | Listening / Watching actively                |
|                        |                             | Listening / Watching passively               |
|                        |                             | Multimodal or multimedia interaction         |
|                        |                             | Recognizing                                  |
|                        |                             | Selective listening                          |
|                        |                             | Understanding                                |
|                        | Post-Listening activities   | Evaluating                                   |
| Grammar                |                             | Code Switching                               |
|                        |                             | Explicit learning                            |
|                        |                             | Implicit learning                            |
|                        |                             | Mechanics                                    |
|                        |                             | Semantic Analysis                            |
|                        |                             | Sentence Analysis                            |
|                        |                             | Sentence Composing                           |
|                        |                             | Style / Error Analysis                       |
|                        |                             | Usage  |
|                        |                             | Word Analysis                                |
| Vocabulary             |                             | Vocabulary Analysis                          |
|                        |                             | Vocabulary Awareness                         |
|                        |                             | Vocabulary Use                               |

## **Sociolinguistics in selected textbooks used for teaching Polish as a native language in a primary school**

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### **Abstracts**

The text is an effort to present a change which took place at the turn of centuries in teaching Polish as a native language. It is, first of all, about a new sociolinguistic perspective in teaching Polish which appeared at schools. The author analyses four selected series of textbooks used for teaching Polish in a primary school. Special attention was paid to activity books, which are analysed with regard for presence of situational exercises that make students analyse communication situations and their typical language behaviours. They also make them create effective utterances adequate to a specific context. The conducted research shows that a communication perspective is not represented well in school textbooks. Activities focusing on development of communication competence are rare, they are scattered or separated from other language actions. Thus, they do not fit into a general textbook concept, and they often are only a decoration required by the core curriculum.

**Key words:** communicative competence, language teaching, Polish language teaching, sociolinguistic, textbook

### **Introduction**

In the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a change, which could be called “a communication turn”, started in the didactics of teaching Polish as a native language. After a long period of structuralism, softened sometimes by functionalism, some new tendencies started to appear which supported teaching the language as a tool for communication, and not only as a structure. This approach resulted directly from the following linguistic fields: pragmalinguistics and sociolinguistics. Actions at a grass-roots level (Szymańska, 2015), not resulting from top-level ministerial influence, managed to reach more common awareness and they found their own place in the core curriculum for a reformed school. The provisions, which appeared at that time, paid attention to the

necessity to teach a communication skill in diverse communication situations and to develop communication competence. One of the basic school responsibilities was to “support students’ communication abilities and introduce them to the world of culture, especially through: shaping the ability to speak, listen, read and write in diverse situations of private and public communication, important especially for a life in a democratic country of citizenship culture; development of students’ language interests as a part of cultural legacy (*Core Curriculum...*, 1999). It was also reflected in descriptions of students’ achievements after primary school, which included: “Talking to real and imagined listeners, with clear intentions, taking into consideration diverse situations, roles and interpersonal contacts (official and unofficial ones). The terms, which appeared in this context (communication situation, communication competence) refer directly to sociolinguistic fields. The provisions from the turn of the centuries were changed in the successive core curricula. The communication language aspect was deleted in the successive curricula and they started to go back to a structural presentation. However, it seems that some sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic perspectives are still present in teaching, which can be noticed in textbooks for teaching Polish as a native language at the primary school level.

### **Sociolinguistic studies versus communication teaching**

Sociolinguistics is the study related to linguistics and sociology, as the name clearly suggests. In literature we can find two names which are used: sociolinguistics and language sociology. However, there are opinions that the first term should cover only those studies with sociology as a starting point, and the second term should include the ones of more linguistic character. Grabias (2001, p. 15) characterises this phenomenon as follows: “The framework of the discipline, despite the strong development of the studies in recent years, is far from definite conclusions. Even the basic notions, such as ‘sociolinguistics’, ‘language sociology’, ‘social linguistics’ or ‘ethnography of communication’ are sometimes interchangeable, and sometimes they fall within different, separate for each notion, scopes of meaning. Thus, the subject of the studies is vague. The outlines of scientific penetration are still blurring. But sociolinguistics is not an exception. It often happens with other disciplines created on the borders of different fields. According to Fishman, sociolinguistics covers only a small part of the whole range of studies on language sociology. It is a kind of knowledge on the rules of language behaviours: “Sociolinguistics, constructing a model of social language behaviours, touches only some microprocesses and it applies, first of all, the methods elaborated by linguistics. At the same time, sociological description



of language communication refers to macrostructures, and thus, its research perspective and methods presenting different phenomena are closer to sociology, history, anthropology and ethnography" (Grabias, 2001, p. 61).

According to some linguists, sociolinguistics is a field of linguistics which is supposed to study the role of the language in a society and also to analyse the relations between the language and the social structure. Benveniste (1980, p. 27) shaped a rule of implication which presents the relations between the language and the society: "Society creates the language and the language creates society, at the same time". This rule shows, on one hand, that the language is a social creation with group origins, and not individual ones; and on the other hand, the language is a tool for communicating and interpreting reality. Grabias writes: "... the language can be treated as a mirror of social life, but this mirror reflects human cultural activities, first of all" (2001, p. 29). We can summarise it saying that the subject of interest of sociolinguistics is the language, speech as a kind of social action, and especially dependence of speaking and language behaviours on conditions and situations, not directly related to the language, where communication takes place. Communicating refers to an act of communication with its all components: sender/speaker, receiver, message, context. In case of sociolinguistics, not only speaking is interesting, but broadly defined language behaviours.

Sociolinguistics studies communication in the social context so language varieties functioning in different social groups are important. Constructing a classification of Polish language varieties, researchers consider "social and territorial coverage of language phenomena (national language = general language: city dialects), information channels (spoken language: written language), functions of varieties (language: colloquial, artistic, scientific, journalistic, administrative styles, etc.), their social origins (jargons, community dialects, professional styles)" (Grabias, 2001, p. 78). Special attention is paid by sociolinguistics to city dialects and sociolects, associated to some social groups related by a special kind of bonds (miners, sportsmen, hunters, soldiers, etc.). However, it is not focused on detailed description of language phenomena. The things which are more important are the characterisation of social groups and the bonds connecting their members, as they are the starting point for identification of the language variety and its place in the communication process. However, abilities to distinguish language varieties and their adequate usage depending on a situation are crucial for teaching the language. It should also be remembered that individuals are not limited to only one language variety. They can use different languages, dialectics, styles and registers.

In the context of communicative language teaching, sociolinguistic studies on language styles and varieties are also important. It means, first of all, awareness of different stylistic varieties of Polish language, and an ability to distinguish them and to adjust a communication style. The speaker should be able to:

- **recognize** a social status of the listener,
- **take** into consideration the place and time of the conversation,
- **select** the right language variety,
- **decide** on an information channel,
- **adjust** an appropriate kind of the utterance.

Therefore, the styles are a natural cultural context for the utterance. Sociolinguistics treats a style as a factor which makes the utterance different, both in individual and social dimensions. We can say that, in this case, the studies on the style are conducted in two different ways. On one hand, the attention is focused on indicators typical for the language of the specific social group, and on the other hand – on the elements which make the individual styles different. Labov (1972) called this diversity a social and stylistic variety.

However, one should remember that communication takes place in a specific social situation and in interaction with other participants of social life. Thus, the knowledge of social roles and patterns of behaviours ruling the interaction are crucial. The ability to distinguish (accepting) the roles and adjusting behaviours to the role and the situation is acquired by the members of the community in the process of socialization. One of the elements of the process is also the school, with its all actors and stages (Janowski, 1995).

In the interaction theory, a situation is defined in a narrow way – a group of physical conditions, or in a broad way – a repeated system of all the interaction elements. No matter how we understand it, we can distinguish “the obligatory components determining a specific behaviour (e.g. spatial limitations – behaviours can be perceived only in space which can be controlled by sight or hearing or sight and hearing at the same time) and optional components, customizing the process (e.g. movement activity, voice timbre)” (Grabias, 2001, p. 255). Additional components of the interaction can be social components, which are typical, permanent elements preserved in social awareness, some gestures often related to rituals (e.g. a prayer, a football game) or outfits. All the mentioned elements, recognised by the participants of a specific situation, let them understand the context and adjust the rules of behaviour. The broader the experience of interaction participants is, the better understanding of essential and less important components is. Thus, adjusting behaviours (also the language ones) to the situation is also better and more predictable.

Finally, it should be emphasised that sociolinguistics does not eliminate language description and it does not reject the concept of language system. After all, description of language structures helps to record the changes which take place in the language, describe and interpret any social language diversity. However, there are also important differentiating issues. First of all, one of them is the study material, which – in case of structuralism – is the language as a system, and for sociolinguistics – it is speaking, social speech practice. It is mainly interested in language diversity at the level of sociolect and idiolect, it studies the language in the context of social life and culture, contrary to structuralism which is focused mainly on the system and describes the language separated from any social context.

From the point of view of the communication concept, the most important elements of using the language appear to be the following:

- speaker/listener – the function expressed with an outfit, gestures, way of speaking,
- context in which communication takes place,
- message – adjusting it to the speaker/listener; styles and language varieties.

The educational obligation, indicated by the core curriculum, was connected to organization of such lesson activities which would allow students to develop the following abilities:

- determine the social role of the speaker/listener,
- analyse the situation in which the conversation takes place,
- build an utterance adjusted to the context and the role, which is correct and effective.

### **Sociolinguistic perspective in textbooks for language teaching**

Twenty years have passed since the first efforts were taken to construct educational materials, taking into consideration a communication perspective. The core curriculum and textbooks have been changed several times since then. Every time the importance was emphasised that learning the language should mean communication, although the provisions were more and more general. In what way is the direction indicated by the core curriculum implemented in textbooks? Is it implemented at all? What kinds of exercises, aiming at development of communication competence, can be found in textbooks-language activities? How many of such exercises can be found there? These are the questions which are to be answered by the conducted analysis.

The research covered selected textbooks, most often used at schools, among 16 ones approved for use at schools<sup>4</sup>. The analysis of the contents of the activity books has shown that the authors care especially about providing and testing knowledge on language structures. The greatest number of activities, used in the textbooks, refer to description and classification of structure elements. It is very rare when the knowledge on grammar is presented in a functional way, emphasising its value in language practice. Many activities are devoted also to learning text competence. There are numerous exercises which are grouped in separate subsections of the textbooks. They cover many examples of practised forms of utterances, transformation exercises and suggestions of tasks which can be done individually. The authors often take advantage of good patterns. They use methods of teaching language competence (Dyduchowa, 1988), and especially the method of analysis and creative imitation of patterns, as well as the method of norms and instructions. They also apply suggestions taken from the textbook series, "To lubię!" for language education (Mrazek & Steczko, 1994, 1995, 1996; Mrazek, Potaś, & Steczko, 1999; Mrazek & Potaś, 2000, 2001) and "Nowa sztuka pisanía" (Kłakówna & Wiatr, 2006). However, none of the analysed textbooks has tried to combine writing skills with exercises which are strictly linguistic.

A careful analysis of the selected textbooks has shown that activities aiming at development of communication competence are only a small part of all the exercises presented in the hundreds of pages. Eleven textbooks, covered by the research, included only 63 exercises of this type (see Tab. 1).

Two textbooks present them in separate sections: „Jak się porozumiewać?” (“How to communicate?”) (Wojciechowska, Marcinkiewicz, 2013); „Komunikacja” („Communication”) (Krawczuk-Goluch, 2012). In others, they are scattered, although most often they accompany writing activities (invitation, announcement, etc.), indicating natural context where these forms are used.

It is also interesting to analyse a quantitative arrangement of situational activities<sup>5</sup> in case of individual grades. As you can see in the chart below, the greatest number of exercises with communication perspective can be found in

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<sup>4</sup> The textbooks with a subtitle “study on the language” or “grammar” were not considered. It was accepted as the declaration which referred to the concept of the textbook.

<sup>5</sup> I use the conventional name “situational exercises” for the activities which make students pay attention to the speaker/listener, their social roles, and also adjusting the message to the context.

textbooks for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade (37 exercises), and in case of older students, the number is getting smaller: 5<sup>th</sup> grade – 15, 6<sup>th</sup> grade – 13 (see Chart 1).

Tab. 1.: Activities aiming at development of communication competence in the selected textbooks

| TEXTBOOK   | SITUATION<br>speaker/listener |
|--|-------------------------------|
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2 | 17                            |
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 5 <sup>th</sup> grade               | 6                             |
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2 | 7                             |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1-5  | 6                             |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                                    | 2                             |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                                    | 3                             |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | 1                             |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | 2                             |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | -                             |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | 11                            |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | 5                             |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | 3                             |
|  | 63                            |

Analysing these kind of exercises in individual textbooks, we can see that the highest number can be found in the textbook series called „Między nami”, which includes 18 exercises in case of all grades. In the textbooks of the series called „Czarowanie słowem” we can find 11 exercises; „Słowa na start! – 7, and the series called „Język polski. Odkrywam na nowo” includes only 3 exercises (see Chart 2).

Chart 1: Situational exercises (according to the grades)

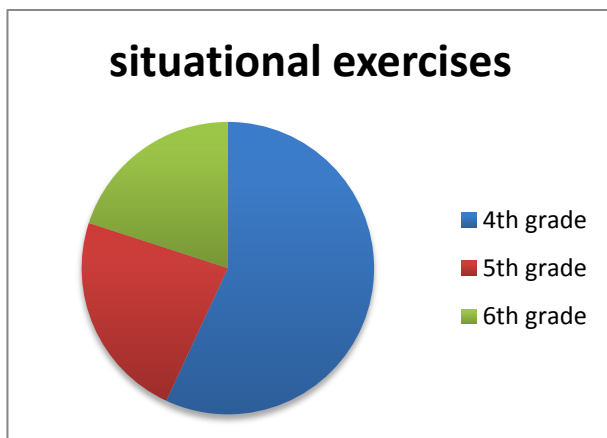
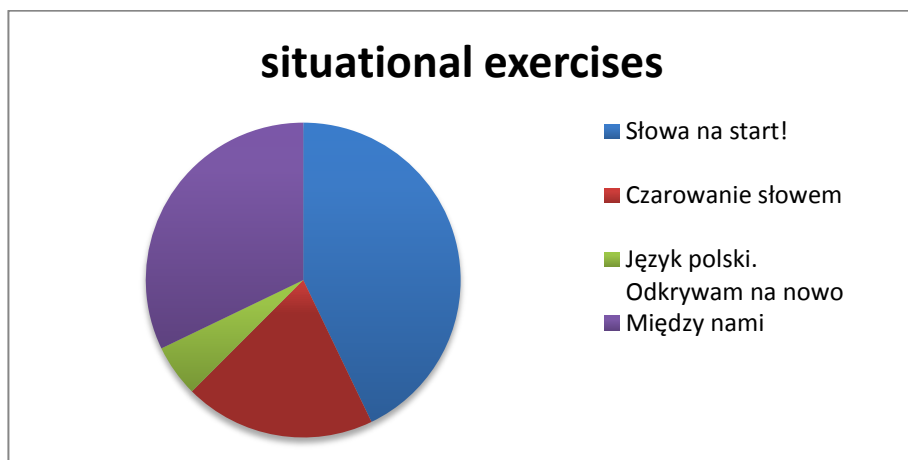


Chart 2: Situational exercises (according to the type of an exercise)



And what do the situational exercises in the textbooks look like? Usually they refer to simple, everyday situations which can happen to children: greetings, gratitude, compliments. The suggested actions are focused on:

- naming participants of communication and identifying its goal, e.g.:

“Look at the situations presented in the pictures and decide who is expressing attitude to whom and for what.”

**Jak děkować?**

1. Přijrzyj si situacím představeným na rysovkách i odpověď, kto, komu i za co děkuje.



\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- adjusting the utterance to the situations, the speaker's and the listener's roles, e.g.:

I “Read the utterances and decide who could use them”

2. Przczytaj podane wypowiedzi i zapisz, kto i do kogo mógłby si tak zwróciť.

Cześć! Czy wiesz, o której mamy być w poniedziałek w szkole?

\_\_\_\_\_

Dzień dobry. Czy mógłbym się dowiedzieć, na którą godzinę planowane jest rozpoczęcie roku szkolnego?

\_\_\_\_\_

Mam problem. Mój pies gdzieś uciekł. Może go widziałaś?

\_\_\_\_\_

Przepraszam panią, czy nie zauważyła pani psa? Właśnie przed chwilą mi uciekł.

\_\_\_\_\_

## II "Read the following sentences and join them with the situations, speakers and listeners"

3. Przeczytaj poniższe wypowiedzi i dopasuj je do sytuacji, nadawcy i odbiorcy.



A. – Czcigodny panie profesorze! W imieniu całego grona chciałbym złożyć szanownemu profesorowi wyrazy ogromnej wdzięczności za okazaną nam pomoc.

B. – Wiktorze! W imieniu wszystkich kolegów dziękuję za wszystko, co dla nas zrobiłeś.



## III "Look at the pictures and write short utterances. Adapt them to the situation and the listeners"

6. Przyjrzyj się ilustracjom i napisz krótkie wypowiedzi. Dostosuj je do sytuacji i odbiorcy.




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- identifying roles on the basis of non-verbal signs, e.g.:

“Who are the people presented in the photos. Write their professions and decide what makes you think that.”

- 3 Kim są postacie przedstawione na fotografiach? Wpisz nazwy ich zawodów i zastanów się, dzięki czemu można je odgadnąć.



Tab. 2: Styles and their varieties in the selected textbooks

| TEXTBOOK   | style/<br>varieties |
|--|---------------------|
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 4 <sup>th</sup> grade               | -                   |
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 5 <sup>th</sup> grade               | -                   |
| „Słowa na start!” Podręcznik do kształcenia językowego 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2 | -                   |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1-5  | -                   |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                                    | 2                   |
| „Czarowanie słowem” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                                    | 1                   |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | -                   |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | -                   |
| „Język polski. Odkrywamy na nowo” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade                                    | -                   |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | -                   |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | 4                   |
| „Język polski. Między nami” 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, part 1 and 2                            | 2                   |
| Total  | 9                   |

One of the fields interesting to sociolinguistics is the style and their varieties. This category is also important for teaching communication competence. Joining the message with the situation was already presented by the above instructions. Apart from them, in some textbooks we can find sentences aiming at distinguishing official and unofficial styles. They appear in the context of letters and compliments (see Tab. 2).

It proves that working on distinguishing official and unofficial styles in utterances (spoken or written ones) seems to be important only to some of the authors who decided to create separate exercises for this purpose.

One of the important elements of colloquial speech are also idioms. This issue can be found in all the textbooks. However, none of them treats idioms as a component influencing the stylistic character of the utterances. The suggested actions are focused on explaining the meaning of the individual examples.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the textbooks shows that the authors have tried to adapt materials to the requirements of the core curriculum which emphasises the necessity to develop communication competence. The influence of the tendencies accompanying the first core curriculum from 1999 is clearly noticeable. However, it should be noticed that exercises focused on a communication aspect, relations between the speaker/listener, between the situation in which the communication takes place and the message itself (in the text it is called a situational exercise) are rather rare in the textbooks. They are only an additional, supplementary element in the whole process of language teaching which traditionally refers to structuralism. Usually they are also unnaturally separated in the textbook structure which additionally emphasises lack of cohesion in the textbook concept.

The conducted research confirms an assumption that, although there have been some changes in teaching Polish as a native language, structuralism is still dominant and describing, instead of using, the language is still the basic activity of students during Polish lessons in primary schools. This attitude is noticeable in the structure of the textbooks, which show already in their contents (sections with the names of individual elements of language structures, referring to descriptive grammar) the real educational concept, as well as the things and the point of view which are the most important for them. All these things are confirmed by activities which most often consist on underlying, indicating, transforming, in isolation from any real context. Stylistic differences are not very important during lessons, either. Only official language variety is one of the

scheduled subjects. Apart from this, the textbooks pay attention to the things, such as comparisons and metaphors, with no information that they can also be used in everyday communication, as well as certain grammar structures which are isolated from an utterance.

Communication situations and some adequate language behaviours are present most often in textbooks for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The created situations refer to greetings, compliments, and also the differences resulting from the status, gender, and age of the participants of the communication. This is where students' communication problems are over for the authors of the textbooks. It is important that students know how to say "hello". The further conversation seems to be uninteresting for all of them. Working on the language exercises from the textbooks does not have to result in the fact that the students' utterances will be correct with respect to their linguistic part, because the exercises are isolated from the context of the specific utterance.

Finally, it should be noted that the perfect context for the presented textbooks would be the series "To lubię!". It is the only textbook on the Polish educational market, which is focused on cultural and language education, completely subordinated to the communication concept of teaching the language. However, because of their different structure, the textbooks cannot be compared (Szymańska, 2014). The provided activities are fully subordinated to communication situations which are close to students at a specific development level. The exercises which are focused on language observation also result from the offered situation and they lead to using the language (in its oral or written form) in a similar context. Mutual dependences, cohesion and relations do not let us separate individual exercises from the holistic project.

However, observation of the reality which surrounds us, of the students with their virtual world with limited contact with behaviour patterns, also the communicative ones, let us guess that paying attention to development of communication competence shall become the necessity in close future

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## **Preferences for activities in French textbooks used in Slovak secondary schools analysed with Birova's Communication Curve Tool**

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### **Abstract**

Which textbooks are used in French classes? Can the struggle to choose a good textbook affect the communication procedure in French? What is the proportion of language, intercultural and communicative activities in selected textbooks? What are the reasons for purchasing language-based and communication-based textbooks? The present study explores these questions and presents results with broad implications for teachers of French at secondary schools. It points out some significant markers such as textbook type activities preferences and arguments for choosing textbooks for French classes.

**Key words:** textbooks, frequency, activities, preferences, communication, appropriateness

### **Introduction**

Slovak state standards and curricula are becoming increasingly important not only in the implementation of instruction but also in choosing a good textbook. Many textbook publishers provide a variety of activities in order to fulfil general textbook standards without considering the balance between the intercultural importance, grammar significance and communication needs. In the paper, I present partial results from the empirical research conducted within a year. I propose a survey of textbooks used for teaching French at secondary schools in Slovakia. The objective of this study is not only to show what textbooks are used and with what frequency, but I also intend to demonstrate that, for instance, the textbooks which are used often do not sufficiently attain the communicative objective.

When choosing a textbook, several elements should be taken into consideration—the students, the proportion of language-based and

communication-based or task-based activities, the proportion of activities enhancing the students' input and output, the curricula content. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests four criteria for evaluating language textbooks. They should:

- reflect students' needs and match learning objectives,
- reflect the use of language communicatively,
- facilitate learning processes by eclecticism,
- sustain a clear role as a support for learning.

The problem which was assumed before proceeding with the research, was related to the theories, research or partial research in the works of French-writing authors such as Bertocchi and Constanzo (2008), Besse (1995), Courtillon (2003), Pécheur and Vigner (1995), Slovak-writing authors Nogová and Bálint (2005), Pokrivčáková (2003, 2004), Repka (1990) or Turek (1997), as well as English-writing authors Brumfit and Johnson (1989), Cunningsworth (1995), Dalgalian, Lieutaud and Weiss (1991), Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979), Lamie (1999), Lee and Vanpatten (2005), Nunan (1989, 1991), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), Thornbury (2006) or Tomlinson (2001) but mainly to the theory of the balance-activity approach mentioned in the work of Harmer (1991) which was the point of departure for creating Bírova's theory of CC analysis and seen in the material coverage of everyday class in the form of the proportion of language-based exercises and communication-based activities in the textbooks which prepare high school learners for their final graduation examination in French as a foreign language.

### **Research methodology**

Such methods as a questionnaire and interview concerning the use and the variety of French textbooks and exercise books were used with French teachers teaching at secondary schools. Bírova's Communication Curve (CC) content analysis was applied in order to map communicative, language, sociolinguistic and pragmatic activities in randomly selected units of textbooks previously designed by teachers in the questionnaire. The research methodology was devised during the doctoral studies in 2009 and was discussed and published in the proceedings from the World Congress of Teachers of French in Quebec in 2008 (Bírová et al., 2010).

### **Research objectives**

Research objectives are designed regarding the assumed problem. In the present paper, the following is intended:



- to map French textbook policy and exercise typology,
- to map the ratio between communicative, language, sociolinguistic and pragmatic activities in randomly selected units of textbooks,
- to point out some motivating factors behind teachers' choice when selecting textbooks.

### **Research procedure and results**

Frequencies called tallies were used to count up the number of teachers and the number of textbooks. The respondents to the questionnaire turned out to be 108. 2 questionnaires were not suitable and another 6 teachers of French expressed their opinions in the questionnaire but were not currently teaching French at secondary schools. The bank of 100 questionnaires created the corpus of answers that was analysed. The respondents were from the following towns:

6 Banská Bystrica, 1 Brezno, 1 Čadca, 1 Dolný Kubín, 2 Dubnica nad Váhom, 1 Galanta, 4 Hadlová, 1 Hnúšťa, 1 Humenné, 1 Kežmarok, 3 Komárno, 1 Košice, 1 Kremnica, 2 Krupina, 1 Levoča, 3 Liptovský Mikuláš, 2 Lučenec, 1 Martin, 2 Michalovce, 4 Námestovo, 4 Nitra, 1 Nové Mesto nad Váhom, 1 Nové Zámky, 2 Piešťany, 2 Poprad, 2 Piešťany, 2 Poprad, 1 Považská Bystrica, 3 Prievidza, 1 Pruské, 1 Púchov, 1 Rajec, 1 Rimavská Sobota, 1 Sabinov, 2 Senica, 2 Stropkov, 1 Tisovec, 1 Topoľčany, 8 Trenčín, 1 Trnava, 2 Tvrdošín, 1 Vrútky, 1 Zlaté Moravce, 4 Zvolen, 1 Žiar nad Hronom, 5 Žilina, 2 did not specify the town).

Total number of respondents: 100

Table 1: School typology

| 4-year high schools | 8-year high schools<br>(French CLIL classes) | Secondary vocational schools | Associated secondary schools | Others |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|
| 62                  | 14   | 14                           | 4                            | 2      |

According to the first result, the highest number of schools where teachers teach French are 4-year high schools. The development of confident communication in French takes place in 8-year high schools, too. This is due to everyday French CLIL classes. A high level of French is also at secondary vocational schools where students have to learn not only the basics of the language but they also penetrate to the specific fields of their future work.

Table 2: Gender of respondents

| Gender          | 4-year high schools | 8-year high schools (French CLIL classes) | Secondary vocational schools | Associated secondary schools | Others | Total |      |
|-----------------|---------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|-------|------|
| Female          | 61                  | 14  | 18                           | 3                            | -      | 96    | 96%  |
| Male            | 1                   | -   | -                            | 1                            | -      | 2     | 2%   |
| Did not specify | -                   | -   | -                            | -                            | 2      | 2     | 2%   |
| Total           | 62                  | 14  | 18                           | 4                            | 2      | 100   | 100% |

As it is evident, teaching French is mainly the business of female French teachers (96%).

The respondents are used to using more than one textbook during their classes. Sometimes it even happens that they change the publisher as they are not satisfied with the textbook policy introduced by the Ministry of Education. Some of the interviewed teachers use the textbook entitled *En français 1* in the first grade. In the second grade, these teachers turn to a completely different publisher and start working with *Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 2*. In the third and fourth grades, teachers choose for their learners the textbook entitled *Forum 2*. Other teachers use more than one textbook for the same level of students. For example, in the old textbook entitled *Francúzsky jazyk*, written according to the audiolingual method, they appreciate the grammar exercises and the system which allows learners to automatize grammatical rules. In *Libre échange*, teachers appreciate pre-communicative and communicative activities. During conversation lessons, teachers are used to working with thematic workbooks mentioned above.

Except percentage calculations and dividing textbooks according to the typology of schools, the textbooks were sorted by the frequency of use – from the highest to the lowest. Table 3 is a summary table of all the books (60) the interviewed teachers indicated in their questionnaires. Table 4 shows the rank of cyclic textbooks and Table 5 the percentage rank of the thematic exercise books.

The most frequently used exercise book is *Oui* with the representation of 28%. The other two most widely used textbooks are *En français 1* and *En français 2*. Interestingly, this set of books is designed primarily for elementary schools. Its high percentage of usage at secondary schools reflects common methods of teachers at primary and secondary schools for teaching French language as well

as the similar language content and objectives at A1 and A2 levels of learning French. However, some teachers consider the use of textbooks *En français* and *En français 2* as infantile as they are intended for lower-age audience.

Table 3: Raw frequencies and percentages of using textbooks and thematic workbooks at secondary schools in Slovakia

| Rank <sup>6</sup> of textbooks and workbooks |                                     | 4-year high schools | 8-year high schools (French CLIL classes) | Secondary vocational schools | Associate secondary schools | Others | Total |     |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|-----|
| 1  | Oui                                 | 12                  | 4   | 9                            | 1                           | 2      | 28    | 28% |
| 2  | En français 1                       | 3                   | 9   | 5                            | 2                           | 1      | 20    | 20% |
| 3  | En français 2                       | 1                   | 10  | 5                            | 2                           | 1      | 19    | 19% |
| 4  | Libre échange 1                     | 10                  | 6   | 1                            | -                           | -      | 17    | 17% |
| 5  | Forum 2                             | 8                   | 2   | 1                            | 3                           | 2      | 16    | 16% |
| 6  | Le Nouveau Sans Frontières 1        | 3                   | 5   | 6                            | 2                           | -      | 16    | 16% |
| 7  | En français 3                       | 1                   | 6   | 4                            | 1                           | 1      | 13    | 13% |
| 8  | Libre échange 2                     | 12                  | 1   | -                            | -                           | -      | 13    | 13% |
| 9  | Forum 1                             | 7                   | 1   | 2                            | -                           | 2      | 12    | 12% |
| 10   | Maturujem z francúzštiny 1          | 7                   | 1   | 2                            | -                           | 1      | 11    | 11% |
| 11   | Maturujem z francúzštiny 2          | 6                   | 2   | 2                            | -                           | 1      | 11    | 11% |
| 12   | Francúzsky jazyk pre stred. školy 3 | 5                   | 2   | 3                            | -                           | -      | 10    | 10% |
| 13   | Le Nouveau Sans Frontières 2        | 4                   | 2   | -                            | 2                           | 1      | 9     | 9%  |
| 14   | En français 4                       | -                   | 5   | -                            | 2                           | 1      | 8     | 8%  |
| 15   | Francúzsky jazyk pre stred. školy 1 | 6                   | -   | 1                            | 1                           | -      | 8     | 8%  |
| 16   | Monitor                             | 6                   | -   | 1                            | -                           | -      | 7     | 7%  |
| 17   | Francúzsky jazyk pre stred. školy 2 | 4                   | -   | 1                            | 2                           | -      | 7     | 7%  |

<sup>6</sup> References for textbooks – see Bibliographic References

|    |                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 18 | En français perfectionnement        | 2 | - | 3 | - | - | 5 | 5% |
| 19 | Francúzsky jazyk pre stred. školy 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 2 | - | 5 | 5% |
| 20 | Campus 2                            | 5 | - | - | - | - | 5 | 5% |
| 21 | Aspects de civilisation française   | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5% |
| 22 | Vocabulaire progressif              | 3 | 2 | - | - | - | 5 | 5% |
| 23 | Espaces 1                           | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | 4 | 4% |
| 24 | Nouvel Espaces 1                    | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | 4 | 4% |
| 25 | Grammaire progressive               | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | 4 | 4% |
| 26 | Espaces 2                           | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 27 | Libre échange 3                     | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 28 | Campus 1                            | 3 | - | - | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 29 | Tempo 1                             | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 30 | Tempo 2                             | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 31 | On y va 1                           | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 32 | On y va 2                           | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 3 | 3% |
| 33 | Café crème 1                        | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 34 | Café crème 2                        | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 35 | Panorama 1                          | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 36 | Panorama 2                          | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 37 | Nouvel Espaces 2                    | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 38 | On y va 3                           | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 39 | Extra                               | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 40 | Bonne route 1                       | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 41 | Cvičebnice francouzské gramatiky    | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 42 | Junior 1                            | - | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| 43 | Francúzska konverzácia              | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | 2 | 2% |
| 44 | Café crème 3                        | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 45 | Champion 1                          | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 46 | Champion 2                          | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1% |

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 47 | On y va 4   | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 48 | Le français pour vous                             | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 49 | Junior 2  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 50 | Junior 3  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 51 | Fréquence jeunes                                  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 52 | Le Nouveau Sans Frontières 3                      | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 53 | Archipel  | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 1% |
| 54 | Escales   | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 55 | Économie  | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 56 | Le français de l'hôtellerie et de la restauration | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 57 | Delf scolaire A2                                  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 58 | Delf scolaire B1                                  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 59 | Delf scolaire B2                                  | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |
| 60 | Francúzština pre pokročilých                      | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1% |

High values of usage also represent the following textbooks *Libre échange*, *Forum*, *Le Nouveau Sans Frontières* as well as the textbook conceived according to the audiolingual method principles, *Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy*, which was used before 1989. It is surprising that this textbook published for the first time in the 80s of the last century, the era of communism, it is still used. This might be explained as a very weak progress in the textbook policy, yet according to the interviews done with teachers during the research, this textbook is used nowadays for its grammar and, in broadest terms, linguistic know-how which is necessary mainly at the stage of language practice. While other textbooks reveal high interest in communication practice, this old audiolingual textbook is appreciated for its grammar. Teachers recommend this textbook to other colleagues as they are convinced that only with grammar exercises and pre-communicative activities a learner will know how to communicate efficiently.

As it is shown further, *Maturujem z francúzštiny po novom*, *Monitor* and *En français perfectionnement* achieve high representation. These books prepare high school graduates for the final examination not only from the point of view of their thematicity but also exercise typology. Other books in the stated order: *Aspects de*

*Civilisation Française, Vocabulaire progressif* and *Grammaire française*, achieving 5% representation.

Table 4: Percentages of French textbooks usage at secondary schools in Slovakia

| Percentage of French textbooks |                                      | Total | Percentage of French textbooks |   | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|---|-------|
| 1                              | En français 1                        | 20%   | 24                             | On y va 2   | 3%    |
| 2                              | En français 2                        | 19%   | 25                             | Café crème 1                                      | 2%    |
| 3                              | Libre échange 1                      | 17%   | 26                             | Café crème 2                                      | 2%    |
| 4                              | Forum 2                              | 16%   | 27                             | Panorama 1  | 2%    |
| 5                              | Le Nouveau S. Frontières 1           | 16%   | 28                             | Panorama 2  | 2%    |
| 6                              | En français 3                        | 13%   | 29                             | Nouvel Espaces 2                                  | 2%    |
| 7                              | Libre échange 2                      | 13%   | 30                             | On y va 3   | 2%    |
| 8                              | Forum 1                              | 12%   | 31                             | Extra   | 2%    |
| 9                              | Francúz. jazyk pre stred. školy 3    | 10%   | 32                             | Bonne route 1                                     | 2%    |
| 10                             | Le Nouveau S. Frontières 2           | 9%    | 33                             | Junior 1  | 2%    |
| 11                             | En français 4                        | 8%    | 34                             | Café crème 3                                      | 1%    |
| 12                             | Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1 | 8%    | 35                             | Champion 1  | 1%    |
| 13                             | Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 2 | 7%    | 36                             | Champion 2  | 1%    |
| 14                             | Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 4 | 5%    | 37                             | On y va 4   | 1%    |
| 15                             | Campus 2                             | 5%    | 38                             | Le français pour vous                             | 1%    |
| 16                             | Espaces 1                            | 4%    | 39                             | Junior 2  | 1%    |
| 17                             | Nouvel Espaces 1                     | 4%    | 40                             | Junior 3  | 1%    |
| 18                             | Espaces 2                            | 3%    | 41                             | Fréquence jeunes                                  | 1%    |
| 19                             | Libre échange 3                      | 3%    | 42                             | Le Nouveau S. Frontières 3                        | 1%    |
| 20                             | Campus 1                             | 3%    | 43                             | Archipel  | 1%    |
| 21                             | Tempo 1                              | 3%    | 44                             | Le français de l'hôtellerie et de la restauration | 1%    |
|                                |                                      |       | 45                             | Escales   | 1%    |
| 22                             | Tempo 2                              | 3%    | 46                             | Francúzština pre pokročilých                      | 1%    |
| 23                             | On y va 1                            | 3%    |                                |   |       |

Table 5: Percentages of French thematic exercise books usage at secondary schools in Slovakia

| Percentage of French thematic exercise books |                                   |  | Total | Percentage of French thematic exercise books |                                  |  | Total |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|-------|--|----------------------------------|--|-------|
| 1  | Oui                               |  | 28%   | 9  | Cvičebnice francouzské gramatiky |  |       |
| 2  | Maturujem z francúzštiny 1        |  | 11%   | 10   | Francúzska konverzácia           |  | 2%    |
| 3  | Maturujem z francúzštiny 2        |  | 11%   | 11   | Économie                         |  | 2%    |
| 4  | Monitor                           |  | 7%    | 13   | Delf scolaire A2                 |  | 1%    |
| 5  | En français perfectionnement      |  | 5%    |  |                                  |  |       |
| 6  | Aspects de civilisation française |  | 5%    | 14   | Delf scolaire B1                 |  | 1%    |
| 7  | Vocabulaire progressif            |  | 5%    | 15   | Delf scolaire B2                 |  | 1%    |
| 8  | Grammaire progressive             |  | 4%    |  |                                  |  |       |

### Communication Curve (CC) Content Analysis

In order to map activity preferences of textbooks used for teaching French at secondary schools, the Communication Curve Content Analysis (Birova, 2009) was applied. Preferences were counted upon defined categories. Activity categories were extended from 1 to 7. Language exercises practising language without being put into context were levelled 1. Exercises practising sociolinguistic elements or sociocultural items without context were levelled 2. With the level 3 were associated activities which concerned pragmatic competence elements practice. These elements were predominately put into micro-contexts and represented by short open answer tasks. The fourth curve degree represented pre-communicative contextual activities practising reading comprehension, listening comprehension or mediation. The fifth category represented activities which stimulated learners to work in context with elements of sociolinguistics and socioculture, also practising reading or listening. The sixth degree was oriented on contextual pragmatic activities.

The highest-level 7 incorporates production activities such as speaking, writing or oral and written interactions that encourage learners to communicate in dialogues, discussions or confrontations.

Point 0 on the CC involves extra activities that are neither open nor closed, of no linguistic or communicative relatedness. They appeared in textbooks as

supplementary and had no point common with language learning (example of such assignments: "Hang the project on the board!")

The following tables present the preferred degree of activities in selected textbooks.

Table 6: Activity preferences and value scale measured by the CC content analysis in selected thematic exercise books

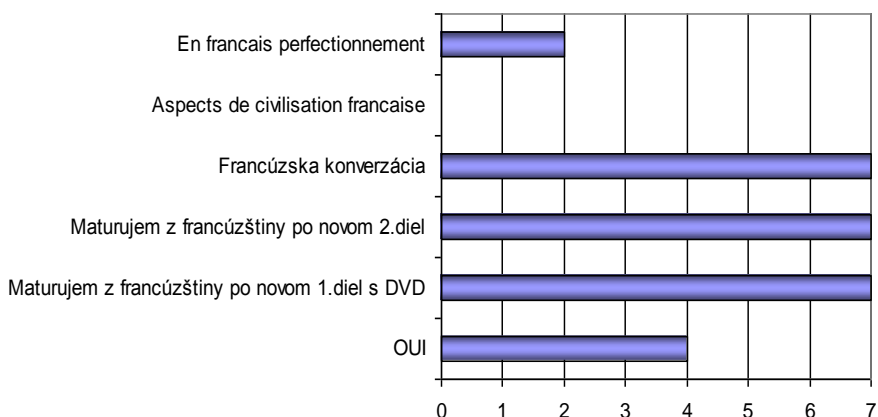


Table 6 presents the preferable aspects of thematic exercise books. While *En francais perfectionnement* attains only level 2 of CC analysis (activities about socioculture and sociolinguistics), *Maturujem po novom* exercise book set prefers communicative activities (level 7 of CC). *Oui* obtains level 4. *Aspects de civilisation francaise* seems to have not been evaluated as its preferences are not demonstrated. It is due to the authorial concept of the book as the authors decided not to invent activities, just to present texts and prepare some extracts of realia input.



Table 7: Activity preferences and value scale measured by the CC analysis in a student's book of selected textbooks

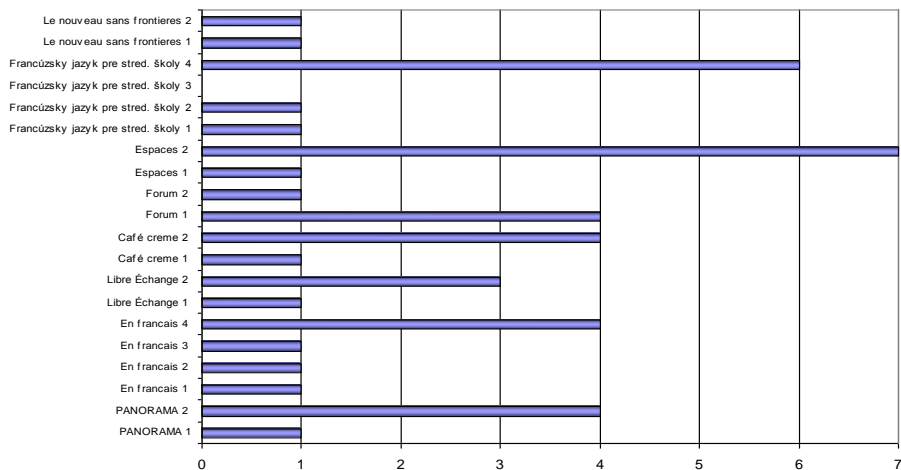


Table 8: Activity preferences and value scale measured by the CC content analysis in workbooks of selected textbooks

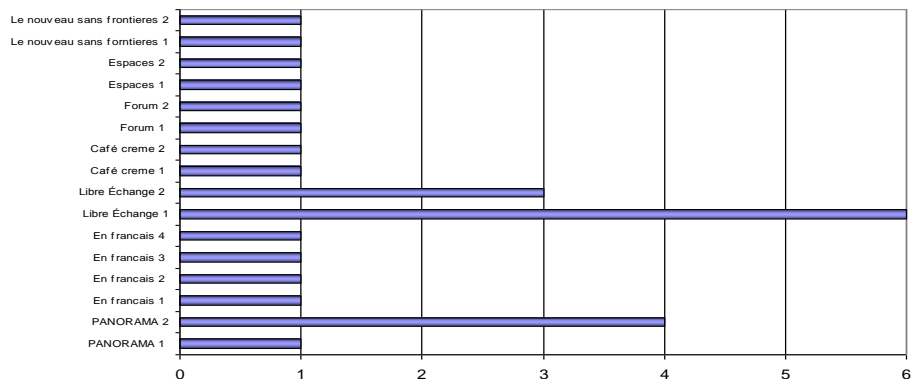


Table 9: A general overview

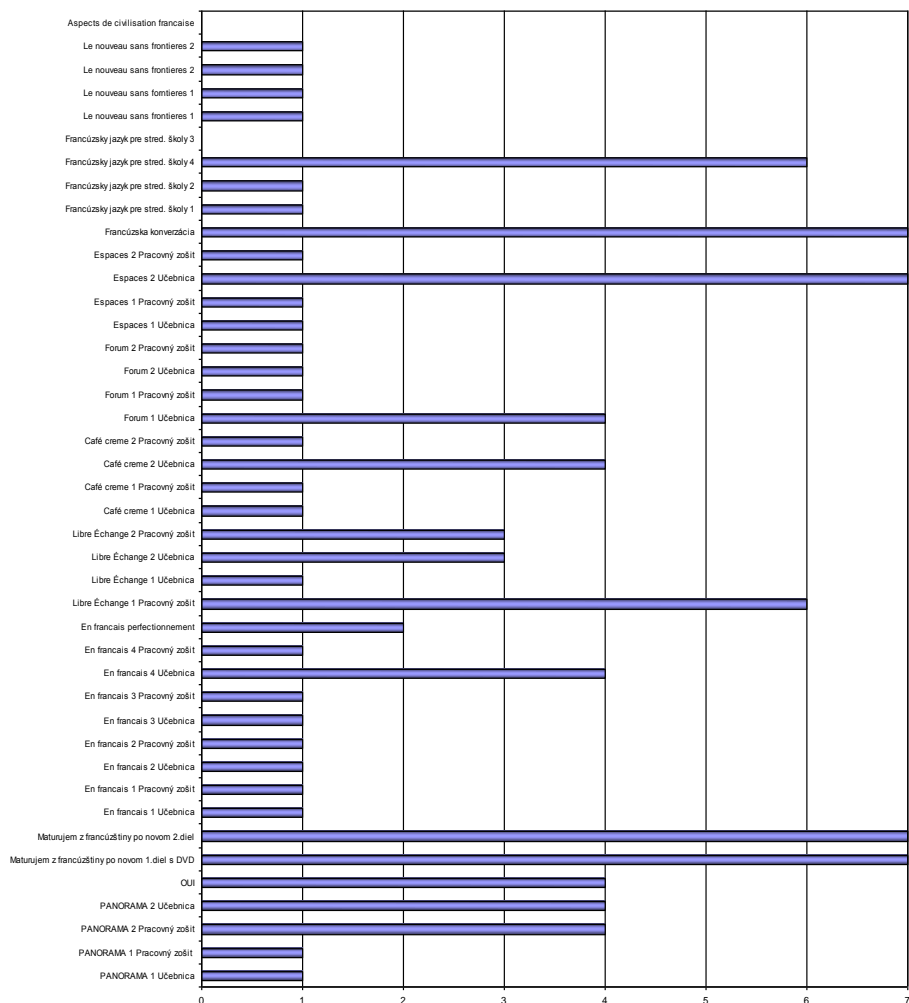


Table 10: Raw frequencies of oral communicative interaction activities and other communicative activities

|    | French textbook or exercise book title | N<br>Oral<br>communicative<br>intercultural<br>interaction<br>activities | N<br>Other<br>communicative<br>activities | N<br>Total<br>Communicative<br>activities |
|----|--|--|---|---|
| 1. | Forum 2                                | 13   | 6   | 19  |
| 2. | Forum 1                                | 8  | 3   | 11  |
| 3. | Espaces 2                              | 7  | 12  | 19  |
| 4. | Café crème 1                           | 7  | 2   | 9   |
|    | Café crème 2                           | 5  | 3   | 8   |
|    | Le nouveau sans frontières 1           | 5  | 8   | 13  |
| 5. | Espaces 1                              | 4  | 1   | 5   |
|    | Libre échange 2                        | 4  | 7   | 11  |
| 6. | Francúzská konverzácia                 | 3  | 3   | 6   |
|    | Maturujem z francúzštiny po novom 1    | 3  | 16  | 19  |
|    | Maturujem z francúzštiny po novom 2    | 3  | 10  | 13  |
| 7. | En français 1                          | 2  | 1   | 3   |
|    | En français 2                          | 2  | 7   | 9   |
|    | En français 3                          | 2  | 3   | 5   |
|    | Libre échange 1                        | 2  | 0   | 2   |
|    | Panorama 1                             | 2  | 4   | 6   |
|    | Panorama 2                             | 2  | 4   | 6   |
| 8. | En français 4                          | 1  | 5   | 6   |
|    | Le nouveau sans frontières 2           | 1  | 7   | 8   |
| 9. |  |  |   |   |
|    | En français perfectionnement           | 0  | 0   | 0   |
|    | Franc.jazyk pre stred.školy 1          | 0  | 2   | 2   |
|    | Franc.jazyk pre stred.školy 2          | 0  | 0   | 0   |
|    | Franc.jazyk pre stred.školy 3          | 0  | 0   | 0   |
|    | Franc.jazyk pre stred.školy 4          | 0  | 3   | 3   |
|    | Aspects de civilisation française      | 0  | 0   | 0   |
|    | Oui – francúzština cvičebnica          | 0  | 0   | 0   |
|    | <b>Total</b>                           | <b>76</b>  | <b>107</b>                                | <b>183</b>                                |

*Oui*, a thematic exercise book purchased and used widely in Slovakia in order to prepare future high school graduates for the final examination achieves only level 4 of communicativeness. Analysing the data collected in the chart below, the book does not eliminate oral interaction activities. Why, then, do teachers use

this thematic workbook if not for preparing students for communication? According to the data collected from interviews, teachers are used to using the audiolingual method principles. They let learners memorise texts which are, then, learnt by heart. This principle teaches them to reproduce written texts.

Another thematic exercise book designed to develop communication aspects is *Aspects de civilisation française*. The book conceptors did not include any exercise or any activity. The book consists of sociocultural elements packed in a number of texts.

*Francúzsky jazyk pre stredné školy 1, 2, 3, 4* – a set of textbooks conceived upon the audiolingual method principles, inadequately proposes improvement possibilities regarding intercultural communication in interaction. Books following the communicative approach principles reveal a high interest in the development of students' conversational potential by means of information gap activities or tasks involving speech acts. These are *Espaces 2*, *Francúzska konverzácia* and the thematic exercise books *Maturujem z francúzštiny po novom 1* and *2*.

When investigating further the authorial preferences in the aforementioned textbooks, it is surprising that not infrequently there is a small or no difference between the textbook and its corresponding workbook. *Panorama 1* textbook and *Panorama 1* workbook, for example, have the same level of the CC activity preferences – level 1. As a researcher, I ask then: what are the reasons and, more importantly, what are the learners' benefits of the stated identical textbook conceptualization? *Panorama 2* follows the same pattern as both the textbook as well as the workbook are also on the same CC level 4. Consequently, it is only language-based activities, mostly contextualised, that are incorporated, either through reading or listening practice. Hardly any or no opportunity is given to practise oral interaction or pragmatic linguistics.

In the set of textbooks *Forum* (*Forum 1*, *Forum 2*), the randomly selected unit to be evaluated in *Forum 2* consisted of more than 50 exercises and activities out of which 13 propose to practise oral intercultural interaction. 6 other are considered as other communicative activities. They enhance learners' speaking and writing skills. In chart 1 *Forum 2* is considered as one of the most communicative textbooks so far as presented in the tables 7 and 8. This is because the tables 6, 7 and 8 reveal only textbook preferences. The authors of *forum 2* preferred in the selected unit the CC level 1. It means that in the mentioned unit, learners are to practise communicative activities but they are more exposed to non-contextual language-based activities, as, for example, putting the verbs in brackets into the correct form in isolated sentences.)

The set of cyclic textbooks *En francais 1, 2, 3, 4* as well as *Perfectionnement* are also conceived in accordance with the communicative approach principles but the results of the CC content analysis do not validate this statement. The authors were much inspired by the audiolingual method principles. Teachers mentioned in the interview that for this set of textbooks, it is very difficult to get listening activities records. They admit omitting these activities in the class.

### **Conclusion**

Textbooks are in the policy as terms to describe learning support materials. Creating a textbook includes several stages and implements a variety of aspects. The process itself in bringing textbooks from the hands of the author (or conceptor) to the user (teachers and learners) aims to pave the way forward for learners in formal education to have access to learning support materials. Textbooks aim to develop to their full potential in order to make a meaningful contribution to the economic development. The economic and access criterion is sometimes a way to influence teachers' decision. Sometimes, the policy missions of creating a good textbook to plan and implement integrated, sustainable and coordinated learning support materials supply the chain that will provide the best value, curriculum-relevant textbooks in an equitable way to all learners and teachers. This should have a direct and measurable impact on the quality of learning opportunities for all learners.

In the article, the equitable way was measured by the aid of the CC analysis and it was shown that textbooks more commonly purchased do not positively answer the demand of the equal proportion of activities. The most used textbooks were evaluated as the least communicative.

The stated research outcomes lead researchers and teachers of French to reconsider the level of efficiency when using textbooks in class. The Slovak textbook policy is an unrestricted process and does not limit teachers' freedom to choose suitable materials; however the process itself seems to be difficult and inefficient.

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## **Subjective perceptions of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) university teachers' professional beginnings: Quantitative research into pedagogical content knowledge**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to present methodology and results of a quantitative phase within a research into English for Specific Purposes university teachers and their subjectively perceived changes in pedagogical content knowledge from a retrospective view of their professional beginnings. The introduction describes the investigated issues and explains key concepts. The first chapter refers to the theoretical background of teacher professional development. Since the quantitative research phase is a part of a mixed research design, the second chapter deals with the whole research including the research objective and questions. The third chapter is devoted to the quantitative research phase during which an anonymous electronic questionnaire was sent to the whole population of Czech university teachers of English for Specific Purposes and processed statistically as well as descriptively. The fourth chapter presents the obtained quantitative data discussed within the individual components of pedagogical content knowledge – conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter, curricular knowledge, knowledge of instructional strategies, and knowledge of students' understanding. The conclusion summarises all the information and proposes some recommendations for pedagogical practice.

**Key words:** pedagogical content knowledge, English for specific purposes, ESP, professional growth, beginning teacher, university teacher

### **Introduction**

This paper presents a quantitative research phase carried out within a mixed research investigating changes in university teachers' pedagogical content knowledge from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching English for Specific Purposes. Currently, *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) is the most frequently taught foreign language at Czech universities. Unlike *English for*

*General Purposes* (EGP) aiming at a broad base of knowledge and skills, ESP is focused on specific professional contexts in respective areas of expertise (Far, 2008, p. 3–4). The basic approach in teaching ESP lies in its adaptation to students' specific needs (Harding, 2007, p. 10–11) – while EGP emphasizes all four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading), in ESP the teacher has to analyze which of these skills students need most for their work (Fiorito, 2005, p. 1). The professional content is another specific feature of ESP which (according to one of many classifications) consists of English for Science and Technology, English for Business and Economics, and English for Social Sciences (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 16–17).

In the Czech Republic, ESP university teachers are likely to go through a rather difficult period during the first years of their practice because during their university studies they were prepared for teaching EGP at secondary schools. Therefore, this research is specifically aimed at novices. Based on the fact that the period of *novice teachers* is usually defined between one and five years of practice (Juklová, 2013, p. 98; Palmer et al., 2005, p. 23; Remmik, Karm, & Lepp, 2013, p. 332; Steffy et al., 2000, p. 6; Šimoník, 1994, p. 9; Veenman, 1984, p. 143), the concept of *ESP university novices* has been introduced including all teachers during the first three years of teaching ESP at universities, regardless of their possible previous EGP teaching practice at other types of schools.

*Pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) is one of the basic categories of teachers' knowledge described as a "special amalgam of content and pedagogy" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). It represents the knowledge of "the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations", which means that it refers to "the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). The issue of Czech *ESP university novices'* PCK is rather complicated – the teachers should be able to connect only EGP knowledge with general didactics knowledge. However, their previous education has not provided them with ESP knowledge, university didactics knowledge, and the knowledge of students' branch of study (e.g. medicine, engineering, law). The issue of *ESP university novices'* PCK is presented in Figure 1.

## 1 Theoretical background

Since the research focuses on changes in ESP university teachers' PCK during the first three years of practice, the following teacher professional development models have been taken into consideration. Firstly, it is necessary to mention

models concentrated on pedagogical-didactic approach and based mainly on findings from didactics, pedagogy and cognitive psychology (Píšová et al., 2011, p. 79– 87). In this area, Berliner' model (1995, p. 47–48) seems to be the best known one. It presents teachers' professional development in a linear direction (novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert levels) but does not take into consideration the influence of individual differences or contextual variables. Other models define three phases in teacher professional development – the primary orientation on the teacher's "survival" in the classroom, the following focus on teaching situations and the final emphasis on students' learning (Fuller, 1969, p. 210–213; Kagan, 1992, p. 156; Maynard & Furlong, 1995, p. 12–13; Richardson & Placier, 2001 in Píšová et al., 2011, p. 82–83). In addition to that, some authors insert a phase of initial idealism before the phase of "survival" (Maynard & Furlong, 1995, p. 12–13; Ryan, 1986, p. 8).

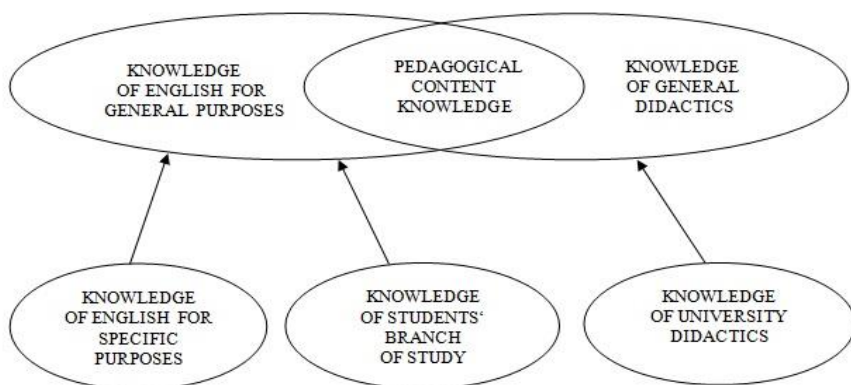


Figure 1: The pedagogical content knowledge of English for Specific Purposes university novices

Secondly, the socio-pedagogical approach to the teacher professional development should be taken into account (Píšová et al., 2011, p. 79–87). From this perspective, Huberman's model is probably the most frequently cited one (Glatthorn, 1995, p. 42). It describes the teacher professional development in a linear way with regard to the individual periods of teaching experience (1–3 years, 4–6 years, 7–18 years, 19–30 years, 31–40 years). It is also possible to mention other models dealing with teacher development in relation to the

research findings usage (Bevan, 2004, p. 328–336) or to the perception of surroundings (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 148–154). Furthermore, some models are focused on the teacher professional self-image in relation to the influence of external factors (Nias, 1989, p. 66–73; Day et al., 2007, p. 69–70) while others are based on reflection as a professional growth mechanism (Spilková, 2011, p. 120–121; Steffy et al., 2000, p. 6–14).

Thirdly, the socio-pedagogical-didactic approach represents a broader conception based on the above two approaches to the teacher professional development (Píšová et al., 2011, p. 79–87). In this context, it is essential to mention Fessler's model of teacher professional cycle (Fessler & Ingram, 2003, p. 588) including three interacting subsystems – the career cycle (pedagogical subsystem), the personal environment (psychological subsystem) and the organizational environment (social subsystem). Another global view of the issue is presented in Shulman and Shulman's model (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p. 260–268) where reflection is in the centre of professional development consisting of three levels – individual, community and policy. Finally, Guskey's cyclical model of teacher change (Guskey, 2002, p. 383–386) describes the teacher professional development influencing teaching practice, which affects students' learning outcomes, which results in changes of teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and the entire process is repeated.

During their professional development, the teachers undergo professional learning processes that can be described by several theories. From a cognitive perspective, Anderson's ACT model (Anderson, 1983, p. 1–44) emphasizes learning based on experience and assumes that this process includes three types of memory – short term, declarative and procedural. The transfer of processes from conscious declarative memory to unconscious procedural memory is realised in three stages – cognitive, associative and autonomous (Randall & Thornton, 2001, p. 30–32). On the other hand, some models emphasize the role of reflection in the process of learning based on experience. It is necessary to mention Korthagen's ALACT model (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 32–50) consisting of a spiral of the following phases – an action, looking back on the action, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action, a trial (a new action) etc. Similarly, Shulman (1987, p. 14–19) mentions reflection in his model of pedagogical reasoning and action describing the professional learning process from a broader perspective – comprehension, transformation (preparation, representation, selection, adaption and tailoring to student characteristics), instruction, evaluation, reflection, new comprehensions etc.

## 2 Methodology of the whole mixed research

As already mentioned, the objective of this paper is to describe the methodology and results of the quantitative research phase. However, this phase is just one part of the whole mixed research. Therefore, it is also essential to deal with the methodology of the whole research whose aim *is to investigate* subjectively perceived changes in *university teachers' PCK* from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP.

The whole research should answer the following question: Did the university teachers perceive any changes in PCK from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP? If yes, what changes did they perceive? This relatively elaborated research question has been divided into several sub-questions according to Grossman's model of PCK (Grossman, 1990, p. 5–9) where PCK consist of the following individual components: (a) the *conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter (the knowledge and beliefs about the aims of teaching particular topics)* – Did the university teachers perceive any changes in their conceptions of objectives for teaching ESP? If yes, what changes did they perceive? (b) the *curricular knowledge (the knowledge of curriculum organization and materials available for teaching)* – Did the university teachers perceive any changes in their knowledge of curriculum organization and materials for ESP? If yes, what changes did they perceive? (c) the *knowledge of instructional strategies (the knowledge of strategies and representations for teaching particular topics)* – Did the university teachers perceive any changes in their knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for ESP? If yes, what changes did they perceive? (d) the *knowledge of students' understanding (the knowledge of students' conceptions and misconceptions of particular topics)* – Did the university teachers perceive any changes in their knowledge of students' conceptions and misconceptions of ESP? If yes, what changes did they perceive?

The mixed methods research design has been chosen on the grounds of its benefits from the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bergman, 2011, p. 272). During this sequential research design, the results of the first, qualitative phase were essential for the second, quantitative phase confirming and specifying the obtained qualitative data (Hendl, 2008, p. 279). The mentioned combination of approaches has been further supported by the triangulation of data collection methods (Švaříček & Šed'ová, 2007, p. 204). Since it was not possible to conduct the research for the whole period of three years, the selection of methods has been limited to introspective and retrospective ones – an interview and a questionnaire. During the qualitative phase, individual semistructured interviews on the topic of the first three years of teaching ESP at

universities were carried out with 14 respondents – 12 experienced teachers (having three and more years of practice in teaching ESP at universities) and 2 novice teachers (having less than three years of this practice). The obtained data were analysed by thematic coding and the results were used in the following quantitative phase where anonymous electronic questionnaires were sent to the whole population of Czech ESP university teachers and completed by 98 respondents – 86 experienced teachers and 12 novice teachers. Subsequently, the quantitative data were processed statistically as well as descriptively.

Since the methodology and results of the first, qualitative research phase have been presented in another paper (Jašková, 2015), the following text deals entirely with the second, quantitative phase of the whole research.

### **3 Methodology of the quantitative research phase**

The quantitative research phase consisted of three parts – a pilot study, a preliminary research, and a main research (Gavora, 2012, p. 48–49). The pilot study investigated whether the questionnaire was comprehensible by a personal contact with 3 respondents. During the preliminary research, the electronic questionnaire was sent to 20 respondents and completed by 15 of them. Finally, the questionnaire was sent to the whole population of electronically accessible Czech ESP university teachers (712 respondents) and completed by 83 of them. Therefore, altogether 98 completed questionnaires from the preliminary as well as main research have been obtained, which corresponds to the required number of respondents for questionnaire surveys (Gavora, 2000, p. 67; Kohoutek, 1998, p. 10).

#### **3.1 Questionnaire content and structure**

Since it was necessary to meet the requirement of maximum 15-minute limit of completing electronic questionnaires (Gavora, 2000, p. 107), only some data obtained in the previous qualitative research phase could be included in it. Therefore, twenty following sub-categories have been chosen from the categorial system consisting of five main categories: (a) the factographic information (eight sub-categories) – the period of the first three years of teaching ESP at universities, the length of the whole practice in teaching ESP at universities, the length of potential preceding practice in English teaching, the length of potential preceding practice in university teaching, the respondent's university qualifications, the respondent's educational qualifications, ESP specialization during the first three years, ESP level during the first three years; (b) the conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter (three sub-categories) – the



educational objectives within the area of ESP, the educational objectives outside the area of ESP, the pedagogical objectives; (c) *the curricular knowledge* (three sub-categories) – the syllabus for teaching ESP, *the materials* for teaching ESP, the professional content of ESP; (d) *the knowledge of instructional strategies* (three sub-categories) – the ways of motivating students, the organizational forms of teaching, the strategies to cope with the professional content; (e) the knowledge of students' understanding (three sub-categories) – students' effective approaches to learning, students' learning styles and strategies, students' acquired knowledge and skills.

On the basis of the above sub-categories, twenty questions have been formulated for the questionnaire. Four of the questions were open and sixteen questions were semi-closed (Pelikán, 2011, p. 107–108). The open questions corresponded to the first four sub-categories of the factographic information where respondents entered a specific number of years. The remaining semi-closed questions offered various answers as well as the possibility of writing one's own answer. Moreover, next to each offered answer there were other items forming four columns in order to map the changes during the first three years: (a) yes, only at the beginning of the first three years; (b) yes, only at the end of the first three years; (c) yes, at the beginning as well as the end of the first three years; (d) no, neither at the beginning nor at the end of the first three years. For illustration, one question from the questionnaire can be found in Figure 2.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the obtained data has been conducted at three levels: (a) PCK-component-level – the statistical analysis within the individual PCK components where each component consists of three questions, (b) question-level – the statistical analysis within the individual questions from the questionnaire where each question consists of several answers, (c) answer-level – the descriptive analysis within the individual answers from the questionnaire. While the statistical analysis was focused on the differences between realized and unrealized changes during the first three years as well as on the changes between the beginning and the end of the period, the descriptive analysis was concentrated only on the latter. It is also to be noted that the data from 12 novice teachers were processed in isolation from 86 experienced teachers and used for validation.

During the analysis, the respondents were counted up in each of the four columns (see Chapter 3.1) at the level of answers, questions and PCK components. The pairs of sums were compared within the beginning and the end

of the first three years (columns (a) x (b)) and the realized and unrealized changes during this period (columns (a+b) x (c+d)). Pearson's chi-squared test verified whether the obtained frequencies differed from the theoretical frequencies assuming there was no difference between the observed phenomena (Chráska, 2007, p. 71–72). The results at the expected frequency of 50 % were compared with the critical value of test criterion (3.841) for the degree of freedom 1 and the level of significance 0.05. Chi-square results higher than the critical value were considered to be significant.

**9. Which ESP objectives did you consider most important?**

Select one option in each line

|  | YES – only at the beginning of the first 3 years | YES – only at the end of the first 3 years | YES – at the beginning as well as the end of the first 3 years | NO – neither at the beginning nor at the end of the first 3 years |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| pronunciation development                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                               |
| vocabulary development                               | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>        | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| grammar development                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| listening skill development                          | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>        | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| reading skill development                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                            | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| speaking skill development                           | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                            | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| writing skill development                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| all the above mentioned items were equally important | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                               |
| I had no ESP objectives                              | <input type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                               |

**Others:**

You can supply your own answer (a few words)

.....

Figure 2: The illustration of one question from the questionnaire

### 3.3 Research sample

As mentioned above, altogether 98 questionnaires have been completed by 12 novice teachers (having less than three years of ESP teaching experience) and 86 experienced teachers (having three and more years of this experience). The following text deals with the factographic information obtained from all the respondents.

**The period of the first three years of teaching ESP at universities.** The respondents started teaching ESP at universities 1–35 years (10.2 years on average) before completing the questionnaire, i.e. during the period 1980–2014.

**The length of the whole practice in teaching ESP at universities.** The length of the ESP university teachers' practice was 1–30 years (9.6 years on average) before completing the questionnaire, which indicates some respondents' interruption in teaching ESP (compared with the information in the previous paragraph).

**The length of potential preceding practice in English teaching.** Before teaching ESP at universities, the teachers had been teaching English language at various types of schools for 0–29 years (5.7 years on average).

**The length of potential preceding practice in university teaching.** Before teaching ESP at universities, the teachers had been teaching any other subjects at universities for 0–15 years (1.1 years on average).

**The respondent's university qualifications.** At the beginning of teaching ESP at universities, 92 % of respondents had had their academic degree in English (and 82 % also in another subject). During the first three years, additional 3 % of teachers completed their studies of English (and 4 % of another subject).

**The respondent's educational qualifications.** At the beginning of teaching ESP at universities, 89 % of respondents had had some pedagogical qualifications and additional 4 % of teachers acquired this competence during the first three years.

**ESP specialization during the first three years.** The respondents differed a lot in the professional content of ESP which was technical (40–35)<sup>7</sup>, business (39–35), social (30–31), natural (16–14) and medical (13). It is clear from the figures that during the first three years some teachers were teaching more than one specialization.

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<sup>7</sup> The numbers in brackets represent the number of teachers at the beginning and at the end of the first three years.

**ESP level during the first three years.** The level of ESP was A1 (14–11), A2 (32–23), B1 (63–57), B2 (60–62), C1 (27–30) and C2 (5) according to *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001). Although B1 and B2 were the prevailing levels for the whole period, the above figures suggest a tendency of increasing ESP level during the first three years.

#### 4 Results and discussion

In accordance with the objective of this paper, the following text presents only data obtained in the quantitative research phase. As mentioned above, the emphasis is placed on information provided by experienced teachers while data from novices are used for validation.

The statistical analysis aimed at realised and unrealised changes during the first three years shows the statistical significance of unrealised changes in all PCK components, which means that most experienced teachers did not perceive any changes during the period. Nevertheless, they might not have realised or remembered the changes in their retrospective view of the distant past. However, this argument would be in conflict with the data obtained from novice teachers who were in the period of the first three years and thus had everything in recent memory. This group of respondents has also proved the statistical significance of unrealised changes, even if their chi-square values are noticeably lower. In other words, the university teachers did not perceive any statistically significant changes in PCK from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP. Pearson's chi-squared test values concerning the differences between realised and unrealised changes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson's chi-squared test values concerning the differences between realised and unrealised changes during the first three years (\* = the number of unrealised changes is significantly higher than the number of realised changes)

| PCK-component-level<br>- Question-level             | Chi-square values    |                 |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|
|   | Experienced teachers | Novice teachers |
| Conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter | 1371.803*            | 48.016*         |
| - Educational objectives within the area of ESP     | 566.207*             | 16.333*         |
| - Educational objectives outside the area of ESP    | 388.961*             | 9.389*          |
| - Pedagogical objectives                            | 417.240*             | 24.500*         |

|   |           |         |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Curricular knowledge                                      | 1146.056* | 50.417* |
| - Syllabus for teaching ESP                               | 156.465*  | 6.750*  |
| - <i>Materials</i> for teaching ESP                       | 382.724*  | 23.048* |
| - Professional content of ESP                             | 618.687*  | 21.333* |
| Knowledge of instructional strategies                     | 1251.469* | 43.860* |
| - <i>Ways of motivating students</i>                      | 551.535*  | 24.000* |
| - <i>Organizational forms of teaching</i>                 | 314.940*  | 1.067   |
| - <i>Strategies to cope with the professional content</i> | 385.496*  | 26.889* |
| Knowledge of students' understanding                      | 1520.304* | 54.545* |
| - <i>Students' effective approaches to learning</i>       | 584.238*  | 26.042* |
| - <i>Students' learning styles and strategies</i>         | 392.442*  | 10.889* |
| - <i>Students' acquired knowledge and skills</i>          | 544.395*  | 18.375* |

Table 2: Pearson's chi-squared test values concerning the differences between the beginning and the end of the first three years (\* = the number of items at the end is significantly higher than at the beginning, \*\* = the number of items at the beginning is significantly higher than at the end)

| PCK-component-level<br>- Question-level                   | Chi-square values    |                 |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|
|   | Experienced teachers | Novice teachers |
| Conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter       | 25.138*              | 59.507**        |
| - Educational objectives within the area of ESP           | 4.571*               | 33.000**        |
| - Educational objectives outside the area of ESP          | 19.882*              | 12.565**        |
| - Pedagogical objectives                                  | 5.538*               | 15.000**        |
| Curricular knowledge                                      | 2.051                | 33.985**        |
| - Syllabus for teaching ESP                               | 0.000                | 5.400**         |
| - <i>Materials</i> for teaching ESP                       | 1.984                | 7.200**         |
| - Professional content of ESP                             | 1.195                | 22.533**        |
| Knowledge of instructional strategies                     | 4.745*               | 52.563**        |
| - <i>Ways of motivating students</i>                      | 18.778*              | 16.667**        |
| - <i>Organizational forms of teaching</i>                 | 0.032                | 22.154**        |
| - <i>Strategies to cope with the professional content</i> | 0.714                | 14.000**        |
| Knowledge of students' understanding                      | 1.469                | 40.500**        |
| - <i>Students' effective approaches to learning</i>       | 0.037                | 12.565**        |
| - <i>Students' learning styles and strategies</i>         | 0.758                | 8.909**         |
| - <i>Students' acquired knowledge and skills</i>          | 0.947                | 19.593**        |

#### 4.1 Conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter

It is evident from Table 2 that there is a statistically significant increase in the number of objectives at the end of the first three years within the PCK component relating to the conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter. This statistical significance has also been proved at the level of all three questions concerning the educational objectives within the area of ESP, educational objectives outside the area of ESP and pedagogical objectives. To sum up, the university teachers perceived statistically significant changes in the objectives *from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP*, which could indicate their professional development. Specific differences between the beginning and the end of the period at the answer-level from the descriptive analysis are discussed in the following text.

**Educational objectives within the area of ESP.** The emphasis on grammar and vocabulary development was monitored at the beginning of the period while at the end there was a prevailing emphasis on writing, reading, speaking, and listening skill development. Therefore, there seems to be a transition from the primary focus on language means to the final focus on language skills. From the perspective of communicative competence, which is the main goal of foreign language teaching, the respondents transferred their attention from students' language competence towards their pragmatic competence (Bagaric & Djigunović, 2007, p. 99–100).

**Educational objectives outside the area of ESP.** The respondents emphasised learning autonomy and critical thinking development of students. As this emphasis was concentrated on the end of the first three years, it could be assumed that their professional development was gradual. During the period, the teachers apparently realized the importance of students' learning autonomy and critical thinking which are integral parts of tertiary education (Ramsden, 1992, p. 96–103; Vašutová, 2002, p. 58) while the former is also a characteristic feature of post-communicative approach in foreign language teaching (Dakowska, 2011, p. 82; Janíková, 2011, p. 58).

**Pedagogical objectives.** During the first three years, the teachers were gradually stressing the development of students' moral attitudes, intercultural tolerance, responsible approach to study, and decent behaviour during lessons. Therefore, the respondents were progressively developing many teaching objectives, which is in accordance with literature referring to novices' professional development (Berliner, 1995, p. 47–48).

#### 4.2 Curricular knowledge

It is obvious from Table 2 that there are no statistically significant changes between the beginning and the end of the first three years in the area of PCK component aimed at curricular knowledge. No statistical significance has also been found at the level of questions concerning the syllabus for teaching ESP, the materials for teaching ESP, and the professional content of ESP. Therefore, the university teachers did not perceive any statistically significant changes in the knowledge of curriculum *from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP*. However, on the basis of the descriptive analysis some differences between the beginning and the end of the period have been noticed and are presented in the following text.

**Syllabus for teaching ESP.** At the beginning of the first three years, most respondents had prepared and established syllabi. At the end of the period, the teachers either took part in syllabi production or created their own syllabi, which suggests their professional development. Thus, they became curriculum authors in the onthodidactic transformation of content – they had to choose curricular contents from branch contents, in which they were not educated, and incorporate them into the curriculum (Janík, Manak, & Knecht, 2009, p. 39).

**Materials for teaching ESP.** It has been noticed that the teachers initially used prepared and complete materials, while at the end they either took part in collective production of teaching materials or prepared their own ESP materials. Besides, the respondents used mainly Czech textbooks at the beginning while at the end of the first three years they emphasised textbooks from English publishers. Above all, during the period they also created an increasing number of supplementary materials, which might make their professional development evident.

**Professional content of ESP.** At the beginning, the respondents acquired their knowledge of ESP professional content primarily through discussions with other ESP teachers, while at the end they relied on professional publications, textbooks or internet materials, and on courses, lectures or seminars. Therefore, the teachers lacking specific ESP education seem to become gradually familiar with this professional content by means of the above devices, which could indicate their professional growth.

#### 4.3 Knowledge of instructional strategies

As Table 2 shows, some statistically significant changes have been observed at the level of PCK component dealing with the knowledge of instructional strategies. However, within the question-level statistical analysis this significance

has been remarked only in the area of the ways of motivating students, while no significance has been found in the sphere of the organizational forms of teaching and the strategies to cope with the professional content. To conclude, the university teachers perceived some statistically significant changes in the knowledge of instructional strategies from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP, which could indicate their professional development. Specific differences between the beginning and the end of the period from the descriptive analysis within the answer-level are introduced in the following text.

**Ways of motivating students.** It has been found out that at the end of the period the respondents emphasised primarily useful teaching connected with practice, thus following the latest trends in ESP teaching (Harding, 2007, p. 10–11) and adult education (Barták, 2008, p. 27–31). Moreover, the teachers gradually preferred amusing teaching with interesting activities and considered students' active participation during their final assessment. This combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is considered to be an effective way of encouraging students' active participation in learning processes (Cangelosi, 2014, p. 137).

**Organizational forms of teaching.** In general, the respondents applied frontal teaching at the beginning and pair or group teaching at the end of their initial practice (Gavora, 2005, p. 117–121). This trend is considered to be very effective, unlike the traditional teacher's main role in the classroom preventing students' development of activity, independence and creativity (Maňák, 1998, p. 106). To sum up, the teachers were initially concentrated on their own survival, particularly on establishing their roles in the classroom management (Maynard & Furlong, 1995, p. 12–13), then their professional confidence began to increase and they focused attention on students' learning processes (Richardson & Placier, 2001, in Píšová et al., 2011, p. 82–83).

**Strategies to cope with the professional content.** At the beginning of their practice, the respondents did not solve problems concerning the professional content themselves. Instead, they referred students to experts in the field. Less often, they asked students for explanation or tried to solve the problem themselves. At the end of the period, the teachers asked students for dealing with the problem or let them teach the professional content. Therefore, it can be assumed that the ESP university teachers shifted their responsibility for the professional content towards their students. To conclude, the novices' teaching strategies developed progressively in connection with their experience acquisition (van Driel, Verloop, & de Vos, 1998, p. 681–682).



#### **4.4 Knowledge of students' understanding**

It is clear from Table 2 that there is no statistical significance both at the PCK-component-level related to the knowledge of students' understanding and at the question-level concerning *students'* effective approaches to learning, students' learning styles and strategies, and students' acquired knowledge and skills. Therefore, the university teachers did not perceive any statistically significant changes in the knowledge of students' conceptions from their retrospective view of the first three years of teaching ESP. However, at the level of descriptive analysis some evident changes have been found and are presented in the following text.

**Students' effective approaches to learning.** At the beginning of the first three years, the respondents emphasised regular grammar and vocabulary exercises as the best way of learning ESP. From the perspective of foreign language acquisition, the focus on language means is rooted in behaviourism (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 34) and the accent on repetition is based on cognitivism (Cook, 2001, p. 189). At the end of the period, the teachers preferred practising of speaking, writing and reading skills. The focus on productive language skills can be associated with social interactionism (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 195–196), while the emphasis on receptive language skills has its roots in nativism (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 30–32). Moreover, the above mentioned shift from language means to language skills validates the previous findings within the category of purposes for teaching subject matter.

**Students' learning styles and strategies.** It has been found out that the teachers gradually focused their attention on students' learning styles and strategies by discussing this topic with them or by monitoring their responses during lessons. It is evident that the novices started to be interested in students' learning processes (Fuller, 1969, p. 210–213; Kagan, 1992, p. 156) and act in accordance with their learning styles (Steffy et al., 2000, p. 6–10).

**Students' acquired knowledge and skills.** To find out and evaluate students' knowledge and skills, the respondents initially emphasised regular homework in accordance with the idea that adult people should be responsible for satisfying their own educational needs (Mužík, 2004, p. 26). At the end of the period, they preferred oral seminar work (e.g. presentations), written seminar work (e.g. essays) and continuous oral examinations. Therefore, the teachers started to pay attention to students' independent creative activities reflecting the latest trends in tertiary education (Vašutová, 2002, p. 54).

## Conclusion

At Czech universities, ESP is usually taught by teachers whose university education has been focused on teaching EGP at secondary schools. Because of this non-specific undergraduate preparation, ESP university teachers can be short of basic kinds of knowledge forming their PCK, such as the knowledge of ESP, the knowledge of students' branch of study, and the knowledge of university didactics. For this reason, they may meet many difficulties during their initial practice. This idea has led to the attempt to investigate their situation during the first three years of working experience.

A mixed design has been used for the whole research examining ESP university teachers' subjectively perceived changes in PCK from a retrospective point of view. The first, qualitative phase consisted of semistructured interviews conducted with several ESP university teachers and analysed by thematic coding. This paper presents the second, quantitative phase during which the data were collected with the aid of electronic questionnaires sent to the whole population of Czech ESP university teachers and analyzed statistically as well as descriptively.

The quantitative results show that statistically significant changes between the beginning and the end of the period have been found in two PCK components – the conceptions of purposes for teaching subject matter and the knowledge of instructional strategies. The remaining two PCK components – the curricular knowledge and the knowledge of students' understanding – have not shown any statistically significant changes. However, in terms of descriptive analysis many changes have been noticed in all PCK components, which could indicate the teachers' professional growth during the first three years of their career.

The research should contribute to the expansion of scientific theories dealing with PCK in relation to the period when EGP secondary school teachers were becoming ESP university teachers. From a practical viewpoint, the research could help to inform the professional community about ESP university novices' demanding situation caused by their non-specifically targeted education. This way, the research might be an impulse for introducing changes in the university preparation of future ESP teachers and for supporting these teachers during the first years of their practice.

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## Exploring Intercultural Competence through an Intercultural Extracurricular Activity in Taiwan

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### Abstract

This study used interviews to explore how 10 Taiwanese college students' intercultural competence was developed after participating in an intercultural extracurricular activity designed with a purpose to facilitate foreign students' study in Taiwan and to promote meaningful home-foreign student contacts. In-depth information and narratives from the interviews were collected as evidence of intercultural competence development. The results showed all the interviewees appreciated the experience and felt it to have been of value to them in terms of building international friendships, heightening their intercultural awareness and the benefits of intercultural competence, and having more appreciation and better understanding of Taiwanese culture. Students also realized that a lack of understanding of Taiwanese culture could exacerbate communication difficulties. Students thus became aware of the importance of describing Taiwanese cultural practices in English and realized that more language practice was necessary for smoother communication. Suggestions for both extracurricular activities and language programs improvement in the future were also provided in the conclusion.

**Key words:** Intercultural competence

### Introduction

The topic of intercultural learning has received much interest due to the rise of globalization. When English is used as a tool of communication and interaction with people worldwide, people have more opportunities to experience intercultural learning through using English as an international language to communicate with non-native speakers. This indicates the importance of teaching the intercultural dimension in a foreign language classroom so that students will be prepared to function in the international contexts.

Traditionally, many institutions have facilitated the development of intercultural competence through study abroad programs (Dolby, 2008;

Rundstrom, 2005) and indeed, study abroad has been linked to many positive intercultural learning outcomes (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009; Weber, 2005). However, studying abroad is not accessible or affordable opportunity to all students. For the majority of university students, foreign language classes are the most important forms of access to the development of intercultural competence. However, some studies (Sung & Chen, 2007; Sung & Chen, 2009) have shown that language teachers often are limited in terms of their own knowledge or in the teaching support they receive which in turn affects the promotion of intercultural learning. Moreover, authentic environments for language use are often limited or completely lacking, posing a further challenge to EFL teachers and learners. Theorists also argue that experiential learning of a culture is more effective than learning that is confined within a classroom (Byran & Feng, 2004). To address such challenges, student diversity on campus is a valuable resource for the development students' intercultural competence.

In recent years, the universities in Taiwan have been making strategic efforts to address their internationalization goals. One strategy is to bring in more foreign students, making the university more international in terms of the languages, cultures and viewpoints reflected within the student body. An internationalized campus can thus become an culturally diverse context in which to provide opportunities for the experience of intercultural learning, including language learning as well as other aspects, and to develop intercultural communicative competence without the necessity of going abroad.

Some studies suggest that well-designed tasks and activities as well as appropriate guidance and support are important elements for promoting meaningful intercultural learning (Miyamoto, 2012; Liu, 2012). Leask (2009) also concludes that the development of intercultural competence in students is one of the key outcomes sought in an internationalized curriculum. This in turn necessitates a campus environment and culture in which there are clear motivations for and rewards for interaction between international and local students inside and outside of the classroom.

Based on such an understanding of the diverse campus as a context for the real-life learning of language and culture, this study used a qualitative approach to explore the evidence of students' development of intercultural competence by investigating students' in-depth information and narratives after participation in one specific intercultural extracurricular activity.



## **Literature Review**

### **Intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence has been recognized as an essential skill in the globalized world and studied by various scholars, who have attempted to define, model and assess it. Despite a number of differences among the models and conceptions, scholars generally concur that intercultural competence refers to the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. Four dimensions-in particular: knowledge, attitude, skills and behaviors, can be seen in many definitions (Alred & Byram, 2002; Bennett, 2008; Byram, 1997; Heyward, 2002; Hiller & Wozniak, 2009; Lustin & Koester, 2006). A person who has intercultural competence can develop relationships with people from different cultures, can resolve conflicts arising as a result of cultural differences and can improve his or her ability to do business with counterparts from different cultures (Huang, Rayner, & Zhuang, 2003). Taylor (1994) defines intercultural competence as a transformative process through which the foreigner develops his or her adaptive capacity, altering his or her perspective to effectively understand and adapt to the demands of the host culture. Hence, learning to deal with different cultures effectively requires cultural awareness, communicative competence, as well as personality traits like empathy and flexibility, self-awareness along with a conceptual understanding others' values, norms and beliefs.

### **The importance of intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence is the foundation of any international interaction. Globalization and worldwide contacts among companies, organizations and individuals requires of individuals the ability to communicate successfully. The rise of English as a global language implies a paradigm shift for English Language Teaching (ELT). Kachru (1985, 1991, 1992, 1998) categorizes the English as center-periphery relationship in which the innermost circle comprises the countries in which English is the primary language such as the UK, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. The next circle includes countries where English has official or historical importance such as India, the Philippines, and Singapore. Here English may serve as a useful lingua franca between ethnic and language groups. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce, and so on, are all carried out more or less predominantly in English. The final, or expanding, circle refers to those countries where English has no official role in the state, but is nonetheless important for functions such as international business. In recent decades, the varieties of English used in the expanding circle

have been reported to be the fastest growing sectors of world English. In the twenty-first century, non-native English speakers have come to significantly outnumber native speakers (Graddol, 1999; Gnutzmann, 2000). This indicates most verbal exchanges in which English is used as a foreign or second language involve non-native users of English. For many English learners, the main purpose of learning English is to communicate with people the world, the majority of whom are non-native speakers (NNS). In traditional ELT, learners follow the NS norms and standards, trying to understand the rules and usages of the language set by native speakers (NS). In contrast, the global English paradigm holds that the importance of intelligibility and intercultural comprehension outweighs considerations of grammatical correctness and standardization.

### **The development of intercultural competence**

Developing cultural dimension in language teaching has grown in the last two decades. What has to be taught and learned to develop intercultural competence are explicitly explained by Kramsch's quotation (Kramsch, 1998, p. 27): "The characteristic of a competent language user is not the ability to speak and write according to the rules of the academy and the social etiquette of one social group, but the adaptability to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use".

Byram (1997) adds: The desirable outcome is a learner with the ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviors and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language –or even a combination of languages—which may be the interlocutors' native language, or not.

Thus, the intercultural dimension in language teaching is developed in order to give learners intercultural as well as linguistic competence; to enable students to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with distinctive perspectives, values, and behaviors; and to help them to see such interaction as an enriching experience.

Some analyses of study abroad programs have found them to be an effective way to experience intercultural learning (Weber, 2005) and practice language. Language teachers also apply web-based technologies to promote intercultural learning (Chen, 2011; Ke, 2011; Lee, 2012). In contrast to these previous studies, this study explored the development students' intercultural competence as the result of participation in an extracurricular activity designed to promote intercultural learning outside the classroom and encourage English language use as a means of communication on an internationalized campus in Taiwan.

### **The assessment of intercultural competence**

Research results indicate that intercultural competence can, indeed, be assessed (Deardorff, 2011; Fantini, 2009; Stuart, 2009). A great number of tools have been developed to measure intercultural competence. Most assessments of intercultural competence focus on results instead of process. Intercultural competence assessment must involve a multi-method, multi-perspective approach that is focused more on the process of intercultural competence than on an end result (Deardorff, 2012; Deardorff & Edwards, 2012; Gordon & Deardorff, 2013). Examples of how intercultural competence is currently being assessed include through embedded course assessment, self-report instruments, reflection papers, critical incident analysis, interviews, observations (by professors, internship supervisors, host families, group members, etc), simulations and longitudinal studies. While it is encouraging that more institutions are assessing intercultural competence outcomes, there is much work that needs to be done on improving intercultural competence assessment and as such, there are currently no examples of “best” practices.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

10 college students who voluntarily participated in an 18-week intercultural extracurricular activity, called SUSIS, on the campus of a university in Taiwan with a sizeable population of international students were interviewed for their intercultural learning experience. After an initial interview explaining the purpose and the process of this study to a total of 23 new SUSIS members at the beginning of the semester, 10 students, 7 female and 3 male, agreed to participate in this study with an understanding about confidentiality and signed a consent form.

#### **Description of intercultural experience activity**

The intercultural experience activity that formed the basis of this study is called Soochow University students’ international service (SUSIS). SUSIS is under the supervision of the international office of Soochow University, which mainly details international student affairs. Every semester the international office recruits local students as members of SUSIS, who are willing to offer service for 18 weeks, to welcome and assist foreign students. In addition to facilitating foreign students’ study in Taiwan, SUSIS allows more frequent contacts with students from different cultures outside the classroom.

After recruiting the members of SUSIS, an orientation session at which the tasks the SUSIS members would be asked to complete during the 18 weeks were explained was provided. The SUSIS members were grouped according to the primary tasks assigned them; for example, group for picking up foreign students in the airport, group for help with check-in in the dorm, and group for help with housing rental if foreign students would like to live off campus. SUSIS members and foreign students collaborated on the organization of four major intercultural events intended to allow the students to get to know each another better. A buddy program was also established, providing participating students with greater opportunity to develop closer friendships. On the average, one SUSIS student took care of one to two foreign students. Pairs were formed as far as possible, based on students' fields of study. The scope, duration and frequency of interaction in this program provided SUSIS students with an intercultural experience that afforded possibilities of self-discovery standing in contrast to the second-or third-hand cultural knowledge or information passed on through teacher-directed classroom approaches.

## **Data collection**

### ***Interviews***

An initial interview explained the purpose and the process of the research and allowed the researcher to develop rapport with the purposely selected participants. The 10 volunteers were contacted to set a time for a second interview at the end of the semester.

A flexible semi-structured interview, which allows new questions to be brought up in response of interviewee remarks, was conducted at the end of the semester. The choice of a semi-structured interview format was based on the idea that the researcher can gather detailed data, such as thoughts, feelings, intentions or beliefs (Denzin, 1989; Merriam, 1998), or what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Seidman (1998) also states that "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3). A series of prearranged questions related directly to the research question were asked to elicit the responses from the 10 students who were divided into 4 groups due to scheduling considerations. Each small group, including 2-3 students, was interviewed for two 2 hours. Interviewees were allowed to respond either in Chinese or English. The contents of the interview were recorded, transcribed and translated into English with the interviewees' permission. Questions dealt with aspects of the participants' motivation to participate in SUSIS, their interaction

engagement; their experience of cultural difference; accounts of their collaboration with people from different cultures; communication experiences developing linguistic and other skills; new knowledge and abilities applied and developed during the course of the program and as well as the challenges encountered. Informal, relaxed atmosphere maintained during the interviews encouraged the participants' open expression of ideas.

### **Data analysis**

A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Owen, 1984) was performed to analyze the interviews. All the interviews were read thoroughly and repetitively to code important texts related to the research questions. Then the coded excerpts were categorized and given the initial themes which were reviewed continually and revised several times before the final themes were generated.

### **Results**

Five main themes were identified :(a) reasons for participation, (b) communication preferences (c) positive aspects perceived in development of intercultural communication competence,(d) challenges and (e) negative aspects of contact experience.

#### **Reasons for participation**

The ten interviewees were asked about the reasons for participation in SUSIS. All of them stated that the main purpose was to make friends with a foreign student and to learn more about other cultures. The most frequently stated reasons were: to build international friendship, to practice spoken English, to increase knowledge of other cultures, to help others, to learn team-work skills and to develop problem-solving skills. The following are representative quotes:

*"I am interested in making friends from different cultures. I want to practice communication in English and hope to improve my English ability." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" This activity provides more opportunities to experience different cultures than other student clubs on campus. I think this is a good chance to increase knowledge and practice English communication and learn how to be a team player. I believe the experience of meeting people from different cultures cannot only broaden my horizons but also be helpful in my*

performance at workplace in the future.” (personal communication, March 4, 2015)

*“ I want to learn more about the world by interacting with people from different cultures. Also I want to share and introduce the culture and the beauty of Taiwan with foreign students.” (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*...to increase my confidence in using English and to learn social and problem-solving skills.” (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*“ I am going to be an exchange student next semester. I would like to take this opportunity to know why they want to study in Taiwan and help them adjust to the study in Taiwan if they have any difficulties. I believe this will also help me better prepare my study in a foreign country. I am glad that I can be a member of SUSIS and help foreign students. When I study abroad, I hope I can have a partner to help me too.” (personal communication, March 4, 2015).*

### **Communication preferences**

When asked to describe the topics that they usually talk about in their meetings, all interviewees firmly expressed being able to talk about Taiwanese culture is the key for the successful interaction engagement. Foreign students are eager to know the local culture. Thus topics such as trips, food, restaurants and festivals are preferences in conversations. All the interviewees shared the same idea like the following quote:

*“They often ask us where to eat delicious Taiwanese food and ask for advice for the trips. My partner and I visited Kinmen together during the spring break. He wanted to go there because of the famous alcohol there, Kao-Liang.” (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

### **Positive aspects of contact experience**

All interviewees felt SUSIS to have been of value to them and commented that although they were nervous at the beginning, they gained something from this intercultural learning experience. The most commonly mentioned gains were (1) friendship (2) English for real communication (3) appreciation of Taiwanese

culture (4) better perception of intercultural communication and (5) Increasing intercultural awareness. Representative quotes are as follows:

*"This is a very good chance to meet people from different cultures in my own school, especially for students like me who don't have the opportunity to study abroad. I remember at the welcome party, I was a little nervous and had no confidence. However, when a Japanese student tried to communicate with me by writing, I found out that in fact foreign students were not so unapproachable as I had thought. Despite my poor communication skills, I tried my best to converse with my partner. Through this experience I realized as long as we open our hearts, we can make more friends." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"My partner and I are doing a language exchange. I teach her Chinese and sometimes she helps me with my Japanese assignments. We meet every week and we go visit many places, such as night markets, Taichung city and Tainan, my hometown together. I have a plan to visit her after she goes back to Japan this summer." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"It's very interesting to learn about other cultures through such direct contact. I have made a lot of international friends. My conversations with them show me how they look at Taiwan. As a Taiwanese student, it's my job to help them get to know Taiwan. As a result, I can see my own country from a different point of view and I have visited places I have never been to and eaten foods I have never tried before with foreign students. And I think Taiwan is really pretty." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"Here I can learn practical skills that I can't gain in the classrooms, such as problem-solving skills and real communication skills. Due to the language barrier, it's very important to ask for help or support from other SUSIS members who have better English proficiency to solve foreign students' problems. Sometimes it is difficult to understand their English. Students from different places, have different accents. My English is not so good either. Therefore, sometimes we use limited Chinese and English or sign language to communicate. That is fun too." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" Foreign students' lives and overseas experiences motivated me to see more of and learn more about the world. I want to travel and study abroad if possible. My partner told me he studied in China before coming to Taiwan. He recognizes the differences between the Chinese used in China and in Taiwan. Also the learning environment in Taiwan is much better and safer. At least not many people spit on the streets." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"This experience has increased my understanding of the importance of English as an international language for communication among people from different cultures. Many students speak English very fluently. I need to work harder to improve my proficiency." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

Through the interviews, the development of the intercultural awareness, the foundation of intercultural competence, is identified as below.

*"My impression of the westerners is that they are open and outgoing. But I found this is not to be so true. My partner is not enthusiastic as I had expected. She is shy and quiet and sometimes it took some time for us communicate well." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"In the classroom, my Japanese teacher taught us that it was a part of Japanese culture to show respect to others by not asking personal questions. However, my own experience showed me that it is not true for everyone. I also learned some real language use from my Japanese partner, which is different from what is taught in our textbooks." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" It's important to be more patient and be objective in an international relationship because things might not be going as well as I think they are. Sometimes I really don't know what subtle meanings my partner is trying to express during our interaction. " (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"As long as we are open-minded and willing to try, we can make a lot of foreign friends and enjoy the interaction more. (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*



## **Challenges**

Despite these fruitful positive learning outcomes of their contact experiences, there were some problems identified. Two most commonly mentioned challenges faced by the subjects were (1) the language barrier and (2) difficulties in explaining their own culture. Typical remarks are as follows:

*"At beginning, I couldn't express myself well. I felt upset. But I try to use a lot of gestures and sign language to communicate. And recently I think I have been making some progress in speaking." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"Students more proficient in English have more opportunities to talk to students from the West." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"Successful intercultural communication is not so easy. Lack of fluency in spoken English or poor listening comprehension can cause a lot of frustration, but I still believe this direct contact provides a good learning experience for intercultural communication." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" My partner is from Japan. His English is not so good either, so we sometimes have difficulties understanding each other. We always end up using smart phones to look up vocabulary in order to communicate." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"When we eat in the restaurant, it's very difficult to explain Taiwanese food in English to them. I don't know enough vocabulary to explain on the spot" (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" Because of my poor spoken English, my partners sometimes can't understand me at all, resulting in real embarrassment and frustration." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*" During a trip to the museum in Yingge, my French partner asked me about the statues of gods and goddesses. I realized that I didn't know much about them myself. So, of course I was not able to explain it in English. I immediately used my cell phone to google it " (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

*"I need to improve my listening comprehension. During the conversations, it was challenging for me to understand what they were saying or asking. I usually had to have people proficient in English help me out. This has really motivated me to study English harder in the future." (personal communication, March 4, 2015)*

### **Negative aspects of contact experience**

Although the majority of the interviewees expressed a positive attitude regarding the benefits of this intercultural experience, not all interviewees felt they had achieved significant improvement in ICC. Three interviewees reported that their ICC had developed substantially. This was because the Japanese majors who had been matched with Japanese students were already somewhat familiar with Japanese culture or had already had experience interacting with Japanese students. Thus, they reported that they had not experienced much that was new to them. Another difficulty was related to scheduling. Most students reported difficulty in finding free time beyond the official scheduled activities to meet their buddies during the semester. This is shared by the following quote.

*"I take classes on Main campus while my partner takes most classes on Downtown campus. It is impossible for us to meet each other often. If she doesn't need any help from me, we seldom contact each other." (personal communication, March 4, 2015).*

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Considering the need to maximize the opportunities of intercultural learning for the majority of university students, this study explored the effects of an intercultural engagement activity on the development of intercultural competence on an internationalized campus by interviews. The results showed the benefits of experiential learning, as well as indicating some of the challenges face and attitudinal changes undergone in the development of intercultural competence.

The interviewees' motivation to participate in SUSIS expressed their eagerness, openness, willingness and readiness for and interest in discovering, learning and experiencing other cultures through contacting with foreign students from various cultures. Such enthusiasm is just the attitude students are expected to have in the development of intercultural competence. Through SUSIS, all the interviewees appreciated the experience and felt it to have been of value to them in terms of building international friendships, heightening their

intercultural awareness and the benefits of intercultural competence, and having more appreciation and better understanding of Taiwanese culture. The interviewees' attitudinal shifts became evident through this experience in several ways. Some were able to see the differences in language use between the real world and in the classroom. They realized that more efforts would be needed before they attained fluency. More than half of them gained new views and opportunities to explore their own culture. Some interviewees' stereotypes were broken down in this experience.

Aside from the benefits, students also encountered difficulties expressing themselves to foreign students in situations when the vocabulary is limited. In addition, most interviewees experienced communication problems when their foreign partners did not speak fluent English or spoke with unfamiliar accents. Students also realized that a lack of understanding of Taiwanese culture could exacerbate communication difficulties. Students thus became aware of the importance of describing Taiwanese cultural practices in English and realized that more language practice was necessary for smoother communication. They understand it needs more patience and more tolerance in a foreign friendship.

Despite the challenges and negative views reported therein, the interview results have shown that intercultural contact outside the walls of the classroom can provide a means of expanding intercultural communication and learning from experiential intercultural education. The reported gains of this extracurricular intercultural contact experience can not only complement students' academic studies but also motivate students to improve their English.

Based on the results, a number of suggestions can be put forward to facilitate the development of intercultural competence on the university campus. First, besides encouraging students to participate in SUSIS, more training could be devoted to preparing students in the curriculum of language programs. Students' reports of their experience also suggest the importance of sharing knowledge about one's own culture in intercultural interactions and that more training is needed in academic programs so that students can be better equipped to deal with such communicative challenges. Therefore, language teachers can reexamine the cultural content of their classes to see what role information about the local culture, generally taken for granted, can play. Encouraging students to consciously look at their own culture through the eyes of an outsider should be undertaken alongside the discussion of foreign cultures are introduced. Good language teachers help improve students' ability to learn about other cultures as well as providing them new insights on their own culture.

Second, expand and diversify experiential learning opportunities to maximize the potential for intercultural learning. Facilitating international education for home students requires the full support and cooperation of multiple institutions at various levels. This study is one example of how intercultural communication competence beyond EFL classrooms can be facilitated by using international students as language and cultural resources. In the future, the administrators in charge of foreign students may collaborate with language or subject-related teachers and offer mutual support by designing more various intercultural work projects or theme-based activities to enrich and expand the communication topics so that they are not only frequently limited to foods, fairs, or trips by using the campus diversity as valuable resources.

Finally, the outcomes of participation in SUSIS should be shared and widely promoted on campus to draw the interest of even more student in the future. After all, interaction between foreign and local students does not just spontaneously happen. Nor does the existence of cultural diversity in a given institution does automatically lead to harmonious intercultural contact. It needs to be nurtured and guided toward positive outcomes. Similarly, intercultural contact doesn't guarantee intercultural competence.

The results of this study were used as important information to better the intercultural education. It is hoped that curricular design in and outside the classroom constitute a dynamic interplay of teaching and learning processes to shape the lived experience of students and develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to face a future in an increasingly connected and globalized society.

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## **Foreign language education of seniors**

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### **Abstract**

This study is of a theoretical-conceptual nature and is a partial outcome of the research project VEGA MŠVVaŠ SR and SAV no. 1/0176/15. It deals with one of the problems currently faced by educational theory and practice, i.e. the foreign language education of seniors. The trend is typical for many EU member states, since it results from the needs of a modern society. In addition to strategic documents, programs and legislation which binds the Slovak Republic to create conditions for lifelong education, including foreign language education, the authors are more closely preoccupied with specificities and possibilities of the language education of seniors, which are explained on a comparative basis with the language education of children and youth. Even though in literature one can find results of many substantial empirical research projects devoted to foreign language education of children and youth, research into the education of adults and seniors in the area of foreign languages falls behind considerably. A sufficient platform for the methodology of language education of adults and seniors in Slovakia has not been created either, if compared with the methodology of language education of younger age categories. This shortcoming is often quite noticeable in practice. The study attempts to pay adequate attention to the analysis of selected teaching styles specific for adult and senior age as well as teaching methods which may be used in the language education of seniors.

**Key words:** senior; foreign language education; starting points, specificities, possibilities and institutional background of foreign language education of seniors; teaching styles of seniors; methodological approaches to foreign language education of seniors; language pedagogy; geragogics

### **Introduction**

Recently, on various levels of social life, there has been much discussion on the need or rather a capability of a human being to communicate through speaking and writing not only in one's mother tongue, but in a foreign one as well, potentially in several foreign languages. This usually applies to the persons



in pre-productive and productive age who are either using a foreign language or will be using it especially in their jobs. Nowadays it is not an exception also for the individuals who have already finished their professional activity and set on a journey of active and productive old age.<sup>8</sup> Education of seniors not only has become a topic of the day, acquiring ever greater popularity, but also an important element, if not a means, of the building of knowledge-based society. Institutions, organisations as well as various subjects of the third sector have enlarged their offer of educational programs and courses devoted specifically to seniors. Out of all the offered educational programs, language and ICT courses have become relatively most preferred. Moreover, the educational practice has shown that not all the subjects offering language courses for seniors are adequately prepared as regards teaching staff (i.e. qualifications of foreign language teachers). Many times the courses were taught by the elementary and secondary school teachers who applied methodology of work with children also in their work with seniors, which was counterproductive. As a participant of lifelong education in the area of foreign languages, a senior enters the educational process with certain expectations, especially educational needs which can be adequately saturated by the knowledge of a foreign language.

### **Legislative, programmatic and documentary starting points in the foreign language education of seniors**

The need of lifelong education, which should objectively stretch up to the old age, has been intensively discussed for a few years, mostly because of the population's growing older. As a response one could see codification of various supporting, opinion making as well as binding documents, programs and laws in which the idea of lifelong education, including foreign language education, became of key importance. Many of these programs and documents were created on the basis of international resolutions. Out of them, we have chosen the following programs, laws and documents dealing with the issue.

*The National Program for the Protection of Elderly People (Národný program ochrany starších ľudí)* has declared in the area of education, among other things, also the necessity to pay increased attention to the universities of the third age, to support the increasing in the number of participants in further education and the creation of (new) educational programs at the universities of third age, in order to preserve and support spiritual health and make processes of ageing

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<sup>8</sup> For more on individual concepts of ageing, see Repková (2012).

easier. It is undeniable that language education is one of the frequently searched for educational programs at the third age universities.

*Memorandum on Lifelong Education (Memorandum o celoživotnom vzdelávaní sa)* penetrates into the essence of lifelong education through its six key messages<sup>9</sup>. The first message speaks about new basic skills for all. They are the skills which are necessary for an active participation in the life of knowledge-based society and economy. The Memorandum (2000, p. 12) includes command of foreign languages to the skills as well.

In 2002 the Government of the SR introduced the *National Program of Education in the Slovak Republic (Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike)* which included to lifelong education also the socio-cultural, civic, and spare time education, including the seniors. The National Program recommends, among other things, creating a lifelong education system for the acquisition and improvement of language competencies.

In 2007 the European Union issued a document *Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning – European Framework of Reference (Kľúčové kompetencie pre celoživotné vzdelávanie – európsky referenčný rámec)* as an enclosure to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. The given framework of reference describes in more detail 8 key competences<sup>10</sup>. *Communication in foreign languages* is based on basic skills which “consist of the ability to understand spoken messages, to initiate, sustain and conclude conversations and to read, understand and produce texts appropriate to the individual's needs. Individuals should also be able to use aids appropriately, and learn languages also informally as part of lifelong learning” (*Kľúčové kompetencie...*, p. 5).

Another significant document is the *Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Counselling to 2015 (Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva do roku 2015)*, whose primary mission was to form a society based on knowledge by means of all systems and cycles of education. Not all the

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<sup>9</sup> It includes the following key messages: new basic skills for all, more investment to human resources, innovations in education, assessment of education, new approach to vocational orientation and consulting, drawing education closer to homes (*Memorandum on Lifelong Education*, p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> It includes the following competencies: communication in mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competencies in research and development, digital competence, learn to teach, social and civic competencies, leadership and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression (*Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning – European Framework of Reference*, p. 3).

priorities of this Strategy have been fulfilled, some of them have not even been begun, says the prologue of the new *Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2011 (Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania 2011)*. It considers the need to develop key competences one of its problem areas, to which the expert group included *communication in world languages*, digital literacy, business competences, active citizenship and financial literacy. The basic principle for the selection of these competencies was to understand education not only as an instrument of fulfilling the needs of professional development, but also as an instrument of the development of the personality of human being in order to be successful in society and develop his/her personal interests (Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2011, p. 26).

*Law no. 568/2009 on Lifelong Learning (Zákon č. 568/2009 Z. z. o celoživotnom vzdelávaní v znení neskorších predpisov)* puts lifelong learning on two pillars, i.e. on school education and on further education. The kinds of further education include spare-time education, civic education, education of seniors, and other education, through which the participant in education saturates his/her interests, gets involved in the life of civil society and develops his/her personality (§ 4, section 1, letter d) of the law). The Law also includes language schools among institutions of further education.

The year 2013 saw the origin of three significant documents, that is, *Strategy of Active Ageing (Stratégia aktívneho starnutia)*, *Action Plan for the Fulfilling of the Strategy of Active Ageing (Akčný plán naplňania stratégie aktívneho starnutia)* and *National Program of Active Ageing for 2014 – 2020 (Národný program aktívneho starnutia na roky 2014 – 2020)* in which the idea of active ageing was fully established and substituted current approach to seniors as subjects of protection (Bútorová et al., 2013). The National Program of Active Ageing lists six objectives within lifelong learning (*Objective 1*: In order to increase the quality of life it is necessary to create new and develop the existing opportunities for the education of people in a higher age, to support their active life and improve their chances at labour market. *Objective 2*: To legislatively anchor individual kinds and forms in the education of the elderly into the educational system of the Slovak Republic. *Objective 3*: To financially secure individual kinds and forms in the education of the elderly. *Objective 4*: To improve digital literacy of elderly people. *Objective 5*: To implement programs for the improvement of financial literacy of elderly people. *Objective 6*: To strengthen and systematically develop the quality of specific professional career advisors for work with elderly people; c.f. Národný

program aktívneho starnutia na roky 2014 – 2020, p. 32-35), which in themselves carry a mission of creating certain fundament of our work.<sup>11</sup>

Even though one can say, based on the above, that during the entire human life, thus also in old age, language education has a strong program-legislative platform, its concrete application in practice has still considerable shortcomings.

### **Specificities, possibilities and institutional background of foreign language education of seniors**

Literature as well as educational practice often ignore the need to differentiate between the (foreign language) education of youth on one hand and the (foreign language) education of adults and seniors on the other hand. There is no doubt that there are significant differences between them, especially with regard to motivation, methodology itself, and partly also the content of foreign language education. While for children and youth motivation to study foreign languages comes, as a rule, from the outside (e.g. a grade as a motivational factor), in case of adults and seniors one may rather speak about inner motivation. A senior learns a foreign language not to be dependent on others communicating in a foreign language, family members, friends or acquaintances, to prove to others, usually the younger ones, that he/she is also able to progress..., or just to be able to meet his/her peers in language courses. The study saturates rather social than educational needs<sup>12</sup> of a senior. Prusáková (2010, p. 25) claims that in analysing educational needs it is important to know a possible motivation and to differentiate the *need to deal with a concrete situation* from *educational need*. While in case of the need to deal with a concrete situation the starting point is the fact that one does not have enough knowledge and cannot solve the situation (insufficient knowledge and skills), with the need to educate oneself the leitmotif is getting education in order to come to terms with changing living conditions. In practice it means that education of seniors in foreign

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<sup>11</sup>To preserve the cohesion of the text, all electronic sources for the mentioned documents, programs and law are provided in References.

<sup>12</sup>Průcha (2014: 36-37) distinguishes three kinds of educational needs, i.e. *educational needs of individuals* (the needs of real or potential participants of education that are variable – depending on age, sex, educational level, etc.), *educational needs of groups of subjects* (age, professional, socioeconomic, ethnic and other groups), and *educational needs of enterprises, sectors of national economy, entire society* (including, especially, requirements of employers transformed to the needs, and, at a national level, national priorities /objectives of education).

languages may be understood either as a *process of saturating a senior's needs* or as *the need in itself* (Prusáková, 2010). Getting to the curricular area, content of education (we do not mean grammar, sentence constructions, vocabulary, etc., but rather thematic orientation of the used teaching texts) changes with participants' age. It is logical that in language education of seniors we will not use materials for children and youth, which was not a rule in the past, that are often filled with slang expressions, time and age related picture material as well as various extra textual components which may have a disturbing effect on seniors.<sup>13</sup> As far as methodological aspect is concerned, a very important role is played by a chosen methodological approach which should fully respect the individual, especially age specificities of participants in education. Based on the Berlin study, Mitterlechner (2012, p. 9) claims that in work with seniors it has to be taken into account that:

- "learning takes longer for older people,
- they are more sensitive to external disturbances,
- they put emphasis on the meaning of education,
- educational content must be relevant for learners, i.e. it has to be meaningful and it must bring benefit,
- success in learning depends on motivation,
- continuation with what was previously learned (connection to the knowledge acquired earlier) has a favourable effect,
- learning is dependent on social factors,
- unused learning capacities are available in older age as well".

While in the work with contemporary seniors grammar-translation method is in the centre of attention, which more or less respects their way of acquiring, preserving and using a foreign language, the work with contemporary children and youth is rather characteristic for the changing of several procedures within one teaching unit, with emphasis placed on the use of audiolingual and communicative methods.<sup>14</sup> We would argue that neither the preferred interests,

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<sup>13</sup>A comparison of the pedagogic and andragogic approach, or education of children and adults in general, is (was) more closely analysed by several authors, such as Knowles, Jarvis, Matulčík, and others.

<sup>14</sup>Methodological procedures, even though mostly with focus on the target group of children and youth, are more closely discussed by foreign language methodologists, in our country for example Pokrivčáková, Tandlichová, Horváthová, Hockicková, Straková, Lojová and others.

nor methodology of foreign language education, which suits contemporary seniors, will meet the needs of those seniors who will then be taking language courses, since contemporary seniors grew up in a different social system which is also manifested in their interests, expectations and preferred methods. Not only the age, but also requirements, interests and entire views of life change from generation to generation, or from year to year.

Petřková and Čornaničová (2004, p. 69) mention also potential barriers resulting from subjective (e.g. fear of the decrease of sensory and cognitive capabilities, low self-confidence, stage-fright and anxiety from new situations, shortage of vitality, indecisiveness, etc.) as well as objective (e.g. shortage of information about educational possibilities or bad approach to them, unsuitable time of education, problems with transport, financial problems, etc.) conditions which can slow down not only the learning. Many of the given educational barriers are not associated with the children's or youth age, and therefore it is necessary to have lecturers or teachers specifically trained for foreign language education of seniors.

Drawing on the definition of education (for more, see Švec, 2008), the following three possibilities of foreign language education of seniors can be distinguished:

1. *at the level of formal education* – this may include the study of foreign languages at elementary, secondary schools and higher educational institutions; the result of this is the obtaining of respective level of formal education aimed at a given foreign language (this possibility is more specific for children, youth and adults in productive age);<sup>15</sup>
2. *at the level of nonformal education* – this may include the study of foreign languages at language schools or within educational language programs/courses at universities of the third age, academies of the third age, in daily centres (former pensioners' clubs), and elsewhere;
3. *at the level of informal education* – this is mostly spontaneous and non-institutional education in foreign languages, e.g. through communication in foreign language environment, watching TV programs or listening to radio broadcasting in a foreign language, reading books, promotional materials or tourist guides, etc.

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<sup>15</sup>Individual stages of language education are discussed in detail by *Law no. 245/2008 Coll. On Education* in § 17, par. 3.

As indicated above, the strongest institutional base of foreign language education of seniors under our conditions is created by *language schools* and *universities of the third age*. Law no. 245/2008 Coll. on Education incorporates language schools into the system of schools. According to § 53 of the Law language schools provide language education in foreign languages based on specific educational plan, then organise teaching foreign languages for specific purposes, and, at the same time, prepare students for translation and interpreting. Education is provided in courses. Its target group is made up, according to the Law, by elementary and secondary school pupils, college and university students and adults (including seniors – noted by the authors). Another educational subject providing (nonformal) spare-time education for elderly people and seniors (not only) in foreign languages is the university of the third age. The study is carried out in accordance with the conception of lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic, as a continuation of the gerontological program of UNESCO (5/2011 Statute of the University of the Third Age). As far as the organisation of work with seniors is concerned, the following two basic approaches can be distinguished (whose combination is not excluded): *classical academic approach*, emphasising especially the intellectual activity of participants, and *traditional educational approach*, putting emphasis especially on mass events with a high number of participants (Čornaničová, 1998). In western countries, e.g. in Germany, *integrational model* of the study of seniors at universities of the third age has been widely used. Its essence lies in seniors' participating in educational events together with full-time students. A more characteristic model for the Slovak Republic is the *segregated education model* in which the senior and full-time students study separately. In addition to the mentioned institutions and seniors living in their natural home environment, language education may also be provided to the institutional seniors from social services facilities. In 2013 we carried out a research with a sample of 259 respondents consisting of the clients of facilities for seniors from seven Slovak regions. It was found out, among other things, that the interest in foreign language courses was expressed just by 7 (2.70 %) clients (Határ, 2014b). This may be justified mainly by the nature of the institution which provides primarily social services, not education, by the specificity of the target group, consisting of the seniors depending on care, changing needs of ageing and old people, their abilities, previous and current social status, their former profession, personal and other barriers, inner and outer motivation, etc.

The focus of our study is thus on the organised and intentional foreign language education of non-institutionalised seniors, in particular on the study of

German or English as the first foreign language, at the level of nonformal education (language schools or universities of the third age).

### **Analysis of the selected learning styles of seniors**

In addition to the age specificities and the above mentioned factors, a teacher or a lecturer must be aware of the fact that a group as a whole is composed of various personalities who are different in many respects, and they have to be approached on an individual basis and, at the same time, as a group. Therefore, we have concentrated on the educational-psychological construct, i.e. a participant's learning style. The aim of this study is neither to explain the concept of learning or cognitive style and the difference between these categories, nor to discuss the adequacy or validity of the measuring of learning style. We are aware of the fact that there is a great number of theories explaining learning styles from various aspects. In identifying and classifying learning styles one may draw on the combination of three aspects:

1. How a person primarily accepts information as simply as possible through the senses, how he/she learns about the surrounding world. Sensual perception is understood as biologically conditioned reactions to external environment through which we efficiently adjust and process information.
2. The way information is organised and processed points to the process of thinking and remembering. Also in this process a learner gives preference to a way through which he/she "captures" the information, speaking, in this case, about abstract concepts and generalisation or concrete examples. Then the information is arranged either through logical, sequential ways (step by step we build a picture) or holistically (first a picture is built, then details).
3. What conditions are necessary to organise information and present new knowledge to others (e.g. emotional, social, physical environment). New information may be organised in a holistic way or through a detailed analysis. Presenting is either verbal or written (use of pictures) (Petty, 2002).

Based on this classification, we may look at individual theories dealing with learning styles, applying them to the adult and senior age. Seniors as a specific group of learners have their own learning procedures and strategies which serve them well in other contexts. They can be used in language education as well. A lecturer should therefore be sufficiently flexible to allow various approaches to the tasks in the course (respecting learning styles).

In acquiring information, understanding, in general learning, one connects various senses, some of them more preferable than others. A significant factor in



every learning is undoubtedly health, since many deficits, chronic diseases, may influence seniors' ability to learn. The loss or weakening of hearing influences the ability to understand speech, especially when it is at the same time accompanied by a noise, or sounds in the background. Sharpness of sight also gets worse with ageing. Worse motion, loss of teeth and other defects or restrictions (naturally, these problems cannot be associated only with seniors) will be influencing the preference of a certain sensual channel. In foreign language teaching there is an approach called neuro-linguistic programming, described by the acronym VAKOG (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory and gustatory type). Based on the way of perception and reaction to learning style, four methods of learning are distinguished; one of the most common typologies is N. Fleming's VARK in which every letter denotes one learning style - visual, aural, read/write, kinaesthetic. Sensual preferences are created through positive experience. Every learner uses a net of neurons which deal with the problem in a simplest and fastest way. If a learner further uses these neuron connections, they become stronger. So, for example, if an audial learner acquires positive result in listening and dialogue, he/she will continue in such learning, it will become its preference, and this procedure will be strengthened by the use of a given sensual organ.

- *Visual* type learner needs a mental model which he/she can see, a structure to express meaning, since he/she has a difficulty to understand verbal instructions. The learner can have a problem to remember names, but remembers details. He/she enjoys books, is fond of reading them (mostly alone, not indirectly), as well as pictures, graphs, tables, posters; he/she should be using visual organisers (e. g. conceptual maps, posters). Such learner organises ideas by writing them down, likes jigsaws, notices small details, prefers when a lecturer keeps eye contact. This type should be making notes from what he/she hears at a lesson and the tasks assigned by the teacher to better remember the information.
- *Audial* type learner likes explication, lectures, the information which would make a meaning for him/her, discussions about content, not just listening and making notes. He/she likes discussions with others, but also with oneself, often moving lips during reading, talking to oneself. This type searches for opportunities to verbalise ideas. Such learners like activities during which they can talk to other participants, express opinions, being able to remember easily and being also characteristic for their weak coordination of fine motoric skills. They learn well when accompanied by others and through conversation with the lecturer.

- *Verbal (R)* type learner was included into the characteristics of former types due to the need to communicate the seen and the heard.
- *Kinaesthetic (K)* type learner feels best to learn through the movement and manipulation with objects. The type wants to feel, either through touching, smelling or tasting. It is suitable to create such situations for this learner during which he/she may move, change a workgroup, perform activities, create manually, since these activities are helpful in understanding the content, usually having good motoric skills. Therefore, it is recommended using music, arts, manipulation with objects, simulations, roleplays, cooperative teaching, activities distributed to small blocks. The learner learns best through experience (c.f. Tileston, 2004).

Another typology of adult learning styles is offered by Willing (in Harmer, 2007, p. 88) who specifies 4 learner categories.

- *Converger type* prefers individual work, avoids group activities, is independent and has sufficient faith in his/her own abilities. It is an analytical type, introducing one's own structures in learning and having a tendency to be calm and pragmatic.
- *Conformist type* emphasises "learning about language" at the expense of learning for a use. The type has a tendency to be dependent on authorities, enjoying work in non-communicative groups fulfilling the orders, and preferring to have a well organised teacher setting a direction in the group.
- *Concrete type is like the conformist*, but appreciates a social type of learning from one's own experience. The learner is more interested in the using of language and communication than in language as a system, enjoying plays and work in a group.
- *Communicative type* is focused on the use of language, feeling oneself comfortably outside the classroom and being able to show a level of self-confidence and an ability to risk. This learner is more interested in social interaction with people speaking foreign language than in the analysis of how a given language works. He/she likes working without teacher guidance.

Experiential psychology considers learning a cyclic process based on experience (dependent on age). Kolb explains the theory of a cycle by claiming that man lives through concrete experience, perceives it, observes and thinks about it. The result of thinking is the creation of abstract concepts and generalisations with which he/she experiments. The learner actively uses in practice conclusions and concepts leading to a new, enriched experience. The

author created a model through a combination of ways of information acquisition (concrete and abstract thinking) and ways of information processing (reflective observation and active experimentation). The following styles are defined:

- *accommodating* (dynamic), with the learner thinking concretely, actively processing information, needing experimentation and flexibility in tasks which are a challenge. He/she is intuitive, searching for opportunities and objectives, pragmatic, spontaneous, sociable, good organiser, non-systematic, impulsive;
- *diverging* (innovatory), with the learner thinking concretely, processing information reflectively (contemplatively), needing to be personally involved in the learning activity. He/she has imagination, is emphatic, intuitive, flexible, emotional, sociable, enjoying exploration, generating ideas, being non-systematic, spontaneous;
- *assimilating* (analytical), with the learner thinking abstractly, processing information actively, needing pragmatic, problem learning activities. He/she is analytical, logical, systematic, good organiser, enjoying theorising and concrete tasks, but, as a student, being rather passive;
- *converging* (practical), with the learner thinking abstractly, processing information reflectively (contemplatively), requiring detailed work, step by step. He/she is decisive, pragmatic, rational, analytical, systematic, theoretical, focused on tasks, with one-sided thinking, without imagination, and with lower intuition (in Riding & Rayner, 2009).

Another theory which can be used with seniors learning a foreign language is their differentiation on the basis of mental abilities. According to Švec (2002), ability is a quality of an individual, defined as a prerequisite quality of social individualities to be, and thus to understand, evaluate, act, make oneself understood and understand. Gardner (1983) sees intelligence as an ability to deal with problems and create valuable products in one or several cultures. Human abilities are characterised through the theory of multiple intelligence, which means that man has independent systems of various kinds of abilities, independent on one another. Intelligence is thus a combination of various abilities of whom each has a meaning for life. Each person has all kinds of them, some more or less developed, differing just in the strength and way of functioning. Individual intelligences get activated when one responds to various kinds of stimuli and information. Drawing on this, the following learning styles were distinguished:

- Linguistic style is activated during speaking, listening, reading and writing words.
- Logical-mathematical style works during problem solving, new solutions, understanding abstract models, connections, relations.
- Spatial-visual style is activated during the presentation of unusual, colourful pictures, when imagining something, during the manipulation with images in mind, during orientation in an unknown environment.
- Kinaesthetic style works with bodily movements of all kinds, when expressing content with body, during dramatization, when touching objects.
- Musical style is activated by sound resonance, vibrations, music.
- Interpersonal style is initiated during work and communication with other people, when there is a need to understand and comprehend them.
- Intrapersonal style is initiated during self-reflection, introspection, metacognition (Gardner, 1983).

Tanner (in Harmer, 2007) proposes activities for the development of individual language skills, grammar, vocabulary and literature, taking into account individual types of intelligence.

Nowadays there are also other theories drawing on research into human brain. The explanation of thinking is closely related to brain activity. Both hemispheres work simultaneously, but which area is activated during thinking depends on the object (content) of thinking. The hemispheres have different roles during thinking. Functional differences lie in the fact, for example, that the right hemisphere concentrates on intuition, creativity, spatial information, and the left one is analytical, logical, verbal, rational. Thinking thus requires coordination of many brain areas, and the way of thinking also depends on which of the hemispheres is more active. Conscious thinking is what we are aware of at a given moment, and therefore it is significantly limited, is structured through cause and effect, has a tendency towards the logic and consecutiveness of information processing. On the other side, unconscious thinking is permanently running in the background of conscious thinking, and by this determines most of our behaviour, being characteristic for its intuitive nature, speed, creation of associations among various pieces of information (Winston, 2005). Analysing learning, Torrance (in Turek, 2003) draws on to what extent man during learning prefers the right or left hemisphere, since both concentrate on other types of activity. Based on this preference, cognitive styles are distinguished as well (which are perceived as a permanent aspect of personality):

- *The right brain hemisphere* reacts emotionally to external situations, interprets nonverbal behaviour of others, produces humour, allows interpretation, with creativity in a forefront, intuition, divergent thinking, putting emphasis on play, fantasy, experience, colours, etc. The activities in the right hemisphere fall to the area of creativity.
- *The left brain hemisphere* distinguishes sense of words, produces logical thinking, objectively processes new information, emphasises abstract thinking, systematic solution of problems, convergent thinking, rationality, analysis, etc. Intellectual activities in the left hemisphere fall to the area of intelligence (in Turek, 2003).

Research carried out in foreign language education (Krashen, Seliger, Hartnett, Stevick) showed that learners with the dominance of the left hemisphere prefer a deductive style of teaching, while learners with the orientation on the right hemisphere were more successful in an environment with inductive teaching methods. Dominance of the left hemisphere leads to a better production of independent words, to the accumulation of language specificities, to dealing with abstraction, classification, labelling, reorganization. On the other side, dominance of the right hemisphere in thinking leads to a better coping with entire ideas, concepts, generalization, metaphors, with emotional reactions and artistic expressions (Brown, 1987).

The last of the many theories to be mentioned as regards language education and adult learners is the theory based on perception styles (falling to the area of cognitive styles), which are either non-dependent on the field of perception or dependent on the field of perception. This quality of (non)dependence on the field of perception becomes more significant with getting older.

- *Dependence on perception field* is a tendency to be dependent on the entire field which is perceived as a unified whole, with parts within the field not paid attention to. People with the preference of dependence on perception field are more socialized, empathic, sensitive to feelings and ideas of others. In foreign language courses they are more successful in communication activities, prefer analytical methods, put emphasis on details, manage exercises, drilling and other targeted activities. This style significantly positively correlates with success in a language course and is more suitable with inductive methods.
- *Non-dependence on perception field* allows to distinguish parts of a whole, concentrate only on a part, analyse independently variables without intervention of other, neighbouring variables. Too much dependence on perception field causes that a person sees only parts, not their relation to the

whole. The learners with a tendency of non-dependence on perception field are, in general, independent, competitive, self-confident. In foreign language learning, they are doing better with deductive methods (in Brown, 1987).

If a lecturer wants to make foreign language acquisition and learning for seniors easier, there is definitely much sense in taking into account specific features of individual learning styles based on a selected theory. Learning style diagnostics may be carried out through authorized questionnaires, observation, participant's reflexive diary (in case of long-term courses). The knowledge acquired in this way helps the lecturer better design learning activities, select suitable teaching methods, strategies covering the needs of an individual as well as of a group.

### **Methods in foreign language education of seniors**

In literature, there is a term named special speech register, with regard to our theme also called "elderspeak", which leads to a communication partner's tendency to adapt to language abilities of seniors, or seniors' speech. It can be usually characterised by a slower production, simplified syntax, avoidance of complicated words, or exaggerated prosody (Coulmas, 2013), which, however, does not have to be a rule. This problem can be similarly perceived in foreign language education as well.

Despite the generally accepted stereotypes, seniors may become good foreign language learners. Difficulties they face in a language course may be overcome especially by the elimination of affective barriers (mostly fear), adaptation of learning environment, preparation of relevant teaching materials, and, naturally, application of effective teaching methods strengthening learning styles and strategies of seniors. The studies on ageing prove that the ability to learn does not decline by age. If a senior is healthy, his/her intellectual abilities do not diminish (Schleppegrell, 1987). According to Cimermanová (2000, p. 25), after taking into account psychological knowledge concerning the relation between age and abilities, an adult should have more advantages in learning a foreign language than a child. A more important factor is the senior's experience with learning at a higher age. If he/she intentionally did not develop individual cognitive processes during productive age (or several years), the acquisition of a foreign language at a senior age may be problematic and demanding.

There are various approaches regarding foreign language education of adults and seniors, but no elaborated methodology of teaching. It is evident that no strategy or method is universal and for all. Each approach has its pros as well as cons.

As mentioned above, adults and seniors often prefer the *grammar-translation method*, which results from the fact that there is a relation between the level of a foreign language command without accent and the age. The younger a person, the higher level and quality of the sound form of speech (conditioned by an intensive, long term influence of a foreign language environment). A specific accent in the pronunciation of adults is explained by biological determinants, i.e. by the fossilisation of articulators after puberty (Malíková, 2000). Also Tkáčiková (2000) points to the fact that adults manage to learn vocabulary and grammar structure relatively easily, but the sound system of a given language and pronunciation poses problems. Drilling pronunciation, sound production, rhythm, or intonation are considered irreplaceable parts of learning for adult beginners, in order to overcome the fear and frustration from oral production. On the contrary, Schleppegrell (1987), for example, considers drills, the remembering based on short term memory, to be discriminating for seniors, therefore the audio-lingual method is not recommended for older adults. The receptive communication skills, such as reading and listening comprehension, may be acquired to a certain extent also outside a foreign language environment. Adults have built habits, experience, and often need to understand the essence of a fact, phenomenon, to see logic in it, to understand relationships, therefore deductive procedures used in explaining grammar suit them. The use of a native language as a communication language is perceived very positively by beginners, since they have just minimum experience with a new language. Therefore, the grammar-translation method is a very frequently used method in adult and senior education.

The use of *audiolingual method* in a senior age depends very much on knowing the learners group, especially their needs, expectations, as well as health handicaps. It is their previous experience with a certain learning style and methodological procedures what causes them problems with the acceptance of new, maybe less conformal techniques and methods. They are more critical of the selection of methods, which can cause problems in learning. However, audiolingual method in combination with other procedures may be efficient for seniors as well. The emphasis on listening, pronunciation and speech production, e.g. by revision, drilling, leads to the acquisition of fluency and overcoming of the first barrier (e.g. fear); it can lead to the freeing and gradual development of communication skills as well. Cimermanová (2000) has pointed to the fact that adults may repeat and remember longer sequences of sound, syllables, words. They have an advantage in remembering models, or entire dialogues. Naturally, recordings and videos must be clear, without noises in the background, with

content interesting for a given age category. This method is based on a direct correction of mistakes, which should be, however, reduced in case of seniors, since it could have a de-motivating effect.

The *communicative method* can be applied in case of seniors with better language skills. Irrespective of the age, the ability to communicate in a foreign language is one of the primary objectives of foreign language education. It is important to support the senior's motivation, the need to express his/her ideas, opinions, either by spoken or written word. The method's advantage lies in the fact that the lecturer corrects only serious mistakes, tempo of speech production is left for the senior, materials are based on inductive procedures, they are heterogeneous and allow for the use of several techniques (e.g. roleplays, picture stories). Adults integrate new content to the already existing cognitive structures, their experience being in this case an advantage. This method may saturate also the social needs of a senior. Providing opportunities to work in pairs, groups, together (but not on a competitive basis), may build self-confidence and support language learning.

The *direct method*, like the preceding one, is suitable in case of a more advanced language level of seniors. It is based especially on inductive procedures, when the lecturer uses a foreign language during the whole lesson and explains, demonstrates, grammar through pictures, life and institutions, examples (using only a foreign language may be, naturally, modified with regard to seniors). New vocabulary (it is emphasized) is learned in context and directly applied during a lesson. Since the method assumes combination of basic language skills (listening, writing, reading, speaking), it can be called a complex method, which is another advantage as far as the adult and senior age is concerned. It is very successful for learners with inner motivation and for the ones who consider grammar of a key importance in foreign language acquisition. The direct and communicative methods are very similar, differing in several techniques, but the principle is the concentration especially on communication and the use of language.

There are also other methods in foreign language teaching, such as *natural method*, *total physical response*, *silent way*, *suggestopedia* and other ones (for more see Brown, 1987; Harmer, 2007; Krashen, 1982), which, however, are not in their essence fully adequate for senior age. The selection of methods is dependent on many determinants; first of all, the lecturer must know the needs, motivation, aims, age as well as individual specificities of the group, in order to decide for a correct choice of methods. There is not just one suitable method,



since it is the methodological shift and ability to combine methodological procedures which testify to the quality of the lecturer's didactic work.

### **Conclusion**

The foreign language education of adults in productive age, and particularly seniors, has, alongside its practical social sense, also a potential to become subject of further, even international language pedagogy and geragogic research. There is a need of further research not only into what or who influences current seniors in their determination to study a foreign language, what satisfaction the study gives them, but especially into the efficiency of didactic procedures used in foreign language education. Naturally, the repertoire of research problems depends on several variables which will become subject of further extended exploration (e. g. teaching foreign language as the first or second foreign language, influence of the achieved education and previous experience with language education on the motivation to get further education, influence of bilingual environment, personality factors, influence of health handicap, and many other ones).

In old age the pressure to adapt to social norms is weakened. Social reasons which could influence changes of the preferences in language abilities of seniors have not been paid enough attention to in research. The speech of seniors has been scholarly explored a priori in connection with a disease or impairment (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, aphasia, hearing impairment, etc.) (Coulmas, 2013). Since several research problems of current language pedagogy theory and practice are of an interdisciplinary nature, it is almost necessary to approach them from several aspects, or rather holistically. As far as the theme discussed in this paper is concerned, a research team should consist not only of foreign language methodologists, but experts in psychology and andragogy as well.

This paper is submitted to the scholarly community with an expectation that it will initiate a constructive discussion, and thus contribute to a more progressive exploration of the education of seniors in the area of foreign languages.

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## Is relevance theory applicable to proverbs' translation?

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### Abstract

Translation, viewed as a multi-faceted task, can arise different types of difficulties. Proverbs have been considered special patterns, displaying sometimes hidden meanings or suggesting morals issuing from a particular example. These paremic units – the proverbs – conveyed feelings, states of mind, behaviours or ‘metaphorical descriptions of certain situations’ (Krikmann). Starting from Savory’s list of pair-wise contradictory translation principles, I intend to prove that the link between different ‘forms’ and their ‘contents’ lies in the principle of relevance when referring to proverbs. Even if relevance theory is not a theory of linguistic structure – and many translation problems imply structural mismatches – relevance theory offers insights about contextual information. Proverbs are seen as texts in themselves. My analysis will target the ethnofields of ‘to buy’ and ‘to sell’ in English proverbs and their Romanian corresponding versions.

**Key words:** context, ethnofield, focal area, meaning, principle, structure.

### 1. Towards a definition

When uttering the word ‘translation’, we can think about:

- an abstract concept including both the process and the product, which means the activity of translating and translation as an entity;
- the translated text;
- the translator’s method.

Among the theories that explained the term ‘translation’, the interpretive theory is focusing on the process, displaying domains belonging to psycholinguistics, semantics, pragmatics, cultural context, communication competence. From such a perspective, translation can be either an oriented text approach or an oriented interpretation analysis.

Jakobson (1959, p. 232-239) saw in the translation exercise three types of approaches:

- the intralingual translation;
- the interlingual translation which seems to be the translation in itself;
- the intersemiotics translation, where the non-verbal symbols can perform the interpretation of the verbal symbols.

Mounin saw in translation a series of operations whose final product bears in it the sum of meanings the translator can produce. Both Jakobson and Mounin considered translation an adequate interpretation of a unit which belongs to a different code than the one that is named the source text or the starting point in the translation exercise.

When a text is re-created through the translation exercise, the sender of the message has to cope with the addressee's register and at the same time the addressee has to understand the sender's language. It is called in translation terms a 'spiritual transfer'. Such a 'spiritual transfer' is almost the image of a 'perfect text'. The universal text is also very difficult to be obtained as it has to contain universal human values.

Romanian translators have been successful in both re-creating and conveying human values, as we do have nowadays what Mircea Eliade had as a dream that has become reality: a universal library offering world writers works, poets or playwrights translated in Romanian. There has been performed the version exercise as well: outstanding Romanian writers, poets or playwrights have been translated in different foreign languages, too.

### **Is translation a pure interlingual and interpretive exercise?**

Target language readers do find themselves, sometimes, faced with contextual information that the source text authors understand differently. Such a situation can be explained either by the norms of structural organization that function in the two languages (viewed as 'source' and 'target') according to each specific linguistic system or the semantic mechanism that implies vocabulary choice and discourse analysis.

Many researchers suggest the possibility of an 'interpretive use across language boundaries' in the case of translation (Gutt, 2000).

English and Romanian do not belong to the same language family. Still, they have French as a common 'denominator'. French and Romanian belong to the romance languages family and on the other hand French has considerably influenced English in its whole linguistic system developed along the centuries (the most undeniable proof is the English vocabulary that has 40% words of French origin – a natural consequence of three centuries during which French

was the administrative official language for the English kingdom born after the Norman Conquest in 1066).

Within the translation process, proverbs, seen as phraseological units or better said, independent texts, seem to be subjected to different types of reorganizations, transformations or modifications.

There are, however, proverbs that illustrate the perfect transfer from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL)<sup>16</sup>:

*E: Better buy than borrow.*

*R: Mai bine cumperi decât să împrumuți.*

The above example is what we can call 'word-for-word' translation, the two languages displaying a pattern that involves the following structure: Adv. – Verb (comparison particle)- Verb.

### **Method and corpus**

Due to the fact that translation is considered a multi-faceted task, my analysis, centered on the English and Romanian proverbs structure, will represent a combination of approaches among which I mention the relevance theory and the discourse analysis.

Within the corpus I selected, I have searched for:

- exact vs derived information:

*E: Don't sell the bearskin before you killed the bear.*

*R: Nu vinde pielea ursului din pădure.*

(the first parts of the two paremic units are identical as pattern and meaning, while for the second part English retains the moment of killing the animal and the Romanian version focuses on the place' the animal lives in – the forest/ 'din pădure')

- optimal relevance:

*E; If you buy the cow, take the tail into the bargain.*

*R:Când te apuci de o treabă, n-o lăsa fără ispravă.*

The transfer from the SL to the TL, in the above example is performed through what we can call 'indirect translation', fostering a personal apprehension of the

<sup>16</sup> My approach is a comparative one, implying the differences in patterns of cohesion of either English(SL) and Romanian(TL) proverbs or Romanian(SL) and English(TL) proverbs, within two ethnofields: 'to buy' and 'to sell' and respectively 'a cumpăra' vs 'a vinde'.



message: English values the act of 'buying' which implies negotiation and the checking of the 'bought' object – be it [+animate] or [-animate]. The animal which is taken as the example of the buying act - the cow - is usually valued for the milk and the meat. The source text author implies that 'the tail' is also important and he does oblige the addressee of the message to think about all the elements that are necessary for a successful acquisition. The Romanian version of the English above mentioned proverb underlines another aspect: the importance of bringing to a good end a good beginning.

- a presumption of optimal resemblance:

*E: The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.*

*R: Mușteriu trebuie să se uite de zece ori, negustorul doar o dată.*

There are, obviously, different attitudes and ideas concerning proverbs and the result of the translation process in proverbs. The majority of comparative works conclude on the difficulty of rendering the meaning as a whole in ready-made clichés. That is why changes - during the transfer from SL text to TL text – may occur under the form of possible:

- contamination:

*R: Economul bun își cumpără iarna car și vara sanie.*

*E: Have not thy cloak to make when it begins to rain.*

(the wise man is both the person who buys cheaper needed objects during seasons when they are on sale and the one who has his clothes made before the cold weather begins)

- enlargement:

*R: Să cumperi vecinii întâi și apoi casa.*

*E: You must ask your neighbour if you shall live in peace.*

(the neighbours are to be asked if the buyer of the house can live peacefully)

- reduction:

*R: Nu cumpăra mîța-n sac/ pisica-n traistă.*

*E: To buy a pig in a poke.*

(from a SL negative sentence where the cat is in a sack, the TL retains a cliché, underlining the danger of buying something without seeing it)

The corpus extracted from Lefter's "Dicționar de proverbe, Englez-Român și Român-Englez" (2007), having the ethnofields of 'to buy' and 'to sell' as well as

their Romanian versions, made possible an accurate analysis through the relevance theory mechanism and concepts, especially 'the degree of relevance' and 'the contextual effect'.

### **Direct/ indirect translation vs the relevance theory**

The idea of the complete resemblance between the source language utterance/text and the target language utterance/text seems to be a possible definition of the direct translation:

*E: Better buy than borrow.*

*R: Mai bine să cumperi decât să împrumuți. (translation)*

The above example excludes the explication of implicit information or changes in language. The idea of 'property' is universally desired and this might be the success of this direct translation example. The linguistic and the cultural differences seem to be annuled.

The question that may arise is whether the translator understands the cognitive environment accurately or not? The main advantage offered by a direct translation is that it provides the frame of reference for its own evaluation.

In indirect translation there is the translator's presumption that his interpretation adequately resemblances the original text in respects relevant to the target language text.

According to Zhonggang (2006, p. 47), the difference between direct and indirect translation is to be found in the degree of 'complete interpretive resemblance' vs 'the adequate resemblance in relevant respects' of the transfer from the source language text to the target language text. Zhonggang's hypothesis is that translation is a clues based interpretive use of languages across languages boundaries.

Translation validity vs translation fidelity can be seen in what Roman Jakobson named in 1959 'equivalence'. During the 21st century very many other voices pleaded for the importance of communication, of the translator's intention(s) and the source text functions. Admitting that translation is an interlingual interpretive process means, in fact, that we can see in translation 'an act of ostensive-inferential interlingual interpretation of the source text (Zhao, 1999, cited by Zhonggang, 2006):

*E1: He that buys land, buys many stones.*

*E2: He that buys flash, buys many bones.*

*E3: He that buys eggs buys many shells, but he that buys good ale buys nothing else.*

*R: Cine cumpără pământ, se-alege cu pietre, cine cumpără carne rămâne cu oasele, cine târguiește ouă are parte de coji, dar cel ce cumpără bere bună, acela n-are ce pierde. (trad.)*

The above example shows that the translation exercise can be conducted via pragmatic-semantic strata of the text to be translated. The translator took into account the linguistic and the contextual difference between the source text and the target text. The direct translation was possible up to a point. The English proverb displayed three parts of the buying act, when any person who buys 'land' finds 'stones' or 'bones' after buying 'flash' or 'shells' after buying 'eggs'. The last part which can be seen as a conclusion is different in the English proverb as compared to the Romanian translation. For the English source text reader buying 'ale' means buying 'ale' and nothing else. For the target source reader (a Romanian one) the person who buys 'ale' has 'nothing to lose'. The contextual difference here is a matter of cultural awareness and clues-based interpretive exercise, a step towards relevance theory.

### Principles, rules and exceptions

If we are tempted to believe Savory's rather negative evaluation of translation principles - there are no universally accepted principles of translation - then, we can believe that different readings of the same text may appear as distinct strategies for obtaining the most appropriate meaning.

Savory's 'pair-wise' contradictory translation principles rotate themselves around modal verbs like 'must', 'should', 'may' and hide, in a way, the importance of the main verbs like 'read', 'reflect', 'possess', 'add', 'omit' or 'be'. The 12 principles are well known and my intention is not to analyse them but to underline the importance of a possible shift from the descriptive- classificatory approach to an open explanatory one.

Proverbs, with their unique status of both literary and philosophical texts in themselves, can illustrate the hypothesis according to which translation is a clues-based interpretive use of language across language boundaries. They address themselves to individual source text readers/speakers as well as to collective ones, whose cognitive environment may be different from that of any other. Still, what really makes proverbs universal, is the metarepresentational use of the utterance and topics/themes they convey.

When referring to explicit vs implicit interpretive translation exercise, there can be a lower order of representation lying, in the resemblance of the communicative clues, while the truthfulness of the state of affairs may appear as

a background image. According to Zhonggang (2006, p. 43-60), citing Gutt, the higher-order representation includes the intuition of the communication as well as the communicative clues in the text. Translation, considered as a part of cross-culture communication is a higher-order communication, embracing the lower-order communication:

*R: Cine deschide ochii după ce cumpără, cumpără totdeauna marfă proastă.*

*E1: The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.*

*E2 : Measure thrice what you buyest and cut it once.*

The above example, which in the source language text – Romanian – displays a general universal relative pronoun 'cine' [who] as a starting point of the utterance, continues in the i-mode (based on the meaning intention), 'deschide ochii după ce cumpără' and develops the c-mode (based on the communicative clue of the verb 'a cumpăra', 'cumpără totdeauna marfă proastă'). A word-for-word translation of the Romanian proverb would give: 'who opens the eyes after having bought, always buys bad merchandise'. The first English version of the Romanian proverb I am analyzing has given 'The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one', emerging in the c-mode, as it gives the communicative clues 'buyer' vs 'seller' and infers the intention of the original communication: a buyer has to be very careful/attentive, looking at he/she wants to buy as having a hundred eyes, the seller does not need to be very attentive. The second English version as well as the first one implies 'the object/merchandise', without naming it as such. The idea of 'carefulness' remains. The 'buyer' (named in the first English version but absent in the second English version and contained only in the verb 'to measure') has to be attentive *before* buying, and more than that he/she has to 'measure' before 'cutting'. The implicit 'object' does not exist in the English text surface structure (though it does exist in the Romanian surface structure, the transfer from the source language text – Romanian – to the target language text – English- being performed through an omission). The communicative clues 'buyer' and 'seller' make the inferential combination 'buy' – 'the buyer' vs 'sell' – 'seller' opposed to the verb 'to measure', building the context and recovering the information of the Romanian source degree text – 'the bad merchandise'. The second English version adds to 'the total communication intended or assumed by the writer (Larson, 1984) the importance of a 'wise, buyer who needs to measure carefully before cutting the 'merchandise'

The text vs the context opposition is to be found in the causal interaction between the two entities. The translator aim is to 'maintain a successful

communication, irrespective of cultural and linguistic barriers, achieving an interpretive resemblance of the two texts. The context role is therefore very important if we think about the degree up to which the target language text is relevant to the target language reader/receptor/hearer and faithful to the source text reader.

Going back to the example I have chosen:

*R: Cine deschide ochii după ce cumpără, cumpără totdeauna marfă proastă.*

*(source language text -SLT1)*

*E1: The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.*

*(target language text -TLT2)*

*E2: Measure thrice what you buyest, and cut it but once.*

*(target language text -TLT3)*

the translator task has been to make the strata of T1 (the phonetic units, the semantic units, the schematized aspect units as well as the objective portrayed units)[Ingarden:1073] equivalent to the source language versions of the English text.

The translator of the Romanian proverb succeeded, in my opinion, to make sure that the target language texts both T2 and T3 resemble the source language text adequately. The four stratified structures of T1 met the causal interaction of T2 and T3. Regarding the meaning, T1 needed no significant change when the target language text T2 emphasized the role of the 'buyer':

*E1: The buyer needs a hundred eyes.*

as opposed to:

*R: Cine deschide ochii după ce cumpără...*

*[Who opens the eyes after buying...]*

Relevance as a comparative notion is different in degree if we discuss the second English version -T3- of the Romanian proverb. In T3 - *Measure thrice what you buyest, and cut it but once*, the key word is 'buyest'. There is here, however, a modifying pattern of resemblance of the target language text meaning. The main emphasis in T3 is on 'measuring' and 'cutting' which can bring the implicit information of a possible 'tailor' who could have bought the 'merchandise'. It is very true that what Lakoff (1991) called 'possible factors' that

can influence the language behavior (like class, gender, occupation) may bring some light within the text-context relationship in the case of T3.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that translation and the theory of relevance can work together in terms of processing efforts and contextual effects in the case of proverbs. From the undertaken analysis of the ethnofields 'to buy' and 'to sell' in English proverbs and their Romanian versions 'a cumpăra' and 'a vinde' it is very obvious that the translator of the source language text had to take into account the addressee's competence and the information that is given. The information can be a 'comprehensible input' in Krashen's terms or can be implicit.

Proverbs translation can be compared to literary texts translation. There is, nevertheless, a specificity that cannot be denied or ignored. A proverb as a source language text may represent a starting point. The target language text can contain words that correspond to the source language text, with regard to their function. In proverbs translation, one can also find:

- a words game;
- words that rhyme, referring to different targets;

*R: Cine nu te știe, te vinde, iar cine te știe, te cumpără.*

*E: He who doesn't know you sells you, he who knows you, buys you.*

I can affirm that relevance theory is applicable to translation and to proverbs' translation, too. Relevance can be optimal or even strong if the translation is a direct one. The weak relevance appears if the target language text changes the source text strata or even the meaning:

*R: Inima de vânzător e venin otrăvitor.*

*E: In the heart of a traitor there is the most venomous poison (translation).*

*(the Romanian word 'vânzător' corresponds to both the English words 'seller' and 'traitor')*

On the other hand, as translation is a complex process, I cannot deny the importance of subjective thinking, even when we deal with small texts as proverbs. The Romanian source text can pick up a certain term while the English version chooses another. In the following example even if we deal with the wild animals' world, the difference between the 'actors' is a huge one:

*R: Nu vinde pielea vulpii înainte de a o prinde.*

*E: Don't sell the bear's/lion's skin before you killed the bear/lion.*

*(Romanian prefers 'the fox' to the 'bear/lion' and Romanian does not kill the fox, it caches it)*

In everything that displays the proverbs' implicit information, we can deal with the source text author's competence vs the target text reader's/hearer's competence. The context is important even if proverbs appear as texts in themselves.

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## **Appendices**

### **To Buy & To Sell**

1. Better buy than borrow.  
Mai bine să cumperi decât să împrumuți. (trans.)
2. If you buy a cow, take the tail into the bargain.  
Când te apuci de o treabă n-o lăsa fără ispravă.
3. The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.  
Mușteriu trebuie să se uite de zece ori, negustorul doar o dată.
4. He that buys land buys many stones; he that buys flesh buys many bones;  
he that buys eggs buys many shells; but he that buys good ale buys nothing  
else.  
  
Cine cumpără pământ, se-alege cu pietre, cine cumpără carne rămâne cu oasel,  
cine târguiește ouă are parte de coji, dar cel ce cumpără bere bună, acela n-are  
ce pierde. (trad.)
5. Don't sell the bearskin before you killed the bear.  
Nu vinde pielea ursului din pădure.
6. Ale sellers should not be tale –tellers.  
Cârciumarul care știe toate ale mușterilor săi, nu trebuie să bată toba.
7. Buy the truth and do not sell it....wisdom, instruction and insight as well.  
Get the truth and never sell it; also get wisdom, discipline and good  
judgement/wisdom, instruction and understanding.  
  
Cumpără adevărul și nu-l vinde....înțelepciune, educație și viziune.  
Obține adevărul și nu-l vinde...obține și înțelepciune și bună judecată.

### **A CUMPĂRA**

1. Cine deschide ochii după ce cumpără, cumpără totdeauna marfă proastă.  
The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.  
Measure thrice what you buyest and cut it but once.



2. Cine nu te știe, te vinde, iar cine te știe, te cumpără.  
He who doesn't know you, sells you, he who knows you, buys you.(trad.)
3. Economul bun își cumpără iarna car și vara sanie..  
Have not thy cloak to make when it begins to rain.
4. Nu cumpăra mîța-n sac/pisica-n traistă.  
To buy a pig in a poke.
5. Omul cuminte/gospodar își cumpără vara sanie și iarna car.  
In fair weather prepare for foul.  
He is wise that is ware in time.
6. Să cumperi vecinii întâi și apoi casa.  
You must ask your neighbour if you shall live in peace.
7. Săracul cumpără scump.  
The poor man's shilling is but a penny.
8. Calul bun se vinde din grajd.  
Calul bun din grajd se vinde; și mai bun preț pe el prinde.  
Good ware makes quick markets.
9. La grădinar castraveți să nu vinzi.  
An old fox needs learn no craft.
10. Nu se vinde gogoșarului, gogoși.  
You must not teach fish to swim.
11. Nu vinde pielea vulpii înainte de a o prinde.  
Don't sell the bear's /lion's skin before you killed the bear/lion.
12. Inima de vânzător e venin otrăvitor.  
In the heart of a traitor there is the most venomous poison.(trad.)
13. Cu bani nu poți cumpăra fericirea, dar poți s-o închiriezi.  
Money does not buy hapiness but you may rent it.
14. Banii nu aduc învățătură, dar învățătura aduce bani.

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## **Taking a literature circles approach to teach Academic English**

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### **Abstract**

Literature circles (LC), an activity framework for classroom discussion, has been adapted for EFL classes to help students engage more deeply with reading texts. In this approach, students read texts outside of class, and discuss the texts in class, using a specified discussion framework. Originally developed for L1 classes as a tool for teaching literature, LC has been adapted for EFL classes, not only to help develop reading skills, but also to help students develop their discussion skills. However, to date, many adaptations of LC have relied on graded fiction as source material, which is not always appropriate for tertiary education. Feeling pressure to match course content with the labour market needs of our contemporary global society, English departments are increasingly being asked to include more academic content in their classes. This requires that non-fiction be used as source material. This preliminary study examines student perceptions of an LC class using non-fiction as source material. The subjects of this short, qualitative, pilot study were engineering students at a university in Japan. Procedures of the class and the issues that emerged are discussed.

**Key words:** SLA, EAP, EFL, literature circles, reading, discussion

### **Introduction**

An ability to understand and use English in academic domains has become an essential skills for those wishing to pursue careers in international fields such as science and technology. In all of these fields, a lack of proficiency in academic English can reduce one's access to information needed for career development and advancement. As Nunan (2003, p. 590) points out "English is currently the undisputed language of science and technology", and the large majority of academic papers in the fields of science and technology are published in English. In many fields English is the prime medium through which information is

disseminated, and this has transformed the educational landscape of countless students around the world.

In its latest white paper released in 2012, the *Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) stated that “it is essential to train human resources that can play an active role in the international community” as “major changes in the international community and the environment surrounding Japan, including the deepening complexity or interdependence between countries” require that participants in the international community have proficient communication skills. According to the current *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization*, issued by MEXT, the government is instituting reform plans aimed at promoting the establishment of an education environment that nurtures “the ability to understand abstract content for a wide range of topics, and the ability to fluently communicate with English speaking persons”. In order to see these goals met, MEXT is encouraging that classes be done in English, and in addition include many higher-level linguistic tasks, such as presentation, debate, summation and negotiation.

To realize such goals, educational organizations in Japan are moving to include more *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP) in their programs and institute classes where English is used as a medium of instruction (EMI). While EMI programs have been common in countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong for some time, they are still fledgling in Japan. However, an example of Japan’s push to establish EMI programs is the *Global 30* program, a project started by the Japanese government, which aims to have 300,000 international students studying at Japanese universities. According to *Higher Education in Japan*, a MEXT document from 2012: “In order to strengthen the international competitiveness of Japanese higher education and to offer attractive and high-quality education for international students, it is very vital to develop universities as centers for internationalization, in which many international students and professors are welcome and enjoy high-quality education and research.”

To these ends, the Japanese government has selected 13 universities to develop EMI programs for both international students coming to Japan and Japanese students interested in studying through the medium of English. However, while these 13 universities have received funding and support to institute EMI, there are also many other universities that have implemented EMI classes. However, often these classes are offered on an *ad hoc* basis. Many of these EMI classes are simply one or two seminar classes taught by a foreign language teacher, with academic credit given under the rubric of an English

elective. While a few other EMI programs are semi-structured, with some required classes related to a student's major taught in English (Brown & Iyobe, 2014).

However, the route to creating a more globally communicative cohort of Japanese graduates is not simply to throw them into EMI classes. Many Japanese students have poorly developed listening skills and are unable to aurally comprehend words that they know (see for example Graham-Marr, 2015). This inability to aurally comprehend known language is a severe handicap. While practice gained in EMI classes could help alleviate some of these difficulties, guided practice with a more systemic approach might be more beneficial. In addition, many of the skills associated with academic English, such as summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, comparing and contrasting require higher-level linguistic skills. That is, the ability to perform difficult tasks is closely linked to ones overall proficiency. Using the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) as a guideline, the majority of Japanese university students can be said to have proficiency levels in the CEFR A2 to CEFR B1 range. However, suggested proficiency levels needed to handle academic English and EMI classes begin at a CEFR B2 level. That is, CEFR A2 and B1 students cannot be reasonably expected to handle academic tasks. (see table 1 below)

|    | <b>Overall oral production</b>  |
|----|---|
| B2 | Can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.                                     |
| B1 | Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.                     |
| A2 | Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list. |

Table 1: CEFR Levels of Proficiency for Oral Production

If A2 or B1 level students are to be given more academic tasks in their classes, they need to be given greater support to help them do these tasks. Students need help in not only understanding the longer pieces of text associated with academic

English, but also in collating and synthesizing the information in these texts in order to summarize or paraphrase such texts.

However, students have rarely been given the chance to use English as a tool for communicating information, due to the demands of the university entrance exam oriented English education system. Academic skills such as summarizing are not often attended to in Japan's test driven education system. Thus, the adoption of a Literature Circles (LC) framework might provide students with more opportunities to practice these skills in a structured format.

### Source material

The source materials for this class were graded texts written and prepared specifically for this study. Topics were chosen to match the majors of the students, in this case engineering. As such, students were asked to read and summarize articles on *metal fatigue*, *how dams operate*, *simple machines* and *mechanical advantage*. The articles were all around 1200 words in length. The articles were divided into a Part A and Part B, each about 600 words in length.

Each article was written for students with a high CEFR A2 level of proficiency. Although the CEFR does not clearly specify a vocabulary size for each level, a vocabulary size between 1500 and 2500 words has been recommended as an appropriate level for A2 learners (see for example Milton, 2009, 2010). However, in order to make sure that students could read the articles more fluently, the articles were graded to a 1200 word level using a number of online text-grading tools.

Although texts were simplified, the academic nature of the topics required that a certain number of *illegals*, words that fall outside of the prescribed boundaries, be allowed. However, efforts were made to limit the number of illegals in the text to between 10 and 15 words. These illegals were handled in one of two ways. They were either defined within the text, that is, their meaning could be worked out from the context of their use, or they were taught to students in pre-reading activities.

### Class procedure

Students came to class having read for homework an article on a topic related to engineering. In class, students were put into groups of four to discuss the articles according to a set framework. The discussions followed a framework described by Furr (2004) and Graham-Marr (2015b). The four roles were:

- a. *Leader (Ldr)*: responsible for leading the discussion and asking questions
- b. *Summarizer (Sum)*: responsible for summarizing Parts A and B of the article.

- c. *Detail master (DM)*: responsible for answering questions given by the Leader on matters of fine detail.
- d. *Vocabulary master (VM)*: responsible for explaining the meanings of vocabulary chosen from the text.

Once assigned their roles, students were put into groups and began their group discussions. Typically discussion sessions lasted between five and seven minutes. After each session, students then changed groups while maintaining their roles. This allowed for task repetition, which helped students to practice their speaking roles multiple times gaining fluency. In addition, such repetition allowed for greater informal student-student feedback, which helped students attend to any errors. In each class, the discussion sessions were repeated four or five times.

### **Questions**

The present pilot study investigated student opinion about the LC approach using these academic texts. We wanted to elucidate which role was easiest, which role was most difficult, which role was deemed most valuable, and how difficult the texts were. To shed more light on this approach, the following questions were asked.

1. Which role was most difficult?
2. Which role was easiest?
3. Which role helped you improve your English the most?
4. Which role helped you improve your English the least?
5. How were the articles?
6. How was the vocabulary in the articles?
7. How was the grammar in the articles?
8. Do you think summarizing skills are important?

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The participants in the study were 10 engineering university students (6 males and 4 females) studying English in an elective course at a well-regarded science university in Tokyo. The English proficiency of the students was not directly measured, however the entrance exam at the university tends to level students, and most students were evaluated as being between a CEFR A2 level and a low CEFR B1. There were ten students registered in the class, and all participated in the questionnaire.

## Instrumentation

The questionnaire was written in English. Students were asked to rate items on a Likert scale. In addition, open-ended questions were also asked. Students were allowed to answer these open-ended questions in English or in Japanese.

## The Results

As expected the students found the role of *Summarizer* both difficult but very important. Nine out of the ten students said that this role was the most difficult, and all ten students said that the role of summarizer was *important*, with nine out of ten students ranking it as *very important*. However, all ten students rated this activity as *difficult*, which suggests that students need more support to help them develop their summarizing skills. Asked why the role of summarizer was difficult, students mentioned that having to understand the article completely, and having to make up sentences using their own words was quite difficult. See Table 2 for the results on task difficulty.

|  | Ldr | Sum | DM | VM |
|--|-----|-----|----|----|
| 1. Which role was most difficult?            | 0   | 9   | 1  | 0  |
| 2. Which role was easiest?                   | 3   | 0   | 3  | 4  |
| 3. What role helped you improve the most?    | 0   | 10  | 0  | 0  |
| 4. What role helped you improve the least? * | 4   | 0   | 1  | 4  |

Table 2: Role difficulty and perceived value

\* one student said *none*

Ideas on which role was easiest was split between the other three roles. Some people said that the role of *Leader* was easiest, with one noting that “all they had to do was ask questions”. Others said that the role of *Detail Master* was easiest, with one noting that “answering specific questions on specific details was easy”. While others said that the role of *Vocabulary Master* was easiest as they could consult a dictionary, and secondly, one could do the role of *Vocabulary Master* without having fully understood the article.

Student responses as to which role helped them to improve their English most were unambiguous. Everyone chose the role of *Summarizer*, even though they struggled with it. All ten students reported that this role helped them to improve their English the most.

What was interesting was that a majority of students found the articles *easy*, but nonetheless found summarizing difficult. Six described the articles as easy, while four described them as difficult. Seven said that the vocabulary was easy or very easy, while all ten described the grammar as being easy. However, all ten nonetheless said that it as difficult to summarize these passages. Perhaps one reason for this was the length of the articles. Even though the articles were not that long, most of the students had not previously had the opportunity to summarize articles of this length. One student mentioned that the articles were not so difficult, however they took a long time to read. Another student mentioned that although the grammar and vocabulary were not that difficult, the articles were quite long and the subject matter difficult, making it difficult to summarize the articles. See Table 3 for detailed results.

|                                     | Very easy | Easy | Difficult | Very difficult |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Reading passage difficulty       | 0         | 6    | 4         | 0              |
| 2. Vocabulary difficulty            | 1         | 6    | 3         | 0              |
| 3. Grammatical difficulty           | 2         | 8    | 0         | 0              |
| 4. Task difficulty<br>(summarizing) | 0         | 0    | 9         | 1              |

Table 3: Difficulty of source text and task difficulty

## Discussion

Students found summarizing difficult. Having to decide what pieces of information were important, and what pieces of information could be glossed over or skipped, requires that one have a fairly clear overall understanding of the whole article. Having an understanding of the gist of the article can be achieved with a basic understanding. However, having to summarize requires a deeper, more complete understanding of the passage.

Furthermore, although students seemed fully aware of the task demands needed to accurately summarize a longer reading passage, some commented that they didn't feel that they had reached a level of proficiency where they might able to more deeply comprehend the passage to a point of being able to clearly and quickly identify the important points. As the texts were somewhat long, picking out peripheral support from the main points is a somewhat more advanced task. Even though the articles were simplified, and a majority of students felt that the articles were easy, the students felt that they didn't have sufficient ability to distill down longer texts into its main pertinent points, with one student



commenting that “it is difficult for pre-intermediate English learners to sum up long passages”.

This finding matches the findings in the CEFR, which describes how deeply students should be able to comprehend an article at different levels of proficiency. See Table 4 below.

|    | <b>Reading for information and argument</b>   |
|----|---|
| B2 | Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field. Can understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology. |
| B1 | Can identify the main conclusions in clearly signalled argumentative texts. Can recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.   |
| A2 | Can identify specific information in simpler written material he/she encounters such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events.  |

Table 4: Reading skills linked to proficiency levels

Students also pointed to insufficient proficiency in English as being yet another reason why summarizing texts was difficult. Some students mentioned that they had not yet reached a level of sufficient proficiency to appropriately summarize long passages in their own words. The length of the reading passages was such that it was difficult to *borrow* phrases from the initial articles, which forced students to rely on their own linguistic resources. Student mentioned that even though they understood the content, it was nonetheless difficult to summarize the articles in their own words.

The implications seem quite clear. Although the government has perhaps identified a need, and a set of clear goals, the proposed use of EMI to address this need could use more detailed thought and study. This mini pilot study suggests that some sort of bridging program is needed, to help lower proficiency level students step up to these tasks, as for the most part, such students lack sufficient linguistic resources to do these tasks.

According to the *European Common Framework*, students with an A2 level of English proficiency can be expected to give simple descriptions of their living conditions, daily routines, likes and dislikes and so on. However, such students should not be expected to be able to reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of an academic subject, a task demanded of students in EAP programs.

While EAP programs and EMI programs do give students more exposure to the target language, which has been found to lead to meaningful second language acquisition, and while EAP programs do give students the opportunity to output language, needed for the development of both fluency and accuracy, students with insufficient proficiencies are unlikely to benefit from such programs without more detailed support and a greater scaffolding of tasks. In a 2001 study with Indonesian students, Ibrahim found that for many students, before an EMI program can be implemented, “a bridging program and a partial EMI program are necessary at least at the initial stage.” (Ibrahim, 2001, p. 121) This pilot study’s findings mirror those of Ibrahim. This suggests that before an EAP program or EMI program can be implemented, those in positions of power must clearly understand the current abilities of their student. That is, they must look realistically at their students before setting out program goals.

### Conclusion

Although the sample size in this pilot was far too small to make any sorts of general conclusions, this study does suggest that EAP and EMI should be more carefully considered in the context of Japan. Government directives pushing schools to adopt an EAP focus, do so without reference to current student ability. Schools and school boards might be better advised to get a better understanding of their students’ abilities before making edicts as to how to improve English education. That is, goal-based directives should be tempered by reality. English education might be better served with sets of *level specific* directives. Program planners need to clearly define the current abilities of their students, before laying out goals. Secondly, such goals must be attainable, given the amount of study time available. Lastly concrete plans, with task difficulty matched to student abilities should be specified. In short, more detailed planning seems necessary.

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## **Paper-pen peer-correction versus wiki-based peer-correction**

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### **Abstract**

This study reports on the comparison of the students' achievement and their attitudes towards the use of paper-pen peer-correction and wiki-based peer-correction within English language lessons and CLIL Social Science lessons at the higher secondary school in Prague. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather information. The data suggests that students made considerable use of wikis and showed higher degrees of motivation in wiki-based peer-correction during English language lessons than in CLIL Social Science lessons. In both cases wikis not only contributed to developing students' writing skills, but also helped students recognize the importance of collaboration.

**Key words:** peer-correction, wikis, writing skills, collaboration

### **Introduction**

Having good writing skills is considered to be an inseparable part of human literacy. Every year thousands of Czech higher secondary school students have their writing skills tested during state Maturita exams both in Czech and foreign languages. The required level for successful passing the exam of any foreign language is B1 according to Common European Framework for languages (CEFR). The content of each skill is described in detail in the catalogue of English language exam requirements (MSMT, 2014). As the first year students' entrance level of English is supposed to reach A2 level according to CEFR, it is very challenging for students to learn how to compose a suitable writing in certain situations and for certain purposes. Nowadays students prefer communicating electronically, in emails, through mobile phone applications enhancing short message writing e.g. Tweet, What's up or Viber or Internet applications like Skype or Facebook. The language, which students use, serves mainly for

delivering everyday information or expressing their emotions. They like using different abbreviations, emoticons and images. When students write in English they seldom pay any attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar or syntax rules. They prefer writing short sentences; sometimes just a simple noun or adjective is enough to deliver a message. Harmer (2009, p. 323) suggests that students who are studying English for academic purposes should be literate at the level they are studying for. The writing literacy represents different written genres, which “perform purposes for specific discourse communities”. Some research studies (e.g. West & West, 2009; Wheeler, 2010) support the idea, that writing skills might be enhanced by using collaborative online tools. This study tried to find a way to bridge the gap between writing mobile/Internet short messages and English language Maturita exam requirements. There are two main reasons why the wiki (wikispaces.com) could be chosen as the main online collaborative and enhancing writing skills platform. Firstly, “the basic wiki has several properties that make it ideal framework for composing different time and place environment. Applications engineered within the style of wiki interactions can support a variety of learning activities ranging from tightly to loosely coupled collaborations. Wiki-based collaborative applications can also support metacognitive tasks, like reflection or self/co-explanation”, as Larusson and Alterman define (2009, p. 372). Secondly, the wiki is considered to be a user-friendly tool. The wiki is a website allowing users to create and edit pages easily and collaboratively. It can serve as a tool for synchronous and asynchronous communication and also enables students and teachers to keep track of any changes made into students’ contributions, which might build their awareness of students’ learning process. Moreover, it might serve not only as a platform for a teacher’s assessment of student’s progress or frequency of contributions (adding, deleting), but also it might provide the information about students’ interests, motivations and giving space for creativity. Peer-correction, which supports a student-centred approach, is our main aim of this study. Many experts in teaching writing skills (e.g. Brookes & Grundy, 1998; Leki, 2007; Robinson, 1988) support the idea of implementing peer-correction or peer-review into learning process. The study focuses on assessing the impact of peer-correction on the development of writing skills both in English language lessons and CLIL Social Science lessons. Moreover, it tries to detect possible differences between paper-pen peer-correction and wiki-based peer-correction.

### **Theoretical background**

There are two main approaches teachers should choose from when teaching writing skills. Teachers can focus on the process of writing or on a product of writing. The process of writing involves activities like studying different written genres or encouraging creative writing, while a product writing “values the construction of the end-product as the main thing to be focused on” Harmer explains (2009, p. 325). The Maturita exam writing is more focused on a product of writing. Brookes and Grundy (2005, p. 15) comment “All of us (and this includes our students) would like to produce final products that are imaginative and accurate, personal and public, fluent and correct.” However, if we want students to be well-prepared for their final exams, we should apply both approaches in teaching skills. During the process of writing students learn to think about the process in deep. The norms of different kinds of writing are represented by genre. To learn different genres students should look at different texts from textbooks, printed media (newspapers, magazines, and real letters) or real examples of text on the Internet. To write a good magazine article, students should be aware of the conventions and style of the genre, context and purpose of the writing and a reader. Wikis can serve as a bank of different genre examples. Students can look up real examples of writing on the Internet and post them on a class wiki. Creative writing with regard to Maturita exams represents narrating or telling stories. Harmer (2009, p. 328) points out, that students need “an appropriate reader audience” to write creatively. Wikis belong to many Internet applications (Blogs, micro-blogs, Google groups etc.) where students can post their stories and get an immediate feedback. Such activities motivate students to write easily. For example, Castaneda and Cho’s students (2013) found wiki writing helpful in improving their writing skills.

Students shouldn’t be satisfied with the first draft of their piece of writing. They should spend enough time on planning, drafting and editing. As a school lesson takes only 45 minutes, it is not possible to complete such a collaborative task in time. Harmer (2009, p. 326) sees it similarly “One of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some other way.” Teachers have two common options how to deal with it. Firstly, they might ask their students to finish the task at home or secondly, they might spend two or three additional lessons on completing the task. In this study we tried to implement wikis into the writing process to find the third option how to practise writing skills. Students can not only write their drafts on a class wiki and get the feedback from their classmates and teachers; they can also read other students’ drafts and give their

opinions on them. Leki (2007, p.10) states "Many writers find it helpful when they write a draft to ask a friend or colleague to read the draft before they give it to its real intended audience to read." Students can be inspired and thus modify their own drafts or vice versa they can help someone else with their drafts. During these learning activities they employ their cognitive, affective and critical thinking skills as well. These learning skills can be successfully promoted by wikis as West and West (2009, p.33) explain "Wiki projects promote critical evaluation, judgment, and making choices based on research and reasoned argument. Learning teams can use the wiki frame to brainstorm, gather research, analyze and solve problems, and create action plans. The wiki supports users in their need to chunk and organize contributions, conduct peer reviews, establish document styles and standards, and edit final outcomes." In fact, there is a variety of feedback options from real audience. It could be a classmate or a teacher; it could be a small or big group of peers or even someone outside the classroom from parents to an unknown person from the Internet forum.

The results of research on the effectiveness of teacher feedback are similar to those of peer review (Wu, 2006). Peer and self-assessment is a more and more favourable alternative to a teacher's assessment, with additional benefits. It not only provides feedback, it also helps students see work from an assessor's perspective (Tinapple et al., 2013). Students would likely not see peers' solutions, strategies, and insights without being peer-evaluated (Chinn, 2005).

According to website [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk) "Peer correction is a classroom technique where learners correct each other, rather than the teacher doing this. It is a useful technique as learners can feel less intimidated being helped by others in the class. However, some learners are highly resistant to being corrected by someone other than the teacher."

It is a common habit, when students are asked to produce any piece of writing; they expect their writing being corrected by a teacher. Especially, Czech students want their teachers to correct every single mistake. They think that a thorough correction helps their writing skills. Unfortunately, it might be ambiguous. If the feedback is only on the used language and the content is omitted, it might evoke a wrong impression, that what students are saying in their writing is not important, Harmer (2009) warns. So when students give opinions, suggestions or express their feelings it is crucial to give the feedback on what they are saying. To motivate students that the content matters teachers should include peer-correction into writing process. It is supported by Harmer (2009, p. 140) "Although teachers are supposed to provide accurate assessments of students' performance, students can also be extremely effective at monitoring

and judging their own language production. They frequently have a very clear idea of how well they are doing or have done, and if we help them to develop this awareness, we may greatly enhance learning." To implement peer-correction into learning process teachers should train students how to do it properly. Students should know what is meant by feedback and what they are expected to do. Many teachers prefer correction codes to indicate mistakes to written feedback. Correction codes show students where the mistakes are and what kind they are and then students try to correct them as a second stage to the initial writing task. Written feedback takes the form of written comments, which should help students improve their writing. According to Harmer (2009, p. 150) peer-correction has a deep influence on "group cohesion" especially "during the drafting stage". To make it easier for students teachers should design "a checklist of things" to look out for when they peer-correct. A few studies (e.g. Warschauer, 1996; Wu, 2006) show a positive effect of online peer-correction on students' motivation, participation and collaboration. They also evaluate time and place independency and ability to monitor conversations between students.

### Methodology

The aim of this study was to promote a student-centred approach during building students' writing skills. We proceeded from the main principles of student-centred learning in Brandes and Ginnis's *Guide to Student-Centred Learning*, (1986), where: 1. students are fully responsible for their learning, 2. students' involvement and participation are necessary for their learning, 3. the teacher becomes a facilitator and resource person, 4. students experience affective and cognitive confluence in education. The next aim was to identify the students' preferences for paper-pen peer-correction or wiki-based peer-correction. Finally, the aim of this study was to compare students' attitudes to wiki-based peer-correction during English language lessons and CLIL Social Science lessons. Since CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) "deals with teaching a subject at the same time as teaching language" (Dale and Tanner, 2012, p. 4) in both lessons there are plenty of writing activities to be peer-corrected. The study thus sought the answers for these questions:

1. Which peer-correction do students prefer (paper-pen or wiki-based)?
2. Are students' attitudes to wiki-based peer-correction the same in both English language and CLIL Social Science lessons?

The target group for the purpose of the study was 50 students from a higher secondary school in Prague specialised in public administration. There were 24 students from two English classes and 50 students (including 24 English



language students) from two CLIL Social Science classes. The participants were the second year students at the age of 16 - 17. Their level of English is approximately B1 according to Common European Framework for languages (CEFR). Each participant had previous experience with working within wikis environment (editing, writing, commenting and adding different images).

The whole pedagogical experiment consisted of four stages as follows:

**Criteria for peer-correction** – In order to make students aware of assessment criteria for their state Maturita exams, we approximated peer-correction criteria to given criteria by Czech Ministry of Education. During our experiment we decided on teaching a semi-formal opinion essay. We prepared a template, which you can see in Table 1. The template has four main categories, within each category we highlighted the elements, which according to our teaching practice we regard as crucial for successful passing any B1 exam writings.

**Content:** Students very often omit the headline or use the incorrect one. For example, instead of writing “Advantages and disadvantages of living in the city.” they use “The essay by David.” The layout of an opinion essay has exact rules to be followed, such as an opening paragraph and a summary paragraph. There are usually one or two paragraphs, where writers state their opinions, which must be followed by explanations or reason-giving. During peer-correcting students have to check not only a proper amount of paragraphs, but also check the content of each paragraph. Especially, they have to count the number of opinions/reasons according to essay instructions. Students indicate correctness of each element into the template by words ok, yes or correct. If there is any inconsistency, students write their suggestions.

**Linking words:** To support awareness of cohesion and coherence, we added four elements (words, sentences, paragraphs and commas) which should help students not only during peer-correction, but also help them mainly during their re-drafting phase. Students have no problems with using simple conjunctions like “and”, “but”, “or” and “because” unfortunately, they do not feel the need of using adverbials at the beginning of sentences like “however”, “although” or “first of all” and “finally”. During peer-correcting students have to check at least six different linking words (two for each element) and indicate it into the template.

**Lexis and grammar:** Students have to pay attention to essay instructions. Instructions set the topical area of their writing and outline the grammar (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional in opinion essays) Students are asked to find three topical words they like and indicate them into the template and also indicate max. three topical words, which are incorrect or inappropriate. Similarly to previous category,

students are asked to indicate three grammar elements, which they like and max. three incorrect or inappropriate elements. We consider this to be a balanced feedback (positive and negative things are in equilibrium), which might be encouraging and reinforcing.

|                      |                          |  |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Content</b>       | Headline                 |  |
|                      | Paragraph - introduction |  |
|                      | Paragraph - problems     |  |
|                      | Paragraph - summary      |  |
| <b>Linking words</b> | Words                    |  |
|                      | Sentences                |  |
|                      | Paragraphs               |  |
|                      | Commas                   |  |
| <b>Lexis</b>         | 3 words I like           |  |
|                      | 3 mistakes               |  |
| <b>Grammar</b>       | 3 grammar things I like  |  |
|                      | 3 mistakes               |  |

Table 1: Peer-correction template

At the beginning of the study the students learnt how to use the template on model essays from their textbooks of English language.

***Paper-pen peer-correction*** – During the second stage of this experiment, the students wrote a 150-word opinion essay at school. This essay was not meant to be graded as it served only for preparation for their graded school essay following week. They could use neither dictionaries nor templates. This activity took one school lesson (45 minutes). The following lesson the students corrected one of their classmates' essays. The students were informed that the author of the essay might use their peer-correction for preparation for a graded school essay. They chose the essay randomly; they couldn't correct the essay of their next sitting classmates. The students were allowed to use dictionaries and had to fill in the templates. When the students finished their assessments, they handed corrected essays over their authors to keep them for future writing. If the students felt the need, they could explain their assessment to the authors.

***Wiki-based peer-correction during English language lessons*** – The third stage is similar to the second one. It differs in using wikis for peer-correction. This time the students were asked to write a 150-word opinion essay at home.

On their class wikis "Essay page" was created, which the students used for writing their essays. The students could choose whether to write their essays in Word Document to use a spell-checker first and then post it on a class wiki, or they could write their essays directly on a class wiki without using a spell-checker. The students were given a deadline to complete their tasks. After the deadline the students corrected one of their classmates' essays which hadn't been corrected yet and also created and filled in the templates. The examples of wiki-based peer-correction can be seen in Appendix Pictures 1 and 2. As before the students were informed that the author of the essay might use their peer-correction for preparation for a graded school essay.

**Wiki-based peer-correction during CLIL Social Science lessons** – The fourth stage is a part of a long term running project, more in Frolidova (2014). The students work in teams of four to five students on a team/collaborative wiki page. The whole team contributes to their team page after each lesson. The students should post their reflection on a lesson as well as they should add some materials concerning their interests or needs. They comment member's contributions and react to their comments. The examples of wiki-based peer-correction can be seen in Appendix Pictures 3, 4 and 5. The whole communication is supervised by the teacher, who irregularly posts their own comment and assesses the content of the page from subject-content or foreign language point of view.

### **Data collection instrument**

Research data was collected from three sources: one online questionnaire, focus-group discussions and analysis of students' contributions to class wikis. For reflecting the teacher's subjective feedback the qualitative analyses of 24 English lesson students' paper-pen peer-corrected essays and peer-corrected essays on class wikis have been done as well as contributions of 50 students on their wiki team pages and their frequency of peer-correction. The online questionnaire, which consists of 10 items scored on a three-point Likert scale, was designed to survey students' immediate preferences and their attitudes to both paper-pen and wiki-based peer-correction after correcting two of classmates' essays. The questionnaire was administrated online in February 2015 to a population of 30 students, who were registered on class wikis. Twenty-four valid responses were received. In order to explore student's attitudes in depth, a set of semi-structured interviews was conducted alongside the questionnaire. Interview questions were based on students' responses to the questions in the online questionnaire.

## Results

The first issue raised in the questionnaire is related to students' views on peer-correction. Overall, their attitudes towards peer-correction from their classmates and toward their own peer-correction is positive in both paper-pen and wiki-based cases as can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3.

| Questions   | Very Beneficial | Beneficial | Little Beneficial |
|---|-----------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1. The process when my classmate was correcting my essay <b>at school</b> was for me..... | 8.33%           | 62.50%     | 29.17%            |
| 2. The process when my classmate was correcting my essay <b>on wiki</b> was for me.....   | 12.50%          | 50.00%     | 37.50%            |

Table 2: Students' views on peer-correction from their classmates

Based on interviews most students highly appreciated the time spent on learning how to fill in the templates and possibility of further practice during their wiki home writing. For example:

"Peer-correcting made me think about the layout of an opinion essay."

"When I was writing my essay I used the template and ticked each element during re-drafting."

"It was easier for me to write as I had the template."

The progress which students made resulted in extremely good grades from school graded essays.

|  | Very Beneficial | Beneficial | Little Beneficial |
|--|-----------------|------------|-------------------|
| 3. The process when I was correcting my classmate's essay <b>at school</b> was for me... | 12.50%          | 62.50%     | 25.50%            |
| 4. The process when I was correcting my classmate's essay <b>on wiki</b> was for me...   | 17.39%          | 65.22%     | 17.39%            |

Table 3: Students' views on their own peer-correction

The second issue raised in the questionnaire is related to students' views on the effort they made during peer-correcting. As we can see in Table 4 the students tried to correct the essays carefully. Based on analyses of paper-pencil and wiki-based peer-corrected essays we can say that the students were more careful and detailed in filling in the templates at school rather than on wiki. At school all students worked on peer-correcting, while on wikis, although all students posted their home essays there, six students didn't peer-corrected any essays. This was the case, why there were excluded from online questionnaire. Four of these students during interviews similarly explained, for example:

"It takes a lot of time and I do not want to do it, because I want you (a teacher) to do it."

The same opinions are stated in Franco (2008), where 11.1 % are of the same opinions.

|   | Thorough-ly | I did my best | With no interest |
|---|-------------|---------------|------------------|
| 5. I was correcting my classmate's essay <b>at school</b> ... | 29.17%      | 70.83%        | 0%               |
| 6. I was correcting my classmate's essay <b>on wiki</b> ...   | 41.67%      | 50.00%        | 8.33%            |

Table 4: Students' effort during peer-correcting

The third issue raised in the questionnaire is related to using peer-corrected essays for preparation for a school graded essay. Table 5 shows that more than 50% students used paper-pen and wiki-based corrected essays for preparation for a school graded exam. A few students during the interviews complained about poor handwriting of their classmates or correcting correct things.

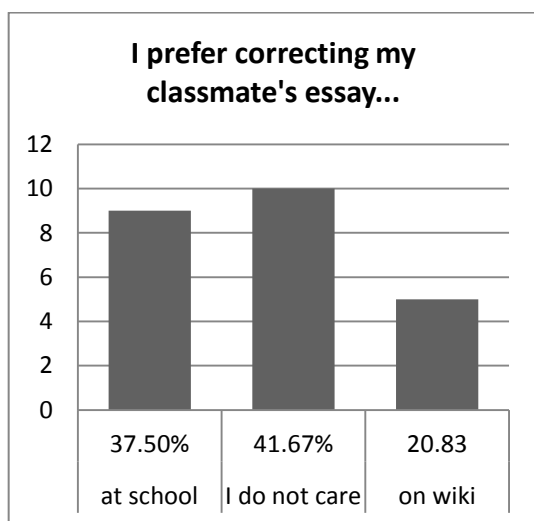
|  | Yes    | Partially | No     |
|--|--------|-----------|--------|
| 7. Did you use <b>paper-pen</b> peer-corrected essay for your preparation for school essay?  | 45.80% | 20.83%    | 33.33% |
| 8. Did you use <b>wiki-based</b> peer-corrected essay for your preparation for school essay? | 20.83% | 37.50%    | 41.67% |

Table 5: Using peer-corrected essays for preparation for a school graded essay

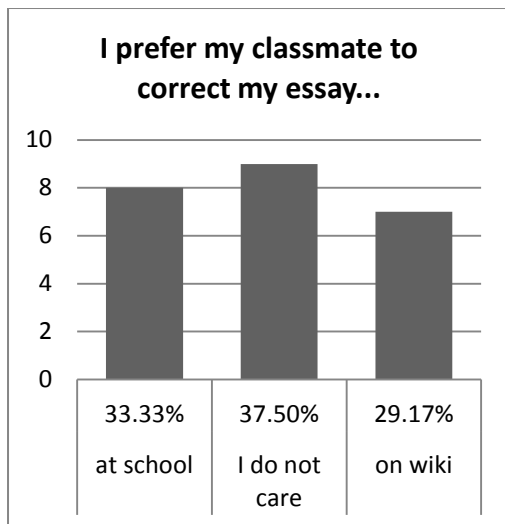
The fourth issue raised in the questionnaire is related to students' preferences concerning paper-pen and wiki-based peer-correction. Overall, the students slightly prefer correcting their classmates' essays and their classmates to correct their essays on wiki, as can be seen in Table 6 and for better illustrations there are two Graphs 1 and 2. This corresponds to results in Franco (2008), where "...students (61.1 %) would rather write using a wiki than writing on paper". Similarly there are in both Franco and our studies more than 30% of students who prefer traditional form of paper-pen writing.

|  | <b>At school</b> | <b>I do not care</b> | <b>On wiki</b> |
|--|------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 9. I prefer correcting my classmate's essay ...  | 37.50%           | 20.83%               | 41.67%         |
| 10. I prefer my classmate to correct my essay... | 29.17%           | 37.50%               | 33.33%         |

Table 6: Students' preferences concerning paper-pen and wiki-based peer-correction



Graph 1: Students' preferences



Graph 2: Students' preferences

The results based on an online questionnaire and focus-group discussions show that there are no relevant differences in preferring paper-pen or wiki-based peer-correction. We can conclude that in each class there are three approximately equally numbered groups, where one group is in favour of a traditional form of paper-pen peer-correction, the second group prefers wiki-based peer-correction and the third one has no preferences.

Detailed analyses of 50 students' contributions to class wikis during CLIL Social Science lessons revealed interesting data. 80 % of students frequently contributed to their wiki team pages. They preferred writing short comments and giving opinions to writing e.g. arguments or elaborated summaries. Only seven students (14 %) corrected their teammates' comments. During the interviews students showed their displeasure at correcting someone else's contributions. For example:

"I don't want to make them upset."

"I think it is useless to do it."

"Why I understand it anyway."

These findings are opposite to Beaumont and Su (2014), where "some of 45 % students provided constructive comments on other students' work." In case those students worked together in teams on a longer piece of writing e.g. stories or essays they corrected their teammates' contributions very often. 62 % of

students at least twice corrected someone else's contributions. There were 12 % of students who never contributed to wikis. They considered using wikis waste of time and did not find anything beneficial in it. The students explained the differences in their attitudes to peer-correction between posting their comments and working on collaborative work. In the first case, they did not pay any attention to language their use because it was for them "just a tool" for delivering a short message. Also they knew that their English was not graded during a team conversation and they "are not motivated" to do it. In the second case, they felt that "English is important" especially, when they were giving presentations. They "don't want to sound stupid". Such comments suggest to the author that students' efforts to peer-correction during CLIL Social Science lessons are based on the amount of workload in English and the audience of their writing.

## **Discussion**

This study constituted a small scale experiment, and the learning context is critical to outcomes. The author does not make great claims about the generality of the results. Nevertheless, the findings from this study provide good insight into wiki-based peer-correction.

The students assessed peer-correction differently depending on the subject. The wiki-based peer-correction was highly appraised during English lessons and the students found it motivating and beneficial to their learning process. A particularly interesting aspect that emerged was two different perceptions of the wiki-based peer-correction within CLIL Social Science lessons. Although English is there an integrated part of learning process, the students seemed to be more focused on subject content than language content. The students did not perceive wiki-based team discussions as a possibility of practising English writing skills and most of them strongly neglected to do the peer-correction. They found it meaningless, inappropriate and time-consuming. On the other hand, they positively assessed the wiki-based discussion as a good practice of their English communication skills. It evokes the idea, that the content and purpose of short writing is more important than a used language in non-language lessons. This idea can be supported by findings in (Esteves, 2011), where the students during the similar activity on wikis in English language lessons "felt they had to be language-aware in order to be able to correct others". Contrary to the first negative perception, the students willingly peer-corrected long pieces of writing, especially, if the writing was going to be presented to other classmates. The students found these writings important for developing their writing and collaborative skills. In general, it can be concluded that paper-pen peer



correction enhances both writing and learning skills and moreover, wiki-based peer-correction encourages students' collaborative skills and learning independency.

### **Conclusion**

As a teacher, I had a very positive feedback from my students in terms of learning writing skills through peer-correction. Students did not only learn how to peer-correct, but since then also pay more attention to layouts of the genre of writings and cohesion and coherence of the text. Moreover, each student succeeded in writing school graded essays. Implementing wikis into learning process showed their possibilities and shortcomings. Generally, wikis seem to be a good online tool within both L1 and L2 lessons, which promotes student-centred approach and collaboration.

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## Appendix

### 1) Examples of wiki-based peer-correction taken from class wikis (English language lessons).

What is the best way for you to spend your free time?

I spend my free time with my family or with my best friends. We sometime spend our time at home or on my competition. But I want spend my free time only with my family, because they are more important for me.

In my opinion we can spend our free time together at home. Firstly I want spend my free time with them in games, talk more, more going for trips etc. It is true that many people haven't time for other people, while work or spend their free time in the club, on their mobile phones or in the bed. Many people say that their free time doesn't exist. **However**, everyone would be the time for family should do. **Consequently**, I would have had to time for my family.

In summary, I would like to say that family and time spent with family is the most important.

|               |                |   |
|---------------|----------------|---|
| Content       | headline       | ok  |
|               | 1.introduction | ok  |
|               | problems       | there is just <b>one</b> big problem about the <i>lack of time</i>  |
|               | summary        | maybe more words about the problem  |
| Linking words | sentences      | ok  |
|               | pararagraphs   | ok  |
|               | commas         | <b>Firstly,</b>   |
| Lexis         | vocabulary     | the marked words, maybe a little bit more for this topic  |
| Grammar       | +              | <b>Consequently, I would like to..., the most important, I would have had to...</b>                             |
|               | -              | lots of word <i>spend,time,free time... at competition(s), sometime(s), for the other people</i>                |
|               |                | Maybe there are too difficult senteces - like: <i>However, everyone would be the time for family should do.</i> |

lack of time - nedostatek času

Picture 1: Screenshot of Home essay (1) and a filled Template

What is the best way for you to spend your free time?

Well, it is important to find your free time and to invest it to useful things.

As well, it is good to spend it with someone; anyway, many people prefer to be alone. Usually you spend it with your friends and obviously, with family.

However, I think that the most important is not with whom you spend it but how you spend it. Studying more than you have to, is a good idea. Nevertheless, I do not think, there are many people who want to do it. People should also enjoy their free time. We can play some sports. This may help your health at the least.

But mostly, it depends on what you are interested in. If you liked nature, you should go to a park or a forest. For social people is better to go somewhere where are many people, for example a café or some cultural events.

In conclusion, It is on each person with who, where or what do to. Everyone should choose his own combination which is ideal for him. Therefore, you can have many combinations. In fact, you can modify them anytime. All is just on you.


|               |              |  |
|---------------|--------------|--|
| Content       | Headline     | yes  |
|               | introduction | yes  |
|               | opinions     | yes  |
|               | solution     | yes  |
|               | summary      | yes  |
| Linking words | sentences    | yes  |
|               | paragraphs   | yes  |
|               | commas       | I think, there are mistakes (f.e. obviously, with family)  |
| Lexis         |              | yes, good  |
| Grammar       |              | small mistakes, I think (f.e. free time and to invest); (studiing more, than you have to - ???); (if you liked nature) |

Picture 2: Screenshot of Home essay (2) and a filled Template


- 2) Examples of wiki-based peer-correction taken from class wikis (CLIL Social Science classes)

 /ZSV/Team 3/home edited

...

You are good at assessing and I like your approach to Social Science. 

3-team home page

 On tuesday we talked about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Everyone would put it order differently. We all know what is the most important for us.

 Last lesson we spoke about our motivation and how we can divided it. It was interesting but for me maybe little confusing.


Hi, So I choose link about our view to ourself, because it engaged me.


Picture 3: Screenshot of Home Team evaluation of the lesson

...

31.3.2015 - Hodnocení

 - Last lesson was ok. We were talking about type of motivation. We learned a lot of new interesting words.

 Yea it was good. We were going through what we started the class before. It wasn't hard. We talked about the Maslow's pyramid of needs and motivations. To me it was a bit boring but it was may be cause it was too simple..

 - i wasnt at school last tuesday.

Summary -

Picture 4: Screenshot of Home Team evaluation of the lesson

**Story about people in important life situation**

Long time ago there was a village, where our story was taking place. Over the village there was a high hill, where one rich man lived in a beautiful house, we will say him Lord. So this Lord was interested in collecting paintings. In the village lived one old man, who had valuable painting, but he didn't want to sell it. One day when the Lord wanted to try to persuade the old man, he met his beautiful young daughter. daughter, because he had wanted to try to persuade the old man. After they fell in love and they had wedding. She had everything, but he wanted one thing. He said: "You said her that she had to stay here, I here because he didn't want to you she went to the village." village. She agreed. One day she left her house, because she had felt alone and bored. In the village she found a lover, who did baker for living. So she started leave her house more often. One night she was late, because she had stayed longer with her lover. She had to go across the bridge, but this bridge had closed. There was a soldier, who protected this bridge. She pleaded him to go, but he didn't let her go. She went to the fisherman, because he had had boat and he could help her. But he wanted 1000 € immediately. Then she went to her lover to asked him for money. He didn't give her any money, but before he had offered her together living, living, when she left her husband (Lord). She didn't want. Then she decided to go across the bridge, when the soldier wasn't looking. He shot her, because he had seen her. She died.

Picture 5: Screenshot of Home collaborative writing during CLIL Social Science Lessons

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The innovative textbook on Computer-Assisted Language Learning**

*Pokrivčáková, S. et al. (2015). CALL and Foreign Language Education: e-textbook for foreign language teachers. Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University. 110p. ISBN 978-80-558-0621-1*

This recently published e-textbook by a group of authors as its title suggests, discusses computer-assisted language learning in linkage with foreign language education. The abbreviation CALL posits the idea of using computers for language teaching and learning as an innovative approach for contemporary and future schooling. In the last few decades this approach to education has been frequently debated and reviewed by both the academic world and professional teachers. Substantiation of the importance of CALL within language classes according to authors in the learning environment is indicated by the freedom from stress, the learner's opportunity to study at his/her own pace and affirmation via prompt and individualised feedback. On the other hand this approach also has its pitfalls making it crucial for language teachers to be aware of both sides of the coin. To be able to use CALL for pleasurable and effective learning in language classes is the main goal of the textbook's message.

As for the structure of the publication it is divided into five major chapters that are further developed into subsequent subchapters. The introduction explains the plan for the writing of the textbook as part of a series of methodological guides that should be useful for teacher-training courses at Slovak universities.

The first chapter provides theoretical context where readers can find useful terminology and historical background related to the topic of CALL. This chapter consists of two parts. In the first half the author clarifies terminology and the message of computer-assisted instruction, e-learning, m-learning, b-learning and different points of view regarding this approach of learning are discussed. The second part is oriented toward various historical understandings of CALL by different authors. Pedagogical principles are analyzed and an outline of possible CALL sources including educational software, Internet, multimedia and on-line



websites are provided. Accompanying the possible sources are expectations for the roles of learner and teacher.

The second chapter of the textbook focuses on various language systems. The author first approaches the teaching of vocabulary with the support of CALL. A brief description of what is suitable to broaden English vocabulary is enhanced by examples of computer assisted activities that are divided into three groups according to the context in which they are practiced: visual, semantic and interlingual. Several activities are given within each group and these are linked directly to the online web-page. The second aspect is the teaching of pronunciation with the assistance of computers. The subchapter reveals three important factors: input, output and feedback that affect the acquisition of intelligible English pronunciation. In this regard a wide range of accessible Internet materials for possible application in class is offered. The last subchapter discusses the use of CALL for the teaching and learning of English grammar. Exercises and tasks for practicing grammar features are provided by examples of computer software, interactive lessons and games. As a good hint for learners, the grammar proofreaders on stream are quite useful.

The content of the third chapter is devoted to communicative skills; therefore, it is divided into four parts. First discussed is the assistance of computers when developing listening. Serious attention is paid to podcasting and its typology as it is seen as a modern way to advance the listening of learners. On this subject the author focuses on two model activities for classes giving its aims, procedure and exercises. The second subchapter deals with CALL and the development of speaking. This skill is important to oral production and in this case the computer is considered an important communication medium. The author mentions systems that provide computer-mediated communication. To enhance speaking skills diverse examples are given. The next skill supported by computers is reading. In the introduction purposes for supporting reading abilities are grounded with a view to different techniques. This subchapter also encompasses the advantages of the application of CALL for ESL purposes as can be seen in the model activities which point to real life experience. Another skill that benefits from computer assistance is writing. In this regard the textbook provides the reader with a description of e-mail/blog use, word-processing activities as well as useful hints about the handling of the "wikispaces" portal.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the specific areas where CALL might best be used. As an example the application of computer technology to develop intercultural communicative competence is included. The author emphasizes that culture is an inalienable part of English language classes so this subchapter

discusses the use of various authentic materials and their adaptation for lessons. The cultural aspect can also be taught through activities based on TV commercials, online magazine articles or video projects. CALL could be of assistance when using literature in ESL classes. Two sample activities combine the literary context with online activities even when using them with an interactive whiteboard. Also described is the entire procedure for work in class. Young learners in particular can benefit from computer assistance while learning language. The textbook discusses the positive and negative attributes of using multimedia in class. Two case studies within the subchapter depict activities in which media can serve the needs of young learners. As a bonus are added online websites suitable for the same purpose. The last subchapter shows how to combine CALL with English for specific purposes. The author describes the procedure for running an entire English course supported by online software at a department of informatics.

The last chapter is concerned with the definition, principles and methodology of blended learning. A closer look is given to the added value and drawbacks of this way of teaching and learning a foreign language.

It is clear that this e-textbook has fulfilled its aim of being a suitable manual for teacher-training during university courses. The evidence lies within each chapter as all authors have contributed to the creation of a guidebook that provides university students as well as a wider audience with a valuable resource for activities and tasks supported by computer technology that can be applied in everyday English classes. Although the main focus has been oriented to CALL and its implementation into education the content provides an even broader sense of teaching individual language skills. The theoretical introduction of each subchapter uncovers the most crucial aspects of foreign language education as the discussed topic is set at the beginning into a general context and later elaborated into more specific elements.

Computer-assisted language learning inevitably belongs in the current educational system of Slovakia. In this regard it is absolutely appropriate that the contributors decided to prepare a guide for practical work using this approach. Highly beneficial are the online examples, links to activities and tasks that with just one click redirect the reader to the resource material. All examples given in each section may function as tips and hints for revitalized language classes full of motivating features while employing computer assistance. Recommended multimedia resources and authentic materials may be promptly assigned in class. Adjustments may be needed at times.

Model activities that are developed in the material offer several valuable tools such as: a complete lesson plan with aims, appropriateness for specific language level and skill, description of necessary equipment. Another useful feature of this e-textbook is that tasks are added after some subchapters. These will widen horizons for those in the ESL teacher-training programme at university level.

Although the overall evaluation and impression of the publication is highly positive and practical it has a few omissions. For example not every subchapter has included the *"Tasks"* assignment. For students at university it is a useful resource for revision and a real opportunity to have these activities to work with. In some cases the students can imagine and better understand the real demands of teaching when working on preparation of their own materials as required in those tasks. Also lacking in some subchapters are samples of online activities or examples of evidence to prove what is stated.

The present e-textbook is highly recommended for in-service and for future teachers of English as a second language as well as for university students in general. It is a guide for teaching that combines language education with computer, technology and multimedia. The CALL approach enriches the traditional form of teaching foreign languages and examples given in this book are the evidence for it.

This publication is suitable for use beyond that of ESL teachers and classes. The examples and activities shown in this text are targeting English language learning but may be used as a template or role model for further adaptation among other foreign languages.

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# 3rd International Conference on Language, Literature and Culture in Education LLCE2016: 12-14 July, 2016 in Venice, Italy



To get more detailed info, please, visit the official website of LLCE2016:

<http://www.jolace.com/conferences/conferences-2016/llce2016/>

LLCE2016 is expected to create an ideal platform for academics, researchers, scientists, scholars, teacher trainers and teachers to discuss, exchange and share their research results, projects, experience, and new ideas about all aspects of studies in language, literature, culture and related areas in a truly international atmosphere.

## Important dates

- **Abstract Submission:** April 30th, 2016 (included)
- **Notification of Acceptance/Rejection:** May 15th, 2016
- **Registration deadline:** May 15th, 2016 (included)
- **Final Paper Submission (including virtual papers, video presentations and posters):** May 31st, 2016 (included)
- **Conference Dates:** 12-14 July, 2016 in Venice, Italy
- **Publication of CD Book of Abstracts:** July 12, 2016
- **Publication of the conference issue** of *the International Journal on Language, Literature and Culture in Education*: October 2016.

## Publications

All conference papers submitted by the authors with completed registration will be reviewed by the International Editorial Board members (a double-blind peer review procedure). **The selected (i.e. accepted) conference papers** will be published in the *International Journal on Language, Literature and Culture in Education* (ISSN 2453-7101). Only the papers approved for publishing in LLCE will be charged separately from a conference fee by a reduced publication fee **after** receiving the affirmative review results.

## A special social events:

### The Grand Canal boat guided tour & The Doge's Palace guided tour



# 3rd International Conference on Language and Literature in Education and Research **CLEaR2016: 15-17 September 2016, in Prague, CZ**



To get more detailed info, please, visit the official website of **CLEaR2016**:  
<http://www.jolace.com/conferences/conferences-2016/clear2016/>

The conference will be held during **September 15-17, 2016** in Prague, in the historic building of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Národní 1009, Prague, the Czech Republic).

## **Important dates**

- **Abstract submission** Deadline: June 30th, 2016 (included)
- **Notification of acceptance:** July 15th, 2016
- **On-line registration** deadline for authors: July 31st, 2016 (included)
- **Final paper submission** Deadline: July 31st, 2016 (included)
- **Conference dates:** September 15th-17th, 2016 in Prague, the Czech Republic
- **Publishing the CD Book of Abstracts:** September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016
- **Publishing the conference journal issues:** October and November 2016

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**A special social events:**  
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