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Classroom-oriented Research

Achievements and Challenges

Springer

Second Language Learning and Teaching

About the Series

The series brings together volumes dealing with different aspects of learning and teaching second and foreign languages. The titles included are both monographs and edited collections focusing on a variety of topics ranging from the processes underlying second language acquisition, through various aspects of language learning in instructed and non-instructed settings, to different facets of the teaching process, including syllabus choice, materials design, classroom practices and evaluation. The publications reflect state-of-the-art developments in those areas, they adopt a wide range of theoretical perspectives and follow diverse research paradigms. The intended audience are all those who are interested in naturalistic and classroom second language acquisition, including researchers, methodologists, curriculum and materials designers, teachers and undergraduate and graduate students undertaking empirical investigations of how second languages are learnt and taught.

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Preface

As Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 18) so aptly comment, following the observation offered by Gaies (1980), "(…) the classroom is the crucible—the place where teachers and learners come together and language learning, we hope, happens. It happens, when it happens, as a result of the reactions among the elements that go into the crucible—the teachers and the learners". In practice, this means that even the best laid-out plans concerning how a lesson should proceed are subject to far-reaching modifications as a result of the various interactions taking place in the course of this lesson, with the consequence that the impact of the pedagogic choices made by teachers is extremely difficult to predict. This is because, on the one hand, such practices have to be modified in many cases in the face of unexpected events in the classroom or their limited efficacy in a particular context, and, on the other, even if they are fully implemented, their impact on second language development is mediated by a number of variables, the most important of which are teacher characteristics and individual learner differences. All of this points to the need to carry out research on different aspects of teaching and learning languages in a classroom setting with an eye to gaining more profound insights into these processes and devising ways of enhancing their effectiveness, such that would be firmly grounded in current theoretical positions and empirical evidence, but at the same time be practicable in a specific instructional context.

The present volume contributes to this line of inquiry by bringing together papers dealing with different facets of classroom-oriented research, ranging from reports of original studies to considerations of issues in research methodology, as well as providing useful guidelines for everyday classroom practice. The book is divided into four parts, each including contributions touching on similar topics, although, in some cases, the choices had to be somewhat arbitrary due to the fact that the articles were related to more than one of the leading themes. Part I, entitled *Individual Variation*, contains four papers which demonstrate how the characteristics of learners and teachers, in particular age, anxiety, beliefs and the use of language learning strategies, impact different aspects of classroom language learning. Part II, *Teaching and Learning to Teach*, focuses upon the role of the teacher, both in terms of his or her role in managing classroom interaction, problems involved in teacher education, and the contribution of action research. The common theme in Part III, *Instructional Practices*, are the different actions

taken by teachers in order to develop all the components of communicative competence, with the papers included therein being tied, among others, to the employment of Internet resources, assessment of learners' abilities and the possibilities of integrating content and language in the classroom. Finally, Part IV, entitled *Research Tools*, is devoted to issues involved in studying the teaching and learning processes during language lessons, focusing in particular on the use of teacher narratives and lesson observation, the benefits of applying mixed methods research, and the role of triangulation in investigating learner autonomy. We believe that, thanks to the diversity of the topics covered, the multiplicity of theoretical perspectives embraced, the inspiring examples of how classroom-based studies should be designed and conducted, as well as sound guidelines for classroom practice, this edited collection will be of relevance not only to experts in the domain of second language acquisition, but also to methodologists, materials writers, graduate and postgraduate students, and teachers wishing to enhance the effectiveness of their instructional practices.

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Contributors

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Part I
Individual Variation

Age and the Classroom Learning of Additional Languages

David Singleton and Agnieszka Skrzypek

Abstract This chapter deals with some commonly held views in relation to the age-factor dimensions of the classroom learning of additional languages which the authors regard as serious misunderstandings. The principal issues focused on are the following: (a) the widespread notion that the younger = better tendencies observed among naturalistic acquirers of additional languages can be assumed to operate also in formal instructional settings; (b) the often unexamined assumption that such support as exists for the Critical Period Hypothesis constitutes an argument for early instruction in additional languages, or that a resolution of the veracity or otherwise of this hypothesis would also resolve the question of when to introduce additional languages into our schools; (c) the idea that ultimate attainment in the context of the classroom learning of additional languages is so much bound up with the age of those doing the learning that almost no other factors are relevant. With respect to all of the above, alternative research-based propositions are presented and advocated.

1 Introduction

The age-related dimensions of the learning of an additional language (henceforth L2) have figured prominently in discussion of both instructed and naturalistic L2 acquisition. The issue of the optimal age for beginning to be exposed to an L2 has been a long-standing focus of attention for L2 acquisition researchers and language

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educators alike. Research in this area has been concerned, *inter alia*, with: (1) whether learners in their childhood years learn additional languages faster or more slowly than older learners, and (2) whether early L2 exposure eventuates in a higher or lower level of attainment in terms of L2 proficiency than a later start. The pattern of findings that emerges in respect of these matters from classroom-based studies differs somewhat sharply from the pattern identified in relation to naturalistic settings—in a manner which calls into question a number of quite widespread assumptions in respect of the benefits of the introduction of additional languages as subjects in primary-school curricula.

The present article explores some of such assumptions at some length, in particular those assumptions which we see as rather serious misunderstandings. We begin by discussing the notion that the younger an L2 learner begins to be exposed to the L2 in question, the better his/her attainment in that language is likely to be—at least in the long run. In broad terms, the evidence (and everyday observations) from naturalistic settings support this notion. The question is whether such 'younger = better' tendencies can be taken to operate also in formal instructional settings. We next turn to the vexed question of the Critical Period Hypothesis (henceforth CPH). Controversy around the CPH has, of course, raged for decades. Our discussion-point here is not so much the veracity or otherwise of the hypothesis as the belief existing in some circles that any research findings which may be seen as supporting the CPH straightforwardly constitute an argument for early L2 instruction. The third and final perspective we scrutinize critically is that which expects the age factor to trump all other factors in instructed L2 learning. In truth, there is a view prevailing in some educational circles that the degree of success of L2 learning in formal instructional settings is so much bound up with the maturational factor that almost no other factors are relevant.

2 Younger = Better Assumptions in the Context of Instructional Settings

In the 1950s and 1960s advocacy of the introduction of L2s into the primary school curriculum was much influenced by the 'younger = better' ideas of Penfield and the neurological evidence he adduced in their support (Stern 1983, p. 132). The viewpoint advanced by Penfield and Roberts (1959) posits that the optimal period for language acquisition ends when a child's brain begins to lose its plasticity in the second decade of life. Brain plasticity refers to the brain's ability to form new connections between brain cells. This is an essential feature of human brain, as it can compensate for lost brain functions or maximize the remaining functions in the case of brain injury. The position adopted by Penfield and Roberts is founded on the results from brain damage studies involving subjects who had suffered a brain injury before and after the end of the childhood years. From a comparison of patients who had suffered a brain injury in childhood with patients who had suffered a brain injury

in adulthood it emerged that children typically redeveloped normal language, while adults hardly ever fully recovered language. This finding was often cited in support of Penfield's oft-proclaimed and widely disseminated ideas favouring the early introduction of L2 instructional programmes into schools. One might note in passing, however, that, according to at least one commentator, Penfield's passionately held views regarding the desirability of early L2 instruction owed more to his personal experience of enthusiastically immersing his own children in foreign languages at an early age than to his work as a scientist (Decher 1995).

Findings concerning age-related dimensions of L2 acquisition in naturalistic settings seem to offer support for the claim that early L2 exposure in these settings yields benefits. Immigrant studies, for example, show that immigrants who have several years' experience of the language of the host country and whose exposure to the L2 in question began early in childhood eventually, on the whole, outperform those whose exposure began later. It is true that the research evidence has pointed to an initial advantage for older beginners in naturalistic settings in terms of rate of acquisition, but such evidence has over many years robustly indicated a tendency for a long-term advantage on the part of younger beginners in terms of attainment (cf. Oyama 1976, 1978; Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978; Krashen, Long and Scarcella 1979; Patkowski 1980; Johnson and Newport 1989; Hyltenstam 1992). In other words, in general, older beginners initially appear to learn at a faster pace than younger beginners, but eventually the younger beginners tend to catch up with and overtake their seniors.

The findings of studies involving subjects who have been learning an L2 in formal settings, however, paint a very different picture from that obtained in naturalistic settings. Research relating to formal instructional L2 learning environments has echoed the finding from naturalistic environments with respect to the faster rate of acquisition of older beginners (e.g. Cenoz 2002, 2003; Muñoz 2003; Mora 2006; Álvarez 2006; Kalberer 2007), but has not confirmed the long-term benefits of an early start in situations where younger and older beginners have had the same number of hours of instruction (Muñoz 2006a, 2008b; Navés 2009). Muñoz (2006a, 2008a, c) argues that the expectation that younger starters in a typical limited-input instructed setting will in the long-term outperform older starters after the same number of hours of instruction or courses is not warranted. She argues that it is in the realm of implicit learning that young children are superior in comparison to older learners, and she suggests that such implicit learning requires massive amounts of input, vastly more than a typical instructional setting supplies. She notes that the typical L2 instructional setting is not normally characterized by an abundance of input, and that this kind of setting provides more opportunities for explicit learning than it does for implicit learning. The obvious implication is that younger learners in the input-impoverished classroom setting cannot hope to have the same learning advantage as younger learners in the naturalistic setting. Older instructed learners, on the other hand, can be expected to exhibit a faster rate of learning than younger learners in the same educational setting owing to their superior cognitive development and their greater

consequent capacity to cope with the kind of explicit learning opportunities which most classrooms purvey.

From a methodological point of view, it has been suggested that research investigating maturational effects should wait to compare learners' L2 attainment until such learners have reached their acquisitional "end state" or "asymptote", that is, a stage where significant further progress is seen as very unlikely. In the current relevant literature this is typically set at the point where subjects have undergone at least 10 years of immersion in a naturalistic context. When translated into the terms of normally spaced L2 units of contact in an instructional context, however, the relevant number of instructional slots corresponds to an amount of real time that extends far beyond the span of a lifetime (Muñoz 2008c; Muñoz and Singleton 2011). Furthermore, the requisite that learners receive substantial amounts of native-speaker input in order to reach native-likeness phonologically (Flege and Liu 2001) or otherwise (Niżegorodcew 2007) is also not guaranteed in an instructional setting (Muñoz 2008a). Given, then, that the necessary length of the relevant period of instruction is not within the bounds of possibility, and given that the necessary quality of input is not necessarily on offer either, the concept of younger beginners in a L2 instructional setting outperforming older beginners in the long term does not seem to be at all well grounded.

3 The CPH: Early Instruction Interface

The term *critical period* is used in biology to refer to a strictly limited phase in the development of an organism during which a particular kind of behaviour or a specific competency must be acquired if it is to be acquired at all. An illustrative example often used in this context is that of imprinting in ducklings and goslings, which, for a short time after hatching, become irreversibly attached to the first moving object they perceive—usually their mother—after which they develop a fear of strange objects and retreat instead of following. If language acquisition in human beings is constrained by the limits of a critical period on this kind of definition, the implication appears to be that unless language acquisition gets under way before the period ends it will not happen. There may also be an implication that even if language acquisition begins within the critical period it does not continue beyond the end of that period.

Many of the researchers who subscribe to the notion of a critical period for language acquisition in humans have had no hesitation in claiming that it constitutes an argument for early L2 instruction. For example, in an interview published in 2004, Spada (2004) had the following to say:

> If the goal for learning/teaching a foreign language is to obtain the highest level of second language skills (…) there is support for the argument that 'earlier is better'. This support, found in the critical period hypothesis literature, is based on the claim that biological and maturational factors constrain language learning beyond a certain age.

In other cases, the argument is made with regard to specific domains and with regard to the negative impact of failing to introduce L2s early. For example, Thompson and Gaddes (2005) claim that the existence of a critical period, which they take as axiomatic, means that adult L2 learners will never sound like native speakers and that teachers therefore need to adjust their expectations and their pedagogical approach in such cases. The implication is that such an adjustment is not necessary in the case of young learners. Likewise, Polish publications for language teachers (cf. Singleton and Leśniewska 2012) usually recommend early foreign language instruction, focusing particularly on the phonetic aspects of the CPH, and the supposedly greater flexibility of the vocal organs before the onset of puberty (e.g. Wieszczeczyńska 2000, p. 8). Similarly, Jedynak (2005, p. 198) points out that advertising for early foreign language courses in Poland almost always echoes a CPH perspective, generating a widespread belief that post-pubertal learners are, in a best-case scenario, faced with severely limited chances, and in worst-case scenario, are doomed to failure.

Other advocates of the CPH take a different line. Johnson and Newport (1989) note that the crucial measure in their study was age of arrival in the L2 environment rather than age of onset of formal L2 instruction in their subjects' home country, concluding "that the learning which occurs in the formal language classroom may be unlike the learning which occurs during immersion, such that early instruction does not necessarily have the advantage for ultimate performance that is held by early immersion" (1989, p. 81). DeKeyser (2003a, b) agrees broadly with Johnson and Newport's line. For him, school-based L2 learning is typically explicit in nature and largely unaffected by maturational constraints (DeKeyser 2003a, p. 335):

> Rather than suggesting the importance of starting early, [age differences] indicate that the instructional approach should be different depending on age: full-scale immersion is necessary for children to capitalize on their implicit learning skills, and formal rule teaching is necessary for adults to draw on their explicit learning skills.

Interestingly, there have been a number of prominent CPH sceptics who, despite their scepticism on the question of an ineluctable and absolute age factor, have pronounced themselves all in favour of the early introduction of L2s into the school curriculum. Thus, for example, Genesee (1978) and Hatch (1983) argue strongly for early L2 instruction on grounds, not of maturational constraints, but of considerations such as the general desirability of, as long as possible, the exposure to the L2 and the importance of laying an early foundation to L2 learning so that ground can later be covered that might otherwise be neglected. These are essentially educational arguments, which are made with little or no regard for the CPH debate.

A final Polish footnote: Rokita's (2006) research, appears to suggest that—in line with DeKeyser's and Muñoz's—general perspective—learning a foreign language as a subject in a formal instructional setting for a few hours a week is not particularly in tune with children's capacities. The Rokita study looked longitudinally at early L2 development of very young Polish children (aged two to four)

learning English in naturalistic and instructional settings. She found that the achievements of the instructed L2 learners were deeply unimpressive, the L2 being, for example, very rarely used spontaneously for communicative purposes amongst such learners (Rokita 2006, p. 81).

4 Age and Other Factors in the Classroom Context

Earlier we noted the influence of Penfield's ideas on the enthusiastic initiation in the 1950s and 1960s of projects which brought L2 instruction into early stages of schooling. Such projects were dealt a severe blow by the findings of research in the 1970s which cast doubt on the capacity of such early instruction to deliver higher proficiency levels as compared with later instruction (e.g. Oller and Nagato 1974; Burstall et al. 1975)—findings which have been reinforced by more recent research (see above). The disillusionment occasioned by such findings seems, however, to have been rather swiftly consigned to the dustbin of history. This is perhaps not too surprising in the light of Spolsky's (1989) astute remark: "Educational systems usually arrive first at a decision of optimal learning age on political or economic grounds and then seek justification for their decision".

It is, in any case, a fact that, since the 1990s throughout Europe and indeed across the world there has been a clear and apparently accelerating trend towards the introduction of additional languages into primary-level curricula (e.g. Hunt et al. 2005; Audin 2008). This trend appears often to have been underlain by the widespread belief on the part of parents—whose views feed into the decisions of governments—that an early start in L2 instruction is a panacea overriding and neutralizing all other factors. We might perhaps pause to recall Bruer's (1999) wise comment that one of the dangers of focusing on maturational issues in discussing learning is that it prompts us to pay too much attention to when learning occurs and too little attention to the conditions of learning.

If we have a need of sobering exemplification and illustration in this connection, we could do worse than look closely at the results of many decades of teaching the Irish language in the primary schools of the Republic of Ireland. By way of contextualization, only a tiny proportion of the population of the country are native speakers of Irish (although the exact figures are controversial—cf. Murchú 1985; Hindley 1990), and so, for the vast majority of pupils in Irish schools, Irish constitutes an additional language. In response to any enquiry as to the outcome of this almost century-long experiment in early L2 instruction, most Irish people would undoubtedly say: "not great". The controversialist journalist, Kevin Myers, recently wrote the following about the experiment in question (*The Irish Independent*, October 3, 2011):

> The "restoration" of spoken Irish is the greatest single economic and cultural project in the history of the State. Not merely has it been the greatest national failure, but it has also revealed a national disorder; the acceptance of a consensual falsehood across society, from the intimate disclosures of a census form to the public formulation of national policy.

One should note that it is not only controversialist journalists who voice such sentiments. Mr Ruairi Quinn, current Irish Minister for Education has reportedly called the way in which Irish has been dealt with in Irish schools "the single biggest policy failure" of the Irish education system (*The Irish Times*, March 15, 2011). Earlier assessments under previous governments and prior to the ill-humour of economic collapse were no less scathing. Thus, on March 20, 2005, the Irish edition of *The Sunday Times* carried a report according to which the Irish Language Commissioner, Mr Seán Ó Cuirreain, had also admitted that the teaching of Irish as an L2 in Irish schools had been a failure.

Let us have a brief look at the conditions under which Irish has been taught in Irish primary schools (cf. Singleton and Ryan 2004, pp. 208–209). In relation to teaching materials and methodology deployed, the *Nuachursaí* ("New Courses"), which were in use from the 1960s to the 1990s were classically (and obstinately!) audio-lingual, and moreover the requisite support equipment (tape-recorders, felt-boards, film-strips, etc.) was often missing. From the end of the 1990s (cf. Murchú 2001) more communicative materials have been introduced, but they have not yet been formally evaluated. With regard to teaching personnel, primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland have to have good school-leaving qualifications in Irish, and, in their initial training, they compulsorily attend courses in Irish and Irish language teaching methodology. Despite such preparation, however, studies of teacher attitudes have long revealed a substantial level of primary teacher indifference towards Irish (see e.g. INTO 1985), and recent research (e.g. Gallagher 2006) has called into question the average level of Irish primary school teachers' proficiency in the Irish language. With respect to societal attitudes, surveys going back nearly forty years have time and again shown a generally favourable general attitude to Irish (e.g. CLAR 1975; Riagáin and Gliasáin 1984) but time and again have also shown that Irish is popularly seen as of cultural rather than practical value, and as a badge of national identity rather as having any communicative usefulness. Hence, undoubtedly, the situation in this regard that gave rise to the well-worn cliché in Ireland that the Irish will do anything for the Irish language except speak it.

We can sum up as follows the case of the attempt to use the primary schools to revitalize the Irish language in Ireland. It is clear that the prevailing conditions for this enterprise have been in a number of respects not ideal, and it is also clear that an early start to instruction in the language has signally failed to outbalance the unpromising conditions in question. The instance of the teaching of Irish may be thought of as quite a special, *sui generis* kind of example, but the message which flows from it is in fact universally applicable. The simple and stark lesson is this: starting a programme of L2 instruction in the early years of a child's schooling experience can never absolve us from paying very close attention indeed to optimizing the circumstances under which teaching is delivered and learning is promoted in such a programme. If circumstances in which the programme proceeds are unfavourable, the age factor, whatever its nature may be, will not rescue the situation, whose outcome may range from the unimpressive to the disastrous (cf. Singleton 1995; Nikolov 2000; Johnstone 2002).

5 Concluding Remarks

We return now to the issues we raised in our introductory section. With reference to the question of the optimal starting age for second language learning, we have seen that the research evidence deriving from naturalistic situations lends support for the popularly held view that younger beginners tend in the long run to do better than older beginners. On the other hand, we have also taken account of the fact that research findings from instructional settings consistently show that this 'younger = better' trend discernible in respect of the acquisition of additional languages in naturalistic settings is nowhere to be found in respect of the learning of languages by children, adolescents and young adults at school. We might add as a footnote that although the state of the empirical evidence seems to come as a disappointment to many, it has not apparently stemmed the tide in relation to the introduction of L2 instruction into primary school curricula all round the world.

Our next topic of discussion was whether or not a resolution of the critical period issue—in its favour or to the contrary—would also constitute a resolution of the question of when to introduce additional languages into schools. Our view on this matter is that settling the controversy about the CPH would certainly not automatically provide age-related guidelines in relation to the ideal curricular starting point for L2 instruction. We do not believe, incidentally, that the critical period for language acquisition is anywhere close to being definitively established by the evidence (or indeed definitively dismissed). Even if it were, the debate about when to initiate L2 education in schools would persist. We have noted that CPH advocates differ sharply among themselves on this subject, some claiming that the critical period constitutes a strong argument for early L2 instruction, while others claim it has no relevance to L2 learning in formal settings. Moreover, we have further noted that some rather persuasive arguments in favour of early L2 instruction have actually come from opponents of the CPH.

Finally we turned to the question of whether an early start to the teaching of additional languages will of itself counterbalance negative elements in a situation where the context and operation of the instructional process are less than optimal. We examined in this connection the case of the teaching of the Irish language in the primary schools of the Republic of Ireland since quite early in the last century. We reported the widespread disappointment with this exercise, noting some of the generally unfavourable conditions under which it proceeded, but noting also that the early start failed to make up for such unfavourable conditions. The message we drew from this part of the discussion was that to rely on the age factor, whatever its nature, to compensate for other factors, such as deficiencies of teaching and/or an unaddressed climate of unhelpful attitudes, is a mistake.

There may be very good educational reasons in a given set of circumstances for taking the decision to introduce an additional language into a school curriculum at an early stage. What the foregoing shows, however, is that an early start is unlikely to confer advantages over school learners who start later, that the question of whether or not there is a critical period for language acquisition is almost certainly

irrelevant to such a decision, and that if such a project falls down in terms of the educational context in which the teaching occurs the early start will not help.

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The Sociolinguistic Parameters of L2 Speaking Anxiety

Christina Gkonou

Abstract Much of the research into language anxiety has concentrated on the detrimental effects of speaking anxiety on academic achievement. However, less attention has been paid to the components of oral classroom anxiety that are an impediment to the development of L2 speaking fluency. Clearly, understanding the nature of speaking anxiety will help towards finding ways to alleviate it. This chapter reports on the non-linguistic, socio-psychological constraints of speaking-in-class anxiety. The researcher adopted a sequential explanatory design. Data were generated through a survey and qualitative interviews, and analyzed employing factor analysis and qualitative coding respectively. The findings revealed a dynamic interplay between oral classroom anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-perceptions of speaking ability. The paper concludes by urging language educators to reevaluate the social contexts of the foreign language classroom with a view to adjusting their L2 speaking practices to learners' affective state in class.

1 Introduction

"How is it that some people can learn a second or foreign language so easily and so well while others, given what seem to be the same opportunities to learn, find it almost impossible?" (Gardner and Lambert 1972, p. 131). This question, asked by the two Canadian social psychologists in their seminal research on learners' motivation and attitudes towards the target language, has triggered much research in individual learner differences and affectivity in language learning. While many people are keen on learning a new language, they consider it a challenging task

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and report uncomfortable experiences with relation to it. Therefore, researchers have shifted the focus on learners' emotional responses to language learning and their impact on classroom performance and success.

Affective variables typically include language anxiety (LA) which has been widely investigated in the last three decades (cf. Horwitz 2010). The bulk of the research, however, has been correlational and factor analytic in nature, and is limited by the recognition that learner traits, learner beliefs, and teaching attitudes in instructed language learning contexts impede oral communication in the second/ foreign language (L2). A sentiment of worry that others would evaluate oneself negatively during speaking activities in the classroom seems to be the common ground between these obstacles to the development of L2 speaking fluency.

The present chapter is an attempt to investigate the effects of fear of negative evaluation and self-perceived oral performance on English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students' classroom speaking anxiety and general LA. The researcher implemented a mixed methods sequential explanatory design to address the needs of the current study. On the basis of the emic perspective presented and analyzed, implications on the role of teachers in creating friendly and secure classroom environments will be discussed.

2 The Construct of L2 Anxiety

The basic conceptualization of LA as a by-product of "the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al. 1986, p. 128) paved the ground for flourishing research into one of the most important affective reactions to language learning. Horwitz and Young (1991) stated that it is possible to view LA either as a transfer of anxiety from other domains (i.e. stage fright), or as a situation-specific anxiety. In contrast to state anxiety (moment-to-moment experience) or trait anxiety (stable predisposition), LA manifests itself in foreign language learning settings where students may experience "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language" (MacIntyre 1999, p. 27). These students may be resilient in most other contexts but rather nervous in the language classroom.

Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested that LA is related to three performance anxieties: *communication apprehension*, *fear of negative evaluation*, and *test anxiety*. In the foreign language context, communication apprehension results from the self-consciousness students experience during their L2 attempts to communicate. Fear of negative evaluation manifests itself in learners' worry over the opinions of others and a higher level of concern over errors. In particular, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) claimed that students' fear of negative evaluation is due to the nature of the L2 classroom, where their performance is constantly evaluated by the only fluent member of the class, the teacher. They further argued that "students may also be

acutely sensitive to the evaluations—real or imagined—of their peers" (Horwitz et al. 1986, p. 128). The last one, test anxiety, appears in evaluative situations and prevents learners from performing successfully in a test or an exam.

3 Theoretical Concepts Linked to L2 Speaking Anxiety

LA can therefore be understood as having a debilitating effect on learners' performance. As noted earlier, communication apprehension hinders the production of language. With reference to L2 speaking, and given that students are expected to communicate orally through the use of unfamiliar sounds or forms, it seems logical that communication apprehension directly affects levels of an individual's *willingness to communicate* (WTC; McCroskey 1970; McCroskey and Richmond 1987, 1991; MacIntyre and Charos 1996). Parallel to language anxiety, WTC correlates with certain personality variables, such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and introversion/extroversion. Mejias et al. (1991, p. 88) have stated that the level of communication apprehension is critical in language learning, for "if a student is apprehensive about communicating in a particular language (…) he or she will have negative affective feelings toward oral communication and will likely avoid it".

The notion of social anxiety in cognitive psychology could also serve as a means of delineating the complex nature of L2 speaking anxiety. Schlenker and Leary (1982, p. 645) mentioned that social anxiety "arises whenever people are motivated to make a desired impression on others, but are not certain that they will do so". This definition suggests a positive correlation between social anxiety on the one hand, and motivation and level of doubt on the other: as both the desire to be approved by others and the uncertainty of such an event to occur increase, the amount of social anxiety increases as well.

It could be argued that the theory of social anxiety shares some commonalities with the terror management theory proposed by Greenberg and his colleagues (Greenberg et al. 1992, p. 913), who speculated that "people are motivated to maintain a positive self-image because self-esteem protects them from anxiety". Horwitz et al. (1986) claimed that foreign language learning poses a threat to self-esteem because it is axiomatic that students will make mistakes when communicating by means of a language they have not yet fully acquired or mastered. These threats to learners' self-esteem provoke anxiety and could be managed by increasing their degree of self-worth.

4 Empirical Evidence on L2 Speaking Anxiety

Most research has shown that LA is linked with L2 oral performance, thus causing L2 oral achievement to suffer (Horwitz et al. 1986; MacIntyre et al. 1997; Horwitz 2000, 2001; Kitano 2001; Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Liu 2006; Woodrow 2006).

Arguably, speaking is the skill in which the students' language ego is most vulnerable due to a higher level of self-exposure that it imposes on them. Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 127) argued that the foreign language classroom may "represent serious impediments to the development of second language fluency as well as to performance". This may be due to the "severely restricted language code" learners are expected to perform with in class, which further renders language classrooms "inherently face threatening environments" (Dörnyei 2001, p. 91). Given that learners have to communicate through the medium of a new language, it is highly likely that they will make mistakes. However, the majority of students fear making mistakes in classroom oral tasks, and view it as a manifestation of weakness and incompetence. At the same time, several students believe that speaking is the most important skill they need to learn in order to master a foreign language (Phillips 1991; Kitano 2001). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that low self-perceptions of L2 speaking ability and fear of negative evaluation induce LA.

4.1 Low Self-Perceptions of L2 Speaking Ability

Learners' self-perception of their ability is thought to be a distinguishable aspect of L2 oral performance. MacIntyre et al. (1997) explored how students' L2 actual competence and LA affect their perceived competence in the L2. The participants in their study were 37 Anglophones enrolled in a first-year philosophy course at a bilingual university, who had considerable exposure to French. They were administered a LA questionnaire consisting of items from Gardner's French use anxiety and French class anxiety scales (MacIntyre and Gardner 1989), and a modified version of the "can-do" test that assessed their self-perceived competence on 26 French tasks. The researchers reported a strong link between actual competence, perceived competence, and LA. In addition, a significant negative correlation ($r = -.60$) was found between self-rated speaking proficiency and LA.

Kitano (2001) administered a survey to 211 Japanese students at two major universities in the United States and concluded that a significant negative correlation exists between LA and self-perceived speaking ability. Thus, as students perceived of themselves as less competent than their peers, their level of LA increased. Much in the same vein, Woodrow (2006) collected quantitative data from 275 participants enrolled in English for Academic Purposes courses in Australia. The researcher developed the *Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale* (SLSAS) for her study and made use of additional interviews. The results indicated that speaking anxiety both within and outside the language classroom was associated with L2 self-perceived performance.

Price (1991) conducted a number of interviews with highly anxious students. The participants believed that their pronunciation was not accurate and that they were not pronouncing words as native speakers would do. In yet another study,

Bailey (1983) examined the relationship between competitiveness and anxiety of adult second language learners through diaries. The researcher concluded that "anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness when he sees himself as less proficient than the object of comparison" (1983, p. 27).

4.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation

L2 learners have also been found to share feelings of fear of negative evaluation as part of the speaking classes they attend. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) measured reactions to oral performance among eight second-year English language students in Chile. They used videotaped conversations with the participants in order to obtain a sample of their speaking ability in English, and then conducted interviews to elicit the informants' beliefs on their feelings of anxiety and perfectionism. The findings revealed that the highly anxious participants were influenced by others' evaluations and the subsequent possibility of looking foolish, and consistently linked their mistakes in speaking activities to that possibility. The students who compared their pronunciation with that of native speakers in Price's (1991) study also feared being looked down on. Additionally, Kitano (2001) concluded that a positive correlation ($r = .31$) exists between LA and fear of negative evaluation.

Liu (2006) investigated 547 Chinese undergraduate non-English majors at three different proficiency levels through the use of an adapted *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS; Horwitz et al. 1986), as well as observations, reflective journals, and interviews. The researcher found that the students felt the most anxious when answering questions set by the teacher or when asked to speak English in class. Further, Young (1990) found that many Spanish learners would be willing to take part in oral classroom tasks if they were not afraid of saying the wrong thing.

The emergence of fear of negative evaluation as an important component of classroom speaking anxiety has also been well documented through factor analytic studies. In a study of 96 second-year Japanese students at the University of Texas at Austin, Aida (1994, p. 159) found that "speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation may not be totally independent concepts, but rather are probably different labels describing one phenomenon in a language learning situation". Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) investigated the links between second language classroom anxiety and second language writing anxiety among 433 Taiwanese English majors. The principal components analysis of the FLCAS pointed at low self-confidence in speaking English as being the most prominent factor of classroom anxiety. Furthermore, Mak (2011) examined the sources of speaking-in-class anxiety of 313 Chinese English first-year university students in Hong Kong. Speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation again constituted the first factor of the L2 oral anxiety sources taxonomy. In particular, speaking in front of the class without being prepared in advance and being corrected when speaking were the two most frequently mentioned causes of speaking anxiety.

5 Rationale of the Present Study

The research goal of the current attempt was to explore the nature of speaking anxiety, as well as its conceptual links with students' self-perceptions of their oral competence and social comparison in class. The study was situated in the Greek EFL learning context. In order to gain insights into students' emotions, the study posed the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Does LA relate to speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation?
RQ2: How do Greek EFL learners conceptualize their fear of negative evaluation?
RQ3: Do their self-perceptions of EFL speaking performance influence their LA?

6 Methodology

6.1 The Research Paradigm: Pragmatism and Mixed Methods Research

The 1980s was the era of a fierce 'paradigm war' between the two major research camps of *constructivism* (i.e. qualitative research) and *postpositivism* (i.e. quantitative research) in terms of the epistemology and logic each one was embracing. Mixed methods research has risen as a result of the rejection of a forced choice of either quantitative or qualitative inquiry in the social sciences. Quantitative and qualitative methods were seen as adhering to the principles of pragmatism, which by and large rejected "the either/or of the incompatibility thesis" noted above (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003, p. 21), and favored both points of view (Rossman and Wilson 1984; Howe 1988; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1990; Greene and Caracelli 2003; Dörnyei 2007). Hence, mixed methods research was defined as "the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, p. 123).

The key assumption about mixed methods research refers to its capacity to offset the weaknesses of one method through the strengths of another method (Jick 1979; Howe 1988; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Dörnyei 2007; Creswell 2009; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). According to Johnson and Turner (2003, p. 299), "the fundamental principle is followed for at least three reasons: (a) to obtain convergence or corroboration of findings, (b) to eliminate or minimize key plausible alternative explanations for conclusions drawn from the research data, and (c) to elucidate the divergent aspects of a phenomenon".

The use of a mixed methods framework in research into LA is scarce. However, even in those few mixed methods studies, little emphasis is placed on the initial quantitative stage of the investigation; rather the focus lies on the interview-based follow-up, and the quantitative phase is primarily used to classify participants into meaningful clusters with relation to certain variables. Nevertheless, in the current study, the two stages are given equal priority, and quantitative and qualitative results are meticulously presented.

6.2 Research Design

The present study, which spanned five months, implemented a sequential explanatory design. First, quantitative data were collected and analyzed for the purposes of testing relations among variables with a large sample of students, and identifying a percentage of those students who received the highest scores on the numerical scale. A subsequent qualitative data collection on the extreme cases (i.e. highly anxious students) was added in order to make some decisions on the reasons why that specific group of students deviated significantly from the rest. Thus, the quantitative results, which were based on a probability sample, guided the purposive sampling of participants for the qualitative study. Patton (1990, p. 169) rationalized that "the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth". A further function of the quantitative results was to extract key themes that could form the basis for the interview guide of the qualitative study. Table 1 visually displays the explanatory design procedures.

Table 1 Visual diagram of explanatory design procedures (adapted from Ivankova and Creswell 2009)

Phase	Procedure	Product
Quan[a] data	• N = 128 • FLCAS • Background questionnaire	Numeric data
Quan analysis	• Descriptive statistics • Factor analysis • Correlations • SPSS software	• Means, SDs • Factor loadings • Correlation • Coefficients
Connecting quan and qual[b] phases	Purposefully selecting 13 participants	N = 13 (highly anxious students)
Qual data	Individual interviews	Text data (interview transcripts)
Qual analysis	• Thematic analysis • Coding form	Codes and categories
Mixing of the quan and qual results	Explanation of the quan results based on qual findings	Conclusion

a Quantitative
b Qualitative

6.3 Participants

128 EFL students enrolled in general English classes in two private language schools in Greece participated in the quantitative phase of this project. All informants were adults; the average age was 24.12. There were 44 male and 84 female students. All of them gave their consent to participating. The minimum length of exposure to English was two years with a maximum length of eight years. The participating students' proficiency level ranged from B1 to C2 (in CEFR[1] standards, from lower intermediate to upper advanced). As far as the qualitative phase is concerned, 13 students were interviewed.

6.4 Instruments

6.4.1 The Questionnaire

LA was operationalized by an adapted FLCAS, which contained 29 items. Even though FLCAS is not in its entirety related to speaking anxiety, previous research has shown that, given its strong association with second language speaking achievement, it measures "anxiety primarily related to speaking situations" (Aida 1994, p. 163). Using the FLCAS in their study of the speaking and writing components of classroom LA, Cheng et al. (1999) also concluded that the FLCAS is an instrument focusing particularly on speaking anxiety.

In the present study, test anxiety items included in the original questionnaire were eliminated due to lack of consistency with the research purpose; the focal point of the study was to measure the effects of peer pressure on LA during EFL lessons. Moreover, items related to interaction with native speakers were also excluded, because they refer to hypothetical situations that do not occur in the participating English language classrooms. In this study, the term 'foreign language' used in the original FLCAS was replaced by 'English language'. For instance, the original FLCAS item "I feel confident when I speak in my foreign language class" was modified to "I feel confident when I speak in my English language class".

The questionnaire was answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total classroom anxiety score was derived by summing the students' responses to respective items. Positively worded items, such as "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English language classes" and "I feel confident when I speak in my English language class", were reversed and recoded. The instrument was proved to be highly reliable (.91). The descriptive statistics for the FLCAS are summarized in Table 2.

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[1] *Common European framework of references for languages* (Council of Europe 2001).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for the FLCAS

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
FLCAS	33	165	69.3	16.5

6.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Multivariate statistics, and in particular factor analysis, were applied to the FLCAS. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was selected for the intraconstruct examination of the FLCAS in order to identify those components that best defined the anxiety measure. Further, correlation coefficients check was computed to examine the relationships among the overall FLCAS and its subcomponents. The data were entered into and analyzed through SPPS version 16.0 for statistical analysis.

6.4.3 The Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 participants on the basis of an interview protocol. Typically, a semi-structured interview "is one where the interviewer has a clear picture of the topics that need to be covered (and perhaps even a preferred order for these) but is prepared to allow the interview to develop in unexpected directions where these open up important new areas" (Richards 2009, p. 186). The researcher knew that she would need to identify key areas and compare the students' experiences of these. An element of structure was therefore important. On the other hand, a general picture was unlikely to reveal the undercurrents of feelings, expectations, opinions, and so on that would help her understand the reasons for what was happening. For this she decided that she needed more open questions to allow students the freedom to bring to the surface aspects of their experience that would otherwise remain hidden. For these reasons, the researcher opted for semi-structured interviews.

6.4.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

The data were analyzed combining deductive and inductive approaches (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Strauss 1987). By applying a categorical scheme suggested by the quantitative analysis of the students' questionnaires, as well as existing frameworks from the literature (e.g. Horwitz et al. 1986; Aida 1994; MacIntyre et al. 1997; Kitano 2001; Mak 2011), a deductive approach was utilized as a means of data triangulation and of comparison of students' views on EFL speaking anxiety against the norms established in relevant research. On the other hand, given that qualitative data analysis should be dialectical and not just an application of the theory (Lincoln and Guba 1985), an inductive approach was also adopted for the present study in order to identify additional themes that are meaningful to the

interviewees with regards to the topic under investigation. The data was coded in two stages: (a) first-level coding, where codes were created, revised, and defined, and (b) pattern (second-level) coding, which allowed the researcher to group the already identified codes into manageable sets (Miles and Huberman 1994).

7 Results

RQ1: Does LA relate to speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation?

To address this research question, the FLCAS was first subjected to exploratory principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Table 3 shows the item loadings on FLCAS1. The number of components to be extracted was guided by the scree plot and a three-component solution, accounting for 42.51 % of the total variance, was selected. The first component (FLCAS1) consisted of twelve items accounting for 18.5 % of the total variance. Most of these items seem to share a feeling of speaking anxiety caused by low perceived self-efficacy (e.g. "I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am"), and fear of negative evaluation by the peers (e.g. "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in English"), thereby signifying that fear of negative evaluation and the emerging anxiety about speaking in English form an integral part of LA. This factor was labeled *Speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation*.

In addition, the Pearson product-moment correlation was computed between the overall FLCAS and FLCAS1. The correlation coefficient equaled $r = 0.91$ ($p < 0.05$), which indicated a significant and high positive relationship between LA and speaking anxiety. Thus, the tendency was that the higher an individual's

Table 3 Item loadings on FLCAS1 *Speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation*

Items	Factor loadings
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my English language class	.668
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do	.664
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in English	.651
I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes	.644
I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am	.639
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in my English language class	.602
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English language class	.599
I feel confident when I speak in my English language class	.529
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class	.524
I worry about the consequences of failing my English language class	.482
I often feel like not going to my English language class	.407
I don't worry about making mistakes in my English language class	.340

Table 4 Conceptualization of fear of negative evaluation by Greek EFL learners

Fear of negative evaluation
1. By the peers
1.1 Fear of facing derision
1.1.1 Mistakes
1.1.2 Group membership
2. By the teacher
2.1 Mismatch between great efforts, unexpected outcomes, and teacher expectations
2.2 Lack of lexis and structures—Low ability to communicate
2.3 Error correction

speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, the higher his or her anxiety in the EFL classroom.

RQ2: How do Greek EFL learners conceptualize their fear of negative evaluation?

This research question was addressed by considering the students' responses to the interview questions. Fear of negative evaluation by the peers and by the teacher was reported to occur while practicing speaking in class. Table 4 below illustrates the findings regarding the interviewees' beliefs on the nature of their fear of negative evaluation.

As evidenced in Table 4, fear of facing derision by fellow students resulting from the possibility of making a mistake was a widely attested source of fear of negative evaluation that influences how often learners choose to communicate in English in class:

> I am afraid of being laughed at. Also I don't like being judged by my classmates. And that's the reason why I never speak in class unless I am absolutely certain that what I am going to say is correct.

Furthermore, due to a potential fear of appearing foolish, certain participants reported that they tended to study more in order to avoid mistakes during speaking activities. The following extract is typical in illustrating this point.

> I know that, if I make a mistake, they will laugh at me. So, I try to study harder to prove myself. I don't like being laughed at.

The potential of group membership to provoke anxiety was noted by the most anxious student of this cohort. As a self-aware language learner, this student was confronted with the fact that fellow students will perceive her differently from the way they perceive themselves. Specifically, the student was perceived by others as being "too foreign" for their native group:

> My teacher tells me that I am good at speaking, and that I have a good accent which sounds American. However, I feel embarrassed whenever I speak because the other students make fun of me sometimes. For example, I pronounce the word *the* as /ðə/ and not as /ðiː/ and the others make fun of this, because they think it sounds too American. And it was the teacher who started all this by commenting on my pronunciation in front of the whole class.

This comment also demonstrates that the teacher may inadvertently create an atmosphere of inter-learner evaluation in the EFL classroom.

The fear of being negatively evaluated by the teacher mainly stemmed from incongruence between students' efforts to improve their competence in the language and the probability that unanticipated outcomes of the learning process would interfere with teacher expectations. Students disliked the idea that their teachers might think less of them and were overwhelmed by the fear of disappointing them. Additionally, the inability of successfully communicating personally meaningful messages to the teachers was also viewed as a factor ensuing a possible fear of negative evaluation. Some students felt that they are not being understood by their teacher when they speak in class due to lack or inaccurate use of input, and subsequently felt that their teachers will consider them poor communicators in the L2.

As far as error correction and fear of negative evaluation are concerned, this was presented with the following oxymoron: on the one hand, the interviewees stressed the importance of error correction while speaking and felt that it constitutes a constructive aspect of the language learning process. On the other hand, they believed that their teachers told them off by correcting their mistakes in the oral output. For several students, error correction was discouraging as well as indicative of lack of knowledge and of the potential to fulfill teachers' expectations.

> Anxiety when speaking is my concern. When the teacher is correcting me, I feel I am not at the correct level for the class and that I can't produce exactly what my teacher wants.

The influence that fear of negative evaluation by teachers exerts on learners is clearly revealed through the interview excerpt attached below. Interestingly, one of the interviewees admitted having adopted the following tactic in order to reduce the amount of fear of negative evaluation experienced as a result of the teacher's presence in class.

> I really fear making mistakes, not because I've made a mistake and that means that I haven't studied enough, but rather because I tremble from my teacher's reaction to it. I know that my teacher calls on us in a predictable order and I know when it is my turn to speak. For example, when we are working on a gap fill exercise with twelve gaps to complete, I know I'm number ten. So I read that question again and again to make sure that I can give as accurate an answer as possible, but I ignore everything else that goes on in the classroom at that time.

RQ3: Do their self-perceptions of EFL speaking performance influence their LA?

In order to address this research question, the student interviews were again taken into consideration. The findings showed that the students' anxiety level was higher as they perceived their performance in oral tasks to be less competent than that of their peers. A summary of the aspects of self-perceptions of oral ability is found in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Aspects of self-perceived oral ability of Greek EFL learners

Self-perceptions of EFL speaking ability
1. Competitiveness
2. Peer pressure
3. Teacher high status

First, negative self-perceptions were shown to produce a spirit of competitiveness among students. Students initially appeared unwilling with reference to the pragmatic choice and use of the word 'competitiveness' to denote their desire to come top of the class. Nonetheless, they soon realized that their LA increased as they thought of themselves as less proficient and, thus, incapable of competing with their peers.

> When I speak English in class, I have to think if I've used the grammar and vocabulary correctly. It's difficult to clearly say what you want to say in English as you are used to speaking Greek most of the time. And my anxiety doubles because I am in a classroom with other students and I have to speak in front of them. I have to think of what I'll say in front of people who might be stronger students than I am. I wouldn't call it competitiveness, but students should be of an equal level of proficiency and should have similar abilities. Is this possible? No, no, I am competitive, because I don't want other students to perform better than me.

Second, peer pressure as a social force exerted by strong group members was indicated as a source of LA. Students admitted trying to resemble those classmates whom they perceived as more capable learners than themselves:

> The peers can be a bit of a snob and you know that they are stronger students than you actually are. So, you try to be like them, but by the time you realize that that's not possible, your feelings of anxiety overwhelm you.

Finally, the view of the teacher as an authoritative figure and as the only fluent speaker of the target language in the classroom made students hesitant to speak EFL and lowered their self-perceived speaking ability:

> I see my teacher as my boss. When I know I am seeing someone who is superior to me and I know that I will be judged by the way I'll answer his/her questions, I get nervous. I am not self-confident and I feel that my level of English is low.

8 Discussion and Pedagogic Implications

8.1 The Relationship Between LA, Speaking Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation

This study found that speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation were a source of LA in EFL classrooms in Greece, a result that corroborates previous research (Horwitz et al. 1986; Young 1990; Aida 1994; Cheng et al. 1999; Kitano 2001;

Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Mak 2011). The items included in FLCAS1 indicated students' apprehension in speaking English in class, fear of facing derision owing to making errors in front of other students, and comparison among them. Horwitz et al. (1986) have suggested that LA is related to fear of negative evaluation. This study, however, reveals that there is not just a link between speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, but rather that the two possibly describe one distinct student classroom reaction when learning EFL.

One possible reason for this finding could be the participating students' level of proficiency in English which ranged from lower intermediate (B1) to upper advanced (C2). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, p. 111) posited that as "experience and proficiency increase, anxiety declines in a fairly consistent manner". However, the present study indicates the opposite. Students who have already acquired a certain amount of knowledge at the lower levels (i.e. A1 and A2) are ashamed of making a mistake on any of the simple target structures taught and learned at an earlier stage. Therefore, students with low self-esteem but high fear of negative evaluation are more vulnerable to being exposed when speaking English. At the same time, teachers' reactions to mistakes at these levels of EFL learning may also be stronger. It is likely that some teachers might not be as tolerant of mistakes as teachers at the lowest levels, but on the contrary set higher expectations for their students as the levels progress. Additionally, taking into account the curricular standards for B1 classes and above, EFL students are expected to produce more authentic-like language and not restrict themselves to the production of formulaic sentences and structures. This could also explain the rise in students' fear of negative evaluation since they are aware of the increase in the difficulty of instruction and in the performance standards set for them.

The findings of the study also suggest that teachers should be encouraged to reduce their students' fear of negative evaluation by first identifying those learners with a disposition to LA and to a strong fear of negative evaluation. Praise and pair work or small group work could be frequently incorporated into lesson periods for the purposes of having effective language sessions with the students and creating a sense of community in the classroom. One-to-one tutorials with each student outside class would also allow anxious learners to express their negative emotions and at the same time feel that their tutors are empathetic with their needs. Tutorials could then help teachers better respond to students' EFL communication apprehension in class and think of measures to take to build a positive learning environment.

8.2 The Relationship Between LA and Self-Perceived Oral Performance

This study revealed that low self-perceptions of speaking ability in the EFL classroom caused higher levels of LA about speaking, a result that is consistent

with the extant literature (Bailey 1983; Price 1991; MacIntyre et al. 1997; Kitano 2001; Woodrow 2006). In particular, peer pressure, competitiveness among peers, and teacher status were found to be the components of self-perceived oral ability of Greek EFL learners. Instructed language learning involves performing in front of a teacher and fellow students. Therefore, it is inevitable that EFL learners evaluate their performance, achievement and success in comparison to other students. The intervention of the teacher is vital here, too. In order to reduce anxiety triggered by social comparison among students, teachers should encourage them to work together before focusing on an oral activity as a whole class. Students should feel that they know each other very well and can support each other through peer-seeking. Along with these steps taken by the teachers, language school principals should consider grouping students in accordance with their level of proficiency to avoid huge competence differences between peers in the same class. This means carefully predefining criteria for divisions among levels and groups, and accommodating new-comers appropriately.

Another possible explanation could be that anxious EFL learners who perceive themselves as poor students may not have managed to acquire the input taught and, consequently, make mistakes during the output stages of learning. Individual study plans on appropriate study methods for each student based on his/her aims and needs should be implemented in EFL classes. Diary or journal logs could also be kept and examined as a record of students' opinions on their progress in EFL and on the weaknesses or constraints encountered. By making themselves aware of their students' needs, EFL teachers can help anxious students to develop effective study skills and learning strategies.

However, a crucial point should be made here: students' self-perceived abilities do not necessarily reflect their actual abilities. This statement is valid especially for highly anxious learners with a low sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. These students tend to underestimate their capacities and consider themselves inferior to their fellows. Instilling in students the idea that all classmates attend EFL lessons for the same purpose and undergo the same difficulties would be a first step to be taken to reduce feelings of negative self-image.

9 Conclusion

This study focused on issues pertaining to speaking anxiety in EFL learning in Greece. Speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation were found to highly and significantly correlate with LA. Specifically, fear of negative evaluation was caused by the peers and by the teacher. The former took the form of fear of facing derision due to mistakes and group membership. By contrast, the latter was conceptualized as a result of not meeting teachers' expectations, of poor communication skills in the L2, and of error correction. Finally, self-perceived L2 oral proficiency also interacted with LA. A strong interplay emerged between

competitiveness, peer pressure, teacher high status, and students' self-perceptions about their oral ability.

It is hoped that these findings will urge EFL teachers to identify students prone to LA over speaking and provide an encouraging classroom atmosphere for them. Some potentially fruitful directions for future research could centre on exploring the relationships between speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived speaking competence through numerical scales. The teachers' perspective on students' feelings in connection with EFL speaking could also be examined. Classroom observations of teachers' practices could help towards this, followed by qualitative interviews or stimulated recall sessions to further investigate how teachers handle classroom situations that are anxiety-provoking for their students.

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Stability and Variability in Pre-Service Language Teachers' Beliefs

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Abstract Recent approaches to second language learning have focused on the role of individual differences, out of which beliefs seem increasingly to be drawing researchers' attention. While focus on teachers' beliefs has been theorized with regard to their definitions and content, there is a dearth of empirical research on beliefs as to how much changeable or unchangeable they can be. The study to be presented examines stability and variability of two pre-service language teachers' beliefs—a very motivated student who intends to become a professional language teacher and an unmotivated one who has joined language teaching studies in order to learn foreign languages, with no intention of becoming a professional teacher. The focus of the study was on both generic and domain beliefs, the former comprising the perception of different aspects of the teaching profession in general, whereas the latter presenting the subjects' opinions on three language subsystems (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation). The study was a longitudinal one lasting almost 3 years, and the data obtained within that time comes from the use of the following qualitative research instruments: the subjects' narrative accounts, their choice of metaphors, mind-mapping, diaries on their teaching practice, interviews and the researcher's observations. The results showed that the change on some of the beliefs did occur, although there were areas where the beliefs changed very insignificantly.

1 Introduction

The study of beliefs—what participants in the learning/teaching process think, know, and believe—has become a key theme in the field of language teacher education. This is so because beliefs are central to the process of understanding

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teaching, and the beliefs teachers hold usually affect what they do in their class-rooms. To improve their teaching, teachers should often investigate and modify their beliefs. Most large-scale research on teacher cognition has been conducted in English-as-a-second-language countries, and though the findings have important implications for teacher education, most cannot be directly applied to the present Polish context due to differences in social conditions. The bulk of the research conducted so far has focused on examining beliefs as static, collected at one point in time and assumed to be maintained indefinitely. Such an approach is insensitive to the context of given beliefs or their dynamism, and is what this paper attempts to rectify. Focusing on two pre-service language teachers, it aims to show that beliefs are related to contextual experience, and may be not as stable as is usually assumed.

2 Theoretical Foundations

Analyzing extant research studies on language teachers' beliefs, four strands seem to come to the fore:

1. There exists a diversity of terms, many of which stand for seemingly the same concepts: beliefs, kinds of knowledge, conceptions, attitudes, intuitions, opinions, ideas, philosophies, personal (subjective) theories, etc. (Benson 2001; Barcelos 2006; Borg 2006). To make things more complicated, many papers focusing on learning and teaching do not address beliefs explicitly, yet the notion of belief can be implicit. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to separate research on, for example, attitudes from studies on beliefs, because the theories of attitudes, attributions and motivations all accommodate aspects of belief.

2. There exists a number of possible categorizations of beliefs and belief systems. Hence, we can talk about global beliefs, central beliefs, peripheral beliefs, generic beliefs, domain-specific beliefs, subject matter beliefs, ontological beliefs, epistemic beliefs, epistemological beliefs, espoused beliefs, etc. (Borg 2006; Bernat 2009).

3. There exists a multiplicity of references to mainstream educational rather than language acquisition concepts (e.g. beliefs regarding maintaining student motivation, classroom management, planning a lesson, learning strategies, promoting autonomy, the notion of a good learner) (White 2008; Crookes 2009). Although all these aspects assume a significant role in language acquisition research, most could refer to learning or teaching any other subject matter as well.

4. Almost all studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs emphasize the importance of the respondents' prior experiences (Richardson 2003; Borg 2009).

3 The Study

In the study to be presented, *belief* is defined as an individual's subjective knowledge, with a strong emotional component. Such a definition is consistent with a constructivist perspective. The affective component influences a person's behavior (e.g. someone who finds certain grammatical structures difficult as a result of stressful experiences will probably dislike using those structures), and if this person further confirms what the researcher has observed (i.e. reluctance to use certain grammatical structures), then we are provided with a window for accessing the subject's true beliefs or their possible changes.

3.1 Aims

The aim of the study was to examine the development of two pre-service language teachers' beliefs with regard to *generic beliefs* (those embracing aspects related to learning and teaching in general, irrespective of the subject matter) vs. *domain beliefs* (those focusing on areas typical of language learning and teaching), as well as *central beliefs* (those characteristic of a person, influencing his or her thinking in one direction, like an approach) vs. *peripheral ones* (those appearing in a person's thinking occasionally, like a technique borrowed from a method but not adhered to as a general practice). As far as generic beliefs are concerned, for the sake of this chapter, the focus of attention was primarily placed on the changing perception of the teacher (role, teaching style, etc.) whereas with the domain beliefs it was the three subsystems (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) that were regularly monitored. In addition, it was of interest to the researcher whether the subjects viewed native-speaker teachers as in any way superior to non-native ones, and what conception of language (if any) they had. With regard to central beliefs, most emphasis was laid on exploring the issue of autonomy, while peripheral beliefs stood for all the other convictions that the subjects felt strongly about. Moreover, due to the selection of the research participants, the study hoped to find out whether or not any relationship between beliefs and a pre-service teacher's motivation to become a teacher could be spotted. In other words, four principal questions guided this research study:

1. Which beliefs can be changed and which cannot?
2. When do beliefs change?
3. What factors stimulate the change of beliefs?
4. Is there any relationship between beliefs and pre-service teachers' motivation?

3.2 Participants

Two subjects—Anna and Kinga (pseudonyms), students of English philology,[1] were recruited for the study. Both are the same age, and both, according to their university lecturers, are considered good language students, fond of voicing their own opinions. Despite these similarities, variation appeared in terms of motivation for the choice of studies: Anna has always wanted to become a professional language teacher, and the local university was her first choice, whereas Kinga joined the language studies program located closest to her home after failing to be accepted in the legal department at Warsaw University and being encouraged by her mother to study two languages free of charge. Both students were informed about the research and expressed their consent to it.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

The study has consisted of four stages: the stage of entering the teacher-training institution, the stage after completing theoretical input on language learning and teaching, the stage after internship at schools, and the stage at graduation. For data triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln 2009), data from complementary sources were used at each stage: classroom observations, keeping a researcher's diary, interviews with students and other teachers about the students' work and behaviors during other classes, analyzing their products (tests, tasks performed, choice of metaphors), and above all the students' narratives on different aspects of language learning and teaching. With hindsight, it can be said that for this study, which is focused on tracking changes, the most useful approach proved to be narrative inquiry, both written and spoken. Used widely in the field of applied linguistics to investigate motivation (Norton Pierce 1995; Schumann 1997), identity (Reis 2011), or teacher subjectivities (Werbińska 2011a), narrative inquiry can be very helpful in examining learners' beliefs, and instrumental in understanding who the subjects are and how they change over a period of time, allowing individual voices to be heard (Benson 2005). Constant observation of the subjects' behaviors, keeping notes in the researcher's diary, and then verification of the ideas with the subjects also proved to be invaluable. Table 1 presents a list of all the research tools used throughout the entire study.

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[1] According to *Common European framework of reference for* languages, the subjects' level of language advancement at the inception of the study was B1+ in English and A2 in German.

Table 1 Research instruments

Stage	Research instruments
1. Beliefs held on entering the teacher-training institution	Language learning autobiography
	Metaphors
	Narratives on a good teacher, herself as a learner, a language teaching method
	Observation and researcher's diary
2. Beliefs after receiving theoretical input	Spontaneous opinions on language subsystems
	Metaphors
	Narratives on their language learning and teaching philosophies
	Observation and researcher's diary
3. Beliefs after the school teaching practice	Analysing the students' diaries on teaching practice
	Analysing lesson plans
	Observing the students' lessons
	Metaphors
	Observation and researcher's diary
4. Beliefs around graduation time	Narratives on the students' language learning and teaching philosophies
	Interviews
	Observation and researcher's diary
	Discussing the students' readiness for the teaching job with their other teachers

3.4 Data Analysis

In a longitudinal study like the one described here a great deal of data accumulates from the outset. This is why, it is easy to lose one's track, failing to remember what each piece of data signifies and how it relates to the overall study. To keep track of the data collected, below I present my data analysis steps, which in the main rely on categorical content analysis and the constant comparative method. The steps are inspired by Richards' (2003, p. 272) aspects of case study data analysis and in my project embrace: (a) collecting the data, (b) selecting the issues of investigation (teacher/learner and language subsystems) and thinking about the data in relation to them, (c) coding and categorizing the obtained data, (d) noting the emerging themes within the selected areas, and (e) connecting the themes to concepts and theories that may help to explain them.

3.5 Results

As a result of conducting the study the following findings have been obtained.

Stage 1 (February 2009)
The objective of Stage 1 was to obtain insight into what beliefs were held by the pre-service teachers on entering the teacher-training institution.

Anna

Teacher and learner
Anna claims that teaching is her dream job. What fascinates her is the power
wielded by the teacher, on whom so much depends. She gives the metaphor of a
teacher as a "sailboat" that can change with the wind, sometimes putting the
learner into motion and sometimes stopping him from development. The learner
assumes the role of a "sponge", which can absorb knowledge, but whether it will
absorb it or not depends to a great extent on the teacher.

The perception of subsystems
Vocabulary. She mentions learning by heart, the ability to write and pronounce
words properly, the ability to check words in the dictionary in order to understand
them well.
   Grammar. She points to patience, the importance of theory gained from reading
boring and complicated books, and learning structures by heart. She is of the
opinion that the native language can make learning grammar difficult, but games
can make this process easier. She also mentions that the more often learners hear
and use structures, the better they assimilate them.
   Pronunciation. Stress on speaking on the part of students can positively
influence their pronunciation. She says that listening to native speakers is indis-
pensable, and teachers have to introduce a lot of pronunciation exercises in order
to control learners' accents. She mentions a dictionary as a good resource to be
used in case of doubt about how to pronounce a word.

Researcher's comments
Anna seems to hold quite traditional views on language learning and teaching. Her
references to the power held by the teacher, the memorization of words and
grammar rules, and the image of a native speaker influencing the learner's accent
well testify to this. She seems to be dedicated to becoming an English teacher, and
it can be sensed that her "transmissive" orientation is perceived by her as the
proper one. Nothing can be said about her autonomous inclinations at this stage.

Kinga

Teacher and learner
On entering the university, Kinga claims that teaching is akin to Sisyphean labour,
because teachers invest a lot of effort, but most learners are "resistant" to
knowledge and question almost anything. She says that all learners realize the
supremacy of the teacher and adds that teachers should know learners' names,
possess the ability to listen to pupils, have a lot of knowledge, and encourage
students to communicate. Teachers should not overcorrect students, have favorite
pupils, or abuse their power over the others, which seems to be a serious problem.

The perception of subsystems
Vocabulary. She names different parts of speech, mentions dictionaries and books
with pictures, but also the influence teacher and school have on the development of
vocabulary and the factor of time spent on learning words at school and at home.

Grammar. She associates learning and teaching grammar with doing tests and constant checking of one's correctness in using tense or structure. She is aware of productive and receptive knowledge of grammar.

Pronunciation. Looking in the research data for her beliefs on pronunciation, one finds references to accents, drills, repetition, and a general ambiguity of this subsystem for learners.

Researcher's comments

Kinga seems to sympathize with the teacher's situation. In her opinion, there is a divide between teacher and students, and she tries to find some reasons why this is so. It is especially surprising, considering her stage of education, that she enumerates desirable qualities of a language teacher corresponding to the ones found in the literature. The perception of the language subskills, although typical of most students, is interesting in the fact that she mentions the teacher's contribution, school, and the time devoted to learning vocabulary as crucial, and can already distinguish the difference between productive and receptive knowledge of grammar. She seems to be unwilling to perform a teacher's job, and certain remarks on language subsystems may point to wider horizons than most of her peers, non-conventionality of thinking or fledgling awareness of autonomy to be confirmed or disconfirmed later.

All in all, the results from Stage 1 are as follows:

1. On entering college, students demonstrate a rather traditional image of a teacher or unwillingness to perform this job in the future.
2. A traditional Chomskyan image of a native speaker is still an object of admiration.
3. There are no well-developed ideas on the concept of what language is.
4. There are no clear signs of autonomy.

Stage 2 (February 2010)

The objective of Stage 2 was to see whether the theoretical input obtained in courses dealing with language teaching methodology, acquisition of language, or glottodidactics in any way affected the subjects' beliefs.

Anna

Teacher and learner

After two academic terms, Anna claims that it is the teacher who has the greatest influence on pupils in terms of their development (as regards primary school), social education (as regards lower secondary school), and even personality (as regards upper secondary school). This time the metaphor offered is that of a "treasure with lots of linguistic knowledge" on which her authority and the pupils' gratitude are built. She still wants to teach English to children, claiming that she has a lot of patience and is impressed at the way children can show their gratitude to a teacher for what they have learnt.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. There is still room for learning words by heart and looking them up in a dictionary, but she also names "the mind-mapping technique", word notebooks, vocabulary games, and learning via interaction in the classroom. Such phrases as "words in everyday usage", "words worked out from context", and "using new words" occur in her accounts.

Grammar. She is of the opinion that grammar should be taught via exercises (gap exercises being the best ones) and frequently tested because this is the best way to improve language awareness. However, she claims that grammar can be very confusing for students, and "the distance from the input students receive to their correct output is a long one". She uses the same sentence from Stage 1, that "the more often learners use or hear a structure, the better they are at using it".

Pronunciation. In Anna's view, pronunciation can be taught in an interesting way, but a lot depends on the teacher. The teacher should not spend the whole lesson on teaching pronunciation, but incorporate it into reading or speaking activities. She is of the opinion that it is better to teach students only the most difficult aspects of pronunciation for Poles, rather than all sounds in the target language, adding that errors should be corrected explicitly by the teacher because pronunciation will not take care of itself. She also mentions that using stress or intonation should be considered as important by teachers as the correct pronouncing of vowels or consonants.

Researcher's comments

After getting acquainted with theoretical input, Anna has somewhat modified her views on the role of the teacher; in addition to being very influential, the teacher now wins authority due to her linguistic knowledge. Anna demonstrates her newly gained methodological knowledge, which is incorporated in her enumeration of vocabulary learning techniques. She is more reflective on grammar learning and teaching than in Stage 1; she also uses more terminology, and in the phrases connected with "using the language" the communicative aspect seems to emerge now. She is also more reflective than before as far as pronunciation is concerned, presenting the so-called common-sense attitude to pronunciation when saying that not all aspects can be taught, and it is important to concentrate on those most necessary for effective communication. Her statements also reflect the knowledge gained from reading methodology books (Bowen and Marks 1994, pp. 59–74), so it is impossible to say whether the student really thinks like this. All in all, the communication strand is more present now than in Stage 1, but teacher-centeredness is still noticeable. Not much can be said about the student's treatment of autonomy at this stage.

Kinga

Teacher and learner

The teacher is the one who communicates and makes the learner aware, the one who should convey knowledge in such a way that the learner understands. She might consider becoming a professional teacher, providing she improved her language skills.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. On the second occasion of discussing her views on vocabulary, she names more activities, specifies the kind of dictionaries to use, differentiates the vocabulary in terms of the learner's language advancement, and does not use as many grammatical terms with regard to vocabulary as before. She believes that increasing the vocabulary range is the best way of acquiring a language.

Grammar. Kinga treats grammar as a language element in which teacher is superior to learner. She still associates grammar with many tests, but indicates they can be differently designed. The use of professional terms such as "teacher's input" and "learners' output", "noticing", "spoken grammar", or "comprehension and acceptability" dominate, but there are also more subjective metaphor-like definitions, e.g. "learner's nightmare", all endowed with examples.

Pronunciation. Her second attempt at providing associations with pronunciation contains more proper sentences, such as "Pronunciation will not take care of itself" and "It is important to teach only the things that are the most difficult". She stresses that there must be time for teaching it by introducing different pronunciation exercises and making frequent use of dictionaries. She believes that teaching pronunciation from the beginning can make students not only language learners but also language users.

Researcher's comments

A slight change in Kinga's attitude to the language teaching profession is noticeable, probably due to her coincidentally starting to give private lessons. There are hardly any references to the hardships of the teaching profession. She still maintains that teaching words should be adjusted to the learner's age and cognitive development. Now she knows that there exist many "nice and pleasant" techniques that are helpful in developing learners' vocabulary stock. The student uses terminology from methodological classes, and it is important that she does not confine herself to presenting popular opposites, e.g. correct vs. incorrect (so often used in terms of talking about grammar), but introduces professional jargon, e.g. "comprehension" and "acceptability", "noticing", and "spoken grammar." The use of examples testifies that she knows what these terms mean. Considering grammar a "nightmare", she sympathizes with the learner. As to pronunciation, Kinga presents almost the same opinions as the other student. This means that certain beliefs are due to the methodological input received from their teacher, maybe believed at the rhetorical level only. She still believes in the role of teaching pronunciation.

To sum up the results from the data at Stage 2:

1. Theoretical knowledge can influence what the subjects claim with regard to language subsystems.
2. Unwillingness to perform the teacher's job can be somewhat softened due to starting to teach in student-selected friendly contexts.
3. No definite conclusions can be drawn from the students' behaviors as to the native speaker's supremacy, autonomy, or the conception of language.

Stage 3 (October 2010)

The purpose of Stage 3 of the study was to find out how much the students' opinions changed after 1 month of teaching practice. It was expected that this "practical" phase of the project would prove the most remarkable in shifting the teacher candidates' orientations toward teaching.

Anna

Teacher and learner

For Anna, the teacher becomes a "guide" who does not show everything to pupils, but leads them to self-discover the best knowledge. Nonetheless, the teacher's role is powerful—a good teacher can make a good lesson only with the help of a register book. But now in most accounts (diaries, interviews, researcher's observations) there appear references to her disappointment concerning the insecurity of obtaining a post as a language teacher in Poland. On a number of occasions, she demonstrates her criticism of teacher employment policies that no longer depend on applicants' qualifications or professional ambitions.[2] She is very disappointed when she cannot plan and conduct her lessons in the way she would like to but instead has to follow her mentor's recommendations slavishly, even to the point of using the prescribed grammar examples. Learners are presented in rather idealistic ways—there are hardly any complaints about their lack of discipline or unwillingness to work. In the diaries she often mentions how grateful they can be for her kind of teaching, and this seems the most important to her.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. Vocabulary is perceived now in communicative aspects—she claims that the wider vocabulary stock a learner has, the more freedom in communication he or she enjoys. She also perceives a rub-off effect of vocabulary on reading when she says that without the knowledge of vocabulary, reading becomes more difficult or simply impossible. As to learning vocabulary, memorization seems to be the best technique. Strangely enough, she makes a distinction between words of British and American origin.

   Grammar. Grammar is associated with the grammar translation method. She seems to be against the traditional perception of grammar boiling down to learning by heart the principles of using language structures. Being full of exceptions, grammar as a language subsystem appears complex and often challenging for many a student, and this is why, in her opinion, it does not reflect what language

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[2] Teachers of different subjects requalify on an unprecedented scale and become language teachers, which prevents young graduates from securing a language teaching post. Anna's mentor of language teaching practice was a German teacher who, like Anna, was to finish her BA in English studies in a year's time but at a private school known for low-quality teaching and learning (students are said to pay high fees but, for example, if they prefer, can take end-of-term examinations in their native language). Holding a BA from such a school is enough for the German teacher to continue work and teach in English if there are too few hours for teaching German, thus blocking posts and preventing young teachers from getting jobs.

really is. She adds that teachers should not concentrate on grammar as the most important language factor, which is often the case in Polish schools.

Pronunciation. She perceives the importance of pronunciation, especially in learners considered advanced in the use of language. A teacher with improper pronunciation means learners having the same deficiencies in the future. According to her, this is the most frequently omitted aspect of language in Polish schools. She advocates using more recordings with authentic but, strangely enough, different pronunciation models and is very much against transferring pronunciation rules from one language onto another.

Researcher's comments

An interesting change of metaphor indicates that she has started to perceive the role of teacher in less traditional terms. The desire to conduct the lessons in her own way signals her autonomous orientation, but it is difficult to say whether this autonomous stance is due to her inability to have a say in the lessons or a shift in her orientation. Yet, the teacher's role as an authority, especially when she refers to learners' gratitude, can be still felt. Grammar is still perceived by her as the least "teachable", in the sense of being less interesting and more difficult than other subsystems. She still dreams about becoming a teacher, but the context of teaching somewhat diminishes her passion. She does not want to be a teacher who overuses teaching grammar in a very predictable and boring way but can secure a full-time job. It can be deduced that Anna's personal situation of difficulty in obtaining future work at school has resulted in her dislike of her mentor originally German teacher requalifying to be an English teacher and the mentor's grammar-oriented methods of teaching a language, which boils down to even greater dislike of grammar as a subsystem on the part of Anna. The communication strand, which surfaced in Stage 2, continues to be felt at Stage 3, and the choice of metaphor of teacher as guide evokes more learner agency than in previous stages. There appear some contradictions in the perception of pronunciation. On the one hand, she is very much in favor of the proper model, and we could only suppose it would stand as the pronunciation of an educated native speaker. On the other hand, she makes a statement about introducing different pronunciation models. Also, it may be the case that what appears as incongruent to the outsider is consistent to the belief holder. The "different models" of pronunciation can belong to peripheral beliefs in her belief system, although "the correct model" is for her supreme.

Kinga

Teacher and learner

For Kinga, the teacher is like a social worker who works with children who some-times can be malicious, aggressive, ill-behaved, and resistant to many of the methods deemed effective in methodological books. She also produces an image of a teacher who is overworked and drained of passion, especially due to mounting bureaucracy. During her internship she felt like a teacher although she did not think like a typical one—she knew that she was teaching for some time only, so she wanted to devote

herself to it as much as possible, but afterwards she was tired and exhausted. Learners' satisfaction, especially in those considered "difficult students", was motivating, but it was probably the only positive thing about being a teacher.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. With regard to vocabulary, Kinga points to endless possibilities of topics, and the fact that learners like vocabulary, provided it is presented in an accessible way. In her view, there exist many games connected with using dictionaries, and focusing on vocabulary enables learners to make their own dictionaries, thematic posters, etc., or take part in various kinds of projects.

Grammar. Kinga points to the difficulty of grammar, calling it "the Achilles heel for all learners". She is convinced that grammar can be taught in various ways, including songs, games, literary texts, and above all by discussing interesting topics. Yet, it requires frequent testing, and not everybody finds it easy to teach grammar in an enjoyable manner.

Pronunciation. She claims that pronunciation is difficult to teach because learners ignore it, or assert "it is good because we have always pronounced like this". She also points to various techniques of teaching and correcting pronunciation, but admits that teaching pronunciation requires a lot of lesson time.

Researcher's comments

Kinga still perceives the teaching job as a difficult one that, as she already felt in Stage 1, she would not like to do unless she had to. Sympathy with students and serious treatment of her duties made her perform the teacher's role well, although it is worth noting that she knew it would not last for too long. Of the three language subsystems, she seems to favor teaching vocabulary, and pointing to the multiplicity of techniques for teaching she indicates her ability to teach vocabulary in a varied and unpredictable way. In this way, she might be considered an independent teacher who has a lot of interesting teaching ideas at her disposal, not necessarily following the prescribed exercises from a course book.

It can be said, therefore, that the results of the data obtained after the school teaching practice suggest the following:

1. Field experience can undermine teacher candidates' motivation due to so-called "external constraints" (Anna) or hardship if a lot of energy is put into it (Kinga).
2. There appear new conceptions of the role of teacher ("a guide" and "a social worker").
3. Examples of autonomous thinking can be observed at this stage (i.e. desire to plan and conduct lessons in one's own way, student teacher's independent decision to focus on "difficult students", inventing vocabulary techniques).
4. There are premises to suppose that language is understood more like communication (i.e. pointing to communicative techniques) rather than like a system (i.e. presenting grammar in a traditional way).

Stage 4 (June 2011)

The objective of the last stage was to see what beliefs were held at the end of the Bachelor of Arts training, with a particular view to recording which still continued and which did not stand the test of time.

Anna

Teacher and learner

When asked to say with whom she identifies more—a teacher or a learner—Anna points to a teacher. She seems to be striving for linguistic perfection and claims that she is ashamed when she cannot remember a simple enough word, criticizing herself by saying: "A good teacher should know". She considers herself a person with good teaching potential, only inferior to a native speaker in accuracy of pronunciation, but possibly better at teaching grammar or vocabulary. Although she thinks that she believes in learner autonomy, she admits to disliking situations in which adult learners question her knowledge and lack of expertise when she gives them a choice of a lesson topic or a homework assignment. She has already abandoned making her private adult learner decide about learning assignments and, as a result, the learner is more satisfied with Anna's lessons.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary is definitely more enjoyable for her than teaching grammar. She enumerates vocabulary techniques, just as in Stage 2.

Grammar. Grammar continues to be the most difficult aspect of language. Anna associates it with doing boring exercises, but almost simultaneously expresses her concern connected with the difficulty of effectively teaching it in any other manner.

Pronunciation. Pronunciation is something that learners must learn. It can amount to a serious problem for adults, although it is not difficult for children once they are exposed to a good pronunciation model.

Researcher's comments

Anna seems to have returned to the stage of a successful teacher who is distinguished by excellent linguistic competence. She still considers herself a born teacher, and it is interesting that in comparisons with native-speaking teachers she considers herself more successful in some aspects of language teaching. Her dislike of grammar continues, but now she tends to look at grammar as a teacher concerned about teaching structures in the most interesting way. She may also be at the stage when autonomy is being weighed: she may even give it up altogether for the sake of maintaining her authority.

Apart from narratives, at Stage 4, which took place around the students' graduation time, the respondents were asked to define effective language teaching. It was interesting for the researcher to note whether or not their definitions would keep abreast of their views presented on other occasions. Below is the account of what Anna was to say about it:

> I think that the more students use the language, the better speakers they become. The use of target language is important. I think that nowadays teaching, for example projects, is very important because learners have an opportunity to think in an innovative way. For the end, I think that teachers, good teachers, should, let's say, commit themselves to learning, because I think the teacher's job is connected with constantly developing personal knowledge, so they can't just stop and not think about it. They must think about this knowledge.

Researcher's comments

Anna's views on effective language teaching have preserved some of their previous substance. She seems convinced of the "practice makes perfect" approach when she claims that the more a learner performs a certain aspect of language, the better he or she becomes at performing it. Clearly, the emotions concerning her school mentor teacher described in Stage 3 have left her, although her plea for lifelong learning and striving for perfection can be read as a criticism of low-quality teacher performance. Teaching via making projects seems to be her way of teaching, which apparently agrees with autonomous teaching, but lack of preparation for autonomy on the part of her private learners disturbs her so much that in the future, they may call in question her strong belief in its usefulness.

Kinga

Teacher and learner

When she gives lessons to her kindergarten-age brother, Kinga says that she identifies herself with being a teacher, always remembering to adjust her teacher behavior to particular learners. She thinks that she has an inborn ability to teach with which not everyone is equipped, and which consists in understanding children. She adds that during her teaching practice most of the pupils liked her very much, thanks to her empathy. She mentions the pleasure derived from working with difficult children, who can provide a great deal of challenge. She likes talking to pupils in their off-school time, because then she can get to know them as "whole persons". Having said so, she remarks that a lot of teachers are reluctant to talk to pupils after working hours because they are afraid of what to do with the knowledge they receive.

The perception of subsystems

Vocabulary. She finds learning vocabulary very useful in working on a foreign language (in addition to English and German, at the time of the study she was attending lessons in Spanish and Ukrainian). She likes learning and teaching vocabulary, especially through games, so often invented by her when teaching her younger brother. During her internship at school she made frequent use of dictionary games or English magazines.

Grammar. According to Kinga, grammar is the most difficult aspect of language, and probably this is why she has always disliked it in any of the languages she has studied.

Pronunciation. She is convinced that pronunciation should be attended to at school, and frequent practicing is needed. She would like to improve her own pronunciation, and her dream would be to speak like a native.

Researcher's comments

It can be said that memories of teaching practice are still vivid in Kinga's accounts after almost 1 year. Her learner-centeredness or references to the learner as the whole child echo Rogerian humanism. The language teacher in her has stepped aside and changed into a global teacher who can contribute to leveling up social injustices. Just as in Stage 2, she likes learning vocabulary, and the least liked language system is grammar. She perceives a native speaker's pronunciation as a good point of reference, although she is familiar with concepts of English as a lingua franca. When asked to present her definition of effective language teaching, she says:

> When I think about effective teaching I think about an autonomous learner and provoking learners' consciousness about learning a foreign language. I think that this state can be established by a teacher who is close to learners, who's conscious about their needs and wants, but on the other hand, I saw learners struggling with different activities when they were under teacher's pressure, and what comes to my mind is the fact that students learn properly when they are at ease, even relaxed—also when students are emotionally engaged in their learning process and when the teacher is trying to establish such an atmosphere that students can develop their abilities. Students must be confident about what they are learning and how they are learning. The foundation of both—teaching and learning—lies or concentrates on the person of a teacher who is an observer and a friend, who can easily explore students' strengths and deficiencies. The teacher should understand students, be conscious about their general knowledge, know that they also learn other subjects, not only language, but above all he should know what students should know and what aspects of students' learning are good for both—a particular student and a teacher.

Researcher's comments

Kinga's understanding of effective language teaching agrees with current trends. She comes up with the notion of an autonomous learner; she considers the context of learning, the learner's emotional engagement, and the significance of learning strategies. Kinga perceives the role of teacher as observer of learners, a confidant but also someone who must feel good with such an approach. The last observation, "what aspects are good for both—a particular student and a teacher", still reflects her conviction of teacher's hard work that probably she would not like to do.

In sum, it can be said that as a result of obtaining data from Stage 4, the following can be inferred:

1. Both student teachers claim with certainty that they have teaching potential.
2. They can maintain their teacher images gained after field working in which teacher authority derives from being, to use their metaphors, "a good language model" or "a social worker".
3. Autonomy can be at a risk when confronted with learners' lack of readiness to assume it.
4. Language tends to be viewed as communication with learners.
5. The native speaker's supremacy is still preserved in terms of pronunciation but less in the other subsystems.

4 Answers to the Research Questions

The study described here is a small-scale one, and in no way does it pretend to offer convincing arguments for the changeability or unchangeability of teachers' beliefs. It is hoped that notwithstanding this it can offer some insights or inspire more extensive studies on this topic. Therefore, the suggested answers to the research questions are only preliminary, and probably need some verification by studies of other learners' beliefs. Below I present what has been discovered so far from this longitudinal study.

Which beliefs can be changed and which cannot?
Even though the study has indicated that there might appear certain conditions accounting for the modifiability of certain beliefs, it can hardly be said that beliefs can or cannot be changed once and for all. Therefore, it is probably better to talk about a degree of belief change or its lack thereof. Generic beliefs related to the perception of the teacher, as shown in Table 2, point to high stability of thinking that good performance of the teaching job is within everybody's reach, rather high stability of considering the teaching profession as difficult, fairly high stability of regarding teacher's job in terms of wielding power, and low stability as to the traditional dichotomy of who is a better teacher—a native or a non-native speaker. The last point is especially interesting because the opinions might alter depending on the speaker's positioning—as a learner or as a teacher.

As to the beliefs at domain-specific levels, as depicted in Table 3, it seems that the perception of grammar as a most difficult language system to learn is immutable. The importance of using native-like pronunciation appears to assume fairly low stability, again depending on the speaker's positioning. The greatest degree of modifiability can be found in the statement about pronunciation being less important than other systems and somewhat more stability in considering the language as a system.

When do the beliefs change?
It seems that a superficial change takes place after experiencing theoretical input. It happened in Stage 2 when students used more terminology and new knowledge but, deep down, they seemed to believe more in those aspects that aligned with their previous beliefs. A more formative change takes place after the school internship, when students have had to act as real teachers.

What factors stimulate the change of beliefs?
Stimulants of the change in beliefs as observed in the subjects under investigation were principally two: receiving theoretical input and, above all, teaching practice. New information on the roles of teachers and learner as well as language skills presented in methodology classes slightly changed the students' views, at least at the rhetorical level. As a result, they used more precise language teaching terminology and considered more aspects than before in developing familiarity with this knowledge. Teaching practice, apart from other issues, was a source of

Table 2 Perception of teacher/learner beliefs

Belief	Stability (high/low)	Comments (name initials)
A person can become a good teacher if she or he wants	High stability	The person is convinced that she has a teaching talent (A, K). The belief can be slightly undermined as a result of unfair employment strategies or the necessity of conducting lessons in a prescribed way, but not changed completely (A)
The teaching profession is difficult	Rather high stability	Appears throughout the study although the student occasionally points to bright aspects of the profession (K)
Traditional understanding of teacher's job (teacher wields power in the classroom)	Fairly high stability	Can be modified when the communicative aspect of teaching is stressed and the subsequent role of teacher as organiser, facilitator, participant, etc. (A)
A native speaking teacher is the best teacher	Low stability	The change is possible if learners start considering themselves as language teachers rather than language learners (A)
Teachers can change things at school if they want to	Low stability	The belief can be undermined due to overwhelming bureaucracy and consequent teacher's exhaustion (K)

Table 3 Perception of grammar, pronunciation, and language

Belief	Stability (high/low)	Comments (name initials)
Grammar is difficult to learn	High stability	Appears throughout the study (A, K)
It is important to use native-like pronunciation	Fairly low stability	The belief can be changed at the declarative level because students want to show they know the latest trends or in situations in which they themselves are compared against native speakers, yet they would personally like to sound like native speakers (A, K)
Pronunciation is less important than other language systems	Low stability	The belief can be changed if student's attention is drawn to pronunciation (A, K)
Language is a system	Rather low stability	Despite exposing students to other meanings of language (as discourse, ideology, see Kumaravadivelu 2006, p. 3–15), thinking about language learning in terms of skills and syntactic and semantic systems prevails, but teaching it in terms of communication can start to take hold

experience generating emotions. Dealing with emotions turned out to be a far stronger change factor, because anger at school employment policies or sympathy with pupils from disadvantaged homes could undermine existing beliefs and even cause a complete turnabout in their thinking (a thought about the impossibility of getting a teaching post or about teaching English as a means of helping to redress social imbalances).

Is there a relationship between beliefs and pre-service teachers' motivation?
There seems to be a strong relationship between beliefs and pre-service teachers' motivation. Declaring her motivation to become a teacher, Anna consistently strove to achieve her goal from the moment she joined her studies. In terms of intensity her motivation to become a teacher did not fluctuate within the first 2 years of studying although some doubts appeared after her internship, caused by a strong likelihood of encountering employment problems, the insignificance of education or passion for teaching as a vital criterion of employing teachers, bureaucratization, and formality of teaching. It can be said, therefore, that motivation of "ideal L2 self" is subject to fluctuations under the influence of external factors and may slightly decrease as a result of the conflict of the student's vision with school realities.

Kinga's approach to teaching also agrees with Dőrnyei's (2009) conception of motivation. She did not want to become a teacher in the first place, and this viewpoint has never changed. It can be assumed that her motivation represented by "ought-to L2 self", caused by other people's suggestions, is a temporary one, an attractive option at a certain point in time. Yet, analyzing her beliefs, it can be said that some positive changes in her attitude about the teacher's job took place, especially when she found it challenging to work with "difficult" students. On the

other hand, the school reality seems too overwhelming to completely change her attitude to pro-teaching. Therefore, it can be said that her stability or slight fluctuation in beliefs ("I do not want to teach, because it is too hard a profession") is not logically but psychologically based.

5 Conclusions and Implications

All in all, it can be said that out of the two—generic and domain beliefs—the former are less prone to change, probably because they are very much connected with one's personality. Domain beliefs are easier to change under the influence of repetitive theoretical input, especially when it is presented by a person considered an authority or accompanied by an emotional experience.

Considering central and peripheral beliefs, peripheral beliefs can be changed more easily than central ones. A peripheral belief in the effectiveness of a particular teaching technique may question some other ones, but central beliefs concerning more serious aspects such as the perception of a teacher's profession may not be changed even over a two-year course of study. One reason for this might be the warrants that are offered for central beliefs, which can be deeply ingrained, or simply the fact that holding certain beliefs is comfortable and therefore reinforces all kinds of defenses (i.e. the teacher's job is unappreciated, with all the possible consequences this statement entails). They can be grounded in an individual's social life, as in the case of Kinga, whose mother advised against a teacher's job. In a word, it can be said that people appear to hold the beliefs that serve their needs. Likewise, when Anna considered herself a language learner she looked up to a native speaker and his or her perfection. However, when she started her teaching practice, she looked for more and more ways of confirming her own teaching expertise and, on finding some confirmation in English as lingua franca theories, she declared herself equal to native speakers in all subsystems but pronunciation.

It is also vital to say that despite holding different beliefs on language teaching in the future, both participants of the study are considered very good students, and both received the highest grades for their language teaching practice. This means that such concepts as "the right belief", "good motivation", etc., should be abandoned in favor of the recognition of diversity in pre-service teachers' beliefs. Using Dörnyei's (2009) conception of motivation, it can be said that teachers embodying "the ought-to L2 self" can be as successful as those who typify "the ideal L2 self", at least in the short run.[3]

As for the implications, the following can be offered:

1. There exist too many concepts denoting what can pass as beliefs. A reduction of terms, the specification of meanings, and the clarification of the relationships

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[3] We do not know if Kinga will succeed in the long run because her unwillingness to perform the teaching job might take precedence and negatively influence her performance.

among those appearing to be the same are important. This would help researchers achieve confidence that they are using the same language for description of the same phenomena, or could help better organize their discoveries in teacher cognition.

2. Since emotions may influence a person's beliefs, bringing about their modification or even stabilization, experiences rich in emotional content can be offered if a change in future teachers' beliefs seems desirable. It must be remembered, however, that an ethical issue might be involved in attempting to change the beliefs of teacher candidates.

3. Although domain-specific beliefs seem to be easier to change, they should be discovered as soon as possible. It is therefore recommended to learn pre-service teachers' views on their image of the teaching profession at the start of their interest in teaching. Then, any attempt at intervention, modification, or verification of beliefs disagreeable with the current state of what we know about the process of language learning could be more successfully performed.

4. Probably the habit of reflection and frequent confrontation with contradictory beliefs should be an obligatory technique of learning teaching. This is so because greater awareness of one's own beliefs is assumed to bring about a greater integration of belief and practice. Possible ways to start could be "tinkering"—introducing small changes (different pupil grouping, small changes in pupil assessment, occasional use of technology, etc.); implementation of Allwright's idea of Exploratory Practice (Gieve and Miller 2008; Allwright and Hanks 2009), based on understanding the quality of language classroom life; conducting action research projects (Burns 2009); inviting significant people to the classroom to present their views (White 2008); creating cognitive dissonances (Werbińska 2011b); or generating emotions (Werbińska 2011b).

5. When students declare the change of beliefs, it is important to distinguish whether it is a behavioral change (for example, changing a belief on one occasion for the sake of passing the assessment) or a cognitive change (changing as a result of reflection on one's own beliefs).

6. Future research on learners' and teachers' beliefs regarding different aspects of teaching and learning languages is important because apart from providing valuable knowledge about the participants of the learning process, the awareness of one's beliefs enables people to become more aware of their own identity—who they are, what they do, why they do something, thereby stimulating their own agency and professional development agendas.

In sum, it can be said that research on teacher candidates' belief change is an emerging line of teacher education. This paper has aimed at providing examples of two student teachers and the stability and variability in their beliefs over the span of their Bachelor of Arts education. The study presented here is only a modest proposal; more research of longitudinal type is required, possibly in other contexts, to provide knowledge about how beliefs of candidates for teaching concerning the key aspects of learning and teaching languages change over time.

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The Relationship Between Learning Strategies and Speaking Performance

Agnieszka Pietrzykowska

Abstract The paper reports the findings of a study whose aim was to seek a relationship between learning strategies employed by students and their speaking skills. 80 English Department students (61 female, 19 male; intermediate to advanced level) took part in the study. In order to determine the strategies used by the participants, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (Oxford 1990) was used. The data concerning language learning strategies were correlated with the overall results of the end-of-the-year oral examination and its components, namely, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and fluency. The results show that there might indeed be a relationship between some language learning strategies and speaking performance, but there is much individual variation in this respect.

1 Introduction

Studies concerning language learning strategies date back to the 1970s when researchers, who observed that, irrespective of a teaching method that was used, there were always learners who succeeded and those who failed, started their investigations into the characteristics of good language learners. It is these studies (e.g. Rubin 1975; Stern 1975; Naiman et al. 1978) that enabled indentifying what behaviours are conducive to the learning process and spurred a number of research projects related to learning strategies (e.g. O'Malley et al. 1985a; Oxford 1990) and strategy training (e.g. O'Malley et al. 1985b; Rubin 1987; Chamot 1993; Yang 1995; Huang 2001).

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2 Definitions and Classifications

So far, numerous definitions of language learning strategies have been offered. Broadly speaking, they are procedures or actions undertaken by learners to make the learning process, use and storage of information more effective (Rubin 1987, 1994; Oxford 1989; Chamot et al. 1999; Diaz-Rico 2004). At the same time, language learning strategies are supposed to make learning more enjoyable (Oxford 1990). Operations performed by learners may be either conscious or unconscious; however, some researchers (e.g. Cohen 1998; Lee and Oxford 2008) are of the opinion that they facilitate the process of learning to a higher degree when they are selected and employed consciously.

As interest in language learning strategies continued, a wide range of their classifications has been proposed, with O'Malley et al.'s (1985a) and Oxford's (1990) enjoying the greatest popularity. O'Malley et al. (1985a) grouped language learning strategies into three categories. *Cognitive strategies* refer to operations performed on the learning material, such as repeating, analyzing, synthesizing, the aim of which is to learn easier and faster. *Metacognitive strategies* are related to organizing, planning and evaluating the learning process. *Socioaffective strategies* are connected with controlling emotions, interacting and cooperating with others. Oxford (1990) proposed as many as six groups of strategies. The first three, namely *memory* (responsible for storing and retrieving information), *cognitive* (connected with manipulating the learning material as to enhance learning), and *compensatory strategies* (the ones used to make up for the lack of knowledge) comprise the category of *direct strategies*, i.e. such that contribute to mastering specific target language material, for example vocabulary. *Indirect strategies*, related to the way any type of learning is managed, include *metacognitive*, *affective*, and *social strategies*. The first group concerns planning, monitoring, and assessing one's learning. The second one is related to techniques used to regulate emotions, and the third one is connected with interacting with other learners, the teacher, or native speakers. In tandem with this taxonomy, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) consisting of fifty statements the aim of which is to measure learners' use of strategies was designed. This instrument is still commonly employed by researchers in studies dealing with language learning strategies.

3 Research into Language Learning Strategies

Since, with time, language learning strategies had become one of the most widely used ways to facilitate learning languages, scholars started investigating the actual effectiveness of techniques used by students. Philips' (1991), Takeuchi's (1993), Park's (1994, 1997), Green and Oxford's (1995), Oxford and Nyikos' (1995), Dreyer and Oxford's (1996), Bremner's (1999), Sheorey's (1999), Wharton's (2000), and Huang's (2001) studies showed that language learning strategies do go in pair with better language performance in general. In yet another study

(Nisbet et al. 2005), metacognive strategies correlated with higher proficiency. Nonetheless, some studies proved the opposite, for example, the one conducted by Tilfarlioğlu (2005), who examined the interdependence between strategies and language proficiency in the Turkish educational context. Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pietrzykowska's (2011) research project did not find any positive and strong correlations between the frequency of employing different techniques by university students and their results obtained in the final exam.The only two higher correlations, the first one calculated for the first year students, which turned out to be moderate, and the second one (a weaker one, $r = -0.295$) calculated between the use of memory strategies and overall language performance of all the participants in the study, turned out to be negative. The results suggest then that frequent use of a range of strategies does not guarantee success when learning a foreign language.

Numerous studies have aimed to examine the effectiveness of language learning strategies in developing language subsystems, a range of skills, and in performing a variety of tasks related to acquiring a language (e.g. Chamot 1992; Raymond 1993; Yang 1995; Cheng 2002; He 2002; Wang 2002). To give an example, Mystkowska-Wiertelak's (2008a, b) empirical investigations revealed a positive relationship between using strategies and grammatical accuracy among secondary school and university students. Contrary to these findings, the results obtained by Pawlak (2009) showed a lack of any significant correlations between grammar learning strategies employed by university students and the results they achieved at the end of the grammar course and in their final practical exam.

Due to the popularity of communicative approaches, many research projects have focused solely or among other things on the skill of speaking. The study carried out by O'Malley et al. (1985b) revealed that training students in the use of strategies had a positive influence on their performance in speaking tasks. Oxford and Ehrman's (1995) investigation showed that there exists a relationship but only between cognitive strategies and speaking skills. The research project conducted by Cohen et al. (1995) suggested that explicit instruction in strategy use had a positive effect on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary; each time, however, the effectiveness depended on the speaking task (describing oneself, retelling a story, describing a city) used in the experiment. In addition, the study showed that frequent use of certain strategies improved the students' ratings for grammar, vocabulary, and self-confidence. Still, there were a number of strategies that correlated negatively with the same components depending on the nature of the task. Lioa and Chiang (2003) did not find a significant correlation between strategies used by students and their oral proficiency. The findings then are rather mixed.

Several researchers (e.g. Ellis 2008) discourage ascribing too important a role to language learning strategies. In Chamot's (2004) view, being a successful language learner does not depend only on using a wide range of techniques but also on employing them appropriately to the task. Takeuchi et al. (2007) are of a similar opinion and believe that achieving good results is related to selecting strategies in such a way as to suit the requirements of a task at hand. Cohen (1998) claims that the frequency of using strategies itself cannot determine their effectiveness since a lot depends on the context in which they are employed. Then, it is

employing learning strategies wisely that is believed to offer language learners a means to achieving success in mastering the target language.

4 Research Project

The aim of this paper is to report the results of a study investigating the relationship between language learning strategies used by students and their oral proficiency. The study, conducted at the English Department, involved eighty participants, sixty-one female, nineteen male, representing intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced levels. In order to determine the strategies used by the students, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (Oxford 1990) was used. It consists of six parts, each of which refers to a different category of language learning strategies (i.e. memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective and social strategies). The questionnaire includes 50 statements, and the respondents, using a scale from 1 to 5, were to decide whether each statement is: (1) never or almost never true of them, (2) usually not true of them, (3) somewhat true of them, (4) usually true of them, and (5) always or almost always true of them.

The questionnaire was used in its original form and was not translated into the participants' mother tongue. Besides, it is worth underlining at this point that the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* was not adjusted in any way. Certain statements applied to several skills, e.g. "I try to find patterns in English", "I practice English with other students", "I try to find as many ways as possible to use my English", "I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English", and others were linked directly to speaking, e.g. "I start conversations in English", "I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake", "I try to talk like native speakers". In the study described here, the researcher sought to examine how different strategies that can be employed to improve a range of skills contribute to enhancing speaking proficiency. It is for this reason that learning strategies were taken into consideration instead of communicative ones, enabling students to deal with breakdowns in communication when engaged in interaction (Nakatani 2006).

The questionnaire was filled in by the students towards the end of the academic year during their regular classes. The procedure took about 15 min. The data obtained by means of the questionnaire were correlated with the general students' results of the end-of-the-year oral examination and its components: pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use and fluency. A month before the exam, the students were given a number of topics (e.g. entertainment, technology, religion, advertising), usually about ten, which were to be included in the exam (this was a common practice at the department). The same topics had been discussed in detail during the students' conversation classes. Besides, the examinees could be asked questions related to other issues too, or could be told to interpret a diagram or describe a picture.

Table 1 The relationship between language learning strategies and speaking (in general and with respect to their type)

Speaking	Strategies					
	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
$r = -0.16$	$r = -0.29$	$r = 0.012$	$r = 0.059$	$r = -0.13$	$r = -0.104$	$r = -0.157$
$r^2 = 0.026$	$r^2 = 0.085$	$r^2 = 0.0001$	$r^2 = 0.003$	$r^2 = 0.018$	$r^2 = 0.011$	$r^2 = 0.025$
2.60 %	8.50 %	0.01 %	0.30 %	1.80 %	1.10 %	2.50 %
$p = 0.077$	$p = 0.004$	$p = 0.004$	$p = 0.335$	$p = 0.012$	$p = 0.182$	$p = 0.089$

5 Results and Discussion

The correlation between language learning strategies used by the respondents and their speaking skills in general (Table 1) turned out to be weak and negative ($r = -0.16$), the data overlap 2.6 % ($r^2 = 0.026$). This suggests that the strategies employed to master the target language are not linked to improvement in speaking skills. In fact, the students who used language learning strategies more frequently were weaker in speaking. A moderate but also negative correlation ($r = -0.29$, the data overlap 8.5 %) was found between memory strategies and speaking. This could indicate that using techniques whose aim is to aid the retention of the material by means of memorizing is not effective as far as speaking proficiency is concerned. In fact, the more frequently such techniques are used, the less improvement there is in speaking. The correlation between cognitive strategies and speaking actually does not exist as it is extremely weak ($r = 0.012$), the data do not even overlap 1 %. The same applies to compensatory strategies since the correlation is negligible ($r = 0.059$) and this finding is not statistically significant. A very weak but negative correlation ($r = -0.13$, the data overlap 1.8 %) was found between metacognitive strategies and speaking. This may suggest that planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process as such do not translate into better speaking proficiency. The correlations between affective and social strategies and attainment in speaking were very weak and negative too ($r = -0.104$, the data overlap 1.1 %; $r = -0.157$, the data overlap 2.5 %). Yet, they were not statistically significant. The results discussed above are presented below in Table 1.

The data obtained through the questionnaire were correlated with the criteria according to which the students had been evaluated. Table 2 displays the statistics

Table 2 The relationship between learning strategies and pronunciation

Strategies	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Pronunciation	$r = -0.225$	$r = 0.06$	$r = -0.039$	$r = -0.087$	$r = -0.112$	$r = -0.097$
	$r^2 = 0.051$	$r^2 = 0.004$	$r^2 = 0.001$	$r^2 = 0.008$	$r^2 = 0.012$	$r^2 = 0.009$
Data Overlap	5.10 %	0.40 %	0.10 %	0.80 %	1.20 %	0.90 %
	$p = 0.021$	$p = 0.062$	$p = 0.312$	$p = 0.278$	$p = 0.050$	$p = 0.032$

concerning the relationship between different language learning strategies and pronunciation. The correlation computed between memory strategies and pronunciation turned out to be rather weak and negative ($r = -0.025$, the data overlap 5.1 %). Probably, in the case of sounds and suprasegmental features, such as intonation, students either are in the habit of producing them correctly or they have a flair for pronunciation. Memory strategies do not work in the case of students who are weak in this language subsystem in situations when they speak without thorough preparation and have no time to control their speech muscles. An extremely weak, but positive correlation ($r = 0.06$, the data overlap 0.4 %) was found between cognitive strategies and pronunciation, which indicates that working with sounds more consciously is more effective than using memory techniques. The statistics computed for compensation and metacognitive strategies and pronunciation ($r = -0.039$, the data overlap 0.1 %; $r = -0.087$, the data overlap 0.08 % respectively) revealed extremely weak relationships. Students resort to compensation strategies (e.g. making guesses when coming across unfamiliar words, trying to guess what the other person will say next, using gestures) when they lack the necessary knowledge, when they lose the thread of what they wanted to say, as a result of which they become nervous and no longer focus on pronunciation; they simply want to survive and their only goal is to put their message over. A lack of significant correlation between metacognitive strategies and pronunciation is more difficult to interpret. It may be speculated that planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process may not involve practicing the segments and suprasegmental features of the target language. Perhaps, the students decided to focus on other language subsystems and skills instead. Using affective strategies correlated negatively with the students' ratings for pronunciation, and the strength of the correlation was weak ($r = -0.112$, the data overlap 1.2 %). Therefore, paying attention to one's feelings and trying to lower negative emotions seem more helpful in areas different from pronunciation. Breathing deeply to feel more relaxed and being aware of one's stress, trying to regulate it take attention away from controlling one's pronunciation. A very weak ($r = -0.097$, $r^2 = 0.009$) negative correlation between social strategies and pronunciation shows that interacting with others is not related to the level of achievement in this language subsystem, probably because when cooperating with peers, little attention is paid to pronunciation.

A different picture emerges when looking at the statistics related to grammatical accuracy, presented in Table 3. The strength of correlations is incomparably

Table 3 The relationship between learning strategies and grammatical accuracy

Strategies	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Grammatical	$r = -0.334$	$r = 0.503$	$r = 0.569$	$r = 0.644$	$r = 0.413$	$r = 0.572$
Accuracy	$r^2 = 0.115$	$r^2 = 0.253$	$r^2 = 0.324$	$r^2 = 0.414$	$r^2 = 0.171$	$r^2 = 0.327$
Data Overlap	11.50 %	25 %	32 %	41 %	17 %	33 %
	$p = 0.001$	$p = 0.013$	$p = 0.021$	$p = 0.045$	$p = 0.0002$	$p = 0.028$

higher. Using techniques helping to memorize the target language material correlated moderately and negatively with the ratings for grammatical accuracy ($r = -0.334$, the data overlap 11.5 %). It is possible that such memorization techniques do not facilitate acquiring grammatical knowledge to an extent which would enable the students to use this knowledge when necessary. Also, it may be speculated that learning language material in this way extends the amount of time needed to retrieve it later so that students may abandon using more sophisticated structures and use simple ones instead. It is worth emphasizing here that when evaluating this component, the examiners do not only pay attention to mistakes made by the students but also to the sophistication and appropriateness of structures used by them. It may seem that using memory strategies does not always guarantee good retention and quick retrieval of more advanced grammatical structures. Perhaps, these strategies are not effective in unplanned speech and it may be assumed that they are more useful in written tests, when examinees have more time to come up with answers. Besides, material learned by heart, especially when it is not mastered well or correctly, may lead to mistakes, hence a negative correlation. For this reason, cognitive strategies are more useful. Finding patterns, using new structures in a variety of contexts and situations, and understanding the learning material make grammar structures ready for use; that is why there was quite a strong, positive relationship ($r = 0.503$, the data overlap 25 %). Even a stronger positive correlation exists between compensation strategies and grammar accuracy. Paraphrasing, not paying attention to every single word uttered by the interlocutor, and guessing what he/she will say give the student some extra time, thus enabling using more sophisticated structures and avoiding making mistakes. A strong, positive correlation ($r = 0.644$, the data overlap 41 %) was found in the case of metacognitive strategies. Therefore, it could be speculated that planning the learning process, having clear goals, noticing mistakes and learning from them translate into better oral performance. Since learners pay increasing attention to their grammatical mistakes and make these mistakes work for them, and not against them, they know their weak sides and try to improve them, with time they become grammatically more accurate. Besides, lowering stress, monitoring one's emotions, relaxing before speaking, procedures typical of affective strategies, could have exerted a positive influence on grammar, which is illustrated by quite a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.413$, the data overlap 17.1 %). The conclusion may be that being less nervous enables the learner to choose more interesting, more sophisticated structures and avoid mistakes. Practicing with others, correcting each other, asking the interlocutor to slow down represent situations which are simply perfect to practice speaking and, at the same time, grammar; thus a strong, positive correlation ($r = 0.572$, the data overlap 32 %) between social skills and grammatical accuracy.

Much weaker correlations were calculated between language learning strategies and the students' scores for vocabulary (see Table 4). Memory strategies correlate negatively with the latter, yet the strength of this correlation is weak ($r = -0.109$, data overlap 1.2 %). Using flashcards when learning a language, remembering the location of words on a page, and reviewing lessons are not likely to help in the

Table 4 The relationship between learning strategies and vocabulary

Strategies	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Vocabulary	$r = -0.109$	$r = 0.0182$	$r = -0.095$	$r = -0.132$	$r = -0.113$	$r = -0.235$
	$r^2 = 0.012$	$r^2 = 0.0003$	$r^2 = 0.009$	$r^2 = 0.017$	$r^2 = 0.013$	$r^2 = 0.055$
Data Overlap	1.20 %	0.03 %	0.90 %	1.70 %	1.30 %	5.50 %
	$p = 0.017$	$p = 0.043$	$p = 0.020$	$p = 0.124$	$p = 0.161$	$p = 0.019$

exam situation, probably because of the necessity to retrieve words that are needed immediately. An extremely weak (actually we may say that nonexistent), positive relationship was found between cognitive strategies and ratings for vocabulary. As in the case of grammar, this group of strategies might be more useful. Using words in different situations, reading for pleasure, watching English TV—such procedures involving analyzing and understanding enable remembering words better so that they are ready for use when necessary. Employing compensation strategies to learn English is not in tandem with high ratings for vocabulary; the correlation is extremely weak and negative ($r = -0.095$, the data do not even overlap 1 %). Making up new words, paraphrasing instead of using an accurate term, using gestures and other compensation strategies dent the number of points given for this component. Becoming accustomed to techniques helping to overcome deficits in knowledge is not helpful in the area of vocabulary. Resorting to them in extreme situations to overcome communication breakdowns and to avoid misunderstandings does bring benefits to their users; however, overusing them during the exam may paint the examinees in a negative light. Also metacognitive strategies correlated negatively with vocabulary. We may put forward a hypothesis that paying attention when somebody is using English, looking for people to whom students can talk in English, setting goals and planning learning time do not tell us what students actually do with such opportunities, and, when they do make use of them, which language subsystems or skills constitute students' target. Still, since these correlations were not statistically significant, we might as well say that no relationship exists. The same applies to affective strategies, for which a weak, negative correlation ($r = -0.113$, the data overlap 1.3 %) is not statistically significant. Considering the type of this relationship, however, we might speculate that when students are lost for words, when they do not know or cannot recall terms related to the topic, lowering stress and analyzing one's feelings do not seem to help solidify their vocabulary knowledge. A moderate yet negative correlation was found between social strategies and vocabulary ratings. On the one hand, it may seem that learning together should be beneficial, but what actually students learn when they cooperate and what they pay attention to may not be connected so much with vocabulary. Students may focus on grammar or the content, e.g. they may summarize an article which they were supposed to read before a class.

The last criterion evaluated during the speaking task was fluency (Table 5). Memory strategies correlated negatively with this component; the Pearson correlation coefficient indicates that the strength of this relationship was rather weak

Table 5 The relationship between learning strategies and fluency

Strategies	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Fluency	$r = -0.137$	$r = 0.093$	$r = 0.063$	$r = -0.081$	$r = -0.043$	$r = -0.104$
	$r^2 = 0.019$	$r^2 = 0.009$	$r^2 = 0.004$	$r^2 = 0.007$	$r^2 = 0.002$	$r^2 = 0.011$
Data overlap	1.90 %	0.90 %	0.40 %	0.70 %	0.20 %	1.10 %
	$p = 0.116$	$p = 0.209$	$p = 0.029$	$p = 0.023$	$p = 0.035$	$p = 0.018$

($r = -0.137$, data overlap 1.9 %). It could be speculated that using different memorization techniques has a negative influence on fluency, and, to be fluent, the student must possess well-established knowledge, and have ideas related to a given topic, vocabulary, phrases, and grammar structures that can be used on the spot rather than think of their location on a page or rack their brains trying to recall these. The relationship between cognitive strategies and fluency was even weaker ($r = 0.093$, the data overlap 0.9 %), but positive. This low correlation may be due to the fact that out of 14 statements included in the questionnaire in this category, only a few (e.g. "I try to talk like native English speakers", "I start conversations in English") are closely related to developing fluency. It stands to reason, however, that the remaining strategies could somehow contribute to fluency indirectly, since such statements as "I try not to translate word for word enables reacting quickly to what was said" or "I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English" are reflective of techniques that facilitate getting used to the foreign accent and becoming familiar with new phrases, words, structures, or noticing these, so that they can be used by learners later on. Still, as indicated by the Pearson correlation coefficient, such transfer does not seem to take place. A positive, but extremely weak correlation ($r = 0.063$, the data overlap 0.4 %) was observed between compensation strategies and fluency. Such a finding appears rather surprising as these strategies, e.g. paraphrasing, inventing new words, using gestures, are supposed to help learners with language deficits. Perhaps, fluency suffers when students paraphrase or use gestures, which they do in situations when they are unable to express themselves so that before they resort to any compensation technique, they hesitate and are indecisive, which is reflected in their scores for fluency. A weak and negative correlation ($r = -0.081$, the data overlap 0.7 %) between metacognitive strategies and fluency may result from the fact that the time planned for learning, goals set by students or analysis of the progress made in English could refer to these language skills and subsystems which are tested by teachers most frequently, e.g. grammar or reading comprehension. Lowering stress, relaxing muscles and calming down, connected with breathing slowly, procedures typical of affective strategies, take some time and, as a result, may negatively influence fluency. Thus, a negative (but extremely weak) correlation ($r = -0.043$, the data overlap 0.2 %) between this component and affective strategies. Also negative, but a bit stronger correlation was found between social strategies and fluency. This finding reflects the nature of working in pairs or groups, when students interrupt each other frequently, correct each other's

Table 6 Positive and negative correlations between language learning strategies and speaking (statistically significant results in bold)

	Memory	Cognitive	Compensatory	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Speaking	–	**+**	+	–	**–**	**–**
Pronunciation	–	+	**–**	**–**	–	–
Grammar	–	**+**	+	**+**	**+**	**+**
Vocabulary	–	**+**	–	**–**	**–**	–
Fluency	**–**	+	**+**	–	–	–

mistakes, ask questions, share ideas, exchange opinions. Rarely do they present a longer speech or monologue, which is required of them in the exam. The exam situation is different then, and, undoubtedly, more stressful as well.

Table 6 presents a simplified version of the results discussed in this section. There were nineteen negative correlations found, out of which twelve were statistically significant, and eleven positive correlations, out of which eight results were significant. It could be speculated that cognitive strategies were the most influential, and that they exerted a positive effect on speaking in general as well as its components. Memory strategies seem to have supported speaking the least. The component which turned out to correlate the most was grammar. Only memory strategies used to learn English in general were not likely to be useful in this case. The remaining components of the speaking task were enhanced by one or two categories of strategies, pronunciation by cognitive strategies, vocabulary knowledge by cognitive strategies, and fluency by two types, namely cognitive and compensation strategies.

6 Conclusions and Implications

The aim of the study reported in this paper was to investigate the relationship between language learning strategies employed by students and their speaking proficiency. The data concerning the frequency of strategies used in general correlated with the overall end-of-the-year results of the oral examination did not reveal a significant relationship between them. The findings related to specific categories of strategies are more revealing. Negative correlations between memory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies and speaking performance suggest that a high frequency of using these two categories of techniques corresponded to a lower level of speaking skills. A positive relationship exists between cognitive and compensation strategies and speaking.

The correlations computed between the four criteria taken into account when evaluating the students and different strategies present a clearer picture of the relationship between strategies and speaking. Memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies correlated negatively with pronunciation. Only cognitive strategies were in a positive relation with this component, which

indicates that only well processed, deeply rooted knowledge can improve one's pronunciation. Strong and positive relationships were found between cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies and grammatical accuracy. In this area, only one category of strategies correlated negatively, namely memory strategies. Therefore, it could be speculated that employing the first five categories mentioned above when learning a language may translate into success in speaking. This relationship is so clear perhaps due to the fact that whenever students learn grammar, they use a wide range of strategies frequently. Negative correlations exist between memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies and students' ratings for vocabulary. This does not mean that using these strategies is detrimental to vocabulary acquisition as such. In the oral exam situation, where a number of factors influence performance, knowledge gained with the aid of such strategies is not sufficient and in some cases overreliance on, for example, compensatory techniques, lowers the score for this component. This is in contrast to cognitive strategies which enable learners to master vocabulary to such an extent that, even in stressful circumstances, the student finds appropriate words easily. In the case of fluency, positive, but still weak, relationships were found in the case of cognitive and compensation strategies. To be fluent, the knowledge of the target language acquired through manipulating the material to be mastered is immeasurably useful; however, it does not guarantee success. Besides, it stands to reason here that whereas using a paraphrase instead of an English word can help in interaction, using gestures and hesitating when creating a paraphrase are not so much welcome in the oral exam where precision is quite an important issue, and it might be assumed that if the students employed such strategies while learning the material, they also resorted to them in the exam. Memory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies proved to be in a weak and negative relationship with fluency. Learning by heart, planning and controlling learning and looking for opportunities to speak or read in English do not automatically make a learner a more proficient speaker. Also, regulating emotions, controlling one's breathing, and trying to relax do not necessarily have a positive influence on the pace of speaking. The same applies to cooperating and interacting with others when learning, which is usually connected with taking turns to speak, interrupting each other, correcting mistakes, and asking questions. Techniques of this kind do not enable the student to produce an uninterrupted flow of speech, which is a problem since, in the exam, once the examinee is asked a question, he/she is supposed to present his/her knowledge extensively. All in all, looking at the results holistically, language learning strategies seem to support speaking proficiency especially with respect to grammar sophistication and correctness. Besides, cognitive strategies appear to be helpful not only when it comes to grammar, but also vocabulary. Finally, compensation strategies seem to be conducive to improving fluency. Memory strategies could be said to be the least useful in speaking in general and when taking into consideration its components.

With regard to the results of the study, a word of caution is necessary at this point. It must be borne in mind that correlation as such does not imply causality. The findings presented above simply show that frequent use of certain strategies is

or is not related to speaking performance. Nevertheless, they can be suggestive of certain trends. In addition, perhaps it would seem more justifiable to adjust the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* used in the survey to examine the relationship between strategies and speaking proficiency so that the questionnaire would apply specifically to speaking skills (e.g. "I try to talk like native speakers", "I ask questions in English"). This would enable the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of particular steps undertaken by learners in developing speaking skills. However, the aim of the study was to investigate how a rich selection of strategies used across skills and language subsystems contributes to speaking itself.

In addition, the study examined the relationship between the frequency of using language learning strategies and oral proficiency. However, taking into account the recognition of context and individual factors in the application of strategies (Cohen 1998; Kim 2002; Takeuchi et al. 2007; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pietrzykowska 2011), the frequency of use plays second fiddle to the quality of employed strategies (Macaro 2001). Using a given strategy very often does not mean that it is effective, the student can persistently use a strategy unsuccessfully. Negative correlations between the frequency of use and speaking proficiency may be indicative of this. Besides, a small number of positive correlations, the fact that the vast majority of them were very or extremely weak, and several negative correlations may also be due to a limited choice of strategies included in the questionnaire (Pawlak 2009). What is more, the data collection instrument, namely the questionnaire, made it possible for the respondents to give answers which were more likely to satisfy their teacher rather than such which reflected reality.

Still, language learning strategies do have the potential to make learners become successful TL speakers; however, strategies need to be wisely selected. Applying a wide range of strategies inappropriately to a learning task is not likely to boost students' learning efficiency. It seems of great significance then to integrate strategies-based instruction into regular language classes. Making learners aware of what techniques enhance their performance in different areas, showing them how to individualize the learning process by means of strategies, and helping them to choose strategies matching their learning styles constitute a step towards assisting students in becoming better language users.

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Strategy Training and its Application in the Process of Foreign Language Learning

Olga Trendak

Abstract Research into the strategies employed by good learners shows that it is not enough to teach a foreign language to make learners achieve success. It is the introduction of language learning strategies that can make the process more efficacious (Rubin et al. 2007). On many occasions, less proficient language learners, despite their great effort and perseverance, experience frustration due to their unsatisfying results. What is more, they fear they will never master the target language the way their more advanced classmates did. Strategy training, or direct instruction thanks to which learners learn how to use learning strategies effectively (Cohen 1998), may appear to be very useful in such cases. Thanks to its implementation, learners receive an opportunity to enrich their knowledge about strategies, which might make learning the target language more successful. Furthermore, strategic intervention is believed to boost learners' confidence and promote autonomous behaviors. The paper reports the results of a study conducted among advanced learners of English which examined the impact that strategic intervention exerted on the acquisition of a specific grammar feature.

1 Introduction

Language learning strategies (LLS), defined by Oxford (1990, p. 8) as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations" have been of great interest to researchers for a few decades. Although many see eye to eye on the beneficial role of LLS in the foreign language classroom, there are still numerous conceptual problems which frequently engender disagreement, for instance, the distinction

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between mental and behavioural, general and specific or conscious and unconscious strategies. Surprising as it may seem, even providing a general definition of a language learning strategy that would resist criticism and satisfy all the different criteria has not always been feasible.

With such a great deal of uncertainty and disagreement, one may ask about the cause of the remarkable upsurge of interest in this field. Many researchers stress the need for moving beyond mere language learning and drawing learners' attention to ways of becoming more autonomous. Rubin et al. (2007, p. 141) claim that "learners should be taught not only the language but also directed toward strategies they could use to promote more effective learning". In a different publication, Rubin states that "often poor learners don't have a clue as to how good learners arrive at their answers and feel they can never perform as good learners do. By revealing the process, the myth can be exposed" (1990, p. 282). Therefore, by introducing language learning strategies into the foreign language classroom, teachers can show their learners how to become more self-reliant and autonomous. It is also an effective way of boosting students' self-confidence and encouraging them to make their own decisions when learning the target language.

One of the aims of this paper is to provide the reader with information about the notion of strategic intervention as well as the conceptual problems associated with it, for instance, strategy selection, language choice or the type of the training. The author also reports the results of a research project into the learning strategies employed by advanced learners of English. Numerous researchers agree that the number of empirical studies focusing on the relationship between the application of language learning strategies and the acquisition of linguistic forms is still insufficient, especially in the Polish educational setting; hence the author's interest in this particular area.

2 Strategic Intervention

One of the most efficacious ways of making language learners cognizant of strategies is by means of strategy training, also known as direct instruction, which clearly shows learners how to apply LLS (Cohen 1998). The training is aimed to encourage students to experiment with familiar and unfamiliar strategies. They are expected to take risks and try out strategies they have never employed before. According to Droździał-Szelest (1997, 2004), another objective of strategy training is to bridge the gap between the knowledge about the target language and the ability to use that knowledge in practice, since knowing all the necessary rules does not guarantee their correct application.

Furthermore, owing to the training, learners have an opportunity to learn more about the value of the strategies that they are using (Rubin 1981). The training is also designed to help them deal with errors in a more effective manner and provide them with a wide range of problem-solving skills. When discussing further objectives of strategic intervention, one should mention that it is intended to

facilitate the selection of strategies that will be appropriate to the task performed. At this point, it is worth mentioning that a great many learners apply strategies which are not suitable for the tasks they concentrate on. Therefore, strategy training aims to show them which strategies will be the most useful for certain types of tasks. What is more, such instruction encourages students to monitor and evaluate their performance as well as the progress that they are making. In this way, learners can evaluate their work and also see which areas still need improvement. Another issue which should be emphasized is that strategy training promotes cooperation between the teacher and students. The teacher helps his/her learners to become more independent and responsible for their learning by showing them the right strategies and their effective application. Finally, strategic intervention should stress the value of independent learning. Thanks to the frequent employment of LLS, students are expected to become less reliant on the teacher and more autonomous and decisive in the foreign language classroom. However, if the training is to be successful, certain requirements should be met.

According to Rubin et al. (2007), there are four conditions that should be fulfilled. To start with, the teacher should raise learners' awareness of the LLS that they are already employing. The value of metacognition will be elaborated on later in the paper. What is more, the teacher should present and then model the target strategies. These steps will make it easier for the learner to become more cognizant of his/her thinking processes. The next stage includes extensive practice opportunities that will facilitate gaining greater autonomy in terms of strategy use. In the last step, the teacher should assess the effectiveness of the learning strategies taught.

Although researchers concur as to the effectiveness of strategy training, there are still several issues which have not been resolved. Opinions differ as to the types of strategies that should be implemented during the training, the use of L1, or the type of the training: integrated or non-integrated, direct or indirect, and, finally, short-term or long-term. These points are addressed in the following subsections.

2.1 Selection of Strategies

Since raising learners' awareness of strategies is an essential component of strategic intervention, many agree that metacognitive strategies should be introduced first (Chamot and O'Malley 1987; Droździał-Szelest 1997). Others argue that a combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategies would be a better alternative as it could facilitate strategy transfer. It is worth mentioning that too little emphasis is placed on affective and social strategies, which could also play an important role in learning the target language.

Although researchers have not decided which strategies should be introduced first, they agree about the fact that language learning strategies should be adjusted to the needs of the learners. Oxford (1990, p. 204) highlights the following points that should be taken into consideration:

- Is there a wide gap between the strategies they have been using and those you think they need to learn?
- How do these students view their roles as language learners?
- Do they take responsibility, or will you need to help them change their attitudes to learning?
- Have you given the learners a chance to express their desires about strategies they might like to learn?

Furthermore, the researcher advises teachers to consider issues such as the learners' age, previous learning experience, their social background as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It would be to the teacher's advantage if he/she made sure that his/her learners are not prejudiced against certain types of learning strategies as it might hinder the effectiveness of the intervention. Another point worth remembering is the introduction of strategies that are effective and that can be transferred to different linguistic contexts. Lastly, the teacher should focus on several different types of strategies rather than only on one.

2.2 Language Choice

Another significant issue is the choice of the language in which the training will be conducted. Chamot (2005) is of the opinion that beginners will not be able to comprehend the teacher's explanations in the L2 since they do not know the necessary terminology. Therefore, the best solution would be to conduct strategy training in the learners' L1. The only drawback connected with this choice is the fact that learners are not exposed to the target language. There is also the possibility of implementing the training initially in the mother tongue and then, gradually, introducing the target language. There is yet another group of researchers who support the use of L2 from the very beginning of the training. The language should, of course, be adjusted to learners' level.

2.3 The Type of Training

When designing the training, the teacher should also consider its type. However, researchers differ with respect to the recommended type of strategies-based instruction. There are those who are in favour of its integration Oxford (1990). The proponents of this stance claim that learning about LLS in a specific context is of greater value than learning separate skills (Wenden 1987). According to Oxford (1990, p. 206), "when strategy training is integrated with language learning, learners better understand how the strategies can be used in a significant, mean-

ingful context". What is more, applying strategies in more authentic tasks facilitates strategy transfer since learners have a chance to employ the strategies they learnt in different, not necessarily linguistic, contexts (Chamot and O'Malley 1987). Although the majority of researchers opt for integrated training, there may appear situations in which a more detached version of the training could also be effective. A good example could be an insufficient amount of time the teacher has at his/her disposal. Then, the intervention may need to be detached from the regular learning activities.

Prior to implementing the training, one should also decide whether it should be *direct* or *embedded*, also referred to as indirect. In the case of the former, learners are made cognizant of the aim and frequency of the actions to be performed (O'Malley and Chamot 1990). In the latter, on the other hand, students perform tasks which focus on the use of a particular strategy. Here, however, they are not informed about the aims of the activities. Since many researchers value and stress the role of students' awareness of the strategies taught, it is the direct training that has gained greater popularity (O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990). What is more, (Cohen 1998) is of the opinion that if a learner is fully aware of the learning process, he/she is more motivated to achieve success, which is no longer seen as something accidental but rather as a result of factors such as meticulous planning or effective implementation of the right learning strategies.

Additionally, as studies show, learners who underwent indirect instruction had difficulty transferring the strategies they learnt to other tasks. What is more, it is believed that learners who are not aware of the strategies they employ, are not able to develop their own and independent strategies and, as a result, fail to become autonomous learners (Wenden 1987; Droździał-Szelest 1997). Although it is still difficult to decide which type of strategy training is better, researchers seem to be in favor of direct instruction since it helps the learner to become more autonomous.

2.4 Intensity of the Training

Oxford (1990, p. 203) differentiates between *one-time* and *long-term training*. In the case of the former, learners focus on one or more strategies along with a task which is a part of the regular materials used by the teacher. This way, learners have an opportunity to see the value of a certain strategy, its use and possible effectiveness. This type of instruction could prove extremely useful "for learners who have a need for particular, identifiable, and very targeted strategies that can be taught in one or just a few session(s)" (Oxford 1990, p. 203). Similarly, long-term instruction includes practising learning strategies together with regular classroom activities. Learners find out more about the significance of LLS and the role they can play when learning the target language. The difference between one-time and long-term strategy training is that the latter comprises a greater number of strategies and it is this feature that makes it more efficacious.

2.5 Further Problems

Although a great many studies have shown the effectiveness of strategy training (Cohen and Aphek 1980; Tang and Moore 1992; Nunan 1995; Pressley 2000; Carrier 2003; Shen 2003), there are several obstacles that need to be tackled.

To start with, researchers claim that the number of purely experimental studies, that is studies that would comprise at least one experimental group and one control group, is still not satisfying (Hassan et al. 2005). What is more, as Rubin et al. (2007) point out, the information about the selected strategies, the way of their implementation or the duration of the treatment is still insufficient and incomplete. More data are required on why teachers opt for particular strategies and how they resolve to integrate them into their lessons.

Another issue which hinders progress in the field of strategic intervention is the insufficient knowledge of teachers who frequently do not know how to introduce learning strategies (Vieira 2003). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) believe that teachers should learn more about effective ways of implementing language learning strategies, especially since they "can play an active and valuable role by teaching students how to apply learning strategies to varied language activities and how to extend the strategies to new tasks both in the language class and content areas requiring language skills" (O'Malley et al. 1985, p. 558). Droździał-Szelest (2004) also stresses the importance of teachers' professionalism and their willingness to gain greater insight into strategy training and the way it should be introduced. Teachers' attitude towards strategies can also exert a profound impact on the feasibility of the training. Some teachers fear that if they take on the role of a guide or consultant, instead of maintaining their role of an instructor, they might lose respect in the eyes of their students. At this point, Oxford (1990) firmly states that changing roles in the classroom can in fact prove the teacher's creativity and open-mindedness. It is a clear sign that the teacher is willing to let go of his/her beliefs with a view to helping his/her students achieve better results and, hopefully, become independent in the process of learning the target language.

Obviously, the lack of time and the curriculum may also cause problems. It is frequently very difficult, if not impossible, for the teacher to devote extra lesson time to introducing LLS. Students' attitudes towards the intervention are another factor that may limit the effectiveness of teachers' actions. If the learner does not take any interest in the training, all the efforts made by the teacher may appear futile. Thus, it is significant to inform students about the aim of the intervention, its duration and the possible outcomes. Rubin et al. (2007) add that strategic intervention should lead to immediate success, as it will motivate students even more. Difficult as it may seem, if students notice that their language skills were enhanced in a short period of time thanks to the training they underwent, they will be more favorably disposed to the treatment.

3 The Study

One of the most salient aims of introducing strategy training in foreign language classrooms is to make language learners more autonomous and more responsible for their learning. This was one of the reasons why the present author resolved to focus in her study particularly on strategy training. In her research project, she also laid emphasis on the introduction of awareness-raising sessions that would make learners more cognizant of LLS and that would encourage them to apply strategies more frequently. Apart from the metacognitive component, the research project presented in this chapter focused on other issues. To start with, the author wanted to gain greater insight into the language learning strategies employed by advanced learners of English. She wanted to learn more about the strategies her students applied in order to enhance their linguistic performance. What is more, the study was conducted with a view to investigating the impact of strategic intervention on the acquisition of a target language feature, emphasis, in two different groups: memory and cognitive. The author wanted to examine which of the two experimental groups subjected to strategy training achieved better results, as measured on the pretest, immediate and delayed posttests. Finally, it was the author's intention to see whether the effect of the training, as measured by the tests, was durable.

3.1 Data Collection

In order to collect all the necessary data, the researcher employed different types of instruments. Information was elicited by means of diaries, a background questionnaire, and the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*, referred to as the SILL (Oxford 1990). The results of the main treatment were tapped by means of a pretest, an immediate and delayed posttests. The data obtained in course of the study were subjected to qualitative or quantitative analyses, depending on the type of research questions. In order to establish the statistical significance of the differences between the tests, the author administered *t*-tests. She also measured standard deviations (SD). Due to space limitations, the present paper only focuses on the results achieved on the pretest and the two posttests.

At this point, it seems warranted to provide more extensive information about the tests. The tasks in the pretest included filling in the gaps with a word to create an emphatic expression, transformations, crossing out an incorrect word in a sentence and putting the words provided in the right order. The posttests differed from the pretest as the author wanted to avoid or at least minimize the *practice effect*. The format of the tests bore, however, some resemblance to the pretest. The subjects were asked to put the words provided in the right order, and find an inappropriately used word and correct it; there were also transformation tasks. On every test, the students could score a maximum of 35 points. Each correct answer meant one point. In the case of spelling mistakes that did not obscure the meaning of a sentence, the

subjects were also awarded one point. Half a point was awarded when the subjects omitted one word, slightly changed the required word order or produced partially incorrect forms (e.g. "What I wanted to see the most in Louvre was the Mona Lisa" instead of "What I wanted to see most in the Louvre was the Mona Lisa"; "It was only when he took his sunglasses off then I recognized him"). Partial credit scoring was used with a view to recognizing the development of the subjects' interlanguage on the posttests. When the target form was incorrect, no point was awarded.

3.2 The Subjects

The subjects participating in the study were 40 Polish students attending junior high school, secondary school and university. The two experimental groups and the control one were selected completely at random. One of the experimental groups received training in memory strategies and the other focused on cognitive strategies throughout the study. The former consisted of 11 secondary school and 2 university students. The latter was composed of 6 secondary school students, 3 junior high school students and 2 university students. Initially, there were 12 subjects in the cognitive group; however, two days before the delayed posttest one of the students withdrew from the course. The control group comprised 16 first-year university students at an English department.

The subjects forming the two experimental groups were students attending a language course designed for students working towards CAE. The classes took place twice a week. The subjects were exposed to 4.5 h of English every week, which made it easier to combine strategic intervention with regular classes. The control group attended their university classes taught by the researcher once a week. The lessons lasted 1.5 h, which was why she resolved not to implement strategic intervention in this group. The time she had at her disposal was insufficient and would make it impossible to conduct training and regular lessons.

3.3 The Design

The study reported here can be regarded as action research. The aim of the research project was to gain greater insight into the language learning strategies employed by advanced learners of English and also to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and learning, which constitutes the main characteristics of action research (Dörnyei 2007). The design of the study was quasi-experimental. There were three groups, two experimental ones and a control group.

The researcher started her project by distributing a questionnaire that aimed to provide her with background information about the subjects. The questionnaire helped the researcher to learn more about such issues as the duration and intensity of learning English, the subjects' reasons for learning this particular language,

Table 1 Research timetable

Time	Procedures
Week 1	Questionnaire
Week 2	Pre-test, SILL, diaries
Week 3	Awareness-raising training, diaries
Week 4	Awareness-raising training, diaries
Week 5	Awareness-raising training, diaries
Week 6	Awareness-raising training, strategic intervention, diaries
Week 7	Strategic intervention, diaries
Week 8	Strategic intervention, an immediate post-test, diaries
Week 9	SILL, diaries
Week 10	Diaries
Week 14	Delayed post-test

their attitude towards learning grammar, their most and least frequently employed grammar learning strategies, etc. In order to avoid any possible misunderstandings, the language of the questionnaire was Polish.

The next stage was the administration of a pretest and the SILL. The reason why the SILL was introduced was that the researcher wanted to know more about the frequency of LLS use before the treatment. The students also completed their first diary entries. Since the completion of both the pretest and the SILL would have been rather time-consuming, the author decided to implement them separately, so as not to take up too much lesson time. Additionally, asking the subjects to complete a questionnaire, the SILL and a pre-test during one lesson, though logistically feasible, would have put a strain on learners and negatively affected their concentration. Just after the end of the treatment, the subjects were asked one more time to complete the SILL, which was administered to determine whether any changes had occurred in the frequency of general strategy use. The timetable of the research project is depicted in Table 1.

What is more, as advised by Pawlak (2006), no mention of the target feature was made between the immediate and delayed post-tests so as not to affect the final results. However, there was a risk that the subjects would revise their knowledge of the targeted structure outside the classroom setting. Such situations are unavoidable since there will always be students who will attend to their school duties very seriously and conscientiously, even outside their classroom setting.

3.4 Awareness-Raising Sessions

Prior to introducing strategic intervention, the author resolved to implement awareness-raising sessions. She wanted to help students understand the concept of a language learning strategy and its value when learning a foreign language. In fact, the metacognitive component is perceived by many as pivotal when

boosting the effectiveness of strategic intervention (Nyikos and Oxford 1993; Chamot et al. 1999; Rubin et al. 2007). It is believed that learners who are aware of the learning process become more independent. Anderson (2002) claims that learning more about one's cognitive processes is one of the most significant abilities a learner can acquire and develop in the language classroom. There are miscellaneous ways of raising learners' strategy awareness. As it is impossible to elaborate on all of them here, the focus will be solely on the actions undertaken in the course of the reported research project. It is worth mentioning that the awareness-raising sessions did not vary between the experimental groups and were devoted to general strategies.

The first session of awareness-raising training focused on analyzing the results of the SILL. When calculating the scores achieved by the subjects, the teacher created a separate profile for each student which showed clearly which strategies were most and least often employed by the learner. The profile also included the overall average obtained in the inventory. Before distributing these papers, the teacher engaged in a short discussion about language learning strategies with her students. They were asked to provide examples of the strategies they use to, for example, learn for a test, learn new vocabulary or understand the news. The next question pertained to the aim of strategies when learning a foreign language. Students unanimously answered that strategies help them to absorb knowledge more quickly and in a more effective manner. Thanks to the teacher's hints, the students came to the conclusion that strategies facilitate becoming independent and self-reliant when learning the target language.

Other steps included in the awareness-raising sessions involved analyzing the different types and subtypes of strategies proposed by Oxford (1990). To make it as clear as possible, the teacher prepared her own diagrams showing the different strategy types. The learners tried to elucidate what the different strategies are and provided further examples. They were also encouraged to share their opinions about the most and least useful strategy subtypes analyzed. The discussion was followed by short exercises that required the use of a particular type of language learning strategy. At the end of each session, the learners were asked to complete their diary entries and comment on the things they found useful and interesting.

It should be mentioned that all the exercises the participants performed were closely connected with the materials the subjects were analyzing at the time. This way the author wanted to make sure that the exercises students engaged in would not only help them to learn more about strategies but would also be exam-oriented since most of the students were planning to take the CAE exam by the end of the semester.

3.5 Strategic Intervention

Since many researchers strongly believe in the value of integrated and direct training, the strategic intervention conducted was closely integrated with the curriculum. The training was also direct as learners were informed about the aim

of the intervention, as well as its frequency. Since the teacher had to remember about the curriculum and time restraints, she resolved to focus on a grammatical aspect that had to be covered during the school year. Thus, during every lesson within the period of six weeks students received handouts with information and tasks on the target feature, namely emphasis. Every session focused on a different aspect of emphasis, such as fronting or introductory phrases, and was always accompanied by the same exercises for each group. Once the students performed the obligatory activities, they received an additional set of tasks, different for each of the experimental groups. The memory group (MG) focused on tasks that encompassed only memory strategies. The cognitive group (CG), on the other hand, concentrated on cognitive strategies, whereas the control group (ContG) did not receive any additional exercises.

4 Results

When looking at the mean scores the three groups achieved on the pretests, and immediate and delayed posttests, displayed in Fig. 1, one can see that it was the memory group that scored highest. On the pretest, the students subjected to memory strategies achieved a result of 19.15 points, surpassing the remaining groups. On the immediate posttest, administered immediately after the treatment, the memory group, again, outdid the control group and the cognitive one and scored 20.73 points. However, it was on the last post-test that they scores the highest number of points, namely 22.77.

By contrast, the scores achieved by the cognitive group were much lower. However, it should be stressed that the progress made within the period of fourteen weeks is certainly more noticeable. On the pretest, the group scored 12.14 points,
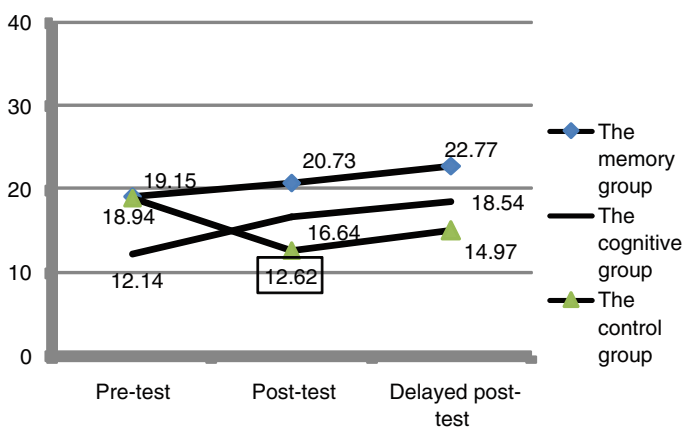

Fig. 1 The mean scores on pretests, immediate posttests and delayed posttests measuring the subjects' mastery of emphasis (n = 40)

which is the lowest score among all the three groups. This result could have stemmed from the fact that the majority of the members of the group were not familiar with the concept of emphasis. The immediate posttest showed, however, a considerable increase, which resulted in the score of 16.64 points. Just as the memory group, the cognitive one achieved the highest score on the delayed posttest, namely 18.54. When analyzing the mean scores in the cognitive group, one may see that the improvement is remarkable. This, in turn, suggests that the strategy training the group had undergone proved to be very beneficial in terms of mastering the target structure.

The last group, the control one, scored 18.94 points on the pretest, which was a very good start. However, in the course of time the results were far less impressive. The group managed to score only 12.62 points on the immediate posttest and 14.97 on the delayed one. Since the control group included first-year university students at an English department, they were exposed to many more hours of English than the experimental groups. Therefore, one might ponder why their results were much lower. One of the reasons for such unimpressive or even disappointing results could have been the students' attitude. Since the immediate posttest was conducted in the middle of the semester and no EFL tests were looming, many students did not devote much of their time to studying. However, as the end of the semester was approaching, many students started to revise the material analyzed during the course as they knew it would appear on their final exam. Hence, the score gained on the delayed posttest amounted to 14.97 points and increased by almost 2.5 points in comparison to the previous test.

The results show that it was the memory group that benefited most from the treatment as it managed to achieve the highest scores on both posttests. Since both experimental groups managed to obtain higher results on the delayed posttests administered six weeks after the end of the intervention, it seems that the effects of the intervention proved durable.

One of the issues the author also dealt with was the level of standard deviations among the groups participating in the study, which is shown in Fig. 2. When looking at the memory group, one can see that the level of SD was rather high on the pretest. This could have resulted from the different levels of advancement among group members. Some of them had already become acquainted with the notion of emphasis, whereas others had not. This discrepancy decreased on the immediate and delayed posttests by, altogether, 0.86 points. The scores obtained in the cognitive group do not indicate such a disparity, which means that the inter-subject variation was not as conspicuous as in the memory and control groups. Initially, the SD amounted to 3.6 points, then plummeted to 2.44 points, only to reach 3.24 on the last posttest. The observed increase in the SD value on the posttests could have resulted from the fact that there were students who were still lagging behind and who probably needed more time to absorb the target feature and who, occasionally, missed their classes because of the approaching school leaving examinations. Therefore, they achieved lower results, which in turn affected the SD value in the whole group.
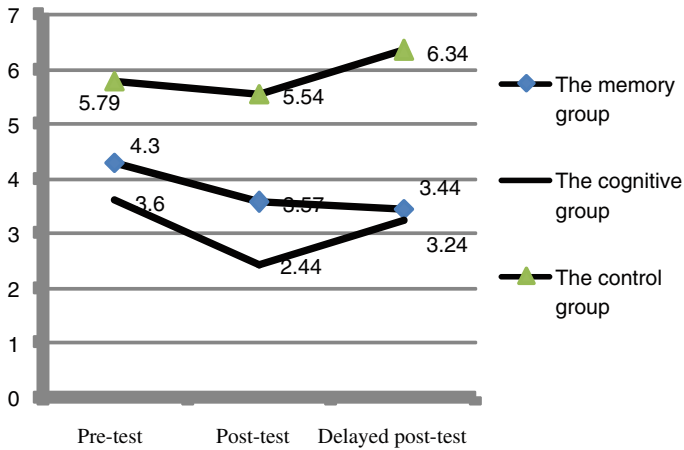
Fig. 2 The values of SD on pretests, immediate posttests and delayed posttests measuring the subjects' mastery of emphasis (n = 40)

Having calculated the two most significant data, the author conducted a t test with respect to the scores of the two experimental groups, the memory and the cognitive one, the results of which are given in Table 2. The significance level was set at.05. The values of p were much higher than the established critical value for t 2.074. Although one may observe a decreasing tendency with respect to t, with the value of 4.25 for the pretest, 3.19 for the immediate posttest and 3.06 for the delayed posttest, the results reached statistical significance. The scores also suggest high proficiency gains on the part of the subjects.

The second t-test was conducted in order to compare the results achieved by the memory and the control groups, displayed in Table 3. The critical value of t was established at 2.052. One may observe that the differences on the pretest were minute. It could have been the very high level of standard deviations for one of the groups that adversely affected the results. However, when one examines the results for the immediate and delayed posttests, it is clear that the differences reached statistical significance. The t values are much higher than the critical value.

Table 2 Significance levels for the memory group (MG) and the cognitive group (CG)

	Mean		SD		Significance (two-tailed t-test)
	MG	CG	MG	CG	
Pre-test	19.15	12.14	4.3	3.6	Pre→6 Pre: $t = 4.25$, $p < .05$, df $= 22$
Immediate post-test	20.73	16.64	3.57	2.44	Ipost→ Ipost: $t = 3.19$, $p < .05$
Delayed post-test	22.77	18.54	3.44	3.24	Dpost→ Dpost: $t = 3.06$, $p < .05$

Table 3 *t*-test for the memory group (MG) and the control group (ContG)

	Mean		SD		Significance (two-tailed *t*-test)	
	MG	ContG	MG	ContG	MG	ContG
Pre-test	19.15	18.94	4.3	5.79	Pre→ Pre: $t = 0.108$, $p < .05$, df $= 27$	
Immediate post-test	20.73	12.62	3.57	5.54	Ipost→ Ipost: $t = 4.58$, $p < .05$	
Delayed post-test	22.77	14.97	3.44	6.34	Dpost→ Dpost: $t = 3.98$, $p < .05$	

Table 4 *t*-tests for the cognitive group (CG) and the control group (ContG)

	Mean		SD		Significance (two-tailed *t*-test)	
	CG	ContG	CG	ContG	CG	ContG
Pre-test	12.14	18.94	3.6	5.79	Pre→ Pre: $t = 3.5$, $p < .05$, df $= 27$	
Immediate post-test	16.64	12.62	2.44	5.54	Ipost→ Ipost: $t = 2.27$, $p < .05$	
Delayed post-test	18.54	14.97	3.24	6.34	Dpost→ Dpost: $t = 1.73$, $p < .05$	

The data for the cognitive and control groups are presented in Table 4. The critical value of *t* was established at 2.06. The *t* values obtained for the pretest and the immediate post-test were much higher than the critical value. However, the result for the delayed posttest proved highly disappointing. One of the possible causes of this result could have been the difference between the SD values, as already mentioned with respect to the previous set of *t*-tests. It should be stressed that the standard deviation in the control group, measured on the delayed posttest, reached the highest value of 6.34. This, most surely, affected the final results.

5 Conclusions

The paper was devoted to the concept of strategic intervention and its place in the foreign language classroom. The author also presented the results of a research project that she carried out with a view to examining language learning strategies employed by advanced learners of English. The study focused on comparing the results of the training conducted in two experimental groups—the memory and the cognitive one. Prior to introducing strategy training, the author also implemented awareness-raising sessions, thanks to which the subjects were provided with an opportunity to learn more about LLS, their application and effectiveness. Even

though the results of the study demonstrate that it was the memory group that achieved better results as measured by the pretest, and the immediate and delayed posttests, it would seem appropriate to conclude that in fact both groups benefited from instruction. Moreover, in both experimental groups the mean scores proved considerably high even six weeks after the intervention, which implies that the effect of the treatment was durable and yielded satisfactory results. The findings that, thanks to the exposure to LLS, the subjects were able to acquire the target feature and achieved better results than the subjects who did not undergo the treatment.

Of course, it should be stressed that the findings should be treated with some degree of caution as there are multiple variables that could have exerted an impact on the final scores. To start with, if the researcher had introduced a different target feature in the study, the results could have varied significantly. What is more, it is possible that different groups, placed in a different setting and working throughout a longer period of time would have achieved much higher, or much lower, results. That is why, the findings should by no means be perceived as conclusive and there is a need for more comprehensive research in that area, especially such that would address the relationship between the training and the application of grammar learning strategies (GLS), an area that so far has received a limited amount of interest. Hopefully, however, the results presented in the paper will not only serve as a reference point for further discussion but also encourage a greater number of practitioners to implement strategic intervention in their classes.

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Part II
Teaching and Learning to Teach

On the Role of Teacher Questions in EFL Classrooms: Analysing Lesson Videos

Petra Kirchhoff and Friederike Klippel

Abstract This article reports first steps in an analysis of teacher language in ELT classrooms which are being filmed in German secondary schools. With the tools of discourse and conversation analysis the focus is on teachers' questions in their instructional context. Teachers' questions can perform a range of different functions both in the various communicative and pedagogical situations in a lesson and within the IRF cycle (i.e. initiation, response, feedback/follow-up). We argue that even cognitively simple questions should not be discounted as they might serve an important function in the language learning process. Finally, we suggest a reassessment of the IRF cycle on the basis of our findings and we propose a re-working of Nunn's (1999) framework for question analysis as a point of departure.

1 The Basis: The Munich Video Project

Since 2010 English lessons have been videotaped in Bavarian secondary schools. The teachers are volunteers, as are the students. Our goal is to have a range of 'ordinary' lessons on record, lessons that have not been planned just to be filmed, but lessons that would have taken place with or without a camera present in the context of a normal classroom environment. The teachers are not given any kind of guidelines as to what and how they should teach. Topic, language focus and methodology are therefore based on the individual teachers' long-term planning, their teaching styles and experience. We are well aware of the fact that the lessons we have recorded may not cover the whole range of methodological, topical or linguistic realizations of

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English language teaching at German secondary schools, and this is also due to the fact that we are working with volunteers, who feel confident enough to be filmed. Nevertheless the 15 lessons recorded so far show a remarkable diversity in terms of levels, teacher personalities, goals and methodology. Before recording takes place, each teacher submits information on their professional status and experience as well as a brief lesson plan including a characterization of the learners, the lesson objectives and outline as well as copies of the materials used. If possible, field notes are taken by members of the video team. In our analyses, we use this additional set of data as a means of clarification for the videotaped lessons.

Since we are still in the process of recording lessons we cannot yet say anything definitive about the size and characteristics of the final corpus we may be dealing with. This chapter is our first step towards an analysis of some of our data. We have chosen the area of teachers' questions as a promising avenue towards a better understanding of what happens in English language classrooms. Teachers' questions are an element of virtually every lesson and thus deserve a closer look.

2 Research Perspective

Teachers have a range of verbal and non-verbal behaviors at their disposal to stimulate and create situations in which learning can take place. Probably the most frequently used strategy of elicitation and (pedagogical) interaction is constituted by *teacher questions*. There have been a number of studies investigating teachers' questions in the modern language classroom (e.g. Long and Sato 1983; White and Lightbown 1984; Banbrook 1987; Banbrook and Skehan 1990; Nunn 1999). Both qualitative and quantitative aspects have been investigated so far. In their analysis of research to date, Banbrook and Skehan (1990) distinguish two different research perspectives which they characterize as *theory-then-research orientation* and *research-then-theory perspective*, respectively. In the first case, a particular theory of language teaching and/or learning determines the research questions as well as the methods employed for observation and analysis. The data are then used to confirm a theory or provide evidence for certain deficits in the field of practice. In the second instance, classroom interaction is observed, transcribed and conclusions are drawn from the data gathered. Even if no theory is explicitly used to formulate and maybe even test hypotheses, this approach is not theory-free, because researchers also have their very personal beliefs which need to be made explicit. Yet, this second approach gives more weight to the data and their interpretation. It is in this second research paradigm that we situate our own study. On the qualitative-quantitative scale, we have been more interested in collecting and analyzing qualitative data so far. However, should we succeed in videotaping a greater number of English lessons, a further quantitative analysis may follow at a later stage, when data collection has been completed.

Within the qualitative research paradigm we follow Seedhouse (2004) and Seedhouse and Walsh (2010) by adopting an *emic perspective*, which gives prominence to the participants. The data is seen as context-bound, which means

that interactants rely on "mutually understood features of the background context" (Seedhouse 2004, p. 7). Thus students and the teacher have a shared understanding of what certain utterances 'mean'; the participants' utterances are "context-shaped and context-renewing" (Seedhouse 2004, p. 14) and have to be seen within the conversational sequence.

3 Some Results of Research into Teachers' Questions

One of the outcomes of qualitative analyses has been the development of different taxonomies of teachers' questions; these are frequently based on principles derived from general pedagogy, in particular Bloom's taxonomy (cited in Long and Sato 1983; Wong 2010). Bloom distinguishes six types of questions, i.e. *questions asking for knowledge*, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *evaluation*; these question types signify a progression from low cognitive processing to high cognitive processing, making questions for knowledge (often display questions) the easiest, and those for evaluation the most difficult for the learners to answer. In a recent study based on Bloom's taxonomy, Wong (2010) looked at six ELT classrooms in Hongkong and found that overall more than 80 % of all questions asked were low cognitive questions. Knowledge questions were asked by the teachers to check understanding of particular words, "to teach vocabulary; to elicit words from students; to ask students to locate information and to reactivate students' previous knowledge" (Wong 2010, p. 42). Synthesis or evaluation questions did not occur at all. On the surface, this seems a slightly disturbing finding. However, it raises the question which functions teachers' questions ought to have in a language classroom, when both skill-getting, which involves remembering words, pronunciation and sentence chunks among other things, and skill-using, to use a term coined by Rivers and Temperly (1978), are important goals. Further work on Bloom's taxonomies has been presented in other fields of research. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, p. 27), for example, introduce a second dimension to Bloom's original taxonomy. In their two-dimensional framework, the knowledge dimension of learning and the dimension of cognitive processing intersect. Whether adding another dimension to Bloom's model really constitutes a way forward to develop a better taxonomy of questions that reflects the objectives of our area of research still needs to be investigated.

Apart from Bloom's taxonomy, a further classification of questions types pervades qualitative research in recent decades, namely the distinction between *referential* and *display/rote questions*, on the one hand, and between *open* and *closed questions*, on the other. Overall, researchers found frequent use of display questions and rather fewer referential questions for teachers in ELT classrooms (Long and Sato 1983). Long and Sato (1983) contrast the dominant use of display questions in the language classroom with the prominent use of referential rather than display questions in natural discourse amongst adults and thus see the language classroom as deficient in this respect.

Level 1	Discourse in the classroom, context reflecting the classroom roles of teachers and students
Level 2	Discourse in a "displaced" context a. interaction in a non-classroom setting simulating non-classroom roles b. topic from textbook world or students' world
Level 3	The language itself as topic within the classroom

Fig. 1 Levels of discourse in language lessons (adapted from Nunn 1999, p. 27)

This is rightly taken issue with by Nunn (1999), who proposes a three-level analysis of questions (see Fig. 1). His approach does justice to the multifaceted functions of teacher language in the language classroom. Nunn's first level refers to the most immediate context of a teacher's question, i.e. the language classroom, where teachers and students negotiate their roles in a pedagogic situation. On this level, discourse is not simulated in any way. The second level comprises 'displaced' discourse, i.e. talking about texts or information relating to the world outside the classroom as well as simulations of real-world interactions. Level three Fig. 1 deals with the language itself and therefore is "code-focused" (Nunn 1999, p. 27).

When considering this analysis, it is vital to keep Nunn's socio-cultural perspective in mind:

> Classroom discourse has to be analyzed, like any other style of discourse, in terms of the same aspects of the context of situation. It is unhelpful to suggest that classroom discourse is somehow 'unnatural' or 'abnormal' just because it is usually rather formal (Nunn 1999, p. 35).

It is important to study teachers' question within the educational framework which generates them. This ties in well with Seedhouse's (2004) stance mentioned above. In our view, it is necessary to have in mind the different approaches to analyzing questions, because the interactional function of a question can only be assessed in relation to the teaching context and the objectives of a particular phase of the lesson. For example, in a language classroom that includes elements of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) the distinction between display and referential questions might lead to a deeper understanding of teaching and learning processes (Nicula 2007, p. 180). But the value of this distinction needs to be challenged in a language-focused classroom, because here "the most significant feature of instructional questions is their eliciting function" (van Lier 1988, p. 224).

Research in the last decades has also looked at quantitative aspects such as *wait time* (White and Lightbown 1984), the overall number of questions asked and the frequency of specific question types (DESI 2007; Wong 2010). The large-scale study *Deutsch Englisch Schülerleistungen International* (DESI—*Learner Achievements in German and English*) conducted in Germany about eight years ago is of great interest in this respect. In its video study, DESI analysed 105 English lessons with regard to the number of questions used by the teacher within one lesson, the range of responses accepted by the teacher (*Antwortspielraum*), the level of complexity of answers (*hohe/niedrige Komplexität*) and the authenticity in the interaction (*hohe/*
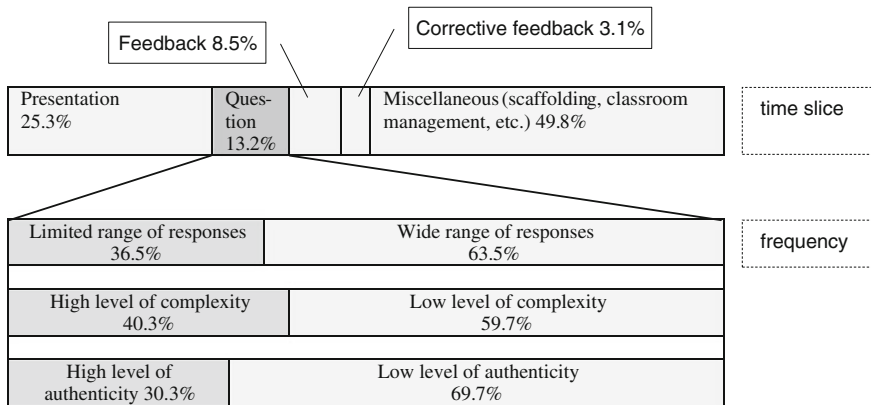
Fig. 2 DESI data on distribution and types of questions (adapted from DIPF DIPF. Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung 2007, p. 49; original in German; translation into English by the authors)

niedrige Authentizität) (DIPF 2007, p. 49). In this study, referential questions were found to generate more authentic interaction than display questions.

Figure 2 displays the findings of DESI (2007). On the whole, they are basically in line with previous findings of other studies. Unfortunately, the DESI video data are not available to researchers outside the project consortium, so that further analyses are impossible.

4 The IRF Cycle

Banbrook and Skehan (1990, p. 142) in their review of the research on teachers' questions conclude "that there is a divergence between what theorists would consider to be good practice and what is actually going on in the classrooms". It seems that the concept of communicative language teaching is sometimes understood by researchers as implying that classroom interaction has to mirror natural interaction between speakers outside the classroom all the time. The basic rule that one learns to communicate by communicating is overextended to all classroom activities. But is that really required? The traditional distinction between skill-getting and skill-using suggests that different goals can be assigned to different phases of language lessons, in which classroom discourse takes on different functions.

In our view, a closer look at what language teachers actually do and say is required. We understand pedagogical discourse in English language lessons as a type of discourse in its own right and we suspend judgment on the often maligned IRF sequence (i.e. initiation, response, feedback/follow-up). Teachers' questions are often in the initial position in this sequence, but can also occur in a wide range of different functions in the lesson.

In order to find out more about the cognitive demands and the interactive purposes or functions, the full context of the classroom discourse and the whole communicative exchange embedded in it, i.e. the whole IRF cycle comprising different realizations of initiation, response and feedback need to be considered and analyzed. We would like to stress that we do not subscribe to a linear and narrow view of the IRF cycle, i.e. the type which, as Seedhouse (2004) justly criticizes, is often viewed as anathema to a communicative classroom setting, because it does not seem to reflect the communicative goals.

Seedhouse (2004) showed that not only the type of question being asked is important for judging the quality of the interaction, but also the whole IRF exchange. He used the following example, taken from Johnson (1995), to exemplify his point (Johnson 1995, p. 23, as cited in Seedhouse 2004, p. 59):

1 T: Vin, have you ever been to the movies? What's your favourite movie?
2 L: big
3 T: big, OK, that's a good movie, that was about a boy inside a big man, wasn't it?
4 L: yeah, boy get surprise all the time
5 T: yes, he was surprised, wasn't he? Usually, little boys don't do the things that men do, do they?
6 L: no little boy no drink
7 T: that's right, little boys don't drink.

In his subsequent analysis, Seedhouse shows that the learner actually manages to introduce a subtopic (line 4), an element in the plot of the film. By responding to the propositional content of the learner's utterance with "that's right" (line 7) as well as to the linguistic form by recasting the learner's sentence in "little boys don't drink" (line 7), the teacher shows a complex understanding of the demands at hand, which are more pedagogical in character, like sharing ideas, responding to linguistic incorrectness and orienting the other learners, who might not have seen the film (Seedhouse 2004). Using this short example, Seedhouse draws attention to the idea that what could be regarded as a traditional lock-step communication is actually a "very complex, fluid and dynamic piece of interaction" (2004, p. 60). According to Seedhouse, "IRF/IRE cycles perform different interactional and pedagogical tasks according to the context in which they are operating" (2004); therefore the entire context created by the institutional framework and the interactional sequence demand careful analysis. Considering his approach to conversation analysis, which allows the attribution of several different communicative functions to single utterances, it becomes clear that an isolated look at the type of question and a superficial look at the response it triggers are not enough to tease out the complex use of questions. This poses a great challenge to the researcher. Ellis (1997, p. 588) terms this research approach *high interference*, because a lot of interpretative work is required in order to code teachers' questions into cognitive or functional categories. This difficulty will become fully evident when we discuss our own classroom-based work.

There is one fundamental problem to which we have not found a solution so far: What should be considered a teacher's question? Do we only look at sentences in

the syntactic form of questions or do we include statements with rising intonation? What about non-verbal questions which are visible in our video data? This issue has to be set aside at the moment.

5 A Framework for the Analysis of Teachers' Questions in Interaction

Even though our basic approach is data-driven, it is nevertheless helpful to conceptualize a more elaborate framework for studying teacher–pupil exchanges on the basis of pilot analyses. For this purpose, we suggest the fleshing-out of the IRF cycle presented in Fig. 3, where different aspects guide a more detailed analysis of each utterance. It is obvious that the framework is open to extension and needs to be tested with more data than can be analyzed in this chapter.

A number of open questions remain: Would it be helpful or indeed necessary to integrate Nunn's levels (1999; see above) into the framework? Is it possible to discover all the functions carried by teachers' and students' utterances even from a

Phase of interaction	Aspects for analysis
I	• question type (taxonomy) • number of questions asked within one turn (e.g. paraphrase of previous question) • function(s) (communicative and/or pedagogical function) • directedness (focused/unfocussed) • wait time • ...
R	• number of respondents called upon by the teacher • length of individual response(s) • correctness (propositional content and linguistic form) • complexity (propositional content and linguistic form) • ...

F	• directedness (focused/unfocussed)
	• focus on form and/or meaning
	  o level of exploitation of pupil's response
	  o higher level of knowledge processing (e.g. hypothesis-building, note on board on higher level of abstraction)
	  o new initiation
	• length
	• ...

Overall evaluation: high/low fluidity of discourse, interactional space, potential depth of processing, connectedness to overall learning aims of the language lesson	

Fig. 3 Extended framework for analysis of the IRF cycle

videotaped lesson? Is it enough to use an emic view of the data or do we need to apply other research tools to validate our findings?

6 First Analysis of Selected Examples

The main aim of this section is to present the first tentative data-driven insights into interaction in the language classroom that is guided by questions. For orientation, we apply the framework for the analysis of teacher's questions (see Fig. 3) to instructional practice. The interaction is described at the micro-level of teaching from an emic point of view. In this section, we will focus on three short examples.

6.1 Example 1

The first example is taken from a lower intermediate English class in a Bavarian *Realschule*.[1] In Bavaria English language teaching begins in grade three in primary school; at the level depicted here the pupils are in their fourth year of learning English. The aim of this lesson is to use of the present perfect in context. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher elicits sentences in the target structure with the help of a picture description. In the picture a shocked family is standing in the middle of their living room that has been searched by burglars. In the classroom, the picture is shown with the help of an overhead-projector (OHP). The transparency is not displayed in its entirety, but the teacher slowly moves a sheet of paper with a hole in it over the projected image. In this short sequence the teacher makes use of a couple of questions (underlined in the transcript).

Example 1 (t = teacher, p = pupil)			
1	**p:**	((t shows part of an image on the OHP)) I can see a woman.	R
2	**t:**	well, it's actually a man	F
3		but here is a lady and have a look at the lady	I
4		((t uncovers the whole picture))	I
5		what about her?	I
6		is she happy? (.) is she sad? (.)	
7		ahm Zobina.	R
8	**p:**	she isn't (.) she is in shock.	
9	**t:**	she's shocked right	
10		and now we want to see what has happened why she is	

(continued)

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[1] In *Realschule* pupils work towards an intermediate school certificate.

11	shocked ((turns off OHP and indicates non-verbally to the	F
12	responsible p to turn on the room light)) so we want to find	I
13	out what has happened	

In the second line of this exchange, the teacher gives feedback to a pupil's response. She corrects the pupil by stating that the person the pupil wanted to describe is a man (line 2, "it's actually a man"). The teacher makes further use of the pupil's answer by directing the attention of the whole class to a woman in the picture (line 2, "but here is a lady and have a look at the lady"). By connecting the utterances on the topic level the teacher skillfully manages to form a cohesive discourse. In order to elicit a description of the lady, the teacher asks the open question "what about her?" (line 5) and leaves a very short wait time. As no pupil ventures to answer, the teacher offers some descriptive adjectives for describing the woman in the picture (line 6, "is she happy? (.) is she sad? (.)"). Here she uses closed questions that can only be answered with "yes" or "no". These questions could be potentially misleading, as the lady shown in the picture is neither sad nor happy. Neither of the teacher's suggestions represents a valid answer to the original question, "what about the lady?" (line 5). It becomes obvious that the follow-up questions were not intended as questions to be answered in the affirmative or negative, but rather as hints as to what to look for. Consequently, a pupil reacts to the teacher's questions by saying that neither of the teacher's given answers is correct and gives a suitable answer as far as content and language are concerned. It seems that the teacher has managed to stimulate the pupil to come up with a valid description of the lady in the picture.

When the teacher uses an eliciting technique in the form of questions like these, the learners' mental lexicon will be activated to retrieve appropriate vocabulary. Therefore, offering lexical items could be seen as a way of scaffolding on a lexical level. The goal in this phase of the lesson is to describe a picture correctly and apparently the pupils either lack the appropriate vocabulary or the visual literacy to succeed. As the main focus of this phase in the lesson is on activating vocabulary and the use of a particular grammatical form, the questions serve the purpose of generating answers in the foreign language. This eliciting function has already been highlighted as crucial by van Lier (1988, p. 224) and referred to earlier in this paper. In line 9, the teacher responds to the pupil's answer ("she's shocked right") by not only giving feedback on the content (level 2) but also providing input on the language level (level 3). In this short exchange, Nunn's (1999) distinction turns out to be helpful in highlighting the multifunctional layers of classroom discourse, referring to the content area of the lesson as well as the language focus.

A further issue lies in the value of open and closed teachers' questions for generating discourse. It seems doubtful whether assigning a lesser value to all closed questions (as seen in Wong 2010, p. 37) is appropriate in the context of language teaching. In Example 2 below, closed questions were used to scaffold

pupils' answers at an elementary level of English. The analysis of questions on a higher level of proficiency could reveal more about the use of closed questions to generate elicited language.

6.2 Example 2

The following extract is taken from the same lesson and shows the interaction immediately after the exchange in the first example. In this short excerpt, the teacher manages the transition from a speaking activity to an information gap activity that uses texts with different pieces of information on the same event. It is the teacher's intention to make the pupils use the present perfect.

Example 2			
1	**F**	**t:**	she's shocked right and now we want to see what has happened
2	**I**		why the lady is in shock
3			so we want to find out what has happened
4			((t turns around flipchart with 'What has happened?' in big writing))
5			so and in order to find out what has happened we are going to read a
6			text actually there are two texts one text for the As and one text for
7	**I**		the Bs
8			((turns on OHP to show transparency with tasks))
9			you will have to read the text to find a heading and to take down
10	**I**		some notes the As and the Bs, they've got different texts (.) right?
11			((t nods head to emphasize question on task comprehension while
12			looking around the class))
13	**I**		so, I think it's Jacqueline and who helps her to distribute the papers?
14	**R**		((p gets up to help))
15	**I**		mind (.) the As get the (.) it doesn't matter the As get the yellow
16			sheets and the Bs the white ones ok? so right

Bearing the logic of the IRF cycle and the multiple functions of questions in mind, lines 1–3 are most interesting. Here the teacher gives feedback to the pupil (line 1, "she's shocked right") on the correctness of the linguistic content and, at the same time, she addresses the whole class by paraphrasing the sentence and therefore making sure that everybody in the classroom has understood the utterance (line 2, "the lady is in shock"). Correctly interpreting the situation in the picture is a prerequisite for establishing common knowledge in the classroom before moving on to the next initiation. Here, feedback and new initiation overlap.

In line 3, the teacher has already indirectly asked the question "what has happened". This question embodies the main focus of the lesson, the use of the present perfect in context. Like in the previous example, Nunn's (1999) framework is useful to consider the interplay of the content level of the lesson and its language focus. Here, discourse works both in the 'displaced' context of the language

classroom (level 2) and on the level where language itself is a topic within the classroom (level 3). Because of its multi-functional nature, the question serves as a signpost for the learning objective of the whole lesson. The input of this question is visually enhanced by displaying it on the flipchart, ensuring as much as possible that all learners know what the aim of the activity is and are kept on task. This short extract of the lesson can be doubly coded in Nunn's framework, which offers the opportunity to assign more than one level of discourse to one utterance.

After that the teacher gives instructions for the reading and speaking activity. In this critical phase of the lesson, where comprehension is paramount, she makes ample use of the words "right" and "ok" with rising intonation (lines 10 and 16) as confirmation checks. By combining these one word questions with non-verbal language and eye contact she interacts quite closely with her pupils and gives them the opportunity to signal potential comprehension problems about the task at hand. She also uses a pedagogical question to organize the classroom (lines 13–14, "and who helps her to distribute the papers?"). In Nunn's categorization of discourse in the language classroom, this piece of discourse reflects the classroom roles of learners (level 1).

The analysis of this very short passage has shown that questions can guide discourse in the language classroom and classroom management on multiple levels. As none of the questions that are being asked in this sequence are answered by the pupils, they are correctly perceived by the learners to have a different function from those which merit a response in a learning context.

6.3 Example 3

The excerpt for the following analysis is taken from an eighth grade English class at a Bavarian *Gymnasium*.[2] At the start of the lesson, the teacher worked with an e-mail about a teenager's experience in Boston found in the course book *Green Line New 4* (Ashford 2006, p. 59). The objectives for this lesson include new vocabulary and knowledge about the New England area; in addition, the pupils should learn how to express their own opinions. The teacher takes the Museum of Bad Art, one of New England's tourist attractions introduced in the text, as a point of departure to work on expressions for stating opinions.

Example 3		
1	t:	oh let's go back to the museum of bad art again
2		how do you like this picture? (..) ((pupils open their books))
3		what's your [reaction]

(continued)

---

[2] High school or grammar school equivalent.

(continued)

4	p1:	[uah!]
5	t:	to this picture from the museum of bad art, Julia?
6	p2:	it's not really bad ((laughs))
7	p3:	it's funny
8	t:	ok
9	p4:	I find it interesting (.) how the colors are painted with each other
10	t:	right well your knowledge in art is amazing (.) who is your art
11		teacher this year?
12	p:	((all murmur name))
13	t:	((t nods)) good job they made you positive even toward bad art (.) or
14		what they call bad because it's a good point Julia I mean why does
15		anyone say this is bad art? now just spontaneous reaction hands up
16		who thinks this is ugly (.) or not good?
17	p	((almost no show of hands, pupils laugh))
18	t:	ok hands up (.) who thinks this is actually interesting or even nice (.)
19		beautiful?
20	p:	((a few pupils raise their hands))
21	t:	ok but the rest is undecided but ok lots of you don't find it so bad in
22		fact what I forgot for you is a few more pictures from the museum of
23		bad art and before we look at it I would like to (.) just to remember a
24		few of the words that you can use when we want to express our
25		opinions instead of always just saying well this is good or bad (.) ok
26		right write this in your school books as well

In this sequence, the teacher asks a referential question to move from working with the text to the next phase. His question, "how do you like this picture?" (line 2), should prompt pupils to share their personal reaction to a picture in the textbook which is presented as an exhibit from the Museum of Bad Art. As there is no immediate response, probably due to the pupils' still being busy with opening their books, he rephrases the question and directs it towards an individual pupil. But before he manages to rephrase his question, some pupils give an immediate response (line 4, "uah"). Julia, who the question has been addressed to, offers a more considered response; in her statement (line 6, "it's not really bad"), she breaks with the anticipated expectation of a critical judgment on the paintings by reacting positively. It is well possible that the pupil intended to provoke the teacher or the other pupils who had commented on the painting by groans. Julia's statement is followed by another pupil's positive remark about the works of art from the Museum of Bad Art shown in the textbook. Only after the third response to his question does the teacher give subtle feedback in the form of a short "ok" (line 8), which gives another pupil the opportunity to voice her reaction to the paintings. It turns out that the teacher has created interactional space that the pupils can fill by giving personal responses.

Up to now the conversation centered in the 'displaced' context of the language lesson, where the focus is on a given topic (level 2). But in the next step, the teacher manages to move to the real-life context by asking about the class's art

teacher. Obviously, this question is not only connected to the context and the material provided in the textbook, but it moves clearly beyond it. In Nunn's terminology it would still account, though, for level 2. It becomes evident that Nunn's framework does not provide for a description of this important distinction. In Nunn's (1999, p. 26) terms, the discourse taking place here is entirely 'displaced' and 'simulated', as the topic of the exchange is set by the textbook. Yet, the teacher's questions seem to initiate a change in the atmosphere of the classroom. This change is distinctly noticeable in the video data: The overall noise level rises and the pupils also react non-verbally to the question "how do you like this picture?" (line 2) and to the question about the class's art teacher. The following impromptu survey (lines 18–19, "ok hands (.) up who thinks this is actually interesting or even nice (.) beautiful?") gives even more room to the learners' personal reactions to the paintings shown in the textbook and prepares them for the next step of the lesson, where the class focuses on different ways of how to express one's opinions (focus on language, level 3). As the opportunity for personal evaluation of topics makes such a difference to the interactional dynamics in the classroom, there is a need to fine-tune Nunn's approach to distinguish between different levels of discourse in the language classroom by re-considering the distinction between 'simulated' discourses, on the one hand, and 'displaced' discourse on the other. In this example, it seems that even within the framework of a 'displaced' discourse, the teachers' questions eliciting pupils' personal evaluation and opinion alter the quality of the lesson.

7 Conclusion

It could be seen in the three extracts from English lessons at German secondary schools that a fresh look at teachers' questions is necessary. A simple categorization into types does not do justice to the complexity of classroom interaction. The intentions and effects of teacher's questions can only be described when considering the teaching aims, the instructional context including the entire IRF cycle, and the social situation in which teachers' questions are embedded. The learning objectives, which guide a lot of teacher utterances in the classroom are of paramount importance. In our examples, the teacher's questions form the central hub of communication and teacher-learner interaction. A close analysis of further lessons will show if the central role of questions is confirmed. In this research context, Nunn's (1999) framework needs to be refined to serve as a tool for further analyses.

On the basis of the extracts studied, we suggest that considering cognitively simple questions as less valuable is not helpful. Since language learning always requires some degree of automatization, these simple questions may act as triggers. Therefore, value judgments found in the research literature on the use of teachers' questions in ELT classrooms may well have to be reassessed. Referential questions

might stimulate more learner output as far as its quantity is concerned (Brock 1986), but we should study more closely how teachers' questions scaffold the development of learner fluency.

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Teacher Interpersonal Communication Abilities in the Classroom with Regard to Perceived Classroom Justice and Teacher Credibility

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Abstract The aim of this paper is to present theoretical foundations pertaining to interpersonal communication as well as to expound its role in defining teacher competence and evaluating teacher classroom performance. Furthermore, inter-personal skills are related to the concept of perceived teacher credibility and classroom justice as constituting the basis for the evaluation of teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The overall working hypothesis is that teacher evaluation pertains basically to the perception of his/her interpersonal communication skills. Both of the key concepts of teacher credibility and classroom justice rest firmly on these skills. Hence, their applicability in the verification process of teacher evaluation may shed additional light on the overall perception of teacher communicative abilities. As a result, the juxtaposition of the administrative teacher evaluation with the one based on the above-mentioned concepts corroborates the principal hypothesis.

1 Introduction

The teacher undoubtedly occupies a central role in the institutionalized educational system. Even if modern educational approaches pivoting around the umbrella term of autonomy promote learner centeredness, this, as Andrzejewska (2008, p. 42) puts it, does not absolve the teacher from the responsibility for the educational practice. It rather deconstructs his/her roles in the classroom, presents new challenges and redefines the range of his/her competences. Following this line of reasoning, the author of the present paper posits that teacher interpersonal communication abilities are a very important factor for his/her pedagogical endeavors.

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They directly influence students' behavior and their perception of the teacher, or, more precisely, his/her classroom credibility, and the perception of his/her pedagogical efforts included in the notion of perceived classroom justice. Thus, the vital issue under scrutiny in this article is the recognition of teacher interpersonal abilities and their impact on the holistic picture of the teacher and the evaluation of his/her classroom behavior.

2 Interpersonal Communication and the Teacher

The value of interpersonal communication in the school milieu came to the forefront of considerations with democratization of schooling. This, in turn, entailed the need for revisiting the jug-and-mug vision of the teacher and the traditional banking model of teaching supported by the transmission vision of communication ascribing a secondary role to the receiver, as initiated by Shannon and Weaver's (1949) mathematical model. Today, we acknowledge that human communication is basically shaped by an ongoing feedback (the reaction of the receiver) and language is by no means a mere conduit of meaning. This new communication paradigm is particularly vital for educational endeavors in which learners are no longer perceived as passive receives. Consequently, the effectiveness of the teacher's efforts is placed on the relational continuum and depends on his/her interpersonal abilities. The following sections highlight the importance of interpersonal communication in the classroom and its reference to the respective notions of teacher credibility and classroom justice, which are claimed to be a good measure for evaluating teacher interpersonal communication skills.

2.1 Defining Interpersonal Communication

When defining *interpersonal communication*, it is important to distinguish it from broadly-conceived communication. Literature offers a multitude of definitions and taxonomies of interpersonal communication. Some researchers seem to use the adjective 'interpersonal' only to underline the fact that it refers directly to human communication. Hartley's (1999, p. 2) understanding of interpersonal communication as "face-to-face communication by two people" metaphorically embodied Clampitt's (1991, p. 18) vision of communication as a dance. As to the basic characteristics of interpersonal communication, it is commonly agreed that it involves few participants, usually two, referred to as a dyad, but it can also involve a larger number of interlocutors. Nonetheless, the smaller the number, the more interpersonal character it assumes. It can also involve an individual talking to a small group of people. Another feature of interpersonal communication is proximity, which means that interactants are physically close to each other, there are many sensory channels used, and feedback is immediate. An important point to

note about the contextual definition of interpersonal communication is that it does not take into account the relationship between communicators. The adjective *interpersonal* may additionally define communication between people who have known each other for some time and view each other as unique individuals (Gouran et al. 1994). Shebanova (2010, p. 81) defines interpersonal communication as "interrelation experienced and recognized to a variable extend [*sic*] and based on various emotional and psychological states". She juxtaposes it with business relations and stresses the fact that interpersonal communication, as opposed to business communication, is "referred to as emotional or expressive".

Interpersonal communication manifests inherent emotional intelligence or interpersonal intelligence, which is a vital factor for effective communication. Thus, interpersonal communication skills may be perceived as an inborn characteristic susceptible to minor social modification. This stance concurs with the concept of an inborn capacity for communication inherent in the *Theory of Mind* as stipulated by Premack and Woodruff (1978) and seen by Kurcz (2005, pp. 30–37) as a biological, latent component underlying communicative competence—the equivalent to the inborn quality of Chomskyan *Universal Grammar*. The Theory of Mind posits the inborn capacity of decentration, or, more colloquially, the ability of feeling oneself in somebody else's shoes. The ability of reflecting upon experience is also an essential part of Damasio's (1999) concept of *proto-self*, or innate "virtual other". Van Lier (2004, p. 107) seems to reject the validity of the innateness hypothesis and, stressing the role of social construction, claims that "humans are so constituted that in their activity in the world, both external (about the environment) and internal information (about the body of its activity) is created". As a result, the sociocultural approach presupposes that interpersonal skills, just like intelligence, are equally well shaped and developed in social interaction.

When comprehended in a very narrow sense, interpersonal communication means communicating oneself to others and reversely getting information about other interactants. This dimension of interpersonal communication rests firmly on the affective domain. The present author limits his considerations to the psychological and relational contexts, demonstrating that interpersonal communication has a direct reference to the attitudinal nature of perceived classroom justice and teacher credibility. The teacher's disregard for this dimension of interpersonal communication may have negative consequences for the rapport with students and can influence his/her general image in students' minds. This is how interpersonal communication is viewed by De Vito (2011, p. 5).

2.2 Interpersonal Communication in the School Milieu

Educational theoreticians and practitioners have long recognized the value of communication in the learning and teaching processes. The narrow understanding of interpersonal communication as communicating oneself and getting information about others has received an adequate consideration in teaching theory in the

notion of a *rapport*. The modern world seems to present a significant challenge for interpersonal communication.

Technology, such as the Internet and mobile communication, rendering information exchange and communication much easier, can be ironically perceived as the realization of the sentiment for immediate contact with others. It leads to the increase of the popularity of Internet communicators and mobile phones. Shebanova (2010, p. 86) accentuates that the value of virtual communication lies in its realization of the need for interpersonal communication. She views this type of interpersonal communication in terms of real face-to-face communication since it is impossible to imagine the virtual world without people. This seems to be the case, since virtual communication in the instructional setting (e.g. interactive instructional television—IITV), in order to be effective, has to be marked by the qualities of interpersonal communication pertaining to the effects of immediacy and receptivity (cf. Umphrey et al. 2006). Some researchers, such as Witt (2004), question the value of Web-supported instruction. His findings did not confirm commonsensical hypotheses claiming "that instructors who provide course Web sites would be viewed by students as more credible", or predicting "higher expectations for learning in the presence of a Web site, based on the assumption that the Web would be viewed by students as an effective instructional medium that would support or extend instruction received in the classroom", or the supposition that "affect for teacher and course content would be enhanced in the presence of a course site" (Witt 2004, p. 430).

The trend to underscore the value of face-to-face communication in the educational milieu as enhancing the meaning of interpersonal communication is paralleled with the search for education which is based on first-hand experience and ongoing dialogues between classroom members and the teacher to create the meaning beyond the physical world. Interpersonal communication, the indispensible dimension of gregarious human nature, is deeply rooted in the psychological domain of human existence. In the field of schooling, the sheer promotion of intellect had a crippling effect on human "emotional illiteracy" (Arnold and Brown 1999, p. 3). Recent trends promoting humanistic methodologies, autonomy, or quality (as derived from the ecological and semiotic perspective) underscore the value of interpersonal communication.

Communication in general has long been identified as a vital component of education. Modern theories of learning resting on the premise that knowledge is a process of construction and personal understanding underscore the value of communication in the process of information exchange. Interdependence, as promoted by autonomization of the educational process, requires cooperation on the part of interactants in the process of learning. Interpersonal communication seems to be the key to modern education. The value of social interaction has been promoted in the concept of Kohonen et al.'s (2001) experiential learning in language education, which involves the ability "to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways" (Kohonen 1992, p. 19).

Educational discourse requires more than a mere information exchange. In the school context, information is, and should be, most often tinted with some

emotional value. Only then can it be noticed and integrated into the existing system of knowledge and beliefs. Stonkuvienė (2010) maintains that interpersonal communication inevitably entails the communication of the self, and education, in turn, should be seen primarily as communication. From this perspective, education as communication shapes emotional reactions and reveals human relations (Stonkuvienė 2010, p. 191).

The ecological and semiotic approach to education, as envisaged by van Lier (2004), looking for the ways of enhancing the quality of education (van Lier 2004, p. 12) sees chances for accomplishing it through the activation of the self in language learning and learning as such. This is because all learning is realized through language, which gives rise to an additional call for educational linguistics (van Lier 2004, p. 2). The essential thing is that both learning and language (a means of learning) require active participation on the part of learners in the form of identification. van Lier (2004, p. 108) explains that:

> Using language is not a simple, neutral business of transmitting information to another person or to the world at large. Whenever we say something we do not only provide a piece of information about something or other, we also at the same time provide information in two other important matters: who we are ourselves, and who we think or listeners or readers are. Or, phrasing it in another way, our language use discloses information about what we think of ourselves and what we think of the people who may be listening (or reading).

Using semiotic discourse, van Lier (2004, p. 113) claims that "signs therefore do not exist outside of human speakers, hearers, and the objects (physical or symbolic) that they are addressing". Any learning (including language learning), in order to be effective, is thus supposed to be the natural process of *semiosis* in which interactants communicate their own voice. Thus, language learning requires personalization (Lankiewicz 2011) based on interpersonal communication.

Assuming the facilitative role of the teacher in student learning endeavors, it is critical that s/he possesses good interpersonal communication skills. High awareness of the interpersonal communication process is undoubtedly crucial for the success of his/her educational activities and physical well-being in the school milieu. Consequently, interpersonal communication skills constitute a vital component of his/her teaching competence.

2.3 Interpersonal Communication Skills and Teacher Competence

Modern approaches view schooling as learner-centered, thus abolishing one-way controlling style of communication and discarding the banking model of the teacher. In the postmodern world, governed by relativism and the logic of perception, knowledge is basically a personal construction. The non-existence of the absolute truth or knowledge deconstructs the traditional role of the teacher as a source of information. Thus, teacher education should comprise good knowledge of the subject matter, technical and methodological preparation as well as training in

interpersonal skills. Practical theories and good communication skills are indispensable for winning students' hearts and enhancing their respect and motivation towards the course and the teacher. Interpersonal skills may involve empathy, a sense of humor, control of one's body language, or self-disclosure (Hartley 1999).

Out of an array of language teacher competences, Werbińska (2011) assigns due attention to *psychological competence*, which by others is sometimes arbitrarily referred to as *emotional competence* (Head and Taylor 1997, cited in Werbińska 2011, p. 49). She defines it as "the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students". Further, she quotes Cooper's (1993, cited in Richards, 1998, p. 6) words to underscore the value of teacher communicative skills:

> Although many variables affect classroom learning, it is generally agreed that the paramount variable is communication. The essence of the teaching-learning process is effective communication, for without communication, teaching and learning would be impossible. Thus, one of the core components of teacher education should be speech communication (Werbińska 2011, p. 49).

In reference to interpersonal skills, other authors accentuate the value of a positive and friendly attitude towards learners (Stern 1992, cited in Werbińska 2011, p. 50), respect for others and authenticity (Komorowska 1993, p. 12; Harmer 1994, cited in Werbińska 2011, p. 49) or being fair to all students and presenting clear rules (Komorowska 1993, cited in Werbińska 2011, p. 49). Thus, interpersonal communication skills require maturity of character on the part of the teacher who has to be aware of the fact that his/her nonverbal behavior is as important as verbal.

Verbal and visual nonverbal characteristics are the constitutive elements of communication and influence its evaluation when people get into the direct contact. Communication participants evaluate anatomic features (height, hair color, etc.), physiological characteristics (good breath, circulation of the blood, sweat), functional ones (bearing, posture, gait) and linguistic verbal and nonverbal peculiarities (speech rate, audibility, facial expression and gestures, bodily movement) (Shebanova 2010, p. 81).

In the 1970s, Fulcher and Anderson (1974), viewing teaching as a communication process, perceived teacher effectiveness in the spectrum of the relationship with learners. Despite the fact that their study consisting in the measures of perceived interpersonal dissimilarity and perceived teaching effectiveness failed to confirm a critical relationship between the two measures, it accentuated, as they concluded, "the potential of relational analysis as a promising method for exploring the nebulous question of teaching effectiveness" (Fulcher and Anderson 1974, p. 25). Undoubtedly, the potential in question has received elaboration in the notion of perceived teacher credibility and perceived classroom justice.

Chory (2007) investigates the effectiveness of the teacher in the teacher-student relational perspective with regard to the concepts of teacher credibility and classroom justice. She supports her research with the claim made by former American studies perceiving classroom relations as basically interpersonal (DeVito 1986; Frymier and Houser 2000) or psychological (Dobranky and Frymier 2004) in nature predicting "student learning and motivation" (2007, p. 90). Further in her article,

she focuses on the interpersonal communication dimension relating it to the issue of source (teacher) credibility and classroom justice and maintains that the perception of instructors by students "may help to explain their effectiveness and provide insights into how they might benefit students and instructors" (2007, p. 90).

3 Teacher Credibility and Classroom Justice

The concepts in question are guided by the logic of perception, meaning that the use of them for the evaluation of teacher effectiveness is not based on subject matter expertise, but rather on pedagogical (or psychological) attributes ascribed to the teacher and his/her actions as a result of interpersonal communication acts. Thus, perception is the dominant nominal attribute for both concepts. Nonetheless, the fact remains that both teacher credibility and classroom justice pertain to the notion of power relations in the classroom and the level of students' empowerment. The right balance of control between students and teachers enhanced by the adequate shape of interpersonal communication may have drastic consequences for the positive evaluation of instructional effectiveness, classroom fairness and an overall image of the teacher.

3.1 Perceived Teacher Credibility

The concept of *teacher credibility* was created in the field of communication studies in the middle of the 20th century in the USA, especially during World War II as a way of enhancing the effectiveness of persuasion of propaganda and flourished soon after being propelled by the reality of the Cold War period with Yale being a scientific centre for the issue (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006). The notion has been later incorporated into communication effectiveness in many areas of social disciplines, particularly business, law and politic science (cf. Tessner and Schwartz 2001). It pertains to the effects trustworthiness imparts to other people and it encompasses two elements: *perceived expertise* and *trustworthiness of the source* (Wiener and Mowen 1986). It is worth pointing out that the concept is built upon an intersubjective domain, meaning that one studies the effect somebody's messages have on people rather than the factual state of affairs regarding the source's expertise. Thus, trustworthiness is basically influenced by relational factors summarized euphemistically as someone's general likeability.

The field of education draws heavily on social science research in regard to credibility. McLean (2007, pp. 17–18) presents the evolution of the term and its constituents. She ascribes the origin of the notion to McCroskey et al. (1974), who defined teacher credibility as a composite of *character, sociability, composure, extroversion*, and *competence*. The idea has undergone substantial compositional changes; for example, McCroskey (1992) suggested measuring teacher's

credibility with regard to the following: *caring, competence,* and *trustworthiness*. Further, McLean (2007, pp. 17–18) mentions that "positive teacher credibility can also be measured by such behavioral parameters as verbal and nonverbal immediacy (Johnson and Miller 2002), nonverbal immediacy and perceived caring (Teven and Hanson 2004), and affinity seeking (Frymier and Thompson 1992)".

Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) see positive perception of teacher credibility as the result of effective instruction (Martin et al. 1997; McPherson and Liang 2007; Mottet et al. 2007; Schrodt et al. 2006; Schrodt and Witt 2006, cited in Bolkan and Goodboy 2009, p. 299) or positive classroom experiences "jeopardized through ineffective instruction" (Schrodt 2003; Edwards and Myers 2007; Teven 2007, cited in Bolkan and Goodboy 2009, p. 299). Thus, referring to management research, Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) point out the potential of enhancing teacher credibility and instructional effectiveness in applying transformational leadership as opposed to transactional one. While the former is based on task orientation and "providing or withdrawing extrinsic rewards" and proper application of control strategies, the latter is concerned with empowerment (Bolkan and Goodboy 2009, p. 297). The claim of empowerment, understood in the organizational context as "the humanistic process of adopting the values and practicing the behaviors of enlightened self-interest so that personal and organizational goals may be aligned in a way that promotes growth, learning, and fulfillment" (Luechauer and Shulman 1993, p. 13), in educational reality seems to embody the concept of student autonomy. No doubt, a teaching mode and the use of power in the classroom define source credibility and influence instruction effectiveness as "students report more cognitive learning, affective learning, and motivation from credible instructors (Frymier and Thompson 1992; McCroskey et al. 2004; Pogue and AhYun 2006)" (Bolkan and Goodboy 2009, p. 299).

All in all, as the study reported further in the present chapter draws on Chory's (2007) research, it is necessary to accept the same definition of the concept and its constituents. Citing possible interpretations of credibility, she mentions *believability* (Frymier and Thomson, 1992), or "one's attitudes toward a communication source (McCroskey and Young, 1981)", or "students' attitudes toward instructors as sources (Schrodt 2003)" (pp. 90–91). She finally accepts McCroskey and Teven's (1999) concept perceiving instructor credibility as composed of three dimensions: *competence* (standing for intelligent, informed), *character* (standing for honest, moral, ethical) and *caring* (standing for caring about students and understanding). She makes it clear that her understanding of the idea is of a relational nature resting firmly on the effectiveness of communication comprehended as interpersonal teacher-student relationship.

3.2 Perceived Classroom Justice

Commonly referred to as fairness, the notion is of an attitudinal nature. Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b) derive the definition of *classroom justice* from the

organizational one, as presented by Cropanzano and Greenberg (1997), and define it "as perceptions of fairness regarding outcomes or processes that occur in the instructional context" (2004b, p. 254). They also point out that studies of justice in the instructional context are quite a new enterprise.

The concept does not represent a single construct. Both organization and educational literature enumerates three elements of classroom justice: *distributive, procedural* and *interactional*. Research on the idea of justice (Colquitt 2001, cited in Chory 2007, p. 92) has shown separate constructs being more adequate and exhibiting "discriminant validity among the justice types". It was also found that particular components are related to certain educational measures and, namely *distributive justice* is related to grades, *procedural justice* is related to compliance with classroom rules, and *interactional justice* to instructor evaluation. In the perception of *distributive justice*, "individuals evaluate and compare the outcome (e.g. pay or test grade) they received to a standard or rule and/or to the outcome received by a referent (Adams 1965; Austin 1977; Cropanzano and Greenberg 1997)" (Chory-Assad and Paulsel 2004b, p. 255). The postulated referent can be anything: past experience, expectations or similar others. "In the instructional context, for example, a student assessing the fairness of a C+ grade, may compare that C+ to the grade s/he expected to receive, the grade (s)he felt (s)he deserved, or to the grade received by others" (Chory-Assad and Paulsel 2004b, p. 255). *Procedural justice* pertains to "the perception of procedures used in making resource distribution decision (Cropanzano and Greenberg 1997)" (Chory-Assad and Pausel 2004b, p. 255). In the school milieu, it refers to the perception of how instructors make decisions regarding grades. In other words, it involves the perception of criteria or components taken into account during grading. For example, giving semester grades "instructors may consider students' attendance, classroom behavior, written assignments and exam grades" (Chory-Assad and Pausel 2004b, 255), but the critical issue is whether the procedure is judged fair by students. In defining *interactional justice*, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b, p. 255) and Paulsel (2005, p. 6) quote the concept of perceiving fairness (Bies and Moag 1986) as "interpersonal treatment individuals receive from those who make decisions and if they are treated with respect" (Paulsel 2005, p. 6). "In the classroom, interactional justice involves evaluations of how fair instructors are in their personal treatment of and communication with students" (Chory-Assad and Paulsel 2004b, cited in Chory 2007, p. 92).

The idea of justice is related to the idea of *power* exercised by the teacher. A democratic school and a learner-oriented approach require negotiation and understanding of instructional power on the relational basis (teacher-student, or, more precisely, perception of instructional power by the student and by the teacher). This relation between the instructor and the student is defined by researchers as superior-subordinate with an orientation toward goal achievement (Richmond and Roach 1992, cited in Horan and Myers 2009, p. 486; Chory and McCroskey 1999; Myers and Knox 2001). Horan and Myers (2009) in their study examine instructors' concerns about classroom justice and how they relate to the use of *power base* and behavior alteration techniques identified as instructor variables in

prior research, as they duly admit. In general, research done by Paulsel et al. (2005) confirms "that students' perceptions of instructor power use were related to perceptions of justice" (Horan and Myers 2009, p. 485).

Paulsel (2005), Chory (2007), and Horan and Myers (2009) present examples of pragmatic research on the role of justice in the instructional context. Paulsel (2005, p. 6) recognizes the contribution of Chory-Assad's (2002) research in this respect. Her initial study suggested that positive perception of distributive and procedural justice predicted student motivation and affective learning while "on the negative side, students reported that they would be likely to use indirect interpersonal aggression against their instructors when perceived that the instructors were not using procedural justice" (Paulsel 2005, pp. 6–7). Hostility and more direct use of student resistance strategies were reported in Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004b) subsequent study. Extending the study to interactional justice, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004a) were able to ascertain that perception of classroom interactional injustice resulted from the use of "antisocial behavior alteration techniques of pushing students and making them feel guilty" (Paulsel 2005, p. 7). Students reported "an increased likelihood of using indirect interpersonal aggression against the instructor" (Paulsel 2005, p. 7). An interesting study in regard to classroom justice, power and behavior alteration techniques is presented by Horan and Myers (2009). Results obtained in the study are compatible with prior research in the field. The authors present concerns of the perception of fairness as important both for teachers and students, but differing goal orientations of students (learning or grade oriented) and teachers (rhetorical or relational goals) may make the issue of justice a more complex factor in the classroom. Chory (2007), elaborating on the findings of former research (mainly Pausel et al. 2005; Thweatt and McCroskey 1998; Teven and McCroskey 1997), built three hypotheses relating three different components of teacher credibility to the components of classroom justice. In the comment on the results which were obtained, she claimed that "although perceptions of instructor credibility explained unique variance in all three types of classroom justice, they contributed most to explaining the variance in perceptions of instructor interactional justice. As both interactional justice and instructor credibility concern the communication of the source, it is not surprising that these two perceptions would be most strongly linked" (Chory 2007, p. 99). This claim constitutes the basis for the whole paper and the research presented below.

4 Research

The basic premise of the present research is based on the achievement of a group of American researchers dealing with classroom communication pertaining to classroom justice and teacher credibility, as it has been highlighted in the theoretical part. Basically, it is based on the concept worked out by Rebecca (2007). She studied the correspondence between the components of the notion of *teacher credibility* and the different types of *classroom justice*. She hypothesized that the

Scales of teacher credibility	Scales of classroom justice		
Competence	interactional		
Caring	interactional	procedural	
Character	interactional	procedural	distributive

Fig. 1 Results of Chory's (2007) research

components of teacher credibility "are positively associated with perceptions of classroom distributive, procedural and interactional justice" (2007, p. 95). From the description of her research, we may presume that she tried to find out whether the dependent variables of teacher credibility predict independent variables of classroom justice. However, in the research summary she made it clear that "causality cannot be inferred" (Chory 2007, p. 101). It is a classical example that statistical variables are rarely independent (Dodge 2003). Chory's findings can be depicted as in Fig. 1.

Thus the scale of *character* correlates with all scales of *justice*. And the other way round, the scale of *interactional justice* correlates with all scales of teacher *credibility*. Putting it in a very concise way, Chory (2007) draws a conclusion that communication in the classroom is important as a predictor of evaluations in the two investigated domains. Describing the limitations of her research, she encourages replications of her study. By undertaking this challenge, the author of the present paper attempts to make up for some limitations of the former research and additionally pursues his own goals. The following is a list of what makes the present research different:

- It pertains to instruction carried out in a foreign language (a sort of an immersion program); thus it entails a different educational context.
- Different cultural context (Poland); the communication paradigm is culture dependent.
- Different time; retrospective in nature, this research refers to the former semester and the former evaluation, whereas Chory's (2007) was conducted towards the end of the semester; the design of the study includes teachers perceived as both fair and unfair, while Chory (2007, p. 101) mentions that in her study students may have reported only good teachers.
- Extended goals: the present study pursues its unique goals, as presented below.

4.1 Participants

The research was carried out among the students of Stanisław Staszic State Vocational School of Higher Education in Piła, Poland. It included only the second and third year students of philology in two independent sections (English Studies and Applied Linguistics). The whole study was conducted by the present author. The research included 148 responses (74 respondents in each section respectively,

who were asked to fill in two independent measures). The nature of the study does not make any provision for variables referring either to gender or age, or course specificity.

As to the instructors and courses, six different teachers were chosen teaching six different courses (three of the teachers were evaluated by students very positively and three were from the bottom of the school ranking list). All the names were totally changed so as not to provoke any associations since the research was carried out in the author's workplace. Nonetheless, the reader deserves a concise description of the instructors. As to the group of teachers representing the top of the ranking list, their common characteristic may be that all of them (Alan, Eva and Helen) seem to possess a good command of the target language, speaking a native-like accent. They may be considered well-informed regarding the subject matter of the courses they teach and their psychological profile might be defined as being well-balanced and a bit reserved. However, they teach totally different courses ranging from purely theoretical to very practical ones. The second group (Monica, Diana, William) of low-ranked teachers is more diversified. Some seem to lack oral communication skills in English, at the very least their spoken language is easily recognized as tinted with their mother tongue. Others are shy by nature, or very defensive. Yet others are either too formal or too easy going in personal relations with students. Regular observations of William's classroom behavior, for example, entitles the author of the present paper to claim that he tries to make friends with students but his classroom joking seems to bring about the reverse effect, causing tensions and misunderstandings. Despite possessing good factual knowledge, his presentation skills are inadequate for the teaching profession, and he also seems to lack an assertive pedagogical voice in the foreign language. This group also teaches various courses ranging form EFL to the content-based ones. Needless to say, all the teachers are fully qualified at the university level and they have been working in the teaching profession for at least 8 years or so. Both groups include MA and PhD holders.

4.2 Measures

The present study incorporated measures adopted by Chory (2007). Consequently, *teacher credibility* is investigated with the use of McCroskey and Traven's (1999) *Measure of Source Credibility*, adapted for the instructional setting. Participants were asked to express their impressions regarding competence, caring (goodwill) and character (trustworthiness) on a 7-point semantic differential scale. In this study, lower scores indicate higher credibility. Perception of *classroom justice* was assessed in one survey including three different scales: Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004b) *distributive justice scale* containing six items (eight items were excluded as they did not apply to a retrospective study); Chory-Assad and Pausel's *procedural justice scale* containing 17 items; and *interactional justice sale* revised by Chory-Assad (2007) consisting of eight items. In these measures, students were

supposed to evaluate classroom justice on a 5-point Likert scale. To maintain data transparency, it was necessary to adopt the system assuming the following relation: the lower the scores, the higher the perception of justice. Despite the fact that the research was carried out among students exposed to instruction in English, to avoid any misunderstandings, all measures were translated into Polish. The use of standardized measures resulted in high internal consistency of reliability for all the scales, measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and they were as follows: competence .94, caring .92, character .94, distributive justice .95, procedural justice .94, and interactional justice .95. The study includes the school ranking of teachers and courses as a reference for further analysis. All data was processed by the SPSS software.

4.3 Goals and the Principal Hypothesis

The main purpose of the research pertained to the revision (verification) of the existing teacher evaluation in the light of teacher credibility and classroom justice. The author refers to the evaluation done by the school administration at the end of the former academic year which resulted in a ranking list of teachers and courses. It was done to corroborate the principal hypothesis that teacher evaluation pertains basically to the perception of his/her interpersonal communication skills. As it has been stipulated in the literature review, both key concepts of teacher credibility and classroom justice rest firmly on these skills. Hence, their use in the verification process of teacher evaluation allowed to shed additional light on the overall image of teacher communicative abilities. The specific goals of the study were as follows:

1. To replicate Chory's (2007) study in a different educational and cultural context to see the correspondence between *teacher credibility* and *classroom justice* constituents.
2. To evaluate perceptions of *credibility* of teachers subjected to scrutiny.
3. To define perceptions of *classroom justice* of teachers subjected to scrutiny.
4. To compare the results of *teacher credibility* and *classroom justice* to the ranking list and define which components play a vital role in being highly ranked by students.

4.4 Results and Discussion

As to the accomplishment of Goal 1, Table 1 presents the results of the present study and juxtaposes them with the correlation figures obtained by Chory (2007). The data presented in the first place pertain to the present study. Generally speaking, the results of the present research corroborate the ones of the research carried out by Chory (2007). A significant difference would be that in the present research *competence* seems to correlate more closely with the perception of

Table 1 Correlation among the dimensions of credibility and classroom justice. Comparison of studies

		Credibility			Justice		
		Competence	Caring	Character	Distributive	Procedural	Interactional
Credibility	Competence	–					
	Caring	.40/.41*	–				
	Character	.29/52*	.75/.61*	–			
Justice	Distributive	.51/.15	.13/.34*	.45*/38*	–		
	Procedural	.65/.29*	.74/.52*	.59/51*	.41/.65*	–	
	Interactional	.78/45*	.58/.65*	.54/.57*	.59/.41*	.74/.70*	–

* p > .001

Table 2 Teacher credibility

	Credibility		
	Competence (M)	Caring (M)	Character (M)
Alan	1.31	2.72	1.51
Eva	1.42	1.71	1.58
Helen	1.49	2.81	1.37
Monica	2.53	2.85	1.52
Diana	2.71	3.23	2.57
William	4.54	4.92	5.18

different classroom justices, while in her study it was *character*. In the present study, the correlation figures for *character*, however, do not diverge markedly from Chory's. Cultural difference might be a reasonable explanation here. It turns out that Polish college students look primarily for teacher competence as well as character in their evaluations of classroom justice and consequently general teacher classroom performance. Perception of *interactional justice* seems to be equally well predicted by teacher credibility, but procedural justice does not fall behind.

As to Goal 2, Table 2 presents the data obtained from the *Measure of Source Credibility* evaluated by a 7-point semantic differential scale. The study was based on the assumption that the closer the overall result is to 1.0, the more credible the teacher is. They are placed in the order derived from the ranking list (three well-evaluated teachers and three badly-evaluated ones). The averages which were calculated indicate large discrepancies between "good" and "bad" teachers. The last one is particularly informative here. It is also noticeable that caring figures are much lower than the other ones, which might be construed as a sign of students' expectation of improvement.

Table 3 pertains to the accomplishment of Goal 3 and presents data obtained from the *perceived classroom justice* measures, evaluated on a 5-point scale. Once again, the lower the figure, the higher the perception of justice. The analysis of the table allows one to claim that the general perception of classroom justice does not display remarkable differences among justice constituents. Nonetheless, there is a significant consistency paralleled with teacher credibility as to the perception of

Table 3 Perceived classroom justice

	Justice		
	Distributive (M)	Procedural (M)	Interactional (M)
Alan	1.79	1.51	1.21
Eva	1.79	1.46	1.32
Helen	1.93	2.63	1.53
Monica	1.73	1.98	1.69
Diana	1.86	2.72	2.69
William	2.83	3.54	3.81

Table 4 Comparison of the research data with administrative evaluation of the ranking list

Course sample N = 92	Selected course ranking	Lowest/ highest ranking	Spread	M for ranking (all courses)	M for grade (all courses) l courses, max 5.0)	M for credibility (max 1, min 7)	M for justice (max 1, min 5)
Alan	4	23	12	13.5	4.6	1.85	1.50
Eve	6	10	4	6	4.8	1.57	1.57
Helen	11	25	14	18	4.5	1.89	1.69
Monica	79	75	4	77	3.8	2.03	1.80
Diana	86	73	13	79.5	3.6	2.50	2.40
William	88	71	17	79.7	3.5	4.88	3.40

'good' and 'bad' teachers. An additional possible conclusion might be that distributive justice needs improvement for highly ranked teachers. So it must have been the students' perception of procedural and interactional justice which put them high on the ranking list.

Pursuing Goal 4, the compilation of the ranking list data and the teacher credibility and classroom justice figures were compared (Table 4). Accounting for the fact that the same teachers instruct different courses, some additional tendencies were observed. The analysis of the spread and statistical means (average − M) for the ranking of teachers and courses indicates some consistency. Some teachers are highly ranked while others tend to be placed at the end of the list. Thus, the argument that the difficulty of the course may markedly influence students' evaluation of the teacher in the case of this study seems to be an ill-founded excuse.

The table shows some consistency between variables, as defined by correlation studies. Given the maximum score of 1.0, the general perception of *teacher credibility* seems high (M = 2.45), despite the presence of some low ranked teachers. The data seems less optimistic in regard to the perception of *classroom justice*. Comparable figures at the minimum average 5.0 might be an indicator of poor perception of justice. The cursory analysis of the ranking list criteria indicates that the evaluation was properly balanced between *credibility* and perceived *classroom justice*. The criteria were as follows: class preparation and competence (credibility-competence), punctuality and conscientiousness (credibility-character), correlation between class content and requirements (justice-procedural), communicativeness (ability to transmit knowledge) (justice-interactional), rapport with students (justice-interactional), objectivity of assessments (justice-distributive), and appeal of the classes (credibility-competence, caring, character). Consequently, teacher evaluation carried out by students is basically of a communicative nature as highlighted by Fulcher and Anderson (1974) and duly defined in the concept of perceived *teacher credibility* and *classroom justice*. The data consistency of the two independent evaluations provides a basis for the confirmation of the assumed hypothesis.

The premise of the paper that interpersonal communication constitutes the basis of teacher perception has been adopted after Chory (2007, p. 91), who presumes "interpersonal nature of student-teacher relationships" in the perception of instructor credibility and who in the conclusion to her study claims that "consistent association between instructor credibility and instructor interactional fairness provides additional evidence for communication-based nature of each of these constructs" (Chory 2007, p. 100). The present research seems to confirm this claim. Thus, apparently the teacher ranking list represents his/her interpersonal communication skills related to how s/he 'sells himself/herself' in class. Poor teacher performance, judged as ineffective, hinges totally on perceived credibility and good classroom experiences (cf. Bolkan and Goodboy 2009, p. 299).

Accounting for the significant correlation between interactional and procedural justice and character, the reader's attention should be drawn to Chory (2007, p. 100), who points out that "apparently, student perceptions of the instructor's character are most important, as they predict all three types of justice. Students who perceive their instructors as trustworthy, honest, honorable, and ethical also perceive these instructors as assigning fair grades, using fair classroom procedures, and treating students fairly in interpersonal interactions". In the case of the present study, competence is a predictor of classroom justice, which is not corroborated by Chory's study. A possible explanation can be found in Thweatt and McCroskey's (1998, cited in Chory 2007, p. 94) research, which indicates the link between credibility and classroom justice and in "which students perceive misbehaving teachers as less competent".

5 Conclusions

All in all, the concepts of teacher credibility and classroom justice, together with the respective measuring scales, constitute powerful and apparently quite reliable tools for the evaluation of teacher communicative effectiveness. They offer important insight into teacher interpersonal communication skills. Furthermore, the measures for the two concepts may function as a support for any external evaluation, offering additional insights into the communicative behavior of the teacher.

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Action Research and Teacher Development: MA Students' Perspective

Aleksandra Wach

Abstract Action research (AR) is a professional development option for L2 teachers that fits well into the paradigm of the teacher as a reflective and inquiring practitioner, a learner-centered curriculum, teacher autonomy, and life-long teacher professional education. Utilized by practitioners to identify and solve problems in their own educational settings, it has the potential to improve the processes of learning and teaching, as well as enhance teachers' ability to reflect upon their own practices, and contribute to their professional development. The current study examined the opinions expressed by 51 MA students who were at the same time EFL teachers about their experience of conducting AR as part of the requirements of their MA course. The results indicated that the students positively evaluated the effects of AR projects on the development of their teaching and research skills. The participants were able to list a number of benefits that the experience had for their learners and for themselves as teachers. Although some problems and difficulties connected with the process of conducting research were also voiced, a generally positive picture emerged of AR as a teacher development option.

1 Introduction

Action research (AR) joins two components: *action*, which in this context means undertaking and implementing some kind of intervention, and *research*, which denotes systematic data collection and analysis (Burns 2005a, b, 2007, 2009). In recent decades (since the 1980s), it has been considered to contribute to reflective teaching in the field of ELT. AR is recognized as an important teacher professional development tool based on the contemporary preference for promoting teaching

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within a communicative, learner-centered curriculum, which calls for more active involvement by teachers (Elliott 1991; Wallace 1998; McNiff and Whitehead 2006). The aims served by AR as a teacher development option are multiple and fall within the following categories: providing opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge, equipping them with skills and abilities for finding solutions to problems, giving them practice in research skills, raising their awareness about learners' needs and expectations, and preparing them to reflect upon their instructional practices. Studies on action research in the field of ELT usually provide accounts of pre-service and practicing teachers conducting research in their educational settings, although, as Burns (2005a, p. 64) notes, "published accounts of AR undertaken by teachers are still relatively restricted".

In the current article, the findings of a study conducted on EFL teachers who had conducted AR projects during their writing of their MA dissertations at Polish tertiary educational institutions, will be presented and analyzed. In the study, the participants shared their experiences conducting AR and evaluated its usefulness for the development of their knowledge and teaching skills. First, however, the concept of AR and its place in education will be outlined, with a special focus on its place within L2 teacher professional development.

2 Action Research as a Tool for Teachers' Professional Development

2.1 Defining AR

Arriving at a concise definition of AR is less straightforward than it may seem, largely due to the number of varying definitions of the term (Burns 2005b). However, although Norton (2009, p. 51) makes the point that AR "is a broad umbrella term for what is actually a wide range of research paradigms and processes", there appear to be some common characteristic traits in the definitions of the term formulated by different researchers. The fact that AR is conducted by the practitioners themselves occurs in all descriptions and seems to be the most important distinctive feature of this kind of research (e.g. Nunan 1992; McNiff and Whitehead 2006; Philips and Carr 2010). As Elliott (1991, p. 14) states, in AR teachers do not "step out of their pedagogical role", as teaching and research become unified as parts of the same process. Other characteristic features of AR highlighted by most definitions refer to its problem-oriented, inquiry-based nature (Wallace 1998; Burns 2009). Such concepts include: generating and testing ideas, gaining insight, effecting changes, undertaking social action, and awareness raising; in addition, some of the general themes that usually accompany discussion of AR and denote its character are: "participatory research", classroom research, "action learning", teacher research, and "critical reflection" (Philips and Carr 2010, p. 41). McIntosh (2010, p. 34) stresses the practice-oriented, reflective

nature of action research: "It is an empirical approach to the importance of data in reflectively improving practice".

In discussing the concept of AR within the broader context of classroom research, Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 42) highlight the multiplicity of forms it may take and quote "intervention" and "a low degree of exerted control" as features underlying its methodological setup. AR makes effective use of various data collection techniques within different research approaches (Wallace 1998; Burns 2007); Burns (2011, p. 241) refers to it as the "third research paradigm", alongside qualitative and quantitative research, as it incorporates techniques typical of both, but cannot be easily classified as either.

AR follows certain steps or stages, arranged in such a way as to bring about the desired results. Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 44) list the following steps: *identification of a problem*, *seeking knowledge*, *planning an action, implementing and observing the action*, *reflecting on the observation* and, finally, *revising the plan*. McNiff and Whitehead (2006, pp. 8–9) suggest a similar cycle of steps in AR: "take stock of what is going on, identify a concern, think of a possible way forward, try it out, monitor the action by gathering data to show what is happening, evaluate progress by establishing procedures for making judgments about what is happening, test the validity of accounts of learning, modify practice in the light of the evaluation". These steps are in dynamic interaction (Burns 2010a, b). Philips and Carr (2010, p. 42) sum them up as the "plan-implement-reflect" cycle. McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p. 9) note that the final conclusions often lead to the emergence of new research questions, hence, they call this process an "action–reflection cycle". According to Elliott (1991), reflection leads to action, and action leads to new reflection. The "reflective cycle", which embraces professional practice and reflection, is also at the core of Wallace's (1998) understanding of AR.

Its primary aim is to identify a problem, work out a solution to problems and bring about an improvement in an existing situation (Allwright and Bailey 1991; Burns 2005a, b, 2010a, b). According to McNiff and Whitehead (2006), in order to make this happen, AR encourages researchers to deepen their understanding of the situation, to improve their own learning and to influence the learning of others. Other, related purposes of AR include: investigating and understanding the processes underlying curriculum innovation, bridging the gap between academic research and teaching practice, providing teachers with opportunities to practice research skills, and, finally, generally contributing to the emergence and development of reflective teaching (Burns 2005a, 2009, 2010a, b). Thanks to its characteristics and aims, AR is often discussed within the context of continuous, ongoing teacher professional development (Wallace 1998).

2.2 AR in L2 Teacher Development

McNiff and Whitehead (2006) note that although action research can be conducted by professionals in different fields, it is the field of education in which it developed

particularly well, actively involving teachers, administrators, school principals, and learners. Although, as Ferrance (2000) and Johnson (2009) note, AR was introduced to education in 1940s by the social psychologist and educator Kurt Lewin, it started to appear in the domain of ELT in the late 1980s, with enhanced understanding that the ESL/EFL classroom should be viewed as a social context. Therefore, it has been associated with terms and concepts such as a learner-centered, process-oriented curriculum, teacher roles as curriculum negotiator and course designer, classroom-oriented research, and reflective, research-oriented teacher development (McKay 2009; Wallace 1998).

Burns (2009, p. 290) stresses that AR developed alongside with the "'developmental', transformative" teacher education model. In a more general way, AR fits within the reflective teaching trend in teacher professional development (Richards and Lockhart 1996; Wallace 1998; Richards and Farrell 2005; Burton 2009). Hence, AR is associated with the teacher as researcher movement in education, which denotes the need for life-long learning and for reflective, self-critical enrichment of teachers' skills and knowledge as part of their professional practice and development. According to Johnson (2009), externalizing teachers' understanding of concepts and discovering alternative solutions to problems through action research falls within the sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education, as it denotes learning to teach through engaging in a social activity. She further discusses the benefits of the "variety of school-based, practitioner-driven, collaborative, inquiry-based approaches to professional development" (2009, p. 95), of which action research is one of many tools. Harley (1989, p. 1) refers to AR as "teacher-owned professional development".

McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p. 7) state that through AR, teachers attempt to "improve their own learning, and influence the learning of others", and Johnston and Irujo (2001) note that in the field of L2 education, most researchers are practitioners themselves, who research their own settings and generate findings of immediate relevance to them, which directly contributes to the shaping of their teaching skills. Ferrance (2000, p. 14) lists the benefits of AR for professional development: "Action research projects influence thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to share and communicate, and attitudes toward the process of change". Burns (2010, p. 7) also stresses the motivating power of conducting AR, which "can reinvigorate our teaching, lead to positive change, raise our awareness of the complexities of our work, and show us what drives our personal approaches to teaching". Richards and Farrell (2005) point out that AR redefines the role of teachers by shifting the responsibility for introducing changes in their teaching from outside authorities to themselves.

AR is undertaken for different purposes by both experienced and novice teachers, as well as by teacher trainees (Philips and Carr 2010). Burns (2009) notes that AR is often conducted as an official requirement in courses, where apart from serving as a basis for granting official teaching certificates and degrees, it serves the aim of indicating to the trainees the value of classroom research, acquainting them with research skills, and raising their awareness in preparation for further learning. Wallace (1998) and Gabryś-Barker (2011) also highlight the importance of AR for

pre-service teacher-training and in-service teacher education courses as a way of promoting teacher autonomy and reflectivity, and according to Philips and Carr (2010, p. 2), "preservice teacher action research represents a unique genre within the action research tradition, and has the potential to shape teacher identity in powerful ways". In a similar vein, Legutke and Schocker–v. Ditfurth (2001) see the benefits of combining action and reflection in the apprenticeship experience of teacher trainees. Borg (1998, p. 274), however, warns that the huge potential benefit of doing research for professional development may be wasted if the aim of teacher research is "strictly academic", i.e. as part of a thesis written to earn a degree.

2.3 Selected Studies on L2 Teacher Involvement in Research

Most publications on teacher involvement in research focus on describing teachers' experiences in conducting research, as well as their beliefs and conceptions about research-related issues. Borg (2010) provides a comprehensive overview of studies related to teacher research (which, according to Borg, is a wider term that AR), and Burns (2005a, b, 2011) makes references to numerous studies published within the area of teacher involvement in AR. In this section, a selection of studies on teacher research involvement will be presented, not all of which, however, directly investigated AR.

Thorne and Qiang (1996) describe the experience of implementing an AR project in a teacher-training course at a university in Beijing. First, the trainees were acquainted with the concept of AR and the possible data collection techniques, and then they conducted their own research projects. The experience gave the trainees more confidence as teachers, and acted as a stimulus for implementing changes in their teaching (a quality rarely observed in the Chinese educational context, as noted by Thorne and Qiang). The trainees developed their classroom research skills, raised their level of awareness to the classroom situation, and learned how to introduce more variety to classroom activities in response to learners' needs. Investigating Chinese primary school teachers' research engagement was the aim of a study by Gao and Wai Kwan Chow (2011). Despite the fact that the participants were both encouraged and given the opportunities to do research, they faced obstacles in the form of contextual constrains (the financial situation of the school and their teaching load) and their low evaluation of themselves as researchers.

Cumming et al. (1997) investigated the process of learning how to do educational research by six experienced teachers, most of whom were doctoral students involved in conducting a long-term collaborative study with their graduate students. The data revealed the value of conducting research for the participants' professional work: it helped them become more aware of the balance between theory and practice in L2 teaching, and it enabled them to develop research skills useful for their future careers and cooperation skills. Cumming et al. (1997) conclude that there is a need to focus deliberately and explicitly on the skills and abilities needed to conduct educational research within given contexts.

Borg (2007, 2009) conducted inquiries into teacher research engagement (understood as both doing and reading published research). In both studies, 55–61 % of the teachers said they did research at least sometimes, and 38–45 % stated they did research rarely or never. The most frequent reasons provided for doing research revolved around improving teaching practice, solving problems and developing professionally, while the most recurring reasons for not engaging in research was a lack of time, insufficient knowledge and skills, and teachers' negative attitudes toward research.

Atay (2008) describes the effects of introducing the research perspective into in-service teacher education courses in Turkey. The data, generated through teacher journals, point to the participants' development of research skills, enhanced awareness of learning and teaching, renewed enthusiasm for teaching, the development of cooperation with peer teachers, but also to problems connected with conducting research. Similar findings were generated by Wyatt (2011) in a study conducted on four teachers in Oman. The participants mentioned the clear benefits of their action research engagement, which included: a feeling of achievement derived from helping others, the development of research skills, enhanced teacher motivation, confidence and autonomy.

3 MA-Program Students' Reflections on the Experience of Conducting AR: An Empirical Study

3.1 Aims

The main aim of the study was to investigate what MA-program students, English majors, thought of action research as a way of fostering their professional development as teachers of English. In order to meet this primary aim, additional objectives were formulated. One of them was to see whether and to what extent the study participants were familiar with the concept of AR as a teacher development tool. Another objective was to investigate their perceptions about the usefulness of AR for themselves and for their learners. Moreover, the study aimed to gather the participants' opinions about the process of engaging in AR. The final objective was to explore what the participants had learned from the experience of conducting AR.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 51 English philology students finishing their studies in 2- or 2.5-year MA programs. The participants were enrolled in the

MA-program courses in two different institutions and attended seminars conducted by three different supervisors. As many as 49 of the participants were Polish EFL teachers, and two were Moroccan EFL teachers working in Polish schools. Ten of the participants were regular program students, while the remaining 41 studied in the part-time program. All of the participants, however, were teachers of English at the time of the study, and their teaching experience ranged from 10 months to 8 years. Out of the 51 study participants, 5 volunteered to provide an in-depth account of their MA-project experience: Ela, a middle school teacher with 3 years of experience in the teaching profession, Kamila, a primary and middle school teacher, who had been teaching for 2 years, Magda, who taught at both middle and high school and had 4 years' experience as a teacher, Ewa, who had taught in ESP courses to adults for 2 years, and John, who taught at middle school and in a private language school, with teaching experience of 3 years. In order to complete their MA theses, each of the participants had to carry out a research project, which can be labeled as AR due to the classroom-based, problem-oriented scope of inquiry. At the time of the study, the research projects had been finished and described in the participants' MA papers.

3.2.2 Procedure

The present study involved mixed-methods research methodology (e.g. Dörnyei 2007), as it incorporated a consecutive and interrelated questionnaire and interview study format. The questionnaire consisted of two initial questions about the participants' experience as EFL teachers, six closed-ended questions of a multiple-choice type, and six open-ended questions, and it yielded both quantitative and qualitative results. The closed-ended items focused on the respondents' previous experience and acquaintance with action research as a teacher development tool, their perceptions of the benefits of their MA research experience for themselves and their students, and an evaluation of action research for professional development, while the open-ended questions aimed at eliciting an in-depth evaluation of the strong points of the MA research projects for their development as teachers of English. As a follow-up, two weeks after the administration of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five of the participants who volunteered to be interviewed. Each of the interviewees was asked similar questions as a starting point; however, additional questions or hints were provided depending on the course of the particular interviews to elicit more in-depth data. Each interview took about 15 min. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questionnaire form and examples of the core interview questions are presented in the Appendix.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Questionnaire Findings

The initial question asked whether the participants had ever conducted research before they joined the seminar, and if they had, they were asked to specify when. In response to this question, 29 out of the 51 participants (57 %) provided a negative answer, while a positive answer was given by the remaining 22 (43 %), all of whom had conducted research as part of their BA projects. However, most of the respondents (36, that is 71 %) had heard about conducting research as a way of improving teachers' skills and abilities before they joined the MA seminar.

The following question asked about the respondents' satisfaction with the fact that they had to conduct research in the course of their MA studies. Altogether, 34 participants (66 %) gave positive answers to this question ("yes", "definitely" and "rather yes"). Four of them (8 %) answered negatively, and for 13 (26 %) it was hard to decide whether they were glad with the fact or not. The responses to this and the remaining multiple-choice questions are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of the respondents believed that their students had already benefitted or would benefit in the future from the AR; altogether, 41 of them (80 %) provided the "yes", "definitely" and "rather yes" answers. Only three of them gave a negative answer and four were undecided. Three respondents provided other answers, such as: "some of them", "it depends on the students", "they were not my students". Addressing the question about their future involvement in action research, most of the respondents (51 %) marked the "it's hard to say" option, while three of them (6 %) said they definitely would do action research again and 18 (35 %) chose the "rather yes" answer. Four of them said they would never do it again. Finally, asked about action research being part of regular teaching practice, most respondents (56 %) gave the "rather yes" answer, 15 said that it definitely should be part of teaching and the same

Table 1 The respondents' answers to the multiple-choice questions concerning their experience with conducting action research

Question	Yes, definitely		Rather yes		Hard to say		No		Other answers	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Are you glad that you had to conduct research for your MA seminar?	17	33	17	33	13	26	4	8	–	–
Do you think your students benefitted or will benefit from your conducting the research?	15	29	26	51	4	8	3	6	3	6
Do you think you will ever conduct action research again, even if you don't have to?	3	6	18	35	26	51	4	8	–	–
Do you think that conducting classroom-oriented research should constitute a regular part of every teachers' job?	8	15	28	56	8	15	6	12	1	2

number of the respondents were not sure. Six of them (12 %) thought it should not be the case and one person made the point that only those teachers who apply for professional advancement should do it regularly.

The open-ended questions yielded very interesting descriptive findings concerning the respondents' opinions on their experience of conducting their MA research projects. Some of the quotes will be presented in the paragraphs below.

The first question in this part of the questionnaire was: "What did you like most about conducting the research?" Most of the responses provided by the participants highlighted the methodological aspects of doing research: "The freedom of choosing research procedures"; "The observations and interviews with my students"; "Finding out about the results"; "I found creating my own questionnaire really enjoyable". Other responses focused on the enjoyment derived from teaching, or the enjoyment observed in the learners: "I really liked working with young children"; "I enjoyed preparing nice activities and materials"; "I really liked the fact that it brought lots of joy and entertainment to the classroom". Finally, some respondents provided more general comments, summing up the whole experience of conducting AR, e.g. "The research helped gain insight into issues I would otherwise find hard to understand".

In the following question, the respondents were asked what they had found most difficult in conducting the research. Most of the respondents regarded analyzing the data and arriving at conclusions as the most difficult parts of conducting the research. Other answers provided by the participants were: "Designing an appropriate test"; "Formulating concrete research questions"; "I didn't know much about the methodology of research and data interpretation, so at first I found it difficult"; "Making the students cooperate".

The following question asked whether there was anything in the course of conducting the research that the participants found surprising. Again, as with the previous questions, a variety of responses focused on different aspects of conducting research were provided. Most of them were associated with the methodological side of constructing and implementing research procedures, e.g. "The results were a bit surprising and disappointing"; "That some survey questions, obvious to me, were problematic for some students". Other responses highlighted the administrative and social issues involved in carrying out research: "I was surprised by the honesty of the participants"; "I was surprised that the school principals often created artificial obstacles and were unpleasant"; "I was surprised to see that so many teachers do not find any sense in conducting any kind of research".

Another question asked what the participants had learned from the experience of conducting the research. A great number of varied, very interesting answers were given by the study participants. Some of them stressed the theory–practice connections discovered by the participants: "I learned that theoretical assumptions are not always fully applicable in reality". Some of the answers very specifically explained what the participants had learned about the learning–teaching process, as can be seen in the following examples: "Thanks to the research, I know more about teaching strategies, especially those aimed at students with learning

disabilities such as ADHD, and I'm sure I wouldn't have learnt so much solely from books"; "I learned that it is possible to motivate even very problematic students"; "The research helped me develop skills to encourage a group of teenagers to take active part in lessons"; "I discovered very interesting and unusual ways of working on my students' pronunciation. As a result, I will know how to teach pronunciation in the future". Other answers stressed acquiring insight into teaching in a more general way, e.g. "It enriched my understanding of the classroom and the students". Moreover, other responses focused on the participants' knowledge about the process of conducting research: "I learned how to construct a questionnaire"; "I learned that research is demanding in terms of organization and time consuming".

The next question was: "Do you think this experience has contributed to your professional development as a teacher?" Again, a number of highly interesting responses were provided, some of them oriented with the process of conducting research, e.g. "It gave me more experience in conducting research as such, which will be useful in the future"; "Thanks to this experience, I had a chance to organize and conduct my own research, which is what every teacher should be able to do". Other comments were connected with the participants' development of their teaching skills. Most of these concentrated mainly on the learners and the discovery of the need for individualization in teaching: "Yes, because I've learned a lot about classroom management and students' behavior"; "Yes, the research made me more conscious of how my students learn English and what they need"; "Conducting the research made me more reflective and sensitive towards students' needs and expectations. I started approaching them not as a class, but as a collection of individuals"; "It certainly helped me realize that working with different age groups requires different teaching skills, sometimes very specific ones". Other comments specifically explained which skills the teachers had developed: "I am a better prepared teacher now because I've acquired the ability to construct and implement games and other fun activities in teaching vocabulary to children"; "Now I will be more careful in providing feedback to students' writing". It needs to be noted here that three of the respondents' provided negative answers to this question, stating openly that they could not see the relevance of conducting research to their professional development as teachers.

The final question aimed to elicit further reflections from the participants regarding their experience in conducting the research. As answering this question was optional, only 12 of the 51 participants provided comments. These were rather general, summative accounts of their research involvement, such as the following: "I wish I had known more about the methodology of research, e.g. how to construct a good questionnaire or test, and I had had more knowledge as to how to interpret my data properly"; "The MA research was an interesting experience in the sense that I had to deal with a lot of data, which was challenging"; "The study took me a lot of time, but I think I may take advantage of the results and even do a different study on my own to get new results in a problem that interests me".

3.3.2 Interview Findings

As stated before, the main questions remained the same for all five interviews, although frequent deviations from them introduced the desired high degree of flexibility. The selected statements extracted from the interviewees' utterances evolved around the core themes of the interviews. The numbers given in the brackets refer to line numbers in the transcripts.

The initial interview question was: "Generally, was doing the research an enjoyable experience for you?" One of the interviewees provided the following answer:

> I wouldn't actually call it 'enjoyable', at least not at all its stages. The beginning, when I had to select a problem to explore in my research, was difficult, as I really didn't know what to focus on. (…) Later, when I already had the materials ready and knew exactly what to do, it got easier and, in fact, more enjoyable (Ela, 1–5).

Another one focused on the process of teaching and gathering research data:

> I did research on using visual aids with children and teenagers, and I really liked looking for nice pictures and videos, and I can say that both myself and my students had fun in the classroom. And then, when I had the results and starting analyzing them, I found it interesting and enjoyable as well, as I could compare my expectations with the actual results (Kamila, 2–6).

The following key theme evolved around perceived usefulness of the process of carrying out research. The interviewees provided a number of arguments for the usefulness of the experience, as these two quotes illustrate:

> I didn't expect the teenage learners to be so enthusiastic about working with pictures in the classroom. They did better on the tests and they generally reacted to visual aids in more positive ways than children. (…) So I can say that the experience was very useful. I wouldn't have discovered that otherwise (Kamila, 8–12).

> Oh yes, it was very useful, I learned many things. I read many books and articles first, some of which were very practical and really useful. For the study, I had to prepare a lot of very well structured lesson plans and think of activities and materials that would be particularly interesting for my ESP students. I learned a lot about their motivation (Ewa, 6–9).

Next, the interviewees were asked how they would evaluate the experience of conducting research to another teacher. One of them seemed rather positive about its value, additionally recognized by her colleagues at school:

> I already talked to some of the teachers at my school, when they asked about my MA project. They were generally interested and helpful, that is, a more experienced colleague gave me some hints as to how to interpret my data. (…) They could see that I was really involved in doing the research, so I didn't even have to tell them directly that it is worth doing (Magda, 17–21).

Another teacher expressed some doubts about whether doing research should be recommended to all teachers:

I don't know. If a teacher doesn't have to do it, for the MA or for other reasons, then I'm not sure if he or she would do it. It is not easy, and teachers have so many things to do connected with teaching and administration. I conducted research for my BA and now for the MA; otherwise, I probably wouldn't have done it (Ela, 14–18).

The final clue stimulated responses about the ways in which the experience of conducting research enriched the interviewees and whether and how it improved their teaching. All five interviewees were convinced that it had contributed to their professional development and that they had acquired new skills and knowledge through their research engagement, which is illustrated by these two quotations:

Apart from a lot of other things, when conducting the research I realized how difficult it is for the learners to speak the foreign language. How they struggle to express what they want to say. It is probably natural, but since I became more sensitive to the students, I noticed many things. So, I can say that the research made me rethink some of my teaching practices (John, 22–27).

I know much more about teaching now, and it's the kind of knowledge which you won't find in books only. In a study like that, you have to stop and think about what you're doing, and it's always useful. So one thing that I learned is that it is important for teachers to conduct research. It really allows you to learn new things about your students and gives you a chance to reflect on your teaching (Magda, 25–29).

3.4 Discussion

The fact that all of the study participants who previously conducted research had done so for their BA degree reveals that, in the studied population, research was associated with seminar courses at teacher training institutions rather than being part of their teaching practice. At the same time, however, most of them stated that they had heard about AR as a way of improving one's teaching skills. It can only be hypothesized here that they became familiar with the AR concept from their courses in the BA or MA programs and had never tried out this option in their teaching.

Most of the teachers definitely enjoyed the experience of conducting AR, or at least they were glad that they had a chance to do it. This was further confirmed by the open-ended questionnaire and interview findings. The participants quoted numerous aspects of the experience as the ones they liked most, from the technical side of organizing the study, designing tools, analyzing the data, etc., through all stages of teaching and implementing changes in their instructional practices, to reflecting on their newly gained knowledge on learners and their own teaching. These comments also show that the experience was truly informative for the teachers, as they developed their research skills and improved their teaching practice. They gained new knowledge as well, and the experience really seems to have bridged the gap between theory and practice, which is noted as a vital aim of AR (e.g. Burns 2009).

Some of the study participants mentioned the external obstacles they had to face, such as the amount of time and effort which the study required, or negative attitudes on the part of other teachers or school authorities. Although such an experience might have been discouraging for some of the teachers, it could have also made them realize that by "its very nature, action research demands a high level of commitment from the teachers who undertake it", as stated by Thorne and Qiang (1996, p. 259). The difficulties encountered during research may be the reason why a high number of the teachers, despite their positive feelings about conducting AR, were so skeptical about conducting it again in the future.

It needs to be highlighted here that for the participants in the study the primary aim of getting involved in AR was completing their MA dissertations, not the need to find a solution to a problem or improve their teaching, and in fact, they may never conduct AR again. The study findings, however, indicate that the experience of engaging in AR contributed to a heightened awareness in them of numerous learning- and teaching-related issues. Even though for some of them it was the first time they had conducted classroom research, this occasion might have been a turning point in their perceptions of research and themselves as researchers.

It is evident that AR developed and deepened their knowledge about research-related and teaching-related aspects of their work as teachers. Apart from that, they looked at the experience and their teaching in a reflective way, which is perhaps the most significant gain from the process of AR engagement. It definitely evoked reflection on their perceptions of teaching, and in the way they approached the classroom and their learners. It may thus be assumed that the experience of conducting AR may have benefits for the future professional development of these teachers.

4 Conclusions

The findings generated in this study clearly indicate that conducting AR projects was a beneficial experience for the teachers. They learned a lot from the process of conducting the research, and their professional development as teachers was enhanced. It was a stimulating and, to a large extent, enjoyable experience for the teachers. This seems to confirm Burns' (2010a, b, p. 7) statement that "there is growing evidence that language teachers from all over the world get immense satisfaction from doing AR".

Valid conclusions are formulated by McKay (2009, p. 286) concerning educating novice teachers. She says that teacher educators need to convince them that research is not only done on teachers, but also by teachers and that because they know so much about the teaching process, teachers themselves are eligible to do classroom research. Therefore, much depends on what happens in pre-service and in-service teacher education courses in terms of shaping teachers' conceptions about and attitudes toward teacher research.

The potential of AR as part of an MA program like the one described in this study may be not fully exploited if the teacher-researchers perceive it as merely part of their theses and do not seek other, practical aims for improving their teaching practice. Therefore, as Borg (1998, p. 181) suggests, a broadened perspective needs to be added to teacher education programs, which will make teacher-researchers aware of this potential and to encourage a "more holistic form of self-reflection". AR appears to be a very important tool in pursuing this goal.

Appendix

The questionnaire used in the study

MA Research Projects: Students' Reflections

Dear MA Students, each of you has recently conducted a study within your MA project. Now I would like to ask you to share your opinions and reflections on the usefulness of doing such research for your professional development as teachers.

Please answer the following set of closed-ended questions. Mark the answers that best reflect your views.

1. Are you a teacher? ……………..
2. How long have you worked as a teacher? …………..
3. Before you joined the seminar, had you ever conducted research before?

a.   yes (when and why? ………………………)
b. no

4. Before you joined the seminar, had you ever heard about conducting research as a way of improving teachers' skills and abilities?

a.   yes
b. no

5. Are you glad that you had to conduct research for your MA paper?

a. yes, definitely
b. rather yes
c. it's hard to say
d. no
e. other answers: ……………………………

6. Do you think your students benefitted or will benefit from your conducting the research?

a. yes, definitely
b.   rather yes
c. it's hard to say
d. no
e. other answers: ……………………………

7. Do you think you will ever conduct action research again, even if you don't have to?

a. yes, definitely
b. rather yes
c. it's hard to say
d. no
e. other answers: ……………………………

8. Do you think that conducting classroom-based research should constitute a regular part of every teacher's job?

a. yes, definitely
b. rather yes
c. it's hard to say
d. no
e. other answers: ……………………………

When answering the following open-ended questions, please share your honest opinions and personal reflections concerning your experience. Any comments will be deeply appreciated.
1. What did you like most in conducting the research?
2. What did you find the most difficult?
3. Was there anything in the course of the study that surprised you?
4. What did you learn from the experience of conducting the research?
5. Do you think this experience has contributed to your professional development as a teacher? Please justify your answer.
6. If you have any further reflections concerning your experience of conducting the research, please provide them here:

Sample core questions asked in the interviews

Generally, was doing the research an enjoyable experience for you?
Generally, was it a useful experience? In what way?
What would you say about it to another teacher who has never conducted research? Is it worth doing? Is it worth the effort?
In what ways has it enriched you? Do you think you might be a better teacher thanks to the experience of conducting this research?

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Communicating Solidarity
with the Reader: Linguistic Politeness
Strategies in EFL Methodology Textbooks

Joanna Nijakowska

Abstract My attempt in this paper is to demonstrate how the mechanism of establishing common ground with readers is reflected in textbooks aimed at foreign language teachers and trainees. The study draws on the framework of linguistic politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987), informed by the metadiscourse framework (Myers 1989, 1992; Hyland 1998, 2000, 2005c, 2009). While written academic discourse has been extensively researched, there seems to be a gap concerning its detailed analysis devoted to politeness strategies, especially with reference to foreign language teacher education. Viewing academic writing as interpersonal social engagement naturally invites linguistic politeness framework for its analysis. The study uses the apparatus offered by the politeness theory to address writer-reader interaction patterns in written academic discourse with reference to EFL methodology textbook genre. The research questions I intend to answer are as follows: What are the facework patterns and regularities that govern the way writers express solidarity and seek common ground with readers in methodology textbooks in the field of EFL teacher education? Is there a preference towards the use of particular politeness strategies? Tentative results confirm writers' preference towards certain politeness strategies, demonstrating their solidarity with the readers through intensifying interest to readers, claiming common opinion/attitude, showing concern for readers' needs, including writer and readers in the activity, giving reasons, giving gifts, as well as promising/offering.

1 Introduction

Written academic discourse has been subject to intensive research with reference to different cultures, languages, disciplines and genres, with a textbook genre among them (e.g. Hyland 1994, 1999; Swales 1995; Parkinson and Adendorff 2004;

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Freddi 2005; Biber 2006; Paxton 2007; Hyland and Salager-Meyer 2008; Kuhi and Behnam 2011). However, there seems to be a gap with regard to the application of politeness framework to written discourse analysis in the area of foreign language teacher education, and methodology textbooks in particular.

Written academic discourse is no longer perceived as necessarily involving rhetorical neutrality; consequently, communicating via academic writing more and more frequently entails personal and spirited (as opposed to bland and impartial) dialogue with readers. This seems to reflect how much writers value the quality of the (social, interpersonal) interaction they engage in with their readers: how they use language to acknowledge the readers' presence and how they construe and negotiate the writer-reader relationship. Readers are portrayed as active discourse participants rather than uninvolved receivers of the message conveyed by the writer (Hyland 2005b).

The writer-reader interaction in written academic discourse is accomplished through the way writers position themselves in their texts to present their standpoint in relation to the propositional content and the audience, which is referred to as stance (Hyland 2001b, 2003, 2005b), and through engagement, which is the way they get readers involved as active players—discourse participants (Hyland 2001a, 2005a). Writers can deploy politeness rhetorical strategies to mark their readers' presence in the text: to focus their attention, anticipate objections, recognize expectations, knowledge, uncertainties, and guide them towards preferred interpretations (Hyland and Tse 2004; Hyland 2005a, b). I attempt to capture the instantiations of on-record (positive)[1] linguistic politeness in methodology textbooks aimed at foreign language teachers and trainees, and show that such an analysis proves capable of supplementing the characteristics and enriching the understanding of the writer-reader interaction in this particular genre.

The corpus used in the present study comprises 10 textbooks (see Appendix 1) which commonly constitute compulsory readings in methodology courses offered to trainees and pre-service teachers. The choice of textbooks was based on the interviews with academic teachers and teacher trainers with regard to their choice and preference of bibliographic selections and reference materials that they use in their methodology courses and require their students to get acquainted with. Samples of 50 consecutive pages from each textbook were analyzed in order to identify and classify the examples of politeness strategies resorted to by the textbook authors.

2 Linguistic Politeness Framework

The study employs an insightful and well-articulated face-saving model of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) (henceforth B&L), which is devoted to the manifestation of social relationships through language. Linguistic

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[1] See the discussion below with reference to the plausibility of the positive/negative dichotomy.

politeness is understood as language use, the choice of appropriate linguistic expression in order to satisfy the face needs of discourse participants and to get valued and regarded in return (Cutting 2008).

Admittedly, the model suffers from several imperfections and failings which have been scrutinized over the years and described in detail in numerous publications. This in turn generated a vivid discussion with regard to general plausibility of the model (e.g. Meier 1995; Matsumoto 1988; Eelen 2001; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Culpeper et al. 2003; Watts 2003; Terkourafi 2005; Watts et al. 2005; Werkhofer 2005; Arundale 2006; Haugh 2007; Spencer-Oatey 2007; Arundale 2009; Bargiela-Chiappini 2009). The scope of the present paper does not allow to review these criticisms in sufficient detail and that is why I only briefly list the most relevant aspects below and concentrate on selected issues which seem to be most relevant for the present study. Careful and critical attention has been devoted to, for example, B&L's conception and interpretation of the notion of *face* and Model Person, their claims to the universality of face (especially its negative aspect), conceptualization of face threatening acts (FTAs), applicability of the 'bold on record' super-strategy, viability of positive/negative dichotomy, failure to account for uncooperative, impolite, aggressive linguistic behavior once it emerges or to recognize the hearer's perspective to mention just a few.

Notwithstanding its flaws and inaccuracies, B&L's (1978/1987) model has continued to be an academically most prominent, attractive and stimulating approach that has inspired several face, politeness and impoliteness models (e.g. see Culpeper 1996; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Culpeper et al. 2003; Watts 2003; Janney and Arndt 2005; Spencer-Oatey 2005; Arundale 2006; Locher 2006; Terkourafi 2007; Bousfield 2008; Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2010; Culpeper 2010). Originally designed and applied to spoken discourse analysis, B&L's model has also been successfully exploited in the study of written texts, including academic discourse (e.g. see Myers 1989; Pilegaard 1997; Bremner 2006; Graham 2007; Hatipoğlu 2007; Ermida 2006; Bremner 2008; Park 2008a, b; Walko 2007; Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal 2009; Jansen and Janssen 2010).

The concept of *face* (Goffman 1967), which constitutes a point and concern in every interaction, not excluding the interaction between writers and readers, appears fundamental to any (im)politeness theory. Face, apprehended and discerned as a public self-image, given on loan from society and subject to constant negotiation in interaction, can be threatened, damaged, or preserved, appreciated and upgraded. B&L reinterpreted the original concept (Goffman 1967) of face and presumed dualism of face which operates in terms of a positive/negative dichotomy. *Positive face* is perceived by B&L as individual's self-image, a wish to be well thought of, desire to be understood, appreciated, liked, admired, approved of and treated as a friend by other interactants. The construal of *negative face*, on the other hand, involves a claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction—freedom of action and freedom from imposition (B&L 1987). However, bearing in mind that, in fact, most utterances involve both aspects of face, the advanced face dualism seems rather unsustainable and unconceivable, and indeed it has induced ample criticism (e.g. Bousfield 2008; Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2010).

In B&L's model face is pictured as an internally generated and highly individualistic construct, consequently, individual's wants and freedom of imposition are highlighted which, in turn, makes the perception of face culturally biased. Type, quantity, strength and salience of face vary across discourses, languages and cultures. In collectivist cultures individuals tend to define and perceive themselves in relation to the social group. Thus B&L's claim to universal applicability of their model across cultures seems to fail. I incline towards the suggestion (Bousfield 2008; Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2010) that face can be defined as internally expected but externally constituted/realized in interaction with others.

Furthermore, according to B&L, FTAs can be directed either against positive or negative face of the speaker (writer) or/and hearer (reader) (B&L 1987). FTAs to positive face include expressions of disapproval, accusations, criticism, disagreements, insults, and complaints, while advice, orders, requests, suggestions, warnings, and offers constitute FTAs to negative face. In general, one can decide to either commit or refrain from a FTA. One can choose from a set of five super-strategies to avoid or weaken a FTA and demonstrate the awareness of face. The more threatening a given FTA, the more polite strategy must be employed to mitigate its effects to compensate for face-threatening behavior. FTA can be performed either on-record or off-record and further on, an on-record FTA can be done baldly or with redressive action either towards positive or negative face. More precisely, B&L ranked politeness super-strategies in terms of a cost/benefit analysis as follows: (1) do the FTA bald on-record (directly, without linguistically encoded redressive action and without attempting to hide what we are doing); (2) do the FTA on-record (directly, with redressive action towards positive face—positive politeness); (3) do the FTA on-record (directly, with redressive action towards negative face—negative politeness); (4) do the FTA off-record (indirectly, in such a way as to pretend to hide it); (5) don't do the FTA (face-threat is too great to be redressed by any language formula, so the best politeness strategy is not to do the act) (B&L 1987, pp. 60, 68–70). However, these claims have been subject to criticism based on the observation that there seem not to be inherently polite or impolite acts directed at either aspect of face, the interpretation of a given utterance appears to depend on the context-, discourse- and culture-specific factors (Bousfield 2008).

Bousfield (2008) invalidates 'bald on record' as a separate super-strategy as lacking elaboration on face-functional aspects. The strategy seems ineligible and unqualified because face is at stake in every instance of communication. The bald on record strategy describes merely structural aspects of utterances: "Doing an act baldly, without redress, involves doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible (…) where S and H both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interest of urgency or efficiency" (B&L 1987, p. 69). Interestingly, Bousfield (2008) also points to the potential of the off-record politeness strategies to operate towards either positive or negative face, while in B&L's model only on-record strategies enjoy this positive/negative dichotomy. In sum, the reformulated model of politeness proposed by Bousfield (2008) takes it that FTAs can be performed either on- or off-record and directed towards either positive or negative face. The bald on record utterances (being

apparently offensive and threatening towards the interlocutor's positive or negative face) have been ingested by the on-record super-strategy.

The above-mentioned model is perceived as not yet entirely accurate and capable of elucidating interaction in terms of (im)politeness. Further revision would result in a two-tier distinction: on- and off-record politeness (Bousfield 2008, p. 65). Nevertheless, I take this model as a point of reference in the present study with the reservation, though, that a sharp distinction between utterances directed either to positive or negative face may prove implausible as it seems that both aspects can be simultaneously attended in interaction.

B&L also draw our attention to the strength or weightiness of a given FTA, which builds upon three independent and culturally sensitive variables that define the power-distance relationship between the writer and the reader. They involve social distance (D) between the writer and the reader, power differential (P), which is defined as relative power of the reader over the writer, and ratio of imposition (R). In the case of textbooks, the relation between the writer and the reader can be clearly characterized as asymmetrical in terms of distance and power, where the writer's status, expertise, knowledge and membership in the disciplinary community, which readers, (mostly) novices to the field, aspire to join, is undisputable.

3 Manifesting Solidarity with EFL Methodology Textbook Reader

The present section aims to demonstrate how textbook writers apply on-record politeness strategies to develop and cultivate a relationship with their readers. In the examined corpus of textbooks, writers make considerably frequent attempts to mitigate FTAs and soften the imposition they create by manifesting solidarity with readers. Community of interests and responsibilities is consistently communicated through claiming common ground with readers, conveying the idea that writers cooperate with readers and fulfill their wants (B&L 1978/1987). Writers frequently stress and refer to a common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge and empathy but also claim in-group membership with readers, notice and attend to the readers' interests, needs, and qualities. As cooperators, they include both themselves and their readers in the activity, they issue offers and promises as well as provide explanations and reasons for their actions in order to minimize the power of the FTAs. Gifts of understanding, cooperation and sympathy towards readers are routinely presented by textbook writes.

Textbook writers tend to claim common ground through presupposing, raising or asserting common points of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, or empathy. The indication of the fellowship which arises from shared purposes and beliefs seems to be well achieved by the use of emotional language presenting emotions and affective attitudes of the writer towards the propositional content and audience. Expressions of surprise, amazement, satisfaction, disappointment seem to

diminish face threats because it is presumed that knowledge, values, definitions and attitudes towards discussed issues are shared by discourse participants.

(1) How awkward these definitions are! Isn't it curious that professional lexicographer cannot devise more precise scientific definitions? (HDB 2000, p. 7).[2]
(2) So, our 'reading' of the text, while in no way profound, is amazingly accurate, given our zero knowledge of the 'code' (ST 2005b, p. 9).
(3) Brown and Bellugi (1964) gave us a delightful example of the difficulty of attempting to extract underlying grammatical knowledge from children (HDB 2000, p. 31).

The examined corpus can be characterized by a considerable use of the second person reader pronouns 'you' and 'your' In such a way writers mark the presence of their readers in the text and clearly acknowledge the interaction which is taking place. This demonstrates how writers can succeed in raising, asserting or presupposing common ground. Moreover, the use of reader pronouns indicates familiarity, informality and directness (Hyland 2005a).

(4) Just to give you an idea, here's how my day started (…) (ST 2005, p. 17).
(5) You may be familiar with the classical experiments with Pavlov's dog and Skinner's boxes (…) (HDB 2000, p. 9).
(6) It's possible, for example, that you took a guess that the text is about birds, sincefigures of birds occur frequently. This, in fact, was the strategy adopted by thosescholars who first attempted to decipher hieroglyphs (…) (ST 2005b, p. 8).

To stress shared goals as well as similarities in reasoning, understanding and attitudes developed towards the issues discussed, writers frequently include both themselves and their readers in the activities and/or beliefs. Calling on common membership, shared knowledge and readiness to cooperate, writers repeatedly employ the inclusive *we* form to redress FTAs. In addition, inclusive 'we' may invite the perception of discourse (text) participants as equals in terms of their expert knowledge and status within the disciplinary community. In that way, the imposition is softened and, at the same time, the writer-reader bonds are strengthened. Consequently, readers' face can be substantially enhanced, especially that the textbook audience is mainly composed of students whose level of knowledge and disciplinary status is significantly inferior to that of the textbook author, who is usually a distinguished and respected scholar, with essentially remarkable account of academic and didactic achievements.

(7) We must first address a fundamental concern (…) (HDB 2000, p. 4).
(8) Let's see what happens when we try to 'define' those three terms (HDB 2000, p. 4).

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[2] Annotation convention used in the present chapter involves providing initials, followed by the year of publication and page number.

(9) Turning our attention to grammar, what does the text tell us about the way English sentences are organized? First of all, all the eight different parts of speech are represented (…) (ST 2005b, p. 12).

(10) How can we explain a fantastic journey from that first anguished cry at birth to adult competence in a language? From the first word to tens of thousands? (HDB 2000, p. 21).

(11) As teachers of second language users, therefore, our top priority is to help our learners engage with texts (ST 2005b, p. 6).

Stimulating and interactive texts tend to more successfully arouse and intensify the readers' interest. Most conspicuously, writers manage to capture the readers' attention, challenge them and prompt to become text participants by asking direct questions. In such a way, readers are directly provoked and motivated to take position, get engaged and respond. These questions can be immediately followed by the answers provided by the author.

(12) But how are the efficiency and success of that learning determined by the environment the child is in? or by the child's individual construction of linguistic reality in interaction with others? The waters of the innateness hypothesis are considerably muddied by such questions (HDB 2000, p. 35).

(13) How do we know, then, which screen, which show, which title, etc., is being referred to? The identity of each is, of course, easily recoverable by reference to the mental schema of the movie theatre (ST 2005b, p. 26).

(14) How can we explain a fantastic journey from that first anguished cry at birth to adult competence in a language? From the first word to tens of thousands? (HDB 2000, p. 21).

(15) Where does a teacher begin the quest for an understanding of the principles of language learning and teaching? By first considering some of the issues (HDB 2000, p. 1).

With a view to intensifying readers' interest and adding vividness to the text, in addition to questions, in their texts writers often incorporate metaphors, similes and jokes. They typically extend across several lines of text and are frequently used to explain and clarify the points writers make, in that way conveying the preferred/required interpretations and understanding.

(16) We must not put all our eggs in the innateness basket. Environmental factors cannot by any means be ignored (HDB 2000, p. 35).

(17) Consider for a moment the analogy of a very high mountain, viewed from a distance. From one direction the mountain may have a sharp peak, easily identified glaciers, and distinctive rock formations. From another direction, however, the same mountain might now appear to have two peaks (the second formerly hidden from view) and different configurations of its slopes. From still another direction, yet further characteristics emerge, heretofore unobserved. The study of SLA is very much like the viewing of our mountain: we need multiple tools and vantage points in order to ascertain the whole picture (HDB 2000, p. 12).

(18) Serious and extensive thinking about these eight topics involves a complex journey through a labyrinth of linguistic science—a maze that continues to be negotiated (HDB 2000, p. 6).

(19) Just as we cannot make a geranium bloom before its 'time', so human beings will 'bloom' in predetermined, preprogrammed steps (HDB 2000, p. 35).

(20) A simple analogy to music illustrates this complex notion. Think of an orchestra playing a symphony. The score for the symphony may have, let's say, twelve separate parts that are performed simultaneously. The 'symphony' of a human brain enables us to process many segments and levels of language, cognition, affect, and perception all at once–in a parallel configuration (HDB 2000, p. 27).

(21) By about age three, children can comprehend an incredible quantity of linguistic input; their speech mushrooms as they become the generators of nonstop chattering and incessant conversation, language thereby becoming a mixed blessing for those around them! (HDB 2000, p. 21).

Writers manifest the intention to cooperate with their readers through asserting or presupposing that they possess relevant knowledge with regard to the readers' wants and that they consider the readers' needs to be of great significance and are prepared to recognize and cater for them.

(22) While some linguistic terminology is inevitable, this has been kept to a minimum, as have references to academic and theoretical literature. For those interested in following up some of the theme of the book, a reading list of selected books and articles can be found at the back (ST 2005b, p. 7).

(23) As you consider the issues, chapter by chapter, you are led on a quest for your own personal, integrated understanding of how people learn–and sometimes fail to learn–a second language (HDB 2000, p. x).

(24) Prepare a 'gap-fill' version of the text for a subsequent lesson. Here is how a colleague of mine used this gap-fill idea with a group of ESL students in Oregon (…) (ST 2005, p. 15).

Cooperative writers often resort to circulating offers and promises to their readers. Textbook writers seem to accurately anticipate both the outcomes of the actions/beliefs they invite the readers to undertake/accept as well as the intellectual effort readers are expected to invest in such endeavors. That is why, writers tend to aptly picture the abovementioned outcomes in terms of rewards which are worth striving for and much valued.

(25) And the quest is cautious: you will be urged to be as critical as you can in considering the merit of various models and theories and research findings. By the end of the final chapter, you will no doubt surprise yourself on how many pieces of this giant puzzle you can actually put together! (HDB 2000, p. x).

(26) (…) while you cannot hope to find final answers to all the questions, you can begin to achieve a surprising number of answers as you move through the chapters of this book (HDB 2000, p. 3).

(27) This book aims to address these issues. By the end, you should have a better idea of (…) (ST 2005b, p. 7).

Yet another technique which serves to successfully justify and mitigate FTAs is to present the readers with explanations and reasons why writers prompt them to accept a particular belief or undertake effort to complete a certain task.

(28) Here, you are strongly encouraged to commit yourself to a process of weekly journal entries that chronicle a previous or concurrent foreign language learning experience. In so doing, you will be better able to connect the issues that you read about in this book with a real-life personal experience (HDB 2000, p. 18).

(29) A cautious approach to inferring someone's competence will allow you to draw some conclusions about overall ability while still leaving the door open for some significance to be attributed to those linguistic tidbits that you might initially be tempted to discount (HDB 2000, p. 33).

(30) The vignettes are obviously not intended to be exhaustive (…), but they should begin to give you a bit of history and a picture (…) (HDB 2000, p. 14).

Finally, textbook writers can manifest their solidarity with the audience through giving gifts. Expressions of sympathy, understanding, appreciation, acknowledgement, credit and cooperation highlight the writer's readiness to fulfill the readers' wants. Such a strategy allows to recognize the contribution and pay tribute to other scholars and researchers in the field who also constitute an integral part of the textbook audience.

(31) And so, according to PDP model, a sentence (…) is not 'generated' by a series of rules (Ney and Pearson 1990; Sokolik 1990). Rather, sentences are the result of the simultaneous interconnection of a multitude of brain cells (HDB 2000, p. 27).

(32) The objective of the tasks is to help you understand the material and study it thoughtfully and critically—but they are rather time-consuming (PU 2006, p. xi).

(33) The vignettes are obviously not intended to be exhaustive (refer to such books as Brown 2000; Richard-Amato 1996.; Nunan 1991b; Richards and Rogers 1986 for more specific treatments), but they should begin to give you a bit of history and a picture (…) (HDB 2000, p. 14).

4 Conclusions

The analysis showed that the politeness theory provides some important insight into the nature of writer-reader interaction. The authors of methodology textbooks aimed at foreign language teachers and trainees seem to considerably frequently rely on politeness rhetorical strategies to reduce the imposition of the FTAs they issue towards their readers. The expressions of fellowship and alliance with readers transpire in the analyzed texts with a view to acknowledging their in-group

membership and presume merging interests, opinions and beliefs. Instantiations of linguistic politeness aimed at manifesting harmony and unity which have been captured in the analyzed textbooks constitute an important element supplementing the characteristics and enriching the understanding of the writer-reader interaction in this particular genre. Such interaction necessarily involves the writers protruding their views and attitudes but at the same time recognizing readers' wants and expectations, acknowledging knowledge and experience, anticipating objections and doubts, and, finally, assisting the readers to reach the favored interpretations. In that way the readers' presence is marked in the text (Hyland and Tse 2004; Hyland 2005a, b).

The examples of on-record (positive) politeness have been tentatively labeled and extracted from the examined corpus. However, as already indicated, definitive identification and delineation of the aspect of face, positive versus negative, that is threatened by particular FTAs seems highly difficult since, due to the complexity of the concept of face, in some instances both positive and negative aspects are simultaneously addressed and threatened (or enhanced) during interaction.

In textbook discourse particular linguistic politeness strategies are not restricted to single utterances; on the contrary, they seem to require extended pieces of discourse to surface and be identified (see Bousfield 2008). The analysis shows, rather unsurprisingly, that some of the cited examples could be potentially classified as instantiations of several strategies because the same forms can serve different functions across examples.

In addition, particular FTAs can be softened by multiple politeness strategies. What is more, the 'threatening' power and direction (positive and negative) of given FTAs does not remain constant but appears conceivably dependant on the multitude of cultural, contextual and genre-specific factors. Consequently, a FTA could be placed on a continuum in which case the imposition it carries could be interpreted as possessing gradable/modifiable salience, depending on the abovementioned factors and in that way partially accounting for diverse recipients' reactions and perceptions of a given FTA.

Interestingly, in the examined corpus, FTAs seem to be composed into systems of macro- and micro-acts, where a given macro FTA embraces a set of micro FTAs. Macro FTAs are constrained by the textbook author's overall didactic/instructional goal and (justified by the anticipated educational and academic benefits resulting from them for the readers) they could possibly be interpreted as indeed reduced in salience in comparison with other genres of written academic discourse. It is worth considering here the face threat from the perspective specific to the context of the instructional, pedagogic textbook genre. In textbook discourse, we witness great distance and power differential between writers and their readers. However, unlike in the classic approach, the recipient of the face threatening act at the same time becomes a (potential) beneficiary of didactic endeavors attempted by the author, which seems to constitute a sufficient justification for performing a given FTA. Thus, in the case of a textbook genre, politeness strategies aimed at mitigating the power and effect of FTAs could be

viewed as not only diminishing the threat but also, indirectly, as enhancing benefits to the reader.

In sum, it appears that textbook writers invest in harmonious relationships with their readers; they tend to seek common ground and communicate solidarity by resorting to particular rhetorical strategies. They apply the on-record linguistic politeness strategies either individually or in combination. These strategies are realized across individual utterances or extended pieces of written discourse in order to alleviate FTAs which can be issued towards either positive or negative face, or, more plausibly, towards both. It needs stressing though that despite a general tendency displayed by the textbook writers to manifest solidarity and common ground with their readers, the type and quantity of such expressions (as well as the quality of writer-reader interaction) is still very much dependant on the individual writer's style.

Appendix 1: Corpus

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Part III
Instructional Practices

Micro- and Macro-Perspectives on Students' Attitudes to Online Classes

Anna Turula

Abstract The article is devoted to the problem of online TEFL course writing *vis à vis* students' attitudes to e-learning looked at from two different perspectives: macro and micro. The former involved a large-scale study based on two surveys tapping into (n1 = 398; n2 = 331) related to e-learning, carried out at the College of Foreign Languages in Czestochowa, Poland; the latter was a small-scale qualitative investigation of the College students' opinions on a particular e-course in progress, informed by regular feedback sessions with three student-reviewers who had volunteered to take part in the said course and evaluate it. In the course of the two studies, it was possible to delineate the following characteristics of a good online course: ample choice as regards both content and form; a good balance between teacher control and learner autonomy; multi-source supplementation to lecture content; teacher-student and student–student interactivity; and easy access to handouts and revisions.

1 Introduction

In search of guidelines for an effective online course one usually relies on a combination of purely technical recommendations regarding online tools to be used and a belief that traditional methodology needs to be fallen back on because what makes good e-learning coincides, to a very large extent, with learning as such. What one understands by *traditional methodology,* depends greatly on one's own beliefs as to what makes education effective.

In the case of the research project presented in this article, student attitudes to online classes were first and foremost taken into account in the course of e-

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material writing. The rationale behind this pedagogical choice was motivated by the author's belief that curriculum development should be learner-centred rather than centralised (cf. Nunan 1988, among others). In an attempt to determine these attitudes, a two-faceted—macro and micro—research design was chosen based on the assumption that, while large scale investigations involving large numbers of respondents provide data of invaluable statistic significance, the outcomes of such research are general rather than specific, and individual student voices—which could help translate some general guidelines into course specificities—can rarely be heard. This is why it seemed necessary to supplement macro-scale data with a more detailed and personalised feedback referring to a particular course rather than to e-learning in general.

The article starts by looking at learner-centredness, and relates it to three factors which ought to influence the form and content of any (online) course for final year of secondary school/tertiary/university students: the characteristics of an adult learner and his/her preferred learning modes; the ways in which online learning milieus are particularly suited for learner-centredness and how they can foster it; and finally the teaching style of the course author as well as his/her preferred teacher and learner roles which result from this style. With these factors in mind, some initial e-course writing recommendations are formulated towards the end of Sect. 2, Sect. 3 presents the data collected during the macro-perspective study and some interim observations based on the results. Section 4 introduces the micro viewpoint as well as presents the outcomes of the qualitative study. It also sums up the two studies with a number of final conclusions and e-teaching implications.

2 Learner-Centred Curriculum Development

The idea of learner-centredness in curriculum development is frequently put forward by disanalogy to a more traditional, centralised course design. While the latter approach is aimed at mastering a body of knowledge, learner-centred curricula are process- rather than product-oriented, and they value skills over formal expertise. As Nunan (1988, p. 21) points out, in relation to language learning curricula, "[b]oth viewpoints are quite valid, and most courses will reflect elements of both". In practice, the question of whether particular classes are predominantly skill- or knowledge-oriented (as well as a suitable proportion of both approaches) will be determined by their curriculum specificity. Considering language teaching, referred to in the citation above, the centralised component grows in importance if such are the course demands resulting from: individual learner differences (analytic, introverted and authority-dependent learners or those who desire to make sense of language as a system will show a preference for knowledge over skills); problem specificity (teaching the grammar of fact—cf. Lewis (1986) and Willis (2005) for their classification of grammar problems—or fragile syntax may require a more centralised approach); or course objectives (taking an examination in which accuracy and complexity are valued alongside fluency is usually

an important argument for including knowledge-centred instruction). In others, which are, in fact, the majority of cases, language learning will be processual, skill-based and, consequently, de-centralised.

All of this, which applies to EFL course design, is mentioned in the context of a TEFL course curriculum development for an important reason. The similarity between these two types of curricula is particularly striking: it seems that TEFL training—because it is practical by definition, similarly to language learning in the majority of contexts—should be learner-centred, skill- rather than knowledge-based, the knowledge component being ancillary rather than privileged: limited to territory blueprinting rather than constituting the main focus of the course.

In fact, when we consider Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, which is now popularly applied at universities in Poland as the basis for describing the prospective outcomes of all academic courses, knowledge should play the above-defined role in any area of education: it ought to be the foundation—an important one, yet the foundation alone—on which the generally more sophisticated and, consequently, more highly valued cognitive feats of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation/creativity can be performed. However, even if such an approach is now highly recommended in any content subject (among others, in the English Department study programmes), TEFL training will still be in the avant-garde of practicality and skill-dependency because of its vocational (i.e. directly related to the student's future career) rather than theoretical (and of a more indirect impact) character. To quote Nunan (1988, p. 22) again, so that the language-learning/TEFL-training analogy can be dwelled upon in an attempt to finally delineate the principles of a TEFL course design,[1] "[p]roponents of learner-centred curricula are less interested in learners acquiring the totality [of the language; *but also the totality of the TEFL knowledge*] than in assisting [students] gain [the communicative and linguistic; *but equally importantly language teaching*] skills they need to carry out real world tasks". This, with a particular emphasis on the prospective *real world tasks*, is why it is particularly important for the curriculum of a TEFL training course to be learner-centred in the sense proposed by Nunan (1988) and adopted for the sake of the present argument.

In addition to the above-mentioned, course-type-related rationale for curriculum decentralization, three other reasons for learner-centredness in material design need to be taken into account when writing online lectures and classes applicable to TEFL training. They include: (i) the characteristics of adult/tertiary/university learning; (ii) the autonomy-breeding potential of online education together with the specificity of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), which are both *learning* and *virtual* milieus; as well as (iii) the author's personal preferences concerning teacher and learner roles. All of these issues are briefly discussed below.

When it comes to adult learners, they have to be seen from a three-fold time perspective (Nunan 1988; Turula 2006): through their unique *past* experiences, their *present* interests and abilities, as well as their reasons for learning and the

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[1] The author's interjected comments are italicized.

goals they want to achieve in the *future*. All of this, as indicated by a number of publications on adult learning (among others, Brundage and MacKeracher 1980 cited in Nunan 1988; Knowles 1990; Billington 2000; Turula 2006) translates into the following classroom practicalities:

1) learning should be based on experience in two different ways: the adult learner ought to be both seen as *experienced* and asked to learn *through experience*;
2) the learner's cognitive style, perceptions and feelings need to be taken into account; there should be *learner participation* in course development;
3) there must be *learning how to learn* alongside the learning of (*personally relevant*) content;
4) learning needs to take place in a *stress-free* environment; and
5) there ought to be regular *revisions* and effective *feedback* mechanisms.

All of these teaching recommendations make the course learner-oriented rather than centralised in, as the emphasis (indicated by italicisation in the text) is on the learning process and skills—both content- and learning-related—and not on knowledge mastering.

In addition to the above-listed specificities of adult education, one more important characteristic of the mature learner needs to be mentioned. As is pointed out by numerous andragogues (cf. Holster 1986; Knowles 1990, among others), adulthood is synonymous with *autonomy*, a word of Greek origin meaning "making one's own rules". As a result, it seems justified to assume that in a class of adults all students are, by definition, responsible for their actions and capable of self-direction, and—very importantly—that they want to be seen and treated as such. This acknowledgement goes hand in hand with the specificity of e-learning, in which the 24/7 availability of content together with the lack of immediate teacher presence and control make online courses particularly suited for the development of learner autonomy, especially in the area of time-management and decision-making skills. If this is the case, any online course should give learners plenty of choice as to how they want to approach a given task; it also has to offer activities which are suited to the individual differences and learning objectives of course participants. All of these factors are characteristic of a learner-centred, but not a centralised knowledge-providing course.

Related to the above-discussed question of autonomy is another important argument in favour of learner-centredness of online courses. This argument is related to the very concept of online knowledge provision and access to resources. The Internet is a vast reservoir of a massive body of knowledge, and an online course which is purely content-providing—a mere replication of the Web in a micro-scale—will always be inferior in terms of what and how much it can offer. This is why, e-learning makes sense only if it is skill- and not knowledge-based; learner-centred (=training the learner in skills useful in the understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and creative adaptation of the content in question) and not centralised (=limited to the sole provision of content which is e-available anyway).

The final important factor to be taken into account in any curriculum design is the tutor's own teaching style, together with his/her beliefs about teacher and learner roles. As the author of the present article (who happens to be the writer of the described online courses) believes in democratic, not autocratic, facilitative, not authoritarian, teaching, the learner-centredness of the devised online classes seems to be a very natural choice.

The development of the online TEFL training course which is the object of the present article was initiated in January 2011. With the territory staked out by all four of the above-mentioned arguments in favor of learner-centredness—the practical, skill-based character of the course itself; the characteristics of the prospective participants (adult learners); the specificities of the educational environment (online); and the course author's own preferences concerning teacher and learner roles—the process of e-lecture and e-class writing seemed to be well-grounded theoretically. The last question to be resolved was the one of how to be truly learner-centred before knowing one's specific audience.[2] The answer was sought on two different planes: (i) at the level of general tendencies, through a large-scale student satisfaction survey implemented twice in the academic year; as well as (ii) qualitatively, based on the opinions of three student-reviewers who followed the process of material writing and offered their individualised, course-specific feedback. Both parts of the study—which were carried out alongside each other between January and June 2011—are described in the following two sections.

3 The Student Voice in the Practice of Online Course Writing: The Macro Perspective

3.1 Study Design: Data Collection Procedure and the Analysis of Research Results

The quantitative research, whose aim was to ensure learner-centredness of the designed online course by offering insights into college students' attitudes towards e-learning, was based on the results of a student satisfaction survey carried out biannually at the College of Foreign Languages in Czestochowa, Poland. The data which were taken under consideration were the opinions on the e-routines of 119 college teachers provided in the Autumn of 2010 and Spring 2011 by 398 and 331 respondents, respectively.

As for the survey methodology, its participants expressed their opinions by answering the following three closed multiple-choice questions:

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[2] All of the online courses had to be completed before student enrolment started.

Table 1 In what way are the e-campus materials useful?

Answer	Autumn	Spring
Revision	47.24 %	58.45 %
As extension to f-2-f classes (same topic)	52.76 %	60.32 %
As f-2-f content outreach (other topics)	36.18 %	38.34 %
As self-study motivators and autonomy boosters	26.87 %	26.01 %
In the area of source availability/critical selection	23.87 %	27.61 %

Table 2 What type of content/activities were the most useful?

Answer	Autumn	Spring
Text files	55 %	68.63 %
Presentations (ppt and others)	27 %	31.37 %
Interactive quizzes	28.54 %	29.76 %
Forum discussions	11.56 %	15.01 %
Online assignments	19.6 %	25.74 %
Audios	11.81 %	10.46 %
Videos	7.54 %	10.72 %

Table 3 Do you find e-materials attractive and effective?

Answer	Autumn	Spring
Yes	61.06 %	67.02 %
No	7.79 %	10.99 %
No/unfinished answer	31.15 %	21.98 %

1) In what way are the e-campus materials useful?
2) What type of content/activities were the most useful?
3) Do you find e-materials attractive and effective?

Moreover, the respondents were required to answer two open-ended questions, in which they were asked to enumerate the main strengths and weaknesses of the college e-campus. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 present the results.

As can be seen in Table 1, the two main areas in which online courses were seen as useful to students are revisions (A: 47.24 %; S: 58.45 %) and the extension to off-line classes (A: 52.76 %; S: 60.32 %), the latter understood as continued work on the content introduced during a face-to-face meeting. The utility of the e-campus in the introduction of content other than the one covered in class was slightly less valued (A: 36.18 %; S: 38.34 %). The usefulness of the e-learning component in the area of autonomy development—including the ability to criti-cally select sources of knowledge—was rated the lowest (A: 26.87 % and 23.87 %; S: 26.01 % and 27.61 %). All the scores, with the exception of the autonomy rating, show a growing tendency over the spring term.

When it comes to the type of content/activities which were perceived as the most useful in meeting the objectives specified in Question 1 (Table 2), all kinds of the so-called handouts—text files—have the largest scores (A: 55 %; S: 68.63 %; other formats—27 % and 31.37, respectively). Interactional quizzes, the second in line,

Table 4 The main strength and weaknesses of the e-campus

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Availability	• Problems with Moodle technicalities and course organization
• No time/place constraints	• Lack of f-2-f contact with the tutor
• Flexibility of use	• Quality of materials (lack of key, technical problems)

enjoyed less popularity (A: 28.54 %; S: 29.76 %), while other activities were rated as low as approx. 10 % in both surveys. As in the case of Question 1, all spring scores—apart from the decrease in the rating of audios—are higher.

Finally, as regards the overall satisfaction (Table 3), the favourable ratings grew from 61.06 % (A) to 67.02 % (S), the unfavourable ratings—from 7.70 % (A) to 10.99 % (S), while the number of no/unfinished answers dropped from 31.15 % (A) to 21.98 % (S). All of this, especially the last score, shows that in the course of e-learning students became more definitive as regards the usefulness of the e-campus and increasingly determined in their positive and negative attitudes to it.

As to the open-ended questions (Table 4), the main strength of the e-learning component offered at the college, as the respondents saw it, was the non-stop access and the possibility of the students being flexible in terms of when and where they want to take part in the activities, whereas the chief weaknesses are related to the human factor: the lack of digital literacy on the part of the student and, occasionally, the teacher; and the need for education to be interactive on the traditional, face-to-face basis.

Since Questions 1 and 2 are more specific, while Question 3 refers to overall course satisfaction, it seemed interesting to compare the dynamics of change in the particular and the general scores. For this purpose, regression coefficients were calculated for the difference between autumn and spring scores in Question 3 and similar over-time differences for Questions 1 and 2 in all the specified areas. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Looking at the regression coefficients (Table 5), we can observe that the most dynamic growth concerned the satisfaction with the online component used for revisions (the belief in its usefulness grew almost as fast as the general satisfaction with the course—1.880872), and as extension to f-2-f classes (the growth was only slightly more dynamic than the increase in the general satisfaction with the course—1.268456). The belief that online courses are useful in other areas grew more slowly than the favourable ratings in general course satisfaction, or even weakened (as in the case of the autonomy-boosting potential of e-learning).

Table 5 The dynamics of change: Overall course satisfaction and the usefulness of the e-component

Answer	Reglinp
Revision	1.880872
As extension to f-2-f classes	1.268456
As f-2-f content outreach	0.362416
As self-study motivators and autonomy boosters	−0.1443
In the area of source availability/critical selection	0.627517

Table 6 The dynamics of change: Overall course satisfaction and the usefulness of different materials/activities

Answer	Reglinp
Text files	2.286913
Presentations (ppt and others)	0.733221
Interactive quizzes	0.204698
Forum discussions	0.578859
Online assignments	1.030201
Audios	−0.22651
Videos	0.533557

When it comes to the comparison between overall course satisfaction and the usefulness of different materials/activities (Table 6), the calculated regression coefficients suggest that the popularity of text files saw the highest growth dynamics: it increased more than two times faster (2.286913) than the general course satisfaction, while online assignments saw dynamics of change similar to the one noted for the overall ratings (1.030201). As for other resources, their popularity increased only slightly, with the possible exception of audios, whose popularity went down over the spring term.

3.2 The Macro Perspective: Some Interim Conclusions

Based on the data presented in Sect. 3.1, the following two course-writing recommendations could be put forward if an e-learning course were to cater to the student needs and expectations noted in the course of the study:

1. E-courses should offer revisions and serve as supplementation of f-2-f classes; and
2. The most desired form of content are files (handouts).

It needs to be pointed out that the observed growth in the overall course satisfaction is mostly due to the very fast increase in the popularity of the two above-mentioned factors. What is also important is that these two ratings go up between the two surveys, which means that the students' appreciation of online revisions, supplementations and handouts grows as a result of positive experience with these e-learning options. Courses meeting requirements 1 and 2 are seen as moderately/ sufficiently helpful: the overall satisfaction scores—A: 61.06 %; S: 67.02 %— translate into grades 3.0 and 3.5,[3] respectively.

If we remember the characteristics of a course for adults enumerated in Sect. 2, the respondents' wish for revisions and supplementation seems justified and by

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[3] The percentage/grade relation may be different for different schools and universities. Yet, the 60 % and 67 % thresholds quite popularly correspond to numeric grades 3.0 and 3.5, respectively. The following discussion is based on this assumption.

any means uncontroversial. However, if we look at the second observation referring to the preferred activities, we have to come to the conclusion that the results of the quantitative study need a critical look. An additional argument for doing so is how online courses are evaluated, especially *vis à vis* the percentage/grade interpretation: the overall rating is far from impressive (3.0 and 3.5 are the lowest passing grades in Poland). This is easy to explain when we confront these results with the answers to open-ended questions: e-lectures and e-classes are evaluated only in terms of their availability—and not their *quality*—and the access is, in most cases, sufficiently easy, ongoing and flexible rather than difficult. Yet, as it appears, availability alone is far too little for the e-campus to deserve a rating significantly above the passing band.

The above-made observation is very much in accord with what was argued earlier in this article: e-courses that are limited to knowledge provision cannot compete quantitatively (and, very often, qualitatively) with what is available in the entirety of the Internet. Knowing this, we can enumerate only two reasons for taking part in an e-course—instead of simply browsing the Web—when one is on a knowledge quest: 1) the course content, unlike general Internet resources, is pre-selected and structured by the tutor; or 2) the course gives tools for critical evaluation of the said general content. However, these two factors—online lectures/classes as helpful in the area of source availability/critical selection, and as self-study motivators and autonomy boosters—were rated quite low in the answers e-participants gave to the course usefulness question (around 25 % of 'yes' answers in both categories). There are two possible interpretations of these scores: either the evaluated e-courses are not helpful in fostering autonomy or critical selection of resources because their authors, determined by their previous educational experience, do not include these aspects of e-learning, perceiving them as unimportant; or the evaluated courses include autonomy-fostering elements but this is not seen as useful by students, whose attitudes are shaped by their previous, predominantly centralised schooling.

No matter which of the two interpretations above is adopted, each stemming from the preserved status quo of education as such, an important question which arises at this point is: Does the quantitative study offer a reliable answer to the question of how to write a good online TEFL course? Can we really stop at the conclusion that students do not expect more than merely satisfactory (3.0/3.5) e-learning amounting to revision-facilitation and class supplementing based on text-file handouts? These two questions are perfectly legitimate, especially if considered *vis à vis* the four arguments for learner-centring the e-lectures and e-classes under investigation: the aim of the course, which is training prospective teachers who need professional skills alongside a body of knowledge; the way adult learners learn best; the already mentioned limitations of online courses as regards pure knowledge provision as well as their potential in autonomy development; and the course author's beliefs and preferences as to teacher and learner roles.

All of this leads to another question, the one about the role of online courses in not as much catering to learner needs, potentially conditioned by their previous experience with traditional schooling, but rather in trend-setting, in which a fairly

innovative tool can be used to shape new attitudes to learning. The present article opts for the latter, trend-setting approach. However, if these new trends are to be introduced, and a truly high-standard learner-centred, skill-based online course is to be written, we still need a students' voice so that the created content and its presentation mode can be fine-tuned to the needs of the addressee. The solution that seems to carry the most promise in this respect is refocusing from the macro to the micro scale and involving student reviewers in the very process of material writing.

4 The Student Voice in the Practice of Online Course Writing: The Micro Perspective

As was mentioned before, the TEFL course was planned as consisting of two components: an e-lecture and e-class, both written in a learner-centred, rather than centralised, fashion. This resulted in the following design:

1) A lecture course, by definition more teacher-fronted, which was created based on the assumption which can be described as *the teacher gives content, but…* This implied a combination of the presentation of knowledge, followed by related skill-based questions and activities enabling teacher-student dialogue. Such lectures were prepared in one of the two presentation modes: (i) *Articulate Presenter*[4] slideshows (+voiceover), interspersed with quizzes to simulate comprehension check questions asked by the lecturer in a traditional face-to-face auditorium; and (ii) *Moodle Lesson*[5]: page-after-page organisation of material (each page with audio, video, quiz, essay or insert-link options in multiple combinations); all parts of each *Lesson* were password-protected to ensure chronological coverage of content (Part 1 → Part 2 → Part n → Part n + 1). In addition, lectures in both modes—*Articulate* and *Lesson*—included an introduction, in which topic objectives and content organisation were specified, as well as a student feedback-on-lecture section;
2) A fully interactive, task-based, skill-developing e-class, in which students were asked to complete assignments involving student-teacher, student-student and student-text interaction in individual as well as collaborative task modes requiring, for example: showing the understanding of the text on a TEFL-related issue; analysing and comparing two articles presenting opposing views on a TEFL-related issue; evaluating the usefulness of a TEFL-informed text in one's own teaching context; replicating a TEFL-related study; creating own materials based on a read TEFL-related text; and others.

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[4] An e-learning authoring tool enabling the conversion of ppt presentations into slideshows with elements of interactivity and voice-over narration.

[5] A Moodle-based presentation tool which allows for page-by-page presentation of content. Each page can contain: embedded audios and videos; pictures and photos; tables and graphs; different quiz options (multiple choice, true/false; short answer; essay; etc).

This two-module course was written, topic by topic, and subjected to student evaluation. Three reviewers were recruited: one male and two female, all of them students of the first year of the TEFL MA programme in the College of Foreign Languages in Częstochowa, each of them already holding an MA in one area of knowledge (Polish Studies, philosophy and mathematics). It is important to point out that the recruitment criteria included interest in online education, some expertise in individual learner differences (learning styles, learner autonomy, motivation, learning in adulthood) as well as the ability to think critically together with the courage to express one's opinions even if this meant questioning the authority of one's superior (the teacher, in this particular context). As for the evaluation procedure itself, the said three reviewers were offered unlimited tryout sessions in the course-in-progress, and asked to write down, diary-fashion, all their remarks concerning different aspects of both the form and content. During face-to-face meetings, which were held bi-weekly, all of these concerns were shared with the course author. The evaluation procedure, which lasted for the Spring term 2011, involved four such f-2-f sessions.

The comments as regards both the e-lecture and the e-class were generally positive. The main advantages described by the reviewers were the interactivity of the courses and ample choice of tasks as regards their type, mode and level of difficulty. However, a number of concerns referring to the following three aspects of the course were also expressed (samples are quoted below, for each of the three mentioned groups of noted problems):

1) The mode of presentation:

> *3# The choice of colour is unfortunate.*
> *5# The possibility of listening to you is great (pronunciation of difficult terms), but I'd like to be able to switch you off and ponder over the content.*
> *9# The quality of the recording is quite low. I don't mind myself, but I'm thinking college prestige…*

2) The content:

> *6# The lecture is way above my head; some clarification is needed.*
> *4# I don't like list-item slides with no comment. Either discuss them or drop them.*
> *2# Less slide text more voiceover comment, please.*

3) Student attitudes:

> *1# I hate the idea of password-protected lesson parts. I want to go back sometimes … and I want to have a choice. Have some trust in our common sense, pls.*
> *7# The idea of writing 10 essays out of which 2 will be evaluated by the course tutor is extremely demotivating.*
> *8# There should be more choice. The student should be able to manage the course, not just take whatever's served.*

As a result of the above-quoted critical comments, the following steps were taken to improve both the form and the content of the course:

i. the material was subject to polishing and clarification: most list-only slides were given a voiceover comment explaining the enumerated ideas, and some of them were deleted;

ii. *Moodle Lesson* with mp3 embedding was chosen over *Articulate Presenter*, as the former allows for voiceover-on-voiceover-off manipulation of the presentation mode, while with the latter the only option is watching the slideshow with the computer sound system on/off;

iii. teacher control was lessened: based on the assumption that fostering autonomy has to stem from encouraging autonomy, the password protection was removed from the lessons;

iv. mandatory essay writing was replaced by the student-made choice of 2 essays to be submitted.

In addition to the above-mentioned changes, based on the e-learning preferences delineated as a result of the micro-scale research, both courses were organised in a way that took into account the needs identified in the quantitative study (cf. Sect. 3) by:

v. giving ample opportunities for revisions (quizzes; collaboratively compiled course glossaries);

vi. ensuring multi-source supplementation of the lecture content (links to pre-selected resources available online); and

vii. giving easy access to handouts (a separate resource-only section in each topic).

5 Conclusions

In conclusion to both parts of the research—the macro- and micro-scale studies, it can be said that in material writing as such—and particularly in e-material development, where most of the content is (or should be) authored by the course writer—taking students' attitudes into consideration is necessary if one wants the course to be truly learner-centred. This, as was argued on numerous occasions throughout the article, is absolutely crucial in courses which, like TEFL training, are practical and skill-based by definition. In designing such a course based on students' attitudes, we definitely need to account for trends that are statistically significant. However, these trends should be both noted and critically examined. This means listening to the student voice and translating general guidelines into particular solutions. The latter can be done only if we narrow down the focus and pay attention to highly specific concerns expressed in relation to a particular course. Only a joined look, from the two combined perspectives, makes it possible not only to cater to student needs but to establish new trends in education and get immediate, personalised feedback as one ventures to do so. As a result of such a look in the case of the present research effort, it was possible to find the answer to

the question of what makes a good online course in the case of both lecture and class. Based on the insights into student attitudes gained from the two perspectives described in the article, the following characteristics of effective academic e-course design can be listed: a good balance between teacher control and learner autonomy; multi-source supplementation to lecture content; teacher-student and student-student interactivity; and easy access to handouts and revisions.

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The Use of Internet Resources in Developing Autonomy in Learning English Pronunciation: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract The main aim of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the importance of autonomy in language learning and teaching by addressing the issue of the development of autonomy in learning pronunciation by means of Internet resources among Polish senior high school learners. The data were collected by means of learners' logs, group and individual interviews, observations, evaluation sheets and open-ended questions included in a pronunciation autonomy questionnaire. They were subjected to qualitative analysis and, in some cases, the 'quantizing' technique was also involved, which allowed for the transformation of the qualitative data into quantitative data (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 42). The findings show that the use of Internet resources and the resultant independent work were not only welcomed by the experimental students but also contributed to a change in the way they learned English pronunciation and the development of certain behaviors characteristic of autonomous learning.

1 Introduction

The development of learner autonomy has become one of the most significant goals of foreign language education. The majority of theorists, researchers and methodologists have been stressing the need for making language learners capable of taking responsibility for their own learning (e.g. Benson 2001, 2007; Pawlak 2004, 2008; Little 2007). It has to be pointed out, however, that despite the fact that few Polish foreign language teachers would probably question the importance

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of learner autonomy, the reality of foreign language instruction in Polish schools is bound to lead to the conclusion that these beliefs only occasionally translate into teaching practice. It could be argued that such a state of affairs might be related to teachers' beliefs, preferences or experiences dating back to the time when they were learners themselves. This failure to apply the principles of autonomous learning may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of instruction, particularly in the case of skills and subsystems which learners have to practice a lot on their own, pronunciation being undoubtedly a good case in point. In view of such considerations, the present paper reports the findings of a research project which demonstrates how the use of Internet-based resources can contribute to enhancing learner independence in this area.

2 Computer Technology and the Development of Learner Autonomy

There are quite a few studies which have explored the impact of computer technology on the development of learner autonomy. A study conducted by Cervera et al. (2005), for example, aimed at investigating the extent to which university students were able to develop their independence during an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course delivered through the Internet. The researchers analyzed the specific actions students were able to undertake and paid special attention to those which were the most common. Cervera et al. used a series of course activities which strongly encouraged students to make decisions and take actions so as to manage their learning process. As regards the participants of the study, they came from a variety of universities and degree courses, and made up heterogeneous groups with different levels of English proficiency and interests. When it comes to the course design, it was not oriented towards a particular level, but instead, it aimed at fostering students' capacity for learning to learn. Thus, it was designed in such a way that the students themselves were able to choose the content and tasks they wished to perform. Moreover, the course allowed the participants to learn the target language in a flexible way so that each student could adapt the way of learning to his or her learning style. The data were collected from students' course activities and personal record sheets which, in turn, enabled the participants of the study to plan and keep track of their learning process. On the basis of the analysis of the results, the researchers concluded that the students demonstrated a variety of behaviors and expressed different views on and attitudes to language and learning as well as an interest in language learning and the Internet. Moreover, it was observed that the subjects were able to develop their own learning plans, assess materials critically, give advice to other students and collaborate to design learning tasks for other students. However, the authors also discovered that, in spite of the variety of strategies the students displayed, they still needed to be 'pushed' in order to demonstrate more autonomous behaviors and

they were not able to execute certain actions concerning the management of their learning or, on some occasions, they simply tried to comply with the teacher's requirements rather than provide answers to tasks.

Another study was conducted by Figura and Jarvis (2007), who examined the extent to which specific cognitive, social and metacognitive strategies were used by language students when working with computer-based materials in self-study contexts outside the language classroom in a self-access center. The participants of the study were non-native speakers of English aged 18 or above who attended an English for Academic Purposes course aimed to prepare students for academic study at British colleges and universities. As for the component of the course devoted to the development of independent language learning, it was designed to instruct students in maximizing language learning outside school. Thus, the participants were shown how to find materials in self-assess center classes and they were also assisted with general study skills such as reflecting on their learning, assessing their progress, making plans and setting goals for their future independent learning. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire, interviews and 'snap-shot' observations, and then subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The results of the study showed that the majority of the learners regarded computers as very useful or useful in language learning. Another important finding was related to the fact that most of the learners considered the computer to be a very useful tool for independent learning and appreciated the degree of control they experienced with the technology. Moreover, the subjects liked learning in their own way and at their own pace, while also valuing the opportunity to learn and have fun at the same time. As far as learning strategies are concerned, the subjects were mostly found to use cognitive strategies and apply metacognitive awareness in their use of computer-based materials. It should be noted, however, that the results of the study indicated that less than half of the learners used social strategies while studying the target language.

Another attempt to use modern technologies to promote learner autonomy was the research project conducted by Kruk (2009). This quasi-experimental study aimed at investigating the development of learner autonomy by means of Internet resources and its impact on grammar learning in comparison with traditional instruction. Forty-three Polish high school students participated in the experiment and two groups, experimental and control, were formed. The students in the experimental group had more freedom in studying English grammar in comparison with the learners in the control group who were taught in a traditional way. The results demonstrated that the experimental subjects outperformed their traditional counterparts. What is more, the roles of the teacher and the learners were also modified.

Finally, Kruk (2010) carried out another experimental study the purpose of which was to promote learner autonomy through the application of Internet resources. The study comprised two senior high school classes making up an experimental (N = 28) and control group (N = 18), each of which received a different type of instruction. The data were collected by means of learners' logs, group and individual interviews and the Internet English forum, and subjected to

qualitative analysis. The results showed that the use of Internet resources and independent work were not only welcomed by the experimental students but also contributed to a change in the way they learned English and the development of certain behaviors characteristic of autonomous learning.

As can be seen from this brief overview of studies investigating the implementation of computer technology with a view to developing learner autonomy, such a step is not only justified but also necessary if teachers want to promote an autonomous approach among their students. It should be kept in mind, however, that modern technology cannot and should not replace teachers whose role in foreign language instruction and the development of autonomy is crucial, since language learners, including those more proficient ones, might at some point need support or encouragement in their endeavors to learn the target language and become more independent. The study reported below represents yet another contribution to this important line of inquiry.

3 The Study

3.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to determine whether the use of Internet-based resources in teaching a selected pronunciation feature would result in the participants' greater independence in learning this target language subsystem. The targeted structure was the final '-ed' sound of the simple past tense of regular English verbs and the subjects were provided with access to the Internet and were given a considerable degree of freedom in working on this aspect of English pronunciation.

3.2 Participants

The participants were 15 Polish senior high school students. The curricular policy of the school provided the students with three 45 min English lessons a week. Approximately one week before the treatment, the students were requested to fill out a background questionnaire. The overall proficiency level of the learners was rather low, as indicated by the relatively low mean grade point average at the end of the previous school year, which amounted to 2.40 on a 0–6 scale. The analysis of the data obtained by means of a background questionnaire also revealed that the learners had been learning English for an average of 7.33 years. In addition, most of the students reported limited contact with the English language outside school and most of them mentioned watching films (9 or 60 %). It should also be noted that 3 (20 %) subjects attended private lessons, but they were not taught English pronunciation there. This situation was quite favorable in view of the fact that the

danger of the results being in some way contaminated by the out-of-school contact with English pronunciation was reduced to the minimum. When it comes to the pronunciation instruction the participants had received in junior high school, 4 or 26.66 % of the learners claimed that they had the opportunity to study English pronunciation in the form of repeating English words or phrases after the teacher or recordings.

3.3 Treatment

At the start of the treatment, the students were informed that the next four lessons would be devoted to the pronunciation practice of the final '-ed' sound of the simple past tense of regular English verbs. Each pronunciation session lasted approximately 25 min and the remainder of each lesson was devoted to working with regular classroom materials. Moreover, the students were notified of the teacher's English website (http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/∼anglik/), which included all the necessary information and activities. As a result, the participants gained access to the Internet and exercised more freedom in learning English pronunciation than was the case before, thereby being encouraged to try to "take control of their own learning" (Holec 1981, p. 3). For example, they could choose from a variety of online activities and decide how much time to spend on each. In addition, the subjects were encouraged to evaluate and reflect on their own learning. It has to be noted that the lessons were conducted in a computer classroom which was equipped with 15 multimedia desktop computers running the Linux Suse 11.0 operating system and the 6 MB broadband connection to the Internet.

As indicated above, the instructional materials were entirely based on Internet resources. During the lessons, the students were provided with the opportunity to watch short movie clips which explained how to pronounce the final '-ed' sound of the simple past tense of regular English verbs (e.g. http://www.youtube.com/user/evaeaston#p/c/13/_M7xIwAqy9I) and make notes. In addition, the learners were asked to read, listen to or watch online stories seeded with words containing the sound in question (e.g. http://evaeaston.com/t-d-Id-pr-lincoln1.html) and repeat these words. They were also provided with the opportunity to record their own pronunciation. Moreover, the students were requested to do online activities, most of which contained embedded audio files (e.g. http://www.elearnenglishlanguage.com/esl/grammar/simplepast-pronunciation.html) and perform online pronunciation quizzes with or without sound (e.g. http://eolf.univ-fcomte.fr/uploads/ressources/pronunciation/01_-ed_endings/01_ed.htm or http://www.english-zone.com/convo/pron-ed1.html). The aim of these activities was to provide further practice in the pronunciation of the '-ed' ending, with the resources allowing the students to check their own pronunciation of the targeted feature and providing them with immediate feedback.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments, Procedures and Analysis

The following data collection instruments were used: a background questionnaire, a pronunciation autonomy questionnaire, learners' logs, observations as well as group and individual interviews, with the caveat that only qualitative data are included in the present analysis. It should also be emphasized that all the data collection instruments were designed and presented to the students in Polish so as to avoid any potential misunderstandings.

When it comes to the pronunciation autonomy questionnaire, it was made up of two parts. The first part contained 30 items and was designed in the form of Likert-scale statements and the second part comprised nine open-ended questions. The questionnaire was administered in the first week and was followed by four 45 min lessons (PrePAQ). At the end of the treatment, the pronunciation autonomy questionnaire was filled out by the subjects again, thus performing the role of an immediate posttest (IPostPAQ). After that, traditional instruction was resumed. It has to be noted that careful attention was given not to teach the items that were covered during the treatment lessons, which would have unduly affected the results. Finally, the students completed the delayed pronunciation autonomy questionnaire, which can be regarded as a delayed posttest (DPostPAQ).

As far as the learners' logs (LL) are concerned, they were designed in such a way that they contained nine prompts in the form of open-ended questions, such as: "In a few words write about what you have done during the lesson", "What have you learned during the lesson?", "Write about what was the easiest thing(s) to learn. Explain why", etc. The subjects were also encouraged to self-assess their own learning and assign their own homework. The main purpose of the learners' log was to obtain information on the students' impressions and perceptions about pronunciation learning as "diaries can yield insights into the learning process that may be inaccessible from the researcher's perspective alone" (Gass and Mackey 2007, p. 48). In addition, the students were asked to complete the logs after each lesson and send them to the teacher by email.

Another way of gathering data were observations of the students' classroom performance. Since one of the researchers was the subjects' regular English teacher, the observation technique employed in this study could be described as participant observation, which occurs when the researcher immerses himself or herself into the setting (Gebhard and Oprandy 1999, p. 38). The aim of this observation was to provide additional descriptions of the students' behaviors without unduly affecting the events in which the subjects were engaged. The researcher simply observed and noted down everything that he found interesting.

The remaining data collection procedures included semi-structured group and individual interviews. Since the group interview (GI) format is "based on the collective experience of group brainstorming, that is, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to emerging issues and points" (Dörnyei 2007, p. 144), it was conducted first. It was the belief of the researchers that this interview would yield data that could be further explored in

individual interviews (II). Moreover, a semi-structured type of both interviews was also chosen deliberately since its open-ended format encourages the interviewees "to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner" (Dörnyei 2007, p. 136). Thus, the researchers made an attempt to get the students to describe their learning experiences and to comment on their perceptions of the lessons and activities. This was a form of introspection where the subjects were encouraged to examine their behaviors and thought processes as well as to provide a first person narrative of their experiences. The group interview preceded the individual interview and took place in the language classroom. As for the individual interview, it was held in a separate room and 6 randomly selected learners were asked to participate in it after school classes. Both interviews were conducted after the intervention. It should also be added that all the participants were informed that the interviews concerned the pronunciation lessons and the students were asked for permission to be recorded.

The data collected in these ways were subjected to qualitative analyses which were executed by means of the data analytical software NVivo v. 8. It has to be pointed out that the process of analysis of the qualitative data was similar in each case and involved some of the steps described by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 250–257). Thus, the procedure included four stages: (1) the pre-coding stage, (2) the initial coding stage, (3) the second-level coding stage and (4) the final coding stage. In the case of the open-ended questions of the pronunciation autonomy questionnaire the 'quantizing' technique was also involved, which allowed for the transformation of the qualitative data into quantitative data (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 42).

3.5 Results of the Study

3.5.1 Results of the Open-Ended Questions of the Pronunciation Autonomy Questionnaire

The aim of the pronunciation autonomy questionnaire (PAQ) was to measure the students' autonomy in learning the pronunciation of the '-ed' ending before and after intervention. As indicated above, the students' responses to the open-ended questions were subjected to the 'quantizing' technique, which involved transformation of the qualitative data into quantitative data in order to calculate the frequency of occurrence of items the students mentioned while providing their responses.

The analysis of the data obtained from the three questionnaires revealed the number of students who liked studying English pronunciation (Question 1) increased systematically and amounted to 10 (66.7 %), 14 (93.3 %) and 15 (100 %) for PrePAQ, IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ, respectively. Each time the learners pointed to the usefulness of good English pronunciation in life as well as its significance in communication. When it comes to the willingness to pronounce sounds like native speakers or to be able to pronounce words to be understood in

everyday situations (Question 2), the majority of the respondents always claimed that it was intelligibility that was their top priority (11 or 73.3 % for PrePAQ and IPostPAQ, and 10 or 66.7 % for DPostPAQ). It should be noted that the subjects who opted for native like pronunciation most frequently pointed to the fact that they would like to be understood better and have no problems with finding a good job.

The third question of the PAQ required the students to describe the differences between studying English pronunciation and the other skills and subsystems of the English language. The analysis of the data showed that each time almost all the students pointed to such differences (14 or 93.3 % for PrePAQ and 13 or 86.7 % for IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ). They stated that English pronunciation did not require learning any rules or learning by heart. Moreover, the respondents claimed that it was easier to acquire in comparison with reading or grammar. In addition, some of the students claimed that learning English pronunciation requires saying words out loud. As regards the learners' strong and weak points with respect to pronunciation, the analysis of their responses to Question 4 showed that, on each occasion, they most frequently mentioned the ease of learning (5 or 33.3 % for PrePAQ, IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ) and satisfactory pronunciation of simple words (4 or 26.7 % for PrePAQ, 6 or 40 % for IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ). As regards their weak points, before the experiment the students often pointed to problems with the pronunciation of new and "long and difficult words". When it comes to IPostPAQ, some subjects still mentioned such difficulties, but a few respondents stated that they had problems with the correct pronunciation of the '-ed' sound. The analysis of DPostPAQ also revealed that this time the students generally referred to problems with English pronunciation and the English language.

The fifth question pertained to the way in which the learners studied pronunciation after school. As the analysis showed, before the experiment got under way the subjects most frequently mentioned listening to English songs (7 or 46.7 %) and watching movies (6 or 40 %). In addition, some of them claimed that they only revised the school material (5 or 33.3 %) and only 5 learners (33.3 %) stated that they used the Internet. The situation changed immediately after the treatment, since the majority of the respondents mentioned using the Internet (13 or 86.7 %) and some pointed to listening to music (5 or 33.3 %). As for DPostPAQ, the ways in which the students studied pronunciation were again largely dominated by using the Internet (9 or 60 %), listening to music (8 or 53.3 %), but 7 (46.7 %) respondents also made a reference to watching movies. Such results might be viewed as quite promising if we consider the ways the learners studied English pronunciation after school before the treatment.

The next two questions required the participants to express their opinions on the teacher's role in pronunciation instruction (Question 6) as well as the role of the students in this process (Question 7). As far as the former is concerned, most learners stated that the teacher is responsible for correcting their errors (7 or 46.7 % for PrePAQ, 6 or 40 % for IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ). Moreover, before the experiment individual learners wanted the teacher to explain and show how to

pronounce words, provide materials and check their progress. It has to be pointed out that after the treatment (i.e. on IPostPAQ and DPostPAQ) the subjects still wanted the teacher to provide explanations and assess their performance. However, a few learners stated that the teacher should make it possible for them to study on their own (e.g. "(…) the teacher should provide tips and 'set us on the trail' but he or she should not explain everything (…)" or "(…) to direct us and to correct our pronunciation but he or she should not explain everything because it is better for a student if he or she understands it, since this is the best way to remember everything"). As regards the latter, each time some learners persistently stated that the role of the student is to just revise the school material. Moreover, individual learners claimed that students should listen to the teacher and say words out loud. It should be noted, however, that after the treatment the subjects claimed that they should study English pronunciation harder (6 or 40 % for IPostPAQ and 9 or 60 % for DPostPAQ). In addition, some students pointed to learning English pronunciation on their own (7 or 46.7 % for IPostPAQ and 8 or 53.3 % for DPostPAQ). Taken together, these findings indicate that, although the treatment proved to be effective for individual learners, on the whole, it did little to eradicate the traditional perceptions of the role of teachers and learners in pronunciation instruction.

Another question required the learners to state whether studying English pronunciation was difficult or easy. It turned out that the number of students who claimed that this task was easy increased over time (8 or 53.5 % for PrePAQ, 11 or 73.3 % for IPostPAQ and 12 or 80 % for DPostPAQ). In justification of their answers, the respondents claimed on each occasion that it was just easy and fast to learn and remember (e.g. "(…) fast to learn", "(…) some words are difficult but when I repeat them several times the problem disappears" or "It's the easiest thing to learn"). As the analysis showed, the students who said that English pronunciation was difficult usually mentioned problems with the pronunciation of more sophisticated and new words (e.g. "It's difficult to pronounce long words", "I don't know how to pronounce some words" or "(…) there are a lot of words that I haven't heard before and that's why I can't pronounce them correctly"). This appears to indicate that the intervention had a positive effect on how the respondents studied the final '-ed' ending, since the majority of them claimed that it was not difficult and this tendency kept increasing over time. However, the students' responses to the question were typically short and general, which, in turn, might testify to the fact that the learners had a vague idea of how to answer it.

The last question required the learners to provide examples of the most serious problems they encountered while studying English pronunciation. The problems identified before the intervention included the articulation of new and long words, reading whole sentences rather than separate words, or the influence of the German language. It has to be noted, however, that two students were quite specific and pointed to problems with the correct pronunciation of words which begin with the letter 'h' such as 'holidays', 'honest' or 'hour'. When it comes to IPostPAQ, some subjects still mentioned problems with the correct pronunciation of long or new words. In addition, 6 (40 %) students pointed to problems with the past tense '-ed'

ending. As for the problems mentioned on DPostPAQ, 5 (33.3 %) respondents still admitted to having difficulty in pronouncing the final '-ed' sound and some learners still pointed to problems with the pronunciation of new, long and difficult words.

3.5.2 The Results of the Learners' Logs and the Interviews

This section presents the analysis of the data which originated from the learners' logs and the group and individual interviews. As was expounded in more detail in Sect. 3.4., the data were subjected to qualitative analysis which was executed by means of the data analytical software NVivo v. 8. The following subsections will present categories and relevant extracts obtained from the qualitative analysis of different types of data.

Advantages and Disadvantages

What became apparent early on was that the learners perceived the Internet lessons and online activities as enjoyable and useful for learning English pronunciation. They liked the freedom of studying English pronunciation and frequently pointed to a variety of engaging exercises and the possibility of choosing interesting ones, and they also appreciated the opportunity to self-assess their own work by choosing appropriate options available on the web pages, which, in turn, might have resulted in better learning and ultimately contributed to their pronunciation improvement. The following excerpts illustrate some of these points[1]:

> During pronunciation lessons I liked working at the computer, listening to and repeating words (LL).
> I liked the movie clips, quizzes, the opportunity to check the answers and the quizzes with audio files (GI).
> I liked independent work because I could do the exercises I wanted to do (LL).
> I like the opportunity to choose from a variety of activities (LL).
> (…) I liked the exercises witch contained audio files (…) I clicked on words and I could hear the correct pronunciation of the words and I could repeat them (…) the exercises with sound were better (II).
> I liked the idea that I could check what I learned and what I had to work on more (LL).

From the outset of the treatment, the subjects started to appreciate working at their own pace and deciding how much time to devote to particular exercises, and they seemed to appreciate the new role of the teacher. It is quite a significant finding, since the class consisted of rather weak students, who were unmotivated and unwilling to take part in English lessons in general. The following three excerpts taken from the learners' logs exemplify this finding:

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[1] All the translations from Polish into English were done by the researchers.

> I enjoyed working on my own and no one made us do activities we didn't want to do but we could do one and do it carefully (LL).
> I like the fact that we can decide what exercises to do in lessons and if we do them thoroughly (…) the effects are visible (LL).
> The lesson was very interesting and everyone was working on their own and the teacher always could help us. I liked everything (LL).

The students also implied that the lessons and the activities actually enabled them to learn new words and improve the pronunciation of the final '-ed' ending, since they were motivated and could always find exercises appropriate to their level, which, in turn, reduced the amount of stress they experienced when practicing their pronunciation. This is evident in the following excerpts:

> (…) the lessons showed me how to pronounce words (GI).
> In my opinion it's easier to revise and learn much more (II).
> I learned how to pronounce the final '-ed' (LL).
> I mostly studied the pronunciation of the '-ed' ending in such verbs as asked, worked, looked (LL).

Despite the fact that the findings presented thus far are very positive and seem to testify to the appeal of the instruction, there are also such which ought to make us circumspect about taking for granted the benefits of the intervention. For example, the participants did not take to activities without audio files or the ones which required them to wait for audio files to be downloaded. In addition, some subjects pointed to technical problems and poor sound quality in the case of some exercises. The following extracts provide examples of these types of statements:

> The activities without sound were more difficult to do because I had to guess the pronunciation, read the words and match (…) (II).
> I didn't like the exercises which required us to download sound files. It was very annoying (…) (II).
> I didn't like the activities without sound because I didn't know how to say the words correctly (II).
> In some activities I couldn't hear the sound and I had problems with the recognizing the correct ending (LL).

Ordering

Some learners indicated that the way in which they performed the activities was not random. They often demonstrated prioritization skills by being selective of the tasks and first choosing the ones which they felt they were able to do. This is visible in the following comments:

> If the exercise was too difficult for me, I chose an easier one (GI).
> I chose the movies because in this way I could learn faster. When I can see a person who says words I can learn faster (GI).
> When I didn't know how to it I didn't do it and I moved on to another activity.
> Then I tried to do the previous exercise again and do it well (…) (II).

These findings can be partly accounted for by the fact that the students were able to recognize that they needed to organize their learning during the lessons more effectively in order to be successful. It can further be claimed that the intervention itself and the nature of such lessons to some extent modified the students' perceptions of the role of the teacher and learners, and enabled them to take control over their own learning. This stands in contrast to the way students typically work in other school lessons in which they often wait to be told exactly what to do and in what order.

Confidence

The analysis of the data yielded numerous examples of such phrases as: 'I know', 'I can', 'I have learned', 'I know how to pronounce...', which were used on a number of occasions. This may demonstrate that some subjects became more confident of their pronunciation of the final '-ed' sound. The following excerpts, taken from the individual interview conducted after the intervention, are examples of how the students manifested their self-confidence:

> (...) the lessons helped me for sure (...). Before I didn't know how to pronounce the '-ed' endings correctly but now I know it (...).
> (...) now I can distinguish the '-ed' ending (...) before I wasn't sure how to do it but now I understand it.

Organization

After each lesson the students were required to set their homework assignment themselves and provide the description of it in their logs. The analysis showed that the learners quite frequently focused on the repetition of the activities they had performed during lessons, although with the passing of time, they also tried to search the Internet for similar activities of this kind. This is evidenced by the following comments gleaned from the learners' logs:

> I'm going to revise the exercises I did at school.
> I'm going to do what I did in the lesson and try to record myself to see what mistakes I make.
> I want to search the Internet for some pronunciation exercises and practice.
> I'm going to do some online exercises and listen to the sound and repeat a lot.

Changes in Learning

There is evidence that the lessons became an impetus for a change in the way the learners studied English pronunciation, both at school and in their own time. They encouraged some learners to use the Internet independently for this purpose and search for websites devoted to pronunciation practice and activities. This is illustrated by the following comments:

> The best way to study is to do it on one's own (…) we know what we can do best (…) and to choose relevant activities (…). However, if we make pronunciation mistakes the teacher should correct them (…) (GI).
> I logged on and did some exercises. If I wasn't sure I used ling.pl where I could listen to the correct pronunciation of some words. Besides, I often use the Internet at home and when I come across a difficult word I always check it (…) (II).

The extracts below show that the treatment had a positive effect on the learners' approach to studying English pronunciation, since some of them realized that in order to make progress they had to get more engaged in this process. For example, some students reported trying to record their pronunciation with the purpose of detecting the mistakes they made. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

> (…) to record ourselves. [Did anyone try to do it at home?] Yes. [Was it OK?] Yes, it was OK. [Were you able to assess yourself?] I think so (GI).
> I try to record myself at home, however my microphone makes noise and the recording was poor (LL).

It should also be noted that the majority of the students liked the idea of having personal logs and completing them after each lesson. The students claimed that they encouraged them to revise the lessons and in this way spend more time studying English pronunciation. As one of them commented:

> I started to revise the school material more often at home thanks to the log (II).

"*I Learned*"

Almost all of the students felt that they had actually learned how to pronounce the final '-ed' sound of the simple past tense of regular English verbs. What is more, during the process of analyzing the data that originated from the learners' logs it was determined that most of the subjects had noticed progress themselves. Similar observations were made during the group and individual interviews where the learners claimed that they had improved their pronunciation of the targeted feature and, at the same time, had learned more English verbs. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the subjects referred to the progress they were making in rather general terms, with the exception of a few students who were able to supply specifics. The following extracts demonstrate how learners perceived their improvement:

> I learned how to pronounce English words (GI).
> I learned when to use the -'ed' endings and how to pronounce them (LL).
> After this lesson I can say correctly a lot of words without hesitation (LL).
> During the lesson I can pronounce such words as started, wanted, laughed, needed (LL).

Reflection

The analysis of the data revealed that the learners were able to reflect on their pronunciation learning and the progress they were making. It has to be noted,

however, that their comments seemed to be automatic rather than well thought-out. Nonetheless, they said that they should practice more at home and search for more pronunciation activities on the Internet, spend more time listening and repeating words and saying them out loud. In addition, the students were cognizant of the fact that the process would be much more efficient if they started to do more exercises and invested more effort in practicing the '-ed' ending. Moreover, they were aware of the need to be more focused on doing the different activities and to avoid distractions. This is visible in the following comments taken from the individual interviews and the learners' logs:

> (…) to practice more at home (…) I used some other pages which I found (…) (II).
> I want to repeat the verbs out loud more often because I think it helps (LL).
> I could pronounce the -ed ending better. I have to listen to and repeat more (LL).
> I could do more exercises (LL).
> Be better at saying the/t/and/d/sounds because I have some problems with it (…) (LL).
> To concentrate on the activities because sometimes I do the exercises too quickly and that's why I make simple mistakes which I shouldn't make (LL).

Self-Assessment

After each lesson the students were requested to evaluate their performance in class and to include relevant comments in their logs. The data showed that the majority of the learners were able to perform such self-evaluation, although quite a few entries were short and superficial (e.g. "I think it's OK"). It has to be noted, however, that there were a number of instances in which the students attempted to assess their pronunciation more precisely by, for example, considering their progress, preparation for the lessons and satisfaction. In some cases such self-assessment was also simply expressed in numbers, i.e. grades. The following excerpts from the students' logs illustrate these points:

> At the moment my pronunciation is quite satisfactory although I could study words and pronunciation harder.
> My pronunciation is better in comparison with the first lesson. I've made progress.
> The activity which I did the best was the one in which I had to write/t/,/d/or/Id/. My score was 17 out of 21. I think it's a good result.
> I think I learned a lot during this lesson. I learned the meaning of a lot of words.
> It's better than last time but I still have to work harder.

4 Conclusions

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, the learners perceived the implementation of computer technology in English classes as beneficial and they enjoyed the freedom they could exercise in studying pronunciation. They justified such opinions by frequently pointing to the variety of interesting online exercises

or the unconventional way of acquiring and practicing this target language sub-system. Moreover, they valued the opportunity to select the level of difficulty of online exercises, they appreciated the fact that they could work at their own pace and decide how much time to allot to the performance of specific activities. In addition, the students implied that the lessons had enabled them to actually learn English pronunciation because they were motivated and could always find tasks suited to their abilities, which contributed to a decrease in the amount of stress they experienced. Even though some lessons constituted a major challenge for at least several students, they did not give up but tried to overcome the problems they faced while learning the final '-ed' sound.

The results of the study also demonstrated that the students became more confident of their pronunciation learning and they developed the ability to plan their learning in this respect (e.g. they set a homework assignment on their own). It can further be claimed that, to some extent, the intervention itself and the nature of such 'virtual pronunciation lessons' modified the learners' views of their own roles and that of the teacher, thereby enabling them to take control over their learning. This stands in contrast to what transpires in learning school subjects where students are often told what to do or how to solve particular tasks. Another important finding was related to the fact that some subjects manifested prioritization skills and intentionally selected the tasks they were able to do first. Equally important is the fact that the students were able to reflect on their learning of the pronunciation of the final '-ed' sound and the progress they were making. Moreover, the majority of the participants showed that were able to perform such self-evaluation, and, although in many cases the comments were very short and sometimes simply expressed in grades, there were a number of instances in which the students were able to be more specific in the way they appraised their pronunciation development. Last but not least, the students would not have been able to develop their autonomy if they had not been provided with the opportunity to keep their logs. This is because this tool allowed them to reflect on their learning, plan their actions and engage in self-assessment. However, there were some areas in which the treatment did little to make the students more independent in their pronunciation learning, as is evident in the fact that some subjects continued to subscribe to traditional perceptions of the roles of teachers and learners in pronunciation instruction.

It is the belief of the authors that the main strengths of the present study are related to the involvement of an intact group of learners, the fact that the intervention took place during naturally occurring English lessons and reliance on methodological triangulation. Nonetheless, it also suffers from some weaknesses, such as the inclusion of a small number of participants or the need to complete the pronunciation autonomy questionnaire three times in a row, which may have resulted in boredom and discouraged the subjects from providing more elaborate responses. While the data obtained in the course of the study provided valuable insights into the role of the Internet in developing autonomy in learning foreign language pronunciation, more research is needed in this area, such that would

involve other learner groups, focus on other pronunciation features and perhaps also combine quantitative and qualitative procedures.

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Intercultural Teaching in the Polish Context

Paweł Sobkowiak

Abstract The aim of the paper is to justify the idea that in order to develop learners' capacity to use a foreign language (FL) efficiently in the global world, the long established goals of FL teaching must be reconsidered and a more open-ended intercultural (IC), process-oriented approach adopted. Thus, language training, apart from the traditional work on teaching the four skills, should focus on developing learners' IC competence and raising their awareness of difference and diversity among representatives of various cultures. Equally important is engaging learners in the process of decentering, acquiring desirable attitudes to otherness, fostering empathy, developing their ability to mediate and promoting tolerance. In the empirical part of the paper, the results of a quantitative study aimed at creating a profile of a high school FL learner in Poland and assessing whether and to what extent FL classroom in Poland is conducive to developing learners' IC competence is reported. The results demonstrate that IC teaching plays a marginal role in the Polish FL classroom.

1 Introduction

The importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an extremely relevant capacity for the 21st century has been well recognized, not only by individuals, but also by the educational sector, which recognizes that building students' ICC is a prerequisite for their competence in the global community. Bhawuk and Brislin (1992, p. 416) posit that to be effective in another culture "people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of

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respect for the people of other cultures in order to effectively bridge across cultural differences and commonalities". Hence, if students are to benefit from their international encounters, knowledge of culturally affected variables and the skills for dealing with otherness need to be incorporated into FL syllabuses.

This paper aims to discuss the nature of ICC, analyzing the various components which contribute to the ability to understand and relate to people from other countries. It also indicates the necessity of promoting awareness of difference and diversity in the FL classroom to help prevent and modify stereotypical views among students which often hinder communication among representatives of different cultures. In the empirical section, the article presents a profile of a high school FL learner in Poland and reports the results of a study which aimed to assess IC teaching in the Polish high school.

2 Communication Across Cultures

Communication is more than just an exchange of information and dispatch of messages—the focus on practicing the four skills in the classroom, which has dominated communicative language teaching in recent years, does not suffice for learners to be able to function in a multi-cultural world. There is a multifaceted link between the linguistic form and the interpretation of meaning; the components of vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, style, politeness and inference are shaped by socio-cultural practices to produce the language used. Similarly, social taboos, politics, religious traditions and values differ from country to country. Language signals to other people who we are and what group/s we belong to. It expresses culture (Kramsch 1998). Thus, failure in communication does not necessarily result from insufficient knowledge and inadequate skills in terms of linguistic competence.

Successful ICC depends on understanding that how and what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context, i.e. on the ability to decentre and take up the listener's or reader's perspective on their culture, anticipating and, where possible, resolving dysfunctions in communication and behavior. However, it has to be remembered that culture itself is dynamic, and any interaction is characterized by constant negotiation in the production of meanings. That is why teachers "should be aware of the danger of presenting 'a culture' as if it were unchanging over time or as if there were only one set of beliefs, meanings and behaviors in any given country" (Byram 1997, p. 39). Similarly, FL speakers should be aware of the constant need to compare, contrast and establish relationships between concepts in their own and the FL.

To survive in a multi-cultural environment, learners' educational starting point should be an exploration of the home culture so that they become aware of the fact that home culture determines their lifestyles and behaviors, informs their moral judgments, expectations and values, which, in turn, guide their interactions with others. If FL learners are to manage IC interaction effectively, they need to be

aware of the inherent norms of their own speech practices, the ways in which norms vary depending on situational factors and the ways in which speakers from other language backgrounds may have different expectations about language usage and communicative behavior. Such knowledge, indispensable for successful IC contacts, empowers people to understand the relativity of their own cultural group.

However, successful interaction is not assessed merely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange, but also by the degree to which one manages to establish and maintain relationships, which is also highly determined by culture, i.e. beliefs, behaviors and meanings through which people interact with one another. These differ across countries, may be incompatible and conflicting unless relationships are maintained through politeness. Therefore, learners should develop interpersonal skills that would help them negotiate mutually acceptable identities in cross-cultural interactions (Cupach and Imahori 1993).

3 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Although scholars have synthesized various understanding of ICC, the processes underpinning its individual acquisition, evaluation and placement are far from evident and invite further investigation. Scholars have conceptualized ICC from a variety of perspectives. A number of ICC definitions provided in literature limit it to personal skills and abilities, and emphasize the appropriateness and effectiveness of an individual's behavior and attitude[1] (Spitzberg 2000; Bennett and Bennett 2004; Martin and Nakayama 2004). Such a conceptualization, however, implies two risks by referring to the image of the native speaker. Firstly, it suggests that there exists a homogeneous native community, governed by a set of norms and conventions shared by all the members of the community.[2] Secondly, it considers the native speaker as the model of behavior, a view attacked especially by the proponents of English as a lingua franca, who claim that when English is used as an international language students are no longer expected to achieve the native speaker's competence in terms of linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge[3] (McKay 2002; Seidlhofer 2010).

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[1] ICC often appears in literature together with the term *intercultural sensitivity*, which is used to refer to the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences (Hammer et al. 2002, p. 422). Greater IC sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising ICC.

[2] This assumption is unjustifiable. For example, the white middle-class culture is perceived to be American culture, although there are many more ethnic groups in the American society, often referred to as 'a melting pot'. The culture of the Han group is often taught to students learning Chinese, although China is composed of 56 ethnic groups (Carbaugh 1996).

[3] This goal was not only completely unrealistic, but also meant abandoning one's native language in order to blend into another linguistic environment, separation from one's own culture and the acquisition of a native socio-cultural competence, a new socio-cultural identity (Kramsch 1998).

A definition of ICC focusing on attitudes indicates the necessity of developing in learners a more positive stance towards foreign cultures. This position, however, is based on the perception of culture as an object, with clear limits and comparable features, and ignores its dynamic and dialogic character. Alas, the cultural dimension can no longer be looked upon as a product, i.e. a static list of facts and behaviors of a specific, allegedly homogeneous, cultural group, to be reproduced and transmitted by the teacher and memorized by learners. Instead, in the current view of culture as a process, where one's own values are constantly called into question, more emphasis is laid on the promotion of respect for difference in general as well as on developing the skills of observing and interpreting, which will help learners cope with the cultural diversity of their IC interlocutors (Kramsch 2001; Risager 2007; Byram 2008).

According to Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), in the definitions of ICC not enough attention has been given to the emotional aspect, namely how people manage cross-cultural interactions, and to the processes they undergo while talking to foreigners. They warn against conceptualizing ICC as a set of skills and abilities as these may pertain to one context and not another, to one perceiver, but not another. Such oversimplified definitions ignore the role of thought processes, such as introspection, self-reflection and interpretation, and the processes of individual agency, i.e. how individuals transgress, remediate and negotiate rules in everyday communication (Carbaugh 1996). To fill this gap, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009, p. 7) defined ICC as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world".

Some definitions highlight the individual's psychological adjustments. Kim (2001, p. 259) states that ICC is "the overall internal capacity of an individual to manage key challenging features of IC communication, namely cultural differences and familiarity, intergroup posture and the accompanying experience of stress". In her opinion, developing ICC encompasses processes of acknowledging reluctance and fear, foregrounding and questioning stereotypes, monitoring feelings and emotions, working through confusion and grappling with the complexity of IC encounters.

Of particular importance is Byram's descriptive model of ICC (Byram 1997), which comprises *linguistic*, *sociolinguistic*, and *discourse* competence, and five separate *intercultural* components which individuals bring to the IC encounters, namely positive attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and/or interaction. It also encompasses political education and critical awareness—the ability to interpret, evaluate and negotiate, on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures, which may lead to some degree of acceptance of new ideas.

Byram (1997, pp. 32-47) realizes that to possess ICC means to see relationships between different cultures, both internal and external to a society, and be able to mediate, i.e. interpret each in terms of the other, either for oneself or for other people. Thus, FL teachers have a responsibility to develop in learners a critical awareness of the values and significance of cultural practices in one's own culture

and the other's. ICC has many dimensions and the provision of knowledge about different cultures or dominant non-verbal practices can only be an introductory phase of gaining it. It is important that learners develop a critical or analytical understanding of parts of their own and other cultures, consciousness of their own perspective, of the way in which one's thinking is culturally determined rather than believing that one's understanding and perspective is neutral. Learners should also possess the ability to gather knowledge about other cultures and the skills of empathy, and learn how to manage anxiety and adaptability (*attitudes* in Byram's model). Since knowledge and skills are interrelated, teachers and learners should practice and reflect upon cultural differences hidden in texts/events in the classroom.

4 Intercultural FL Teaching

According to Bennett (1986), the best way to acquire IC sensitivity and competence is by experience. The assumption which lies behind Bennett's model is that as one's experience of cultural differences becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in IC relations increases (Hammer et al. 2003, p. 423). Experience, however, is a function of how one structures events (Kelly 1963). Thus, the extent to which an event of cultural difference will be experienced is a function of how complex its structure is. Individuals who have gone through largely monocultural socialization have access only to their own cultural worldview, so they are unable to form and experience the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different. That is why they should attain the ability to put together (and thus experience) cultural differences in more complex ways in the classroom. This can be done by implementing experiential learning, i.e. engaging learners both intellectually and emotionally through active participation.[4]

Experiential learning entails providing learners with opportunities for concrete experience, e.g. through drama, the use of films and stories; reflective observation, e.g. through reflective essays and thought-provoking questions; abstract conceptualization, e.g. through theory construction and lecturing; and active experimentation, e.g. through fieldwork, projects and games (Kolb 1984, p. 42). Also the dialogical approach has to play a central position in the classroom, since knowledge is seen as constructed and reconstructed through interaction with one's social and cultural environment, including interaction with others. Reflective processes are of importance throughout the learning process, which is seen as a spiral progression from simple to more complex models rather than as a gradual linear

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[4] Scholars emphasize that the most valuable means for ICC development is facilitating continued relationship building with the cultural other. This can be achieved by IC encounters in the real world—only then can individuals shift their focus away from an external evaluation of the other to an inward contemplation of what is really going on (Holmes and O'Neill 2012).

progression from facts to understanding and analysis. Thus, a dialogical approach can create more common frames of reference for the educational experiences—through continued interaction around learners' expanding knowledge it is easier for the teacher to see what could be added, restricted or given new perspectives (Forsman 2010; Thompson 2011).

5 Intercultural Teaching in a Polish FL Classroom: A Research Study

5.1 Rationale and Aims

The impulse for the study came from a detailed analysis of the literature on intercultural learning and teaching done by the present author. ICC is presented there as the fifth skill to be acquired by learners in order to be able to function effectively as citizens of the world. Furthermore, as a Ministry of National Education reviewer of textbooks used in Polish schools, the author observed that IC components still play a marginal role in most textbooks. Hence, this has aroused the author's curiosity about whether IC is developed in FL classrooms in the Polish context.

The author wished to examine if and to what degree the assumptions of IC teaching are being implemented in Poland. The study was meant to answer the following questions:

1. Do FL lessons help learners develop ICC by being a source of IC experience?
2. Do teachers focus learners' attention on the relation between language and culture, as well as the importance of socio-cultural knowledge in international communication?
3. To what extent do FL classes help learners become aware of cultural differences? Do students learn appropriate strategies which will help them cope with IC encounters?
4. Are 'soft skills', namely an open and accepting attitude to otherness, which helps in managing cross-cultural interaction, developed in the classroom?
5. Are learners made aware that they themselves are the products of enculturation? Are they referred to Polish culture in the classroom or do they practice analyzing foreigners from the Polish culture perspective while looking at themselves through the eyes of foreigners?
6. Do textbooks that learners use and the practices of their teachers contribute to ICC development? To what extent?

The research also aimed at creating a profile of a high school learner of foreign languages in Poland and measuring to what degree IC elements were present in the FL classroom.

5.2 Participants

The research involved 338 high school students in Poznań, Poland, in the spring of 2011. Stratified, multiple stage sampling was used: 3 high schools were drawn, then 4 classes in each school. Finally, groups (strata) were established, according to sex. Of the 338 respondents, 48 % were men (n = 162) and 52 % were women (n = 176). The sample size fulfilled the sample requirement recommended by Nunnally (1994) of 300 respondents for scale testing.

5.3 The Method and Measurement Instruments

Two research instruments were used in the study: they were two paper-and-pencil questionnaires in Polish developed by the author. The first (Questionnaire A), consisting of 21 questions, 14 closed and 7 open-ended, gathered information about students and their FL education at school. The other (Questionnaire B), a 24-item questionnaire, asked the respondents for their opinions and assessed FL classroom teaching from an IC perspective. This questionnaire was constructed after a detailed analysis of comprehensive literature on IC teaching; it referred to the most important elements of IC teaching (see Appendix 1[5]). Scale construction guidelines were followed (DeVellis 1991). The students were asked to mark to what extent they agreed with the opinions concerning elements of IC teaching in their classroom. A 5-point Likert scale was used and the following response options were incorporated: 1—*strongly disagree*, 2—*disagree*, 3—*neutral*, 4—*agree*, 5—*strongly agree*. The participants were not supposed to consult each other while completing the questionnaires.

A pilot questionnaire was administered to a sample of 12 students to check clarity of instructions, item clarity, overall time taken to complete the questionnaire and balanced keying (to see if the respondents avoid using extreme response categories). A relatively equal number of extremely positive (5) and negative (1) responses in the sample proved that the scale had been chosen correctly. The length of time needed to complete both questionnaires ranged from 20 to 25 min.

Construct and content validity of the second questionnaire was established. A panel of two experts was asked to participate in the study and review the item pool for clarity, sentence structure and ambiguous meanings. This aided in establishing the relevance of the items to IC teaching, also providing the initial reliability and validity estimates (DeVellis 1991). Two experts, both PhD holders, were selected based on their demonstrated expertise within the IC field. They were asked to decide independently whether they felt that a particular item was important for

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[5] The first questionnaire is not presented in the appendix because its content is discussed in detail in the paper (Sect. 5.4). The second one has been included since it will enable the reader to relate the results of the study presented in Table 2 to a specific questionnaire item.

ICC development in the FL classroom. The criterion for incorporating items into the final version of the questionnaire was that each had to be accepted as important for IC teaching by both experts, who also provided comments on the item's clarity and conciseness. In the process, 6 items were eliminated from the pool.

In order to analyze the results and perform a reliability analysis, Microsoft Excel software was used to compute descriptive statistics. Internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was measured—the survey had Cronbach alpha coefficient of .84, and thus met the lower bound for internal consistency reliability (Crocker and Algina 1986).

5.4 Results and Discussion I (questionnaire A): Respondents' Profile as FL Users from the IC Perspective

The respondents were from 17 to 18 years of age, evenly split in the age categories. The majority of the informants began their FL education in elementary school, either in the first grade (67 %, n = 227) or in the fourth grade (21 %, n = 71). The remaining 12 % (n = 40) started learning a FL in junior high school. At the time of the study they had been learning a FL for 10, 7 or 4 years respectively; thus, it can be assumed that they had learned a FL for long enough to be aware that each new language introduced them into a new world.

The majority of the informants learned two FLs at school (68 %, n = 230), which is mandatory for high school students in Poland; 32 % (n = 108) learned three or more FLs. All sample learned English (100 %, n = 338). German was studied by 55 % (n = 187), French by 31 % (n = 104), Russian by 14 % (n = 47) and Spanish by 6 % (n = 19) of the respondents. The minority FLs were Italian, Dutch, Czech, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Korean and Mongolian. 85 % of the population surveyed (n = 286) had FL classes twice or three times a week, 15 % (n = 52) had an extended program, i.e. 5 or 6 h of instruction per week.

Most of the respondents had no experience of living abroad in another culture for a longer period of time (a year or longer) (98 %, n = 331). The 2 % (n = 7) who had such an experience had stayed abroad for a relatively short period of time, namely a year (n = 4) or two (n = 1). Only 2 respondents had stayed abroad longer, 1 for 8 and the other for 14 years. The countries of their residence were the USA (n = 3), Great Britain (n = 2), Germany and Korea. Thus, during their formative years the respondents lived primarily in Poland and constituted a homogenous group of a similar national, ethnic and cultural background. Consequently, the subjects did not have the opportunity to practice on a daily basis the attitude of openness and tolerance towards minorities, foreigners or otherness in contacts with their classmates, as it happens in multinational countries such as Great Britain or the USA.

When asked if a FL classroom was a source of IC experience for them, 58 % (n = 195) of the informants answered "yes", while 42 % (n = 143) "no". Those who considered a FL classroom a place where IC teaching was taking place were asked to tick the sources of their IC experience. Among the instruments used were course books (71 %, n = 101; 30 %),[6] teacher's lectures (58 %, n = 83; 25 %), books, press articles and films in a foreign language (56 %, n = 80; 24 %), discussing cultural differences (43 %, n = 61; 18 %), students' presentations on target language history, geography and various other aspects of culture (32 %, n = 46; 14 %), projects (19 %, n = 27; 8 %), discussions of current events (15 %, n = 22; 7 %), role-playing foreigners (4 %, n = 6; 2 %) and cultural portfolios (1 %, n = 2). Only three respondents (2 %) mentioned the Internet as a source of IC experience in the FL classroom. The data show that culture is taught in a very traditional way, and the methods and techniques which resort to learners' autonomy, such as ethnographic projects or tasks demanding Internet searches, are not used at all.

The respondents have contact with foreign languages, and presumably with foreign cultures outside the classroom. 77 % (n = 259) watch foreign TV channels, 63 % (n = 212) go abroad with their families, 41 % (n = 140) read literature in foreign languages. 48 % (n = 161) take private lessons, 34 % (n = 116) have foreign friends and keep in touch with them on a regular basis either by e-mail or Skype. 33 % (n = 111) read foreign language press, 31 % (n = 104) listen to foreign broadcasts on the radio, while 31 % (n = 104) search foreign sites on the Internet. 15 % (n = 52) participate in summer language camps. However, the present study did not aim to assess whether and to what extent such international experiences or self-study contribute to learners' ICC.

Scholars have claimed that building a relationship with the cultural other is the best means of fostering ICC. Byram (1997) calls it an "experience of fieldwork". In his opinion, visits abroad "particularly over a longer term, where learners are separated from other learners and teachers, and from their family and friends, provide them with the opportunity to develop attitudes which include ability to cope with different stages of adaptation, engagement with unfamiliar conventions of behavior and interaction, and an interest in other cultures which is not that of the tourist or business person" (1997, p. 65). For this reason, the respondents were asked about foreign exchange programs in their schools and sources of gaining ICC outside the classroom.

79 % respondents (n = 266) declared that the schools they attended or had attended before had student foreign exchange programs, whereas 21 % (n = 72) claimed that visits abroad were/had not been organized by their schools. Among the countries visited most often were Germany (49 %, n = 164), Sweden (42 %, n = 143), France (24 %, n = 81), Great Britain (9 %, n = 32) and Holland (8 %, n = 26). The range of countries listed by only a few respondents was much wider

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[6] The second of the parenthesized percentages refers to the proportion of the whole population surveyed (n = 338).

and included Spain, Italy, Austria, Russia, Belgium, Lithuania, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa, Canada and the USA. However, those exchange programs were not available to all the students. Only 34 % (n = 91) of the subpopulation of the students who attended schools with foreign exchange programs had participated in such a program (27 %, n = 91, of the whole population surveyed), whereas 66 % (n = 175) had not (73 %, n = 247, of the whole population surveyed).

Unfortunately, even those who did participate in school visits abroad did not benefit from them as much as they could have from the IC perspective, since the majority of their teachers (67 %, n = 61) did not prepare them for the contact with a foreign culture. The minority who did (33 %; n = 30) resorted to very traditional methods, mainly classroom lectures and discussions about the target culture and cultural differences (97 %, n = 29). Only 3 % (n = 1) assigned presentations and 7 % (n = 2) observational tasks to be performed during the stay abroad; such tasks would have allowed learners to play the role of an ethnographer, recommended by IC teaching experts (Roberts et al. 2001). Nor did the teachers summarize school visits abroad on return to school (70 %, n = 64). The minority who did (30 %, n = 27) organized in-class discussions (60 %, n = 16) and slide shows (30 %, n = 8), assigned special projects (11 %, n = 3) or written reports (11 %, n = 3), or asked students to post comments on a bulletin board (4 %, n = 1).

66 % of the respondents (n = 222) would like to take part in a foreign exchange program or repeat this experience; however the majority were not aware of the potential of such visits for developing ICC. The reasons given in response to the question why they would like to participate in school visits abroad were the following: to practice the language (61 %, n = 135) or test their language skills (44 %, n = 98), to meet new friends (41 %, n = 90), or to experience something new (16 %, n = 35). Very few respondents mentioned travelling (1 %, n = 2) or gaining knowledge (1 %, n = 2). Only 13 % (n = 29) mentioned the opportunity to get acquainted with a new culture. Obviously, the school foreign exchange programs embrace only the minority of student population, and those who go abroad treat the experience as a sightseeing trip and a test of their linguistic abilities. The limitless potential of such visits for fostering ICC is thus not properly exploited.

5.5 Results and Discussions II (Questionnaire B): IC Elements in a Polish FL Classroom

As has already been mentioned, the instrument used to assess IC teaching was a 24-item questionnaire. The respondents were asked to grade from 1 to 5 the questionnaire items. The findings are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below. The 0.05 level of significance was set for all the results; thus the confidence level was 95 % ($p = .95$).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for all the 24 items of the questionnaire

Parameter	Results
Mean	2.78
Standard deviation	1.28
Coefficient of variation (in %)	46.04
Mode	3.00
Median	3.00
Skewness	0.12
Kurtosis	−1.04

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for each questionnaire item

Parameter	Item							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mean	2.99	3.13	3.23	2.62	2.99	2.86	2.48	2.71
SD	1.21	1.22	1.11	1.11	1.22	1.16	1.09	1.28
CV (%)	40.46	39.09	34.42	42.56	40.86	40.59	43.84	47.12
Mode	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Median	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Skewness	−0.154	−0.169	−0.466	0.216	−0.154	−0.024	0.291	0.116
Kurtosis	−0.910	−0.915	−0.489	−0.698	−0.926	−0.828	−0.638	−1.090
Parameter	Item							
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Mean	2.55	2.95	2.05	2.04	2.51	3.52	2.58	3.86
SD	1.20	1.19	1.12	1.04	1.17	1.16	1.16	1.18
CV (%)	46.85	40.24	54.62	51.09	46.77	33.03	44.90	30.67
Mode	3	3	1	1	3	4	3	5
Median	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	4
Skewness	0.353	−0.036	0.818	0.721	0.263	−0.555	0.186	−0.853
Kurtosis	−0.724	−0.840	−0.270	−0.223	−0.818	0.400	−0.835	−0.127
Parameter	Item							
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Mean	3.03	2.19	2.16	2.46	2.52	2.61	2.69	4.05
SD	1.22	1.11	1.08	1.31	1.27	1.16	1.23	1.19
CV (%)	40.29	50.63	49.85	53.16	50.44	44.47	45.76	29.49
Mode	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	5
Median	3	2	2	2	2.5	3	3	4
Skewness	−0.067	0.605	0.559	0.427	0.374	0.192	0.203	1.207
Kurtosis	−0.963	−0.460	−0.567	−0.965	−0.874	−0.784	−0.909	0.537

The results (M = 2.78) reveal that, in the respondents' opinion, IC teaching in Poland plays a marginal role in the classroom (Research question 1). The informants' grades for separate questionnaire items ranged from 2.04 (item 12) to 4.05 (item 24). Standard deviations for the majority of the questions were high, which indicates small concentration of the results around the mean value; rather, the

results are spread (dispersion, which is measured by coefficient of variation, is higher than 30 % and in all cases and amounts mostly to over 40 % (14 items) or even 50 % (5 items).

The results show a considerable diversity of the respondents' opinions. There is also a wide scattering of the mode in the sample—as many as 6 questionnaire items scored 1 and only one item scored 5. The dominant score was 3, as it was achieved by 13 items. This might mean that IC teaching differs between schools and teachers, and that in the classroom the vast majority of learners are introduced only to some aspects of IC teaching. All the variables were found to be asymmetrical, not normally distributed (all the 24 questionnaire items have negative kurtosis, skewness not near zero). For the 10 questions which had negative skewness, the majority of the results were above the mean.

The highest scores were given to Questions 14, 16 and 24, but only the findings for Item 24 were absolutely positive—a large number of the respondents agreed that traveling abroad and foreign school exchanges have a strong influence on their attitudes and behaviors towards representatives of foreign countries. The mean here (M = 4.05) is 1.27 higher than for all the 24 questionnaire items (2.78). Furthermore, a great number of informants attached the highest value of the rating scale (5) to this item. The coefficient of variation is below 30 %, which indicates a large concentration of the results around the mean—most of the respondents assigned a high value to this item.

A large number of informants admitted that their teachers warned them against stereotyping foreign cultures and foreigners when meeting them (Item 16, the highest value of the rating scale (5) dominated in students' responses)—the mean (M = 3.86) is 1.08 higher than the average for all the questionnaire items (2.78). In the respondents' opinions, FL classes prepare them to a moderate degree for avoiding premature assessment of foreigners' attitudes and behaviors (Item 14, M = 3.52).

A vast majority of the respondents were neutral about the second research question (Items 1–5, the means from 2.62 to 3.23) concerning the attention learners pay in the classroom to the relationship between language and culture, which implies that not much is done in the FL classroom in Poland to help learners realize the cultural connotations of language and the fact that not knowing the foreign culture impedes their ability to communicate. Similarly, FL classes do not contribute much to learners' knowledge of the target and foreign culture/s.

In the informants' opinion, FL classes do not raise their awareness of cultural differences (Research question 3). The scores for this part of the questionnaire (Items 6–9) ranged from 2.48 (Item 7) to 2.86 (Item 6). A large number of the respondents claimed that they neither develop the skills that would help them communicate effectively with representatives of the foreign cultures (Item 8), nor practice establishing and maintaining contacts with foreigners (Item 9).

The Polish high school does not prepare learners for managing cross-cultural interactions (Research question 4). The study revealed that developing learners' 'soft skills' is completely ignored. The scores of this part of the questionnaire were the lowest and very diversified, as they ranged from 2.04 to 3.52. A vast majority

of the subjects declared that they were not taught how to avoid assessing a situation or a phenomenon in an emotionally-driven way (Item 12, M = 2.04) or how to keep negative emotions under control (Item 11, M = 2.05). Furthermore, both items had the lowest mode on the rating scale (1) and a low value of the median (2).

The majority of the informants were either neutral or negative about Research question 5 concerning building learners' awareness of being a product of enculturation. There was a considerable discrepancy in the results obtained, with the scores in this part of the questionnaire ranging from 2.16 (Item 19) to 3.86 (Item 16). The mode value for four of the items was the lowest (1), which means that half of the respondents expressed strong disagreement. Surprisingly, the respondents thought that the FL class did not help them understand their own culture and identity better (Item 19, M = 2.16 and the lowest mode on the scale (1) and a low median (2)). The majority were neutral when asked if they compared in class a spectrum of various foreign cultures with their own (Item 17, M = 3.03).

Both textbooks used in the classroom (Item 22) and FL teachers (Item 23) were assessed by the informants relatively low in the IC perspective (Research question 6)—the mean values were 2.61 and 2.69, respectively. However, the coefficient of variation for both items was high (over 40 %), which indicates a considerable diversity of the responses, which might mean that there are schools where IC teaching is implemented by teachers with the use of the textbooks. Furthermore, some teachers might teach FLs interculturally.

To offer a broader picture of IC teaching in the Polish FL classroom, the study also aimed to establish what factors, if any, determined the respondents' assessment. The following seven factors were considered to find out whether they differentiated the questionnaire results: gender, the length of FL education, the number of FLs learned, language proficiency, intensity of FL instruction, participation in a school exchange program and experience of living abroad. U- tests were run on the first six of the subpopulations and t test on the last.[7] No significant differences were found on any of the seven measures ($U = 1.64$; $p < .05$). However, there were significant differences in a few separate items in the subpopulations determined by gender (3 items), the length of FL education (1 item), intensity of FL instruction (12 items) and participation in a school exchange program (2 items) (see Appendix 2).

Some limitations of the present study should be addressed in additional research. Firstly, the quantitative investigation was limited due to the subjectivity of the respondents' assessment. Secondly, the study examined only the opinions of learners, and teachers should be surveyed in a separate, qualitative study involving lesson observations and interviews.

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[7] The critical values are 1.64 and −1.64, respectively.

6 Concluding Remarks

If school education is expected to produce wise, open-minded graduates capable of critical thinking and forming their opinions about the multicultural, complex world, it should provide greater opportunity for learners to immerse not only in the language, but also in its culture. Learners should be shown that culture is not monolithic and that IC dialogue leads to new awareness which consists of many truths and opinions the representatives of different cultures share. FL classes should help learners identify themselves with their own culture and provide them with the opportunity to compare it to what might seem strange, foreign and different. Consequently, mutual learning, instead of simply transferring declarative knowledge should be at the heart of IC teaching, complemented by IC mediation. By developing the skills of interpreting, relating, discovery and interaction, learners should be taught how to interpret/understand language and non-verbal signals in their own and others' behavior. Equally important are openness to otherness, modification of stereotypical views, elimination of prejudices and promotion of tolerance. The present research has demonstrated that IC teaching in the Polish educational context plays a minor role and much needs to be done to implement multi-dimensional IC teaching in the FL classroom in Poland.

A.1 Appendix 1

A.1.1 Intercultural Education in a FL Classroom in Poland

A number of statements which are used to describe FL classroom from the IC perspective are given below. Read each statement and indicate by circling the right number how this particular comment refers to your FL classes. Use the following rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

1. Thanks to FL classes I know that both language and body language have cultural connotations, e.g. people in different parts of the world differ in their perception of time, the distance kept by interlocutors during a conversation or the use of gestures.
2. FL education has made me aware that lack of knowledge of cultures impedes our abilities to communicate with their representatives and can lead to a wide range of communicative misunderstandings.
3. FL classes contribute to my better understanding of the TL culture/s.

4. FL classes broaden my knowledge of various cultures, characteristic of the people living all over the world, not only in the TL culture.
5. FL classes provide me with the information not only about history, geography, literature or art of the TL culture/s, but also about everyday habits of the inhabitants.
6. Thanks to FL education I know that different societies differ from each other in the systems of values or attitudes that prevail there.
7. FL education is conducive to reflections on cultural differences and development of observational and analytical skills.
8. In FL classroom we develop skills which help us communicate effectively with speakers who originate from various cultures. For example, we do exercises or tasks which require adopting linguistic and paralinguistic behavior appropriately to the situation.
9. FL teaching is integrated with establishing and maintaining contacts with foreigners.
10. FL classes develop in us openness and tolerance towards different nations and cultures, promote positive attitudes towards them and teach us perceive the world from different perspectives.
11. FL classes have taught me to keep under control my negative reactions, such as anger or fury towards representatives of the cultures distant from mine.
12. In FL classroom I have learned to avoid assessing a situation or a phenomenon impulsively or emotionally-driven.
13. FL education has helped me develop empathy towards people who live in different countries or originate from different cultural regions.
14. When I compare foreign cultures or behavior of foreigners with my own I try not to assess them.
15. FL classes have taught me to disagree with the opinions or attitudes of the other people in such a way that does not provoke conflicts or excludes cooperation with them.
16. FL classroom does not contribute to strengthening stereotypes and prejudices among us towards foreigner cultures, e.g. Scots are mean.
17. In FL classroom we often compare foreign cultures with the Polish one.
18. FL classes help us reflect on our own values and beliefs.
19. FL classes help us understand better our own identity and native culture.
20. FL education contributes to reducing our ethnocentrism.
21. Contacts with other cultures in foreign language classroom help us improve our self-assessment as Poles—we do not have an inferiority complex toward representatives of other cultures because we realize that Poles have their own valuable contribution to the world's cultural heritage.
22. FL textbooks which we have used in the classroom so far have prepared us well to function in a multi-cultural world. Among others, they had a separate module devoted to developing ICC.

23. My FLteachers are/were very effective IC mediators—they make/made us aware that we live in a multi-cultural world and prepare/prepared us well to interact with foreigners.
24. Visits abroad (school exchange programs included) have a positive influence on my attitude and behavior towards foreign cultures and their representatives.

A.2 Appendix 2

Item	U statistics (t-test)[a] for the differences between mean results in the subpopulations determined by:						
	Gender	The length of FL education	The number of FLs learned	Language proficiency	Intensity of FL instruction	Participating in a foreign exchange program	Having experience of living abroad
1	−0.3795	−0.9433	−1.1153	−0.7398	−2.7771	0.6391	0.2169
2	0.2249	0.7012	−1.2124	−0.7941	−2.1978	0.2118	0.0765
3	−1.5733	−0.1708	−1.2229	−0.8189	−2.4645	−1.7695	−0.6172
4	−1.1525	0.4012	0.1396	0.0920	−0.4395	0.2088	0.0692
5	−1.6638	−0.5521	−0.0266	−0.0176	−2.7139	−0.6744	−0.2267
6	−0.6360	0.5224	0.3994	0.2621	−2.2484	1.0363	0.3435
7	−1.5198	−0.4283	−0.7347	−0.4873	−1.8748	−0.1492	−0.0484
8	−1.0089	1.0740	−0.3426	−0.2259	−0.0586	−0.4272	−0.1382
9	−0.2296	−0.1384	−0.1580	−0.1042	−1.8408	−0.9659	−0.3213
10	−1.1624	1.0998	0.1720	0.1133	−1.4144	1.0650	0.3430
11	−1.7973	0.1563	−0.3124	−0.2044	−0.4171	−0.8565	−0.2775
12	−1.4107	0.3618	1.0684	0.7081	−1.2027	0.5238	0.1874
13	0.3125	1.2140	−0.7841	−0.5189	−1.9975	0.1165	0.0390
14	0.8697	−1.2613	−0.9278	−0.6154	−0.2085	−0.8379	−0.2935
15	−0.9526	0.8695	−0.7956	−0.5297	−1.7727	0.1545	0.0494
16	0.6949	0.3615	1.1769	0.7749	1.1645	−0.8278	−0.2917
17	−0.3767	1.3582	0.2092	0.1403	−1.7833	−1.3933	−0.4535
18	−0.2483	1.5526	0.7389	0.5029	−0.9162	0.4503	0.1470
19	0.0855	−0.2950	0.4434	0.2998	−1.6589	0.0440	0.0135
20	−0.7694	2.3394	0.4859	0.3230	0.5105	1.4181	0.4595
21	−2.0228	−0.0266	−0.0216	−0.0144	0.6612	0.1328	0.0404
22	−1.5121	−0.2367	−1.0464	−0.6795	−1.8884	−1.6546	−0.5387
23	−1.1943	−0.8844	1.0351	0.7035	−0.1966	0.4255	0.1449
24	4.2533	0.1335	−3.0990	−2.1818	−2.5470	5.0995	1.3050
Total	−0.5481	0.2895	−0.2441	−0.1621	−1.2188	0.0498	0.0164

a For the first six factors, U statistics were used, for the last one t test because of the small number of the subpopulation of the students who had experience of living abroad (n = 7).

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Getting Closer to Native Speaker Competence: How Psycholinguistic Experiments Can Enrich Language Learning and Teaching

Mirja Gruhn and Nina Reshöft

Abstract In the foreign language classroom, various exercises are carried out to bring students closer to native speaker competence. In order to avoid interference mistakes, traditional language teaching strongly focuses on lexical and grammatical phenomena. By contrast, conceptual transfer (Jarvis 1998) has received little attention in foreign language teaching, although experimental research has shown that learners have a strong tendency to transfer the habitual conceptualization patterns of their native language to their L2 (Jarvis 1998; Stutterheim and Nüse 2003; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008). In order to sensitize L2 learners to different conceptualization patterns and to promote their language awareness, we argue for an integration of psycholinguistic experiments into the foreign language classroom. In this paper we will present the results from a school project in Germany in order to show how psycholinguistic experiments can be methodologically integrated into foreign language teaching. By reducing experiments to the core and adapting them to classroom use, students learn new ways of thinking about language. The procedure raises metalinguistic awareness and improves students' skills through learning about specific contrasts between languages. Knowledge about language-specific conceptualization patterns leads to the awareness that competent speakers of a foreign language, on the one hand, are able to produce grammatically correct utterances, which, on the other hand, often differ from native speakers' utterances with regard to preferences reflected by the conceptualization patterns.

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1 Introduction

During the past fifty years, various approaches dealing with foreign language instruction have addressed the question of how to support learners in their language acquisition process. These approaches range from structural approaches (Brooks 1960; Rivers 1964), through communicative approaches (Littlewood 1981), to 'alternative' teaching methods such as the Silent Way (Gattegno 1972) or the Total Physical Response (Asher 1969). In the past decade, foreign language research has been focusing on intercultural communication and transfer of linguistic knowledge across languages (e.g. Byram et al. 2001; Hufeisen and Aronin 2009).

More recently, experimental studies carried out in this field have shown that cross-linguistic knowledge promotes students' acquisition of metalinguistic awareness because it can help them understand the relativity of language (Cook 1995; De Angelis and Selinker 2001). Cazden (1974, p. 29) formulated the first definition of metalinguistic awareness as follows:

> the ability to make language forms opaque and attend to them in and for themselves. [Metalinguistic awareness] is a special kind of language performance, one which makes special cognitive demands, and seems to be less easily and less universally acquired than the language performances of speaking and listening.

A more recent definition proposed by Mora (2009) states that metalinguistic awareness "is (…) an awareness of bringing into explicit consciousness of linguistic form and structure in order to consider how they relate to and produce the underlying meaning of utterances". This perspective shows that the aim of language education is no longer seen as simply to master one or more foreign languages in isolation. It is rather to develop a linguistic repertory including all linguistic abilities.

In line with these findings, the Didactic of Multilingualism (Meissner 2004) and EuroCom (Klein 2004) aim at fostering transfer between closely related languages, e.g. from Spanish to French (Blanche-Benveniste et al. 1997; Klein 2004). However, neither of these methods takes into account the complete range of knowledge that students have about language. They merely focus on structural or lexical transfer, while vital transfer of language concepts is largely ignored. Furthermore, these approaches are based on the assumption that students start school with similar linguistic backgrounds and learn foreign languages later on, one after another. This perspective on 'step-by-step' language acquisition and teaching is only gradually changing, and language teaching that integrates state curriculum requirements in terms of metalinguistic awareness is still an exception. However, the relevance of metalinguistic competence is mentioned in German teaching curricula, and the importance of plurilingualism is also emphasized in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001, p. 5):

> From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve mastery of one or two, or even three languages, each

> taken in isolation, with the ideal native speaker as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.

Although teachers can learn neither every language spoken by their students, nor all foreign languages taught at school, they can still teach students *about* language. Therefore, teachers should be sensitized to the importance of metalinguistic awareness, as is suggested in the German teaching curricula.

However, classroom exams are primarily based on testing the correct use of linguistic structures. In order to prepare students for these types of exercises, language instruction has traditionally focused more on form than on function. Similarities between the mother tongue and the target language allowed teachers to make predictions about positive or negative language transfer; similarities are generally said to help language learners in their acquisition process, whereas the converse is argued for differences between the L1 and the L2 (Hecht and Green 1993; Grzega 2005). Therefore, grammar books usually emphasize structural differences and provide exercises to practice language-specific structures (Parkes 2001). Nevertheless, various studies have provided counterevidence for these teaching methods (Diehl 2000; Riemer 2001). In many cases, the nature of these differences cannot be accurately assigned to lexical or grammatical errors. Rather, even advanced learners draw upon their interlanguage systems and often produce non-native-like utterances (Selinker 1972). In order to support students in their acquisition process and help them get closer to native speaker competence, foreign language teachers must be familiar with the fact that even (written and oral) utterances produced by very advanced learners often differ from those produced by native speakers of the target language.

In this paper, we want to show how such non-native-like utterances relate to conceptual differences. We propose that an integration of psycholinguistic experiments into the foreign language classroom can help learners to take an important step towards native speaker competence.

2 Thinking for Speaking and Conceptual Transfer

The influence that one language has on another is generally referred to as *linguistic transfer*. Odlin (1989, p. 27) defines *transfer* as "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired". This very broad definition encompasses not only similarities and differences, but also any language acquired by the learner, including the mother tongue and any other language acquired after the L1. The notion of transfer is closely related to the *thinking for speaking hypothesis* (Slobin 1991) as well as the *conceptual transfer hypothesis* (Jarvis 1998; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008; Jarvis 2011), which are described in what follows.

2.1 Thinking for Speaking

The *thinking for speaking hypothesis* (Slobin 1991, p. 7) postulates that in the process of speaking, "a special kind of thinking is called into play, *on-line*" (emphasis original). Slobin (1996, p. 71) refers to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf 1956a, b) and distinguishes *thought* from *thinking* and *language* from *speaking*. He emphasizes that thinking is carried out in a particular way during speaking and that when speakers construct utterances in discourse they adapt their thoughts to the patterns available in their languages (Slobin 1991). He later extended the hypothesis to L2 acquisition, claiming that each native language has trained its speakers to pay different kinds of attention to events and experiences when talking about them. This training is carried out in childhood and is exceptionally resistant to restructuring in adult L2 acquisition (Slobin 1996, p. 89).

Languages have preferences for selecting and structuring information about several concepts. Research on language and thought has shown that speakers of different languages systematically differ in their conceptualization of time, space and motion, and refer to the same events in different ways according to the preferred grammaticalization patterns of their mother tongues (e.g. Berman and Slobin 1994; Boroditsky 2001). Furthermore, information selection and information structure can have an impact on language acquisition. For example, children acquiring English as a first language need to acquire the progressive form as a grammatical marker as well as capture the idea of ongoingness. The progressive form is acquired very early in childhood; Tomasello (1992) has shown that it is the first grammatical marker English-speaking children acquire. Thus, language-specific conceptualization patterns develop along with the acquisition of grammatical structures in childhood. Consequently, the adult speaker, the 'conceptualizer', is already ''tuned' to the specific language by drawing on this knowledge before the formulator is addressed (Stutterheim and Nüse 2003, p. 877). Berman and Slobin (1994) showed that English-speaking children preferred the use the progressive form over simple forms in a story telling task. By contrast, children acquiring German as a first language do not acquire a grammatical feature to mark ongoingness—instead, ongoingness is marked lexically. Klampfer (2008) claims that the first explicit morphological marker in German relates to the perfect tense (e.g. 'er ist gelaufen'), which is mainly used in oral language and therefore has high input frequency. Furthermore, it is the form which is used most frequently in film retellings of 10-year-old children, as compared to the simple past (e.g. 'er lief') (Halm 2010).

These findings underline the interplay between grammaticized concepts and information selection (Carroll and Lambert 2006, p. 55; cf. also Talmy 1988; Slobin 1991, 1996). Furthermore, they emphasize the challenges that foreign language learners are faced with as they might not be aware of these differences and "may fail to recognize the role that grammaticized means of the target language play in shaping information structure" (Carroll and Lambert 2006, p. 55).

2.2 Conceptual Transfer

Conceptual transfer, which is as a special kind of *linguistic transfer*, refers to the transfer of concepts. In one of its early definitions, *conceptual transfer* is described as follows: "Concepts underlying words in L1 are transferred to the L2 and mapped onto new linguistic labels, regardless of the differences in the semantic boundaries of corresponding words" (Ijaz 1986, p. 405). At that time, the term was used informally, denoting that foreign language learners often refer to the same objects and events in conceptually different ways that are most often specific to their language backgrounds. Through the works of Pavlenko (1999) and Jarvis (1998), *conceptual transfer* became a technical term "for referring to research on crosslinguistic influence that is grounded in theories and empirical findings on the nature of conceptual representations within the human mind and on how these are accessed and processed during language comprehension and production" (Jarvis 2007, p. 44).

The notion of conceptual transfer is subsumed under the *conceptual transfer hypothesis* (Jarvis 1998; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008; Jarvis 2011), which postulates that "certain instances of crosslinguistic influence in a person's use of one language originate from the conceptual knowledge and patterns of thought that the person has acquired as a speaker of another language". (Jarvis 2007, p. 44).[1]

The *conceptual transfer hypothesis* claims that languages with a similar set of grammaticized means show similar patterns of information selection and information structure for the same kind of task, whereas different grammatical structures result in different information structure choice (Carroll and Lambert 2006, p. 55):

> The posited relation between grammaticized means and information structures enables formulation of testable hypotheses once languages have been analyzed for relevant structural similarities and contrasts. (…) Analyses of the contrasts in the selection, ordering, coding, and linking of information across different domains of reference show that information structure is language-dependent; that is, it correlates with the specific system of grammaticized means in the language. Concepts that are mapped into grammatical form in one language are coded lexically in another.

Concept-based approaches to SLA research have shown that the concepts and patterns of thought acquired through one language are likely to be transferred to a second or foreign language. There has been a great body of research into concepts and conceptualization, but, according to Jarvis (2007), only Lakoff (1987), Levelt (1989), and Stutterheim and Klein (1987) brought it to the attention of researchers in the fields of SLA and bilingualism. For example, Stutterheim and Klein (1987) recommend investigating concepts instead of linguistic structures as the point of departure in research on second language use, e.g. examining the concept of perfectivity instead of present perfect morphology.

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[1] Jarvis (2007, p. 43) distinguishes between *concept transfer* and *conceptualization transfer*: "The former arises from crosslinguistic differences in the conceptual categories stored in L2 users' long-term memory, whereas the latter refers to the effects of how L2 users process conceptual knowledge and form temporary representations in their working memory".

Stutterheim and collaborators (Stutterheim and Nüse 2003; Stutterheim and Carroll 2006) investigated cross-linguistic differences in text production in learner languages. Stutterheim and Nüse (2003) found significant differences between English and German speakers in film narrations in which speakers of different mother tongues retell movie scenes or short animated cartoons. The test material consisted of different video clips showing situations with or without a definite endpoint. For the latter, the stage at which a possible endpoint was reached was not shown. Speakers were then asked to tell what was happening and to describe the events (Stutterheim and Carroll 2006, p. 44). In order to verbalize events, speakers have to choose a temporal frame of reference. Both English and German speakers must choose the appropriate tense (i.e. past or present tense). In addition, speakers of English have the choice of presenting events as ongoing by using the progressive form (e.g. 'they are walking'), as reaching an endpoint by using the simple form (e.g. 'they walk to the bus stop'), or as overlapping. In English, the concept of ongoingness can be coded morphologically on the verb. In German, by contrast, such concepts are lexicalized rather than grammaticized (e.g. 'Er ist dabei zu laufen', 'er ist am Laufen').

Due to these structural differences speakers of English and German behaved differently with regard to the information that was verbalized: "English and German speakers not only encode different events, but also encode events differently" (Stutterheim and Nüse 2003, p. 864). The study revealed that German speakers mentioned more endpoints than English speakers in each case. For example, in a static picture that shows two women walking along a road towards a house, an English speaker is very likely to use a construction such as 'Two girls are walking along the road', while speakers of German are very likely to describe the situation by using a sentence like 'Zwei Frauen laufen auf ein Haus zu'—'Two women are walking towards a house'. This means that Stutterheim and her collaborators consider the *perspective* taken as a possible reason for these differences. German speakers present events *holistically*, that is, they tend to narrate events as closed actions, with an endpoint. English speakers, by contrast, take an *ongoing* perspective without mentioning the ending of an action. These findings can be attributed to different aspectual systems in English and German with regard to the grammaticalization of ongoingness: "The results show that language structure can be correlated with specific patterns of event conceptualization" (Stutterheim and Nüse 2003, p. 856). Hence, both information selection and information structure are affected by one's mother tongue (cf. Carroll and Lambert 2003; Carroll et al. 2004).

Stutterheim and Carroll (2006) extended these findings to native speakers of Norwegian and Arabic. The phrasal decomposition in Arabic is grammaticized in the same way as in English, whereas Norwegian, like German, has no grammatical aspect. In these languages, ongoingness can only be expressed by lexical structures. The results showed that the English and Arabic speakers mentioned the endpoint in only one fourth of the cases, whereas the majority of German and Norwegian speakers did mention the endpoint, viz. marked most of the events as not ongoing. Stutterheim and Carroll showed that in languages in which phrasal decomposition is grammaticized (e.g. Arabic and English), speakers relate to the phases of the events, using the aspectually marked form. By contrast, in the non-

aspect languages, Norwegian and German, speakers describe events from a holistic perspective. They express endpoints, "even if they have to be inferred or invented" (Stutterheim and Carroll 2006, p. 45).

Within the framework of conceptual transfer, the question arises how learners of different languages select information structures in a foreign language. Stutterheim and Carroll (2006) compared these structural choices in the same communicative task across the source and target languages and then analyzed learners' productions for emerging differences. They tested the organization of information in advanced learner languages. The research questions were the following: "Can we find support for our claim that linguistic knowledge not only covers lexicon, syntax, morphology, and phonology but also encompasses a specific set of principles of information organization? Are these principles particularly difficult to detect and acquire, resulting in problems that are related not so much to form as to factors governing use?" (Stutterheim and Carroll 2006, p. 47).

They used the same type of stimuli and elicitation method for the production experiments they carried out with learners of German and English. Both groups had the other language as the respective L1. The results show that (Carroll and Stutterheim 2006, p. 48):

> broadly speaking, both learner groups are moving toward the target language norm. As the results indicate, however, this trend holds to a lesser degree for English learners of German than for their German counterparts. In other words, for the domain of events, learners of English seem to acquire the underlying linguistic knowledge associated with a form such as the progressive more easy, compared to the holistic perspective required of learners of German.

3 Method

In the following, we will present one of the projects we carried out during the *JuniorAkademie*[2] in St. Peter-Ording, Germany in 2010. During the *JuniorAkademie* in 2010, we taught a course on psycholinguistics, *Psycholinguistik—Wie denkt man eigentlich auf Englisch? Grenzen des Spracherwerbs aus psycholinguistischer Sicht*.[3] The first part of the course covered basic concepts and disciplines in linguistics, such as phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The second, major part focused on basic psycholinguistic principles and their relevance for foreign language learning and teaching. In order to teach the students some basics of psycholinguistic research, we demonstrated four

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[2] The *JuniorAkademie* is a summer school organized for highly skilled high school students from grades 8 to 10. Students are selected due to their grades and a letter of recommendation written by one of their teachers. *JuniorAkademie* summer schools take place in several regions in Germany, usually for two weeks. Students can choose from various subjects such as physics, chemistry, drama or linguistics.

[3] 'Psycholinguistics—How to think in English. Limits of language acquisition from a psycholinguistic perspective.'

psycholinguistic experiments, which we then replicated with the participants of the course. With our assistance, the students collected data, annotated and analyzed them and finally presented the results to a larger audience (oral presentation and poster presentation). The experiments we carried out were *Animals-in-a-row* (Brown and Levinson 1993; Pedersen et al. 1998), *Frog story* (Slobin 1996), *Time and space* (Boroditsky 2001), and *Endpoint* (Stutterheim and Nüse 2003).[4] Our aims pursued in the psycholinguistics course were closely related to the above proposals to incorporate psycholinguistic experiments into the foreign language classroom. First, we wanted to demonstrate the influence of the L1 on the L2 and therewith the limits of language learnability and the phenomenon of conceptual transfer. Second, our aim was to foster metalinguistic awareness in order to make students aware of different conceptualization patterns in English and German. The research questions were adapted to the linguistic backgrounds of the course participants. All the course participants as well as all the study participants (who were participants of other courses) were native speakers of German and had learned English as a foreign language in school for three to five years. The experiments addressed the following research questions:

- *Animals-in-a-row*: Do different encodings of spatial relations affect non-linguistic behavior?
- *Frog story*: Do speakers of German, when producing L2 English utterances, encode accomplished and ongoing events differently from native speakers of English?
- *Time and space*: Do speakers of German use spatial schemas to think about time?
- *Endpoint*: Do speakers of German, when producing L2 English utterances, encode actions with potential endpoints differently from native speakers of English?

Thus, all psycholinguistic experiments chosen for the course focus on how languages encode concepts and events differently and how different patterns in different languages affect learnability.

3.1 Procedure

In the following, we present the steps that were necessary for the design and preparation of the experiments as well as for the analysis and presentation of the results. We exemplify this by the *Endpoint* experiment. The aim of the experiment was to find out whether speakers of German, when producing L2 English utterances, encode actions with potential endpoints differently from native speakers of English.

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[4] The labels chosen for the experiments were partly taken from the original sources and partly chosen in the process of our research.

We first presented the findings from Stutterheim and Nüse (2003) to the students and explained the aim of the experiment. In order to have the students prepare the experiment, their first task was to imagine dynamic situations with possible endpoints. The students were then divided into four groups. With our assistance, each group was responsible for preparing short video clips using a camcorder. Altogether 40 clips were produced. These clips included 20 scenes with and without endpoints (10 each) as well as 20 distractors (10 dynamic distractors, e.g. a flag flying in the wind, and 10 static distractors, e.g. a chair on the lawn). Ten clips were cut before the endpoint was reached; in ten other clips the action was fully presented, with an endpoint. The clips, which were each 8 s long, were then cut into a movie and stored on several notebooks. Then, the students formulated instructions which were the same for all participants: "I will show you a movie with some individual actions. Please describe in one sentence and as soon as possible what you see". In total, 32 students participated in the experiment. The responses were recorded and transcribed later. Table 1 shows examples of students' responses to the test stimuli. Responses to the test stimuli were coded as "endpoint expressed" and "endpoint not expressed" for both of the conditions, i.e. for scenes with an endpoint reached and scenes with a potential endpoint.

We assisted our students in every step of the experiment. After the data had been collected, we gave students more input onto data annotation and analysis, which they were then responsible for. The results of the replicated experiment are displayed in Fig. 1.

As a next step, we taught students how to summarize and present results. In order to remind students of the aim of the course, we finally turned back to our initial research question and discussed the relation of our results to our research question.

Table 1 Examples of students' responses to the test stimuli, coded as "endpoint expressed" (+ep) and "endpoint not expressed" (−ep) for both of the conditions

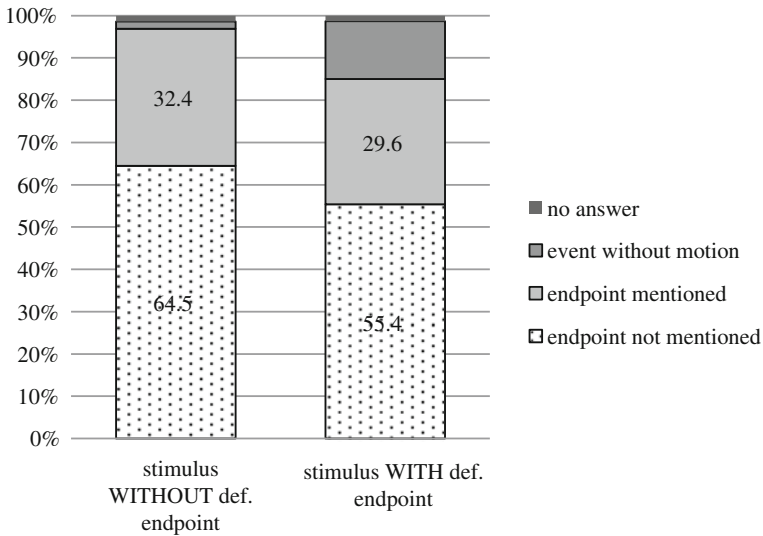| Potential endpoint	Endpoint shown
• A boy is walking around—I think, to a tent. (+ep)	• The boy is saying "hello" to his friend. (+ep)
• A boy is walking towards a tent. (+ep)	• There is a boy who walks to another boy and says "hello" to him. (+ep)
• A boy comes to tent and walks over grass. (+ep)	• There is a boy walking to another boy. (+ep)
• A boy walks on the lane. (−ep)	
• Colin is walking around. (−ep)	

Fig. 1 Results of our replicated experiment "Endpoint". (answers in %)

3.2 Proposal

The project we carried out during the *JuniorAkademie* has shown that it is possible to carry out psycholinguistic experiments with young students in a learning and teaching environment. Our personal impression was that students were enthusiastic about all steps that had to be taken in order to design the experiments, collect and annotate data, analyze data and finally summarize and present the results. Our impression was confirmed by the comments and feedback we received from the students. Hence, we argue that similar projects are basically feasible in the foreign language classroom in schools because they can foster metalinguistic awareness and a better learning and understanding of linguistic structures.

Of course, there are certain limitations as well as important factors to be considered. The prerequisite for incorporating psycholinguistic experiments into foreign language teaching are conceptual differences between the student's L1 and the target language. Furthermore, one has to consider the technical conditions and the time limits due to a given school context. Schools are generally not equipped with psycholinguistic apparatus such as eye trackers, nor do they have computer software for priming or for measuring reaction times. However, experiments can be adapted to the limited conditions. One also has to consider that, due to curriculum requirements, the learning and teaching environment in schools and the limited time frame do not allow test–retest designs, large-scale assessment or designs with multiple conditions, as well as experiments which require a large number of participants. Therefore, teachers should choose experiments where they expect to find reliable results with a small number of study participants.

We suggest the following procedure: Teachers should first provide students with knowledge about the grammatical phenomenon in question. A second possible step could be to find out about students' knowledge and skills, such as computer literacy (e.g. word processing, spreadsheet processing, presentation programs), and knowledge of other media (e.g. video editing software). Experimental designs should be selected carefully. Online designs, such as measurements of reaction times, are not suitable for the school context. The same goes for designs in which the influence of multiple variables on a dependent variable is tested. Researchers in psycholinguistics sometimes look at the interaction of various variables as in priming studies. These research forms require a large number of participants to ensure a sufficient number of responses in each test condition. Thus, experiments have to be chosen according to their design complexity. In order to carry out psycholinguistic experiments in the classroom, teachers should reduce the experimental designs to the core. As high school students do not usually have any knowledge about theoretical linguistics, it is essential to simplify the theoretical framework. Furthermore, it should be possible to conduct the experiments with fewer study participants and fewer test items in order to limit the time required to design tests and to run the experiment. The reduction and simplification of the experimental setting helps students to focus on the core question without being overcharged with linguistic theory or excessive data collection.

Finally, we would like to make clear that the 'experimental framework' does not need to correspond to scientific demands. The experiments are meant to foster students' language awareness, and the results are not intended to be published in research journals.

4 Discussion

Research on SLA and native speaker competence has shown that most non-native speakers fail to reach native-speaker competence: "In L2 acquisition (…) it is common for the learner to fail to acquire the target language fully" (White 1989, p. 41). Bley-Vroman (1989, p. 43) goes even further, claiming that "the lack of general guaranteed success is the most striking characteristic of adult foreign language learning". Achieving native-speaker competence does not necessarily have to do with foreign language instruction. For example, Selinker (1972) states that an absolute success in learning a second language applies to only a small percentage of learners (about 5 %). He assumes that this small percentage of learners goes through different psycholinguistic processes than does "the vast majority of second-language learners who fail to achieve native-speaker competence" and "must have acquired these facts (and most probably important principles of language organization) *without* having explicitly been taught them" (1972, pp. 14–15, emphasis original). The reason for the partial success in second language acquisition has to do with the limitations of learnability (Juffs 1996, p. 1):

One might imagine, then, that learning the vocabulary of a second language (L2) may just mean learning which words mean 'the same' as ones in the first language. However, there is much more to learning words than one-to-one matching of L2 words to native language equivalents. The claim will be that in second language acquisition, as well as in first language acquisition, the learner brings a considerable amount of internal knowledge to bear on the problem of learning words and their meanings, and that without this internal contribution, much of the knowledge which speakers of second languages possess could not be explained.

In order to overcome difficulties in language learning and to bring students (at least) closer to native speaker competence, we argue that foreign language teaching should incorporate linguistic research in different ways. First, findings from research on conceptual transfer should be made explicit. Teachers should be sensitized to the importance of *metalinguistic awareness*, as it is suggested in the German teaching curricula. Second, students themselves should become aware of the phenomenon of conceptual transfer and should be assisted—in the foreign language classroom—with acquiring *metalinguistic awareness*. We argue that, in order to foster metalinguistic awareness, students should be faced with research findings on second language acquisition and conceptual transfer. We suggest that this can be done by incorporating experimental designs used in psycholinguistic research into the foreign language classroom. Experiments can enable students to become aware of the structure of language, the psychological processes underlying language use, and the functions of language in interaction (cf. Wolff 1993, p. 514).

5 Conclusions

In this paper we have shown that linguistic theory concerning conceptual transfer can serve as a reference for second language teaching. Conceptual transfer theory underlines the influence of grammatical structures on cognition and therefore helps to explain language transfer from the L1 to the L2. The psycholinguistic experiment that we conducted with high school students shows how experimental research designs can be methodologically integrated into the foreign language classroom. Via these exercises, students become aware of conceptual transfer as they can observe the impact of language-specific conceptualization patterns on foreign language production. Knowledge about these differences leads to the awareness that the ability to produce grammatically correct utterances does not necessarily correspond to native speaker competence. As outlined above, learners' utterances often differ from native speakers' utterances with regard to preferences reflected by the conceptualization patterns. However, the immediate aim is not to achieve full native speaker competence. Rather, we argue that such projects can help students to acquire metalinguistic awareness, which can then bring them closer to native speaker competence.

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Using Dynamic Assessment to Improve L2 Learners' Knowledge of Grammar: Evidence from the Tenses

Reza Barzegar and Rana Azarizad

Abstract The aim of the present study is to examine the effect of dynamic assessment (DA) of speaking on rule internalization through giving explicit feedback as mediation along with a focus on five tenses: simple present, simple past, present continuous, past continuous and present perfect. Sixty participants were invited to take part in the study. After a pretest, DA using explicit feedback as mediation was administered in the experimental group as a midterm exam; however, the control group took a conventional midterm exam. In order to investigate the rate of rule internalization, in both groups a posttest (with no mediation) was administered. Given the lack of normal distribution of scores, the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U-test was run on the data obtained from both the pretest and posttest. No significant difference between the performances of two groups at the beginning of the experiment existed, but the results of the posttest showed that at the end of the term the experimental group outperformed the control group as a result of administering DA as the midterm exam. Moreover, considering the lack of normal score distribution, the Freidman test was run to determine which target forms were internalized the best, revealing that the simple past was the form internalized better than the others.

1 Introduction

Poehner and Lantolf (2005) define dynamic assessment (DA) as the interaction between assessor as intervener and learner as active participant with the aim of making cognitive changes in the learner during the process of learning and

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assessing. Unlike other skills, speaking has not received much attention as far as DA is concerned. More specifically, the focus on spoken grammar seems to have attracted minimal attention from the scholars in the field. Various studies have been conducted on reading and writing whose results show the effectiveness of dynamic assessment in comparison to the conventional forms of assessment. As a case in point, Anton (2003) used DA as a diagnostic test of the reading and writing of advanced learners of English whose native language was Spanish. She concluded that those with less knowledge made more revisions compared to those with better knowledge. Therefore, she concluded that weaker students benefit more from DA.

Although little research has been conducted on the effect of DA on speaking, there is a study on Japanese students by Hill and Sabet (2009). First, they asked the students to speak about one of their previous experiences using the past tense. In the second phase, the students were given a more difficult test task involving paraphrasing a story with the use of the past tense. During this phase, the students benefitted from the mediation of the assessor in the form of explicit feedback. Finally, in the third phase, the students were asked to rephrase another story in the past, the aim being to check how much of the mediation was transferred from the second to the third phase. The results showed a significant difference between the performance of the students who had received DA and those who had not.

All in all, the scarcity of research on the application of DA to improving learners' spoken grammar convinced the present authors that they should embark upon a program of research which would explore the potential of DA in this area.

2 The Study

As the data collected were on an interval scale and the ultimate analyses made use of inferential statistics, the authors decided to proceed with hypotheses rather than the original research questions. Therefore, the following null hypotheses were proposed:

1. DA of speaking through giving explicit feedback and focusing on form has no significant effect on rule internalization among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.
2. There is no statistically significant difference in the internalization rank of five tenses (i.e., simple present, simple past, present continuous, past continuous and present perfect) brought about by administering DA of speaking among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

3 Method

3.1 Participants

To accomplish the objectives of this study, 60 male and female learners of English at a language school in Tehran were recruited. The learners ranged in age from 17

to 24 and were all Iranians at the intermediate level of proficiency. They had all studied two elementary and pre-intermediate level books in the *Natural English* series; therefore, they had been exposed to all the five tenses in question. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups: one served as the experimental group and the other as the control group.

3.2 Instrumentation

In order to carry out this study, a 20-item teacher-made grammar pretest was used in both the experimental and the control group (the maximum score was 20; see Appendix 1). This test consisted of four questions on each of the five tenses. The purpose of administering the pretest in both groups was to ascertain that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their knowledge of grammar at the outset of the experiment. The same test functioned as the posttest in both groups at the end of the experiment.

The second instrument used in this study, a DA test, was based on a short anecdote (see Appendix 2) which was chosen from the intermediate section of Hill's (1980) *Anecdotes in American English*. The readability index of the anecdote was calculated beforehand, following the Lexical Density Test, to make sure that it was at the same difficulty level as the texts in the learners' textbooks. Table 1 shows the results of the readability analysis.

Table 1 Readability results for the text used for DA

The mean readability of five reading texts from *Natural English* (Intermediate)	45
SD	4
Text readability used in the DA phase	43

The readability of the text used for the DA phase had to be not higher than 1 SD above and not lower than 1 SD below the mean, i.e., between 41 and 49. As can be seen, the readability of the DA text was 43, which falls in the acceptable range.

3.3 Procedure

After ten sessions of teaching the five forms in question, the experimental group went through DA as the mid-term exam, while the control group took the usual conventional mid-term exam administered by the school. The DA which was administered in the experimental group took the form of an anecdote which was unknown to the participants; this was confirmed by giving them a checklist

beforehand. During the DA phase, which took 2 h, the learners were given 15 min to go through the text and then they were asked to paraphrase it for the assessor. They were told to use the same tenses as those used in the text while they were paraphrasing it, especially the tenses in the direct quotations. While the other learners were busy doing a task from their textbook, each learner was asked to come and sit next to the assessor and paraphrase the text. While the learners were being tested, the assessor provided them with explicit feedback on the five above-mentioned forms. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), explicit feedback can be more beneficial than implicit feedback because the latter engages learners in heavy mental guess work. Whenever the learners made a mistake, the assessor gave them explicit feedback. The whole process was recorded and the following two excerpts may help clarify the procedure. In one exchange, the assessor said: "There is something wrong with the grammar here", and "No, this is not the correct form". As a last resort, the assessor said: "No, you should use the past tense here…". Here is another excerpt from the interaction between the assessor (A) and a student (S):

> S: Mr. Parker is going straight…
> A: There is a mistake here.
> S: Mr. Parker went straight…
> A: No, it should still be continuous but in the past…
> S: Yes, Mr. Parker was going straight…

Following Nassaji and Swain (2000), the explicit feedback that the learners were provided with had two important features: firstly, it was contingent on the needs of the learners, and secondly, it was graded, i.e., whenever there was no need, the feedback was removed. After the paraphrasing was done, the learner had to leave the class. It seems crucial to explain at this point that the whole process of DA was recorded; however, the learners were informed about this only after the research was over and subsequently they expressed their consent to the use of the data obtained. As the recording was done secretly, it seemed to have had little or no effect on the performance of the learners. It was also crucial for the task (i.e., paraphrasing a text) to be beyond the zone of proximal development of the learners in comparison with the pretest because, according to Haywood and Lidz (2007), there is no point in providing mediation for a task which has already been mastered by students. At the end of the course, the learners took the posttest and the results were subjected to analysis.

4 Results

In order to analyze the data obtained in the pretest, first a test of normality was run, the results of which are shown in Table 2. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to see if the score distribution was normal.

Table 2 Tests of normality on pretest results

	Condition	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest	Control	0.153	30	.071	0.944	30	.120
	Experimental	0.182	30	.012	0.927	30	.040

Table 3 Results of the Mann–Whitney U-test used to compare learners' performance on the pretest and the posttest

	Pretest	Posttest
Mann-Whitney Statistics	428.500	290.000
Z	−0.323	−2.426
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.746	.015

As shown in Table 2, the distribution was normal in the control group, as the significance value of .071 exceeded $p = .05$. However, it can also be seen that the distribution in the experimental group was not normal as the significance value of .012 is lower than $p = .05$. Due to the lack of normality of distribution, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to test the hypotheses and see if there was any significant difference between the performance of the two groups at the beginning of the experiment. As shown in Table 3, there was no significant difference between the performance of the two groups on the pretest, with $p = 0.746$ exceeding the .05 level. In other words, the two groups did not significantly differ in their knowledge of the five forms at the outset of the study.

At the end of the semester, the learners were given the posttest along with the final exam (the routine exam of the school). Since the distribution was not normal, again the scores obtained on the posttests in each group were analyzed through the Mann-Whitney U-test, the results of which are given in Table 3. The results demonstrate that there was a significant difference between the scores obtained by the two groups on the posttest because the .15 significance value for the posttest is lower than .05. Therefore, it may be concluded that there was a significant difference between the performance of the two groups at the end of the experiment, i.e., that the group which underwent DA had improved statistically significantly more than the group which had not.

Finally, the scores obtained on the pretest and the posttest in the experimental group were analyzed to see which of the five forms in question had benefitted the most from the treatment. The nonparametric Friedman test was conducted to determine if the use of each form had improved at equal intervals. As shown in Table 4, the second null hypothesis of this research can be rejected as well, because the significance level of .000 is lower than the significance value of 0.05.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, which presents the mean scores obtained for each targeted form on the pretest and the posttest, past simple was the form which developed the most, followed by present perfect, simple present, past continuous and present continuous.

Table 4 The results of the
Friedman test gauging the
rate of development of the
five tenses

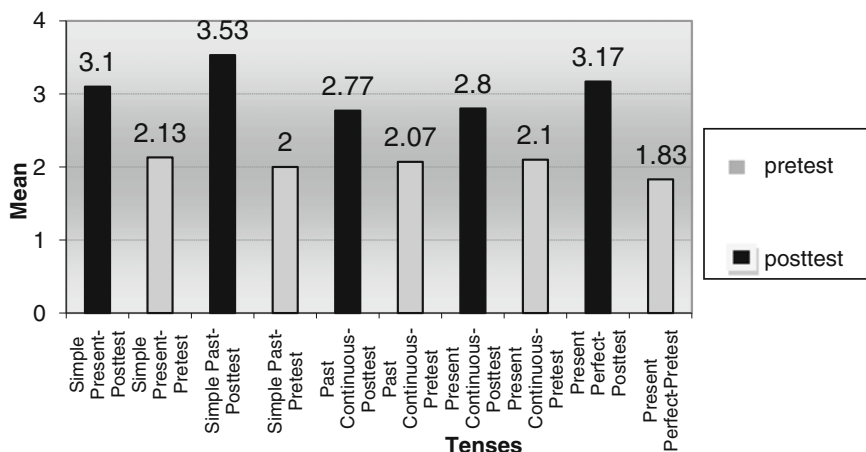| N	30
Chi-Square	41.67179
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Fig. 1 The development rate of the five tenses

5 Discussion

The results of this study showed that the experimental group, which went through DA, outperformed the control group in the use of the five targeted tenses. This might partly be due to the effectiveness of the interaction between the assessor and the examinee in the form of explicit feedback, interaction that might have helped the internalization of the relevant rules. This finding corroborates the results reported by Hill and Sabet (2009). In addition, it was observed that simple past was the tense, the use of which had improved the most. Again, a plausible explanation for such an outcome could be the frequency of a tense corresponding to the English past tense in Persian, which was the mother tongue of the learners. Further, the number of verbs in the past tense in the text which was used in DA was higher than the number of the other four tenses. The positive washback of DA could be another reason why learners in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group. It was observed that the learners in the experimental group were more eager and willing to participate in classes, and weaker students were not afraid of expressing their ideas; they also appeared to be more motivated, compared to

participants in the control group, and tried to come to class on time. This ultimately led to greater exposure and hence better mastery of the targeted forms.

The outcomes of this study may lend further support to Lantolf's (2006) claim that what is being done with the help and meditation of the others is what can be done alone in the future. In the present study, the mediation provided by the researchers might have been effectively transferred to a new context such as that of the final exam, which explains why the learners in the experimental group performed significantly better. This could, in turn, transfer to even more naturalistic contexts, those in real life, and help learners use the forms authentically and independently. The results of this study are also in line with what Nassaji and Swain (2000) have argued regarding explicit feedback. In their view, mediation provided by means of explicit feedback works better than that provided more implicitly, because implicit feedback engages learners in a good deal of mental work in which they may not be able to locate the erroneous utterances precisely.

As all the above-mentioned studies, as well as the present study, suggest, DA can be an effective procedure bringing about certain cognitive changes in learners and enhancing their performance. Furthermore, the learners' independent performance may be viewed as evidence for the effectiveness of the treatment used in the present study as well as the ones cited above.

6 Conclusion

From a theoretical perspective, the results reiterate the claim of Sociocultural Theory that what the learner can do with the help of the teacher is what they can do on their own in the future. Therefore, it can be claimed that DA is not an instrument of power, but a democratic instrument of learning. In other words, DA may contribute to inducing cognitive development in learners and helping them to move from other-regulation to self-regulation, thus contributing to their independent performance. From a pedagogical perspective, given that DA involves the integration of teaching and assessing, this study could provide support for using explicit feedback as mediation during the process of dynamic assessment. It also implies that this technique can be used for teaching the use of grammatical rules in oral communication. Mediation, which, according to Sociocultural Theory, is an integral part of the process of learning, helps more effective internalization of rules (Appel and Lantolf 1994). Therefore, teachers can use DA as an independent exam or, at the very least, as an addition to a conventional exam.

Appendix 1

Tests used on the prettest and posttest (questions were not asked successively):

Simple present

Where do you usually go for summer holidays?
What do you do at weekends?
Where do you live?
When do you wake up in the mornings?

Simple past

Where did you go for Norouz holiday last year?
What did you have for lunch yesterday?
When did you wake up this morning?
When did you start learning English?

Present perfect

Have you ever been abroad?
How many terms have you studied English here?
Have you ever lost your mobile phone?
Have you ever played tennis?

Present continuous

What are you wearing now?
What am I doing now?
Do you know what your mother is doing now?
Who are you living with?

Past continuous

What were you doing when i entered the class?
Was it raining this morning?
Did you watch TV last night when you were having lunch?
What were you doing this morning at 8?

Appendix 2

Dynamic Assessment text for paraphrasing as midterm exam:

Mr. Parker is a kind man who lives in a small town. One day Mr. Parker said to himself: "I haven't seen my brother David for a long time, and he is living in a new house now. I'm going to drive there and see him this afternoon." He took his brother's address, got into his car and started out. He was driving for a long time, but still couldn't find the house so he

stopped and asked somebody to help him. "You have come the wrong way. Go straight along this road for two miles,"the man said, "then turn left, and then take the second road on the right." While Mr. Parker was going straight along the road and he was trying to turn left after two miles, but he got lost again. He drove for another mile, and at last he saw a road on his right and stopped. A woman was coming toward him, so he said to her, "Excuse me, is this the second road on the right?"

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How to Teach in CLIL? Some Remarks on CLIL Methodology

Katarzyna Papaja

Abstract Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has emerged as one of the major educational trends in the European Union. It is an innovative approach which refers to educational settings where a language other than the learners' mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction. For many years the methodological aspects of CLIL were neglected. The CLIL classroom looked like a traditional teacher-centred language or content subject classroom but the content of the content subject replaced the traditional content of the language classroom (Marsh 2001, p. 32). The situation has changed in recent years and CLIL-specific methodology is being developed. The paper provides an outline of CLIL methodology starting with a brief outline of the phenomenon of CLIL. Additionally, the importance of teaching materials in a CLIL classroom will be discussed. All the data presented is based on CLIL classroom observations in Poland as well as on interviews conducted with CLIL teachers. Finally, problems concerning CLIL methodology are discussed and specific solutions are provided.

1 Introduction

As societies are constantly transforming and new communities and identities emerge, teachers are required to adjust their instructional practices to the reality of multilingualism in their classrooms. In the words of Dooly (2008, p. 15), "[t]eachers must be seen as central stakeholders in the education process and this implies viewing their practical knowledge and notions as a broad pool of resources they will employ in the classroom". Blanton (1992, p. 285) claims that "a whole language approach—text-based and student-centered—is a viable alternative to

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various models". The concept of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is in many respects similar to English for specific purposes (ESP), but it does not necessarily include explanations relating to the language itself, but simply integrates language and content, which involves understanding and production of the second language. Although subject specialists and language specialists have to work very closely in designing materials that are appropriate for the CLIL classroom and, as a result, invest a large amount of time, there are a lot of advantages which make CLIL an innovative methodology that has emerged to cater for this interconnected age.

In the present paper, the CLIL methodology, as observed in CLIL classrooms in Poland, will be outlined. Additionally, the importance of teaching materials in a CLIL classroom will be discussed. It is strongly believed that well-designed materials are a crucial factor in determining success in learning content subjects through another language. All the data presented in this paper is based on observations conducted in Polish CLIL classrooms as well as interviews with CLIL teachers.

2 Definition of CLIL

Content and language integrated learning is a common term for a number of similar approaches in Europe to teaching content subjects through a foreign language. Other terms used are *bilingual content teaching*, *bilingual subject teaching* or *content-based language teaching* (Wolff 2003, p. 211). The term CLIL is now the most commonly used and "it is based on the assumption that foreign languages are best learnt by focusing in the classroom not so much on language but on the content which is transmitted through language. The novelty of this approach is that classroom content is not so much taken from everyday life but rather from content subjects e.g. mathematics, biology, geography etc." (Wolff 2003, pp. 211–222).

Marsh and Langé (2000, p. 3) provide the following definition of CLIL: "Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a generic term and refers to any educational situation in which an additional language and therefore not the most widely used language of the environment is used for the teaching and learning of subjects other than language itself". According to Wolff (2003, p. 211), there are at least three points which are important in the context of this general definition:

a) CLIL should not be perceived as an approach to language teaching and learning; it is important to pay attention to both content and language;
b) in CLIL content and language are learnt in an integrated way; the two subjects are related to each other and dealt with as a whole;
c) in CLIL another language is used to teach and learn content subjects, i.e. it is the medium of instruction.

3 Methodological Approach

Reading and writing skills are regarded as very important in the CLIL classroom: learners work with documents and other sources in order to acquire knowledge in the content subject. According to Marsh and Marsland (1999, p. 41), CLIL-specific methodology has to take into account the promotion of reading skills as they often determine the students' success or failure. Wolff (2005, p. 10) claims that "the focus on processing strategies in the CLIL classroom is characteristic of a new methodological approach which is both language and content based". In fact, learners read texts in order to acquire knowledge in the content subject. As far as productive skills are concerned, in the CLIL classroom writing skills are considered to be very significant (Wolff 2005, p. 10). Learners are asked to compose reports, write down definitions, compile results of observations, etc. As Portmann-Tselikas (2002, pp. 13–43) explains, "[c]ontent subject language competence is to a large extent text competence so writing skills cannot be neglected in a CLIL methodology".

However, the most important thing is the integration of content and language in the CLIL classroom. Marsh, Marsland and Stenberg (2001, p. 28) point to the content of the content subject which "is in the center of the learning-teaching process". Wolff (2005, p. 10) adds that "in order to deal with the content in the foreign language learners have to acquire both knowledge and skills which are necessary to manipulate this content". Crystal (2007, p. 31), in turn, claims that "the relationship between content and language requires a comprehensive frame of reference in which the theories, methods and findings of various professional domains dealing with language are interrelated". In other words, ideas from foreign language teaching need to be linked to the content teaching. When introducing CLIL, teachers believed that learners should be provided with language for specific purposes (LSP) or ESP terminology in a foreign language. Nowadays, the attitude has changed. In CLIL one should begin by providing more general content subject-oriented terminology and should then slowly move towards more and more specific vocabulary (Krechel and Wolff 1995).

The next aspect which should be emphasized while talking about CLIL methodology is linked to discourse skills. According to Thürmann (1999, pp. 75–96), discourse skills in a CLIL classroom should be analyzed as consisting of two sets:

- the general functional set, i.e. speech acts, such as *identify, classify, define, describe, explain, conclude, argue*, etc.;
- more specific sets which differ according to content subjects or groups of subjects, e.g. *making inductions, stating laws, describing states and processes, working with graphs, diagrams, tables* etc.

The discourse skills belonging to the general functional set should be paid attention to during all CLIL content lessons as the ability to define, describe or classify certain concepts may be needed during geography, biology, mathematics

or other content subjects. As far as the discourse skills belonging to the specific set are concerned, it is advisable to pay attention to particular skills in reference to the CLIL content subjects, e.g. working with graphs or diagrams can be practiced in the case of mathematics while the ability to describe states or processes can be focused in the case of geography or chemistry, etc. The aim of this division is to classify discourse skills and make them useful in the CLIL classroom.

Taking into consideration the language-oriented methodological aspect, in comparison to the traditional language classroom where the foreign language is used as often as possible, in a CLIL classroom it is also useful to work with first language materials. Wolff (2005, p. 11) argues that "methodologically, the CLIL classroom should not be characterized by monolingualism but by functional bilingualism". What is meant by *functional bilingualism* is the use of the mother tongue and mother tongue materials when necessary, e.g. using Polish when discussing the history of Poland. This approach is quite new and very different from the traditional approach to language teaching where the use of a foreign language is obligatory.

The last but not least of aspects linked to methodology in the CLIL classroom are cooperative and experiential learning. Cooperative learning is also very important in the CLIL classroom. According to Marsh and Marsland (1999, p. 39), "cooperative learning refers to means by which learners and teachers alike facilitate learning through methods in which people actively help each other in the learning process. The focus is to develop social, academic and communication skills as an integral part of the subject learning process" It is not always easy to engage learners in certain types of the cooperative method because some of them will be reluctant to use the L2 with their classmates. As has been pointed out by Genesee (1987, p. 26), the CLIL teacher should use different kinds of non-threatening cooperative methods, especially at the start of the course to help learners build up enough self-confidence to actively speak in the L2. What is more, learners should be aware of the reasons why they study content in a foreign language. Finally, when the group activity involves more than five or six people, then some of them may adopt "passive communication roles" (Marsh and Marsland 1999, p. 40). Experiential learning also plays an important role in the learning process in CLIL. Learning by doing is very popular in subjects such as physics, biology or chemistry. Some CLIL teachers argue that "by definition, learning through a foreign language is a form of experiential learning for learners" (Hauptman et al. 1988, p. 437). The opportunity offered in some of the CLIL contexts to intensively use the L2 with learners from schools in other countries is another form of experiential learning opportunity. All in all, one of the most significant outcomes of the CLIL experience is gaining more self-confidence in using the L2.

To sum up, the following core methodological considerations, as provided by Mehisto et al. (2008, p. 29), should be paid attention to in the CLIL classroom:

Multiple focus

- supporting language learning in content classes;
- supporting content learning in language classes;
- integrating several subjects;
- organizing learning through cross-curricular themes and projects;
- supporting reflection on the learning process.

Safe and enriching learning environment

- using routine activities and discourse;
- displaying language and content throughout the classroom;
- building learner confidence to experiment with language and content;
- using classroom learning centers;
- guiding access to authentic learning materials and environments;
- increasing learner language awareness.

Authenticity

- letting the learners ask for the language help they need;
- maximizing the accommodation of learners' interests;
- making a regular connection between learning and learners' lives;
- connecting with other speakers of the CLIL language;
- using current materials from the media and other sources.

Active learning

- learners communicating more than the teachers;
- learners helping set content, language and learning skills outcomes;
- learners evaluating progress in achieving learning outcomes;
- favouring peer cooperative work;
- negotiating the meaning of language and content with learners;
- teachers acting as facilitators.

Scaffolding

- building on learners' existing knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests and experience;
- repackaging information in user-friendly ways;
- responding to different learning styles;
- fostering creative and critical thinking;
- challenging learners to take another step forward and not just coast in comfort.

Cooperation

- planning courses/lessons/themes in cooperation with CLIL and non-CLIL teachers;
- involving parents in learning about CLIL and how to support learners;
- involving the local community, authorities and employers.

The above-mentioned core methodological issues, which are learner-centered, support the holistic development of learners. Multiple focus helps them in concentrating simultaneously both on content and language. Safe and enriching environments help in building up self-confidence and getting rid of inhibitions which might be connected with a new learning environment. Authenticity of learning materials as well as authenticity of tasks used in a CLIL classroom is extremely important. It helps learners to apply the knowledge gained in a CLIL classroom to everyday life situations. According to Little et al. (1994, p. 24) "authentic texts have far greater potential as they have been written for a communicative purpose and as such they are more interesting than texts which have been invented to illustrate the usage of some feature of the target language". In the case of active learning, learners must have a feeling that they are active and independent participants in a CLIL classroom (Krueger and Ryan 1993). Active participation increases motivation and, what is more, makes lessons more interesting. The role of a CLIL teacher is to stimulate the learning process. It can also be done by responding to different learning styles, building on learners' existing knowledge as well as by fostering creative and critical thinking. CLIL learners should have a feeling that they are at the center of the lesson. Finally, cooperation with other CLIL and non-CLIL teachers, parents and the local authorities may facilitate the work of CLIL teachers. It should be borne in mind that the main aim of the above-mentioned methodological guidelines is to help learners become independent learners who will have sufficient content and language knowledge. What is more, they are supposed to guide students towards becoming motivated learners who will look for opportunities to become successful not only in education but also in communication with people coming from other cultural backgrounds.

4 Teaching Materials

Materials are always considered to be a problem for many CLIL teachers. A lot of effort must be put into the development and acquisition of materials on the part of the teacher. What is more, "CLIL teachers should not expect to be able to teach the same amount of content when using the L2 as when using the L1" (Marsh and Marsland 1999, p. 55). In other words, the amount of content introduced in the classroom should be considered to be lower than when the L1 is used as the medium of instruction. In fact, teaching through L2 makes the quality of teaching and learning higher because CLIL teachers have more time than regular subject teachers to concentrate on essential areas. Adamson (1993) points to the fact that focusing on content in a foreign language also stimulates the development of language skills and subsystems, such as reading, writing and grammar. However, during the planning process, "CLIL teachers should carefully scrutinize available materials. Texts from publications should be selected with great care, as L2 readability, requirements, or socio-cultural orientation, can hinder learning

motivation and outcomes. Teachers should identify and contact counterparts in the country or abroad to locate key L2 materials. Materials made by the teachers themselves should be of a very high L2 standard" (Marsh and Marsland 1999, p. 56). However, one observation has been made recently, namely the lack of cooperation between CLIL teachers, which may result in the fact that many teachers spend a lot of time creating the same teaching materials. It would be much easier for CLIL teachers to help each other in creating suitable materials. Yet, the adoption of materials from other countries creates a number of different problems. In fact, it is very difficult to teach the curriculum of one nation by using materials designed for another. Education is never 'neutral'. The use of the so-called 'imported' materials may be very confusing but a combination of such materials may be advantageous in providing different perspectives on the content matter. Marsh and Marsland (1999, p. 44) claim that "through cooperation between CLIL teachers from different countries, the amount of time invested in materials production may diminish and as a result the quality of teaching may increase".

It should be also emphasized that access to the Internet is a key factor in helping teachers find suitable materials. In addition, CLIL teachers should remember about the learning objectives of the subject area, which need to be clearly specified (Darn 2006). What is more, they should take into account the fact that CLIL learners need to be provided with more subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, learning this vocabulary will require an extra effort on the part of the learner, but it can be facilitated by the provision of additional exercises and elaborative rehearsal.

5 The Research Project

The current research aimed to determine what CLIL methodology is used in Polish schools as well as the importance of teaching materials. Unlike regular English courses, CLIL provides additional learning challenges resulting from the fact that language is not a sole concern, but it is a tool whereby CLIL students study content subjects.

5.1 Participants

A total of 97 CLIL learners participated in the research, 62 females and 35 males. All of them were learners from four different secondary schools in the southern part of Poland. Their age ranged from 16 to 18. Most of the participants studied two content subjects in English. Additionally, they had 6 h of English per week. All the learners had started learning content subjects in English in their secondary education. Apart from that, 12 CLIL teachers took part in the research. All the teachers were qualified in content subjects, such as geography (4 teachers), biology (3 teachers), mathematics (3 teachers) and history (2 teachers), and all of them

possessed adequate qualifications in English (either a BA degree or an MA degree).

5.2 Instruments and Procedures

A special observation sheet was designed for the purposes of the research project. It was divided into the following parts: the stage of the lesson (e.g. revision, brainstorming, etc.), the method used (e.g. communicative, etc.), the type of interaction (e.g. T-SS, SS-SS), the type of activity (e.g. role play, listening for gist, etc.), time (how much time the learners spend doing a particular activity), materials used (e.g. additional copies, books, etc.), comments, as well as the subject, the date of the lesson and the number of learners. An interview was also conducted in which the teachers were asked the following questions:

- What kind of methods do you use when teaching content in English ?
- Over the year, what proportion of the English language (texts, teacher talk, student-to-student—holistic appraisal) is used in a bilingual lesson?
- What kind of teaching materials do you use?
- Are the bilingual classes oriented towards European and international issues more than Polish-medium classes?
- How is the content affected by the use of the foreign language?
- Are you a different teacher in English and in Polish?
- What professional needs do you have?

In total, 36 lessons were observed during one semester (Spring 2011). At the very beginning, the lessons were supposed to be recorded but most of the participants of the study did not agree. The teachers were interviewed in Spring 2011. One interview lasted around 20 min. Notes were made as the teachers were responding to the questions.

6 Research Findings

In the case of subjects such as history, geography or biology, most of the teachers were trying to adopt the learner-centered approach. The teachers tried to concentrate on the CLIL learners' performance. From time to time the CLIL teachers were giving 'short lectures' (10 min). The purpose of these lectures was to introduce geographical, historical or biological concepts that the learners were not familiar with. The teachers were concentrating on communication by introducing pair or group work, providing the CLIL learners with comprehensible input (e.g. documentaries) or projects which required active participation on the part of the students. The learners were also encouraged to take part in various discussions,

such as that on the role of water in our organism, which required the knowledge of specialized vocabulary, communication and active participation.

In the case of mathematics, the situation was different. The CLIL mathematics teachers were mainly giving lectures in English, which were then translated into Polish. When asked why they were using such methods, the teachers stated that they were afraid that the learners would not understand anything in English because of the difficulty of the subject. While concentrating on practicing certain formulas, the CLIL mathematics teachers as well as the CLIL learners mainly used Polish and no particular teaching methods could be observed. The lessons were based on translation, which was not very successful. Only by introducing communicative exercises, did the CLIL learners have an opportunity to memorize content and also develop their language skills.

All in all, in the course of the study, a range of different methodologies were observed in classroom practice. There was significant variation among the subjects and classes, and it is not possible to draw the conclusion that any specific model of bilingual education was tied to specific approaches. However, it is an interesting area for all teachers involved to reflect upon as they examine the ways in which they could further refine their work.

As far as teaching materials are concerned, all the teachers were spending a lot of time on preparing communicative tasks. The geography and history teachers did not have English coursebooks that could be used in the classroom and therefore they had to spend a lot of time inventing the necessary materials. In most cases, the CLIL learners were provided with handouts with special vocabulary concerning particular topics. Additionally, the CLIL teachers used a lot of visual materials such as films, pictures, maps and postcards in order to facilitate learning. One of the biology teachers used an American coursebook during the lessons. Additionally, the CLIL learners had their own Polish coursebook which they could use at home. What is more, the CLIL biology teachers used many real objects, e.g. a skeleton or cells which the CLIL learners could observe through a microscope. These artifacts helped the learners memorize difficult vocabulary.

All the teaching materials were very well prepared but the stage of preparation was very time-consuming for the teachers. For this reason, investment in classroom data projectors and portable computers seems to be a pre-requisite to achieving standards of excellence in materials and subject learning. This is partly due to the need for teachers to give considerable and ongoing attention to maximizing the quality of their materials. It is also related to enabling greater use of the Internet so that students can learn autonomously.

As for the interview, all the teachers answered that they used various techniques, but they all tried to concentrate on the communicative approach. When it comes to the proportion of English used during the lessons, the results were as follows: geography–90 %; biology–90 %; history–50 % and mathematics–40 %. Taking into consideration the observation data, in the case of geography and biology there was about 80 % of English and in the case of history and mathematics about 30 %. When asked about the orientation of the bilingual lessons, all the teachers answered that they were rather Polish-medium oriented due to the fact

that the CLIL learners are obliged to take their final upper secondary school examination in Polish. However, all the CLIL teachers claimed that content was *not* affected by the use of the foreign language, but it required more effort and time, both on the part of the teacher and the learner. When asked whether they were different teachers in English than in Polish, the teachers provided the following answers:

> No, the lesson looks the same (mathematics).
> Yes, it's different—I introduce a lot of English vocabulary, translate certain aspects into Polish and do less exercises because there is not time (geography);
> Yes, I am. I try to use certain methods which are used in the language classroom (biology).

As can be seen from the answers, the geography and biology CLIL lessons differed from the ones in Polish, while the mathematics CLIL lessons did not differ, which was also visible during the observations.

When asked about their professional needs, the teachers provided the following answers:

> To be a good teacher.
> To have more teaching materials (films, presentations, articles, etc.).
> To have a course book for geography in English.
> To have materials in English preparing for the final examination (e.g. a set of exercises).
> To have good students who want to study hard.
> I would like to be better paid.
> I wish there were more teacher trainings organized.
> I need some support from other teachers.
> A special curriculum for the bilingual stream of education.
> Student and teacher exchanges between bilingual schools.

As can be seen from the data, the CLIL teachers have different needs; some of them are connected with professional development, some are connected with the learners and some are financial in nature.

7 Conclusions

To sum up, it can be seen from the data presented above that CLIL teachers seem to use various types of teaching techniques during the content lessons conducted in English. Some of them give short lectures, while others prefer a more communicative approach and introduce a lot of pair and group work activities. However, all of them have to put a lot of effort into preparing teaching materials and a lot of them still do not really know how to teach content subjects in a foreign language. They do not know how much Polish they should use (20 %, 30 % or more) and how to introduce more complicated concepts.

In order to provide teachers with guidance concerning teaching in CLIL, a special framework was established. This *European framework for CLIL teacher education* aims to provide a set of principles and ideas for designing CLIL

professional development curricula. Additionally, the framework seeks to serve as a tool for reflection. It is proposed as a conceptual lens and model, not as a prescriptive template. This framework is the result of a CLIL curriculum development (CLIL-CD) project financed by the *Empowering language professionals program* of the European Centre for Modern Languages. As CLIL programs in the Council of Europe member states differ from country to country in their organization, content, intensity and choice of languages, the *European framework for CLIL teacher education* focuses on macro-level universal competences of CLIL educators. These have been identified through an examination of teacher education learning and curricular needs in CLIL contexts, and through a pan-European process of consultation.

CLIL, as practiced in Poland, but also in a number of other countries, seems to be a very convincing approach to promoting higher language proficiency and a better understanding of content. However, it would benefit enormously if it was integrated methodologically into an approach defined by the principles of learner autonomy and if it made better use of the resources and the functionalities of modern technologies. In the opinion of the present author, CLIL has a lot to offer foreign language teachers. It is a methodology which endorses student-centered lessons, recognizes the fact that students are worthwhile individuals and allows learners to really communicate in a classroom environment.

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Part IV
Research Tools

Teacher Narratives in Teacher Development: Focus on Diary Studies

Danuta Gabryś-Barker

Abstract Teachers' perceptions of their own classroom experiences and the way they are reflected upon and interpreted constitute a significant factor in the evolution and re-structuring of teachers' initial beliefs about teaching and learning. This paper discusses diary writing as a thinking process and one of the best tools for developing reflective thinking, which can be employed in a variety of teaching and learning contexts, for both experienced and inexperienced/pre-service teachers. Diaries are instances of teacher narratives which can contribute to constructing professional knowledge, as they record and interpret teachers' stories in a systematic fashion and are contextualized within the teacher's working environment. The paper demonstrates the value of diary writing for the professional development of teachers by presenting a selection of diary studies implemented either in teacher training programmes or carried out for independent research purposes. These studies elaborate on a whole variety of focus areas in teacher development, such as lesson effectiveness, self-assessment or affectivity, which are important teaching concerns during the various stages of a professional career and, most important of all, on the development of reflectivity. This article is based on a more detailed description of diary use in the pre-service teacher education to be found in Gabryś-Barker (2012).

1 Introduction

This article discusses diary writing as one of the best tools for developing reflective thinking, which can be employed in a variety of teaching and learning contexts, for both experienced and inexperienced/pre-service teachers. Diaries are instances of teacher narratives that contribute to constructing professional

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knowledge, as they record and interpret teachers' stories in a systematic fashion and are contextualized in the teacher's working environment. The motivation for them comes from teachers' desire to comprehend their own practices and to improve them. Also, writing is fundamental to thinking as it allows the writer to name, categorize and interpret and, later on, re-interpret experiences at first subjectively described. This is done in the form of verbalized thoughts, emotions and subsequently reflections for future actions. Diaries enhance the development of experiential learning, which is grounded in reflection on classroom incidents but supported in their analysis by theory. The thinking involved in identifying and interpreting diary-recorded incidents is also a way of questioning the trainees' beliefs about teaching previously imported by them into their classrooms. This thinking process serves either to validate or reject these beliefs. This process of reflecting facilitates one's learning through narrated reflection. In Moon's (2004, pp. 189–193) words, it becomes a tool for increasing "active involvement in learning and personal ownerships of learning", and it helps to "explore the self, personal constructs of meaning and understand one's view of the world. (…) To enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-improvement. (…) To enhance creativity and make better use of intuitive understanding".

This broad perspective on diaries sees them as not only a tool for professional development but also as a personal device for oneself, for one's pupils and one's peer group. This last aspect attaches a social value to diary writing; sharing with students and collaborating with peers are important elements in professional teaching which cannot be emphasised enough.

2 Sample Studies

2.1 An Overview of Research Areas

This paper reports on a selection of studies, all based on teacher narratives presented in the form of diaries/journals. The thematic concerns of these studies address various areas of teacher/learner experiences. Appel (1995) describes the first years of his professional development as an EFL teacher. His development and description of the constantly changing approach to teaching are well documented in the diary. Journal writing as a way of developing reflective thinking was the major object of study of Richards and Ho (1998), who, by introducing journal writing in their MA TESL training programme for in-service secondary school teachers at City University of Hong Kong, aimed to prove that this form of teacher narration is highly conducive to in-service teachers' development of reflective thinking. They concluded that teacher training programmes implementing diary writing should focus first on this type of writing by demonstrating and discussing

Table 1 Diary themes—sample studies (Gabryś-Barker 2012, p. 168)

	Theme	Author (s)
1.	Diary as a general reflection on lesson effectiveness (planning and management)	Loughran (1996)
2.	Diary thematic concerns as focus for reflection	Loughran (1996), Gabryś-Barker (2011)
3.	Diary as a self-assessment tool of one's ability to reflect on one's teaching experiences	Samuels and Betts (2007)
4.	Diary writing and the importance of feedback as a factor conducive to the development of reflectivity	Bain et al. (1999), Sutton et al. (2007)
5.	Diary as expression of emotional and cognitive dissonance in teacher development	Golombek and Johnson (2004), Verity (2000)
6.	Diary representing stages of teacher development	Appel (1995)
7.	Diary writing as a way of developing reflective thinking	Richards and Ho (1998)
8.	Diary as expression of affectivity in language learning experiences	Schmidt and Frota (1986)
9.	Diary as a tool for the development of teacher learning and student learning	Herndon (2002)
10.	Pre-service teachers' perceptions of diary writing	Loughran (1996), Gabryś-Barker (2009)

the examples of reflective journals available in the literature on the subject. In his study, Loughran (1996) looked at attitudes student-teachers manifest to reflecting on their and their peers' teaching experiences, as expressed in their journal entries. The description includes a presentation of the major types of concerns trainees express in their journal writing that range from initial worries concerning the self to preoccupations related to learning, which appears to constitute evidence of moving on from affectivity to reflection. The same theme of trainee teachers' perceptions of diary writing is touched on in my own study (Gabryś-Barker 2009), which arrives at the conclusion that the initial challenge for the trainees, expressed in their ability to reflect in their diary writing, turned into an exciting experience of personal growth and greater awareness of oneself as a teacher and a person. The theme of affectivity was picked up in Schmidt and Frota's study (1986). The other studies commented on in the chapter looked at different areas of effectiveness in diary writing, such as using the diary as a self-assessment tool of one's reflective capacities (Samuels and Betts 2007) or, more generally, the contribution of a diary to the process of learning to teach (Herndon 2002).

The available studies on diary/journal writing in teacher education in general, and the development of reflective practices in particular, embrace a whole range of focus areas. Each of them, however, considers the development of reflectivity, be it in teaching or in learning, to be the most significant benefit of diary/journal writing (see Table 1). The most representative diary studies in these different areas of teacher classroom experiences are reported on in the following part of the article.

2.2 Stages in Teacher Development

In his study, Appel (1995) covers the period of six years, during which diary writing was used for the purpose of recording both school events and Appel's change of attitudes in his professional development. The selected diary entries are analyzed in terms of the issues that arose in his daily practices. As Appel (1995, p. 12) says,"[w]hat they contain are not systematic observations, but subjective perceptions and impressions of everyday life at school—in short: experience". Having doubts about the publication of his narrative text, Appel concluded that although it was subjective, made up of an insider's views, it could be of value to other teachers because it honestly expressed "the complexities of school practice" and was "a picture of individual development and change".

The diary entries presented are organized chronologically, which allowed Appel to trace back his development as a teacher over a period of six years. These years by no means presented him with uniform and steady challenges. School and teaching were in no way as he expected and classroom reality differed greatly from how it was represented in university courses. The heterogeneous nature of school experiences in different periods of teaching is demonstrated by three clearly defined periods identified by Appel (1995, pp. 15–16) as *survival, change* and *routine*:

> *Survival* describes the difficulties I encountered when I started in my first teaching post, discipline being the most prominent one among them. (…) *Change* is no longer exclusively about coping with the classroom situation, but about influencing it as well. It describes what were, for me, new perceptions as well as new methods. (…) *Routine* looks at what role the changes described in Part Two [Change - addition mine] can play in day-to-day teaching. It shows how humanistic principles can enhance routine work.

In the conclusion to his diary analysis, Appel looks at himself as a teacher with some experience, who has developed over six years of teaching, but whose development and approach to teaching is and must remain in a constant process of change. For him, the next period means different considerations and challenges from those in the initial stage of teaching. They are (1) physical strain, (2) the monotony and repetitiveness of the job, (3) the age gap, and (4) a lack of sense of purpose and value (1995, p. 126). These seem to be very negative and could possibly result in teacher burnout. However, as noted before at the novice stage, Appel plans to act against this negativity by being constantly on the alert not to become inert and continue with his lifelong intention to evolve at this stage, which he regards as a good preventive measure. This passion for further development can benefit from research on one's own teaching, in the form of action-research, documented through diary writing. To conclude, it may then be assumed that diary writing has a role to play at every stage of teacher professional activity.

2.3 Development of Reflective Thinking

By introducing journal writing in the MA TESL training programme for in-service secondary school teachers at City University of Hong Kong, Richards and Ho (1998) intended to validate their belief that this form of teacher narration is conducive to in-service teachers' development of reflective thinking. They introduced their in-service teachers to journal writing by presenting them with specific guidelines. They included procedures such as: technical information, establishing the readership (the teacher and a fellow teacher), offering a time schedule for diary writing (twice a week), and reviewing the entries every two or three weeks, etc. The guidelines included examples of reflection questions about the lesson described in the entry, but they also gave teachers a free hand in adding extra questions.

Having analyzed the questions the teachers asked in their diaries, Richards and Ho (1998, p. 160) classified them into those relating to theories of teaching, approaches and methods evaluating teaching and self-awareness. Hierarchically, the number of entries for each of the above was as follows:

- evaluation of one's teaching: 185 references;
- descriptions of approaches and procedures: 108 references;
- theories of teaching: 93 references;
- self-awareness: 20 references.

In more detail the above topics were described as (1998, p. 160):

> *Theories of teaching*: The teachers more frequently engaged in citing theories or evaluating them than in trying to apply them to their classroom practices.
> *Approaches and methods:* The teacher wrote more frequently about the methods and procedures they employed than about the belief systems or contextual factors underlying these techniques and procedures. Their focus was primarily on classroom experience, and there were few references that went beyond the classroom to the broader contexts of teaching and learning.
> *Evaluating teaching:* Entries in this category focused primarily on problems that arose and on how problems were solved.
> *Self-awareness:* There were few entries that related to this aspect of teaching.

The study sought to demonstrate the relationship between journal writing and the development of reflectivity. This was interpreted by looking at general patterns in each individual teacher's journal entries from the perspective of: "(1) a greater variety of types of critical reflectivity; (2) being better able to come up with a new understanding of theories; (3) being better able to reflect across time-spans and experiences; (4) being better able to go beyond the classroom to broader contexts; (5) being better able to evaluate both positively and negatively; (6) being better able to solve problems; (7) greater focus on *why* questions" (Richards and Ho 1998, pp. 165–166).

Ultimately, Richards and Ho (1998, p. 167) arrived at inconclusive findings. Out of thirty-two journals, only 20 % of questions asked by the teachers were

reflective in nature; only six journals could be considered reflective and very little development was observed in respect of the development of the teachers' reflectivity. The teachers' own evaluations pointed to the usefulness of this activity (71 % of the informants); however, the length of time spent on journal writing (only two months) was seen as insufficient to develop more effective skills in reflecting upon one's own classroom practices and arriving at an understanding of it. Richards and Ho also concluded that individual teachers' inabilities to write a reflective text were also a negative factor in the study. This led them to suggest that perhaps training programmes implementing journal writing should focus first on this type of writing by demonstrating and discussing examples of comprehensive reflective journals which are available in the literature on the subject.

2.4 The Diary Focus in the Case of Pre-Service Teachers

Loughran's (1996) study has two dimensions: (1) it looks at attitudes that student-teachers have towards reflecting on their own and their peers' teaching experiences, as expressed in their journal entries, (2) it also discusses the major concerns that trainees chose to comment on in their journals throughout the training programme. According to Loughran, certain trends can be observed in respect of prevailing attitudes. The trainees most often express open-mindedness, then responsibility, and, lastly, whole-heartedness. Loughran also points out that the attitudes expressed by trainees are "affected by the student–teacher concerns. Shifts from concerns related to self to concerns related to learning parallel the development of preparedness to reflect" (1996, p. 88). Thus, the same study also looks at the major concerns as expressed in trainees' journal entries, presented in a hierarchical form in Table 2.

The findings of Loughran's (1996) study illustrate the general tendency pre-service teachers seem to exhibit to focus on themselves and their 'confrontation' with learners, and only later on the learning process itself. In this study, the sequence of major concerns on the course itself, through self-focus and then teaching and learning, was noted at the beginning of the training course. However, with time, a visible shift took place; the pre-service teachers began showing more concern with teaching effectiveness and learning progress observed. Additionally, their initial concern with the self and the course and its value decrease. Thus, Loughran concludes (1996, p. 86):

> The emphasis on these two concerns may well be a guide to the degree to which these student–teachers are reflecting on their developing teaching skills. Such a shift in concern toward one's own teaching and teacher/pupil learning is worthy of note as recognition of this can be used as a way of concurrently influencing the nature of the pre-service curriculum, so that the emphasis of the course can better match the perceived needs and concerns of the student-teachers.

Table 2 The main concerns in diary entries (based on Loughran 1996, p. 85) quoted in Gabryś-Barker 2012, p. 174)

Focus	Examples of topics
Specific topics of the training course	Course structure, its format and its requirements
	Micro-teaching
	Journal writing
	This research project
	Communication
	Teaching and learning (the course)
	Schools; their role and function
	University lecturers/mentors
Concerns about self in various areas of performance	Classroom management and discipline
	Personality traits, concerns and perceived weaknesses
	Ability to praise students
	Prospects of teaching as a career
Concerns about classroom teaching	School placement experiences
	Assessing students' work
	Teaching experiences other than on school placement
	Student motivation
	Other teachers; pedagogy, actions or views
	Teaching as an occupation
Concerns about learning	Learning; self and others
	Role of society as shaping force in students learning
	Students' rights and responsibilities
	Student learning

The study demonstrates not only the development of reflective practices in trainee teachers, but also convincingly shows that the implementation of diary writing in teacher training programmes can contribute significantly to the profitable revision of curricula for such courses, where the contents should accurately reflect and address actual trainees' needs.

2.5 Affectivity in Language Learning Experiences of a FL Teacher

Schmidt and Frota's study (1986) is an interesting diary-based research project focusing on a case study of an adult learner, who is also a language teacher, and his experiences of learning Portuguese as a second language. It demonstrates the role of affectivity at every stage of language learning. Being a language teacher, the subject shows his awareness of learning processes but also his evaluation of the teaching procedures he was exposed to in the classroom context. All this is embedded in affectively marked comments on his attitudes and his strongly

integrative motivation to be able to communicate with Brazilians in their native language. The study of this learning story falls into three distinctive learning periods:

1. Exposure to Brazilian Portuguese out of the classroom and an intense need to be able to interact with people around him, as expressed in the diary entry:

   I hate the feeling of being unable to talk to people around me. I am used to chatting with people all day long, and I don't like this silence (1986, p. 243).

2. Formal instruction in Portuguese (joining a course), in which the narrator seems to be very critical of the methodology used by the teacher in class, which has nothing to do with communicative language teaching (using learning drills out of context). She expresses her dissatisfaction by saying:

   "We are practicing affirmative answers", I objected again, I'm not married, but L said. "These questions have nothing to do with real life". My blood was boiling, but I shut up. (…) I guess I can remember I am not the teacher here, try not to provoke L too much, and make the best of the resources that I get (1986, p. 244).

3. Abandoning the formal course and embarking on an individual programme of learning through immersion (interaction with native speakers of Portuguese), the narrator searches for opportunities to use the language and develops his own communication strategies:

   (…) his face showed complete non-comprehension. I grabbed my dictionary. 'Comfortable' is 'comfortavel' but it flashed through my mind that perhaps you can only say chairs are comfortable, not people (1986, p. 246)

This case study illustrates very well the learning strategies of a very special kind of a language learner, that is to say, a language teacher whose awareness of the nature of learning and teaching obviously influences not just his own learning strategies. It has also inculcated a critical attitude to certain methods of teaching as too distant from learners' needs and thus de-motivating. But more than anything else, this diary study demonstrates that a successful language learner is one whose learning processes are affectively-driven.

2.6 Diary as a Self-Assessment Tool

In Samuels and Betts's (2007) mini-scale study, professional development journal writing was used as a self-assessment tool in a group of pre-service teachers involved in their initial teacher training programme, lasting one academic year. The objective of the project was to observe whether journal writing and trainees' assessment of the way they analyse their teaching experiences would contribute to the development of their reflective abilities. Nine students were asked to evaluate their journal entries according to a self-assessment schedule established in

advance. Additionally, weekly peer-feedback sessions were carried out to share reflections on journal entry assessment.

Self-assessment was conducted in a written form, based on clear-cut criteria for evaluation (Samuels and Betts 2007, p. 247, cited in Gabryś-Barker 2012, pp. 179–180):

- *I am reflecting on an experience.*

  Did I notice/register what happened?
  Did I record how I felt and how I responded?
  Did I pay attention to something significant that happened?
  Did I value my experience and my response as worth reflecting on and learning from?

- *I am reflecting on ideas and concepts that I have read or heard about or thought of myself.*

  Am I making sense of the ideas by linking them to past experience or learning and to other concepts?
  Am I questioning ideas and concepts, testing them against experience and other opinions?
  Am I challenging my assumptions and my judgements?
  Am I prepared to think about the ideas in a new way?
  Am I planning ways to try out new ideas in practice?
  Am I working out, thinking through, action plans?
  Have I experimented with the new ideas and ways of doing things?
  Am I consciously learning from my experiments?
  What have I discovered by self-assessing my journal entry and what do I want to do about this?

When evaluating the levels of reflection in the students' entries, the researchers adopted the scale devised by Bain et al. (1999, p. 275), which comprises reporting, responding, relating, reasoning and reconstructing. The whole project lasted three academic terms, during which various activities related to journal writing were performed:

- Term 1: the beginning of journal writing.
- Term 2: a peer session introducing self-assessment schedules to be used; completion of sample journal entries' assessment scheme.
- Term 3: the final assessment of the level of reflection expressed in journal entries; student discussion of the efficacy of self-assessment during the final course: tutorials; interviews with two selected students on the development of reflectivity.

The data collected at various stages of this project demonstrated that journal writing and self-assessment of experiences contributed to the development of the subjects' ability to reflect. Four mechanisms were diagnosed as conducive to this

development: *revisiting, structure, taking responsibility* and *metacognition.*
Revisiting their own experiences recorded in journal entries at the assessment stage
allowed the students to expand on their reflections, go deeper in their interpreta-
tion, incorporate a longer term perspective, and thus improve their reflection.
Structure given in the form of questions brought about a more comprehensive
picture of the experience recorded and allowed student teachers to ground it in
theory and past experiences. *Taking responsibility* derived from the individual
need to challenge his/her own actions thorough reflection but also from the obli-
gation to share his/her thinking with peers. Finally, using *metacognition* made the
students' more explicitly aware of their own ways of thinking and reflecting.

This research project demonstrates not only the value of journal writing in the
development of reflectivity, but also shows that different types of feedback play an
important role in it. Generally, it was peer feedback sessions that were seen as
facilitative and motivating (Samuels and Betts 2007, p. 280):

> Peer supported review of reflections, carried out verbally and structured by the schedule,
> was valued by all the students. Two students identified this activity as the most significant
> prompt for their reflective development, indicating that part of the value lay in the
> alternative perspectives they gained and part in the peer encouragement and support.

Despite the generally positive findings of the study, Samuels and Betts are
aware that not all the students' opinions were equally upbeat, as some of the
subjects found the experience of diary writing tiresome, time-consuming and
ineffective. Samuels and Betts (2007) cautiously conclude that perhaps the length
of the study and personal variations (for example in the forms of the support given
to the students or the time given for intervention; some students may be slower
than the others) need to be factored into a more extensive project on how to
develop productive reflection by means of journaling.

2.7 Teacher Learning–Student Learning

Herndon's study (2002) is an example of a personal account of experiences in
teaching literacy skills in a literature class given to immigrant students. It dem-
onstrates how a teacher's growing awareness of her professional competence, and
her critical evaluation of it, can influence the learning process in the classroom.

Although evaluating herself positively as a competent and confident teacher,
Herndon often felt that something was missing in her teaching; as she writes, "I
was an effective teacher, no doubt, but somehow my teaching didn't feel right to
me" (2002, p. 35). Through careful observation of her own practices, she sees that
she is too much in control of the ideas expressed in class when discussing literary
texts, which was in fact contrary to her declared beliefs and the training received in
teaching, which "had emphasized the importance of allowing students ownership
over the reading and writing process" (2002, p. 35). However, Herndon is able to
dig out the reason for the problem, which she sees as residing in too much

excitement involved in reading and enthusiasm for the literary texts discussed, so that "[i]n the classroom, my ideas too often predominated, and my voice was too often the most assured in the room" (2002, p. 35).

In the course of writing an autobiographical reflective essay (another form of diary) on her professional growth, Herndon examines the shift in her position from an over-dominating to a more satisfactory, retiring and involving teacher of literature. All this is demonstrated in selected excerpts from her diary. The reflective comments are grouped under the following headings which represent a chronological account of the shift in Herndon's teaching approach: *curriculum planning and implementation*, *reading workshop: independent reading and response*, *short story unit: full-class reading, discussion and response*, *book-group: small-group reading and response*, *conclusion.* The shift observed is a result of Herndon's use of new teaching procedures such as:

- the use of text-orienting strategies to prepare students to read literary texts, e.g. by using story maps or discussing formal discourse properties to aid reading comprehension;
- focusing on different patterns of interaction with a text, e.g. individual ideas of readers and social sharing in group tasks;
- application of new modes of teaching in other courses, e.g. a social studies class.

The later fragments of the diary demonstrate vividly how the learners took in and internalized the new modes of reading literary texts and commenting on them in their journals (introduced by the teacher as part of reading assignments). Herndon herself comments on the improvement in her literacy classes and their success (2002, p. 48):

> Although group interactions play an important role in my students' literary experiences, perhaps most significant are the opportunities provided for students to derive intellectual satisfaction and personal meanings from thestories they read.

The first-person account of Herndon's own learning experiences in how to teach effectively shows the evolution of her teaching. This transformation process describes the teacher and her learning, which enhanced her learners, learning and their more genuine involvement with the literary texts discussed in class. In Herndon's words (2002, p. 48):

> My own growth as a teacher of reading, as I learned to step aside, allowing my students and their learning to take center stage, was as significant as my students' growth as readers over the course of the semester.

The study presented here shows the effectiveness of teaching as a guiding process in which the teacher renounces the position of a leader and becomes a facilitator. This is achieved very convincingly as it is a first-hand experience of a teacher and not a book-prescribed methodology (Gabryś-Barker 2012).

2.8 Critical Incidents in Pre-service Teachers' Classroom Experience

In this study (Gabryś-Barker 2012) a group of 23 trainee teachers of EFL wrote teacher diaries over a period of an academic year in their final year of gaining qualifications to become EFL teachers. Diary writing, which constituted part of the diploma requirements, was carried out during the period of school placement. The focus of the diary entries was on the following:

1. Identification and interpretation of selected critical incidents that occurred in class.
2. Topic concerns of pre-service teachers and shifts in concerns across the teaching practice period.
3. Self-evaluation: successes and failures rate at different stages.
4. Trainees' final evaluation of themselves: strong and weak points.

The study presents a fairly optimistic picture of the group, as the trainees showed themselves to be not only informed but also motivated and enthusiastic, despite occasional setbacks during in the first period of the placement. Their approach to their teaching illustrates what Furlong and Maynard (1995) call the *early idealism* of student teachers in the initial phase of their school experiences (Arthur et al. 1997, p. 78):

> (…) it is a stage in which idealism is represented by student teachers' simplistic views of teaching and learning, and the expectation that they will be able to build friendly relationships with pupils, which they link with memories of either effective teachers who were able to do this, or ineffective teachers, who were not.

They are aware of their successes and failures, but also sensitive to their learners and open to change and further development. Although their conceptions about teaching are initially quite naive and ungrounded in classroom reality and sometimes theoretically-based or intuitive and idealistic, with time and reflective practice, they become more contextualized.

Leshem and Trafford (2006, p. 24), who implemented trainee narratives as core methodology in professional training, make the observation that their trainees' stories demonstrated certain similarities to reflective learning:

- being easy to facilitate as a learning process;
- requiring low/nil consumption of educational sources;
- possessing a constantly increasing reservoir of learning capabilities;
- displaying a capacity to extend learning from the individual to the group.

These characteristics of reflective learning were also present in the diaries of these trainee teachers and demonstrable in the shift in teaching concerns singled out, their ways of reflecting upon classroom episodes (critical incidents–CIs), their approach to success and failure, their ability to evaluate strong and weak points, and also planning of their future professional development. The shift in the

trainees' concerns shows a change from focusing on oneself, one's emotions and authority (as threatened by misbehavior incidents), to the effectiveness of teaching and learner performance.

In identifying and reflecting upon CIs, no striking developmental differences were observed, which was due to the limited time over which the data was collected. Arthur et al. (1997, p. 81) see the difficulties in analyzing classroom practice that the trainees undergo as "difficulties in breaking down classroom practice in a way that enables them to begin to make sense of what is happening and how it is happening". This is also attributable to a lack of "language for talking about teaching" (1997, p. 81). Arthur et al. (1997, p. 81) suggest that:

> It is here, in the early stages, when a student teacher is attempting to make sense of basic classroom practice, that indicators of competence, or statements describing competence, may be of use. They should be used as neither as a tick list of skills or behaviors to adopt, nor a simple checklist for the student teacher, subject mentor, or tutor against which to assess progress, but as a means of enabling student teachers to get inside the 'language' of teaching.

Some indications of development emerged from descriptive comments, first focusing on just reporting on the events to productive reflections searching for the interpretation of the identified incidents, based on the teaching concepts and constructs understood as "the language for talking about teaching" (Arthur et al. 1997).

Diary entries constitute an expression of student teachers' "internal narratives emerging from their intrapersonal experience" (Brown 2006, p. 681). Brown sees them as describing the internal forces and desires that compete within each student to "develop a coherent and effective teacher identity through a process of *becoming*" (2006, p. 681). The articulation of experiences, often traumatic, illustrates each individual trainee's *personal theories* (Tann 1993). In Tann's study of teacher personal stories, the researcher observed that (1993, p. 68):

> (…) students found it very hard to articulate and, if articulated implicitly, they found it very hard to spot the assumptions and to challenge them. (…) A second area of difficulty for the students was in challenging their beliefs and practice. (…) Thirdly, students experienced great difficulty in making a personal-public link. Students explained that "we don't know the words". This means that they had difficulty in articulating their experiences in anything other than colloquial terms, conceptualizing their comments and, literally, "looking things up in the index" of a text so that they could "tune into the public theory".

The importance of professional language competence, i.e. knowledge of terminology in the area, knowledge of concepts and constructs demonstrated in classroom occurrences and procedures, constituting a vital element in student teachers' ability to articulate their experiences, is also commented on by Regan (2007) in his project on the use of reflective journals in post graduate studies.

In this study, the task of identifying CIs presented trainees with major difficulties for the same reasons. Initially, the incidents were very general and unfocused, colloquial (for the lack of language and terminology) descriptions of classroom events, but, with time, they became more specific, which indicates a

growth of classroom awareness and teacher presence in 'here and now' contexts, and also an enhanced ability to articulate these features. The theoretical knowledge the trainees brought to their classroom first seen by them as irrelevant, became 'situated', i.e. analyzed and applied in a given context. The shift from reflection in-action and reflection-on-action more and more frequently turned into reflection-for-action; in other words, it would allow the trainees to use it in a controlled fashion in creating critical events (CE). Responding to an event and reporting on it turn into reasoning and reconstructing reflections, signs of productive reflectivity (Bain et al. 1999). There is still a difference in the ability to be productive in different types of incidents, where failures are more carefully reconstructed and reasoned about, since they are perceived as problems and challenges, whereas successes are more descriptive in nature. Lack of productive comments in the case of successes may mean that, being taken for granted, the skills on which they are based may slip away and thereby not enter the teaching repertoire of those trainees. Paradoxically, the failures as described in this study are more conducive to professional development than the success stories.

The growing ability to reflect productively is most visible in the differences between the types of the comments made, where at the end of diary writing there is less description than interpretation of the identified incidents. Moreover, in the course of analysis at the reconstruction stage, the trainees learnt how to use theoretical sources and ground their interpretation in learnt knowledge rather than in intuitions and their initial beliefs. The predominance of affective responses and comments at the beginning gives way to reflections which are more cognitive in nature, although affectivity is never far away.

In evaluating their performance across the three stages of diary writing, a growing success rate and decreased level of perceived failure is generally observed in the trainees' evaluation of their teaching achievements. However, these levels change within individual areas of teaching. The trainees see themselves as more successful at the end of their practice period at language teaching itself (methods, techniques), whereas they still struggle with instances of misbehaviour. Also, their growing exigency contrasted with their initial leniency in respect of their evaluation of learners' performance makes them more demanding in this area and therefore more prone to seeing themselves as failing more often in this domain at the end than at the beginning of their practice period. The comments made in the diary entries with respect to learner performance and its evaluation certainly show the trainees as more capable of in-depth understanding of the teaching/learning process.

Although, with time, the trainees' concerns about themselves and the dominance of affectivity give way to more knowledge-related issues in their classroom performance, the trainees continue to see their affective features (motivation, enthusiasm, friendly attitudes) and personality traits (open-mindedness, creativity) as their strong points. Their weaknesses are purely knowledge related (how to teach, classroom procedures, lesson planning). What may be viewed as very positive is that the trainees accept the need for constant development of their FL skills, for expanding one's teaching context by teaching different age groups and at

different levels, and for careful monitoring of one's development. They also emphasize the social aspect of the teaching profession by pointing out their desire to share their own experiences and give feedback to other teachers.

The results of this project demonstrated that focused diary writing, if well-structured, can motivate trainee-teachers to develop an active approach to their teaching and deepen their classroom awareness and teacher presence. The trainees' initial reluctance to write reflective diaries turned into a very positive perception of the experience, which added an extra dimension to their periods of teaching practice. Experience shows that diary writing needs to be closely monitored by the supervisor and that regular feedback should be given at each stage, alongside school mentor's feedback on the trainees' performance in the classroom (Gabryś-Barker 2012).

3 Conclusions

To conclude, it seems that diary writing should be included in teacher training programmes and it should be employed at different stages of teacher development. As stated in Gabryś-Barker (2012), at the early stages of professional development, diary writing should become an instrument for not only explicitly formulating one's views on teaching and learning but also examining their origins and testing their value. In middle stages, teachers should be able to give grounds for these views and to create their own new paradigms and models for teaching. In the later stages of teaching, when greater experience allows teachers to grow more confident of their own practices, diary writing becomes "a way of experimenting with new ideas and reflecting on their effectiveness through structured narratives and promoting creativeness" (2012, p. 189). I believe that the study of Gabryś-Barker (2012, p. 189) shows very convincingly that:

> the use of diary writing is most significant for pre-service teachers for, when introduced as an obligatory task and therefore a matter of routine practice, it becomes a natural and efficacious way of analyzing teaching and molding a reflective practitioner right at the start of his/her career.

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Observations: The Eyes and Ears
of Foreign Language Lessons

Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska

Abstract The article presents the results of a study of foreign language lessons conducted in the first grade of the primary school in classes in which there were both 7-year-old and 6-year-old learners. The study focused on the analysis of the language used in classes, the rapport between the teacher and the learners as well as the conduct of 6-year-olds in the course of the lessons and the discipline problems occurring in class. The lessons were audiotaped and then transcribed for quantitative analysis of the data on the classroom language of both the teachers and the learners. The amount of the teachers' L2 use as well as the functions of the teachers' utterances in the foreign language were under scrutiny. L2 use of the learners was also investigated. Qualitative analysis relied on both the transcriptions of the recordings and the observation sheets filled in by the researcher during the lessons. The target language used by the teachers during the lessons varied substantially in terms of both its quantity and quality. It served mainly the function of teaching the target language and to a lesser extent communicating with the children. Learners' L2 use was less varied as the amount of it was comparable across all the lessons under investigation. The 6-year-olds who were observed for the purpose of the study in most cases participated in the lessons and performed the tasks in a manner similar to their 7-year-old peers.

1 Theoretical Background

Lesson observation is a research method which enables the researcher to gain data directly from the context of the lesson. Observation of the lesson maybe structured and systematic, or unstructured and unsystematic; participant or non-participant; overt or covert; in natural settings or in unnatural settings; self-observation or

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observation of others (Flick 1998, p. 137). The main advantage of this method is that there is an opportunity to collect authentic information about the language used during the lesson, the teacher's and the learners' behaviour in class, the activities used and the rapport established between the teacher and the students. Structured observation is systematic, it provides numerical data for analysis, and it is carried out by means of observation schemes. Unstructured observation is unsystematic and enables the collection of qualitative data on the lesson observed. The value of observation lies in the possibility of observing teachers in action rather than only asking them about their teaching in a questionnaire or an interview. What is more, it might be interesting to compare the results of observation with those derived from interviews or questionnaires, because it may sometimes happen that people do different things from what they say they do. The disadvantage of observation was voiced by Labov (1970) in his idea of the *observer's paradox*. According to it, people stop behaving naturally when they realize that they are being observed. So, on the one hand, observation is the best method of obtaining real data about lessons, but, on the other hand, if the teacher and the learners realize that they are being observed, the lesson is not the same as it would have been if there had been no researcher present in the classroom.

There are two methods of studying oral discourse in the classroom: *interaction analysis* and *discourse analysis*. Interaction analysis uses some kind of coding system to investigate the communication patterns that occur in the classroom (McKay 2006, p. 89). Discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used (McCarthy 1991, p. 5). Discourse analysis may be further divided into: *conversation analysis* (analysis of naturally occurring talk to determine what is being accomplished by the speakers) and *ethnography of communication* (investigation of the influence of culture and social realities to find explanations for meaning and behavior).

Chaudron (1995) distinguishes the following as four traditions of classroom research: psychometric studies, interaction analysis, discourse analysis and ethnographic studies. Psychometric studies involve some treatment implemented in experimental groups and comparing the results of this treatment with control groups on the basis of tests. This kind of research may also analyze relationships between various tasks and behaviors in class on the one hand and language achievements on the other. Interaction analysis was developed under the influence of sociological studies and group processes. This kind of research exploits observation schemes for the analysis of classroom interaction in the form of direct and indirect teacher's influence (Flanders 1970). In addition, interaction analysis focuses on the influence of learners' behaviors on classroom atmosphere and interaction initiated by the teacher. Discourse analysis deals with the structural–functional forms of classroom discourse. The four basic forms of discourse are: structuring, enquiring, responding and reacting (Fanselow 1977). This approach to classroom research may undergo modifications due to different ways of naming the categories employed to describe classroom discourse. The fourth tradition of classroom research is derived from sociological and ethnographic studies. In ethnographic research, classroom behaviors are interpreted from the perspective of

the participants and not the observer. Chaudron (1995, p. 52) concludes that two thirds of classroom language is taken up by teacher talk.

Bailey (2006) distinguishes two groups of techniques for collecting data while the lesson is in progress: manual and electronic. Manual techniques involve field notes and observation schedules, which may be standardized or adapted, or specially designed for the purpose of the study. Field notes are collected with the use of a special system of signs, with this description being supplemented with noting down examples of utterances produced by the participants of the lesson, drawing sketches, copying the arrangement of desks in class, or reconstructing the map of the class. Observation schedules applied in classrooms are available in the methodological literature dealing with classroom research (e.g. FIAC—Flanders 1970; FLiNT— Moskowitz 1976; FOCUS—Fanselow 1977; Naiman et al. 1978; COLT—Allen et al. 1984). Electronic data collection in lesson observation consists in audio or video recording. These recordings are then transcribed and the transcriptions are subjected to further analysis.

Teaching a foreign language involves performing two main functions of teacher talk (cf. Niżegodorcew 2007): providing comprehensible language input necessary for the development of communicative competence as well as managing the teaching-learning process. For the analysis of the functions of teacher talk, Bowers (1980, cited in Malamah-Thomas 1987) elaborated *categories of verbal behavior in the language classroom*. The categories comprise the following seven verbal behaviors: presenting, organizing, giving instructions, asking questions, evaluating, answering questions and socializing. Presenting means the act of delivering information directly influencing the learning process. Organizing serves the function of structuring the task or the environment but it does not influence the learning process. Giving instructions encourages nonverbal action as an integral part of the task in the lesson. Asking questions aims at stimulating verbal reactions from an interlocutor. Evaluating constitutes positive or negative feedback. Answering is an act of asking questions. Socialization involves establishing and maintaining interpersonal relations in the lesson and directly influences the learning process.

2 The Study

2.1 Rationale

The incorporation of a foreign language into the lower primary curriculum by the regulations of the Ministry of Education issued in 2008 raises questions as to how foreign language instruction should be conducted in classes with 6- and 7-year-olds. The aims of early foreign language instruction are to sensitize young learners to foreign language sounds, to develop comprehension of the target language, and to motivate the pupils to study the language more systematically in the later stages of L2 learning process. The first two aims may be achieved by exposing learners to a foreign language during lessons. One of the most important sources of L2 in a

lower primary class is teacher talk. The present study is aimed at researching teacher talk in early primary school foreign language classes to find out how much of it is delivered in the target language, how diversified teacher talk in L2 is, and what functions teacher talk in L2 serves. At the same time, learners' language is also subjected to scrutiny. As the educational reform brought about the lowering of the school age of learners, the present researcher was also interested in how 6-year-olds manage in the first grade with respect to a foreign language and what kind of problems foreign language teachers face in these novel conditions.

2.2 Research Questions

The study involved observations of 11 English lessons in the first grade of primary school. The classes were chosen primarily on the basis of the presence of pupils 6 years of age and the willingness of the headmaster to allow the researcher to conduct the study in his or her school. The following research questions were posed:

- How much English does the teacher use during a lesson?
- How much English is used by the learners?
- What is English used for by the teacher?
- What is the rapport between the teacher and the learners?
- How do 6-year-olds behave in class?
- How are discipline problems tackled by the teacher?

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

The observations were conducted by the researcher, and they were audiotaped and transcribed by means of the computer program f4. While transcribing the recordings, the researcher used a special system of coding. In addition to the transcriptions of the lessons, the researcher exploited an observation sheet which she filled in during the lessons.

The research instruments included: audio recordings of 11 lessons (134 pages of transcriptions) and 11 observation sheets filled in by the observer during the lessons. The observation sheets focused on collecting data about the rapport between the teacher and the learners, the behavior of the 6-year-old learners in a class with 7-year-olds, as well as measures taken by the teacher to manage classroom discipline.

2.4 Lessons under Study

All the classed observed were carried out in the first grade of primary school. Four of the lessons were observed in four different schools in Wrocław, one in Warsaw,

Table 1 The population in towns, cities and villages in which the schools under investigation were located

Town/Village	Population
Warsaw	1,714,000
Wrocław	600,000
Legnica	100,000
Lubin	75,000
Brzeg	38,000
Oława	32,000
Polkowice	22,000
Smolec	4,000

while the remaining six were conducted in different primary schools in the Lower Silesia region. Each of the lessons was different in terms of the teaching style, the type of class and the educational context. Lesson 1 was conducted nearly exclusively in the target language. Lesson 2 was taught by the teacher who started teaching the class in the second semester of the first grade as a replacement for another teacher who was on a maternity leave. Lessons 3 and 10 were taught by male teachers, while all the remaining lessons were delivered by female teachers. Lesson 4 was taught by a student of the second year of a teacher training college. Lesson 5 was the only one conducted by a lower primary school teacher. The class in which Lesson 6 was observed had German as their major foreign language (2 h per week) and they had only 1 h of English per week. Lesson 7 was not carried out in a regular classroom as the pupils were taught in the reading room of the school library. This situation influenced the type of activities used during the lesson and caused problems with classroom discipline. While most of the lessons included mixed groups of learners in which there were both 6- and 7-year-olds, Lesson 8 involved a class composed of 6-year-olds only. Lesson 9 was different from the others because basically only one activity was performed. Lesson 11 was observed in an integrative class including children with and without learning deficits.

The schools purposefully chosen for the investigation were located in towns, cities and villages of different population sizes. Table 1 presents the distribution of population in these places.

2.5 Quantitative Data Analysis

2.5.1 The Number of Words

Quantitative analysis of the data involved counting the number of words used in both L1 and L2 by the teacher and the learners. It also took into account the number of sentences in L2 uttered by both the teacher and the learners. The transcripts of the lessons were compiled in order to analyze the number of words used in the lessons by both the teachers and the learners in L1 as well as in L2. The number of words in every lesson was compared to the number of words used by

Table 2 The total numbers of words used in the lesson and the numbers of words used by the teacher

Lesson	All the words	Teacher's words in L1 and L2
Lesson 1	2327	1833 (79 %)
Lesson 2	2172	1531 (70 %)
Lesson 3	2951	2635 (89 %)
Lesson 4	3132	2658 (85 %)
Lesson 5	2664	2021 (76 %)
Lesson 6	2436	1835 (75 %)
Lesson 7	3250	2464 (76 %)
Lesson 8	2457	1636 (67 %)
Lesson 9	3824	2699 (71 %)
Lesson 10	2303	1328 (58 %)
Lesson 11	3256	2704 (83 %)

the teacher in both L1 and L2. In this way, teacher talking time (TTT) was established in percentages for every lesson. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. The number of words produced in the lessons varied from 2,000 to 3,000. The average percentage of lesson time taken up by teacher talking time was 75 %, which was three quarters of the lesson. This high percentage of TTT may be accounted for by the fact that the lessons were observed in grade one, in which the teacher has to provide more input than in the higher grades of lower primary school. The distribution of the time taken up by teacher language was similar across all the observed lessons.

However, closer investigation of the number of words used by the teacher in English shows a greater variety (Table 3). The proportion of English words used by the teacher in a lesson in grade one varied from 4 to 74 % of all the words used in the lesson. The average percentage of English words used by the teachers under study was 30 %. The learners produced English words to a lesser degree.

Table 3 The numbers and the percentages of English words used by the teachers and the learners

Lesson	Teacher's words	Learners' words
Lesson 1	1728 (74 %)	92 (**3** %)
Lesson 2	414 (19 %)	244 (11 %)
Lesson 3	562 (19 %)	124 (4 %)
Lesson 4	1197 (38 %)	277 (8 %)
Lesson 5	962 (36 %)	138 (5 %)
Lesson 6	1208 (50 %)	126 (5 %)
Lesson 7	269 (8 %)	71 (**2** %)
Lesson 8	939 (38 %)	165 (6 %)
Lesson 9	1008 (26 %)	250 (7 %)
Lesson 10	530 (23 %)	257(11 %)
Lesson 11	154 (4 %)	64 (2 %)

Table 4 The percentage of English words in the teacher's language

Lesson	Number of words (%)
Lesson 1	94
Lesson 2	27
Lesson 3	21
Lesson 4	46
Lesson 5	48
Lesson 6	66
Lesson 7	11
Lesson 8	57
Lesson 9	37
Lesson 10	40
Lesson 11	6

However, there was also less variation in different classrooms: the proportion of English words used by learners varied from 3 to 11 %. On average, the English words produced by the pupils in grade one constituted 6 % of all the words.

The teacher's words in the target language were also analyzed in relation to all the words uttered by a particular teacher in the lesson observed. Table 4 shows that there was again considerable variation in the number of English words produced by the teachers in the lessons under investigation. The most extreme situation was revealed in Lessons 1 and 11, as in Lesson 1 the teacher's language contained mainly English words (94 %), while the teacher's language in Lesson 11 contained mainly Polish words as there were only 6 % of words in L2 used by this teacher. This is particularly worrying because a foreign language in grade one can be taught through the medium of L2, as was the case in Lesson 1 but not in Lesson 11. Also in the remaining lessons the percentages of the English words used in the teacher's language were not high (39 % on average).

The percentages of the English words used by the teachers are presented graphically in Fig. 1, which clearly shows the extent of the variation. Lesson 1 (94 %), Lesson 6 (66 %) and Lesson 8 (57 %) all had a relatively high percentage of English words in the teacher's language. Lesson 6 was taught by a teacher who also had classes in junior middle school, while Lesson 8 was taught to a class composed exclusively of 6-year-olds. The lessons in which the number of English words was the lowest were Lessons 7 and 11. Lesson 7 was taught in the reading room of the library and this is why the conditions for conducting a regular class were somewhat difficult. Lesson 11 was delivered to the integrative class and this might have also had some influence on how the lesson was conducted and how the target language was used.

2.5.2 The Number of Sentences

Quantitative data analysis also involved the investigation of the number of sentences uttered by the teacher and the students. The number of all the sentences for each teacher was calculated as well as the number of different sentences in his or
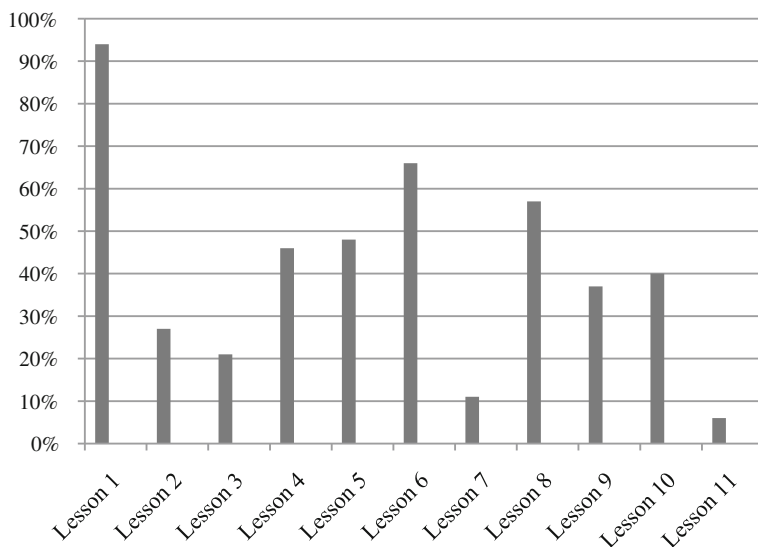
Fig. 1 The percentages of English words in the teacher's language

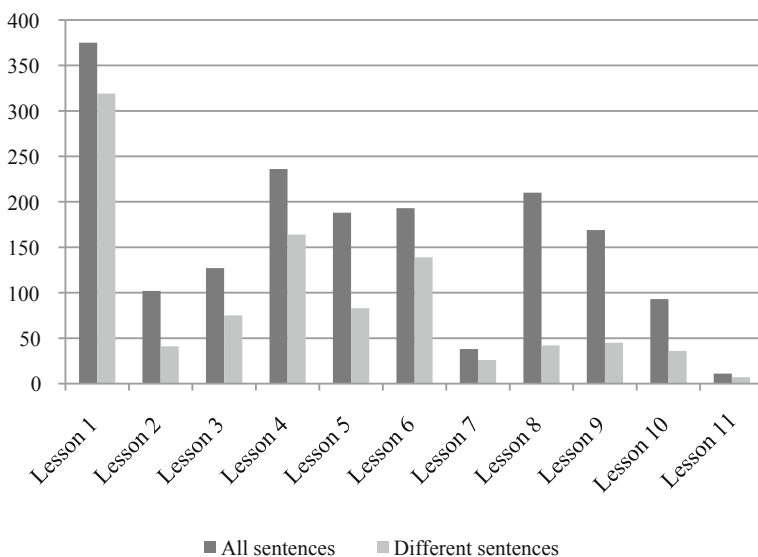■ All sentences   ■ Different sentences

Fig. 2 The number of L2 sentences used by the teachers

her output. The number of all the sentences used in a lesson by the teacher differed in some cases from the number of different sentences used by the same teacher in this lesson. This was the case in Lessons 8 and 9, which means that the teacher used the same sentences over and over again, and although L2 was used, the language was not as varied as in Lessons 4 or 6 (see Fig. 2).
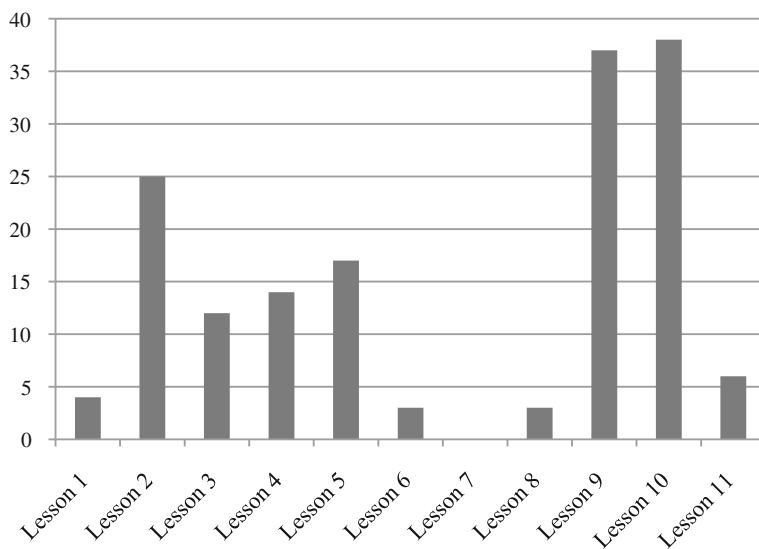
Fig. 3 The number of L2 sentences used by the students

Figure 3 shows that the children did not use many sentences in any of the observed lessons. The greatest number of sentences was used in Lessons 9 and 10, which were both conducted in the same school, yet by two different teachers. Surprisingly, in Lesson 1, in which the teacher used the greatest number of words and sentences in English, and the pupils did not utter that many sentences (only 4). It may mean that the amount of teacher language overwhelmed the children's language. The most worrying was the situation in Lesson 7, in which the students did not produce any sentences in the target language.

2.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the data focused on the functions of the teacher's utterances in L2 used in the lesson. The following functions were coded in the transcription of the lessons: utterances to present new language, asking questions (display and referential), organization of the class, giving instructions for tasks and feedback (positive and negative) (Bowers 1980, as cited in Malamah-Thomas 1987). The numbers of occurrences of particular functions are given in Table 5.

There was great variation in the number of occurrences of particular functions of the foreign language used by the teacher. The number of occurrences of teacher language performing different functions varied from 1 to 80 in the case of presenting, from 7 to 100 in the case of display questions, and from 0 to 28 in the case of referential questions. Similarly, the number of occurrences of teacher language used to organize lessons varied from 0 to 91, and that employed to give

Table 5 Functions of teacher talk in the observed lessons

Lesson no.	Presentation	Questioning		Organization	Instructions	Feedback	
		Display	Referential			Positive	Negative
1	75	44	0	91	81	78	5
2	36	20	18	9	3	0	9
3	4	35	17	32	15	36	1
4	78	100	3	8	41	36	3
5	56	52	28	23	20	24	0
6	21	47	8	35	49	36	0
7	1	7	0	18	0	10	2
8	21	80	25	40	15	40	0
9	80	27	1	21	15	41	2
10	17	55	2	9	10	9	0
11	7	13	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	36	44	9	26	23	28	2
(Sum)	(396)	(480)	(102)	(286)	(249)	(310)	(22)
Total 1845	21 %	26 %	5 %	15 %	13 %	17 %	1 %

instructions for the tasks performed from 0 to 81. Positive feedback ranged from 0 to 78 occurrences. Teachers' utterances conveying negative feedback were less frequent and the numbers of their occurrence ranged from 0 to 9.

The variation in the amount of teacher talk used to present new material resulted from the diversification in the type of the lesson. Lesson 9, in which the teacher used the target language for teaching a poem, contained the greatest number of L2 utterances performing this function. Most of the other lessons observed were devoted to revisions, because the study was conducted in May and June, i.e. at the end of the school year, when the course content had already been covered. In the remaining cases, the differences in the numbers of occurrence of particular functions were less justified and may have resulted from the diversity of the methods of teaching exploited by the teachers.

The greatest number of teacher talk utterances was used to ask display questions (26 % of all the teachers' utterances). Presenting new material was another common function of teacher talk during the lessons observed (21 %). Positive feedback constituted 17 % of all the teachers' production in English. The foreign language employed by the teachers to organize classes comprised 15 % of all the occurrences of teacher talk and giving instructions for tasks constituted 13 %. The teachers under study asked relatively few referential questions (5 %) and they seldom provided negative feedback to the learners (1 %). Teacher talk in the target language served mainly the function of teaching the language (display questions—26 %, presenting new material—21 %). Organizing the class in the target language, constituting communicative use of the target language, resulted in 29 % of the teachers' utterances (organizing classes—15 %, giving instructions for tasks—13 %). The most communicative use of the target language, namely the utterances in which the teachers asked referential questions, occurred in only 1 % of the teacher talk in L2 in

the lessons under investigation. A favorable way of stimulating learners' language development is positive feedback, which was performed by 17 % on the target language. Negative feedback was present in just 1 % of the utterances.

The remaining 2 % of teacher talk in the foreign language was devoted to socialization (maintaining friendly atmosphere in class) and answering learners' questions. Such infrequent use of the target language by the teachers for executing these functions may be explained by low predictability of this kind of language in class; if the teacher is not used to talking to the pupils in L2, he or she may find it difficult to control the language used in spontaneous situations which occur in the lessons.

2.7 Observation Sheets

The observation sheets were filled in by the researcher while she was observing the lessons. The researcher completed them concentrating on the rapport between the teacher and the learners, the behavior of 6-year-old learners in class, and the teacher's way of managing classroom discipline.

2.7.1 Lesson 1

In Lesson 1, in which the TTT in the target language equaled 74 % of the total time of the lesson and the children used the target language just 3 % of the time, the teacher was dominating and she introduced a very quick pace of the lesson, leaving no time for the learners to get bored or to be disruptive. However, in this lesson the learners did not have many opportunities to produce utterances in the target language. In Lesson 1 children reacted very spontaneously to the music played at the beginning. The teacher showed by means of gestures what she meant by her instructions in English. The only instance when the teacher used the mother tongue in this lesson was for eliciting the answers to questions about the story the children listened to. The 6-year-olds did not cause any major difficulties with respect to either studying or behaving in class. The teacher used varied language including language related to classroom discipline and she gave pluses for good behavior and minuses for misbehavior.

2.7.2 Lesson 2

In Lesson 2 only 19 % of the talking time was occupied by the teacher speaking in English, with the learners producing 11 % of the totality of target language used in the lesson. The teacher had been assigned to teach this class only for the duration of the second semester, because the regular teacher was on a maternity leave. In the lesson observed, she was rather reserved and not very open to what the children

were doing or saying. The behavior and participation of the learners who were 6 years old did not differ from those of the 7-year-olds. The teacher waited for silence and asked the learners to stand up and count from 1 to 10 to restore discipline. There was also a teaching assistant in the classroom, who was a psychology student. She was signaling to the teacher by means of gestures that particular learners should stand up to stop talking and interfering with the lesson.

2.7.3 Lesson 3

In Lesson 3 the teacher's use of the target language constituted 19 % of the totality of language used, while the learners' only 4 %. The male teacher in this lesson used a lot of Polish when explaining the test and for the remaining part of the lesson, and he also tended to use L1. He had a friendly attitude to the learners, but his language was somewhat infantile and he sounded overprotective in his approach to the children. One of the 6-year-old learners was the first to finish the test and both 6-year-olds managed to complete the test without any mistakes. Whoever finished the test earlier was asked to come to the teacher to answer his questions about clothes. The teacher gave the learners bad marks for not having done the homework.

2.7.4 Lesson 4

In Lesson 4 the teacher's use of the target language constituted 38 % of all the language used in class while the learners' accounted for 8 %. The teacher, a second year student at a teacher training college, began the lesson with Denison's activities, which the children seemed to be used to. This was aimed at calming the learners down and stimulating both hemispheres for the sake of the activities to be introduced in the lesson. The single 6-year-old in this class was very well behaved and he performed the tasks without any problems. At the end of the lesson, the children sat in a semicircle around the interactive board and started working with it, which they also seemed to be accustomed to. The activities with the interactive board went very smoothly without any discipline problems as the pupils were coming to the screen one by one performing the tasks confidently and happily.

2.7.5 Lesson 5

In Lesson 5 the teacher's L2 production constituted 36 % of total language use while the learners' output equaled 5 %. The class was very quiet and there were no discipline problems. The lesson was the only one taught by a lower primary school teacher. Unfortunately, the teacher had some difficulty producing correct target language forms, which may have had a negative effect on the children's language. The teacher was smiling when stamping the worksheets of the learners who had

finished the task. The learners stood up and moved around a little as it was difficult for them to sit still for 45 min.

2.7.6 Lesson 6

In Lesson 6 the teacher's language in English took up 50 % of the totality of the language used in the lesson, while the learners' L2 output constituted 5 %. The class was relatively well behaved. The learners had two hours of German and one hour of English per week. The teacher was rather reserved. She taught in junior middle school and also taught some classes in primary school. This might have had an influence on the teacher's rapport with the children. She translated all the instructions from English into Polish. The 6-year-olds attending the lesson did not differ significantly from the 7-year-olds.

2.7.7 Lesson 7

The teacher in Lesson 7 used the target language 8 % of the whole talking time while the learners' use of English took up 2 % of the language produced. There were no desks in the reading room of the library where the lesson was conducted, so the children were seated on the carpet. This caused some discipline problems, especially among the boys. A 6-year-old boy did not want to participate and he sat on the only chair available in the room. He also played with some keys, which made some noise. He had problems with his handwriting, which was illegible. The teacher seemed to be annoyed with the behavior of the children.

2.7.8 Lesson 8

In Lesson 8 the teacher's L2 use took up 38 % of the whole talking time while the learners spoken English constituted 6 %. The lesson was conducted in a class composed only of 6-year-olds. One child did not want to sing the song about toys. All the learners were willing to go out of the room to find a flashcard hidden by the remaining learners in the classroom in the hot and cold game. The teacher introduced an activity in which she was the engine and she stopped at each child, asked a question about a school thing and, if the child could name it, he or she joined the train. The lesson was based mainly on activities which involved the children physically and there was only one task based on a coursebook.

2.7.9 Lesson 9

In Lesson 9 26 % of the language used was the teacher's L2 production while 7 % of the whole talking time was taken up by the learners' L2 output. The teacher

moved her lips voicelessly when the learners were to repeat the lines of a chant. A 6-year-old boy was not repeating the chant. There was a little chaos in class. One learner was re-seated because of his unacceptable behavior. Perhaps the learners were disruptive because there was only one activity in the whole lesson (i.e. the chant). The teacher used the target language but it was predominantly the same language based on a chant and there was little variety in the structures employed.

2.7.10 Lesson 10

In Lesson 10 the teacher produced 23 % of the English used in class while the learners 11 %. The lesson was taught by a male teacher and this might have brought about the attitude to the learners, which was rather serious and reserved. The lesson was conducted in a manner appropriate for older learners; however, the pupils performed well and they seemed to be used to such a way of conducting classes. The teacher used pair work and monitored students working in this set-up. A 6-year-old boy was not involved in the activities. The teacher clapped his hands to restore discipline, but there were no major problems with conducting the lesson.

2.7.11 Lesson 11

In Lesson 11 only 4 % of target language use was taken up by the teacher while the learners' output accounted for 2 % of that use. The lesson was carried out in an integrative class and the fact that there was no teaching assistant present on that day seemed to be a problem for the teacher. The children were not asked to sing or to stand up, thus engaging in some kinesthetic activities. A 6-year-old girl was working diligently all the time. The teacher was talkative, but, unfortunately, the lesson was predominantly conducted in the mother tongue. The teacher seemingly created a friendly atmosphere, but the time was not used effectively for teaching communication in a foreign language. This is because the learners were engaged in doing pen-and-paper exercises most of the time.

3 Conclusions

In the observed lessons, the TTT took on the average 75 % of classroom time, but there was considerable variation in the number of English words used in the teacher's language. There was a lesson which was carried out exclusively in the target language and there was a class in which very little English was used. The use of the mother tongue by the teachers in the lower primary school classroom sometimes meant that the language and the attitude of the teacher was infantile and not adjusted to the cognitive level of the learners who were used to more challenging tasks. The teachers were in most cases able to use the target language for

conducting the classes but for some reason they either found it easier to teach in the mother tongue or perhaps they did not believe that the learners would understand them if they spoke in a foreign language. The L2 directed at the pupils should obviously be adjusted to the potential of the learners and its use should be aided with a lot of visual support; nevertheless, as such language is predictable and repetitive, it should be comprehensible to the children.

The pupils did not use many sentences in the target language in the lessons observed. However, there was less variety across the learners in different classes in this respect, compared with the teachers. The number of sentences produced by the learners varied from 3 to 38, but they were in the first grade, which meant that their language production ability might still lag behind language perception. The main function of the target language employed by the teachers was to teach the language but such language was exploited for interaction with individual learners to a lesser degree. A conclusion may be drawn that the foreign language is not used for communication in the classroom but rather for presenting and practicing new language. However, the case of Lesson 1 shows that it is possible to teach the whole lesson in the target language in the first grade of primary school and the foreign language may be used for presenting new language, asking questions, giving feedback, managing the class, giving instructions for tasks and interacting with individual learners.

The teachers usually adopted a supportive attitude to the learners and managed to establish a friendly rapport with them. However, not being their regular class teacher and teaching only two lessons per week put them in a difficult position when it comes to establishing the rules of conduct and ensuring that the children stuck to them during the lessons. With the regular class teacher, the learners are well behaved because they have a strong emotional relationship with him or her, and the process of managing the group takes place on an everyday basis. Besides, it cannot be ruled out that foreign language teachers are not trained to manage a class of 6- or 7-year-olds.

Six-year-olds attending the classes observed generally performed well and managed to act like 7-year-olds. It should be remembered, however, that the 6-year-olds who entered lower primary school in the year 2010 were either qualified by psychologists to join a group of 7-year-olds or the parents decided that their children were ready for formal schooling. This means that the 6-year-olds under investigation might have been mature enough to start lower primary education. Secondly, it is possible that, as a result of having studied with 7-year-olds for the whole year (the observations were conducted at the end of the first grade), the 6-year-olds might have developed more quickly because of the stimulation coming from the group. What is more, in most of the classes under investigation there were from 1 to 5 six-year-olds, and this low number made them easier to manage, control and monitor, compared to classes with 6-year-olds only. In one such lesson there was a greater number of shorter and kinesthetic activities, which may have influenced the progress the learners eventually made.

A general conclusion may also be drawn that both the audio-recordings of the lessons together with their transcriptions ('the ears' of the lessons) as well as the

observation sheets completed by the researcher ('the eyes' of the lessons) contributed to a more comprehensive picture of what happened in the classroom. However, in the contemporary world, we are more and more frequently offered a 3D reality. The question then remains: What should the third dimension of lesson analysis be if it is to provide an even more complete picture of what goes on in the foreign language classrooms?

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The Why and How of Using Mixed Methods in Research on EFL Teaching and Learning

Danuta Wiśniewska

Abstract In recent years the study of learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has ceased to be based solely on quantitative or qualitative methods. Instead, the third orientation, mixed methods research, has gained in popularity. This article reports on a review of a sample of EFL mixed methods articles. The findings of the review show how mixed methods are conceptualized and justified in EFL classroom research as well as what ways and levels of integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches occur most frequently. Some suggestions for further research are also offered.

1 Introduction

In recent years, mixed methods research has become increasingly popular in many areas of social sciences, including education. The definitions of this type of research vary in the depth and breadth of the description of the purposes and processes involved. One of the more general definitions says that mixed methods research is "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17). The underlying principle of mixed methods research, as evident in the majority of definitions, is first, the idea of combining or mixing or integrating methods, and second, the presence or co-existence of two paradigmatically distinct research orientations; qualitative and quantitative. Mixed methods research follows the usual research procedures supplemented with some additional stages, such as decision-making and justification of method mixing, choosing the appropriate way

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of mixing methods and, finally, interpretation of the combined results (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Collins et al. 2006).

Mixed methods research is by no means new to the field of EFL classroom research. The encouragement to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods in L2 research came in the 1980s from Chaudron (1988) and later from Allwright and Bailey (1991). In a brief introduction to the chapter on mixed methods research, Dörnyei (2007) writes about the increasing use of this research orientation in applied linguistics; however, he rightly observes that "most studies in which some sort of method mixing has taken place have not actually foregrounded the mixed method approach and hardly any published papers have treated mixed methodology in a principled way" (Dörnyei 2007, p. 44). Furthermore, he also quotes Magnan's (2006) editorial, in which it has been stated that only 6.8 % of articles published in *The Modern Language Journal* between 1995 and 2005 reported the combining of qualitative and quantitative research methods. For comparison, a review of recent issues of *System* and *TESOL Quarterly* (2010-autumn 2011) reveals that out of 70 research articles as many as 22 % report a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, but, interestingly, only 2 articles (2.9 %) make an explicit reference to the mixed methods tradition. This may mean that researchers are no longer exclusively devoted to only one of the research traditions, having to choose between a qualitative and quantitative orientation, and they feel free to combine these two in one study for a variety of purposes, such as gaining deeper insight into the issue, taking a broader perspective or complementing data. What can be observed, however, is that most research articles reporting the use of the combination of these two research orientations do not make any explicit references to mixed methods research. There is also no comprehensive review of the use of mixed methods for studying teaching and learning EFL. A notable exception is the aforementioned Dörnyei's (2007) book, which is the first to discuss mixed methods in applied linguistics. However, this discussion draws mainly on general literature on research methodology with little reference to EFL studies.

In spite of the interest in theoretical debates about mixed methods and the encouragement to carry out research within this third methodological orientation, at present, we still do not know much about the actual practice of mixed methods in the field of EFL teaching and learning, or about the conceptualization of mixed methods, as well as about the reasons for and the ways of combining these two different research approaches in one study. The need for such an examination of practice has also been observed by Bryman (2006, p. 99) as he comments that "we have relatively little understanding of the prevalence of different combinations" and further makes a strong point supporting his call for the study of the actual mixing of methods (Bryman 2006, p. 111):

> (…) there is considerable value in examining both the rationales that are given for combining quantitative and qualitative research and the ways in which they are combined in practice. Such a distinction implies that methodological writings concerned with the grounds for combining the two approaches need to recognize that there may be a disjuncture between the two when concrete examples are examined.

The aim of this article, therefore, is to examine examples of mixed methods studies in the area of teaching and learning EFL with a view to describing the actual practice of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in studies conducted in this particular field. To this end, the following aspects of mixed methods studies will be considered:

- How is mixed methods research conceptualized in EFL studies?
- What is the rationale for the use of mixed methods in EFL studies?
- What types of mixed methods research designs predominate in EFL studies, including timing and weighting and data collection methods?

2 Methodology: Selection and Review of the Articles

Although the number of studies mixing quantitative and qualitative methods is increasing, only some of them explicitly adhere to the mixed methods orientation. In this preliminary review only those studies have been taken into consideration, assuming that combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods without foregrounding of mixed methods research may indicate that the author does not identify his/her research with mixed methods. The other limitation applied to the selection of articles was the field of study, namely teaching and learning EFL. In order to identify articles for the analysis, the *Academic Search Premier* full text database was searched using 'mixed methods' and 'efl' or 'mixed methods' and 'English' as key words, but this yielded a very modest result of only 3 articles, and the replacement of 'mixed methods' with the singular 'mixed method' added one more result. Subsequent review of academic journals yielded several more results. Hence, 16 journal articles altogether were identified. However, after an initial reading, one of them was excluded from the analysis since it provided an account of only one part of a study where only a single method was applied. The reviewed articles come from the following journals: *System* (4), *Assessing Writing*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* (2), *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *World Englishes*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *Educational Technology and Society*, *International Journal of Language Studies*, *Language Testing* and *TESOL Quarterly*. The articles were published between 2007 and 2011.

The articles were read first to identify in which parts of the article the term 'mixed methods' is used, as this might indicate the importance this particular research method had for the author/s and for the study. The position of this information might also suggest how important the author/s thought it was for the reader. During the second reading, the focus was on the conceptualizations of mixed methods and the justifications for its use which, later on, were compared to the definitions and justifications discussed in general research methodology studies. Finally, the research account was analyzed in order to identify the research

designs. The data collected from this content analysis revealed certain patterns and tendencies in the actual practice of using mixed methods.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Situating References to Mixed Methods within an Article

The analysis revealed only three articles (Barkaoui 2007; Chen 2008; Kim 2009) in which mixed methods are referred to in the title. In two cases, the reference to mixed methods constitutes the second part of a compound title, in one case it is placed at the beginning of the title; thus the titles immediately provide relevant information about the research methodology adopted by the authors. In this way, the audience are immediately provided with information about the methodological approach applied in the study. In seven cases, the information about the methodology is announced in the abstracts, which means that the reader is informed about the methodology used fairly early on, which may suggest the importance of combining methods and a concern for the reader to be introduced to the methodological orientation of the reported research from the outset. In two other cases, this information appears in the introduction to the article. Strangely enough, in two of the articles, the mention of mixed methods methodology is placed at the end of the literature review section. Most naturally, the information about methodology is included in the 'methods' sections, but in the case of the 15 reviewed articles this happens only in nine instances. In four cases, 'mixed methods' appears only in the abstracts, with no further references in the other sections of the article. These numbers show only where in the article the term 'mixed methods' appears; however, references to combining methods are made more frequently throughout the articles.

3.2 Defining Mixed Methods Research

Johnson et al. (2007, p. 129), having analyzed definitions of mixed methods formulated by 18 scholars, offered a comprehensive view of mixed methods research:

> Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.

In this definition, the authors explicitly make references to both the theoretical and practical aspects of mixed methods which, borrowing from the quantitative and qualitative traditions, constitute a distinct, new research paradigm. There has been some argument about the compatibility of worldviews underlying qualitative

and quantitative studies, regarding the feasibility of mixing these worldviews in a single study. One of the solutions, discussed by Gelo et al. (2008, p. 278), is a dialectical stance which makes it possible to view all paradigms as equally important in guiding the research, incorporating "multiple sets of philosophical assumptions toward better understanding" and "a broader set of beliefs and assumptions, and (…) more diverse sets of methods". The definition offered by Johnson et al. (2007) alludes not only to a worldview, but also points out the potential benefits of this third paradigm. Further, they offer a more detailed view of mixed methods as being rooted in a philosophy of pragmatism, following the logic of mixed methods research, relying on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis and interpretation, combined to address research questions, taking also into consideration the context of the research. (Johnson et al. 2007, p. 129).

In a definition suggested by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, p. 267), the emphasis is placed on the subsequent steps in the research procedure: "(…) mixed methods research represents research that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon". Dörnyei (2007, p. 44), while discussing mixed methods research in the field of applied linguistics, defines this research orientation as "some sort of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within a single research project". This definition is very general and lacks precision, since mixed methods research is not a simple addition of quantitative and qualitative research, but is ruled by its own logic. Creswell and Plano Clark (2010), dissatisfied with the definitions of mixed methods scattered across a variety of methodology textbooks and articles, have come up with a set of core characteristics of mixed methods instead of a single definition. From their point of view, mixed methods research:

- collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- mixes (or integrates, or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one built on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);
- uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of the program of a study;
- frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical perspectives; and
- combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, p. 5).

This set of characteristics, typical of mixed methods, not only pictures this research approach in more detail but it can also guide the mixed methods researcher in planning and executing such research.

In the examined EFL research articles, the majority of authors do not express their paradigmatic stance and they do not write explicitly how they understand mixed methods research. In two of the articles, it has been articulated that a mixed method approach involves combining quantitative and qualitative research methods into a single study:

> The methodology applied in this research is mixed-methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, which takes advantage of the strength of one of the methods as a means of compensating for the weaknesses inherent in the other method (Chen 2008, p. 1018).

> A mixed methods approach, known as the 'third methodological movement' (…) incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques into a single study and has the potential to reduce the biases inherent in one method while enhancing the validity of inquiry (…) (Kim 2009, p. 191).

> Intramethod mixing, in which a single method concurrently or sequentially incorporates quantitative and qualitative components (…) (Kim 2009, p. 192)

Chiang (2008), in his definition of mixed methods, mentions only one possible combination in which one approach is used to explain the results gained by another approach:

> In a mixed method approach, the qualitative analysis describes and explains the rationales for the quantitative results (…) (Chiang 2008, p. 1774).

The first theme that is present in these three definitions is the combining of qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study, which is in accordance with the definitions mentioned earlier. Chen and Kim develop their definitions by incorporating the fundamental principle of mixed methods, which says that the strengths of one method may overcome the weaknesses of another if both are applied in a single study (Johnson and Turner 2003; Gelo et al. 2008). Kim also indicates that this compensatory potential serves triangulation purposes, by enhancing the validity of the research. Further in the article, Kim refers to intramethod mixing, closely following Johnson and Turner's (2003) definition, contrasted with intermethod mixing, which involves multiple methods reflecting quantitative and qualitative approaches. Chiang's definition is much narrower, although his study includes a variety of data collection methods employed at different phases of research, both sequentially and concurrently.

The analysis of how researchers in the EFL area articulate their understanding of mixed methods, especially when compared with definitions from the research methodology field, and the infrequency of any attempts to define mixed methods, may suggest that the authors are not preoccupied with worldviews, but that the research process is driven mainly by research goals and questions that may require data of different type.

3.3 Justifying the Use of Mixed Methods Research

Quantitative and qualitative methods are brought together in a single study for a variety of reasons which have been widely discussed due to the importance of having sound justification for method mixing (Creswell 1999; Johnson and Turner 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Gorard and Tylor 2004; Dörnyei 2007; Schulenberg 2007; Gelo et al. 2008). Greene et al.'s (1989) classification of purposes for mixing methods was the first comprehensive attempt at identifying such purposes, which resulted in 5 broad categories: triangulation, complementarity, expansion, development and initiation. In a more recent work, Bryman (2006) provides a detailed scheme of 16 reasons for combining methods, based on an analysis of a fairly large amount of 232 social science articles. In the conclusion to his study, he appeals to the authors of mixed research articles for greater explicitness about the purposes of mixing methods in a study.

In the 15 articles reviewed, however, only a few authors provide such an explicit discussion of their reasons for combining methods. For example, Chang (2010) writes that quantitative data are not sufficient to explain how the variables in the research are related. The implementation of qualitative methods allowed the elaboration and illustration of the results from one method with the data from another, which yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Similarly Kim (2009), by mixing methods, attempted to enhance the understanding of markers' behaviour, not only by investigating the scores assigned by teachers, but also by examining how they assessed students' oral English performance. Corcoran (2011) sought to complement quantitative findings with qualitative ones to achieve elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification. Most authors used mixed methods assuming that this approach was appropriate to investigate a complex phenomenon and that data collected using paradigmatically different methods can provide a richer, clearer, deeper or broader picture. In the remaining part of this section, the rationales for mixing methods in each study will be discussed in reference to Greene et al.'s (1989) classification in order to shed more light on the reasons which guided the researchers in choosing mixed methods as the basis for their inquiries.

The analysis of the sample articles reveals that the main purpose of mixing the methods was complementarity, which was "used to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon" (Greene et al. 1989, p. 258). The following examples illustrate this purpose well:

> (…) quantitative data was necessary for the general baseline information on each group's level of autonomy. Including qualitative instruments was vital to provide a clearer, more complete picture of the research findings" (Sanprasert 2010, p. 13).

> In focus group interviews, students and teachers were asked to comment on salient features which emerged from the questionnaires in order to add explanations, caveats, personal views, and anecdotal evidence on the statistical data. This additional information can

thus "enrich the bare bones of statistical results" (…) and provide valuable insider viewpoint for the interpretation of the questionnaires (Grau 2009, p. 165).

In the discussion of the results, both data from the quantitative and qualitative part of the study will be used in order to give a more comprehensive view (Grau 2009, p. 166).

Data collected through semi-structured teacher interviews and focus groups provide a more in-depth understanding of NEST superiority rejection (…) (Corcoran 2011, p. 149).

Qualitative data allow us to gain a better understanding of this apparent demand for teachers with experience of living abroad (Corcoran 2011, p. 151).

Qualitative data give a more nuanced picture of the contrasting and, at times, the seemingly contradictory nature of teacher beliefs on the importance of native-like proficiency (Corcoran 2011, p. 153).

More examples can be found in Kim (2009, p. 210), Corcoran (2011, p.147), Chang (2007, p. 328), and Chiang (2008, p. 1247). Similarly to the results of this analysis, complementarity was the most frequent justification for method mixing in the review of social science research articles by Bryman (2006).

The second important purpose was development, in the sense that the results from one method help develop or inform the other method (Greene et al. 1989, p. 259). For example, in Chang's (2007) study, the interview sample was chosen on the basis of earlier survey results; and vice versa, in Mazdayasna and Tahririan's (2008) study, qualitative interview data served as input for designing a qualitative questionnaire.

Barkanoui's (2007) study is an example of combining methods for purposes of expansion, which "seeks to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components" (Greene et al. 1989, p. 259). In his study, Barkanoui employed quantitative methods to study the product (teachers' marking of essays) and a qualitative method to study the process of marking and its perception. By comparison, expansion was the second most frequent rationale used in Bryman's (2006) study.

For some authors, the rationale for mixing methods was the need for triangulation. However, this concept has been occasionally misunderstood, and used when the author aimed at complementarity and not genuine triangulation. Triangulation originally meant that the results of different measurements were compiled in order to overcome weaknesses and biases in each of them so that they better support the understanding of a phenomenon. Triangulation "(…) requires that the two or more methods be intentionally used to assess the same conceptual phenomenon, be therefore implemented simultaneously, and, to preserve their counteracting biases, also be implemented independently" (Greene et al. 1989, p. 256). Although triangulation has been mentioned by a few authors, in actual practice, what they really meant was complementarity, where different methods addressed different questions, albeit concerning the same phenomena (e.g. Chang 2010). The following examples illustrate how the authors perceived the purposes of triangulation:

> Triangulating quantitative survey data with a more detailed illustration from language learners through interviews allows the researcher to gather qualitative data to "explain or build upon initial quantitative results (…) (Chang 2010, p.136).

> Three quantitative and qualitative methods (…) were analyzed to provide a triangulated interpretation (…) (Miyazoe and Anderson 2010, p. 190).

> Triangulated data from teacher and student survey-questionnaires, teacher and administrator interviews, and teacher focus groups point to a rejection by NNESTs of NESTs as superior language teachers for a variety of stated reasons (…) (Corcoran 2011, p. 156)

> (…) a way to validate data through triangulation (Grau 2009, p. 165).

Initiation, the last purpose in Greene et al.'s classification, "seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method" (1989, p. 259). In this sample, none of the authors made a reference to this purpose, which is a very similar result to Bryman's (2006) findings.

Amuzie and Winke's (2009, p. 369) justification does not fit any of the categories, since it talks about addressing the complexity of the problem: "We believe that a mixed method approach is appropriate for investigating a complex phenomenon such as changes in beliefs". The analysis of the articles also shows that some authors mention more than one rationale for method mixing (Amuzie and Winke 2009, p. 370; Kim 2009, p. 191; Corcoran 2011, p. 147) and articles whose authors do not justify the combining of methods at all (e.g. Ranalli 2008; Fang 2010). However, not providing a rationale for mixing methods goes against the key principle of mixed methods, which says that methods should be combined only if there is an important reason for it (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, p. 61).

3.4 Mixed Methods Designs

Research design is a set of "procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies" (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, p. 53). Mixed methods research follows the usual research procedures. However, these procedures are expanded due to the fact that the mixed methods researcher needs to take decisions concerning the aim and justification of method mixing, to choose the means of method mixing and, finally, to interpret the combined results (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Collins et al. 2006). Therefore, mixed methods designs are usually more complex than purely quantitative or qualitative designs. Mixed methods designs are usually identified on the basis of three fundamental factors which can be differently combined. The first factor is the degree of mixing, from partial to full. Fully mixed designs involve using both qualitative and quantitative research within one or more of the following or across the following four components in a single study: the research objective, type of data and operations, type

of analysis and type of inference (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2009, p. 267). In a partially mixed study, the quantitative and qualitative research is conducted separately and is mixed at the interpretation stage. The next factor refers to the time at which the methods are applied, either concurrent or sequential (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2009). Concurrent designs include studies where the stages of the research which address related aspects of the same research question occur simultaneously, although for practical reasons a small time lapse is possible. Sequential designs refer to studies where the quantitative and qualitative stages occur in chronological order (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, p. 143). The final factor is the weight, or dominance, of one method over the other, which means that the quantitative and qualitative methods may have equal weight, or one may dominate the other. The typology of mixed methods designs developed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2010, pp. 73–76) includes additional factors, such as paradigm foundation, level of interaction, the phase where mixing happens, mixing strategies, and design purpose. Taking all these factors together, they propose six basic design types with variants: convergent, explanatory, exploratory, embedded, transformative and multiphase designs.

The mixed methods designs of the examined studies were analyzed in reference to the above-mentioned typology. In the examined sample, the explanatory design predominates. In this design quantitative data are collected first and the subsequent qualitative data are meant to explain, or shed more light on the quantitative results; the two strands, quantitative and qualitative, remain interactive and are implemented sequentially. For example, in Chang's (2007) study, first quantitative data on individual learners' levels of autonomy and learner group characteristics were collected, and then interviewees were selected on the basis of their questionnaire responses to provide a more complete understanding of the relationship of group processes and learner autonomy being studied. In another study (Amuzie and Winke 2009), the effect of studying abroad on learners' language learning beliefs was explored, first on the basis of belief questionnaires administered prior to and during the period spent studying abroad, and then more insight into the problem was provided by qualitative interviews. Other studies which employ explanatory designs are Grau (2009), Fang (2010), Kim (2009), and Chang (2010).

An exploratory design, which is also interactive and sequential, involves first collecting qualitative data and then searching for quantitative data in order to gain additional information. The only example of this design is Mazdayasna and Tahririan's (2008) study of the needs of Iranian ESP students. The study began with interviews whose results provided the input for a structured questionnaire with the aim of getting quantitative information about the issues that emerged during them.

Chiang's (2008) research is an example of a multiphase design, which is described as interactive, with equal emphasis on each approach, and with multiphase combination of the approaches. In this design, the collection of quantitative and qualitative data is not linear, but happens at different stages of the research, both sequentially, simultaneously and concurrently. The focus of Chiang's research was the effect of fieldwork experience on foreign language teachers'

development. To this end, a self-report survey was administered at the beginning of the study and an *EFL Teacher Efficacy Scale* (TES) was administered before and after the course. The survey looked for both qualitative and quantitative data while the TES for quantitative data only. During the course, semi-structured group interviews were held and at the end of the course the students were supposed to write reflective essays. Apart from this, throughout the course the students kept reflective logs which provided qualitative data. This multiphase combination served the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the teacher training course.

A convergent design uses a combination of methods which are independent, with equal emphasis on each research strand, and implemented concurrently. This design was employed in the study of EFL teachers' Internet use during language instruction (Chen 2008). A survey was used to obtain quantitative data and interviews were held concurrently with 22 teachers. In this study, all the conditions for convergent design were met: implementing qualitative and quantitative strands during the same phase of the research, equal weight of the two strands, independent analysis, and merging of the results at the interpretation phase (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, pp. 70–71).

Embedded design is interactive, either the qualitative or quantitative method comes first, and it can be either sequential or concurrent. This design was followed in Sanprasert's study (2010), in which experimental quantitative research was supplemented with additional qualitative data from the diaries kept throughout the experiment (application of a course management system to enhance autonomy).

Finally, transformative design is interactive, the emphasis on quantitative and qualitative strand is equal, the strands may be implemented either concurrently or sequentially. No examples of transformative design were found in the examined sample of articles.

Each of the aforementioned design types is defined, among other features, by the timing of the research procedures. In the studied sample, sequential implementation of data collection is much more frequent than concurrent, with 11 instances. In two cases (Chiang 2008; Sanprasat 2010), both sequential and concurrent data collection took place. The second key characteristic of the designs is the weight or, in other words, dominance of one method over the other. This characteristic, however, was not given enough attention. The weight of each research strand was generally not stated explicitly in the articles, except for two of them. In Kim's (2009) study, dealing with the ways in which native and non-native teachers of English assess students' oral performance, the same weight was given to both components, whereas in Corcoran's (2011) study qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups was weighted more heavily than the quantitative data from questionnaires. In other studies, the weight is not mentioned, but it can be observed that the weight of both strands in the majority of cases remains equal, and in a few studies quantitative methods dominate the qualitative ones.

Some designs, however, are somewhat problematic and not easy to categorize. There are studies in which qualitative data are quantized, or in which interviews or questionnaires yield both quantitative or qualitative data. There are also studies in

which only one of several data collection tools looks for both quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. Mazdayasna and Tahririan 2008; Ranalli 2008; Gao et al. 2010). This last case, where both types of data come from one data collection tool, may be especially problematic, considering the view of some methodologists, who do not treat it as an example of true method integration (Bryman 2006, p. 103).

The last issue addressed in this analysis is the type of data collection method used. In mixed methods research, data collection involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixing can take place at an intermethod or intramethod level. Intramethod mixing (data triangulation) involves concurrent or sequential mixing of qualitative and quantitative components within a single method, whereas intermethod mixing (method triangulation) employs concurrent or sequential mixing of two or more methods (Johnson and Turner 2003). In this sample, the methods used to collect quantitative data were questionnaires, pre- and post-tests, observation, ratings, think-aloud protocols and the *Teacher Efficacy Scale*. As many as 10 studies made use of a survey. In four cases, the method contained both quantitative and qualitative components, as in the surveys in the studies of Chiang (2008), Ranalli (2008), and Gao et al. (2010), and in the ratings accompanied by qualitative comments in Kim's (2009) study. The qualitative data collection involved interviews (12 studies), both individual and focus group. Additionally, diaries and logs, written assignments and reflective essays were employed. The data collection methods used most frequently were questionnaires (for quantitative data) and interviews (for qualitative data), which is again in accordance with Bryman's (2006) findings.

4 Summing Up and Conclusions

In this chapter we have looked at three crucial aspects of mixed methods implemented in the context of EFL studies, namely, the conceptualization of mixed methods, the rationale for the use of mixed methods, and research designs. The analysis of this sample of mixed methods research articles reveals infrequency of the actual use of this type of research in EFL studies, rare attempts to define what mixed methods mean for an EFL researcher, and certain tendencies in justifying and designing these studies. The researchers' decisions to apply mixed methods is driven by their research questions and the need for multiple data, not by their worldviews, which is quite a common situation in mixed methods research. The authors usually provide a rationale for mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods; the most frequent reason for combining methods is the complementarity of data needed to gain a deepened understanding of the investigated phenomena. The research designs implemented to study teaching and learning of EFL usually follow a relatively simple explanatory design, although other design types are also occasionally used. Data collection varies, depending on the research problem. However, most studies employ questionnaires and interviews alongside other tools. The mixing of methods is mainly partial and occurs at the data collection

and interpretation stages, whereas the analysis of data is conducted separately for quantitative and qualitative data.

This preliminary analysis of mixed methods studies in the EFL field may serve as a starting point for further examination. First of all, there is a need to identify a substantially larger, more representative sample of mixed methods EFL studies and to refine their purposes and designs. It is also important to evaluate the relationship between mixed methods research and the purposes of EFL studies, to identify patterns of combining, and to evaluate the applicability of the results of mixed methods studies. There is also a need to confront researchers' declarations regarding rationale and design with their actual performance. Further analysis of mixed methods in EFL studies should also include research accounts which do not refer to the term 'mixed methods' but still use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Will they turn out to belong to mixed methods or constitute a different type of research? Additionally, an examination of mixed methods research accounts in journal articles could provide useful information about how they relate to solely quantitative or qualitative research descriptions and what the challenges of this (new) genre are. In 2009, Leech and Onwuegbuzie wrote that the mixed methods paradigm was still in its adolescence. This preliminary analysis and suggestions for further research support this view, as far as we refer to research in the field of EFL.

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Triangulation in Researching Autonomy: A Post-Research Analysis

Anna Czura

Abstract Promoted by the CEFR and implemented as an element of curricular objectives in many countries, learner autonomy has become a buzz word in foreign language teaching and learning. Due to its multi-faceted nature, there have been numerous attempts to formulate a comprehensive definition embracing various aspects of this construct. This multidimensionality poses a problem for researchers trying to observe the emergence of changes in learner autonomy. If autonomy is to be investigated, then the first step should be to establish which aspects of this construct we are really interested in. This article aims to analyze the benefits as well as challenges of implementing methodological triangulation in research devoted to measuring learner autonomy. The main emphasis will be placed on the role of qualitative instruments as valuable alternatives to the prevalence of quantitative tools. It is hoped that the conclusions will provide useful guidelines on researching this construct in the future. The discussion will be based on a study conducted in order to establish the impact of different self-assessment methods on the level of autonomy in lower secondary school learners in a selected educational context. The data collected during a one-year quasi-experiment was based on both qualitative (classroom observations and interviews) and quantitative (a questionnaire) instruments. The analysis of the emerging autonomous behaviors was performed in reference to seven aspects of learner autonomy selected for the purposes of this research.

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1 Introduction

There has been a long-standing debate concerning the use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in language acquisition studies. More often than not these two paradigms were treated as bipolar opposites, and some researchers tended to apply only one type of research in their studies. However, as Brown (2004) notes, qualitative and quantitative methods should not be treated as mutually exclusive categories but as parts of a research continuum involving specific data collection techniques selected on the basis of the research objectives. Moreover, nowadays there is a powerful tendency to strengthen the advantages offered by both paradigms by combining qualitative and quantitative methods within one research study. This approach to research and data elicitation instruments which offer both numeric and descriptive data is referred to as methodological triangulation or mixed methods research. This article aims to analyze the benefits as well as challenges of implementing methodological triangulation in research devoted to measuring learner autonomy. The discussion is based on the analysis of a research study conducted in order to establish the impact of different alternative assessment methods on the level of autonomy in lower-secondary school learners.

2 Defining Learner Autonomy

Promoted by the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) and implemented as an element of curricular objectives in many countries, learner autonomy has become indispensable in foreign language teaching and learning. Still, being a multi-faceted construct, learner autonomy has proven difficult to define. The inability to formulate a clear definition embracing various aspects of this construct poses a problem for researchers trying to observe the emergence of changes in learner autonomy. For this reason, it appears useful to present the development of different definitions of autonomy to justify the choice of the research approach adopted by the author of this study.

One of the first definitions of 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". This definition implies that autonomous behaviors are present at all stages of the learning process: goal setting, ongoing management of learning, and evaluation of the outcomes. Focusing on the technical aspects of autonomous language learning, Holec, however, fails to account for cognitive aspects of autonomy.

Dickinson (1987, p. 11) defines autonomy as "the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions". He also distinguishes between *full autonomy* and *semi-autonomy*. The former pertains to learners' total independence of

teachers, schools or other institutions, while the latter can be described as "the stage at which learners are preparing for autonomy" (Dickinson 1987, p. 11). These definitions emphasize the role of the classroom, which is seen as a natural environment for teacher-learner interaction and autonomous behaviors to occur. The success of semi-autonomy depends largely on both the teacher's and learner's cooperation and their willingness to resign from traditional approaches to education in which the former transmits the knowledge, while the latter's role is limited to accepting it. Benson (2001), however, criticized Dickinson's assumption that full autonomy can be described as a learning situation in which learners are not controlled and directed by the external environment. Benson's claims that autonomous behavior does not appear automatically when learners study in isolation were supported by Breen and Candlin's (1980) and Dam's (1995) research which investigated classroom as a social context and observed that autonomy can develop in situations in which the teacher transfers some part of control and power to the learners. This perspective underlined the role of cooperation and negotiation in developing autonomy in instructed language learning and aroused interest in autonomy training as a part of the curriculum.

Another definition was proposed by Little (1991) who approached the notion of autonomy from a psychological perspective, in which autonomy is viewed as taking control not only over self-management but also over the learner's own cognitive processes responsible for effective organization of learning. According to this stance, autonomy is a learner's individual feature and, therefore, cannot be limited to 'a situation'. Creating a favorable learning environment in the classroom is important; however, it is the learners' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning that determines whether or not autonomous behaviors are likely to occur. This definition implies that the impact of autonomy reaches beyond a language learning context, and an autonomous behavior can be also applied in different situations.

All the definitions presented above attempt to specify the notion of autonomy; still, their perspective is somehow fragmentary. Benson (2001) claims that a coherent definition of autonomy should embrace three interdependent levels of control: control over learning management, cognitive process and learning content. *Control over learning management* involves learner's decisions concerning planning, implementation and evaluation of the learning process. Autonomous learners are capable of construing their own learning system and employing learning strategies that help them to succeed in subsequent stages of learning. *Control over cognitive processes* refers to learner's mental involvement in the learning process. A language learner needs to be able to reflect on all the stages of learning and be ready to introduce any modification to enhance the effectiveness of his or her education. Finally, *control over learning content* depends on the learner's ability to establish learning goals as well as select appropriate materials, methods and techniques to accomplish these objectives. This type of control is subject to social interaction and negotiations concerning goal setting with teachers or peers. It heavily depends on whether the educational context grants learners the freedom of independent choice in a variety of learning situations (Benson 2001).

Benson (2010) suggests that the multidimensional character of autonomy might pose a problem in researching this construct and needs to be taken into consideration before designing any empirical study aiming at measuring learner autonomy. As autonomy is to be interpreted at different levels of control, any research project should approach autonomy as a set of aspects, rather than a coherent entity. Another problem connected with determining the level of autonomy is the fact that this construct constitutes a capacity; therefore, it consists of both observable and non-observable aspects which need to be interpreted and incorporated into a research study (Benson 2001, 2010).

3 Description of the Research

Language education is supposed not only to develop language proficiency and enhance communicative competence, but also foster skills that would help learners to engage in self-directed learning, European language policy as well as the Polish core curriculum regulating language education in public schools underline that learner autonomy and learning to learn constitute essential elements of language teaching and learning. The importance of learner autonomy is undeniable; therefore, the study presented in this article was designed to provide a wider perspective on the nature of autonomous behaviors exhibited by lower secondary school learners in a language classroom as well as in self-study situations.

The research project aimed to determine whether selected methods of alternative assessment (i.e. a project, portfolio, peer assessment or observation) would affect the level of learner autonomy over the period of one school year. A total of 116 first- and second-year lower secondary school learners took part in the quasi-experiment. The subjects were divided into four experimental groups and one control group (the number of subjects in the research groups ranged from 22 to 27 students). Apart from being assessed on the basis of the assessment procedures and criteria used by all the English teachers in the school, throughout the duration of the research the subjects in each experimental group were additionally subjected to one of the alternative assessment methods mentioned above. The control group was not subjected to any additional assessment. As the subjects were not selected at random and the division into the research groups was based on the already formed class units, the study can be referred to as a quasi-experiment.

4 Selection of Appropriate Methodology

The first problem the researcher had to face was the multidimensionality of learner autonomy and the need to develop research instruments that would embrace different aspects of this construct. For this reason seven areas of learner autonomy were selected and focused on in the course of the quasi-experiment:

- Subscale 1, *selection and implementation of relevant resources*, refers to the subjects' use of additional learning materials, in particular the types of resources, the reasons for and the frequency of use, and the role of the teacher or parents in the selection process.
- Subscale 2, *collaboration with other members of the group*, is devoted to the subjects' attitudes to cooperation with peers and the quality of collaborative work in the classroom. It also aims to determine to what extent the subjects feel individual responsibility for the outcome of pair- or group-work.
- Subscale 3, *the ability to establish learning aims and objectives*, focuses on planning of the learning process. The research instruments aim to collect data about the learners' goals as well as the decisions the subjects make in order to achieve the learning objectives. Another important issue is the reason for learning the language—whether the subjects study it because of their desire to obtain a good grade or because they perceive the intrinsic value of learning English.
- Subscale 4, *engagement in outside classroom learning*, refers to the subjects' eagerness to participate in extracurricular initiatives connected with language learning and their engagement in the learning process in self-study situations.
- Subscale 5, *learners' ability to evaluate their own learning process*, aims to elicit information whether the learners are able to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses in the language learning process. This subscale also focuses on the subjects' interest in the feedback received from the teacher as well as their engagement in self-assessment.
- Subscale 6, *implementation of appropriate learning strategies*, places emphasis on the subjects' ability to apply effective strategies in their learning, e.g. while memorizing vocabulary and practicing grammar. It is also important to know the source (e.g. teachers, parents, peers) of the strategies used by the learners.
- Subscale 7, *attitudes toward the teachers and their role in education*, concerns the subjects' attitudes towards their language teachers and their role in the learning process. The focal point in this subscale are the learners' opinions about division of responsibility in the language classroom.

These seven aspects constituted the basis of all data collection tools and were consistently referred to in the process of presenting and analyzing the results.

The second problem in designing the research was the selection of an appropriate data collection method: which research paradigm—qualitative or quantitative should be used? Would a questionnaire and numeric data be sufficient to grasp changes in such a multidimensional notion as autonomy?

Quantitative methodologies apply standardized instruments and statistical procedures which allow precise measurement and offer highly valid and reliable data. Such instruments are valued for providing precise, objective and easy to analyze material. Moreover, they can encompass a large group of subjects, and a wide array of variables can be investigated. If a quantitative instrument is properly designed and validated, it is replicable, i.e. it can be used on many occasions, with many different groups and in a number of situations. On the other hand,

quantitative instruments are often criticized for focusing only on the final outcome and the cause-and-effect relationship between the selected variables. Although quantitative instruments are praised for providing systematic, controlled and easily generalizable data, they fail to give an account of individual diversity within a group of subjects, which can be researched when qualitative measures are applied. Due to their numeric and summative nature, quantitative instruments disregard the immediate social context in which the investigated relationship takes place. As a result, the researcher is denied insight into different factors, such as group dynamics or reasons for individual behaviors that might have a significant impact on the outcomes obtained by means of quantitative research tools (cf. Wilczyńska and Michońska-Stadnik 2010). As Dörnyei (2007) underlines, quantitative instruments are not exploratory in nature—they provide systematic and highly controlled data but fail to account for the dynamic and individualistic nature of various processes.

Qualitative instruments, in contrast, are praised for providing far more contextual insight into the researched area—unlike decontextualized quantitative instruments, qualitative methodology allows a direct contact with the research setting, which might be beneficial in investigating complex situations. Dörnyei (2007, p. 37) draws attention to the "emergent nature" of qualitative research. Embedded in a natural contextual setting, this research paradigm is more adaptable and open to changes: research instruments or research questions may evolve in the course of the study in response to changing circumstances or newly gained insights into the investigated area. Sensitive to changes and ingrained deeply in the situational context, qualitative research methods are exploratory in nature as they help to uncover the roots of diverse phenomena. For this reason, qualitative methodology is particularly useful in longitudinal studies which aim at observing dynamic processes of language acquisition (Dörnyei 2007). Nonetheless, the main drawback of qualitative methodology is that it does not involve any standardized data collection instruments and analytical procedures. Consequently, the obtained results are not fully reliable as they, to a large extent, depend on researchers' judgment and their ability to remain objective. Finally, both the implementation of qualitative instruments and the analysis of the gathered data are difficult to perform, and there is a need to categorize the obtained answers, which makes the research time- and work-consuming.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to explore the possibilities presented by *methodological triangulation*, which was originally used in the social sciences and is gradually introduced into language acquisition studies. Methodological triangulation, also referred to as *multitrait-multimethod research*, *interrelating qualitative and quantitative data*, *multimethodological research*, *mixed model studies* or *mixed methods research* (Creswell et al. 2003), is the act of combining several research methods (both qualitative and quantitative) in a single research study in order to obtain a clearer, more comprehensive and reliable picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Using different research methods and approaches ensures the validity of research results and helps to overcome the weaknesses and biases which may arise when only one method is applied. Weaknesses of one

method can be lessened by the application of an alternative one that would provide more insightful and reliable information in a given area (Olsen 2004). Dörnyei (2007) lists a number of positive features of this approach; for example, mixed methods research allows a multi-level analysis of complex issues as it enables the researcher to obtain more in-depth knowledge about the subjects as well as the setting in which a research study takes place. Despite the unquestionable advantages of this approach, one needs to remember that the implementation of methodological triangulation is time-consuming and requires heavy workload on the part of the researcher, both in the process of data collection and data analysis (Dörnyei 2007).

The choice between qualitative or quantitative paradigms depends on aspects or processes of language acquisition to be investigated. As methodological triangulation is useful in researching complex issues, it can be assumed that changes in learner autonomy can be better analyzed by converging numeric trends of the quantitative tools with more descriptive qualitative data. Moreover, being grounded in social constructivism, which views gaining knowledge as constructing meaning in a situational and social context of the learning process, learner autonomy is inherently linked with its immediate situational setting (Michońska-Stadnik 2004). This contextual aspect should be taken into account in research on this intricate construct; therefore, mixed methods research appears to be a beneficial approach to conducting a multi-level analysis of learner autonomy.

Three research instruments were implemented in the study: a questionnaire on learner autonomy, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with the learners. In order to ensure complementary nature of the data, all these instruments included sections referring to the aforementioned seven aspects of autonomy. The questionnaire items, the observation sheet and the interview questions were designed by the researcher (Czura 2010) and were based on inventories of autonomous behaviors (Boud 1988; Legutke and Thomas 1991; Dickinson 1992; Sheerin 1997) and existing autonomy questionnaires used previously in the Polish educational setting (Michońska-Stadnik 2000; Pawlak 2004; Skrzypek 2004).

The questionnaire consisted of 35 questions with a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 meant *strongly disagree* and 5 indicated *strongly agree*. The questionnaire was applied before the experiment to establish the initial level of autonomy and at the end to observe whether any change in the level of autonomy occurred. To determine whether the changes in the level of autonomy resulted from the applied treatment, a dependent *t* test was used for each questionnaire items, each separate subscale referring to different aspects of learner autonomy and, finally, the total score in the questionnaire. The means of the obtained results were further analyzed according to a scale developed for the purposes of this research:

– mean above 4.21: very high level of autonomy;
– mean 3.41–4.2: high level of autonomy;
– mean 2.61–3.4: moderate level of autonomy;
– mean 1.81–2.6: low level of autonomy;
– mean below 1.8: very low level of autonomy.

Apart from the quantitative data collected by means of the questionnaire, qualitative tools, such as classroom observations and interviews with the participants, helped to obtain more insightful details concerning the investigated area. To enhance the validity of the observations, throughout the study the researcher consistently used a specially designed observation sheet. The experimental and control groups were observed once a month in a variety of classroom situations involving language instruction, practice, production as well as assessment-related procedures. The researcher was an objective observer and did not participate in the instruction process.

Finally, at the end of the research, a semi-structured interview was implemented. The interviews were conducted with 7–8 learners, randomly selected from each research group. The number of participants depended on the group size and, ideally, should amount to a third of the total number of learners in a given group. All the interviews were based on an interview scheme constructed for the purposes of this study.

5 Results and Discussion

The analysis of the outcomes of all research instruments indicates that some of the opinions the subjects expressed in the questionnaire were to some extent overstated. For example, according to the scale presented in the previous section, the subjects' overall level of autonomy can be described as moderate. Additionally, the scores on the subscale pertaining to their ability to cooperate with peers indicate that lower secondary school learners highly evaluate their collaborative skills. At the same time, the observations and interviews with the learners did not always support these claims. For instance, questionnaire item 5 ("While working in groups or pairs, all members should take decisions about the task") revealed very high results in all groups, both before and after the treatment. The interviews with the learners, however, failed to confirm these assertions as a large number of subjects openly admitted that they did not want to be responsible for the task, and that other peers should take all the decisions. Additionally, monthly classroom observations showed that the subject's collaborative skills were rather low—they overused the mother tongue, had problems with equal division of responsibilities when performing tasks and did not attempt to evaluate the quality of their own work. Such overstated opinions in the questionnaire comply with a natural tendency of human beings to present themselves in a favorable way. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010, p. 8) refer to this limitation of questionnaire studies as *self-deception*. The respondents tend to unconsciously deceive themselves by providing answers they believe to be true in order to maintain a sense of self-worth. As Breen and Mann (1997, p. 141) add, learners "put on the mask of autonomous behavior" but fail to exhibit these features in reality.

The second reason for overstated estimations of autonomy is learners' insufficient knowledge about the language learning process. The questionnaire responses

show that the subjects obtained the highest scores on the subscales describing their self-assessment skills and the ability to apply appropriate learning strategies. During the interviews it turned out that the subjects' opinions about their strengths and weaknesses were limited to grammar and vocabulary only, and they were not able to explain fully how they self-assessed their progress in language learning. When asked about learning strategies in the interviews, students indeed enumerated a large number of examples. Still, such techniques as memorization of grammar rules, learning vocabulary in isolation, reading new words according to their spelling, or reviewing all the material on only one occasion are hardly likely to contribute to the development of communicative language competence. Therefore, it might appear astonishing that the mean questionnaire results on the subscale pertaining to the use of learning strategies proved to be higher than on any other subscale. This phenomenon is explained by Oxford (2002), who claims that both more and less effective learners are able to recall and describe the strategies they use in language learning. Nevertheless, the latter are prone to apply less efficient learning strategies, such as memorization, repetition or translation, which do not contribute to the development of communicative skills. The participants of the study seemed to be representative of the less effective learners—despite naming and describing different techniques applied in the learning process, they were unable to assess the usefulness and efficiency of the undertaken measures.

As Oxford (2002, p. 126) indicates, "less effective learners apply these strategies in a random, even desperate manner, without careful orchestration and without targeting the strategies to the task". This assertion was also confirmed in the research—in many cases, when learners attempted to take actions in order to improve the areas of the target language they had problems with, the selected materials or techniques were not tailored to their actual problems. The enumerated resources indicate that learners made a conscious effort to find different means that would help them to solve language problems. Still, the variety of applied materials implies that they were mainly interested in developing language accuracy, while communicative skills were seriously neglected. For instance, grammar reference books devoid of practical exercises do not seem to be a useful tool for lower secondary school learners. Such limited use of learning resources and lack of knowledge about numerous available options was also observed among upper-secondary school learners (Pawlak 2008). These observations provide a negative picture of the learners' learning skills, as, according to Oxford (2002), inappropriate application of strategies and learning resources may lead to the development of an L2 system consisting of unconnected elements which do not form a consistent entity.

Despite some examples of overstated opinions, the questionnaire results helped to observe certain trends and characteristic patterns in the research groups. For example, in comparison with the remaining research groups, the experimental groups subjected to peer-assessment and formal observation obtained slightly lower results across all the subscales both before and after the treatment, and this lower level of autonomy was also evident during the observations and interviews

as the learners tended to be more reliant on the teacher, exhibited less developed collaborative skills, and used fewer resources or learning strategies.

The second valuable finding resulting from the questionnaire data refers to the ability to cooperate with peers. As mentioned previously, in the subscale describing learners' collaborative skills, the mean results both before and after the experiment were somewhat higher in comparison to the values obtained on the other subscales. It turned out that the group subjected to portfolio assessment reported slightly lower results in this area when compared with the remaining groups. Classroom observation helped to explain this phenomenon—lower results may have stemmed from the fact that collaborative work was applied least frequently in this group—pair and group work were mentioned by the subjects in the interviews, but their application was not observed during the lessons throughout the entire treatment.

The statistical analysis of the overall questionnaire results indicated that the differences in the level of autonomy before and after the treatment did not prove to be statistically significant and thus could not be attributed to the intervention. However, when similar calculations were performed for single questionnaire items and separate subscales, in a few cases the differences in results obtained before and after the experiment turned out to be statistically significant. Most of these occurrences could be explained by the data obtained by means of the observations and interviews. For example, in the group exposed to portfolio assessment, the ability to implement learning resources increased after the experiment, and this finding was supported by the observations and interviews. The increase in the scores might have stemmed from the fact that almost all the items included in the portfolio exceeded the content of the course book and compelled the learners to look for information in other sources, whereas in other assessment methods most of the tasks were imposed by the teacher. If the learners wished to obtain a better grade for an additional entry in a portfolio, they had to make all decisions concerning task completion independently: they were responsible for selecting the task type as well as choosing relevant resources and evaluating the final outcome. In the same group, the ability to set learning goals decreased—the result might be surprising, but it can be explained by the fact that the learners expressed negative attitudes towards portfolio assessment in general and criticized the need to take their own decisions concerning the content of the portfolio. In the interviews, the learners explicitly admitted that it was the teacher who should have imposed all the tasks—the obligatory as well as the additional ones.

Let us now proceed to the discussion of the application of the qualitative tools. Monthly observations proved particularly useful in researching such aspects of autonomy as cooperative skills, the learners' attitudes to the teacher, their interest in their own progress and grades, as well as different phenomena not directly connected with learner autonomy which seemed to considerably affect the results of the experiments. Classroom dynamics or discipline problems observed in some of the groups had a strong bearing on the subjects' approach to the applied assessment method. The emergent nature of qualitative instruments enabled the researcher to introduce ongoing modifications in the observation sheet in order to

adjust it to this particular educational context and accommodate the dynamic nature of classroom learning. The original observation sheet focused mainly on the development of autonomous behaviors; however, in the course of time it became evident that a number of additional factors, such as the aforementioned group dynamics or discipline, affected the amount and the quality of autonomous behaviors in the research groups. The emergence and intensity of other factors affecting the interplay between the new assessment method and learner autonomy differed in the research groups, and the application of qualitative instruments helped to observe and then analyze this relationship. Such findings as well as numerous incidents observed in the classroom played a crucial role in supplementing the analysis of the quantitative data obtained on the basis of the questionnaire. Although the observation of autonomous behaviors was the main goal of the research, the application of qualitative tools also helped to gather data concerning other aspects of classroom teaching. Monthly observations allowed the researcher to witness the implementation of different assessment methods in the classroom, in particular the processes of setting assessment standards and criteria, carrying out tasks to be assessed, and students' self-assessment. Additionally, it was possible to observe how teachers approached learning to learn or other areas of classroom practice, not necessarily connected with language assessment.

Although this assertion was not verified empirically, it appeared that in the course of the experiment the subjects got accustomed to the regular presence of the researcher and they did not seem to alter their behavior during the researcher's visits. Consequently, it can be tentatively stated that the observer paradox did not interfere with the results of classroom observations.

Finally, the interviews turned out to be a particularly valuable data collection tool as they provided important insight into the non-observable aspects of learner autonomy as well as different strategies or techniques the subjects implemented in self-study situations. Despite their young age, lower secondary school learners were able to provide surprisingly honest and judicious answers, deprived of bias and negative feelings towards their peers or teachers. Similarly to the answers obtained in the questionnaires, the subjects' initial responses tended to present overstated opinions about their level of autonomy, which resulted from their willingness to provide a desirable answer or from their insufficient knowledge of the nature of language learning. The semi-structured form of the interview allowed the researcher to ask for clarification or examples of autonomous behaviors. Being aware of the need to provide further explanation and instances of their self-directed actions, with time, the subjects started to provide more level-headed and insightful responses.

6 Conclusions

On the basis of the study, it can be concluded that the use of methodological triangulation may bring positive results in research aiming at fostering learner

autonomy. The application of three data collection instruments helped the researcher to obtain ample, insightful data not only about individual students but also about language teaching in lower secondary school. The research showed that the development of learner autonomy can be affected by a number of different factors which can be observed only if qualitative methods are implemented. Secondly, the notion of autonomy entails both observable and non-observable components, and the implementation of interviews and questionnaires made it possible to collect data about learners' attitudes, feelings as well as their learning choices in self-study situations. Although the results of observations and interviews indicate that in reality the subjects manifest fewer autonomous behaviors than declared in the questionnaire, the role of a questionnaire as a tool used to measure learner autonomy should not be disregarded. The results obtained by means of the questionnaire were not entirely accurate; nevertheless, they indicated certain trends supported by qualitative methods. As questionnaires provided insights into the aspects of language learning which cannot be directly observed in language classroom, such as learners' attitudes or outside-school learning, their results supplement the information collected on the basis of the qualitative methods and enable the researcher to better understand certain behavior patterns or different phenomena observed. It can be stated that a questionnaire can serve as a useful instrument for measuring autonomy only when it is supplemented with a qualitative tool, such as regular observation, interviews, focus group interviews, learning log (diaries) or open-ended surveys. The research presented in this article proves that qualitative and quantitative paradigms should not be treated as mutually exclusive; instead, every attempt should be made to take advantage of the potential these two research paradigms offer.

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