English Language Education 32

Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz · Anna Czura
Małgorzata Jedynak · Anna Klimas
Agata Słowik-Krogulec *Editors*

Contemporary Issues in Foreign Language Education

Festschrift in Honour of Anna Michońska-Stadnik

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English Language Education

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This series publishes research on the development, implementation and evaluation of educational programs for school-aged and adult learners for whom English is a second or additional language, including those who are learning academic content through the medium of English. The series has a dual focus on learners' language development and broader societal and policy-related issues, including the implications for teachers' professional development and policy support at the institutional and system level. The series seeks to engage with current issues in English language teaching (ELT) in educational institutions from a highly situated standpoint, examining theories, practices and policies with a conscious regard for historical lineages of development and local (re)contextualisation. By focusing on multiple educational contexts and adopting a comparative perspective, the series will transcend traditional geographical boundaries, thus will be relevant to both English-speaking countries and countries where English is a very much an additional, but important language for learning other content. This series will also cross disciplinary and methodological boundaries by integrating sociocultural and critical approaches with second language acquisition perspectives and drawing on both applied linguistics and educational research. In drawing together basic and applied policy-related research concerns, the series will contribute towards developing a more comprehensive, innovative and contextualized view of English language education internationally. Authors are invited to approach the Series Editor with ideas and plans for books.

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Preface

This Festschrift has been compiled as a tribute to Professor Anna Michońska-Stadnik – a Polish scholar who specializes in the field of foreign language learning and teaching, second language acquisition and applied linguistics. She is a respected researcher, academic teacher and teacher trainer, whose professional career is tightly linked to the University of Wrocław. She has also cooperated with the Foreign Language Teacher Training College in Wrocław and the Karkonosze University of Applied Sciences, not only working there as a lecturer but also taking the roles of the content supervisor and quality advisor at these institutions.

Professor Michońska-Stadnik holds a Master of Arts degree in English Philology from the University of Wrocław and in Teaching English as a Second Language from the Victoria University of Manchester. Before joining the academic staff of the Institute of English Studies (University of Wrocław) in 1980, she gained practical teaching experience working as a secondary school teacher. On the basis of the dissertation *Basic theoretical principles for an English beginners' course in Poland and their practical applications*, she obtained a PhD in linguistics in 1989. Eight years later she gained her "habilitation" (Polish higher post-doctoral diploma) for her pioneering work on learner autonomy and language learning strategies in the Polish context. She obtained full professorship in 2015.

Anna's scholarly interests centre around teaching grammar, methodology of foreign language teaching, individual differences, motivation, learner autonomy, language learning strategies and research methodology. The second important pillar of her work is the teacher – in particular, foreign language teachers' subjective theories, teacher identity and the role of reflection in teacher education. She has greatly contributed to the development of the academic field through her numerous writings – 5 monographs, 3 edited volumes, over 60 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, as well as numerous publications addressed to foreign language teachers and teacher educators. Professor Michońska-Stadnik has supervised over 20 PhD students, many of whom follow her legacy by pursuing an academic career in the field of foreign language acquisition.

Being an experienced teacher and teacher trainer, it has always been of Anna's greatest interest and concern to help future and current foreign language teachers develop their professional competences and practical teaching skills. This proved particularly important when post-1989 Poland found itself in a new political, social and educational reality. One of the consequences of the transformation was an acute shortage of English language teachers, and Anna's involvement in shaping modern foreign language teacher education proved invaluable. Among many other initiatives, with the support of the US embassy, she coordinated summer schools in Karpacz, Poland, which aimed at enhancing the language and teaching skills of English language teachers and teacher educators working in institutions of higher education.

Anna Michońska-Stadnik has also performed important administrative functions at the Institute of English Studies, being its Deputy Director of Studies (1989–1997) and the Director (1997–2002). In 2005 she transformed the Department of Applied Linguistics into the Department of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching and has remained its president ever since. For 15 years (from 1997 to 2012), she served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Anglica Wratislaviensia*, the research journal of the Institute of English Studies, in which she hosted and encouraged contributions from both novice and experienced scholars from Poland and abroad in the disciplines associated with English Studies: literature and culture, linguistics and applied linguistics. She continues to support the journal as a member of the editorial committee in the field of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching. Showing greatest concern for the highest quality of teaching, Anna Michońska Stadnik was also appointed the leader of the Teaching Quality Assurance Team at the Institute in 2014.

Anna's expertise in the field of Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language teaching, and involvement in the life of the University of Wrocław and the Institute of English Studies, has been recognized by numerous authorities, which has resulted in her receiving several accolades, such as the Medal of the National Education Commission, the Gold Medal for Long Service and numerous Rectors' awards for her scientific, didactic and organizational excellence. For many years, she had been elected vice-president of the Polish Association of Modern Languages (PTN) – the major organization in Poland dedicated to foreign language teachers, educators, researchers, translators and interpreters. Anna has been actively engaged in the activities of this association through, among others, organizing successful conferences, guest editing special issues of *Neofilolog* – the Association's academic journal – and presenting captivating keynote lectures. In recognition of Anna's significant contribution to the field and her active involvement in the PTN activities, in 2022 she was awarded the Gold Medal of Prof. Ludwik Zabrocki – the highest honour presented by the Association.

Her work has touched the lives and influenced the careers of innumerable scholars, colleagues and teachers in Poland and beyond. This volume seeks to honour Anna by compiling chapters produced by scholars and practitioners who have either cooperated with Anna – as colleagues, PhD students or co-authors – or used her research in their academic work. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the authors, not only for their positive response to our invitations

and valuable contributions to this volume, but also for the constructive comments they offered one another as internal reviewers. The Editors would like to thank the external reviewers for taking the time and effort necessary to review the manuscript. We sincerely appreciate the positive feedback and all valuable suggestions, which helped us improve the structure and the quality of the manuscript. Thanks are also extended to Jason Schock, one of Professor Michońska-Stadnik's innumerable disciples himself, for his help in copy-editing this *Preface*.

To us, the Editors of this volume, Anna was not only an invaluable PhD supervisor, and is a wonderful colleague and a dear friend, but has also been a source of knowledge, an inspiration and a motivational force that has pushed us relentlessly to surmount boundaries in our empirical explorations. She is always ready to offer help, share her expertise and propose solutions; but most of all, she encourages us to work autonomously and think critically. It is our hope and mission that this volume reflects the lessons we have all learned from Professor Anna Michońska-Stadnik.

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Introduction

This volume is intended as a tribute to Professor Anna Michońska-Stadnik, an outstanding scholar and mentor, whose impact on the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) in Poland is unquestionable. As the expression of their gratitude and appreciation, her former doctoral students and currently her colleagues have brought together a collection of papers representing diverse conceptual and empirical positions that, on the one hand, demonstrate the contributors' broad scope of inquiry, and on the other, testify to their sensitivity to the challenges of present-day language education in the face of global-scale and local crises and tensions. As evidenced by this volume's chapters, research on learning and teaching foreign languages can take numerous forms and concern diverse contexts, processes and mechanisms underlying language acquisition.

Second/foreign language acquisition (SLA) research draws on an amalgam of disciplines, including, among others, linguistics, psychology, sociology and educational studies. It adapts and transforms insights these domains offer with a view to expanding on them, developing novel perspectives and frameworks, and finally, discovering ways in which they could inform foreign language pedagogy. The present volume is representative of the directions and trends dominant in the SLA research and literature of today with their varied themes, methodologies and scopes of inquiry. Importantly, it accentuates the impact of the recent pandemic and the resultant online instruction on language education and its participants, which has led to the remodelling of traditional thinking about acquisition contexts and available pedagogies.

This impressive lineup of 15 chapters by 19 contributors, willing to honour their mentor and friend, has been divided into two main parts, each of which includes papers revolving around one of the main foci of the authors' investigations and deliberations: language teachers and language learners. Part I, Focus on the Teacher, includes seven texts discussing an array of topics relevant to teacher training and development, as well as the functioning of language instructors in educational systems. In the first chapter in this section, Hanna Komorowska discusses the aetiology of classroom conflicts, ways of their prevention and management, and offers useful

tips for pre-service and in-service teacher education in this respect. Dorota Werbińska, in turn, considers the role of reflexivity as a means of building the professional identity of teachers as instructors or/and researchers, which she aptly describes as "professional becoming". The contribution of Danuta Gabryś-Barker delves into manifestations of affectivity in the classroom discourse of a foreign language teacher and discusses ways in which verbal and nonverbal signals shape the learning environment and, eventually, impinge on achievements and well-being of the learners. Anna Klimas explores the process of identity restructuring of in-service teachers of other subjects in the course of training to become foreign language teachers. The author traces roots of identity tensions among beliefs and attitudes concerning language-related and disciplinary identity, self-knowledge and awareness. Teacher feedback on student writing is the topic addressed by Kinga Potocka and Małgorzata Adams-Tukiendorf. The authors compare practices of feedback provision in Polish secondary schools against a long tradition of foreign language feedback research, which aims at stressing the importance of developing writing skills and the need to implement existing alternative approaches that can be used to that end. In the following chapter, Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska elucidates the concept of teacher engagement with the teaching process and educational institutions that, ideally, should encompass all engagement dimensions: behaviour, cognition, affect and social bonds. In the last chapter in this section, Katarzyna Sradomska provides insights into challenges resulting from the implementation of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in exam classes. Importantly, the author, while formulating her diagnosis and recommendations, takes into account not only teachers' but also learners' perspective.

In Part II, Focus on the Learner, comprising eight contributions, attention is shifted to learner-internal and learner-external factors influencing the effectiveness of the learning process. The first author in this section, Małgorzata Jedynak, focuses on teaching languages to blind and partially sighted students, emphasizing the role of language education in preventing psychological, social and communicative deprivation among learners with special educational needs. Her overview presents not only results of recent studies on language education in this learner group but also reports on legal and policy aspects underlying teaching of visually impaired students. Anna Czura and Mirjam Egli Cuenat focus on ways of maximizing benefits of learning mobility. To this aim, they suggest applying resources that were developed within the *PluriMobil – Plurilingual and Intercultural Learning Through Mobility* project, funded and supported by the Council of Europe. The authors concentrate on means of building sojourners' autonomy through the use of learning strategies, reflection and goal setting. Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Jakub Bielak report the results of their attempt to establish co-dependencies between a number of learner-internal and context-dependent variables characteristic of a language classroom, including learner engagement, willingness to communicate, facets of learner self, communicative confidence and international posture. Taking Complex Dynamic Systems Theory as the point of departure, Katarzyna Rokoszewska delves into the analysis of a learner corpus to search for the relationships between lexical frequency levels in secondary school learners' writing. Ewa

Piechurska-Kuciel, in turn, elucidates the intricate connection between personality and success in language learning. Her analysis concerns links between individual facets of personality and attainments, operationalized in two ways: as self-perceived levels of foreign language skills and as final grades. Another individual learner feature, language anxiety, is the focus of the chapter by Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz and Agata Słowik-Krogulec. The researchers examine how the teaching mode, face-to-face or online, impacts older adult learners' experience of anxiety and how it impinges on learning a foreign language. In the next chapter, Elżbieta Gajek ponders on the need to explore learning strategies applied in technology-enhanced environments. The chapter reports the results of a comparison of students' learning habits before and after the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic, seeking explanation for the observed tendencies. The volume ends with a contribution of Liliana Piasecka, who investigates benefits and downsides of online teaching. In her mixed-methods study, the author takes university students' perspective and revisits the ills and worries that the learners and teachers' community had to confront over the months of isolation brought about by the pandemic.

Given the scope of themes and methodologies that the authors of the present monograph apply, and the theoretical positions they adopt, the volume will be of interest to researchers who may wish to further explore the aspects of language learning and teaching. It may also inspire material developers, teacher trainers and practitioners who will find a wealth of implications and advice on how to improve the quality of instruction. Finally, it can be recommended for graduate and post-graduate students as it offers insights into crucial, up-to-date aspects of teaching practice and demonstrates methodological choices they might adopt in their own explorations.

On my part, I wish to say how glad and honoured I am to have this opportunity to introduce this valuable volume to readers and thus contribute to celebrating the work of a distinguished scholar, an admired colleague, an exceptional person, Professor Anna Michońska-Stadnik.

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Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak

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Małgorzata Adams-Tukiendorf holds a PhD in linguistics. She is the vice dean in the Faculty of Philology, University of Opole. Her academic interests include foreign language acquisition, cognitive and affective factors influencing writing, the role of intelligence and creativity in learning and specifically in learning to write, the role of reflection in the teaching profession, teacher training in EFL, academic writing in EFL, coaching in education and transactional analysis in education. She is a reviewer of coursebooks in English for the Polish Ministry of Education. She is a co-author of a writing manual for EFL students, and an author of articles on various aspects of writing.

Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz holds a PhD from the University of Wrocław, which she has been affiliated to since 2004. In 1998–2013, she worked also as a teacher trainer at the Teacher Training College in Wrocław. She has published many chapters in books (edited, e.g., by John Benjamins, Routledge, Multilingual Matters, Springer) and articles in numerous journals. Her main areas of interest include: IDs (anxiety, cognitive style, WTC) in relation to FL pronunciation acquisition, pronunciation pedagogy, teacher development and training, inclusive education and teaching older adults. At the moment, she is involved in an Erasmus+ project: "Digital Tools for Inclusive Foreign Language Education". For over two decades, she has been conducting several courses and workshops for pre- and in-service EFL teachers.

Jakub Bielak is an assistant professor in the Department of English Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University at Kalisz, Poland. He has done research into applied cognitive linguistics, form-focused instruction and individual differences in language learning, including learning strategies, motivation and learner emotions. His work has been published in such journals as *Language Teaching Research*, *System* and *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, and until recently he served as an associate editor of the last of these journals. He has also co-authored and co-edited several books in the area of language learning and teaching.

Mirjam Egli Cuenat is a researcher in the field of educational linguistics and teacher educator. She studied French and German philology in Basel, Neuchâtel and Paris. She is currently the head of the foreign languages department in primary teacher education at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts North-Western Switzerland (School of Education) FHNW. Her research interests include bi- and pluriliteracy, third language learning and teaching, plurilingual and intercultural education, learning mobility, curricula and language policy. Since 2001 she has been working as an expert at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and Graz (European Centre of Modern Languages).

Anna Czura is a researcher, academic teacher and teacher trainer. Her research interests centre around language assessment, intercultural competence, learning mobility, virtual exchange, CLIL and European language policy. She is an assistant professor at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Wrocław. In 2019–2021, she was a post-doctoral researcher and Marie Curie fellow (MSCA IF) at the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She also acts as the Polish Ministry of Education expert who certifies published teaching materials for school use.

Danuta Gabryś-Barker is a professor of applied linguistics and psycholinguistics at the University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland, where she lectures in applied linguistics, second language acquisition and multilingualism. She has published a couple of books, edited over 20 monographic volumes and approximately 200 articles nationally as well as internationally. Prof. Gabryś-Barker has been the co-editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Multilingualism* (Taylor & Francis/Routledge) since 2010 and the co-founder and co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition* (University of Silesia Press) since 2015. She has been an active member of several scholarly associations, among them the *International Association of Multilingualism* since its foundation and the member of the Board from 2010 to 2018.

Elżbieta Gajek is an electronic engineer with PhD and Habilitation in linguistics; University Professor at the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw; Head of Department of Second Language Acquisition. She specializes in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Computer-Enhanced Teaching Languages, and the use of digital media in learning. She is an author and co-author of over 120 publications including books, book chapters, and journal articles on CALL and MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning), on teacher training for the use of media in teaching, and ICT-based instruction published worldwide. Since 2004 she has been an expert at the National Support Service of the eTwinning Programme in Poland. She evaluates projects submitted to national and international competitions. She participated in many European and global projects.

Małgorzata Jedynak is a researcher, academic teacher and teacher trainer at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Wrocław. She is a specialist in the pedagogy of blindness and visual impairments and a chair of TYFLO Research Group whose members conduct interdisciplinary research in the fields of language learning and teaching, typhlopsychology and special education in the context of blind and partially sighted learners. Her research interests revolve around typhlosciences (typhlopedagogy, typhlopsychology), EU language education policies, intercultural issues and teaching L2 pronunciation. Currently she is involved in the project "Comparative study of pre-pandemic and pandemic well-being of visually impaired learners of English".

Anna Klimas is a researcher, academic teacher and teacher trainer. She holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Wrocław. Her research interests in the field of foreign language teaching concentrate on teacher education and professional development, learner and teacher motivation and autonomy, research methods used in classroom-based studies, developing twenty-first century skills as well as the application of new technologies in L2 instruction. Currently she is involved in Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership Project "Digital Tools for Inclusive Foreign Language Education".

Hanna Komorowska is a full professor of applied linguistics and language teaching at the SWPS University in Warsaw. She served as the Polish delegate to the Council of Europe, member of the EU High Level Group on Multilingualism and a consultant to the ECML in Graz. She now functions as ECML expert and the president of the European Language Label Poland.

Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak is an associate professor at the Institute of English Studies of Wrocław University, Poland. Her main interests include, apart from teacher education, second language acquisition theory and research, language learning strategies, learner autonomy, form-focused instruction, willingness to communicate, motivation and learner engagement. She authored and co-authored a number of publications in, among others, *System*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Language Learning Journal*, *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* and *Research in Language*. She is also a co-author (with Mirosław Pawlak) of the books *Production-Oriented and Comprehension-Based Grammar Teaching in the Foreign Language Classroom* (Springer, 2012) and *Willingness to Communicate in Instructed Second Language Acquisition* (Multilingual Matters, 2017).

Liliana Piasecka is a retired professor of English at the Institute of Linguistics, University of Opole (Poland). She worked as an applied linguist, researcher and teacher trainer. She taught SLA and ELT courses, and supervised MA and PhD theses. Her research interests include second/foreign language acquisition issues, especially L2 lexical development, relations between L1 and L2 reading, new literacies, language and gender, and language and identity. She has published three books and numerous articles and co-edited three collections of essays.

Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel is a professor of Linguistics at Opole University, Poland, where she teaches SLA, MA and PhD courses. Her main interests include the role of affect (language anxiety and enjoyment, willingness to communicate), as well as personality in the foreign language learning process. Among her publications, there are numerous papers, eight coedited volumes and three books published in Poland and abroad.

Kinga Potocka is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Philology (English Philology) at the University of Opole. Her main areas of academic interest include writing instruction in foreign language teaching. She is a life-long learner keen on expanding her knowledge about self-development, time management and creative thinking.

Katarzyna Rokoszewska is an assistant professor at the Institute of Foreign Languages at Jan Dlugosz University in Częstochowa, Poland, where she teaches EFL methodology and SLA courses. Her research interests include various aspects of SLA and methodology of teaching foreign languages, including teaching foreign languages to young learners. She has a particular interest in individual learner differences, the sociocultural approach and complexity theory.

Agata Słowik-Krogulec is an assistant professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław, Poland. She completed her PhD on older adult learners' and their teachers' subjective theories related to foreign language education in later life. She is an applied linguist, teacher trainer as well as a CELTA and DELTA qualified teacher with more than 10 years of experience in teaching various age groups, including learners at the age of 60 and older, at the University of the Third Age in Wrocław and in private language schools. Her principal research areas are: Foreign Language Geragogy (FLG, i.e. Foreign Language Learning and Teaching to Older Adults), Lifelong Learning, Individual Learner Differences, as well as the Age Factor and Positive Psychology in SLA.

Katarzyna Sradomska is currently a lecturer in the Karkonosze University of Applied Sciences in Jelenia Góra, Poland, and a teacher in a secondary school in Wrocław. Her main area of interest is applied linguistics and methodology of a foreign language. She is a teacher trainer in "Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners". For over 25 years, she has been preparing future teachers, managing teaching practice for students and organising and conducting post-graduate studies, workshops and seminars for in-service language teachers. She is also involved in co-operating with various educational institutions in the whole region of Lower Silesia and nationally.

Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska was a teacher trainer at the Foreign Language Teacher Training College in Wrocław and Legnica. For 10 years she has been assistant professor at the Witelon Collegium State University in Legnica. She is the co-author of programmes for teaching English in the primary school and kindergarten, the coursebook Sparks, a methodology book on Teaching English to Young Learners. She took part in the project working on core curriculum for foreign languages in schools and she was cooperating with the Educational Research Institute in Warsaw in conducting research into the effectiveness of foreign language instruction in the primary school. Her research interests involve classroom research and foreign language teacher training.

Dorota Werbińska is an associate professor and head of Department of Applied Linguistics in the Institute of Languages at Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Poland. A former secondary school teacher, a teacher trainer and an in-service teacher educator, she is an author of 5 books on modern language teachers and almost 100 articles, book chapters and book reviews published nationally and internationally. Her main academic interests are within the field of language teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, in particular language teacher identity, teacher professional development, teacher reflectivity and qualitative research.

Part I
Focus on the Teacher

Conflict Prevention and Management in Language Education

Hanna Komorowska

Abstract The text analyses selected issues of conflict prevention and management, such as mediation attempts and coping strategies, in the everyday functioning of foreign language teachers. The notion of conflict will be examined as well as typical conflict-provoking situations and behaviours on the part of teachers, students, parents, members of the staff and school administration. Ways of avoiding misunderstandings and types of behaviour leading to the reduction of tensions will also be discussed. Implications will be sought for pre- and in-service language teacher education.

Keywords Discipline · Classroom management · Conflict prevention · Conflict management · Teacher education

1 Introduction

The social and financial status of the teaching profession has declined in many countries, and in national and international surveys teachers more and more often declare growing stress levels, mostly due to classroom management problems (TALIS, 2009, 2013, 2019). Research demonstrates that novice teachers tend to leave the profession after 5 years of work added to the fact that in many countries this professional group constitutes one fifth of the educational work force, the much feared meltdown scenario materialises (Department of Education, 2018; Koffeman & Snoek, 2019; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017). Encouraging novice teachers to stay in the profession is one of the main concerns of educational administration. At the same time, migration between schools grows among highly qualified teachers, who choose better schools and thus contribute to the increased achievement gaps between students from various districts (Feng & Sass, 2017).

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Attracting teachers to the profession and retaining effective professionals in schools become burning issues in all educational contexts (OECD, 2002a, b.) As teachers ascribe most of their frustrations to conflicts resulting from discipline problems, and consider student misbehaviour a powerful factor affecting their well-being (Bao et al., 2016), conflict prevention and management becomes a major concern of both researchers and administrators and an indispensable skill to be developed by teacher trainees to protect their future psychological well-being (Spilt et al., 2013; Stankiewicz, 2005).

Language teachers perceive conflicts involved in classroom management, alongside work overload, as problems most difficult to cope with and the main factors responsible for professional burnout (Barmby, 2006). Reflection on ways of helping teachers to develop appropriate strategies during their initial language teacher training seems, therefore, indispensable. Drawing on research results obtained in the fields of pedagogy, social psychology and sociology of education, this article aims to address these crucial issues.

2 The Nature of Conflict Definition and Typology

Conflict is defined as the 'perception of different interests…. the idea that involves the beliefs of different social entities (i.e., individual, group, organisation, etc.) who perceive incompatible goals and interference from others in achieving those goals (Bao et al., 2016, p. 542). The nature of conflict is explained in the morphology of the term itself. The word *conflict* comes from the Latin *fligere* – to strike and *con* – together, meaning 'striking one another', which implies intensity of negative emotions and open hostility (Griffin, 2002).

Conflicts are studied in multiple disciplines. Political conflicts between states are analysed by historians, philosophers and political scientists. Social, cultural and ethnic conflicts are the subject of study in ethnology, cultural anthropology and sociology. Interpersonal conflicts are examined by psychologists, legal mediators and therapists. Research on school and classroom conflicts is usually undertaken in at least three fields: education, social psychology and sociology of education. Although in every discipline causative thinking prevails and roots of conflicts are sought, considerable differences can be noted between approaches in particular areas.

For a long time, philosophers and historians analysing conflicts considered them disruptive and disintegrating societies. In the twentieth century, sociologists researching intracommunity frictions introduced a new perspective demonstrating that conflict is an essential element in group formation (Coser, 1957), but focused on power as a permanent feature of social relations (Dahrendorf, 1959) as well as on the role of emotions and values in potential and actual disagreements (Collins, 1975). Psychologists and educators, without ignoring causes of discord, concentrated mainly on strategies of conflict resolution.

According to Deutsch (2000), the main theoretician of interpersonal conflict, each case can be classified as either destructive or constructive. As a criterion of classification, the author uses functional consequences of conflict based on the assessment of post-conflict relations between parties of the initial controversy. When emotions and arguments get petrified on both sides, a conflict is classified as destructive. If interlocutors manage to start listening to each other and arrive at a point when agreement can be reached, a form of a *compromise* may be worked out (a common promise: *com-* together, *promessum* – promise) or a *consensus* as an agreed perspective on the problem (*con* – together, *sensus* – a mode of thinking or perception), the relationship can then rise to a higher level and a conflict proves constructive. Wilmot and Hocker (2011) list five possible results of a conflict situation, i.e., avoidance, competition, accommodation, compromise and collaboration. Avoidance is a form of escape which does not solve the conflict, while competition will only aggravate it. Accommodation takes place when one party to the conflict is not highly assertive, while the other one is in the situation of power; initial controversy results in the stabilisation of unbalanced relationship (Puppel & Krawczak, 2015). Compromise means consensus which may lead to peaceful separation or to future collaboration. Each result takes different forms and brings different side-effects.

In educational contexts destructive or unresolved conflicts, but also those quelled by means of power and domination strategies, such as blaming, insulting, humiliating, often lead to peer victimization initiated by students who could not manage to win the teacher-student power struggle and felt publicly castigated (Archambault et al., 2016; Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2017; Özgan, 2016). Learner's avoidance materialises itself in passivity or truancy and, therefore, is socially unacceptable, while teacher's avoidance reflected in ignoring misdemeanours that may have serious consequences, is likely to encourage bullying and endanger safety. Competition among learners often brings about temporary increases in motivation, but later motivates winners only, at the same time demotivating other participants. Competition between the student and the teacher is in fact a power struggle, which occurs when the roles are not clearly defined. Accommodation has no obvious value. It may be desirable when learners and teachers assume roles prescribed in the given context, when one of the parties of the conflict apologises or compensates, but it may also prove dangerous when the learner engages in pretending and fakes good behaviour, at the same time cherishing resentment and planning revenge. Compromise is the best option, although a decision on each side to take a step back is never easy, especially in classroom conflicts in which the teacher tends to stress duties, the learner emphasizes fairness, and both fear a loss of face.

Success is achieved when conflict resolution leads to teacher-student collaboration, though when this goal proves too ambitious, collaboration within a group of students may be considered a satisfactory result. The road to success may lead from anger, through rejection, reflection, reconciliation to collaboration, referred to as a rule of 5Rs taking its name from Italian *Rabbia, Rifiuto, Ripensamento, Riconciliazione, Ripartenza* (Stańkowski, 2009).

3 Etiology of Classroom Conflict

Conflicts on the teacher-learner front tend to spring mainly from learners' classroom behaviour which the teacher considers disruptive or simply unacceptable. The first official definition of disruptive behaviour was provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the late 1970s and listed the following: aggression to other pupils and staff, rudeness and insolence, behaviour designed to disrupt the work of others and not allowing a lesson to continue, refusal to obey school rules and hostility to authority (DES, 1977 quoted in Mongon et al., 1989; Olsen & Cooper, 2001). Later researchers identified main types of disobedience listed as troublesome by primary and secondary school teachers, i.e., idleness, making unnecessary noise, talking out of turn and aggression (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). For teachers a distinction between a student psychologically disturbed and badly behaved is very difficult to make. On the other hand, bad behaviour is rarely clearly defined by school authorities, which makes learners dependent on inferring teacher's expectations from criticism and blame. Although it is common knowledge that undesirable behaviour is that which either hinders students' learning, or may risk safety, cause harm, or else result in damaging school equipment, it may also include behaviour that a particular teacher perceives as subjectively unpleasant, a reaction often incomprehensible for their learners.

Causes of unwanted learner behaviour vary and include negative attitudes toward the teacher, apathy, boredom, lack of motivation, personality and communication difficulties (Haynes, 2012). One of the most important is attention seeking, which often results from low self-concept, underdeveloped social skills and covert anger turning students into saboteurs. It should not be forgotten, however, that negative learner reactions underlying teacher-student conflict can be traced back to a pupil's constant experiences of failure, lack of tangible results of their efforts, too high competition or too strong pressure of extrinsic motivation (Fontana, 1991).

Identifying causes without understanding learners' aims is insufficient to explain undesirable behaviour and does not help the teacher to solve ethical dilemmas springing from classroom situations (Werbińska, 2009). Student behaviour deemed unacceptable usually has a function: learners receive important payoffs, such as finding oneself centre stage, gaining status among peers, stirring excitement, taking revenge on an enemy or simply avoiding effort. Those, so-called *mistaken goals*, to use a term introduced by Dreikurs (1964), give rise to a variety of student roles, such as a class clown, obnoxious student, lazy pupil, helpless learner, rebellious or stubborn student, destructive or defiant pupil, contemptuous student or socially inept learner (Nakamura, 2000).

Undesirable behaviour is particularly difficult to cope with when it comes from a group rather than an individual student, a phenomenon obstructing project work and group work, i.e., forms of activity frequently used during language lessons. Usually, the group is influenced by a leader or a social star, sometimes referred to as a *gamekeeper,* but also by the teacher's style of building rapport, which may either alleviate or aggravate behaviour problems.

The school context may exacerbate behaviour problems when rules are inconsistently applied and are perceived as unfair by students, especially when decisions are taken arbitrarily. This particular aspect was one of the first variables examined when empirical research started in the fields of social psychology and sociology of education. Results demonstrated that lack of fairness often results from the teacher's behaviour linked to the *halo effect*, the phenomenon when 'we are already impressed by someone's behaviour in one context, we will be favourably predisposed towards their efforts in another' and the *demon effect* under which 'if we already have a bad impression of an individual, we are predisposed to interpret their future actions negatively' (Fontana, 1986, p. 106). A similar categorisation of teacher classroom behaviours had been presented earlier by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) as two sets of predictions, positive and negative, formulated about learners, which lead to teachers' acting on their own attributions, thus producing expected reactions on the part of their students, i.e., phenomena referred to as the Pygmalion and the Golem effects. Acting on attributions is usually perceived by learners as unfair teacher behaviour and, as such, may block communication crucial for the achievement of language teaching objectives.

What exacerbates the problem is the fact that learners fall victim to the lack of uniformity in reactions by teachers in the same school. Disagreements among staff members are unavoidable, as opinions often differ, interests of individual teachers or their groups frequently run counter to one another and other commitments of individuals may conflict with their school responsibilities (Pollard, 1985). It is not very often that a strong, unifying culture of collaboration develops among school staff. Such a desirable pattern of interaction tends to evolve in new educational institutions established as an opposition to norms contested by those who are ready to create a learning environment more conducive to autonomous teaching and learning. Much more frequently, due to diverse milieus in which teachers were brought up and educated, multiple norms and values can be noticed. As a consequence, subgroups and cliques are formed, truces are silently made and intergroup tensions felt. Consensus is difficult to achieve as individuals defend their values and fight to preserve their self-image. The situation can be amended if group leaders and school administration take steps toward valuing individuals, their openness, sense of security and contribution to others, but also promote interdependence during teamwork (Nias et al., 1989). If this does not happen, learners cannot count on predictable teacher reactions to their behaviour, which has a demoralising effect on school population and renders acceptable behaviour difficult to shape.

If a school has managed to implement a consistent policy, conflict resolution is usually easier, although success depends on the behaviour of both parties. Research by Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2017) demonstrates that conflicts in which a student takes a passive approach tend to remain unresolved, while those in which a student takes an active approach 'opportunities to resolve a conflict increase significantly; however, a crucial factor, which determines the further course of the conflict, is the teacher's actions which either respond or fail to respond to the student's needs' (Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2017, p. 117). A teacher's reactions, however, depend on the classroom management model he or she decides to follow.

4 Twentieth Century Approaches to Shaping Learner Behaviour: Classroom Management Models

All main classroom management models were designed in the second half of the twentieth century and all offered strategies aimed to shape learner behaviour. Two trends were dominant in line with psychological approaches of the time. Typically the *behavioural approach*, based on shaping by means of positive and negative reinforcement, is frequently used in primary classrooms. Teenagers react more positively to the *cognitive approach* which attempts at eliciting situational interest and possibly also sustained motivation regulated by long-term objectives. There are, however, other approaches which are not easily categorised, e.g., those oriented toward human communication.

The teacher's reaction depends on their emotional predispositions and the ability to self-regulate in coping with one's own anger or anxiety. When it comes to strategic classroom management, a variety of models have been designed, all of which are adaptable to foreign language teaching.

Three of these models, i.e. *the Redl and Wattenberg Model, the Kounin Model and the (neo)Skinnerian Model* follow the lines of the behavioural approach.

The Redl and Wattenberg Model is based on the conviction that groups of people influence individual behaviour and, as a consequence, members of a given group behave differently than they would act individually (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Redl & Wattenberg, 1959). Teachers may mitigate undesirable behaviour before it turns into aggressive and destructive action against other students or the teacher by using light supportive techniques, such as humour, eye contact, or proximity control, i.e., shortening physical distance. If they decide that bad behaviour is caused by learning difficulties, situational assistance may be offered in the form of an extra explanation or change in the lesson scenario. Appraising reality, i.e., setting limits, encouragement, but also listing possible consequences of bad behaviour, may also help as well as the so-called 'pleasure-pain' techniques which involve rewards or punishment, the latter considered here as the last resort. In language teaching classroom, contracts are usually suggested for the purpose of ensuring early communication of expectations and consequences of bad behaviour.

The Kounin Model is founded on the observation that the behaviour of a pupil immediately influences the behaviour of the nearby student and produces a 'ripple effect' in the classroom, leading to potential conflicts with the teacher (Kounin, 1977). By the same token, reacting to misbehaviour of one individual positively, influences the behaviour of neighbouring students. The reaction should, however, be immediate, before misbehaviour spreads and escalates. In this model teacher's 'withitness', i.e., the ability to attend to several issues at a time and awareness of what is going on in the classroom, becomes crucial (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010). Clarity of messages, firmness of insistence on appropriate behaviour and smooth transitions between classroom activities during the presentation, controlled practice and free practice phases of a typical language lesson contribute to healthy classroom management.

The (neo)Skinnerian Model, as its name makes it clear, is based on the behaviourist principle of operant conditioning, whereby behaviour is shaped by reinforcement. If the teacher's reaction carries a reward, the behaviour is likely to be repeated, if not, or if the teacher's reaction carries punishment, the behaviour is weakened (Skinner, 1971). Shaping learners' behaviour to avoid or counteract conflicts is a gradual process of successive approximations, more effective if it is achieved by verbal and non-verbal rewards rather than by punishment. The reason for the difference in effectiveness of the teacher's reactions lies in the fact that punishment may cause withdrawal, student's loss of face and loss of motivation and even revenge and aggression. Yet, reward also creates some dangers as it may lead to external motivation and conformism. For that reason, in language learning using a considerably larger number of praises than critical remarks is recommended as well as the use of non-verbal signals instead of lengthy verbal feedback.

Three models presented below, i.e., *the Dreikurs Model, the Jones Model* and *the Glasser Model,* follow the cognitive approach.

The Dreikurs Model, unlike all behavioural approaches, focuses on needs and intentions underlying unacceptable behaviour rather than on details of behaviour itself. The model views conflicts as resulting from mistaken beliefs about social acceptance and, as a consequence, mistaken measures taken to achieve goals. Four basic needs identified by Dreikurs help to understand disruptive behaviour, i.e., attention getting, seeking power or revenge and displaying inadequacy (Dreikurs, 1964). Learners' mistaken beliefs about best ways to satisfy these needs lead to unaccepted off-task behaviour designed to attract teachers' attention, struggles of will and attempts to take revenge on adults, but also to learned helplessness when attempts fail. To prevent conflicts or their escalation the teachers should be able to identify mistaken goals and confront students with them. Future language teachers need to be sensitized to a learner's attention-seeking and taught to ignore a student's off-task behaviour unless it becomes destructive, and pay attention when the student is on-task.

The Jones Model concentrates on conflict prevention by focusing on time management in the classroom and claiming that mismanagement encourages bad behaviour and generates conflicts. The solution is seen in placing responsibility on the teacher for preventing the loss of teaching time and students' boredom which results in unwanted behaviour. As, according to Jones, about half of the lesson time is wasted by learners on talking, daydreaming and making noise, the teacher should be able to encourage on-task and discourage off-task behaviour by learning to employ body language as a set of signals carrying information on what should and what should not be done, who is being addressed by the teacher and/or what kind of mistake has been made. Eye-contact, body posture, mime and gesture, as well as operating physical proximity provide not only warning signals for learners, but also – together with verbal messages – offer incentive systems motivating them to remain on task. Recommendations of this sort are usually found easier to follow when language teachers receive a solid knowledge-base in the area of communication types. Conflicts may, however, spring from the concept of group work and group responsibility; in this approach 'the group is rewarded together and punished

together regardless of who might transgress…' which 'brings to bear strong peer pressure against misbehaviour' (Charles, 1989, p. 97).

The Glasser Model, like other models following the cognitive approach, explores into needs and motivations of students who engage in activities deemed unacceptable without analysing types of disruptive behaviour. According to the model's author, conflicts arise from the fact that students do what gives them satisfaction and meets their need to belong, to gain power, to feel free and to have fun. Therefore, as good behaviour comes from motivation, meeting needs and positive reinforcement, the teacher can prevent conflicts by organising groupwork which will satisfy the students' need for affiliation, to encourage them to help other students to satisfy their need for power and status, to offer choices to satisfy the need for freedom and to avoid boredom to elicit motivation and satisfy the need for pleasure (Glasser, 1985). As motivation has become a central problems of language education in this century, training in language teaching methods will facilitate teachers' implementation of this model during their early stages of functioning in the profession.

The last model to be presented here, *the Ginott Model,* does not belong to either of the two main groups of models. Although it is closer to the cognitive group, its emphasis on affective factors makes it difficult to be unequivocally categorised as representing the cognitive approach. *The Ginott Model* originates from its author's Theory of Congruent Communication (Ginott, 1971), according to which good interpersonal relations depend on direct and clear communication based on so called 'sane messages'. Out of the three types of messages, i.e. 'I-messages', 'You-messages' and 'It-messages', Ginott insists on using 'I-messages' which allow for appropriate expressions of anger and 'It-messages' which address the situation, but also on avoiding 'You-messages' as they label the student's character instead of referring to the instance of unacceptable behaviour, according to the motto 'labeling is disabling'. The model focuses on active listening (Bolstad & Hamblett, 2007) and appropriate feedback (Hattie & Timberley, 2007), as well as on the language used in classroom communication in order to show the teacher's acceptance of students' feelings and thus invite cooperation. Future language teachers are likely to find the reformulation of 'You-messages' easier, if offering feedback becomes integrated with developing of strategies for error correction (OECD, 2015).

5 Twenty-First Century Agreement on Conflict Prevention and Management

The twenty-first century search for a common denominator started with a comparison of the ten models presented above. Whatever the differences between particular models, both their authors and other researchers agree that the teacher's definition of accepted vs. unaccepted behaviour needs to be presented very precisely at the beginning of the course as a *sine qua non* for classroom discipline (Brophy, 2011; Charles, 2008; Haynes, 2012; Korb, 2012; Linsin, 2013). In all models teachers are

encouraged to specify types of behaviour which will be required and actions which will not be tolerated. They are also reminded that reasons for rules should be explained and consequences of unwanted behaviour clearly communicated. Expectations made explicit are unequivocally considered to be the core of proactive strategies valued higher than the reactive ones in managing behaviour, as the latter increase off-task student behaviour (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

There is also no controversy over the issue of reacting to unwanted behaviour. Focusing on misbehaviour and spending considerable time in attempts to correct it by reprimands and threats is viewed as having an opposite effect, since students get the attention they are seeking and ensure their rebellion to be noticed and publicized. Reprimands often exacerbate the problem as they are usually accompanied by nonverbal behaviour which pupils perceive as highly unpleasant, such as shortening physical distance, and invading a student's personal space. These additional factors may unnecessarily cause pupils' anger and result in new outbursts of uncontrollable behaviour. That is why all models value rewarding desired behaviour and regulating learners' conduct by bringing to their mind logical consequences of undesired behaviour rather than by threats and punishment (Cangelosi, 1993; Evertson & Weinstein, 2011; Laslett & Smith, 2002).

In contrast, minimizing the time spent on unwanted behaviour, offering praise, alleviating tension through humour and focusing on desired and appropriate behaviour may bring positive results by strengthening it, especially because praise carries information not only for the individual being praised, but also for other students about what is appreciated by the teacher. The function of praise is, therefore, not only motivational, but also informative, hence the need to acknowledge 'the ordinary' and emphasise its value. Ignoring undesirable behaviour rather than minimizing time spent on it is recommended when a given instance of off-task behaviour does not seriously threaten classroom discipline and, especially, when it results from attention-seeking. Attention, however, should be given often enough when the attention-seeking student is on-task (Edwards & Wiley, 2010). In teachers' guides the psychological process underlying the work toward satisfactory classroom discipline is often presented as 'gain attention, show approval, say why you are pleased, say what progress there has been' (Bull & Solity, 1992, pp. 118–119). Psychology, however, offers convincing arguments that reinforcement, here discussed as praise, should be intermittent or else it has an adverse effect on motivation (Deci et al., 2001).

All the recommendations formulated above as common denominators of the ten models are useful not only for future language teachers, but also for teachers of all subject areas. Positive suggestions specifically valuable for language teachers include providing a clear lesson structure with short, attractive and varied tasks, smooth transitions between activities to avoid long pauses, reducing competition, allowing sufficient time for learners to formulate their answers and providing opportunities for students' sense of success.

Maintaining students' concentration is agreed to be the most effective preventive strategy. It can be achieved by creating suspense instead of employing counterproductive techniques, such as using predictable patterns of classroom response to

teacher's questions or naming a student before asking a question. Positive forms of group dynamics also have an important preventive function. Cohesiveness and group productivity are crucial for harmonious collaboration during project work (Crum, 1997), while the ability of active listening (Bolstad & Hamblett, 2007) is particularly important during activities aimed at developing interactive skills. If group work during language lessons is task- and process-oriented, expressive and interactive, no space is left for disruptive behaviour (Gałajda, 2012).

A considerable degree of teachers' success in conflict management lies in the ability to develop awareness of their own emotions, especially those of anger and fear. Anger is more easily understandable vis-à-vis learners' disruptive behaviour in the classroom, yet, displaying emotions may encourage learners to further negative action and, what is more, increases the probability of swift, inadequate response on the part of the teacher. As impulsive responses are usually formulated in L1, they are not only educationally inappropriate, but also methodologically counterproductive. What is more, anger enhances the probability of conflict escalation and may be damaging to the teacher's own wellbeing when awareness of their inability to resolve the conflict gives rise to shame and guilt. Anxiety and fear of being unable to maintain discipline is often more difficult to interpret, as it may spring both from the lack of certainty as to possible conflict growth and also from the vision of publicly losing face. Teachers aware of the fact that negative affect narrows the field of perception and impairs the ability to act swiftly and efficiently as well as to take justified decisions, are more likely to self-regulate and control their emotions concentrating on the coherence of the language lesson scenario.

All this does not mean that every conflict can be prevented and every difficulty easily overcome. Conflict resolution is never fully guaranteed. Not infrequently escalations occur during teacher-student confrontations; in such cases seeking help from school authorities or referring students to psychological counsellors can prove unavoidable. Here again clear definitions of behaviour calling for these measures are needed.

6 Conclusions

Considering the fact that reactive strategies following student misbehaviour, such as reprimands, threats and punishment correlate highly with teacher stress (Cluniess-Ross et al., 2008) and that novice teachers point to discipline problems as the main reason for leaving the profession alongside excessive workload (Perryman & Clavert, 2019), training in proactive strategies seems indispensable to effective initial language teacher education. The knowledge of the type of conflicts the teacher is likely to face in the everyday professional context, and the skills to deal with conflict leading to its successful resolution should form an integral part of pre-service language teacher education.

As proactive strategies have been found to be more effective than the reactive ones, training student teachers should focus on ways of forestalling anticipated

conflicts and types of advance action. Conflict prevention depends on ensuring mutual respect, which can be ensured by a classroom contract and thus grounded in explicitly stated principles rather than dependent on fleeting emotions. Mutual respect calls for the careful use of language. If a controversy has already surfaced, the right tone of any conversation is necessary, especially at the very beginning of a difference of opinion. Attempts at blocking a conflict before it has time to develop seems to be the best option when it is still feasible. If not, active listening is a *sine qua non* for moving the controversy from a destructive to a constructive route as it enables a change of perspective which makes it possible to understand the other side's needs and aims (Bao et al., 2016; Deutsch, 2000).

The main question is how to fit the content into the existing language teacher education programmes. In most countries initial teacher training includes four basic curricular components, i.e.: (a) practical language teaching, (b) background studies (linguistics, literature, history, culture), (c) introduction to psychology and pedagogy and (d) language teaching skills. Logically, conflict prevention and management might be expected to form part of the third component, i.e., introduction to psychology and pedagogy. Yet, in most cases this component carries content related to developmental and learning psychology focused on cognitive processes (IQ, memory, etc.), as well as to general educational issues, such as educational objectives, curriculum construction, summative and formative assessment, the functioning of school administration and digital skills (Kelly et al., 2002, 2003; Krajka, 2012).

Both theoretical foundations of conflict management and practical training should be recommended as both contribute, alongside many other factors, to the formation of teacher identity (Werbińska, 2017). Psychological and pedagogical content of initial teacher training is unquestionably the area which allows for the inclusion of topics connected with conflict prevention and management. Psychology courses can include causes of conflicts and types of interaction as well as of the emotional load involved therein, while pedagogy can deal with classroom situations which are not specific for language teaching, but tend to take place across subject areas. Role-pays and simulations can be used as practical forms of training to prepare future teachers for difficult classroom cases.

There is no need, however, to restrict this content to psychology and pedagogy. Practical English classes invite solutions in the form of interactive and communicative activities which would prepare trainees for using classroom language appropriate for a variety of interaction types taking place when conflicts arise. The didactic component aimed at developing language teaching skills can, therefore, link topics connected with error prevention and therapy with the set of problems related to conflicts, as most problems during foreign language lessons result from assessment difficulties (Black, 2010; Laveault & Allal, 2016). Analyses of critical incidents and case studies seem to be more suitable for in-service teacher education programmes. Equipping trainees with strategies of conflict prevention, management and resolution is likely to contribute to their well-being in their future profession, helping them to remain in it and draw satisfaction from their contacts with students and colleagues.

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Reflexivity-Becoming: Lessons from Reflective Tasks

Dorota Werbińska

Abstract Since reflection is regarded as an important skill for language learners and language teachers, I have often used reflective tasks in my work as a higher education instructor and preservice language teacher educator. To my mind, reflection (and 'reflexivity' as its derivative) is fundamental to a person's becoming. In this paper, my five thematically similar reflection-based studies which employed examples of different reflection-generating tools, such as critical incidents, language learner autobiographies, written narratives, metaphors and duoethnographic dialogues are reconsidered with a view to analysing the data obtained from the participants' texts in the light of how they might bring about the professional becoming, called reflexivity-becoming, of the study participants – language learners' and teacher-researchers'. The article hopes to encourage other language educators to incorporate reflective tasks into their language education programmes.

Keywords Reflexivity · Becoming · Reflective data · Language learners · Preservice teachers

1 Introduction

This article grew out of my reflections on how best to honour professor Anna Michońska-Stadnik. Her professional career has been of invaluable service to the theory and practice of learning strategies and autonomy (Michońska-Stadnik, 1996, 2008a, b, 2009, 2011), as well as beliefs (Michońska-Stadnik, 2013), research methods (Wilczyńska & Michońska-Stadnik, 2010), and reflection (Michońska-Stadnik, 2019), most of the topics which are also dear to me. With that in mind, the present contribution, based on my five reflection-stimulating studies, deals with

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reflection (and 'reflexivity' as its derivative), which, to my mind, is at the heart of professional becoming in language learning and teaching. In this chapter, I use the concept of becoming with a view to considering what the data obtained from the studies can do. In other words, my preoccupation is with a shift from the perception of what the texts in the data are to what they can bring about for language learners' and teacher-researchers' professional becoming.

To achieve this goal, I begin with a short introduction to the notions of reflexivity and becoming, both of which provide the theoretical framework for this book chapter. Next, the main body of the text is presented. It consists of a summary of the reflection-based studies carried out in my five thematically similar projects, the purpose of each project, a description of the participants and contexts, and conclusions drawn at the time of conducting the studies. This is followed by a discussion on what possible lessons can be learned from the studies in terms of the learners' and teacher-researchers' becoming.

2 Theoretical Framework

The foundations for the reflective approach are attributed to the early work of Dewey (1933) followed by Schőn's (1983) seminal contribution, which was later 'translated' to TESOL by Wallace (1991), where the reflective model was contrasted with the craft model and the applied science model. Wallace (1991) also introduced Schőn's concepts of reflection-in-action which refers to reflection while teaching and reflection-on-action which indicates reflection that occurs after a teaching situation. The model later provided inspiration for the concepts of reflection-for-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991) conceptualised as a follow-up stage of reflective practice as well as reflection-before-action (Michońska-Stadnik, 2019) which, by focusing on students' attitudes, beliefs and personal theories, can successfully serve as a stimulation for their in-depth discussions.

The consolidation of the reflective approach is still ongoing with many contributions offered from different perspectives (e.g. Pollard, 2005; Sellars, 2017). Perhaps the most well-known name associated with reflection in TESOL is that of Thomas Farrell's (2007, 2013, 2015, 2018, 2021). Another important contribution is the comprehensive monograph on reflective practice in English language teaching by Mann and Walsh (2017). Within the Polish TESOL context, Gabryś-Barker's (2012) insightful monograph with 'reflectivity' in its title should not be overlooked, along with Baran-Łucarz's (2014) edited collection on reflection in Polish. In addition, a special issue devoted to reflection appeared in the Polish language journal *Neofilolog* edited by Czura (2014), not to mention innumerable journal articles and theses written on reflective practice dimensions in ELT.

Popular as the words 'reflection', 'reflective', 'reflectivity' are, it is also important to note that some explorers of reflection distinguish between 'reflectivity' and 'reflexivity'. Finlay (2003), for example, claims that reflexivity is a linear extension of reflection as if the two were on one continuum. Nevertheless, Edge's (2011)

twofold distinction seems to be more precise. According to Edge (2011), one meaning of reflection encompasses all kinds of issues, including reflexivity. Reflexivity is, in this sense, only consciously accessible by reflection, whereas his other meaning of reflexivity is more interactively-oriented. While reflection assumes in it the continuing identity of the same individual doing the reflecting, reflexivity contests that continuity, focusing on the change-effect of reflection on the person involved and originating from what they have done to themselves (p. 38).

To better grasp the nuances of reflexivity, Edge (2011) made a distinction between its different dimensions – linguistic, psychological, philosophical, and ecological– and also suggested two pairs of useful binary constructs: prospective/retrospective reflexivity and vertical/horizontal reflexivity. The first pair refers to the effect of the person on the work (*prospective reflexivity*) and the effect of the work on the person (*retrospective reflexivity*) (p. 38), terms which reflect Dewey's *trying* dimension of experience and his *undergoing* its effects (p. 47). The second pair of concepts relates to experimenting with a theory (*vertical reflexivity*), for example implementing the contributions of positive psychology into the language classroom, to provide an example from ELT, or copying over its application to a related area of work (*horizontal reflexivity*) (p. 75), for example implementing the principles of well-being in one's life.

For the sake of clarity, a distinction between reflection and reflexivity can be introduced where reflection encompasses the knowledge of the subject matter, and the exchange of ideas, concepts, diverse perspectives, understandings, interpretations, responses and reactions, meaning making as well as 'languaging'. In other words, it is reflecting on how experiences are expressed and represented, and how perspectives are embedded in the linguistic choices that are made. By contrast, reflexivity is reflection on self and self in relation to others, consideration of one's own situatedness, positionings, assumptions, as well as developing consciousness as communicators and meaning makers. In the retrospection on the projects quoted in the text, this distinction, however, is not strictly followed.

Reflexivity can be related to a second important construct here, namely becoming. The word 'becoming' features in the titles of several full-length books in teacher education literature (e.g. Clarke et al., 2010; Doecke et al., 2014; Green, 2011), journal articles (Arshavskaya, 2017; Lee, 2013; Lee & Schallert, 2016; Mairitsch et al., 2021; Wolf et al., 2021), book chapters (e.g. Werbińska, 2021), but perhaps the greatest gift offered on this topic to the TESOL profession is, again, Julian Edge's (2011) contribution. Although he never explicitly refers to the concepts fundamental to Deleuze's philosophy of becoming, the term 'becoming' appears in the titles of five chapters of Edge's (2011) book dealing with becoming methodological, becoming technical, becoming theoretical, becoming intellectual, and becoming pragmatic, all linked to the concept of reflexivity.

Recently, 'becoming' has mostly been discussed with regard to its poststructuralist and non-representational understanding advanced by Deleuze, the philosopher of becoming *par excellence*, as, for example, reflected in the works by Orland-Barak (2016). One aspect that distinguishes Deleuze's philosophy of becoming is what he calls the double nature of becoming which splits the present into two simultaneous

streams of the in-itself past and the not-yet of the future (Bankston, 2017, p. 3). To express different shades of a single concept of becoming, Deleuze uses the language of generality and particularity, which is reflected in the countable (becomings, a becoming) or in terms of a single, absolute process (becoming) (Bankston, 2017, p. 8). These two expressions of becoming do not mean the same, as the concept of fragmentary and relative features of becomings stands for sensory becoming and pertains to expression in matter, whereas conceptual becoming is absolute becoming and pertains to events in ideation. Sensory becomings can be traced in Bergson's inspirations, whereas absolute becoming are to be found in Nietzsche's inspirations. For Deleuze, both of these apparently incompatible ontologies coalesce in a third term, the becoming of sensation which prevents the concept of becoming from lapsing into dualism (Bankston, 2017, p. 8).

Both reflexivity and becoming provide a framework for the present text. In the text, I call reflexivity and becoming *reflexivity-becoming*. I understand this concept as a *developmental process which can be triggered by the data in reflection-based and context-dependent tasks which provide new learning opportunities*. Reflection in all the studies that follow was both my pedagogical practice in my role as a teacher trainer and a tool for data collection when I played the role of a teacher-researcher.

3 Five Reflection-Based Studies

The studies selected for discussion in this book are all closely related. For more than a decade I have been involved in various qualitative research projects on L2 teacher and learner identity in which I collected data from my students in the form of course assignments. The participants of the studies were students of English as a major or minor subject. In the studies in which English was the participants' major subject, the participants were preservice teachers or novice teachers.

All five studies, presented chronologically here, rely on participant reflection. Each of them uses a different method, which at the same time stands here for a data elicitation technique: a narrative inquiry, critical incidents, metaphor processing, and duoethnography. They are all situated in the ecological paradigm (Priestly et al., 2016), as the data refer to three temporal dimensions: the influences from the past, the present orientation, and the engagement with the future, although different emphasis is given to each of the dimensions in particular studies. The participants' responses derive from some of their past achievements and understandings. By drawing on past experiences, they can usually better clarify their future goals, consider possible constraints and more realistically imagine their future action. At the same time, everything takes place in the present, in the face of potential threats and dilemmas, including the participants' perceptions of the risk of sharing their opinions in a given assignment. This understanding of context, augmented by the fact that the data collection took place during a scheduled university program, enhances the ecological validity of all five projects.

3.1 Study 1: Critical Incidents

Study 1 (Werbińska, 2009) was conducted as part of the research study on 244 novice English teachers who were also at that time my BA or MA students. All the participants worked in different schools, both primary and secondary, including junior high schools, which existed in Poland at the time of the study. Half of them simultaneously worked in the private sector, either offering private lessons or working in language schools. In the study, I was interested in finding out what ethical dilemmas the beginning English teachers encountered, whether there were problems common to a number of teachers, and what the teachers' opinions about these incidents were.

The teachers were asked to write about two problems they had encountered during their teaching practice that could be considered ethical. It was intended that these problems should relate to vividly remembered situations in which the novice teachers were uncertain about what they should do. The outcome of the task conducted in the years 2005–2007 was research material consisting of 429 examples of teachers' ethical problems. The memorable episodes reported by the respondents did not lie within the teachers' duties and obligations towards the school as stipulated by the formal regulations, for example in the Teacher Charter.

The problems generated were divided into six thematic categories. These referred to: English teachers' dilemmas related to teaching English as a subject (n = 86), teachers' relationships with students in the classroom (n = 155) and outside of the classroom (n = 50), teachers' relations with other people employed at school, such as those between teachers and their superiors (n = 35), teachers and their colleagues (n = 33), teachers and parents (n = 39), and finally, teachers' dilemmas concerning the contemporary school (n = 31).

In summary, Study 1 carried out over a decade ago provides evidence that beginning English teachers face numerous ethical situations, or critical episodes, which predominantly involve relationships with students which are difficult to predict in advance. The final decisions that the teachers made while encountering the problems were frequently successful solutions, yet there were also incidents in which the participants' attempts at solving their problem proved futile.

3.2 Study 2: Autobiography

Study 2 (Werbińska, 2010) was inspired by the ever-increasing interest in people's learning foreign languages, especially English, in Poland in the first decade of the new millennium. In the study, I attempted to identify different models of linguistic biographies produced by language learners. By obtaining material in the form of biographies centred around the fundamental theme of learning a foreign language, it was hoped that a significant amount of authentic information about the language learner could be obtained, including the participants' previous experiences of

learning a foreign language, and their possible plans for the future, as well as showing the person-in-context (Ushioda, 2009), which offers the possibility of a deeper interpretation of language learners' biographies.

I asked the students I was teaching at that time to take part in the project. The students aged 20–50, pursued different modes of study (full-time and part-time), and represented three different fields of study, and the levels of language advancement. As a result, I obtained language learners' autobiographies from students of English Studies at upper-intermediate and advanced level (n = 168), students of Early Childhood Education with EFL at intermediate level (n = 90) and from students of Management at elementary level (n = 48). All the students participating in the project received the following topic: '*My journey with a foreign language' – describe your story of learning foreign languages.* There was no word limit for the assignment and students had from 2 to 3 months to complete their work. I hoped to extract the main narratives and the participants' systems of meanings, to gain access to facts and themes important to the students, as well as to define the relations in and between the obtained data. I was interested in the participants' personal theories, their paths to language development, and thereby, in establishing their biographical affordances and constraints that influence success or failure in their English language learning.

In my analysis of the findings, I relied on the creation of biographic networks which were arranged chronologically (as a vertical set of events concerning learning English) or conceptually (as a horizontal set of factors influencing success and failure in English language learning). The main contribution of Study 2 was my identification of three features, models, or preliminary hypotheses for each of the investigated groups of students which I labelled as engagement, postponement and withdrawal.

The engagement model was typical of English Studies students who seemed to have already taken an interest in learning languages in their early years. In the primary school they attended private lessons, whereas in the secondary school they often took part in courses with a view to obtaining a language proficiency certificate. Learning English was pleasant for them and they were convinced of their language learning giftedness. They planned to combine their future lives with English, even if they had previously graduated from other fields of study.

The postponement model was more characteristic of students of Early Education with EFL. Although EFL was part of their study curriculum, thus providing them with formal qualifications to teach, most of them felt uncertain about their roles as English teachers. They seemed motivated but they were more aware of their language inadequacies, in comparison with the students of English Studies. Some of them, treating the possibility of English teaching with due responsibility, seriousness and care, tended to postpone the decision to teach English classes until they felt more confident in English. In contrast to the students of English Studies, English had never been the most important school subject for them. Interestingly, their biographies presented more personal theories on the nature of teaching, more reflection on the negative influence of the frequent rotation of language teachers at that time, the importance of moral issues in teaching and the relevance of children's well-being.

The withdrawal model was most common among my Management students. For many of them, it was their first encounter with the 'serious' study of English, as in the previous stages of their education they had not enjoyed learning foreign languages. A lot of them associated learning English with anxiety, although they did perceive the practical benefits that a knowledge of English could bring (e.g. communicating in English while travelling, understanding computer software instructions, etc.). They tended to claim that once an opportunity presented itself, they would continue learning English. In most cases, however, such affirmations were empty promises.

3.3 Study 3: Written Narratives

Study 3 (Werbińska, 2011a) was similar to Study 1 and Study 2. It was like Study 1 in the sense that it also included teachers (n = 64), most of whom, alongside studying to become English teachers, had recently completed their first year of work. Using Study 3 was also similar to Study 2 because it used the narrative inquiry approach; though this time not a linguistic biography but an imposed theme to reflect upon.

What interested me in this study was the participants' transformation period from being a student to being a teacher, and the extent to which novice teachers give up their previous identities and assume new identities. In particular, I was intrigued about what identities (called subjectivities in the study) the novice teachers were contributing to the new situation, what subjectivities they were negotiating, what new subjectivities they were acquiring, which of their old subjectivities they were maintaining and which they were abandoning.

I asked the teachers who were then my MA programme students to describe their first year of working as a school English teacher. I adopted written narrative inquiry as I strongly believed that such a tool would best accommodate the school's contextuality and idiosyncrasy. I also hoped that such a reflection-based assignment could encourage the participants to talk about their successes and failures and, therefore, to speak with their 'authentic' voices.

Although I obtained many examples offering interesting insights into the research questions on novice teacher identities, the overall finding was that the teachers in the induction year fluctuate between their different subjectivities (Who to side with? Which strategy to adopt?), experience dilemmas concerning their community of practice (Do other teachers in this school have the same problem?) or concerning autonomy in its traditional understanding (Am I allowed to do this? Will my superiors or colleagues still accept me if I disagree?) before they finally find their informed professional style. In a word, I found confirmation for the poststructuralist researchers' claims that novice teacher identities, as related to their emotions, beliefs and experiences, are dynamic, changeable, and all the time shifting between being an English language teaching learner and being an English language teacher. The other issues that emerged from the participants' recollections was the

discrepancy between the university culture and the school culture, the participants' reported behaviour and their actual practice, the nature of the relationships between novice teachers and their colleagues, the poor effect of the mentoring system, and some teachers' resistance to change.

3.4 Study 4: Metaphors

Study 4 (Werbińska, 2011b) was a metaphor-based research project carried out at a private higher school of management. The participants (n = 184) were students in their late 20 s learning foreign languages as a course subject: 75 students studying English, 64 studying German and 45 studying Russian. All the groups had obligatory language lessons for five terms, with 24 lessons in each and the classes took place every 2 or 3 weeks on average and lasted for three or four 45-min periods.

Study 4, as it is referred to in this text, focused only on speaking skills in the context of the language the students were learning. In addition, I was interested in investigating possible differences in the participants' views, as I expected that different views would emerge with regard to speaking each of the three languages. To achieve this aim, all the participants were asked to complete the following sentence: "Speaking English (German, Russian) is like …". I divided the accumulated data into three groups, according to the languages spoken by the participants (English, German, Russian), looked for key words, categorised the obtained metaphors into three semantically similar groups representing 'main' metaphors in the data, and, finally, considered the implications (*entailments*) of the main metaphors by examining to what extent they were expressed in the data. As a result, I obtained 184 examples of metaphors presenting how students understand speaking in a foreign language (75 relating to the understanding of speaking English, 64 German and 45 Russian).

I analysed the results in terms of concept, grammar and discourse. Conceptually, speaking English was associated with a difficult challenge, which was confirmed by the use of such metaphors as "walking along a bumpy road", "working in a mine", "balancing on a line" but also pleasure indicated by such metaphors as "music, swimming and ripple", "pleasant memory", "eating chocolate ice cream", "buying sweets – pleasant and bringing joy", a natural thing ("natural conversation in Polish", "speaking Polish"), but there were also students for whom speaking English, as reflected in their accounts, touched upon the issue of identity change, such as "being part of England", "becoming a native English person", "trying to be someone different", or "walking one step further in the contemporary world".

Speaking German was also associated with difficulty but the metaphors the students adopted were even more picturesque than those used by the students learning English, for example "breaking the language", "crossing the desert", "calling for help", "writing in Chinese". Students also talked about the shrill sound of German speaking ("a hailstorm", "a barking dog", "noise in the city", "heavy metal songs", "expressing emotions with the help of your jaws") which suggested dynamism and,

in contrast to these, the effect of slowness produced on the students, when they compared their speaking German to "moving like a snail on the road" or "thinking about an answer". Other associations of speaking German concerned the necessity of regularity in the process of language learning: "running – the more training, the fewer problems", "constant learning of new words"; learning by heart: "reciting poems"; pleasure: "breaking a tongue, but pleasant", "talking to your best friend"; something incomprehensible: "baby's babbling", "muttering something under your breath", "the sound of people under the influence of alcohol", "gibberish"; the pace of the words uttered: "sport for the tongue when you pronounce very complicated words", "making poems at a very fast pace". There were also references to a person's identity change in such examples as "changing into another person" or "getting to know a different culture".

The vast majority of the students of Russian provided many positive associations. Speaking Russian meant to them listening to a nice sound: "poetry", "singing", "a nice melody", "listening to your favourite music"; pleasure: "good fun", "a walk", "drifting on the calm sea", "savouring a delicious dish", "careless playing with a dog"; ease: "bread and butter", "almost speaking Polish". The students also mentioned the communicative aspect linking speaking with communication, such as "approaching people other than Poles", "a need to communicate", as well as the retrospective element – "returning to the times of primary and secondary school", "meeting after many years", "bringing back memories of your youth".

In summary, Study 4 indicated that most speaking metaphors are used to articulate students' difficulties and tensions, that the languages under discussion could be slightly differently perceived by the learners, and that a large number of the metaphors expressed other associations of speaking skills than communicating with other people.

3.5 Study 5: Duoethnography

Study 5 (Werbińska, 2021) was longitudinal in the sense that it embraced one academic year. It was piloted on different student cohorts (Werbińska, 2018), and then carried out on BA teacher-candidates (n = 20, ten dyads). The purpose of the study was to find out how the participants negotiated and shaped their identities in terms of language learning and teaching experiences – who they were at the moment of data collection and who they were (becoming) as future professionals. Although the study reported here had not originally intended to focus on positive psychology, aspects related to positive psychology were one of its serendipitous insights. As a result, attention was narrowed down to the exploration of the kind of positive psychology-related teacher identities the participants were developing and might develop in the future.

The study comprised of three stages. In the first stage, for which the time limit was 1 month, the students were introduced to duoethnography, its genealogy and the benefits of its use. Each student was to find a person in the group, who was

different from them in a significant way and conduct an interesting conversation with them, talking to that person about their beliefs on language learning and teaching, recording the conversation and handing in the written transcription of the talk and the recorded text. The second stage was initiated with my distribution of the students' transcripts and asking the participants to read the dialogues carefully. On the basis of the meanings produced by their own words, they wrote a one-page interpretation of what kind of teacher they might become, supporting their claims with examples from what they said in the dialogues. Once this was completed, they were to read the original transcripts again, but now focusing on their partners' words. As before, they produced a one-page interpretation of what kind of teacher their conversation partner might become, again supporting their opinions with examples from the conversation. Finally, they compared both interpretations and discussed the similarities and differences. The last stage of the project was focused on gaining feedback about the effectiveness of the study and the lessons learnt. With the reference to the purpose of the study, stage one of the project related to the emergence of their teacher identities at that present moment (who they were), whereas stage two was used to confirm and verify the data from stage one (who they might become?).

Using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure, made up of the dimensions: interaction, continuity, and situation, ten themes emerged from the students' discussions in stage one of the project. They included personal memories of language teachers, motivation issues, positive perception of the teaching profession, positive memories of school placement, learning English as passion, teaching/learning skills and systems, the English classroom, private tutoring, participants' meaningful decisions and the value of education and English learning, which comprised at least one of the three positive psychology concerns: positive emotions, positive individual traits and positive social institutions. Drawing on Gee's (2005) framework and the idea of Discourses which are constantly being reconstructed, I also identified seven discourses evident in the participants' self and their partner's analysis accounts to answer the question of who they might become with reference to Seligman's (2011) PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) model. These included: the teaching vision discourse (positive emotions, engagement, meaning), the teacher as an authority discourse (positive emotions, accomplishment), the English as a passion discourse (positive emotions), the teacher becoming discourse (engagement), the helping others discourse (relationships), the autonomy discourse (meaning), and the meaningfulness discourse (meaning).

In summary, Study 5 demonstrates that who the teacher is (becoming) and who they might become begins at the micro level with cognitive processes within an individual person and their personality traits. It is further shaped by communities of practice at the meso level which offer or limit access to particular experiences, and is still further affected by the wider social context at the macro level with its orientations towards teacher belief systems and values.

4 Discussion

The studies summarized above were based on five reflection-generating assignments that employed four qualitative research methods: narrative inquiry, critical incidents, metaphor processing, and duoethnography. I will restrain from discussing the benefits of each of these research tools separately, as they are accessible in many sources, including full-length monographs devoted to them (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2013; Barnard & Burns, 2012; Cameron & Low, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Farrell & Baecher, 2017; Lowe & Lawrence, 2020). Rather, in the following, I focus on the potential of the data generated from these reflection-based assignments for tracing the study participants' 'reflexivity-becoming'.

The studies selected for the discussion were not equally powerful in stimulating reflection in the sense of Deleuze's sensory becoming. Yet, in all of them, be it critical events, or looking for metaphors, or narrative accounts, or linguistic autobiographies, not to mention duoethnographies, *emotions* triggered by language learning and teaching processes were present. Study 1 and Study 2 were illustrative of how novice teachers dealt with their emotions and, as revealed in the studies, negative and tension-producing emotions were more apparent than positive and satisfying emotions. The metaphor-based Study 3 showed the relationships with the language that the students were learning, in which the shrill sounds of German ("a barking dog", "heavy metal songs") and canorous sounds of Russian ("a nice melody", "listening to your favourite music") were particularly marked. Study 4 enabled participants to take a global look of their lives and the place of languages in them, whereas Study 5 provoked them to reconsider their views on a topic as a result of the resonances or new understandings derived from juxtaposing meanings in joint discussions. It could be said that the last two studies were more conceptual and heuristic; yet, the 'heureses' that emerged from the data also derived from the participants' experiences of emotions in the past (Deleuze's sensory dimension of becoming) and attempts at rationalizing them in dialogues (Deleuze's conceptual dimension of becoming).

All the emergent emotions, such as experiencing pleasure, anxiety, shame, guilt, etc. are relevant to the context of ELT, as they all surfaced from the studies. For teacher-researchers they are invaluable as they provide information on language learners' affective states. In short assignments, like the metaphor study, participants come up with their immediate implicit associations and interpretations, but if asked to focus explicitly on them again, especially with their fellow students and teachers (for example, the second stage of the duoethnographic study), there is potential for new meanings and reinterpretations, and deeper reflection not on what emotions are but what they do to people, or what powers lie behind them. As I argued elsewhere (Werbińska, 2017), the encounter of ruptures, tensions (called by me "discontinuities") and explicit reflection on them may in the long run result in better understandings of what people are doing and this has the power to change who they are and how they feel and think. All in all, reflection-based studies provide rich opportunities for learning about learners' emotions, which is invaluable at every educational stage, but especially important for newly-qualified teachers' professional becoming.

Aside from emotions, I also stress in these studies the *affordances* that can be encountered in the data from reflection-based studies. Thanks to investment in reflection on a selected area of interest, new ideas may arise, which are likely to create more powerful images if consolidated by discussions with others. Study 4 was especially important as it revealed that in most of the autobiographical narratives a significant number of non-specialist EFL students postponed or withdrew from learning English, since they may never have encountered any affordances on their learning paths. Writing a linguistic biography and discussing it with others may completely transform a person into an individual who has considered different aspects of language learning and who therefore might become someone different in the future. This is reflexivity-becoming which may result in participants' experiencing transformations in thinking and writing about themselves.

By providing encounters with affordances, reflective tasks enable the learners to consider alternative ways of thinking about reality that would not be possible were it not for completing a particular task and approaching it with the reflection needed for its realisation. Here, the implications are paramount – the need to direct learners' attention to their lived experience, stimulating their forward thinking, creating what-if events in which learners/study participants adopt new language learner subjectivities (Study 2) and, possibly, bringing these subjectivities to life. This could open the way for future reflexivity-becoming, as having encountered an affordance in the form of a task, analogous to Edge's (2011) retrospective reflexivity, and using it successfully, participants could be ready to notice other affordances and, in turn, be open for immanent encounters that yield indeterminate future becomings. In a way, the reflection-based assignments empower those who are involved in them, so that they can be used as pedagogies in the act (Ravindran & Ilieva, 2021).

As reflection-based assignments require authentic engagement from participants if their responses are to represent serious data, they serendipitously create valuable *relational encounters*. Such (relational) encounters may originate between a participant and a classmate partner with whom they discuss the data (Study 5), with the reader of their narratives or ideas (instructors, other fellow students), or even with themselves at a particular time and place (reading the same data from a reflection-based study after a lapse of time). To achieve this, it would be advisable for teacher-researchers to conduct their research not 'on' their participants but 'with' them and 'for' them, never criticising what participants disclose but always supporting and inspiring them. In this way, teacher-researchers will be able to highlight in their data not what participants are or what they should be, but what potential they have in order to become. If this happens, teacher-researchers may gain the participants' trust and respect. Then, the study participants are more likely to become more receptive to language learning and learning teaching while the teacher-researchers, in turn, can become more open to gaining invaluable knowledge about the intricacies of language learning and learning teaching from them. It is worth stressing once again that what is important here is not the literal meaning of the data but the processes – the improvement of human relations – that they can foster.

The participants' data can also be invaluable for the development of reflexivity-becoming in teacher-researchers as they can be regarded as affordances (van Lier, 1996) providing individual teacher-researchers' with learning opportunities. They can be seen in relation to the researchers' own experiences, their deliberations about their teaching, and their learning of the profession, or their ruminations about the effects of a reflection-generating task on the learners' responses. Much of the information gained in the data may confirm or disconfirm instructors' prior impressions about their students, the (in)congruity of their teaching practice with their students' future goals or current understandings. These can be reconsidered and further explored, providing teacher-researchers with a number of open endings and inspiring them to detect their "final vocabulary", which Edge (2011), conceptualised as the key to who a person is in the sense of central, pivotal, and indicative lenses for their perceptions and bases for their actions (p. 9). Such encounters with the data, being attentional rather than intentional to them, may allow for being astonished by the world a study participant reveals (which was my case in Study 3 when I learnt that a well-known principal in one of the best schools in town uses sophisticated workplace mobbing targeted at novice teachers). Reading the data as if walking with no goal or waiting for something that is not yet given, may bring about an epistemological reorientation.

The teacher-researcher's attitude is important here in the sense that reflection-based tasks should not be assigned just for the sake of giving a task. Instructors should not be afraid to hear the participants' voices and meet their worlds and words, but treat these as invitations, questionings, responses, not mere representations. What is important is what is hidden behind the words, how the meaning was produced, what questions it would be appropriate to ask, rather than 'What does it mean?'. Changing the question into 'How does it mean?' could stimulate reflexivity-becoming that can only be attained through the teacher-researcher's rapt attention to the participants' doings, practices, and performances in the data. It is in this way that novel ways are generated, new stories created, intellectual fascinations stimulated – all leading up to a creative tension with what was once raw, polyvocal, different, and sometimes even criticised, to become calm, unified, harmonious and, above all, recognizable through the research on reflection.

5 Implications

I hope that this text may encourage other language teacher educators to introduce reflection-generating tasks in their language classrooms and, thereby, gain insight into what can be achieved by doing so. The prerequisite on their part is, yet, to be sensitive, alert, and read or listen to the texts between and beyond the lines provided by the students. Then, students' emotions are visible, affordances and constraints accompanying their learning emerge, the task data provide information for developing better rapport with learners, and teacher educators may keep abreast of the developmental process of their students' learning. As a result, the focus is placed on the nuances of the learning process rather than the end product.

6 Conclusion

This text was based on my five reflection-generating studies carried out over the last decade. I tried to illustrate what the data from the reflection-based studies contribute to the study participants and teacher-researchers apart from what they represent at face value. The study resulted in the identification of reflexivity-becoming, a concept inspired by my reading of literature, especially in the works by Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004) and Edge (2011). It transpires that reflection-driven study data can serve as a dynamic force. Open-ended, indefinite, unpredictable, they embrace knowledge that is not yet known either to the recipient or the producer. The data from reflection assignments create direct access to people's emotions and all that can be gained from this, providing the potential for future affordances and positive relational encounters. By making students reflexive and bringing their beliefs into conscious consideration, teacher-researchers also learn as they negotiate with themselves. Students' constructions of knowledge may introduce modifications in teaching epistemological paradigms and may even help teacher-researchers explore new territories and possibilities connected with the process of language learning and teaching.

All in all, it can be said that although reflection-generating studies are not without shortcomings (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p. 15), the data that they produce can serve as powerful artefacts that mediate both language learners' and teacher-researchers' professional becoming.

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Verbal and Nonverbal Teacher Affectivity in an EFL Classroom: A Pre-service Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract What teachers do and how they do it – what language choices they make and what non-verbal signals they send to their students – all constitute an affective dimension of a FL teacher's discourse and has a significant impact on effective interaction, group dynamics and, as a result, student language achievement and well-being. This article focuses on the specificity of foreign language (FL) teacher talk (TT) as an expression of his/her emotionality and on the impact it has on the students. It consists of three parts. Firstly, it expresses the view on the importance of affectivity in the FL classroom on the basis of a continuously growing body of research. The emphasis is on verbal and nonverbal aspects of teachers' emotionality as expressed in their classroom talk. The second part of the text reports on a small-scale empirical study of pre-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and their perception of how they actually express affectivity in teacher talk on the level of verbosity (their choice of language) as well as their nonverbal behaviour. Preliminary observations signal that this group of pre-service teachers still involved in their professional training is largely unaware of how to use affectivity as a tool in successful teaching and communication in the FL classroom. The study results point out that an active engagement of the trainees in self-awareness and self-assessment by means of action research projects is an important element in FL teacher education.

Keywords EFL trainees · Teacher talk · Verbal indictors · Nonverbal indicators · Awareness

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1 Introduction

The importance of emotions in our functioning in every domain of life, in personal, social and professional spheres of life, is demonstrated in our behaviour and in the way we assess situations and react to them. It is the result of brain activation that is based on intricate interaction between cognitive and affective processing and the primary activation of the affective brain (amygdala) to filter the way we think (Schumann, 1999). We express our emotions verbally and non-verbally. The language choices we make in particular situations give evidence of how we feel at a given moment and are accompanied by non-verbal signals, for example gestures, body language or eye contact. Not only daily interaction observations but also research demonstrate that the nonverbal dimension of communication plays a dominant role in being able to communicate to and understand others in a variety of contexts of interaction (Mast, 2007; Phutela, 2015; Zeki, 2009).

This article focuses on the affective dimension of teacher discourse expressed by teacher talk (TT) in an EFL classroom in communicating and interacting with learners. It embraces both verbal and nonverbal aspects of TT. It compares what we actually know about FL teacher discourse on the basis of extensive research in this area and confronts it with the empirical data collected from pre-service EFL teachers on the awareness of their TT emotionality. The findings of the study help formulate certain implications for teacher training in respect of teacher emotionality, an important aspect contributing to their success as teachers and also to their wellbeing as humans.

As stated earlier, the study reported here is part of a teacher training programme, which embraces the idea that developing teacher reflectivity at any stage of teachers' professional development is a necessary condition for teacher success. Introducing reflection-on-action in the form of small-scale action research projects, we as trainers can focus on various areas of trainees' experiences in their own classrooms. Additionally, the dissemination of the results gathered becomes an important instrument in future (FL) teacher professional development.

2 Teacher Talk as Classroom Discourse: Functions and Characteristics

Classroom discourse on the part of the teacher is first of all expressed by his/her talk. In a foreign language class, teacher talk is usually monitored and planned, and it demonstrates the teacher's approach to teaching (Gabryś-Barker, 2018). In the teacher-centred class, the dominance of TT (versus learner talk) will be visible not only on the level of language presentation, but also classroom management, and as a consequence of teacher responsibility for all that happens in the classroom. On the other hand, in the learner-centred class, where some of the responsibility is passed on to the learners, the teacher will try to limit his/her talk to elicit language from the learners, i.e. learner talk (LT). Thus, the proportion between TT and LT will be the

opposite of what can be observed in the teacher-centred approach. Irrespective of what the teacher's approach is, as mentioned earlier, TT is seen not only as a planned and monitored process at different stages of the lesson (on-tasks activities), but it also embraces spontaneous talk (off-task communication). In each case, TT is an important verbal and nonverbal tool allowing for a (hopefully) smooth communication and interaction during a FL lesson to reach the objectives of a lesson and thus, contributing to its effectiveness. In classroom discourse, various factors play a role as Tsui (2008) puts it

> The linguistic and non-linguistic elements constitute the observable dimension of classroom discourse. Studies of classroom discourse have explored factors which play a critical role in shaping classroom discourse. These factors pertain to the sociocultural contexts in which the discourse is generated, including the physical environment, the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of participants, as well as the psychological dimensions such as their perceptions, emotions, beliefs and orientations. They constitute the unobservable dimension of classroom discourse (p. 261)

Research on classroom discourse offers a variety of classifications of classroom talk. One of them presented by Watkinson (2006) divides classroom talk into:

- cognitive talk, which focuses on the subject taught (here: a FL),
- managerial talk, which is responsible for various organizational aspects of a lesson and for example, controlling and reacting to classroom behaviour,
- counseling talk, in which a teacher responds to pupils´ needs and feelings, giving appropriate feedback,
- expressive talk, which demonstrates feelings and emotions in response to a person or a situation.

Table 1 presents a more detailed discussion of another classification of TT (for an even more detailed discussion of these types of TT, see the *Foreign Language Teacher Talk Survey* in Warford and Rose, 2011) (Table 1).

Foreign language TT is one of the important sources of input for learners, and exposure to it during a lesson may create a semi-authentic situation of communication in a given language. It is not only a model of new language being introduced but also a tool of communication and interaction for both task and off-task procedures during the lesson. In such a way it can be compared to foreigner talk. In fact, definitions of the construct and research on TT are very much based on foreigner talk studies. Both of them present a modified version of authentic language, adapted to a given interlocutor (a learner – his or her level and characteristics) and the context (classroom or beyond, type of task/activity, objectives etc.). The modifications in TT (like in foreigner talk) mean that on the one hand the language learners are exposed to may be far from authentic, but on the other, the modifications assure the comprehensibility of the message. According to one of the first studies of TT (Osborne, 1999), foreign language TT embraces phonological, lexical, syntactic and discourse modifications. Phonological modifications are observed in the:

- exaggerated articulation of words and phrases, even emphatic at points
- extended pauses in speech to allow the learner to process the message heard
- slower than natural rate of speech

Table 1 Classification of TT (Gabryś-Barker, 2018, p. 303, based on Warford & Rose, 2011)

Main aspects/categories of TT	Specific categories	Role
Procedural	Taking attendance, announcements, giving directions to an activity, introducing a topic, goals, giving agenda for a lesson, etc.	Organizer
Instructional (discourse related to lesson content)	Introducing new language, reviewing, modeling, drills, activities and exercises, etc.	Knowledge giver/ source of input
Offering and soliciting feedback (discourse related to progress, repair sequences/ corrections)	Explicit and implicit corrections, praising, comprehension check, giving feedback, etc.	Assessor/corrector/ evaluator
Spontaneous L2/FL talk (interaction on and off task)	Eliciting student talk, facilitating communication, expressing humour/ empathy/sympathy, etc.	Facilitator/ communicator/ interlocutor
Classroom management/ maintaining discipline	Reminding the rules of behaviour, encouraging engagement in tasks, discouraging misbehaviour, etc.	Manager/facilitator

- atypical pronunciation with less reduction of vowels and consonants clusters
- a louder delivery
- use of a more standard pronunciation, avoiding dialectal forms

On the level of lexical modifications of TT the following ones are observed:

- more basic vocabulary, adjusted to the level of learners
- focusing more on formal and informal lexis than colloquialisms
- fewer indefinite pronouns
- neutral and unmarked style

Syntactic modifications in TT are expressed by the use of simplified structures in term of:

- avoidance of subordinate clauses
- shorter clauses (fewer words in a clause)
- shorter sentences
- predominance in the use of simple present tense
- use of fully grammatically correct sentences

There are also significant discourse modifications introduced in TT and expressed as:

- use of first person references
- simplified language functions
- teacher-initiated talk (though the trend is to do otherwise now)
- using conversational frames and scripts/schemata
- implementation of self-repetitions
- repetitiveness (more verbalization)

Some of these modifications require more affective expression on the part of the teacher to have a greater impact on learners, for example phonological modifications, among others.

Additionally, it is assumed that to be more easily understood, a FL teacher can modify his/her talk by more affective language use, which is mostly visible at its phonological level (e.g., the use of emphasis). Also, the nonverbal aspect of TT needs to be modified, especially that this dimension of interaction is culture-sensitive. Thus, by appropriate use of nonverbal signals, a FL teacher makes learners aware of how to carry out a successful communication act in a given FL, especially in the target language context. Unfortunately, this is an often neglected aspect of classroom discourse (more on non-verbality in TT later in the text).

3 Expression of Affectivity in Teacher Talk

3.1 Language Is Us

Metzger (2007) believes that the language we use, of which we are not always fully aware, can reveal who we are. Language choices in communication express not only our educational background, but also who we are as people, our attitudes and emotions. This verbality is accompanied by a whole array of nonverbal communication signals. Also in the classroom context, the (FL) teacher uses language not only to present the material, monitor the lesson and follow all the necessary procedures in the classroom, but he/she also expresses much more: some aspects of his/her personality, the attitude to the subject taught and to the learners, often accompanied by bursts of affective reactions to the situation. Teacher language is believed to affect learners: "Your choice of words and your language selections are critical to the self-esteem, the academic success, and the healthy mental and emotional development of your students" (Arnold-Morgan & Fonseca-Mora, 2007, p. 1).

Classroom discourse, which teacher talk is a part of, embraces all the teachers' different functions and responsibilities at different stages of a lesson, as well as more generally, in creating positivity and motivating learners. The latter functions are affective in nature and are observable in verbal and nonverbal aspects of teacher talk.

3.2 Verbal Affectivity in Teacher Talk

Empirical data on teacher classroom behavior demonstrate that out of the 60 different behaviour patterns of teachers, four major categories were identified by Arnold-Morgan and Fonseca-Mora (2007) as marked affectively, both in the positive and negative sense (Table 2).

Table 2 Affective aspects of teacher classroom behaviour – categories (Gabryś-Barker, 2018, p. 308, based on Arnold-Morgan & Fonseca-Mora, 2007)

Category	Examples
Teacher questioning behaviour, especially teachers´ response to students´ questions/comments.	Listening to students attentively, appreciating their responses, flexibility in a lesson plan, availability beyond the class.
Teacher demonstrates interest in students and in their learning.	Giving constructive feedback on students' work/performance, being familiar with learners as individuals (e.g., knowing their names), making an effort to get to know students better, providing praise and encouragement, expressing genuine interest in learners´ progress.
Teaching style	Implementing comprehension checks, introducing interaction during classes, listening to students, accepting their views, making connections between material and its value for learners in their lives.
Aberrant disconfirmation	Using put-down statements, ignoring student responses and comments, embarrassing students in front of class, playing favourites and ignoring others, interrupting students, focusing more on teaching and fulfilling the syllabus than monitoring learning.

The verbal affectivity of teacher talk is visible at every stage of a lesson when the focus is on pre-determined and planned activities but also in spontaneous communication in off-task situations (e.g., small talk). Table 3 illustrates instances of affectivity of teacher talk.

The following verbal indicators of teacher affectivity can be observed in TT and demonstrate very well the verbal immediacy (closeness) of the teacher (based on Gregersen, 2010):

- using personal examples, soliciting viewpoints, and discussing issues unrelated to class, thus encouraging students to talk, discussing student topics,
- employing humour,
- addressing students by name,
- praising student work,
- having conversations outside of class.

Each of these indicators demonstrates teacher engagement in the process of teaching and interaction, and expresses the affectivity of the attitude and approach to the learners the teacher exhibits.

3.3 Nonverbal Affectivity in Teacher Talk

The non-verbal dimension of FL classroom communication performs a double function. First of all, it contributes to the level of comprehension during the lesson, both during the on-task and off-task interaction. Secondly, it shapes learner attitudes

Table 3 Verbal affectivity of teacher talk (based on Gabryś-Barker, 2018)

Context	Affectivity indicators
Procedural teacher talk	Forms of direct address, the use of personal pronouns (*us, we*) (Taylor, 2005) in Arnold-Morgan & Fonseca-Mora (2007))
	Expression of teacher's engagement in the lesson, affective
	Language expressing one's feelings: *How interesting!, you will find it quite exciting* or *I am glad to be able to share this with you*, etc.
Classroom management/ maintaining discipline	Encouraging engagement in tasks and discouraging misbehaviour:
	Best expressed by non-verbal signals (such as tone of voice)
	Impact of the choice of language on how learners perform and whether they behave according to the set rules.
Offering and soliciting feedback	In discourse related to progress, repair sequences/corrections):
	Giving feedback (a combination of its cognitive, affective, external and internal characteristics, positive and negative statements).
Spontaneous L2/FL talk	In eliciting student talk, facilitating communication expressing
	Humour/empathy/sympathy:
	Off-task communication (teacher's interest in learners)
	A teacher addressing a learner by his/her first name (and not his/her surname!), which creates learner visibility in class (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

and motivation to learn and become actively involved in learning during a lesson. Compared with verbal messages, whose main function is cognitive (though with elements of affectivity), the nonverbal aspect of communication performs mainly affective and emotional functions (Richmond & McCroskey, 2004). Non-verbal messages are expressed in:

- posture, touching behaviour, facial expressions and eye behavior
- proxemics: how personal and social space are used and perceived
- paralinguistics: how something is said rather than what is said (including tone, pitch rhythm, timbre, loudness and inflection) (Knapp & Hall, 1992 in Gregersen, 2005, p. 18)

Each of these elements has its place in classroom communication and interaction. One of the most important nonverbal elements are gestures. Following Ekman & Friesen (1969), Gregersen (2007) presents a typology of gestures related to (classroom) communication:

- Illustrators (gesturing, smiling, frowning, pointing to something): they accompany verbal speech to complement the message, to emphasize some element of content, to make the message clearer.
- Regulators (termination of a gesture, change in eye gaze direction, looking away from the speaker): they are used to regulate interaction, for example turn-taking in a conversation.

- Emblems (e.g. *good luck, time is over*, nodding and turning head, etc.): they transmit information/messages, to substitute words symbolically, grounded in a given culture.
- Affect display (facial expression, smiling, laughing, crying, body posture): they express emotion, grounded in a given culture (e.g. their frequency and appropriacy of use in a given context).

Each of these gestures performs different functions in classroom communication and constitutes a significant part of teacher discourse in the FL classroom. As such, they all affect learners, however, it is the latter group that directly contributes to the affectivity level and type in the classroom (Gregersen, 2007). Apart from teacher gestures, a teacher also has other means of expressing their affectivity: eye contact, facial expression and proximity understood as non-verbal immediacy/closeness (described in Table 4).

Especially the last non-verbal indicator (proximity/non-verbal immediacy) is seen as significant in teacher classroom interaction expressing affectivity. Elliott (2004, p. 99) suggests the following guidelines on how to use teacher non-verbal immediacy:

> Stand or sit confidently – shoulders back, spine straight and so on. Stand still! Shifting feet distracts pupils and are a sure sign of nerves. Control your hands! However nervous you are feeling inside, try to avoid fidgeting with them. Try to be positive and expressive with your face: smile and nod regularly when pupils say and do anything positive. Have the confidence to approach pupils for an intimate discussion of their work, but avoid invading their personal space.

The teacher's position and his/her use of space in the classroom, as well as his/her body posture in class, demonstrate both the teacher's affinity with the group and

Table 4 Nonverbal indicators of affect (based on Christophel, 1990 and Gregersen 2007, 2010)

Non-verbal indicator	Function
(Frequent) eye contact	A positive attitude to learners, a form of acknowledgement of their individuality and acceptance
	A non-verbal expression of praise or dissatisfaction with learner performance
	Control of turn-taking (very) loaded affectively; it may encourage or discourage learner involvement
Facial expression	To demonstrate the teacher's attitude to learners and teaching itself;
	A form of corrective feedback: a smiling face *versus* a frowning face (less inhibiting than a verbal correction).
Proximity (non-verbal immediacy)	To signal approachability and availability for communication.
	To increases sensory simulation, and communicates interpersonal warmth and closeness.
	To create positive attitudes in learners, greater engagement and motivation to learn
	To develop a more positive affect toward instruction when taught by immediacy practising teachers
	Teacher position in class and body posture

individuals as well as the teacher's confidence or otherwise (sitting at the desk versus moving across the classroom, having a tense *versus* a relaxed body posture when talking to learners). In other words, the use of space in the classroom is accompanied by teacher body language, which may exude teacher confidence or its lack.

4 The Emotionality of Teacher Talk: The Case of Pre-service EFL Teachers (the Study)

4.1 Methodology and the Aim of the Study

The empirical part of this article offers preliminary findings of a project focusing on the emotionality of pre-service teachers of EFL. It is a part of the ongoing action research project aiming at long-term improvement of teacher training programmes and implementing changes in the short term in a group of trainees who participated in a given study. At different stages of data collection in the homogenous groups of trainees, various aspects of their FL teaching and learning awareness and ability are being examined. So far, they related to the issues of FL learning environment and classroom climate (Gabryś-Barker, 2016; 2019a, b), language choices and the code-switching practices of trainees (Gabryś-Barker, 2020), as well as reflections on their multiple language learning experiences (Gabryś-Barker, 2019a, b) or inspirational approaches to teaching FL (Gabryś-Barker, 2021). Another research project embraces a study of these FL trainee' well-being (Gabryś-Barker, 2022, work in progress). The choice of these issues was dictated by the apparent difficulties these trainees encountered in their own practice of teaching and learning English and their additional languages. Also importantly, it is to promote the development of a reflective approach to one's teaching (and learning) of languages. The modest size of the sample as well as the area of focus determined the methodology used, as all of the studies employed mainly qualitative instruments such as questionnaires, narrative texts, metaphors and visualisation. Each of the studies was carried out as an action research project focusing on the trainees' functioning in their own teaching environment (a school placement, language schools, private tuition).

In the part reported here, the aim of the examination is the trainees' level of awareness of their own emotionality in classroom interaction situations, pointing out its importance for successful communication with their learners. As a consequence, the results of the study allow us to diagnose how aware students are of their emotionality and how they express it in different situations. The implications of the study have led to the implementation of some training strategies for improvement, such as emotion labour strategies and development of teacher wellbeing. As was observed in various earlier studies (e.g., Gabryś-Barker, 2012), emotionality is the dominant source of insecurity pre-service FL teachers experience at the start of their professional development and teaching careers. This focus on emotionality and

raising awareness of it had a pragmatic value for a specific group of subjects who participated in the study. The results have already been implemented in actual teacher training sessions and are outlined here as implications.

In the present study, the following research questions were formulated:

- *How is emotionality expressed in pre-service FL teacher discourse in its verbal and nonverbal dimensions?*
- *How aware are the trainees of their emotionality?*

4.2 Participants

The subjects participating in the study at this stage of the project were 15 pre-service EFL teachers at the BA level during their school placement period. They were about to get initial qualifications to teach English at the primary level of education with the prospect of completing MA degree courses which offer them full qualifications to teach at all levels of the educational system in Poland. All of them completed a set of obligatory courses in applied linguistics, TEFL and theoretical and comparative linguistics, at the same time developing their competence level in English (B2+/C1).

4.3 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The task performed by the trainees constituted an example of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The reflection-in-action occurred during the self-observation in lesson and post-lesson time, whereas reflection-on-action was carried out in an informal group interview between the researcher and the trainees.

To be able to gather data allowing to answer the research questions, self-observation was used. The participants observed their verbal and non-verbal affectivity during their school placement. Using a pre-designed observation scheme (used in the data analysis in Sec. 4.4.2, also see Appendix), the subjects were to mark both:

- verbal indicators of affect in their TT in terms of context, purpose, language expression
- nonverbal indicators of affect in their TT in terms of context, purpose, type of expression.

Each of the subjects observed himself/herself during five lessons, making notes in their individual observation schemes during the lessons after each change of lesson task/activity/procedure. They were also asked to reflect on their emotional behaviours after each lesson by completing the observation forms retrospectively and sharing their thoughts with the researcher in an informal group discussion. The total

number of observations was 60. It could be assumed that it was the downside of the procedure that the subjects were only able to mark these indicators that they mostly used consciously so some of them might have gone unnoticed. However, such a design of the study allowed us to see how much awareness of emotionality and their expression these trainees have and thus, are able (or otherwise) to use and to monitor. The data collected is presented following the observation categories of emotional behaviour expressed by the participants: *context (when?), purpose (why?) and form of expression (how?).* The contexts of teacher emotionality and its indicators observed during the lesson (*Context/When?*) are classified solely on the basis of the data received and not pre-conceived by the researcher. The subjects referred to the following contexts:

- emotions expressed on completing the task: responding to learner performance (positive and negative feedback)
- emotionality in teacher reaction to misbehaviour of individual learners
- emotionality indicators in response to a noisy and disturbing class

The identical contexts are exemplified and discussed in both verbal and non-verbal indictors of teacher emotionality (the same observation scheme). The data collected is discussed against the theoretical assumptions of TT and its emotionality discussed in the earlier part of the text.

4.4 Results of the Study

Challenges of Identifying Indicators of Affect

The task of identifying their affectivity when communicating with the learners was found by the trainees to be extremely challenging (post-observation informal group discussion). On the one hand, the difficulty of the task was determined by the fact of simultaneously teaching and self-observing to reflect on one's communicative behaviour in class (reflection-in-action) and reflect on it *post factum* in a group interview (reflection-on-action). On the other hand, the identification of emotions and labelling them was not less difficult for the trainees, as it departs from a traditional focus of observation trainees are usually asked to perform and focus on in their practicum lessons.

The collected data reflect the above difficulties and leads to the conclusion that there is a visible gap in the training programme of these pre-service teachers. As emotions are a significant dimension of the teaching-learning continuum, affectivity deserves more attention in developing future teachers' professional competences, which most obviously go beyond only the purely technical abilities of teaching a foreign language. Affectivity as such is also seen as a decisive factor in teacher well-being (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020), but this is the subject of a separate study. The lack of trainees' awareness of how affectivity can serve them as a tool in communicating and interacting with learners during a lesson (and beyond) is shown in the

visibly poor data received in the study, which strongly points to the need for more emphasis to be put on this aspect of professional competence.

Verbal and Non-verbal Indicators of Affect in Trainees' Classroom Discourse (Data)

The group participating in the study was not very numerous, which was determined by the fact that BA seminars are usually limited in size, i.e. a number of students involved in teacher training at this stage of their professional education. Thus, quantitative analysis is not carried out here as the data indicates only the individual responses of the subjects and constitutes a typical example of an action research project relevant for a given teaching context only. Table 5 demonstrates verbal indicators of affect as identified by the subjects, whereas Table 6 illustrates the non-verbal indicators.

On the one hand, the data collected in the course of study seem highly disappointing due its paucity and insufficiency. On the other hand, such a poor outcome in terms of quantity of observations made by the subjects clearly indicates a high level the trainees' unawareness of their own affectivity during their communication and interaction in class when teaching English. Such a high level of unawareness means that the affective aspect of teacher discourse unnoticed by the subjects cannot be controlled and monitored by them. As such, their emotionality (i.e. its indicators) will not be consciously used by them as a tool for successful teaching, in which affectivity plays a significant role. As emphasised earlier, affectivity in the process of teaching contributes to the development of learner motivation and engagement in teaching as well as a boost to their self-confidence. Thus, it can be assumed that positive affectivity may lead to greater academic achievement (Benesch, 2012; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2017). By making these trainees reflect on their use of affectivity in classroom discourse, gaps in this understanding can be identified. The question is; *What are the areas of affectivity expression which need attention?*

Table 5 Verbally expressed emotionality (sample data)

Context/When?	Purpose/Why?	Form of expression/ How?
On completing the task: Responding to learner performance (positive and negative feedback)	To motivate a learner	*Very good!* (6)
		Well- done! (4)
	To give feedback	*A (very) good job!* (2)
	To encourage	*Nicely done!*
		Fantastic!
Misbehaviour of an individual	Involvement	*Good work!*
Noisy and disturbing class	To mark progress	
	To reward good behaviour	
	To influence learners´ emotions (in learning)	

Table 6 Nonverbally expressed emotionality (sample data)

Context/When?	Purpose/Why?	Form of expression/ How?
On completing the task: Responding to learner performance (positive and negative feedback)	To motivate	Indicative face expression (negative)
	To encourage	
	To make students	Gestures
		Smiling
		Staring
	Involved	Rewards (stickers and stamps)
	To give a clue on correct/ incorrect performance	Clapping hands
Misbehaviour of an individual		Head nodding
Noisy and disturbing class		Silence (pausing)
	To show attitude	
	To praise	

5 Discussion

Although the data collected in the course of this mini-scale action research project is not very rich, some preliminary observations and findings can be proposed. The first consideration is, to what an extent the whole array of contexts in which affectivity can be employed to make communication and interaction in a FL classroom more effective is identified by the subjects. In their *Foreign Language Teacher Talk Survey,* Warford and Rose (2011) distinguish four general categories of teacher classroom behaviour in which affectivity is seen as playing a significant role as a teaching tool (see Table 1). Additionally, but no less importantly, affectivity is observed in spontaneous L2/FL talk (see Table 3). These categories include procedural, instructional discourse related to lesson focus, offering and soliciting feedback and classroom management/maintaining discipline. Taking into consideration the observations made by the subjects on their own verbal behaviour, it is first of all clear that contexts in which they identify affect in their teacher talk relate just to the last two: giving feedback on the completion of a given task and maintaining discipline in individuals and misbehaving group. Both of these are first of all control and assessment-related situations. In the case of feedback, it also has a motivational aspect, which the subjects rightly point out.

Comparing the findings of the other studies mentioned earlier, we can identify what is missing:

- No expressions of affectivity in procedural talk, which can be shown by for example using the first names of learners, expressing teachers' engagement in the lesson by appropriately chosen emphatic language (phrases such as *I am excited to share this with you!*).
- Total absence of off-task communication or spontaneous talk with the learners, which can best show teachers' attitude to learners, interest in their affairs and thus, resulting in building a successful rapport.

- Lack of building rapport and development of classroom climate by appropriate use of voice (effective vocal strategies as a paralinguistic indicator of affectivity).
- Unawareness of the role of proxemics in the classroom expressed by teacher immediacy, his/her use of classroom space and posture assumed.

We can also observe that there are hardly any indicators of teacher affectivity that would express his/her attitude to the course, and more importantly to the learners themselves. Although the trainees observe that teacher's affectivity is an instrument in motivating and encouraging learners' involvement in learning, praising them for achievement and good behaviour (and reprimanding them for misbehaviour), at the same time, they seem not to be fully aware of how to do it. The limited number of contexts in which affectivity is identified by the trainees also limits the types of indicators used.

The verbal repertoire is very scanty and limited to language expressions such as: *Very good! Well- done*! *A (very) good job. Fantastic.* Paralinguistic signals such as tone of voice or vocal emphasis, pitch rhythm, timbre, loudness and inflection are absent from the data. Also, non-verbal indicators of affect such as posture, touching behaviour, facial expressions and eye behaviour and proxemics (Gregersen, 2005) are not indicted in the data. The non-verbal indicators mentioned in the data are not very abundant, for example they just refer to: an indicative face expression (negative), smiling, staring, clapping hands or head nodding. These are general examples of affect display gestures (e.g., facial expression, smiling) and partly emblems (e.g. nodding, turning head). At the same time, no specific gestures seem to be a part of the trainees' teaching repertoire in relation to their affectivity. These are missing examples of illustrators (e.g. frowning, pointing to something/somebody) or regulators (e.g., gaze direction, looking away, terminating gestures) (Gregersen, 2007). The frequency of the same gestures' use may lower their effectiveness and create teacher routines, which are less effective than various novel ones.

6 Conclusions and Implications for FL Teacher Training Programmes

The data collected in this mini-scale research project testify to the need for bridging existing gaps in these trainees' professional instruction. It is demonstrated not only in the scarcity of affective strategies they are able to identify, but also in their very limited awareness of what impact affectivity has on EFL classroom communication and successful interactions. One of the ways of sensitising the trainee teachers (and teachers in general) to the issue of affectivity is to engage them in different reflective activities. One of them is their involvement in action research projects, such as the one described in this article. It allows them to reflect on their own experiences and confront them with the findings of other research. Though the outcomes of such observations and reflections may be quite unsatisfactory, as they are in the case of this study, they can sensitise and make the students more aware of certain gaps in

their professional competence and skills at this stage in their careers. This was achieved, as the trainees participating in the study were alerted to various issues related to their affective functioning in their classrooms. This was accomplished by the process of dissemination and feedback. The results presented here and set against research on the affectivity of teacher discourse were discussed with the subject group.

Apart from discussing the importance of affectivity in educational contexts and especially in FL instruction, where language is the tool of establishing and maintaining communication and interaction, more focus on this aspect of teacher development is in place. It is clear, taking into consideration the above observations, that some elements of explicit instruction on teacher affectivity indicators need to be added to the training module. The introduction of mini research projects is a good starting point, but it also needs some complimentary background from other studies as mentioned above (some of the better sources have been referred to in this article).

Instruction in using appropriate indicators of affect would naturally refer to verbal as well as the non-verbal indicators of teacher affect presented earlier. Verbal indicators demonstrating teacher's acceptance of ideas and feelings (both spontaneous and animated), and a varied way of praising, clarifying and giving feedback are often situations of intense emotionality. A whole array of ways of dealing with them to avoid routine reactions should be developed as a clearly-defined repertoire of strategies, in which teacher talk (as described earlier) is consciously controlled at the level of word choices, intonation and appropriate volume of speech. However, it is non-verbal aspects of affectivity that are most poorly represented in the self-observation data.

One indicator visibly absent is the way trainees in this study use proxemics, that is, non-verbal immediacy in terms of the physical space in the classroom, where the position (location) of the teacher demonstrates their approach to teaching and the roles performed. Closeness and entering learners' spatial zone may indicate involvement and openness to the learners as contrasted with a distant position of power and dominance (e.g., a teacher walking around the classroom versus a teacher standing at his/her desk and towering over the class). Of course, the issues related to proxemics are culturally determined and certain manifestations of spatial closeness may not be acceptable in certain cultures, whereas in others, they may be expected. A FL teacher needs to exhibit awareness of these cross-cultural differences.

It is not only position and its job in performing different teacher roles during a lesson, but also its variability in demonstrating attitude, interest and teacher involvement in the lesson. One of the important strategic tools at a teacher's disposal is his/her voice as shown in paralanguage, i.e. vocal animation expressed by a teacher's intonation, use of varied vocal tones and the level of volume, pitch and quality. The emphasis or a changing volume of speech can both be used as an attention-getting strategy or as a didactic tool in signalling important points, as well as expressing teacher emotion, involvement and attitude (Gabryś-Barker, 2014). These indicators of affect are a part of an effective teaching strategy and thus ought to constitute an indispensable part of any (FL) teacher's repertoire.

7 Final Remarks

It was a risky speculation to take up the topic of affectivity, as experienced by EFL pre-service teachers. The issues related to this domain of the professional development of future teachers have been neglected for a long time in training programmes. Only fairly recently applied linguists and applied psycholinguists researching educational contexts have made their research more multidisciplinary, looking into the findings of psychology (and also sociology) and applying them in education, including language education. As a result, many research projects and their outcomes have contributed to this changed perspective on teaching/learning processes, and affectivity has been seen to be at its core. At the same time, such an approach has not invariably entered the training programmes of future (FL) teachers, as it should have. Thus, future teachers do not receive much guidance on how to recognise, cope with and monitor their emotions and what emotion indicators (as well as emotion labour strategies) they have at their disposal in communicating and interacting with their learners. In fact, this observation, so clearly relevant for FL trainees, may relate to practicing in-service teachers who often find themselves at a loss and unable to face their own (and their learners') emotions.

Appendix

Verbal and non-verbal indicators of teacher affect (the observation scheme used in the study).

Context/When during the lesson?	Purpose/Why was it used?	Form of expression/What were the indicators of teacher emotionality?

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Teacher Identity (Re)construction in the Process of EFL Teacher Education

Anna Klimas

Abstract This study explores the concept of L2 teacher identity and the way it is shaped by knowledge and experience gained in the course of teacher education. The paper presents the results of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted via e-mail with trainee teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) who at the same time are experienced in-service teachers of other content subjects in Polish schools. Data are analysed in terms of three aspects of teacher identity formation and the associated tensions: language-related identity, disciplinary identity, self-knowledge and awareness (Pennington MC, Richards JC, *RELC Journal* 47:5–23, 2016). The results indicate that the transformation from a subject teacher to an EFL teacher is not only a matter of developing necessary skills and knowledge as a professional, but most importantly, it may redefine attitudes and beliefs that teachers hold about the nature of teaching and learning, thus changing their identity. The major source of identity tensions that such teachers experience is connected with their language proficiency.

Keywords Teacher identity · Identity construction · Foreign language teacher · L2 teacher education · English language teaching

1 Introduction

Teacher professional identity is a well-established concept in the field of general teacher education (Beijaard, 2019). In L2 teacher education, this concept is a relatively new area of inquiry with a history of approximately three decades. It has been also repeatedly emphasised that discovering and exploring one's identity, e.g., through self-reflection, should be an integral part of any teacher preparation as well

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as professional development programmes with the aim of supporting the process of becoming a teacher (Miller, 2009; Tsui, 2011; Izadinia, 2013; Goh, 2015; Singh & Richards, 2006; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Flores, 2020). What is more, due to the dynamic, context-dependent and personal character of teacher identity, possible identity tensions and conflicts may arise in the course of teacher learning. Exploring such tensions is a worthwhile endeavour for researchers, teacher educators and teachers alike because it enables them to make sense of the complex nature of L2 teacher identity. As Varghese et al. (2005) indicate, researching teacher identity not only allows us to understand how teachers see themselves, but also comprehend the process of language teaching. Most importantly, becoming aware of one's professional identity has some practical implications for teachers as they become more competent and confident, which will naturally have a positive impact on their students (Goh, 2015).

So far, researchers have investigated identity development mainly among preservice and novice teachers, and as Cheung (2015) indicates in a research review on teacher identity in ELT, there is a need for more studies that would explore language teacher identity from the perspective of experienced teachers, teachers of diverse backgrounds or primary school teachers. The present study attempts to fill this gap by looking into identity development among in-service teachers who decided to acquire new qualifications to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) at a primary school level. As teachers' professional development is a lifelong process shaped by all their teaching and learning experiences, it seems crucial to explore how more experienced teachers construct and reconstruct their professional identity, especially when confronted with substantial changes affecting their careers, such as complying with national or school reforms, being assigned a new role, or working in a new context. In this regard, the study has the potential to inform teacher education programmes as well as pedagogical practices of newly qualified EFL teachers.

The present paper focuses on foreign language (FL/L2) teacher training in the Polish context. As L2 teaching is one of the major goals of formal education in Poland, compulsory foreign language instruction starts as early as on the preprimary level. This, in turn, means a higher demand for FL teachers, especially those who are qualified in teaching English to young learners. However, recruiting teachers is a demanding task as there are not enough university students of English who decide to enter the teaching profession. Teacher recruitment, especially to initial teacher education programmes, seems to be facing challenges in many European countries as, due to motivational issues related to pursuing a teaching career, the number of students applying for such programmes has been decreasing (Flores & Niklasson, 2014). A remedy to such a situation might be to recruit from among experienced teachers specialising in other content areas. Investigating this particular group implies exploring teachers' identities, or sub-identities, developed as a result of gaining new knowledge and experience in the field of ELT. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to scrutinise teacher identity (re)construction as it takes place in the course of teacher education programme focused on teaching EFL in primary school.

2 The Concept of L2 Teacher Identity

Despite rich theoretical and empirical considerations on teacher identity in the literature, finding one comprehensive definition of the construct is a challenging task. As Beijaard et al. (2004) notice in their review of research on teacher professional identity, the term is not uniformly defined or it is not defined at all. It has been for example described as teacher's self-image, the teacher's perception of their role, or a sense of belonging to a specific group. In a general sense teacher identity can be understood as being 'a certain "kind of person" in a given context' (Gee, 2001, p. 99). Instead of giving a precise definition, researchers tend to represent teacher identity in terms of some distinctive features, thus focusing more on its nature (Barkhuizen, 2017; Beijaard et al., 2004). Accordingly, in the L2 teacher education literature, the following descriptors of the nature of teacher identity can be found: *relational*, i.e., recounted from different perspectives, and *experiential*, i.e., shaped by one's experiences (Tsui, 2011), or *discursive*, i.e., constructed and negotiated through language (Trent, 2015). In this section some essential features of teacher identity are discussed.

First of all, teacher identity is conceptualised as a dynamic construct undergoing constant negotiation and transformation, so its formation is an ongoing and lifelong process (Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005). Secondly, every experience, be it individual or social, contributes to one's sense of identity (Sachs, 2005). Teacher identity is therefore unique and personal as well as context-dependent (Miller, 2009; Pennington, 2015; Varghese et al., 2005). These features are captured in Lasky's (2005, p. 901) explanation of teacher identity as 'professional self that evolves over career stages, and can be shaped by schools, reform and political contexts.' Some researchers also stress the fact that individuals actively construct their identity by interacting with others, thus indicating the central role of agency in identity formation (Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2015). In addition, it is important to mention the role of language and discourse in teacher identity formation, development and negotiation as it is considered to be a primary means allowing us to express our identity (Varghese et al., 2005; Olsen, 2011).

What is more, identity is a multifaceted concept; hence, every person develops multiple identities, and then within those identities a number of sub-identities are formed. Beijaard et al. (2004) suggest that all of them should be well-balanced so as to ensure one's well-being as well as to prevent possible identity conflicts. For example, identity frictions may appear when one's personal identity is far removed from one's professional identity, or they may be induced by the substantial changes in the working environment. What has been also indicated in the field of social psychology is the fact that one's identity or multiple identities may undergo significant modifications (Burke, 2006). Such modifications can be observed in how a person understands oneself and one's role within a particular group. For instance, learning a new language (Yihong et al., 2005), assuming a new role in a professional context (Caihong, 2011; Achirri, 2020) have been found to produce identity changes.

As can be seen, teacher professional identity is a very broad notion. The features presented in this section seem to be universal, that is, they are acknowledged by the researchers in the field of both general teacher education and L2 teacher education. However, it needs to be emphasised that teacher identity is also influenced by the subject and the content of instruction (Pennington & Richards, 2016); hence, the investigation of L2 teacher identity requires looking into the specifics of language teaching.

Taking into account the distinctive character of second language teaching, Pennington and Richards (2016) have proposed a model in which they provide an insight into the nature of L2 teacher identity. In this framework, L2 teacher identity is conceptualised in terms of two groups of competences: *foundational competences* of language teacher identity, which include language-related identity, disciplinary identity, context-dependent identity, self-knowledge and awareness, student-related identity, and *advanced competences* of language teacher identity, which comprise practiced and responsive teaching skills, theorizing from practice, and membership in communities of practice and profession. For the purpose of the present study, only the former group is discussed since advanced competences result from continuous professional development and they begin to play a more prominent role only when foundational competences are well-established. Since the study participants are new to the field of ELT, the group of foundational competences is used as a point of reference in data analysis.

Language-related identity is the first, and the most distinctive, foundational competence. The level of L2 proficiency determines how confident the user of that language feels, which is vital for language teachers who are supposed to communicate with their students in L2. Pennington and Richards (2016, p. 12) indicate that for those teachers who are not fully competent L2 users, improvement in their proficiency is considered as central to 'their identity as knowledgeable professionals.' Developing a strong language-related identity may require revisiting one's professional values and making adjustments in one's identity in relation to the vision of an ideal teacher. Any identity tensions relative to teacher's linguistic competence may be resolved by accepting and appreciating their status of lifelong language learners and transcultural L2 users.

The next component of language teacher identity, i.e. disciplinary identity, is based on the knowledge specific to the field of language teaching (Pennington & Richards, 2016). This kind of knowledge, which is both theoretical and practical, is usually acquired through formal education. By getting acquainted with language learning theories as well as particular methods and techniques used for language instruction, student teachers gain disciplinary knowledge that provides a solid base for becoming expert L2 teachers. Formal teacher education is thus a vital step in laying the foundation for teacher professional identity. However, it needs to be pointed out that teacher cognition, i.e., knowledge, values and beliefs concerning the nature of learning and teaching, is not only developed through education but also determined by their past experiences as learners (Borg, 2003).

Context-dependent identity, the third aspect of L2 teacher identity, is shaped by various situational factors, such as administrative support, class size, available

facilities, which can either foster or hinder the development of a strong professional identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016). In negative conditions, such as stringent state-level requirements, inappropriate facilities or large groups, teachers are less likely to stay motivated and avoid any consequent identity tensions. On the other hand, positive conditions enable teachers not to compromise on the educational principles they value.

Moreover, being a competent teacher requires self-knowledge and awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. This, in turn, translates into effective teaching. As Pennington and Richards (2016, pp. 15–16) observe, 'one's identity as a language teacher should involve developing experience and an image of oneself that is built on self-awareness in relation to acts of teaching and that incorporates one's personal qualities, values, and ideals into effective teaching performance.' Self-knowledge, however, is not enough and it needs to be accompanied by student knowledge and awareness (student-related identity). This final element of language teacher identity is constructed over time through learner-centred pedagogy. Because of a strong link between teacher identity and student identity and their complementary nature, one cannot be developed without the other. This facet of L2 teacher identity is reflected in many teachers' concern with their students' achievement as well as psychological well-being.

In conclusion, Barkhuizen (2017) in his comprehensive description enumerates all integral components of language teacher identity, which can serve as a summary of the construct:

> Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological and historical – they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time – discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, place, and objects in classrooms, institutions and online. (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 4)

3 The Study

The research methodology applied in this study is qualitative as its aim is to investigate teacher professional identity (re)construction, which is a dynamic and multidimensional process. As such, it requires research methods that allow the researcher to get insight into this complex phenomenon and at the same time deal with individual variability (Dörnyei, 2007). Apart from exploring the process of L2 teacher identity formation, some distinctive characteristics of EFL teacher identity were also scrutinised. In addition, there was a practical dimension added to the study because the participants were engaged in reflection on their professional identity development, which is a core component of teacher learning (Michońska-Stadnik,

2019). This experience was intended to help them understand themselves as L2 teachers and their new roles better. Having this in mind, the following research questions were put forward to guide the study:

1. How is teacher professional identity (re)constructed in the process of acquiring ELT qualifications? How does it influence three facets of L2 teacher identity: disciplinary identity, language-related identity, self-knowledge and awareness?
2. What are possible tensions in the process of identity (re)construction that newly qualified EFL teachers experience? How are those tensions released?

3.1 Participants

The sample consisted of eight participants: seven females and one male (pseudonyms are used) and it constituted half of the whole student group enrolled in the three-semester programme preparing them to teach EFL in primary school. The participants volunteered to take part in the interview that was conducted during the final semester of the programme. What is more, all of them possessed qualifications in other than EFL areas and were experienced teachers of other subjects; however, some of them were already foreign language teachers (the sample includes three teachers of German as a foreign language). Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 22 years. In Poland there are four successive teaching posts that teachers can apply for through a merit-oriented promotion structure: trainee, contractual, appointed, chartered teachers. Accordingly, the participants' experience was reflected in the posts they were holding (see Table 1). Seven participants worked in

Table 1 Participants' profiles

Pseudonym	Sex	Experience (years)	Qualifications/Subjects taught	Teaching context/post
Agata	F	10	German, science, maths	Primary school/appointed teacher
Beata	F	5	Early primary education	Primary school/contractual teacher
Ewa	F	9	PE, special needs education	Primary school/appointed teacher
Jola	F	14	Early primary education, special needs education	Primary school, secondary school/chartered teacher
Kamila	F	21	German	Secondary school/chartered teacher
Maria	F	10	Early primary education	Primary school/appointed teacher
Roman	M	22	German	Primary school/appointed teacher
Sara	F	21	PE	Primary school/chartered teacher

primary schools, one teacher in secondary school, and one participant was employed in both primary and secondary schools.

3.2 Data Collection

The data were collected by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted via email. This research method is seen as a viable alternative to traditional interviews and a valid way of capturing narrative data (James, 2007). Apart from that, email interviewing offers numerous advantages, such as providing research participants with ample time for considering questions, alleviating participants' inhibition which may be an issue in face-to-face interviewing, facilitating the process of data storage, processing and analysis due to automatic transcripts (Klimas, 2016). Before the proper interviews started, the participants were introduced to the purpose and nature of the study. This was done in the first email containing the e-interview guide, which was sent to all the teachers willing to take part in the interview. The following ethical issues were also addressed in the guide: obtaining the consent of the participants, granting them the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, respecting and ensuring confidentiality. In addition, the participants were informed about the interview procedure based on receiving one question at a time, sending replies within two days, keeping all emails as one exchange. It was anticipated that the interview would be completed within two months. By organising the interview process in such a way, the researcher intended to engage the participants in a conversation-like exchange that would give them enough time for deep reflection.

The interview was organised around three time-related aspects. First, teachers' current self-perception and self-evaluation were addressed, so the participants were asked to specify their motivation to acquire new qualifications to teach EFL and to reflect on how they see themselves performing their basic role of subject teachers as well as their new role of EFL teachers. Then, because teacher's biography is an integral part of professional identity formation (Knowles, 1992), the participants' past teaching experiences and language learning experiences were addressed in order to identify underlying patterns in the development of language teacher identity. As the last part of the interview the issue of the participants' hopes and aspirations, their future goals and ways of achieving them in addition to their worries concerning EFL teaching were considered.

3.3 Data Analysis

As the interviews were conducted via e-mail, there was no need to transcribe them. Thematic analysis was based on identifying and coding elements related to identity (re)construction and possible tensions in L2 teacher identity formation. Pre-ordinate categories were used for coding the data (Cohen et al., 2017). The analysis was

limited to three above-described components of L2 teacher identity: disciplinary identity, language-related identity, self-knowledge and awareness (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Context-dependent identity and student-related identity were not included in the analysis owing to the participants' lack of relevant ELT experience. The three categories were guiding themes and the data were coded to indicate the aspects of identity formation, identity modification, and identity tensions. Significant similarities and differences in the interviewees' accounts were identified which led to drawing some conclusions concerning patterns of EFL teacher identity formation. In order to ensure that the process of data analysis was reliable, the results of classifying data into the categories were discussed with a colleague.

4 Findings and Discussion

Findings are discussed in reference to the three aspects of L2 teacher identity: disciplinary identity, language-related identity, self-knowledge and awareness (Pennington & Richards, 2016). In each of the following sections, the results of data analysis are presented and supported with some comments given by the participants during the interview. The extracts presented in the paper were translated into English by the author.

4.1 Findings: Disciplinary Identity

Constructing disciplinary identity required the teachers to establish a clear connection with the specific field of ELT. This could be achieved by acquiring the knowledge and skills of teaching the English language. Not surprisingly, it was this aspect of identity that was most strongly developed throughout the programme during which the teachers completed a number of ELT methodology courses.

The participants admit that they learned a lot about foreign language education in general as well as about approaches, methods and techniques specific to teaching EFL, so in this way, they gained confidence as ELT professionals. Interestingly, in the participants' accounts of how they see themselves as EFL teachers, two distinctive factors related to disciplinary identity could be noticed: teacher's own language learning experiences, and the working methods that they developed in other subject areas. This observation confirms what we already know about how teacher cognition is shaped, namely that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes are formed through schooling, their classroom practice, and only partially professional training they undergo (Borg, 2003). Thus, the participants feel well-prepared to fulfil their new role of English teachers as a result of not only a sound disciplinary knowledge they acquired but also relevant personal experiences they can draw on in their teaching practice. As one of the participants noticed, her own history as a language learner shaped her perception of how she should teach the language:

> I remember myself learning English at school and how difficult it was for me to open up and speak English. The older I was getting, the more difficult it was for me to overcome this inhibition. That is why I'd like my students to become confident users of English. It's not an easy goal, but I think it's achievable. I can do this by allowing them to make mistakes, stimulating them to talk, motivating them to communicate with others and encouraging them to watch films and TV programmes in English. (Beata)

In addition, most participants mentioned their former L2 teachers, who taught them at different stages of their education, as crucial figures in shaping their identity as EFL teachers. The interview analysis revealed that their disciplinary knowledge and beliefs about language teaching are based on the observation of those early role models, which corroborates the description of teacher identity as derived from all personal and professional experiences (Sachs, 2005; Tsui, 2011). For example, one of the participants considers that her most important role in language teaching is making the learning experience attractive for her students so that they stay motivated throughout the whole process of learning the language. Then, in the recollection of her former English teachers we find an explanation for this attitude:

> I remember my English teacher from secondary school very well. He was a truly great teacher! He encouraged us to act out Shakespeare's plays in English. Back then I felt impressed by his approach and now I think he's still a great inspiration to me as a teacher. (Sara)

As regards the second factor contributing to the formation of disciplinary identity, i.e., the teacher's tried and trusted working methods, some patterns among specific groups of teachers could be noticed. Namely, the teachers with a background in early primary education, special needs education as well as physical education believe that effective language teaching should be based on such ground rules as creating positive atmosphere in the classroom, adopting a holistic and individualised approach, developing pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem, forming appropriate attitudes towards learning in general and language learning in particular. It means that teaching methods specific to EFL will work if teachers provide a stimulating environment for their students. This can be seen in the following excerpt from the interview:

> I'd like my students to learn English well. However, I do believe that I should stimulate other spheres of their development, too. I want my students to feel successful and capable. In order to achieve this, I need to create appropriate conditions during my lessons and appreciate students' effort. I'd also like to make my students happy so that they are motivated to learn English in the future. (Marta)

Another pattern could be discerned among the teachers of German as a foreign language. Namely, they rightly claim that there are no major differences in methods and techniques applied in teaching both languages, but they also notice that studying EFL methodology is for them a very enriching professional experience due to the access to unlimited teaching resources, interesting materials, or methodology books in English. In other words, theoretical and practical knowledge that the participants had a chance to develop during the ELT programme not only helps them create stronger disciplinary identity but also informs their educational practice in

other subjects they teach. This observation aligns with the claims that language teacher identities are dynamic, multiple, and complex (Barkhuizen, 2017), and constant interaction among different identities may result in identity modifications (Burke, 2006). The impact of new knowledge and skills on their perception of teaching was a recurring theme in the participants' accounts:

> ELT methodology is a mine of information and a great inspiration for me as a teacher. I use the newly acquired knowledge and skills in my other classes as well. For example, discussing the benefits of collaboration and cooperation in EFL classrooms helped me realize that I should arrange pair and group work activities more often. I've also noticed that I'm more willing to try out and experiment with new teaching techniques and activities. This gives me increasing confidence in my professional skills. (Agata)

The interview analysis also revealed some tensions that the teachers were experiencing in the process of constructing disciplinary identity, such as not being suited for teaching English in general or not being the right person to teach younger students. These tensions, however, could be reduced by acquiring new knowledge and building relevant expertise:

> I have to admit that, at first, I felt confused as to me being an English teacher. I wasn't sure whether it was the right thing for me, but then I gradually realised (thanks to learning about, e.g., shared reading or multisensory approach) that I can find something for me in English teaching, something that suits my personality, my interests, and my life philosophy as well. (Sara)

> I've realised that I can also teach younger children. When I first started working as a teacher, I didn't even consider it to be possible. Now I've learned how to work with children and I have to admit that my knowledge about teaching this age group was very limited. I found many useful sources of information on how to teach young learners and I discovered that teaching them is not as difficult as I'd envisaged. Teaching children can be a very pleasant and rewarding experience for a teacher. (Kamila)

Moreover, what helped the participants overcome the tensions was the fact that, as they all revealed, it was their own decision to acquire new qualifications and that they were driven by intrinsic values, such as personal growth or satisfaction of curiosity. This seems to align with Flores and Niklasson's (2014) study in which student teachers more often indicated intrinsic reasons for pursuing a teaching career rather than extrinsic motivations. In the present study only one participant (a German teacher) mentioned that she also felt a growing pressure to add a new language to her teaching repertoire so she would be able to respond to the requirements of educational authorities as well as parents, which can be treated as a manifestation of extrinsic motivation. Because almost all participants were intrinsically motivated, the complex process of coming to terms with the new role of teaching EFL was not as difficult as it would have been if their motivation had been driven by purely extrinsic factors.

4.2 Findings: Language-Related Identity

Developing language-related identity depends not only on one's language proficiency, but also on one's attitudes as well as values associated with being a proficient user of the language. This facet of L2 teacher professional identity required the most thorough consideration on the part of the participants whose educational background was not directly related to English. Hence it also generated the most evident tensions.

On the one hand, all participants admit that a high level of language proficiency is crucial, but on the other hand, they point out that other factors, such as one's personality, enthusiasm, or empathy, are equally or even more important for foreign language teachers than mere fluency in the language. They also notice that teachers can compensate for their lower L2 proficiency with the aid of authentic materials, audio recordings and other resources. In other words, they feel that, regardless of their linguistic deficiencies, it is possible to fulfil the role of EFL teachers successfully when appropriate teaching strategies and materials are implemented. The following extracts illustrate two teachers' views on the relationship between teacher's language proficiency and effective teaching.

> I think that it's a bit like teaching someone to sing – you don't have to be an opera singer to do it. Teaching English seems to be the same in this regard. (Beata)

> So far, I've had a chance to observe many qualified teachers of English whose lessons were by no means successful. That is why I believe that the complete mastery of the language is not necessary. I am the best example myself. Despite my far-from-perfect proficiency in English, I feel I'm capable of sharing my knowledge with students and I can be a good English teacher. If I'm always fully prepared for my lessons, I can make up for this deficiency. (Ewa)

At the same time, most teachers state that improving their language skills is a vital aspect of building strong language-related identity. One participant, for example, indicated that greater exposure to the language in the English-speaking environment helped her establish what Pennington and Richards (2016, p. 12) call 'an "insider" identity of a language teacher.' She comments on this in the following way:

> When I was living in the UK, I got to know a lot about English culture. It helped me realise that language and culture are closely connected, e.g. I could learn about the origins of Peter Piper and other nursery rhymes. I think teaching culture will be one of my priorities. Oh, and one more thing – thanks to my experience of living abroad, I'm not afraid of speaking English. What I've observed so far is that many English teachers do not use the language in the classroom as much as they should, probably because they lack necessary confidence in their linguistic skills. (Sara)

As regards tensions in language-related identity construction, certain deficiencies in English skills as a source of uneasiness were frequently revealed. In their accounts, a lower level of proficiency is often considered to undermine their performance. For example, in the following excerpts the teachers express their worries concerning their language skills:

> I know that I'm not ready as my English, especially my pronunciation, is not good enough. I need to work hard on improving my language skills to feel more confident as an English teacher. (Roman)

> I don't want my students to notice that I'm not confident about my language skills. (Jola)

> My biggest worry is that I'll make some kind of a language mistake and my students will remember it. I'd like to be fairly proficient, but I know it requires a lot of practice and time. I'll be fully ready to teach English only when I have enough contact with the language. (Beata)

As can be seen, the participants show a clear understanding of the fact that they act as models for their students, and their professional performance in the classroom is, to a large extent, dependent on their command of the language. Nevertheless, the interview analysis did not reveal any patterns related to a language status (native or non-native), which is believed to be the main source of identity tensions for many L2 teachers (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Since the formation of teacher identity is determined by a wider socio-political context (Lasky, 2005), the feeling of self-doubt might be heightened by external requirements or unrealistic expectations about English teachers that other people tend to hold. However, in the present study, none of the teachers expressed any concerns about being a non-native speaker. Teaching English in the foreign language context rather than the second language environment, which is the case in Polish primary schools, means that teachers are not required to be fully proficient but to know the language reasonably well (at least B2 level of the CEFR). Besides, being able to teach in a bilingual mode usually helps L2 teachers compensate for their lack of fluency and consequently allows them to feel more self-assured.

Fortunately, the feeling of uneasiness that the participants expressed is not perceived as an insurmountable obstacle in the path of constructing a strong identity and the teachers realize that the way to relieve this kind of tension is to seek opportunities for intensive language practice and language-related professional development. This, in turn, is directly linked to the last aspect of teacher identity discussed in this paper, i.e., self-knowledge and awareness.

4.3 Findings: Self-Knowledge and Awareness

Being experienced in their content areas, the participants did not find it problematic to openly and clearly identify their strengths and weaknesses. The whole interview, as they indicated, allowed them to reflect not only on different aspects of their teaching practice (both in relation to their regular roles and a new field of ELT), but also on themselves as English teachers and their personal characteristics. In naming their assets, the participants focused on, first of all, some important personality traits that allow them to be effective language teachers, e.g., flexibility, creativity, inventiveness, and secondly, on specific skills all teachers should possess, e.g., being able to

work with difficult students or fostering positive attitudes among learners. The analysis of the interviews revealed that they all needed some time to discover what they are good at, and what they think they do right. This self-awareness is clearly visible in the following extracts:

> There were times when I had my doubts about the way I assess students. My supervisors, or even some parents, called into question my approach (I was perceived as too lenient). Now I'm convinced it's the right thing to do because proper assessment plays a crucial role in motivating students to learn. (Jola)

> During my teaching practice (as an English teacher) I understood that I quickly respond to my students' needs and I am able to stand the pace. It confirmed me in my belief that I can be very creative in difficult situations. I can easily improvise and create a relaxed atmosphere during lessons. (Ewa)

Despite having some considerable classroom experience, the participants still were able to indicate certain areas for improvement. It could be noticed that those areas would allow them to feel more self-assured as EFL teachers. Hence, apart from the above-mentioned different aspects of linguistic competence, such as pronunciation, grammar, or spelling, which in their view call for further development, they focused on becoming more familiar with the latest trends in ELT. The analysis of the interview data led to the conclusion that there is a mutual relationship between participants' self-awareness, their language-related identity, and their developing disciplinary identity. Gaining new knowledge of ELT and applying it in practice was the trigger for an in-depth analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and allowed them to set further development goals. For example:

> During the course I've realised that there are two aspects of my teaching I need to work on: 1.giving students more autonomy, encouraging them to speak (I noticed that I talk too much during my lessons) 2.responding to students' needs by introducing these teaching tools that they find attractive (e.g. applications) so that the learning process is more motivating in the long term. (Roman)

In general, the data derived from the interview did not indicate any particular tensions among the participants in terms of this aspect of language teacher identity. However, in one case, the participant's self-reflection on her early experience as a language teacher resulted in the conviction that she needed to adjust her personality to the new role, which might be interpreted as a potential source of identity stress:

> Teaching English in the classroom makes me think that I'm too loud and the classroom is too small for me. As a PE teacher and an athlete, I've always focused on being fast. Language learning, however, is not a race. I should work on setting a slower and more relaxed pace of my lessons. I've also come to the conclusion that I have to verify my personality traits. On the one hand, I should make the most of those aspects of my personality that are desirable for an English teacher, and on the other hand, I should minimize or even eliminate those aspects that are undesirable. (Sara)

It needs to be pointed out that identity frictions are particularly likely to occur when personal identity and professional identity are fairly distinct from each other (Beijaard et al., 2004), which might be the case here. The participant considers her character to be problematic in a sense that it might not be entirely suitable for a

language teacher, yet it has always been at the core of her work as a PE teacher and an integral part of her professional identity. Gaining new experiences in teaching English raised her awareness of what kind of language teacher she should be. It also made her negotiate her new identity by aiming to develop such a model of teaching that would effectively exploit her personality.

5 Conclusion and Implications

The present study served to examine and thus provide some understanding of the complex process of identity (re)construction among eight in-service teachers of diverse backgrounds involved in acquiring additional qualifications to teach EFL in primary school. Three facets of L2 teacher identity were scrutinised and some patterns of L2 teacher identity development were identified. The findings indicate that such teachers are able to build a strong disciplinary identity thanks to the knowledge and experience gained in the process of EFL teacher training, but at the same time some significant influences of their previous educational and professional backgrounds on their identity formation were observed. Developing language-related identity, in turn, was the most difficult part of the process and it generated the most visible tensions. In this case, an important element of identity construction was not only recognizing and accepting their own linguistic limitations but also understanding that it should be the key aspect of their professional development. The data derived from the interviews also revealed that the teachers possess a strong awareness of themselves as teachers, which is considered to be a contributing factor in the construction of EFL teacher identity.

Owing to the fact that the participants were actively engaged in negotiating their own identities, the interview served a number of important practical purposes. Namely, they could develop and make use of the skills of reflectivity, which are seen as the key component of teacher development at all stages of their careers (Zawadzka-Bartnik, 2014). In addition, all the participants evaluated the interview as a positive and enriching experience because it raised their awareness of crucial elements of their professional identity, allowed them to explore their strengths and limitations as well as consider areas of their practice that they need to work on. Increased awareness and self-assurance will certainly be reflected in the quality of their teaching practice and the kind of relationship they are able to establish with their students.

Reflection on one's identity should be an integral part of any teacher education programme, and it is particularly essential for those teachers who want to change their career path, for example, to teaching EFL. It is vital that such programmes facilitate and guide the process of identity formation, thus allowing teachers to consciously shape their identities. Finally, what seems to be of utmost importance is addressing and responding to the challenges and tensions inherent in the process of identity reconstruction by, for example, allowing teachers to give voice to them.

The study contributes to the research on language teacher professional identity by offering some insights into the process of identity (re)construction in the course

of teacher education. However, some limitations of the study need to be considered. First of all, due to the small number of participants, the study results cannot be generalised to other contexts. A larger sample would undoubtedly allow us to better understand the issue of identity. Secondly, due to the fact that the interview was carried out during the final semester of the programme, it enabled us to observe only selected aspects of language teacher identity development. A longitudinal study should be undertaken to thoroughly examine the changes in teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and modifications in teacher identity.

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Teacher Feedback to Writing of Secondary School Learners of English in the Polish Classroom Context

Kinga Potocka and Małgorzata Adams-Tukiendorf

Abstract Since 1960s, process-oriented methodology in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing has been thoroughly studied, researched, and successfully incorporated into pedagogy due to its repeatedly proven effectiveness. One of the procedures associated with this methodology is the provision of teacher feedback that goes beyond the form and grammatical aspects of written work. Nevertheless, while several decades of research conducted on writing instruction and teacher feedback situated within the tenets of process theories emphasize its positive influence on the development of EFL students' writing skills, it appears that in Polish secondary school education EFL writing is largely marginalized and the quality of teacher feedback does not reflect process-influenced strategies. Using questionnaire and interview data, the authors provide an insight into the current situation regarding feedback practices utilized by EFL teachers in Polish secondary schools and scrutinize these practices on the basis of the existing EFL feedback research. They also examine possible implications of this trend and underline the need for enhancing writing skill development among secondary school learners, focusing on alternative approaches to teaching writing.

Keywords EFL writing · Process approach · Product approach · Teacher feedback · Secondary education · Polish education

1 Introduction

Ever since the process approach to writing became favored over the product approach throughout the 1960s and 1970s, when the extensive research done on this complex skill from a brand-new perspective gained further momentum (see, e.g.,

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Emig, 1971; Flower, 1979; Perl, 1979; Stallard, 1974), both first language (L1) and second language (L2) writing instruction have undergone substantial changes in terms of recommended methodologies and the roles of learners and teachers in the educational setting. The ever-growing body of evidence clearly pointing to the benefits of switching to more process-oriented teaching strategies has resulted in the global emergence of writing curricula based upon the premise that teachers provide learners with procedural support on their path to developing solid writing skills (see, e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). One method of providing such support is written feedback, the importance of which had not become emphasized until the emergence of the process approach (Matsuda, 2003).

The product approach constitutes a model of writing instruction concentrated on text as an object rather than discourse and its overall form (Hyland, 2008; Raimes, 1991). This particular paradigm pays little attention, if at all, to the process of composing itself, focusing mainly on concerns related to the structure, style, genre, and proper language use (Young, 1978). Another assumption in product-oriented pedagogy is that "writers know what they are going to say before they begin to write; thus, their most important task when they are preparing to write is finding a form into which to organize their content" (Hairston, 1982, p. 78). Consequently, teaching writing based on the product approach revolves around helping learners master written genres primarily through the analysis of literary texts serving as prototypes for their compositions (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Straub, 2000), as well as providing them with a linear outline and rigidly established rules to follow for the purpose of carrying out error-free writing. Language correctness is especially prominent in an L2 writing setting, where particular emphasis is put on the reinforcement of the accurate application of grammatical rules through exercises requiring learners to manipulate linguistic structures (Raimes, 1991). In general, product-centered writing instruction does not offer learners many opportunities to receive content-based feedback, revise, find their individual style by being able to express themselves, or choose their own topic (Matsuda, 2003).

As opposed to the product approach, the process approach is based on the premise that writing does not simply consist in a transcription of the writers' pre-planned ideas, but can be considered a learning process in and of itself, during which learners organize their knowledge and engage in constant revision (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In this paradigm, the learner is depicted as the creator of original compositions, and the procedures and strategies involved in the writing and revising stages gain prominence (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Langer & Applebee, 1987). With the notion of writing as a complex thinking process, product-oriented and teacher-centered pedagogy is replaced with a process-oriented and student-centered one (Matsuda, 2003). Consequently, process-oriented writing instruction not only recognizes the active role of novice writers in organizing, reshaping, and refining their thoughts, but also encourages them to perceive their development as an ongoing process and the occurrence of errors in their writing as expected (Langer & Applebee, 1987). With this approach comes the decrease in the teacher's control over learners' texts, which allows the latter to explore the process of writing

independently (Murray, 1990/1972). An interesting feature of the process approach is the introduction of peer feedback and encouragement of peer tutoring (see Chang, 2016, for a research review of this notion; Wakabayashi, 2013).

In spite of the widespread popularity of the process-oriented pedagogies and the role that written teacher response plays in shaping learners' writing skills, English as a foreign language (EFL) writing instruction in Poland appears to be centered mostly around product-based methodologies (cf. Majchrzak & Salski, 2016), especially in the context of secondary school EFL instruction in which learners' proficiency in all four language skills is eventually tested during the Matura exam (i.e. the secondary school exit exam). Therefore, EFL language classes in this setting may resemble preparatory courses, where language correctness, also in writing, constitutes the primary focus of teacher commentaries, and summative rather than formative feedback dominates (Baran-Łucarz, 2019). The aim of this chapter is to discuss tendencies regarding teacher feedback to the writing of secondary school EFL learners in the Polish classroom context. Using a questionnaire and an interview, the authors asked a group of English teachers to comment on their way of teaching writing in English and their way of offering feedback in order to identify potential traces of the leading approach.

2 The Role and Benefits of Teacher Feedback

In the most general understanding, feedback can be defined as "input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision" (Keh, 1990, p. 294). This information, presented in a form of comments, questions, and suggestions, is intended to help the writer transform his/her text into reader-based prose (Flower, 1979) that successfully communicates the thoughts of the author to the intended recipients. In the writing classroom, where one of the roles assumed by teachers is that of a reader (Keh, 1990; Leki, 1991), teacher response aims at reminding students about the presence of an audience, making them evaluate their texts from a reader's point of view, and aiding them as they learn to develop control over their writing (Sommers, 1982). However, when it comes to teaching writing in the L2 context, what also needs to be taken into account while responding to student writing is L2 students' unique situation as language learners. The challenges faced by these students, such as their unfamiliarity or lack of experience with L2 structures, warrant the inclusion of some elements of prescriptive instruction in teacher feedback (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Leki, 1991). On the other hand, since in the process approach to L2 writing students are perceived not only as language learners but also as creators of original written discourse, and particular attention is paid to the content of the composition rather than exclusively its form (see, e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Raimes, 1991), teacher feedback in this context revolves around students' writing processes in the first place, whereas issues related to linguistic accuracy tend to be de-emphasized and delayed until students have generated and explored the ideas regarding the topic and content of their texts (Raimes, 1983, 1991).

The research conducted on written teacher feedback suggests that not only does it constitute a fundamental element of process-oriented writing pedagogy as a whole (Hyland, 1990; Keh, 1990), but it is also considered a major aspect of L2 writing courses across the world (Hyland & Hyland, 2019) and the most common method of responding to student writing utilized by teachers due to its feasibility and thoroughness (Leki, 1990). Regarded as a task of utmost importance in the L2 writing setting (Ferris, 1995; Ferris et al., 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Leki, 1990) and a primary medium of communication and interaction with students (Ferris, 1995; Ferris et al., 1997), the practice of providing commentary on student texts has proven to have a profound impact on the overall development and consolidation of L2 students' writing skills (Hyland, 1990; Hyland & Hyland, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2019). Other benefits of teacher feedback acknowledged by researchers include its potential value in student motivation and effective self-expression (Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2006a; Lipińska, 2021) and the improvement of both language and composing proficiency (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Ferris et al., 1997; Ferris et al., 2013; Razali, 2015). With research backing up the positive impact of feedback on learning L2 writing and teachers' belief that their written responses help students learn and improve (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Leki, 1990) by offering crucial information about their performance in this regard (Zamel, 1985), written teacher response is stipulated to prevail amongst other forms of teacher support (Ferris, 2003).

3 Guiding Principles for Effective Feedback

The studies that investigated written teacher response have resulted in the formulation of several recommended principles and practical strategies of constructing feedback in order to maximize the benefits that this form of teacher support may offer to L2 writers (for an overview see, e.g., Ferris, 2003, 2014). While Straub (2000) rightfully points out that there is not a single proper method of commenting on student writing and that the choice of the most suitable practices is determined by the teacher's individual preferences, particular needs of students, and specific circumstances, he argues that teacher feedback should be based upon certain accepted principles. Therefore, adhering to such a set of predetermined principles is meant to help teachers develop and refine their commenting strategies as well as to direct their attention to the purpose and methodology behind their feedback (Ferris, 2003).

One crucial principle of providing effective teacher feedback pertains to its timing in relation to how advanced the stage of a given written work is (Straub, 2000) as well as to whether students are enabled to submit subsequent drafts of the same task for revision (Hyland, 1990). Additionally, research shows that teacher response proves to be most effective when provided in the course of the composing process

as opposed to commenting solely on the final versions of students' texts (Ferris, 1995, 1997; Leki, 1991), as in the latter case, students have neither the motivation nor the reason to give any consideration to teacher's comments. In her study on student response to teacher feedback, Ferris (1995, p. 36) reports that a multiple-draft design of the writing course successfully addresses these issues, because "[when] students must rethink and revise previously written essay drafts, they are more likely to pay close attention to their teachers' advice on how to do so than in a situation in which they are merely receiving a graded paper with comments and corrections to apply to a completely new essay assignment." Moreover, Hyland (1990), who claims that the implementation of the drafting and revising stages leads to significant improvement in the final version of student texts, emphasizes the need for feedback to be interactive so that students are given an actual opportunity to adequately respond to and act on the teacher's comments and suggestions. Therefore, with the introduction of the multi-draft approach to writing accompanied by providing responses on intermediate drafts rather than the final ones, feedback does not function merely as a justification of a grade (Hyland, 1990), but also as a tool to motivate and encourage students to undertake revision.

Effective feedback also requires the teacher to prioritize and place an adequate focus on certain aspects depending on a particular draft (Ferris, 2003; Keh, 1990; Straub, 2000). Prioritization may involve addressing content-related aspects of a text, before attending to stylistic or linguistic errors after students have fully developed their ideas for a given writing assignment (Raimes, 1983, 1991). The recommendation to comment on these issues in such an order stems from the fact that remarks on content are usually highly text-specific (Ferris, 2014), as opposed to those on linguistic matters. As a consequence, students might not see the point of feedback regarding their ideas when it is provided on the final draft due to its limited usability in the next writing project, but may find practical value in form-oriented comments that are not bound by the specifications of a particular task and can be successfully reapplied in a different writing context (Ferris, 1995). Furthermore, interim feedback that emphasizes concerns directly related to the requirements of a given assignment or a writing stage prevents overburdening students' attention and enables them to gradually apply necessary corrections in a given revision cycle (Ferris, 2003) and according to the immediate needs (Ferris, 1997, 2014; Straub, 2000).

While there are many other recommended strategies when it comes to providing well-constructed teacher commentary on L2 students' compositions, it can be argued that the guiding principles discussed above constitute a very basic foundation for student-centered feedback that is in line with the premises of the process approach to writing; namely, the creation of multiple drafts, emphasis on revision, and focus on the content before addressing the form. As a result, incorporating these principles in the feedback strategy applied to the writing classroom appears to be a reasonable step towards moving from strictly form-focused writing instruction to the one that promotes the multifaceted development of writing skills.

4 The Study

To investigate current feedback practices of EFL teachers on learners' written texts, a survey study, employing a questionnaire and an interview, was conducted in selected Polish secondary schools. The rationale for the study was to explore whether there are any grounds to believe that written teacher response in this context is still more product-based in spite of various research findings supporting a more process-oriented pedagogy, and whether it needs to undergo any substantial changes to align with these current trends in teaching writing. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What forms of feedback practices do Polish secondary school EFL teachers incorporate in their writing instruction?
2. Are these practices in line with the research supporting the implementation of process-oriented feedback?

4.1 Participants and Data Collection

The pilot study involved 40 EFL teachers from seven Polish secondary schools who responded to an open request to take part in the research. The majority of the participants (n = 33) were female, while seven were male. Their teaching experience varied between 2 and 30 years.

The study methodology included two research tools. A questionnaire designed for the purpose of this pilot study assessed whether the teachers' preferred strategies and methods of feedback provision lean more towards the product approach or the process approach to writing. In the second phase of the pilot study, the respondents were asked to answer in more detail upon their writing instruction practices so the nature of the observed tendencies and contradictions revealed in the questionnaire could be clarified.

The questionnaire comprised 18 questions in total (see Appendix 1) generating qualitative and quantitative data that could be roughly divided into three overlapping sections. The first section consisted of three questions aimed at establishing a simplified teaching profile of each participant by acquiring information regarding the language proficiency level of his/her students, the number of hours of English taught on a weekly basis, their didactic decisions regarding teaching writing in EFL context, and their prioritization of the four basic language skills taught in their English classes. The subsequent section consisted of 10 questions that revolved around the teachers' attitudes to writing as a skill and their methods of teaching writing in general. The answers to these questions were expected to help formulate a premise for the analysis of beliefs and experiences underpinning the respondents' teaching strategies in relation to the kind of commentary that they provide on their learners' texts. The final section was made up of four questions related to the teachers' assessment and feedback practices and concluded with one question requiring

the participants to express their opinion as to what factors contribute to students' difficulties with writing.

Moreover, the interview was prepared as a follow-up research tool meant to shed more light on the details regarding teaching writing with the focus on feedback provision. The semi-structured interview consisted of four groups of questions circling around aspects that teachers consider vital while providing feedback, the content of their comments, the approach to assessment of learners' texts, as well as their grading policy (see Appendix 2). The interview was conducted online and recoded.

4.2 Results and Analysis

Questionnaire Results and Analysis

All 40 participants taught groups of learners at the so-called extended level i.e. reaching an equivalent of B2 in CEFR (cf. Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej [Ministry of Education, abbrev. MEN], 2018) on average 16 contact hours per week. Moreover, 40% of the teachers (n = 16) were also teaching groups at the basic level i.e. reaching an equivalent of B1 in CEFR (cf. MEN, 2018) on average 4 h per week.

When asked to rank the importance of the four basic language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), 90% (n = 36) of the teachers answered that all of these skills were equally important, and the remaining 10% (n = 4) chose the productive skills, i.e., writing and speaking, as the most crucial ones. The belief that writing can be taught was shared by all of the respondents, and the overwhelming majority (95%; n = 38) also agreed that it should be taught at schools, with only 5% (n = 2) holding an opposing view. However, in terms of devoting more time to teaching writing, 65% (n = 26) of the teachers expressed a negative opinion, claiming that there was already enough time to teach this skill, 20% (n = 8) supported such an option only in the case of students who learn English at the basic level, and 15% (n = 6) agreed that there should be more time dedicated to writing instruction in general.

Out of 40 teachers, 45% (n = 18) responded to the follow-up open question regarding the possible obstacles preventing them from dedicating more time to teaching writing. The most prominent complaint was a significant shortage of time in relation to the vast requirements of the National Curriculum involving not only writing, but also the other language skills, the need to prepare students for the Matura exam, and excessive teacher workload. As for the possible concerns or problems related to teaching writing, 75% (n = 30) of the teachers did not report experiencing any issues, whereas 25% (n = 10) confirmed that they had encountered some difficulties, all of which were attributed to learners and pertained to their lack of concentration on a given task, motivation to learn, willingness to devote more time to writing assignments, or awareness of the importance of text composition. 5% (n = 2) of the teachers also mentioned problems related to instructing individuals with dyslexia.

The average number of hours allotted for written exercises involving the expression of ideas was 4 h per week for the extended level and less than 1 h per week for the basic level. As can be seen in Fig. 1, the most common writing assignments given to learners were essays and letters, which were selected by all of the respondents, closely followed by school newsletter articles (75% of the respondents, n = 30), stories and narratives (55%, n = 22), reviews (50%, n = 20), and descriptions (45%, n = 18). The least popular choices were blog entries (15%, n = 6), forum posts, and news reports (5% of the respondents for both options, n = 2).

When rating the importance of four different aspects of their learners' writing (i.e., grammar, organization, content, and style), 75% (n = 30) of the teachers found the content to be the most important aspect of their learners' texts, 20% (n = 8) were mostly concerned with organization, and only 5% (n = 2) considered grammar to be the priority. None of the participants paid particular attention to style, which was most often viewed as relatively unimportant (see Fig. 2).

When it comes to the preparatory activities conducted during writing classes, the teachers usually selected more than one such activity, with the most frequently used ones being discussing a model text (95%, n = 38) and providing specific grammar and vocabulary (90%, n = 36). Introductory readings and/or group discussions were used by 40% (n = 16) of the respondents, whereas 5% (n = 2) selected providing only the topic and/or specifying the genre. The average number of both in-class writing assignments and take-home assignments was three per semester.

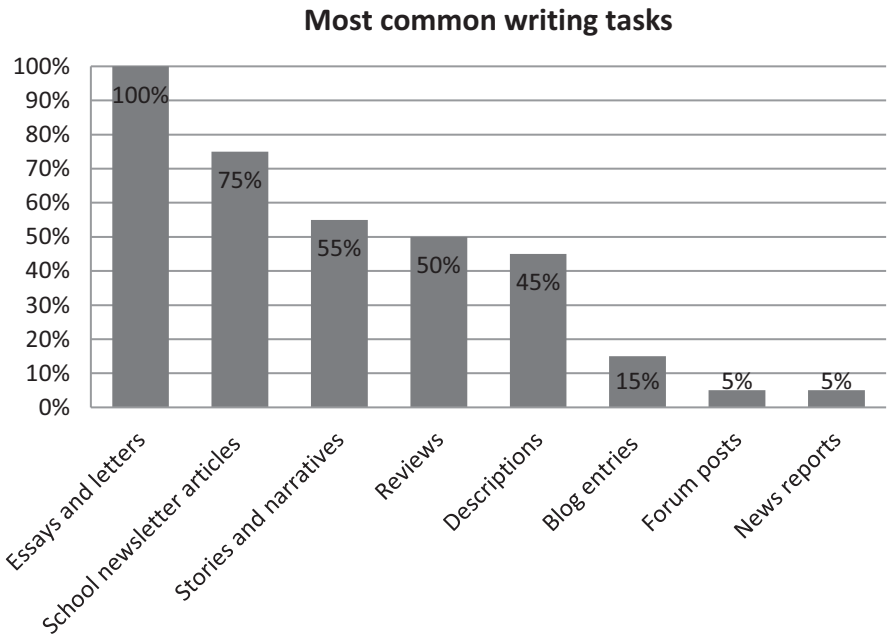

Fig. 1 Most commonly assigned writing tasks (Question 10)

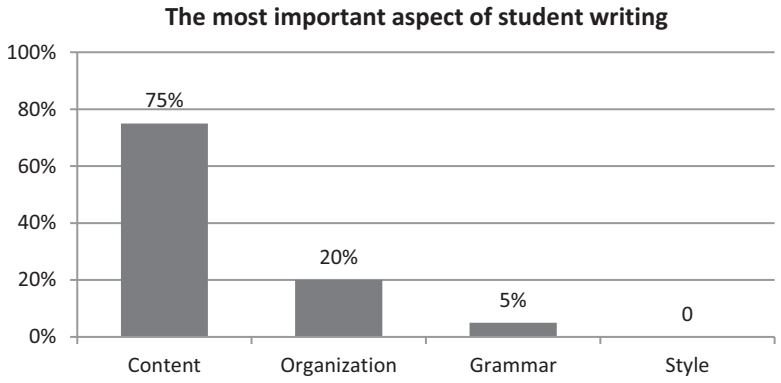

Fig. 2 The most important aspect of student writing according to the teachers' rating (Question 11)

Rewrites were allowed by all of the teachers, but mostly when students received a negative grade (70% of the respondents, n = 28). For 25% (n = 10) of the participants, rewriting was permitted in general and without any conditions, whereas 5% (n = 2) of the teachers enabled students to rewrite their texts only upon the latter's request.

Comments and suggestions for rewrites were provided by 65% (n = 26) of the teachers, while the remaining 35% (n = 14) did not engage in such a practice. The most common method of assessing learner texts involved carefully marking errors and providing extra comments on language, content, and/or organization (all 40 respondents). None of the teachers selected the remaining three options, although 5% (n = 2) included an additional comment stating that they also suggested "better answers" to their students. While grading their students' writing assignments, 50% (n = 20) of the teachers focused the most on content, 40% (n = 16) on language, and 10% (n = 4) on the organization of a text.

Finally, the inquiry about the sources of learners' difficulties with writing revealed that the majority of the teachers (75%, n = 30) believed that it was learners' inability to express their thoughts in writing due to problems with content and organization, 60% (n = 24) pointed to students ignoring the teacher's suggestions for improving their writing, 30% (n = 12) suggested their own inability to attend to every learner's needs and 25% (n = 10) found the insufficient amount of time dedicated exclusively to classroom writing activities to be the problem.

Several contradictions can be noticed in the answers provided by the teachers. For example, the vast majority of the respondents agree that writing can and should be taught. Although more than a half of them do not see the need to increase the number of hours devoted to teaching this skill and believe that it receives enough attention as it is, a lack of time repeatedly appears among the problems reported by these teachers. In fact, two of the teachers openly stated that time constraints prevented them from arranging more than a single rewrite per assignment, suggesting that they would apply a multi-draft approach to their writing classroom if the circumstances allowed it.

Keeping in mind that effective teacher response requires a setting where a text can be gradually developed over a series of drafts, it can be inferred that in the investigated secondary schools, an ample amount of time was available only for the product-based writing instruction involving the completion of an entire composition within a relatively short period, but not for the process-based one, where multiple rewrites are a common practice and interim feedback is feasible.

Another instance where the participants of this study gave contradicting answers is the selection of the most crucial feature of learner texts in comparison to the primary focus of the commentary on these texts and their assessment. Although content definitely prevailed over the remaining three aspects that the teachers found to be the most important in their learners' works, the situation changed in favor of language in terms of grading and feedback provision. In spite of the contrasting answers in this regard, all teachers claimed that when assessing learner compositions, they carefully marked errors and gave extra comments on content and/or organization. Nevertheless, the practice of simultaneously addressing every type of concern, especially on a finished product, stands in opposition to the characteristics of effective feedback strategy, where different problems are emphasized at different stages of composing. The commentary provided on students' assignments was not interactive in nature as they were very rarely presented with an opportunity to apply the suggestions made by their teachers in subsequent drafts, if at all. As can be seen, in the existing classroom conditions, teachers did not tend to adjust the focus of their comments according to the revised draft or provide truly interactive feedback, and students did not receive any incentive to actually undertake the revision of their texts. Overall, the results of the questionnaire seem to suggest that not only is process-oriented writing instruction scarce in the investigated secondary schools, but, more importantly, the practices of feedback provision are largely product-based.

Interview Results and Analysis

Only three volunteer teachers decided to participate in the follow up interview – two very experienced in their profession – 27 and 23 years of teaching practice, respectively; and one in the profession for just a few years.

The first participant – well experienced in EFL teaching (23 years of teaching practice) – drew attention to a dominant washback effect of Polish Matura exam on her approach to teaching and assessing writing. The majority of her writing assignments reflected Matura exam text types that she assessed using Matura exam criteria for writing (cf. CKE, 2013, 2021). These criteria constituted the basis of her writing instruction, with most attention being drawn to the use of language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling). According to the teacher, language accuracy in learners' writing was the most important aspect of their texts as it straightforwardly affected cohesion. The teacher focused also on topic development and text organization in her assessment.

Regarding the nature of her feedback, she issued written comments that were sometimes extensive, especially when there were plenty of language lapses in texts.

Furthermore, the teacher offered her feedback once only and did not offer the learners an opportunity to multi-draft their compositions. The teacher claimed that with a large number of learners to guide and a limited time devoted to teaching writing, it was unrealistic to work on multiple drafts with multiple extensive comments. Again she underlined that preparing students for the Matura examination was the main objective of writing instruction. Apart from the written feedback, she allowed for oral communication regarding problem areas underlined or marked otherwise in her feedback. Nevertheless, her preferred way of working on learners' errors in writing was having students discus the incorrect forms in groups. Focusing on learners' mistakes/errors was a key element of her feedback that aimed at helping learners improve their future writing.

The teacher perceived giving feedback not merely as a justification for the grade but, most importantly, as a set of instructions and suggestions on what to focus on and what to avoid in the next writing task. In her feedback, she differentiated between learners in lower forms (cf. freshman, junior) and learners from the senior form. With freshman learners, the teacher offered detailed markings that included the type of errors and possible accurate forms to use, whereas with senior groups she only indicated the errors and encouraged learners to correct them themselves in order to foster students' autonomy in error correction.

What is interesting, occasionally, the teacher assigned her students some writing tasks that served a purpose of entertainment. Learners wrote a story or some other text genre, and then read their texts on the class forum. The class then voted on whose story/text was the most interesting, while the teacher provided very positive feedback that focused on the strengths of the text.

The second teacher, also very experienced (27 years of teaching practice), acknowledged devoting most of her class time to Matura exam preparation and employing Matura exam criteria to provide feedback. She claimed that it was fairly easy both to explain the rules of text organization and to teach learners to be adhere to the writing tasks' instructions. Language use, however, appeared to be the most challenging for the learners to acquire; thus, in her comments, she drew attention mostly to that aspect. In her words: "If a learner can manage the language, s/he can manage writing, including text organization and content."

Second of all, feedback she offered to her learners always contained comments regarding problem areas, errors/mistakes or other lapses in writing. A positive comment was granted especially in error-free texts. She marked errors, added suggestions of accurate form or use, and in rare cases allowed learners to rewrite a text to get a better grade.

The teacher openly confirmed that high-school conditions did not leave much space for teaching writing. The number of hours devoted to teaching writing, which is one of the language skills to be developed during class time, limited the opportunities for introducing a process approach to writing. It was more time efficient to practise a variety of shorter texts written just once and to follow a set of concrete assessment criteria than to work extensively on just one or two texts per semester.

Similarly to the previous teacher, this respondent also mentioned introducing writing tasks that are not Matura-based. However, these rather rare extra writing

tasks were addressed only to volunteers who wanted to explore their creativity in writing. This gave them a chance to write freely longer pieces and enjoy the lack of formal boundaries imposed by exam-type tasks. The feedback in such tasks focused on various aspects of learner writing, with language being the leading one again.

The third participant representing a group of younger and less experienced teachers (6 years of teaching experience) in her interview yet again confirmed the practices of the more experienced colleagues. She stated that the key factor affecting her approach to teaching writing was the National Curriculum for foreign language instruction. As a result, as she stated, she tended to follow the coursebook closely, while the Matura exam requirements became a point of reference in the written assessment and feedback. For example, her usual teaching strategy involved an introduction of model texts characteristic of the Matura exam that her learners had to analyze carefully and then apply as a basis of their compositions. The teacher employed assessment criteria similar to those used by Matura exam board members to evaluate her students' performance especially in terms of content and organization. As she explained, not only did such means of assessment familiarize her learners with official criteria, but also they appeared to be a fairly reliable tool for providing an approximation of how their texts would likely be graded during the exam. When asked if she introduced any additional writing activities that might serve a different purpose than just exam preparation, the teacher responded that on average there was no time for any extracurricular activities, and exam preparation was her leading didactic goal that required a uniform approach.

The choice of tasks and criteria affected the way she taught, assessed and provided feedback to writing. In addition to the above-described assessment criteria, the teacher stated that her feedback practices incorporated the provision of written comments along with holding face-to-face conferences with students after returning the graded assignments. In both instances, her typical feedback covered issues related to language and stylistic correctness, content and organization. The problem areas in her learners' texts were explained in relation to the model texts and task requirements. During the conferences, she discussed a given composition in depth, elaborating on her in-text remarks and further detailing what changes would be appropriate. Despite asserting that language was of secondary importance to content and organization, her feedback to students' short texts focused mostly on lapses and errors that were marked, corrected and discussed with learners.

Furthermore, although her written and oral feedback did feature suggestions for improvement, she seemed to view them as rather definitive and universal, expecting her learners to use them in future writing tasks or make-up assignments. As she underlined, "of course, the [final] grade is important to students, but what is more important is that they write their future texts better."

The data obtained from the interviews indicate that the teachers tend to apply writing instruction and assessment that are compatible with the product approach. The learners typically do not practice multi-drafting and are given an opportunity to rewrite the assignment only if they receive a bad/negative grade. Consequently, this infrequent option of rewriting text is not seen as an opportunity to develop students' writing skills as a long-term process.

The negative washback effect of Matura exam is evident. The teachers seem to organise their writing classes around the Matura exam preparation, which is reflected in the text types that are specified in the examination requirements, e.g., a note, an announcement, an invitation, wishes, a message, SMS, a postcard, an e-mail, a story, a private letter, a curriculum vitae, a cover letter, a blog entry (cf. the basic Matura level, MEN, 2018), as well as a review, an article, or an essay (cf. the extended Matura level, MEN, 2018). Feedback provision also relies on formal aspects of compositions stipulated in the exam objectives. Although the teachers underline the role of text organisation and composition, the feedback seems to be focused predominantly on language accuracy. Other, less restricted types of texts are introduced sporadically to give the students an opportunity to receive feedback on their actual written performance, rather than the usual comments that centre around the form and language. The seemingly trivial writing for entertainment may be one of the rare occasions for the learners to notice their strengths in writing.

5 Discussion

Considering the study results, the answers to the posed research questions point to a clear tendency. Teachers claim not to have a sufficient amount of time to introduce multiple drafts when teaching writing to high school learners of English, despite the fact that learners have approximately 5–6 h of English instruction per week. For this reason, teachers do not follow the process approach to writing as popularized by Ferris et al. (1997). Instead, they provide comments, usually underlining problem areas connected with the language itself, together with the final grade as a form of assessment of their learners' texts, which stands in opposition to the process approach practices (cf. Ferris, 1995, 1997; Leki, 1991). Being focused solely on the final product, the teachers do not comment on or assess the process of writing in any way. The learners have a chance to revise and/or rewrite their texts only to receive receive a higher grade.

In the investigated contexts, language-based feedback seems to dominate. The reason for that may lie in a strong washback effect of the Matura exam that Polish high-school learners are being prepared for (a tendency observed also by Baran-Łucarz, 2019). It is important to mention that the objectives of the Matura exam reflect to the point the National Curriculum (MEN, 2018). Clearly, the research results point to the fact that the Polish EFL teachers teach writing in alignment with these documents; however, that practice is far from the assumptions of the process approach, in which the content-based approach to feedback is a priority (cf. Raimes, 1983, 1991). Other types of texts are introduced only occasionally, when time allows, to give students a chance to enjoy writing for pleasure, focus on the text content and write creatively.

On the whole, secondary school English teachers can autonomously decide on how to prepare their learners for the Matura exam writing task; still, this study reports that there is a clear tendency to follow a one-draft approach to writing

(cf. the product approach). The teachers typically offer their feedback once only, which results in highlighting all spotted errors, mistakes and other lapses in language, organization and topic development. This is again in contrast to the process approach, in which learners may be requested to focus on one aspect at a time depending on their individual needs (see Ferris, 1997, 2003, 2014; Straub, 2000).

A significant number of respondents report that learners' difficulties with writing stem, among others, from the latter's unwillingness to apply the former's suggestions for improvement in their future tasks. Nevertheless, as learners are expected to complete their compositions in a single draft that undergoes assessment immediately upon submission and cannot be revised past this stage, they are not presented with any opportunities to adequately respond to teachers' suggestions unless they receive a failing grade or are allowed a rewrite. With such limited possibility to act upon teacher comments, virtually no interaction occurs between the learner and the teacher regarding writing in the investigated context – interaction that normally constitutes an important factor in process-oriented feedback especially when it comes to encouraging motivation to revise (Hyland, 1990).

In a process-oriented classroom, feedback is meant to help learners express themselves effectively (Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b) by guiding them towards the exploration and development of their own ideas in writing (Raimes, 1983, 1991). However, as Polish EFL learners are expected to create content that complies with the requirements of a given assignment, teacher feedback in this context essentially revolves around the proper fulfillment of task instructions. The need to adhere to a set of predetermined criteria for the purpose of imitating a previously introduced model text is detrimental to the promotion of self-expression within an original composition. This situation once again reflects the prevalence of product-based feedback practices resulting from the preparations for the Matura exam.

Nonetheless, as this study was designed as a pilot trial, the results presented herein need to be considered as tentative. Another limitation that may render relevant is the number of participants. A follow up study might be considered to collect data from a much larger cohort to confirm the observed tendencies in Polish teachers' approach to English writing instruction and the type of feedback they provide to their learners at the secondary level. It might also be compelling to investigate whether there are any significant differences in the teaching of writing approach among more and less experienced educators.

6 Conclusions

Teachers need to navigate their choices to manage teaching various language aspects and skills in the time dedicated to classroom instruction. It is understandable that in their choices to teach writing in English as a skill they need to consider various variables, such as following the guidelines of the National Curriculum, preparing learners for their final Matura exam and offering them guidance in language

development through feedback on their texts. To this end, teachers tend to rely on the product approach to writing – an approach that seems practical, time efficient and optimal for secondary school education. Within this approach, learners write plenty of one-draft short texts, receive feedback predominantly on language accuracy and text organization, rarely have a chance to rewrite texts, and never have a chance to experience writing as a process.

The authors of this chapter postulate to reconsider the general tendency to follow the product approach to teaching writing at secondary level, especially in terms of providing feedback on learner performance. Given the overwhelming popularity and efficacy of the process-based pedagogy propagated in L2 writing courses across the world, the Polish EFL writing classrooms could potentially benefit from adopting the current global trend rooted in well-researched practices, especially in terms of a more student-centered response system, where the multi-faceted improvement of learners' performance matters the most. It is perspicuous that the exceptional situation of EFL learners as writers requires them to work on their language proficiency alongside their writing skills, and thus teacher feedback must include some prescriptive elements. However, students should not be deprived of the opportunity to at least occasionally reflect upon their written output and review it with the teacher's procedural support and guidance beyond error correction. The recommendation for the application of more process-oriented strategies of teaching writing to Polish EFL learners that involve the provision of content-based commentary as opposed to the one concerned primarily with linguistic matters arises from the repeatedly proven assets of the process approach when it comes to the consolidation of both language and writing skills, as well as the overall development of mental processes that occur during the act of text composition.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Teaching EFL Writing in High School

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information concerning EFL writing instruction in Polish high schools. The information is gathered for research purposes only. The identity of the respondent will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

1. *On average, how many hours of English per week do you teach to students according to their language proficiency level? Please specify.*

Students' language proficiency level	*Number of hours*
Basic	_____ *hours/week*
Extended	_____ *hours/week*

2. Is it up to you to decide what you teach specifically during your English classes?

☐ *Yes, I can make independent decisions on my teaching schedule.*
☐ *No, there is a predetermined program that I must adhere to.*

3. How would you rate the importance of the four basic language skills?

☐ *The productive skills (i.e. writing and speaking) are the most important.*
☐ *The receptive skills (i.e. reading and listening) are the most important.*
☐ *All of these skills are equally important.*
☐ *Other (please specify).*

4. Do you believe that writing can be taught?

☐ *Yes, like any other skill, writing can be mastered, given proper teacher guidance and student motivation.*
☐ *No, writing is more of an innate gift which is developed implicitly.*

5. Do you believe that writing should be taught?

☐ *Yes, it should be taught.*
☐ *No, it should not be taught.*

6. In your opinion, should more time be devoted to teaching writing?

☐ *Yes.*
☐ *Yes, but only to students who learn English at the basic level.*
☐ *Yes, but only to students who learn English at the extended level.*
☐ *No, there is already enough time to teach this skill.*

7. What do you think are the obstacles that prevent teachers from dedicating more time to teaching writing? Please elaborate.

8. Do you have any concerns and/or problems regarding teaching writing? Please elaborate.

9. Could you roughly estimate how much of your teaching time is allotted for written exercises involving students' expression of ideas?

Students' language proficiency level	*Number of hours*
Basic	_____ *hours/week*
Extended	_____ *hours/week*

10. What kind of writing assignments do you give to your students? You can tick more than one box.

Writing assignments in my class
☐ Descriptions
☐ Stories/Narratives
☐ Letters
☐ School newsletter articles
☐ Reviews
☐ Other (please specify).

11. What do you look for in a student's text? Please rank each of the following items in order of importance from 1 to 4, where 1 is the most important and 4 is the least important.

☐ Flawless grammar
☐ Good content
☐ Good organization
☐ Style appropriate for the genre of the text

12. How do you prepare your students to write given assignments?

☐ I discuss a model text.
☐ I provide specific grammar and vocabulary.
☐ I use introductory readings and/or group discussions.
☐ I only provide the topic and/or specify the genre.
☐ Other (please specify).

13. How many writing assignments do your students complete per semester? Please specify.

Type of assignment	*Number of assignments per semester*
In-class writing assignments	_____ *assignments/semester*
Take-home assignment	_____ *assignments/semester*

14. Are your students allowed to rewrite the same assignment before you grade it?

☐ Yes.
☐ Yes, but only if they ask for it.
☐ Yes, but rewrites are allowed only when the students receive a bad grade.
☐ No.

15. Do you give your students any comments on how they can rewrite their texts?

☐ Yes.
☐ Yes, but I comment only when giving a final grade on their assignment.
☐ No.

16. Which of the sentences below best describes your way of assessing students' texts?

☐ I carefully mark errors in my students' texts and provide additional comments. ☐ *What is the focus of these comments?* ☐ Language. ☐ Content. ☐ Organization. ☐ All of the above.
☐ I carefully mark errors in my students' texts, but do not provide any extra comments.
☐ I mark errors selectively and provide some additional comments if necessary.
☐ Other (please specify).

17. On what aspects of your students' texts do you usually focus on the most while grading? Please rank each of the following items in order of importance from 1 to 3, where 1 is the most important and 3 is the least important.

☐ Language.
☐ Content.
☐ Organization.

18. What do you think causes students' difficulties with writing? You can tick more than one box.

☐ Insufficient amount of time dedicated exclusively to classroom writing activities.
☐ Teacher's inability to attend to every student's needs.
☐ Students' inability to express their thoughts in writing due to problems with content and organization.
☐ Students ignoring teacher's suggestions for improving their writing.
☐ Other (please specify).

End of questionnaire
Thank you

Appendix 2: Interview

1. Which of these aspects do you find most important in a student text: language, content or organization? Why?
2. Do you give your students any comments on how they can rewrite their texts? If yes, how do you do it (in writing, orally)? What kind of comments do you give? What is the purpose of these comments? What do you focus on the most when giving such feedback (content, organization, etc.)? In case of feedback on the final draft, is your commentary meant to justify the final grade or provide some tips to be taken into consideration for future writing assignments? If not, why not? How do you instruct your students to address their issues with writing in this situation?
3. How do you assess your students' texts? Do you mark errors and/or provide additional comments? What kind of comments do you give? What is the main focus of these comments (language/content/organization/all of them)? If your feedback is error-based, how do you address the issues with the remaining aspects of your students' texts, if at all?
4. What aspects of your students' texts do you usually focus on the most while grading (language/content/organization)? Why?

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Exploring Teacher Engagement on the Example of Polish FL Teachers

Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska

Abstract In the self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation results from autonomy, competence and relatedness. This motivation is compared to engagement which entails active participation and involvement. It integrates affective, cognitive and behavioural components. Teachers and learners, in order to get engaged in the learning-teaching process, need to be emotionally involved, they ought to activate thinking processes, as well as they should take actions. For both teachers and learners, the willingness to get engaged, arrives when they feel safe and accepted as part of the group or staff as well as when they have responsibilities for their own learning and teaching. To explore teacher engagement in the educational process, a survey was designed to research involvement of the participants in different activities at their institutions. The study consists of a questionnaire administered to in-service teachers. The investigation will probe the perception of engagement of the respondents in four dimensions of engagement: cognitive, emotional, social with students and social with colleagues at work. The results will inform teacher training programmes on how to prepare trainees so that they can achieve self-realisation in the profession through engagement.

Keywords Teacher engagement · Wellbeing · Self-efficacy · Self-realisation

1 Introduction

Engagement can be represented by a condition of increased attention and involvement which is realized in the cognitive, social, affective and behavioural dimensions (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). The concept of engagement can be compared to motivation and it may be defined as active participation and involvement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 2). According to these authors, engagement is an active, holistic

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and practical construct. It entails active contribution of the participants in the teaching-learning process, it combines a variety of factors influencing the educational context as well as it advocates practical aspects which are favourable for both the learners and the teachers. Engagement is also considered one of the factors influencing wellbeing in the PERMA model along with positive emotions, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). This construct may be related to the concept of flow as conceptualized by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) who describes it as the way "people have used to describe the sense of effortless action they feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 29).

There are two theories which feed understanding of engagement: the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). The self-determination theory refers to relational engagement and it claims that a person will achieve the state of wellbeing by accomplishing the three needs: the need for relatedness, the need for competence and the need for autonomy (Patrick et al., 2007). Relatedness can be interpreted as the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and it indicates the drive to establish relations with others but also connection with the task a person is involved in. The need for competence "reflects the need to feel effective in one's efforts and capable of achieving desired outcomes" (Patrick et al., 2007, p. 434). The need for autonomy indicates a need to have own will to perform actions, to accept own behaviours and to be the creator of own activities.

Kahn (1990) identified three psychological aspects related to engagement: meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness is the feeling which individuals may have about the relevance and usefulness of their activities so that they may experience the conviction about their value at work. Safety implies the state of a person in which they feel comfortable about their position at work and they do not fear any threat of their self-image and status. Availability entails access to physical, emotional and psychological resources while performing certain duties at a given point in time. Engagement is claimed to be significantly fixed with some changes occurring over time and it corresponds to both trait-like as well as state-like factors (Dalal et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2002a, b). It means that both more permanent individual differences as well as experiencing engagement at certain moments, may be qualified as realisations of this construct.

2 Work Engagement

Work engagement is a construct within the strand of motivation which represents investment of personal resources in tasks involved in a certain professional role (Christian et al., 2011). Work engagement influences a person's motivation in performing in the profession and stimulates their commitment to it. Most approaches to work engagement indicate cognitive, physical and affective involvement in work related tasks (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002a, b). Kahn (1990) conceptualized

work engagement as a physical, emotional and cognitive activity. Workers who are cognitively and physically engaged get involved, remain focused and expend effort in work-related tasks, while if they are also emotionally engaged, they receive affective rewards from their work. The concept of work engagement was also explored by Schaufeli et al. (2006) as a cognitive and affective state. Schaufeli et al. (2002a, b), explained work engagement as "… a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption" (p. 74). Vigour is understood as "high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties"; dedication entails "a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge" while absorption is interpreted as "being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work" (Schaufeli et al., 2002a, b, pp. 74–75).

Work engagement can be represented by a person's engagement and job satisfaction on accomplishment of certain job-related tasks. However, work engagement is different from job satisfaction as it incorporates work pleasure (dedication) and activation (vigour, absorption), while job satisfaction is a more passive concept (Bakker, 2011). Bakker et al. (2011) indicate two dimensions of work engagement, i.e. energy and involvement. Work engagement is also varied from work-related flow as it is a long lasting activity while flow may take place for shorter periods of time. Work engagement is a wider concept than motivation because it involves a cognitive activity (absorption) and an affective activity (vigour) as well as motivation (dedication). A similar concept to work engagement is job involvement which entails cognitive involvement of an individual and their care about the job (Paullay et al., 1994). Bakker and Xanthopoulou (2009) point to four reasons which explain in what way, engaged workers perform better that non-engaged ones. Such employees reveal positive emotions (gratitude, joy and enthusiasm), they are healthy, creative in their own job and personal resources, as well as encourage engagement in other workers in their environment.

2.1 The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was designed by Schaufeli et al. (2002a, b) with the aim to estimate work engagement operationalized by the worker's attitude to their duties with vigour (emotional), dedication (cognitive) and absorption (behavioural) which was the reverse of burnout. Vigour in this instrument may be interpreted as worker's absorption and dedication to work as well as accomplishment of their responsibilities with investment of significant energy. Dedication is realized by the worker's enthusiastic approach to work. Absorption results from the presence of vigour and dedication at work. The UWES is based on a self-report of 17 items composed of 6 items referring to vigour, 5 items related to dedication and 6 items intended to explore absorption. The UWES provides a definition of work engagement as a stable state of mind but not a personality trait (Seppälä et al., 2009,

p. 461). A worker is estimated to be on a spectrum between two extremes of "burnt out" or "engaged". Work engagement researched by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is mainly employed in the business setting (Bakker et al., 2011).

The concept of work engagement has also been transferred to the school setting and UWES student form was developed (Schaufeli et al., 2002a, b). The work engagement scale was adjusted to students by focusing on attendance to class and study tasks. Schaufeli et al. (2002a, b) applied the scale to Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch students to assess relationship between UWES-SF and academic performance. This scale was administered to Turkish high school students to investigate the mediating role of work engagement between academic procrastination and academic responsibility of the subjects (Çapri et al., 2017). However, the UWES did not incorporate some aspects specific for the teaching profession, such as, for instance, relationship of the teacher and the students. Student engagement has been researched quite extensively (Hiver et al., 2021; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), however teacher engagement is still a potential area for further investigation.

3 Teacher Work Engagement

Teacher engagement may be interpreted as participation in a goal-oriented activity (Perera et al., 2018). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale does not cover all the aspects which are relevant for the teaching profession, therefore, the Teacher Engagement Scale was developed. In particular social relationships with other teachers but also with the students, seem to be particularly relevant for enhancing engagement of teachers (Cinches et al., 2017). In their study, the researchers found out that teacher effectiveness variables (professionalism, instructional delivery, student engagement, learning environment and assessment) together with teacher engagement variables (student-teacher relation, improving pedagogy and participating in teaching-learning decisions), contribute to student engagement. Teacher engagement has been identified as a construct incorporating four dimensions (Klassen et al., 2013), cognitive engagement, emotional engagement and social engagement with students and colleagues. Cognitive engagement involves vigour, persistence and focusing attention on teaching. It may be compared to physical engagement and absorption in the UWES. Emotional engagement entails positive affect of teachers at work. It is related to dedication in UWES. Social engagement corresponds to caring for students and colleagues in the educational context as well as commitment and connection to them.

Effective teaching results from teachers who are motivated and engaged in their educational tasks, cognitively and emotionally, but also socially. Teacher engagement may influence learning achievement of the students and it may foster teacher's effectiveness (Klassen et al., 2012). Engaged teachers can manage more successfully work-related stress and prevent burnout. They assume also active roles at school as well as participate in its life. Engaged teachers "often (1) experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; (2) experience better

psychological and physical health; (3) create their own job and personal resources (e.g., support from others); (4) transfer their engagement to others" (Bakker et al., 2008, p. 193).

The construct of teacher engagement has been researched in relation to self-efficacy, job satisfaction and teacher personality. Teachers Work Engagement Scale (Klassen et al., 2013) was also designed to explore the construct in a more systematic way.

3.1 Teacher Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction and Engagement

Teacher self-efficacy is a construct which encompasses three areas (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001): self-efficacy for classroom management, self-efficacy for instructional strategies and self-efficacy for student engagement. Affective experiences may enhance self-efficacy beliefs which, in turn, influence further involvement in goal-oriented activities and thus may also be related to engagement (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy may be interpreted as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) revealed that higher self-efficacy indicated greater work engagement in Norwegian teachers and Simbula et al. (2011) proved that self-efficacy fosters work engagement in Italian teachers. Job satisfaction may also be related to engagement. According to Lent and Brown (2006), job satisfaction can be defined as a cognitive and affective state which derives from a positive evaluation of experiences at work-related tasks. Work satisfaction may result from the following variables: personality and affective traits; work-related efficacy, work conditions and engagement. Work satisfaction may be anticipated in those people who are engaged in work-related tasks and the ones who believe that they can accomplish these tasks (Lent & Brown, 2006). Work engagement of the teachers may affect favourably their perception of satisfaction at work. Participation in goal-oriented activities, representing engagement, may, therefore, result in achieving work satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006). According to research, teachers who are engaged tend to be satisfied with their work (Høigaard et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2012).

3.2 Teacher Personality

The Big Five approach to personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992) suggests that this construct is composed of traits: conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, openness and agreeableness. Conscientiousness is understood as the disposition to be disciplined, organized and geared towards achievement. Neuroticism reveals emotional stability, control of impulses and the level of anxiety. Extraversion indicates the degree of sociability, assertiveness and talkativeness. Openness is represented

by curiosity as well as a drive for novelty and variety. Agreeableness implies a feature of being helpful, cooperative and sympathetic in relations with other people.

According to research conducted by Dufy and Lent (2009) as well as Lent et al. (2011), teacher personality may have an influence on work engagement and satisfaction achieved on the job. Li et al. (2017) in their study observed that Chinese teachers who were willing to take the initiative were also more engaged in their work. Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five aspects of personality, includes the tendency to initiate new activities. Teachers with high conscientiousness and perseverance may be more committed to various tasks in their profession (van Daal et al., 2014). Burns and Machin (2013) investigated teachers in Norway as far as neuroticism and extraversion is concerned, and the participants of the study who were characterized by high extraversion and low neuroticism, experienced more positive emotions while teaching. As far as agreeableness is concerned, Cano-Garcia et al. (2005) revealed that teachers who display the feature, are more inclined to personalize their relationships with others which may contribute to better rapport with colleagues at work and students. Openness is another feature of personality, which may indicate more sense of connection with other teachers and the learners as well as it may enhance engagement at work (Kokkinos, 2007). Higher levels of engagement may be observed in teachers who are characterized by lower neuroticism, higher conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and openness (Perera et al., 2018).

3.3 Teachers Work Engagement Scale

Klassen et al. (2013) developed the Teacher Engagement Scale which measures engagement in four dimensions: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement with students and social engagement with colleagues. For the group of researchers, social engagement should be considered particularly important in the teaching profession. As Klassen et al. (2013) indicate, "although workers in many settings must engage socially with colleagues, teaching uniquely emphasized energy spent on the establishment of long-term, meaningful connections with the clients of the work environment (i.e., students) in a way that characterizes the job of teaching… teacher-student relationships may play *the* primary role in fostering students engagement and positive student outcomes" (Klassen et al., 2013, p. 35). In the Teacher Engagement Scale, each of the four dimensions is operationalized in four sentences. Cognitive engagement is researched by means of the following statements: "I try my hardest to perform well while teaching", "While teaching, I really 'throw' myself into my work", "While teaching, I pay a lot of attention to my work", "While teaching, I work with intensity". Emotional engagement is revealed in the following statements: "I am excited about teaching", "I feel happy while teaching", "I love teaching", "I find teaching fun". Social engagement with students is investigated in the following statements: "In class, I show warmth to my students", "In class, I am aware of my students' feelings", "In class, I care about the problems of my students", "In class I am empathetic towards my students". Social

engagement is explored by means of the following sentences: “At school, I connect well with my colleagues”, “At school, I am committed to helping my colleagues”, “At school, I value the relationships I build with my colleagues”, “At school, I care about the problems of my colleagues”. The responses to these statements were to be marked on a Likert scale from 0 (never) to 6 (always).

International validation of the Engaged Teachers Scale was carried out in the North American context (Klassen et al., 2012) and in Turkey (Yerdelen et al., 2018). The Engaged Teachers Scale was also administered to teachers in Indonesia (Kristiana & Simanjuntak, 2021) and was proved to be applicable to measuring engagement of Indonesian teachers of special educational needs students, regarding teacher experience as a variable.

4 The Study

The aim of the research was to explore engagement among Polish foreign language teachers. For this study, the analysed data was collected from a survey created in the Google Forms application. The name of the survey was “A study on foreign language teacher engagement”.

The survey was available online in October 2021. It was much more difficult to collect the responses to this questionnaire compared to the one administered in 2019 on teacher wellbeing (Szulc-Kurpaska, 2021). Either the topic was less stimulating for the respondents or the teachers got a bit overwhelmed by the number of online surveys which have been uploaded in the English language teachers’ interest group on Facebook.

4.1 Research Questions

The present study was designed in order to answer the following research questions:

- How engaged teachers of a foreign language are in teaching?
- Which dimension of engagement (cognitive, emotional, social with students and social with colleagues) are participants most engaged in?
- What justification do the participants of the study provide for their choices in the questionnaire?

4.2 The Participants

The sample of respondents included 107 teachers of foreign languages at all educational levels with teaching experience from 0 to more than 20 years. There were n = 92 women who responded to the questionnaire (86%) and n = 15 men took part

in the study (14%). Most of the respondents were experienced teachers (n = 50) with more than 20 years of professional practice (46.7%). The next numerous group was constituted by teachers with 11–15 years of experience (n = 18) which contributed in 16.8% to the total number of participants. Teachers with 6 to 10 years of professional experience equalled n = 16 people and this indicated 15%. 15 teachers represented 16–20 years of experience in the profession and this resulted in 14%. The smallest group of respondents n = 8 belonged to the group of young teachers with 0 to 5 teaching experience and they amounted to 7.5% of all the participants in the study (see Fig. 1).

The sum of the number of teachers from each educational level does not make up 107 because many of the respondents have worked at more than one school. The findings from this question indicate that majority of teachers participating in this study have been teaching at different levels of education and this experience may have affected their engagement in the profession (see Table 1).

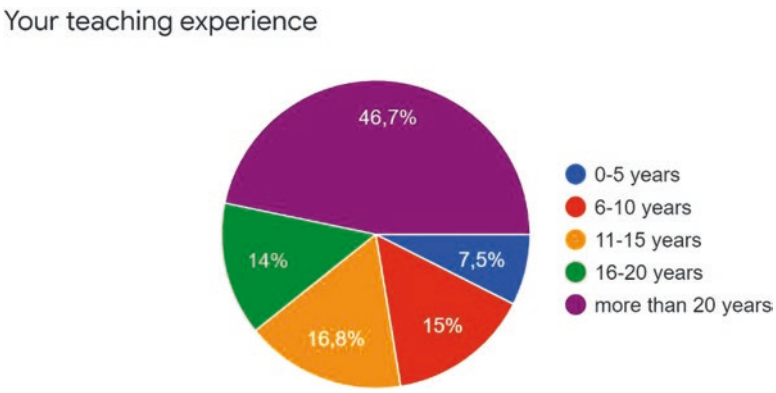

Fig. 1 The teaching experience of the respondents

Table 1 Educational level at which study participants worked

Educational level	Number of teachers	Percentage
Pre-primary	25	23.4%
Grades 1–3 of the primary school	40	37.4%
Grades 4–6 of the primary school	41	38.3%
Grades 4–8 of the primary school	55	51.4%
Secondary school	67	62.6%
Technical school	24	22.4%
University	55	51.4%

4.3 The Instrument

The questionnaire implemented in the research study was based on Klassen et al. (2013) and one open ended question was added to it with the consent of the authors of the instrument. In the closed questions the participants could choose on a Likert scale options 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (on occasion), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), 5 (frequently) and 6 (always). The time expressions were explained by the researcher in a more approachable way by specifying the frequency more precisely: 1 (rarely - a few times a year or less), 2 (on occasion – once a month or less), 3 (sometimes – a few times a month), 4 (often – once a week), 5 (frequently – a few times a week), 6 (always – every day). In the open question the participants were asked to choose one statement which they felt most emotional about and reflect on it in a 100 word paragraph, to develop the idea of the statement and provide more thoughts on it. The analysed data included gender of the participants (female, male), their teaching experience (concluded in 5 time intervals of: 0–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years and more than 20 years), types of education stages they have been teaching (pre-primary, lower primary 1–3, upper primary 4–6, upper primary 4–8, secondary, technical school, university; there was a multiple choice possibility) and responses from a questionnaire, that consisted of 16 closed questions and 1 question that required a longer response. All of the questions, excluding the last one from the questionnaire, were obligatory.

5 Analysis of the Data

5.1 The Quantitative Analysis

All statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS programme. The analysed data included gender, teaching experience and closed responses to the questionnaire. The ‘gender’ variable was nominal and consisted of 2 described levels (female - 1, male - 2). The ‘teaching variable’ was ordinal and consisted of 5 described levels (0–5 years - 1, 6–10 years - 2, 11–15 years - 3, 16–20 years - 4, more than 20 years - 5). Each question of the questionnaire was a quantitative variable and consisted of 6 levels (never - 0, rarely - 1, on occasion - 2, sometimes - 3, often - 4, frequently - 5, always - 6). Moreover, following the manual of the questionnaire, there were 4 more variables created; cognitive engagement (‘CE’), emotional engagement (‘EE’), social engagement with students (‘SE_students’) and social engagement with colleagues (‘SE_colleagues’).

The ‘CE’ was a computed variable from variables representing questions 4, 8, 11 and 15.

The ‘EE’ was a computed variable from variables representing questions 2, 5, 10 and 13.

The ‘SE_students’ was a computed variable from variables representing questions 3, 6, 14 and 16.

The ‘SE_colleagues’ was a computed variable from variables representing questions 1, 7, 9 and 12.

The statistical analyses included a series of descriptive statistics.

Engagement According to the Four Variables

The descriptive statistics of all the variables of the sample (n = 107) is listed in Table 2.

The scores of all the variables are generally high and the highest one was received by cognitive engagement (M = 20.94), then social engagement with students (M = 20.88), next was emotional engagement (M = 18.88) and the last one was social engagement with colleagues (M = 18.26).

Engagement According to the Gender of the Participants

The descriptive statistics of the variable ‘CE’ of the females of the sample (n = 92) and the males of the sample (n = 15) is listed in Table 3.

The descriptive statistics of the variable ‘EE’ of the females of the sample (n = 92) and the males of the sample (n = 15) is listed in Table 4.

The descriptive statistics of the variable ‘SE_students’ of the females of the sample (n = 92) and the males of the sample (n = 15) is listed in Table 5.

The descriptive statistics of the variable ‘SE_colleagues’ of the females of the sample (n = 92) and the males of the sample (n = 15) is listed in Table 6.

In all the four dimensions, the female respondents’ scores were higher than the males’ ones. The highest, i.e. the most frequent dimension for female participants

Table 2 The descriptive statistics of all the variables of the sample (n = 107)

Variable (n = 107)	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
Cognitive engagement ‘CE’	20.94	2.88	8	24	−1.50	3.80
Emotional engagement ‘EE’	18.88	4.65	0	24	−1.32	2.34
Social engagement with students ‘SE_students’	20.88	2.81	12	24	−.96	.32
Social engagement with colleagues ‘SE_colleagues’	18.26	4.35	5	24	−.86	.41

Table 3 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'CE' of the females and the males of the sample

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
Females	92	21.14	2.63	8	24	−1.64	5.774
Males	15	19.73	4.00	11	24	−.80	−.24

Table 4 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'EE' of the females and the males of the sample

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
Females	92	19.10	4.08	4	24	−1.02	1.36
Males	15	17.53	7.29	0	24	−1.19	.74

Table 5 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_students' of the females and the males of the sample

variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
Females	92	21.21	2.57	13	24	−.99	.39
Males	15	18.90	3.44	12	24	−.37	−.501

Table 6 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_colleagues' of the females and the males of the sample

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
Females	92	18.33	4.31	5	24	−.82	.35
Males	15	17.90	4.78	6	24	−1.17	1.24

Table 7 The mean values of the four dimensions of engagement for the female and male respondents

Dimension	Female	Dimension	Male
Social with students 'SE_S'	M = 21.21	Cognitive 'CE'	M = 19.73
Cognitive 'CE'	M = 21.14	Social with students 'SE_S'	M = 18.90
Emotional 'EE'	M = 19.10	Social with colleagues 'SE_C'	M = 17.90
Social with colleagues 'SE_C'	M = 18.33	Emotional 'EE'	M = 17.53

was social engagement with students (M = 21.21), while for the male participants the most frequent dimension was cognitive engagement (M = 19.73). The second dimension in terms of frequency of occurrence in female respondents was cognitive engagement (M = 21.14) and in the case of male respondents, was social engagement with students (M = 18.90). The third dimension as far as the score is concerned for female teachers was emotional engagement (M = 19.10) and for the male teachers it was social engagement with colleagues (M = 17.90). The dimension which was least frequent in female participants was social engagement with colleagues (M = 18.33) and for the male participants, it was emotional engagement (M = 17.53). The mean values of the four dimensions of engagement for female respondents and female respondents are presented in Table 7.

The difference between the female and male teachers may have resulted from the small number of men compared to women who took part in the present study.

Engagement According to the Teaching Experience of the Participants

The descriptive statistics of the variable 'CE', considering the teaching experience of the participants is listed in Table 8.

The mean values for all the groups of participants are high which implies that they are frequently cognitively engaged in teaching, the most engaged cognitively turn out to be teachers with 0–5 years of experience in the profession (M = 22.13), while least frequently engaged cognitively tend to be respondents with more than 20 years of teaching (M = 20.54).

The descriptive statistics of the variable 'EE', considering the teaching experience of the participants is listed in Table 9.

The mean values for all the groups of participants are relatively high (but not as high as for the dimension of cognitive engagement) which implies that they are frequently emotionally engaged in teaching, the most engaged emotionally turn out to be teachers with 0–5 years of experience in the profession (M = 20.25), while least frequently engaged cognitively tend to be respondents with 16–20 years of teaching (M = 18.27).

The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_students', considering the teaching experience of the participants is listed in Table 10.

Table 8 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'CE' according to the teaching experience of the participants

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
0–5 years	8	22.13	2.64	18	24	−.80	−1.61
6–10 years	16	21.00	3.32	11	24	−2.01	5.14
11–15 years	18	21.33	2.00	18	24	.08	−.91
16–20 years	15	21.13	4.12	8	24	−2.62	7.80
More than 20 years	50	20.54	2.62	14	24	−.59	−.29

Table 9 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'EE' according to the teaching experience of the participants

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
0–5 years	8	20.25	4.10	13	24	−.82	−.41
6–10 years	16	19.44	6.50	0	24	−2.35	5.51
11–15 years	18	18.83	4.64	7	24	−1.05	.92
16–20 years	15	18.27	5.09	4	24	−1.53	3.60
More than 20 years	50	18.68	4.02	10	24	−.50	−.72

Table 10 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_students' according to the teaching experience of the participants

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
0–5 years	8	21.88	2.10	19	24	−.15	−2.14
6–10 years	16	20.80	3.19	12	24	−1.51	2.52
11–15 years	18	21.11	2.45	16	24	−.55	−.49
16–20 years	15	21.27	3.04	13	24	−1.70	3.01
More than 20 years	50	20.60	2.90	14	24	−.66	−.78

Table 11 The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_colleagues' according to the teaching experience of the participants

Variable level	N	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness statistics	Kurtosis statistics
0–5 years	8	19.00	4.90	11	24	−.67	−.79
6–10 years	16	18.40	4.53	10	24	−.52	−.98
11–15 years	18	19.28	3.63	13	24	−.32	−1.04
16–20 years	15	17.27	4.48	5	24	−1.60	3.00
More than 20 years	50	18.04	4.50	6	24	−.95	.52

Table 12 The mean values of the four dimensions of engagement for teachers depending on their experience

Engagement	0–5 years	6–10 years	11–15 years	16–20 years	More than 20 years
'CE'	**22.13**	21.00	21.33	21.13	20.54
'EE'	**20.25**	19.44	18.83	18.27	18.68
'SE_S'	**21.88**	20.80	21.11	21.27	20.60
'SE_C'	19	18.40	**19.28**	17.27	18.04

The mean values for all the groups of participants are high which implies that they are frequently socially engaged with students, the most engaged socially with students turn out to be teachers with 0–5 years of experience in the profession (M = 21.88), while least frequently engaged cognitively turn out to be respondents with more than 20 years of teaching (M = 20.60).

The descriptive statistics of the variable 'SE_colleagues' considering the teaching experience of the participants is listed in Table 11.

The mean values for all the groups of participants are relatively high (but not as high as for the dimension of cognitive engagement and social engagement with students) which implies that they are frequently socially engaged with colleagues, the most engaged socially with colleagues turn out to be teachers with 11–15 years of experience in the profession (M = 19.28), while least frequently engaged socially with colleagues tend to be respondents with 16–20 years of teaching (M = 17.27). The mean values of the four dimensions of engagement for the participants depending on their teaching experience are presented in Table 12.

The difference between the younger and more experienced teachers may have resulted from the small number of respondents with 0–5 years of experience compared to other groups of teachers who took part in the present study.

5.2 The Qualitative Analysis

Out of the 107 participants, 54 responded to the open ended question 17 in which they were to write a reflection on one of the statements from 1 to 16 from the questionnaire in order to develop the idea implied in it. This equals half of the teachers who participated in the survey (50.04%). The majority of the teachers who decided to answer this question represented the group with over 20 years of experience (n = 29).

Statements chosen most often by the participants of the study to reflect on are presented in Table 13 below.

Among the teachers who responded to the open ended question in the survey, majority commented on the statements referring to the social engagement with students (n = 24), the second numerous group of teachers elaborated on the statements concerning emotional engagement (n = 21). The most often selected statement of all the points in the questionnaire was "I love teaching" (n = 11) belonging to the

Table 13 The number of teachers responding in the open ended question to one of the statements

Number	Statement	Number teachers
Cognitive engagement		**7**
4	I try my hardest to perform well while teaching	2
8	While teaching, I really 'throw' myself into my work	1
11	While teaching, I pay a lot of attention to my work	1
15	While teaching, I work with intensity	3
Emotional engagement		**21**
2	I am excited about teaching	7
5	I feel happy while teaching	2
10	I love teaching	11
13	I find teaching fun	1
Social engagement with students		**24**
3	In class, I show warmth to my students	3
6	In class, I am aware of my students' feelings	6
14	In class, I care about the problems of my students	7
16	In class, I am empathetic towards my students	8
Social engagement with colleagues		**4**
1	At school, I connect well with my colleagues	2
7	At school, I am committed to helping my students	1
9	At school, I value the relationships I build with my colleagues	1
12	At school, I care about the problems of my colleagues	0

emotional engagement. The second most popular statement was "In class, I am empathetic towards my students (n=8) representing social engagement with students. The third most frequently chosen statement was "I am excited about teaching" (n = 7) from the group exploring emotional engagement and "In class, I care about the problems of my students" (n = 7) investigating social engagement with students. Cognitive engagement statements were described by 7 teachers and social engagement with colleagues were least often written about by the respondents who decided to engage in the open ended question of the survey (n = 4). None of the participants responded to the statement "At school, I care about the problems of my colleagues", operationalizing social engagement with colleagues.

Positive Comments about Engagement

Three teachers thanked for the possibility of taking part in the study because by filling in the questionnaire, they had an opportunity to realise how much they appreciate being a teacher. Another three respondents feel happy while teaching: one of them (0–5 years of teaching) wrote: *I am a happy teacher thanks to my students and my colleagues* and she is also excited about teaching. The other two (more than 20 years of teaching) who chose sentence 5 added: *Being a teacher means spending time with younger generation which is inspiring*, and the second one expressed the following feeling: *This career has been the most rewarding experience for me. It is like the air I breathe. Tired, sleepy, or sick I've always found comfort and peace in teaching.* ***I am who I am because of teaching****. Teaching makes my life complete.* Most of the teachers expressed their dedication to the profession: *Teaching is utmost creativity and fuel for life. Students are the greatest inspiration.* The respondents provided their reason for the love for the profession: *I love teaching because it enriches me.* Or another respondent commented: *Teaching is and has always been my life. … In spite of the mistreatment and disappointment, this job is bound to bring at times – it is still among my best choices in life.* Two teachers (6 to 10 years of teaching) and one teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) cannot imagine themselves doing anything else. One teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) indicated engagement with students and teachers as important: *At the school where I teach we value relations not only with our students but also among teachers and so it has become a priority for teachers to be a team.* However, one teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) noted that: *Students help me to grow both intellectually and emotionally*, *but I don't feel any deep relation with my colleagues*. Sometimes although there are not too many contacts with colleagues, the atmosphere at school is nice: *I help if I'm asked to and I know I've got a few people I can ask for help if there is a need*. Yet another participant (more than 20 years of teaching), indicated some evidence for a flow during classes: *I have noticed in the past few years that I can be really engaged in the classroom working with the students, and for me, once I enter the classroom,* ***I find myself in a different world****.* A respondent (6–10 years of teaching) confessed her dedication: *When in the classroom, I am wholeheartedly devoted to the students*. One more comment about love for the profession from a

teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) is: *I love teaching and my job, especially since I have realized that I can make a difference in my Students' life* or another teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) admitted: *I intend to provide my students with a life-changing experience*. The respondents also mention the importance of the affective factors in the teaching and learning process: *Without emotions, noticing feeling and care, learning is impaired*. One teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) even corrected statement 3 by saying: *I would say that I feel (usually) warmth… rather than just try to show it to my students.* One respondent (11 to 15 years of teaching) keeps in touch with students after graduation and remarks: *It is very rewarding to find that even after the years, they remember my engagement into their education.* For another teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) there is a difference in young people coming to school at present: *These days students who enter secondary education are more and more vulnerable and that is why, teachers should become more attentive and empathetic towards their feelings and emotions*.

However, quite a few teachers point to the difficulties to manage emotions of students: *Being empathetic towards students is simply a must in the teaching profession, but it is harder and harder to do that mainly due to students growing feeing insecurity and rapid mood swings in the classroom*. One more teacher explains why teaching is not fun: *It requires a lot of effort on the part of the teacher to create and run a really successful lesson. Teaching is like acting – you leave the stage exhausted. But it can be a very rewarding job if you accept the effort involved*. Another respondent (more than 20 years of teaching) indicated that *to be a teacher is a mission: sometimes impossible, but still a mission*. One teacher (6 to 10 years of teaching) commented on the concept of intensity in teaching (cognitive engagement): *Before intensity was connected to knowledge, now is about relations with my pupils*. Another participant (6–10 years of teaching) stated: *I just want to be good at my work no matter what I do for a living. In my opinion, professionalism has nothing to do with love, excitement, fun and one's feelings*.

Negative Comments About Engagement

All the statements in the questionnaire were positive in the way they were formulated, however not all the responses in the open ended questions had this optimistic note. One teacher wrote: *I find teaching still exciting and worth my every effort but after working over 20 years in public institutions, I feel burnt out with the paper work and changing rules. I also feel the disrespect from the society towards teachers now much more than in the past. I also feel humiliated when my students earn more than me in their first summer job. That is why, I am going to change my job soon…* Yet another negative comment was delivered by a respondent with 6 to 10 teaching experience: *Every year I feel more discouraged to teach in Polish schools. I don't blame students or my colleagues who are great people. I really like working with them. The main reason is money and almost "voluntary" work at schools*.

Several teachers mention tiredness as the experience that they have in teaching, as one of them (more than 20 years of teaching), admitted: *As for the feelings of*

excitement and fun while teaching, it is not so much a question of how often, but rather how far into the semester… towards the end of the semester or the whole year, I believe not just me but many teachers feel less enthusiastic… Yet another participant raised the same problem: *Sometimes I feel tired of teaching because the Polish government doesn't motivate teachers*. Or another comment from a teacher with 11 to 15 years of experience: *Sometimes it's hard to be excited about teaching, because teachers have too much work to do*. One teacher (11 to 15 years of teaching), complained about the time devoted to preparations for lessons: *I spend far more time preparing stuff for a class than actually teaching, which makes me question the whole concept of me being a teacher*. On the same note, one teacher (more than 20 years of teaching) stated: *Although I do my best, prepare for every class, I still find teaching my students hard and unrewarding experience*. Yet another teacher (more than 20 years of teaching), while referring to two statements: 4 and 15 included in cognitive engagement, is still slightly anxious every time she opens the classroom as she is never 100% sure that she has prepared the lesson to the best of her knowledge and abilities. However, when she can observe the students benefitting from the lesson, she declares: *I believe I can fly, to quote a musician, and it gives me power to try again and again*.

Three teachers referred to engagement as related to wellbeing: *I do believe teachers should set some boundaries to protect their emotional state and wellbeing although in some situations, they are the only people students can trust.* Another teacher confessed that: *Our job involves teaching but also giving psychological support in many cases*. One teacher expressed worries about getting back to teaching face to face after 18 months of "teaching to a black screen": *How do students feel about that? How will we all cope?* One participant (20 years of teaching), observed that: *After pandemics and lockdown, students are not as willing to cooperate as they were before*.

Some teachers indicate problems in handling students' negative opinions and interpretations: *It's hard to accept without judging*. One more comment from a respondent (0–5 years of teaching) who reflected on her relations with students: *I try to do my best and build a great relationship with students but it is hardly ever mutual*. Yet another participant (6–10 years of teaching) referred to being empathetic to students: *Sometimes they tell me after class about their problems and that makes it easier to cooperate with them and set boundaries, but often they keep it to themselves and simply look bored or ignorant.* Relationships with colleagues are quite often not so close: *People just enter and leave*. Similarly to the findings in Szulc-Kurpaska (2021), one teacher (over 20 years of teaching) wrote: *I like working with pupils/students, but I hate schools/institutions*. Or one more comment from a respondent (11 to 15 years of teaching) with the same problem is as follows: *I like teaching as English is my passion, but in the school teaching environment it is often really hard to take pleasure from it all the time*. And another comment from a participant (0–5 years of teaching) pointing to teacher dedication but also commenting on conditions of work: *Teaching is something that I feel created for, however the Polish reality is very difficult and demanding for a teacher*.

6 Discussion

- How engaged teachers of a foreign language are in teaching?

Majority of the respondents in the survey turned out to be experienced teachers with 20 and more years of experience (n = 50, 46.7%). They also constituted the majority in the group of 54 teachers who decided to respond to the open ended question in the survey (n = 29). The teachers who took part in the study reveal high engagement in all four dimensions included in the questionnaire: cognitive, emotional, social with students and social with colleagues. Female participants of the study revealed generally higher scores on all the four dimensions than male respondents which may indicate that women get engaged in teaching more often than men. Younger teachers with 0–5 experience reveal higher scores on all the four dimensions of engagement compared to other groups of respondents. The teachers with high scores on the Teachers Engagement Scale may have represented a personality which predisposed them to active participation and involvement in the profession. They may have remained in the profession due to this capacity.

- Which dimension of engagement (cognitive, emotional, social with students and social with colleagues) are participants most engaged in?

The most frequently experienced dimension of engagement in the sample of 107 teachers turned out to be cognitive engagement, then the next in the frequency of occurrence was social engagement with students, the third most often revealed engagement was emotional engagement and the least frequent dimension of the four, was social engagement with colleagues. Women tend to engage most frequently socially with students while men engage cognitively most often. Female teachers engage least often socially with colleagues while male teachers engage emotionally least often of all the four dimensions. Participants with the shortest teaching experience turned out to be engaged cognitively most frequently, while respondents with the longest experience in the profession, indicated that they are least often cognitively engaged compared to the other groups of teachers who took part in the study. Teachers with the shortest teaching experience are engaged emotionally most frequently, while participants with the experience 16–20 years admitted to be least often emotionally engaged in relation to the other groups of teachers under investigation. Participants with the shortest teaching experience turned out to be engaged socially with students most frequently, while respondents with the longest experience in the profession indicated that they are least often socially engaged with students compared to the other groups of teachers who took part in the study. Teachers with 11–15 teaching experience are engaged socially with colleagues most frequently, while participants with the experience 16–20 years admitted to be least often socially engaged with colleagues in relation to the other groups of teachers under scrutiny.

- What justification do the participants of the study provide for their choices in the questionnaire?

The greatest number of teachers who responded to the open ended question, elaborated on one of the statements representing social engagement with students (n = 24) and the statements indicating emotional engagement (n = 8). Most commonly chosen statement "I love teaching" (n = 11) and "I am empathetic towards my students" (n = 8) indicate that the teachers who took part in the study, are passionate about their profession and care about their students.

In the open ended statements, most of the respondents expressed positive views on their engagement with students. These responses also indicate love for teaching considered quite often to be dedication and the best choice in life which makes the authors of these comments, happy in the profession. However, quite a number of participants who decided to elaborate on one of the statements in question 17, revealed some negative views on their teaching experience. They complained about tiredness, long time spent on preparation for lessons, difficult conditions at school, problems with managing emotions of the learners, feeling psychological pressure for being responsible for learners' wellbeing, teaching during lockdown due to pandemic and after it.

7 Conclusions

The study aimed at exploring engagement of teachers, revealed high levels of this construct in teachers who decided to fill in the online questionnaire. An explanation of this finding can be that only engaged teachers participated in the study in all the groups of respondents, irrespectively of the number of years of teaching, and the ones who are less active, did not take part in it. Nearly half of the teachers who completed the questionnaire belong to the group of experienced teachers with more than 20 years of practice in this profession. The fact that they responded to the invitation to take part in the survey, may indicate that they are still engaged in teaching. With experience, they reveal more frequent social engagement with the students. They seem to be dedicated to the profession and they love teaching. As the majority of the participants have been teaching for more than 20 years, it may indicate that engaged teachers do not suffer from burnout and they remain in the profession for longer. There seems to be a lot of positivity in the open ended responses of the participants who took the challenge to reflect on one of the statements of the questionnaire. This feeling results predominantly from interaction with the students, less so from contacts with the colleagues at schools. Some negative statements were also expressed in the open ended responses, mainly concerning conditions of work and the amount of additional responsibilities, teachers have to cope with. Several reflections referred also to the difficulties in managing emotions of the learners.

The statements in the Teachers Engagement Scale are declarative and that is why, the findings refer to what the teachers believe about their engagement. Therefore, they display teachers' opinions rather than facts indicating their engagement. Had the statements been exemplary of what the teachers actually do, perhaps the findings would be more credible, e.g. "I take part in projects with students", "I take part

in projects with colleagues at school", "I talk to students during breaks", "I offer extra lessons for students", "I talk to colleagues at school during breaks", "I share materials with my colleagues at school", "I search for authentic materials to supplement the course book", "I attend workshops and teacher training courses". But this change would need some validation of the instrument to operationalise the construct of engagement in terms of specific actions and activities, the interpretation of which would be then the role of the researcher.

Taking into consideration the findings of the present study, there appears a need to introduce more classes on psychology, especially positive psychology, to teacher training programmes to enhance motivation and engagement of novice teachers in the profession (Williams et al., 2021). In particular, there is a need for incorporating a component of teacher wellbeing as teacher engagement, being one of the elements of it, may increase the level of job satisfaction, assist educators in achieving self-realisation and prevent teachers from burnout. Happy and satisfied teachers stimulate wellbeing of the learners and foster the learning outcomes (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). The area of engagement which offers potential for growth, results from establishing positive work relationships with both the students as well as the colleagues at schools. Encouraging teacher trainees to share materials and ideas, create lesson plans together, prepare tests and discuss marking of them, cooperate in projects and joint presentations, participate in webinars, may enhance engagement and the sense of belonging to the group. Such habits of working in a team can then be transposed to their future educational environments to introduce a school culture of collaboration. Soft skills of communicating with other professionals turn out to be vital for successful and satisfying functioning in the school context.

Many activities suggested by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) designed for students, can be easily adapted for teacher trainees to stimulate their engagement in the profession. Also the ideas on enhancing engagement identified by Mercer et al. (2023), can be incorporated into teacher training programmes to promote wellbeing with special focus on engagement. In further exploration of the construct of teacher engagement, it would be recommended to design a research study investigating teacher personality and the perception of self-efficacy of teachers in connection to their engagement.

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The Challenges of Implementing CLIL in the Polish EFL Educational Context

Katarzyna Sradomska

Abstract Since Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) became a widely recognised educational methodology at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the collocation has appeared in the corpus of English language over 1,000,000 times. Not only did it start the discussion over the four main elements of the concept: content, cognition, communication and culture, but it also offered refreshing classroom solutions. The chapter presents the development of CLIL, including its recent pluriliteracies model, from the perspective of groups of teachers and learners functioning in Poland within the boundaries of the curriculum and available resources. The discussion is supported with the results of two-part study conducted at different educational levels, primary and secondary, confirming some dilemmas concerning the necessity of awareness raising of teachers and learners, to abstract the valuable elements of CLIL. The former part of the research was conducted in the first three grades of Polish primary schools (6/7–10-years-old learners) by observing and surveying the mode (integrated in the mainstream or subject-oriented) and techniques used to integrate the content within foreign language lessons. The results of the latter part derive from five-year action research conducted at the secondary school level (15–19-years-old learners), which focused on exploring CLIL within the boundaries of preparation for national exams. The chapter offers some pedagogical implications, at the same time addressing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threads signalled in the reports from Council of Europe concerning CLIL from the perspective of the reported studies conducted in the Polish context.

Keywords Content and language integrated learning · Mainstream education · Pluriliteracy · Culture · National curriculum

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1 Introduction

For the last fifteen years in Polish education system there have been introduced several changes of the Core Curriculum and they have also concerned the content of a foreign language taught (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2008, 2012, 2017). Late 1990s brought the idea of early primary education (classes 1–3) executed in integrative form, i.e. resigning from the division into subjects and incorporating the requirements of the Core Curriculum within the topic-based education. A general education teacher still can read in the latest documents that "in primary schools at the first level of education, covering classes 1-3 - early primary education, the education is conducted in the integrative form" (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017, February 14, p. 15). The necessity of integrating a foreign language content with the topics outlined in general education has become the requirement for this stage of education.

At the level of secondary schools in Poland there is no explicit demand formulated in any of the national documents stating that language teaching has to take the integrated form with other subjects, however the current Core Curriculum lists 14 different topical areas which should establish the framework for the content in teaching/learning the foreign language (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, January 30, p. 42 & p. 47–48). Moreover, there is one important guideline which stresses that "foreign language teaching is not conducted in an educational vacuum – it should support and be supported with teaching of other subjects and general skills" (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej, January 30, p. 67). This statement can be interpreted as an encouragement to amalgamate the foreign language with content of other subjects.

The solution to the national requirements of teaching a foreign language either integrated in the mainstream curriculum (at lower primary level) or in a cross-curricular form (at upper primary or secondary levels) could be the Content and Language Integrated learning as the leading method. Its solutions to how manage the language, topical content and cultural elements in a classroom have been recognised and introduced in many European countries, also in Poland. Most frequently in majority of national educational changes conducted by governments, mainly teachers are made responsible for all the organisational preceedings in order to achieve the expected outcomes. Aplying any new methodology in a foreign language classroom requires from teachers professional awareness and skills concerning new, in this case CLIL-oriented, teaching procedures and techniques. Then, conducting research devoted to teachers' perspective on implementing CLIL in a foreign language teaching context in Poland was supposed to investigate how much of the teachers' skills and awareness determine successful use of CLIL methodology. Initially, the research was oriented on early primary education and then it was extended to secondary. There are two different research methods: the former conducted from the observer's perspective, the latter, in the form of action research, from the participant's/in-service teacher's perspective. However, both are supposed to present a teacher's involvement, awareness and professional skills required to apply the CLIL methodology in a foreign language education.

2 CLIL as a Platform for 'Integration' in Early Primary Education

The context for the mainstream education including a foreign language as an element of the whole scheme has been based on several international concepts such as bilingual education. In the document published in 2002 "*CLIL/EMILE The European Dimension. Actions, trends and foresight potential*" there were several possibilities enumerated how to interpret and apply broader contexts of different subjects or integrate their topics within a foreign language education. Over thirty different terms were enumerated which described potential ways of worldwide used practices.[1] Some of these ideas described the same solutions but under different terms, or they were applied in different places, e.g. in Europe or America. It is worth mentioning that teaching/learning based on 'bilingual education' was not initially addressed to foreign language environment, but rather to the contexts where the language could be called a second language.

This split responsibility for language education between teachers of a foreign language and teachers of other subjects can be observed in Content and Language Integrated Learning, in which a foreign language is supposed to be used for conveying topical content from other subjects, while teaching the language skills simultaneously. Then, "CLIL refers to a dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content"[2] (Marsh, 2002, p. 1). The authors of the report focused on the necessity of increasing the amount of a foreign language being taught, not by increasing the number of hours but creating the language learning environment within the context of other subjects. Introducing CLIL worldwide caused its heterogeneous interpretations, depending on the amount of time or various techniques used.

[1] Enumerated terms (2002: 57–58): bilingual education, bilingual nursery education, bilingual instruction, content-based language teaching, content-based second language instruction, developmental bilingual education, dual-focused language education, dual language bilingual education, dual majority language bilingual education, language maintenance bilingual education, extended language instruction, immersion, language across the curriculum, language-based content teaching, language bath, language-enhanced content teaching, language enriched education, language-enriched content instruction, language shower, late partial bilingual programme, learning through an additional language, learning with languages, mainstream bilingual education, modern languages across the curriculum, multilingual education, plurilingual education, sheltered language learning, teaching through a foreign language, teaching non-language subjects through a foreign language, transitional bilingual education, two-way bilingual education, (Spanish/English/Finnish) as a language of instruction.

[2] The definition of CLIL comes from www.clilcompendium.com, the official website of the CLIL project; the same definition was also found in the report *CLIL/EMILE The European Dimension. Actions, Trends and Foresight potential.* David Marsh (Ed.) (2002). Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Initially, teaching/learning according to CLIL was intended to open new possibilities of languages, cultures and knowledge diffusion, which could enable European citizens to operate freely in business, education and social spheres. The ideal was that people would be able to use not only their native language but also two others. Moreover, lessons prepared according to Content and Language Integrated Learning should use the foreign language as the means to teach/learn and to communicate, while the content and range of the language used and taught is determined by the content of the subjects being taught. It was supposed to be neither a bilingual lesson of the subject nor a foreign language lesson with a subject content. Coyle (1999) claimed that a CLIL lesson was to combine the following elements:

– content – which could ensure knowledge, skills and understanding;
– communication – which would use the language for learning; while learning its use;
– cognition – which meant developing thinking and understanding skills, as well as creating concepts;
– culture – which would mean building openness to other perspectives and deeper understanding of oneself.

As far as a foreign language is concerned all the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) should be incorporated in a lesson, where language accuracy was subordinated to fluency, and listening or reading allowed for receiving language input.

Most of European countries started applying new techniques of CLIL and in 2005/6 they reported using some of its forms, either included in the mainstream education or applied in project work (Eurydice, CLIL report, 2006). CLIL was claimed to be "a platform for innovative methodological approach of far broader scope than language teaching" (2006, p. 7). However, from the point of view of the integrated primary education in Poland and its vision how the process should be organised the following sentence seems significant: "CLIL calls for development of a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught *in* a foreign language, but *with* and *through* a foreign language. This implies more integrated approach to both teaching and learning, requiring that teachers should devote special thought not just to how languages should be taught, but to the educational process in general (2006, p. 7)".

Coyle, Hood, and Marsh stressed in the procedures of CLIL the roles of learners as being "active participants in developing their potential for acquiring knowledge and skills (education) through a process of inquiry (research) and by using complex cognitive processes and means for problem solving (innovation)" (2010, p. 6). This learner-centred teaching which has been rooted in theories of a child's development initiated by Piaget (1967, 1970), Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Bruner (1966, 1983), or Bruner and Anglin (1973) has also been relevant to a foreign language learning (Cameron, 2001). Learning a foreign language children should actively participate in the educational process by the use of their Zone of Proximal Development

(Vygotsky, 1978) which means that it is necessary to enhance learning through the previously gained experience, then, placing the learner's learning in the centre.

However, not only learners are the prominent part of a CLIL lesson. In documents concerning CLIL it has been explicitly stated that teachers are the ones who are responsible for considering "how to actively involve learners to enable them to think through and articulate their own learning" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 29). Moreover, building the 'scaffolding' for a learner by the teacher in the form of skilfully-constructed tasks should lead to developing not only the content knowledge, but also cognitive engagement and higher-order thinking processes.

From the point of view of early foreign language education (also in Poland) it is possible to think of the scaffolding being built in the form of classroom routines, in order to focus learners' attention on what seems important with respect to the content knowledge and the language. Such careful teacher's preparation can also give learners safe environment for learning. The ability to concentrate on the specific language or knowledge is developed with age and a teacher, especially at primary level, should support this cognitive skill (Cameron, 2001). Presuming that children can be mentally active, it is crucial to involve young learners into tasks, rather than activities (Cameron, 2001). While doing tasks young learners could work on language as well as on cognitive skills. Then, the teacher has to construct the whole procedure of conducting the tasks by amalgamating language (careful choice), physical features (e.g. controlling co-operation of learners), or metalanguage (while giving instructions). Such controlled operations or activities would resemble 'task-based learning', however, the authenticity of the language and situations has to be adjusted to young learners' experience and would be different from other age groups.

3 Pluriliteracies Approach to Teaching for Learning – Another Version of CLIL

Meyer and Coyle, the authors who had been involved in promoting the initial version of CLIL, suggested a new term, 'pluriliteracy', to educators (Meyer et al., 2015). This reinterpretation of the already well-established scheme was supposed to require from either teachers or learners "deep subject knowledge" which consists of facts, concepts and procedures. Moreover, only via some "subject specific strategies learners can solve tasks typical for a particular subject" (2015, p. 2). The authors claimed that the focus on language enables deeper learning, i.e. "increasing conceptual understanding" (2015, p. 2). Learners are also to be involved in sharing their expertise and knowledge and such pluriliterate learners are expected to be subject literate in more than one language. What is crucial in the organisation scheme is that a teacher should be responsible for designing and developing the progression path within a subject in order to make understanding and learning possible. The procedure needs to be clear and learners should be encouraged to try several times to improve their results.

The authors enumerated five principles that must be taken into account when planning Pluralities Teaching for Learning (PTL): Conceptualising Learning Progression, Focusing on the learner, Learning for understanding, Realising cultural embeddedness, Rethinking scaffolding for learner development.

Within the Conceptualising Learning Progression it is essential to adapt knowledge required for a specific subject to age and level of learners, however, still preserving the science-oriented process of doing, organising, explaining and arguing. It has been stressed that "thinking develops through experience and practice, from the concrete to the abstract" (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 4). The proof of the growing competence and skills in the subject should be the increasing ability to understand and communicate the knowledge via the use of language, which is supposed to develop along with the development of learners' subject knowledge. Encouraging and organising learners' progress in conceptualising the content of the subject, teachers are responsible for grading the tasks and creating the possibility of improvement, so it means that learners should be able to improve their abilities from one task to another. Focusing on the learner, the PTL assumes that potentially increasing opportunities for communicating the knowledge do not ensure better understanding of the subject content and concepts. Each student should be given a chance to construct their meaning at their individual level in as many trials or tasks as he chooses to be ready to move to another topic. Additionally, the authors stressed that teachers are responsible for constructing the so called 'languaging' (expressing what they want to say about the subject matter) in the way which allows learners to use their Cognitive discourse functions (CDFs). It requires using language for expressing thoughts, as well as constructing them. In the final element of the PTL scheme it has been suggested that the 'scaffolding' provided to learners should be rather oriented on "optimising learner development through appropriate forms of mediation" (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 12). Learners will be able to achieve more, individually, if they can first start working in co-operation with others.

From the point of view of a foreign language teacher this shift towards more subject-specific language and content does not seem to make lives of teachers easier but rather it puts more requirements and strain, in the end, the language teacher is to operate within some subject-oriented knowledge which is not her/his professional field. The teacher is expected to prepare the full procedure and assist a learner to find confidence to try again, for the sake of solving another, more elaborate task or repeating the last task again to understand some subject processes better.

On the other hand, cultural embeddedness is related to certain conventions of specific subjects, such as extracting or encoding information. Consequently, this version of CLIL concentrated on 'pluriliteracy' limits the idea of Culture, one of the four 'Cs', to a role of a box or wrapping for either content learning or cognitive processes. It is rather understood as language-specific environment in which a learner operates when learning some content of a subject.

Having considered all the initial assumptions of CLIL as well as its further development towards focusing on pluriliterate skills of learners, it proved immense strain put on teachers involved in the whole process of preparing and conducting CLIL lessons. This reflection led to conducting two studies in two age groups of learners in Polish educational environment.

4 Challenges of Implementing CLIL in Early Primary Mainstream Education – The Classroom Based Research

Since Content and Language Integrated Learning requires from teachers skilful designing, organising and conducting the teaching/learning process it seemed interesting to investigate to what extent teachers apply the idea of integrating a foreign language (English) with the mainstream curriculum. The responsibility to organise the educational process was left with teachers, who were supposed to create the learner-centred tasks giving learners the possibility of gaining content knowledge within a foreign language, so also developing the language. Additionally, the requirement of integrating foreign language learning with lower primary education scheme seemed logical and understandable, however, again teachers were expected to construct and conduct the integrated process.

From the point of view of early education and applying CLIL or any other form of integration in it, the remark that "early introduction (4–12 years) is now increasingly under discussion as advantageous" (Marsh, 2002, p. 10) was stimulating to research the potentials of CLIL at this particular level.

Documenting the learning effects is currently onerous from the legal point of view, then to apply tests on learners, audio or video recordings of lessons would require the consent of all the parents' of the learners or erasing all the information that allows for identification of the pupils. Then, to observe a certain innovation, which was the integrated foreign language education, suggested and required by our Polish education system, the researcher did not assume measuring the effectiveness or the 'product', but rather the initial overview of the functioning of this innovation. It was supposed to be viewed from the perspective of the construction of the educational process, as well as, or even primarily, how the 'integration' is understood, interpreted and applied by the main implementing part, i.e. teachers. The research, investigating how integration of a foreign language (English) with the mainstream curriculum at early primary level was used, was to concentrate on the process and the teachers, who were supposed to interpret it, choose the content and language, design the classroom procedures and conduct them successfully. Qualitative methodology of the research allowed to focus on a teacher's perspective in a public school context.

The research was oriented on observational investigation (van Lier, 1988) with the use of an instrument which was supposed to help the researcher to notice teachers' procedures in a foreign language classroom. The teachers' perspective was formulated by using a questionnaire for teachers, based on self-observation and their opinions. The professional experience of the researcher (for over 20 years being a teacher trainer) granted conducting the observation in the practical-evaluative perspective. The context of the research was local (limited to the local region of Lower Silesia in Poland), personal (by involving the researcher's professional experience) and developmental (to observe the possibilities and boundaries of incorporating CLIL in foreign language teaching/learning).

There were several initial assumptions stated before the research started:

- integration (CLIL) was present only in some linguistic and extra-linguistic spheres;
- topical integration was possible;
- similar techniques could be used in both classroom types – mainstream education and foreign language teaching;
- the integrating elements were a teacher and syllabi;
- the problem was perceived in topical divergence of the language teaching and the mainstream education syllabi;
- the guidelines concerning the interpretation and application of CLIL were not consistent and they evoked ambiguous interpretations;
- teachers were not convinced that the integration was beneficial for learners and feasible for either learners or teachers;
- teachers were not exploring and using the guidelines considering possibilities of the integration included in the subject curricula.

The choice of teachers was limited to the local, Lower Silesian area in Poland, in order to reach the teachers for the observations. The participation in the study was offered to many teachers and schools but finally, 33 teachers were observed. They were to represent different settings from towns or villages and different educational backgrounds. Some of the teachers were foreign language teachers, who had graduated from English philology departments or foreign language colleges. Others were early education teachers or teachers of other subjects who had gained qualifications for foreign language teaching. This spectrum of teachers representing various educational backgrounds was interesting for getting the full perspective on the aspect of early primary integrative educational model with English as a foreign language.

The observation of lessons and the procedures used by teachers was conducted according to the observation instrument, mainly in an ethnographic mode, structured by questions and it required from the researcher evaluation if the techniques, materials, or teachers' conduct were in accordance with CLIL and topics from the mainstream education.

The questionnaire for teachers was oriented on investigating their opinions concerning the integrative model of a foreign language teaching, as well as establishing how aware the teachers were of the requirements and problems of this model.

Eleven out of thirty three teachers taking part in the research stated that integrating language with the mainstream curriculum was possible and five more claimed that this format is possible but difficult to conduct. Among the problems accompanying the integration they enumerated the necessity of co-operation of language and general education teachers, shortage of adjusted materials or different requirements for a foreign language and general education. Only a few teachers agreed with confidence that CLIL in early primary education is doable as for correlation of topics, techniques or educational fields, such as art, mathematics, physical education, which could enable young learners to perceive the world holistically. However, nearly a third of the teachers did not consider the integration possible or they were not taking this mode of teaching into account.

Difficulty in cooperation with regular teachers of the mainstream education and the correlation of content or topics were other strong obstacles enumerated by the majority of the researched teachers. Unsurprisingly, the teachers who represented the group of the mainstream teachers additionally qualified to teach English were favourable towards the integrative model of language and content teaching. Yet, some of them did not actually use CLIL during their lessons, even if they declared being in favour.

Verifying the teachers' claims while observing the lessons the researcher wanted to investigate if the integration was visible in several spheres: aims, content and topics, teaching techniques, teachers' roles and evaluation techniques. After observing 120 lessons it was barely possible to notice topical correlation at the level of topics covered in the same time span, e.g. a day or a week. Some content which was visible within the general curriculum was also present in the foreign language lessons. The only example of integration when the teacher introduced new mathematical and art concepts (distribution of house numbers in a street; the concept of caricature) was present in lessons of the mainstream education teacher who taught English to her pupils every day, delivering the language in shorter but more systematic time slots.

The majority of the observed lessons were aimed at working with the foreign language e.g. practising vocabulary. The aims of lessons which had extra-linguistic character were mainly concentrated on social skills, building nice atmosphere or supporting self-assessment.

This small scale research at the primary level confirmed the initial assumptions and highlighted some problem areas. Although integration with the mainstream topics was possible in a foreign language lessons, teachers did not decide to apply it because they did not consider it as beneficial for learners. On the other hand, in all the cases of the successful integration teachers were the main integrating 'elements'; their preparation skills concerning techniques, materials and language content proved to be crucial in designing and conducting a real CLIL lesson. Teachers clearly stated shortages in their preparation for interpreting requirements of CLIL and they did not feel well-equipped for independent application of a foreign language integration within the mainstream curriculum.

5 Challenges of Implementing CLIL with Secondary School Learners – The Classroom Based Research

Teachers at the primary level were not confident enough to trust their professional skills. However, what seems to be the most valuable in both models for developing CLIL or pluriliteracies is the possibility of empowering teachers to take their autonomous decisions. In the approach to create pluriliteracy, teachers are responsible for the preparation of skilfully graded tasks in order to engage learners in more elaborate thinking processes. Yet, this opportunity also seems to be a challenge even for experienced professionals, not only for their teaching skills but also their analytical abilities. While preparing tasks for lessons it is necessary to decompose and analyse

them to investigate which cognitive skills are involved and which learning processes are activated. Moreover, a teacher devotes a lot of time to analyse the foreign language in order to adjust its level to the complexity of the task, communicative requirements of sharing the learning experience with other learners, as well as to consider also some language learning aims, since it is supposed to be a foreign language lesson.

Then, from the point of view of a foreign language teacher it is problematic to apply the scheme of CLIL in a foreign language lesson conducted in a regular school, with its formal demands, unless it is reinterpreted and reshaped. This consideration evoked the second part of research with the use of CLIL in a foreign language classroom, this time at the level of secondary school. The researcher wanted to use CLIL ideas for building motivation and communicative skills within the foreign language, English, as well as to establish whether it was feasible to create tasks involving different thinking processes. Additionally, the teaching/learning process had to be organised within the regular secondary school curriculum content because learners were/are preparing for their final examinations.

The Current Polish Core curriculum for secondary schools (2.03.2018) enlists 14 topical areas which give the potential for exploring topics not only oriented on the language development but also discovering contents of other subjects. At both levels assigned for national examinations, basic and extended, there are two separate sections devoted to requirements focused on exploring culture of countries where the language is used. The need for increasing awareness of the bond between our own culture and the culture of the foreign country has been enumerated in a separate requirement listed in either basic or extended levels.

This part of research concerning the secondary school level took the form of action research, due to the possibilities given by the regular lessons conducted in one of the secondary schools in Wrocław, Poland, by the researcher. The action research concerning the use of CLIL was initiated in the school year 2017/2018 at the level of a lower secondary school. Then, in years 2018–2021 it was continued at the level of an upper-secondary school (in the school year 2019/20 there was a change in the schooling system in Poland and the level became secondary).

Being a regular teacher of secondary school learners (their age ranging from 15–19) the researcher had a chance to involve the scheme of 4Cs based on CLIL ideas. It was possible to investigate how the procedures concerning Content, Cognition, Communication and Culture can be incorporated into the restrictions of the curriculum for teaching English as a foreign language. The assumption that CLIL tasks should be based on teaching the content of another subject through the language medium in case of a foreign language teaching is more challenging to achieve. The curriculum at basic, or even the extended level of learning a foreign language does not include more specialised subject-based topical areas and it seemed natural to treat culture of English-speaking countries as the subject content when preparing tasks for learning English. This area requires from learners not only the language, but also the knowledge and thinking processes such as establishing cause and effect, or developing comparisons between the native and foreign language cultures. The content-culture oriented work had been planned for 60 h and

divided into 4 cultural areas: American, Canadian, Australian and British. The most important quality of the tasks was that they were supposed to be motivational, then they had to be interesting for teenage learners. Topics were not specified in the Core Curriculum, however, using course books on a regular basis allowed to find some culture-oriented topics or even available texts as well as audio materials, e.g. 'Characters played by Paul Newman' or 'Fish and chips, what the origin is and if they are still served in a newspaper' (see Table 1). However, the selection and sequencing of the topics were the teacher's responsibility and her subjective choice. Some of the topics were suggested by the current political situation, e.g. 'Independence referendum in Scotland – main arguments for and against' or the teacher's personal interests, e.g. 'Why do we admire gardens in Britain?'

The CLIL oriented topics (see Table 1) were planned to be covered within the regular syllabus and their occurrence was subordinated to topics from the Core Curriculum. As regards Cognition and Communication from the CLIL scheme, they were present in the tasks prepared for particular topics, with various intensity depending on the level of the learners and a topic being discussed. The topics, being included in the regular syllabus, needed or still need to be covered within the full 3-year or 4-year educational scheme, then, the form of advancing the topics was determined by the teacher considering the learners' needs and their pace of work. Tasks, also with web quests, were the most frequently used techniques of activities during the lessons, however, in some of the topics the learners decided to use guided learner-prepared presentations. The topic-based tasks were also being implemented during the COVID pandemic period and the necessity of e-learning evoked by national regulations. This form of schooling forced the researcher/teacher to introduce more online sources and organise the culture-based topics in some self-study activities. In consecutive years new groups of learners were involved in discussing the culture-based topics: 2017/18–16 learners, 2018/19–75 learners, 2019/20–68 learners, 2020/21–60 learners, 2021/22–50 learners. All the learners represented pupils from a big secondary school in Lower Silesia, Poland, and there they were learning in various types of classes specialising in science subjects or humanities, also with a different number of English language lessons.

Observing how the topics can be explored in a syllabus devoted to English language teaching/learning enabled the researcher/teacher to find answers to the following initial questions:

– if the subjective choice of content-culture-based topics can be considered satisfactory as far as learners' motivation to learning is concerned;
– if the demands of a task preparation can be too challenging for a teacher;
– if the main assumption of CLIL of teaching 'with' and 'through' a foreign language is still preserved.

Consequently, in the course of the action research conducted in the secondary school, learners manifested some evident preferences for certain topics. Learners were asked to judge the topics in a form of a short questionnaire, also stating what problems they encountered when preparing or working with the topics.

Table 1 Topics introduced during culture-content English lessons

The USA, Canada	Australia, Great Britain
Why country music seems so popular in the USA? Which place/town is the best known for this kind of music? Who are the most popular country singers/groups?	Media in Australia
What are the most famous amusement parks in the USA? Where are they? Why are they so popular?	Why sheep are so important for Australia?
What is 'Ivy League'? How is it connected with education?	Australian interior – is it ruled by the weather?
Why everybody wants to go to Hawaii?	Australian wildlife – weirdos, freaks of nature or natural wonders
San Francisco in California has acted in many American films. Explain why? What is so special about this city?	Is it possible that Australia is one of the most urban nations on Earth.
Characters played by Paul Newman.	Australian mosaic society – various nations contributing to the whole picture of the society
What are the most popular TV series in the USA?	How Australia nearly became independent from the Crown – republic or monarchy in Australia?
Is 'The Simpsons' series a picture of an average American family?	Fighting for dignity – place of aborigines in Australian history
What is 'route 66'? Explain and what can be interesting about it?	Australian art
What is 'Super Bowl'? Explain why it is so popular?	What is Australian 'outbreak'?
What are 'American food trucks'?	Do Australian eat any unique food such as kangaroo, eel, emu, snake, witchetty grubs? Are there any characteristic features of Australian cuisine?
What are the most famous cars and motorcycles in the USA?	The Great Barrier Reef – unique place on the Earth
What are 'garage sales / yard sales' in the USA?	Why is Australia a good place for wineries?
Explain the idea of the 'American dream' in the past and nowadays.	Fires in Australia- reasons and measures
Why someone can say that water is 'a curse or a bliss' for New Orleans in Louisiana?	Prospects of Australia and Canada in the context of Commonwealth
What can you do in/around Las Vegas (Nevada) apart from gambling? What are the natural attractions of the place?	Let's talk about Shakespeare
Is Alaska the state where you can escape?	Media in Great Britain
What is the 'Columbus Day'? How is it celebrated?	Fish and chips – what is the origin and are they still served in a newspaper
What is the origin of the word Canada? Multinational and multi-language Canada.	Is there any code of behaviour of MPs or what's the role of the Speaker in British parliament?

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

The USA, Canada	Australia, Great Britain
Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia - geography of Canada	Is Britain the land of scientists (e.g. Isaac Newton, James Watt, Charles Darwin, Alexander Fleming, Graham Bell, Stephen Hawking)?
Polish traces in Canada – why Poles emigrated to Canada.	A detective – a well-recognised literary figure in British novels or stories
Alice Munro and her literature for the Noble Price.	Independence referendum in Scotland – main arguments for and against
Indigenous nations of Canada – their traditions, art and music.	British humour
Famous Canadian markets - ByWard Market, Ottawa Market, Ontario Market, Parliament Hill Market	Why do we admire gardens in Britain?
Bilingual province in Canada	Is it easy to be a 'sweet tooth' in Britain?
Leonard Cohen – a poet, a musician, a bard	What is true about Scotland: wild, traditional, mysterious, dark or urban?
Prince Edward Island – homeland of Ann's of Green Gables	Wales – is it only known for 600 castles?
Holidays in Canada	Is Ulster in Northern Ireland still the province of troubles?
Modern Canadian music	Why did Irish leader John Hume get the Nobel Prize for Peace?
Canadian storytelling	Robin Hood and King Arthur – are they legends or historical figures and how they influenced contemporary pop-culture.
	"How to be an alien"… in Britain – is it still relevant?

Their preferences were not oriented on a particular English speaking country, nevertheless, most of them concern British and American areas (see Table 2).

Other topics, repeatedly, came as less welcome or harder to understand and prepare for the learners (see Table 3).

Unsurprisingly, one of the topics 'San Francisco in California has acted in many American films. Explain why? What is so special about this city?' was approached and interpreted, as it was done in the form of learners' presentations, by learners in a variety of ways.

As for planning and designing the activities for the topics, the researcher/teacher was pursuing the CLIL requirement that "it is useful to think of content in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding we wish our learners to access, rather than simply knowledge acquisition" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 53). However, reflecting on the learners' engagement in higher-order as well as lower-order thinking processes and designing the tasks that way so they will always be challenging enough, not for the sake of developing the language itself, was really demanding. It was not impossible to achieve, but time consuming and not always smooth and uncomplicated to integrate with the course of lessons progressing according to the Core Curriculum.

Table 2 Learners' most appreciated topics in culture-content English lessons

Why country music seems so popular in the USA? Which place/town is the best known for this kind of music? Who are the most popular country singers/groups?
What are the most popular TV series in the USA?
What are 'American food trucks'?
Why sheep are so important for Australia?
Do Australian eat any unique food such as kangaroo, eel, emu, snake, witchetty grubs? Are there any characteristic features of Australian cuisine?
Australian wildlife – weirdos, freaks of nature or natural wonders
Canadian storytelling
Prince Edward Island – homeland of Ann's of Green Gables
Let's talk about Shakespeare
Is there any code of behaviour of MPs or what's the role of the Speaker in British parliament?
Robin Hood and King Arthur – are they legends or historical figures and how they influenced contemporary pop-culture.

Table 3 Learners' least appreciated topics in culture-content English lessons

What is 'Ivy League'? How is it connected with education?
Explain the idea of the 'American dream' in the past and nowadays.
Why someone can say that water is 'a curse or a bliss' for New Orleans in Louisiana?
Polish traces in Canada – why Poles emigrated to Canada.

Even if the researcher was an experienced teacher and had applied some of higher-order skills before, still designing an efficiently-organised CLIL task was a real challenge. The example of the CLIL topic 'Was Shakespeare educated?' (see Table 4) was supposed mainly to practice listening for specific information, as far as skills in a foreign language are concerned.

Additionally, according to various thinking processes, it should also allow the learners to remember (list, state), understand (discuss, identify, recognise), analyse (compare, justify), or evaluate (judge, select) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This culture-oriented content appeared to be motivating for learners and evoked vivid discussions, nevertheless, finding the appropriate language material and converting it into a CLIL task engaging learners in more elaborate thinking processes demanded from the teacher advanced professional skills and was time-consuming. Finally, preserving the Language Triptych of CLIL (Language of learning, Language for learning and Language through learning) postulated for very thorough planning of the foreign language content that enables learners to access the new knowledge, as well as to learn efficiently from the cognitive processing when using the language. The example of the steps from the lesson around the topic 'Let's talk about Shakespeare' proves that it not enough to comprehend the message and recall the ideas to confirm the knowledge. To constitute progression through cognitive skills learners should also be able to apply, analyse and synthesise, evaluate, at least

Table 4 Sample tasks and activities for one of the topics used during the secondary school CLIL lessons

Topic: **'Was Shakespeare educated?'**
Step 1
Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions:
Who was responsible for your education in your childhood? Justify and give examples.
Who is responsible for your education at the moment? Justify and give examples.
Step 2
Work in pairs. Make a list of 5 examples how your relatives influenced your education.
Now, compare the list with another pair. Find out if they listed the same examples.
Step 3
Listen to the podcast from the following website:
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/podcasts/lets-talk-shakespeare/was-shakespeare-educated/
It is a series **'Let's talk Shakespeare'** and tries to answer the question **'Was Shakespeare educated?'**
The podcast lasts for over 20 minutes (you can obviously listen to the whole podcast), but for the sake of doing the task you have to listen to 11 minutes of the podcast.
!!!!! PLEASE, DO NOT READ WHILE LISTENING. IF YOU HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING, THEN YOU CAN CHECK IN THE SCRIPT.
After listening, give answers to the questions:
1. How did Shakespeare's mother influence his education?
2. Was there any pre-school system in Shakespeare's times?
3. What type of education did he get from his grammar school?
4. How were children taught to read?
5. What skills did Shakespeare learn in his grammar school that would make him a good playwright?
6. What does it mean that pupils at that time 'learnt by rote'?
7. How were girls educated at Shakespeare's times?
8. How was the Bible connected with education?
9. What could have 'kick-started' Shakespeare's imagination (as one of the interviewers claims)?
Step 4
Then, 'Was Shakespeare educated?'. Discuss in groups of 4. Support your ideas considering 2 perspectives:
Shakespeare's times
Current times

according to Bloom's taxonomy (1956). Should we consider the revised version of this taxonomy, there are even more demanding divisions of cognitive processes and types of knowledge that could be considered when creating educational tasks: factual, conceptual, procedural, metacognitive (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Then, to construct an efficient CLIL lesson, time-consuming preparation was required to develop a foreign language activity, mainly oriented on the language itself, into a multidimensional task where the language was the means and ends at the same time, additionally, developing the content area, which in this case was a topic about culture.

6 Conclusions and Implications

The two elements of the CLIL research were mainly oriented on diagnosing a teacher, then, the voice of teachers should be considered if one wants to construct some conclusions after over 20 years of implementing, changing and adjusting to CLIL in foreign language classrooms in Poland.

Bearing in mind the remark from the beginning of the twenty-first century about the uncertainty of applying CLIL with learners aged 4–12 years, it seems that teachers who were researched in the primary school investigation saw several benefits of the integration, such as: more flexible time management in a classroom, more frequent contacts with a foreign language, or using techniques present in general/mainstream education for teaching the foreign language. The teachers mentioned also the possibility of topical correlation, however, this can still be treated as a challenge, for it was difficult to notice many instances of introducing the same topics within reasonably close time spans, e.g. in the same week or day. It was also visible in the observed lessons that with a skilful teacher who could integrate mainstream education topics with English, learners were more engaged in learning. Creating the link with general knowledge and using the foreign language as a unifying element constituted a more natural context for learning in general. The inquired group of teachers stressed that the CLIL techniques and integration ensure more efficient learning.

Since the CLIL research was oriented on teachers, it is worth noticing that the professionals who participated in the primary observation and questionnaire represented a variety of educational backgrounds and it was evident that their opinions on implementing CLIL at the young learners' level were influenced by their own education and experience. However, in spite of their professional background, all of the teachers agreed that the more frequently they could have CLIL lessons, the better general foreign language abilities of their learners. On the other hand, one of very strong benefits for learners, and at the same time drawbacks of CLIL, was the new range of topics, independent from the mainstream education. It was supposed to create a change in a routine and consequently, build better motivation. What all the teachers stressed was the shortage of materials which could show them how to integrate topics from general curriculum or how to prepare integrated lessons. The claim that there was little or no correlation of topics in English and the mainstream education was also signalled by the majority of teachers, however, it was rather based on personal opinions, not facts. Unfortunately, the majority of the teachers lacked awareness what topical integration could mean and what kind of support was offered by syllabi available from various publishing houses.

As far as the preparation of teachers is concerned, after observing the group of researched teachers in practice, some conclusions could be drawn in relevance to how important the professional preparation is. Teachers who were the mainstream teachers, when introducing English in the integrative form, were able to implement the general education topics in the foreign language, but their level of the foreign language was lower than the subject (English) teachers. On the other hand,

professionals educated as the foreign language teachers did not see the urge of elaborating their foreign language area to more integrated and oriented on CLIL. This proves to be in accordance with the opinion expressed by Coyle, Hood and Marsh that "without attention being paid to implementing strategies for training the professional workforce, which include long-term plans for skilling multilingual teachers, then quality of CLIL in not sustainable" (2010, p. 161).

It is impossible to disagree with the claim because the action research conducted in a secondary school confirmed the exigencies in the area of building awareness and professional skills of teachers how to construct CLIL tasks skilfully and how to reinterpret the ideas of CLIL to meet the requirements of national curricula or learners' needs by responding to the CLIL lessons in positive way. The secondary school learners confirmed the potential of this methodology, even in the context of teaching a foreign language. Moreover, the freedom of choice of topics on the part of the teacher or the procedure to organise the CLIL lessons was motivating, and yet, it could also be intimidating for inexperienced professionals. Those professionals should offer their learners confidence to try again and organise the process of learning in repeatable trials, however, from the point of view of big groups of learners, which are frequently seen at schools, it is hard to organise the procedure of CLIL efficiently.

The content-culture oriented language lessons were successful motivators for the teenage learners, hence they were distinct from the routine of the regular language topics. Additionally, the 'culture' itself created the knowledge area which can always be challenging or surprising for learners. This 'soft'/'weak' version of CLIL (Ball, 2009; Bentley, 2010) that was used in the secondary school seems to be the solution for foreign language teachers who want to introduce the methodology of CLIL without specialising in other subjects. In Polish schools, either primary or secondary, this language and topic-oriented CLIL creates the opportunities for teachers to prepare lessons which can combine some suggestions from the Core Curriculum with the learner-centred approach. Then, when foreign language teachers are prepared to apply CLIL in their classrooms, the content might also be the culture, bearing in mind that it is perceived as one of "drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as a means to experience European identity in all its diversity" (The European Commission, 2017).

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Part II
Focus on the Learner

Current Issues in FL Learning and Teaching in the Context of the Visually Impaired Learners

Małgorzata Jedynak

Abstract In the twenty-first century language competence is regarded as one of the key competences to be mastered by each EU citizen. This pertains to all people regardless of their impairment or disability. For visually impaired people a command of a foreign language is particularly important. Not only does language learning compensate for sensory deficit but also psychological, social and communication deprivation. Considering all the above and the fact that foreign language typhlomethodology is a grossly underresearched area, the present paper will highlight the most salient issues in foreign language teaching to blind and partially sighted students. The paper has an insight into legal and policy context of language education provision to SEN learners, and language programs and projects targeted at visually impaired learners. It also depicts how learners with vision loss or deficit function in FL classroom. Here, the role of holistic education and tailored language teaching is accentuated. Finally, the paper presents a review of the recent research reports pertaining to various facets of language learning and teaching in the context of the visually impaired.

Keywords Visually impaired · Special education needs · Foreign language learning · Foreign language teaching

1 Introduction

Nowadays, education provision is regarded as priority to create modern knowledge-based societies. To achieve the goal education policies are developed to promote full access to education to everyone, including students at risk of social marginalization and these with disability or impairment (Pronay et al., 2020, p. 93). The above also

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concerns equal access to FL (foreign language) education which is reflected in the EU education policy documents. For the visually impaired, learning a FL compensates for psychological, sensory, social and communication deprivation. A command of languages other than one's mother tongue paves the way for opportunities to experience cultural diversity, meeting people and enhancing sense of personal fulfilment. What is more, it opens more job opportunities in societies with a high degree of economic interaction and may contribute to the mobility of disabled or impaired people in the EU. The language that is particularly valued on the EU labour market is English. Therefore, the EU launches various programs and projects targeted at the visually impaired to promote FL learning and teaching.

The necessity of English language learning is stressed in all age groups starting from very young learners with vision impairment. Aikin Araluce (2005, p. 5) notes that children can particularly benefit from mastering English which increases their professional opportunities as well as enhances their integration into the world of the sighted children. Nowadays modern language is treated as a foundation subject included in school curricula. However in the past foreign languages were traditionally regarded as subjects appropriate for study only by the more able students.

From the existing literature related to language acquisition in visually impaired learners, it may be concluded that vision deficit is not an obstacle to successful FL mastery. Their aural auditory and memory abilities allow them to surpass sighted learners, particularly in FL pronunciation, provided there are adequate teaching methods and environment (Jedynak, 2011). Bearing in mind the great potential of visually impaired language learners and scarcity of research findings pertaining to visual impairment and FL learning there is an urgent need to address the issues in both research and education policies.

2 From Marginalization to Inclusion

For a long time impairments and disability were associated with subordination and a passive role in a society (Król-Gierat, 2020). In the past a person with visual impairment was frequently marginalized or excluded from education (Jedynak, 2015). After the years of isolation, the process of the visually impaired integration was started. This was mainly due to the 1824 invention of a series of embossed dots arranged in a specific manner and representing various letters commonly known as braille script (Tremblay, 2007). The script made use of the slate and the stylus for punching holes in it. The raised dots could be touched and read by the blind people, which opened a window into new ways of experiencing education including FL learning. Though the script became a universally accepted tactile system for reading and writing, the visually impaired were still excluded from mainstream education. To the late 1950s visually impaired children were frequently home schooled (Jedynak, 2018). In time governments included SEN (special education needs) children in public education, however they were separated from other learners. Mayberry and Lazarus (2002, pp. 5–6) describe this model of integration saying that SEN

children could only spend some time in a regular classroom while the overwhelming majority of time they spent in a special resource classroom. Undoubtedly such integration allowed for limited cooperation between visually impaired and non-deficit learners, promoted tolerance and diversity. Yet, as Tremblay (2007, p. 22) notes, despite many advantages the model had, visually impaired children could feel segregated.

In the twenty-first century equitable provision for visually impaired learners became a priority in education policies in countries associated in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the main goal of education shifted from *integration* to *inclusion* – a new education model fostering equity and social cohesion (Czerwińska & Kucharczyk, 2019). According to Kupisiewicz (2013; in Król-Gierat, 2020, p. 12) inclusive education assumes the reconstruction of a school system and a holistic approach to learners, bearing in mind their strengths and special needs in every sphere of their lives (psychological, physical, social).

Equity as a core of inclusion has been thoroughly discussed in the international documents (see UNESCO, 2017; OECD, 2018, 2019) and available literature (e.g. Murray, 2018; Santos et al., 2020) which interpret the term equity in the four ways:

(i) equity in terms of equal learning environment provision (Are visually impaired learners provided with equivalent learning conditions? and Do they benefit from an environment in the same way as other individuals e.g. in terms of the level of teaching staff training)
(ii) equity of access or equality of opportunity (Do visually impaired learners have the same chances to progress in the education system?);
(iii) equity in production or equality of attainments (Can visually impaired learners master with the same degree of expertise like students without impairments both knowledge and skills designated as education goals?, Do visually impaired learners achieve equivalent results and have the same chances to earn the same qualifications?)
(iv) equity in using the results of education (Do visually impaired graduates have the same chance to use acquired knowledge and skills both in community life and employment?)

As it can be seen inclusive education capitalizing on equity aims at narrowing the gap between high and low performers. Though the aim is common to all OECD education systems most countries are only capable of partial inclusion and provision of equitable outcomes achievement for all. This is due to a lack of funds or SEN teacher training (Jedynak, 2015, p. 41).

3 Emergence of New Terminology

Education for All which is a global movement led by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), together with the principle of inclusion contributed to a change in perception of the visually impaired in society,

their more active participation in social and education domain, including FL education. The change is reflected in terminology used to describe a person with visual impairment. In the past the terms such as a *visually disabled person* or a *person with vision below the norm* were used not only in common language but also in literature. In the twenty-first century such terms are associated with discrimination and social prejudice. Newly coined terms such as *visually impaired* or *visually challenged* are devoid of negative connotations. They are used with such descriptors as *mild*, *moderate*, *severe* and *specific* (Jedynak, 2015, p. 21).

The changes can be also observed in terminology used in a school context. In the past blind and partially sighted learners were categorized with other disabled pupils described as pupils *eligible for special education.* Nowadays the term *students with special needs* is widely used. It should be noticed that *special education needs* is a broader concept than *cognitive disability* measured by IQ tests. Both terms are used, however, to describe levels of cognitive disability and special education needs which may lead to confusion. According to a definition developed by Bogdanowicz (1996) special education needs students are the ones who find it difficult to handle the curriculum of the typical school and consequently to make the same progress as their non-impaired classmates. It should be stressed that the term special education needs was also operationalised in a legal discourse which accentuates two main issues, namely problem and disability. The latter is defined precisely in the EU *Education for All* document as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" (Centre for Inclusive Education, 1990, p. 4).

The term *special needs* reflects the current trend in the EU policies which stress a departure from *inter-individual differences approach* (focusing on differences between impaired and non-impaired people) to *intra-individual differences approach* (focusing on differences within a population of people with one particular impairment). Nowadays the idea of streaming visually impaired pupils into special classes in line with the first approach is abandoned where possible and instructional procedures for each visually impaired learner are determined by the other approach.

A growing interest in education of the visually impaired, including language education gave rise to the emergence of a new scientific domain – *foreign language typhlomethodology*. As Krzeszowski (2001, p. 5) notes the newly coined term originating from a Greek word *tyflos* (blind) deals with teaching techniques and methods that can be implemented for the visually impaired. The term emerged in the last two decades and was adopted in Europe, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe where the domain gained a notable status. However, in the Anglos-Saxon culture the domain is barely known, which is reflected in the absence of the term in dictionaries. Typhlomethodology or typhlodidactics relies largely on research methods and instruments used for sighted learners. As it is an interdisciplinary domain it draws on various branches of sciences such as psychology, pedagogy, applied linguistics, sociology and even cultural studies. Its research scope concerns (1) foreign language, (2) visually impaired learners, (3) teachers of visually impaired learners, (4) teaching resources development, (5) learning and teaching context, (6) approaches, methods and techniques used for teaching (Jedynak, 2015: 23). It should be stressed

that FL typhlomethodology should be treated equally with FL methodology. According to Piskorska et al. (2008, p. 16) both domains offer the same teaching techniques which, in the context of visually impaired learners, need to be tailored to their needs.

4 Legal Policies and Frameworks: International and EU Perspectives

The above mentioned changes in the perception of handicapped people required both political decisions and legislative support. It should be noticed that the education systems in the EU member states have been developing within very specific contexts, both in terms of policy and practice. Consequently specific countries in their educational legislation and policymaking do not rely on externally operationalised definition of SEN but rather define the term on their own. In some education systems only one or two SEN categories exist while in others there are as many as ten. According to the report *Special Education across Europe in 2003* these differences, may be attributed to procedural, financial and administrative regulations (European Agency for Development in Special Education Needs, 2003, p. 126). What all EU countries share, however, is the approach they take for SEN defining, assessment and provision. Nowadays the approach is based on a social model and not a medical model which was prevailing in the last two centuries. According to the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training-ET* 2020, there are three broad cross-national categories of learning problems based not on medical causes but on perceived causes of educational failure: (i) *the disabilities category* (clear organic reasons for difficulties in education e.g. learners with vision impairments), (ii) *the difficulties category* (emotional and behavioural difficulties or specific difficulties in learning), (iii) *the disadvantaged category* (additional resources are necessary to compensate for problems caused by cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds).

With regard to education for SEN students, it is guided by the principles included in the legislation of individual EU member states. Yet, the underlying philosophy of particular Education Acts is based on international documents concerning the rights of disabled people. These international documents underpinning all countries' national policies encompass various conventions, resolutions, declarations and statements. The key international document affecting special education is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UNESCO, 1948) issued by the UNESCO. In line with the declaration human rights are vested in all human beings; everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of all human rights and that entitlement extends to people with disabilities and impairments. The second point of Article 26 is particularly relevant to special education as it outlines the main goal of education which is respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms together with promoting understanding and tolerance. There are also four international conventions with

the United Nations guidelines on general and special education: (i) the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), predominantly Article 28 related to education, (ii) the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity in Cultural Expressions* (UNESCO, 2005), (iii) the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* and Articles 13 and 14 (right to education) of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Economic Rights* (UNESCO, 1966), and (iv) the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNESCO, 2006), particularly Articles 7 on children with disabilities and 24 on education. The last convention is of paramount importance for ensuring equality in education. The principles outlined in the conventions guarantee three fundamental rights, namely the right to education, the right to equality, and the right to be a part of society which are forcefully reaffirmed in the *World Declaration Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990), a UNESCO document, which in Article 3, point 5 devotes much attention to the issues crucial for students with disabilities such as universalising access to education and promoting equality in education. The perception of the rights of persons with disabilities and their access to education was also largely shaped by the United Nations *Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* (UNESCO, 1993). The document specifies the main prerequisites for equal participation of disabled people in different spheres of life and the target areas for their equal participation. It also outlines the measures which should be implemented to achieve equality in various domains including education at primary, secondary and tertiary level (Jedynak, 2015, pp. 39–41). The 1993 document initiated the UNESCO conference whose participants adopted the *Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action*, known as *Salamanca Declaration for Special Education Needs* (UNESCO, 1994).

According to Król-Gierat Salamanca Declaration was a milestone in the conceptual framework of the SEN policies which were developed in many European countries (Król-Gierat, 2020, p. 9). It needs to be stressed that the declaration not only affirms the *Education for All* principle and inclusive education but also curriculum flexibility, assessment, technology assistance and preparation for adult life, all of which are of primary importance for visually impaired pupils. With regard to inclusive education, mainstreaming disabled students should be an integral part of national policies aiming at education for all. Furthermore, schools should respond to students' diverse needs by accommodating different styles and rates of learning. As to curriculum flexibility, it should be adapted to students' special needs and not vice versa. It needs to be stressed that visually impaired students like other SEN learners should not receive a different curriculum but a regular curriculum tailored to their individual needs and accompanied by instructional support. With regard to assessment, summative assessment aiming at monitoring educational outcome for purposes of external accountability should not be implemented; rather its formative form is advocated. In the era of technology one can hardly imagine effective teaching without technology-based resources. This is even more relevant in the case of visually impaired students for whom access to appropriate and affordable assistance technology guarantees learning success. An important aspect of education is also preparation for adult life. For visually impaired pupils transition from school to

adult working life is possible if schools provide them with practical skills allowing economically active and independent life.

There are also some documents issued at the European level which set out objectives for EU countries in relation to special education. The Report from the Education Council to the European Council *Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems* (European Commission, 2001) outlines a comprehensive and consistent approach for education policies in the context of the EU. The Communication from the Commission *A Coherent Framework of Indicators and Benchmarks for Monitoring Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training* (European Commission, 2007), in turn, identifies special needs education as being one of the 16 priority objectives to be considered within the Lisbon 2010 objectives. Also ET 2020 – A *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training* (Council of Europe, 2009) emphasizes the imperative that education systems in Europe should provide successful inclusion for all learners.

5 Languages for All

Legal policies and frameworks brought about changes not only in general education but also in language education. This change is reflected in the *Language for All* principle which was thoroughly discussed by McColl in *Modern Languages for All* (McColl, 2000). The publication shows numerous benefits of FL learning provision to SEN students, both in mainstream and special schools. In the report *Special Educational Needs in Europe: The Teaching and Learning of Languages* it is pointed out that people with all abilities have the potential to learn foreign languages. If they are provided the right opportunity and conditions they can also achieve success. In the report one can also read that FL success is realistic as SEN learners already achieved success in their first language, which is indisputably their potential. The question that arises, however, is how close to that potential educators and teachers can enable SEN learners to get.

For visually impaired people FL learning is not only an opportunity for success in a different curriculum area but also, as Mason et al. (1997, p. 253) note, a chance to practice a range of basic skills related to their life, social and educational functioning. Nowadays a command of English is particularly stressed. Not only does it allow a visually impaired person to compensate for sensory deprivation in various spheres of life (psychological, social, professional) but also to develop creativity, communicative skills and engage in entertainment activities e.g. using social media and online applications. With regard to psychological compensation, Asher et al. (1995) point out that visually impaired students who may have learning difficulties or even fail in other curriculum areas may at the same time experience a fresh start while learning a FL. Woods (1995), in turn, makes a reference for enhancement of visually impaired learners' self-confidence and self-esteem. Further benefits of opening up FL learning to visually impaired people are also well documented in

literature and they concern greater vocational mobility or increased opportunities for tourism (Deane, 1992; Fox & Looney, 1993).

One of the visible manifestations of Languages for All policy is introducing foreign language as an obligatory subject to school curriculum for all SEN learners. Along with the change of FL status in schools, FL teaching to visually impaired adults started to be promoted by such organisations as the European Blind Union (EBU) and International Council for Education of Visually Impaired (ICEVI). One of their aims is to improve accessibility to FL learning through adaptation of teaching infrastructure to the needs of people with vision deficit. In Poland, there are two organisations, which actively promote FL learning by visually impaired people, namely Polish Association of the Blind Union and Foundation Institute of Regional Development. A growing emphasis on FL teaching to the visually impaired gave rise to a variety of initiatives in a form of EU-funded programs and projects such as *LangSen Project, Per Linguas Mundi ad Laborem, Listen and Touch*, *Accessible Language Learning for Visually Impaired People, Pedagogy and Language Learning for Blind and Partially Sighted Adults in Europe*, *Eurochance*, *European Language Portfolio for the Blind and Visually Impaired*.

6 FL Learning and Teaching: Findings, Recommendations

The available literature in the field of visual impairment and FL education shows that both researchers and practitioners' interests revolve around determinants of visually impaired learners' FL success. Two main facets may be distinguished here, namely didactic process and affective-cognitive traits. Undoubtedly they pose a challenge for contemporary language education in the context of learners with vision deficit.

FL success is an attainable goal if certain conditions are met. The inclusion policy requires from language teachers to introduce all necessary adaptations aimed at minimising the barriers to FL learning. This may be achieved by implementation of appropriate teaching methods and the choice of special didactic devices.

In line with the current language education recommendations communication is the main aim of modern language teaching. This may imply that speaking and listening should be prioritized, which works at advantage of visually impaired learners as they rely primarily on aural input. Yet, it should be emphasised that all four skills must be given equal weighting. Visually impaired students should be able to use Braille in a FL they are studying though they may be some students whose literacy skills cannot be assessed. As Mason et al. (1997) state reading and writing should be regarded as reinforcement skills rather than as means of access and assessment, particularly in the early stages of learning. The authors give a few practical tips to teachers who introduce writing and reading skills, namely they should concentrate on the spelling of individual words and phrases and then on the sounds of the words and the relationship between sound and shape. To achieve the abovementioned aims in teaching four skills both in mainstream and specialized settings, FL teachers need

to adapt their teaching style to encourage students' maximum access. The adaptation may involve the elements of cooperative language teaching which is particularly beneficial for students with vision loss and deficit. This type of teaching allows them to develop communication skills during peer-peer and team interactions without competing with each other. Apart from developing social skills the cooperative teaching method contributes to enhancement of visually impaired learners' sense of responsibility and building a positive emotional bond between classmates (p. 255). Kalnbērzina (2008) who investigated the method in the specialized setting proved its high effectiveness, particularly in FL grammar learning. The method affected not only students' academic attainments in grammar but also the level of social skills, enjoyment of learning and self-confidence. The researchers noticed, however, that cooperative language teaching did not appeal to all visually impaired students, particularly to introvert, inhibited ones at initial stages of their learning. Such learners were reported to express dissatisfaction with the method and reluctance to work in collaboration with other classmates.

Apart from cooperative language teaching the holistic approach to teaching the content is also advocated. Wyszyńska (2013) implemented such an approach in her experiment. The *psycho-linguistic method Touching the World,* as the author called it, treats a visually impaired learner as a whole together with their emotions and mental blockers. The researcher developed two stages in her innovative way of teaching a FL to learners with vision deficit. The first stage – mental stage – affects psyche through the implementation of the sandtray therapy, controlled breathing practice, the Brain Linkage Method, and the edu-kinaesthetic method. In the second stage lexis and grammar are introduced by the Re-charged Direct Method, supported with collage and water clusters, involving the media of sand and water, and techniques used for tactile-audible perception. The psycho-linguistic method based on holistic and humanistic approaches proved to be highly effective in the context of visually impaired children learning English as a FL. The researcher reports that apart from increase in language competences the method involving manipulating sand and water encouraged the learners' self-expression and enhanced their self-growth.

Tailoring didactic process would not be possible without adaptation of language materials and resources adaptation. In a comprehensive study by Aikin Araluce (2005) an attempt was made to investigate the effectiveness of the instructional materials used for teaching English to the visually impaired children in the mainstream Spanish schools and the experimental summer camp. The researcher developed a tactile resource pack with an interactive storybook introducing and practicing basic English grammar and lexical structures commonly found in textbooks designed for children. The implementation of the tactile resource pack turned out to correlate positively with language attainments. In the follow-up study another resource pack called the dinosaur pack was designed to evaluate the effect of the tactile instructional materials on motivation to learn English. The post-questionnaire results indicate that the experimental pack contributed to the improvement of motivation in all children.

In the twenty-first century, tactile resources are coexisting with various devices and new technologies which enhance learning and teaching process. Among a variety of optical devices that can be used by the visually impaired there are bifocals, prism lenses, contact lenses, magnifiers, and telescopes. As to non-optical devices they include large-print language course books and materials or bold-line paper to facilitate seeing the lines on regular writing paper. There are also devices used for tactile learning which allow a learner creating tactile graphics to convey non-textual information by means of raised images (tactile pictures, diagrams, maps, graphs). Such devices include raised-line paper (lines are embossed to allow students to explore the lines with fingers), raised marks (special markers, adhesive-backed materials, and glues that leave raised marks to create lines or dots which can be felt), raised-line drawing boards covered with rubber and equipped with a sheet of acetate (used for writing or drawing with a pen or other pointed object; it produces raised lines that can be explored with fingers).

FL learning also requires some devices for auditory input processing and recording. In the twenty-first century such specialized devices are usually portable. Among them there are voice organisers and recorders for recording short notes at school and listening to them at home, audio books and colour identifiers. Nowadays it is difficult to imagine successful language learning and teaching without advanced technological devices for the visually impaired. Among them there are (i) computer screen readers to navigate through dialog boxes, menus, and editing fields, (ii) speech synthesizers which speak a text sent from the screen-reading programme installed on the computer, and (iii) a Braille display (soft paperless or refreshable Braille display) which is a tactile facility placed under a conventional computer keyboard enabling a user to read the contents of the computer screen by touch in Braille (Zdobylak, 2009, p. 28). A discussion on language materials would not be complete without mentioning the issue of audiovisual translation. Audio description also known as video description or visual description can be used both by visually impaired learners for autonomous FL learning and FL teachers as a stimulus for speaking or pronunciation and grammar practice. Its effectiveness in education was proved in numerous research (e.g. Walczak & Rubaj, 2014; Krejtz et al., 2014).

Tailoring didactic process to the unique needs of each visually impaired learner also entails a development of *Individual Educational Programme* (IEP). In a FL classroom an IEP may be in a form of a contract between language teachers, other professionals, and parents. A typical IEP should contain the information on a learner's current level of language performance, the planned timeframes of language provision, and additional services which need to be provided (e.g. Braille classes, mobility instruction or psychological consultation).

Paluch (2022) draws attention to another important issue, namely adaptations of educational requirements in English language classes for SEN students to meet examination requirements. As the author notes, the main and almost only adjustment for such students is extended time to write an exam. Based on the case study she points out to a main problem related to language testing and assessment i.e. lack

of coherence between the different regulations at school and national level, which affects the results achieved by the students in their final language exams (p. 241).

The last two decades faced a growing interest in investigating affective and cognitive traits of visually impaired learners. The traits, as Czerwińska and Kucharczyk (2019) note in their book, are of a paramount importance to be considered while teaching in the context of students with visual impairment. The authors prove effectiveness of a modern approach to teaching in which the main emphasis is placed on the assets of a visually impaired learner and not primarily on deficits. This paradigm is recommended not only in relation to vision loss but also to other disabilities.

The research done in the area of language education and visual impairment intends to work out implications for language teachers, school counsellors and parents on various ways of improving visually impaired learners' language attainments. In the mixed-method study conducted by Jedynak and Wesołowska (2014) an attempt was made to establish vocabulary language learning strategies used by three groups of learners who were studying English as a FL, namely non-blind, fully blind, and partially blind. The researchers' intention was to indicate the strategies shared by all the learners, regardless of the degree of sight loss and these which were unique for one particular group of learners. The study based on retrospective accounts provided by learners indicated there was a relationship between the use of FL vocabulary learning strategies and vision. The keyword strategy was favoured by all the groups, yet only partially blind and fully blind learners selected the strategies related to representing sounds in memory. The partially blind group, who could still rely on their vision, opted for the keyword strategy in which they used auditory impressions rather than visual ones. Surprisingly enough, the group also tended to rely more on the sense of hearing than the fully blind learners who appeared to have developed other skills, rather of a mental nature, which they used to comprehend our visual reality and learn new lexical items. The above findings not only provide some insights into cognition and language acquisition of learners with vision impairment but also allow formulating some implications for FL teachers who should adjust their language strategy training to a degree of learners' vision deficit. Strategies based on sounds in memory and mental should be prioritized in such a training (Jedynak & Wesołowska, 2014, p. 327).

Another determinant of language performance which in the case of visually impaired learners may be even more significant than for fully sighted learners is motivation. This affective-cognitive trait was investigated by Jedynak (2010). The researcher established that visually impaired learners like their sighted counterparts recognized a great importance of FL learning and developed their own personal goals. Yet the learners with vision deficit were reported to have more pessimistic attitudes towards possible perspectives related to the potential application of English in the future. This gloomy vision is partly justified if one takes into consideration the statistics on the unemployment rate of visually impaired people.

7 Conclusions

As presented above promotion of equality and diversity in education is essential for both visually impaired learners and FL teachers. Nowadays modern education systems should create such environments in which students with and without disabilities can thrive together. Yet, the transition from the integrative school to inclusive school system is counter-productive in some European countries (e.g. in Germany or Poland). Consequently, many visually impaired students are still schooled in special schools. It seems that implementing inclusion is the most important issue which should be addressed by policy and decision makers in the following years.

As it has been pointed out advanced new technologies may compensate for a lack of vision. Visually impaired people can learn foreign languages using such technologies for professional and entertainment purposes. This has been of much value in the global pandemic time. However, for some visually impaired people the pandemic has had a detrimental effect manifested in helplessness, frustration, lack of motivation to learn a FL and autonomy. It seems that at this stage language teachers, apart from new technology use, should focus primarily on enhancing visually impaired students' well-being and motivation.

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Fostering Learner Autonomy and Intercultural Learning Through Face-to-Face Mobility and Virtual Exchange: PluriMobil Resources

Anna Czura and Mirjam Egli Cuenat

Abstract Even though learning mobility (both face-to-face and virtual) is widely promoted and funded by a number of institutions worldwide, voluminous research suggests that international experiences do not always yield positive results. Therefore, to turn a mobility programme into a learning opportunity, it is necessary to provide student sojourners with guidance at different stages of the experience. PluriMobil teaching resources, developed with support of the Council of Europe, aim to help teachers and teacher educators guide their students through a mobility experience, especially in terms of developing intercultural and plurilingual competences, fostering learner autonomy and raising language awareness before, during and after either a face-to-face or virtual intercultural encounter. Because the intricate relationship between intercultural competence and learner autonomy is often overlooked, in this chapter we present the rationale behind those PluriMobil resources that focus specifically on developing learner autonomy. By referring to sample activities, we illustrate how the development of learning strategies, reflective skills and goal setting can be promoted in a learning mobility context.

Keywords Learner autonomy · Learning mobility · Virtual exchange · International experience · Teaching resources · Intercultural competence

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1 Introduction

Learning mobility is understood here as an educational experience in a new environment that aims at enhancing the development of the plurilingual, intercultural and professional skills of students at all ages. In this chapter, we focus particularly on two forms of learning mobility: face-to-face mobility (also termed as physical mobility) and Virtual Exchange (VE). The former involves moving to a different location and for different purposes, for instance students may move to a new learning environment to participate in a language or university course, carry out a work placement, study abroad, or complete a project with students from partner institutions. Virtual Exchange (also known as telecollaboration or online intercultural exchange) involves interaction and collaboration with peers from geographically distant locations, facilitated by means of online technology (through such tools as social media, videoconferencing, e-learning platforms, etc.) and carried out in an institutionalised setting (Belz, 2003; O'Dowd & Dooly, 2020). VE allows for cooperation with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds while staying at home. It is our understanding that virtual and physical mobility are not restrained to cross-border cooperation only, but may also refer to intra-national contacts, especially in the case of multilingual countries (cf. Egli Cuenat et al., 2015a, pp. 15–16).

The benefits of mobility programmes are enumerated in a number of documents issued by the European Commission such as *Green Paper: Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People* (2009) and *Languages for Jobs: Providing Multilingual Communication Skills for the Labour Market* (2010). The documents stress that a mobility experience has a positive influence on participants' personal growth as well as communicative and intercultural competences. Mobility is also viewed as a valuable contribution to plurilingual and intercultural education, a key issue of the Council of Europe's language policy (see the website of the *European Centre for Modern Languages* and the *Language Policy Unit*'s platform "Languages in Education – Language for Education"). Moreover, students who take part in learning mobility initiatives are more likely to opt for professional opportunities abroad. With this in mind, many schools and institutions of higher education in Europe and beyond offer different forms of mobility programmes, which are often financially and administratively supported on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements as well as programmes funded by international organizations, with the European Union being the most notable example in the European context.

However, recent empirical data do not always support these claims and may suggest that the relationship between students' international experiences and intercultural or communicative growth is not as straightforward as earlier assumed (Deardorff, 2006; Jackson, 2012; Richardson, 2016). It appears that the ultimate learning gains of any mobility experience vary from individual to individual and depend largely on the participants' previous experience in travelling, sociocultural knowledge, initial level of intercultural awareness, openness and tolerance (Jackson, 2010). Similarly, Olson et al. (2005) observe that in the process of preparing a mobility initiative, many organizations tend to focus on administrative aspects, whereas a formal

statement of learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the experience seems to be downplayed and severely neglected. These studies indicate that intercultural encounters do not automatically result in personal, linguistic and intercultural gains; therefore, in order to turn a mobility programme into a true learning opportunity, there is a need to establish coherent learning objectives and provide the participants with guidance and support at different stages of the experience (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018; Heinzmann et al., 2014; Jackson, 2012, 2014; O'Dowd et al., 2020).

Developed in response to these challenges, *PluriMobil* resources enable teachers and teacher trainers to guide their students through the entire process of an intercultural experience. These practical resources were produced as an outcome of the 5-year *PluriMobil – Plurilingual and Intercultural Learning through Mobility* project, which was funded and supported by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe in Graz. PluriMobil offers five sets of practical resources designed for five different target groups: primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools (both general and vocational) as well as teacher education. With the objective of assisting mobility participants in benefiting fully from this learning opportunity, PluriMobil aims to develop their intercultural and plurilingual competences, foster learner autonomy and raise language awareness throughout the entire mobility programme: at the preparatory stage, during the stay itself and on return to the home institution. The three-stage approach should be analogously implemented in Virtual Exchange initiatives. The PluriMobil resources were not designed for any specific mobility context but can be used flexibly and adapted to the needs of specific teaching and learning situations.

Because the intricate relationship between intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and learner autonomy is often overlooked in study abroad research and practical resources alike, in this chapter we present the rationale behind PluriMobil resources that focus specifically on developing learners' independence, autonomy and reflective skills in the mobility context. The chapter starts with an overview of the concept of learner autonomy in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Next, our understanding of the interdependence between learner autonomy and the ability to communicate cross-culturally is delineated. After outlining the objectives, structure and components of PluriMobil, our approach to fostering learner autonomy in the mobility context, illustrated with sample activities, is presented. We hope that the approach to supporting learner mobility proposed in this text will contribute to overcoming the existing gap between policy, practice and research findings.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Learner Autonomy

The importance of learner autonomy was highlighted by studies that attempted to identify characteristics of 'the good language learner' (Griffiths, 2008; Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975). Based on previous work, it appeared that the most

successful learners were those individuals who took an active role in the learning process and applied certain independent measures to accomplish their learning objectives. Such learners are able to readjust the goals set by teachers to suit their own learning needs, select appropriate learning strategies and constantly monitor the effectiveness of their learning by introducing any necessary changes.

One of the first definitions of learner autonomy in language learning was formulated by Holec (1981, p. 3), who put forward an assumption that autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". His definition implies that autonomous behaviour is ideally present at all stages of the learning process: from goal setting and ongoing management to the evaluation of outcomes. Little (1991), on the other hand, takes a more psychological perspective and views autonomy as

> a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts. (Little, 1991, p. 4)

Benson (2001) further develops these definitions and suggests that learner autonomy essentially entails three interdependent levels of control over: learning management (learners' decisions concerning planning, implementation and evaluation of the learning process), cognitive processes (learners' mental involvement in the learning process) and learning content (learners' ability to establish learning goals as well as to select appropriate materials, methods and techniques to accomplish these objectives).

Although initially learner autonomy was associated with self-instructed adult learning, nowadays it constitutes an integral part of mainstream education, and *learner training* (also referred to as *pedagogy for learning* and *learning to learn*) is seen as a prerequisite for effective language learning "here and now" to prepare learners to pursue their educational goals in other contexts. Over the past 20 years, several documents of the Council of Europe have underlined the curricular relevance of the development of learner autonomy. Being a framework for language learning policy in European countries, the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) sends a clear signal that learning to learn, which is deemed as a non-linguistic component of language competence, should be incorporated in curricula and teaching resources. The *Framework for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA, Candelier et al., 2012), in turn, formulates descriptors of knowledge, attitudes and abilities dedicated to language acquisition and learning.[1] The *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco

[1] For details see sections KVII Knowledge about language and acquisition/learning, section AVI Attitudes to learning and section SVII Knows how to learn.

et al., 2016) recommends that the curricular development of learner autonomy[2] be approached transversally, across different languages.[3]

Dam (1995) states that the development of autonomy is a gradual process that shapes teachers' and learners' learning experiences and entails changes in the classroom environment. Learners are not likely to start to believe in their own independence and to make decisions concerning their own learning, unless the teacher transfers some part of control and power to them (Dam, 1995; Little, 2009). This perspective highlights the role of cooperation and negotiation between different agents in developing autonomy in the context of instructed language learning. In a learner-centred classroom, instead of assuming the role of an authority and a sole decision-maker, a teacher needs to become a facilitator and guide that encourages the learners to reflect on their own learning process, to formulate interpretations and to make independent decisions about what, how, why, when and where to learn. Wilczyńska (1999) highlights the link between the process of developing autonomy and building individual communicative competence – learners need to assume an active role in the process by discovering both the properties and the communicative value of the foreign language.

There is a variety of pedagogical measures and tools that promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning in the classroom context. For instance, through language strategy instruction learners become more aware of the nature of language learning, develop familiarity with a number of possible language learning techniques and, thus, are better equipped to cope with recurring problems (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Michońska-Stadnik, 1996, 2009, 2011; Oxford, 1990, 2017). Gremmo and Riley (1995) emphasise the need to prepare learners to analyse and reflect on the processes taking place in the classroom, which can be accomplished, for instance, by means of self-assessment, which can be introduced in the form of questionnaires, rubrics or learning journals. Additionally, teachers' formative feedback on learners' performance, which may take the form of portfolios, diaries (Dam, 2009; Yang, 2007), face-to-face conferences (Peñaflorida, 2002) and other types of ongoing evaluation (Brown, 2004; O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996), offers learners information concerning their strengths and weaknesses as well as the possible means that can be applied to overcome encountered problems. The use of task-based and problem-solving activities, which essentially involve collaboration with other learners and encourage critical thinking, also engages learners in reflection on both the process and product of work, thus, contributing to developing their autonomy (Nunan, 2004; Sercu, 2002). Finally, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a powerful tool for supporting learner autonomy, goal setting, self-assessment and other forms of reflective language learning (Little, 2009, 2016; Kühn & Pérez Cavana, 2012). Although it is often overlooked in teaching practice and subject literature alike, the ELP also aims at developing pluricultural competences by encouraging reflection on both linguistic and cultural encounters, collecting evidence of

[2] Further details in sections 2.2 and 2.3 (Beacco et al., 2016).

[3] Further details in section 2.6 (Beacco et al., 2016).

culture contact and self-assessment of language skills on the basis of descriptors that, in some cases, refer to "linguistically mediated culture" (Little & Simpson, 2003, p. 4).

2.2 The Interdependence Between Learner Autonomy and ICC

In the era of globalisation and widespread use of computer-mediated communication, autonomous learning skills are particularly valuable in out-of-school contexts, which include study and residence abroad, school exchanges, online projects and other forms of learning mobility that involve interaction with both native- and non-native speakers of the target language (Nunan & Richards, 2015). Effective communication in such contexts is conditional not only on the learners' linguistic skills, but also on their ability to cope with situations that abound in novelty and ambiguity on both linguistic and cultural levels. Consequently, because learner autonomy facilitates the processes of learning and communicating in a foreign language in a variety of settings, the interdependence between this notion and ICC is evident.

The necessity to link language and culture in the language classroom has been the subject of attention in the literature for some time (cf. Czura, 2016, 2018; Egli Cuenat & Bleichenbacher, 2013; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat, 2002; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Sercu, 2005). Dervin and Liddicoat (2013, p. 8), to highlight the joint nature of these two elements, refer to language as "the unnamed dimension of the intercultural". Looking back at acknowledged models of communicative competence (cf. Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Council of Europe, 2001; Hymes, 1972), it is clear that even though the term intercultural competence is sometimes not mentioned verbatim, successful communication is conditional on the speaker's ability to communicate both accurately and appropriately in a given social context. Intercultural competence also implies the ability to be reflective about the communicative and linguistic dimensions of culture and to use appropriate communicative strategies. Accordingly, socially and culturally acceptable interaction takes place when the speakers are able to exploit their linguistic resources efficiently in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect. Sercu (2002, 72) asserts that "all language education should always be also intercultural education"; consequently, teachers should adopt an integrated approach to language and culture teaching (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; Sercu, 2005).

Whereas some attention has been paid to the interdependence between communicative and intercultural competences, the links between the latter and learner autonomy have not been recognised until recently (Benson, 2007; Little, 2009). In school practice, the integrated approach to teaching language and culture is frequently neglected at the cost of knowledge-based aspects of ICC (Castro & Sercu, 2005). Sercu et al. (2005, p. 494) rightly note that "Because teachers tend not to teach culture, they may not yet have come to realise that the cultural dimension of foreign language education is well suited for promoting learner autonomy and that such an approach might be beneficial to language learning as well". Apart from

facilitating linguistic growth, learner autonomy entails also deeper skills of analysis, reflection and evaluation and it contributes to learners' social and personal development.

As debates on notions of culture and the intercultural in the field of education and other fields suggest, cultures should be understood as complex, dynamic and variable phenomena, as opposed to being viewed as fixed and static entities attributable to specific nations or ethnic groups (Dervin & Tournebise, 2013; Holliday, 2010). Hence, learner autonomy appears particularly pertinent in the context of cross-cultural communication, which relies not as much on the speakers' knowledge of the target language culture, as on their ability to analyse new phenomena, reflect on novel situations, cope with uncertainties and socially construct their own perspectives. As Elsen and St. John (2007, p. 22) rightly assert, "a focus on learner autonomy holds the promise that values and norms are communicated, mediated, and developed rather than being transmitted."

Given that nowadays foreign language learners interact cross-culturally across a multitude and variety of media and contexts, the need for fostering intercultural and autonomous learning skills becomes even more pronounced both in and beyond the language classroom. In a study exploring the potential of blogs for learner autonomy and intercultural communication in a study abroad context, Lee (2011) discovered that the success of autonomous and intercultural learning in a group of undergraduate students depended on well-designed tasks as well as effective metacognitive and cognitive skills. Also, Harvey et al. (2011) indicate that one of the reasons the benefits of immersion programmes for language teachers were not fully exploited was insufficient goal-setting support prior to departure. Taking into account such research findings as well as our own mobility experiences, with the view of supporting a holistic development of mobility participants, PluriMobil resources focus on both intercultural skills and autonomous language learning.

3 PluriMobil Resources and Learner Autonomy

Motivated by research findings suggesting that not all participants of mobility experiences equally benefit in terms of intercultural and communicative competences, PluriMobil resources were produced to assist teachers of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school (general and vocational education) as well as teacher educators in designing a pedagogical intervention aimed at supporting student development in the course of learning mobility programmes.

PluriMobil was developed by an international team in two stages as a part of two subsequent ECML programmes: *Empowering Language Professionals* and *Learning through Languages*. The final product includes five sets of so-called *lesson plans*, a *Handbook* (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015a) and a *Quick Start Guide* that are freely available on the project website (plurimobil.ecml.at). The resources are available in English and French but are also addressed to teachers of other languages, who might translate the selected parts of the lesson plans into their respective target

languages. Although PluriMobil resources were primarily designed for foreign language teachers, some lesson plans, especially those focused on developing intercultural skills, can be also used by teachers of other subjects. The lesson plans offer a wide range of practical activities that are accompanied by convenient photocopiable examples that can be either used in their present shape or customised to the needs of different mobility projects, educational contexts and language groups. Most of the lesson plans include instructions to tasks that may be completed in three phases: (1) before a mobility/VE project, supervised by a regular teacher or a team of teachers in the home institution; (2) while abroad in the host institution or in the course of a VE project; and (3) once the project is finalised. The PluriMobil *Handbook*, offers a thorough, yet practically-oriented, introduction to the lesson plans and provides some guidelines on implementing the resources in practice. Finally, the *Quick Start Guide* is a concise manual that offers teachers and teacher educators step-by-step practical instruction on how to start using the tool in their contexts.

To promote good practice in mobility programmes by developing plurilingual and intercultural competences, PluriMobil resources contain numerous references to other Council of Europe publications. For instance, the objectives were formulated on the basis of such reference documents as the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) and the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (*FREPA,* Candelier et al., 2012). Additionally, selected fragments of the *European Language Portfolio* (*ELP*),[4] the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (*AIE*),[5] the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL, Newby et al., 2007), *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003), and *Developing and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence–A Guide for Language Teachers and Teacher Educators* (Lázár et al., 2007) have also been adopted so that they can be used to support different stages of a mobility project.

PluriMobil resources reflect the complex nature of and the interdependence between communicative and intercultural competences; therefore, apart from developing these two competences, the lesson plans essentially are geared toward non-linguistic elements that are pertinent to successful learning and communication including reflective practice, autonomous learning and soft skills. PluriMobil resources have been developed to encourage students to approach mobility experiences as autonomous learners who are able to self-assess their communicative competence, to choose their most effective learning strategies and to set their own learning goals without the teacher's support. While the approach to ICC adopted in the resources has been delineated elsewhere (Egli Cuenat, 2018), this chapter focuses specifically on how PluriMobil facilitates the process of developing autonomous learning skills in a mobility context.

[4] More information available at: http://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio.

[5] More information available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_en.asp.

3.1 Strategy Instruction

Oxford (2017, p. 48) defines L2 learning strategies as:

> complex, dynamic thoughts and actions, selected and used by learners with some degree of consciousness in specific contexts in order to regulate multiple aspects of themselves (such as cognitive, emotional, and social) for the purpose of (a) accomplishing language tasks; (b) improving language performance or use; and/or (c) enhancing long-term proficiency

Building on her work, some PluriMobil lesson plans aim at equipping students with appropriate strategies that will help them independently develop their language skills in a mobility context. Similar to other lesson plans, the resources focused on strategy instruction also guide users throughout the entire stay abroad or VE project. First, from an array of possible strategies, students select the ones they would like to test during their mobility experience and then, upon the project completion, the students' self-reflection on the effectiveness of the undertaken measures is encouraged. This procedure reflects the usual approach to strategy instruction that involves preparation (laying the groundwork for learner-centred learning), presentation (explicit explanation of strategies), practice (guiding students on putting the newly learnt strategies into use), evaluation (engaging students into reflective practice on the used strategies) and expansion (encouraging students to apply the strategies in unfamiliar context) (cf. e.g. Oxford, 2017).

The presentation of learning strategies in PluriMobil is largely based on selected elements of the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) and *Helping Learners Learn: Exploring Strategy Instruction in Language Classrooms across Europe* (Harris, 2001). In the contexts where the ELP is already used, the teachers are advised as to how this tool can serve to support language learning during a stay abroad or with a virtual mobility project. Alternatively, for teachers who are unfamiliar with the ELP, some relevant tasks have been selected and adapted to guide students through the three stages of a mobility experience. The resources available in the ELP appeared to be particularly useful in the exploration of learning techniques and resources that facilitate progress in the four language skills. A sample PluriMobil activity designed with the objective of strategy instruction in lower secondary school is found in Fig. 1. Here, as a result of discussing the advantages and drawbacks of diverse learning techniques in pairs or groups, students reflect on the usefulness of the learning resources they already know and additionally become familiarised with a number of new possible tools for improving language skills. With a heightened awareness of learning resources and strategies, in the next step, students are prompted to formulate language learning objectives to be achieved during a mobility project.

Additionally, because most of the mobility projects entail communication with speakers of other languages, special attention is also paid to the use of communication strategies. While completing a checklist containing such entries as "I change to my first language or another language and borrow a word or an expression from that language", or "I use mime or gesture or a facial expression" (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015c, p. 53), students discuss which strategies may be of help in case of a

EXAMPLE 1

Learning strategies

How do I learn languages?

Mark [V] in the first column what you do to learn a foreign language. In the second column mark those techniques you would like to use in the future. You can add your own ideas.

	In the language I am learning	I do the following	I would like to learn like this
I listen to	songs on the radio, TV	[ ]	[ ]
	recorded lessons on tapes and CDs	[ ]	[ ]
	radio and TV news	[ ]	[ ]
	...	[ ]	[ ]
I watch	films on TV, in the cinema, on video/DVD	[ ]	[ ]
	other TV programs	[ ]	[ ]
	...	[ ]	[ ]

Fig. 1 A fragment of Lesson plan 9 for lower secondary school: *The European Language Portfolio: How do I learn and how do I want to learn?* (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015b, p. 39)

communicative breakdown and then, once the mobility project is completed, analyse the extent to which these techniques proved useful in a real-life context.

3.2 Developing Reflective Skills

No matter whether a lesson plan targets the development of learner autonomy, communicative competence or intercultural skills, the activities are designed in such a way so as to engage prospective users in reflective thinking. Regarding intercultural

competence, the students are invited to reflect on such aspects as: perceptions of their own and other cultures, approaches to otherness, the ability to cope with ambiguities and the impact the intercultural encounters exerted on their initial attitudes and beliefs.

In terms of autonomous language learning, the reflection process involves self-assessment of language competence, setting learning goals to be accomplished and a final evaluation of the projected outcomes. Active engagement in self-assessment may encourage students to take responsibility for planning, management and evaluation of the learning process; to this end, as research indicates, the ELP has proved to be a highly relevant tool (Kühn & Pérez Cavana, 2012; Little, 2009). An example of such a self-assessment task for the lower secondary level is presented in Fig. 2. Here, the descriptors at A2 level, adapted from the ELP, have been tailored to encourage students to assess their language competences, engage in reflection, highlight what they need to practice and, with this knowledge, set learning goals to be accomplished when abroad. The students return to the goals they have set and reflect on them once the mobility is completed. Naturally, the selection of learning goals depends on the type, length and aims of a mobility project. Thus, both teachers and learners are invited to select any objectives they believe are relevant to their context. It is worth noting that because vocational upper secondary school students frequently undertake a job placement as a part of their mobility project, in the lesson plans devoted to this target group the self-assessment checklists have been enriched with descriptors specifically referring to language use in work-related situations, such as, "I can understand what a client/patient/supplier, etc. requires on the telephone", "I can understand the main points in a meeting with my colleagues", etc. (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015d, p. 39).

Additionally, in order for reflection to address the entire mobility experience, ideally the students should document their self-assessment, established goals, intercultural encounters, evidence of growth and other experiences that are linked to their mobility activities (e.g. photos, drawings, leaflets, souvenirs, audio and video recordings, completed tasks). Depending on teachers' and students' preferences or technical possibilities, the documentation of a mobility project might take the form of a traditional or electronic portfolio, a diary, a notebook, a paper file, a ring binder, a blog or a personalized webpage. In the contexts in which the ELP is used, the evidence of the mobility experience can be collected as an inherent part of the ELP Dossier. The use of portfolios in intercultural contexts affords students an opportunity to construct their own meanings, make judgments and analyse both intercultural and linguistic choices in collaboration with the teacher (O'Dowd & Müller-Hartmann, 2018; Scarino, 2010; Schulz, 2007). Based on their experience of pedagogical interventions in study abroad contexts, Corder et al. (2018, 290) note that "Reflective journals, blogs, or portfolios are useful for fostering critical reflection, working through feedback from mentors, and undertaking collaborative learning with other participants". Drawing on this, PluriMobil explores the potential of a portfolio to record the process of becoming interculturally and communicatively competent through mobility, beyond the foreign language classroom. Figure 3 presents the during and after stage of Lesson plan 2 addressed to student teachers.

EXAMPLE 2

Goal setting checklist (A2)

Have a look at the table:
Before your mobility activity, list some language goals you'd like to achieve. Think about what you can do to achieve these goals.
During your mobility activity, check if you are really doing what you have planned to do.
After your mobility activity, tick the goals you have actually achieved.

GOALS	BEFORE What can I do during my mobility project to achieve these goals? Explain	DURING What am I actually doing? Explain	AFTER Have I reached my goal? Please tick if yes.
LISTENING			
I can understand the main points in short and very simple TV news, if I can see pictures.			
I can understand what the topic is if people speak slowly and clearly.			
...			
READING			
I can understand simple descriptions of people, things and places.			
...			
SPEAKING			
I can order something to eat or drink in a simple way, e.g. in a bar.			
...			

Fig. 2 Adopted from Lesson plan 9 for lower secondary school: *The European Language Portfolio: How do I learn and how do I want to learn?* (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015b, p. 41)

Before the mobility, the students are asked to fill in a blank template of an iceberg with the visible and invisible aspects of culture, which later serves as a basis of a discussion with the partner students. Once the mobility is completed, reflection on the changes in opinions and beliefs is encouraged. It is recommended that the whole process and the modifications to the iceberg be documented in the portfolio.

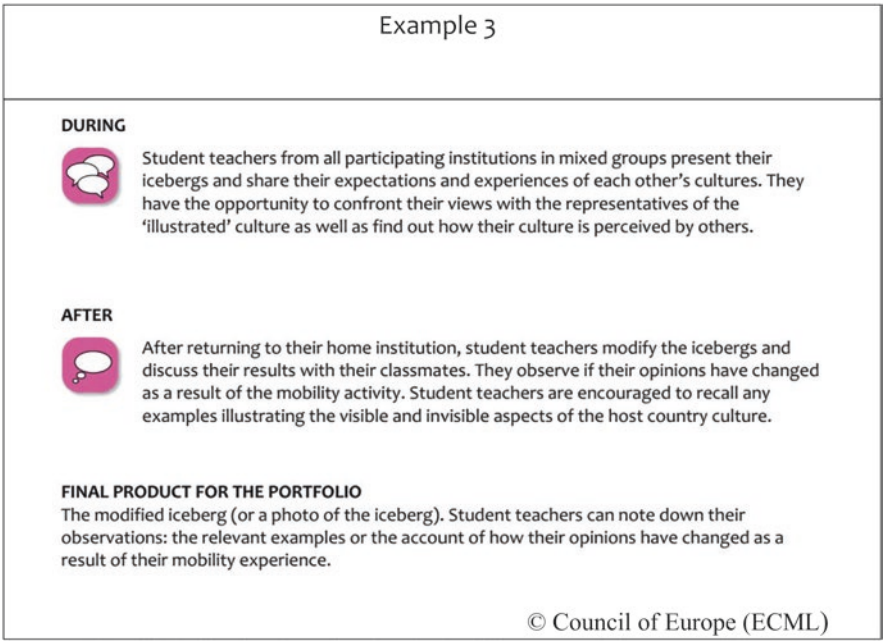

Fig. 3 A fragment of Lesson plan 2 for student teachers: *The visible, the less visible, the invisible* (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015e, p. 8)

Irrespective of whether students record their intercultural and linguistic development in or outside the school context, the importance of a teacher/instructor, who essentially assumes the roles of a facilitator, a guide and/or a coach, in the reflection process should not be underestimated. It is visible, for instance, in Lee's research (2011), where the students involved in a study abroad project appreciated the freedom of choice while working independently on the final product; however, the process of in-depth critical analysis of and reflection on the intercultural encounters heavily relied on the teacher's guidance. Also, McKinnon (2018) underlines that the true value of a portfolio in a study abroad project lies in the possibility of ongoing support from an instructor in the home institution.

The value of mentoring in a mobility context has been confirmed in two small-scale studies on the implementation of PluriMobil resources. After the project involving a study abroad semester in an institution of teacher education in Switzerland, the participants underlined that they appreciated both autonomous learning and in-depth intercultural reflection. Despite a very tight time budget allotted to the work with PluriMobil, which consisted of an introductory session focused on the *ELP*, the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* and a learning diary, ongoing e-mail contact regarding the self-reflective tasks during the stay and two sessions after the stay for presentation with a common reflection and discussion, the project proved to be a minimal but very efficient condition to ensure the necessary guidance and support (Egli Cuenat et al., 2016). The outcomes of the second

project, in which PluriMobil resources were used to accompany Liechtenstein upper secondary learners' language stay in England and France, suggest the necessity for more extended teacher support during a stay abroad. Although the learners generally appreciated the intercultural and language benefits of the before-during-after scenario, some learners felt disadvantaged as they did not receive sufficient support and/or too little time was devoted to working on their portfolios during language lessons in the host institutions. It occurred that in some cases the receiving teachers were not sufficiently prepared for the work with PluriMobil resources (Sommerauer et al., 2016). This proves that mentoring can be effective only when all the involved institutions actively contribute to the study abroad endeavour.

3.3 Guidance on Self-Directed Learning

Goal-setting abilities and autonomous language learning skills are further promoted in a few lesson plans for all target groups that support the development of language awareness and selected aspects of communicative competence. In lesson plan 11, "I understand more than I think", younger learners learn that due to similarities between the languages, they can understand a lot through observation and context (see Fig. 4).

The resources for older groups focus on more complex aspects of plurilingual competence such as cognates, everyday expressions, culture-bound vocabulary, jokes, advertisements, formal/informal language use, plurilingual communication strategies (see Egli Cuenat & Höchle Meier, 2016) and non-verbal communication. In the home institution, in cooperation with teachers, students are advised to discuss the usefulness of selected items in the mobility context and choose the ones they wish to develop. During a mobility project, students expand their linguistic repertoires by exploring the surrounding, searching the Internet and other available sources, consulting their peers or host families. Subsequently, they record their progress in the form of a portfolio or a diary that will later constitute the basis of the final reflection on their linguistic growth upon project completion. Such a design not only encourages the mobility participants to actively use the language in communication, but also shows practical ways to enhance language skills independently of the teacher. Additionally, the exploration of culture-bound vocabulary, rich points (cf. Agar, 1994), idioms or advertisement slogans, that is the elements of language that are intricately linked to culture, may contribute to raising the students' sociolinguistic competence and intercultural awareness.

Self-directed language learning based on PluriMobil resources was attended to in a small-scale study abroad project that involved student teachers of foreign languages (Egli Cuenat et al., 2016). On the basis of lesson plan 9 – The European Language Portfolio – My learning diary, before the sojourn, the participants self-assessed their FL competence in order to set their own learning goals that both matched their own language learning needs and were relevant in the context of their intercultural experience. As the authors indicate, conscious reflection on the

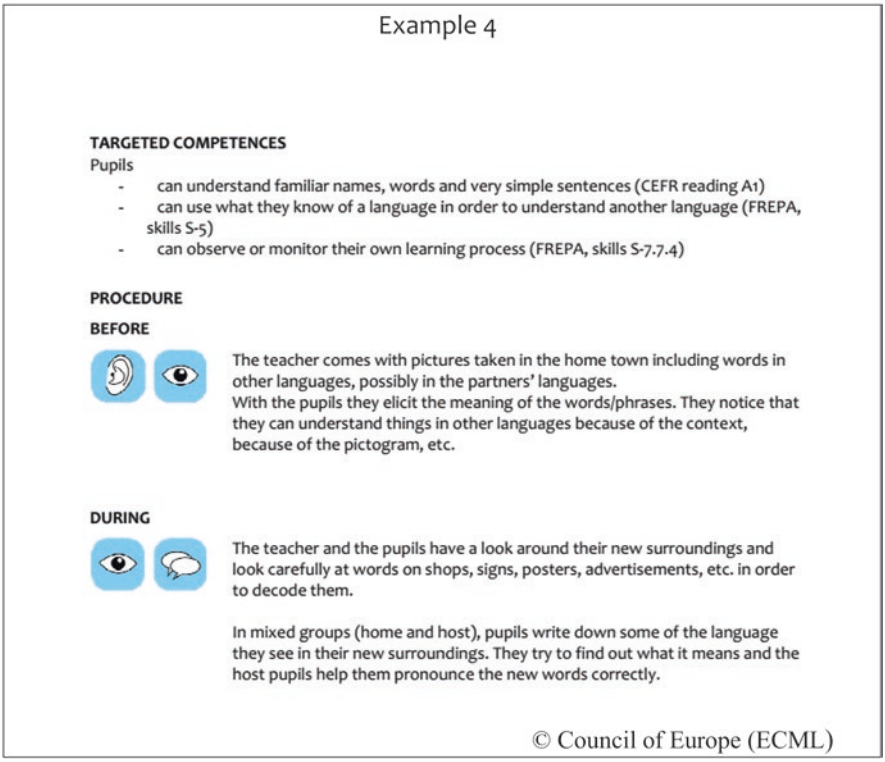

Fig. 4 Adopted from Lesson plan 11 for primary school: *I understand more than I think* (Egli Cuenat et al., 2015f, p. 33)

progress made in the form of a learning diary during the mobility and on return to the home institution raised the student teachers' language learning awareness.

3.4 Soft Skills

To promote lifelong learning and boost students' academic and professional performance, apart from developing linguistic and intercultural competences, PluriMobil resources aim to support students in gaining a number of soft skills, many of which constitute important components of learner autonomy. A vast majority of PluriMobil lesson plans for all target groups is based on practical tasks that encourage active collaboration – through pair and group work – with other students both in the home and the partner institutions. The aim is to promote a spirit of cooperation and increase students' sense of ownership, which is additionally supported by constant attempts to engage students in the process of guided reflection. Students become responsible for the outputs of the collaborative work and are able to adapt to new

intercultural situations. Moreover, PluriMobil tasks often involve some degree of problem solving problems and negotiation of meaning. Task completion frequently depends on the students' ability to search for and analyse diverse resources in order to select and summarise relevant information.

4 Conclusions

Given both the financial and organisational costs involved, it seems natural to expect that both face-to-face and virtual mobility programmes should lead to tangible learning gains for participants. Whereas most existing instructional interventions tend to focus only on intercultural aspects of mobility experiences, we suggest that this objective should be supplemented with sessions devoted to fostering learner autonomy and study skills that facilitate language and academic progress in a new learning environment. As described in this chapter, PluriMobil resources are based on empirical findings that suggest that adequate pedagogical preparation, guidance and follow-up should be provided in order to optimise learning opportunities of a mobility experience. However, it should be remembered that PluriMobil is not a magical potion that automatically turns a mobility programme or a VE project into a successful and sustainable learning experience. The success of a pedagogical intervention based on these resources may depend, amongst other factors, on the learners' initial level of autonomy, willingness to cope with novel situations, depth of understanding of interculturality as well as the teachers' readiness and ability to foster learner autonomy. Moreover, the successful use of a portfolio as a tool that triggers reflection on both intercultural and language learning experiences depends to a large extent on the quality of support and guidance mobility participants receive on an ongoing basis. We understand that the support based on PluriMobil resources will not always result in the development of autonomous learning skills as not all learners will react positively to this type of pedagogy. Secondly, an intervention of this kind limited to one mobility/VE project might be insufficient. Fostering learner autonomy should be treated as a continuous and long-term process inherent to language and intercultural learning and teaching, both in and beyond the language classroom.

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Investigating the Link Between L2 WtC, Learner Engagement and Selected Aspects of the Classroom Context

Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Jakub Bielak

Abstract From the point of view of language pedagogy, understanding what promotes learners' willingness to communicate (WtC) in the target language, as well as what enhances learner engagement (LE) in the learning process constitutes an important goal that could translate into learning outcomes. Both constructs, WtC and LE, appear mutually related, but the nature of their connections is not fully understood. Informed by the literature review and own research, the analysis reported in this chapter involved also a number of other variables that are believed to contribute to generating WtC in the classroom: Classroom Environment, Communication Confidence, Ought to L2 Self, and International Posture. To address the issue of the interplay of these factors, first, Principal Component Analysis was performed to establish the component structure of the constructs, and, second, regression analyses were employed to establish WtC antecedents in the context of learning English as a foreign language involving 262 secondary school students. The results show that *Agentic engagement*, *Behavioural engagement*, and *Ought to L2 self* significantly predict classroom WtC. It appears that allowing learners to have their voice in matters related to the process of learning might boost their engagement and increase their WtC.

Keywords Willingness to communicate · Learner engagement · Agentic engagement · Secondary school

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1 Introduction

The complexity of the processes leading to foreign/second language learners' willingness to communicate (WtC), backed up by the significance of communication in the target language for this language attainment, has inspired numerous research projects within the qualitative as well as quantitative paradigm. They aim at the identification of factors that hinder or boost learners' communicative behaviour in and out of the classroom, as well as at figuring out these factors' mutual relationships. To the best of our knowledge, however, none of the studies undertaken to date has considered learner engagement (LE) as a WtC antecedent. To bridge this gap the present study has been undertaken, including also other components of instructed second language acquisition. The study presented here is a partial replication of the investigation conducted by the author and her colleague (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2017). Hence the choice of the variables to be included in the procedure was informed by the results of the above mentioned study and included three facets of WtC: unplanned, planned and practice-seeking WtC, as well as other components emerging from the analysis, namely Communication Confidence, Classroom Environment, International Posture, Ideal L2 Self, and Ought-to L2 Self. As compared to the original study, a different sample was targeted: The participants of the 2017 study were English majors, whose goal-orientation and motivation, *per se*, make them unique, which precludes broader generalizations. That is why the decision was made to collect data from a different respondent group, secondary school students, to eliminate the tertiary education bias and enable the identification of WtC antecedents shaping learners' communicative behaviour in the context of learning English in a secondary school.

LE can be defined as a multifaceted construct that "concerns active participation and involvement in (…) school-related activities and academic tasks" (Dörnyei & Mercer, 2019, p. 2). The reason why the present study focuses on the link between WtC and LE, apart from the other components of instructed L2 acquisition, is the fact that LE has been associated with success, no matter which line of academic pursuit is followed, and, as has been uniformly stressed across disciplines: it is invariably positively correlated with academic achievement (Case, 2007). In language learning, learners' engagement seems critical for language development, given the role of active practice and language use in the development of communicative competence (cf. Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Mercer, 2019). In the field of second/foreign (L2) language acquisition, the topic of engagement in language learning has gained a wider recognition only recently, giving rise to a surge of publications, particularly, in the last few years (e.g., Hiver et al., 2020; Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). However, as argued in a recent meta-analysis of language learner engagement studies (Hiver et al., 2021), research into engagement in language learning started over 20 years ago with the publication of Dörnyei and Kormos' study (2000) on individual and social variables in oral production.

We believe that being able to better understand the connection between LE, WtC and a host of other classroom context components, many of which are shaped by teacher intervention, we shall be able to offer teaching recommendations that might enhance students' active involvement and communicative behaviour.

2 Willingness to Communicate

WtC, originally studied in the context of the native tongue, was at first defined as a personality trait, stable across contexts (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). The study of WtC in a foreign/second language (L2) showed its greater dependence on external conditions and hence malleability contingent on the interlocutor and a whole host of variables, best identified in the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547), L2 WtC arises out of the interplay of numerous factors, some beyond the learner's control, including linguistic and communicative competence, personality, motivation, anxiety, attitudes, as well as relations between the learner and target language community, desire to communicate with a particular person and the feeling of self-confidence. In the pyramid model, the pinnacle belongs to communicative behaviour, an observable manifestation of a learner's intention (cf. Cao & Philp, 2006; Yashima et al., 2016). The desire to enter into discourse, WtC, occupies the space just underneath and, being a psychological entity, can be accessed with the use of questionnaires. To this end WtC surveys have been used alongside numerous scales to explore the relationship between the construct and such variables as motivation (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002), emotions (Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee & Hsieh, 2019), personality (Ghonsooly et al., 2012; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), learner beliefs (Fushino, 2010; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), anxiety and self-perceived competence (Yan et al., 2018; Yashima, 2002), international posture (Yashima, 2002, 2009), and pronunciation anxiety (Baran-Łucarz, 2014).

Situating L2 WtC research in the language classroom along with laboratory idiodynamic studies (Ducker, 2022; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011) enabled capturing dynamic shifts in its intensity, and identification of abundant influences shaping L2 learners' eagerness to contribute to task performance longitudinally or on the minute-by-minute basis. The range of variables causing WtC ebbs and flows comprises feeling excited, responsible, and secure (Kang, 2005), interlocutors and context (Cao, 2014; Cao & Philp, 2006; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2016; Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014, 2017), topic and time (Cao, 2014), culture (Peng, 2012) and multimodal affordances (Peng, 2019; Peng et al., 2017). There have also been a few attempts to prove that pedagogic intervention can enhance learners' WtC: Munezane (2015) and Al-Murtadha (2019) found the positive impact of visualization and goal-setting activities, and Mesgarshahr and Abdollahzadeh (2014) observed the influence of strategy training on the increase of students' eagerness to join into classroom interaction.

3 Learner Engagement

The operational definition of LE applied in the present study repeats after Reeve et al. (2004) that engagement is a complex meta-construct that refers to a person's active involvement in task performance. Its measure involves tapping into one's effort, positive emotions, or assuming responsibility for one's actions. Because of its much encompassing nature, engagement subsumes different correlative ways in which motivation can be manifested: intrinsically motivated behaviour, self-determined extrinsic motivation, work orientation, or mastery motivation (Reeve et al., 2004, p. 147). The significance of engagement in educational settings lies in the fact that it mediates the passage from motivation to learning and achievement (Wellborn, 1991). Numerous definitions of LE may choose different points of focus (e.g., Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg, 2009), but they uniformly stress the importance of what students do, how and what they think about, and how they collaborate with others to achieve their learning-related goals (cf. Oga-Baldwin, 2019). A number of theoretical traditions, including Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Expectancy-Value Theory, have referred to the construct of engagement to account for learner success (e.g., Martin, 2010; Noels et al., 2019; Reeve, 2012; Svalberg, 2009; Wang & Eccles, 2011). Research on engagement has established links to desirable behaviours and attitudes such as goal-orientation (Anderman & Patrick, 2012), self-efficacy (Schunk & Mullen, 2012), interest (Ainley, 2012), or personal investment (King et al., 2019). As engagement denotes not only behaviour but also cognition and affect, not all of its operation may be evident to the onlooker. In the educational sciences, the model of engagement that has earned much popularity is the one developed by Lam et al. (2012), which perceives engagement as a mediator between the world outside, learners' experience, internal processes and, finally, achievement. Oga-Baldwin (2019) stresses the affinity of the model to Biggs and Telfer's (1987) process phase in the learning process or the actional phase of Dörnyei's (2000) process-oriented model of motivation.

In educational psychology, LE has been researched for many decades now (Christenson et al., 2012) and although some might think that considering this aspect in the domain of second language acquisition represents a new path of inquiry, it has been present in language acquisition research for quite some time, although various labels have been used to denote the construct (Svalberg, 2017). For example, Gardner (2010, p. 121) in his socio-educational model included *motivational intensity*: "the amount of work done, persistence, and consistency in focus" or *positive attitudes towards the language*. In Ellis's (2010) model for investigating corrective feedback, successful uptake was conditioned by the learner's cognitive, emotional and behavioural response – engagement with feedback. In the literature, there are other constructs corresponding to the notion of engagement, for example, "active learning" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), "on-task behavior" (Butler & Lee, 2006), "motivated behavior" (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Nakata, 2006), "time on task" (Good & Brophy, 2008; Hattie, 2009), or "effort" (Mercer, 2011). Bygate and Samuda (2009) as well as Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) measured learner

engagement by the gross quantity of language produced in task performance. The quality of language which learners produce in interaction has also been interpreted as a manifestation of engagement. Fortune and Thorp (2001), for example, perceived it in sharing previous knowledge or explaining decisions in language related episodes. In the same vein, responsiveness and attentive listening, asking questions, negotiation of meaning, back channelling, commentary, and showing empathy (Baralt et al., 2016; Lambert & Philp, 2015; Storch, 2008), or vicarious responses, private speech and attentive listening (Snyder Ohta, 2001) have been interpreted as signs of learner engagement.

Despite intriguing affinity, LE should be distinguished from motivation. Although they both play a role in educational achievement and are undeniably related, they must be viewed as separate constructs that operate on different planes: mental and physical. Motivation functions as engagement precursor (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012), or antecedent (Christenson et al., 2012). Philp and Duchesne (2016, p. 52), while differentiating between LE and motivation, point out the physical dimension of LE, stating that it is "a visible manifestation or 'descriptor' of motivation." Mercer (2019), in turn, stresses observable participation and enjoyment, characteristic of engagement, as compared to motivation that constitutes part of mental reality inaccessible to external observation. Much in the same vein, Oga-Baldwin (2019, p. 3) contends that "[i]f motivation is will and intention, wanting and wishing, engagement is the moment when word turns into deed." Importantly, Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) recognise an important asset of engagement, as compared to motivation, that is, the fact that it automatically translates into suitable learner behaviour, whereas motivation, no matter how strong at the beginning, can subside due to competing external distractors and internal influences.

Engagement is also likened to the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which denotes a state of heightened enjoyment, increased focus while being engrossed in task performance. As Oga-Baldwin (2019) points out, flow might be viewed as the state of optimal engagement, however, learners can be engaged without experiencing flow. Moreover, flow does not have a negative counterpart as learners can be either *in flow* or *not in flow*, whereas lack of engagement takes the form of disengagement or disaffection and comprises a host of components that can vary in their presence and intensity.

Differing views on the component structure of LE have been presented in the literature. According to van Uden et al. (2013), the construct is composed of behavioral and emotional dimensions; Fredricks et al. (2004) identified its behavioral, emotional and cognitive facets: while the behavioural one refers to learners' qualitative behavioural choices, the affective facet involves emotional reactions and links to peers and teachers, and finally, the cognitive one denotes mental operations performed by learners. Reeve (2012) and Reeve and Tseng (2011) complemented the previous divisions with the dimension of agentic engagement that can be defined as "students' intentional, proactive, and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (Reeve, 2012, p. 161). Reeve and Tseng's (2011) model, comprising cognitive, behavioural, emotional and agentic engagement, has been

used in the inquiry presented below, whose only purpose, however, was testing the model's appropriateness in the learning context under study.

The theoretical basis for the consideration of the connection between engagement in language learning and L2 WtC is provided by SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which assumes that the intensity of engagement in the learning process largely depends on motivational orientations and needs satisfaction. In the model of the language learning motivational process, Noels (2001b) and Noels et al. (2016) summarise the operation of self-dynamics (i.e., needs satisfaction and orientations), their antecedents and outcomes in the form of engagement and achievement (Noels et al., 2019, p. 101). In short, if the context, including teachers, parents, and peers, supports the satisfaction of the fundamental need for autonomy, relatedness and competence, language learners' motivational orientations get enhanced, which, in turn, defines ways in which they engage in language learning. Their engagement produces linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes (Noels, 2001a; Noels et al., 1999, 2000, 2001, 2019). The first group involves proficiency and communicative competence; the other encompasses psychological well-being and sociocultural knowledge, which result in increased contact with the target language group and willingness to communicate with it. The framework, however, does not fully explain the connection between WtC and engagement in language learning in the settings where contacts with the target language community are infrequent and target language use is largely limited to classroom interaction. To this end, the present research has been undertaken to address this gap, as well as to generate teaching recommendations aimed at increasing learners' participation in classroom activities and involvement with the target language out of class.

4 Purpose

The main objective of the study has been to explore the role of engagement in language learning in generating WtC in English among secondary school learners. As the investigation concerned the formal setting, it was assumed that the data would also allow identification of WtC correlates for this specific group of learners. That is why variables, previously identified as impinging on L2 learners' WtC (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2017), such as Classroom Environment, Communication Confidence, Ought to L2 Self, and International Posture have been considered. The underlying assumption has been that from among the above-mentioned components of the formal educational setting, LE, or rather its individual dimensions, will directly predict learners' WtC. More specifically, the following research questions were considered:

1. To what extent do different dimensions of LE correlate with learners' WtC in English and other aspects of the secondary school context, such as Classroom Environment, International Posture, Ought-to Self, Communicative Confidence?

2. What is the component structure of WtC and LE in the context under investigation?
3. Which variables from among the ones considered in the study are the strongest predictors of WtC in the foreign language classroom?

5 Method

5.1 Participants

The study was performed in the context of secondary education with teenage learners facing an obligatory school-leaving examination in English. The exam should be considered high-stakes because its results are taken into account in admittance procedures for university courses. The cohort consisted of 262 students (174 female and 88 male), who, at the time of the research, were on average 17.5 years of age. They attended three lessons of English a week and their average end-of-the semester grade was 3.9 on a scale from 1 (fail) to 6 (excellent). Their expected proficiency level was B1/B2 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*; however, variation in this respect should be expected.

5.2 Procedure, Instrumentation and Analysis

The participants took the anonymous survey online on a voluntary basis and were informed they could withdraw from the procedure at any moment without any consequences whatsoever. It needs to be noted here that the self-selection principle applying in the study might have affected the results since volunteering students might have had a generally more favourable disposition towards learning and communication. Once the approval from the school headmasters was obtained, the questionnaire was posted online via Googledocs. It consisted of 77 5-point Likert-type items (from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree*). The survey was presented in the respondents' mother tongue to avoid misunderstanding and possible confusion, and prior to completing it, the students were informed about study aims and the procedure. Clear indications were included in the introduction and individual items to inform the respondents that the survey concerned learning English, not learning in general. The items intended to tap into the learners' WtC were derived from the instrument that was the outcome of the research conducted by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2017), who, in the course of Exploratory Factor Analysis performed on data gleaned from 614 participants, identified three facets of WtC: *Unplanned in-class WtC*, e.g., I am willing to ask my group mates about forms/words related to the topic (6 items – $\alpha = 0.84$); *Planned in-class WtC*, e.g., I am willing to give a presentation in front of the class. (3 items – $\alpha = 0.79$);

Practice-seeking WtC, e.g., I am willing to use English to speak to/text my Polish peers out of class. (3 items – α = 0.79). Apart from different WtC dimensions, the following subscales for factors identified in the above mentioned analysis were used: *Communication confidence* (12 items – α = 0.89), *Ought to self* (9 items – α = 0.86), *Classroom environment* (7 items – α = 0.73), *International posture – openness to experience* (9 items – α = 0.77), *International posture – interest in international affairs* (6 items – α = 0.80). The inquiry that the above-mentioned variables originated from concerned students majoring in English who had a specific and unique orientation and well-defined goals related to using English in their future. The present study involved a sample consisting of younger learners whose future plans may not have been specified yet and who were likely to pursue many different walks of life and careers which might not entail speaking English. Thus the study represents an attempt at exploring the variables identified earlier in a different context to confirm their applicability to larger populations.

LE was measured with the use of the survey developed by Reeve and Tseng (2011), which differentiated between *Agentic engagement*, e.g., During class, I ask questions (5 items – α = 0.82), *Behavioural engagement*, e.g., I listen carefully in class, *Emotional engagement* (4 items – α = 0.78), e.g., I enjoy learning new things in class, and *Cognitive engagement*, e.g., I make up my own examples to help me understand the important concepts I study (8 items – α = 0.88). Alpha values for all of the subscales indicated that they have high reliability and could be used for further investigation of the concepts in question.

First, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed to determine a minimum number of factors accounting for the maximum variance in the data, followed by calculating descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations to establish the nature and strength of relationships between the variables. Additionally, internal consistency of the instrument was established by calculating Cronbach α for each of the subscales. This was followed by two rounds of regression analysis: linear multiple regression and linear hierarchical regression to explain the relationship between WtC and predictor variables.

6 Results

6.1 Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

The first step of the procedure was performing principal axis factoring with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). The Keyser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = 0.898 (“meritorious” according to Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2013). In order to establish the number of factors, a scree-plot criterion was used. It was unambiguous and showed an inflection justifying the retention of 8 components, which explain 60% of the total variance. Appendix One shows factor loadings after

rotation. PCA enabled the identification of 8 separate components. The first, labelled *Positive cognitive engagement* (PCE; 8 items – α = 0.89), contains items related to cognition involved in language development tinted with positive feelings of enjoyment, interest and fun. *Behavioural engagement* (BE; 5 items – α = 0.89), the second component, contains 5 items that reflect diligence, effort, hard work, and concentration. Component 3, comprising as many as 9 items, pertains to *Ought to self* (OUT; 9 items – α = 0.88) and echoes external pressures as perceived by learners. The fourth of the components, labelled *WtC* (5 items – α = 0.93), shows willingness to interact with other students on issues related to topics and ideas, and with the teacher with reference to words and structures. Component 5, *International posture – interest in the world* (IPIW; 6 items – α = 0.83), consists of 6 items and mirrors the importance students attach to learning and discussing issues related to culture, sport, politics and economy, which helps them create the feeling of belonging to an international community of speakers of English. Component 6 contains items labelled as *Agentic engagement* (AE; 5 items – α = 0.86), which express learners' active involvement in shaping classroom procedures in the form of expressing opinions and preferences, making suggestions, asking questions. Component 7, *Classroom environment* (CLE; 5 items – α = 0.89), concerns the teacher's favourable disposition, manifested in a smile and patience, but also clarity of instructions and careful planning of tasks and procedures. The final component is *International posture – openness to experience* (IPO; 4 items – α = 0.83), and it denotes learners' readiness to accept frequent travel, and work or living in a foreign country.

6.2 Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the components generated in the course of PCA (see Table 1). Standard deviation values below 1.00 in most of the cases, with the exception of WtC and *Agentic engagement*, 1.13 and 1.04

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for the 8 components identified in PCA

Variable	Mean	*SD*
PCE	3.73	0.91
BE	3.94	0.92
OUT	2.82	0.98
WTC	2.85	1.13
IPIW	3.82	0.85
AE	2.74	1.04
CLE	4.10	0.92
IPO	3.88	0.98

Notes: *AE* agentic engagement, *BE* behavioural engagement, *CLE* classroom environment, *IPIW* international posture – interest in the world, *IPO* international posture – openness to experience, *OUT* ought to self, *PCE* positive cognitive engagement, *WTC* willingness to communicate

respectively, testify to relative uniformity of the sample with respect to the measured constructs. The highest mean noted for *Classroom environment* ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 0.92$) reflects the characteristics of the setting such as the teacher's positive disposition and behaviour, quality instructions, awareness of lesson aims and opportunities for self-correction. Much in the same vein, the mean nearing 4.0 ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 0.92$) for *Behavioural Engagement* proves the relative frequency of a behavioural response to what is happening in the classroom. Two facets of *International Posture* – IPO – *Openness to Experience* and IPIW – *Interest in the World* – produced means slightly lower than the previous subscale: 3.88 ($SD = 0.98$) and 3.82 ($SD = 0.85$) respectively, showing the respondents' positive disposition towards and interest in international matters, as well as readiness to take up travel and jobs abroad. The mean for the newly created component, labelled PCE, that resulted from a merger of *Positive and Cognitive engagement*, amounted to 3.73 ($SD = 0.91$), which allows us to believe that the learning process happens in a friendly atmosphere and generates the feeling of enjoyment and interest. The mean score for WtC at 2.85 ($SD = 1.13$), slightly above the mid-point of the scale, shows a moderate degree of learners' eagerness to talk about lesson-related issues. Similarly, the level of OUT turned out to be close to the mid-point of the scale ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.98$), as did AE at the level of $M = 2.74$ ($SD = 1.04$).

6.3 Correlations

As can be seen in Table 2, a preliminary Pearson correlation analysis revealed that all of the independent variables were significantly positively linked to WtC ($p < 0.01$). Most of the intercorrelations between independent variables turned out statistically significant at the level of 0.01, with the exception of the link between OUT and IPO, significant at 0.05 and the relationship between CLE and OUT that appeared insignificant (see Table 3). Effect sizes were compared to the benchmark put forward by Plonsky and Oswald (2014). Only in one case did the effect size

Table 2 Pearson correlation analyses between independent variables and WtC

Independent variable	Pearson r ($p < 0.01$)
AE	0.420
PCE	0.365
OUT	0.301
BE	0.271
IPIW	0.247
CLE	0.211
IPO	0.201

Notes: *AE* agentic engagement, *BE* behavioural engagement, *CLE* classroom environment, *IPIW* international posture – interest in the world, *IPO* international posture – openness to experience, *OUT* ought to self, *PCE* positive cognitive engagement, *WTC* willingness to communicate

Table 3 Intercorrelations among independent variables (Pearson *r*)

	BE	OUT	IPIW	AE	CLE	IPO
PCE	0.632**	0.180**	0.438**	0.476**	0.536**	0.391**
BE		0.202**	0.185**	0.225**	0.564**	0.130*
OUT			0.193**	0.238**	0.095	0.125*
IPIW				0.351**	0.226**	0.386**
AE					0.247**	0.255**
CLE						0.191**

Notes: *AE* agentic engagement, *BE* behavioural engagement, *CLE* classroom environment, *IPIW* international posture – interest in the world, *IPO* international posture – openness to experience, *OUT* ought to self, *PCE* positive cognitive engagement, *WTC* willingness to communicate
** significant at 0.01
* significant at 0.05

exceed the level of 0.60 (large), showing the large magnitude of the relationship between PCE and BE (r = .632). Values above the medium level were noted for the link CLE and PCE (r = 0.536) and CLE and BE (r = 0.564). Slightly lower values, oscillating around 0.40 were noted for the connection between IPIW and PCE (r = 0.438), AE and PCE (r = 0.476), AE and WtC (r = 0.420). Below the 0.40 threshold but still nearing this level were connections between PCE and IPO (r = 0.391), as well as between the two types of International posture (r = 0.386). The other effect sizes should be considered as low.

6.4 Regression Analysis

Linear Multiple Regression

With the adequate sample size (Green, 1991), the multiple regression analysis could be performed to see if the independent variables significantly predicted WtC. Univariate and multivariate data screening resulted in the removal of outliers, which was followed by checking for multilinearity and homoscedasticity. A significant regression equation was found indicating that the variables predicted 28.4% of the variance (R^2 = 0.284, F(7, 239) = 13.55, p < 0.001). The strongest predictors were OUT, AE and BE (see Table 4). The remaining four variables: PCE, CLE and the two facets of IP did not prove to be significant predictors of WtC (see Table 4).

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

To further examine research question 3 asking about the variables that contribute to learners' WtC in the secondary school setting, a hierarchical multiple regression (HMR) was run. With WtC as a dependent variable, we entered the strongest and significant predictors identified in the linear multiple analysis described above: AE,

Table 4 Multiple regression analysis with WTC as dependent variable (sorted according to beta value)

	B	*SE*	Beta	*t*	*p*	*CI* 95.0%	
AE	0.390	0.072	0.357	5.391	0.000	0.247	0.532
BE	0.269	0.108	0.185	2.497	0.013	0.057	0.480
OUT	0.192	0.068	0.163	2.831	0.005	0.059	0.326
IPO	0.091	0.074	0.076	1.224	0.222	−0.055	0.237
IPIW	−0.051	0.091	−0.036	−0.558	0.577	−0.230	0.128
CLE	0.030	0.096	0.021	0.313	0.755	−0.159	0.220
PCE	0.017	0.115	0.013	0.0151	0.880	−0.208	0.243

Notes: *AE* agentic engagement, *BE* behavioural engagement, *CLE* classroom environment, *IPIW* international posture – interest in the world, *IPO* international posture – openness to experience, *OUT* ought to self, *PCE* positive cognitive engagement, *WTC* willingness to communicate

Table 5 Hierarchical multiple regression coefficients

	b	*SE b*	*ß*	*p*	*CI* 95%	
Step 1						
Constant	1.49	0.18		0.000		
AE	0.50	0.06	0.46	0.000	0.381	0.624
Step 2						
Constant	0.39	0.34		0.256		
AE	0.45	0.06	0.41	0.000	0.329	0.573
BE	0.31	0.08	0.21	0.000	0.144	0.468
Step 3						
Constant	0.04	0.36		0.918		
AE	0.41	0.06	0.37	0.000	0.286	0.533
BE	0.29	0.08	0.20	0.000	0.127	0.447
OUT	0.19	0.07	0.16	0.005	0.060	0.322

Notes: $R^2 = 0.21$ for Step 1, $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$; $R^2 = 0.25$ for Step 2, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$
AE agentic engagement, *BE* behavioural engagement, *OUT* ought to self

BE, and OUT in three steps. In Model 1 (see Table 5) we entered AE as a predictor variable and it showed to have significantly contributed to WtC, accounting for 21% of the variance ($R = 0.46$, $F(1, 245) = 65.91$, $p < 0.001$). AE and BE were predictor variables in Model 2 ($R = 0.50$, $F(2, 244) = 41.62$, $p < 0.001$). Model 2 approximately accounts for 25% of the variance in the data. In Model 3, AE, BE, and OUT significantly contributed to the regression ($R = 53$, $F(3, 243) = 31.30$, $p < 001$), accounting for approximately 28% of the variance. The 95% Confidence intervals for the three Models did not include 0, which indicated reliability associated with regression weights. The addition of variables in Model 2 and Model 3 resulted each time in a significant change of 4% (Step 2) and 2% (Step 3). Although the additions explain a small amount of variance, they can be considered helpful in pursuing a parsimonious model.

7 Discussion

PCA performed on the data collected by means of 12 subscales tapping into various aspects of language learning in the formal setting lead to the identification of 8 factors (see Appendix One). Cronbach α values for each of the subscales reached or exceeded 0.8, which attests to high internal consistency of each of the components. WtC antecedent structure resulting from Principal Component Analysis reflects the characteristics of the secondary school context with the dominant role of the teacher as an organizer, tutor and feedback provider, and the power of external motivations in the form of Ought to self. It appears that learners associate language learning with good atmosphere that generates positive affect, which promotes effective learning, as items originally belonging to the subscales of cognitive engagement and emotional engagement loaded on the same component, creating the new, Positive Cognitive Engagement, factor that explains 26% of the variance. Language learning seems unique in that it cannot be understood as a purely cognitive endeavour. Numerous studies have identified a link between positive emotions and better learning outcomes (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Ryan et al., 1990, p. 14). Enjoyment is said to emerge in the presence of challenge, concentration, clear goals, and immediate feedback, as well and a sense of progress towards their achievement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, p. 242) observe that "on daily basis, the process of language learning will implicate the two key sources of enjoyment: developing interpersonal relationships and making progress toward a goal." However, emotions and cognition seem to influence each other reciprocally. On the one hand, secondary school language learners seem to be willing to engage cognitively to enhance their understanding of the target language if the process is at least to some degree enjoyable and sparks their interest, and on the other hand their sense of progress and improved understanding generates positive emotions. This mutually supportive relationship has been reflected in the merger of these two dimensions of language learning. Interestingly, however, the regression analysis did not prove the strength of Positive Cognitive Engagement in predicting WtC, despite a relatively high level of correlation between the constructs. This comes as a surprise, since as shown in previous research (e.g., Khajavy et al., 2018), emotions, including enjoyment, strongly predict WtC. The situation described here could be attributed to the fact that the new factor, Positive Cognitive Engagement, is a combination of emotions and cognition and these two aspects in conjunction do not exert such influence as operating separately.

The items that loaded on the Classroom environment factor are mainly related to the supportive behaviour of the teacher and their expertise in teaching. The importance of the characteristics of the classroom environment for learner engagement has been stressed by Noels et al. (2018), who showed how teachers' support promotes learners' needs satisfaction and translates into greater engagement in language courses. This position, consistent with the provisions of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), posits that engagement stems from satisfying basic psychological needs of an individual. Among those needs there is autonomy, the

construct that denotes the learner's need to exercise agency while shaping their own learning in accordance with their beliefs, values and interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This might be the reason why Behavioural engagement (8% of the variance) and Agentic engagement (3% of the variance) emerged as separate components. Not all of the conceptualisations of LE differentiate between behavioural and agentic dimensions (cf. Fredricks et al., 2004; Svalberg (2009, 2017). The component structure derived from the present analysis confirms the assumption promoted by Reeve (2013) and Reeve and Tseng (2011) that the LE model should also contain the agentic dimension as a distinct facet of the construct.

The components initially representing three facets of WtC (Unplanned in-class WtC, Practice-seeking WtC, Planned in-class WtC) were not retained in the new structure, although their utility was proved in the study by Fang et al. (2020), who used these WtC scales to look into the link between intercultural attitudes and WtC of Chinese students. In the present study only 5 items originally belonging to the three categories loaded on one component, representing learners' willingness to talk to classmates on topics referring to the flow of the lesson and to asking the teacher about issues concerning vocabulary or grammar. As many as 7 items representing the three WtC facets were eliminated. They denoted using English to speak to or text friends during breaks or after school, most likely because in a monolingual group at an intermediate proficiency level, the learners are unlikely to communicate in a foreign tongue. Another WtC item that was eliminated concerned self-correction in response to an indication of an error, which may not be a very common error correction technique in the context under investigation. A WtC item: *I am willing to ask the teacher in English what he or she has said* was also eliminated most likely because the target language may not be used in the classroom for purposes other than language practice and learners, not being highly proficient, might choose Polish instead. Finally, another batch of items that were eliminated were those linked to certain types of activities (*I am willing to give a presentation in front of the class; I am willing to do a role-play in a small group; I am willing to do a role-play in pairs*), which might have happened because the learners were not familiar with those ways of language practice.

Two separate components representing International Posture were identified: *Interest in the World*, which comprises all of the 6 original items, and *Openness to Experience*, bearing some characteristics of an imagined future self – involving job or study abroad opportunities, which seems natural in the context of teenage learners preparing for school-leaving examinations and deciding on their future careers. The 5 items of the IP *Openness to experience* scale that were dropped involved interaction with foreigners or exchange students (I am willing to initiate communication with a foreigner met in the street; I am willing to use English to speak to exchange students; I want to make friends with people from abroad; I would talk to an international student if there was one at school; I would like to take part in a volunteer activity to help foreigners living in my country). The main reason for this being the case seems a relative scarcity of contact with English language users, as also indicated in the report on learning English in Poland (cf. Ellis, 2015).

The whole scale related to *Communication confidence* (12 items) was not retained, which most likely happened because, in the course of the lesson, learners perform actions that are required by the teacher and their own conviction concerning their ability to perform particular actions and tasks does not play a significant role in the context under discussion. Among the items eliminated in the course of the procedure were also four, belonging originally to the scale aimed at tapping into Cognitive Engagement: Before I begin to study, I think about what I want to get; When I am learning English, I stop once in a while and go over what I have been doing; As I study, I keep track of how much I understand, not just if I am getting the right answers; If what I am working on is difficult to understand, I change the way I learn the material, all of which denote specific ways of dealing with the material. First, it appears that the participants might not have been familiar with such tactics or did not feel the need to decide independently about effective ways of learning. Since the degree of their autonomy was never assessed, it can only be assumed that being part of the educational setting that did not encourage independence, they did not develop proper cognitive strategies nor reflection concerning the topic.

The results of the correlation analysis confirm the initial assumption that WtC and LE components are significantly related. The positive link between WtC and Agentic engagement, explaining approximately 16% of the variance, testifies to the importance of empowering learners to actively shape instruction. Reeve (2012) defines Agentic engagement as "students' intentional, proactive, and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (p. 161). Most likely, a context that encourages learners to proactively influence learning increases their need to communicate with others, the teacher, and peers as well. Out of the 8 components denoting the characteristics of the formal setting taken into account in the present study only the correlation between L2 Ought to self and Classroom environment did not turn out significant. The concept of L2 Ought to self reflects learners' appraisal of other people's (parents', peers', society') demands or expectations of them concerning their command of English in general. Classroom environment, in turn, as operationalized on the subscale, appears beyond learners' control, as it denotes teachers' tactics and their disposition. It rather reflects the expectations learners have towards their teachers, which is not linked to what others expect from them.

To address RQ3 and because of the fact that correlational analyses do not answer the question of directionality of the impact of the variables, linear multiple regression analysis was performed to identify variables that significantly predict WtC. These predictors are Agentic engagement, Behavioural engagement, and L2 Ought to self. An increase in the magnitude of each of them predicts learners' willingness to interact with others in the target language. If Agentic engagement and Behavioural engagement are viewed as relatively stable predispositions, then their impact on learners' WtC should be perceived as similar to that of personality. However, as the survey items were formulated in such a way as to denote respondents' language learning experience, it cannot be excluded that these two engagement types occur in response to the characteristics of their particular contexts and thus resemble a component of layer three of the pyramid model (MacIntyre et al.,

1998), where situated antecedents can be found. Learners who have a strong desire to influence the course of the lesson need to accomplish this aim by communicating with their teacher and peers. The fact that this predicts target language WtC shows that they intend to or are obliged to use the studied language for that purpose. It may also be the case that, in the learners' view and practice, behavioural involvement in the lesson requires, in addition to focused attention, numerous instances of speaking. The third of the positive significant predictors of WtC identified in the course of PCA is L2 ought to self, a component that grasps the pressure teenage learners perceive from parents, teachers and important others, including the peer group.

In pursuit of parsimony, HMR was conducted and three models were produced. Although AE alone turned out to account for as much as 21% of the variance, we opt for Model 3, where Agentic engagement, Behavioural engagement, and L2 Ought to self jointly explain almost 28% of the change in WtC. Agentically engaged learners who, as explained by Reeve (2012, p. 161), "proactively try to create, enhance and personalize the conditions and circumstances under which they learn," are more likely to feel a stronger drive to contribute to the flow of the lesson but also express their opinions and negotiate options. The fact that Agentic engagement itself turned out to be the strongest predictor of WtC suggests that target language communication in the secondary school classroom involves, apart from participation in tasks and activities, also discussing matters related to lesson aims and ways of pursuing them. It seems that Agentic engagement and Behavioural engagement coincide to produce a learner who is focused on lesson objectives, carefully follows instructions, and works very hard. Such a person must feel responsible for what is happening in the classroom and how the language is taught. This corresponds to the claim by de Saint Léger and Storch (2009) that students who felt responsible for the course of the lesson were also more willing to speak. It also stands to reason that L2 Ought to self, one of the facets of Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System Model, exerts considerable influence on the thoughts and behaviour of secondary school students who face high-stakes examinations and strive for good grades on a daily basis, trying to satisfy their parents' and teachers' expectations.

We are aware the study is not free from limitations, the first of which is self-selection. The online survey was completed by volunteers, who may display higher levels of engagement in school life in general and LE in particular. Although such respondents are likely to provide data of a better quality (Wilson & Dewaele, 2010), they are not representative of the population. Moreover, the participants came from high-profile schools whose graduates tend to pursue education at the tertiary level. English examination grades are considered in the university entrance procedures; that is why many pupils may have put a premium on developing their command of English, and hence their engagement and motivation may have been higher than that of other teenagers.

The present research into the complexity of language learners' WtC has been undertaken with a view to understanding its complex nature in order to offer ways in which teachers could increase its levels. The pedagogical implication of the present study is that encouraging students to shape language instruction, increasing their active involvement is likely to translate in greater willingness to contribute to

classroom interaction. Taking into account learners' point of view and creating a safe environment in which they can freely express their opinions and preferences and feel respected and valued enhances their engagement and, in turn, their WtC.

8 Conclusion

The main goal of the present study was to explore the link between two multifaceted concepts: WtC and learner engagement, both of which coincide with learning outcomes. The analysis proved the existence of significant correlations between all of the dimensions of the constructs in the context of formal instruction at the secondary level. Learner engagement in the form of Agentic engagement and Behavioural engagement together with L2 Ought to self appear potent variables capable of explaining varying levels of learners' WtC, the construct that considerably shapes outcomes of the learning process. An additional aim pursued here was testing the component structure of WtC as comprising three dimensions (Unplanned in-class WtC, Practice-seeking WtC, Planned in-class WtC) as well as that of learner engagement that in the literature has been conceptualized as a two-, three-, or four-dimensional construct. PCA confirmed the significance of Agentic engagement in classroom language learning. Thus, we extended Reeve and Tseng's (2011) work by offering a proof for the role of agency in classroom language development and the existence of Agentic engagement as a separate facet of learner engagement. The merger of emotional and cognitive engagement into one component proves the strong link between learners' cognition and emotionality, which is congruent with research stressing the inseparability of cognition and affect in language learning in the form of "perezhivanie" (e.g., Pavlenko, 2014; Lantolf & Swain, 2020). Separate WtC subscales merged into one scale whose items made direct reference to the classroom use of English. It seems that the characteristics of the context, learning English at a secondary school, has impacted the components in such a way that the items describe the behaviours, procedures and techniques learners know from their every-day experience. Moreover, the elimination of items tapping into the use of English out of class clearly shows how scarce the opportunities for authentic language use in this age group are, contrary to expectations concerning young people in the digitalized world. The significant role of Agentic engagement in generating WtC shows how important is empowering learners to enrich learning opportunities, improve teaching practices and tailor them to learners' needs, as well as allow them to have their voice in the process as well.

Appendix: Factor Loadings from PCA

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
Positive cognitive engagement items								
Learning English is fun	0.511							
I enjoy learning new things in English	0.506							
When learning English. I try to relate what I am learning to what I already know	0.476							
I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I am learning English	0.465							
When I am in class. I feel curious about what we are learning	0.441	0.378						
When we work on something in class. I feel interested	0.425	0.405						
When I am learning English. I try to connect what I am learning with my own experience	0.398							
I make up my own examples to help me understand what I am learning in English	0.303							
Behavioural engagement items								
I listen to my English teacher carefully		0.838						
I try very hard in my English class		0.791						

(continued)

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
I pay attention in class		0.755						
I work hard when we start something new in class		0.746						
The first time the teacher talks about a new topic. I listen very carefully		0.662						
Ought to self items								
If I fail to learn English. I'll be letting other people down			0.783					
Learning English is important to me because people surrounding me expect me to learn to speak in English			0.744					
I have to study English because. If I do not study it. I think my parents will be disappointed with me			0.718					
Learning English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/ teachers/family/ boss			0.715					
I consider learning English important because the people I respect think I should do it			0.659					
Learning English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English			0.652					

(continued)

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person			0.651					
I learn English because my friends think it is important			0.538					
Learning English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English			0.407					
WtC items								
I am willing to ask my group mates in English about forms/ words related to the topic				−0.897				
I am willing to ask my class mates in English about forms/ words related to the topic				−0.895				
I am willing to ask my group mates in English about ideas/ arguments related to the topic				−0.866				
I am willing to ask my class mates in English about ideas/ arguments related to the topic				−0.854				
I am willing to ask the teacher in English about words or structures she has just used				−0.595				

(continued)

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
International posture – Interest in the world items								
I have a strong interest in what happens in other countries					0.820			
On the internet. Tv or newspapers I don't look for information concerning only my hometown or country					0.635			
I often talk about situations or events (sport events. Concerts. Festivals. Etc.) in foreign countires with my family and friends					0.617			
I sometimes feel like a member of an international community of people who want to share ideas and opinions					0.571			
I have ideas about international issues such as sports. Cultural. Social. Political. Or economic events or phenomena					0.544			
I often read or watch the news, short films, memes about life/ events in foreign countries					0.486			
Agentic engagement items								
I tell the teacher what I like and what I don't like						−0.821		

(continued)

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
I let my teacher know what I'm interested in						−0.762		
During class. I express my preferences and opinions						−0.601		
I offer suggestions about how to make the English class better						−0.550		
During an English class. I ask questions						−0.443		
Classroom environment items								
The teacher provides a timely response to students' concerns							0.840	
Class assignments are clear so everyone knows what to do							0.752	
Activities in class are clearly and carefully planned							0.730	
The teacher is patient							0.720	
The teacher smiles while talking							0.630	
International posture – Openness to experience items								
I want to work in a foreign country								−0.792
I am interested in an international career								−0.783
I wouldn't avoid work that requires frequent travelling abroad								−0.655
I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English								−0.588

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Dynamic Relationships Between Lexical Frequency Levels in L2 English Writing at Secondary School: A Learner Corpus Analysis

Katarzyna Rokoszewska

Abstract According to Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), language subsystems develop in an interdependent and non-linear way forming supportive, competitive, and pre-conditional relationships. One such language subsystem is lexis whose development is typically investigated in terms of lexical density, sophistication, and variation. The present paper focuses on the development of lexis in terms of lexical sophistication operationalized as four basic frequency levels. More specifically, the aim of the paper is to examine dynamic relationships between lexical frequency levels in L2 English writing at secondary school. The study was based on The Written English Developmental Corpus of Polish Learners (WEDCPL), which consists of 1924 essays. The texts were produced by 100 learners during 21 repeated measurements conducted over the period of 3 years. The results indicated that the learners predominantly relied on the use of words from the first frequency level to the disadvantage of words from higher frequency levels. The relationships between the frequency levels revealed some competition between the first and higher frequency levels and some pre-conditioning between the second and third frequency levels. Thus, developing learners' lexis beyond the first level is necessary to discourage the production of lexically unsophisticated texts and to foster the use of more advanced words.

Keywords Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) · Lexical sophistication · Lexical frequency · L2 writing · Learner corpus

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1 Introduction

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) is the term coined by de Bot (2017) to refer to both Complexity Theory (CT) (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), which originated from the natural sciences, and Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) (Verspoor et al., 2011), which is a branch of mathematics, on the grounds that the two theories, applied to SLA in different academic centres, share similar theoretical and methodological principles. As an alternative approach to SLA, CDST focuses on language development, as opposed to acquisition, tracing changes in the dynamics of this process (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). According to CDST, language is a complex dynamic system which consists of internally complex subsystems which are said to co-develop non-linearly at different rates and form multiple relationships (Van Geert & Van Dijk, 2002). Language development is an emergent, variable, and self-organising process (de Bot et al., 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 1997).

CDST offers a new perspective on various constructs in SLA, including the CAF triad which consists of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. In this framework, the components of the CAF triad are viewed as multidimensional subsystems whose diachronic development, as opposed to synchronic manifestation, should be examined (Housen et al., 2012). Lexical complexity, which is a counterpart of syntactic complexity, consists of lexical density, variation, sophistication, and compositionality (Bulté & Housen, 2012). So far studies on lexical complexity have been conducted either on the basis of cross-sectional corpora of many subjects (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Lu, 2012; Verspoor et al., 2012) or longitudinal mini-corpora of single subjects (Spoelman & Verspoor, 2010; Caspi & Lowie, 2013; Chan et al., 2014). The present study intends to contribute to lexical research within the CDST framework by investigating the development of one of the components of lexical complexity, namely lexical sophistication operationalised in terms of word frequency. Thus, the present study will examine the dynamics of the relationships between different frequency levels in the development of lexical sophistication in L2 English writing at secondary school on the basis of the learner corpus which provides dense, cross-sectional, and longitudinal data.

2 Complex Dynamic Systems Theory

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) represents non-symbolic psychological theories which contrast sharply with symbolic linguistic theories (Altman, 2006; Huljstin, 2002). Firstly, the non-symbolic theories construe knowledge in terms of connectionist as opposed to symbolic architectures postulating that knowledge is not represented as a set of symbols and rules which specify relationships between them but as different patterns of activation and connectivity which carry meaning in the neural network (Elman, 2001; MacWhinney, 2005). Secondly, the psychological theories question the existence of an innate human endowment posited by nativists in Chomskyan tradition, and reject inheritance and predeterminism as solutions to

the logical problem of language acquisition arguing that language emergence is driven by domain-general learning mechanisms which are applied to linguistic data and not by domain-specific learning mechanisms which evolved for language acquisition (Ellis, 2006; Saffran & Thiessen, 2007). Thirdly, non-symbolic theories posit that language emerges from use and experience through the process of grammaticalization (Hopper, 1998; Tomasello, 2015). It is learnt from input in a probabilistic way thanks to the ability of the human brain to unconsciously register and store all occurrences of language items in memory and to compute frequency statistics based on the availability, contingency, and reliability of linguistic cues to form and meaning (Ellis, 2002; MacWhinney, 2005).

In the CDST framework, language is construed as a complex, dynamic system. Language development is an emergent and highly variable process which takes place through soft-assembly and co-adaptation to changing demands of the communicative context (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Like other dynamic systems, language is characterised with nonlinearity, unpredictability, sensitivity to initial conditions, openness, self-organisation, feedback sensitivity, and adaptability (de Bot et al., 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 1997). It consists of internally complex subsystems which develop simultaneously not only at different timescales and levels but presumably also at different rates (Van Geert & Van Dijk, 2002). The subsystems enter multiple interactions which may be of supportive, competitive, conditional, or dual character (Van Geert & Van Dijk, 2002). The trade-offs between and within these subsystems reflect language learners' limited cognitive and linguistic resources which they soft-assemble to co-adapt to other language users in communication (Verspoor et al., 2011).

Research informed by CDST may implement qualitative and quantitative methods, preferably in a mixed methods approach (Dörney, 2009). The former include qualitative comparative analysis, process tracing, concept mapping, agent-based modelling, retrodictive qualitative modelling, social network analysis, and design-based research methods, whereas the latter comprise panel designs, latent growth curve modelling, multilevel modelling, time series analysis, experience sampling method, single-case designs, and idiodynamic method (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2020). Studies conducted from the CDST perspective focus on the development of different language subsystems (Baba, 2020; Baba & Nita, 2014; de Bot et al., 2007), inter- and intra-individual variability (Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Verspoor et al., 2008) as well as the competition and coordination among CAF variables (Hou et al., 2020; Van Geert & Verspoor, 2015). The present study will focus on the development of one such subsystem, namely lexical sophistication.

3 Lexical Sophistication in CDST

Lexical complexity, which is construed as the breadth and depth of L2 lexical repertoire, is said to consist of lexical density, variation, sophistication, and compositionality which are quantified by various measures (Bulté & Housen, 2012). Lexical density, which indicates the amount of information in a text, is typically measured by the ratio of lexical tokens to all tokens (Ure, 1971). Lexical sophistication, which

denotes the depth of lexis, is expressed either as the proportion of advanced words to all words in a text (Read, 2000) or as the proportion of word types from different frequency levels in the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) (Laufer & Nation, 1995). Lexical variation or diversity, which refers to the range of vocabulary displayed in a text, is calculated by means of different corrected and randomised type-token ratios (Malvern et al., 2004). Lexical compositionality, which concerns formal and semantic components of lexical items, is calculated as the ratio of morphemes or syllables per words. In addition, lexical accuracy involves examining the quantity and quality of lexical errors (Read, 2000). According to James (1998), lexical errors are divided into (1) formal errors, which include mis-selections, misformations, and distortions, and (2) semantic errors, which involve problems with sense relations, collocations, connotations, and style.

Word frequency, which is the most common measure of lexical sophistication, provides information on how frequently a given lexical item is used with reference to such language corpora as the British National Corpus (BNC) (BNC Consortium, 2007) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2012). Word frequency lists which are commonly used in research on lexical sophistication are the General Service List (West, 1953), the CELEX lists (Baayen et al., 1995), BNC2000 (Nation, 2006), the COCA lists (Davies & Gardner, 2010), BNC/COCA2000 (Nation, 2016), the SUBTLEX lists (Brysbaert & New, 2009), and the New General Service List (Browne, 2014; Brezina & Gablasova, 2015). It is recommended to implement such lists in the development of the curriculum, teaching materials, and language tests.

As already mentioned, lexical sophistication is typically calculated as the ratio of sophisticated lexical words to all lexical words in a text (Linnarud, 1986; Hyltenstam, 1988). Sophisticated words are often defined as words which go beyond the first 2000 most frequently used words (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Lu, 2012). Alternatively, the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) (Laufer & Nation, 1995) shows the percentage of words from different frequency levels. However, Kyle et al. (2018) point out a number of different measures of lexical sophistication, such as word range, the use of academic language, psycholinguistic properties of words, such as concreteness, familiarity, meaningfulness, and imageability, word recognition norms, contextual distinctiveness, word neighborhood, and semantic network, pointing out the need to investigate multi-word units by means of n-gram indices. Lexical sophistication may be calculated by various computer programmes, such as CLAN (McWhinney, 2000), Range (Nation & Heatley, 2002), Lexical Complexity Analyzer (Lu, 2012), Lextutor (Cobb, 2014), AntWord Profiler (Anthony, 2022), Text Inspector (2018), P-lex (Meara & Bell, 2001), or the Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Lexical Sophistication (TAALES) (Kyle & Crossley, 2015).

Research on lexical sophistication indicated that word frequency affects word recognition and production (Balota et al., 2004), reading comprehension (Crossley et al., 2007; Nation, 2006), writing quality (Laufer & Nation, 1995; McNamara et al., 2015), and speaking proficiency (Kyle & Crossley, 2015). Studies on multi-word units highlighted the importance of knowing word combinations for language development (Bestgen & Granger, 2014; Kyle & Crossley, 2015). CDST studies

examined the development of lexical sophistication, density, and variation over time providing mixed results. Some studies reported an increase in the development of sophistication and variation as opposed to density (Duran et al., 2004; Storch & Tapper, 2009; Zheng, 2016). However, other studies did not find any statistically significant gains in these measures (Bulté & Housen, 2014; Knoch et al., 2014). In contrast to these studies, the present study investigated the development of one subsystem of lexical complexity, namely lexical sophistication, focusing on dynamic relationships between different frequency levels within this subsystem.

4 Method

4.1 Research Aim and Questions

The aim of the present study was to examine the development of lexical sophistication in terms of supportive, competitive, pre-conditional, and dual relationships between different frequency levels in L2 English writing at secondary school. With respect to the aim of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What results do learners obtain on the use of lexis from different frequency levels in L2 English writing over the whole learning period at secondary school?
2. What relationships take place between different frequency levels in L2 English writing at secondary school?

4.2 Research Method

The present study took the form of panel design (Salkind, 2010; Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2020) as it involved measuring the same variables on the same individuals over a longer period of time. The study was conducted at one of Polish secondary schools in 2014–2017. It was based on The Written English Developmental Corpus of Polish Learners (WEDCPL), which consists of over 1900 written texts collected during a series of repeated measurements over the period of 3 years (see Sect. 4.4). The corpus provides dense, cross-sectional, and longitudinal data. The study combined focused description, which was used to examine the relationships between different frequency levels, and CDST research procedures, which were implemented to investigate the dynamics of these relationships over time.

In the present study, lexical sophistication was operationalized as the proportion of words from different frequency levels in a written text. Hence, the research variables were four frequency levels, namely the first 1000 (level 1), the second 1000 (level 2), the third 1000 (level 3) most frequently used words in English, and the off-list words, i.e. words which go beyond these levels. The frequency levels were estimated on the basis of the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) (Laufer & Nation,

1995) with the use of the computer programme called Lextutor (Cobb, 2014). The profile was built on the basis of the BNC-COCA Core-4 frequency lists which come from the Common Core List (CCL) (Davies & Gardner, 2010) generated from the British National Corpus (BNC) (BNC Consortium, 2007) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2012).

4.3 Research Participants

The research sample included 100 secondary school learners, i.e. 45 males and 55 females, who were at the age of 16–19 in grades 1–3. They were taught in seven language groups on the basis of the same coursebook by five different teachers with an MA degree in English. In the first grade, they were at the intermediate level (B1), in the second grade–at the upper-intermediate (B2) level, and in the third grade, they took a revision course (B2) for the final exam in English. By the time of the study, the learners had been learning English for about 9 years. At secondary school, they were enrolled in an extended English program and had 4–6 lessons per week depending on the grade. Around half of the learners had some extra-curricular English classes outside school. In the EFL context, the learners had some culture-mediated contact with English thanks to the Internet, music, and films. As for the third language, 86.0% of the learners studied German while 14.0% studied French. The learners' grade point average of all school subjects (GPA) and their average grade in English per all three grades were 4.0 on the 1–6 grading scale. Their results on the final written exam in English (B1–91.8%; B2–72.1%) were higher than the average national results (B1–73.0%; B2–63.0%).

4.4 Data Collection

The Written English Developmental Corpus of Polish Learners (WEDCPL) was built on the basis of 21 tests administered over the period of 3 years (Table 1). The corpus consisted of 1924 per total of 2100 texts, the return rate being 91.6%. The size of the whole corpus was over 510,000 words while the size of the corpus analysed on the basis of the research samples was 393,202 words. The average length of the samples was 204 words.

The procedure of building the corpus involved the following steps: writing essays without reference materials during English lessons every month, scanning the original versions of the essays, grading the essays and storing them in regular files, preparing electronic transcripts by means of the speech recognition programme called Dragon Naturally Speaking (Nuance® 2014), verifying the transcripts with the learners' errors preserved, and preparing appropriate text samples. The learners were asked to write essays of the descriptive and argumentative mode on different topics based on the coursebook. The required length was 200 words and the time

Table 1 Research design in a time series

	Semester 1					Semester 2				
Data	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Grade 1	Org.	Test 1 Fashion	Test 2 Internet	Test 3 Music	Test 4 Education	Winter break	Test 5 Ecology	Test 6 Pets	Test 7 Work	Test 8 Holidays
Grade 2	Org.	Test 9 Books and Films	Test 10 Shopping	Test 11 Friendship	Test 12 Christmas	Winter break	Test 13 Family	Test 14 Health	Test 15 Fame	Test 16 Home and Living
Grade 3	Org.	Test 17 Love	Test 18 TV	Test 19 Crime	Winter break	Test 20 Terrorism	Test 21 Tolerance	End of year	Matura exam	–

limit was 45 min. The accuracy of the audio-transcripts was verified by an inter-rater who checked the transcripts of 100 texts. The inter-rater reliability, calculated in the form of Pearson's correlation coefficient, equalled 1.00.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data were analysed with the use of the programme called Lextutor (Cobb, 2014). The texts were pre-processed to be decoded by the programme. Firstly, pre-processing involved a few formal procedures, such as changing short forms into long forms, replacing numbers with the word *one*, which belongs to the first frequency level, and recategorizing proper nouns as 1 k words (Cobb, 2014). Secondly, it entailed eliminating such items as L1 words, L3 words, direct borrowings, e.g. *circa, inter alia*, marginal words, e.g. *Ups, Oh, Yea*, and acronyms, e.g. *PE, IT*, but accepting informal words, e.g. *wanna*, *gonna,* and clipped forms, e.g. *oft, thru.* Thirdly, it involved dealing with errors in that words with minor spelling errors and morphosyntactic errors, i.e. word-bound grammatical errors connected with tense or plurality, were corrected, whereas words with major spelling errors and morphological errors, i.e. incorrect derivatives, were excluded from the analysis (James, 1998; Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006).

Data analysis involved some standard and CDST procedures (Verspoor et al., 2011). The data on different frequency levels were normalized to be compared and the general trends in the data sets were plotted by the second degree polynomials (see Sect. 5.1, Figs. 1–4). The learners' initial and final results on lexical frequency levels were compared by means of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for related samples ($\alpha = 0.05$; $N = 100$). This non-parametric test was used as the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality ($\alpha = 0.05$; $N = 100$) did not show the normal distribution in the compared data sets. Since the Wilcoxon test does not take into account the learners' results obtained between the first and the last test, the learners' results on all tests were correlated with time (Caspi & Lowie, 2013) by means of Pearson's linear correlation coefficient.

The co-development of the frequency levels was illustrated by the sixth degree polynomials (see Sect. 5.2, Fig. 5) which capture developmental variability. Linear and moving correlations were expressed as Pearson's correlation coefficients, but the latter were calculated by means of the moving window of correlations in which each measurement takes into account the previous one. Given 21 repeated measurements, a window of five data points was used, which yielded 17 correlation measurements (Verspoor et al., 2011). The correlations were calculated on the basis of detrended data so that the coefficients were not affected by increasing or decreasing trends. The significance of correlations was checked by means of a Monte Carlo method (10,000 iterations, $\alpha = 0.05$) (Spoelman & Verspoor, 2010) in which the null hypothesis of zero correlation is rejected provided that the null hypothesized value of ρ ($\rho = 0$) falls outside the Monte Carlo confidence interval (Preacher & Selig, 2012).

5 Results

5.1 The Development of Lexical Sophistication

The results of the present study indicated that the learners, on average, used 89.8% (SD = 2.56) of words from the first frequency level in written production at secondary school (Table 2, Fig. 1). On the first measurement point, they used 86.5% (SD = 2.80), whereas on the last measurement point–90.7% (SD = 2.57) of such lexical items. Furthermore, the group highest score was equal to 93.3% on test 17 (SD = 2.50), whereas the group lowest score was equal to 85.1% on test 20 (SD = 3.32). At the same time, the single highest score in the whole corpus was 99.0% (test 4), whereas the single lowest score was 75.4% (test 20). The general trend line in the development of words from this frequency level indicated a substantial increase in the first half of the observation period (tests 1–11), followed by an equally substantial decrease in the second half of this period (tests 11–21) (Fig. 1).

Table 2 The development of lexical frequency–level 1

Tests	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
$\bar{X}$	86.5	89.2	89.8	92.5	85.7	88.0	92.5	90.9	90.9	92.0	91.8
Min	77.0	83.6	78.7	87.4	77.7	80.3	86.9	83.1	82.9	84.2	84.7
Max	92.5	93.7	97.2	99.0	94.0	95.5	97.7	96.6	96.1	97.5	96.5
SD	2.80	2.23	3.00	2.37	3.22	3.08	2.28	3.00	2.86	2.74	2.26
Tests	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	T18	T19	T20	T21	Total
$\bar{X}$	90.2	92.9	87.0	87.4	91.3	93.3	91.9	86.8	85.1	90.7	89.8
Min	83.8	87.0	75.6	81.1	85.7	83.1	86.4	79.9	75.4	84.5	85.1
Max	96.8	98.2	93.5	93.5	96.6	98.0	97.4	94.9	92.5	96.4	93.3
SD	2.70	2.61	3.39	2.77	2.58	2.50	2.36	2.80	3.32	2.57	2.56

Notes: $\bar{X}$ mean, *Min* minimum score, *Max* maximum score, *SD* standard deviation, *T* test

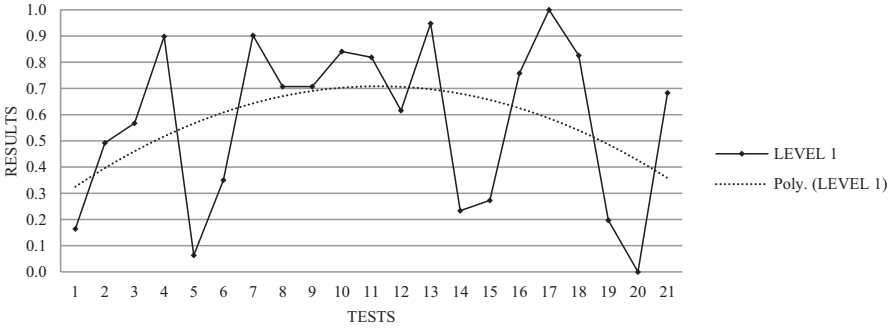

Fig. 1 The development of lexical frequency–level 1. (Notes: Poly–polynomial trend line of the second degree)

Table 3 The development of lexical frequency–level 2

Tests	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
$\bar{X}$	5.6	3.0	3.3	3.3	6.3	3.0	3.9	5.7	3.1	3.0	3.6
Min	2.0	1.0	0.4	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.9	0.6	1.0
Max	12.1	7.7	8.0	6.6	10.9	6.5	8.9	14.4	8.3	8.4	7.0
SD	1.69	1.37	1.69	1.33	1.97	1.34	1.62	2.53	1.67	1.63	1.27
Tests	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	T18	T19	T20	T21	Total
$\bar{X}$	4.5	2.6	5.3	6.8	4.5	4.5	3.3	4.2	8.2	6.0	4.3
Min	1.4	0.5	0.5	2.8	1.9	0.9	0.8	3.7	2.6	1.4	2.6
Max	9.2	8.5	11.4	12.3	9.6	11.4	10.6	13.7	11.4	9.5	8.2
SD	1.50	1.44	2.08	1.89	1.67	1.64	1.84	2.08	1.87	1.85	1.51

Notes: $\bar{X}$ mean, *Min* minimum score, *Max* maximum score, *SD* standard deviation, *T* test

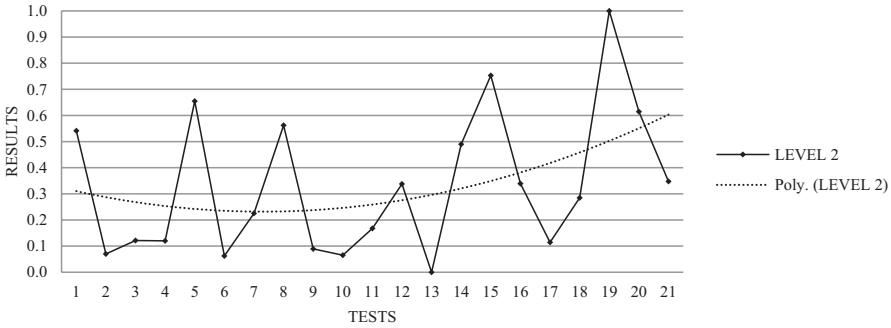

Fig. 2 The development of lexical frequency–level 2. (Notes: Poly–polynomial trend line of the second degree)

With respect to the second frequency level (Table 3, Fig. 2), the results showed that the learners, on average, used 4.3% of such words (SD =1.51). On the first test, they produced 5.6% (SD = 1.69), whereas on the last test–6.0% (SD = 1.85) of such items. The group highest result equalled 8.2% (SD = 1.87) on test 20, whereas the group lowest result–2.6% (SD = 1.44) on test 13. In comparison, the single highest score in the whole corpus was 13.7% (test 19) while the single lowest score–0.4% (test 3). The general trend line in the development of words from this level illustrated a slight decrease at the beginning of the observation period (tests 1–7) and a rather substantial increase in the remaining part of this period (tests 7–21) (Fig. 2).

With respect to the third frequency level (Table 4, Fig. 3), the results revealed that the learners, on average, used 2.0% of such words (SD = 1.28). On the first test, they used 2.5% (SD = 1.08), whereas on the last test–1.7% (SD = 1.23) of such items. The group highest score amounted to 6.1% (SD = 1.75) on test 20, whereas the group lowest score to–0.9% (SD = 0.68) on test 8. In contrast, the highest individual result in the whole corpus was 12.2% (test 20) while the lowest individual result–0.4% (tests 4, 8, 10, 16–18). The general trend in the development of lexis from this level showed a moderate decrease in the first half of the learning period, followed by a similar increase in the second part of this period (Fig. 3).

Table 4 The development of lexical frequency–level 3

Tests	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
$\bar{X}$	2.5	4.0	2.0	1.2	2.7	3.7	1.6	0.9	2.3	1.2	1.3
Min	0.5	1.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5
Max	5.3	7.3	6.4	4.4	6.2	8.3	4.8	3.7	6.1	3.4	4.9
SD	1.08	1.15	1.20	0.95	1.18	1.55	0.96	0.68	1.24	0.74	0.86
Tests	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	T18	T19	T20	T21	Total
$\bar{X}$	1.3	1.5	3.8	2.7	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.5	6.1	1.7	2.0
Min	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.0	2.4	0.5	0.9
Max	4.6	4.9	8.3	7.1	4.0	6.4	3.9	6.6	12.2	6.5	6.1
SD	0.85	1.12	1.49	1.55	0.70	1.12	0.85	1.16	1.75	1.23	1.28

Notes: $\bar{X}$ mean, *Min* minimum score, *Max* maximum score, *SD* standard deviation, *T* test

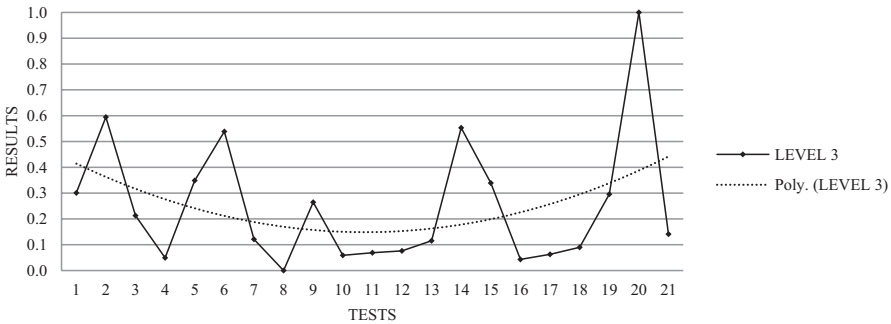

Fig. 3 The development of lexical frequency–level 3. (Notes: Poly–polynomial trend line of the second degree)

Finally, with respect to the off-list words (Table 5, Fig. 4), the results showed that the learners, on average, used 3.2% of such words (SD = 1.21). On the first test, they produced 6.7% (SD = 2.85), whereas on the last test–3.3% of such items (SD = 2.03). Their highest group result was 6.7% on test 1 (SD = 2.85), whereas their lowest result was 1.7% (SD = 1.52) on test 8. In comparison, the best individual result in the whole corpus was 18.9% (test 1) while the poorest individual result was 0.4% (test 12). The general trend in the development of words from this level was decreasing throughout the whole observation period (Fig. 4).

As far as the learners' progress is concerned, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for related samples ($\alpha = 0.05$; $N = 100$) indicated statistically significant differences between the learners' initial and final results in the development of the third frequency level ($p = 0.00$*) as opposed to the first ($p = 0.11$) and second ($p = 0.27$) frequency levels as well as words off the list ($p = 0.09$) (Table 6). In contrast to the Wilcoxon test, which takes into account only the first and the last test, the correlations between the learners' results on all tests and time did not show statistically significant relationships in the case of level 1 ($r = 0.03$), level 2 ($r = 0.33$), and level 3 ($r = 0.03$), but it showed a moderate negative relationship in the case of the words off the lists ($r = -0.53$*) (Table 6). The critical value (r*) for the significance of the correlation was 0.43 ($N = 21$; $\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 5 The development of lexical frequency–off-list words

Tests	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
$\bar{X}$	6.7	3.8	3.8	3.0	5.8	4.6	2.2	1.7	2.5	4.2	3.4
Min	2.0	0.8	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.8
Max	18.9	10.0	9.3	10.2	13.3	11.7	10.7	6.5	8.3	9.0	14.8
SD	2.85	1.93	1.91	2.01	2.61	2.25	1.75	1.52	1.69	1.93	2.52
Tests	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	T18	T19	T20	T21	Total
$\bar{X}$	3.0	2.9	3.6	3.0	3.6	2.2	2.5	2.8	2.1	3.3	3.2
Min	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.7
Max	9.5	8.8	11.8	10.2	9.1	8.2	7.1	11.4	6.5	9.2	6.7
SD	1.98	1.91	2.04	1.64	1.84	1.50	1.45	1.86	1.31	2.03	1.21

Notes: $\bar{X}$ mean, *Min* minimum score, *Max* maximum score, *SD* standard deviation, *T* test

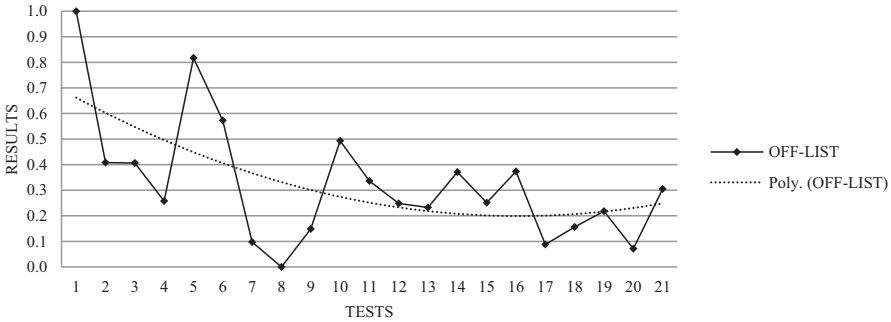

Fig. 4 The development of lexical frequency–off-list words. (Notes: Poly–polynomial trend line of the second degree)

Table 6 The learners' progress in lexical frequency over time

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Other
Wilcoxon test (*p*-value)	0.11	0.27	0.00*	0.09
Correlation with time (*r*)	0.03	0.33	0.03	−0.53*

Notes: An asterisk–statistically significant results (α = 0.05), the Wilcoxon test (N = 100) and Pearson product (N = 21)

5.2 The Relationships Between Lexical Frequency Levels

The correlations between different frequency levels (Table 7) showed that the relationships between the first frequency level and higher frequency levels were negative and statistically significant. This was reflected in the co-development of lexical frequency levels over the whole observation period (Fig. 5) which revealed that an increase in the development of the first frequency level, observed in the middle of this period, took place during a decrease in the development of higher frequency levels. This was in turn confirmed by the moving correlations. Detailed data on the moving correlations are presented in Table 1 in the Appendix.

Table 7 Correlations between different frequency levels

Data	*r*	R^2	MC CI LL	MC CI UL	Type
Level 1 & 2	−0.76*	57.76	−0.90	−0.49	Competitive
Level 1 & 3	−0.77*	59.29	−0.90	−0.51	Competitive
Level 1 & Off-list	−0.51*	26.01	−0.77	−0.10	Competitive
Level 2 & 3	0.28	7.84	−0.19	0.63	Pre-conditional
Level 2 & Off-list	0.29	8.41	−0.16	0.64	Dual
Level 3 & Off-list	0.19	3.61	−0.26	0.57	Dual

Notes: *r* correlation coefficient, R^2 shared variance, *MC CI LL* Monte Carlo confidence interval lower level, *MC CI UL* Monte Carlo confidence interval upper level, an asterisk–statistically significant results, a Monte Carlo analysis ($\alpha = 0.05$, $N = 21$)

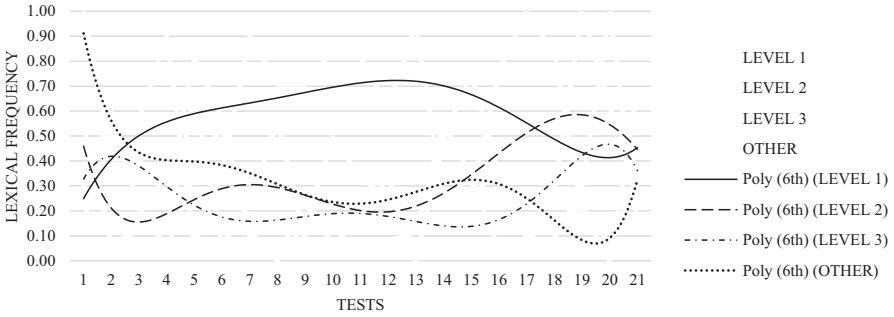

Fig. 5 The co-development of lexical frequency levels. (Notes: Poly (6th)–polynomial trend line of the sixth degree)

More specifically, the relationships between the first and the second level ($r = -0.76$*) as well as the first and the third level ($r = -0.77$*) were rather strong while the relationship between the first and the off-list level ($r = -0.51$*) was moderate (Table 7). The moving correlations also indicated that words from the first frequency level co-developed with words from higher frequency levels in predominantly competitive relationships during the majority of the observation period (Fig. 6). However, the competition between these variables fluctuated to some extent. In the case of the first two relationships, this competition became weak at data point 8 and at data points 9 to 11, respectively. In the case of the third relationship, it changed into some support between data points 9 and 11. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that the first frequency level and higher frequency levels developed as the so called competitive growers in L2 English writing.

The correlations between higher frequency levels were statistically insignificant (Table 7). However, in contrast to the standard correlation between words from the second and third frequency levels ($r = 0.28$), the moving correlation revealed that the relationship between the two variables was pre-conditional in that they competed with each other in the first part of the observation period (data points 6–11) but supported each other in the second part of this period (data points 12–19) (Fig. 7). Thus, the second and third frequency levels co-developed as pre-conditional growers.

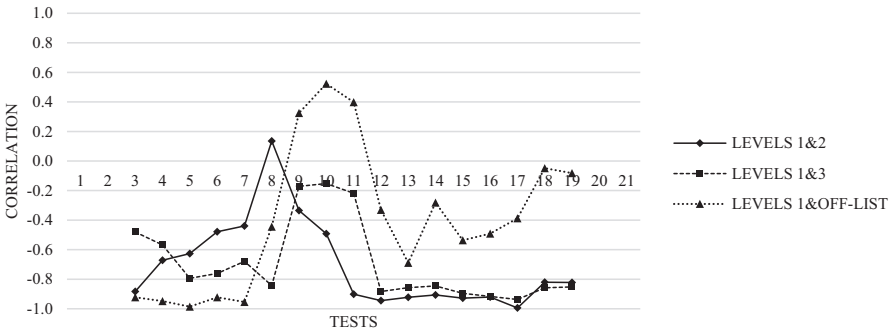

Fig. 6 The moving correlations between the first and higher frequency levels

The moving correlation between the second frequency level and the off-list level ($r = 0.29$) as well as the moving correlation between the third frequency level and the off-list level ($r = 0.19$) (Table 7) illustrated dual relationships between the variables. In the first case, high and moderate support at the beginning of the observation period (data points 3–7) changed into quite strong competition in the middle of this period (data points 8–10), which in turn changed into moderate support at the end of this period (data points 12–19) (Fig. 7). In the second case, a strong supportive relationship observed at the beginning (data points 3–8) plummeted into a strong negative relationship (data point 11), but then it rose to a temporary strong support (data point 13) only to drop down at the end (data points 17–19) (Fig. 7). Thus, words from the second and third frequency levels developed in relation to the off-list words as dual growers.

Synthesising the results, it is important to point out that support in the relationships between the first frequency level and higher frequency levels (Fig. 6) took place when competition occurred in the relationships between the higher frequency levels (Fig. 7), i.e. around data points 8–12. In addition, Fig. 8 illustrates competitive relationships between the first frequency and higher frequency levels in contrast to the pre-conditional relationship between higher frequency levels, namely levels 2 and 3.

To conclude, the linear regression models revealed that the increase of words from level 1 by 1% would cause a decrease of words from level 2 by 0.45%. In this model, the amount of variance in level 2 was explained by level 1 in 60.8% (Fig. 9). Furthermore, the increase of words from level 1 by 1% would lead to a decrease of words from level 2 by 0.19%, with shared variance between the variables equal to 21.2% (Fig. 10). Such an increase in words from level 1 would result in the decrease of the off-list words by 0.38%, with shared variance of 34.66% (Fig. 11). In contrast, the increase of words from level 2 by 1% would cause an increase of words from level 3 by 0.24%, shared variance being 4.15% (Fig. 12).

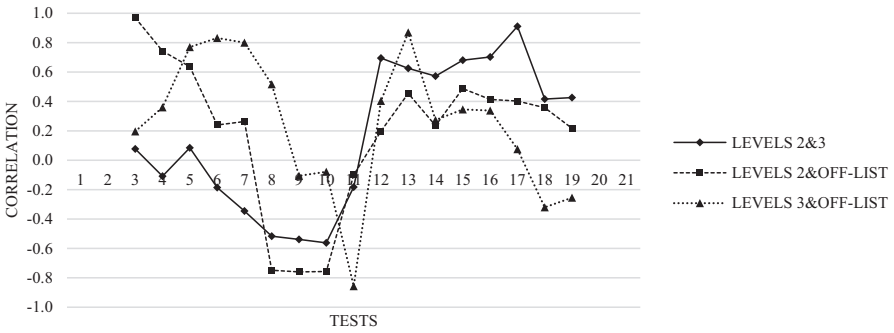

Fig. 7 The dynamics of correlations between higher frequency levels

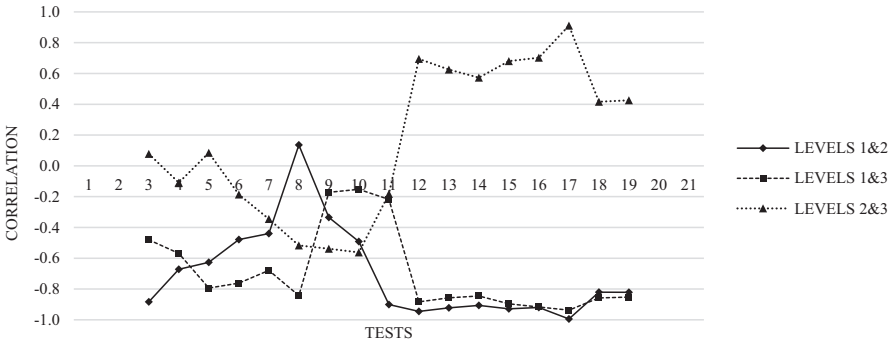

Fig. 8 The moving correlations between the main frequency levels

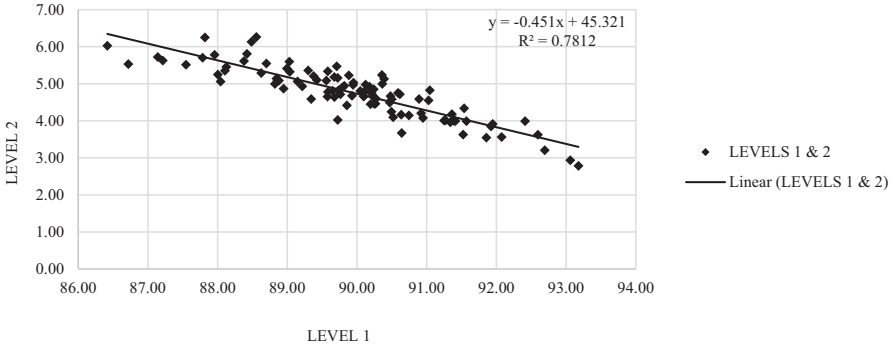

Fig. 9 The correlation between levels 1 & 2–the linear regression model (*N = 100*)

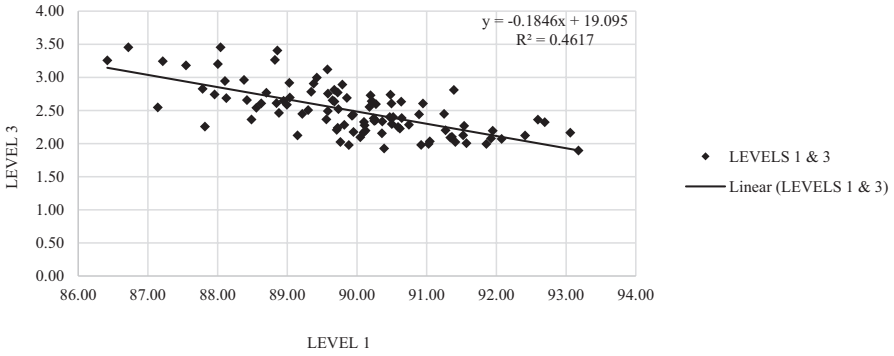

Fig. 10 The correlation between levels 1 & 3–the linear regression model (*N = 100*)

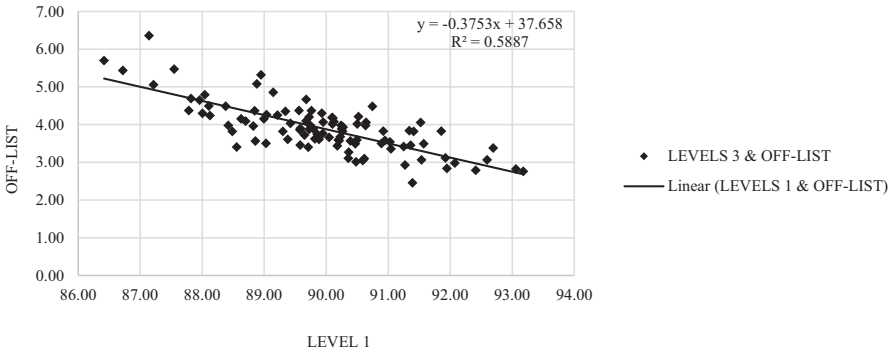

Fig. 11 The correlation between levels 1 & off-list–the linear regression model (*N = 100*)

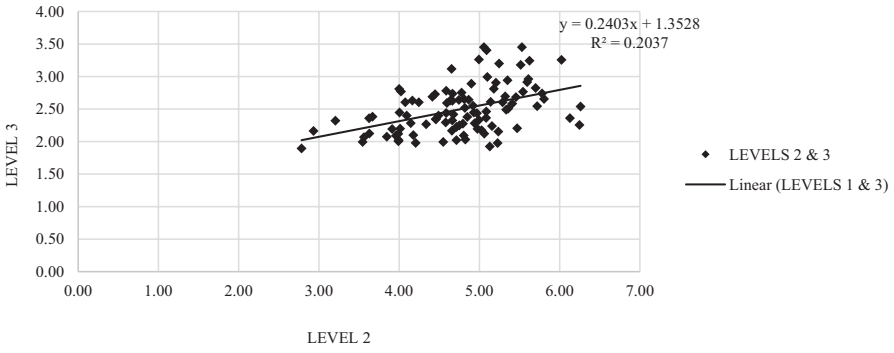

Fig. 12 The correlation between levels 2 & 3–the linear regression model (*N = 100*)

6 Discussion

The aim of the present paper was to examine the development of lexical sophistication and the dynamic relationships between different frequency levels in L2 English writing at secondary school. With respect to the first research question, which concerned the learners' results on the development of lexical sophistication, it was established that the learners mainly used words from the first frequency level to the disadvantage of words from higher frequency levels. As for the learners' progress, it was found that the differences between the learners' initial and final results at secondary school were insignificant in the case of all frequency levels, except the third one. However, the correlation between the learners' results and time was insignificant not only for the first and second but also for the third level. The only exception was the negative relationship between the off-list words and time. Nevertheless, the general trend lines indicated some qualitative increase in the development of words from the second frequency level accompanied by some decrease in the development of words from the first frequency level.

In total, these results indicate that the learners made hardly any progress in lexical sophistication in L2 English writing over the period of 3 years at secondary school. Such results may be caused by a few factors. As already pointed out, some studies conducted within the CDST framework did not find significant progress in lexical sophistication, either (Bulté & Housen, 2014; Knoch et al., 2014). As Meara and Bell (2001) point out, L2 learners may indeed find it difficult to use words beyond the first 1000 productively. The results may also reflect the nature of lexical development. Caspi and Lowie (2013) found that different levels of lexical knowledge were hierarchically ordered in that vocabulary reception pre-conditioned its production while controlled and free production competed with each other. It is reasonable to assume that the learners in the present study must have recognised and practised words from higher frequency levels introduced at the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels in certified coursebooks, but they were unable to use them in free written production. This might also have been due to the type of practice the learners received in the EFL context. The quantity and quality of language practice might have been insufficient to foster the learners' use of more sophisticated lexis, especially if such practice consisted of controlled lexical exercises and entailed little naturalistic practice.

With respect to the second research question, which focused on the relationships between different frequency levels, it was established that the relationships between the use of words from the first and higher frequency levels were rather strong and negative. Indeed, an increase in the use of words from the most basic level caused a decrease in the use of words from more advanced levels. Thus, the first and higher frequency levels co-developed as competitive growers (Van Geert & Van Dijk, 2002). This means that due to limited cognitive resources (Verspoor et al., 2011), the learners were able to focus mainly on the first frequency level at the cost of higher levels. In contrast, the relationships among the higher levels were statistically insignificant. However, the moving correlation between the second and third

frequency levels revealed a clear pre-conditional relationship in which the second level had to be developed prior to the third one. Indeed, an increase in the second frequency level caused some increase in the third frequency level. In other words, the development of words from the second frequency level supported the development of words from the third frequency level. Thus, these two frequency levels functioned as pre-conditional growers (Van Geert & Van Dijk, 2002). In addition, it was observed that a change in one correlation may affect other correlations (Caspi & Lowie, 2013). More specifically, support in the relationships between the first and higher frequency levels was accompanied by competition in the relationships between higher frequency levels. Thus, the study showed that not only individual language variables, like lexical frequency levels, form various dynamic relationships but also the correlations between them contribute to an intricate network of mutual interdependencies in language development. On the whole, the study showed that lexical sophistication is a complex system which consists of different frequency levels which co-develop in dynamic, nonlinear, and inter-dependent ways (Housen et al., 2012; Verspoor et al., 2011).

The present study has some limitations. Firstly, despite the fact that the study was based on the iterative procedure which involved the same type of tasks performed in the same conditions in the language classroom, the topics were different, which was unavoidable in a longitudinal study in the real-life context but might have influenced the learners' results. Secondly, although the learners followed the same coursebook and received the same amount of instruction, they were taught by five teachers whose potentially different teaching styles might have affected the learners' lexical development. Thirdly, the study provided the panel data which yielded some insight into the group language behaviour, but in line with the ergodicity principle (Lowie & Verspoor, 2019), the individual learners' performance may diverge from the group average results. Hence, it is recommended to conduct a critical stance case study which would provide the data on selected learners in comparison to the panel study.

Despite the limitations, the study offers some practical implications for Polish teachers of English. The study revealed that the development of lexical sophistication posed both the teachers and learners with a substantial challenge, and pointed to the necessity to work on this aspect of language more efficiently. The teachers should realize that apart from accuracy and fluency, language development involves both syntactic and lexical complexity. Lexical sophistication, which is one of the main aspects of lexical complexity, should not be neglected. The teachers should focus on lexical sophistication not only in terms of controlled vocabulary practice but also free language production as words presented and practised in mechanical written exercises can hardly be accessed in speech or writing. Being familiarized with word frequency lists, especially with words from the first frequency level, the teachers would be able to monitor learners' level of lexical sophistication and to encourage them to use more sophisticated lexis. It would be also helpful to make learners aware of the lexis they use so that they would pay attention to whether they actually use words encountered at the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels or if they conveniently rely on basic lexis. Accepting the learners' predominant

reliance on the first frequency level, the teachers most unintentionally impede the learners' use of more sophisticated lexis. Creating appropriate affordances for the learners to use words from the second frequency level would support the development of words from further levels.

7 Conclusions

The present study has provided some insight into the development of lexical sophistication and the dynamics of the relationships between different frequency levels in L2 English writing at secondary school. The results of the study indicated some qualitative changes in the development of lexical sophistication in that the general trend lines illustrated some decrease in the use of words from the first frequency level to the advantage of some increase in the use of words from the second and third frequency levels in learner writing. The results also showed that relying on basic words from the first frequency level prevents the learners from using more sophisticated words from higher frequency levels. Conversely, developing the learners' lexis from the second frequency level serves as a necessary condition for their use of lexis from higher frequency levels. Since the study revealed that the learners' gains were statistically insignificant over the whole learning period, there arises the need to work on this aspect of lexical complexity more efficiently in order to achieve greater complexification and automatization of lexical knowledge in language production.

Appendix

See (Table 8).

Table 8 The moving correlations between different frequency levels

Tests	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 1 & 3	Levels 1&Off-list	Levels 2 & 3	Levels 2 & Off-list	Levels 3 & Off-list
1	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	−0.88	−0.48	−0.92	0.08	0.97	0.20
4	−0.67	−0.57	−0.95	−0.11	0.74	0.36
5	−0.63	−0.79	−0.99	0.08	0.64	0.77
6	−0.48	−0.76	−0.92	−0.19	0.24	0.83
7	−0.44	−0.68	−0.95	−0.35	0.26	0.80
8	0.14	−0.84	−0.44	−0.52	−0.75	0.52
9	−0.34	−0.17	0.33	−0.54	−0.76	−0.11
10	−0.49	−0.15	0.52	−0.56	−0.76	−0.08

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Tests	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 1 & 3	Levels 1&Off-list	Levels 2 & 3	Levels 2 & Off-list	Levels 3 & Off-list
11	−0.90	−0.22	0.40	−0.18	−0.10	−0.86
12	−0.95	−0.88	−0.33	0.69	0.20	0.40
13	−0.92	−0.86	−0.69	0.63	0.45	0.87
14	−0.91	−0.85	−0.28	0.57	0.24	0.27
15	−0.93	−0.90	−0.54	0.68	0.49	0.35
16	−0.92	−0.92	−0.49	0.70	0.41	0.34
17	−0.99	−0.94	−0.39	0.91	0.40	0.08
18	−0.82	−0.86	−0.05	0.42	0.36	−0.32
19	−0.82	−0.85	−0.08	0.43	0.22	−0.25
20	–	–	–	–	–	–
21	–	–	–	–	–	–

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Empirical Verification of the Relationship Between Personality Traits and EFL Attainments

Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel

Abstract Although the study of personality is one of the major themes in psychology, its role in the second language acquisition (SLA) process has not been unanimously acknowledged. The overall scarcity and obscurity of research outcomes can be attributed to methodological problems and lack of firm grounding in the vast field of personality theories. Moreover, it appears that personality may not exact an easily observable, direct effect on L2 behaviours and success. This paper is an attempt to broaden the understanding of the role of personality in the SLA field. Its main aim is to establish the predictive value of the personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) for students' EFL attainments operationalized as self-perceived levels of foreign language skills and final grades. The participants of the study were 560 secondary grammar school students who responded to a questionnaire created for the research purposes. The research revealed that the dimension predicting the two forms of EFL attainments was Openness to experience, Neuroticism predicted only self-assessed skills, while Conscientiousness and Agreeableness – final grades. It can be concluded that in most cases, a successful language student is characterised by intellectual independence and higher levels of verbal skills that underpin Openness to experience.

Keywords Personality · Neuroticism · Extraversion · Openness to experience · Agreeableness · Conscientiousness · EFL attainments

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1 Introduction

Although the study of personality is one of the major themes in psychology, its role in the second language acquisition (SLA) process has not been unanimously acknowledged. The overall scarcity and obscurity of research outcomes can be attributed to methodological problems and lack of firm grounding in the vast field of personality theories. Moreover, it appears that personality may not exact an easily observable, direct effect on L2 behaviours and success. This text is an attempt to broaden the understanding of the role of this factor in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. Its main aim is to establish the predictive value of the personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) for the EFL attainments, operationalised as two forms of EFL attainments. The first one, internal, is constituted by self-perceived levels of EFL skills, while the other, external, by final grades.

The chapter starts with an outline of the personality concept, and its relevance for the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field. It is supplemented with a short presentation of the personality model that is most popular in empirical psychological research, called the Big Five, as it will be a point of reference for the analysis provided in the empirical section. The next part comprises the Method section with the description of the participants, instruments and analyses, followed by an outline of the results. The final part is devoted to the discussion of the main findings, as well as conclusions, as well as recommendations for the EFL classroom.

2 The Big Five Traits and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Attainments

The concept of *personality* centres on individual differences, i.e., variations in human feelings, actions, thoughts and wants (Revelle et al., 2011). It can be understood as "characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms – hidden or not – behind those patterns" (Funder, 2012, p. 5). These mechanisms explore the uniqueness and universality of personality characteristics, considering the human being as a complete and complex individual (Pervin & John, 2001). The collection of one's qualities and dispositions distinguishes one person from another. For this reason, personality involves the interdependence and independence of multiple persistent and coherent subsystems, interacting with the environment, which makes a person incessantly adapt to continuous changes.

On the basis of differing views on personality, two major theoretical trends have evolved: *type* theories and *trait* theories. The first group focuses on segregating people on the basis of qualitative differences represented by clear- and non-overlapping categories or types (Gerrig et al., 2015), such as those proposed by Hippocrates et al. (1923), and Myers Briggs character types (Myers, 1980). The

other group of theories views personality as composed of wide-ranging traits that are quite stable over time and across situations. According to them, an individual's overall behaviour is determined by personality as represented by discrete dispositions conceptualized such as continua, alongside which each individual can be placed. The most recognized trait theories include Allport's classification (1961), Cattell's typology (1957), and Eysenck's super-traits (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). They also include the *Big Five* model that "dominates the landscape of current psychological research" (Ewen, 1998, p. 141), having achieved a principal status in personality studies (John et al., 2008).

The Big Five model incorporates five broad and independent dimensions of personality traits or domains (Costa & McCrae, 1995) that describe an individual, regardless of language or culture, at a very broad level of abstraction. Thanks to this categorisation, personality factors can be perceived as independent variables in research studies in an easier and more reliable manner. Each dimension is placed on a continuum with two extreme poles. They are labelled as:

- *Openness to experience* (contrasted with low Openness)
  This dimension describes the inclination to seek, discover, value, understand, and employ both sensory and abstract information (DeYoung, 2015). It is a form of cognitive exploration, indicating both reasoning and perception. Hence, this characteristic comprises emotional and motivational traits (e.g., pursuing new experiences and feeling a variety of emotions), cognitive traits (e.g., intellect and imaginative thinking), social expression (e.g., nonconformity and liberal attitudes), and self-regulation (e.g., absorption and tolerance of ambiguity) (Ivcevic & Brackett, 2015). The facets describing this trait in a greater detail are Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings, Actions, Ideas and Values.

- *Conscientiousness* (contrasted with low Conscientiousness)
  Altogether, the trait can be regarded as a spectrum of constructs describing one's tendency "to follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control, to be goal directed, to plan, and to be able to delay gratification and to follow norms and rules" (Roberts et al., 2009, p. 369). The attributes of conscientiousness include both the need for achievement and work commitment, as well as moral thoroughness and carefulness (Costa et al., 1991). The most prominent facets of the trait include Achievement, Dependability, Impulse control, Order, Moralistic attitudes and Persistence (Hough & Ones, 2001)

- *Extraversion* (contrasted with Introversion)
  This dimension is often equated with energy and enthusiasm. Defined as one pole of the extroversion-introversion dimension, it is understood as the tendency to experience positive emotions connected with the expectation or enjoyment of reward (DeYoung et al., 2007). This trait is mostly characterized by an interest in social interaction, pertaining to "an active, zestful, and venturesome approach to life and to interpersonal relations" (Digman, 1997, p. 1250). The facets of the trait incorporate Warmth, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity, Excitement-seeking, and Positive emotions.

- *Agreeableness* (contrasted with Antagonism)
  Linked with social harmony and cooperativeness, the trait refers to differences in social behaviour and interpersonal relationships, such those connected with being likable, friendly, and agreeable in relations with others (Graziano & Tobin, 2017). In terms of motives and emotions, it refers to an altruistic consideration for other people, as well as to the unsuspecting and big-hearted attitudes towards others (McCrae & Costa, 2003), while in terms of thoughts and attitudes – this trait tends towards trusting and generous sentiments. Its facets are composed of Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty and Tendermindedness.

- *Neuroticism* vs. Emotional Stability
  The trait is connected with negative emotionality and nervousness. At its high-end it accommodates individuals who are not able to control of their impulses, and who have problems coping with stress. The basic features of Neuroticism are anxiety and volatility, so it is proposed that this dimension (continuum) is defined by stability and low anxiety at one end, and instability and high levels of anxiety at the other end (Pervin & John, 2001). The facets of Neuroticism are represented by Anxiety, Angry hostility, Depression, Self-consciousness, Impulsiveness and Vulnerability.

The Big Five model, which allows for the viewing of personality factors as independent variables, has turned out to be very popular not only in Psychology, but also in many other research disciplines due to the fact that it allows for the study of personality by non-psychologists (Dörnyei, 2005).

In spite of that, the general contribution of personality studies for the SLA field is still scarce (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2020). There has been little research on this subject; furthermore, the established findings are quite mixed (e.g., Dewaele, 2012b; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). That might be attributed to several factors, like the multiplicity of personality theories, challenging linguists attempting to integrate some of the incongruent approaches (Dörnyei, 2005) that can be placed into one theory to underpin their research. Also, the measurement of the construct may be another source of problems. The application of unrelated measurement tools may lead to difficulties with the interpretation and comparison of results (Dewaele & Furnham, 2000). Aside from that, the role of personality in SLA is difficult to examine due to the fact that it requires the research expertise of a psychologist and linguist. Last but not least, the impact of situational factors embedded in the English/foreign language context causes substantial confounding (Dörnyei, 2005), hampering the disentanglement of the effect of personality from the assembly of the potential cognitive, social, and situational aspects of SLA (Dewaele, 2012a).

Nonetheless, the application of the Big Five conceptualization has led to the establishment of several reliable findings. Very many of them are connected with the importance of Openness for successful EFL acquisition. The overwhelming majority of studies appear to indicate that certain levels of Openness are necessary for ultimate success, as demonstrated in the studies on multilingualism (e.g., Dewaele & Botes, 2019). The research pertaining to general EFL proficiency (e.g., Shirdel &

Naeini, 2018) or self-assessed L2 skills (Ghapanchi et al., 2011) tend to demonstrate that the trait is part and parcel of a good language learner who focuses on their own cultural capital (literacy and cultural activities) (Khodadady & Zabihi, 2011). Not only does it predict L2 proficiency, but also frequency of L2 use (Ożańska-Ponikwia & Dewaele, 2012). Importantly, its positive predictive power has also been established in relation to the speaking ability (Zohoorian et al., 2018) or its preference (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018).

Conscientiousness, on the other hand, can be regarded as an underlay of a generalized learning ability. It has been found to be a positive predictor of preference for acquiring L2 writing, reading, grammar, and spelling (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018), thanks to which a sustainable knowledge of the L2 system can be developed. The importance of the trait is also revealed in the research on various aspects of language learning, such as the positive attitudes to EFL learning (Pourfeiz, 2015), although it must be admitted that no relationship has also been observed (Dewaele, 2005). In connection to L2 communication, the positive relationship between Conscientiousness and L2 willingness to communicate (WTC) (Šafranj & Katić, 2019), as well as foreign language speaking confidence (Khany & Ghoreyshi, 2013), points to a general advantage of conscientious learners. Understandably, their speaking anxiety has been found to be low (Vural, 2019), which may enable their effective L2 development.

Extraversion may be considered as another key personality trait in connection to general L2 achievement. The empirical findings unanimously expose the advantage of extraverts on various measures of L2 performance. Such language learners are not only more fluent (Dewaele, 2002), but also make a better general impression (Oya et al., 2004), which can be attributed to the specific Extraversion characteristics of being talkative, energetic, enthusiastic, assertive and outgoing/sociable, and equipped with good presentation skills (Liang & Kelsen, 2018). Aside from these general communication capabilities, the language-related advantages identified in Extraversion comprise superiority in L2 verbal production (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018. It is also maintained that the L2 oral ability can be fuelled by assertiveness, due to its relationship with self-assurance which may be advantageous in fluency acquisition (Ockey, 2011). Then again, in spite of the reported strengths of Extraversion, several contradictory results have also been identified. One of the gravest refers to the general profile of high achievers who tend to be introverted (when equipped with intuition and thinking) (Ehrman, 2008), which allows them to outperform extraverts in general English language competence tests (Čizmić & Rogulj, 2018).

Of the Big Five traits, Agreeableness appears to escape the SLA researchers' attention to the greatest degree. The to-date findings are quite conflicting, pointing to the either negative (Shirdel & Naeini, 2018) or non-existent (Choi, 2018) association of Agreeableness with EFL proficiency. However, the links between the trait and L2 willingness to communicate are positive (Oz, 2014; Šafranj & Katić, 2019), while foreign language speaking confidence is high (Khany & Ghoreyshi, 2013), and pronunciation – above the average (Hu & Reiterer, 2009).

In the case of Neuroticism, its cumulated, negative effects on different aspects of the foreign language learning process have been confirmed, such as in tasks testing spoken language (listening and conversation), phonological processing, and orthographic knowledge (Abu-Rabia et al., 2014) or general English language competence (Čizmić & Rogulj, 2018; Shirdel & Naeini, 2018). Also, the direct links between Neuroticism and anxiety are generally substantiated, as demonstrated in the studies by Dewaele and Al-Saraj (2015) or Šafranj and Zivlak (2019), among others. A similar pattern of findings pertains to the association of Neuroticism with SLA-specific forms of anxiety, like speaking anxiety (e.g., Babakhouya, 2019; Vural, 2019). Similarly, the links between Neuroticism and the L2 willingness to communicate tend to confirm this research path (Šafranj & Katić, 2019).

3 Rationale of the Study

The main aim of this paper is to verify the role of the Big Five traits for predicting EFL attainments, operationalised as self-assessed levels of EFL skills and final grades. There are only a few studies pertaining to the impact of all the five dimensions on EFL achievement. Specifically, in the research by Shirdel and Naeini (2018), Openness to experience, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness significantly explain EFL achievement as operationalised on the results of the English C-test, with Openness being the sole positive predictor. The correlative study by Pavičić Takač and Požega (2012) demonstrated very small correlations between oral language proficiency and the traits, alongside with small to medium correlations between Openness to experience, Extraversion and Agreeableness with forms of willingness to communicate in a foreign language, which was confirmed by Oz (2014). The research by Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013) focused on EFL speaking confidence, exposing the positive predictive power of all the five traits. Aside from that, Openness to experience is the strongest predictor of the cognitive component of attitudes to foreign language learning, while Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Openness predict the affective/evaluative component, with Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Openness predict the behavioural/personality component (Pourfeiz, 2015). Finally, Nikoopour and Hajian (2016) demonstrated that Extraversion is the best predictor of EFL learner autonomy, while Conscientiousness – the weakest.

Due to a paucity of studies focusing on the relationship between the five traits and EFL attainment, it appears justified to replicate the study by Shirdel and Naeini (2018) in an attempt to verify the predictive value of the Big Five traits in explaining EFL achievement in Polish participants. The benefits of Openness to experience and Neuroticism for EFL attainments appear to have been corroborated (e.g., Ghapanchi et al., 2011; Shirdel & Naeini, 2018). Nevertheless, taking into consideration the empirical findings of the studies quoted above, it appears that Agreeableness may not play a significant role in understanding global achievement because its overt focus on good interpersonal relationships may not sufficiently motivate students to

explore all the four skills, not only speaking (e.g., Khany & Ghoreyshi, 2013). Aside from that, it can be expected that Conscientiousness, with its focus on generalized learning ability, is likely to make a significant contribution to EFL attainments because language learning is a long-lasting process demanding persistence and achievement orientation, with which Conscientiousness is connected (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2020). In the case of Extraversion, its strong ties with positive emotionality may alleviate the impact of negative emotions, such as language anxiety, and, at the same time, boost positive ones, such as foreign language enjoyment (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017). For this reason, the hypothesis formulated for the benefit of this study is the following:

H: *EFL attainments can be predicted by the five personality traits.*

4 Method

Below is a description of the sample, instruments, as well as the procedure, including the analyses used in the study.

4.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 590 students from 23 randomly selected classes of the six secondary grammar schools in Opole, located in the south-west of Poland. The cohort was composed of 333 girls and 257 boys (mean age: 18.50, range: 18–21, SD = .53). Their level of proficiency was intermediate to upper intermediate, while the average length of their English language experience amounted to almost 11 years, with the vast majority (above 90%) studying it for 7–17 years. Apart from English, the students also studied another compulsory foreign language: French or German (2–4 lessons a week). The participants came from different residential locations, mostly urban (307 of them from Opole, 119 from neighboring towns), with 164 students from rural areas.

4.2 Instruments

The basic instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. Its first part comprised demographic variables: age, gender (1 – *male*, 2 – *female*), and place of residence (1 – *village: up to 2500 inhabitants*, 2 – *town: from 2500 to 50,000 inhabitants,* 3 – *city: over 50,000 inhabitants*).

In the second part of the questionnaire, the magnitude of the participants' Big Five traits, was measured with the 100-item *IPIP* scale (Goldberg, 1992). It

consisted of five 20 item subscales devoted to each dimension with 10 positively and 10 negatively worded items, which were then key-reversed. Sample items on the Openness to experience subscale were: "I am good at many things" or "I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas", Conscientiousness – "I like to tidy up" or "I waste a lot of time", Extraversion – "I take charge" or "I don't talk a lot", Agreeableness – "I love to help others" or "I insult people", and the Neuroticism subscale included: "I rarely get irritated" or "I worry about things". All the responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *1 – strongly disagree* to *5 – strongly agree*. The minimum number of points on the scale was 20, while the maximum was 100. The Openness to experience subscale's reliability was measured in terms of Cronbach's alpha, ranging the level of $\alpha = .82$, in the case of the Conscientiousness subscale $\alpha = .91$, Extraversion: $\alpha = .94$, Agreeableness: $\alpha = .81$, and Neuroticism: $\alpha = .90$.

The third part of the questionnaire included assessment tools: external (self-reported final grades) and internal (self-assessment of the four foreign language skills). *Final grades* were constructed by an aggregated value of the grades the participants received at the end of junior high school, and each semester of their secondary grammar school. The grades were reported on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*unsatisfactory*) to 6 (*excellent*). The scale's reliability was $\alpha = .90$. *Self-perceived levels of EFL skills* (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) were constructed from aggregated values of independent self-assessments of each skill at each grade of the secondary grammar school, measured with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*unsatisfactory*) to 6 (*excellent*). The scale's reliability was Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ (speaking), .84 (writing), .81 (reading), and .83 (listening).

4.3 Procedure

The data collection procedure took place in the six grammar schools located in Opole. After the schools' headmasters had given their consent, the classes in which the research was to take place were randomly selected. Then the students were informed about the purpose of the research and granted full confidentiality. They could withdraw from the study without any consequences, at any time. After all the participants gave their oral consent, they filled in the questionnaire. The time given for the activity was 15–45 min. The participants were instructed to give sincere answers without taking excessive time to think. A short statement introducing a new set of items in an unobtrusive manner preceded each part of the questionnaire.

The data were computed by means of the statistical program STATISTICA. The main operations were descriptive statistics (means and *SD*) and correlations among all the variables, represented by the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient *r*. Finally, several independent regression procedures were run to estimate the linear relationship between the Big Five traits, viewed as independent dimensions, and the two forms of attainment (final grades and self-perceived levels of L2 skills).

5 Results

First, means, SD, and correlations were calculated for all the variables included in the study. In the case of self-assessed EFL skills, it turns out that the correlation is strongest with Openness to experience, though the magnitude is relatively weak. As to final grades, Openness to experience together with Conscientiousness appeared to be related to them in the strongest manner, though, again, the magnitude is very weak. The summary of the results is found in Table 1 below.

In the next step, two sets of regression procedures were run for the two dependent variables in order to assess the predictive value of each dimension. The variable that demonstrated a weak, though statistically significant predictability of the self-assessed EFL skills, was Openness to experience, with $\beta = .11$, $p = .00$. The other significant variable negatively predicting EFL skills was Neuroticism, with $\beta = -.08$, $p < .05$. The procedures are summarised in Table 2 below.

Finally, similar regression operations were run for final grades. This time, out of the five personality dimensions, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness were found to be significant predictors of the dependent variable. In the case of Openness to experience, the results were: $\beta = .13$, $p = .00$, while in reference to Conscientiousness they were $\beta = .11$, $p = .01$. In the case of Agreeableness, the findings were: $\beta = .09$, $p = .03$. The procedures are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 1 Means, SD, and correlations among the variables (N = 590)

Variable	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Openness to experience	71.51	12.06	.15***	.30***	.19***	−.06	.11**	.12**
2. Conscientiousness	68.94	12.71	–	.27***	.27***	−.24***	−.02	.12**
3. Extraversion	72.66	15.16	–	–	.25***	−.37***	.00	.00
4. Agreeableness	67.00	10.71	–	–	–	−.11**	−.04	.09*
5. Neuroticism	54.54	15.62	–	–	–	–	−.08*	.03
6. Self-assess.EFL skills	4.00	.89	–	–	–	–	–	.36***
7. Final grades	3.89	.83	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note. *signifies $p \leq .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$*

Table 2 Summary of the regression results for self-assessed EFL skills (N = 590)

Variable	β	t	p
Openness to experience	.11	2.60	.00***
Conscientiousness	−.02	−.56	.58
Extraversion	−.00	−.11	.91
Agreeableness	−.04	−1.23	.32
Neuroticism	−.08	−1.97	.05*

Note. *signifies $p \leq .05$, *** $p < .001$*

Table 3 Summary of the regression results for final grades (N = 590)

Variable	*β*	*t*	*p*
Openness to experience	.13	3.22	.00***
Conscientiousness	.11	2.43	.01**
Extraversion	.01	.29	.77
Agreeableness	.09	2.11	.03*
Neuroticism	.03	.78	.43

Note. *signifies $p \leq .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$*

6 Discussion

According to the hypothesis formulated for the purpose of this study, *EFL attainments can be predicted by the five personality traits.* However, the results obtained did not allow for its full corroboration.

Of the Big Five traits, only Openness to experience turns out to play the role of a positive predictor of both forms of EFL attainments – self-assessment of the four skills and final grades. Indeed, a majority of studies appear to indicate that certain levels of Openness to experience are necessary for ultimate EFL success (e.g., Dewaele & Botes, 2019; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2018). The beneficial impact of the trait can be ascribed to open learners' intellectual curiosity, which allows them to know more and learn effectively, as confirmed by the cognitive and behavioural/personality component of attitudes (Pourfeiz, 2015). This curiosity about the foreign language and culture that is being studied drives the willingness to become more proficient. Moreover, open students also enjoy intellectual creativity, which enables them to generate innovative language learning orientations. The trait's focus on intelligence obviously assists the acquisition of knowledge stemming from the inquisitive and perceptive nature of open language learners. Also, the merit of being inclined to seek social interactions, in general and in the L2, may greatly induce the development of their L2 proficiency. It follows that gaining excellence in this field is mostly connected with the open students' autonomous drive to become proficient, which stems from making the learning process personally relevant and stimulating (Zohoorian et al., 2018).

As to Conscientiousness, its predictive value can only be exposed in relation to final grades, as also confirmed in the study by Novikova et al. (2020). The industriousness and orderliness of conscientious students can be related to their skilful self-regulation and discipline (He, 2019) that might be performed throughout the length of the language learning process (Jackson & Park, 2020). Thanks to their diligence and good study habits, they may skilfully acquire L2 subsystems (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018), wisely using their time and study management strategies (Ghyasi et al., 2013), allowing them to experience an optimal learning environment (e.g., Alibakhshi et al., 2017). The study results seem to point out that the organized and purposeful behaviour of conscientious students is noticed and rewarded by teachers, who express their opinion by means of final, summative grades. It is though unclear why there is no relationship between the trait and self-assessed L2 skills. Although

the conscientiousness's focus on optimal learning is supposed to induce greater feelings of competence and achievement, the trait does not appear to influence the student's views on their own EFL competence. It follows that a serious attitude to obligations represented by conscientious learners may not be a necessary prerequisite for holding a high opinion of their four skills in spite of their self-discipline and deliberation. It can though be speculated that such students may be too strict in their opinion of EFL abilities.

Surprisingly, in spite of expectations, Extraversion has turned out to be unrelated to both forms of attainments. Although the existing empirical findings overwhelmingly reveal the advantage of extraverts on various measures of L2 performance (e.g., Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018) and willingness to communicate (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2021), the present research appears to disprove this finding. It follows that the strength of this dimension is much lesser when compared to other traits in the context of this study. Nevertheless, the specific benefit of Extraversion for the EFL learning process cannot be ignored, especially concerning general communication capabilities (e.g., Ockey, 2011; Oya et al., 2004), when assisted by the language-related advantages identified in extraversion (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2007; He, 2019).

As to Agreeableness, the trait has been found to significantly predict final grades. This result stands in opposition to some findings in the field proving its negative role (e.g., Pavičić Takač & Požega, 2012; Shirdel & Naeini, 2018) or no relationship (Choi, 2018). Nevertheless, the findings of this study corroborate views on a general behavioural pattern attributable to agreeableness (i.e., prosocial orientation), which can also be identified in the foreign language acquisition process. The significant link between Agreeableness and final grades appears to prove that teachers appreciate cooperativeness and compliance on the part of the student, assigning such learners an important part in the learning process.

Neuroticism has turned out to be a significant, negative predictor of self-assessed EFL skills. Indeed, the negative role of the trait, mostly attributed to its ties with anxiety, depression, self-consciousness, and vulnerability, has been confirmed in the literature of the field (e.g., Čizmić & Rogulj, 2018; Shirdel & Naeini, 2018). However, it is unclear why no links between Neuroticism and self-assessed EFL grades have been detected in the present study. It can be speculated that Neuroticism affects attainments directly through its focus on negative emotionality, which may escape the teacher's attention, especially when the student is able to compensate for their deficits with heightened levels of EFL self-efficacy (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2019) or emotional intelligence, especially when speaking in the foreign language (Ożańska-Ponikwia et al., 2020).

The study is not free from a few limitations that need to be addressed. The paper documents an attempt to grasp the effects of all the five dimensions in the EFL learning process from the theoretical and empirical points of view. Due to their vastness and complexity, the findings and their interpretation may offer quite a limited understanding of the role of each independent trait. Aside from that, although the regression model applied in the study is considered as causal, no causality inferences can be proposed because the study design was descriptive. The results must be treated with caution, excluding the generalizability of the findings. Moreover,

only the direct effects of the dimensions were observed, which did not allow for a full understanding of the complex context of the language acquisition process.

On the basis of the findings of the study several recommendations can be proposed. First, there is a need to examine the effects of each trait in various configurations by means of more precise models, like the mediation processes. Thanks to such an approach, the genuine impact of personality on the quality and quantity of the foreign language process can be explained in a more comprehensive manner. As the results above show, the effect of personality on factors specific for the SLA process are discrete, hence more meticulous procedures are needed. Also, the incorporation of various operationalizations of foreign language attainments, like the results of different kinds of tests measuring proficiency or skill levels, grade point average (GPA), and other forms of summative and formative assessment may offer a promising research path.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations for Classroom Practices

Personality is responsible for shaping "the way people respond to their learning environment" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 30), hence its understanding plays a role in the reliable predicting of behaviour across situations. Also, in the foreign language learning process such predictions may be quite relevant. Nevertheless, the investigation of this specific environment requires untangling the complicated interconnections between sociobiographical and educational variables, which is extremely difficult. As Dewaele puts it, "[n]o single personality trait therefore predetermines success in SLA. At best, some combinations of traits create a potential for success, which the learner can decide to boost through hard work and practice" (2012a, p. 6). As a matter of fact, the results of this study seem to indicate that a combination of high Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness, together with low levels of Neuroticism (high Emotional Stability) is likely to induce a substantial language learning potential. For this reason, pedagogical interventions aiming at boosting positive aspects of these traits can be advised. This can be done through the application of media in the classroom – newspaper clips, the Internet, or films (Yang & Chen, 2007), which may allow for the presentation and analysis of diverse, often conflicting viewpoints and values – which is especially relevant in familiarizing students with different cultural behaviours and norms (Levy, 2007). Also, catering for a stress-free atmosphere in the classroom is of paramount importance, as it will enable all students to identify more positive than negative experiences, making ground for achieving L2 success. Moreover, it may appear justified to follow classroom techniques that can be helpful in developing learner autonomy. These can be tasks and projects that require students to practise the language on their own or with classmates, and then to use their experience to fulfil a subsequent task, for example, through online games, like treasure hunts. Introducing a more organized approach

to learning, such as being punctual and prepared for the classes or keeping a tidy desk is also worth mentioning (for more ideas check Piechurska-Kuciel, 2020).

To conclude, it needs to be pointed out that that this study by no means exhausts the fascinating subject connected with the role of personality in the SLA process. However, it is hoped that it provides some clues to the understanding of the individual side of learner behaviour driven by the five personality dimensions. Although it may appear that Openness to experience, as an independent trait, is the key to unlock EFL attainments, it should be remembered that the impact of personality within the EFL field may be more complicated. For this reason, further, more intense and elaborate investigation is advised.

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Language Anxiety of Older Adults in an Online and In-class EFL Course: Results of a Pilot Study

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Abstract As recent meta-analyses reveal, language anxiety (LA) is one of the most important determinants of success in foreign language (FL) learning, next to aptitude, motivation, and working memory. Although studies on LA have been carried out for a few decades, exploring its nature, causes, correlates and influence on FL achievements, there are still several questions to be answered. One of such under-researched areas is LA experienced by older adults (60+), who nowadays constitute an important group of FL learners in Poland. A few years ago, their attempts to master English as a FL were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought several limitations and changes, forcing them to switch from learning in a classroom setting to an online mode. The main objective of this chapter is to report the outcomes of a mixed-method pilot study, aimed at measuring the level of LA of older adults (OAs) in the in-class and online modes, exploring its causes, and identifying the most anxiety-provoking skills. Data were collected among six OAs via a questionnaire, draw-a-picture technique, and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that there is a complex interrelated network of external and internal factors of LA, which should be taken into account when teaching this age group.

Keywords Language anxiety · Older adults · Foreign language Geragogy · In-class FL course · Online FL course

1 Introduction

At the end of 2020, the number of people aged 60+ (so-called 'older adults') in Poland constituted 9.8 million (25.6% of the whole population). This number is expected to grow, and by 2050 older adults (OAs) are assumed to comprise about

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40% of the whole population in Poland (Eurostat, 2022, Past and future, para. 4). According to Eurostat (2022), this cohort is expected to exceed even up to 44% of the population worldwide. Moreover, "as a result of the population movement between age groups, the EU's old-age dependency ratio is projected to almost double from 32% in 2020 to 57.1% by 2100" (*ibid.*).

Since nowadays travelling has become more convenient and affordable, and many older adults can finally pursue their dreams about seeing the world or visiting their families abroad (see, e.g., Słowik-Krogulec, 2019), a considerable interest of seniors in developing their foreign language (FL) competencies has been observed. Many attend FL courses at private language schools, senior centres, or Universities of the Third Age (U3A). In fact, in only a decade, the number of U3As in Poland increased from 123 in 2007 to 614 in 2017. The U3As offer a wide range of courses, from among which, English classes are the most popular (83% of all courses) (GUS, 2020a, b). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many OAs withdrew from FL courses, which was caused by a sudden and unexpected need to switch to emergency remote teaching. This decision might have been determined by their difficulties with adapting to the new situation and low technological skills. According to GUS (2020a, b), the number of Internet users decreases with age. In 2021, only slightly more than half of the Polish older adults (51.4%) were using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), with men being a little more active than women. Moreover, the data show that the approach to using ICT depends upon the educational background of OAs (*ibid.*).

At the same time, several studies conducted since the late 1980s (e.g., Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Horwitz et al., 1986; Price, 1991) have shown that one of the determinants of successful FL learning is anxiety. Although some data confirm that the level of language anxiety (LA) is related to age (e.g., Dewaele, 2013), still little is known about anxiety experienced specifically by older adults. Many arguments seem to suggest that learning FLs by OAs may be even more anxiety-provoking during online courses. Is that indeed the case? If so, what are the reasons for such negative emotions to appear, and how are they different from the in-class anxiety causes? Are some skills more anxiety-generating in these two settings? To answer these questions, a pilot study was carried out, whose results are shared in this chapter. To ensure a better understanding of the matter, first the profiles of OAs and the construct of language anxiety are explained. This is followed by the research description, analysis of results and pedagogical implications.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Older Adults as FL Learners

The past two decades have seen a major shift of interest in FL education to older adults. However, despite its significance, there is still no one field of study devoted to FL teaching and learning of people at the age of 60 and older (Foreign Language

Geragogy), as it continues to develop separately as Geragogy and Second Language Acquisition. The incoherent and fragmented research makes it challenging to characterise older adult FL learners (Słowik-Krogulec, 2019). Nonetheless, thus far, certain shared characteristics of this age group have been established to facilitate the process of late-life FL education.

According to the *linear decline hypothesis*, learning a FL is considered to be more difficult with age (Lenet et al., 2011), but the present studies show that OAs *are* able to become successful language learners (Ramírez Gómez, 2016; Jaroszewska, 2013; Mast et al., 2009, Michońska-Stadnik, 2013). Although senescence is often associated with deficits in various cognitive functions (such as working memory capacity, sensory function, inhibitory control, and processing speed), which differentiate older from younger adults, ageing depends on individual variation (Cox, 2013; Park, 2000*;* Steinerman et al.*,* 2010). Mast et al. (2009) enumerate seven main cognitive changes that can be observed throughout the lifespan, which include: processing speed, inductive reasoning, spatial orientation, perpetual speed, numeric ability, verbal ability, and verbal memory. However, from among all these only the first one declines steadily from middle age onwards, while the rest all follow different trajectories. Hence, caution is needed while equating old age with impairment of cognition, as basic abilities can remain unchanged or even improve in most healthy individuals until at least the age of 60. After this age the decline is usually insignificant until the age of 80. The National Research Council (2000) note that the cognitive changes observed in people above the age of 85 show less differentiation, since in the majority of population there is a decline of most cognitive functions.

However, cognitive changes can be affected by the level of education, socioeconomic status or baseline intelligence (Grant et al., 2014), life experiences, health, psychomotor abilities, physical exercises (Hultsch et al., 1998; National Research Council, 2000; Słowik-Krogulec, 2019), or even indulging in socially engaging hobbies (Harada et al., 2013).

In fact, Pfenninger and Singleton (2019) claim that "a cognitively challenging activity," which may be offered during a FL course, can "promote neural plasticity" and "foster social interaction and individual mobility" (p. 2; see also Antoniou et al., 2013). Other studies suggest that FL learning might contribute to an enhancement of the quality of life, health and well-being (Antoniou et al., 2013; Pikhart & Klimova, 2020).

When changes in memory are concerned, they follow different trajectories depending on the types of memory. Studies show (e.g., Cox, 2013; Park, 2000) that short-term memory (STM) – the ability to retain information for a brief period of time – is less affected by the process of ageing than working memory (WM) – responsible not only for holding information but also executing cognitive tasks with the use of data held in the STM and long-term memory. The latter is also related to the decline in fluid intelligence, which negatively influences the processing speed and perception. This results, among others, in problems with reading comprehension or inductive reasoning of seniors (Park, 2000). Older adults' declarative memory is also affected to a greater extent than non-declarative memory. This means that

an intentional recollection of facts or events proves problematic, while, for instance, recognising and responding to a familiar face remains relatively intact. Finally, episodic memory (also described as autobiographical due to its reliance on personal experiences and memories) is rather untouched by the age of 55–60, while semantic memory, which is associated with facts, concepts and general knowledge, increases between the ages 35 and 55, plateaus until the age of 65, and then begins to decline (Old & Naveh-Benjamin, 2008).

Biological ageing, which includes motor and sensory impairment, also affects FL education. According to GUS (2020a, b), decreased mobility is an everyday reality for 30% of OAs in Poland. Problems with vision are experienced by every other person over 65 and range from the need of glasses to serious sight-related problems, involving near-blindness. In contrast, some degree of hearing loss is experienced by every twelfth adult aged above 80 above. Helfer (2009) points to a major issue related to auditory impairment, namely its exacerbation in situations when conversation is contaminated with background noise. As a result, the situation in which an OA needs to focus on distinguishing sounds and encoding information might cause problems with comprehending and memorising information (Pichora-Fuller, 2009). Sweetow (2009) also argues that both older and younger people with aural impairments are "susceptible (…) to developing maladaptive compensatory behaviours and loss of confidence that may translate into social isolation, depression, and apathy" (p. 113).

In sum, despite its significance, research into Foreign Language Geragogy is still lacking and there are more studies needed to examine cognitive abilities, preferences and potential learning difficulties that late-life FL learners might encounter, in order to create a less stressful and more friendly learning environment for this steadily growing cohort.

2.2 Language Anxiety and Its Effects on FL Learning and Use

Language anxiety is considered "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) further explain that it may also refer to the situation that "requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient" (p. 5). A deep understanding of the construct is crucial since several studies have shown its detrimental effect on FL attainments and performance (e.g., Baran-Łucarz, 2014; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008; Szyszka, 2017; Tóth, 2012).

LA has three typical facets: a physiological, behavioural and a cognitive one (Vasa & Pine, 2004). The first dimension refers to characteristic body reactions (e.g., heart pounding, dizziness, mounting perspiration, blushing, dry mouth, motor tension) and body postures (e.g., leaning back, closed body positions). Behavioural symptoms encompass irritability, impatience, and attempts at avoiding situations and tasks appraised as threatening to one's ego. In the case of FL learning, anxious students have been found to withdraw from anxiety-generating exercises, skip

classes, or even give up studying (Horwitz et al., 1986; Şimşek & Dörnyei, 2017). Analogously, in natural settings, people experiencing LA would deliberately avoid threatening situations, such as social meetings requiring talking to others. Such decisions and actions have evident negative consequences, which consist in the FL learners refraining from exposure to the target language (TL) and from opportunities to practise its use. Finally, there are several cognitive limitations that anxiety leads to. Among them are problems with concentration and attention steering, lower creativity, or reduced STM and WM (Vasa & Pine, 2004). Anxiety also debilitates all three stages of information processing, i.e., taking in, analysing and retrieving information (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008). It is important to add that anxious people are usually aware of experiencing the apprehension and the consequences it brings, which boost their anxiety even more.

In 1986, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope conceptualized and operationalized LA as a construct closely related to other types of anxiety identified by psychologists, namely to communication apprehension, i.e. the worry of not making oneself understood and understanding others (McCroskey, 1984), fear of negative evaluation, i.e. the projection of being negatively judged by others (Watson & Friend, 1969), and test anxiety, i.e. the distress experienced before, during, and after a testing situation caused by the fear of not being able to succeed (Sarason, 1981). Based on the three facets and types of anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) constructed an instrument – the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale – the best-known and most widely used scale to measure the level of LA, and a basis for designing its shorter and different language-skill-specific versions.

The detrimental effects of LA on FL performance and learning are evident, visible in various language aspects and skills. Interestingly, though several empirical data have suggested that speaking is the most anxiety-generating skill (e.g., Gkonou, 2017; Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1992; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008; Tóth, 2012), a more recent meta-analysis (Teimouri et al., 2019) has found that "listening and writing anxiety showed much larger effects than reading or speaking anxiety" (p. 15). Moreover, anxiety deteriorates the richness and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar used in speech (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Park & Lee, 2005; Tóth, 2012), and debilitates sound discrimination and accuracy in production of segmentals and supregmentals (Baran-Łucarz, 2011; Szyszka, 2017; Tóth, 2012). Studies have also revealed its negative link with fluency (Park & Lee, 2005; Tóth, 2012), the use of communication strategies (Park & Lee, 2005) and pronunciation strategies (Szyszka, 2017). Finally, LA is negatively related to motivation to learn FLs (e.g., Baran-Łucarz, 2017) and willingness to communicate in the FL classroom and naturalistic settings (Baran-Łucarz, 2014).

2.3 Causes of LA

LA has several causes, which many researchers have tried to classify on the basis of data elicited mainly from young adults and adolescents. One of the early well-known taxonomies was suggested by Young (1991), who identified six, both

internally- and externally-driven sources of language anxiety. The most significant group of internal causes are *personal and interpersonal anxieties*, which embrace negative self-perceptions (self-evaluations and self-images). These can be of more general kind, referring to negative beliefs about ones worth and scholastic skills (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999; Stroud & Wee, 2006), or related specifically to assumptions about one's FL level and learning capacities (Baran-Łucarz, 2011; Gkonou, 2017; Stroud & Wee, 2006; Szyszka, 2011). Among these perceptions and beliefs are also those concerning the problem of not being as genuine when using a FL as when using L1, due to several FL deficiencies (Horwitz, 2017). LA may also derive from *actual FL learning difficulties* (as in the case of dyslexia; see e.g., Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008); however, self-perceptions are better predictors of anxiety than real problems encountered when mastering a FL (Botes et al., 2020). Another type of internal LA sources are beliefs learners hold about *characteristics of effective FL teaching and learning*. Anxiety is prone to rise particularly if the teaching methodologies and techniques do not correspond with the students' assumptions about successful FL pedagogy (e.g., a clash between the teacher's and student's ideas on effective error correction techniques) (Young, 1991).

Externally-driven sources of LA refer to the *beliefs teachers hold about effective teaching* and their actual teaching practices related to *instructor-learner rapport and interactions*, *classroom procedures*, and *language testing* (Young, 1991). As many studies have shown, talking in front of the class, being frequently corrected in an explicit and unfriendly manner, or being provided with tests with an unknown or ambiguous format are particularly anxiety-provoking (Price, 1991; Czura & Baran-Łucarz, 2021). One of the moderators of LA is also age. Research outcomes have revealed that there is a negative correlation between the two (Dewaele, 2013; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999) and between LA and the onset of FL learning (Dewaele, 2013). Most of the studies on LA and age are, however, of quantitative and correlational design. Still little is known, for example, about the nature and sources of LA in various age groups, and how they differ from one another. Waters (2013), on the basis of interviews, observations and diaries written by eight OAs, identified several factors inhibiting FL learning in this age group: "fear of failure, comparison with peers (…), too fast instructional pace that leads to overload, physical limitations relating to age, and three instructional factors: a) too high task level, b) lack of meaningful practices, and c) negative error correction" (pp. viii–ix). It was also stressed that "language-learning anxiety in older adults exists within a complex network of inhibiting and enhancing factors, which influence each other in a multidirectional way" (p. viii). The latter group of facilitative factors was found to embrace, among others: positive classroom atmosphere and feedback, working in pairs and small groups, practices considered by older adult students relevant and meaningful, and the feeling of positive and secure status among other learners. The results of this study need corroboration by further research conducted among OAs representing various L1s and educational backgrounds.

The level of anxiety and its causes can be expected to vary depending on the learning setting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most teaching shifted into an online mode. To improve the learning/teaching processes in this context, many

researchers have conducted studies on the effectiveness, advantages and limitations, or factors determining academic success in this particular setting. The studies, however, have focused mainly on adolescents and young adults. Though some show that students tend to feel less anxious due, for instance, to the possibility to hide by switching off the camera and/or microphone (Czura & Baran-Łucarz, 2021), many have concluded that online learning leads to higher stress, anxiety and even depression (Fawaz & Samaha, 2020). To the very best of our knowledge, no data have been presented so far on LA experienced by OAs when studying in an online mode. Thus, a pilot study tapping into the nature and causes of LA of this particular age group, in a classroom and online setting, has been conducted. Its design and results are described and discussed in the further subsections of the chapter.

3 Method

3.1 Research Questions

In autumn 2021, a study was conducted among six Polish older adults to gather preliminary data to answer the following questions:

1. What was the level of LA of the study participants when learning English during in-class and online courses?
2. What were the causes of LA in the two learning contexts?
3. Which (sub)skills were particularly anxiety-generating for the participants in the two contexts?

Besides finding answers to the main research questions (RQs) above, the study was also aimed at verifying the research design, data collecting tools and procedures, with the intention of introducing necessary modifications into the proper study.

3.2 Participants

The study was conducted in a group of six older adults, aged 70–80, who attended classes at the University of the Third Age in Wrocław in 2021 and volunteered to take part in the research. They had previous experience of studying other languages, including Russian, Latin, German, Spanish, and French. When English is concerned, they had been studying it on average for 10 years, usually starting at primary school and continuing at the university. Additionally, they all had attended courses at the U3A from 2 to 8 years. The moment the data were collected, the participants represented a pre-intermediate level (CEFR B1). Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, they were offered emergency remote teaching by their university. However, in addition, they decided to have private online lessons that would concentrate on developing their speaking skills in a smaller group they knew well.

As highlighted in the introduction, many OAs are not technologically-savvy. This can be exemplified by the number of English classes offered by U3A in Wrocław, which dropped from as many as 14 in-class courses in 2019, to only 2 in 2020, and 3 in 2021, when the courses were run online. Thus, the participants of this study can be considered an exceptional group that was highly motivated to improve their FL skills and welcomed new challenges, but that also felt rather comfortable with the use of computers and the MS Teams platform. An explanation for this might be the fact that four students had engineering degrees and used computers in their professional life. Two remaining subjects, who had university degrees in humanities and had used ICT mainly to pursue their hobbies, during the classes found it a little more challenging to deal with potential technical issues.

3.3 The Context of the Study

On the basis of the information gathered during the interviews, general characteristics of the earlier (i.e., pre-pandemic) in-class courses attended once a week by the participants at the U3A in Wrocław can be delineated. As pointed out by the respondents, they were taught by different English language educators employed by this university. The teachers were often young and rather inexperienced but tried to have good rapport with the class. Their lessons were mainly based on various course books for adolescents (e.g., *New English File*). Each lesson usually followed the order of the tasks suggested in the course book, with less focus on speaking and pronunciation and more time spent on vocabulary and grammar. Listening exercises were used rarely or never due to problems with audio equipment and the learners' dislike of such tasks. Instead, reading and writing tasks were preferred both by the instructors and the students. Speaking was often heavily based on the use of these two skills (students wrote down what they wanted to say and then read it out loud).

As already mentioned, in 2021, during the pandemic, the respondents followed stationary education offered by the U3A, which included English classes. However, at the participants' request, they were also taught online by one of the authors of the chapter once a week for a period of 8 months. Each meeting, every time attended by all of the participants, was devoted to one of the topics from a list that the learners created together with the teacher/researcher at the beginning of the course. The topics were related to the participants' interests and included, for instance, books, films, art, travelling, searching for information online. A week before each class, the course participants were given homework with tasks including relevant vocabulary, which were later checked and discussed together on Teams. Grammar was dealt with mainly on the spot, when particular problems emerged. Similarly, errors were corrected either immediately or during the post-speaking stage, depending on the task objective (accuracy- or fluency-oriented). At the same time, two participants attended additional online courses offered by language schools and taught by instructors who did not participate in the current study. As a result, all of the

information about the additional lessons came from the interviewees and was based on their personal accounts.

3.4 Instruments, and Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach. The data were collected in the participants' L1 in three stages. The qualitative data gathered with different tools aimed to complement one another and provide a more complete and comprehensive picture of LA experienced by OAs in the two settings. First (Stage 1), the participants were asked to draw two pictures (a technique used e.g., by Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018), either very simple and symbolic, or more detailed ones, with the first representing feelings and emotions that accompanied their learning during in-class English courses (drawing 1), and the second – during the online courses (drawing 2). Then, the participants wrote down at least five adjectives/expressions that represented their feelings and emotions accompanying the in-class and online FL lessons. The first two tasks, with clear instructions to them, were handed over to the participants, who returned them after a week.

Next (Stage 2), the subjects were provided with a questionnaire, which was a translated version of a short FLCAS scale (ShFLCAS; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). The instrument consisted of eight statements addressing the physiological dimensions of anxiety, worry, and feeling of confidence, which the respondents were to agree or disagree with to a various extent. While the formulation of six items reflected high levels of anxiety, two were negatively worded (reverse coded prior to the analysis) and denoted low LA. Consequently, the higher the participants scored, the higher their level of LA was considered to be. Since the middle (neutral) answer in a 5-point scale is frequently overused, the original scale was replaced with a 6-point Likert scale.

At Stage 3, the participants were interviewed by one of the authors on Microsoft Teams. The 30–45-min interviews, involved questions referring to the OAs' experience with learning English in-class and online, with the main aim being eliciting information related to anxiety, its level and potential causes. The conversations opened with more general inquiries about the format of the in-class and online courses, the participants' likes and dislikes related to the two modes, and the motivating and demotivating factors associated with practising English. The interviews allowed the researchers to refer to the drawings, adjectives, and answers marked on the questionnaire, asking for further clarifications. The meetings ended with encouraging the interviewees to suggest possible improvements in the two teaching modes in hope to elicit potential ideas on anxiety lowering techniques. Prior to the data collection phase, the research tools were tested for their clarity and coherence with a few senior non-participants. The order of the three stages was not accidental but derived from the attempt to limit imposing the issue of anxiety, which, if important to this group of learners, was believed to emerge and become evident without direct explicit questions.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were introduced into Excel to compute the descriptive statistics for LA and compare the means to particular questions in the two teaching contexts. The responses of participants provided in the interviews were transcribed.[1] Then, an initial examination of the data gathered with the interviews and other qualitative tools (draw-a-picture technique, providing adjectives) was conducted individually by each researcher. Following a discussion, a consensus was reached on the codes related to causes of LA (as suggested by Young, 1991). Finally, the data sets composed with the use of the different tools were brought together, so as to have a more comprehensive and clearer picture of the LA tendencies of the study participants.

4 Presentation of Results

4.1 Quantitative Data

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the LA questionnaire. The participants' level of anxiety in the in-class context appeared to be slightly higher than in the online mode, with responses to the former setting being more homogeneous than those concerning the latter. The table also shows small differences in the low and high scores in the two contexts, with both of values higher in the in-class mode.

Figure 1 indicates how the means for particular items of the ShFLCAS differed in the two contexts, with possible means for each item ranging from 1 to 6, depending on how strongly the participants agreed with the statements. Most of the responses, irrespective of the context, ranged from 3 to 3.5, where 3 represented the answer *'Rather disagree'* and 4 – *'Rather agree'*, with the total mean also around 3. In the case of six items, the means were found to be lower in on-line than in-class learning. Item 6 showed the same level for both contexts, while in items 2 and 4, the means were higher for the online learning.

Statements

1. Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it.
2. I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the ShFLCAS in the in-class and online contexts

Context	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Low	High
In-class	25.67	4.84	8	48	20	34
Online	24.00	5.33	8	48	16	30

[1] All the responses provided by the participants and quoted herein have been translated into English by the authors of the chapter.

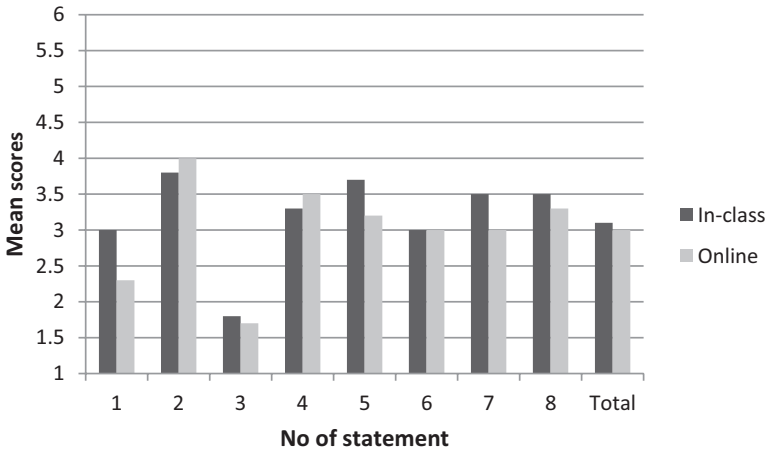

Fig. 1 Means for each question in the ShFLCAS in the in-class and online contexts. Note: **Mean scores:** 1– *strongly disagree*; 2 – *disagree;* 3 – *rather disagree*; 4 – *rather agree*; 5 – *agree*; 6 – *strongly agree*

3. I can feel my heart pounding (or have clammy hands, dry mouth, etc.) when I'm going to be called on in FL class.
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class (reverse-coded).
5. I feel confident when I speak in FL class (reverse-coded).
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class.
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class.
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class.

There are also items whose scores vary from the remaining ones. In item 1 – *'Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it.'* – the difference between the means for the two contexts is most visible, with the respondents considering it more true in the case of in-class courses. The highest mean can be seen in item 2, with respondents '*Rather agreeing*' that other students are better at speaking than they are. At the same time, it appears that the respondents did not experience strong physiological reactions when being called on in a FL lesson, which the low means of item 3 suggest.

4.2 Qualitative Data

Although instructions to the tasks used in Stage 1 stated clearly that drawings and verbal expressions were to represent feelings and emotions, some of the participants (Ps) shared their more general perceptions and characteristics of the two learning contexts, particularly in the case of the latter task. Still, the data gathered with the tools applied in the first phase were referred to during the interviews, and thus they

will be reported to complement the oral answers. The presentation of qualitative data is organised according to the research questions. Consequently, first the participants' remarks on their level of LA are reported, followed by their responses related to the matter of causes of LA, and FL skills and aspects that they find particularly anxiety-provoking.

When in the interview, after more general questions, the respondents were inquired specifically about LA they (might have) experienced during FL classes, most of them automatically responded as Participant 3 (P3): *'I don't think learning English makes me at all anxious.*' However, answers to further questions related to anxiety seemed to contradict its complete non-existence among the subjects. In fact, several factors emerged, some of which appeared to be anxiety-provoking irrespective of the mode of learning. For example, many OAs underlined the relationship with the teacher as a crucial determinant of their emotions experienced while FL learning. P3 explained as follows:

> Our teacher now is wonderful and I don't feel any anxiety. When I was learning English at the university, we had a teacher that all were afraid of. He was very strict and created barriers between the students and himself and thus a very unpleasant atmosphere, which is why most felt anxious.

P1, on the other hand, though did not refer directly to anxiety, claimed that '*the attitude the students have towards the teacher is crucial; if you don't like the teacher or the way he/she runs the classes, you will always be dissatisfied and no learning will take place.'* Participants P5 and P6 drew attention to very poor rapport with the teacher during one of the online courses, which was caused by her camera being constantly switched off. As the two seniors confessed, this drawback led to their withdrawal from the course. P5 further explained how important the camera switched on by the teacher in the course run by one of the authors of this chapter was to her in diminishing the physical distance and compensating the lack of real presence among the other group members. She stated,

> Since I am a cat person, it was so positive to see you with your beautiful cat. It was so pleasant and I felt you became closer, showing your home to us. The atmosphere became even more comforting and nicer than in the classroom. This at least partially compensated the physical distance, lack of warmth and touch of the others.

Another cause of LA that could be traced was related to the fear of negative evaluation. Some students confessed that with age, one's concerns about the opinions of others diminishes ('*I stopped worrying about how others perceive me many years ago, when I realised I am learning exclusively for myself'* [P3]). Such a way of thinking lends support to the quantitative outcomes of the questionnaire, which showed that although the OAs perceived their ability to speak to be at a lower level than that of others (item 2), they did not recognise in themselves typical physiological symptoms of being anxious (item 3). However, other remarks of the subjects showed that they did worry about how they might be perceived by others. P3 stated a few minutes later in the interview as follows: *'I do not belong to those who want to perform perfectly but I do feel apprehension related to ridiculing myself in front of others'.* In some other place she came back to the matter, saying '*Nobody wants to be ridiculed and to perform poorly.'* Two participants claimed that the feeling of

being assessed by others was more noticeable, and thus more anxiety-generating, during in-class learning. For instance, P4 claimed as follows,

> I think I was more stressed during the traditional course. When learning at home, I felt comfortable and relaxed. In the classroom, though the size of the group was comparable to the online group, the presence and evaluation of others was sort of … more tangible for me.

A similar argument was provided by P6, who said, *'I think we find it more difficult and stressful to perform alive in front of an authentic group.'* However, others held an opposite view, i.e., that online learning was more anxiety-provoking for them. This was due to the fact that the setting did not allow them to get to know each other well enough to feel comfortable and secure. Student P3 clarified, *'I was more stressed because I was among unknown people and I was afraid somebody might want to mock me at some forum'* and went on explaining, '*I am not embarrassed to speak when I know the group. If I don't know my classmates, I will never volunteer to say anything; instead, I will wait to be nominated to respond.'*

The fact that knowing each other is crucial to OAs was also signalled in their statements provided as clarifications to the pictures, in which most of the participants drew happy faces in reference to the in-class context and sad faces in the case of the on-line setting. Participant P3, the same who confessed about her anxiety being higher when performing among people she did not know well, added a cup of coffee to the happy face, which was a reference to the awaited enjoyable socialising event after each on-site class – a routine that made it possible for the students to get to know each other well. In contrast, the picture associated with the online course represented a sad face accompanied by a person lying in bed, which symbolized demotivation, a lazy mood, and the feeling of isolation and solitude (see Fig. 2).

Analogously, P4 explained that her drawings alluded to the problem of solitude and lack of real contact with other classmates in online courses, which she tried to display via a sad person sitting in front of a computer, contrasted with a group of happy learners enjoying a traditional in-class lesson (see Fig. 3).

The impaired social contact and classroom dynamics in the online setting, which some students found to be anxiety-generating, was also the most frequently mentioned negative association in reference to online learning in task two of Stage 1, e.g., *'the feeling of loneliness'* [P4] and *'lack of a direct contact and warmth of other students and the teacher'* [P2]. These excerpts are the opposite to the positive remarks provided in the case of in-class courses, such as '*direct contact with the teacher and other students'* [P6], *'friendly atmosphere'* [P2], and opportunity to get involved in '*pair-work and group work'* [P5]. The short explanations go hand in hand with longer confessions students made in the interviews about how the

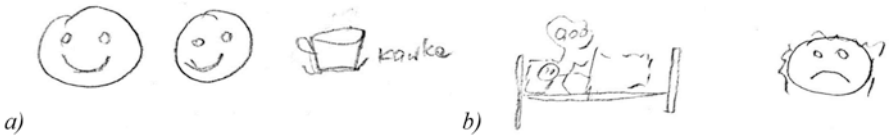

Fig. 2 Drawings of participant P3 representing her feelings accompanying learning in an in-class (**a**) and online (**b**) EFL course. Note: 'kawka' (in Polish) – coffee in a diminutive form

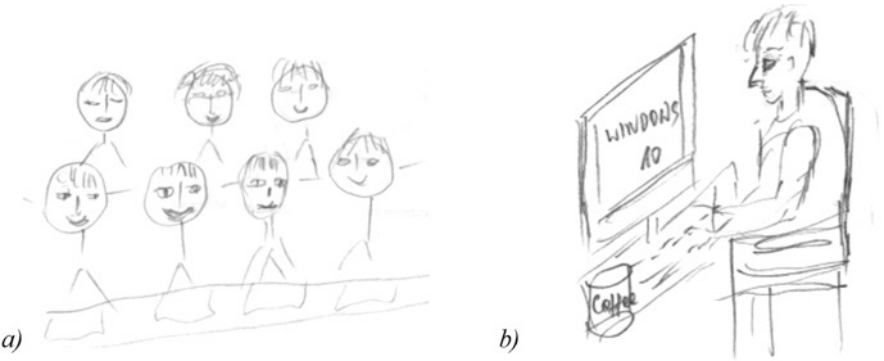

Fig. 3 Drawings of participant P4 representing her feelings accompanying learning in an in-class (**a**) and online (**b**) EFL course

atmosphere during learning affects their sense of security and psychological comfort. When referring to the classroom setting, P3 said as follows*, 'I didn't feel any negative emotions. Maybe because the group was nice and the atmosphere was simply pleasant … We liked each other, so coming to the English class was a kind of ceremonial I was always looking forward to.'*

P5 further explained that *'the feeling of apprehension appears when one is not sure if the performance is correct or not.'* A similar tendency of anxiety being related to one's feeling of confidence and self-efficacy was observed in the case of P3, who claimed *'I'm not worried about my pronunciation because I feel good at it. I think I have fewer problems with pronunciation than other senior learners thanks to the traditional old methods my teacher from the university used.*' Yet, the same participant explained that for her writing was very anxiety-generating, since she thought perfect written performance was expected from her, which she knew she could not produce.

Furthermore, four participants referred to the problem of not being able to recall vocabulary, even though they had studied for the class or revised some words a few minutes before they wanted to use them in conversations. Though the seniors blamed the age factor, the problems might also be considered a negative consequence of being anxious, which may be boosted by the awareness of the deficiency. These elements seem all to go well together, particularly when we add that the most anxiety-provoking skill according to most of the subjects of the study is speaking. Additionally, it appears that the problem of not being able to recall necessary vocabulary is related to whether or not the OAs had been given adequate time to prepare to the performance. P1 explained, *'When I am asked an on-spot question, I can't express my thoughts straight away. This makes me so nervous that I can't remember the words I need.'* Some, however, stressed that the difficulties they encounter in such moments *'lead more to irritation and anger than to anxiety'* [P3]. Answers to further questions have shown that the anxiety the students experienced in such situations was lower during the online than in-class lessons. There are a few reasons for that. As P2 put it, an easy access to other resources and plenty of time to prepare oneself before speaking, make the online classes less stressful:

> The stress is smaller; it's easier because you can prepare yourself, take notes; you can predict when you will be asked… and can support yourself with materials. Like now, I'm talking to you, but have a smartphone and books that I can use to check something I don't know. In classroom I wouldn't do that cause it would be rude.

She further added, *'Unfortunately for me, I'm quite smart and good at using these aids. I know I'm unfair with myself, but can't help checking things if only it is possible.'* Moreover, three participants stated directly that the online classes allowed them simply to withdraw, switch off their microphones and/or cameras if only they wished to. For example, P6 said, *'Here (during online classes) I don't feel such anxiety. I just don't answer questions or join in discussions, if I don't want to, if I don't know what to say or how to say something.'* On the other hand, some held the opinion that in-class courses were less stressful since they were more predictable thanks to the coursebook that was used. *'I knew what we were going to focus on next, could prepare earlier at home, or go back to aspects we had dealt with,'* said student P6, whose idea was also shared by P1 and P3.

Though the beginning of the online course was *'technologically demanding'* [P1] for some of the participants, most of them did not consider the technological aspect to be a source of their anxiety. Instead, the problems that some encountered irritated those who had fewer difficulties of technological nature. Participant P6 explained that she skipped a few classes at the beginning because '*over half of the class was wasted on explaining technical matters to some classmates and no actual learning was going on.*'

Finally, many participants referred to physiological and medical aspects in the drawings, verbal associations and interviews. Though at a first glance they may be considered causes of discomfort and distress rather than LA, they might indirectly determine anxiety accompanying FL learning of this particular age group. Among them were e.g., the embarrassing need to frequently take off and put back on a malfunctioning hearing aid in the presence of other classmates when learning in the classroom (represented in a drawing and commented on in the interview), and the fear of being infected with COVID-19 during the in-class lessons. More remarks, however, about negative health consequences were identified in the case of online learning. Examples of some of the seniors' comments are as follows *'the feeling of exhaustion while spending long hours in front of the computer; straining eyes in front of the screen'* [P2], '*serious problems with one's back and cervical spine'* [P4], feeling *'tired'* [P1].

5 Discussion

The data gathered in this study show how complex the nature of LA experienced by older adults is. Although it shares certain characteristics with the anxiety experienced by other age groups, it also seems to represent features characteristic for this particular group of learners.

When the RQ1 is concerned, although no statistical tests could be computed due to the small sample size, the levels of LA in the two learning modes can be considered low and comparable, with the in-class LA being somewhat higher. It must, however, be taken into account that the participants were not fully representative of their age group due to their IT skills and educational and professional backgrounds, which also explains why they volunteered to take part in this pilot study. Despite this limitation, the preliminary data shed some light on the nature and sources of LA experienced by the seniors in these two learning settings.

With regard to RQ2, many causes of LA could be identified, some of which are independent from the teaching mode. One of the most frequently traced internally-driven source in this data set was the fear of failure and being negatively evaluated by others. This fear was more evident in the case of those respondents who revealed lower self-perceptions and/or FL learning self-efficacy, and compared themselves to others. These outcomes show that some sources of LA, suggested as its core by Horwitz et al. (1986) in their model of the construct, occur irrespective of age. There are, however, some age-specific causes of LA. It appears that in the case of the OA participants language anxiety might have been increased by their belief that cognitive capacities debilitate with age (e.g., their explanation for problems with recalling vocabulary when speaking). Additionally, some of the learners expected too much from themselves (e.g., perfect performance in writing). These data go hand in hand with Waters' (2013), which also suggested the inhibiting role of the fear of not being able to succeed, worry about performing at a lower level than classmates, and being limited by cognitive dysfunctions caused by age. The internal causes stress the importance of raising older adults' FL self-efficacy and confidence by praising them and showing their systematic progress, and making it clear to them that perfect performance should neither be their expectation nor goal. At the same time, it is vital to search for techniques and prepare aids (e.g., a short list of most important vocabulary needed when speaking on a particular topic) that could reduce the strain and apprehension caused by age-related working memory deficits.

It appears that these internal sources of LA can be levelled or intensified by external factors, such as the advantages and limitations of particular learning contexts. On the one hand, the participants felt less anxious when studying in the online mode, since whenever they wanted they could pretend that technological problems did not allow them to take over in conversations. Interestingly, such a benefit of online classes was also mentioned in the study of Czura and Baran-Łucarz (2021) conducted among young adults. Similarly, to this age group, the OA participants of this research explained that such an escape is not possible in the case of traditional classes, where questions are sometimes asked on the spot, and where hiding is not possible and losing face more probable. On the other hand, the seniors stressed how important it was for them to be well-prepared for their performance, which a coursebook could help them with. These remarks show clearly that OAs will not feel comfortable unless they have adequate time for and support with preparation. Again, such a claim corroborates Waters' (2013) remarks about the too fast pace of a lesson being an anxiety-generating factor in the case of older adult FL learners. Several rules can be followed by teachers to lower LA of seniors caused by this particular

factor. Providing them with clear materials adjusted to their needs, designing well-planned pre-speaking tasks, where the new language is revised, giving a chance to prepare at home or rehearse the performance in pairs or small groups, are just some of the suggestions. The need to prepare to perform in L2, stressed by many subjects, leads us to the answer to RQ3 about the most anxiety-generating skill. As confessed by most of the participants, it was speaking, with the exception of one learner who felt more anxious when writing, a skill mentioned also by younger age groups in prior studies (Teimouri et al., 2019).

Moreover, the collected data suggest that the fear of negative evaluation, referred to by most of the study participants, is determined by the classroom atmosphere, which in turn, is dependent upon the rapport between the teacher and students, and the relationships among the learners. This observation again supports Waters' (2013) data, which showed that a positive classroom atmosphere can enhance FL learning. Although some participants claimed that the physical presence of others in the classroom setting made them more anxious, several subjects acknowledged that in the earlier online classes they had taken part in the atmosphere was not pleasant since the students and teachers did not get to know each other well. However, as one of the OAs explained, the atmosphere in the online mode can be made pleasant and help reduce the stress, e.g., by having the cameras switched on. The positive atmosphere built thanks to good relationships could be also expected to reduce the stress of OAs caused by their physical deficiencies related to aging. Finally, data gathered by all our instruments – pictures, adjectives, interviews – evidently show that OAs are more prone to experience LA and even depression [as found also among younger students (Fawaz & Samaha, 2020)] in online settings if relationships among the course participants are not taken care of, due to their exceptionally strong need to build social bonds with others.

6 Conclusions

The results of the study suggest that the determinants of LA experienced by older adults form a dynamic and highly complex network. Many are internal, such as the fear of failure and negative evaluation, too high self-expectations and negative self-perceptions. These can be intensified or levelled by external factors, which, in turn, were found to be characteristic for specific modes of learning. For example, the gathered data suggest that anxiety accompanying speaking, the most anxiety-generating skill for these participants, might be boosted by the lack of opportunity to hide or pass when expected to provide an on the spot answer, fewer chances to prepare for performance, or physical and cognitive age-related difficulties and limitations, which were more common in the in-class setting. On the other hand, the apprehension was found to be provoked by the feeling of insecurity caused by difficulties with getting to know fellow students, lack of trust towards one another, and feeling of solitude, which the subjects complained about more in the online mode. Thus, LA is recommended to be dealt with in a two-fold manner. First of all,

irrespective of the mode, it is crucial to raise older adults' L2 learning self-efficacy and self-confidence. Secondly, specific approaches and techniques need to be introduced to cater for the difficulties generated by particular modes of teaching/learning (e.g., encouraging all the students to have their cameras switched on during online lessons), so as to, first and foremost, foster good classroom atmosphere and the feeling of security.

Although the data reported in this chapter shed some light on the LA experienced by OAs when learning in the two modes, they need to be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. In the proper research, a number of modifications are planned to be introduced. First, a more numerous group of OAs who are not biased by high IT skills will be addressed, so as to be a good representation of the cohort. Second, the instructions might be followed by examples and more specific questions to avoid misunderstandings and elicit more relevant data. What needs to be addressed are further matters related to LA, such as the approach to errors or testing in the two modes. Next, the subjects should not be interviewed by their teacher to avoid the halo effect. Finally, to further triangulate the data, it is recommended to introduce an objective observer to the online and in-class lessons. The last two suggestions might, however, be challenging, as older adults find it difficult to trust and cooperate with people they do not know well (Słowik-Krogulec, 2019).

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Digital Language Learning Strategies Subject to Change or Not – Post Pandemic Reflections

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Abstract The strategic approach to language learning has gained recognition among both language teachers and learners since the early nineties. However, the use of such strategies in technology-enhanced environment has remained marginal, focusing interest of a small group of CALL (TELL, MALL) pioneers. The sudden outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic with its restrictions enhanced the need of learning languages in the digital environments. The change had a big impact on the teachers, who needed to learn quickly how to work online. However, it is interesting whether the change influenced the ways students learn. Reflection on the experience is necessary to incorporate it into development of the domain. In the text, the current digital strategy use among students is compared with the results of the previous study. Both datasets were collected with the use of similar questionnaires – three more answers were only added to let the respondents indicate the change in their use of digital strategies during the pandemic. The results show that the strategies remained the same as before the pandemic. Thus, the intensive use of digital tools may not have a substantial impact on students' learning habits.

Keywords Language learning strategies · CALL – computer assisted language learning · COVID-19 · Language learners' attitudes · Factor analysis

1 Introduction

Language learning strategies and strategies learner training have been discussed for nearly 50 years (Rubin, 1975). Extensive research confirms the importance of the topic. What is more, many studies (Chapelle, 2000; Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017; Pujolá, 2002; Ulitsky, 2000) examine the role of strategies in learning foreign

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languages in digital environments. In the pandemic, learning took place outside of the class, even if it was partially supported by the teacher. Thus, it was more individualised. This chapter presents an overview of the key concepts and taxonomies related to strategies in the non-digital and digital environments. Various digital tools have learning strategies embedded in their functionalities available for learners (Ulitsky, 2000), who also have access to multilingual resources. Thus, students may creatively invent and shape the digital learning strategies for effective language learning (Yoon & Jo, 2014). In such an environment learner awareness of language learning strategies as part of their autonomy and responsibility for learning becomes crucial. This chapter is to present the comparison of digital learning strategy use by university students based on the data collected in 2013 and 2021 and the students' opinions on the change in the strategy use in the pandemic period.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Origin of Language Learning Strategies Studies

Language learning strategies (LLS) have been discussed since Joan Rubin noticed in 1975 actions and behaviours which good learners perform to achieve a success in learning. Then Stern (1975), Naiman et al. (1996/1978), characterized the good learner's activities in more detail. Later the interest in language learning strategies grew (Bialystok, 1978; Michońska-Stadnik, 1996; O'Malley et al., 1985; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1990a, b; Rubin, 1987; Wenden', 1986). The taxonomies have become more and more extended.

In the most widely known taxonomy (Oxford, 1990b) strategies are divided into Direct strategies and Indirect Strategies. Direct strategies cover Memory strategies, Cognitive strategies and Compensation strategies. While Indirect strategies cover Metacognitive strategies, Affective strategies and Social strategies.

Researchers emphasised the role of strategy training in the context of individual learners variables (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Then the interest in strategies decreased slightly. However, some new insights were introduced in the extended S^2R Model which involves the role of learners' culture (Oxford, 2011). Finally, Griffiths (2013) concludes "Language learning strategies are activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning" (p. 15).

2.2 Language Learning Strategies in Digital Environment – Overview

Although LLS have become a core in teacher training courses, their use in a digital environment is not so well-known. Joan Rubin (1988, 1996) was an author of a popular digital video disk for language learning. This technology got outdated soon,

and the strategic approach it had introduced was abandoned. Although many researchers (Ellis, 1994; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Wenden, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1993; Shorrocks, 1991) emphasized the need for the use of strategies out-of-class, the language teachers in the eighties and nineties of the previous century rarely recognized digital environment as a place where strategies could be utilized. But research on LLS in CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) has continued (Chapelle, 2000; Chapelle & Mizuno, 1989; Hagen, 1994; Harris, 2003; Hauck & Hampel, 2008; Huang et al., 2009; Li, 2009; Pujolá, 2002; Ulitsky, 2000). Recent approaches discuss the role of strategies embedded in the digital tools (Ulitsky, 2000), strategic creativity of learners (Yoon & Jo, 2014) as well as the influence of context on learners' behaviour (Huang & Sheng Yi, 2016). The application of strategies in using online dictionaries and corpus based learning is widely investigated (Charles, 2007; Gaskell & Cobb, 2004; Gilmore, 2009; Kennedy & Miceli, 2001; Lee & Chen, 2009; Lee & Swales, 2006; O'Sullivan & Chambers, 2006; Sun, 2007; Yoon, 2008; Yoon & Hirvela, 2004). Also the selection of digital tools available for the learners in the light of their strategic use has been discussed. Learners have access to the internet in their computers or phones in various places, not always at home, but for example in the library or cafés (Bekleyen & Yilmaz, 2012; Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017). This confirms Kukulska-Hulme (2009) statement that access to the internet has a decisive impact on their learning strategies.

2.3 Strategies as Means to Develop Autonomy and Responsibility for Learning

The use of LLS and strategy training are very often associated with individualised learning, learner autonomy and responsibility for own learning as strategies refer to personal behaviour and actions. Strategies are to regulate own learning processes (Griffiths, 2013, p. 15). While monitoring their own language production learners notice the mistakes (Rubin, 1981) or refer to their own previous knowledge (Oxford, 1990b). Affective strategies require observation of their own bodily reactions to stress. Autonomy, by definition, refers to the control of one's own learning (Holec, 1981, p. 3), which leads to responsibility for own learning and progress (Benson & Voller, 1997). Students organise their learning independently when they use technology (Sharma & Barret, 2007, p. 11). Some methodology solutions suggested for learning with technology, such as webquests, allow for autonomy and the learner's own initiative in learning (Smith & Baber, 2005). In many studies learners are encouraged to use various digital tools: the internet, dictionaries, editing software to improve their own texts (Marlyna & Noor Saazai, 2016). In the TESOL Technology Standards (Healey et al., 2011) Standard 5 within the Goal 3 strictly refers to own thinking, cooperation and to the use of technology to achieve own linguistic and communicative aims. In the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) the reference to own actions is evident (Oxford, 1990b).

2.4 Research Instruments for Strategic Learning

Language learning strategies have been mainly investigated via the questionnaires (Cohen et al., 1998; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Oxford, 1990b; 1996; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000). The tool used most often is SILL (Oxford, 1990a). Data from this inventory have also been used to study correlations between strategies and other variables such as learning styles, language proficiency, cultural factors and type of tasks (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Bruen, 2001; Green & Oxford, 1995; Nyikos & Oxford, 1993; Oxford et al., 2004; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000). Adapted SILL was used in the study referred to below (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017).

2.5 Studies on Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 Pandemic

Although there are numerous reports of studies on language learning undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are diverse in terms of understanding the term LLS, theoretical background applied, methodology, cultural contexts and localisation. For example, the analysis of 11 (out of 105 considered) studies on language learning strategies applied in Middle East and Saudi Arabia universities published from 2019 to 2021 in renown journals is focused on the use of zoom and its functionalities, collaborative learning, flipped classroom without any reference to Oxford's taxonomy (Khreisat, 2022). Another study, done among 50 students in Peru shows that strategy training based on Oxford's taxonomy improves students' learning as it has been demonstrated in many studies mentioned above (Fernandez-Malapartida, 2021). This may suggest that the impact on online educational environment is not as essential as it could be expected.

3 Aims of the Study

The aim of the current research is (1) to examine a change, if any, in the use of digital language learning strategies (DLLS) due to the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) to compare the recent results with the results collected in 2013 and published earlier (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017). The first hypothesis is that the developments in technology have changed the distribution of digital strategies among university students over the eight years between the previous and current studies. The second hypothesis is that the remote learning and lockdowns experienced during the pandemic increased the use of (DLLS) among students.

The research questions are the following: (1) What DLLS do university students bring from secondary education? (2) Have DLLS changed over the 8 years? (3) What is the COVID-19 lockdown impact on DLLS used by students?

4 Methodology

As a research tool a large part of the same questionnaire is applied in the present study and the study conducted in 2013 (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017). In the recent study three options (e–g) were added to each question. For example, the question with four options (a–d) was used in the previous study:

I use the internet to learn grammar.

a) *often.*
b) *sometimes.*
c) *rarely.*
d) *never.*

In the recent version the following options were added:

e) *more often than before the pandemic.*
f) *less often than before the pandemic.*
g) *without any change due to the pandemic.*

In the previous study the respondents ticked one option out of four (a-d). In the recent study students were asked to tick two answers: one from the first section (a-d) and one from the second section (e–g).

In the pre-pandemic time, for the purpose of the research presented in Gajek and Michońska-Stadnik (2017) two questionnaires were used. One was based on SILL. The other, based on the TESOL Technology Standards (Healey et al., 2011), was applied to identify what DLLS learners use when they learn a foreign language out-off-class in the digital environment. The essential statements applied in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2, column A. Some final questions about the role of a language teacher in the process of enhancing strategic use of digital tools were added in the first study. Two hundred and three answers collected among secondary school learners and 37 answers collected among university students were taken for analysis in Gajek, Michońska-Stadnik (2017, pp. 67–103). Whereas, 22 students responded to the questionnaire in the second study. The questions about the role of the teachers were removed to focus the respondents' attention on their own practice, which allows the comparison of the two periods – pandemic and pre-pandemic one in terms of the use of DLLS.

4.1 Data Analysis of the Results – Factor Analysis

To answer the first research question and to provide a clear background to the current study it is worth presenting a specific analysis of the data collected in the first study. Factor analysis (FA) allows to extract components that contribute to general overview of the use of strategies. It demonstrates the complexity of internal processes which encourage learners to undertake actions that lead to effective learning. It demonstrates interrelations among the strategies used by learners. Although statistical analysis is based on quantitative data, the results reflect the distribution of

Table 1 Components extracted among digital learning strategies from the data collected among secondary school learners

Component	Eigenvalue
Using the internet for learning grammar	.822
Using the internet for learning pronunciation	.791
Using the internet for learning vocabulary	.773
Using the internet to improve writing	.691
Using the internet to improve speaking	.79
Listening to recordings on the internet	.524
First language teacher uses digital materials	.19
Second language teacher uses ICT	.58
First language teacher encourages the use of digital materials	.89
Second language teacher encourages the use of digital materials	.39

individual choices, which could be shaped by teachers and trainers. The FA based on the data collected among secondary school learners presented earlier (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017) is calculated (Gajek, 2018). For digital learning strategies 10 components extracted by FA (with Kaiser Meyer Olkin .861) are presented in Table 1. The core strategies reflect the practical approach to learning language elements and skills and the response to the teachers' actions. This illustrates what kind of strategic preparation the university students might get from their experience at secondary school level.

The FA shows that learning language systems: grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, followed by writing and listening, prevail speaking. All in all, the analysis supports the following claims: (1) the learners used the Internet mainly for learning grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary; (2) they tried to improve writing, and listening skills while using the Internet resources; (3) Although the eigenvalues related to the role of the teachers as strategy trainers, it was still crucial for the development of individual approach to language learning and actions taken by students. The results illustrate the language learning strategies learners elaborate at secondary level.

4.2 The Use of Digital Strategies in the Perception of the Learners

The data in Table 2 show two things. In columns B-E the percentage of the respondents who used the strategies is presented in simple font. This illustrates the frequency of the use of DLLS. The numbers in italics show the data collected in 2013 (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017, pp. 92–96). Columns F-H show the percentage of the respondents who noticed the increase, the decrease or no change in the frequency of the use of the strategies in the pandemic time.

Table 2 Frequency of the use of selected strategies and comparison of the actions before and during the pandemic

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Strategy	Often (in %)	Sometimes (in %)	Rarely (in %)	Never (in %)	More often (in %)		Without any change (in %)
1	I use internet bilingual dictionaries e.g. EN-PL, DE-PL	90.9 *(86.8)*	4.5 *(7.9)*	4.5 *(5.3)*			4.5	86.4
2	I use internet bilingual dictionaries e.g. EN-DE, EN-FR	50.0 *(52.6)*	40.9 *(36.4)*	4.5 *(7.9)*	0.0 *(2.6)*	9.1		81.8
3	I use monolingual internet dictionaries EN-EN. DE-DE	63.6 *(68.4)*	31.8 *(31.6)*	9.1 *(0.0)*		18.2		72.7
4	I use machine translators, e.g. translate.Google, DeepL	27.3 *(2.6)*	50.0 *(18.4)*	22.7 *(63.2)*	0.0 *(15.8)*	18.2		68.2
5	I use speech-to-text systems		9.1 *(5.3)*	22.7 *(21.1)*	72.7 *(73.7)*			72.7
6	I use graphic search engines to find the meaning of words	18.2 *(34.2)*	40.9 *(36.8)*	31.8 *(21.1)*	9.1 *(7.9)*	13.6		68.2
7	I use spell-checkers	31.8 *(21.1)*	45.5 *(18.2)*	18.2 *(23.7)*	4.5 *(36.8)*	31.8	4.5	54.5
8	I use the internet for learning vocabulary	81.8 *(57.9)*	18.2 *(21.1)*	0.0 *(15.9)*	0.0 *(5.3)*	27.3		63.6
9	I use the internet for learning grammar	36.4 *(31.6)*	54.5 *(42.1)*	4.5 *(21.1)*	4.5 *(5.3)*	27.3		63.6
10	I use the internet for learning pronunciation	54.5 *(50.0)*	40.9 *(29.0)*	4.5 *(18.4)*	0.0 *(2.6)*	45.5		45.5
11	I read texts on the internet	63.6 *(79.0)*	36.4 *(15.9)*	0.0 *(5.3)*		22.7		68.2
12	I listen to recordings on the internet	54.5 *(60.5)*	36.4 *(31.6)*	4.5 *(7.9)*	4.5 *(0.0)*	13.6		77.3
13	I use the internet to improve writing	9.1 *(5.3)*	36.4 *(29.0)*	31.8 *(36.8)*	22.7 *(29.0)*	18.2		68.2
14	I use the internet to improve speaking	13.6 *(13.2)*	31.8 *(39.5)*	40.9 *(13.2)*	13.6 *(34.2)*	18.2	4.5	54.5
15	I initiate written communication in a foreign language	27.3 *(34.2)*	45.5 *(26.3)*	22.7 *(29.0)*	4.5 *(10.5)*	18.2		72.7
16	I initiate spoken communication in a foreign language	4.5 *(10.5)*	22.7 *(5.3)*	50.0 *(44.7)*	22.7 *(34.5)*	13.6		68.2
17	I use Wikipedia for learning languages	9.1 *(47.4)*	36.4 *(31.6)*	27.3 *(18.4)*	27.3 *(2.6)*	9.1		77.3

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Strategy	Often (in %)	Sometimes (in %)	Rarely (in %)	Never (in %)	More often (in %)		Without any change (in %)
18	I watch films with original sound track	68.2 *(79.0)*	27.3 *(15.8)*	4.5 *(2.6)*	0.0 *(2.6)*	13.6		72.7
19	I watch films with polish subtitles	9.1 *(34.2)*	36.4 *(52.6)*	45.5 *(13.2)*	9.1 *(0.0)*	4.5		81.8
20	I watch films with voice over in polish	9.1 *(7.9)*	18.2 *(26.3)*	63.6 *(52.6)*	13.6 *(13.2)*		13.6	72.7
21	I search for lyrics of my favourite songs	72.7 *(73.7)*	13.6 *(15.8)*	13.6 *(10.5)*		9.1		77.3
22	I translate fragments of films to merge interests and language learning	9.1 *(15.8)*	27.3 *(29.0)*	45.5 *(34.2)*	18.2 *(21.1)*	13.6		72.7
23	I translate texts of my favourite songs	22.7 *(26.3)*	31.8 *(29.0)*	31.8 *(31.6)*	13.6 *(13.2)*	9.1		77.3
24	I participate in spoken communication on the internet	9.1 *(13.2)*	36.4 *(5.3)*	45.5 *(42.1)*	9.1 *(39.5)*	40.9		50.0
25	I send messages (mails, sms, social media) in a foreign language	40.9 *(39.5)*	45.5 *(44.7)*	9.1 *(15.8)*	4.5 *(0.0)*	40.9		45.5
26	I check spelling before sending a message in a foreign language	77.3 *(73.7)*	13.6 *(15.8)*	9.1 *(10.5)*	4.5 *(0.0)*	13.6		72.7
27	I use smileys and abbreviations in messages in a foreign language	59.1 *(57.9)*	27.3 *(34.2)*	9.1 *(7.9)*	4.5 *(0.0)*	13.6		72.7

Table 3 shows the comparison of the students' approach to the incidental language learning when they make use of websites in a foreign language. As above, the numbers in simple font represent the currently collected data and the numbers in italics show the data collected in 2013 (Gajek & Michońska-Stadnik, 2017, pp. 92–96).

Table 4 shows the students' willingness to learn foreign languages during the pandemic, when the Internet became the main source of learning materials in 2020.

Four respondents shared their opinions in the open questions. Students emphasised the possibility of mixing languages for learning that is: searching audio visual materials in English for learning Italian or materials in Spanish for learning German. This extends the use of strategies in the multilingual online learning environment. Another student emphasised the possibility of talking with native speakers of the languages he or she learns. They also indicated the importance of listening to the foreign language in the background while doing other things at home. These findings illustrate the students' creativity and initiative taken in the area of strategic use of available online resources.

Table 3 Language learning strategies in the use of websites and comparison of the actions before and during the pandemic

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J
	I do not think about language learning while having fun	I repeat words used in the site	I memorize characteristic phrases	I search unknown words in a dictionary	I imitate the way of speaking it is a spoken text	More often	Less often	Without change
While using a website in a foreign language for fun I mind the language	27.3 *(15.8)*	9.1 *(29.0)*	45.5 *(71.1)*	45.5 *(52.6)*	18.2 *(34.2)*	13.6		86.4

Table 4 Learning languages during the pandemic

	I started learning a new language (in %)	I intensively learnt the languages I know (in %)	I spent less time on learning languages than before the pandemic (in %)
During the pandemic	50.0	59.1	13.6

4.3 Analysis of the Use of Digital Learning Strategies

Comparison of the Frequency of the Use of the Digital Strategies over the Years

As the numbers in italics represent the frequency of the use of the strategies by the students in 2013, we can observe some change in the use of DLLS over the years. The use of the Internet dictionaries has not changed much. They are used as often by the students as they were used 8 years ago (Table 2, rows 1–3, columns B-D). A big change is observed in the use of machine translators. Over 70% of the respondents use them often or sometimes now, but 78% of the respondents did not use them at all or used them rarely 8 years ago (Table 2, row 4, columns B-D). Speech-to-text systems have not changed their position as they were not used by the students now and in the past (Table 2, row 5, columns B-D). The use of graphic search engines has decreased slightly over the years (Table 2, row 6, columns B-D). However, the use of spell-checkers has increased much (Table 2, row 7, columns B-D). The use of the Internet for learning language systems, that is vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation has increased over the years (Table 2, rows 8–10, columns B-D). The strategies related to reading and listening have remained generally

at the same level with a slight decrease in frequency of reading (Table 2, rows 11–12, columns B-D). More people try to improve their writing with the use of the Internet materials (Table 2, row 13, columns B-D). They rarely use the Internet to improve speaking (Table 2, row 14, columns B-D). Students initiate written and spoken communication more often than it was observed eight years ago. But their reluctance to initiating spoken communication has remained the same (Table 2, row 15–16, columns B-D). Wikipedia is not used as a resource for language learning – this has been a big change over the years (Table 2, row 17, columns B-D). Watching films with the original soundtracks has remained the same (Table 2, row 18, columns B-D). However, there are big changes in the use of strategies related to watching films with Polish subtitles and voice over on the Internet, which have decreased (Table 2, rows 19–20, columns B-D). The strategies related to searching lyrics of the students' favourite songs and translating songs have remained the same (Table 2, rows 21, 23, columns B-D). However, translating fragments of films has slightly decreased (Table 2, row 22, columns B-D). Sending messages and using smileys and abbreviations have remained more or less at the same level (Table 2, row 25, 27, columns B-D). Also sending messages in a foreign language and participation in spoken communication increased during the pandemic, but the former reached the level observed 8 years ago (Table 2, row 26, columns B-D). The frequency of active language learning while using websites for fun has substantially decreased over the years (Table 3, columns B-F). Taking into consideration the huge developments in technology it is surprising that the frequency of the use of strategies has remained relatively steady for 8 years.

The results demonstrate that the hypothesis of noticeable change over the years is true only in the case of some strategies. Namely, the increased use of machine translators and spell checkers, the decreased use of Wikipedia for language learning, the decreased use of subtitles and voiceover while watching films, the decreased attention to language learning while being exposed to foreign language materials contacted for fun.

Comparison of the Use of the Digital Strategies in the Pandemic

In Table 2, in columns F, G and H the data about the changes observed by the students are presented. Most of them did not notice any changes in the use of the majority of DLLS during the pandemic, in comparison to their use before. The biggest change is indicated for learning pronunciation 45.5% (Table 2, row 10, column F). The change noticed by the students 40.9% refers to participation in spoken communication and sending messages in a foreign language. The next group of strategies, which are perceived as used more often during the pandemic at the level of 27.3% each, are: the use of Internet materials for learning vocabulary and grammar. These are followed by using the Internet for improving writing and speaking, using machine translators and monolingual dictionaries and initiating written communication at the level of 18.2%. The strategies indicated by the students as increased are

the same as the 5 top components identified in the Factor Analysis done on the data collected 8 years ago, except for reading, which is not present in FA and listening, which is not indicated in the current study. This can be interpreted in the following ways: (1) either both cohorts of learners were able to develop their language learning strategies by themselves, or (2) taking into consideration the role of the teachers indicated in FA, they were equipped with the strategies by their teachers at secondary school level. This may mean that the evolutionary change in the use of the strategies by students is relatively small.

The results (Tables 2 and 3) show that the pandemic practice slightly increased the frequency of the use of strategies during the COVID-19 period in comparison to their use before. However, the majority of the respondents did not change their habits during the intensive use of computers for studying. This means that the impact of the pandemic has not been as strong as it might be expected even in the case of revolutionary change of the learning environment. This makes the second hypothesis false with some exceptions only. The numbers do not sum up to 100 because some students did not tick the answers e-g and the percentages are calculated for the entire group of the respondents.

During the pandemic, half of the students started learning a new language and half of them intensively learned the languages they knew (Table 4). In the open question only one student mentioned that she wanted to learn new languages intensively, but the pandemic circumstances influenced her learning negatively. Thus, she did not achieve the expected results.

5 Indication for the Future

It is worth mentioning that innovative approaches to the use of digital tools should not be limited to the communication platforms such as Zoom, MsTeams, WebEx, etc., as they were intensively used during the pandemic. The strategy training needs to involve preparations to the future use of bots and robots, virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence applied to all pedagogical stages of: (1) learning and teaching, such as introducing the language and noticing the language; (2) practicing language use in context and in communication; (3) monitoring correctness and progress as well as assessment. Thus, the learning strategies need to be adapted in a balanced way: keeping the human factors that support language learning and the qualities of the new environments. It should also start early in language education as at the university level the use of strategies by students remains similar to their use in secondary school. Such strong factors as the developments of educational technology and its intensive use during the pandemic has not affected the distribution of the use of DLLS among students, who are future translators and language teachers.

6 Conclusions

The analysis shows that the use of the majority of DLLS remains the same or it is only slightly subject to change in response to the broadened learning environment. However, the change is not as intensive as it could be expected. It is worth mentioning that the participants of the current study experienced the beginning of the pandemic as school learners, not university students, which may force them to stick to the strategies they acquired at secondary school. The findings show that either (1) the profile of the learners as future translators and language teachers determine their use of DLLS as the frequency of the use of strategies has not changed substantially over the years or during the pandemic as they all came to the university with habits how to use language learning strategies, or (2) their use of strategies is: (2a) formed by their teachers at secondary school level or (2b) developed by themselves. The emphasis on the role of the teachers is supported by the findings from the previous study which stressed the role of the teachers in the strategic training at secondary school level as the FA indicated. The set of components of FA is replicated in the list of strategies perceived as used more often during the pandemic. Thus, the similarities in the results between the two studies and the reference to FA may come from the same training students get at secondary school level. So, there is a need for strategy training offered to learners at lower levels of education. There are more and more digital resources for language learning available on the Internet so learners who are aware of a variety of strategies can be, potentially, more creative in adopting the strategies they know and even in creating their own strategies for making their learning more individualised and effective.

To sum up, the post-pandemic reflection enhanced by the comparison of the two sets of data collected in the last 8 years shows that strategies that digital language learning acquired at lower levels of education remain steady (with some exceptions only), despite the evolutionary or revolutionary changes in the learning environment.

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Lights and Shadows of Studying Online: University Students' Perspective

Liliana Piasecka

Abstract The outburst and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced every aspect of contemporary life. Since March 2020, education has moved to the online mode. Practically overnight the teaching and learning activities shifted from the physical to virtual spaces, which brought about both positive and negative opinions about this form of education. The chapter discusses advantages and disadvantages of distance teaching from the university students' perspective. Eighteen MA students attending a teacher training programme, majoring in English Philology, participated in the study. Their opinions were gathered by means of an online questionnaire that was administered twice: the first time at the end of the first semester of online teaching, the second time at the end of the second semester of online teaching. The collected data were both quantitative (statements on the Likert scale) and qualitative (answers to open-ended questions). The students' views show a complexity and dynamics of the situation incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. They realise that online teaching has many advantages, for example saving time and money, having time for reflection about the activities they are engaged in, or time management. Yet, they also perceive the disadvantages of the situation which are related mostly to work overload, lack of face-to-face meetings and physical discomfort, for example eye-pain and poor physical condition.

Keywords COVID-19 pandemic · Higher education · Distance learning · Online studying · Students' opinions

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1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched every sphere of human existence, changing the familiar face-to-face modes of activity into not-so-familiar distance ways of work and communication that have been made possible by the developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The new situation required a new approach as the imminent threat that the pandemic has carried resulted in limiting contacts among people, in strict sanitary regulations, in lockdown, and eventually in turning to the use of ICT wherever possible. The entire world was in the state of emergency. In spring 2020 remote education worldwide became a reality which caused multiple problems and challenges. The most difficult was the fact that there was no choice – only online mode of delivery was possible. In addition, teachers were not prepared to switch to online teaching practically overnight. Neither were the learners. This obviously caused a lot of confusion, stress and despair.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss university students' opinions about online studying when they were in their MA programme. The students are skilled in the use of ICT but mainly for personal purposes, as many of them are regular users of social media sites, information resources and other affordances made possible by the Internet. Yet, their experience with online learning and teaching is fairly limited. Therefore, it seems justified to probe into their views and opinions concerning this form of education.

The chapter opens with the discussion of distance education, its definition and typology, followed by digital competences that are necessary to deal with ICT in various spheres of life. Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on education are also briefly discussed along with a short overview of extant empirical research. Then the study on the university students' opinions about online learning is reported.

2 Distance Education (DE)

At the end of the twentieth century DE was defined as

> covering the various forms of study at all levels which are not under a continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and teaching of a supporting organization (Holmberg, 1994, p. 3).

The above definition highlights the students' independence from teachers (tutors) as well as the physical distance between the participants of the educational process. In addition, DE has always been supported by the use of technology which makes communication between physically and temporally distant learners, teachers and institutions possible (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

The spread of DE worldwide provides educational opportunities to those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot participate in regular classroom teaching. DE has always been dependent on technological affordances and its earliest forms were

based on postal services that were becoming more and more efficient. DE is almost 300 years old. In 1728, correspondence teaching was advertised in the *Boston Gazette* while in the 1840s, Sir Isaac Pitman initiated a system of shorthand by mailing texts transcribed into shorthand on postcards and obtaining transcriptions from his students in return (Holmberg, 2005). The so-called correspondence courses were immensely popular although distance learning was not much recognised and treated as a sub-form of education (Tait, 1996). Only when the British Open University was founded in 1969 had the barriers of academic learning been broken. As Weinbren (2014) observes, its ethos was to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. It has gained a considerable popularity and educated a large number of students (Prasanth, 2003).

The development of DE has been analysed within the so-called generational framework, first proposed by Nipper (1989). He distinguished three generations of DE that depend on the mediating technology and are labelled correspondence, broadcast and computer. The first generation (correspondence) of DE was based on print and postal services. Its overarching aim was "to offer educational opportunities to those without easy access to education institutions" (Anderson & Simpson, 2012, p. 3), such as, for example, women and working class representatives. The second generation of DE is marked by the use of radio and television broadcasting that greatly expanded the possibilities for transferring knowledge at a distance (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). This was followed by the third generation that made use of interactive technologies to enable conferencing, both synchronous and asynchronous. The development of digital telecommunications, computer technology, satellite TV and multimedia technology has had an increasing impact on learning and teaching practices.

In contrast to Nipper, Taylor (2001) proposed another approach to the development of DE. Thus, the third generation is based on telelearning that involves audio and video conferencing while the fourth generation exploits online learning that accounts for flexibility. The fifth generation uses "additional aspects of 'intelligent' digital technologies" (Anderson & Simpson, 2012, p. 2). Regardless of the classification framework, the first two generations of DE are followed by computer-mediated education that undergoes changes along with the new developments and affordances of ICT.

DE has also an interesting and long history in Poland. In 1776 the Jagiellonian University offered vocational courses for artisans. Since 1882 the Flying University in Warsaw, acting illegally, offered self-study courses for women. Maria Skłodowska was among its graduates. In 1906 it was legalised and transformed into the Association of Higher Academic Courses. After Poland regained independence, in 1920 it was renamed and called Free Polish University (*Wolna Wszechnica Polska*). At the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, other institutions dealing with distance education appeared, for example, the Association of Academic Courses for Women, Universal University Lectures and the Association of Higher Scientific Courses. Then, in the 1960s, educational television called "School programmes" was launched and the lectures it offered were conducted by scientists from large academic centres. Between 1966 and 1971, Television University

(*Politechnika Telewizyjna*) broadcasted preparatory courses for candidates who wanted to enter higher education institutions as well as supplementary materials for students (Goltz-Wasiucionek, 2011).

To sum up, DE has a long history and is a worldwide phenomenon. It provides educational possibilities to people who otherwise would be excluded from (further) education due to inhabiting underpopulated areas (e.g. Australia), insufficient material resources, dropping out of the formal educational system, disabilities, personal reasons, and many others. It is available anytime and anywhere. Moreover, it supports one of the major needs of the twenty-first century, namely lifelong learning which is indispensable in the times of great economic, social and cultural changes. The changes mean new situations in life as well as in a workplace and to cope with them, education is necessary for all. It is not limited to young age only – it spans across lifetime and is a key to the twenty-first century (Delors, 1998).

Technically, DE currently has at its disposal numerous resources that make access to knowledge easy and cheap. Students can interact with other students as well as with teachers/tutors without any problems. Learning and teaching resources, tasks and activities can be placed on educational platforms, discussed by teams, on fora, or individually. Everybody can learn at their own pace that is consistent with their own goals and individual characteristics, anytime and anywhere. Most DE takes place through the Internet, and uses social media and web 2.0 services to learn in groups and individually, using desktop and mobile devices (Brolpito, 2018). However, to fully exploit technological affordances of the digital age in DE, it is necessary to have appropriate digital competences.

3 Digital Competences

Digital competences are defined as a "set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, strategies and awareness that is needed when using ICT and digital media" (Ferrari, 2012, p. 84). They are also known as digital literacy or e-competences and have been the focus of interest of international organisations such as UNESCO, European Union, or OECD and resulted in compiling lists and descriptions of these competences. The ones identified by OECD (2005) are aimed at living a successful life in a well-functioning society and are divided into three categories. The first one includes interactive use of language, texts, symbols, knowledge and technology. The second refers to interacting in heterogenous groups which refers to maintaining good relations with others, cooperation, team work as well as the ability to solve conflicts. The third category is related to acting autonomously which is based on people's awareness of their environment, of social dynamics, the roles they play and wish to play which require their individual decisions, choices and actions. In this framework technology is but one of numerous competences for the present world.

The frameworks proposed by UNESCO (2018) and European Union are more focused on competences for digital literacy. Thus, according to UNESCO (2018), the following competences are necessary:

- operating devices and software: physical operation of devices, functions and features of hardware and software;
- information and data literacy, including locating, retrieval, storage, management, and organisation of data and information;
- communication and collaboration that involves interaction through digital technologies, participation in social life, engagement in citizenship actions, co-construction and co-creation of knowledge through collaboration;
- digital content creation, including self-expression through digital means, modification and improvement of information to create new content;
- safety manifested in protecting physical and mental health, privacy and well-being, as well as being aware of cyber dangers;
- problem-solving;
- career-related competences that include the use of digital tools for a particular field of activity.

The framework presented by European Commission (2007) is less extensive and includes five groups of competences that overlap with the ones discussed above, that is information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem solving. The frameworks briefly discussed above refer to smooth functioning of all the citizens of increasingly more and more digital reality. However, in the DE context, online students need more specific digital competences. Da Silva and Behar (2020) took the challenge and proposed a model of digital competences for online students in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, based on theoretical considerations and empirical data.

The model covers six areas, that is "introduction of digital technologies, digital communication, network information management, digital health and security, attendance and digital citizenship, and creation and development of digital content" (Da Silva & Behar, 2020, p. 11). For each area there are three levels of digital competences (functional digital literacy, critical digital literacy, and digital fluency) broken into 14 specific competences that are based on knowledge, skills and attitudes. In addition, three levels of proficiency (initial, intermediate and advanced) were introduced for each competence. Thus, functional literacy refers to the use of desktop and mobile devices, network communication capabilities, search and treatment of information as well as efficient and safe use of desktop and mobile devices. Critical digital literacy, in turn, includes tools for interaction and collaboration in network, strategies for evaluation and sharing of information, organisation and planning that are necessary for setting priorities and goals as well as specific routines that result in student autonomy. In addition, there is a digital profile that helps online students cope with information that accounts for their various digital identities. This is complemented by cooperation in virtual learning environments that is mainly focused on teamwork skills and digital communication. Digital fluency refers to content production, data protection, networking relationships, virtual resilience (ability to cope with unexpected changes, obstacles and difficulties), and teamwork that requires the students to interact with others in "a socially acceptable way" (ibid., p. 14).

The frameworks and the model imply that digital competences are complex, multilayered and dynamic. Da Silva and Behar's model has been validated which means that it can be used by DE institutions to equip online students with requisite competences that are indispensable for successful studying in online contexts which are a dominant form of DE nowadays (Demiray & İşman, 2014).

4 COVID-19 Pandemic

First reported in the second half of 2019, the virus has completely changed our lives. Its spread resulted in school closures to ensure safety. In March 2020, 109 countries closed schools, which affected almost 667 million learners (42.4% of all learners) worldwide. Duration of school closures varied. In some places schools were closed for 6 weeks (Papua New Guinea), in others – for 73 weeks (India). In Poland, schools were closed for 43 weeks (UNESCO, 2021). Forced into lockdown, educational institutions took the only possible measure to continue education, that is they switched to virtual, online learning and teaching, also referred to as emergency remote teaching. The change took place almost overnight, leaving no choice either for teachers or for learners. It has to be remembered that choice is at the heart of DE. Yet, the stakes were high and online mode was the sole possibility to provide and continue education. The challenges of the new educational reality focused on the organisation of the teaching process, provision of equipment and adequate training for teachers, support for learners in need, and communication and cooperation with other institutions, among others (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). All the parties involved in the educational process needed equipment and skills. Moreover, the change has also impacted emotions of learners and teachers.

A number of studies were concerned with learners' responses to the emergency remote teaching. Alvarez (2020) observed that technological issues (access to internet connection and technological devices) along with financial problems and emotional support interrupted engagement in learning. Learning engagement appears to be positively influenced by such factors as perceived closeness with the teacher, influence of peers engaged in the same mode of learning as well as the perceived control over the learning process. All these factors contribute to subjective well-being that is correlated with learning engagement (Yang et al., 2021). Well-being, a central concept in positive psychology, refers to having a good life which flourishes "by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment" (Seligman, 2011, p. 12). Learning engagement is also enhanced by a synchronous mode of online learning (Nguyen et al., 2021), adaptability and positive academic emotion, manifested in searching for learning opportunities and resources (Zhang et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had effects on students' mental health and the level of stress. Thus scholars have investigated learners' emotions and found that stress and anxiety about the course of studies and their completion were

reported by the participants. Yet, online classes lessened these negative emotions as the students realised their education may be continued (Karalis & Raikou, 2020). Aslan et al. (2020) carried out a cross-sectional study on a sample of 358 undergraduates from 14 universities in Turkey and found out that the students reported high perceived stress, mild generalized anxiety, and low satisfaction with life. Physical inactivity and anxiety appeared to be significant predictors of perceived stress.

Kukul (2021) carried out a qualitative study that aimed at examining students' opinions about the transition to DE during the pandemic. From their perspective, the transition to DE was successful but they were worried about educational efficiency which is connected with the manner of teaching or structuring courses. There are no interactive elements in the material provided for asynchronous tasks. In addition, the students are dissatisfied with the level of in-class and out-of-class dialogues. This implies that the teachers need training and preparation to teach effectively online to have satisfied and committed students.

Teachers' actions and behaviours during a rapid change to online teaching have been investigated by Jelińska and Paradowski (2021c). In an attempt to understand how teachers manage the challenge, they surveyed 1500 teachers from 118 countries. Their analysis allowed them to distinguish two groups of teachers, that is a group of more engaged and better coping teachers and a group less engaged and worse coping teachers. The group which was more engaged and coped better with the transition to online learning includes the teachers who had some prior experience with distance education, worked in higher education institutions and taught synchronously, in real time. Moreover, they had more teaching experience and lived in developed countries. It also appeared that males were more willing to share their online materials in social media posts than females.

In another study, Jelińska and Paradowski (2021b) were interested in the teachers' perception of students' coping with emergency remote instruction in the light of such factors as the instructors' gender, age, length of teaching experience and education stage. They also intended to find out whether these perceptions varied due to the teachers' attitudes to remote teaching, defined in terms of the perceived effectiveness of this mode, prior experience with remote teaching, synchronous and asynchronous mode of instruction and its impact on teachers and students. The results show that in the male teachers' opinion, students coped with remote instruction better than in the female teachers' opinion, with students at the tertiary level of education coping the best. Also, the teachers who perceived their remote instruction as effective did not think it was difficult or problematic for students. Teachers who taught synchronously perceived their students as coping better than the ones who taught asynchronously. Also teachers with prior experience in remote teaching thought that their students coped better and had fewer problems than the teachers with no prior experience with remote instruction. Factors such as teachers' age, length of experience and appraisal of the relative situational impact on students and teachers were not connected with differences in perception of student coping.

In yet another study, Jelińska and Paradowski (2021a) analysed well-being of teachers engaged in remote instruction during the pandemic. They collected information concerning sociodemographic factors, the shift to remote instruction, the teachers' "personal experiences, behaviours, attitudes, physical and mental health, and personality traits" (p. 5). As far as negative emotional states – sadness, irritation, strain, emotional instability along with signs of tiredness, collectively referred to as negative affect – are concerned, females reported stronger negative affect than males. Teachers with partners or families experienced less intense negative affect than single representatives. Negative affect is also age-dependent but not related to professional experience. The results also show that negative affect is significantly and positively correlated with higher situational anxiety and situational loneliness but negatively correlated with work and life satisfaction, productivity and coping with the situation.

The studies by Jelińska and Paradowski are extremely important for the understanding of the impact of the pandemic on education worldwide due to the fact that large numbers of participants from various countries filled in the questionnaires, thus sketching the macropicture of the situation. This shows that we all have been affected by the pandemic that is not over yet and we need to be ready to switch to online learning and teaching any time.

The selected studies, briefly addressed above, show that online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is related to technical affordances (availability of devices and internet connections), digital literacy of teachers and learners as well as to a host of sociodemographic and psychological factors that account for smooth and effective remote instruction. These were survey studies and they examined remote instruction at the outset of the pandemic. The study reported below aimed to find advantages and disadvantages of online teaching from the point of view of students engaged in this form of instruction. Another goal was to answer the question whether extended participation in online instruction has any impact on learners' opinions about this form of studying and attitudes to it. In contrast to studies by Jeleńska and Paradowski, it provides the micropicture of online studying in the higher education institution during the pandemic.

5 The Study

The study was guided by two research questions:

RQ1. What are advantages and disadvantages of online learning in the eyes of students involved in this form of studying?

RQ2. How does extended participation in online studying affect students' perception of advantages and disadvantages?

To answer these questions, a small scale study was devised. It involved MA students in one of the universities in the south of Poland.

5.1 Context and Participants

In autumn 2019, I started a regular MA seminar with a group of students who already held their BA degree. I also ran a seminar with a group of part-time students. The classes took place at the University and the work went smoothly – all the students completed the first semester. Then, in March 2020 – the second semester of the MA programme – face-to-face teaching was abruptly replaced by online instruction. Initially, the university authorities did not specify what this instruction was supposed to look like but as the pandemic was gaining momentum, it became evident that remote teaching is not a matter of few weeks but rather long months. Remote education was a challenge to me and my students alike. Since the very beginning of remote teaching (March 2020), I was teaching online, in real time (synchronously), to give my students the feeling of continuity, safety, participation and belonging. They needed regular meetings to prepare and write their MA theses in the allocated period of time.

To find out how my students perceived this form of studying, I decided to collect their opinions after one semester of online instruction, in July 2020. Then, to see whether a long exposure to online instruction had any impact on their opinions, I collected their opinions after two semesters of online teaching (February 2021).

The participants were English Philology students enrolled in the MA Teacher Training programme which means that not only did they work to get their MA degree but they were also getting qualifications as teachers of English as a foreign language. In the part-time group, the majority of students were teachers themselves. In July 2020, 12 MA students (only females) in their first year filled in the questionnaire and in February 2021, 18 students filled it in. Their mean age was 27.83 (range: 23–47, SD: 6.77).

5.2 Instrument

To collect students' opinions, a survey with closed statements and open questions was designed. Part One of the survey included 35 items using a Likert scale (How strongly you agree with the following statements, where 1 meant *I totally disagree,* and 7 meant *I totally agree*). The items focused on a number of issues concerning the students' confidence about online learning, their digital and language skills, time and cost, learning, work, taking care of others, interpersonal relations and health.

In Part Two, four open questions addressed advantages and disadvantages of online teaching and learning, reasons for missing face-to-face meetings and advice for improving online teaching. In Part Three, demographic data were collected. The survey was administered via e-mail (June 2020) and Google Forms (Feb. 2021).

5.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse answers to closed items. To reduce the number of variables, some survey items were aggregated and the results were compared by means of a U Mann-Whitney test to see the effect of time and experience with online studying on such factors as: confidence, language skills, digital equipment, time and cost, learning, work and caring for others. Answers to open questions were subject to content analysis. Respondents' answers were carefully read, similar responses were grouped together and on this basis categories for analysis were established.

5.4 Results

Quantitative Results

The means and standard deviations of students' answers to closed items on June and February administration of the survey are included in Table 1.

Descriptive statistics show that the respondents were technically well equipped, they had computers, microphones and headphones as well as access to broadband internet connection. Cameras allowed them to see others and be seen by them. Interestingly, in the first semester of online studying they declared that they prefer studying at the university but after two semesters they were less definite about it. With the passage of time devoted to online learning they realised how much time and money they saved studying from home. The same refers to the feeling of happiness from studying at home as well as the level of satisfaction which increased after two semesters (item 3). Realising the advantages of studying from home, the students became more positive about studying online (item 35, June M = 4.00, Feb. M = 6.00;). The results also show a decrease in the amount of written tasks that the students had to complete. The first semester of online learning was heavily marked by the written tasks while the second semester seems to be marked by other forms of DE. Their feeling of anonymity was in the middle of the scale, oscillating around 3.5 points, which suggests that some of them felt anonymous and some did not. This observation is additionally supported by a high value of standard deviation. It has to be borne in mind that for some items standard deviations are quite high which means that the students varied in their opinions.

To get a more holistic picture of the students' opinions, selected questionnaire items were aggregated into the following groups:

– confidence: about using communication tools (Skype, Teams) for learning and about English proficiency (items 1 and 2);
– digital equipment: appropriate internet connection, including broadband connection, computer with a microphone, camera, headphones; a place/room of one's own to study (items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 28);

Table 1 Closed items – means (M) and standard deviations (SD)

	June 2020 (N = 12)		February 2021 (N = 18)	
Item	M	SD	M	SD
1. I feel confident about the use of communication tools for learning (Skype, Teams)	5.42	1.24	6.39	0.61
2. I feel confident about my English proficiency	5.58	0.79	5.67	0.77
3. I am satisfied with online learning	4.58	1.44	5.94	1.40
4. I prefer studying in a real classroom, at the university	4.58	1.44	3.61	1.65
5. I learned a lot from online lectures	4.42	1.38	5.55	0.78
6. My oral English skills have improved	4.42	1.08	4.94	1.39
7. My reading skills have improved	4.33	1.07	5.17	0.98
8. My writing skills have improved	5.08	1.00	5.11	0.68
9. My studying was based on reading and writing	5.67	0.89	5.11	0.83
10. I have appropriate internet connection to participate in online classes	4.67	1.43	6.28	0.83
11. My computer has a camera	6.58	1.16	6.83	0.38
12. My computer has a microphone	6.67	1.15	6.83	0.38
13. I use headphones during online classes	3.75	2.60	3.83	2.23
14. I have broadband internet	4.75	2.05	6.22	1.06
15. I had to buy a new computer	2.00	2.00	2.11	1.68
16. Online teaching saved my time	4.18	2.40	6.05	1.21
17. Online teaching saved my money	4.92	1.73	6.39	1.14
18. I felt happy staying and studying at home	4.08	2.02	5.83	1.25
19. I enjoyed the time with my family	5.58	1.56	6.22	1.26
20. I felt anonymous	3.42	1.88	3.39	2.17
21. I used the camera to let my colleagues see me	3.33	1.15	3.89	1.71
22. I was happy to see my colleagues on screen	4.50	1.73	5.17	1.46
23. I felt overloaded with written tasks	6.17	1.03	4.50	1.82
24. Apart from studying, I have to earn my living	4.00	2.26	4.11	2.72
25. I had to take care of my family	4.00	1.95	3.39	2.25
26. I had to take care of my neighbours	1.83	1.58	1.33	0.48
27. I had to take care of my friends	2.42	1.37	2.22	1.52
28. I have a room of my own where I could have online classes undisturbed by other people from my environment	5.42	2.15	6.11	1.32
29. I miss face-to-face encounters with my group	4.75	1.81	4.67	1.88
30. I am employed by an institution	3.42	3.00	4.39	3.01
31. I am self-employed	1.83	1.99	2.72	2.74
32. I had problems with time management	4.42	1.56	3.39	1.72
33. My eyesight has deteriorated	4.67	1.77	4.67	1.64
34. My English proficiency has improved	4.75	1.21	4.89	1.45
35. I would like to continue online learning next semester	4.00	2.21	6.00	1.64

– language skills: confidence about proficiency level in English, development of individual language skills (items 2, 6, 7, 9. 34);
– learning: based on reading and writing; knowledge gained (items 5, 9. 23);time and cost (items 16 and 17);work (items 24, 30, 31);caring (items 25, 26, 27) (Table 2).

The results show that statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found with respect to two aggregated items, that is digital equipment and time and cost. Involvement in online studying might have motivated the students to acquire better equipment necessary to attend classes. The passage of time made them realise that online learning saved both their time (no need for commuting) and money (they did not need to pay for accomodation in the university town, for example).

Tables 3 and 4 include the participants' opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of studying online.

Convenience, flexibility, efficiency and safety seem to be the most important advantages of online studying. After one semester of online classes the students appreciated the fact that they were able to attend classes from any location, they had more time to think about their life and learning, they could observe nature (self-reflection), they appreciated teachers' efforts to make classes interesting and involving. Their answers also imply that the teachers modified their approach to evaluation and final credits. After two semesters of online classes, safety became most important. At that time (autumn and winter 2020/21), the number of new infections and the number of deaths was very high (koronawirusunas.pl) and many students personally experienced the effects of the pandemic and realised how fragile life is. They were aware how much time and money they saved. The time they saved could be spent with their families and also they had an opportunity to work at their own pace, using the materials provided by instructors.

Technical problems with broken internet connection, microphones or cameras were identified after both the first and the second semesters of online studying. Another disadvantage concerns the absence of personal, face to face contacts and interaction that cannot be replaced by written messages.

After one semester of online classes the students were concerned mostly with the kinds of tasks assigned by the teachers and the manner in which their work was

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and U Mann-Whitney tests results for aggregated items

	June 2020		February 2021			
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	Z	p
Confidence	5.50	0.85	6.03	0.60	- 1.69	0.09
Digital equipment	**5.30**	**0.98**	**6.02**	**0.49**	**- 2.19**	**0.02***
Language skills	4.97	0.65	5.15	0.68	0.32	0.75
Learning	5.41	0.67	5.05	0.69	1.25	0.21
Time & cost	**4.68**	**1.82**	**6.22**	**0.49**	**- 2.10**	**0.03***
Work	3.08	1.83	3.74	2.10	−0.79	0.43
Caring	2.75	1.37	2.31	1.10	0.85	0.39

Note: The items in bold show statistically significant differences at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 Lights of studying online

June 2020	February 2021
Convenience, efficiency and flexibility	Convenience, flexibility and safety
Classes could be attended from anywhere	Saving time and money
More time for self-reflection	Safety from the threat of the virus
Videos and presentations during the lectures were interesting and helpful	Time for family
Fewer exams, more written tasks to get the credit	Possibility to work at one's own pace with the materials provided by the teachers

Table 4 Shadows of studying online

June 2020	February 2021
Too many written tasks	Lack of personal contacts and interaction (real hugging instead of writing "Hugs")
Teachers only assigned tasks for the students	Long hours in front of the screen
Insufficient explanation of some issues	Strained eyes
Some teachers did not care	Backache
Time had to be shared between learning and home and family duties (not when at the University)	Lower motivation
Technical problems	Technical problems
Face to face, not screen to screen communication welcome	

assessed. They also noticed that some teachers did not invest enough effort to assist them in the times of emergency. They had to learn how to manage their time which they had to share between studying and home and family duties. However, when they have classes at the university, they do not have to worry about household chores and other non-academic obligations.

After two semesters of online classes the students realised that spending long hours in front of the computer screen has negative effects on their health, resulting in strained eyes and backache. They also reported a drop in their motivation.

As for the reasons of missing personal contacts (the third open question), in June 2020 the students wrote that they needed what they called "a normal conversation" and human interactions, they missed their friends and they longed for the sense of normalcy, dramatically reduced by emergency isolation. More participants (7) opted for face-to-face than screen-to-screen contacts while for the minority it did not matter. One student wrote:

> *Attending university classes is much more interesting and motivating than just doing some tasks or watching lectures on Teams/Skype*

Another one added:

> *It is better to have face-to-face contact because you are more focused on that person you are talking or listen to, during online lectures you could switch off your camera or another student could do it so you cannot see him directly.*

Similar comments appeared in February 2021. The students again highlighted the importance of personal encounters with others. They also observed that body language and nonverbal communication significantly contribute to successful interaction. They wrote the following:

We are social animals.
I like my friends and my group.
I miss going out with friends as often as I used to do and spending breaks together.

In the last open question the students gave advice on how to improve online teaching. First of all, the time spent online should be reduced because of negative effects of long hours in front of the screen on the students' health. Online teaching would be more effective if teachers gave precise instructions and guidelines to students, if the course and classes were well-structured and planned, if requirements were clear and if teachers diversified ways of presenting materials. In addition, classes should be interactive and the students should be more involved. They may create a website, a blog, or make a video related to certain topics covered during classes. Actually, making classes more interactive appears in many answers which may imply that interactivity helps to discuss problematic issues, ask questions, relate to what is known and to construct knowledge. The students also stressed the importance of the teacher who is the key element of the educational process because they are responsible not only for the knowledge, skills and competences that the students acquire, but also for emotions and mental health, as shown in the following opinion:

> *Personally, if it's possible, teachers can try to be more friendly. Let students feel that the teacher is approachable. Then the students probably would like to have more interactions with the teacher. As due to some limits of online teaching, students may feel that the teacher is "far away from them" – "physically and emotionally". For instance, they may feel that that the teacher is not only "behind the scene" but also does not want to have any emotional connection with the students. Besides, because of the situation now, students can easily experience some negative emotions or sometimes it can be worse. They need someone to help them. As a result, teachers should care more about the mental health of the students, especially in this challenging situation. The emotional support from the teacher is very essential and necessary, from my point of view.*

5.5 Discussion

As far as the first research question is concerned, it may be concluded that both students and teachers learnt very quickly how to use online platforms as shown by the fact that the students' satisfaction with online learning in February 2021 increased in comparison to June 2020. Studying online has also contributed to the development of digital competences, which is supported by a high level of confidence that the students declared. In addition, 85.7% of the students graduated on

time which also demonstrates that they have successfully developed the necessary digital literacy skills (cf. Da Silva & Behar, 2020; European Commission, 2007; OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 2018). Engagement into a variety activities and tasks contributed to the development of their reading and writing skills.

Studying from home means saving time (travelling) and money (accommodation in the university town) but also confines people to one place – some felt imprisoned within the walls of their rooms. On the other hand, staying at home they could strengthen family ties and relations, support others and get support from them. Having saved time, some participants started to earn their living, also using the online option, as shown by the increasing number of employed or self-employed students. They had more time to reflect on nature, and the quality of their life.

Synchronous mode of teaching was an asset as it organised students' participation in classes as well as made their work systematic, which is associated with effective learning (cf. Alvarez, 2020; Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021b; Kukul, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). Indeed, learners at tertiary level coped well with the challenges of emergency remote teaching.

According to the findings, effective online education depends on a number of factors such as technical equipment, for example. Yet, the teacher appears to be even more important than ever as they shape the teaching-learning process by the decisions they make, materials they use, modes of presentation of the materials and also by motivating and involving learners into the process. Moreover, they are expected to cater for the students' emotional well-being. This is possible when concern about the students leads to interaction among them and teachers. Interaction is not always present in online classes (cf. Kukul, 2021) but it should be there. Even more so that students appear to be willing to actively participate in online classes with materials they prepare on their own.

The darker side of online teaching demonstrates negative effects of this form of education. The longer the students sit in front of the computer, the more they miss face-to-face communication, the more tired they become, the more strained their eyes are, the less physically fit they feel. There are also technical problems like a weak internet connection, the mike/camera that does not work properly, distractors resulting from household activities, pets asking for students' attention, and so on. These distractors are absent in lecture halls.

Moreover, student emotions and their mental well-being have also emerged as an important factor in online learning. Stress and anxiety, anonymity, tiredness and loneliness accompanied by the lack of personal face-to-face contacts and interaction account for the negative affect. To lessen these effects, it is necessary to respond to students' affective states, to show they can cope with the situation and to encourage them to notice their own satisfaction with the things they have accomplished (cf. Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021a).

Answering the second research question, the inevitable conclusion is that experience with online learning and teaching develops digital literacy, digital technologies, and digital fluency (Da Silva & Behar, 2020) but it also makes students

more reflective and self-aware as they realise that spending too much time in front of a computer screen has negative effects on their physical health and social relations. Seven months that elapsed between the first and the second administration of the questionnaire show changes in students' opinions about, views and perceptions of online studying. With the passage of time digital skills and technical issues stop being problematic while other challenges emerge, for example a strong need for interpersonal contacts in real space and time. In addition, education in the state of emergency requires changes in approach, structure, materials and teaching methods that are tailored for the needs of online students living in the twenty-first century.

6 Conclusion

Despite negative effects on learners, teachers and the teaching/learning process, online classes became the only safe and broadly accessible way of providing and continuing education when the COVID-19 pandemic was ravaging the world. Today we are all very much aware that it is not over as the new mutations of the virus keep appearing. Therefore, it is necessary to be ready to take the challenge of online teaching and learning when such a need arises. When positive learning experience is the goal, varied pedagogical techniques are an option. Moreover, it appears that synchronous and in-person online learning allows social-emotional reasoning that is so highly valued by students (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Basing on a survey and interviews with her students, Basford (2021) suggests that pandemic times require specific behaviours. Teachers are encouraged to be flexible and compassionate and to show that they care for their students. When they are not certain about how something works, they can show it to their students and ask them for help. Teachers are advised to help students understand what is going on in the world and help them feel that they are connected.

Online studying has weakened a sense of community. Being a student means belonging to a community of students which has its habits, pastimes, traditions and rituals. These most frequently involve physical presence at certain times in certain places. Participation in various virtual communities does not seem to be a good replacement for real life communities where interpersonal contacts, interaction, physical closeness and humour are indispensable for communication. Yet, sometimes there is no choice. Therefore it is important to be connected and feel connected.

I think the following quotation is a perfect ending of this chapter:

> The COVID pandemic has held up a mirror and shown us that we remain far from making our societies more just, equitable and inclusive. (...) But, COVID has also reinforced the conviction of many that mutual support, the cooperative sharing of resources, and collective action provide the right moral coordinates and give good reason for hope (Sobe, 2021).

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