Second Language Learning and Teaching

Mirosław Pawlak *Editor*

Classroom-Oriented Research

Reconciling Theory and Practice

Springer

Second Language Learning and Teaching

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Editor

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Preface

Theoretical positions regarding second or foreign language teaching come and go, bringing with them proposals on how different aspects of instruction should be conducted to the benefit of learners. Teachers might be advised, for example, to promote reception rather than production of grammatical structures, follow a task-based rather than a structural syllabus, correct only those errors which are likely to impede communication, adopt a process approach to writing or emphasize alternative over traditional forms of assessment in their classrooms. The problem with such recommendations, however firmly they might be grounded in theoretical considerations or research findings, is that they are often contradictory, which is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that they represent the convictions of their proponents who go to great lengths to produce or interpret empirical evidence in a way that supports their cause. After all, language learning can be aided by a number of instructional practices, with the effect that it may not be exceedingly difficult to show that a specific technique or procedure is effective in some circumstances. Besides, pedagogical solutions that are demonstrated to be efficacious in one context or group of learners may fail dismally in another, due to a wide array of factors, such as, for instance, differences in the amount and type of out-of-class exposure, teachers' beliefs or learners' motivation, to name but a few. For this reason, there has always been and always will be a pressing need for classroom-oriented research which would put the pedagogic proposals advanced by specialists to an empirical test in real classrooms, but also determine the effectiveness of specific instructional procedures or help identify conditions in which successful learning and teaching can take place. This is the rationale behind the present volume, which, constituting a follow up to the collection of papers edited by Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Bielak (2014), aims to illustrate the multifarious ways in which theory and research can be reconciled with classroom practice.

The book brings together 18 papers and has been divided into three parts, each including contributions of a similar nature, with the caveat that such a division is always to some extent arbitrary as many articles have many foci and it was the most prominent of those that motivated decisions concerning assignment. Part I,

Research Directions and Methodology, comprises six papers with a focus on both general and specific choices that have to be made when conducting empirical studies, touching upon the need for integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, construction of instruments that can be employed to tap willingness to communicate and pronunciation learning anxiety, as well as the use of such data collection tools as narratives, observation schemes and interviews. Part II, *Empirical Investigations*, includes eight papers reporting the findings of studies dealing with the beliefs of future teachers, both those more general and those related to writing skills, the relationship between in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching young children and their classroom practices, with a particular emphasis on assessment, the contribution of lexical richness to the quality of written texts, the development of interlanguage pragmatics with respect to speech acts, and learners' opinions about the use of video games. Finally, Part III, *Linking Theory and Classroom Practice*, brings together four contributions which highlight the ways in which theoretical positions can inform pedagogical decisions, focusing on the role of age, the application of principled eclecticism in a CLIL classroom, successful implementation of strategies-based instruction, as well as the use of film adaptations in teaching foreign language literature. I am convinced that the volume will provide food for thought and be a source of inspiration for both scholars conducting research on second and foreign language teaching, be they experienced academics, graduate or doctoral students, and teachers wishing to enhance the effectiveness of their classroom practices.

Mirosław Pawlak

Reference

Pawlak, M., Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Bielak, J. (Ed.). 2014. *Classroom-Oriented Research: Achievements and Challenges,* Heidelberg—New York: Springer.

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Part I
Research Directions and Methodology

Quantitative and Qualitative Classroom Research—Friendship or War?

Hanna Komorowska

Abstract Qualitative research is often presented in contrast to quantitative methodologies as an option which makes it possible to avoid pitfalls and shortcomings of the latter, yet often enough is itself attacked for a lack of scientific discipline. Placing quantitative and qualitative research on opposite sides of the barricade was understandably needed in the times of criticism directed against neo-positivist thinking, yet it does not seem particularly fruitful any more, especially in classroom research. In order to decide if reconciliation seems to be a more useful option here, we need to look at those paradigms in their radically opposite forms and identify reasons for frequent tendencies to dichotomize them. In the first part of the present text, historical processes taking place since the launch of the first ethnographic research projects are analyzed, through the development of quantitative methodologies, the birth of the grounded theory and the conflict between paradigms up to the present paradigm shift. In the second part, research paradigms in applied linguistics and language teaching are discussed with emphasis on examples of early qualitative and mixed research types. In the final part, the frequently overlooked similarity of research aims and procedures in the fields of education and applied linguistics is presented, the use of combined approaches is advocated, and their implications for teacher education are discussed. Promising heuristic paths for the future are also sought.

1 Introduction

A *paradigm* is usually defined as a set of assumptions or a shared understanding of reality (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In applied linguistics and language teaching, two or three paradigms are usually identified under a variety of labels, such as

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positivist/interpretivist, *positivist/post-positivist*, *normative/interpretive*, *quantitative/qualitative/ critical*, or *positivist/interpretivist/critical emancipatory* (cf. Jacobs & Farrel, 2001; Kohonen, 2000; Richards, 2009) which roughly correspond to the division into *basic*, *applied* and *action research* (Burns, 2005). Paradigms are often linked to types of research: *explanatory paradigms*, used to test hypotheses, tend to be quantitative, while *exploratory* ones, launched to gain more knowledge of the subject, are typically qualitative. *Descriptive paradigms*, meant to gain and/or present more detailed knowledge can become either of the two, which is also manifested in the passage from description to evaluation used in quality management (Heyworth, 2013). An approach through paradigms is sometimes replaced by an approach through perspectives. Three of those have been suggested by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 29–30), namely the *purist*, the *situationalist* and the *pragmatic*. Whichever approach we decide to adopt, the question remains whether particular paradigms or perspectives are mutually exclusive and as such present crude alternatives (Bryman, 2004), or simply form a continuum (Perry, 2005). A third way is sometimes suggested, pointing to a need for a middle-of-the-road *mixed methods approach*, dictated by practical concerns (Holliday, 2007; Kamiński, 1970), an option which might finally lead to paradigm peace (Bryman, 2006).

2 Research Paradigms

2.1 The Quantitative Paradigm

The quantitative paradigm is based on two major assumptions: that human behavior is rule-governed and as such it should be investigated the way it is done in the field of natural sciences. Within this framework the aim of research is to test a theory; therefore, theory construction should come first, and only then can hypotheses be formulated based on empirical consequences following from the theory. Theory testing consists of attempts to prove or disprove these hypotheses. Researchers ought to establish facts, describe them statistically and discover relations between variables. To do this, variables have to be operationalized and their indicators carefully selected, as in this approach only what is observable and measurable can be scientifically investigated. Research, usually experimental in format, should be carried out on large, randomized samples to permit broad generalizations. Tight control over variables is needed, while data collection based on psychometrically constructed tests must follow statistical requirements. If a research project takes a diagnostic format, it has to follow a detailed plan, use structured observation or structured interviews, and provide statistically appropriate, quantifiable coding counts as well as ensure validity and reliability of all the tests. As objective truth is believed to be sought, individual perspectives of particular participants are not taken into consideration. The theory tested through research of this kind should make it possible to offer explanations and make predictions. Quantitative research

has, therefore, for the last three decades been described as objective, structured, deductive, statistical, abstract and formal (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Cohen, 1982; Konecki, 2000; Silverman, 2012). As quantitative research is often identified with experimentation, it should be noted that it is not the format, but the role of theory that determines paradigm type; evaluative experiments, for instance, can take a qualitative perspective, while interviews can be analyzed using strictly quantitative coding counts.

2.2 *The Qualitative Paradigm*

Roots of qualitative approaches in language education can be traced back to British social anthropology, American cultural anthropology as well as German and French philosophy, especially with its branch commonly referred to as the school of phenomenology. We owe our understanding of the concept of the researcher's subjectivity to Polish-born Malinowski (1929), and of the value of participant observation to Benedict (1934) and Mead (1928). The need to avoid preconceptions is now felt thanks to Husserl's (1913) renewal of the Greek concept of epoché—suspension of all assumptions, and the value of peripheral phenomena for research and study, thanks to the work of Merleau-Ponty (1945). Procedures applied within the frames of the qualitative approach come from the work of the first Chicago school of sociology, especially from research on interactions conducted by Mead (1934). Techniques such as participant observation spring from the work undertaken by Park, Burgess, and Mac Kenzie (1925) on the sociology of the city, while new methodologies, such as, for example, the study of narratives and autobiographies, come from paths sought by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) in their work on immigration. Today's educational emphasis on intentionality and on ways in which people attach meanings to their activities, that is on subjective aspects of human behavior, comes from the work of Goffman (1956, 1969).

Qualitative paradigms were born out of disappointment with the quantitative approach. Strong criticism was voiced mainly, though not only, by researchers from the field of social sciences and humanities. It was pointed out that—as theory came first—all the instruments were in fact no more than frozen theories, a rigid research plan did not allow categories other than those a priori formulated and, those, therefore, may have included value-laden concepts and definitions. In addition, unjustified conclusions that could be formulated as correlations were sometimes taken for causative links. Criticism was also directed at the fact that overemphasis on observable data took place at the cost of aspects more meaningful, though difficult to quantify, and that arbitrary boundaries were placed on continuous phenomena. Psychologists, sociologists and educators pointed out that specific contexts were ignored and intentions underlying behavior were not analyzed. It was also stressed that—as respondents often behave in a different way in formal than in informal situations—verbal declarations might not reflect actual behavior. Opponents criticized the fact that in quantitative approaches processes are

considered less interesting than products and that, due to the abundance of material, data are often linked to form broader categories, which makes research far more subjective than it is claimed to be. Critics stressed that new theories are by definition impossible to spring from empirical research and hoped that the qualitative approach would help to avoid those pitfalls (Charmaz, 2006; Urbaniak-Zając & Kos, 2013).

Defining qualitative approaches has always been difficult and, therefore, they are often defined negatively as non-quantitative. The new paradigm is presented as one interested in evolving theories, concentrated on processes rather than products and characterized by methods which can be described as soft, flexible, subjective, political, speculative, case study or induction based (Silverman, 2012, p. 53). The aim of research here is to gain understanding of a certain situation and of behaviors that occur in it. No complete theory is needed to initiate investigation. Experimental design is rarely used as data collection takes place in a natural setting and is carried out in the course of participant observation, conducted by a researcher who immerses himself in the context and, owing to his subjective knowledge of this context, supplements information obtained by his or her own personal understanding. Results are presented in the form of narration, including anecdotal evidence, quotations or opinions issued by participants, i.e. material which would be considered trivial by researchers working within quantitative paradigms. Sometimes data can even be presented as scenarios or scripts as, for instance, in the seminal work on learner strategies entitled *Games students play* (Ernst, 1972). However, this is done intentionally in order to reestablish contextual data unaccounted for within quantitative approaches (Delamont & Hamilton, 1984; Konecki, 2000; Silverman, 2012). Differing perspectives of research participants, their intentions and meanings they ascribe to particular situation are perceived, noted and analyzed without preconceptions or attempts to link them to existing theories or categories. In the first systematic presentation of this approach, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) pointed out that research of this kind looks more like constructing an unknown picture than like putting together a puzzle whose parts are already identified.

Principles and procedures of qualitative research were first fully laid out in the so-called grounded theory born within the frames of the Chicago school of sociology and published by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their seminal book entitled *The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A significant change came with the postulate to generate a theory through research rather than to base it on one. Both theory itself and categories used in the research emerge in the research process. In Barney Glaser's version of grounded theory—which was at the time often treated as part of ethnography—research is expected to offer hypothetical generalizations rather than descriptions of facts. Theory which is formulated in consequence of qualitative research should be fit and should therefore work as a relevant and modifiable product; if possible, it should also be transcending, i.e. lending itself to be used in other areas. Researchers should be constantly aware of the so-called plumb line, i.e. the main focus of the research undertaken and of the mission question they want to find an answer to (Glaser, 1978). Detailed procedures and applications of grounded

theory were then presented in *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, another seminal book by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Today data collection in qualitative research is based on sensitizing concepts, which show where to find interesting information, as well as on definitive concepts, based on attributes or indices. In order to ensure precise description of reality, triangulation, i.e. analyzing a problem from more than one point of view—first introduced in the 1980s (Sevigny, 1981)—is recommended. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) list the following types of triangulation:

- triangulation of data, related to sources;
- triangulation of researchers, related to the number of research personnel;
- theoretical triangulation, related to a variety of theoretical paradigms used; and
- methodological triangulation, related to a variety of methods and techniques employed, an approach probably the earliest of them all.

Similar guiding principles are presented in *Constructing grounded theory. A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (Charmaz, 2006). Emphasis—as in most of the recent publications on the subject—is laid on the fact that processes are dynamic and methods have to change accordingly, which makes the approach fully interpretive. A clear line of development shows an attempt to integrate new approaches and new disciplines within the framework of flexibly changing grounded theory (Allen, 2010). Postmodern emphasis on contradictions and differences of perspective can be seen in Clarke's (2005) *Situational analysis. Grounded theory after the postmodern turn.*

All in all, qualitative research is, therefore, described as qualitative, subjective, holistic, unstructured, inductive, descriptive and informal. Yet, it is also accused of a variety of shortcomings, such as the anecdotal character of some of the data (Silverman, 2012) or difficulties with generalizing the data obtained (Konecki, 2000). Difficulties with quality assessment are also encountered in spite of the existence of clear guidelines set by American Educational Research Association (AERA) (2006). This often happens due to the lack of information on types of researcher's subjectivity in collecting and interpreting data, while, as Ball suggests, ethnographic research should be accompanied by a research biography (Ball, 1980, p. 170).

3 Quantitative, Qualitative and Combined Paradigms in Classroom Research

The first qualitative research projects in the classroom context were—as in other disciplines—triggered by methodological difficulties inherent in earlier frameworks. A way to deal with the shortcomings of purely quantitative approaches was initially sought in accounts of unstructured participant observation. These helped to avoid

sharp coding categories of quantitative projects, as it happened when, thanks to the publication of John Holt's *How children fail* and *How children learn*, pupils' learning stopped being classified into *unknown* and *known*, and a scale was introduced to accommodate degrees of uncertainty (Holt, 1964, 1967). For the first time, learners' coping strategies made it to the center of researchers' attention and, for the first time, critical events started to be considered indispensable for our understanding of human development. The new approach owes a lot of its popularity to the publishing success of Martin Buber's earlier work presenting the first four Hasidic dynasties and their ways of stimulating cognitive, social and emotional development. In his work, Buber used the so-called legendary anecdotes based on critical events in which metaphors were employed to facilitate understanding (Komorowska, 2012, 2013). An example was, for instance, set of a teacher who modified his ways of dealing with students on hearing Baal-Shem Tov, saying that "we spread our arms in order to protect a child from falling, but keep them away from the child to let it try to be independent or even push the child away and spread our arms even wider" (Buber, 1908/2005, p. 107). Similar ways of working towards understanding through metaphor were used in Philip Jackson's *Life in classrooms*, where he equals schools to institutions of involuntary attendance such as prisons and mental hospitals. Refraining from hypotheses formulation with the stance of a 'Martian on Earth', trying to notice the seemingly unobservable, Jackson came up with the concepts of *hidden curriculum* and *fake attention*, and looked at classrooms as places where pupils learn to live with delayed gratification and to cope with waiting (Jackson, 1968).

Another way of dealing with the shortcomings of quantitative research projects led towards open-ended research with no initially formulated theories or hypotheses. Sara Delamont's *Interaction in the classroom*, based on school and classroom observation is probably the best known example of fully qualitative research in education (Delamont, 1976). Other early examples are Richer's *School effects. The case of grounded theory*, a study of interpersonal relations in the school staffroom, and their impact on labelling students who were found to be assessed on the basis of their behavior rather than their academic skills (Richer, 1975), Rutter's *Fifteen thousand hours. Secondary schools and their effect on children* (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1980) and Hargreaves' *The challenge for the comprehensive school* (Hargreaves, 1975). This line was then taken up in Peter Woods' analysis of British schools, presented in his *Sociology and the school. An interactionist viewpoint* (Woods, 1983).

Open-ended research projects never invited any form of narrowing down the research perspective through initially accepted theory, but allowed for focus through selecting a certain aspect of a classroom situation. A vast number of research projects were then conducted dealing with issues such as classroom humor, classroom noise, discipline or attention, but also coping strategies of young teachers, or learners' testing a new teacher during their first encounter.

Not everybody at that time believed in the strength of qualitative approaches. Quantitative approaches to the classroom context were still used and valued, as exemplified by research projects presented by Morrison and McIntyre in their *The*

social psychology of teaching (Morrison & McIntyre, 1972), but also by research on non-verbal signals in the classroom (Jackson & Lahaderne, 1972) and on classroom interaction (Bellack & Davitz, 1972). Huge quantitative projects continued to be undertaken embracing large samples, e.g. a sample of 458 teachers in the study of UK teachers' attitudes towards educational objectives (Bennet, 1976), a sample of 58 classes examined over three years as in the so-called ORACLE (Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980), or a sample of 1000 classes in 38 schools in the Goodlad project (1984).

With time, combining methodology of educational research with ethnographic methods was looked at as a more attractive option. Although mixed methods and techniques were already used in the early 1960s research on leadership styles (Biddle & Ellena, 1964; Evans, 1966), the spur for new approaches came from Smith and Geoffrey's (1968) research based on participatory observational studies conducted for a period of six months and enriched by a series of interviews with students. Its aim was to analyze the teacher's decision-making processes, ways of setting standards and ensuring classroom discipline as well as the choice of techniques designed to encourage participation of slow students in classroom activities (Smith & Geoffrey, 1968). An extra stimulus for the promotion of the new paradigm came from the work by Flanders on his interaction category system, known as FIAC (Flanders, 1970), which till today lends itself easily to both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Ethnographic procedures were also combined with quantitative ones in *Student social class and teacher expectations. The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education*, a project investigating interpersonal norms as well as roles of teachers and learners. Special emphasis was given to labeling processes leading to attributions of high and low academic potential which were found to be based on the teachers' perception of students' identification with particular groups and social classes (Rist, 1970). A combination of linguistic and ethnographic procedures was also used in the research on aspects of classroom management, this time viewed through the lens of classroom language, investigated within the ethnographic framework (Stubbs & Delamont, 1976). A similar way of using mixed methods in research on classroom language took center stage in the mid-1970s with research initiated by Stubbs on metacommunicative functions of teacher talk, which he found to be used primarily for attracting attention as well as for comprehension checks, nominations, controlling the amount of speech, correcting, summarizing, defining, editing or specifying the topic. Research also revealed imbalance and asymmetry in teacher and student talk as the use of language to these ends was not noticed on the part of students (Stubbs, 1976).

The early development of qualitative research perspective shows that a new approach opened new research venues. These called for new ways of data collection and for new instruments, such as journals, logs or memoirs (Biddle & Ellena, 1964). Leadership styles proved difficult to analyze without the symbolic interactionist interpretation of outside and inside authority (Evans, 1966). Case studies proved valuable both in the analysis of individual children, as in the then popular *Anancy goes to school. A case study of pupils' knowledge of their teachers* (Furlong, 1977), and in the analysis of schools as institutions (Ball, 1981). Critical

paradigms, looking at the social context of education, added new values to the qualitative approach, as can be seen in Eckert's (2012) work employing ethnographic methods to describe the formation of social groups in American high schools concentrating on the so-called jocks and burnout.

Yet, relative proportions of publications reflecting qualitative and quantitative research show a higher status of the latter in academic circles. In the years 1978–1997, qualitative research was found to occupy no more than 12 % of publication space, with only 2 % of studies which were at least partly qualitative (Lazaraton, 1995). The situation showed some signs of change around the mid-1990s: Richards found that in the years 1998–2007 this percentage went up to around 17 %—*Applied Linguistics* published 31 qualitative studies out of the total of 196, *TESOL Quarterly* published 47 out of the total of 178, *The Modern Language Journal* 39 out of 218, and *IRAL* 10 out of 128 (Richards, 2009). Space problems seem to be the main drawback as qualitative studies tend to include lengthy reports. Yet, in fact, qualitative paradigms are still underestimated, if not straightforwardly avoided in dissertations leading to a degree, which shows the lack of acceptance of these approaches in many academic circles (Donmoyer, 2006).

4 Paradigms in Language Education and Their Impact on the Polish Context

Although the teaching paradigm shift in language education took place in the 1970s, replacing teacher-centered by a learner-centered perspective, sharp divisions in positivist and interpretivist research paradigms surfaced approximately 20 years later. The *positivist* paradigm was characterized by (Jacobs & Farrel, 2001, p. 2) emphasis on parts, decontextualization, emphasis on separation, emphasis on the general, consideration of the quantifiable, reliance on external researchers, focus on control, focus on the product, top-down research, and standardization. By contrast, the *interpretivist* paradigm showed emphasis on whole, contextualization, emphasis on integration, emphasis on the specific, consideration of the non-quantifiable, consideration of insider knowledge and participant researcher, focus on understanding, focus on the process, bottom-up research, and diversity of contexts. Some researchers added a third paradigm, namely the *critical emancipatory* one, to underline attempts to introduce social change in education (Kohonen, 2000), but often all non-positivist approaches were grouped under an umbrella term of *postpositivism.*

Just as in other disciplines of science and humanities, in language education positivist paradigms were attacked and the main foci of criticism were context-stripping, especially the exclusion of local contexts, exclusion of meaning and intentions of human behavior, lack of interest in individual cases, and lack of sources of new hypotheses, due to the format of data collection instruments which are predetermined by the theory adopted prior to the launch of a research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 106–107). Qualitative research projects today value

context, dialogue and self-reflection (Saukko, 2005), are based on dynamic, ecological models (Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), and tend to include psychological, sociological, linguistic and cultural aspects (Byram, 2008; Pavlenko, 2007). They evidently draw on the achievements of their numerous predecessors whose contribution is still considered significant (Angrosino, 2007).

In Polish educational sciences, qualitative approaches were first presented as no more than research techniques, such as interview or observation, useful in the process of preparing descriptions, but useless when it comes to explanations (Zaczyński, 1967). Even as techniques they were for a long time considered traditional and outdated (Zaborowski, 1973; Łobocki, 2000), as scientific rigors within them were treated less strictly, often due to the uniqueness of cases. Aleksander Kamiński, professor of social pedagogy, also known as the author of famous books on the Warsaw Uprising, was the only one who postulated rejection of radical judgments and stressed the role of intuition and skills of researchers in selecting approaches appropriate for seeking answers to particular research questions (Kamiński, 1970). Although some qualitative projects were successfully completed by Polish scholars (Szkudlarek, 1992), major changes in attitudes in favor of qualitative approaches in the field of sociology and education did not begin in Poland until as late as the 21st century (Konecki, 2000; Kubinowski, 2011; Urbaniak-Zając & Kos, 2013). Practical applications appeared within the participating/interventionist paradigm, when researchers started to be perceived not only as academics, but also as social actors responsible for their social context. Action research soon followed. This, however, has never fully influenced BA, MA or Ph.D. dissertations where quantitative approaches continued to dominate.

Similar processes have been taking place in language education. Within the teacher-centered approach, quantitative research projects dominated, as control over variables and a precise selection of indicators were relatively easy to ensure due to focus on one person's observable behavior. In contrast, the learner-centered approach today calls for the analysis of intentions, interactions and processes. Therefore, qualitative approaches seem to be more than appropriate. Yet, practically all the doctoral dissertations and academic papers published in professional journals are still based on the quantitative paradigm, evidently considered the only one deemed worthy of a high academic status. Participating and interventionist projects including case studies and teacher-made action research were mainly linked to activities geared toward professional development of teachers seeking promotion and, for that reason, following the strongly bureaucratized path of formal specialization. Qualitative approaches remained the domain of language oriented classroom research, mainly that on interactive discourse in the language classroom (Majer, 2003). Valuable steps towards qualitative academic research have only been made quite recently. The role of reflection in language teaching and teacher education encouraged the use of non-quantitative approaches, as illustrated by the Silesian research project on pre-service teacher development (Gabryś-Barker, 2012). The growing importance of intercultural competence also contributed to the increasing significance of qualitative approaches in language education; research on

the developing of intercultural competence through English among Polish and Ukrainian students launched by the Jagiellonian University can serve as a good example here (Niżegorodcew, Bystrov, & Kleban, 2011). Thus, qualitative procedures enriched the quantitative paradigm rather than replaced it.

5 Conclusions and Implications for Teacher Education

As can be seen from the above, dichotomization into qualitative and quantitative approaches seems useful if—for theory development purposes—we feel the need of distinguishing between normative and interpretative paradigms. No paradigmatic clash arises when we start thinking in terms of data collection techniques, even though in the interpretative paradigm sampling is theoretical and theory emerges from the data obtained, while in the normative one it is a starting point for investigations. Testing preconceived models seems to be taking place more successfully within quantitative paradigms, while new models and new theories emerge from qualitative research projects. The middle-of-the-road approach is taken by those who view qualitative and quantitative research projects as a spectrum rather than as a form of dichotomization and believe in sound decision-making which would depend on the type of data needed and on research questions asked rather than on the ideological preference of the researcher (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1992; Kamiński, 1970).

What are the main values of the qualitative research perspective treated as complementary to rather than as contrasted with the quantitative one? In the field of academic research work, such a combination helps to add important topics to the list of research interests, e.g. classroom language, learner and teacher strategies or interaction patterns. It also widens the spectrum of data collection techniques, as observation, analysis of critical events, diaries, portfolios, logs and autobiographies have now gained a firm place in research methodologies (Franklin, 2012; Heigham & Croker, 2009). Moreover, it encourages an interdisciplinary look and helps us to avoid the tunnel vision of problems springing from the narrowing down of research focus. In the field of teacher education, a healthy combination of approaches helps to identify problems, shows us the usefulness of bridging theory and practice, as well as addressing a missing link between the teacher training institution and the school. Instrumental case studies can be of great usefulness here, which has been observed for the last two decades in many professions, such as pre-service training of medical doctors, but also school teachers. Two kinds of case studies, explanatory and descriptive, have been used (Stevick, 1989; Yin, 1993), the first serving the purpose of helping formulate research questions and decide categories to be further investigated, the latter enabling us to draw generalizations (Konecki, 2000). In the typology offered by Stake (1994), intrinsic case studies prove useful when a given

feature or aspect is to be explored and the case seems to be interesting due to its unique character, while instrumental case studies prove to serve as helpful examples of broader categories and therefore can be useful in gaining insight into a problem or a theory. Both can prove extremely useful in BA, MA and PhD dissertations in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching.

Due to a disciplined approach and a relatively rigid structure with pre-planned procedures, the quantitative paradigm seems more appropriate for BA dissertations prepared by student teachers with hardly any pedagogical practice. Yet, with increasing numbers of practicing teachers having several years of teaching experience who decide to work toward their MA degrees, qualitative approaches prove to be far more valuable as they help active teachers concentrate on learners' cognitive styles and coping strategies, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses, identify difficulties and outline ways of supporting their learning (Hyland, 2000). Both paradigms and the mixed methods approach can prove extremely useful in PhD dissertations as well as in the course of further personal and professional teacher development, because they support autonomy, reflection and professionalization of teachers and at the same time promise positive changes through efforts to empower students (Ohta & Nakone, 2004) and through proposals of new solutions to teaching and learning problems (Baralt, Pennestri, & Selvandin, 2011; Borg, 2003; Burns, 2005; Richards, 2009).

In trying to find ways to support teachers in their development, three issues seem to be of greatest importance:

- eliciting individual initiative and encouraging teachers to search for their own way according to the old motto of The Seer of Lublin "Each person should consider which way his heart lies and incessantly follow this way" (The Seer of Lublin, after Buber, 1908/2005, p. 185);
- providing opportunities for collaborative, interactive learning and dialogical approaches, according to what Lévinas suggests in his famous statement from *L'au delà du verset* "Everyone, through his or her uniqueness, enables the appearance of a new aspect of truth" (Lévinas, 1982);
- supporting teachers' pursuit of evolving theories and their search for new meanings.

In our own personal growth, at least some of us still hope for, such a combination of approaches adopted in a supportive learning and research environment promotes a long-forgotten attitude towards questions. In the early Hasidic writings, what is deemed valuable are the so-called live answers which refer back to the question and stimulate it again, as the essence of the question is its openness to possibilities. Although knowledge is always valued, not much respect is given to final judgments, or to the so-called answers-settlements, for they do not give rise to the questioning thought. As Maurice Blanchot puts it in his *L'Entretien Infini*—"the answer is the tragedy of the question" (Blanchot, 1969, p. 21).

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Designing a Tool for Measuring the Interrelationships between L2 WTC, Confidence, Beliefs, Motivation, and Context

Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Mirosław Pawlak

Abstract The study of language learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) has gained momentum since 1998 when MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) presented a conceptualization of an amalgam of psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative dimensions of language whose interplay underlies a person's wish to use the target language. The recognition of the importance of the concept as well as its potential to impinge on the outcomes of the learning process have generated a multitude of studies, especially in Chinese and Japanese contexts, which either attempt to test and verify MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model or expand the array of factors that promote or hinder communication, both in the classroom and outside. The study reported in the present paper constitutes the first stage of a research project aimed to investigate the relationship between Polish learners' in-class and out-of-class WTC in English and a number of individual and contextual variables which can be seen as its antecedents, such as communication confidence, learner beliefs, classroom environment, international posture, ideal L2 self, and ought-to L2 self. More specifically, it sought to establish the psychometric properties of eight scales that were adjusted to reflect the realities of the Polish educational context and the specificity of English instruction in foreign languages departments. Since the analysis provided evidence for high reliability of the scales and the entire tool, a decision was made to retain all the original items so that they could be further verified by means of factor analysis in subsequent studies.

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1 Introduction

The importance of interacting in a foreign language that one is striving to master is hardly a matter of controversy, and it is recognized by the vast majority of second language acquisition specialists, teachers, learners and even those who are not directly involved in foreign language education. For example, it is regarded as an important mechanism facilitating the process of learning in a number of theoretical positions, both psycholinguistic and sociocultural in nature, such as the modified version of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000), Skill-Learning Theory (DeKeyser, 2007) and Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf, 2006), with ample empirical evidence in each case to buttress such claims. It is also clear that the ability to speak fluently and to successfully accomplish different communicative goals in a variety of situations is seen as one of the most important purposes of learning and teaching foreign languages, not least because it typically constitutes the yardstick for evaluating an individual's competence in the target language on the first encounter with native speakers or other foreigners. It should be kept in mind, however, that readiness to initiate or contribute to interaction in a particular time and place does not only depend upon the appropriate command of all the target language subsystems or the requisite skills, which can be measured more or less precisely, but also hinges upon a complex interplay of numerous psychological, linguistic, educational and communicative variables which is not easy to grasp. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that willingness to communicate (WTC) in a second or foreign language has attracted the attention of numerous researchers who have attempted to explore its nature and identify the variables underlying its occurrence, character and intensity (e.g., Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre, 1994, 2007; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998; Peng, 2014). Such research, though, has concentrated upon contexts rather different from the Polish one, such as Canada, China or Japan, with the effect that the research instruments developed in the course of these studies cannot be fully applicable to the realities of our setting and thus cannot be uncritically used to collect relevant data. Moreover, some of them have been devised for very specific educational stages or proficiency levels, and fail to take into account the latest developments in information and computer technology that have led to the emergence and unprecedented spread of new patterns of communication. Thus, there is a need to develop new data collection tools or refine the existing ones with a view to obtaining a valid and reliable picture of WTC and its antecedents in specific populations. In recognition of this need, the present paper reports the results of a study, constituting part of a larger-scale research project, which aimed to modify some of the existing scales so that they can be included in a questionnaire used to examine WTC and variables underpinning it among advanced learners enrolled in BA and MA programs in English. First, the relevant theoretical background will be presented, which will be followed by the description of the methodology and results of the study, the discussion of these results and some directions for future research. A tangible outcome of the research project is a data

collection tool, included in the Appendix, which the authors will use as a point of departure for their further empirical investigations of WTC in the Polish educational context.

2 L2 WTC and Its Measurement

L2 WTC has been investigated at two different levels—as a trait, reflecting an individual's predisposition to initiate or enter communication when given the choice, or as a state characteristic, dependent on the transitory influences of a particular context. Both quantitative (e.g., MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002, 2003; Peng, 2007, 2014; Yashima 2002) and qualitative (e.g., Cao & Philip, 2006; Cao, 2011; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011) research paradigms have been reflected in numerous studies conducted mainly in Canada and Asia. The model of L2 WTC proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) has inspired a substantial number studies in the course of which researchers have examined interdependencies between WTC and individual and contextual variables, which include age and gender (MacIntyre et al., 2002), motivation and attitudes (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Ryan, 2009), self-confidence (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Yashima, 2002), international posture (Yashima, 2002, 2009), personality (Ghonsooly, Khajavy, & Asadpour, 2012; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), and the classroom environment (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). As the results of these empirical investigations show, motivation, self-confidence and international posture have a consistent influence on learners' WTC (Clément et al., 2003; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Yashima, 2002). Moreover, the available empirical evidence suggests that L2 WTC correlates with or can be predicted by the frequency of communication in the target language (MacIntyre et al., 2002, 2003; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

Most of the quantitative studies reported here made use of the probability-estimate scale, developed by McCroskey and Baer (1985), to investigate willingness to speak in one's first language (see Table 1). It comprises 12 items, in response to which the participants are expected to indicate the amount of time, from 0 % (i.e., never) to 100 % (i.e., always), when they feel willing to communicate. It also provides subscores for each of the following types of receivers: strangers, acquaintances and friends, and the following types of context: public meetings, small groups or dyads. The tool does not attempt to look into feelings underlying communication but rather tap into speakers' predispositions towards approaching or avoiding situations in which they have to interact, which rests on the assumption that respondents are aware of their orientations towards communication (McCroskey, 1992, p. 17). High internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$) for the whole scale and subscales for specific receivers ($\alpha = 0.060$–0.83) and contexts ($\alpha = 0.70$–0.91), reported in McCroskey and Richmond's (1992) study, were also corroborated in a number of other research projects (MacIntyre et al., 2002, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), conducted in a bilingual context in Canada. The predictive validity of the instrument has been addressed by Chan and McCroskey (1987), and Zakahi and McCroskey

Table 1 The measurement of L2 WTC in previous studies (adapted from Peng, 2013)

Study	Context	L2 WTC scale	Reliability Cronbach's alpha
MacIntyre and Charos (1996)	Canada	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.97
Baker and MacIntyre (2000)	Canada	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.97
MacIntyre et al. (2001)	Canada	27 items measuring L2 WTC inside and outside the classroom respectively	0.81–0.96
MacIntyre et al. (2002)	Canada	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.96
Hashimoto (2002)	USA	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.85
Yashima (2002)	Japan	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.91
MacIntyre et al. (2003)	Canada	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.95
Clément et al. (2003)	Canada	12 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.94
Yashima et al. (2004)	Japan	20 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.93
Weaver (2005)	Japan	17 items measuring L2 WTC in classroom speaking and writing situations respectively	–
Peng (2007)	China	27 items adapted from MacIntyre et al. (2001) L2 WTC inside the classroom	0.92
Ryan (2009)	Japan	8 items (including inside and outside classroom situations)	–
Yashima (2009)	Japan	8 items adapted from Ryan (2009)	0.86
Peng and Woodrow (2010)	China	10 items adapted from Weaver (2005), measuring L2 WTC inside the classroom	0.88
MacIntyre and Legatto (2011)	Canada	20 items from MacIntyre et al. (2003)	–
Ghonsooly et al. (2012)	Iran	12 items from McCroskey and Baer's WTC scale	0.94
Peng (2013)	China	8 items from Yashima (2009) outside and inside the classroom respectively	0.81–0.74
Peng (2014)	China	15 items adapted from Weaver (2005) meaning-focused and form-focused activities respectively	0.82–0.89

(1989) in the studies carried out in an experimental setting and, although the experimental situation differed from those referred to in the scale, in both of the studies, the scores proved to predict the respondents' behavior. While the scale items corresponding to everyday encounters with target language users were well-fitted to the bilingual context in Canada, its applicability to foreign language contexts soon began to be questioned (cf. Peng, 2013, 2014). As reported by Asker (1998, p. 164), for example, learners of English in Hong Kong felt confused about the formulations used in the scale and asked whether they should 'imagine' their behavior in situations they would not normally experience. Cao and Philip (2006), in turn, questioned the suitability of the generic trait measurement scale for the analysis of WTC in an instructional setting, pointing to the inconsistency they observed between self-reported WTC and actual WTC in the classroom. Worth noting at this point is the fact that the researchers expanded the scale with five items that referred to actions typically performed in the classroom in the three interactional modes: whole class, pair work, and group work. Despite the fact that the added items specifically concerned classroom interaction, the results showed no clear correlations between learners' self-reported WTC and their actual oral behavior.

MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrod (2001) developed a data collection tool that was intended to tap into L2 WTC with reference to specific skills. The scale concerned not only productive but also receptive skills, since, as the authors contend, "[e]ven receptive language use implies a commitment by an individual to authentic language use and might foster a willingness to communicate" (p. 375). The original rating scheme McCroskey and Richmond (1987) applied in their questionnaire (i.e., the percentage of time an individual was willing to speak) was changed to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "almost never willing to speak" to "almost always willing to speak", on which the respondents were requested to indicate their skill-specific WTC. Reliability estimates for the four skills amounted to: $\alpha = 0.81$ for speaking, $\alpha = 0.83$ for comprehension, $\alpha = 0.83$ for reading, and $\alpha = 0.88$ for writing. Another measure, consisting of 27 items and using the same scale, was employed to delve into the respondents' willingness to engage in various communicative situations that necessitated the use of the L2 outside the classroom. The items were also indicative of four skill areas and the reliability estimates for the subscales were as follows: speaking $\alpha = 0.89$, listening $\alpha = 0.90$, reading $\alpha = 0.93$, and writing $\alpha = 0.96$.

Dissatisfied with the way that the examinations of L2 WTC based on McCroskey and Richmond's (1987) scale were conducted, Weaver (2005) reduced the scope of investigation to the conceptualization of WTC as a stable trait variable, thus failing to take account of its abstruse, situational antecedents. He developed a 37-item scale which targeted participation not only in oral but also written activities, and employed a four-point rating scale, where 1 stood for "definitely not willing" and 4 indicated "definitely willing", with the items included in it representing the typical speaking and writing tasks and situations that Japanese learners of English were most likely to perform in the classroom. Ten items from this scale were adapted in the study undertaken by Peng and Woodrow (2010) which was aimed to examine classroom WTC of Chinese learners of English, with a reliability

estimate at $\alpha = 0.88$ being reported. Justifying the changes introduced to the original formulations used by Weaver (2005), Peng (2013, p. 282) hinted that the lack of a clear reference to the type of receiver might have impacted the results since the relationship between the speaker and interlocutor(s) is bound to affect an individual's readiness to enter into interaction, as was shown, for example, by Cao (2011) and MacIntyre et al. (2011). Hence, the word *someone* that might denote the teacher or another student was substituted with a term clearly denoting the type of interlocutor.

Peng (2007) used the 27 items from MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) scale to measure the WTC of Chinese learners of English inside the classroom. Some of the items had to be changed to make them correspond to tasks and activities familiar to the participants. The WTC in English in the classroom scale, with a reliability estimate of $\alpha = 0.92$, required the students to mark on a five-point scale the frequency with which they would choose to speak English in each of the listed situations. Ryan (2009), in turn, conducted a study in Japan that was meant to be a replication of a research project on motivation undertaken in Hungary (cf., Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Clement, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei, Csizér, & Nemeth, 2006) and included WTC among the 18 motivational and affective variables in his questionnaire. The scale specifically asking the participants to evaluate their willingness to engage in communication consisted of eight items referring to situations both inside and outside the classroom, and was adapted from McCroskey's original measure. The same scale was applied in the study conducted among Japanese learners of English by Yashima (2009), who looked into the relationship between L2 WTC and international posture. It was later applied by Peng (2013) in the Chinese educational setting, with the caveat that a six-point rating scheme was introduced to avoid neutral responses. In this case, the scale was validated by means of confirmatory analysis, based on the results of exploratory factor analysis performed in a pilot study. In a subsequent study, Peng (2014) investigated classroom WTC, zooming in on its level in meaning-focused and form-focused activities, adapting for this purpose Weaver's (2005) scale but also eliminating what she considered the main weakness of the scale, that is the lack of specification of the type of receiver, so that the participants knew exactly who their interlocutors would be. Cronbach's alpha measures for WTC in meaning-focused and form-focused activities scales turned out to be 0.82 and 0.89, respectively, values which are highly satisfactory.

MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) used two 20-item scales that required the respondents to indicate their usual willingness to use the target language and their mother tongue, separately, with the items adapted from MacIntyre et al. (2003) and thus reflecting WTC at the trait level. The focus of the study was the development of an idiodynamic method that allows an in-depth analysis of the fluctuations in WTC across contexts and situations, which marked a significant turn in WTC research and heralded the onset of investigations of this attribute on a moment-by-moment basis. It should be pointed out, however, that even earlier a number of researchers recognized the need to address situational and dynamic aspects of WTC, and even if qualitative research into WTC is not the main theme of the present paper, it without doubt deserves a mention to portray the complexity of

the issue. Some researchers also embraced a mixed-methods approach (cf. Cao & Philip, 2006; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011), looking into both stable behavioral tendencies and dynamic changes in response to the impact of contextual factors. For example, Kang (2005), having collected data by means of semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall, found that the decision to enter into communication emerged as a result of an intricate interplay of three psychological factors, namely security, excitement, and responsibility. Cao and Philip (2006), in turn, examined correlations between trait WTC and actual communicative behavior in three interactional situations, that is pair work, group work and whole class. They established that situational WTC was a function of group size, familiarity with interlocutors, their readiness to participate, familiarity with the topic, self-confidence and cultural background. However, they did not report correlations between WTC at the trait and situational levels, or between the participants' WTC in the three different situations. In a more recent study, Cao (2011), on the basis of the analysis of the data gathered by means of observations, stimulated recall interviews and reflective journals, concluded that L2 WTC in the classroom is shaped by individual, linguistic and environmental factors, an outcome that was subsequently corroborated in the case of variation in situational WTC in a longitudinal case study (Cao, 2013). The results suggest that WTC fluctuates both in the short and the long run, as a corollary of growing experience and confidence. Moreover, ebbs and flows in WTC can be registered from lesson to lesson or even from task to task during a single class. A more fine-grained perspective has been applied by MacIntyre et al. (2011), who demonstrated that learners can feel both willing and unwilling to communicate in certain circumstances as even a slight change in any one detail of interaction is capable of bringing about an abrupt shift in one's desire to speak or remain silent. Finally, in the study carried out by the present authors (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014) L2 learners of English were asked to report on a scale from −10 to +10 their intention to speak during two types of tasks, monologues and dialogues, with interesting differences being detected between the subjects' WTC while performing the two tasks and tendencies within each task-type.

3 The Study

3.1 Aims and Methodology

The aim of the study reported below was to devise a data collection instrument that could be used to tap advanced learners' WTC in a foreign language, such that would take into account the specificity of the Polish educational context and realities of the instructional setting, in this case the teaching of advanced learners in the practical and content components of BA and MA programs offered by departments of foreign languages. With this goal in mind, it sought to scrutinize the

existing scales which are employed to measure what could be regarded as the antecedents of WTC, reducing the number of items in these scales as well as refining them so that they can be included in the proposed tool.

The participants of the research project were 79 MA students majoring in English, 63 of whom were females and 17 males. On average, they were 22.8 years of age, their experience in studying English as a foreign language amounted to about 12 years, and they self-evaluated their speaking skill as 4.06 on a scale of 2 (lowest) to 5 (highest), which is typically used for assessment purposes in institutions of higher education in Poland. Although the students were enrolled in an extramural program and their classes were scheduled for every other Saturday and Sunday, their course of study mirrored those usually followed in regular programs as they were required to attend regular classes in English, divided into courses dealing with grammar, conversation and academic writing, as well as a number of content classes, such as selected issues in applied linguistics, new technologies in teaching English as a foreign language, MA and supplementary seminars, as well as monographic lectures, all of which were taught in the target language. It should also be pointed out that, as most of the participants already had jobs, either in the teaching profession or in other walks of life, they were on the one hand too busy to devote too much time to their studies but on the other highly motivated to complete them.

The tool piloted in the course of the study consisted of 104 six-point-scale items, where 1 indicated total disagreement and 6 total agreement. The statements included in the survey were derived from several scales adapted from the literature which are commonly utilized to determine the antecedents of WTC and which were translated into Polish for the purpose of the current research project. In addition, the scales were modified prior to their administration so that the items they included were more reflective of the unique context of the study, the characteristics of the age group, and the tasks performed during the practical English classes in the program. These modifications involved adjusting some of the items so that they could fit the Polish context (e.g. changing words such as *Chinese* into *Polish*) as well as changing others so that they were reflective of the specific activities and situations that the students can in fact face in the classroom (e.g., no in-front-of the class role-plays or dialogues acted out from script, more challenging tasks completed or a wider range of topics tackled, no standing in front of the class, translation never used in speaking classes, and the use of the L1 avoided). Some entirely new items were also added in some of the scales to acknowledge the fact that the Internet has become an integral part of many people's lives, that access to the target language in a foreign language context is in many cases confined to computer-mediated communication, and that contacts with foreigners are made possible by international exchange programs, such as those encouraging mobility within and outside the European Union. What is more, a decision was made to include several items concerning the provision of corrective feedback, since it was the belief of the researchers that learners' response to such feedback in terms of undertaking self-correction or their willingness to indicate inaccuracies in the output of their peers (see Pawlak, 2014, for an overview of options in oral error correction) is closely related to their level of WTC, an issue that has been blatantly neglected so

far by researchers working in this area. Despite such modifications, the scales can be said to be characterized by high content validity as they were constructed by leading experts in the field and verified in a number of empirical studies. The description of the scales included in the final questionnaire after the modifications have been introduced follows:

- *In-Class WTC* (Peng & Woodrow, 2010), which is intended to measure learners' WTC in speaking in instructional contexts and contains 14 Likert-scale items which are responded to on a six-point scale; examples of items included in the tool are as follows: "I am willing to present arguments to the rest of my class", "I am willing to take part in a discussion in a small group", or "I am willing to modify what I have said in response to an indication of an error"; the reliability of the original scale was established, with the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.88;
- *Out-of-Class WTC in FL context* (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), which includes 12 items taken from McCroskey and Baer (1985), aiming to determine the average percentage of time, from 0 to 100 %, that the respondents would decide to engage in communication in French in different situations; French was changed to English and a six-point Likert-scale was introduced; the final scale included such items as: "I am willing to initiate communication with a foreigner met in the street", "I am willing to use CMC to address an acquaintance of mine" or "I am willing to speak to exchange students enrolled in my program", the reliability of the original scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.97;
- *Communication Confidence* (Woodrow, 2006; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), aimed to provide a composite measure of communication anxiety in English and perceived communication competence in English; the 16 original items were reduced to 13, which had to be responded to on a six-point Likert-scale; examples of the included items are as follows: "I am willing to speak without preparation in class", "I am willing to speak informally to my English teacher during classroom activities" or "I am willing to give a short impromptu speech to my class"; the reliability of the original scales devoted to the two components was calculated as 0.84 and 0.93;
- *Learner Beliefs* (Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Peng, 2007), constructed to tap into beliefs about classroom behaviors that are assumed to encourage or hinder WTC in a second language, with responses provided on a six-point Likert-scale; the instrument contained 10 items such as: "You should try to speak English even if you know you might not speak it correctly", "Students who speak a lot in classes achieve a higher level of proficiency", or "I should be given an opportunity to correct myself when I make an error"; the reliability of the initial scale was 0.80;
- *Classroom Environment* (Fraser, Fisher, & McRobbie, 1996), aimed to provide information about teacher support, group cohesion as well as task orientation; 13 six-point Likert-scale statements were included, with examples as follows: "Tasks designed in this class are attractive", "The teacher asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions", or "I help other class members who are having trouble with their work"; the reliability of the original tool was estimated as 0.88;

- *International Posture* (Yashima, 2002, 2009), which was designed to determine readiness to take part in intercultural communication and includes items reflective of such factors as intergroup approach-avoidance tendency, interest in international vocation or activities, interest in foreign affairs, and having things to communicate to the world; the original seven-point Likert-scale was converted to a six-point scale; the following are examples of the 20 statements included in the tool: "I try to use every opportunity to speak to a foreigner in English, online or in reality", "I want to work in an international organisation or company", "I often talk about situations and events (sports events, concerts, festivals etc.) in foreign countries with my family and friends", or "I have ideas about international issues such as sports, cultural, social, political or economic events or phenomena"; the value of Cronbach's alpha established for the whole battery was 0.78;
- *Ideal L2 Self* (Dörnyei, 2010), intended to provide information about learners' envisaged abilities and skills with respect to learning English; all the original six-point Likert-scale items were retained and examples thereof are as follows: "I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English", "I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues" or "The things I want to do in the future require me to use English"; the reliability of the scale was established for different language versions, with the values of Cronbach's alpha, ranging from 0.78 to 0.83;
- *Ought-To L2 Self* (Dörnyei, 2010), aimed to tap into the attributes which, in the opinion of learners, should be possessed to avoid adverse consequences; as was the case above, all the original six-point Likert-scale items were retained and the following are examples of the statements used: "Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so", "My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person", or "Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English"; the reliability estimates for the scale ranged from 0.75 to 0.78, depending on the language version.

The resulting questionnaire was filled out by the participants online and their responses were subjected to quantitative analysis. This entailed: (1) determining the internal consistency reliability of the scales through calculating the values of Cronbach's alpha, (2) computing item-total correlations for each of the scales in order to identify items which deviate from the average behavior of others and eliminate those correlating below the 0.40 level, and (3) tallying the Cronbach's alpha values for the reduced scales. These steps allowed the researchers to devise an instrument composed of a number of modified scales that could provide a basis for further analysis, fine-tuning and refinement.

3.2 Results

As illustrated in Table 1, which presents the values of Cronbach's alpha before and after the elimination of inconsistent items, the internal consistency reliability of the scales included in the questionnaire administered to the participants was satisfactory, with the values ranging from 0.797 in the case of the *Ought-To L2 Self* component to 0.913 in the case of the *International Posture* scale. When the item-total correlations were computed, it turned out that only four of the scales included a total of five items in the case of which the correlation coefficients were below the set value and therefore their elimination should be considered. The items were as follows: (1) "I am willing to ask the teacher in English about words or structures s/he just used"—item 8 in *In-Class WTC* (0.359), (2) "I am willing to use English to speak to/text my Polish friend out of class (during breaks)"—item 10 in *Out-Of-Class WTC in FL Context* (0.359), (3) "I am willing to respond when the teacher asks me a question in English"—item 4 in *Communication Confidence* (0.389), (4) "Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English"—item 9 in *Ought-To L2 Self* (0.366), and (5) "It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn English"—item 10 in *Ought-To L2 Self* (0.258).

When we compare the values of Cronbach's alpha for the four scales before and after the elimination of inconsistent items (see Table 2), it is evident that the procedure had little effect on enhancing the psycholinguistic properties of these scales. Even though the alpha values did rise in all cases, the increases were almost negligible and they amounted to 0.002 for *In-Class WTC*, 0.004 for *Out-of-Class WTC in FL Context*, 0.002 for *Communication Confidence*, and 0.012 for *Ought-To L2 Self*. These results are without doubt disappointing and can perhaps be attributed to the fact that for as many as four out of five eliminated items, the correlations in fact approached the required value of 0.40 deviating from it by no more than 0.041. They also cast doubt on the very need to exclude the less inconsistent items from the respective scales, a point that is elaborated upon in the concluding section of the paper.

Table 2 The values of Cronbach's alpha before and after the elimination of inconsistent items

Scale	Cronbach's alpha for initial results	Cronbach's alpha with eliminated items
In-Class WTC	0.888	0.890
Out-of-Class WTC in FL context	0.863	0.867
Communication confidence	0.873	0.875
Learner beliefs	0.824	
Classroom environment	0.869	
International posture	0.913	
Ideal L2 self	0.824	
Ought-To L2 self	0.797	0.809

4 Discussion and Conclusions

The study reported above aimed to design a data collection instrument that could be used to examine WTC and its antecedents in the Polish educational context, particularly with respect to advanced learners, such as those majoring in English as part of BA and MA programs. This involved modifying some of the well-known scales so that they could be more reflective of this specific context and present-day educational realities, administering the questionnaire to a group of English philology students, and using their responses to establish its psychometric properties. As the analysis demonstrated, all the scales were characterized by high internal consistency reliability, with the values of Cronbach's alpha within the range of 0.797 and 0.913, which are on the whole higher than those reported for these scales in earlier studies conducted in other contexts. This indicates that the modifications introduced and the fact that the items had been translated into Polish not only did not adversely affect reliability but even enhanced it, which could be interpreted as testifying to the soundness of the changes made. On the other hand, however, the elimination of the inconsistent items (those where the results of item-total correlations were lower than 0.40) from four scales did little to further enhance the reliability of these scales since the increase in the values of Cronbach's alpha was miniscule and could be viewed as negligible (from 0.002 to 0.012). As noted above, such an outcome could be related to the fact that in the case of four out of the five excluded items, one for each of the scales, the correlation coefficients were only slightly lower than the required level. Another reason could be the initially high values of Cronbach's alpha for all the scales which left relatively little room for improvement.

In light of such findings, a crucial question arises as to whether the five less consistent items should be excluded from the relevant scales and from the final tool, as was determined prior to the study, or, perhaps, given the tiny effect of such elimination on reliability, it would be more prudent to retain them until further analyses are undertaken. On reflection, the latter option was chosen, on account of the fact that the initial scales were already characterized by very high internal consistency reliability and that the ways in which they were modified and extended were apparently right on target. In consequence, the original 104 items, divided into eight scales, were preserved in the final version of the instrument which can be found in the Appendix. Obviously, the researchers are fully cognizant that further refinement of the tool is needed, which will involve performing at least one round of exploratory factor analysis, followed perhaps by confirmatory factor analysis, because this will allow the reduction of the number of variables as well as identification of the underlying factor structure of the measures of WTC in English, communication confidence in English, motivation to learn English, learner beliefs, and context. As a result, a valid tool will become available, thanks to which it will be possible to tap all of these areas, with the resulting data yielding further insights into the role of individual learner factors in the process of foreign language learning and teaching, and, hopefully, also providing a basis for useful pedagogical implications.

Appendix: Questionnaire

The following statements describe tasks or situations inside a speaking class and outside the classroom. Please choose the box which best describes your feelings: 1 *Not at all true about me*, 2 *Very slightly true of me*, 3 *Slightly true of me*, 4 *Moderately true of me*, 5 *Very much true of me*, 6 *Extremely true about me.*

Part I: WTC During a Speaking Class

1. I am willing to present my arguments to the rest of my class.
2. I am willing to give a presentation in front of the class.
3. I am willing to do a role-play in a small group.
4. I am willing to do a role-play in a pair.
5. I am willing to take part in a discussion in a small group.
6. I am willing to take part in a discussion in a pair.
7. I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what s/he said.
8. I am willing to ask the teacher in English about words or structures s/he just used.
9. I am willing to ask my peer in English about forms/words related to the topic.
10. I am willing to ask my peer in English about ideas/arguments related to the topic.
11. I am willing to ask my group mates in English about forms/words related to the topic.
12. I am willing to ask my group mates in English about ideas/arguments related to the topic.
13. I am willing to correct a mistake that I notice in what others are saying.
14. I am willing to modify what I have said in response to an indication of an error.

Part II: WTC Outside the Classroom

1. I am willing to use computer mediated communication (CMC) to address an acquaintance of mine.
2. I am willing to use CMC to address a group of my acquaintances.
3. I am willing to use CMC to address my acquaintances as well as strangers.
4. I am willing to use CMC to address whoever is interested in what I want to communicate.
5. I am willing to initiate communication with a foreigner met in the street.
6. I am willing to speak to a foreigner who needs assistance (e.g., help find directions).

7. I am willing to initiate communication with a group of foreigners met in the street.
8. I am willing to speak to a group of foreigners who need assistance.
9. I am willing to speak to a foreign teacher in a private situation (e.g., in a cafeteria).
10. I am willing to use English to speak to/text my Polish friend out of class (during breaks).
11. I am willing to use English to speak to/text my Polish peers out of class.
12. I am willing to speak to exchange students enrolled in my program.

Part III: Communication Confidence

1. I am willing to give an oral presentation to the rest of the class.
2. I am willing to take part in a role-play or dialogue.
3. I am willing to contribute to a class debate.
4. I am willing to respond when the teacher asks me a question in English.
5. I am willing to speak without preparation in class.
6. I am willing to speak informally to my English teacher during classroom activities.
7. I am willing to give my peer sitting next to me directions to my favourite restaurant in English.
8. I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer.
9. I am willing to tell my group mates in English about things I do in my free time.
10. I am willing to give a short impromptu speech to my class.
11. I am willing to correct a mistake that I notice in what others are saying.
12. I am willing to modify what I have said in response to an indication of an error.
13. I am willing to lead the discussion.

Part IV: Learner Beliefs

1. You should try to speak English even if you know you might not speak it correctly.
2. Students should speak even if they are not invited by the teacher.
3. I think I learn a lot by participating in communicative activities.
4. The communicative activities designed by the teacher help me improve my English.
5. Students who speak a lot in classes achieve a higher level of proficiency.
6. Pair and small group discussions are better than whole-class debates.
7. In speaking classes everyone should speak English only.
8. Teachers should insist on the use of English only in speaking classes.

9. Learning a foreign language is learning to communicate.
10. I should be given an opportunity to correct myself when I make an error.

Part V: Classroom Environment

1. Tasks designed in this class are useful.
2. Tasks designed in this class are attractive.
3. I know what I am trying to accomplish in this class.
4. Activities in this class are clearly and carefully planned.
5. Class assignments are clear so everyone knows what to do.
6. I work well with other class members.
7. I am friendly to members of this class.
8. I make friends among students in this class.
9. I help other class members who are having trouble with their work.
10. The teacher provides a timely response to students' concerns.
11. The teacher is patient in teaching.
12. The teacher smiles at the class while talking.
13. The teacher asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.

Part VI: International Posture

1. I want to make friends with people from abroad whom I meet in the internet or at school.
2. I try to use every opportunity to speak to a foreigner in English, online or in reality.
3. I would talk to an international student if there was one at school.
4. I would share a flat or a room with an international student.
5. I would like to participate in a volunteer activity to help foreigners living in my community.
6. I wouldn't feel uncomfortable if a foreigner moved in next door.
1. I would rather stay in my hometown.
2. I want to work in a foreign country.
3. I want to work in an international organisation or company.
4. I'm interested in an international career.
5. Things that happen in other countries don't affect my life.
6. I'd rather avoid the work that requires frequent travelling abroad.
1. I often read and watch news, short films, clips?? about life/events in foreign countries.
2. I often talk about situations and events (sports events, concerts, festivals etc.) in foreign countries with my family and friends.

3. I have a strong interest in what happens in other countries.
4. In the Internet, TV or papers I only look for information concerning my hometown or my country.
1. There are topics I want to present or discuss with people from other countries.
2. I sometimes feel member of an international community of people who want to share ideas and opinions.
3. I have ideas about international issues such as sports, cultural, social, political or economic events or phenomena.
4. I have no clear opinions about international issues.

Part VII: Ideal L2 Self

1. I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English.
2. I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.
3. Whenever I think about my future career, I imagine myself using English.
4. I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.
5. I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues.
6. I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.
7. I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.
8. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.
9. I can imagine myself writing English e-mails/letters/blog fluently.
10. The things I want to do in the future require me to use English.

Part VIII: Ought-to L2 Self

1. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.
2. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
3. I consider learning English important because the people I respect think I should do it.
4. If I fail to learn English I'll be letting other people down.
5. Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family/boss.
6. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.
7. My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person.
8. Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.

9. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.
10. It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn English.

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Conceptualizing and Measuring the Construct of Pronunciation Anxiety: Results of a Pilot Study

Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz

Abstract Language anxiety has serious repercussions for the process of foreign language (FL) learning and use. Some scholars (e.g., MacIntyre, 1999) even consider it the strongest predictor of success in FL learning. At the same time, several studies have suggested that the most anxiety-generating skill is speaking and that the FL aspect which frequently causes apprehension and fear of being ridiculed is pronunciation (e.g., Phillips, 1992; Price, 1991; Young, 1992). Interestingly, though several language-specific anxiety types have been identified and tools to measure them have been devised, no attempt to examine in depth the construct of anxiety related specifically to FL pronunciation and to design an instrument to diagnose it has been made. A better understanding of the concept seems particularly important when taking into account the fact that speaking is a condition necessary for acquisition (e.g., Savignon, 2005; Skehan, 1989) and that pronunciation anxiety (PA) appears to be significantly related to students' willingness to communicate in the FL classroom (Baran-Łucarz, 2014a). The present paper has three major aims. First of all, it presents a working model of PA, whose underlying subcomponents are pronunciation self-perceptions (pronunciation self-image, self-efficacy and self-assessment), fear of negative evaluation, and a set of beliefs about pronunciation learning, its role in communication, and about how it sounds. Secondly, the initial version of an instrument (i.e., the Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety in the FL Classroom), designed to measure the construct is introduced. Thirdly, results of piloting the questionnaire among 151 young adults, and establishing its reliability and validity are reported. The paper closes with suggestions on how to refine the instrument and ideas for future research in this area.

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1 Introduction

Anxiety has been a mainstay in the field of second language acquisition since the 1970s. After the pioneering work of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), in which the construct of language anxiety (LA) was defined and the instrument to measure it published, a vast range of studies has been carried out to explore the nature of LA and examine its influence on second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning and use (see Horwitz, 2010). Although lower levels of anxiety have been found to affect the performance of FL learners positively (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005), the majority of available data have proven its detrimental influence on both learning and using the FL (e.g., Aida, 1994; Bailey, 1983; Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008; Phillips, 1992; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Spielman & Radnofsky, 2001). Some researchers, such as MacIntyre (1999), consider language anxiety to be the strongest predictor of success in FL learning.

Several observations (e.g., Phillips, 1992; Price, 1991) lend support to the claim that speaking is the most anxiety-generating skill, particularly when it is to take place in front of classmates. At the same time, qualitative data gathered with the use of interviews and diaries show that one of frequent sources of anxiety mentioned by FL learners is their "great embarrassment" deriving from the belief in having a "terrible accent" (Price, 1991, p. 105). Interestingly, although many language-specific anxieties have been conceptualized and instruments to diagnose them designed, e.g., listening (comprehension) anxiety (Kim, 2005), writing anxiety/apprehension (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999), reading anxiety (Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999), speaking anxiety (Woodrow, 2006), or grammar anxiety (VanPatten & Glass, 1999), to the best knowledge of the present author, no proposal of defining and measuring *pronunciation anxiety* (PA) has been offered so far. The aim of the present paper is to fill this gap by offering a conceptualization of the construct and by reporting on results of piloting an instrument designed to measure it. The first part of the paper will open with a brief discussion on why and how FL pronunciation and its practice evoke so many emotions, followed by a definition and working model of PA. The second part will describe the pilot version of the tool constructed to diagnose it among FL students, the procedures followed to design it and the study conducted to pilot it and establish its reliability and validity. Finally, ways of improving the measure and directions for further research in this field are discussed.

2 Conceptualizing the Construct of Pronunciation Anxiety. FL Pronunciation and Emotions

Though in the last few years an increase of interest in the role of emotions in FL learning and teaching can be observed (Dewaele, 2005), "affective variables are the area that SLA researchers understand the least" (Scovel, 2000, p. 140). According to Scovel (2000, p. 149), emotions are "simply a natural part of language

acquisition". However, it can be hypothesized that some language aspects and their learning are more emotionally loaded than others. It seems that an aspect evoking a particularly wide array of feelings is pronunciation. Qualitative data justifying this statement derive, among others, from earlier studies on a related concept of *phonetics learning anxiety* (PhLA), proposed specifically in reference to the feeling of apprehension accompanying FL pronunciation/phonetics learning, which was assumed to be experienced by some FL majors. The study by Baran-Łucarz (2013a) showed, among others, that what provokes positive or negative emotions, though not necessarily in a conscious manner, is already the sound of the target language (TL). While the pronunciation of a language may be perceived by some FL learners as, for example, charming, pleasant, or prestigious, it may be considered by others unpleasant, unnatural, or even irritating. Furthermore, it is suggested that the views learners hold about the pronunciation of a TL determine their learning goals concerning the choice of accent and level of accuracy in pronunciation they wish to reach. Indeed, it has been observed (Baran-Łucarz, 2013a) that negative emotions arise in FL learners when they are to learn and try to use a TL that they do not appreciate. Moreover, as in the case of learning any other skill, frustration may appear when achieving the expected level is believed or found to be difficult.

However, what might best explain why FL pronunciation and its learning is so heavily loaded with emotions is that, unlike any other ability or FL aspect or skill, pronunciation is considered to be directly related to the learner's identity. This specificity of pronunciation learning was underlined already a few decades ago by Guiora (1972, p. 144), who claimed that pronunciation "is the key to the extent to which the individual is psychologically capable of stepping into a new system of communication". The same researcher clarified that "the way we sound" is "one of the basic modes of identification by the self and others" (1972, p. 144) and, thus, how successful we are in learning a FL depends on the extent to which we are willing to modify and accept the new identity. Moreover, it can be expected that problems with pronunciation will seriously inhibit individuals' "self-perception of genuineness" (Horwitz et al., 1986, as cited in Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008, p. 57), making them feel as if they were less authentic or another person rather than themselves.

We may speculate that some people are particularly susceptible to worrying and feeling anxious about their pronunciation, fearing of being negatively evaluated by significant others when learning and using an L2. Taking into account the fact that anxiety hinders success in FL learning, it seems important to better understand the phenomenon of apprehension related specifically to pronunciation and to suggest a tool that would allow to diagnose this type of apprehension among FL students.

2.1 The Definition of Pronunciation Anxiety

Pronunciation Anxiety is understood as a language-specific anxiety. It can be classified as a social type of anxiety, which by definition results from fearing "interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings" (Leary, 1983, p. 67),

such as the FL classroom or real-life situations. Since the negative evaluation of oneself based on one's pronunciation is projected to appear in performance-based contexts, PA can be considered also a performance type of anxiety. Finally, treating it as an apprehension experienced in specific situations and contexts, it can be categorized as a situation-specific anxiety.

We may presuppose that, as in the case of any other type of anxiety, PA would reveal itself via typical anxiety reactions or symptoms. Contemporary psychologists (e.g., Pekrun, 1992; Vasa & Pine, 2004) usually refer to them as dimensions or aspects of anxiety, that is the physiological, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. The first dimension or class of symptoms can be easily recognized in an anxious individual. These are usually bodily reactions, such as mounting perspiration, blushing, heart pounding or dry mouth, some of which are caused by hormonal changes, such as motor tension, inability to relax, muscle aches, shakiness, fidgeting or restlessness (Wade & Tavris, 1990). When speaking in a FL and practicing its pronunciation is concerned, it must be remembered that anxiety impedes control over the articulators (Scovel, 1978), which does not allow effective control over pronunciation and impedes correct articulation of particular aspects of the target language (TL). As Szyszka (2011, p. 287) concludes, "the articulation of phonological features, represented by both segmentals, such as vowels and consonants, and suprasegmentals, such as weak forms, linking, assimilation, stress, rhythm and intonation, may be physically affected by the feeling of apprehension".

Among the behavioral signs of being anxious are irritability, impatience and behaviors typical for avoiding threatening situations (Kennerly, 1990). Consequently, in a FL course an anxious student may refrain from performing particular tasks, skip classes or sit in the back of the classroom, trying to avoid participation in anxiety-provoking exercises. Finally, the cognitive dimensions of anxiety refer to how individuals approach situations, information and stimuli that they consider threatening to their ego. According to Pekrun (1992), the level of anxiety increases when one appraises events as endangering their 'selves' and one's ability to deal with them as inadequate. Additionally, there are several other cognitive limitations that anxiety leads to, such as attention-narrowing and difficulties with attention-steering, reduced short-term memory capacity, easy distraction, problems with concentration, and poorer performance due to lower cognitive control. As Piechurska-Kuciel (2008) explains, anxiety interferes with information processing at all three levels, that is input, central processing and output stages, causing difficulties with taking in, analyzing, and retrieving stimuli and information.

The second point of reference in defining PA and forwarding its model was the concept of language anxiety, characterized by Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128) as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Similarly, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993, p. 5) explain that LA refers to "derogatory self-related cognitions (…), feelings of apprehension, and physiological responses such as increased heart rate", adding that they can be experienced in academic and social contexts, in situations of both learning and using a target language that has not been fully mastered. Basing on these definitions and taking into account the

possible subcomponents of PA, which will be described in detail in the next section of the present paper, the construct of PA can be defined as (Baran-Łucarz, 2014a, p. 453) *a multidimensional construct referring to the feeling of apprehension and worry experienced by non-native speakers in the situation of learning and using a FL in the classroom and/or natural contexts, deriving from their negative/low self-perceptions, beliefs and fears related to pronunciation, evidenced by cognitive, physiological/somatic and behavioral symptoms*.

2.2 The Working Model of Pronunciation Anxiety

When deciding on the potential building blocks of pronunciation anxiety, several theories and earlier observations were referred to. First of all, as explained earlier, the outcomes of quantitative and qualitative studies on the related concept of phonetics learning anxiety (Baran-Łucarz, 2013a, 2014b) were taken into account. Furthermore, anxieties related to LA, that is communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986) as well as the "potential sources of LA" (Young, 1991, p. 427), were taken into consideration when building the model of PA. As Young (1991) concludes, it is personal and interpersonal anxieties, and students' beliefs about language learning that are the key causes of FL apprehension. The list of studies lending support to the fact that self-perceptions (self-ratings, self-evaluations) are the most frequent sources of anxiety is long (e.g., Bailey, 1983; Baran-Łucarz, 2011; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). As Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) sums up, highly anxious students have "negative perceptions of their scholastic competence (…) or negative perceptions of their self-worth" (as cited in Horwitz, 2010, p. 165).

In its working model, PA is assumed to be a multifaceted construct, consisting of four main components. They are related to self-perceptions of individual FL students or users and their beliefs about pronunciation of the TL and its learning, each of them touching on a different aspect of the construct, thus allowing us to view it from various perspectives. The subcomponents can be explained in the following manner (Baran-Łucarz, 2014a, p. 453)

(1) *fear of negative evaluation*—apprehension and worry caused by projecting negative assessment made by listeners and/or interlocutors (the classmates, teacher, native speakers or other non-native speakers) about the speaker, on the basis of his or her pronunciation;
(2) *pronunciation self-efficacy and self-assessment*—perceptions about one's inborn predispositions to acquire or learn a FL phonological system and about the level of the TL pronunciation one represents (usually formed by comparing oneself to classmates or other speakers of the TL);
(3) *pronunciation self-image*—beliefs held by FL learners or users about their reception by others, that is about the way they sound and look like when speaking a FL, and their acceptance of the perceived self-image;

(4) *a set of beliefs related to pronunciation*, such as those about its importance for successful communication, difficulties with learning TL pronunciation by learners representing a particular L1, and attitudes towards the sound of the TL.

It seems that PA can be experienced both when learning the TL in a formal classroom setting and when using it outside the classroom in real-life communicative situations. However, we may presuppose that the factors determining PA or the extent to which they shape it in these two different settings will vary.

2.3 Designing the Pilot Version of the MPA-FLC

Following Dörnyei's (2010) suggestions on how to design questionnaires, the first stage of the work on the instrument diagnosing PA consisted in developing a pool of items. Some of them were adaptations of the statements from the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986). A few others were borrowed from the instrument to measure PhLA (Baran-Łucarz, 2013a). The initial version of the questionnaire, composed of 47 items, was distributed among three groups of extramural students (N = 38) majoring in English, during one of their regular classes of either phonetics or the MA seminar course. The learners were asked to fill out the questionnaire, commenting on the relevance, clarity, wording, ordering of the items, and sharing any suggestions with the researcher, that is with the author of the present paper. This phase resulted in paraphrasing a few ambiguous items, particularly those containing negative constructions, combining a few statements into single ones, changing their order, specifying instructions, and rejecting some repetitive items.

Several observations that I carried out earlier among adolescents and young adults (e.g., Baran-Łucarz, 2011, 2013a) showed that despite the evidently growing opportunities to travel abroad, many (about 50–60 %) of my respondents had not paid any visits to other countries and experienced talking to English native speakers or other non-native speakers of English in natural contexts. Consequently, I decided not to include statements referring to participating in real-life conversations with non-L1 speakers. It may be argued that respondents could have been asked to speculate about their reactions in the case of real-life talks. However, the idea of including such items seemed inappropriate, since making assumptions about one's reactions in situations never experienced before may be difficult for an individual and far from authentic. Although an initial version of an instrument aimed to diagnose PA irrespective of the setting has been designed (see Baran-Łucarz, in press), it will not be discussed in this paper. Since the questionnaire described in the present publication refers exclusively to the classroom context, it has been called the *Measure of PA in the FL Classroom* (MPA-FLC).

The pilot MPA-FLC eventually took the form of a 40-item self-report questionnaire, in which the respondents were to agree or disagree with the provided statements on a six-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to

"strongly agree" (6 points). Such a scale lacks a neutral answer, which forces the respondents to analyze their choices more thoroughly and declare whether they consider a statement referring to them as either true or false to some extent. The subscales of MPA-FLC correspond to the subcomponents of PA, as proposed in the working model of the construct. However, to avoid double-barreled items and diagnose the presence of typical cognitive, physiological and behavioral symptoms/aspects of anxiety, 12 statements, most of which were opening items, concerned the general apprehension experienced in the FL classroom (4 items) and the anxiety accompanying oral performance specifically (8 items). Many of them were based on the items found in the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986). Beneath are examples of statements representing each subscale, translated into English from the original Polish pilot version of the MPA-FLC

- classroom anxiety and FL oral performance apprehension (12 items): "I would attend English classes even if they were optional" or "I can feel my heart pounding (or other symptoms of being anxious) when I am asked to respond in English at the whole class forum";
- fear of negative evaluation related to pronunciation (8 items) should be: "I fear my classmates might find my pronunciation of English strange or funny", or "I would rather my classmates did not hear me making pronunciation mistakes".
- pronunciation self-efficacy and self-assessment (7 items): "I remember the pronunciation of new words easily" or "My pronunciation is at a lower level than that of my classmates";
- pronunciation self-image (8 items): "I look funny pronouncing the 'th' sound" or "I like singing and/or speaking to myself in English";
- beliefs (5 items): "Some words in English sound awkward or funny", "The comprehensibility of a speaker depends on his/her level of pronunciation", or "The pronunciation of English is difficult for Poles".

The higher the respondents scored on the test, the higher their PA level was considered to be. In the case of 11 statements (1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 30), a reversed scoring key was applied. The application of the measure not only reveals the respondents' level of PA (the total score for MPA-FLC) but can also shed light on the potential sources of their PA (results for particular subscales).

3 Piloting the MPA-FLC

3.1 Participants and Procedures

To examine the reliability and validity of the MPA-FLC, the questionnaire was distributed among 151 learners of English as a FL, studying at the University of Wrocław, majoring in various fields but English, such as, for example, history, information and library studies, management, economics, law and administration,

mathematics, physics, chemistry, biotechnology, geography, environmental protection, Polish philology, classical philology, political science, sociology, national security or European studies. The average age of the participants was 21.40, with the youngest participants being 19 and the oldest 40. The participants represented three proficiency levels of English, that is B2 (N = 61), B1 (N = 52) and A2 (N = 38), according to the *Common European framework of reference*. The questionnaire was administered during one of the subjects' regular classes of English by their teachers, who had been provided with necessary information on the instructions, timing, and while-writing guidelines to respect. Despite the introduction and instructions being provided in the battery, the teachers were asked to explain briefly the general purpose of the study to the participants and ensure them that the information provided was anonymous and confidential, and that it would be used only for scientific purposes. The teachers were also asked to ensure discipline, so that the conditions would allow students to concentrate, without being interrupted by other participants. The respondents could take as much time as they needed, which was usually not more than 15 min.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Before conducting a thorough analysis of data that would shed light on the reliability and validity of the tool, descriptive statistics of the total outcomes and scores for each subscale were computed. As can be seen from Table 1, in none of the cases was the normal distribution assumption violated (e.g. the means and medians being close to each other, at least two SDs below and above the means), which permitted the researcher to proceed to further calculations and interpretation of data.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for total results of the MPA-FLC and its subscales

	Mean	Median	SD	Low-high	Range
Total	135.55	135	23.08	79–200	122
CA/FL OPA	37.68	38	8.95	17–62	46
FNE	24.85	25	6.97	10–47	38
SE/SA	25.44	26	5.23	13–41	29
SI	26.73	27	5.60	13–45	33
Bs	20.85	21	3.13	12–30	19

(N = 151; *CA/FL OPA* Classroom anxiety/FL oral performance apprehension; *FNE* Fear of negative evaluation; *SE/SA* Self-efficacy/self-assessment; *SI* Self-image; *Bs* Beliefs)

3.3 Internal Reliability

To examine internal consistency of the MPA-FLC, the Cronbach's alpha for the whole instrument and each of its subscales was computed. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) of the MPA-FLC and its subscales

Classroom anx./oral perf. apprehension	0.87*
Fear of neg. evaluat.	0.88*
Pron. self-efficacy/self-assessm.	0.73*
Pron. self-image	0.58*
Beliefs	0.43*
MPA-FLC Total	0.92*

Classroom anx./oral perf. apprehension Classroom anxiety/oral performance apprehension; *self assessm.* Self-assessment; *Fear of neg. evaluat.* Fear of negative evaluation; *pron.* Pronunciation; *MPA-FLC* Measure of pronunciation anxiety in the FL classroom
Note df = 149; *$p < 0.001$ (two-tailed decision)

The Cronbach alpha coefficients suggest high internal consistency of the total scale, that is 92, and most of its subscales. According to Dörnyei (2010), a scale should be reconsidered if the value is lower than 0.60. Such a result was found in the case of the *Beliefs* and *Pronunciation self-image* subscales, though the latter approached very close to the critical value. The low internal consistency of the *Beliefs* subcomponent can be explained by the fact that, despite all the statements in this subscale referring to beliefs related to pronunciation, in fact each of them addressed a different belief (see Sect. 2.2). At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the *Beliefs* subscale was the shortest of all the subscales in the instrument (composed only of 5 items), which by definition lowers the chances for the consistency of the scale being high (Dörnyei, 2010).

The reliability of the measure was further examined by item analysis, that is by computing item-total correlations. In the case of the *Classroom anxiety/FL oral performance apprehension* subscale, the Pearson correlation coefficients computed between particular items of the subscale and its total ranged from 0.50 to 0.75 (df = 151; $p < 0.001$), with the exception of one item, whose item-total correlation coefficient was evidently lower than that of others (i.e., "I would attend English classes even if they were optional"; $r = 0.34$ at $p < 0.001$). When the *Fear of negative evaluation* subscale is considered, all the results were satisfactory, with the coefficients ranging from 0.62 to 0.83 ($p < 0.0005$). All the *Pronunciation self-efficacy/self-assessment* item-total values and all but one of the *Pronunciation self-image* values were satisfactory, ranging from 0.58 to 0.73 and from 0.49 to 0.71 (at $p < 0.001$), respectively. In the case of the latter, the statement whose item-total

correlation coefficient fell below the threshold level was as follows: "I (would) feel uneasy pronouncing English sounds and/or words with a Polish accent". Finally, as could be expected from the analysis of internal consistency of the subscales, not all the items from the *Beliefs* subscale were related equally and strongly enough to the total of this subscale. Two items revealed lower coefficients (i.e., 0.40 and 0.44; $p < 0.001$) than the remaining three, which varied from 0.50 to 0.72 (at $p < 0.001$). Although the values of the two items stand out as lower than the others in this subscale, they are higher than the lowest coefficients in the other subscales. The items with the lowest item-total correlation coefficients can be translated in the following manner: "The comprehensibility of a speaker depends on his/her level of pronunciation" and "The pronunciation of English is difficult for Poles". The two items most strongly related to the total of this subscale concern the perceived sounding of the language ("Some words in English sound awkward and/or funny"; $r = 0.68$; "Some sounds of English seem to be silly and/or strange"; $r = 0.72$, at $p < 0.0005$). The third item highly correlated with the total of the subscale addresses the importance of pronunciation in communication, namely "The level of pronunciation affects the ability to understand spoken language", which is a paraphrase of one of the low item-total correlation items. Consequently, although deleting the two items with the lowest item-total correlation coefficients would most probably raise the internal consistency of the subscale, discarding them might be premature. First of all, reducing the number of items in the subscale to three would question its credibility. Secondly, although indeed beliefs about the role of pronunciation in communication and about difficulty in learning this aspect may be irrelevant in the case of PA, what could precede eliminating these statements could be rewording them or changing their order in the scale. It also seems worth taking into consideration the explanation of Dörnyei (2010, p. 95), who states: "if the theoretical breadth or soundness of the scale would be compromised by the deletion of the item, then it is best to leave it".

Further examination of internal reliability of the instrument measuring PA in the FL classroom setting consisted in observing the correlation of each subscale with the total of the battery and in checking the inter-correlations among the subscales. The assumption verified at this stage is that the five subscales, while tapping into relatively independent aspects of PA, will reveal some degree of overlap with each other, contributing at the same time to the overall picture of the construct in question. Thus, what should be expected is that the inter-correlations among the subscales are lower (preferably not higher than 0.50) than the correlations of each of them and the total scale (preferably not lower than 0.70) (Porte, 2002; Rysiewicz, personal communication, September 11 and 25, 2013). Table 3 displays the outcomes of the calculations described above.

The only subscale that does not comply with the principles mentioned above is again *Beliefs*, whose inter-correlations with the other subscales and correlation with the whole scale are much lower than the preset values. However, again, caution is needed before considering the subscale irrelevant. It is further analysis of data, that is regression analysis, that may show whether it fits the model of PA or not (Porte, 2002).

Table 3 Inter-correlations among subscales of the MPA-FLC and its total

	Self-effc./ self-assess.	Self-image	Fear of neg. eval	Beliefs	Cl anx/Oral per.ap.	Total
Self-effc./ self-assess.	1					
Self-image	0.586	1				
Fear of neg.eval.	0.483	0.514	1			
Beliefs	0.221	0.185	0.256	1		
C1 anx/Oral per.ap.	0.563	0.542	0.674	0.173	1	
Total	0.763	0.766	0.832	0.375	0.874	1

Self-effic. self-efficacy; *Self assess.* Self assessment; *Fear of neg. eval.* Fear of negative evaluation; *Cl.Anx/Oral per. ap.* Classroom anxiety/oral performance apprehension
Note df = 151
$r_{crit} = 0.254$ for $p < 0.01$; $r_{crit} = 0.321$ for $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed decision)

3.4 Test-Retest Reliability

To examine test-retest reliability of the measure in question, 37 third-class high school (lyceum) students filled out the pilot version of the MPA-FLC twice, with a 2.5-week break between the first and second completion. The questionnaire was administered to them during one of their English lessons by their regular teachers (N = 2), who were asked to follow the same procedures and respect the same guidelines as the teachers involved in the earlier part of the pilot study conducted at the tertiary level of education. It was stressed that the conditions for completing the questionnaires provided on the two occasions should be as similar as possible.

After having computed the descriptive statistics and verified the assumptions underlying Pearson product moment correlation, the test-retest correlation coefficients were calculated. The correlation for the whole scale was high, i.e., $r = 0.83$ ($p < 0.001$, df = 35). The outcomes of the calculations for particular subscales were as follows:

- *Classroom anxiety/FL oral performance apprehension* $r = 0.80$ ($p < 0.001$).
- *Fear of negative evaluation* $r = 0.77$ ($p < 0.001$).
- *Pronunciation self-efficacy/self-assessment* $r = 0.42$ ($p < 0.01$).
- *Pronunciation self-image* $r = 0.54$ ($p < 0.001$).
- *Beliefs* $r = 0.59$ ($p < 0.001$).

Although in the case of pronunciation self-perceptions, the coefficients are lower than in the remaining subscales, they can still be considered acceptable, being higher than 0.30 (Rysiewicz, personal communication, September 25, 2013). The analysis of particular items showed that the coefficients ranged from $r = 0.24$ to $r = 0.87$ (see Table 4).

Table 4 Test-retest correlation coefficients of the MPA-FLC items

No item	r	No item	r
1	**0.723**	21	0.538
2	**0.867**	22	0.632
3	0.719	23	0.581
4	***0.307***	24	0.576
5	0.723	25	0.713
6	0.631	26	***0.317***
7	0.645	27	0.580
8	0.471	28	0.504
9	0.666	29	0.613
10	0.593	30	0.551
11	0.699	31	**0.750**
12	***0.318***	32	0.447
13	0.709	33	***0.302***
14	**0.849**	34	0.447
15	0.517	35	0.453
16	0.773	36	0.604
17	0.751	37	**0.789**
18	0.573	38	0.497
19	0.603	39	0.643
20	***0.239***	40	0.452

Note df = 35
r_{crit} = 0.519 for p < 0.001; r_{crit} = 0.418 for p < 0.01; r_{crit} = 0.325 for p < 0.05; (two-tailed decision)
bold the highest Pearson r values;
bold and italics the lowest Pearson r values

The items that the students were the most consistent in responding to were as follows: (1) "Usually during the English class I feel relaxed" (r = 0.72), (2) "I would attend English classes even if they were optional" (r = 0.87), (14) "My pronunciation is at a lower level than that of my classmates." (r = 0.85), (31) "I feel stressed when the teacher corrects my pronunciation mistakes at the class forum" (r = 0.75), and (37) "Usually it bothers me when I mispronounce a word in English during a lesson" (r = 0.79). Two of the items with the highest test-retest reliability belonged to the *Classroom anxiety* subscale, two to *Fear of negative evaluation*, and one to *Pronunciation self-assessment*.

The items that the participants were the least consistent in answering were the following ones: (4) "It happens frequently that I cannot concentrate on a task we are to perform in the classroom" (r = 0.31), (12) "I find it more difficult to improve my pronunciation than grammar or vocabulary" (r = 0.32), (20) "I (would) feel uneasy pronouncing English sounds and/or words with a Polish accent)" (r = 0.24), (26) "The comprehensibility of a speaker depends on his/her level of pronunciation" (r = 0.32), and (33) "The pronunciation of English is difficult for Poles" (r = 0.30). While only one of these items addressed *General classroom anxiety*, two

referred to *Pronunciation self-efficacy/self-assessment*, and two to *Beliefs*. The low consistency in the case of these statements can have various explanations. For example, the subjects might not have understood the sentence, not have experienced a particular situation a statement refers to, not have thought it over thoroughly enough, not have had an opinion about a specific matter, or not have bothered about the answer provided. Conducting observations while testing, consisting in monitoring respondents' reactions during the process of completing the questionnaire, the time they devoted to filling it out in comparison to other students, the tendency to compare their answers with those provided by other students, or potential symptoms of not approaching the task seriously (e.g., chatting, laughing) might have shed light on the answers found in the questionnaires. The cooperating teachers were sensitized to observing the participants filling out the questionnaires and asked to pay attention to signs of anomalous behavior, as mentioned above. However, the researcher did not require from the teachers to note down examples of such irregularities but only gathered very general information about the administration of the questionnaire, the involvement and reaction of the participants.

3.5 Validity of MPA-FLC

It seems important to clarify that the early thoughts on the conceptualization of the construct of PA derived from prior work on the concept of phonetics learning anxiety (Baran-Łucarz, 2013a). The qualitative data gathered via written open questions, think-alouds and semi-structured interviews among students who scored high on the measure of PhLA suggested that the apprehension related to pronunciation learning may be caused, among others, by the fear of being negatively evaluated by classmates (e.g., "I think others will laugh at my pronunciation mistakes"), lacking confidence due to low self-perceived level of pronunciation ("I will be less stressed when I am sure my pronunciation is much better") and lack of inborn capacity to master this FL aspect ("I find it difficult to improve my pronunciation"), difficulties with accepting one's self-image ("I feel childish when I speak English,' 'I don't like listening to myself speaking English"), and beliefs related to pronunciation (e.g., "I think pronunciation is really important; sometimes you may not understand your interlocutor because you can't recognize a word; you think its pronounced in a different way").

An attempt to examine the validity of the battery was also made by calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the means of total scores for the MPA-FLC and for the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986). To observe the extent of overlap between the two instruments and the level of independence from one another, the participants described in the previous section, besides completing the MPA-FLC also filled out a translated version of the FLCAS. The correlation between the scores achieved on the two instruments was found to be statistically significant ($r = 0.72$; df = 35; $p < 0.001$). The result implies that 52.8 % of variance in FL classroom anxiety is accounted for by PA. Consequently, the outcome

suggests that the batteries measure related but still different phenomena. The strong link between the two batteries can be explained by the fact that some of the items of the opening subscale in MPA-FLC, particularly those referring to the general level of FL classroom anxiety, were paraphrases of the FLCAS items. According to Elaine Horwitz (personal communication, October 14, 2013), it is worth considering eliminating these items from the MPA-FLC. Secondly, many of the statements in both scales referred to apprehension accompanying oral performance in the FL classroom, which is unavoidable in the case of the measure of PA. Finally, although the items diagnosing fear of negative evaluation in the MPA-FLC were always addressed in reference to pronunciation, they can be expected to be closely related to analogous statements of the FLCAS, since they usually concern speaking.

4 Conclusions and Further Research Directions

Understanding the concept of pronunciation anxiety and having at our disposal a tool to measure its level and sources can shed more light on the role of emotions in FL learning and help making teaching FLs, including pronunciation, more effective. The study conducted with the use of the pilot version of MPA-FLC described in the present paper suggests that the concept is an important determinant of willingness to communicate in the FL classroom (Baran-Łucarz, 2014a), which calls for adequate attention of SLA researchers and FL teachers. The results of piloting the instrument suggest an acceptable level of its reliability and validity. However, undoubtedly, both the working model of PA proposed in this paper and the questionnaire designed to diagnose it can be improved. Having reconsidered the construct in question, it seems that while some items (e.g., those addressing general classroom anxiety) can be deleted, another important subscale may be included in the model and measurement of PA. The subcomponent that the measure could be enriched with is motivation, treated as yet another aspect of self-concept. The subscale might be represented by statements addressing the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self (Dörnyei, 2005) in reference to pronunciation of the TL. On the other hand, the results of item analysis clearly point to the need to reexamine internal consistency of particular subscales after paraphrasing, reordering or eliminating items with low item-total correlation coefficients. The revised instrument will require further piloting with a larger group of subjects. Although qualitative data gathered with written open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, retrospection, diaries and think-alouds on the related concept of phonetics learning anxiety (Baran-Łucarz, 2013a, 2014b) lend support to the importance of the forwarded subcomponents of PA, it is necessary to carry out qualitative studies specifically dealing with the construct of Pronunciation Anxiety among high and low PA students, complementing the data with objective observations in the classroom. Finally, it can be expected that interesting outcomes will be obtained by comparing PA experienced in classroom settings with PA accompanying authentic FL use in natural contexts. Initial work on designing a tool to diagnose PA outside

the classroom and on examining its specificity, juxtaposing it with PA in FL classroom, is already in progress.

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Appendix 1

Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety in the FL Classroom (MPA-FLC)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the statements by writing a digit next to each statement.

6—strongly agree (completely true about me)
5—agree
4—slightly agree
3—rather disagree
2—disagree
1—strongly disagree (definitely not true about me)

0. *Example: I get nervous every time I am asked to answer a question in the foreign language*	2
1. Usually during the English class I feel relaxedThe statements are all sentences.	
2. I would attend English classes even if they were optional.	
3. English is one of my favourite subjects.	
4. It happens frequently that I cannot concentrate on a task we are to perform in the classroom.	
5. When I speak English during the lesson, my performance is usually at a lower level than when I try (rehearse) speaking at home.	
6. I can feel my heart pounding (or other symptoms of being anxious) when I am asked to respond in English at the whole class forum.	
7. I frequently volunteer to answer questions in English.	
8. I feel embarrassed when I am asked to read aloud in English.	
9. I feel more comfortable during classes, which involve less talking and more writing (e.g. grammar or lexical exercises).	
10. Usually I feel embarrassed when asked to repeat after the teacher.	
11. I avoid eye contact with the teacher when he/she is looking for a learner to answer his/her question.	
12. I find it more difficult to improve my pronunciation than grammar or vocabulary.	
13. I remember the pronunciation of new words easily.	
14. My pronunciation is at a lower level than that of my classmates.	

(continued)

(continued)

15. I believe that after a one-year course of English, my accent could become nativelike.	
16. I am satisfied (happy) with my present level of English pronunciation.	
17. I have a talent to pick up the pronunciation of FLs.	
18. I look funny pronouncing the 'th' sound.	
19. I like singing and/or speaking to myself in English.	
20. I (would) feel uneasy pronouncing English sounds and/or words with a Polish accent.	
21. I feel much more confident at English courses where the teacher does not pay special attention to pronunciation.	
22. Sometimes I like to imitate English actors/singers.	
23. I (would) feel uneasy pronouncing English sounds and/or words with a Polish accent.	
24. I do not like listening to myself reading in English aloud.	
25. I think I sound unnatural speaking English.	
26. The comprehensibility of a speaker depends on his/her level of pronunciation.	
27. I would rather my classmates did not hear me making pronunciation mistakes.	
28. Some words in English sound awkward and/or funny.	
29. I fear my classmates might find my pronunciation of English strange or funny.	
30. I look natural speaking English.	
31. I feel stressed when the teacher corrects my pronunciation mistakes at the class forum.	
32. Some sounds of English seem silly and/or strange.	
33. The pronunciation of English is difficult for Poles.	
34. The level of pronunciation affects the ability to understand spoken language.	
35. I am worried what others might think of me when they hear me English pronunciation.	
36. My pronunciation of English is far from acceptable.	
37. Usually it bothers me when I mispronounce a word in English during a lesson.	
38. I get nervous and feel shy of the teacher when making a pronunciation mistake.	
39. I feel stressed knowing that other students are listening to me.	
40. I feel more embarrassed making a pronunciation mistake, than any other type of mistake (grammatical or lexical).	

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Learning from Retired Language Teachers' Biographies: A Research Proposal

Dorota Werbińska

Abstract This paper suggests a research framework for analyzing the empirical material collected from narrative-biographical interviews. This is followed by an analysis of real data obtained from an empirical biographical study in which the suggested research procedure has been put to the test. Through close examination of one retired Russian-language teacher, the study reveals how teachers can be affected by wider socio-political contextual challenges, and what they can do to maintain a sense of professional integrity. The study also points to the insights that can be obtained from studying biographies of retired language teachers.

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to suggest a procedure for researching retired foreign-language teachers' (RFLTs) biographies. After presenting some general information on the biographical study, a possible framework for such a research procedure is proposed, followed by an empirical biographical study on one retired teacher of Russian as a foreign language,[1] based on the suggested research scheme. The basis of the study is the verification of the suggested analysis framework, as well as the assumption that many valuable lessons can be learnt from RFLTs as objects of exploration whose knowledge, experience and opinions may prove as informative in improving our understanding of foreign-language practice as the study of pre-service or in-service language teachers.[2] Studying post-service language teachers' pedagogical systems, especially those of teachers of foreign lan-

[1]The author would like to thank the interviewee for her agreement to talk about her 'linguistic biography'.

[2]The arguments for the importance of investigating retired language teachers were presented by the author at the annual conference of the Modern Language Association of Poland in Wrocław, 9–11 September, 2013.

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guages other than English, is the author's modest response to Borg's (2012, p. 26) appeal, as well as a promising direction which potential researchers on language-teacher cognition may wish to consider.

2 Biographical Research

Biographical studies have been present in language acquisition for some time (Pavlenko, 2007), first focusing on language learners (e.g., Bailey, 1995; Benson & Nunan, 2005; Biedroń, 2012; Simon-Maeda, 2011; Stevick, 1989), and then on language teachers (i.e. Edge, 2011; Pennycook, 2012). Such studies became more accepted once the positivist paradigm was questioned as the only standardized research procedure. They are examples of qualitative studies and, in contrast to quantitative ones, reveal the perspective of a person presenting the story of his or her life, highlighting a subjective dimension of the issues under consideration. In other words, biographical studies do not verify prior hypotheses but uncover reality as it is perceived by the individual under investigation. Depending on a specific discipline, biography can be looked at as (Urbaniak-Zając, 2011, p. 16):

- a text written by the person concerned (autobiography) or by another person (writing someone else's biography);
- life—*bio*—in which the researcher's attention is focused on 'external' aspects (analysis of someone's life cycles) or 'internal' ones (analysis of someone's experiences);
- a process of human development;
- a social construct in which a 'typical' biography is presented for a social, professional or cultural group;
- a form of communication.

Such a variety of understandings makes a biographical method closely connected with the purpose of investigation, and calls for a researcher-made unique approach, rather than a set of fixed and routine procedures. Using the biographical method in this text serves two purposes. On the one hand, it explores one retired language teacher's experiences relating to some issues connected with language learning and teaching, and, on the other hand, it helps identifying any commonalities in language practice in general. In this way, both subjective experiences of an individual and wider social phenomena can be addressed, interpreted and possibly better understood. The definition of biography adopted here is a narrative one, referring to *an interpretation of the past, in which a description of the foreign-language teacher profession is presented through the viewpoint and sensitivity of a concrete person, rather than in abstract categories*.

3 A Proposal for a Biographical Study on Retired Language Teachers

Inspired by Dubas (2011), an experienced narrative and biographical Polish researcher, and encouraged by her proposal for working with biographical material, what follows is an example of an analogous biographical study of a foreign-language teacher. Afterwards the outcomes of one biographical interview study of a retired teacher of Russian as a foreign language, based on the suggested scheme, is presented.

3.1 The Suggested Scheme of a Biographical Study

The suggested framework for researching a language teacher's biography involves general information about the narrator, followed by a quantitative analysis of selected issues and a qualitative analysis concerning both universal themes that depict the narrator's individual language-based experience and those characteristic of language teachers only. Additionally, possible topics for biography analysis are proposed, as well as issues to be addressed in the concluding part.

I. *Narrator*

1. *Presentation of narrator*: name/code given by researcher; general presentation of person.
2. *Key statements*: a statement or statements characteristic of narrator which reflect his or her individual touch and serve as a key to understanding the essence of his or her language biography.

II. *Quantitative analysis* (*life history*): objective information reflecting narrator's life history:

1. *Facts present in biography*: dates, places, people, names or numbers that situate the narrator in his or her history and refer to objective contexts (historical, political, social, geographical, etc.).
2. *Frequencies*: frequency of using certain words, expressions or parts of speech that define narrator, pointing to his or her attitudes toward what is being described.
3. *Semantic fields*: frequency of keywords referring to semantic fields (i.e., choice of language studies, becoming a language teacher, day-to-day teaching, turning points).

III. *Qualitative analysis* (*life story*): subjective information reflecting the narrator's life story

1. *Universal themes describing narrator's individual language-based experience*:

- feelings and emotions connected with language learning in childhood, school years or studies;
- thoughts connected with the choice of language studies;
- narrator's personality traits recalled by the narrator;
- narrator's personality traits evidenced from the interview;
- significant others;
- important choices and their consequences;
- aims, values and their hierarchy;
- temporal orientations;
- professional development;
- attitude toward the experiences related.

2. *Language teacher's biography*:

- language education (i.e., location in time and space, formal vs. informal, public versus private);
- language teaching successes and failures;
- learning from the narrator's linguistic biography;
- narrator as an autonomous linguistic biography constructor.

3. *Analysis of biography*:

- establishing turning points, critical events, transitions or identity transformations;
- establishing central and peripheral themes;
- establishing stable and variable elements;
- confronting individual experiences of narrator's biography with collective memories, expressed by other people representing the language-teaching profession.

4. *Concluding remarks*:

- presenting the main results;
- linking the results of the study to theoretical second-language acquisition approaches;
- pointing to practical implications.

3.2 Interview with Lena[3,4]

I. *Narrator*
Lena, 62, married, is a graduate of Russian philology from Poznań University, one of the best institutions of higher education in Poland. During her professional life she worked as a secondary-school teacher in a large town in the north of Poland, a local teacher adviser and a *Matura*[5] examiner. She is currently retired, although she still works as a part-time teacher at an evening school for adults. Two sentences have been classified as key statements in Lena's narration: "My biography has been very interesting because I happened to teach Russian", and "I have always valued a living contact with language and people who are passionate about something".

II. *Quantitative analysis* (*life history*)

1. Facts present in biography
During the biographical interview, Lena referred to her studies at Poznań University; two Russian institutes (Moscow State University Lomonosov and Pushkin Institute) that provide Russian teachers with information about literature, culture and economics; her secondary-school students' successful performance of the original version of Gogol's *Marriage*; travelling across the USSR to the Ural Mountains; her fascination with the nineteenth-century literature of Tolstoy; the seventies, the eighties and the nineties; the Polish cultural merchant Empik, from which she would order the latest books before the Polish political transformation; the Polish–Soviet Friendship Society (TPPR), where she worked for a brief time; and the National Centre for Teacher Training and Development (CODN), which proved indispensable in helping Russian teachers in the 1990s. She also recalls four people by name: three teachers who helped her very much in the 1990s (a CODN teacher consultant, a German teacher working with requalification of Russian teachers, a Belgian teacher speaking good Russian who offered her communicative teaching aids about Moscow), and one school director who still employs her on a part-time contract as a retired teacher.
2. Frequencies
In Lena's narration, there are three nouns that appear more frequently than others: *Russian,* different derivatives of *life* and *passion*. The use of the word *Russian* refers to a number of meanings: language (fourteen times), people (ten times), culture (eight times) and philology studies (three times). During the interview she uses three Russian words: *git* (guide) when she gropes for a

[3]The present study is part of a wider study conducted on four RFLTs of different modern languages. Detailed description of the research methodology was presented at the annual conference of Modern Language Association of Poland in Wroclaw, 9–11 September, 2013.

[4]The name of the participant was changed.

[5]This is a secondary school leaving exam whose results determine access to higher studies.

Polish equivalent, *lodka* (boat) to refer to the pronunciation of Russian dark *l* and *dzonki* as an example of a word she did not know until recently. Without prompting, she reiterates her definition of language as a natural element (*żywioł,* which in Polish is related to *life*) six times, which like a "river to immerse in" stands for something *alive*, naturally produced and used for living contacts. The other most popular word, also used six times, was *passion*.

3. Semantic fields
Lena's recollections center on four semantic fields: the times of her studies, as a Russian teacher in Communist Poland, as a Russian teacher after the political change and her retirement.

III. *Qualitative analysis* (*life story*)

1. Universal themes describing narrator's individual language-based experience

- Feelings and emotions connected with language learning in childhood/school times/studies:
In the whole interview, there are no references to the narrator's childhood. Yet, there were two principal emotions distinguishing Lena that proved influential in her outlook on language and language learning in school and university times: fascination with literary texts as well as pleasure derived from contacts with native Russian speakers. Since childhood, Lena has been fascinated with literature, which indirectly has turned into fascination with language expression. Her language of admiration was French; however, as she said,

> I liked French and French culture but, unfortunately, I wasn't able to learn it. So I believed that Russian literature is just like French literature but only in Russian.

During her studies, Lena often worked as a tourist guide, which helped her use and maintain her living Russian speech at an excellent level. As she said,

> At that time, I wanted to be a translator or a tourist guide. I used to work as a guide and an interpreter during trips across Poland, and then across the USSR, and this is how I learnt the language. A lot of pleasant experiences.

- Thoughts connected with the choice of language studies:
Her fascination with literature and culture was not the only reason for her choice of studies. It was also a mere chance. As she said,

> I was also persuaded into studying Russian by my friend, who used to say that it would be easier in Poznan because Russian philology was going to be open as a new field of study.

This shows that the narrator's choice of the field of study was closely connected with her desire to learn more about literature, which echoes integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). However, conformism ("it will be easier to pass entrance exams") also took precedence over other reasons for studying Russian. It is worth adding that she did not receive any support from her mother, who, as Lena recalls,

> was appalled, never really liked my choice, and felt ashamed to tell her friends who asked her what I was studying. She knew Russian from the Soviet Red Army and used to say: "You'll see. They'll come here". We were from the Pomeranian region.

- Narrator's personality traits recalled by the narrator:
  Without any hesitation, Lena refers to herself as an autonomous person. This is clearly articulated in the following words:

> I consider myself independent. I have never given up. I have often resisted. If someone (headmasters, teacher advisors) tried to impose something on me, there were tensions. I never liked doing anything until I was convinced it was worthwhile. The same is with my students. If they convince me that what I do is meaningless, I don't do it.

- Narrator's personality traits evidenced from the interview:
  In addition to expressing autonomous inclinations that were also noticed by the interviewer, Lena seems a very confident person and teacher who likes to have her own say. It transpires from the interview that she has an excellent knowledge of the Russian language and culture and likes being precise in her utterances, deliberately looking for words that she wants to use. For example, in moments of hesitation, when groping for words, she would not adopt a word suggested by the interlocutor, although acceptable in a given context, but preferred to come up with a similar word by herself, probably closer in her subjective meaning to what she wanted to convey.
- Significant others:
  In biography designing an invaluable role is attached to 'significant others'. Recalling them highlights the fact that who we are results from our interaction with the world and exchanging the acts of experience, but also amounts to being a product of copying that experience (Jurgiel-Aleksander, 2013, p. 35). The significant others who appear in Lena's narration are those directly influencing her professional life. As stated before, she enjoys contacts with living Russian speech and Russian culture provided by her friends. She describes them in the following words:

> I have always been surrounded by Russian friends, because I have always been looking for contacts with them. I used to visit people, exchanged letters with them, and now my daughter is in touch with their granddaughter. These things remain, thanks to language. I like Russian and I have always wanted to hear that language, talk to people, immerse in the contemporary Russian culture, so as not to be shut in the nineteenth century. My contacts are contacts with intelligentsia, great libraries, pianos, concerts, meetings and talks until dawn. I wasn't able to meet such people in Poland in my town, because there were none. But my knowledge of language opened me for friendships that had a great influence on my life. Besides, thanks to language I was able to travel up to the Ural. Some of the friends came to my school to talk to pupils. I have always been looking for those who operate this language and are passionate about something. And I find them. Each of them has put a brick onto my linguistic development, from those who taught me on the train how to pronounce Russian l to those who invited me to literary evening meetings where I could enrich my Russian vocabulary (…) A good teacher must have people from the same linguistic sphere around herself. I can't imagine teaching only from a coursebook. There must be living contacts, a natural linguistic element.

These words seem quite significant, because they testify to Lena's intentional striving for contacts with language users. They also echo the good language learners' strategies characteristic of participants in the studies of Naiman, Frohlich and Todesco (1975).

Another significant person Lena recalls in her biography is a teacher consultant at CODN in the early 1990s, when the reluctance to learn Russian in the Polish society was the most acute. The words of that lady are still fresh in Lena's memory when she recalls:

> In CODN there was a Russian consultant who used to say: "Are we any worse than English or German teachers? They are working, and we have the most work to do because we don't have any books for secondary schools. We are lagging behind by twenty years".

Her ambition was triggered by those words and, unlike other Russian colleagues, who resorted to requalification, she decided to change the situation and start teaching Russian for communicative purposes.

- Important choices and their consequences:
  Although the first important choices for a language teacher are probably those of the language to be studied and of the teaching profession as such, Lena faced two main professional challenges in which important decisions had to be taken. The first challenge that she had not expected before starting to work as a teacher was students' reluctance to learn Russian in the times of communist regime. This is what she recalls about that issue:

  > At university nobody prepared us for working at school. When I came to work at school I wasn't able to establish contact with pupils; I felt resistance on their part. They didn't want to work. Russian was a school subject at that time, not a foreign language. And the teacher's job was to promote it. This is why we were provided by the Russian institutes Lomonosov and Pushkin with Russian and Soviet literature, and additionally educated in postgraduate studies to prepare the learners for consuming Soviet culture in the original version. I was to promote culture that has always been close to my heart. But I had problems with methodology, didactics.

  Faced with reluctant students, she tried to make use of her passion for culture. She said:

  > I didn't know at first why my passion for language and culture was hardly implanted in pupils. I couldn't understand this. Then I realized I didn't have tools. So I consulted a methodologist in a town sixty kilometers away, started reading, learning. We even performed Gogol for people in the town.

  She recalls those times with pleasure as 'the marvelous times', so it can be inferred that her strategy to enrich Russian lessons with cultural issues succeeded at school.

  The second challenge was the time after the fall of communism when there were even more students who, supported by their parents, openly declined and questioned the significance of learning Russian at school. This is what she says about it:

> I remember saying that I would stop being a teacher unless I could discuss literature, culture or art with my students. And what happened? I had students who had never learnt Russian before, but the books for elementary students at our disposal were those for fifth grade, hardly appropriate for upper secondary school students. I started searching for something and found a very influential group of former Russian teachers from all over Poland. We started to write our own book, available in a photocopied form; then I designed a syllabus, and to my sheer astonishment I started pursuing the methodological path. I finished a course for educators served to us by Germans. Germans taught us communicative methods, and we turned them into coursebooks. That was the time when I worked as a local teacher adviser.

Such behaviors on the part of Lena again show her autonomous and agentive powers. For many teachers, confronting a situation of this kind would entail abandoning teaching Russian and striving for qualifications in another school subject. Being a natural fighter, Lena must have been convinced that incorporating communicative aspects into her teaching, coupled with her willingness to inspire others via cultural issues, would succeed despite the anti-Russian prejudices.

- Aims, values and their hierarchy:
  When asked about her values in life, Lena says without doubt: "Passion is my top value; other values are subordinated to it". Considering the fact that the word *passion* is so frequently used in the narration, there is no basis whatsoever for questioning the truthfulness of her claim.
- Temporal orientations:
  Talking about biography naturally signifies talking about the past, but Lena does not glorify it. She remembers how bad she felt at TPPR and how relieved she was when she came back to work at school. Proportionally, references to the present and what kind of teacher she has become are as frequent as reminiscences of the past. There are no allusions to the future, though.
- Professional development:
  Probably one of the most significant claims is the influence of teaching the Russian language in post-communist Poland on her professional development as a language teacher. This is what she has to say about this:

> I think that my professional biography was very interesting, in contrast to what my mother had thought. Russian made me develop professionally, look for something motivating in the times of smuta when nobody wanted to learn that language. On the other hand, when Russians were liberated from that verbiage and long-windedness, I stopped hearing. No press around (now there is the Internet and satellite TV), a black hole. And then urgent looking for motivation and contacts. I was the first New Matura examiner (number two on the ministerial list), one of the first educators, one of those who prepared the first Matura standards. If I had been older I wouldn't have it. (…) Even today the Russian methodology of teaching languages is something horrible. When I had to write a paper for the Pushkin Institute I refused to do it. I simply couldn't go through that artificial language. I learnt language teaching methodology from the West. My Russian-language colleagues requalified and started teaching English but I decided to take things in my own hands. I thought I had devoted twenty years to learn Russian well, so I would need ten years at a minimum to be able to adequately teach a new language. No time. There were no teaching hours for me at school, so I had to do something. I decided to become a teacher adviser.

These words testify to the fact that professional development does not need to be imposed top down. A reflective teacher in need can take care of his or her development by herself through looking for contacts (her CODN group), coming up with initiatives (writing teaching materials) and taking up new roles (becoming a local teacher adviser to have a wider space for her activities).

- Attitude toward the experiences related:
  Since Lena's professional period embraces working at school before and after political transformation, the change of the political system in Poland provides a natural watershed to look at her career from a pre- and post-transformation perspective. Before political transformation she led the secure life of a Russian teacher, although it was full of political propaganda which she tried to modify to the extent that she could. When she recalls those times, she says that:

> Russian teachers had access to the press, Russian literature, subscriptions in school in Empik, and I used it very much. I always considered coursebooks outdated, bad and that's why I supplemented them. I had tapes, made especially for me by my Russian friends, the latest literature. They informed me what had been released, and I ordered that via Empik. But I still disliked the coursebook texts about a Soviet woman who was an ambitious tractor driver written in terrible ideological language. I don't know who invented those stories. They hardly appealed to secondary school students' mentality.

From this extract it transpires that her attitude toward the political situation in Poland was not one-sidedly approving. Resorting to culture and literature in supplementary materials was her means of resistance as a teacher bent on imparting to students something other than language full of verbosity and slogans.

After the fall of communism in Poland, however, her passion for living Russian speech as well as teacher autonomy were put even more to the test. Her recollections are a good illustration of this:

> The worst professional period in my life was when everything collapsed, together with the language that almost overnight ceased to exist. Because the language of the USSR was not Russian, all those newspapers, stories – they stopped being useful because they concerned the language that no longer existed. But it was impossible to come back to the language of Tolstoy. So when Russians came to me I took away the papers in which their sandwiches were wrapped. I was so hungry for contact with current living speech. And then the CODN group came with a helping hand. (…) I once experienced a funny moment when a student in the early nineties asked me quite sincerely: 'Are you sure that the language that you are teaching us is still spoken by anybody?' That's true. Anything you take, for example, an iron, had English labels. There was no contact with Russians at that time – maybe in Warsaw, at Central Station or the stadium.

What should be noted, however, is that Lena realized the problem of little practical use of Russian. That was why, by all possible means, she tried to cling to the evidence of its existence (newspapers serving as wrapping paper for sandwiches) so that she could on the one hand resuscitate its liveliness and on the other hand protect and maintain her own personal theories on language being something alive.

3. *Language teacher's biography*

- Language education:
  As far as the time period is concerned, Lena's linguistic education falls upon the 1960s (primary school) and the 1970s (secondary school and Russian philology university studies). As to the space, it should be noted that, apart from traditional schooling at her local town and university, she picked up a lot of language, embracing a rich stock of vocabulary, impeccable Russian pronunciation and impressive communicative skills in her contacts with Russian friends travelling around Poland and the USSR. Therefore, her language education was both formal and informal, both intentional and incidental, which was altogether responsible for her excellent command of Russian.
- Language teaching successes and failures:
  Probably the greatest success for a language teacher is a sense of satisfaction. With regard to Lena's biography, satisfaction from teaching occupies a prominent place. As she recalls,

  > I think that nobody has succeeded in teaching a language unless the learner wanted it and learnt by himself. The teacher is a propeller who makes learners want to learn, develops in them needs to read something or discuss something. And I have triggered such needs, given tools and showed the sense of doing it. (…) You can't teach a language without the learner's participation. (…) Teaching is a hard job. There are many frustrated teachers. A lot of them withdraw from the profession; they think it is not what they want to do. But I was confirmed in my beliefs that it was what I wanted to do to the best of my abilities. I never liked giving exactly the same lessons; I simply couldn't get bored. (…) A lot of people say that I infected them with a passion for Russians and Russian culture. These are my successes.

  As for failures, teaching a language received by the general public with mixed feelings can hardly be immune to failures. In Lena's case, two negative feelings come to the surface: a sense of shame and a sense of regret. The former refers to the political and low economic situation of Russia projecting onto the learning of the Russian language and the reception of Russian teachers in Poland. Lena came to the conclusion that she was being positioned as someone who meant little on account of teaching the hated language. The latter refers to Russian-language teaching methodology, based on a traditional approach to learning that stressed memorization and the value of negative feedback. She captures those traumatic recollections in the following extracts:

  > In the nineties Russian was humiliated and ignored, treated as nothing. People were impressed with English and French culture, probably due to associations with the economic situations of their countries, whereas Russian was associated with the poor Ukraine. I was ashamed to say I was a teacher of Russian.
  > I wish I hadn't given every single 2 – the lowest grade at that time. I wish I had given more higher grades. Now I understood that teachers gave grades not for language but for memory – learning texts by heart. I was even in conflict with a student once or twice due to those grades. (…) Those were times when teaching was to be accompanied by a high dose of stress. We used to point to errors so much that in contacts with Russians they were afraid to open their mouths so as not to commit errors. I myself was taught like this. Only those pupils who were indistinguishable

from native users were rewarded. That's why there were so many phonetics exercises. That was methodology.

We do not know to what degree the narrator was involved in traditional grade-based assessment. Yet, considering the fact that she regrets her system of student assessment makes her a reflective teacher who can acknowledge her pedagogical mistakes. It can be said that the system of language teacher education was to blame and Lena fell victim to the times in which she lived. She was hardly aware of other approaches to student assessment, whereas her successful attempts to infect students with her passion for culture were her intuitive way of making language teaching more humane and motivating.

- Learning from the narrator's linguistic biography:
  One way of investigating former teachers' biographies is to learn from their accounts. In Lena's narrative, we can also find some tips which, although they may seem naïve, proved true in the narrator's context. The following extracts from her narration illustrate what the narrator offered on her choice of profession, language teaching, her change of attitude toward pupils, autonomy and language-teacher education:

  I never wish I had chosen another job. I worked in TPPR but ran away quickly – too much ideology and politics. I worked as an interpreter, but it took up too much time. These are somebody else's thoughts, and translating another person's thinking is tiresome, burns you out, whereas school makes you alive. I tried to translate literature but I got stuck when it came to confronting it, sending for verification. From my town, it would have been hard to find my way through the translators' crowd in the world.

  Something ends, but something new begins. Language is a natural element and if you have people around who are infected with the language as much as you are, establish contacts with them, and you can teach comfortably. This is so because you don't transfer mere knowledge but your passion and your emotions. It's so easy to discourage people, it's much better to work among enthusiasts and be motivated by them.

  I no longer have emotional patience for sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds. Their emotions are not interesting to me anymore. Their impertinence annoys me. I learnt that they should be taught by young teachers who have more educational passion, and I am more interested in language. I get impatient when I have to lose time on persuading them to learn. So I gave up working for a private secondary school when I could. Now I only teach adults.

  I don't feel like imparting something to people. I was a teacher adviser, but I limited myself to syllabuses. You cannot teach how to teach because it is so much intertwined with your personality, experience, contactability. I even went to schools to tell headmasters whether the language taught by a computer operator who used to learn Russian was still Russian, but I didn't think I could teach him something. I can suggest how a coursebook worked in my classroom and that's all. (…) I think it makes sense to be active professionally through looking for knowledge but also knowing what to do with it. If you don't know, you are like a banner in this profession. Students ignore you because they immediately sense that you don't have your own opinion or extensive knowledge, but you don't want to admit to your ignorance. It's better to acknowledge what you don't know and encounter life actively, without fear.

> Probably the most important thing in educating teachers is the ability to reflect, especially upon one's inadequacies and potential improvements. Doing teacher research might be a good step in this direction provided it was not imposed, otherwise it would limit their ways of thinking. That would be very good for external reflection. College could prepare future teachers for working out their own classroom research tools. Then there would be internal reflection for teachers themselves and external reflection for society. Maybe that would reveal those teachers who don't feel good in this profession.

- Narrator as an autonomous linguistic biography constructor:
  Frequent references to undertaking independent decisions and ability to reflect and perceive the complexity of many an issue, coupled with developing her own passion-based teaching style make Lena an autonomous designer of her language-teacher biography. Her autonomy was expressed in a number of ways: as a student who chose studies to pursue her literary passions against the will of the family, as a beginning teacher who turned to conveying passion for Russian culture when confronted with students reluctant to learn Russian, as a Russian teacher in post-communist Poland who managed to find her way to professional fulfilment, and as a retired language teacher skillful in self-analysis and reflection who can offer valuable pieces of advice to anyone in the language profession. It was her internal autonomy that made her challenge the socially written and taken-for-granted roles and design new scripts for teachers of Russian in Poland. Her energy for change was generated from difficulties and adversities, whereas her ability to solve problems could be seen as the outcome of strength and her 'never give up' inclination.

4. *Analysis of biography*

- Establishing turning points, critical events, transitions, identity transformations:
  Without doubt, a transition point in Lena's professional life was the political and economic change in Poland from the communist regime to a free-economic state. Political and economic changes had an enormous impact on the perception and reception of Russian as a foreign language in Poland which, previously associated with the imposed language of oppressors, would be massively rejected in the 1990s as a language to learn.
- Establishing central and peripheral themes:
  In her narrative, Lena does not give much attention to her actual studying of Russian, either at school or during higher education. Her university period was associated with trips, picking up Russian from her native friends, and experiencing Russian culture both with a big C (reading fine literature, attending concerts, etc.) and a small C (establishing friendly relations with Russians, visiting them in their homes, etc.). In contrast to her study period, the time of working as a language teacher is more widely presented, together with her tensions and recoveries. Therefore, the central

theme could be Lena's individuality as a language teacher involved in following her own professional path. The peripheral themes that come to the surface are the power of passion in language teaching or learning language via contact with the target-language culture.

- Establishing stable and variable elements:
  Trying to establish what was stable in Lena's development as a teacher, it is definitely her active attitude to life and her place in it. A variable element that should not be dismissed was her change in patience toward the extramural students that she has an opportunity to teach now. No longer is she tolerant of their misbehaviors, and she complains about the waste of time spent on disciplining them. Such a change in attitude to young pupils probably results from the sense of lapse of time, inevitability of the end and a strong desire to convey as much as she can. Yet, she never stresses that this is the correct way of approaching young people. The narrator is aware of her possible unsuitability and therefore encourages young teachers to teach young people, so that a rapport can be established that is more conducive to learning. At the same time, she does not withdraw from her right to teach the way she likes (without the necessity to establish discipline first), which again proves that she has her own opinion about the issue which she has no intention to compromise on.
- Confronting individual experiences of narrator's biography with collective memories expressed by other people representing the language-teaching profession:
  It can be certainly stated that most Russian teachers in Poland underwent similar experiences. During the communist rule they were glorified by Soviet-dependent authorities, which finds confirmation in the support they were given (teaching aids, PhD studies in Moscow, school exchanges, etc.). On the other hand, they were loathed and despised by the general public (Ciepiela, 2013, p. 72), who often highlighted their subservience, cowardliness or conformism. Still, they had secure jobs at school because Russian was taught as the first foreign language in Poland. After the fall of the communist regime, they often lost their school positions because, due to the freedom of students' (or parents' in younger classes) right to choose a language; not many learners opted for Russian. Lena's biography is, therefore, hardly a recording on one human being but documents the lives of many Russian-language teachers in Poland.

5. *Concluding remarks*

- Presenting the main results:
  It appears that biographical-narrative studies lend themselves well to investigating language teacher identity. In line with the contemporary approaches to identity as multifarious, changeable and subject to change (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton, 2013), Lena's story clearly shows that essentialist theories of identity no longer hold true. This is so because

stable and prescribed roles for teachers, or 'assigned' (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002, p. 96) teacher identity can be undermined by environmental realities which, in turn, generate new behaviors on the part of the teacher.

In the case under discussion, the socioeconomic and political changes of the 1990s produced new linguistic needs, expectations and fashions which, in turn, triggered many negative emotions experienced by teachers of a language that was no longer popular. Feelings of loss and failure, shame for teaching the language no one wanted to study, related doubt about teaching abilities, feelings of depersonalization, or, as Giddens (in Kirk & Wall, 2010, p. 631) put it, "a sense of disembededness in relation to the life world, or lived experience" were common, although not always publicly acknowledged.

Yet, as Lena's professional life story shows, there is a possibility for 'self-renewal' in response to the new structural and cultural change. In other words, finding oneself in an oppressive job situation can lead to the construction of a new professional identity, mostly through modifying the teacher role by giving up teacher passivity and belief in the *status quo* for the sake of teacher agency. In practical terms, the loss of previous job satisfaction can produce teacher resistance to as well as disagreement with the way things are, and, consequently, the influx of agentive powers resulting in looking for new possibilities. In a nutshell, a teacher can be made to take up a role or identity contrary to the one defining her at the beginning or even during the bulk of her professional teaching career.

In this context, it is worthwhile to point to the significance of the temporal and spatial dimension in the formation of teacher identity (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 19). If Lena had been younger and retired in communist times or older and starting to work as a Russian teacher right now, in the times of the 'revitalization' of the Russian-language, she may not have experienced the agentive resources in herself. Paradoxically, Lena became even more liberated when she found herself useless in the professional and, in a way, economic sense, when compared with teachers of Western languages. Thus, her freedom as a teacher was triggered by her fall. Feeling responsible for the whole generation of Russian-language teachers, she managed to take control of her professional life and learnt to teach differently. Simultaneously, she developed as a didactic expert because the adoption of a new communicative model of teaching Russian was new for her Russian colleagues in terms of how the planning, execution and evaluation of lessons could be done. Therefore, reality, however bleak it may seem, does not need to be perceived as oppressive but, quite the reverse, may provide in the long term a sense of individual agency. Being positioned by others enabled the narrator to realize this and position herself as still an important agent.

- Linking the results of the study to theoretical second-language acquisition approaches:

As mentioned above, Lena's case can be well related to contemporary identity approaches, drawing upon poststructuralist theories of language (Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1977; Kramsch, 2010), poststructuralist theories of subjectivity (Bhabha, 1994), or sociocultural theories of learning (Norton, 2010; Wenger 1998). Her careful cultivation of good linguistic skills made her a 'legitimate' speaker or teacher of the target language (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 652) who was able to infect learners with a passion for Russian and Russian culture despite their widespread unpopularity. She managed to maintain her position as a Russian-language teacher rather than a requalified Western-language teacher, which confirms her personal agency and, in a sense, being in a position of power against the odds. Finally, her 'situated learning' and a kind of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Wenger, 1998) in a methodological course offered by Western language methodologists enabled her to preserve the integrity of herself as a Russian teacher and propelled by her own imagination (Kanno & Norton, 2003), just like Norton's (2001, 2013) Katarina who had been a teacher before she arrived in Canada, found herself an old-timer who could offer much methodological knowledge to other Russian teachers.

- Pointing to practical implications:
  A practical implication of biographical studies on RFLTs is that they can offer a number of different readings. Lena's narration is principally a story of a language teacher but it can be read under many other titles, such as *The changing roles of a language teacher*, *The consequences of communism termination in Poland for language-teacher identities*, *Ways of generating teacher autonomy*, *Tracking the process of experienced teacher autonomy formation*, or *Language-teacher positioning in a communist and a post-communist country*, to name but a few. Since Lena's case shows how important it is for a teacher to be autonomous, teacher autonomy embracing agency and the ability to reflect should be promoted by language-teacher institutions. Her suggestions concerning language-teacher education, especially with regard to developing the student-teacher's reflection and encouraging teacher research are very much up to date and are already acknowledged by leading researchers in the field (Borg, 2010, 2013; Meijer, Oolbekkink, Meirink, & Lockhorst, 2012).

  An equally important postulate transpiring from the study seems to be the importance of passion transferred from teachers to students. It is coincidental that the importance of passion was appreciated by Polish educational authorities and the school year 2011/2012 was declared as the year of passion in Poland by the Minister of National Education. Infecting students with teachers' passions can be viewed as a practical contribution of second language acquisition research findings on making use of *affordances* (van Lier, 2000) or the teacher's *transportable identity* (Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2011).

  Finally, examples of RFLTs' biographies can be successfully incorporated into teacher-education didactics programs. Considered as a valuable

pedagogical method, an 'educational' biography is likely to bear fruit in students' increased reflection upon learning and teaching experiences, strengthen (or weaken, which is equally valuable) pre-service teachers in their professional goals, or even help them analyze their own language-learning practice, get to know individual making-meaning processes, and more rapidly = develop their fledgling teacher identities.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has attempted to propose a way of elaborating on empirical data collected from a retired Russian-as-a-foreign-language teacher through narrative-biographical interview. The adoption of the biographical perspective has enabled the researcher to capture the reflection of the interviewee on her autobiography, and present the transformation of one Russian-language teacher's professional identity as a result of socioeconomic, political and cultural changes occurring in Poland. 'Hearing' the teacher-subject's authentic voice has made it possible to access her thoughts, beliefs, tensions, fears, choices and experiences from her 'linguistic life cycle'. Although the present study has focused on a Polish teacher of Russian, it may have much wider implications. Lena's autobiographical account has shown how broader sociopolitical influences shape teacher identity, making it situational, context-bound and specific, thereby questioning the view of stable teacher identity. The study has simultaneously demonstrated that the impact of the wider environment can sometimes trigger a teacher's self-renewal, culminating in perceiving her profession in a different light.

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Capturing Effective Teaching: The Construct of an Observation Scheme

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Abstract This paper explains the theoretical construct of an observation scheme to describe effective foreign language teaching. Drawing on research in teaching effectiveness from general education and findings from studies in second language acquisition which have been associated with improving learning outcomes, structuring the lesson, scaffolding, questioning, giving feedback, eliciting, responding, giving instructions, confirmation checking, error correction, mediating and motivational strategies are among the areas selected for focus.

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the construct of an observation tool for analysis of lessons of English as a foreign language, designed to capture effective teaching. Although the notion of *effective teaching* is commonly discussed by those interested in becoming successful language learners, to date little research has been conducted into what constitutes *effective foreign language teaching* in the context of compulsory education. However, indications of what effective language acquisition is can be found in applied linguistics research. By contrast, in the field of general education there has been substantial research into effectiveness, a brief overview of which is given in the opening section. Second language acquisition (SLA) research is interested in exploring the process of how learning a foreign language takes place and the optimal circumstances for this to happen. Psycholinguistics research on input-processing examines what can enhance acquisition, what helps learners to memorize linguistic features and what assists rapid retrieval of language to facilitate performance. Thus, while not overtly investigating effectiveness of instruction in general, there are many indicators which can be drawn upon when considering what effective English language teaching might include and which have a basis in empirical SLA research. A review of these areas follows in the second section of this paper.

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Observation tools are created with specific aims, for use in specific contexts. The next section examines observation schemes which have been used in effectiveness research in mainstream education and compares these with several from English language teaching contexts. A discussion follows of the purposes an observation scheme for capturing effective teaching could be used for. We then proceed to describe the construct of a tool for considering the effectiveness of English language lessons, drawing together all the threads which have been discussed.

2 Effectiveness in General Education

A predominant model used in effectiveness literature in general education comes from economics, where the school is examined in terms of the nature of the *input* which is invested in it, the instructional *process* which takes place there, the *output* achieved by its students, which is usually measured on standardized test scores, and the *outcomes* these students attain once they leave school, in terms of their employment, further education, or other contributions to society (Scheerens, Glas, & Thomas, 2007, p. 223). Effectiveness within this paradigm is interpreted in a similar way to cost-effectiveness, with comparison between the amount of investment made and the returns received as a result. In the words of Scheerens et al. (2007, p. 221), "[t]he performance of a school is (…) expressed as the *output* of the school, which is in turn measured by looking at the average achievement of the pupils at the end of a period of formal schooling". In order to take account of the fact that all children are different and come from different social backgrounds, much effectiveness research uses a *value-added* model, which takes *before* and *after measures* (where *before* is taken at the end of the previous stage of schooling, or at the entry to the new stage and *after* at the end of the stage under study), and adjusts them for socio-economic factors. In this way, schools with a high proportion of young people from socially disadvantaged home environments are not automatically regarded as 'worse' because of the results their students receive on achievement tests. Value-added measures allow the researcher, or stakeholder, to examine what contribution the school makes to the output and outcome, regardless of the entry level of its learners (OECD, 2008, p. 17).

Stakeholders are concerned with discovering why School A gets better results than School B and there is a substantial body of research investigating the factors which contribute to these differences. For reasons of space, focus here is given to research connected with instructional effectiveness, which has been found to produce a strong impact on learning outcomes. Hattie (2003), in a meta-analysis of more than 500,000 studies of factors affecting student achievement, found that approximately 30 % of the variance could be attributed to teaching. Dobbie and Fryer (2011) found that some 50 % of variance in learning outcomes of charter schools in New York, could be explained by factors connected with teaching itself, or with how the teaching was organized in the school. Seidel and Shavelson (2007), reviewing ten years of teaching effectiveness research, report factors within the

teaching process which are associated with positive outcomes. Reinforcement, feedback, time on task, cooperative learning, differentiation or adaptive teaching and individualized and personalized teaching (2007, pp. 456–457) were found to have significant effect sizes in meta-analyses, based on a process-product model.

More recent research has moved away from the process-product model to socio-constructivist models and it was this model which Seidel and Shavelson applied in their meta-analysis. The constructivist approach sees the individual learner as actively involved in the building of knowledge with the support of the learning materials, the teacher and peers. The positive environment for learning is therefore seen as one where the learner is given ample opportunity "to engage in activities that promote higher order learning" (Seidel & Shavelson, 2007, p. 459). The social atmosphere of the classroom is consequently seen as key. Goal-setting is viewed as desirable, with either the learners having their own goals, or with the teaching organized around clearly defined goals. In this way, knowledge is built by working towards achieving a series of goals. The teacher's role is to clarify these goals and organize learning in a systematic way. In order for learning to take place, the student needs to actively engage in learning activities, which will enable him or her to process and internalize information. Progress is evaluated by both students and teachers as an integral part of the learning process in a variety of ways that include self-evaluation and with reference to the goals which have been set. Learners also engage in regulating and monitoring their learning process, which can be assisted by the teacher through scaffolding, giving feedback, or teaching learners the strategies they need for independent, self-regulated learning.

Adapting Bolhuis's (2003) model of the components that make up teaching and learning, Seidel and Shavelson (2007, p. 461) divide classroom instruction into four components: (1) *knowledge domain* (which is subject specific), (2) *time for learning* (described as opportunities for learning), (3) *organization of learning* (referring to class management), and (4) *social context* (particularly classroom atmosphere). They applied this model in conducting a meta-analysis of ten years of research and conclude (2007, p. 483):

> Providing opportunities for students to engage in domain-specific learning activities was shown to be the component with the highest effect sizes, regardless of domain (reading, mathematics, science), stage of schooling (elementary, secondary), or type of learning outcome (learning processes, motivational–affective, cognitive).

Creemers and Kyriakides (2008) developed a dynamic model of educational effectiveness which incorporated elements from both teacher and school effectiveness research. The model functions at different levels, with students seen as 'nested' with teachers, or in classes, which are within schools, which in turn are located in a wider context, the system level. Five dimensions are used for measuring effectiveness: *frequency*, *focus*, *stage*, *quality*, and *differentiation* (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008, p. 184). Eight observable factors associated with effectiveness in instruction were chosen for the model, based on earlier effectiveness research (e.g., Brophy & Good, 1986). These are "orientation, structuring, questioning, teacher modelling, applications, management of time, teacher role in making a classroom a

learning environment, and classroom assessment" (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008, p. 189). Effectiveness is seen within a theoretical paradigm of what constitutes good teaching. Paradigms have shifted from a process-product approach towards a constructivist approach within the last twenty years. More recent research attempts to blend the findings of earlier work with those of active and collaborative learning. It is interesting to note, however, that the earliest work on teaching effectiveness, such as Carroll's (1963), contains similar components, for example *opportunity to learn*, as later models, although the subsequent change in paradigm has changed how this is understood.

3 Second Language Acquisition and Effectiveness

Studies in second language acquisition have the aim of providing a theoretical basis for, and explanation of, how language learning takes place. For the purposes of this paper, we concentrate on work concerning instructed second language learning and in particular processes which have been found to enhance second language acquisition in such settings. Within a psycholinguistic approach, it is accepted that foreign language learning takes place when learners are exposed to the target language and research has investigated what kind of input is needed and what learners need to do for their knowledge of the target language to develop. Long (1983, 1996) proposed that interaction can facilitate this process as it helps to make sure the learner understands the input through negotiating meaning and receiving feedback. Swain (1985, 1995) argued that input alone is not sufficient and that learners must use the target language in meaningful communication. This allows them to try out their theories about how the language works, helps them to notice what they do not yet know and, through applying rules in practice, understand them better. Schmidt (2001) called into question the notion that language acquisition is a subconscious process and proposed the noticing hypothesis, claiming that conscious attention and understanding help new language to become part of the learner's interlanguage.

Language knowledge in research is divided into implicit and explicit knowledge, where implicit knowledge can be seen as an internal representation of rules. This knowledge is procedural, allowing the automatic processing needed for fluent language use, and intuitive, meaning that the learner has a sense of what is correct, but is not able to explain why this is so. Explicit knowledge, or conscious awareness of language rules, is declarative, meaning that the learner is able to explain the rule. Considerable research has explored the ways in which explicit knowledge relates to implicit knowledge. Three views can be found, the *non-interface view*, the *strong interface view*, and the *weak interface view*. The *non-interface view* is that implicit and explicit knowledge are separate and no transfer can be made from one to the other (Paradis, 1994). The *strong interface view* holds that explicit knowledge may become implicit through practice (DeKeyser, 1998). The *weak interface view* (Ellis, 1993) sees explicit knowledge as supportive of the

development of implicit knowledge through helping the learner become aware of a given structure in the input via *noticing* or *noticing-the-gap* (Schmidt, 1994).

These different views give rise to different types of foreign language instruction, from instruction which focuses on form (FFI) (promoting explicit knowledge) to instruction which focuses on meaning (MFI) (promoting implicit knowledge). Ellis (2005, p. 37) argues that since research as yet offers no clear evidence for whether explicit knowledge may transfer to implicit knowledge classroom instruction should include both, with preference given to meaning focused instruction. Within FFI, explicit instruction has been found more effective than implicit (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Corrective oral feedback has also been found effective, with requests for self-correction and prompts found to have a larger effect than recasts (Lyster & Saito, 2010). Within MFI, a task-based approach, combining a focus on form, which follows a communicative activity, has been found to promote target language development (Loewen, 2005). Other forms of MFI, such as immersion programs and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), have also been found effective.

Another branch of SLA research, based on socio-cultural theory, has investigated the role of interaction, not as a means of providing language input, but as a means of development. As we saw within mainstream educational research on effectiveness, this paradigm views learning as taking place through interaction with others. In terms of language acquisition, the talk about language which takes place, for example, in peer interactions during communicative tasks (such as during a dictogloss task, where learners work cooperatively to produce a grammatically acceptable form of the original text on the basis of their own notes) is seen as promoting language development. The teacher in this paradigm takes the role of mediator, whose task is to model not only new language, but also processes, and to scaffold learners until they are able to manage these independently.

Models of second language acquisition (such as Gardner, 2001) acknowledge the important role motivation plays in the process. Learning a foreign language is challenging and takes a long time, so success depends on the ability to persevere and to continue to do so even in the face of difficulty. Within foreign language education, Dörnyei draws attention to the role the teacher can play in creating conditions for motivating learning, initiating motivation, maintaining learner motivation and promoting reflectivity which has a positive focus (2001, p. 29), and offers a catalogue of teacher *motivational strategies* (2001, pp. 137–144). Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) created an observation schedule based on these strategies and applied it in an exploratory study in South Korean secondary classrooms, claiming that there are indications that use of motivational strategies by the teacher leads to an increase in learner motivational behavior. Ellis (2009), while acknowledging the usefulness of the concept of motivational strategies, questioned the research findings on the grounds of the fact that inadequate rationale was given for how learner motivational behavior was operationalized. However, he found the study a promising beginning which sets out a new agenda for research.

Research on SLA does not point to effective methods but rather to processes within instruction which appear to lead to acquisition. Among these, exposure to the target language in the form of *comprehensible input*, meaning focused

instruction, with an emphasis on output in communicative tasks offering substantial opportunity for practice; a focus on form which promotes noticing, explicit form-focused instruction and corrective feedback can be selected as having been found effective in the foreign language classroom. In addition, the role of the teacher in motivating language learners appears a promising area of exploration.

4 Observation as a Tool for Capturing Effectiveness

Studies of teaching effectiveness often use standardized tests to measure learning outcomes, but, as this only captures the product, alternative measures are needed to investigate the process. Information about teaching may be collected in two main ways, through questionnaire studies, or through observation of lessons. Questionnaires may be directed to learners, where they are asked to give opinions about what and how they are taught, or to teachers. Observation, however, has the advantage of allowing an unbiased, outsider view of the classroom process.

The observation procedure, however, is not without its problems. The classroom during a lesson is a place where a great many things are happening at the same time, all of which dynamically affect each other. Focusing on one of these at one moment in time may mean that something key is missed in another part of the room. At the same time, it is not possible to focus on everything simultaneously. As a result, any observation scheme which is designed for use live during a lesson is only of limited use, as it is only able to capture part of the picture.

The presence of an observer (or observers) in the room is distracting for the teacher and learners, and may have an impact on the lesson. As teachers know that they are to be observed, there is a danger that what the observer sees is not typical, or that because of nerves the teacher does not behave as they would normally. Learners may also feel inhibited, or, alternatively, attempt to draw attention to themselves. To lessen these effects, one solution is to observe several lessons, or a series of lessons over a period of time.

The next problem comes in the design of the observation scheme itself. A well-designed observation tool is prepared on the basis of a theoretical construct, which will be specific to a context and to the purpose for which it is intended. In addition, schemes designed for live use need to take into consideration the constraints suggested above, and so limit the areas to be focused on. Observation schemes typically contain a series of observable behaviors and the observer is asked either to simply decide which are observed during a lesson, or to complete a time sheet, marking at given interval which behaviors are taking place at that moment. These behaviors may refer to the teacher or to learners. An alternative form is where the observer is asked to gauge on a scale how often a behavior occurs, or to make a judgement about an aspect of the lesson on a scale.

Observation procedures vary according to the type of scheme in use. Some require coding on one scheme to take place throughout the lesson. As live coding is extremely intensive work and the difficulty caused by the need to concentrate for

long periods may lead to lowered reliability in completing the scheme, there are also other types of observation procedure. Some schemes contain separate parts which alternate intensive time-coding for specified periods, with periods of general viewing followed by completion of judgment statements.

Use of any observation scheme requires training people how to use it. If the instrument is to be reliable, then it should be used in the same way by all observers. This means that the aspects to be observed are 'coded' in the same way. For practical reasons, the observer training process needs to be efficient in that it trains observers to use the instrument reliably in as short a time as possible, which also has implications for the design of the scheme.

As observation schemes for live use have their limitations, other approaches may be taken. One is the ethnographic approach of unselective, non-judgmental, recording. The observer makes notes about what happens in the lesson, as it happens, noting the times and those involved. This record may be augmented by photographs (for example of the board) and is supported by the materials used during the class.

An alternative to observation during the lesson is the use of film or audio recordings. If carefully arranged, film has the advantage of allowing multiple-views of the classroom, showing both learners and the teacher, and use of good recording equipment means that all the interaction is audible. As with the presence of a live observer, a camera (particularly if there is an operator involved) may affect the lesson and thus a number of recordings need to be made, over a period of time. A less intrusive means is using audio-recording, although this has the difficulty of missing non-verbal information, which may be key to understanding the process. In addition, it is difficult to identify which learner is speaking and it may be hard to follow exactly what is happening. For this reason, audio-recordings need to made together with, for example, ethnographic note-taking, which capture the non-verbal activity and give an overall picture of the lesson.

If a film is available observation schemes can be used to code the recording, with the advantage that the film may be stopped and re-wound to allow multiple-viewing. This allows a more complex observation scheme to be used. An audio-recording requires a transcription to be made (which can also be done with a film) which incurs additional costs and is time-consuming. A transcript, however, allows for more flexible use than a film, as it can be anonymized, which is not always possible with recorded material. Software programs allow the observer to code the transcript, either through using prepared categories, or through using a bottom-up approach of in vivo coding. In addition to qualitative analysis these programs enable quantitative analysis of the frequency of use of the different code categories, which allows patterns to emerge in a large data set.

In order to attempt to capture effective teaching by using observation in the language teaching context, it is necessary to design an appropriate observation scheme. In the next section, we discuss the purpose to which such an instrument could be put and its construct.

5 What Could an Observation Scheme for Effective Language Teaching Be Used for?

Observation of teachers is generally done for two main purposes, for evaluation or for education. Heads of school and local authorities observe teachers as part of a regulatory process to ensure quality, or to check if policy is being implemented as is required. The temptation in this context is to assume that there is one right way to teach, or a form of *best practice*. As Elmore (1996, p. 18) comments,

> One promising approach (…) is to create strong professional and social normative structures for good teaching practice that are external to individual teachers and their immediate working environment, and to provide a basis for evaluating how many teachers are approximating good practice at what level of competence.

Coming from the medical profession, the concept of *best practice* does not fit well in the foreign language classroom. Designed originally to disseminate life-saving medical procedures, it carries with it the idea that one format will suit all contexts, disregarding the rich variety of schools, teachers and learners. As every experienced teacher knows, even within the same school and class, what works well with one group may not work with another, to say nothing of the importance of adjusting to the needs of individual learners. Teachers need to be allowed to use a range of processes and techniques to meet the varied needs of their teaching situations. To prescribe one desired way would be counter-productive.

The other common use of observation is to promote development of teachers. Through becoming more aware of their practice, for example, by receiving feedback following observation of a lesson, or watching a film of themselves teaching, teachers begin to better understand the process and create their own theories. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 190) describe this theorized practice as *praxis*, which they define as "informed, committed action". This is an on-going process, as teaching is constantly evolving. Conducting action research may lead them to reflect and to experiment with new alternatives. Prabhu (1990, p. 172) suggests that teachers need "to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning-with a notion of causation that has credibility for them". This developmental use of a scheme examining effectiveness is consequently more constructive. However, if used judiciously, it could also have a place in programs designed to diagnose possible areas for improvement in schools or for mentoring individual teachers.

For the purposes of research, second language acquisition suggests that if the language instruction which takes place follows theories of how language is acquired then it should be effective. Unfortunately, however, "[i]t is hard to formulate generalizable conclusions, and even more difficult to formulate implications or recommendations that are relevant to, and useful for, teaching practice" (de Graaf & Housen, 2009, p. 742). Despite these limitations, it would appear that some of the findings from SLA research can be drawn on to create a construct for what might constitute effective foreign language teaching and there are precedents for this.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposes a *macrostrategic framework* composed of ten strategies for language teaching pedagogy, each with microstrategies for the classroom. Spolsky (1989, p. 16) describes 74 conditions he considers "relevant to second language learning". Ellis (2005) sets out ten principles for *successful instructed learning*. Crabbe (2003), discussing *the quality of learning opportunities* offers a framework based on areas of SLA research. He writes that (2003, p. 19):

> In order to reach full competence in an L2, learners are likely to need to receive extensive input, participate in interaction, produce extensive output, rehearse language forms and communicative routines, get direct or indirect feedback on performance, and have access to knowledge about language learning.

Questionnaire studies, such as Bell (2005) and Brown (2009), also give examples of how teaching effectiveness can be operationalized. In short, although acknowledging the complexity of the task and the indecisiveness of some of the research findings, there is some consensus in the literature as to aspects which are conducive to effective language learning.

6 Construct of an Observational Tool for Capturing Effective EFL Teaching

As we have stated, an observation schedule is created for a specific context and for a specific purpose. The context under consideration here is that of English (as a foreign) language lessons taking place in lower secondary classrooms, (grades 7–9), within mainstream, compulsory education in Europe. The purpose of creating an observation schedule is to study the relationship between learner outcomes on a proficiency test and teaching behaviors, with a view to identifying which behaviors are associated with higher proficiency, when compensation is made for socio-economic learner factors. The observation schedule is for post-lesson use for analysis of recordings and transcripts. In sum, the study is descriptive and exploratory and follows a correlational design.

The approach taken in development of the construct was to consider findings from instructional effectiveness research in general education and research in second language acquisition which gave empirical evidence for promoting learning outcomes. Next a survey was made of observational schedules in use in general education and in foreign language classrooms. A very brief overview of these is now given.

In general education, particularly in the United States, two schedules were found which have been widely used in recent years. These are the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS) (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) and *Framework for Teaching* (FTT) (Danielson, 1996). CLASS, designed originally for evaluation of pre-kindergarten classes, focuses on classroom atmosphere and measures: "how productive the environment appears in use of time and activities; how sensitive is the teacher's behavior; the quality of instruction and feedback to students; the

effectiveness of behavior management; and the extent to which activities and interactions stimulate conceptual development and engagement" (Pianta et al., 2005, p. 145). The FTT describes teaching four domains: "planning and preparation; the classroom environment; instruction and professional responsibilities" (Danielson, 1996, p. 3) Within *instruction* are included communication, questioning, "engaging students in learning", feedback and "demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness" (1996, p. 4). In foreign language teaching commonly used is *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching* (COLT) (Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984; Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). COLT has two parts where "Part A describes classroom events at the level of episode and activity, …[and] Part B analyzes the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students or among students themselves as they occur within each activity." (Fröhlich, Spada, & Allen, 1985, p. 53).

Self-evaluation of Classroom Talk (SETT) (Walsh, 2006) is proposed as a framework for teacher development. This takes as a starting point work done on classroom interaction in foreign language teaching and has the aim of helping "teachers and researchers attain a closer understanding of how language use and interactive decision-making affect intended learning outcomes" (2006, p. 1). SETT highlights twelve features of teacher talk: "scaffolding, direct repair, content feedback, extended wait-time, referential questions, seeking clarification, teacher echo, teacher interruptions, extended teacher turn, turn completion, display questions and form-focused feedback" (2006, p. 167). For detailed reviews of observation schemes for foreign language teaching, the reader is referred to Allwright (1988), and Allwright and Bailey (1991).

The next phase in deciding the construct was to define aspects for observation with reference to all the research outlined above and on the basis of exploratory analysis of transcripts of lessons. The following focal areas were selected for analysis of *teacher discourse*, which is proposed as one part of the scheme:

- structuring the lesson;
- eliciting;
- presenting new language;
- giving instructions;
- confirmation checking;
- questioning;
- responding;
- echoing;
- interrupting;
- completing a turn;
- scaffolding;
- mediating;
- error correction
- giving feedback;
- motivational strategies.

The selected areas are now described in more detail for clarification. *Structuring the lesson*, based on Creemers and Kyrakiades (2008), here refers to how the teacher explains the purpose, or aim of the lesson and activities, bridges between different activities in the lesson, links the material with previous lessons or topics, or indicates how this material will be relevant in the future. *Scaffolding* follows Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), and refers to ways in which the teacher supports learner understanding of new concepts, while *mediating* is based on the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001, p. 87) and refers to translation or interpretation between languages. *Error correction* refers to focus on form and *giving feedback* refers to evaluative comments. *Eliciting* has been separated from *questioning* and is used with reference to presentation of new language, while *questioning* is used for all other contexts, such as comprehension exercises. *Presenting new language* covers longer turns where the teacher gives explanations of new structures, functions or vocabulary, as distinct from *eliciting*, where the teacher asks a series of questions. Within *motivational strategies*, based on Dörnyei (2001), are codes which refer to the emotional atmosphere of the classroom. In each of the areas more specific codes have been added to create a comprehensive coding system. The observation scheme also covers *learner discourse* and divides the transcript into *lesson episodes*, with a list of codes which characterize the stage of the lesson, or type of activity. Coding is also proposed for which language is used for each category, the L2 or L1.

We suggest that a construct for effective language teaching, seen from the teacher perspective as has been outlined above, can be drawn up with reference to research from the field of general education (from which come scaffolding, questioning, giving feedback, eliciting, responding, giving instructions, and confirmation checking), although some of these areas are also present in Walsh (2006) and second language acquisition (error correction, categories describing lesson episodes, use of L2). The framework offered is, we believe, sufficiently open to allow description of a wide range of teaching styles and behaviors, without being prescriptive.

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Methodological and Ethical Issues in Research Interviewing with a Multicultural Group of University Students: Are There Dos and Don'ts?

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Abstract This paper explores how foreign language teacher–researchers can use semi-structured interviews to successfully solicit student points of view on their own teaching concepts. Basic issues, such as ethics, as well as the methods used to design, conduct, and analyze the interview play a major role. The author will discuss these issues on the basis of her own experiences in conducting semi-structured interviews with multicultural groups of university students on a series of art-integrated German as a foreign language lessons. These interviews were notable as they were conducted in German, a language that was not-native to participants. The cultural background of interviewees also influenced their responses. The author will reflect on the different steps of interviewing, with a special focus on developing questions and analyzing responses through meaning coding, condensing and interpretation. The paper will throw light on how to minimize the effects of language barriers on interview reliability, how to encourage students to express not only positive, but also negative opinions, and how to deal with cultural specificities, such as the Chinese emphasis on extreme politeness. This paper attempts to show that it is possible to construct knowledge through the interaction between teacher and student. By giving advice to teacher–researchers whose goal is to interview students, their own as those of other teachers', the author will demonstrate that interviewing is an art that is worth practicing in foreign language classroom-oriented research.

1 Introduction

Interviews are not only a precious tool with which to gather subjective theories; above all, they are very popular because of their closeness to everyday conversation. "If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?" ask Brinkmann and Kvale (2009, p. xvii) whose recommendations will

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be introduced and discussed in the present paper. Talking is indeed the most natural way of exchanging ideas. There are, however, at least a few things, referred to in the present paper as *dos* and *don'ts*, that need to be paid attention to before, during, and after conducting an interview. Brinkmann and Kvale therefore define interview research as "a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art" (2009, p. 15). Before deciding how to conduct the interview, it is important to pick a topic, defining the *why* and *what*, and, if necessary, to formulate hypotheses (*thematizing*). *Designing*, that is, planning the interview, is a very important stage before conducting it (*interviewing*). Interviewing is followed by transcription from oral speech to written text (*transcribing*), formulating modes of analysis of the transcripts, depending on the purpose and topic (*analyzing*), checking reliability and validity (*verifying*), and, finally, presenting and communicating results in book or journal-article form (*reporting*; Bourdieu, 1993, cited in Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 103). Those seven stages, proposed by the French sociologist Bourdieu (1993), clearly facilitate the construction of knowledge through interviewing. Interview research goes beyond seven clearly defined stages and the present paper raises and attempts to throw new light on key questions and issues.

During my time teaching in the German as a Foreign Language Department of Friedrich Schiller University (FSU) of Jena, Germany, I have become interested in using art in German as a foreign language classes. Originally, my priority was to find a way to motivate young-adult university students who had different cultural backgrounds and learning traditions or habits, and whose only common ground was that they all were studying German in Germany. These students had home universities from all around the world: the US, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, China, and Japan. While trying out innovative concepts combining various mediums, such as painting and literature, or painting and music, I observed my students' reactions and tried to draw didactical and methodical implications from what I had observed. At some point, however, I became aware of the fact that by observing my students during lessons—either by taking notes or by videotaping them—I managed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of those art-integrated teaching methods only to a limited extent. I started to have my students regularly fill in questionnaires in German, which they seemed not to mind doing; however, the more I read my students' responses, the more I felt the need to talk to them, to allow them to clarify and develop their ideas. Thus, I talked to them during class, without recording their voices. The positive experiences that I had with these spontaneous, informal conversations motivated me to do research interviewing, which turned out to be not only more valuable, but also much harder than informal conversations. As soon as I decided to conduct interviews with my students, I was confronted with some hostile reactions from students who did not wish to have their voices recorded; other students felt extremely nervous when put in a formal interviewing situation, causing their language skills to decrease and making them hard to understand. I found that some interview types seemed to present advantages over others, but it was hard to find out which type would work best in a given situation. Another issue was that, after transcribing the interviews, huge deficits suddenly appeared. For example, I felt that some students' responses could have been more detailed if I had asked them

different questions and that my questions had influenced my students' responses. The worst problem was that some students (especially Chinese and Japanese students) did not understand my questions and, not wanting to ask me to repeat the question, preferred to address me with a polite smile and say "yes" to hide their poor language skills. Finally, I found it difficult to systematically present my students' responses using categories I had elaborated before conducting the interviews, as so much new information emerged from the interviews.

A number of questions arose from the issues described above. These questions typically appear within researching interviewing with a multicultural group of foreign language learners and will form the core of the four chapters of the present paper. These questions are: (1) What are the basic issues, such as arguments for and against using research interviewing with a multicultural group of foreign language learners?; (2) How can action researchers make sure to ask appropriate questions?; (3) How can interviewees' responses be successfully analyzed?; and (4) What practical implications can be drawn from the above questions? It is important to bear in mind that the author's goal is not to confirm the utility of a specific methodological convention; rather, the paper attempts to offer some advice to action researchers, finding a middle ground between the spontaneity of a no-method approach to interviewing and the rigid structure of an all-method approach to interviewing.

2 Basic Issues Related to Research Interviewing in the Foreign Language Classroom

Interviews are a non-observational technique for qualitative data collection. In the context of action research, they can, for instance, be one tool used within triangulation methods. Action researchers who choose *between-method triangulation* (a method recommended by Denzin within the main triangulation method developed in 1978) combine qualitative approaches, such as interviews, with quantitative approaches. *Data triangulation* is another popular approach through which different sources are collected at different times and places, with interviews playing a major role (Flick, 2012, pp. 310–314). While interviews traditionally involve groups of teachers and researchers, they can be conducted through a variety of participant combinations, including *teacher to learner(s)*, *researcher to student(s)* (Burns, 1999, p. 118), and *teacher–researcher to student*, whereby teachers interview their own students. Action researchers actively solicit students' points of view regarding their own learning process, as well as the efficiency of teaching methods, especially new ones. From this standpoint, students can be perceived as "co-researchers" (Warneke, 2007, p. 77; translated from German by this writer). Berndt's (2003) and Bjardambyn's (2003) dissertations on successful foreign language learning and on foreign students' social identity, respectively, show that action researchers believe in students' capacity to develop subjective theories on various topics. In this

section, the author will present arguments for and against conducting interviews with foreign language learners. Ethical issues will be discussed and interview types and their potentials will be defined.

2.1 Arguments for and Against

The most obvious advantage of interviewing students is that such interviews reveal precious information that can help teacher–researchers to understand the way that they perceive foreign language learning or specific teaching methods. Students are given the opportunity to express their opinions about various topics and to develop their thoughts, which they may not be able to do as freely and precisely in a questionnaire. By giving enough time and freedom to the students, teacher–researchers can gather information on specific topics, some of which they may not have expected. For instance, a teacher focusing on the failure of a specific teaching concept that involved movie scenes may ask his or her students whether they remained silent because the tasks in that activity were too hard for them; if this teacher used interviewing to elicit student feedback, she or he might find out that the problem was not that the activity was too difficult, but that students were not interested in the topic, or had other personal reasons not to participate. Many factors, especially factors that students may hide, such as not liking their teacher, can influence students' behavior during class in ways that are not visible to the teacher.

A fascinating research field is the way that students believe they learn languages. By using intuition, creativity, and improvisation when interviewing foreign language learners, action researchers may uncover their students' subjective theories about learning. Giving students the opportunity to reflect on their own learning processes is really important, because such reflections may lead them to understand why they were successful or not with a specific task. This information may help students decide to change their learning habits and find better ways to improve their oral or written skills. My experience has been that most students, regardless of their age or cultural background, are not used to reflecting on the efficiency of specific learning and teaching methods. During interviewing, they often become aware of issues they have never thought about before, helping them to develop their own theories of learning. The importance of such subjective theories within foreign language learning and teaching is taken for granted today, even though there are a range of arguments for and against interviewing one's own students (1) in a foreign language (2).

Both characteristics (1) and (2) mentioned above are typical of the interview situation in foreign language classroom-oriented research. They are also the most obvious arguments against doing research interviewing. Interviewing is a means of exchanging ideas orally, predicated on the assumption that both the interviewer and the interviewee have a sufficient knowledge of the language being used in the interview situation. While action researchers may master the mother tongue of the students, which is often the case for teachers teaching a foreign language in their

own country to students from that same country, this is much more difficult when dealing with a multicultural group. The language barrier can definitely be an obstacle to research interviewing with students who have different mother tongues. In my opinion, research interviewing should be conducted in the target language only with students who have at least intermediate ability in that foreign language. If the student is not at least reasonably competent in the target language, the researcher may want to use an interpreter, or make sure that both students and action researchers have a language in common (e.g., English, today's lingua franca). However, my experiences with multicultural groups at FSU have been that although many students, especially those from China and Western European countries, may have learned English as their first foreign language (before learning German as their second foreign language), their English is not sufficiently fluent for interviewing. Naturally, their knowledge of the lingua franca may also have deteriorated during their time in Germany, due to their focus on German.

The second argument against research interviewing relates to the roles of interviewer and interviewee within the interview situation. When a teacher, who usually evaluates his or her students, suddenly sits in front of a student as a researcher and asks that student to reveal his or her inner thoughts, it is reasonable to doubt that that student will tell the truth. For this reason, some teachers will not interview their own students, as they believe that their own students will not dare to criticize their way of teaching. As mentioned above, the way that students perceive their teacher often has an influence on their behavior during class. Students may not be willing to pinpoint the teacher as the reason that they are performing below their actual competence in the foreign language classroom (for further reading on foreign language anxiety, see Dewaele, 2013 or MacIntyre, 2002).

Finally, when interviewing multicultural groups, one must be aware of cultural norms and differences. Having a conversation is not only about communicating verbally; it is also about using facial expressions and gestures to support one's words. These nonverbal codes may differ from one individual to another, depending on both personality and cultural background. I have noticed that Italians, for instance, tend to talk with their hands, Americans smile frequently, and Chinese and Japanese persons tend to be extremely polite and use few hand gestures. Paraverbal features may also differ by culture. Action researchers who interview their own students may underestimate the influence of such cultural specificities, believing they have become familiar with them through their weekly teaching activities with multicultural groups of foreign language learners. The interview situation, however, differs markedly from the classroom situation, in the sense that students have to be relied on and trusted as co-researchers. In the foreign language classroom, students are simply expected to complete assigned tasks in the target language; within the interview they are asked to reflect on their own experiences in the classroom. Their verbal and nonverbal expressions need to be properly understood by the action researcher in order to be properly interpreted. In seeking to construct knowledge through interaction between interviewer and interviewee, some action researchers may panic when, for instance, they find themselves sitting in front of Chinese students whose politeness makes them unwilling to express any negative thoughts

about teaching concepts. The role of ethics within research interviewing will be discussed below.

2.2 *Ethical Issues*

Attending a presentation on the use of the Internet in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, I was skeptical when the teacher–researcher, who had interviewed his own students, proudly pointed out that all of his students' feedback on the activities he had developed and tried out with them was very positive. The teacher—a Polish Native speaker—had conducted his experiments in Polish and English with Polish secondary school students aged 15–16 in a Polish school. I reflected on various factors that could have resulted in this unlikely finding (although I am not familiar with the Polish culture or the Polish educational system). One possibility was that the students, who were probably used to traditional teaching methods, had truly felt only enthusiasm for such innovative teaching concepts; alternatively, they had not dared to complain at all because they felt that this would either be disrespectful towards their teacher or because they were afraid of the effect it could have on their grades. Finally, students of this age may have been too young to have a critical opinion—this last assumption, however, seemed to be a bit unlikely. When I pointed out some disadvantages of this presenter's teaching concepts to him, implying my skepticism regarding his impressive findings, he admitted that his students really liked him and may have therefore preferred to praise the positive aspects of his teaching concept rather than going into the negative ones.

The situation described above highlights the facts that interviews are based on a social relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and that this social relationship inevitably influences the knowledge produced during the interview. The Polish teacher may have been unable to elicit negative thoughts, meaning that his students did not feel free to fully express their opinions. If interviewing is an art, as argued in 1.1., it is the role of the interviewer to be an artist. The first creation of the interviewer should be a safe place where the students feel as little pressure as possible, where they forget that the person interviewing them is also the person giving them grades. In this regard, Brinkmann and Kvale (2009, p. 16) refer to "a stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events recorded for later public use". In my research interviewing with international students at FSU, I have sometimes noticed the interviewees grow nervous; they may have felt like insects under a microscope when I persistently tried to obtain some information, asking various questions related to the same topic. As Sennett (2004, cited by Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 16) points out, "[t]he interviewer all too frequently finds that he or she had offended subjects, transgressing a line over which only friends or intimates can cross. The craft consists in calibrating social distances without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope".

Hermanns (2012, p. 361) uses the English term *fairness-dilemma* when writing in German; he points out the difficulty of gathering as much information as possible by encouraging interviewees to talk about personal things while simultaneously respecting their limits and privacy. One way to accomplish this balance is to explain the goal of the interview research to the student, reassuring them that anything they do not wish to talk about will be avoided on their request. As soon as my students understood the role they played as co-researchers, they felt interested in what they suddenly perceived as an exciting task. They became aware that their teacher needed their help in order to improve the language lessons. Making sure that all students agree to help their teacher is thus an important step before conducting the interview. For example, action researchers should not ask their students: "May I interview you about your experience in class?"; rather, they should start with a question underlining the ultimate goal, such as: "Would you like to help me become a better teacher by telling me about your experience in class?" Once my students were aware of the goal of the interviews, even the most resistant (in my experience, this was, in general, those from China), eventually did not hesitate to talk very freely, sometimes harshly criticizing modern teaching concepts they could not adapt to. This open and honest information was only possible as a result of a respectful and trustful relationship with their teacher–interviewer. However, I also found that the interview type may influence the students' willingness to speak freely; thus, the next section will be dedicated to the different interview types.

2.3 Interview Types and Their Potentials

The present section will cover the importance of the interview situation—especially the type or types of learners to be interviewed—In addition to the interview techniques. In other words, whatever interview types are used, the most important thing to keep in mind is that "[t]he proficient craftsman does not focus on the techniques, but on the task and on the material, the object, he or she works with (…). [The proficient interviewer] thinks less of interviewing techniques than of the interviewee and the knowledge sought" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 87).

A number of interview types are used in qualitative research and it is important to know when to use which one. In order to find out which type is appropriate for which specific purpose, action researchers need to focus on the following questions (Hopf, 2012, pp. 349–350): (1) Do I want to be geared to pre-formulated questions that I will ask my students in a fixed order or do I prefer to exercise less control over the interaction?; (2) Do I want to focus on a single constellation, text, movie, etc., that will be at the center of the interview or do I prefer to go into various topics?; and, finally: (3) Do I expect my students to simply narrate some event–in the most extreme case through a narrative interview–or do I want them to present ideas and defend their point of view–through a discursive interview?

Let us start with the first question (1). Depending on the research issues and the types of learners involved, the action researcher may choose *structured*, *semi-*

structured, or *unstructured interviews*. Because of the fixed order of questions, structured interviews may limit the amount of information the interviewer can gather; semi-structured or unstructured interviews, on the other hand, remove this limitation. Completely unstructured interviews, however, make little sense when the aim is to compare students' responses in a specific area. In such a case, preparing a series of questions to use with each interviewee will facilitate the comparison of students' answers. Interviewers who wish to compare responses may, alternatively, conduct *group interviews*, which enable researchers "to collect more data from a greater number of people on a single occasion" (Burns, 1999, p. 119). According to Burns (1999, p. 199), group interviews have the advantage that "[o]ften the data collected from a group is far richer than collected from individuals as the various members of the group can trigger additional, and more productive, responses from each other". While interviewing my own students with group interviews, I found, however, that many of them waited for the most self-confident students of their groups to express their thoughts, which they simply followed. My Chinese students, who are typically good at expressing opinions as a group, as opposed to as individuals, had difficulty adding new information and expressing different opinions from those already expressed by students from other countries. Some students were too shy to express their thoughts at length in front of other students, and students who had not mastered German as well as their peers were unable to contribute to the dialogue since they could hardly follow the conversation. In contrast, in individual interviews, students felt free to express their true thoughts and feelings; they were not influenced by other students, and they seemed to feel less pressure, with more time to formulate responses despite their language barrier. However, individual interviews are certainly more time-consuming and some students are not comfortable talking alone to their teacher; these students may feel like they are in a test-type situation despite efforts made by the teacher to create an informal, relaxing atmosphere.

The second question mentioned above (2) implies the use of *focused interviews*, which may be chosen to collect precise information on a single topic. The response to the last question (3) is quite obvious: In most cases, teachers want their students to share their ideas on one or several topics, so they use *discursive interviews*, whose main characteristics can be summarized as follows (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, cited by Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 156):

> First, variation in response is as important as consistency. Second, techniques, which allow diversity rather than those which eliminate it are emphasized, resulting in more informal controversial exchanges and third, interviewers are seen as active participants rather than like speaking questionnaires.

To be the active participants, as described above, teacher–researchers need to become familiar with interview questions. The next section first presents various types of interviews questions, including silence, illustrated by concrete examples taken from semi-structured group and individual interviews with German learners at FSU. It then gives further recommendations by focusing, among other things, on the temporal dimensions of research interviewing.

3 Focus on Interview Questions

This section will address some advice related to interview questions. To be able to ask appropriate questions, one must know the different types of interview questions. The most common types of interview questions will be briefly introduced and examples from interviews conducted with German language learners at FSU will be used to better understand the functions of specific interview questions. Selected recommendations based on the author's own experiences will be given to foreign language teacher–researchers, with the goal of helping them to successfully interview their own students in the target language.

3.1 Interview Guides from Three Projects with German as a Foreign Language Learners at Friedrich Schiller University of Jena

Before becoming familiar with the modes of questioning, the action researcher who intends to interview foreign language learners in the target language may develop two interview guides, "one with the project's thematic research questions and the other with interview questions to be posed" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 132); these two interview guides are respectively referred to as *researcher questions* and *interviewer questions*. Table 1 contains excerpts from researcher guides and interviewer guides used from three interview research projects, referred to as Projects A, B, and C, dealing with three teaching concepts with German learners at FSU. Project A took place in my German literature class during Summer Semester 2011. During this project, intermediate German students were tasked with interpreting contemporary German paintings by Matthias Weischer (of the New Leipzig School) while listening to instrumental music; they were then asked to invent a fairy tale incorporating these paintings and music. Printed copies of Weischer's paintings were stuck on big, colorful sheets of paper that were used as posters, on which the various stages of the invented fairy tales were drawn by the students. In the final stage, each group of students presented their poster fairy tale to the class in German (see Martinez, 2013a). For Project B, advanced German students (Summer Semester 2012) had to interpret a piece of contemporary German literature by making a video. The motif featured in both the literature and the video was *the unknown garden*, which the students had to interpret; students also had to explain the use of time, space and gesture in their video. This project was part of their German literature class (Martinez, 2013b). Project C, which was also conducted during Summer Semester 2012, comprised a series of intermediate German as a foreign language classes incorporating contemporary paintings, instrumental music and soundscapes. The students completed various oral and written tasks, using functional vocabulary such as those used in the expression of emotions.

Table 1 Two interview guides

Researcher questions	Interviewer questions
Project A: Which factors (individual, cultural, language-related, etc.) influenced the motivation of the students to make fairy tale posters with the help of paintings and music?	Are you familiar with fairy tales in your own language and culture? Do you like fairy tales? Did you enjoy looking at the paintings? Did you enjoy listening to the music? Did you find the paintings and the music useful in writing the fairy tale? Do you think your German was good enough to work with other students and to write the fairy tale with them? Did you feel comfortable writing the fairy tale in German? Do you like drawing? Did you enjoy working in your group?
Project B: What are the potentials and limits in the making of a video within a German literature class?	Did making your video help you understand the piece of literature? What do you find good about your video? What could you have done better? Do you think you learned something about the motif of the unknown garden by reading the literature work? By making the video?
Project C: Does the combination of auditory mediums (soundscapes and instrumental music) with visual mediums (paintings) facilitate the verbalization in German of the messages expressed by the paintings?	Did you enjoy listening to music while looking at the paintings? What did you find nice or unpleasant about it? Was it easy for you to interpret the paintings both with and without the music and soundscapes? Would you like to work with paintings and music or soundscapes in German as a Foreign Language class again? What do you think you learned during the lessons?

The guides appearing in Table 1 illustrate the two kinds of questions in Projects A, B, and C. There are clear differences in the language used in each guide. The first was formulated using theoretical language, and the second, which contains the questions asked to the students, was expressed using only the everyday language of the interviewees, in consideration of their foreign language skills. These questions were originally formulated in German and were freely translated into English by the author of this paper (see further examples below). The questions on the right-hand side are short and simple, matching the skill level of the students. Even when interviewing in interviewees' mother tongue, the questions should be as simple as possible, so as not to confuse the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 134). The questions in Table 1 vary from very closed to very open. Some of them explicitly refer to the research theme mentioned on the left-hand side, while others are more general. Below, an overview of ten types of interview questions is intended to help researchers to pick the correct questions for their intended purpose.

3.2 Types of Interview Questions

A broad range of questioning modes can be useful when conducting an interview (for more detailed information, see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, pp. 135–136). In this section, this range of modes is illustrated with issues related to Projects A, B, and C presented above.

Introductory questions, such as "Can you tell me about the making of the fairy tale poster last week?", aim to encourage students to talk spontaneously about their experience in the classroom. Students may provide rich descriptions regarding, for example, how they made the fairy tales, as well as the different steps they went through. With *follow-up questions*, "the subjects' answers may be extended through the curious, persistent, and critical attitude of the interviewer" (2009, p. 135), for example with a nod, an "mmm," or a pause. When a student explains that "I was a bit afraid of making a video to interpret a piece of literature," the interviewer may ask: "Why?", "Was it your first video?", "Do you think you were successful eventually?", or "Did you eventually enjoy making it?". Such follow-up questions could also represent the mode of questioning referred to as *probing questions*, through which the interviewer probes students' responses without explicitly specifying which dimensions he or she is interested in. *Specifying questions* encourage students to specify their answers, especially when their statement is vague, such as "Oh yes, I think working with paintings and music in German classroom is great". The interviewer may ask: "What did you enjoy the most?" or "Did the music help you interpret the painting?" This last question could also be referred to as a *direct question*, which can be used to avoid wasting time with broad, unfocused descriptions. In contrast, *indirect questions* may be used when a topic should not be explicitly mentioned; this can be crucial when exploring, for example, deficits in specific learning traditions. The question: "Did you often have oral presentations in German class—such as the one about the fairy tale—before you came to Germany?" enables the teacher to learn more about the students' learning traditions without risking offending them. The student's spontaneous response to this question —"Oh no, we never talked. I mean, in German classes in my home country, we only do grammar; we write and read but we never speak in German. I have learned to speak since I have been here in Germany"—is a clear statement that may be rephrased or interpreted by the teacher with *interpreting questions*, such as "So you mean the way you learn foreign languages in Italy is a bit different from the way we do it in Germany, right?"

When many students are individually interviewed, it may be difficult for the teacher to cover all of the topics related to the research question with each student. Here, *structuring questions* can help interviewers not to forget specific topics, as well as not to waste time on a topic after the student has already exhausted what he or she has to say about it. If an interviewer notices that students are repeating the same theme or idea, it may be necessary to politely interrupt them with words, such as "Great, you have told me a lot, thanks. Now I would like us to talk about what you found particularly exciting about making the video".

The eight modes of questioning discussed so far all involve verbal answers. The last one recommended by Brinkmann and Kvale (2009) is, however, simply *silence*: "Rather than making the interview a cross-examination by continually firing off questions, the research interviewer can take a lead from therapists in employing silence to further the interview" (2009, p. 136). Silence is particularly efficient when the language used by the interviewees is not their mother tongue. I found that my students often needed more time than I had expected to fully express their thoughts in German. This experience leads me to propose one additional type of question, which is not mentioned in the nine questions introduced by Kvale and Brinkmann, but that I would like to recommend as a foreign language teacher and interviewer. I will refer to this type as *confirm questions*. Especially when conducting interviews in a foreign language, teachers should not hesitate to make sure that their students have understood the questions. In spite of the efforts interviewers may make in preparing questions they think would be appropriate, they may need to reformulate them or, if possible, translate one word or the full sentence into the lingua franca or into students' mother tongues. They may also allow their students to use a bilingual dictionary during the interview in order to reduce misunderstandings due to the language barrier. In any case, it is important to confirm whether the student truly has understood the question or not. Cultural differences or individual characteristics such as shyness and fear may lead some students to simply politely nod, whether they have understood the question or not. Sometimes the interviewer finds out only after asking some follow-up and specifying questions that the student has actually misunderstood the original query. To prevent this miscommunication, interviewers can urge students to ask their teacher-interviewers to repeat any unclear questions, or can ask them if they have understood the question. Further recommendations for conducting an interview with foreign language learners from different countries will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 Further Recommendations for Conducting an Interview

First of all, it is important to note that "[t]he interviewer's ability to sense the immediate meaning of an answer, and the horizon of possible meanings that it opens up, is decisive" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 134). The action researchers' familiarity with question types is worthless if their knowledge of and interest in the research theme or the human interaction component of the interview are missing. Another key issue is the ability of the interviewer to listen attentively and to ask further questions. Action researchers may come up with a series of questions of each type mentioned above before conducting the interview in order to be well prepared; they will, however, never be able to fully anticipate their students' responses. Second questions are very useful once the expert interviewer is immersed in the concrete situation. Brinkmann and Kvale (2009, pp. 138–139) point out the importance of mastering the art of second questions, with the interviewer being "sensitive and attentive to the situational cues that will allow him or

her to go on with the interview in a fruitful way that will help answer the research question, instead of focusing all attention on the interview guide, on methodological rules of interviewing, or on what question to pose next". Attentive and sensitive behavior towards the interviewee will also help interviewers to save time. The interviewer should never forget the specific goals of the interview research; things that can be done during early stages should not be kept until the end. In addition to *confirm questions*, which were introduced in the section above as a way to make sure students understand the questions posed, *control questions* can help the interviewer to clarify the meanings of some statements. There is a real danger that interviewers notice only after transcribing an interview that some of their students' statements are confusing, being insightful during an interview will make the eventual analysis easier and more representative of the students' actual responses. In the same way, reflecting on the appropriate way to analyze responses is necessary before conducting the interview. The next section will go into the different types of analysis focusing on meaning (as opposed to those focusing on language), along with their advantages and drawbacks.

4 Analyzing Responses Through Meaning Coding, Condensing, and Interpretation

Analyzing students' responses, with a focus on meaning, will be at the center of this section, in which three types of analyzing—*meaning coding*, *condensing*, and *interpretation*—will be presented with the help of concrete examples taken from this aforementioned interviews.

4.1 Meaning Coding

In *The Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*, first published in 1967 in Chicago, Glaser and Strauss explain how to build theory from data. *Grounded theory* aims at developing theory inductively, rather than testing existing theory. Coding is a successful way of applying the grounded theory approach to qualitative research. "Concretely, working with grounded theory implies a thorough coding of the material, (…) codes are immediate, are short, and define the action or experience described by the interviewee" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 202).

There are two approaches used to obtain theory: the *concept-driven approach*, in which codes are developed in advance by the researcher, and the *data-driven approach*, in which the researcher develops the codes while reading the interview transcripts. In my own interview research, I like to use both approaches, by first defining codes and then adding new ones, based on unexpected, relevant statements

made by my students. Coding can take the form of categorization: defining categories before conducting the interviewing, as well as afterwards, as needed, while analyzing the transcripts. This allows the researcher to catch the meaning of long interview statements, facilitate comparisons and test hypotheses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 203). In the case of fixed, well-defined categories, the occurrence or non-occurrence of a given phenomenon, such as "The student has experienced reading fairy tales in his or her mother tongue" can be expressed by a single "+" or "−" symbol. If the researcher wanted to get more precise information about the student's experience with fairy tales—for instance, when last time was that he or she read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue—a single number on a scale could be used as follows: 5 = *the student read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue within the last two months*, 4 = *the student read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue within the last 6 months*, 3 = *the student read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue one year ago*, 2 = *the student read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue two years ago*, 1 = *the student read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue for the last time as a child*, and 0 = *the student never read a fairy tale in his or her mother tongue*. Numbers are often used to define the strength of an opinion in discursive interviews. For instance, for the category "Student believes music can help interpret painting" (in relation to Project C mentioned in the second chapter), responses could be given as 3 = "Music always helps a lot", 2 = "Music always helps a little", 1 = "Music sometimes helps, but not always", and 0 = "Music never helps" (all examples appearing in Sects. 4.1 and 4.2 were translated from the original German into English). It is up to the researcher to define the categories in the way that is most appropriate for the research purpose and topic.

4.2 Meaning Condensing

As the word 'condensing' implies, *meaning condensing* refers to the process through which a long statement is made shorter, with the main meaning conveyed in a few words. A frequent approach to condensing is based on a phenomenological method originally used in psychology (Giorgi et al., 1975, cited by Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 205). Especially when interview manuscripts are long, condensing can be very useful to get an overview of each transcript and to compare transcripts with each other. The following example taken from Project C shows how one or more central themes arise from a natural unit: "In Italy the groups are big, I mean at my home university it's not like here, we are, hmm, there are many, many students, they sit there and take notes, maybe 50 students. I mean it's obvious that we cannot use such methods with creativity, paintings and stuff; we read texts instead. We don't, well I know it's weird for you but we actually don't speak German. I prefer your classes, here I can talk!" (natural unit). This long unit is shortened, in this case, to: *student's learning habits differ from the ones in Germany; prefers communicative teaching methods and learning in small groups; gets to talk.* Finally, condensing can also be used before coding. Personally, I do not favor the choice of

a single method for analyzing responses. I found that combining two or three methods can be an efficient way to construct valuable knowledge. However, some researchers may find it too confusing and thus prefer to rely on a single method.

4.3 Meaning Interpretation

Meaning interpretation can be difficult to differentiate from meaning condensing. Condensing is about interpreting, and interpreting is clearly subjective. One of the standard objections to qualitative research interviewing is that "[d]ifferent interpreters find different meanings in the same interview, the interview is thus not a scientific method" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 211). When talking to other EFL teachers with many years of experience in research interviewing, one of them revealed a disturbing finding. She told me that reading her old interview transcripts or listening to her old interview recordings is always strange and uncomfortable because she comes to different conclusions than she had in years past, casting doubt on the reliability of her own interview analysis and making her feel guilty that she had not accurately analyzed her interview responses. This anecdote clearly illustrates the role played by subjectivity when "the interpreter goes beyond what is directly said to work out structures and relations of meanings not immediately apparent in a text" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 207). The issue of multiple interpretations, which characterizes the hermeneutical interpretation of meaning, is clearly a disadvantage; however, interpretation remains necessary in order not to miss important information, and thus maybe it is not worth discussing it in the present paper.

5 Concluding Remarks

This section reflects on the statement that "research interviewing can be an exciting way of doing strong and valuable research" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 15) in the field of foreign language classroom-oriented learning and teaching research. Action researchers who ask themselves, even before thematizing the interview, "What am I, as a teacher–researcher, interested in knowing about?", may realize that, even though there are many interesting topics, setting limits while adopting a pragmatic approach is one of the keys to the art of research interviewing. One must not only master interviewing techniques, but one must also learn how to interact with foreign language learner interviewees. My experience interviewing multicultural groups of students showed that interviewees may not master the interview language at a native speaker level, may be anxious about talking in a non-native language, and may have cultural backgrounds which make truthful interviewing more difficult.

Research interviewing is an art that needs to be learned step by step. While "[t]he answer is the tragedy of the question" (Blanchot, 1969, cited by Komorowska in her talk at the conference on classroom-oriented research on October 16th, 2013 in Konin, Poland) the issues discussed in the present paper showed that the *appropriate* question is the *success* of the answer. For instance, when a student gives you a vague answer such as "this class was fun", it is appropriate to use a *specifying* question such as "What did you like during this class?". As the German saying goes, "Übung macht den Meister", or, in English, "Practice makes perfect". While there is no perfect interviewer, there can, at least, be a perfect interview situation. This would be a social interaction between a teacher and a student, in which the latter forgets that he or she is sitting in front of his or her teacher, and feels free to talk in the foreign language about the foreign language class. Both parties are respectful towards one another, and the interview is fun. After the interview is over and the transcripts have been analyzed, the teacher–researcher feels that a great deal of knowledge has been constructed that will contribute to the improvement of foreign language lessons. The action researcher then draws the conclusion that "research interviewing can be an exciting way of doing strong and valuable research" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 15). Thanks to the help of foreign language students, a small piece has been added to the huge foreign language classroom-oriented research puzzle.

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Part II
Empirical Investigations

Future Teachers' Beliefs About Language Learning. A Study on Selected Subjective Theories

Anna Michońska-Stadnik

Abstract This paper focuses on students—future teachers of English. It is believed that their motivation to learn how to teach can also be influenced by subjective theories. The survey study, which aimed at collecting quantitative data, concentrated on a group of 114 student-teachers, from two different training institutions, at different stages of their education. Most of the trainees were women, and it might be interesting to point out that they came from very different communities: villages, little towns, medium towns and cities. The participants were asked to give their opinions on specific variables of the foreign language learning process, such as the role of age and gender, intelligence, learner autonomy, and the learning context. Some questions also referred to the importance of specific skills and subsystems in language education. Many subjective beliefs and theories were revealed, some of which might strongly influence students' professional development, regardless of their training stage. Afterwards, another group of graduate students took part in an open interview, where they were asked to state what specific personal opinions had been modified in the course of their professional training. Interesting data were collected and categorized, which constituted the qualitative part of the research. I believe that novice teachers, regardless of their training, resort to their safe subjective theories whenever a crisis occurs in the lesson and when an immediate reaction is required. My opinion is that teacher education programs should make use of students' subjective theories as points of departure for discussion and reflection on their attitudes to the teaching and learning process.

The research described in this paper is a part of a larger study published in Polish (Michońska-Stadnik, 2013).

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1 Introduction

Subjective theories of individuals taking part in the language learning and teaching process result from their beliefs and opinions, frequently inherited from their parents, teachers, peers, that is from significant others. Teacher trainees are not an exception here. What is significant, however, is the fact that their beliefs may have a considerable influence on the opinions of their future learners in different types of schools. Therefore, as many student-teachers may not realize that they possess subjective theories, the primary task of teacher-trainers is to make these theories explicit. They may become useful as a starting point for reflection in the training process.

2 The Notion of Subjective Theories in Language Attainment—A Summary of Research Findings

Subjective (or personal) theories of teacher trainees have been studied for some time now, especially in the 1980s (Komorowska, 2011), and their role in students' professional development has been emphasized by numerous researchers. Komorowska (2011) claims that even in the course of training personal theories are hardly subject to changes or modifications. They are often deeply rooted stereotypes about language learning and teaching and about the role of the teacher in these processes. When an unexpected situation occurs, and such are frequent in the classroom environment, inexperienced, but also quite a number of experienced teachers, resort to safe routines and stereotype behaviors in order to feel more secure when facing a group of learners. Subjective and scientific theories have been contrasted in a study by Wolski (2000). The findings are presented in Table 1.

Studies on subjective theories were developed due to change of focus in SLA research methodology from quantitative to qualitative. The data collection techniques appropriate for qualitative research allowed the use of observation, interview

Table 1 Comparison of scientific and subjective theories (based on Wolski, 2000)

Scientific theories	Subjective theories
Are based on scientific knowledge	Are based on generally accepted knowledge
Provoke reflection	Lack reflection, associated with beliefs
Are created for a research purpose	Are natural
Are not spontaneous	Are spontaneous
Use original ideas or experiences	Use stereotype ideas and experiences
They aim at better understanding of reality	They accept stereotype understanding of reality
Describe cause-effect relationships	Are not conscious of cause-effect relationships
Are logical and coherent	Are general and uncertain
Are not identified with values	Are frequently emotionally charged

or introspection. In general, investigating students' opinions was more conveniently done with the use of qualitative than with the use of quantitative research tools. The research reported in this paper made use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques; statistical measurements, however, were rather limited, as there was no need for counting correlations or comparing means with the use of *t*-tests.

Subjective theories, even though themselves are considered to be unscientific, have provoked a substantial number of research studies all over the world. One of the most essential contributions in this area was made by Farrell (2007, p. 31), who maintains that subjective theories have a significant impact on perceiving the nature of learning and teaching processes. What is more, they directly affect the teaching procedures. Consequently, the actions undertaken in teacher training and development may lead to students' awareness of the differences between theoretical knowledge, personal knowledge and their actual teaching practice. Farrell (2007) claims as well that developing awareness of the sources of subjective theories is essential for self-reflection, especially at the first stages of teacher training. In another study, Yost, Sentner and Forlenza-Bailey (2000) emphasize the necessity of adjusting subjective theories to the context of teaching and learning. The authors believe that many personal theories trainee teachers bring to the training courses must be adjusted to classroom reality or changed completely. They emphasize the positive role of action research in self-reflection. Crandall (2000), in turn, highlights the fact that also subjective theories of teacher trainers have a significant impact on students-teachers' attitudes and opinions. What is more, they will be frequently reflected in teacher training course syllabuses.

Stuart and Thurlow (2000) argue that teacher trainees encounter numerous problems during their teaching practice and thus they resort to safe stereotype models of classroom interaction, usually forgetting about solutions suggested during the teacher training courses. The authors also point out that some elements of personal theories are especially resistant to change, such as, for example, excessive concentration on classroom discipline, the belief that the predominant role of the teacher is to transmit knowledge, or the belief that introducing many songs and games in the lesson will always result in increasing students' motivation. The authors suggest that in order to face the challenge of classroom encounters more effectively, future teachers should become more active in the process of reshaping their behavioral patterns. Concentrating exclusively on teaching techniques without analyzing their usefulness in a given context will not result in a deeper understanding of specific learning needs in a given group of students.

Last but not least, Busch (2010) presents her own research on the influence of theoretical content of the training course on modification of students' beliefs about language learning. In fact, many research reports claim that such influence is minimal. Busch therefore argues that reflection on individual subjective theories is necessary in early training as otherwise they may still dominate trainees' classroom practice. Busch (2010) carried out her research on a fairly big sample of student-teachers (N = 381) being trained to teach English as a second or foreign language. She made use of the well-known BALLI questionnaire (Horwitz, 1988) in order to investigate which students' beliefs changed under the influence of the

theoretical course devoted to language acquisition theories. The questionnaire was administered to students at the beginning of the course and then after the course was finished. The scores each opinion was given on both occasions were then compared with a *t*-test in order to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the mean values. Apart from that, the researcher collected students' written comments on the reasons for and character of the changes in their beliefs and opinions. The research revealed significant modifications in sixteen opinions. After being familiarized with various theoretical findings about the language acquisition and learning process, the student teachers reported that, among others, they became more tolerant of learners errors and more tolerant of different non-native accents. They also accepted the fact that high intelligence quotient is not really a determining factor in successful language attainment. They also agreed that women are not necessarily better language learners than men. Finally, the importance of learning grammatical rules was discarded in favor of the ability to communicate efficiently in the target language. Other opinions, however, remained unchanged. Still more recent research reports blame teacher factors, their subjective theories among others, for hindering innovative approaches to language education (Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012). It has also been observed that teachers must first of all understand where their theories come from. It seems that they mostly result from their whole life-experience (Ingvarsdóttir, 2014).

The research described in this article has to some extent been stimulated by Busch's (2010) findings. Its aim was: (1) to find current subjective theories of student-teachers in order to plan reflection on them in the course of teacher development program, and (2) to find out which subjective theories, in students' opinion, were modified as a result of training.

3 Future Teachers' Beliefs on Selected Aspects of L2 Attainment—A Survey Study

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What subjective theories do student-teachers hold at the initial stages of their training?
2. Is it possible to observe any differences in the popularity of selected subjective theories resulting from the environment or classroom experience?
3. Is it possible to observe any substantial changes in students' subjective theories at the beginning of the second stage of their teacher training?

3.1 Group Description and Research Procedure

The research described below focuses on a group of 114 student-teachers of English as a foreign language. They were trained in two different Polish institutions: University of Wrocław (60 students) and Karkonosze State School in Jelenia Góra (54 students). The latter institution offers only a BA degree whereas the university group consisted of 30 undergraduates and 30 graduate (MA) students. Consequently, the group of undergraduate university students was labeled Group One (G1 = 30), graduate students Group Two (G2 = 30), and state school students—all undergraduates—as Group Three (G3 = 54). The research was carried out in spring 2009.

Both institutions offer a similar program for training language teachers. It starts with a theoretical course in language acquisition theories, which is followed by ELT methodology in the form of lectures and tutorials. There is also obligatory pre-service teaching practice which lasts 120 h and comprises both lesson observation and individual lessons run by student-teachers under the mentor-teacher's guidance. The undergraduate students have their block teaching practice in primary schools and graduate students in middle or secondary schools. Full teaching qualifications are obtained after completing the MA course requirements so the state school students, if they are interested in obtaining such qualifications, must continue their education at the university to get the graduate degree. Otherwise, they will be allowed to teach English in primary schools only. No wonder then that the MA university courses, especially the extramural ones, frequently referred to as weekend studies, are extremely popular among the state school graduates.

The questionnaire distributed among all students was based on the well-known BALLI inventory (Horwitz, 1988). Thirteen statements altogether, ten from the BALLI questionnaire, were of particular interest to me as they could potentially lead to establishing a set of students' subjective theories. These, in turn, were to become a starting point for the training course *I* was about to teach at each institution, including the graduate program at the university. The thirteen statements were as follows:

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.
2. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.
3. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
4. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.
5. It is the teacher who is responsible for my success (or lack of it) at learning English.
6. I am responsible for my success (or lack of it) at learning English.
7. It is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation.
8. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.
9. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.
10. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.
11. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.

12. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.
13. After completing my education, I will still work on improving my English.

Statements 5, 6 and 13, which have been added to the BALLI questionnaire, were taken from another survey (Michońska-Stadnik, 2000). The reason for the addition was the researcher's interest in the students' opinions on learner autonomy. All statements were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2 Research Findings and Discussion

For clarity, the means scores for each statement will be first presented in Table 2 and then discussed. For statements that reached the mean values higher than 4.00 the bold print has been used. As can be observed from the table, the highest means were obtained in statements 1, 2, and 13. All the groups believed that

- it is easier for children than for adults to learn a foreign language;
- it is best to learn English in an English-speaking country;
- they will continue to improve their English language after graduation.

The students in G3 (state school undergraduate students) strongly believed that learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects. The students in the other groups did not share that strong belief, although statement 10 achieved quite high averages in all the three groups.

Statement 1 is a stereotypical opinion about the impact of age on foreign language learning. As we can observe, even the group of graduate students, who were qualified primary school teachers, still strongly believed that children are better

Table 2 Average values of 13 questionnaire statements in three groups of student-teachers

Statement no	G1	G2	G3	All groups
1	**4.27**	**4.29**	**4.33**	**4.30**
2	**4.27**	**4.02**	**4.23**	**4.17**
3	2.47	2.84	2.29	2.53
4	3.43	3.21	3.14	3.26
5	2.13	2.13	2.35	2.20
6	3.97	3.93	3.52	3.81
7	2.73	3.56	3.19	3.16
8	2.87	3.13	3.53	3.18
9	2.33	1.97	2.51	2.27
10	3.73	3.89	**4.08**	3.90
11	2.4	1.55	2.11	2.02
12	3.13	2.86	3.53	3.17
13	**4.2**	**4.67**	**4.2**	**4.36**

language learners than any other age group. It can be argued that the origins of this stereotype can be connected with the fact that many people, including language teachers, associate language attainment with success in imitating its pronunciation. Undoubtedly, children can imitate better for reasons not necessarily connected with cognitive development. It is believed (e.g., Wieszczeczyńska, 2000; Uylings, 2006) that older learners start to experience difficulties with imitating foreign sounds due to the growing stiffness of their face muscles. On the other hand, research shows that well-motivated grown-up learners can imitate foreign sounds with equal perfection, provided that they have frequent contact with the target language (cf. Bongaerts, 1999; Ioup, Boustangui, Tigi, & Moselle, 1994; Jedynak, 2009).

The process of language attainment cannot be connected only with acquiring its pronunciation. Learning lexical items and language grammar has to be taken into consideration as well, especially in formal learning contexts. Research confirms (cf. Ottó & Nikolov, 2009; Patkowski, 1980; Sokolik, 1990) that older students learn the target language faster (i.e., they can use it for communication purposes) at the initial stages, and they slow down at later stages of development. At the initial stages, older students benefit much from their explicit learning abilities and the use of learning strategies, including memory strategies for vocabulary attainment. As the amount of material to be mastered grows, the process of language learning in adults slows down because their explicit learning abilities cannot quickly manipulate so much new information (Ottó & Nikolov, 2009). It could be argued then that taking into account evidence from different research results, it is impossible to definitely state that children are better language learners than adults. What is more, the growing interest in adult foreign language instruction all over the world seems to contradict the stereotypical opinion about children's dominance over older learners. When strongly motivated, older learners can process foreign language as efficiently as children, provided they get sufficiently frequent contact with the language and enough practice.

Statement 2 is another stereotype belief about the beneficial effects of so-called naturalistic language attainment. It is argued that formal instruction brings best results when supported by contact with the target language in its natural environment, that is in situations where this language is used as the native one. This opinion implies that there is little point in formal instruction in foreign language learning contexts, as no matter how hard learners try, the effects will be meagre and disappointing. Such a belief seems to depreciate the efforts of all foreign language teachers and calls into question the whole idea of formal instruction. Ryan and Mercer (2011, pp. 160–162) claim that such a conviction may result in students' unwillingness to take part in classroom activities. They may wait for the opportunity to go abroad where they would miraculously start to use the language without much effort. Learner autonomy and responsibility for their success in classroom learning may disappear completely. This conviction about the dominance of naturalistic learning setting over formal setting, shared by all groups of student-teachers, regardless of their experience, seems to be a good starting point for reflection in a teacher training course.

It is optimistic that student-teachers quite strongly agree with the statement about the necessity to improve their English after graduation. This at least shows their willingness to experience autonomous language education. On the other hand, however, statement 6 did not gain very high mean values. It seems then that students only to some extent (M = 3.81) agreed with the statement concerning their individual responsibility for success in language learning. The lowest mean appeared in the group of state school students, and the highest in the group of undergraduate university students. As the research did not aim at confirming the statistical significance of the differences between the means in the three groups, a *t*-test was not computed. It is interesting to observe that statement 5 referring to teacher responsibility for learners' success or failure gained one of the lowest mean values among all the statements. It clearly shows that students did not really believe in the teacher's exclusive responsibility for the results of the learning process.

The mean result in statement 3 shows clearly that students did not believe in the superiority of women over men in language processing. Interestingly, about 85 % of students were women, as it usually happens in English departments, especially in sections dedicated to teacher training. Apparently, that stereotypical opinion was no longer valid in the group of contemporary teacher trainees. It could be argued on the basis of neurological research findings that there appear essential differences between male and female individuals in their brain structure and information processing (cf. Piasecka, 2009; Rumianowska, 2011). There is better cooperation between brain parts in female learners and therefore they make effective use of both declarative and procedural knowledge in language attainment. Male brains are more specialized and thus they learn foreign languages in a different way, making use of explicit and implicit knowledge separately. It does not mean, however, that they are worse language learners, only different.

As regards the issue of teacher attention in the classroom, boys generally receive more of it than girls and thus get more opportunities to use the target language. Boys frequently lose motivation, misbehave, and ask more questions referring to vocabulary or grammar. Girls are frequently ignored because they are supposed to be better language learners and will manage anyway, even without the teacher's attention and help (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2011). It may appear, then, that after initial dominance, girls' command of a foreign language will gradually deteriorate because they have fewer contact opportunities. Perhaps in naturalistic settings girls or women, as they are more sociable, will indeed have better chances to develop their communication abilities faster than boys or men. On the whole, as Kubota (2011, p. 266) claims, there is too much fascination with the role of gender differences in language learning. The real differences lie elsewhere, for example in the degree of motivation, the type of discourse required from learners, or in individual willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Thus, it seems quite optimistic that the student-teachers from all the groups did not accept as true the stereotype opinion about women's superiority over men in foreign language attainment.

Statement 4 concerned the role of intelligence in language attainment and it expressed the opinion that people who spoke more than one language were very intelligent. The mean value in all the groups was close to the average (3.26); still it

was considerably higher than in the case of statement three about gender differences (2.53). It seems then that student-teachers were not quite certain whether intelligence is important in language learning or not. In order to offer a few comments on this statement, the neutral phrase *language attainment* should be replaced by the two marked terms, that is *language acquisition* and *language learning*. It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a detailed summary of research on human intelligence. It is enough to refer to studies conducted by Cummins (1983), who offered a distinction between *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP). The former comprise skills which are needed to develop language fluency and social appropriateness, which can be associated with acquisition. The latter refers to the knowledge of language forms and general language learning abilities necessary in formal settings. Thus, intelligence, as measured by traditional IQ psychometric tests, may correlate well with CALP but not with BICS. This assumption was confirmed, for instance, by Genesee (1976) who proved that the results of IQ tests correlated highly with reading comprehension abilities in French, with grammar and vocabulary knowledge, but not with oral production skills. Contemporary research on intelligence and its complexity contributed extensively to understanding language learning processes and their conditions. Still, there is no conclusive evidence as to the degree of influence of intelligence on language learning and acquisition. It seems advisable then to present this issue to student-teachers in order to prevent the formation of stereotype subjective theories on the connection between intelligence and language attainment.

Last but not least, statements 7, 9, 11 and 12 referred to the importance of language skills and subsystems in foreign language classroom learning. Surprisingly, none of the skills and subsystems mentioned in the questionnaire obtained a high average value. Speaking English with excellent pronunciation was considered fairly essential for the group of graduate university students, who were qualified primary school teachers. Presumably, they already understood the role of good pronunciation in teaching English to young learners. The other skills and abilities seemed to be ignored, with the role of translation having the lowest mean of all the thirteen statements (2.02). It remains to be seen what skill or ability students may consider to be essential in language learning; probably the ability to communicate in a foreign language which has not been mentioned in the questionnaire at all. Interestingly, correction of errors (statement 8) was not believed to be of special importance either (3.18). In consequence, the balanced position of skills and abilities in foreign language learning must be explained to student-teachers during their training course.

The aim of this part of the study was to identify the existence or non-existence of student teachers' subjective theories on language learning, which then became the topic of reflection during their professional training course. Unfortunately, the impact of instruction on students' subjective theories has not been studied in this particular group for various administrative reasons. It was, however, investigated in another group of graduate students three years later. This part of research was based on a written questionnaire carried out in a group of 41 graduate university students enrolled in an extramural course at the Department of English Studies, University of Wrocław, Poland. All of them were in-service English teachers at the primary level

and attended a graduate MA program in order to get full teaching qualifications for secondary schools and adult groups. Most students worked full time, usually outside the city. They had completed their undergraduate training in different institutions all over the country, in universities or in state and private professional training schools. Some of them were BA graduates from University of Wrocław and Karkonosze State School in Jelenia Góra. The questionnaire was distributed to students in March 2012. Only one question was asked, which was as follows: *Which of your personal beliefs about language learning and teaching you considered to be true before starting your teacher training course were modified during professional development?* Students were not given lists of opinions prior to answering the question. The opinions were formulated by students themselves and each of them was allowed to enumerate more than one opinion. The collected data are presented in Table 3. It should be noted that if an opinion was not described as "no longer true", it automatically meant that a student still held it true. In the table, the students' opinions are ranked according to the degree of modification; the first opinion had the highest percentage of "no longer true" comments while the last the lowest.

As can easily be observed, the results of the written interview look quite disappointing for the teacher-trainer. The most serious modification can be observed in students' approach to error correction. It seems that at the beginning of their

Table 3 Percentages of students who hold specific opinions after an undergraduate training course

No	Opinion	No longer true (%)	Still true (%)
1	Immediate correction is necessary	83	17
2	Grammar is most important in language learning	79	21
3	Discipline and silence are necessary	75	25
4	Teacher is an authority in foreign language and culture	75	25
5	Teacher decides about materials and coursebooks	73	27
6	Adult learners have no chance to learn a foreign language	70	30
7	Coursebook is the most essential material in language teaching	69	31
8	Translation is essential; students must understand everything	68	32
9	Students should remember everything from the lesson	68	32
10	Students should be tested frequently to remember better	66	34
11	Homework should be given after each lesson	65	35
12	Pair work and group work should be limited as they cause discipline problems	64	36
13	Student must understand every word in the text to read with comprehension	61	39
14	Women are better language learners because they are more talkative	60	40

undergraduate training course the students believed that immediate correction is necessary, regardless of the type of activity. In the middle of their graduate course, only 17 % still held this opinion true. On the other hand, as much as 25 % of the participants still believed that discipline and silence in a language lesson are necessary, which coincides with statement 12 concerning pair-work and group-work activities. As much as 36 % of novice primary school teachers claimed that these activities should be limited because they cause discipline problems. This may result from the difficulties these teachers experience in teaching primary learners. Even more disappointing is the fact that about one third of the graduate students still believed that adult learners have no chance to learn a foreign language well, even though they all attended a program preparing them for teaching older learners and adult groups.

On the other hand, it was quite encouraging to observe that two opinions involving learner autonomy appeared on students' list of modified beliefs. Statements 4 and 5 concerned the teacher's authority and choice of teaching materials. About two thirds of graduate students agreed that the teacher is not the only authority when it comes to understanding foreign language and culture, and that course participants can influence the teacher's decisions about the choice of teaching materials and coursebooks. More than one third of graduate student-teachers still held stereotype opinions about memorizing all language material covered in a lesson, about the necessity of frequent testing and giving homework, and about the idea of reading comprehension, identified as the ability to understand every single word in the text. Finally, about 40 % of students, mostly women, still agreed with the opinion that women are better language learners because they are more talkative.

4 Concluding Remarks

Both surveys allowed identifying a set of subjective theories of undergraduate and graduate student-teachers. The first, based on the BALLI, showed the degree of acceptance of different stereotype opinions about determinants of success in language learning, such as age, gender, intelligence and learner autonomy. Most of the stereotypes were in fact not accepted; however, some were quite persistent, for example the belief about children's dominance over older learners in language attainment, and about the miraculous effects of naturalistic learning contexts in successful target language processing. These and other opinions became essential in planning a reflective teacher training course. It was important to make students aware that they in fact possess subjective theories about language learning and teaching, and that these theories may in turn influence their teaching practice, especially in stressful situations. Even though the second survey was not administered in the same group of students, certain general tendencies could still be observed and discussed. All graduate students were primary school teachers and some of them had as many as five years of classroom experience. They had all

completed their basic training courses in different institutions, including those at the university. Still, quite many of them held the same stereotype opinions true, regardless of their training. This clearly shows how powerful these subjective theories are and it could be argued that they even get stronger under the influence of classroom environments, school authorities and, most probably, students' parents who frequently claim to know best what is good for their children in the area of foreign language learning.

As teacher trainers, what we need to further develop is a greater knowledge of our student-teachers, of their stronger and weaker points, their work environment, and the activities they are engaged in. In this way, we can better adjust our instruction to the authentic needs of students. Our aim is to prepare autonomous teachers who are free of stereotype beliefs about determinants of success in language learning and always ready to cope with difficult classroom situations.

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BA Thesis Writing Process and Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching Writing

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Abstract This paper reports on a series of studies carried out among Polish students writing their BA theses in English as a foreign language. As their specialty area, the students chose teaching English as a foreign language, and they were, at the same time, receiving pre-service teacher training. With these studies, originally intended as action research on our classes, we aimed to shed some light not only on their writing processes, that is how their BA theses come into being, but also on how they develop as writers, and how this development influences their attitudes and beliefs regarding teaching writing skills in English as a foreign language.

1 Introduction

This action research report shows how two independent studies, originally related to two different classes clicked in together and produced complementary results which lead to conclusions reaching beyond the scope of each of the classes, and tackle the issue of the role of writing not only in constructing knowledge but also in shaping beliefs. For an academic year, at University of Łódź, we taught two independent, yet related, third-year classes: one of them was an elective course in TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language), which students take to obtain qualifications required to teach English at Polish state schools; the other was a BA seminar in language teaching, which required the students to write a 30-page thesis in which they reported on their small-scale research project and related reading. The classes, though related thematically, were based on totally independent enrollment, that is participation in either one did not require taking the other. Still, a majority of the members of the BA were in the TEFL program and all the students enrolled in the TEFL program were writing a BA thesis, even if it was not the one devoted to

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language teaching. Our conclusions, however, are based on the answers obtained from respondents who were enrolled in both groups. The results of the studies, when compared, seem to suggest that extensive writing practice may have a positive influence on students' beliefs about and attitudes to teaching writing in a foreign language. Along with the gain in students' knowledge and writing skills, this could be a strong argument for maintaining the BA thesis requirement.

2 Background

Before moving on to the description of the studies in focus of the present article, in this section we briefly outline their theoretical foundations. These quick sketches of writing studies and writing pedagogy, as well as research into teacher beliefs, are by no means intended as exhaustive surveys of the fields. We include them here in order to provide the reader with a basic idea of our teaching and research philosophies.

2.1 Writing as a Skill

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, pp. 142–144) acknowledge the existence of two opposing views on the relationship between speech and writing. One of them sees writing as similar to speech, both being acts of social interaction; the other insists on the distinct nature of written text production, stressing that it is obviously more demanding than speaking, as it requires more focus on the part of the language user. Written communication consists in separation of text-production from its reception, requiring text clarity and accuracy of standard language forms used. Also, since writing is more time-consuming, both compared to the other productive skill, that is speaking, and to the corresponding receptive skill, that is reading, it is possible to consider the writing process, the individual activities, or stages, it involves, and the gains the writer receives because of being involved in, or guided through, the process. These include language development and enhancement of writing skills as well as general knowledge enhancement. It is mainly because of its influence on the writer, not just the text, that the writing process is still considered worth researching, after over forty years since Emig (1971) first made it the topic of a publication, and even though the process approach to writing has given way to views that stress the role of social and cultural context in writing (cf. Atkinson, 2003; Kent, 1999).

2.2 Teaching Writing

The revolutionary process approach to teaching writing, which started in the 1970s and developed in a number of varieties, has gradually raised controversy (cf. Tobin,

2001). Consequently, as Matsuda (2003) observes, the advent of the *post-process* approach meant supplementing the process approach, rather than withdrawal of its main tenets. At the same time, the *genre approach* appeared, which stressed that efficient writing instruction should equip students with the ability to respond to specific social situations with appropriate text types (Hyland, 2004). The approach to teaching academic writing which we pursue in our writing instruction, including BA seminar writing practice, can be defined as post-process, as it combines elements of process and genre approaches to teaching writing. Additionally, we believe that teaching writing, also teaching foreign language writing, should be analyzed as a knowledge-shaping activity (cf. Zalewski, 2004), extending far beyond writing skills, or target language improvement.

2.3 *Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs*

It has long become clear that the insights into the 'thinking process' of teachers may be significant for teacher education and development, and for curriculum effectiveness. Research has consistently pointed to the powerful influence that language teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching exert on their classroom instruction (cf. MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2001; Lo, 2005; Tarone & Allwright, 2005). In the classroom context, the beliefs that teachers bring with them to the teaching situation have been repeatedly recognized as a crucial contributory factor in the learning process and ultimate success (cf. Busch, 2010; Richardson & Placier, 2001). Thus, it has often been argued that language teacher educators and curriculum developers should account for the belief system of pre-service teachers as a means of maximizing the intake during the course (cf. Lo, 2005).

Numerous studies into the topic show that beliefs are formed mainly during *the apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 2002), a period of time that refers to the many years pre-service teachers spent sitting at the student desks observing other teachers at work. At the same time, many researchers point to the fact that the relatively short amount of time that pre-service teachers spend in teacher training programs does not exert a noticeable influence on their existing educational beliefs (cf. Lortie, 2002; Pajares, 1992). Consequently, Attardo and Brown (2005), and Lo (2005) have advocated a large amount of experiential and reflective activities involving observation and active participation in the teaching process to be included in teacher training programs as they seem to have a stronger effect on the development of the belief system than declarative knowledge which typically constitutes the main part of the course. One example of a reflective technique recommended for exploring pre-service teachers' beliefs is the use of qualitative open-ended questionnaires which have been employed in the studies described in this paper.

2.4 Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs About Writing

Over the last two decades there has been a systematic increase in studies on teachers' beliefs. Few of them, however, explore how pre-service teachers come to understand writing and the teaching of writing (cf. Dahl & Farnan, 1998; Kennedy, 1998, 1999). Considering the role that teachers' beliefs play in the classroom, analyzing pre-service teachers' attitudes towards writing and teaching writing seems to be an important source of knowledge about how to structure writing instruction within teacher training courses. As Porter and Brophy (1988, p. 76) rightly claim, "personal experiences about writing, especially teachers' own experiences as students, are important determinants of how teachers think and what they do in the writing classroom".

Notably, student teachers' prior writing experiences and lack of background knowledge about the writing process often lead to their negative attitudes towards teaching writing. In the Polish context, the negative nature of pre-service teachers' prior experiences in the area of writing may result from the following situations:

- the skill is neglected in the language learning process;
- text analysis and writing instruction are rarely introduced at primary and secondary levels;
- teachers' attitudes towards writing in English are often negative.

It could be concluded that one way of improving learners' writing skills and changing their possibly negative attitudes towards writing in English is to obtain some data on the attitudes of teachers towards writing instruction and developing ways of influencing these attitudes. Thus, the current study attempted to specify the nature of pre-service teachers' beliefs about writing and the teaching of writing. Specifically, the study sought to determine what beliefs the future teachers held at the beginning of the TEFL course and BA seminar, and whether their attitudes about teaching writing changed at the end of these courses. The three areas of beliefs that are relevant to the present study are beliefs about writing, beliefs about the teaching of writing, and beliefs about personal writing ability.

3 Research

The studies we have conducted relied on different research methods, corresponding with their goals. One of them examined our students' views on teaching writing in a foreign language. It relied on an open-ended questionnaire to collect data referring to attitudes, needs, and experiences of the trainee teachers after a month of pre-service teaching practice. The data showed that the more proficient prospective teachers are as writers, the more willing they become to incorporate writing practices into their teaching. Another survey focused on the students' evaluation of their own processes of writing their BA theses. Here, most of them admitted that they

saw writing a BA thesis as a valuable experience which helped them develop as writers. The students were asked to keep a learning journal where they recorded and commented on the process of writing the BA thesis. The analysis of the journals reveals not only their progress on that task, but also how they developed as writers, researchers and teachers.

3.1 The Participants

The participants were 15 pre-service teachers enrolled over a year in a TEFL course, and in a BA seminar where they were preparing their diploma theses in the area of TEFL. The TEFL course is a requirement for an official teacher certification for teaching English in Polish state schools. All of the participants were in their early twenties and in their final year of the undergraduate course in teacher education offered as an optional module within the English Language Studies at University of Łódź, Poland. All the students had completed prerequisite introductory linguistics and literature courses, and had some familiarity with basic theoretical issues concerning second language acquisition (SLA). All of them had studied more than one foreign language, a factor that might additionally influence their beliefs about language learning and teaching. The choice of the BA seminar was their autonomous decision and was not part of their teacher training program.

3.1.1 The TEFL Course

The TEFL course is a part of the teacher-training program offered within the BA level in English as an option to those students who are interested in gaining qualifications for teaching English in the Polish educational system. The course comprised numerous practical workshops and discussions, and, above all, school internship. One of the researchers taught the practical modules of the course, which were designed to provide an introduction to EFL teaching methodology. One of these modules was entirely focused on teaching writing and comprised theoretical lectures, practical workshops as well as some experiential and reflective activities in the form of class observations and teaching. One of the requirements of the course syllabus was to analyze and comment on various beliefs about SLA and TEFL with a special focus on writing and the teaching of writing. The data base for this part of the study includes two questionnaires—one conducted at the onset of this one-year course and the other at its end, after the internship at primary and secondary school.

3.1.2 The BA Seminar Course

The BA seminar course, as in most Polish tertiary education institutions, aims at giving students a refined understanding of the specialty area of their choice. It

typically involves reading and discussion of issues within the field as well as writing a BA thesis, supported by input and feedback from the advisor, who is also the course instructor. The group discussed in the present report wrote their BA theses in teaching English as a foreign language, and the course was taught by one of the researchers. While it is not a rule for all BA thesis advisors to decide on their own topics, the instructor gave her students the option of choosing their specific topic, based on their interests and/or FL learning/teaching experience, believing that it would make their writing processes more involving and meaningful. Having come up with their own initial ideas for the BA theses, the students consulted them with the supervisor and the final versions of the topics were negotiated. These topics, among others, included: *The influence of a bilingual education program on students' metalinguistic awareness*; *Teacher as a major source of motivation among adolescent students of English*; *Non-verbal aspects of communication between an EFL teacher and learners*; *The use of communication strategies in learning English in junior high school*. The overall volume of a typical BA thesis is about thirty 1.5-spaced pages. This is usually divided into three chapters, two of them presenting the theoretical background for the issue dealt with, and a practical one reporting on a small-scale research study into the problem. Typically, students start writing towards the end of the fall semester with the theoretical background, which gives them a better grasp of the problem they will research in the spring semester.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

It is far beyond the scope of this study to distinguish *beliefs* from a number of other related terms, such as *attitudes*, *conceptions*, *assumptions*, *values*, *opinions* or *cognitions*, all of which are used interchangeably in various studies (cf. Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Therefore, in the current research, the term *belief* is used in reference to any views held by the participants about the nature of second language learning and teaching and it is applied interchangeably with *attitudes*.

In order to determine the pre- and post-course group beliefs on teaching writing, two separate questionnaires were devised. They were composed of open-ended questions about the teacher-students' beliefs about writing and the teaching of writing. The pre-course questionnaire was administered on the first day of the course, and the post-course one was given in the last week of class. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative ones do not constrain responses and provide insights as to why the beliefs are held. Thus, in writing their answers, the students were encouraged to reflect upon the course readings, classroom discussions and above all, their learning and teaching experience. The aim of the pre-course questionnaire was to collect information on the pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding writing and the teaching of writing when they entered the practical part of the pre-service teacher training course. The questions referred to the students' school experience in writing, their expectations concerning the writing instruction module within the TEFL course and their expectations about teaching writing at

school. In the post-course questionnaire, the students were asked to comment on the mentor's role in the writing module of the teacher training course and on their own experience in teaching writing at school. Finally, the participants were asked to respond to a BA thesis survey which focused on their attitudes towards and opinions about the process of writing a BA paper. This last questionnaire was included in the research since the beliefs about the self as a writer and the knowledge about the process of writing seem to have an important influence on teacher-students' attitudes towards writing instruction.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Beliefs About Previous Writing Instruction

Despite the small scale of the study, the amount of qualitative data is too extensive to cover in detail. Therefore, only selected topics representing the three mentioned areas of beliefs are summarized here. Firstly, the trainees were asked to comment on their attitude towards writing. The answers given to the pre-course questionnaire fully confirmed the negative attitude of pre-service students towards writing and the teaching of writing, which is in line with the previous research (cf. Dahl & Farnan, 1998; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Kennedy, 1998, 1999). To justify their negative emotions about writing, the respondents referred to the poor school experience and the lack of knowledge about writing techniques. Then, in both the pre-course survey and the post-course questionnaire, the participants were asked about their expectations towards the TEFL course. In the pre-course questionnaire, they gave very general answers or left blank spaces, evidently not knowing what even to expect. They also commented on their poor knowledge about writing techniques as well as limited experience with writing instruction they gained in their secondary schools. Interestingly, in the post-course questionnaire, which was administered after they had finished writing their BA thesis, almost everyone was able to clearly specify their expectations. The two recurrent answers concerned modeling writing tasks for students and introducing an increased number of writing assignments in the course. Importantly, many of the trainee teachers emphasized that it was only their participation in the BA seminar where they were guided through the process of writing their own thesis that influenced the way they think about teaching writing in the foreign language classroom. However, when the same students were asked to comment on the way their previous foreign language classroom writing experience helped them in teaching writing, the majority of answers were negative, which is in accordance with a number of previous studies (e.g., Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Kennedy, 1998, 1999), pointing to the lack of correspondence between teaching a foreign language in a formal context and students writing skills.

For the purpose of the present paper, some questions pertaining to the students' beliefs about the link between their school language learning experience and their writing skills have been selected and are commented upon below. When asked at

the beginning of the course about writing techniques they remember from their own learning history and would like to use with their future students, the majority of respondents gave either no response or recommended highly guided techniques such as contextualizing lexical items into sentences. Again, many of them commented on the limited experience they had with writing instruction:

QUESTION: Does your own writing experience help you in teaching writing?

- *Not really; writing is difficult but teaching writing is even worse; it is hard to be a good teacher of writing when you don't like writing yourself.*
- *When I was at school I didn't like writing. In Polish it was always about literature essays rather than writing for pleasure or for some target audience. In English we permanently "described our best friends"—it wasn't writing, it was a lexical or grammar task.*
- *The teacher would just put a bad grade on my paper, not explaining the reasons and giving no feedback.*

Finally, the post-course questionnaire aimed at gathering opinions on the nature of pre-service teachers' experience with teaching writing. When asked about their students' feelings and attitudes towards writing assignments, the trainee teachers listed the following examples:

QUESTION: Comment on your students' attitude to writing assignments.

- *they didn't like writing tasks.*
- *they kept asking questions about vocabulary.*
- *they didn't seem to be involved.*

Interestingly, many of the participants compared the emotions of their students to the feelings they remembered from their own classroom, commenting on the negative attitudes being passed from one generation onto another. On the one hand, these opinions confirm a change in attitudes towards writing; on the other, when asked about the ways they helped their students with the problems they had with writing tasks, the majority of the participants gave some unexpected answers showing that although the theoretical knowledge had evolved, the practical skills were still not sufficiently developed since they still had problems with coming up with effective writing techniques. Some exemplary comments have been listed below:

QUESTION: What problems did your students have with writing task? How did you help them?

- *they asked me for some English words—I gave them English words.*
- *they didn't know what to write—I prepared some ideas for them.*
- *they were not interested in the topic—I explained the topic was important.*

Overall, the trainees' comments from the pre-course questionnaire confirm the portrait of a pre-service teacher with a negative attitude towards writing and limited knowledge about the process of learning and teaching writing. At the same time, more optimistic results of the final post-course questionnaires seem to point to the

importance of experiential and reflective activities as well as hands-on school practice for teachers' professional development. Preliminary conclusions are that teacher beliefs should be explored and accounted for in order for them to be addressed in teacher training programs and that considerable efforts should be made to eliminate any detrimental trainee beliefs before they start teaching.

3.3.2 Beliefs About the Process of Writing the BA Thesis

The survey on teacher beliefs, discussed above, included only one general question related to writing: *How do you see yourself as a writer?* The answers given at the beginning and at the end of the course seem to indicate important development on the part of the students. For example, while in the pre-course questionnaire they included the following: "I don't see myself as a writer" or "poor", examples from the post-course questionnaire are as follows: "developing" or "I never thought that there is so much about writing to be learnt". Since the TEFL course did not contain any substantial writing assignments, it seems that it was mainly the process of writing their BA theses that caused the change students, and made it easier for them to claim authorship of their texts, or at least realize how complex and challenging writing can be.

To gather more detailed information concerning the students' perception of their writing processes, towards the end of the academic year, the other researcher, who had no previous contact with the group, asked the students to do a quick survey whose aim was to collect data on their experience of writing the BA thesis and on their attitudes toward the BA thesis requirement in general. The students answered a set of Likert-scale questions concerning the process of writing the BA thesis (see Table 1 for the English version of the items). It should be stressed here that the questions pertained solely to the process of writing the BA thesis, with only one very generally referring to the satisfaction resulting from completing the project. The students responded to the questions on a five-point Likert scale, in which 5 corresponded to "definitely yes" and 1 meant "not at all". The mean value of the answers for the whole group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean value of the answers in the B.A. thesis survey

Has writing your B.A. thesis …	Mean
helped you develop the knowledge of your subject?	4.83
helped you develop your interests?	4.58
influenced your command of English?	4.58
helped you develop your writing skills?	4.75
helped you understand the conventions of academic writing?	4.83
been a positive experience?	4.66
been difficult?	3.5
given you satisfaction?	4.75

As can be seen from the means, the students gave very high ratings in all the aspects of writing a BA thesis listed in the questionnaire. It is worth noting that they appreciated the progress they made in the knowledge of their subject areas and in academic writing skills. They also acknowledged that they generally developed their writing skills and that writing the thesis had given them satisfaction. The question in which their answers were clearly lower (3.5) was the one related to the challenge which writing a BA thesis posed to them. This can be attributed to the quality of the preparation and the instruction they received before and while writing. The results of this survey seem to indicate that the students appreciate the opportunity the process of writing a BA thesis creates. Of course, one must not generalize on the basis of results obtained in just one small group, and it is quite possible that the response from another group could be much less enthusiastic. On the other hand, the present results show that the very process of writing a BA thesis can be a positive educating experience well worth the effort. In the next section, we try to explain how this experience may influence teacher trainees' beliefs on teaching foreign language writing.

4 Conclusions, Implication and Future Research

It may seem a tautology to conclude by saying that the actual writing experience changed the students' perceptions of and attitudes to writing. However, at the beginning of the course these mainly resulted from the students' past experience in language learning (e.g., in high school) or the general convictions about writing as being difficult and time-consuming which prevail among Polish students. The qualitative analysis and the comparison of the pre-course and the post-course questionnaire results allow attributing the change in beliefs to the EFL teaching experience and to concurrent experience in writing a BA thesis. Even though the present report may lack in academic rigor, the findings may indicate that both quantitative and qualitative methods, when well selected and rigorously implemented, can contribute to better understanding not only of writing itself, but also of where it comes from and where it takes the learner writer. While we are aware that we have not captured all the nuances involved in the process of writing or in the process of teaching writing, we believe that drawing on the benefit of multiple perspectives, we are better able to respond to our students' needs and help them develop as foreign language writers and writing teachers.

Considering the results of the study, it can be concluded that the beliefs questionnaires constitute an important source of information for teacher educators and curriculum developers by providing a wealth of information for determining which topics to include in the teacher training course. It seems that the responses on pre-course questionnaires can act as a guide in choosing the topics for focus in any teacher-training program. Further, the pre-course surveys also provide an alternative approach to the design of teacher training courses by enabling the exploration of misconceptions throughout the course. They also point to the importance of experiential and reflective activities which should occur early on in teacher training

programs. Another important implication concerns the role of the BA course. The BA thesis survey comments demonstrate the benefits of being engaged in the writing process, not only for the development of students as language learners but also language teachers. The post-course teacher-students' commentary often showed the development of their reasoning concerning knowledge and skills related to their future profession.

While the present study yielded some interesting results, definitely some caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation and generalizability of the outcomes. The research showed that both the TEFL and the BA course had some impact on the pre-service teachers' beliefs; however, it was a small scale study, limited to only one group. The scope of survey was also limited to teacher-students' perception of the writing and learning processes. The change in beliefs confirmed but the adopted methodology did not allow specifying what exactly had caused the change. A final note of caution is that since the context for data collection was part of a course that pre-service teachers attended within the teacher training program, the trainees may have stated what they thought the present researchers wanted to hear or taught during the course, whether they believed it or not.

As regards future research, one area for further investigation deriving from the surveys is a longitudinal study of pre-service teacher belief development. It is one thing to say that pre-service teachers' beliefs developed after their participation in a TEFL course and writing the thesis in a BA course, but quite another to say what the reasons behind this change were and how trainees teaching practice was impacted. Longitudinal data would help build a long-term understanding of the development of beliefs about writing and writing instruction. Thus, future research should seek to determine what contributed to the change. In addition, previous studies have demonstrated that teachers often have problems with exploiting the knowledge gained during the teacher-training program in the classroom, and thus some further research is needed into whether the use of reflective activities aimed at the exploration of personal beliefs facilitates this transition. To identify significant episodes that foster changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs about writing and teaching writing instruction, reflective techniques such as diaries and interviews with pre-service students held before, during and after the course are recommended.

All in all, the present study provided evidence of some positive changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs about writing as a result of the teacher-training program and the BA thesis course. Still, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods should be used to fully explore the reasons behind the change in teachers' attitudes towards writing in order to inform efficient writing instruction. The impact of academic writing courses on teachers' beliefs about writing and teaching writing instruction should also be analyzed in detail.

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Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs About the Goals of Very Early FL Instruction and Their Classroom Practices: Is There a Link?

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Abstract The current state of the research (e.g. Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek 2006) as well as the official guidelines of European language education policy (cf. European Commission, 2011) indicate that the goals of an early start are different than achieving near-native like competence in a foreign language (FL). Rather, it is aimed at arousing young learners' interests in other languages, promoting curiosity and openness towards other people and cultures, and thereby laying ground for future plurilingual development. The necessity to implement these directions is even more urgent in monolingual countries where contact with speakers of other languages is limited. From this perspective, it seems that the language teachers of very young learners are expected to be agents of the official policy. Yet, since pre-school FL education in Poland is, for the time being, beyond the supervision of the Ministry of Education, the teaching objectives and beliefs about early FL learning are largely intuitive and often based on individual experience. The paper presents the results of a survey conducted among 90 FL teachers working both in private and public kindergartens. Its purpose was to scrutinize the beliefs of teachers of very young learners about the goals of 'an early start' in a foreign language and gain insight into how they are aiming to achieve them, that is their classroom practices. Of critical importance will be to discern the difference between the goals of native-likeness and/or achieving linguistic multi-competence.

1 Introduction

Language teacher beliefs have drawn a substantial amount of interest in recent years as an important construct formulating teacher professionalism (cf. Gabryś-Barker, 2012; Woods, 1996). Their value lies in the fact that they are major drives underlying teacher decision-making in the classroom. While studies on language teacher beliefs have been conducted in the secondary and adult classroom, this issue

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has not been investigated at the primary and pre-primary levels, partly for the reason that teaching languages to the very young has been a relatively recent faculty, and partly for the fact that teaching young and very young learners has not gained an adequate mark of professionalism, being for many only a temporary occupation. The situation, however, is due to change as the official age of starting second language (L2) instruction was lowered in the 2009 education reform from the age of 10 to the age of 6, and will be even further lowered as a result of implementing guidelines of the European language policy. The goal of the present paper is to investigate what beliefs teachers of English as a foreign language (FL), working with very young learners (VYLs), that is those aged 3–6, hold about the goals of very early instruction and whether these beliefs influence their teaching practices.

2 On the Relationship of Teacher Beliefs and Practices

The very concept of teacher beliefs can be associated with a reflective model of teacher education, which calls for an introspective look over one's practices, drawing critical conclusions, constantly revising one's opinions, and finding solutions as a pathway to constructing knowledge about effective teaching. Teacher beliefs, which are conceptual schemata, have an impact on teachers' *reflection in action* of teaching as well as *reflection on action*, two key terms proposed by Schön (1983, 1988) as the founding rules of the approach (Wallace, 1991). Pre-existing teacher beliefs can influence teacher practices, which, when reflected upon, impact on the existent teacher knowledge, a relationship known as the *reflective cycle* (Wallace, 1991, p. 49). By definition, "teachers' belief systems are founded on the goals, values and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it" (Richards & Lockhart 1996, p. 29). Thus, the definition encapsulates the importance of teachers' understanding of their agency in the teaching process, as teaching effectiveness will to a large extent depend on their sense of goal-orientation, and this can be attained only through the analysis of their own beliefs.

The first studies conducted on learner or teacher beliefs in second language acquisition (SLA) were carried out by Horwitz (1985) and Wenden (1986). Their research focused mainly on the very contents of what teachers believe, that is the *what*. Since then research into teacher beliefs has evolved from purely quantitative to qualitative, thus allowing insight into the process, that is *how they are constructed*. They often are an outcome of a dialogue with others; yet another feature of beliefs has been since identified: *they are dialogic in nature and interactional*. More recently, research on teacher beliefs has been influenced by the sociocultural theory in the sense that teacher beliefs can mediate their actions and henceforth have an impact on their learners. They can be a *mediator in cognition*. Therefore, the key focus lies on "how beliefs develop, fluctuate and interact with actions,

emotions, identities or affordances and how they are constructed within the micro and macro-political contexts of learning and teaching languages" (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011, p. 282). This definition implies that beliefs are *fluctuating, under constant change*. Teachers' beliefs differ because teachers differ among themselves as individuals, coming from various backgrounds and having different types of personalities. As Gabryś-Barker (2012, p. 30) put it, "They are different on the personal, educational, and experiential levels. What they bring is temporary; it fluctuates and evolves over time to finally reach a stage of relative stability".

Richards and Lockhart (1996, pp. 30–31) enumerate possible sources of those beliefs more precisely, sources which contribute to the building of the teachers' own convictions. They are teachers' own experience as foreign language learners, teacher's experiences of what techniques work well in a given learning situation, established teaching practices and routines within an institution, preferred teaching techniques (matching the teacher's personality), knowledge of learning/teaching theory, and trust in a certain method or approach to teaching. This last source indicates that teachers can become agents of certain policy and/or pursue the enactment of those methods, approaches or trends that they particularly believe in. It should also be observed that even pre-service teacher trainees hold certain beliefs about teaching, which are mostly formed on the basis of their experience as learners. Thus the relationship between learner and teacher beliefs is reciprocal. This also shows that teacher beliefs are not constant; they change, for example under the influence of significant others, such as methodology course instructors at university, colleagues, head teachers, until they come to a relative standstill after teachers have obtained a certain amount of experience and knowledge.

Woods (1996, p. 196) proposed the concept of *BAK*, as consisting of *beliefs*, *knowledge* and *assumptions*, to avoid possible dilemmas in distinguishing between the three and to emphasize that the three terms are interrelated. By contrast, Borg (2001) makes a distinction between *beliefs* and *knowledge*, stating that the latter must be true in some external situations, whereas the former reflect the mental state of an individual. Therefore, she defines beliefs as "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further it serves as a guide to thought and behavior" (2001, p. 186). In this context, teachers' beliefs refer to the pedagogical aspects of teaching, such as teachers, learners, materials, subject matter or the teacher's self-concept, and therefore have a huge impact on instructional practices and, consequently, the formation of learners' beliefs about SLA. Gabryś-Barker (2012, p. 30) argues after Hargreaves (1993) that schools should have a certain type of mission to fulfil and that this mission clarifies nuances of teaching by imposing common beliefs. It seems that such beliefs are imposed by language education policy, and its agents, such as educational institutions, their administrators and educators. It is this function of beliefs that is of primary interest in this paper.

Recent research into teacher beliefs seems to adopt the same stance, that is it shows how teachers can be mediators in implementing language education policy (Farrell & Tan Kiat Kun, 2007) and how teacher beliefs can be influenced by other

professionals, for example during in-service training (Borg, 2011). Borg (2011), for example, found that teachers' beliefs had changed under the influence of the course instructor in an eight-week long course. Firstly, they started to make deeper reflections on their beliefs about teaching and, secondly, they were ready to adopt new ideas from colleagues and the course conductor. These changes were possible since the instructor had made in-group reflection the central activity, strengthening its importance as well as emphasizing the teachers' experiences. These findings bring crucial implications for language teacher education: reflective practice can influence teacher beliefs so that teachers can become agents of the official policy, thus pointing to the link between beliefs and practice. However, as Basturkmen (2012) observed in her review of recent research on teacher beliefs, the relationship is not straightforward and the two do not always correspond, that is teachers are not able to put their beliefs into practice due to certain situational constraints (Sinprajakpol, 2004, cited in Basturkmen, 2012).

3 Teachers as Agents of the European Language Education Policy

Teaching foreign languages to preschool children, although not required by official governmental policy till the time of the study, has been a common phenomenon in Poland. A foreign language (FL), usually one of global status, that is English, is offered for an additional fee in every public kindergarten, and is part of the standard curriculum in a private one. There are also numerous institutions offering FL courses (afternoon classes) to pre-school children in languages as exotic as Chinese or Japanese. This educational offer has arisen in response to huge parental demand. By enabling a very early start in a FL, many parents want to secure the best educational and, in the future, vocational opportunities for their children, which probably manifests the aspirations they hold for their children's future achievement (see Rokita-Jaśkow, 2013). Supposedly, by opting for such an early start, they succumb to the common belief that the earlier one starts learning a foreign language, the better.

An early start in learning a foreign language is also recommended in the European documents, which serve as guidelines for the formation of language education policies of individual EU member countries. As a result, a foreign language has been already introduced from the onset of obligatory schooling in the 2009 educational reform, that the age at which it is introduced was lowered from 10 or 11 to 6, together with lowering the age of starting formal education. Yet, foreign language education is not introduced as obligatory in pre-school instruction, despite the recommendations to start foreign language instruction at the age of three. This leaves ground for numerous private institutions which fill in that niche, offering FL courses to very young learners (aged 3–6). On the other hand, European language education policy recommends that young children be exposed to as many as two

foreign languages from the very onset of obligatory (kindergarten) instruction (European Comission, 2002). The goal of this is to arouse interest in other languages, promote curiosity and openness towards other people and cultures, and thereby lay ground for future plurilingual development. The need to implement these directions is even more urgent in monolingual countries where contact with speakers of other languages is limited. As stated in a recently published language policy guide, titled *Language learning at pre-primary school level: Making it efficient and sustainable* (2011),

> Opening children's minds to multilingualism and different cultures is a valuable exercise in itself that enhances individual and social development and increases their capacity to empathize with others. ELL activities in pre-primary settings can be an enriching experience and bring considerable benefits. They are instrumental in enhancing competences such as comprehension, expression, communication and problem-solving, enabling children to interact successfully with peers and adults. They can increase powers of concentration and strengthen self-confidence. As young children also become aware of their own identity and cultural values, ELL can shape the way they develop their attitudes towards other languages and cultures by raising awareness of diversity and of cultural variety, hence fostering understanding and respect.

In an earlier document, Recommendation (2008)7, on *The use of the Council of Europe's Common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism* (Council of Europe, 2008), it was additionally stated that language education should be *inclusive, plurilingual* and *intercultural*, which means that it should be available to all, with no hindered access to it (such as a fee), should promote learning of a variety of languages (not only of one dominant language, that is English), and should encourage intercultural interest. Only by fulfilling these conditions, will all learners (including early starters) be motivated to learn foreign languages now and in the future. Clearly, it is difficult to talk about the fulfilment of the first and second condition if there are no ministerial regulations in this respect. As a result, developing intercultural attitudes seems to be the only realistic goal to implement and obtain if the realization of the policy is left in the hands of teachers alone.

In this view, it seems the task for the language teachers of very young learners is to be agents of the official European policy. As Farrell and Tan Kiat Kun (2007) note, teachers play an important role in the enactment of the educational policy. The same standpoint has been expressed by Komorowska (2007), who indicated that teachers, apart from other people involved in the educational process, are the key decision-makers responsible for motivating learners to learn foreign languages. Yet, it is difficult to expect teachers' dedication to this task since pre-school FL education in Poland for the time being is beyond the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Left with no explicit directives, FL teachers of young learners teach in line with their own convictions, common wisdom or their own teaching experience. Thus, their teaching practice may be largely intuitive and based on individual theories, which may also account for the huge variety in the teaching standards in various institutions.

4 The Study

4.1 Aims and Research Questions

The study presented in this paper follows the call of Barcelos and Kalaja (2011) for research on beliefs of those who have a strong sense of agency. I wish to argue that even though pre-primary FL teaching is beyond the supervision of the Ministry of Education, teachers of young learners should be aware of the rationale behind the early teaching of languages, possess knowledge about the goals of very early instruction and be aware of how to implement them. The aim of the study was to find out to what extent FL teachers of young learners in Poland are aware of and feel responsible for the implementation of the European policy in their teaching. Do they hold to the popular belief that "the earlier one starts learning a FL the better", or do they aim to promote intercultural attitudes as a basis for plurilingualism? Therefore, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are YL teachers' beliefs about the goals of very early foreign language learning? Are they inclined to believe the goal is to achieve native-like competence (*the earlier, the better* view) or lay the foundations for future plurilingual competence?
2. Is there a link between the teachers' length of teaching experience, age and training, and the beliefs?
3. Depending on their view, what are the classroom practices the teachers claim to pursue?

4.2 Method

The goal of this section is to provide information about the organization of the study. Thus it provides details about the participants involved, the instruments used and the procedure in which the research was implemented.

4.2.1 Participants

The sampling of the participants for the study was based on the method of convenience. They were 90 FL teachers of young learners in Cracow and the Lesser Poland Voivodship. 23 of them were teaching English as a FL in private kindergartens and 67 in public ones. It should be noted that it is more common for the teachers in private kindergartens to be employed full time and directly by the head teacher whereas teachers working in public kindergartens are typically employed by external firms and thus the head teacher has lesser supervision over their activities. This is also how the survey respondents were approached for the data collection.

Table 1 Profile of YL teachers (age and education level)

	Age				Education level		
	<25	26–30	31–35	41–45	Second	BA	MA
Private kindergarten (N = 23)	11 (12.3 %)	7 (7.9 %)	5 (5.5 %)	0	0	10 (11 %)	13 (14.5 %)
Public kindergarten (N = 67)	36 (40 %)	16 (18 %)	14 (15.5 %)	1 (0.9 %)	3 (3.5 %)	29 (32 %)	35 (39 %)

Those working in the private kindergartens were contacted in person, while those in public kindergartens via the teaching agencies employing them. Tables 1 and 2 present the summary of the profile of the teachers surveyed, with a subdivision into two groups: teachers working in private and public kindergartens. The precentile scores in each column have been calculated for the total of 90 subjects (100 %).

As can be seen from the tables, YL teachers of foreign languages were mostly young persons, below the age of 25. There were practically no teachers older than 35 (with one exception). They also seemed to possess quite good teaching qualifications, as nearly all of them held BA or MA degrees, although they had not all graduated from language departments. As can be found in Table 2, 10 teachers from private kindergartens and 37 from public ones had certificates other than a university degree in languages, which confirmed their language skills. What is worrying, however, is the fact that a vast majority of the teachers had never had a training course in TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) methodology (60 subjects), nor had plans or a willingness to specialize in teaching this age group. This may suggest that the selection for this occupation is quite arbitrary and teaching foreign languages to young learners has not as yet been accorded an adequate professional status. Although it is generally believed that teachers working in private kindergartens have higher qualifications, statistical analysis conducted by means of cross tabs and *chi*-square tests did not show any significant differences between teachers working in private and public kindergartens in terms of age ($chi^2[3] = 0.751$; $p = 0.861$), their education level ($chi^2[2] = 1.089$; $p = 0.580$), FL qualifications ($chi^2[5] = 4.731$; $p = 0.450$), their competences in YL methodology ($chi^2[1] = 0.117$; $p = 0.733$), or willingness to teach children ($chi^2[2] = 2.329$; $p = 0.312$).

4.2.2 Materials

The tool used in the study was a survey on YL teacher beliefs, expectations and classroom practices, developed by the author for the larger-scale research project (cf. Rokita-Jaśkow, 2013). For the purpose of the current study, only some questions were chosen for the statistical analysis with a view to answering the research questions, those that were not presented elsewhere. This was a 14-item subscale on teacher beliefs about the goals of very early FL instruction, based on research findings into the critical period hypothesis (e.g. Muñoz, 2006; Singleton & Ryan, 2004) and the guidelines of the

Table 2 Profile of teacher preparation for teaching YLs

	FL qualifications						YL didactics		Plans to specialize in teaching YLs		
	Philology	Postgrad	CPE	CAE	FCE	Other	Yes	No	No	Undecided	Yes
Private kindergarten (n = 23)	13 (14.4 %)	1 (0.9 %)	2 (2.2 %)	3 (3.3 %)	4 (4.4 %)	0	7 (7.9 %)	16 (17.7 %)	3 (3.3 %)	11 (12.3 %)	9 (10 %)
Public kindergarten (n = 67)	35 (39 %)	3 (3 %)	4 (4.4 %)	13 (14.4 %)	5 (5.5 %)	7 (7.7 %)	23 (25.5 %)	44 (48.9 %)	19 (21 %)	24 (26.7 %)	24 (26.7 %)

Council of Europe (cf. Komorowska, 1996). In each of the statements the respondents were supposed to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale (1—*I totally disagree*, 5—*I totally agree*). Examples of the statements are: "The earlier one starts FLL, the better results it will bring in the future", or "The child becomes more open and self-confident in contacts with others/foreigners". Table 3 presents a list of all statements together with descriptive statistics.

Table 3 Means and standard deviations for teacher beliefs about the goals of very early L2 instruction (N = 90)

Belief No.	Belief statement	Mean	SD
Belief 1	The earlier one starts FLL, the better results it will bring in the future	4.53	0.88
Belief 2	Development of motivation for further FLL in the future	3.88	0.96
Belief 3	Supporting child emotional, social and intellectual development	3.96	0.98
Belief 4	The child becomes more open and self-confident in contacts with others/foreigners	3.90	0.94
Belief 5	Children learn about foreign cultures and countries and develop interest in them	3.81	0.98
Belief 6	Development of memory and other cognitive operations (e.g. analyzing, finding similarities and differences, etc.)	3.98	0.98
Belief 7	Aiding development of child personality	3.59	0.86
Belief 8	Development of critical and creative thinking	3.56	0.84
Belief 9	Children learn to express their feelings and opinions by words, movement, artwork	3.58	0.89
Belief 10	Children become used to a FL; its sound, other words, grammar, etc.; become aware of the existence of other languages	4.30	0.98
Belief 11	Children can learn a foreign language as quickly and easily as the mother tongue	3.62	0.99
Belief 12	In FL classes children learn cooperating with others	3.18	0.79
Belief 13	Children learn FLs easier than adults	3.90	0.95
Belief 14	It is too early for FLL, since children did not learn Polish well yet	2.47	0.91

Another set of questions required the respondents to indicate which of the instructional techniques (practices) they employ in their teaching. They were requested to choose from the following: 1—classroom stress-free atmosphere, 2—sole L2 use, 3—attractive and carried materials or aids, 4—providing additional L2 input (through books, media, etc.), 5—class interior and decorations, 6—regular assessment and rewarding, 7—home revision, 8—encouraging contacts with foreigners, 9—European club/lessons, 10—European Day of Languages, 11—*European language portfolio*, 12—theatrical performances, 13—song contests, 14—art contests on intercultural topics, 15—Inviting foreigners, and 16—final tests. As can be seen, the techniques were of a various type, promoting more than just one stance, relating to communicative language use (1–4, 7), building intrinsic (5, 12, 13), instrumental (6, 16) and integrative (8) motivation, or developing intercultural attitudes (9–11, 14–15).

The final set of questions included in the survey concerned the demographic data of the respondents, that is their age (1—below 25 years of age, 2—26 to 30 years, 3–31 to 35 years, 4—36 to 40 years, 5—41 to 45 years), level of education

(1—secondary, 2—BA, 3—MA), and qualifications for FL teaching (1—philology graduation, 2—postgraduate studies, 3—Cambridge Proficiency in English (CPE) exam, 4—Cambridge Advanced English (CAE) exam, 5—First Certificate in English (FCE) exam, 6—other exams/certificates).

4.2.3 Procedure

Data collection took place between November 2011 and March 2012. As was already stated, the teachers were either approached in person in their institutions (private kindergartens) or via the firms employing them, which distributed the survey during staff meetings or in an online form via their database (public kindergartens). There were three kinds of variables distinguished in the study. The dependent variable was teacher beliefs, while the independent variables were teacher age, level of education and FL qualifications. Additionally, in order to answer the third research question, another latent variable, referred to as *international stance*, was distinguished, which was calculated on the basis of the scores obtained for the first and fifth item on the scale (1—preference for future native-likeness, 2—no difference in beliefs, 3—preference for future plurilingualism and interculturalism). The types of teaching techniques or practices were nominated as dependent variables. The data were subsequently analyzed for possible correlations by means of the software STATISTICA. In the study of teacher beliefs, the non-parametric Kruskall-Walis test was used, since the beliefs were descriptive in nature. In order to obtain answers to the third research questions, the *chi*-square test was performed between the latent variable and the dependent variables referring to instructional practices.

4.3 Results

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the analysis of teacher beliefs. It can be clearly seen that by far the most common belief among teachers is that "The earlier one starts FLL, the better results it will obtain in the future" (M = 4.53, SD = 0.87). The second in order was belief in statement 10: "Children become used to a FL; its sound, other words, grammar etc.; become aware of the existence of other languages", which refers to children's (meta)linguistic awareness (M = 4.3, SD = 0.98). Other statements, which generally referred to the cognitive or affective benefits of early foreign language learning received moderate recognition, as their means oscillated between 3.5 and 3.9. This also includes a crucial statement for this paper, namely statement 5, which refers to the rise of intercultural interest (M = 3.81, SD = 0.98). An exception is statement 12 (M = 3.18, SD = 0.787) which calls for cooperation among learners: quite rightly, it is too early to expect cooperation as pre-school children are still very egocentric and may find it hard to cooperate with others, other than through play. Also statement 14 received little support (M = 2.47, SD = 0.91; this was a negatively formulated statement), since

the majority of teachers agree that children should learn a foreign language very early, even if their mother tongue is not fully acquired yet.

The inferential statistics analysis aimed to reveal relationships between those beliefs and selected teacher demographic characteristics (Table 4) revealed no correlations, except for belief 4: "The child becomes more open and self-confident in contacts with others/foreigners" ($H (2, N = 90) = 7.49$; $p < 0.05$), where statistical significance was found between the belief and education level and FL qualifications. No other correlations were found between the remaining beliefs and teacher variables, which may imply that teacher beliefs are independent of demographic features, but perhaps formed under the influence of personal experiences or training received, about which, however, no data was gathered.

Table 4 Correlations between teacher beliefs about the goals of early L2 teaching and their personal variables (results of the Kruskal-Wallis test)

Belief No.	Age	Education level	FL qualifications
Belief 1	H (3, N = 90) = 3.82 $p = 0.28$	H (2, N = 90) = 0.44 $p = 0.80$	H (2, N = 90) = 0.44 $p = 0.80$
Belief 2	H (3, N = 90) = 3.78 $p = 0.29$	H (2, N = 90) = 3.64 $p = 0.16$	H (2, N = 90) = 3.64 $p = 0.16$
Belief 3	H (3, N = 90) = 2.30 $p = 0.51$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.12 $p = 0.57$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.12 $p = 0.57$
Belief 4	H (3, N = 90) = 1.80 $p = 0.62$	H (2, N = 90) = 7.49 **$p = 0.02$**	H (2, N = 90) = 7.49 **$p = 0.02$**
Belief 5	H (3, N = 90) = 2.19 $p = 0.53$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.15 $p = 0.34$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.15 $p = 0.34$
Belief 6	H (3, N = 90) = 1.90 $p = 0.59$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.55 $p = 0.28$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.54 $p = 0.28$
Belief 7	H (3, N = 90) = 0.71 $p = 0.87$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.58 $p = 0.27$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.58 $p = 0.27$
Belief 8	H (3 N = 90) = 0.80 $p = 0.85$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.25 $p = 0.33$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.25 $p = 0.33$
Belief 9	H (3, N = 90) = 0.47 $p = 0.93$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.49 $p = 0.29$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.49 p = 0.28
Belief 10	H (3, N = 90) = 1.46 $p = 0.69$	H (2, N = 90) = 0.11 $p = 0.94$	H (2, N = 90) = 0.11 $p = 0.94$
Belief 11	H (3, N = 90) = 0.81 $p = 0.85$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.34 $p = 0.31$	H (2, N = 90) = 2.34 $p = 0.31$
Belief 12	H (3, N = 90) = 1.47 $p = 0.69$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.19 $p = 0.55$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.19 $p = 0.55$
Belief 13	H (3, N = 90) = 1.62 $p = 0.66$	H (2, N = 90) = 4.25 $p = 0.12$	H (2, N = 90) = 4.24 $p = 0.12$
Belief 14	H (3, N = 90) = 2.37; $p = 0.50$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.93 $p = 0.38$	H (2, N = 90) = 1.93 $p = 0.38$

Finally, in the third analysis, the teachers were grouped into three groups according to whether they opted more for future native-likeness (Belief 1) or future plurilingualism and interculturalism (Belief 5). In order to check if there was a correlation between their preferences and the practices they opted for, a *chi*-square test was applied. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 5.

Table 5 The relationship between teacher practices and their intercultural stance (*chi*-square analysis)

Classroom practices	Native-like competence (1)	Undecided (2)	Intercultural stance (3)	*Chi*-square
Classroom stress-free atmosphere	20.07	16.80	5.13	3.47, df = 2, $p = 0.18$
Sole L2 use	10.03	8.40	2.57	1.21, df = 2, $p = 0.55$
Attractive materials	27.71	23.20	7.09	2.86, df = 2, $p = 0.24$
Additional L2 input (media, books, etc.)	11.47	9.60	2.93	2.78, df = 2, $p = 0.25$
Class interior and decorations	3.34	2.80	0.86	3.99, df = 2, $p = 0.14$
Regular assessment	2.39	2.00	0.61	0.33, df = 2, $p = 0.85$
Rewarding	14.33	12.00	3.67	2.39, df = 2, $p = 0.30$
Home revision	5.25	4.40	1.34	1.10, df = 2, $p = 0.58$
Contacts with foreigners	2.39	2.00	0.61	4.19, df = 2, $p = 0.12$
European club	1.43	1.20	0.37	1.30, df = 2, $p = 0.52$
European day of languages	1.91	1.60	0.49	0.80, df = 2, $p = 0.67$
European language portfolio	2.39	2.00	0.61	0.33, df = 2, $p = 0.85$
Theatrical performances	12.90	10.80	3.30	0.80, df = 2, $p = 0.67$
Song contests	8.60	7.20	2.20	0.42, df = 2, $p = 0.81$
Art contests on intercultural topics	4.78	4.00	1.22	15.24, df = 2, **$p = 0.00$**
Meetings with foreigners	3.34	2.80	0.86	7.12, df = 2, **$p = 0.03$**
Final tests	14.33	12.00	3.67	1.27, df = 2, $p = 0.53$

As can be observed from the data, a positive relationship between teacher beliefs and their practices was observed only in two cases. This concerned the correlation between intercultural stance and the practice of using art contests on intercultural topics (*chi*-square 15.23, $p < 0.001$) and meetings with foreigners (*chi*-square 7.12, $p < 0.5$). However, it should be admitted that this correlation concerned very few participants. This is because very few subjects demonstrated an international stance. Yet, those who believed in the necessity of arousing intercultural interest in young learners also did their best to pursue this goal by adequate practices.

5 Discussion

The fact that the majority of YL teachers still hold to the belief that the earlier one starts learning a foreign language, the better is clearly surprising. It shows a repetition of the old cliché that many laypeople believe in, though one would clearly expect greater awareness of the goals of early language teaching from teaching professionals. Equally surprising is the second most frequently indicated statement, namely that very early teaching of languages enhances children's language awareness (i.e., they become aware of the existence of other languages) and metalinguistic awareness (implicit knowledge of rules of phonology, syntax, morphology, etc.). While this statement is found to be generally true in intensive language programs and among naturalistic learners (cf. Bialystok, 2001), it is less applicable to instructed learners in low-input situations. This shows the teachers under investigation do not clearly distinguish between learning a language in naturalistic and instructional settings or the possible outcomes in each of the two situations. Their knowledge of the benefits of early contact with two languages is rudimentary, based on common wisdom rather than empirical data. By contrast, the teachers are hesitant or only in slight agreement with other beliefs describing cognitive or affective benefits of early FL teaching, as is illustrated by the means for the other beliefs, oscillating between 3.5 and 3.9. Among the affective goals is the one calling for development of intercultural interest (belief expressed in statement 5).

These findings are hardly surprising when one considers the fact that only 53.4 % of the teachers had a degree in philology or modern languages, very few of them (33.4 %) had taken a course in methodology of teaching young learners, or expressed a willingness to specialize in teaching this age group (17 %). This suggests that language teachers working with young learners are not very well prepared for this task which can be ascribed to the lack of appropriate training rather than personal variables. Learning about children's linguistic abilities as well as obtaining information about language education policy requirements can only happen via training institutions (also in-service training) or extensive self-study of the literature, the use of the media, etc. However, as the analysis of available data (Tables 1 and 2) shows, only 53.5 % of the participants had received such training. It is also doubtful that they are interested in expanding their knowledge in this

respect if they do not plan to specialize in teaching very young learners and only treat it as a temporary occupation. These findings imply that the status of teaching language to young learners should be raised and become appreciated (also financially), and that more attention should be given to the education of language teachers of young and very young learners. While it is currently recognized that language teachers of YLs can be recruited not only from foreign languages departments (as they lack psycho-pedagogical preparation) but also from the early education departments, it should be recognized that both groups should have the benefit of courses covering critical issues in foreign language pedagogy. They should be informed of the goals of teaching languages to young learners, namely, they should be made aware that affective (including developing an intercultural stance) and general cognitive benefits may exceed linguistic benefits that can be obtained in a classroom situation (i.e., with a low amount of L2 input) and thus should be emphasized more. This implication may be further corroborated by the fact that the only correlations between teacher beliefs and their demographic characteristics, that is the education level and FL qualifications were related to the assumption that, thanks to early language learning, children can become more open and self-confident with others (belief 4). This statement, pointing to affective benefits, obtained high mean scores only in subjects who probably had had sufficient contact with foreigners and who had obtained their MA degrees from foreign languages departments, and thus may have received appropriate instruction in teaching YLs.

The general lack of correlations between teacher views on the goals of early foreign language learning and their instructional practices (except for two instances) may imply that even teachers who generally believe in 'the earlier, the better' attitude, are little aware of their the fact that they can have a significant influence on the outcomes of their teaching. It can be speculated that the teachers' lack of goal orientation may have been impacted by their relatively short experience in teaching, as most of them were young individuals with short teaching experience.

To summarize, it can be boldly concluded that VYL teachers' beliefs about the goals of early teaching of foreign languages are often false beliefs, thus proving lack of familiarity with recent research findings in applied linguistics (such as those on the role of the age factor and early bilingualism) as well as key trends and recommendations in early language teaching. Needless to say, less informed teachers find it harder to link their beliefs with their teaching practice and thus it cannot be expected they will be agents of the European language policy, unless they receive proper instruction and education. This suggests that teacher training institutions should take all measures possible to properly prepare teachers to work with young learners, not only in linguistic but also pedagogical terms. The need for even better educated language teachers of young learners will grow, as the European language policy guidelines are implemented further and FL instruction at the pre-primary level becomes obligatory for all children.

6 Conclusions and Limitations to the Study

Certainly this questionnaire study does not give an exhaustive picture of the YL teacher beliefs. It should be recognised that self-selection of the subjects was a certain limitation to the study: although a survey was sent/addressed to practically all teachers of YLs working in kindergartens in the Cracow district, many of them did not return the survey. Therefore the studied sample does not constitute the true representation of all YL teachers. However, I believe it shows a certain phenomenon. The study should be treated as diagnostic in nature. Its aim was to characterise the current-state of the teachers' professionalism and provide implications for further teacher education. It should be recognised that survey results present only a very general picture of what beliefs YL teachers hold and definitely call for further investigation of a more qualitative nature.

Still, they give valuable insight into the rationale behind the early teaching of languages. They clearly show there is a need for wider advocacy of research findings on very early teaching of languages, emphasising that "the earlier, the better" view is not true in instructional settings, and that it takes much more to obtain native-likeness in a FL in the future than merely an early start.

Since it is expected that teachers be more knowledgeable professionals than lay people (e.g. parents), more care should be taken in the education of language teachers of young learners, and should be obligatorily informed of critical findings in applied linguistics (such as the problem of the age factor in instructional settings), and language policy guidelines.

Subsequently, it is believed more data and correlational results will be obtained as more and more teachers choose teaching very young learners as their professional career and the status of this occupation is raised.

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Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Assessing Young Learners

Adrian Golis

Abstract This paper explores some of the beliefs and practices typical of English teachers working with children in Polish schools. A questionnaire with 32 respondents, all coming from rural areas of Poland, was employed to learn about the attitudes to young learner assessments, the tools used for conducting it, the organization of the evaluation process, and the self-perceived assessment competence of the teachers. The survey was based on similar studies from various countries, interviews with five teachers and the author's experience in working with children. The results seem to be largely in line with the findings of other studies on primary English teachers' beliefs and practices. First of all, assessment is not a priority for teachers, who mostly see it as their obligation, but do not believe that pupils in fact benefit from it. Furthermore, traditional tools, such as paper-and-pencil tests are preferred. Teachers try to make the assessment process quick and easy to administer, since they mostly award numerical grades and use ready-made tests offered by publishers. Interestingly, younger teachers seem to differ from their more experienced colleagues in some respects, such as the value they attach to assessment or their more satisfying pre-service training.

1 Introduction

Teaching foreign languages to children requires a special approach, taking into account both the cognitive and emotional characteristics of young learners. In order to be successful, teachers must be aware of their pupils' needs. The assessment of the learning outcomes in this age group is a difficult matter, as traditional procedures cannot be applied. Traditional tests can do more harm than good and should, if used at all, only serve as one of many ways to acquire data on the learning process. This is due to the fact that children do not exhibit their full potential in traditional paper-and-pencil tests (Katz, 1997, p. 2). Furthermore, it is believed that

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measuring actual progress in language learning is less important than keeping the children motivated (Brumen & Cagran, 2011, p. 544). Not only the linguistic results are important, but also the involvement and hard work of a pupil. These can be seen as even greater achievement, because early instruction is considered a preparatory stage for further language learning. Research into the assessment of young foreign/second language learners has gained attention only in the last two decades, along with the increased interest in all issues related to the special case of teaching children. This is due to the lowering of the starting age of foreign language instruction, which can be witnessed around the world. *Assessment* and *evaluation* are not always synonymous, but for the purpose of this article, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

2 Review of Literature

Numerous attempts have been made to capture some of the beliefs and practices of foreign language teachers in relation to young learner assessment. The studies which will be mentioned here come from countries such the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Turkey, Taiwan or Cameroon, but there is virtually no research of assessment practices and beliefs of English teachers working with children in Poland. In order to prepare the reader for the results of the Polish study presented further in this article, I am going to discuss a selection of the most relevant findings from the research conducted in other countries.

Teachers' attitude to assessment is an important issue, as it helps to realize how much attention is given to the evaluation of pupils. As reported by Brumen and Cagran (2011, p. 541) on the basis of studies from Italy, Scotland and Austria, assessment it is not a top priority for language teachers working with children. Taking into account some reported cases of assessment-driven instruction (Cameron, 2001, p. 215; Gordon, 2007, p. 206), not paying too much attention to evaluating children can however be seen as a positive sign. The opposite, that is putting young learners into an atmosphere of competition and teaching them according to the standards, are contradictory to the goals of early language instruction. In a study of 108 primary foreign language teachers in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Croatia (Brumen & Cagran, 2011, p. 553), most of the respondents (86.1 %) agreed that they do approve of assessing children. Teachers feel responsible for the assessment and see it as one of their natural obligations, as well as a part of their everyday work, regardless of learners' age. They conduct assessment to inform learners and their parents about the progress (Brumen et al., 2009, p. 11; Çetin, 2011, p. 103), but also to gain information about their own teaching (Rea-Dickins & Rixon, 1999, p. 96, cited in Cameron, 2001, p. 217; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000, p. 223).

It is unsettling that the attitude to assessment shown by many primary teacher is that of "assessment of education" rather than "assessment for education" (Tante, 2010, p. 33; Lambert & Lines, 2000, p. 5). Teachers tend to evaluate the outcomes

of learning and attach importance to test scores, but they are often unable to make assessment one of the tools to facilitate learning on the classroom level. Tante (2010, p. 32) argues, based on the results of his questionnaire study of 262 primary English teachers in Cameroon, that teachers are often incompetent to evaluate children. Their understanding of assessment is very limited and based on traditional methods and techniques, which, as was stated in the introduction, cannot always be successfully applied to children. Furthermore, a study carried out in Taiwan revealed that teachers perceive themselves much more competent in introducing traditional forms of assessment (Yang, 2008, p. 100), such as paper-and-pencil tests, rather than projects, language portfolios or peer assessment.

An interesting finding, confirming the obvious presumption that teachers' beliefs about and practices in assessment vary according to the length of the teaching experience, was made by Chan (2008, p. 54) in his study of 520 primary English teachers in Northern Taiwan. The relationship between the years of service and the assessment beliefs and practices turned out to be statistically significant, allowing the conclusion that teachers change their assessment beliefs and practices over their careers, and are influenced by varying pre-service and in-service training experiences. However, not only the length of service can affect the teachers in their assessment, but also the local educational authorities (Morris et al., 2000; cited in Cojocnean, 2012, p. 56). When schools are asked to report the results of tests, individual teachers strive to achieve high average scores. This problem is recognized worldwide (Cameron, 2001, p. 215) and leads to test-driven instruction, which can mean devoting significant amounts of lesson time to testing strategy training and, in consequence, to curriculum narrowing. In other words, teachers who are put under the pressure of high scores in tests do not teach the language anymore, but rather some parts and aspects of it that are likely to be tested. What is more, this situation changes the balance between testing and learning and "might lead to all tests being treated as ends in themselves rather than as means to the end of good learning" (Black, 2001, p. 13).

It is important to learn what teachers evaluate in their English lessons and how they do it. It seems, based on a study from three Easter European countries (Brumen et al., 2009, p. 13), that oral interviews and paper-and-pencil tests (developed by the teachers or ready-made) are the most popular means of evaluation, followed by self-assessment. It is obvious that, when planning assessment, teachers are forced to take the limited classroom hours and their own time outside of school into consideration, so structured observation and language portfolios are much less commonly used, as many teachers avoid activities which are time-consuming (Chan, 2008, p. 54). The vast majority of assessment events are limited to traditional forms, such as oral and written tests, aiming to identify the learners' strengths and weaknesses in an easy-to-correct way. This is not necessarily in accordance with the main objectives of early language teaching, which are creating and maintaining motivation and a positive attitude to language learning. Another worrying preference expressed by teachers is connected with giving feedback to learners. As was discovered by Brumen et al. (2009, p. 12), numerical grades are much preferred to descriptive ones. Such grades are quick and easy to administer, but they only serve

the time pressure, not the pupil, who is left without any relevant feedback. Numerical grades only show the learner his or her place in a class ranking, but do not help to improve the learning process.

I would like to draw attention to one more point, brought up by many authors (Brumen & Cagran, 2011, p. 541; Cameron, 2001, p. 216; Chan, 2008, p. 47; McKay, 2006, p. 64; Tante, 2010, p. 32), which is lack of appropriate teacher training in assessing children. It turns out that many practitioners feel incompetent to evaluate young learners due to their insufficient pre-service training or missing opportunities of in-service training. There is thus a great need for creating opportunities to improve these competences.

3 The Study

3.1 Research Rationale

As mentioned before, there is no data on assessment beliefs and practices of English teachers working in Polish primary schools. When Brumen and Cagran (2011) planned their study of teachers' beliefs and practices in Eastern Europe, they intended to include, among other countries, Poland, but their contact persons reported that "teachers showed lack of interest to complete the questionnaire" (p. 547). This prevented the first study of this kind in Poland from happening. Nonetheless, it is essential to learn how Polish primary foreign language teachers deal with evaluating their pupils for at least two reasons. First of all, curricular changes, introduced in Poland in the recent years, place great importance on foreign language instruction, making English (or a different foreign language) an obligatory subject from the beginning of schooling. During the six years of primary school pupils are provided with at least 480 h of foreign language instruction. This is accompanied by clear goals and precise outcomes included in the core curriculum. Secondly, the efficiency of this language instruction is tested during an external, national exam at the end of grade six, introduced in 2015. The place of a foreign language in the primary curriculum is now clearly defined, but the changes are connected with the need to reflect on the expected outcomes of early language instruction. Polish primary language teachers are, for the first time, faced with the expectation to teach to the standards. Research into teachers' beliefs and practices is encouraged worldwide, as it helps to capture at least a small sample of the world behind the classroom door and to find ways of improving it. This small-scale study is an attempt to gather at least some data on Polish language teachers working with children.

3.2 Method

In the following sections, I am going to describe the research project, presenting the research question, the participants of the survey and the research instrument.

3.2.1 Research Questions

The general research questions I wanted to find the answers to were:

1. What tools do the teachers use to assess young learners?
2. How is the assessment organized?
3. What are the teachers' attitudes to young learner assessment?
4. How do teachers perceive their own competence in assessing young learners?

3.2.2 Participants

The participants of the questionnaire survey were 30 females and two males, aged 24–52, all teaching English to learners in lower primary school (grades 1–3). Their teaching experience ranged from four to 29 years in service, while 15 respondents had been in service for less than 10 years, 14 of them for 10 years or longer, and three did not state their teaching experience. They were all fully qualified English teachers, 13 with an MA and 15 with a BA in English philology, four holding a degree in a different subject and a language certificate. Having qualifications to teach an additional subject was declared by 15 participants. Only two of them taught exclusively learners in lower primary school, while 30 worked with other age groups as well, of which only 10 perceived the work with children as their main specialty. The size of their schools was small (only one class in each year) in the case of 19 participants and the majority (22 respondents) were the only English teacher in their school. When looking at the location of the schools the participants worked in, it is clear that the group was quite homogenous, with 26 respondents working in village schools, six in small town schools and none employed in a city. This is due to the fact that all the respondents of the survey were participants of the XI English Teaching Market—a teacher training conference organized and funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation for teachers coming from disadvantaged regions, which was held in Stare Jabłonki in July 2013. The teachers completed the questionnaire as an introductory part to a training workshop on young learner assessment that I was running. They all showed initial interest in the topic, as they did not choose one of many other training sessions offered at the same time.

3.2.3 Research Procedure and Instrument

I planned the study as a questionnaire survey, intended to capture some of the beliefs and practices of English teachers working in lower primary schools (grades 1–3), related to assessment and motivational strategies. The questionnaire was a multiple-choice one, offering answers to select from. All the questions, as well as the suggested answers, were based not only on similar or related research from various countries and my experience as a primary English teacher, but also on informal interviews with five primary English teachers about their assessment beliefs and practices. The questionnaire was then pre-tested with the same group of five teachers and no changes were introduced apart from some minor editorial alterations.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, of which 12 are relevant for this article, and was divided into five parts: A—practices in young learner assessment, B—beliefs about young learner assessment, C—teacher training in young learner assessment, D—practices in motivating young learners, and E—beliefs about motivating young learners. For the purpose of this paper, only parts A, B and C of the questionnaire will be discussed, as the motivational strategies were not meant as the subject of this article. In order to learn more about the participants of the study, as well as to look at possible differences in the answers provided by various group of respondents, a section asking for personal data was included as well. It inquired about the teachers' age, sex, length of professional experience (in years), education level (BA or MA in English philology, teachers' college diploma, BA or MA in a different subject than English and a language certificate or no formal qualifications to teach English), possible qualifications for other school subjects than English, location and size of the school they work in (village, small town or city school; one class or more in each year), being the only English teacher or one of many in their school and their self-perceived attitude towards teaching learners in grades 1–3 (the only age group they taught; one of the age groups they taught, but their main specialty; one of the age groups they taught, but not their main specialty). All the questions were written in Polish, to avoid confusion and to make the filling-in process easier for the respondents, of whom I initially suspected varied levels of English proficiency.

The questionnaire fitted a pre-planned three-page format and was clear and easy to read. I included a short introduction, explaining the goal of the questionnaire, but most of all raising the expectation for the participants to reflect on authentic and not ideal classroom situations. The anonymity of the questionnaire was assured as well, but I asked the participants, who were interested in seeing the presentation of collective results, to put their e-mail address on the back of the questionnaire form. When preparing the questions and possible answers to choose from, I tried to use simple but precise language. I relied on my experience as a teacher, but also on the opinions of my five teacher colleagues, who by then had pre-tested the questionnaire. Furthermore, in a short introduction to the survey, I explained that I am only interested in real-life reactions and not in what the teacher thinks should be done. I know from my own teaching practice that very often teachers are well aware of the

reactions which are pedagogically correct or expected from them in a given classroom situation, but, for various reasons (such as time constraints or just laziness), they act differently. What I wanted to learn from the questionnaires was what the participants really think and do, not what they believe is appropriate.

I was quite surprised that only two teachers used the opportunity to receive the global results of the survey by writing their e-mail address on the back of the questionnaire. The reason for this is unlikely to be lack of interest in the topic, as all the participants to come to the workshop on young learner assessment, during which the questionnaires were completed, voluntarily and choosing it over many other sessions available. I believe the reason for not giving the e-mail addresses, even if it meant not learning the results of the survey, was not to be in any way identified with the answers given in the questionnaire, which surely can be seen as a sign of honesty when giving the answers.

3.2.4 Results

In this section, I am going to discuss the findings of the survey. All the results will be presented in percentages of the answers given by the respondent groups to each of the suggested answers. As mentioned before, teachers' beliefs and practices vary according to the length of teaching experience (Chan, 2008, p. 54). I am going to show the results scored by two subgroups of teachers, the ones with shorter (up to 10 years) teaching experience and those being in service for 10 years or longer, when some interesting differences between them were visible. Unfortunately, three of the respondents did not state their age and teaching experience in the questionnaire, so their answers, although included in the global results, could not be taken into account when presenting the results of the subgroups. The order of the presentation will follow the research questions mentioned before. More in-depth comments and a discussion will be presented in the concluding chapter of the paper.

What Tools Do Primary English Teachers Use to Assess Young Learners?

The first question of the survey inquired what the teacher assesses his or her pupils for. The respondents were allowed to choose as many items as applied to them. As can be seen from Table 1, paper-and-pencil tests were the most popular form of assessing pupils, followed by grades for lesson participation and homework. Oral interviews, which were the most popular form of assessing learners in the Eastern European study (Brumen et al., 2009, p. 13), turned out to be less popular in this research group. Interestingly, the respondents with shorter teaching experience assessed lesson participation and projects considerably more often than their colleagues with more years in service.

In the question about the frequency of possible assessment forms and tools, some clear patterns were visible, as presented in Table 2. The finding of Brumen et al. (2009, p. 12) that numerical grades are much preferred to descriptive ones

Table 1 What do you assess your pupils for? Results in percentages

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Paper-and-pencil tests	93	100	97
Oral interviews	71	79	72
Projects	86	64	75
Singing songs, saying rhymes individually	71	79	72
Homework	86	71	78
Notebook/workbook/course book	71	57	63
Active lesson participation	93	71	81

Table 2 How often do you use these forms and tools of assessment? Results in percentages

	A few times in a course book unit	After each course book unit	Once or twice a term	Once a year	Hardly ever	Never
Numerical grades	75	19	0	0	3	3
Descriptive grades	0	3	53	25	6	13
Smileys or symbols	56	6	6	0	13	19
Stickers	27	13	16	3	16	25
Sweets or little prizes	9	6	22	13	16	34
Paper-and-pencil tests	0	91	6	0	0	3
Oral interviews	40	19	19	3	3	16
Homework	78	0	3	0	3	16
Self-assessment sheets	3	38	9	3	6	41
Peer assessment	6	0	13	9	9	63
Observation sheets	0	3	6	25	9	57

seemed to be confirmed in this research group as well, as numerical grades were awarded repeatedly during a sequence in a coursebook by the majority of the teachers, while descriptive grades usually appeared once or twice a term, once a year or never. It seems that the participants appreciated other forms of assessment, such as smileys or symbols (used regularly by more than the half of the respondents). Stickers were regularly used for assessment by 27 % of the teachers, while almost the same amount never used them. There were different opinions on

awarding sweets and little prizes, although the biggest group of participants never applied them. As could be seen in the previous question, paper-and-pencil tests, which were implemented by almost all teachers participating in the survey, seemed to always follow a coursebook unit. Oral interviews, if used at all, usually happened more often than that, just like homework, which most of the participants assessed regularly. Self-assessment, in contrast to the study of Brumen et al. (2009, p. 13), was not a very popular technique among the teachers in this research, as almost half of them never or hardly ever used it. Peer assessment and observation sheets seemed to be even less popular. As stated by Chan (2008, p. 54), time-consuming assessment practices are often avoided by teachers.

Table 3 What kind of paper-and-pencil tests do you use? Results in percentages

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Ready-made tests offered by the publisher	33	36	34
Ready-made tests offered by the publisher, sometimes with modifications	48	36	41
Self-developed tests, sometimes based on those offered by the publisher	13	28	19
Self-developed tests	3	0	3
I never use tests in grades 1–3	3	0	3

When asked about the kind of paper-and-pencil tests that used, most of the respondents chose ready-made tests offered by the publisher of the coursebook, possibly with some alterations (75 %). In the study of Brumen et al. (2009) teachers from Slovenia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic ranked individually developed tests much higher than those taken from coursebooks (p. 12). In this research group, as shown in Table 3, self-developed tests were not popular at all, although it seems that experienced teachers were a little more likely to use them.

How Is Assessment Organized?

In Polish schools, teachers are legally obliged to inform students and their parents or legal guardians about the rules and regulations concerning their assessment (Ministry of National Education, 2007, §4.1). It is an example of educational authorities shaping the assessment practices, which is, contrary to the examples cited in the literature review (Cameron, 2001, p. 215; Cojocnean, 2012, p. 56), for the benefit of the students. However, as visible from Table 4, only four out of five teachers in the research group (with a slight advantage of the more experienced teachers) followed this obligation in their teaching practice. However, 91 % of the respondents, and

Table 4 At the beginning of the school year I inform the pupils what and how I will assess (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Yes	67	93	81
No	33	7	19

among that all the participants with longer teaching experience, declared having an assessment policy available in a written form, as can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 I have an assessment policy available in writing (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Yes	80	100	91
No	20	0	9

It is interesting to learn the respondents' attitudes to numerical grades. According to the directive on assessment (Ministry of National Education, 2007), end-of term and end-of-year assessments for pupils in lower primary school have the form of a descriptive grade (§13.3), while the form of the on-the-run assessment should be established in the internal school assessment policy (§3.4). In other words, individual schools are able to choose only the form of the classroom-based assessment (in form of numerical grades, points, smileys etc.), while summative assessment always has to be descriptive. Because starting from grade four, pupils are assessed with numerical grades in all situations, teachers are often tempted to transfer this easy and quick system onto younger learners as well. As can be seen in Table 6, almost all of the respondents in this survey reported using numerical grades with their pupils, but only one in four introduced the whole scale (from one, which is the worst, to six, which is the best mark) right away. What is even more interesting is that the older teachers showed more caution in using numerical grades, as most of them reported starting with the 'good' marks only at first.

Table 6 What is your attitude to numerical grades in lower primary school? (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
I award all the grades (a full scale)	40	14	25
I mostly award the 'good' grades (fives and sixes, sometimes fours)	13	14	16
At first I award only the 'good' grades but gradually introduce the whole scale	40	64	50
I don't use numerical grades with lower primary students	7	8	9

Even though numerical grades were awarded on an everyday basis by the vast majority of the teachers, not all those grades were included in the register book, as Table 7 shows. On the other hand, only one in five respondents paid increased attention to giving the pupil a proper form of feedback. It is worth mentioning that for less experienced teachers the content of the register book seemed to be slightly more important.

Table 7 What is your attitude to recording the grades in the register book? (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
I believe every assessment situation should be recorded	27	14	19
I believe only the most relevant assessment situations should be recorded	60	57	59
I don't pay too much attention to what is recorded in the register, but to giving feedback to the pupil	13	29	22

What Are the Teachers' Attitudes to Young Learner Assessment?

In part B of the questionnaire, the teachers' attitudes to assessing children were the subject of inquiry. As Table 8 shows, when asked about the most important functions of assessment, most of the participants selected "giving the child and the parents objective feedback" or "motivating for further learning". Not even one teacher mentioned "fostering further child development". No relevant differences were observed between the teachers in the two subgroups. These results seem to be in line with those of Brumen et al. (2009, p. 11) and Çetin (2011, p. 103).

Table 8 What are the most important assessment functions? (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Motivating for further learning	26	23	26
Informing the teacher about the efficiency of the teaching	17	12	14
Fostering further child development	0	0	0
Giving the child and the parents objective feedback	30	27	31
Emphasizing achievements, not weaknesses	7	15	10
Boosting the pupil's self-confidence	20	23	19

Table 9 What is your attitude to assessing children in English lessons? (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
It's an important part of teaching and I pay close attention to it	54	7	28
Assessment is one of the most important and pleasant parts of my job	0	0	0
My pupils will be assessed for the rest of their lives, so I have to prepare them for it	13	21	19
I try to do my legal duty, but in fact I don't give assessment too much attention	20	43	31
I find assessment unnecessary in case of children and it's a bothersome responsibility	13	29	22

As can be seen in Table 9, more than a half of the participants did not give assessment too much attention or found it bothersome and unnecessary. What is particularly interesting is how the preferences of the less experienced teachers differed from those of their colleagues who had more experience. The respondents with shorter in-service time tended to find assessment much more important (54 % paying close attention to it, compared with only 7 % in the opposite subgroup). As was mentioned before, assessment is not a top priority for language teachers (Brumen & Cagran, 2011, p. 541), which seemed to be the case here as well.

How Do Teachers Perceive Their Own Competence in Assessing Young Learners?

Teachers of foreign languages are believed to be largely untrained and incompetent in assessing children (Tante, 2010, p. 32). However, the respondents of this survey seemed to be of a different opinion on their assessment skills, as almost all of them, regardless of teaching experience, perceived their competence as high (see Table 10).

When asked about factors shaping assessment competences and practices, most of the teachers selected trial and error as the main source, as shown in Table 11. Respondents with a shorter in-service time seemed to value their pre-service training, while none of their older colleagues chose this answer. Many of the more experienced teachers mentioned their in-service training and, surprisingly, their own experiences as students, more often.

As can be seen in Table 12, the majority of the participants of the study found their pre-service training in assessment insufficient (53 %) or they could not recall it at all (16 %). While many younger teachers felt prepared in this respect, the same

Table 10 I perceive my knowledge of methods and ways of assessing children as… (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Very high	0	0	0
High	93	86	91
Low	7	14	9
Very low	0	0	0

Table 11 I believe my assessment methods to be mostly the result of… (%)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Good pre-service training	27	0	12
Adjusting to what is realistically possible	13	14	16
Methods and practices in my school which I have to adjust to	13	14	16
My personal experiences as a pupil/student	0	22	9
In-service training	13	22	16
Choosing by trial and error what works best with my pupils	34	28	31

number states the opposite (40 %). Although the respondents see their assessment competences as high, for many of them, the reason for that is clearly not proper pre-service training, which turns out to be insufficient even in case of many younger teachers questioned here.

Table 12 The pre-service training in assessment I received was… (…)

	Respondents with shorter teaching experience	Respondents with longer teaching experience	General
Very intensive and practical	7	14	9
Good enough, I didn't make many mistakes in the first years of service	33	7	22
Insufficient	40	65	53
I wasn't trained in assessing children	20	14	16

Limitations of the Study

I am fully aware of the limitations of this study. First of all, self-reporting is not considered a very reliable form of data collection. The research group was relatively small (32 participants), although large enough to allow some analysis, and quite homogenous. The questionnaire itself was a limitation as well, as it turned out to be quite long (three pages) because of the number of suggested answers. As no open-ended questions were available, the respondents could only rely on the answers included in the questionnaire. However, I decided to conduct the study in this form, as it was the only one possible at the time and I found the opportunity of gathering data from a homogenous group of respondents extremely advantageous.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

Surprisingly, the vast majority of the respondents felt competent in assessment, but they saw their skills as resulting from trial and error rather that from professional training. This raises the question about the quality of this competence and suggests that it only means the ability to administer traditional forms of assessment, which are actually more appropriate for older learners. It seems that the participants preferred traditional, quick and easy-to-administer forms of assessment, such as paper-and pencil tests offered by the publishers, homework and lesson participation. Self-assessment, peer assessment and observation sheets were not very popular. This can be explained by the fact that teachers tend to avoid the most time-consuming techniques (Chan, 2008, p. 54), but also feel incompetent with less common assessment tools (Yang, 2008, p. 100). Compared with other studies, the participants of the survey described here tended to pay less attention to oral interviews and self-assessment and use ready-made tests more often.

The respondents preferred numerical grades to descriptive ones. The latter only were used for summative purposes. However, many of them start with awarding mostly the 'good' grades at first, so they did feel the need to keep children motivated and self-confident. Awarding numerical grades is quick and easy to administer, but the pupils benefit more from personalized feedback, which again requires time and skill. Assessment was not seen as a top priority for teachers in this research group and was mostly used to inform the pupils and their parents about the progress. Teachers tried to fulfil their obligation to carry out assessment, but mostly did not seem to think that the learners benefitted from it very much. Training teachers to implement some alternative assessment techniques as well as to give proper, personalized feedback to their learners seems to be the most urgent matters.

The finding of Chan (2008, p. 54) that the length of teaching experience is relevant to the beliefs and practices of assessment seems to be confirmed in the study described here. Younger teachers participating in the research differed from their more experienced colleagues in some respects. First of all, they seemed to find assessment more important, but, surprisingly, they were less likely to inform their

pupils of their assessment policies. This can mean that their expectations were less clear even to themselves. Furthermore, less experienced teachers reported assessing projects, lesson participation and their pupils' notebook/workbook/coursebook work considerably more often, but their older colleagues seemed to value the motivational purpose of grades more by awarding the 'good' grades more often. Finally, the teachers who had been in service for less than 10 years generally found their pre-service training more satisfying than their older colleagues. This can be easily explained by the fact that themes connected with teaching young language learners only gained increased attention in Polish teacher training curricula in the last decade.

The study described here was a small-scale project, offering only some insights into the practices and beliefs of the teachers working with children. I hope this first attempt to explore the subject and the questions raised here can initiate a discussion on young language learner assessment practices in Polish schools.

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Techniques Used to Assess Language Areas and Skills at the Lower-Primary Level: Research Results

Katarzyna Rokoszewska

Abstract The present paper focuses on the issue of assessing young foreign language learners in primary school. First, it presents the most important factors and principles in assessing young learners as well as basic assessment methods and techniques. Then, it describes a study which investigated classroom-based assessment implemented to evaluate lower-primary learners of foreign languages. More specifically, following the first part of the study which focussed on the reasons, means and methods implemented to assess young language learners (Rokoszewska, in press), this paper reports the second part of the study which has dealt with techniques used to test young learners' receptive and productive knowledge of particular language areas and the development of language skills. In general, the results indicate that teachers use a wide variety of techniques to test young learners' language areas and skills. The techniques often come from ready-made pen-and-paper tests and are mostly appropriate to the age and level of the learners. Yet, the most common techniques used by the teachers focus on single language items and thus reflect the view of language as a collection of discrete items which are not connected into a meaningful discourse found in natural communication.

1 Introduction

As the starting age of learning a foreign language has been lowered in many countries, including Poland, many teachers are faced with the challenge not only to teach foreign languages to young learners but also to evaluate their progress. The need for formal assessment of young learners is questioned by some methodologists who emphasize the primacy of attitude goals as opposed to content goals. However, school practice clearly points out that teachers are obliged to assess young learners

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in the formal educational system. It needs to be emphasized, however, that assessment based on classroom tests constitutes a rather under-researched area, in contrast to assessment based on standardized tests. Furthermore, assessing language learners at the lower-primary level requires a different approach because of the child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. The aim of this paper is to present the second part of a questionnaire study whose aim was to investigate the reasons for and means of assessing young learners. The second part of the study focuses on techniques used to assess the receptive and productive knowledge of particular language areas as well as the development of language skills in young learners.

2 Assessing Young Language Learners

Assessing young language learners differs from assessing older learners due to such factors as age, aims, course contents, methods and techniques, and learning theories (Cameron, 2003). Assessment should be adjusted to the child's motor, linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional development. It should reflect the focus on attitude goals, which refer to attitudes and beliefs, as opposed to content goals, which refer to particular language areas and skills (Halliwell, 1996). It should be also based on course contents and techniques characteristic of teaching young learners. Furthermore, assessment should be congruent with learning theories, especially with the main concepts of the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In a similar vein, McKay (2006) lists three features which distinguish young from adult learners and which entail the need for a special approach to classroom-based assessment for the former. The first feature refers to children's developmental needs which have to be taken into consideration as they influence their motivation, concentration and involvement. The second feature refers to the development of literacy knowledge and skills taking place during the development of L2, which contrasts sharply with adult mature literacy. The third feature is children's vulnerability to criticism and failure, accompanied with their need for individual positive attention.

In line with the factors mentioned above, Cameron (2003) enumerates the principles for assessing children. The principles advocate the learning-centred perspective which emphasizes the role of social interaction and which juxtaposes scaffolded (Gipps, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) or dynamic (Feuerstein, Rand, & Hoffman, 1979) assessment with taking a test in silence and isolation. The principles also advocate adopting a more organic view of language learning, which contrasts sharply with a false concept of a linear accumulation of grammar and vocabulary items. In line with the principles, assessment should support learning and teaching by motivating learners, providing the model of language, encouraging further learning, and helping to plan lessons as well as improving courses and programs. What is more, assessing should be adjusted to learning in that assessment activities should be familiar to children, both in content and form, and in that not

only tests but also some alternative methods should be used. Finally, assessment should be valid, reliable and fair (Gipps, 1994).

When assessing young language learners, it is important to distinguish between different assessment methods and techniques. In general, assessment is divided into *formative*, *summative* and *global* (Komorowska, 2002). Assessment methods are *conventional* and *unconventional*. The conventional methods include tests, which are divided with respect to form into *pen-and-paper tests* and *oral tests* (Komorowska, 2002), with respect to content, into *tests based on pictures*, *words* or *both* (Komorowska, 2002), and with respect to function, into *achievement*, *proficiency*, *diagnostic*, *prognostic* and *placement tests* (Heaton, 1990; Hughes, 1989). In addition, tests are classified as *norm-referenced tests* (N-RTs) and *criterion-referenced tests* (C-RTs). The former compare learners' performance in relation to each other, whereas the latter in relation to language material or skills (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). A comprehensive set of testing techniques used to assess particular language areas and skills in young learners has been proposed by Komorowska (2002), and by Szpotowicz and Szulc-Kurpaska (2009). Unconventional methods of assessment for children include mainly observation, portfolio, self-assessment and peer-assessment (Gordon, 2007; O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Pinter, 2006; Rixon, 2007) as well as informal questioning, oral interviews, musical presentations, recitations, presentations, projects, products and journals (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Moon, 2000).

A survey by Rea-Dickins and Rixon (1999) reveals that 93 % out of 120 European teachers assess children, and that 87 % of the teachers understand the purpose of assessment as helping their teaching. However, classroom realities show that assessment is often carried out in conflict with the principles advocated in teaching and learning young learners (Rea-Dickins, 2000). Similar studies were conducted in different countries but not in Poland. Therefore, it is hoped that the present research project will provide useful insights into classroom-based assessment at the lower primary level. The aim of the first part of the project was to determine reasons, means and methods used by foreign language teachers to assess young learners (Rokoszewska, in press). This part of the project revealed that 98.8 % teachers believed that they should regularly assess learners' results in learning a foreign language in grades 1–3 and that they did so in their teaching practice. The teachers reported using mainly formative and summative, as opposed to global assessment. The rationale behind assessing young learners was providing information about the learners' results to the teacher, learners and parents. The most important specific reasons for assessment included obtaining information about learners' progress, encouraging systematic learning, motivating learners to learn, fostering individual work and autonomy, and giving grades. Reasons such as evaluating teaching methods and techniques, and modifying the plan of learning and teaching by the teacher, were also quite important. The least important reasons included controlling the quality of the teacher's work, school system and education system as well as ranking learners from the best to the worst, or stimulating competition. With respect to the frequency of assessment, most teachers said that they assessed young learners on a daily basis. They expressed the results of such

assessment in the form of grades or grades and comments, as opposed to symbols while on the certificate they used descriptions. The learners were assessed according to a scale which was composed by the teacher, a group of FL teachers or a school board. Different scales were binding in schools but their common characteristic was a low level required to pass and a very high level to succeed. The teachers reported using conventional and unconventional assessment methods. The former included ready-made achievement pen-and-paper tests based on words and pictures, whereas the latter comprised informal questioning, products, musical presentations and recitations but not presentations, reports, projects, journals or formal as opposed to informal observation. The teachers did not use portfolios, self-assessment and peer assessment. The most frequently assessed areas were vocabulary and pronunciation as opposed to grammar and spelling, while the most frequently assessed skills were speaking and listening, as opposed to reading and writing. The teachers also assessed other learners' characteristics, such as work during a lesson, motivation, co-operation and risk-taking, but not self-esteem, self-confidence and belief in one's abilities. What is more, they took into account learners' attitude to the target language but not to its users and their culture, not to mention the attitude to learning foreign languages in general. When asked about the problems in assessing young learners, the teachers listed issues related to organization, such as insufficient time, few lessons, large classes, the requirement of testing in the first grade, lack of parental involvement. However, they mostly complained about learning problems that young learners had, such as misunderstanding instructions, poor writing skills, dyslexia, hyperactivity, and inability to do test tasks. In general, the results are similar to the findings of the research undertaken in other European countries in that it appears that classroom-based language assessment at the lower-primary level is not conducted in full congruity with the principles discussed at the beginning of this section. The second part of the study further explored classroom-based assessment at the lower-primary level by focusing in detail on techniques used to test different language areas and skills.

3 The Study

3.1 Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the present study was to investigate techniques used to assess young learners' receptive and productive knowledge of particular language areas and the development of particular language skills. The study is both qualitative, as it was based on a questionnaire, and quantitative, as some basic statistical procedures were implemented. The following research questions were formulated:

- What techniques do teachers use to test young learners' receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation?

- What techniques do teachers use to test young learners' language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing?

3.2 Method

The participants were 84 primary school teachers of English, 80 females and 4 males. The teachers came mainly from the Silesian province (69 teachers). Most of them worked in public (79 teachers), as opposed to private schools (5 teachers). Around half of the teachers worked in the city (41 teachers), and the other half in small towns (12 teachers) and villages (31 teachers). As far as the subjects' education is concerned, 82 teachers held a degree in English philology, with 24 having a BA degree and 58 an MA degree. Some teachers also had an educational background in other disciplines, such as lower-primary education, pedagogy, psychology, Polish philology, music, and computer studies. As far as their methodological preparation for teaching young learners is concerned, 37 teachers indicated a separate methodological course during their studies, 14 teachers mentioned post-graduate studies, and 18 teachers pointed to methodological courses. On average, the subjects had 12.4 years of teaching experience in general (from 1 to 35 years), and 8.9 years of experience in teaching young learners (from 1 to 25 years). When asked about their teaching preferences for specific age groups, 35 teachers indicated lower- primary level (grades 1–3), 49 teachers indicated upper-primary level (grades 4–6), seven teachers pointed out junior high school, and six teachers - senior high school. The teachers taught on average around four groups of young learners per year (from 1 to 6). The groups were either small (4–8 learners), medium-sized (9–15 learners) or large (28–30 learners). The learners had usually two lessons of English per week in public schools and five lessons in private schools. They were taught according to such course books as *Bugs world*, *New happy house*, *English adventure*, *Our discovery island*, or *New bingo plus*.

The instrument used in the present study took the form of a questionnaire composed by the present author and consisted of three parts. The first part referred to general information about schools, teachers, learners and classes. The second part investigated the reasons, means and methods of assessment. It included 14 general questions with a number of sub-questions (Rokoszewska, in press). The third part focused in detail on techniques used to assess particular language areas and skills (Komorowska, 2002; Rokoszewska, 2011). It included 11 parts, each consisting of 10–12 closed-ended questions for which the subjects were requested to indicate the answer on a five-point Likert-type scale (1—*never or almost never*; 2—*seldom*; 3—*sometimes*; 4—*usually*; 5—*always or almost always*). The techniques were briefly explained to the respondents in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed in person and via e-mail among primary school teachers of foreign languages. More specifically, they were sent by e-mail to primary schools in the Silesian province mainly around Czestochowa, distributed to teachers during teacher training

sessions on methodology, and administered by students during their teacher training at school. Next, they were filled in anonymously and sent back by e-mail or post, and delivered by the students. Finally, the questionnaires were statistically analyzed by means of Excel, which involved calculating means and standard deviations.

3.3 Results

The results indicate that, in order to test the receptive knowledge of vocabulary (Table 1), teachers usually use TPR techniques (M = 4.3), in which the learner's task is to listen to the teacher's commands and carry them out, the technique of linking words with pictures (M = 4.2), in which the learner is asked to read words and link them with appropriate drawings, the picture technique (M = 4.0), in which the learner is required to listen to the word uttered by the teacher and point to one out of two or three pictures which illustrate this word, the technique of numbering pictures (M = 4.0), in which learners respond to commands, such as "Number one is the cat", the technique of colouring pictures (M = 3.9), in which learners listen to and respond to commands, such as "Colour the cat red", and the technique of grouping words (M = 3.8), in which learners need to read a list of words and group them into categories (e.g., sport, clothes, food). From time to time, the teachers use techniques such as drawing (M = 3.6), whereby the learner responds to instructions like "Draw a big ball", odd one out (M = 3.5), which requires the learner to read a group of words and circle the one that does not match the rest, multiple choice based on pictures (M = 3.5), in which the teacher says a word and the learner's task is to circle one out of three or four pictures that illustrates it, true or false based on pictures (M = 3.6), in which the teacher utters a given word and the learner circles

Table 1 Techniques used to test the receptive knowledge of vocabulary

Testing receptive knowledge of vocabulary			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Picture technique—"Show me what I am talking about"	**4.0**	0.90
2.	Picture technique with context—"Choose the right picture"	3.5	1.08
3.	TPR techniques (commands)	**4.3**	0.79
4.	Odd one out	3.5	1.07
5.	Grouping words	**3.8**	0.99
6.	Multiple choice based on pictures	3.5	1.05
7.	True or false based on pictures	3.6	1.00
8.	Numbering pictures	**4.0**	0.92
9.	Colouring pictures	**3.9**	0.93
10.	Drawing	3.6	0.96
11.	Linking words with pictures	**4.2**	0.77
12.	Other	–	–

yes or *no* depending on whether the picture illustrates the given word, and the contextualized picture technique (M = 3.5), in which the teacher produces a sentence with a given word and the learner's task is to point to one out of two or three pictures.

Table 2 Techniques used to test the productive knowledge of vocabulary

Testing productive knowledge of vocabulary			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Describing single pictures	**4.6**	0.64
2.	Describing a large picture	**4.0**	1.00
3.	Picture technique with context	3.5	0.92
4.	Pantomime	3.7	1.02
5.	Labelling pictures	3.3	0.97
6.	Labelling pictures with a model	**4.1**	0.76
7.	Filling in the gaps (open gap-fills)	3.3	0.98
8.	Filling in the gaps with a model (close gap-fills)	**3.9**	0.87
9.	Oral translation	3.2	1.20
10.	Written translation	*2.6*	1.34
11.	Writing down words from memory	*2.9*	1.23
12.	Other	–	–

In order to test the productive knowledge of vocabulary (Table 2), the teachers most often ask learners to describe single pictures (M = 4.6) or single items in a larger picture (M = 4.0). They also often ask learners to label pictures (M = 4.1) or fill in the gaps (M = 3.9) on the basis of a model. The technique of labelling pictures with a model requires learners to copy words from a list or table under appropriate pictures. If the words are not given, learners are required to write the words they remember (M = 3.3). When filling in the gaps with a model, the learner has to read the sentence and write from memory a word which is shown in the picture (close-gap fills). If pictures are not provided next to the gaps, the learner has to first guess the missing item and recall its name (open gap-fills) (M = 3.3). Furthermore, the teachers quite often use pantomime (M = 3.7), during which one learner shows various things, like jobs, animals or actions, while another provides the names for them. Sometimes the teachers use the contextualized picture technique (M = 3.5), in which the teacher provides a sentence with a gap and the learner has to fill it in on the basis of a picture, as in "Betty's ball is very…" (a picture with a girl holding a big ball). As far as L1 translation is concerned, the teachers admit that they sometimes use oral translation (M = 3.2) and seldom written translation (M = 2.6). In these techniques, the teacher provides words in L1 and the learner is instructed to say or write their L2 equivalents. Finally, the teachers sometimes ask learners to write down words from memory, for example, numerals from 1 to 10 or days of the week.

In order to test the receptive knowledge of grammar (Table 3), the teachers usually use TPR techniques (M = 4.3), in which learners respond to commands, such

Table 3 Techniques used to test the receptive knowledge of grammar

Testing receptive knowledge of grammar			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Picture technique with context—"Choose the right picture"	**3.9**	094
2.	TPR technique	**4.3**	0.79
3.	Multiple choice based on pictures	**3.9**	0.97
4.	True or false based on pictures (1)	3.7	0.94
5.	True or false based on pictures (2)	3.6	1.13
6.	Colouring	**4.0**	0.98
7.	Drawing	3.7	1.15
8.	Linking pictures	3.4	1.19
9.	Linking sentences with pictures	3.7	0.96
10.	Numbering pictures	**3.9**	0.94
11.	Other	–	–

as "Put the ball on the table", coloring (M = 4.0), in which the teacher describes a picture and learners color it accordingly (e.g., "The teddy bear is wearing blue trousers"), the contextualized picture technique (M = 3.9), in which the teacher provides the learner with a structure in a given sentence and the learner's task is to point to one out of two or three pictures this sentence describes (e.g., "He is jumping"), multiple choice based on pictures (M = 3.9), in which the learner circles the right picture (e.g., "He can swim"), and the technique of numbering pictures (M = 3.9), in which the teacher says sentences with a given structure and the learner numbers the pictures they describe (e.g., "Number 1 - I have dog", "Number two - You have a frog"). The teachers also quite often rely on such techniques as true or false (M = 3.6; M = 3.7), drawing (M = 3.7), linking sentences with pictures (M = 3.7) or linking pictures (M = 3.4). The true or false technique may be used in two ways. As was the case with vocabulary, the learner may be asked to circle *yes* or *no*, depending on whether the picture illustrates the teacher's sentence or not (e.g., "I want to swing"), or the learner may be asked to draw a happy or sad face, depending on whether the teacher's sentence is positive or negative (e.g., "I like oranges, I don't like apples"). While drawing, learners may be asked to respond to instructions, such as "Draw a ball under the table". When linking sentences with pictures, the learner's task is to read sentences with a given structure and connect them with appropriate drawings. In contrast, while linking pictures, learners only listen to the sentences produced by the teacher and link two appropriate pictures, as in "Tomek would like to get a train for Christmas" (linking Tomek and a train) or "Ola would like to get a teddy-bear for Christmas" (linking Ola and a train).

When testing the productive knowledge of grammar (Table 4), the teachers usually use mini-dialogues (M = 3.9) and the picture technique (M = 3.8). They quite often ask learners to sing a song (M = 3.7) or recite a rhyme (M = 3.6) which requires repetitive use of a given structure. Equally often the teachers involve learners in pantomime (M = 3.7) and TPR activities (M = 3.5). In the former, one

Table 4 Techniques used to test the productive knowledge of grammar

Testing productive knowledge of grammar			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Picture technique	**3.8**	0.96
2.	Picture technique with context—"Choose the right picture"	3.1	1.18
3.	Recitation	3.6	1.06
4.	Musical presentation	3.7	1.09
5.	Pantomime	3.7	0.97
6.	TPR technique	3.5	0.98
7.	Oral translation	*2.6*	1.22
8.	Written translation	*2.1*	1.20
9.	Mini-dialogue	**3.9**	0.87
10.	Story-telling	*2.8*	1.23
11.	Other	–	–

learner acts out single actions or a sequence of actions and another produces sentences with a given structure (e.g. Present Continuous), whereas in the latter, one learner gives commands to another learner (e.g., "Put the ball in the box"). The contextualized picture technique is used from time to time as well (M = 3.1). In this case, the teacher produces a gapped sentence and the learner fills it in with an appropriate verb form. It is important to point out that storytelling is also occasionally used (M = 2.8). Seldom do the teachers ask young learners for oral (M = 2.6) or written (M = 2.1) translation of sentences with a given structure.

The results of the study show that the teachers sometimes use three techniques which test the receptive knowledge of pronunciation (Table 5). In the first technique, called *Picture and sound—Choose the right picture* (M = 3.0), the teacher provides a minimal pair of words and the learner points to the pictures in the right order, as in *sheep*, *ship*. In the technique called *Picture and sound—Which word is your picture for?* (M = 2.9), the teacher says one word from a minimal pair and the learner chooses the right picture. In the technique called *Minimal-pair words—The same or different?* (M = 2.9), the teacher says two sentences and the learner decides if they are the same or different. Other techniques are rarely used. In the technique *Color and sound—Two colors, three cards* (M = 2.9), the teacher pronounces two sounds or words; if they are the same, the learner is to raise two cards of the same color and if they are different, the learner picks up two cards of a different color. The technique *Movement and sound—A jumping puppet* (M = 2.2) is similar but the learner's response to the teacher's input involves physical action—if the sounds or words are the same, the learner stands still, and if they are different, the learner jumps spreading his or her arms and legs. In the technique called *Number and sound—Give two numbers* (M = 2.3), the teacher pronounces three words for the learner to give the numbers of the words that were the same, as in *cup*, *cap*, *cup*. In the technique *Pantomime and sound—What are we doing now?* (M = 2.5), the

Table 5 Techniques used to test the receptive knowledge of pronunciation and intonation

Testing receptive knowledge of pronunciation and intonation			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Color and sound—Two colors, three cards	*2.4*	1.23
2.	Movement and sound—A jumping puppet	*2.2*	1.08
3.	Number and sound—Give two numbers	*2.3*	1.18
4.	Pantomime and sound—What are we doing now?	*2.5*	1.36
5.	Picture and sound—Which word is your picture for?	**2.9**	1.16
6.	Picture and sound—Choose the right picture	**3.0**	1.17
7.	Minimal-pair words—The same or different?	**2.9**	1.14
8.	Repeated intonation contour—Which sentences have the same melody?	*2.4*	1.27
9.	Other	–	–

teacher pronounces a word and learners act out an activity connected with a given sound, yawning for /a:/, smiling for /i:/, or poking out one's tongue for /ϴ/. The technique *Repeated intonation contour—Which sentences have the same melody?* (M = 2.4) checks the receptive knowledge of intonation. The teacher says three sentences for learners to decide which of them are the same.

In order to test the productive knowledge of pronunciation and intonation (Table 6), the teachers often use imitation (M = 4.5) asking learners to repeat words or sentences with a given sound or sentences with a given intonation contour (M = 4.1), but not to sing the sentence (M = 2.7), that is to repeat the intonation of the sentence in L2 using syllables, as in *la-la-la-la*, instead of words. The technique *Picture—Look and say* (M = 4.1), in which the learner is prompted to say a word with a given sound on the basis of a picture, is usually used.

Table 6 Techniques used to test the productive knowledge of pronunciation and intonation

Testing productive knowledge of pronunciation and intonation			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Imitation—Repeat a word or sentence after me	**4.5**	0.72
2.	Picture—Look and say	**4.1**	0.86
3.	Imitation—Sing this sentence	*2.7*	1.37
4.	Imitation—Repeat a sentence with the right intonation	**4.1**	0.93
5.	Other	–	–

When testing spelling (Table 7), the teachers often rely on tracing (M = 4.4) and unscrambling words (M = 4.0). They usually use techniques such as labelling pictures (M = 4.0) and filling in the gaps with (M = 3.9) or without pictures (M = 3.9) accompanied by a model of the words in the form of a list or box. The corresponding techniques without the model, that is labelling pictures (M = 3.5), open gap-fills (M = 3.1) and open gap-fills with pictures (M = 3.5), which require learners to recall and spell the words, are used from time to time. Activities, such as

Table 7 Techniques used to test spelling

Testing spelling			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Tracing	**4.4**	0.84
2.	Unscramble the words	**4.0**	1.01
3.	Labelling pictures	3.5	1.11
4.	Labelling pictures with a model	**4.2**	1.01
5.	Open gap-fills with pictures—replace a picture with a word from memory	3.5	1.00
6.	Close gap-fills with pictures—replace a picture with a word from the list	**3.9**	1.03
7.	Open gap-fills—fill the gaps with words from memory	3.1	1.07
8.	Close gap-fills—fill the gaps with words from the list	**3.9**	0.91
9.	Partial dictation	*2.6*	1.18
10.	Dictation	*2.0*	1.21
11.	Other	–	–

partial dictation (M = 2.6), during which the learner fills in the gaps in a text read by the teacher, or dictation, during which the learner writes down the whole text, written on the board and erased sentence by sentence (M = 2.0), are seldom used.

As far as the evaluation of language skills is concerned, the results indicate that in order to test listening comprehension (Table 8), the teachers use a number of techniques which involve learners' physical response, the most common being TPR activities (M = 4.5). Other similar activities include listening and raising one's hand on hearing a given word (M = 3.8), and listen and do activities, in which the learner builds something out of bricks or dresses a doll or a teddy-bear according to the teacher's instructions. It is worth mentioning that the technique *Listen and raise your hand* may be very attractive if learners receive hats, masks, headbands or bracelets with pictures of words which they are to recognize, and if, instead of raising the hand, they perform a different action, such as jumping or clapping. The teachers also use a number of techniques based on pictures, such as listening to the text and choosing one out of two or three pictures that illustrates it best (M = 4.2), listening to the text and pointing out the elements of one big picture that are being described, such as people, things, actions (M = 4.3), colouring (M = 4.2) or drawing (M = 4.2) a picture or its parts according to the teacher's instructions, listening to a story and ordering pictures (M = 3.9), and true or false (M = 3.8), in which the teacher illustrates a picture with a given sentence for learners to decide if it is true or false. This technique may be implemented with the use of cards of different colour or different actions for *yes* and *no*, the latter being called *energetic true/false*. The teachers also often use mini-interviews (M = 3.9), during which the teacher asks each learner the same set of questions, for instance about their names, age, likes and dislikes. In this case, listening is checked in a more natural way as it is integrated with speaking, just as it happens in real communication.

Table 8 Techniques used to test listening comprehension

Testing listening comprehension			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Picture technique—Choose the picture that is described	**4.2**	0.94
2.	Pointing out the elements of the picture—Listen and point	**4.3**	0.85
3.	Listen and raise your hand when you hear	3.8	1.11
4.	Listen and colour	**4.2**	1.05
5.	Listen and draw	**4.2**	0.94
6.	Listen and do (build sth from bricks, dress up a doll)	*3.4*	1.20
7.	True or false	3.8	0.99
8.	TPR technique	**4.5**	0.83
9.	Questions and answers—student-teacher mini-interview	**4.2**	0.92
10.	Listen and order the pictures	3.9	1.01
11.	Other	–	–

In order to evaluate learners' speaking skill (Table 9), the teachers rely mainly on student-teacher mini-interviews (M = 3.9), role-plays conducted by two learners (e.g., a shop-assistant and a customer) (M = 3.9), guessing games (M = 4.0), in which the learner has to ask questions such as "Are you a pilot?", "Is it a cat?", or "Have you got a train?" in order to guess what the teacher's or peer's picture shows, musical presentations (M = 3.9) or recitations (M = 3.8). The teachers also quite often use picture description with (M = 3.7) or without (M = 3.6) the teacher's guiding questions. Such techniques as picture differences (M = 3.3), in which the learner's task is to look at two similar pictures and name the differences, odd picture out (M = 3.2), in which the learner examines a set of pictures on a given topic (e.g., animals), or a set which creates a story and explains why a given picture does not fit, and storytelling (M = 3.2), in which a learner describes two, three or more pictures, are used only from time to time.

Table 9 Techniques used to test speaking

Testing speaking			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Picture description	3.6	1.12
2.	Picture differences	3.3	1.12
3.	Storytelling	*3.2*	1.19
4.	Odd picture out	*3.2*	1.19
5.	Picture description with questions in L2	3.7	1.02
6.	Role-play	**3.9**	0.91
7.	Guessing	**4.0**	0.96
8.	Questions and answers—student-teacher mini-interview	**4.2**	0.95
9.	Recitation	3.8	1.05
10.	Musical presentation	**3.9**	1.08
11.	Other	–	–

When testing reading comprehension (Table 10), the teachers most often ask learners to read words, phrases or sentences and link them with the right pictures (M = 4.4) or choose one out of two or three pictures that illustrates them (M = 4.2). Alternatively, they often ask learners to read and colour (M = 4.2), draw (M = 4.0), order pictures (M = 3.8), answer true or false questions on general topics (M = 3.8) or about the text (M = 3.6), and follow instructions (M = 3.5). The true/false technique on general topics involves learners in reading statements, such as "Cucumbers are green", or "Apples are blue", and deciding whether they are true or false. As with listening comprehension, the technique may be implemented in different ways. Reading instructions, the learner may be asked to find the way on a map or link some points to discover a given shape, etc. The study also shows that the teachers quite often use the technique of reading aloud words, sentences or short texts. From time to time, they use the technique of reading and translating sentences from L1 to L2 and vice versa.

Table 10 Techniques used to test reading comprehension

Testing reading comprehension			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Match the right text to the right picture	**4.2**	0.77
2.	Marking the elements of a picture—Read and link	**4.4**	0.74
3.	Read and colour	**4.2**	0.78
4.	Read and draw	**4.0**	0.89
5.	Follow instructions	3.5	1.07
6.	Read and order the pictures	3.8	1.02
7.	True or false—general topics	3.8	0.99
8.	True or false—questions to the text	3.6	1.09
9.	Reading aloud	3.7	0.97
10.	Read and translate	*3.1*	1.25
11.	Other	–	–

When testing writing (Table 11), the teachers usually rely on filling in the gaps (M = 3.5) or picture gaps (M = 3.8) with words, and on inserting missing letters in words below pictures (M = 3.7). From time to time, learners are asked to write simple texts according to a model, for example a letter to Santa Claus, a postcard or a note (M = 3.4), describe pictures with single sentences (M = 3.3), write a short description of a given picture (M = 3.0), and unscramble sentences or short texts (M = 3.1). Sometimes learners are also instructed to read simple questions and answer them in writing, which constitutes a written version of the oral interview mentioned above. Story writing (M = 2.5) and creative writing (M = 2.3) are rarely used, as is punctuating the text (M = 2.4).

Table 11 Techniques used to test writing

Testing writing			
No.	Techniques	Mean	SD
1.	Insert missing letters	**3.7**	1.02
2.	Filling in picture gaps with words	**3.8**	0.99
3.	Filling in the gaps with words	**3.5**	1.15
4.	Punctuate the text	*2.4*	1.23
5.	Describing pictures with single sentences	3.3	1.13
6.	Picture description	3.0	1.19
7.	Unscramble the sentences/text	3.1	1.15
8.	Writing a story	*2.5*	1.28
9.	Questions and answers	3.0	1.22
10.	Simple texts	3.4	1.03
11.	Creative writing (stories, poems)	*2.3*	1.19
12.	Other	–	–

4 Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the teachers use a large variety of techniques to assess young learners' receptive and productive knowledge of language areas as well as the development of language skills. The number and variety of techniques are probably connected with the fact that the teachers assess young language learners on a daily basis not, only by means of tests but also observation. This means that testing techniques often overlap with teaching techniques and that classroom activities have a dual task, namely to teach and to test. The problem is that the teachers declared the use of formal observation, which, in contrast to informal observation, is based on pre-determined criteria, but they do not really keep any record of their observations, which makes assessment intuitive and sketchy (Rokoszewska, in press). What is more, the number and variety of techniques are also probably connected with the fact that the teachers mostly use ready-made tests.

The number and variety of techniques frequently used by the teachers to assess young learners' language areas indicate that they pay more attention to vocabulary than grammar. More specifically, when assessing vocabulary, they pay attention to both receptive and productive knowledge, whereas in assessing grammar, they pay attention mostly to the receptive as opposed to productive knowledge. Such testing practices most probably reflect a teaching practice in which teaching grammar is neglected at the cost of teaching single words. Such instructional practices in turn result from oversimplified beliefs that vocabulary is more important than grammar and that young learners should not be taught grammar because it is abstract. However, vocabulary is more important than grammar in the semantic processing of input, whereas grammar is more important than vocabulary in the syntactic processing of output (Ellis, 2007). In other words, while young learners rely on lexis in

the comprehension of commands, songs or stories, they need grammar to string words together to produce a sentence, a dialogue or a short written text. As Cameron (2003) points out, using words and phrases in oral and written communication leads to the grammaticalization of young learners' language. What is more, learning separate words is possible only for a limited period of time after which words which are not linked and used in a meaningful way are forgotten as new items need to be remembered. Thus, it is necessary to combine vocabulary item-learning with grammar rule-learning (Thornbury, 2002), remembering that learning and teaching grammar should be inductive and informal, as opposed to deductive and formal because of children's cognitive development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Another possible reason for the fact that the teachers rarely test the productive knowledge of grammar may be that they assume that their learners can produce single words but not whole sentences, which raises the question of the quality of teaching and evaluation. With respect to the former, regular background listening and appropriate revision of grammatical structures in meaningful contexts are recommended (Rokoszewska, 2011). With respect to the latter, scaffolding young learners' performance during dynamic assessment, that is helping the young learner produce the whole sentence on his or her own by modelling, mouthing or prompting, is advised (Rokoszewska, 2011). Still another reason may be that the teachers lack the techniques to test the productive knowledge of grammar as well as the skills needed to organize and conduct such evaluation.

As far as the assessment of other language areas is concerned, it is clear that the teachers focus on the productive as opposed to the receptive knowledge of pronunciation, and that intonation, as opposed to spelling, receives little attention. Focusing on the productive aspect of pronunciation is contrary to the main principle of teaching this aspect of language which states that learners should first perceive and then imitate the sounds of a foreign language. Little focus on intonation may be due to lack of belief in its importance as well as lack of knowledge and skills necessary to practice it. However, it is also the consequence of focusing on teaching and testing single words in conventional ways in non-communicative situations. In fact, rhythm and intonation seem to be important factors in such activities for young learners as rhymes, songs, mini-dialogues, role-plays, listening to and reading aloud texts, telling and acting out stories. Finally, in line with the claim that testing spelling is less important than testing vocabulary and pronunciation, spelling receives little attention.

The number and variety of techniques used by the teachers to assess young learners' language skills show that they focus mainly on listening and speaking, as opposed to reading and writing. It should be emphasized that the teachers mostly use techniques which focus on discrete language items, such as specific sounds, letters, words or sentences, but not those which focus on discourse in a given context. Although the teachers use commands, mini-dialogues, interviews or role-plays, often learnt by heart, they do not often fall back on story-telling, story-writing or creative writing. This is rather surprising as it is required in the national curriculum that young learners, after three years of learning a foreign language at the lower-primary level, can understand and tell a simple story.

In general, most techniques used by the teachers to assess young learners' language areas and skills are appropriate to the level of the learners. They seldom use such techniques as written translation of words and sentences, punctuating the text, partial dictation or dictation but they do sometimes employ oral translation of words, writing words from memory, or reading and translating texts. However, it should be pointed out that the questionnaire listed few testing techniques which can be viewed as inappropriate for young learners. This means that the questionnaire might have not revealed other inappropriate testing practices that are used. Still, the teachers did not mention other testing techniques they implement, even though they were asked to do so. This reflects a common problem in questionnaire studies in which respondents are more likely to answer closed-ended as opposed to open-ended questions.

5 Conclusions

The aim of the present paper was to review the main principles of assessing young learners of foreign languages and to present the second part of the study which has focused on techniques used by teachers to assess young learners' receptive and productive knowledge of language areas as well as the development of language skills. The results indicate that teachers use a variety of techniques to assess young learners. As far as language areas are concerned, they mainly evaluate receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary, receptive, as opposed to productive, knowledge of grammar and pronunciation, and focus to some extent on spelling, as opposed to intonation. As far as language skills are concerned, they assess mainly listening and speaking, as opposed to reading and writing. The techniques are mostly appropriate to the level of the learners but they focus on discrete language items in non-communicative situations. Choosing such teaching and testing techniques, the teachers seem to underestimate young learners' language abilities. Such practices seem to leave teachers and young learners half way between the need to communicate and actual participation in meaningful discourse in simple communicative situations.

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Lexis in Writing: Investigating the Relationship Between Lexical Richness and the Quality of Advanced Learners' Texts

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Abstract The aim of this article is to outline key issues in assessing lexical richness, operationalized as consisting of four interrelated components: lexical sophistication, diversity, density and number of errors, as well as to present the results of a study aimed at providing insight into a possible relationship between selected aspects of lexical richness and general quality of learner texts. Compositions written by 65 English philology students were analyzed using two measures of lexical richness, namely diversity and sophistication. The results of the analysis were correlated with holistic scores for compositions, which included such components of assessment as content, organization and language control. Positive correlations were found between holistic scores for composition and the measure of lexical sophistication, but not between holistic scores and lexical diversity of texts. The paper will conclude with a discussion on the extent to which lexical richness influences general text quality, and implications of the results of the study for language instruction at the academic level.

1 Introduction

Current research into vocabulary development in a second or foreign language (L2), which appears to reflect a common perception of lexis as a means to successful receptive and productive language performance, has concentrated in large part on the relationship between a learner's vocabulary size and free productive use of vocabulary in spoken and written contexts. This strand of research incorporates, among others, the assessment of lexical quality of learner-generated texts. A number of contextualized vocabulary measures have focused on what is popularly termed *lexical richness*, defined by Read (2000) in terms of four components: *lexical variation* (or *lexical diversity*), *lexical sophistication*, *lexical density* and *the number of errors*. Lexical variation is described as the proportion of different words to all number of words in a text (running words), and has traditionally been measured by the

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type-token ratio. Lexical sophistication is defined as the proportion of uncommon words in a text, that is advanced vocabulary of low frequency, professional jargon or technical vocabulary. A related term, *lexical originality*, was suggested by Laufer and Nation (1995) to denote the percentage of words in a text used only by a particular writer and no one else in the group. In this measure, a learner's performance is assessed relative to a group and the measurement may produce different results if a text is analyzed relative to different environments. As far as lexical density is concerned, it pertains to the proportion of content words to function words in a text. The last component of lexical richness, the number of errors, is defined by means of a proportion and qualitative characteristics of lexical errors, which include, among others, spelling mistakes, false friends, and other errors resulting from L1 interference.

Lexical richness in writing, especially measured in longitudinal contexts, is believed to depend on a number of factors related to the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition, which is characterized by both knowledge growth and forgetting (Schmitt, 1998). The factors in question include a learner's vocabulary size, its fluctuations resulting from learning which occurs in between the measurements, activating receptive or previously known vocabulary, and giving more conscious attention to vocabulary use as a consequence of an increased proficiency in writing as a skill (Laufer & Nation, 1995). There are also other factors not connected directly with lexical development. These include topic familiarity and the communicative purpose of a task, which may prompt a student to use a specific set of lexical items in response to a language task. This assumption allows a definition of language learning as a dynamic system, in which, according to de Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2007), the interaction of different variables results in changes introduced to the linguistic system.

Read (2000) cautions that measuring any of the components of lexical richness, despite clear formulae and ease of calculation with available software, is quite problematic due to the presence of a few complicating factors. Firstly, adopting an inappropriate unit of counting (i.e., word form, lemma or word family) may lead to inaccuracy of measurement or influence negatively the interpretation of results. Secondly, measures of lexical richness tend to be sensitive to text length as longer texts generally yield poorer indices of lexical variation and sophistication. The third problematic issue is the treatment of errors, which can be corrected and included in the analysis or removed, and the decision concerning either the inclusion or exclusion of the incorrect items depends on the nature of the study undertaken and the research questions that the study is set to answer. Finally, measures of lexical richness are thought not to cope successfully with multi-word units, whose word parts are analyzed as separate items. Thus, the issue of idiomaticity is not taken into consideration in assessing lexical richness, which, in the case of such highly idiomatic languages as English, may be seen as a serious flaw of these instruments.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Type-Token Ratio Measures of Lexical Diversity

Lexical diversity is an indicator of the ability to use vocabulary productively in spoken or written contexts. In spite of various labels it has been assigned, there is general agreement as to how it should be conceptualized: as the range of vocabulary used and avoidance of repetition. Malvern, Richards, Chipere, and Durán (2004, p. 6), for example, refer to it as "an indication of a combination of vocabulary size and the ability to use it effectively". At the same time, however, they express reservations about treating diversity as the ultimate measure of lexical richness. Naturally, good speakers tend to select words for production in an optimal way instead of using large numbers of different words in their texts without a sound communicative reason.

Traditionally, written learner output has been quantified in terms of lexical diversity with the *type-token ratio* (TTR), which provides information concerning the proportion of the number of different words in a text to the total number of words. This pioneering tool has been criticized for low reliability, predominantly owing to the fact that it is strongly affected by text length (e.g., Jarvis, 2002; Malvern & Richards, 2002; van Hout & Vermeer, 2007; Vermeer, 2000). In the case of longer texts, type-token ratios tend to be lower, as the proportion of types to tokens undergoes changes with increasing text length. The longer the text, the fewer the chances for more types to appear and for more words to be repeated and consequently counted as tokens. Several solutions have been suggested with a view to attenuating the problem of text length. It is possible, for example, to cut all texts which undergo analysis to the length of the shortest text. However, it should be acknowledged that such a procedure leads to wasting valuable data which could yield interesting findings if they were to be analyzed (Schmitt, 2010). Another answer to the problem of text length is the use the so-called *standardized type-token ratio*. The instrument divides learner texts into 100-word long fragments and calculates type-token ratios separately for each sample. The final standardized TTR index is arrived at by averaging all the individual calculations.

In response to the limitations of the method, a number of new TTR-based instruments have been created, with the purpose of alleviating or eliminating the problems experienced by researchers who used the traditional type-token ratio in their investigations. One such instrument, which has recently become a standard, accepted measure of vocabulary diversity using type-token analysis is *vocd* (Malvern & Richards, 2002; Malvern et al., 2004). The instrument consists of quite complex statistical software for computations, used with the purpose of calculating D (lexical diversity) by performing random sampling of tokens from a text. The mechanism whereby the system operates may be briefly described in the following manner. TTR calculations are performed on randomly generated 100 sub-samples consisting of 35 tokens, and the obtained TTRs are subsequently averaged. The procedure of sampling and calculating TTRs is repeated 16 times, and for each

repetition samples of growing number of tokens are used (beginning with 35 tokens in the first sampling and ending at 50 tokens in the last sampling). The final product of the calculation comprises 16 means for all samples, on the basis of which a curve for the data is formed. The generated curve is later compared to theoretical curves produced by the D formula. The best fitting curve and its underlying D value are assigned to the text under analysis.

Vocd has one disadvantage as far as practicality of its use is concerned, namely the format required for inputting the text into a computer. The formatting needs to comply with the conventions of the CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System), a databank on first language acquisition), which are relatively complex and therefore text preparation involves additional effort on the part of the researcher. In response to that, an alternative instrument, *D_Tools*, was created by Meara and Miralpeix (2012). The instrument operates on raw text files and therefore requires relatively little editing of the text prior to analysis. Similarly to *vocd*, *D_Tools* calculates a statistic reflecting the lexical variety of a text.

Despite their relative insensitivity to the length of analyzed texts, both *vocd* and *D_Tools* still have some the limitations which apply to all type-token based methods of assessing lexical diversity. No consideration is given in the instruments to the quality of word knowledge, which can be defined in terms of factors such as word frequency or appropriateness of vocabulary use in social contexts. All things considered, even relatively sophisticated and advanced forms of TTR-based lexical variation analysis are rather limited in their scope and, as such, should be accompanied by other lexical richness measures, which can be used with the purpose of complementing the picture of a learner's free productive lexical knowledge (Schmitt, 2010).

2.2 Measures of Lexical Sophistication

One of the weaknesses of lexical diversity measures is that they do not seem to take account of the fact that a message may be conveyed in a variety of ways, ranging from very simple to more sophisticated ones, which may have an impact on a reader's or listener's perception of the text. In other words, methods such as type-token ratio are not informative enough as far as the quality of words tested is concerned (Milton, 2009). This problem was addressed by the *Lexical Frequency Profile* (LFP, Laufer, 1994, 1995; Laufer & Nation, 1995), a comprehensive method of measuring the lexical sophistication of written texts. LFP analysis is used to calculate the percentage of words belonging to different frequency bands as well as of academic vocabulary used in writing. If used repeatedly, the instrument successfully taps into a learner's developing ability to produce lexically richer output. The ability in question is reflected in a growth in the proportion of low-frequency words in comparison to high-frequency vocabulary.

In order to conduct the frequency analysis, student-generated texts are manually edited to correct spelling mistakes and eliminate words used incorrectly, as they

cannot be considered part of a learner's productive lexicon. After pre-processing the text in an electronic text file, the vocabulary used in the text is categorized according to frequency level. The LFP calculates the percentage of words belonging to the following bands/vocabulary levels: 1000, 2000, UWL/AWL and off-list/2K+.[1] Laufer (1995, p. 266), describes the steps of the procedure in the following way:

> Given a composition consisting of 200 word types, the LFP is calculated as follows: If, among the 200 types, 150 belong to the first 1,000 most frequent words, 20 to the second 1,000, twenty to the University Word List, and 10 are not in any list, then we convert these numbers (the number of words at each frequency level) into percentages out of the total of 200 word types. The LFP of the composition is therefore 75 %-10 %-10 %-5 %.

The LFP is claimed to have several advantages over other measures of lexical richness. Unlike lexical originality, it assesses a learner's performance independently of a group and, in contrast to lexical density, it focuses on lexis proper rather than syntax and text cohesiveness. Additionally, the LFP distinguishes between the kinds of words used instead of merely providing information about the proportion of types to tokens in a text, as is the case with measures of lexical variation (Laufer & Nation, 1995).

The general idea of frequency analysis utilized in the pioneering Lexical Frequency Profile has been a vantage point for researchers creating improved measures of lexical sophistication. One example of such an instrument is the *BNC-20 VocabProfile*, available at http://www.lextutor.ca/, which creates a learner lexical profile which is more detailed than the one offered by the original LFP. The VocabProfile breaks the vocabulary in a text into 20 frequency categories, from 1000 level up to 20,000 word levels. Apart from being capable of performing a fine-grained analysis of words used in a text, the new profiler is also based on recent frequency lists, obtained from the British National Corpus, which are more representative of current English than the General Service List (West, 1953) used in the LFP. Additionally, Xue and Nation's (1984) *University word list* was replaced with the *Academic word list*, updated by Coxhead (2000). The analysis of academic vocabulary is offered as a separate section next to the output tables of the frequency profile. Finally, an unquestioned advantage of the *BNC-20 VocabProfile* is that is provides information with respect to the number of types, tokens and word families as well as to the lexical coverage for each frequency band. Thus, the *BNC-20 VocabProfile* combines elements of lexical sophistication and lexical diversity analyses in a single instrument.

[1]Laufer (1995) also proposed a condensed profile, called the *Beyond 2,000*, which looked at the total number of word families not included in the 1000 and 2000 lists.

2.3 Vocabulary in Written Language Production

A body of research into the relationship between vocabulary and writing has concentrated particularly on two issues: the amount and quality of vocabulary knowledge required for successful communication of content in writing tasks and the influence of the lexis used in learner texts on holistic assessment performed by teachers or raters. As regards the former, several studies have shown correlations between vocabulary size tests and different measures of lexical richness. It was found that learners with wider word stock generally tend to use a significant proportion of rare and academic words in their compositions, as revealed in a lexical sophistication analysis (Laufer & Nation, 1995). The selection of vocabulary and its use in writing is also an indicator of whether a learner has mastered the conventions of a particular discourse community (Nation, 2001). University students, for instance, manifest their progress in the area of academic writing by increasing the ratio of academic vocabulary, compared to general English words in their texts (Laufer, 1994). Also, it seems that second language learners perceive appropriate vocabulary use as an essential factor contributing to their progress in the skill of writing. On analyzing questionnaires administered to a group of participants of a pre-university program, who came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Cumming, Eouanzoui, Gentil and Yang (2004) found that the stated goals for ESL writing improvement were principally language-related, and that vocabulary occupied the top position among these goals.

Research into the link between lexis and the skill of writing also concentrated on investigating the extent to which vocabulary choice influences the general quality of writing. Despite the fact that many teachers tend to concentrate on grammatical accuracy while rating learner texts, it has been shown that it is the vocabulary component of the assessment scale which is the best predictor of the total score for a composition. Astika (1993), for instance, reported that vocabulary accounted for as much 83.75 % of variance. A general teacher/rater perception of texts produced by learners also seems to be related to the lexical richness of these texts. Engber (1995) compared holistic scores for compositions written by students of English at different proficiency levels (including students of academic programs) with four measures of lexical richness: variation (ratio of the number of different words to the total number of words in a text), error-free variation, percentage of lexical error and lexical density (proportion of content words to function words). Highly significant correlations were found for two measures of richness, namely variation and error-free variation, and moderate, but significant correlations for lexical error. The interpretation of these results might be that while assessing learner texts, teachers pay much attention to how varied the lexis in the composition is, but also, how accurately it is used. Later studies (e.g., Agustín Llach, 2005, 2011) confirmed the results of Engber's (1995) study in that lexical errors and accuracy affect teachers' perception of learner texts, as mirrored in their holistic assessment score. Interesting findings were also reported in a study examining the relationship between teacher ratings of EFL essays and two aspects of lexical richness—sophistication and

diversity, or variation (Daller & Phelan, 2007). A highly significant correlation was observed between teacher rating and sophistication, as well as between one of the measures of diversity used in the analysis and the general score.

The results of studies presented above suggest that vocabulary is a crucial component of the skill of writing, which is confirmed by both teachers' and learners' perception of student-generated texts as well as by lexical richness analyses of those texts. Given what is known about the relationship between lexis and writing, steps should be taken to ensure that enough vocabulary recycling and practice is offered to students in language instruction in order to enable receptive vocabulary to change its status to productive. Schmitt (2000) also suggests that an immediate answer to the problem of a small productive lexicon or not enough advanced, low-frequency items used in writing is advising students to resort to good 'productive' dictionaries, such as the *Longman language activator*, which direct them to more sophisticated synonyms of the words they would normally use.

3 The Study

3.1 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between two measures of lexical richness—diversity and sophistication, and the general score for compositions written by advanced learners of English as an L2, scored independently by two raters, at two points in time—at the beginning and at the end of the academic year. The scope of the study was limited in that it involved students from one institution. Therefore, the results were not expected to be highly generalizable, but were to mainly shed some light on the principles of teaching and assessing students in the English Department at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and in similar institutions. Specifically, the study was aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

1. Are the two measures of lexical richness, diversity or sophistication, related to the rater's overall judgement of essay quality?
2. Do the relationships between lexical richness and holistic scores for compositions change after a period of one academic year, with the assumed growth in the participants' general language proficiency?

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Participants

The participants in the study were 65 first-year students at the English Department at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. As regards the level of language proficiency of the subjects, it can be described as halfway between the B2

and C1 levels on the *Common European framework of reference for languages* scale (admissions to the English Department are granted on the basis of candidates' results of the final senior high school examination at the extended level). The students had all received mainly formal English instruction and thus they can be described as learners of English as a foreign rather than second language.

First-year English philology students at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University receive intensive English training consisting in 9 h of practical English classes per week. Students also participate in specialist courses in linguistics, applied linguistics, English and American literature, history and culture, which require adequate preparation for the classes, consisting in large part of completing reading assignments. The students' intake of new vocabulary items can thus be attributed both to conscious study and incidental vocabulary acquisition.

3.2.2 Instruments and Procedure

Two compositions were collected from each student participating in the study: one at the beginning and one at the end of the academic year (November 2011 and June 2012). Altogether, 130 student texts were analyzed. The compositions were of the for-and-against type and consisted of 220–250 words, which is the customary word limit for compositions written by first year English philology students at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. As regards the topic, the texts were written on the benefits and drawbacks of different types of communication (e.g., face-to-face and electronic). Such a choice of topic is justified on the grounds that it is both generative as well as relevant to participants' lives and the context of their studies. The students were given 75 min to write their texts without the help of dictionaries or other reference materials.

The collected compositions were photocopied and subsequently assessed independently by two raters, who were secondary school English teachers with additional university teaching experience. The rating scale used for the assessment consisted of 25 points assigned for such aspects as organization, content and language control. The scale had been used with minor alterations for a number of years to assess compositions written by students during the classes or as homework, as well as to assess texts produced by students during practical English exams. The raters were trained prior to scoring the essays in that the scale was discussed with them and they were able to inspect the essays written by 1st year students in the previous years and assessed with the scale in question. The scores from two raters were averaged to arrive at a single score for every composition.

The lexical richness analysis involved an investigation of two indices, namely lexical diversity and lexical sophistication. With respect to lexical diversity, *D_Tools* was used as a method of assessing the type-token ratios of the texts. Lexical sophistication analysis was performed with the *BNC-20 VocabProfile*. The output from the *VocabProfile* provides detailed information concerning the proportion of types and tokens belonging to twenty frequency levels. However, for the purpose of the present study, a condensed profile, similar to the one proposed by Laufer (1994, 1995), and Laufer and Nation (1995), was opted for. Within the

profile, the frequency information was grouped into two levels: high frequency vocabulary (1000–2000 levels) and low frequency vocabulary (3000–20,000 levels), and only low-frequency vocabulary was focused on.

Before analyzing the lexical richness of the students' texts, it was requisite to type them into separate text files and edit manually. For the purpose of the lexical sophistication analysis, the editing and pre-processing of the texts involved correcting spelling mistakes as long as they were minor ones and the word was largely recognizable (e.g., **negattive, *unfortunatelly, *interprete, *nowedays, *imposible*) as well as removing capital letter words/proper nouns (e.g., *Facebook, iPhone*) and abbreviations (e.g., *i.e., e.g.*). Words used incorrectly also proved an important category of items to be eliminated. Examples of such words are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Types of words used incorrectly removed from raw texts prior to analysis

Type of mistake	Examples
Non-existent words	**correspondency, *electronical*
Polish words	*Gadu Gadu*
Mistakes resulting from L1 interference	*stadium* (for *stage*), **communicat* (for *message*)
Wrong part of speech used	*(facial) express, move (of our eyes), argue* (for *argument*), *convenience* (for *convenient*), *respond* (for *response*)
Words whose form is similar to the form of the intended word	*remain* (for *reminisce*), *resolve in* (for *result in*)
Words used incorrectly in context and approximations	*phatic* (peace of life), *learn* (a child to do smth), *transfer* (a message), *correspondence* (to mean: exchanging information), *to part* (information, to mean: *pass*), *chef* (to mean: boss), *master* (intended meaning unclear), *derive* (to mean: *mean -… the tendency does not ∼ that emails are better…*), *injury* (depression is a type of ∼), *therefore* (to mean: *however*), *colleague* (to mean: *acquaintance* or *friend*), *reliant* (have a ∼ *relationship*)

The primary reason for deleting the above-mentioned items was that they could not be considered part of the productive lexicon of the participants, despite the fact that some of the examples listed in the table are an indication of partial productive lexical knowledge and, possibly, provide evidence of lexicon in acquisition (e.g., wrong part of speech, but belonging to the same word family as the intended word, or non-words similar in form to the target items). Another, less evident reason for deleting some of the incorrectly used words was that they are actually real words of much lower frequency than the intended words. Lexical items such as *stadium* or *phatic*, which belong to K6 and K19 level, respectively, could point to unnaturally inflated lexical sophistication and a richer lexicon if they were to be included in the analysis.

As regards lexical diversity analysis, the texts were also scrutinized for the presence of frequently occurring multi-word units (e.g., *face-to-face, non-*

communicative), which were typed with the underscore in order to enable the *D_Tools* software to recognize them as single units.

3.2.3 Results and Discussion

Owing to the fact that lexical richness scores were to be correlated with the holistic score for the compositions, it was necessary to ascertain a good degree of agreement between the raters. For the 25-point scale, a difference of no more than two points was considered acceptable. With this reservation in mind, it was found that there was a 63 % agreement between the raters on the first administration and 78 % in the case of the second administration. Additionally, an inter-rater reliability analysis was run for the scores, revealing high Cronbach's alpha values (0.906 for the first administration and 0.804 for the second administration).

The main aim of the study was to determine the correlation between the scores obtained on two measures of lexical richness and a holistic score produced by the raters. Quite surprisingly, the correlations that were expected between these measures proved in many cases insignificant, as shown in Table 2. No significant correlations were found between the holistic scores for compositions and the two measures of lexical richness on the first administration in November. Similarly, on the second administration in June, the correlation between the general quality of the compositions reflected in the holistic score and the diversity score was insignificant. However, there was a moderately high significant correlation between the holistic score and the sophistication score. This, to some extent, is in line with the findings of previous research studies (e.g., Daller & Phelan, 2007; Malvern & Richards, 2002; Malvern et al., 2004) which reported a lack of significant correlations between D as a measure of lexical diversity and rater judgement of the quality of written and spoken texts.

Table 2 Correlations between holistic scores for the compositions and the measures of lexical richness on two administrations (Pearson, two-tailed)

	November		June	
	D_Tools	VocabProfile (3K+)	D_Tools	VocabProfile (3K+)
Holistic score	0.032	0.199	0.007	0.359**

**$p < 0.01$

The second research question concerned the change in the relationships between the measures of lexical richness and the holistic scores. A growth in general proficiency which is a result of intensive language learning was manifested in a statistically significant positive change in the lexical sophistication of texts produced after the period of seven months ($t(64) = 2.77$, $p = 0.007$). However, no significant change was found for the lexical diversity scores ($t(64) = 1.96$, $p = 0.54$). These two findings lend support to the correlations noted in June: there was no correlation between D and holistic score, but a significant one appeared between the improved sophistication

score and general judgement of essay quality. The participants in this study were, at the time of writing the compositions, actively involved in the language learning process and their vocabulary knowledge (especially understood as the proportion of low frequency items put into productive use) and their L2 lexicons in general were still being augmented and expanded, which may have been reflected in the raters' noticing this improvement on the second administration. The correlation in question may also be explained by the fact that at the end of the academic year the students were most probably able to write compositions with fewer mistakes and of greater lexical accuracy, which could have positively influenced rater judgement. Such a claim has some confirmation in the findings of earlier research. In a study by Engber (1995), for example, lexical richness, operationalized in terms error-free variation and number of lexical errors, was found to correlate highly and significantly with holistic scores.

4 Conclusion

The study was aimed at investigating the relationship between two measures of lexical richness—diversity and sophistication, and a holistic rater score denoting a general quality of learner-generated texts. Another purpose of the investigation was to observe whether intensive language learning in between the measurements and the subsequent growth in overall language proficiency may have had an effect on the correlations observed. Lexical diversity was found not to be related to the rater judgements on both administrations, which may signify that raters and teachers' perceptions of students' texts are not influenced by how lexically varied the texts are. Lexical repetition appears to be less important for rater judgement than the use of rare, sophisticated words in students' essays. While it is quite unexpected that no correlation was found between holistic scores and sophistication scores in November, and the relationship between the two was only confirmed for the second administration, it can be explained by the influence of lexical accuracy of students' texts on the rater's perception of the texts. Indeed, even relatively high sophistication scores cannot be said to be a sign a good lexical proficiency if the rare words are used incorrectly. In the light of this claim, and having future research possibilities in mind, the rater's scores for language accuracy in a composition could be investigated in terms of their relationship with the lexical sophistication score.

As regards the findings of the present study relevant for assessment practices followed by university teachers in foreign language departments, it cannot be said definitely that any measure of lexical richness can replace traditional holistic assessment of student-generated texts. The methods in question have not been proved to be less time- and effort-consuming than holistic assessment, as they involve laborious text preparation prior to analysis. However, it appears that lexical sophistication measures can successfully serve as an alternative method of assessing students' essays at the academic level, as well as a useful diagnostic tool informative with respect to the types and areas of vocabulary students could choose to work on with a view to improving their productive lexical repertoires.

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Interlanguage Pragmatics of EFL Advanced Learners: Insights from a Longitudinal Study into the Development of the Speech Act of Request in the Polish Context

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Abstract In this paper the acquisition of pragmatic competence in English among advanced Polish learners of English is investigated. A sample of linguistic written data was collected in a discourse completion task of an open-response format in a longitudinal study on EFL acquisitional pragmatics. The responses provided, in this particular case requests, were studied mostly following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Rue and Qiao (2008), Takahashi (2001), and Bardovi-Harlig (2001). This means that internal and external mitigating devices were investigated together with strategies for expressing directness of requests. On this basis, conclusions about the interlanguage pragmatic competence of the participants are drawn. Also, selected aspects of L2 pragmatics which may require further instruction are mentioned.

1 Introduction

Native speakers of a particular language acquire norms of social interaction and appropriate selection of linguistic means through the process of acculturation. This skillfulness in employing "different linguistic formulae in an appropriate way when interacting in a particular social and cultural context" involving the participants' relationship (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2007, p. 349, 351) is called *pragmatic competence*. It encompasses the knowledge and skills needed to understand the meanings, assumptions and actions conveyed by language in its particular socio-cultural context and to use it correspondingly to these interpretations. The area of second/foreign language learning research which studies how pragmatic competence is learned and developed is called *interlanguage*, or *acquisitional*, *pragmatics*. It adopts a slightly different research perspective from cross-cultural pragmatics, which is primarily concerned with comparing second/foreign language learners' pragmatic competence with that represented by native speakers of the target language.

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It is now widely accepted that a speech act "made in one culture using linguistic cues suitable for that particular context might be perceived as inappropriate in another situation" (Ghavamnia, Tavakoli, & Rezazadeh, 2011, p. 106). Although there exists a plethora of studies concerning cross-cultural or intercultural pragmatics involving English as one of the languages compared, there is still a dearth of research concerning Polish in relation to other languages. Hence, this study constitutes an attempt to investigate the interlanguage pragmatics (henceforth ILP) of Polish EFL learners in its narrow sense, that is "the performance and acquisition of speech acts by L2 learners" (Kasper & Dahl, 1991, as cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 159). More precisely, my primary concern in this paper is with developmental issues in language learners' acquisition of pragmatics (ILP) at university level using the example of the speech act of request. Among many aspects, acquisitional pragmatics, when applied to foreign language learning, poses a question of whether there is any relation between linguistic proficiency in a foreign language and pragmatic competence. Although it is clear that L1 influences the learning of a second or foreign language, including its pragmatics, it is still not clear what is transferred. There are many elements which can be taken into account. These may include "learners' assessments of the social situation and the contextual variables in it, their assessment of whether it is appropriate to carry out a certain speech act, the strategies by which a linguistic act can be realized, the linguistic forms by which such strategies can be implemented, or the appropriateness of particular matches between the social situation and strategy choice (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, pp. 156–157).

2 Literature Review

Whether two or more linguistic components are related to one another in second/foreign language use and development has been a research agenda since the early 1980s, when the first version of Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence was presented. However, developmental or longitudinal studies of the acquisition of pragmatic competence are few in number. The first to ask about the relationship between grammar and pragmatics in second/foreign language learning was Walters (1980, as cited in Kasper, 2001, p. 503), who conducted a study with children and adolescents to answer the questions: "To what extent are grammatical ability and sociocultural ability independent as claimed in the Canale and Swain's model? In what ways are they interdependent, i.e., in what ways does the sociocultural component depend on the grammatical component?". He suggested that children formed their requests in pragmatically correct ways but in ungrammatical forms (Kasper, 2001, p. 512). However, it was Schmidt (1983), in his three-year long study devoted to the development of the communicative competence of his Japanese student, named Wes, to first examine the learner's

pragmatic ability in one of its stages. At the beginning, Wes used conventionalized routines to express directives and relied heavily on lexical cues. Over three years, Wes's grammatical competence changed minimally while his pragmatic and discourse competence greatly improved, that is he started to use imperatives and used extensively formulaic expressions such as *can I* (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, p. 152).

More recently there have been a few more longitudinal studies. For example, Matsumura (2003) undertook an interesting study of 137 Japanese students learning the English language at the tertiary level who came to Canada for a study-exchange program for eight months. In particular, the researcher's aim was to establish whether the students' varying linguistic proficiency and exposure to the target language would shape their pragmatic competence in reference to the speech act of advice (Matsumura, 2003, p. 466). Matsumura indisputably demonstrates that exposure to the target language has the potential to account for an increase in L2 pragmatic competence. Simultaneously, he also shows that a simple increase in proficiency, as measured by TOEFL, does not necessarily induce an increase in pragmatic competence. Matsumura (2003, p. 485) hastens to add that his results do not mean that "proficiency has nothing to do with pragmatic development" but that rather this relationship is indirect rather than direct, that is it constitutes only a part of the general causal relation. In particular, greater proficiency achieved before departure meant that the more proficient students were more eager to communicate in the target language, and, consequently, their exposure was greater.

Bardovi-Harlig's (2001, pp. 40–57) conclusions from both observational or interventional studies of the development of pragmatic competence, and also Ellis's (1992) claims run counter to Matsumura's (2003) research results. Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 14) suggests instead that there exists a correlation between pragmatic competence and grammatical competence, but that students of high grammatical proficiency need not develop "concomitant pragmatic competence", and they may differ not only in their pragmatic competence but also in the tempo and success of its development. Indeed, as extensive research on pragmatic failure shows, non-target-like performance is common not only among low proficiency students, but also among advanced language learners displaying a good command of grammatical and lexical elements (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Jodłowiec & Urban, 2010 in the Polish context). Elsewhere she observes that, at the current stage of research advancement, the extent to which the former depends on the latter is not yet clear (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, p. 184).

The findings of the studies mentioned above, including meta-studies reported by Kasper and Schmidt (1996), and Bardovi-Harlig (2001), indicate that we still know very little about acquisitional regularities in the pragmatic development in a particular foreign or second language. Most of the available investigative reports present studies that lasted on average a couple of weeks, except for a few that lasted for one semester or up to two years. This is unfortunate because, as Kasper and Schmidt (1996, p. 153) point out, only longitudinal designs have the potential to ascertain "developmental patterns in learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence".

With reference to learners of English in Poland, there are obvious differences between Polish and English cultural norms, and the characteristics of these speech communities, which conditions differences in requesting strategies applied by English native speakers and its Polish learners. This means English native speakers employ requesting strategies, depending heavily on the use of the interrogative (conventionalized indirect strategy), and avoid using the bare imperative or performatives, as in *I (would like to) ask* (pol.: *poproszę)*. Polish native speakers, on the other hand, also use the interrogative to convey a request. This has been shown to be valid in studies conducted by Kalisz (1993, pp. 112–113) and Ogiermann (2009a, b), especially where interlocutors do not know one another (Marcjanik, 2009, pp. 64–65). However, Wierzbicka (1985) and Lubecka (2000) emphasize the role of the imperative in performing Polish requests in informal situations. In Lubecka's (2000, pp. 75–76, 85) all-encompassing study, direct orders constituted 25.3 % of the 254 requests she collected. However, according to Marcjanik (2009), ability questions are the most polite request realizations among all the interrogative constructions available for the performance of requests in Polish. Finally, according to Wierzbicka (1985), requesting by means of an ability question (e.g., *Can you return the books?*) is not conventionalized in Polish.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of speech act realization has received substantial attention in foreign language acquisition research, especially the contrast between English language norms and EFL learners' interlanguage production. However, to the best of my knowledge, there have only been a few papers concerned with speech act production conducted using data coming from Polish users of English, focusing, for example, on compliments (Herbert, 1991; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989), and a few investigating requests, such as those by Ogiermann (2009a, b), Wierzbicka (1985, 2003), Rakowicz (2009), and Jodłowiec and Urban (2010). The authors of the most recent, cross-sectional study, that is Jodłowiec and Urban (2010, pp. 318–319), were able to show that the level of proficiency which their 120 Polish learners of English represented (B1, B2, C2) was not statistically correlated with the level of their pragmatic competence. Jodłowiec and Urban (2010, p. 313) also point to a dire need for studies that concentrate on the process of development of pragmatic competence among Poles. Hence, this study constitutes an attempt to broaden the focus of research on requests to include a population of Polish learners of English at the university level.

3 The Study

3.1 Aims

The present investigation is based on data collected in a longitudinal research consisting of multiple intervention and test stages in a sample of advanced students

of English. This way it was hoped it would be possible to identify the more closely observed effects of language instruction over a longer term in order to provide data for this under-researched area. Thanks to keeping the same group of participants, I also wanted to achieve reliability of the data, and especially the outcome of the long-term intervention. The assumed validity threats were the practice effect, maturation and attrition (Robinson, Schmidt, & Teti, 2005, p. 8).

In order to monitor the students' assumed development of pragmatic competence, they were given the same discourse completion task (DCT) in the first month of their studies, that is in October, 2011 (henceforth FY), and then in the second year, that is in November, 2012 (henceforth SY). They are to be given it one more time before their graduation in May, 2014. Thereby, I intend to gain an insight into the complex relationship between the length of instruction, learner proficiency level, and difficulty of learning targets. It was hypothesized in FY that the data from the second year would show a developmental trend for conventionally indirect request strategies and the types of modification employed, and their position in the whole sequence, and also that language production would approximate target language norms.

My emphasis on the acquisition of pragmatic competence was based on conclusions from the analysis of other studies concerning this area of pragmatic research, that is most studies that called themselves acquisition-oriented predominantly used either short-interval between pre- and post-test in the pedagogical intervention design or were single-cohort or cross-sectional designs, and thus were more production- than acquisition-oriented. As such, they could be classified as what Norris and Ortega (2000, p. 497) call a *single decisive study* in which the instructional treatment was brief, with its effects measured in a single immediate post-test.

3.2 Participants

The study participants were 57 BA students of bilingual philology studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Their assumed entrance proficiency level in English was B1. They constituted a cohort, which is defined as a sample or group that "enter an environment at the same point in time" (Schaie & Caskie, 2005, p. 22). The cohort included only 57 students, because this number enabled deeper insight into their pragmatic development over the period of three years. I realize that some studies include larger groups, but then they tend to reveal information about production, and not acquisition of pragmatic competence, even if they call themselves acquisition studies.

The participants were advanced students of English and German who received around 10–12 h a week of instruction in English as long-term preparation for the professions of translator, teacher or intercultural mediator. The BA program they

were enrolled in included a number of practical classes in English, as well as courses in literature, linguistics and methodology that were taught in the target language. In other words, apart from studying General English, these learners also employed English to communicate in other subjects in the program, including those conducted by native speakers. Due to their intensive education, most of them by the end of their studies would become functionally multilingual:[1] L1 Polish, L2 English, and L3 German.

Because most of the literature on teaching intercultural pragmatics stresses that there are three necessary conditions for the success of thus oriented pragmatics, that is pertinent input, opportunities for practice and provision of feedback, apart from learning General English, the students were regularly presented with the results of the DCT analysis in sessions specially devoted to it, for example during classes of descriptive grammar of English. This was meant to increase their language (pragmatics) awareness (Schmidt, 1990).

3.3 Method of Data Collection

The data needed to assess ILP was collected with the use of a discourse completion task (DCT). The DCT was made up of 15 situations that were designed, pilot-tested and selected to elicit requests (10 scenarios) and apologies (in 5 scenarios, used as distracters). They were adapted from a DCT composed and also pilot-tested by Liu (2007, pp. 395–404).[2] The request situations were selected with the primary criterion of their frequency and usefulness for the learners' current and future language needs. The situational descriptions were given in English and the students were asked to provide appropriate request expressions within a limited period of time to heighten real-time language use. Their responses were transcribed verbatim by an independent coder and analyzed.

Despite the well-known weaknesses of DCT (discussed, for example in Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2013), it is still recognized as a reliable, valid and effective method of data collection in pragmatics studies, as is evident in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Rose and Kasper (2001), Ogiermann (2009a, b), and Ellis (2003). It is especially appreciated for its 'discreteness', which according to O'Keeffe, Clancy and Adolphs (2011, p. 22), means that "the researcher has a lot of control over the language which they want to elicit. The focus can be limited to a very specific context of use".

[1]I am aware of the ongoing debate about definitions of bilingualism or multilingualism. However, these students were expected to reach a high level of proficiency in both languages and in most cases the boundary between language learners and bi-(multi-)lingualism is fuzzy. I use these terms interchangeably also because at the time of the study they remained learners of languages as such. Additionally, because the foreign languages were also the languages of instruction, I consider them users of these languages.

[2]With his permission granted to the present author.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

In what follows, a comparative analysis of the responses provided in FY and SY to two power-asymmetrical request situations is presented. In both, the power status of the participants, who know each other (medium social distance), is unequal, but the imposition of the request is low and hence not much convincing is required. In the first situation, a student asks a teacher to speak more slowly during their discussion of the student's assignment. The other scenario takes place during a workplace meeting where a manager asks a colleague to lend him some notepaper. The situations were worded as follows, as reported by Liu (2007, pp. 391–415):

Situation 3
You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You don't follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again.

Situation 12
You are the manager of a company. You are in a meeting with the other members of your company. You need to write some notes, but realize you do not have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you. You know the person very well.

I investigated how Polish speakers of the English language performed requests by means of a coding table developed on the basis of the research paradigms proposed by Blum-Kulka (1987), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Bardovi-Harlig (2001), Rue and Qiao (2008), and Takahashi (2001). I analyzed the directness strategies employed to perform a particular request, together with internal and external mitigation devices used to downgrade the requestive imposition. The data obtained from some students had to be excluded from the analysis because they gave incomplete answers or no answers at all due to, for example, the incorrect understanding of the described situation. All examples are provided in their original form.

3.5 Results of Data Analysis

3.5.1 Student Requests of a Teacher[3]

Out of 57 responses provided in FY, 56 were requests for repetition, clarification or slowing down. One response asked for a different action and was therefore excluded from the further analysis. The rate of failure for SY was the same, that is one excluded form.

External modification

In FY 80 % of requests included external modification in the form of mitigating supportive moves. The dominant type was the grounder (68.85 %; Ex. 1) often

[3]A more detailed analysis of responses to this scenario collected in FY can be found in Szczepaniak-Kozak (2013).

accompanied by apologies (24.59 %, Ex. 2). In most cases, the students were quite specific about the exact reason for the request (Ex. 3). The remaining few moves were preparators (3.27 %; Ex. 4) and expressions of gratitude (3.27 %; Ex. 5). In SY 65 % of responses included an external mitigator but its repertoire was less varied, as it involved only grounders (87.5 %; Ex. 1) and apologies (12.5 %, Ex. 2). The decrease in the total number of external mitigation and its diversity is a positive developmental tendency because, in fact, this request should be mitigated only internally and be more conventionalized. Asking a teacher to repeat something is typical of classroom discourse, both in Polish and English. Thereby, the decrease in the total number of external mitigations and the number of apologies is particularly significant, indicating that the students' pragmatic competence is developing towards target language competence.

Ex. 1(SY). Could you say it again, please? I haven't understood it.
Ex. 2 (SY). *I'm sorry but* I don't understand. Could you repeat?
Ex. 3 (SY). *I'm sorry, but you speak very fast*. I would like to ask you to say everything again.
Ex. 4 (FY). May I ask you something.
Ex. 5 (FY). I would be gratefull.

Head acts

The request strategies provided were not varied either. In FY there were 80.35 % conventionalized non-mitigated preparatory queries with *could* (Ex. 6) and 14.28 % head acts with *can*. The remaining requests were mood derivables (3.57 %; Ex. 7) or mitigated want statements (1.78 %; Ex. 8). SY data shows a slight increase in the use of the conventionalized query preparatory, namely, 89.4 % were head acts in this form, predominantly with *could* (Ex. 6). *Can* and *would* appeared once each in the entire SY data. Other categories appeared infrequently, that is want statement (Ex. 8), mitigated preparatory statement, mitigated preparatory question, or mood derivable (Ex. 7) (plus one in a repetition of preparatory query), and constituted no more than 2.63 % of the total each.

Ex. 6 (SY). Could you please repeat?
Ex. 7 (SY). I'm sorry, you lost me. *Come again?*
Ex. 8 (FY). I'd be very thankful if you could repeat the following sentence for me.

Internal modification

As far as the lexical and phrasal downgraders in the FY sample are concerned, on average at least one mitigator appeared in 96.49 % requests. The politeness marker *please* (75 %) and adverbial understater *a little (bit) slower* (21.62 %) were the most frequent. Research into EFL interlanguage requests often analyzes whether *please* is embedded in the head act (Ex. 6) or whether it stands outside it (Ex. 1), because this indicates whether particular EFL learners' pragmatic development is heading in the direction of target language use. Thus, in my FY data, *please* was found outside the head act in 59.45 % responses and inside in 16.21 % relative to all the internal modification used. The external/internal ratio within this category was 78.58 % outside and 21.42 % inside. Finally, there was also one example (2.70 %) of a

phrase giving two options, i.e. *Could you please say it one more time or could you please it parafraze*, a phrasal downgrader showing the speaker's care for the hearer's positive face.

The data for SY indicates quite a similar trend. Some head acts were not mitigated at all, as on average there were 0.62 mitigators per response. *Please* was used most frequently, namely in 69.5 % of requests, of which 81 % were outside the head act. The high percentage of outside head act use of *please* could be considered a negative transfer from Polish. There were very few other pragmalinguistic features used in the SY data. Adverbial understaters, syntactic conditional downgraders, including one case of *can* serving a syntactic modification, constituted 13.04 % each, and repetition of the request (upgrader) constituted 4.34 % of the internal mitigators.

3.5.2 Manager Requests of a Colleague[4]

All the responses provided in FY and SY were requests for paper to make notes in a typical workplace interaction (meeting) between two colleagues. In FY four students did not give any answer, and in SY three.

External mitigation

The students' developing pragmatic competence is discernible in the number and types of external supportive moves. In comparison to other scenarios included in my DCT (analyzed, for example, in Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2013, 2014), their repertoire is limited already in FY, namely they appeared in 34 (59.64 %) responses and represented four types. External mitigators were of two types in SY and appeared in 32.43 % responses. Similarly to the other scenario analyzed in this paper, the grounder (Ex. 9) was the type most often used, namely FY 56.60 % and SY 91.66 %. The remaining types of mitigation moves were: expressions of gratitude (Ex. 10)—3.77 % FY; 8.33 % SY, preparatory question (Ex. 11)—one only in FY, and apology—only one in FY.

Ex. 9 (SY). Hey, can I borrow a couple sheets? *I didn't take any.*
Ex. 10 (FY). Excuse me, I forgot paper, so i have any. Could you borrow me some paper? *I'd be thankful.*
Ex. 11 (FY). Hey, Mark, *do you have any spare paper, by chance?*

Despite the fact that this scenario involves a small power asymmetry, the imposition is very low because this is a typical conventionalized workplace request, which most native speakers of English and Polish would realize without any mitigation and with a more direct requestive strategy. Despite the fact that in a naturally occurring situation justification for the request would be redundant or unusual, most students assumed that it was necessary, which could be considered a point which requires remedial classroom practice.

[4]My detailed analysis of FY responses to this scenario can be found in Szczepaniak-Kozak (2014).

Requestive acts

In FY the students provided the following requestive strategies, starting from the most direct one: mood derivables (Ex. 12)—22.64 %, query preparatories (Ex. 13)—49.5 %, permission questions (Ex. 14)—18.86 %, and strong hints (Ex. 15)—9.43 %. In SY there appeared: mood derivables—27.02 %, want statements—2.70 %, query preparatories—45.94 %, permission questions—13.51 %, mitigated permission questions—2.70 %, and strong hints—10.81 %.

Ex. 12. Tom, give me a paper!
Ex. 13 Can you give me a sheet of paper, please?
Ex. 14 Can I have a sheet of paper?
Ex. 15. Hey Marc! Are you having some sheets of paper? Thanks!

The query preparatory was the most frequently chosen strategy in the situation where the imperative or strong hint could be the unmarked variant. This dominance supports my assumption that at this stage of these EFL students' pragmatic development, they prefer an interrogative sentence with *you*, regardless of the sociocultural context of the situation in which a particular request is performed.

Internal mitigation

In this scenario, the students exhibited a fairly restricted repertoire of internal modifiers in their request realization. Zero marking, which would probably characterize native speech, was infrequent, with the general use of internal mitigation in FY at a level of 77.35 %. The indefinite pronoun *some*, in 49.05 % samples, together with two understaters *a few* and *small*, both serving the same function of softening the force of the message, were the most frequent modifiers. The politeness marker *please* appeared ten times (only three times internal to the head act). The remaining categories of internal mitigation were represented by single examples of, for example, appealer, intensifier, giving option, or were not represented at all. As to the SY data, internal mitigation appeared in 86.48 % of the samples. The most frequent of these was again the hedge *some* (42.42 %). The syntactic downgrader *can* appeared in 36.36 % and *would* in 3.03 %. 15.15 % of the requests were mitigated by *please*, and the internal-external ratio was 8:2. The lexical understater *a little bit* was used in 3.03 % responses.

4 Discussion

Generally, the responses provided in the second year (SY) were shorter than in the first year (FY), which might indicate that the students were already sensitive to the degree of conventionality and informality which the analyzed situations involve and that they formed their responses taking into account the sociocultural background given in the description. Verbosity and less lexico-syntactic variety were previously indicated as indicators of lower EFL pragmatic proficiency. Thereby, the general first impression of the FY sample was that the responses were long, apologetic, and

unnecessarily complex. It seemed as if the students had not understood the situation description, as the provided responses were more likely to occur in a less conventionalized situation, certainly not during a tutorial session or workplace meeting.

We may also observe more positive developmental tendencies, that is a decrease both in the amount and diversity of external mitigation in SY. Most of the FY requests were accompanied by grounders in order to lower the imposition of the demand on the part of the hearer; in this case, a teacher or colleague. The responses provided in SY were slightly shorter and more conventionalized. It may be speculated that these students intuitively assumed that when they give a reason for their request, the addressee will more eagerly respond positively to it. The appearance of a grounder as the most typical supportive move confirms what other studies on native and non-native requests have shown, such as that by Faerch and Kasper (1989). Finally, at least in the present study, it was observed that more supportive moves were used when indirect acts were used, that is direct head acts are less externally mitigated.

The number and diversity of the external mitigators in FY cannot be explained only on the grounds of transfer from Polish. The data allows an interpretation that the students may have assumed different linguistic behavior from that typical of English. This actually corroborates the results of some previous research on requests that indicated that there is a systematic difference between native and non-native speakers of English in terms of the length of verbal utterances. For example, Blum-Kulka (1983) found that Hebrew EFL speakers use more words when making a request than native English speakers do. Furthermore, Niżegorodcew (2010, p. 143) points out that when EFL learners' linguistic competence is wanting, their identity as a learner overshadows other possible identifications.

The request strategy which the students used most often is the indirect conventionalized preparatory question. The fact that the students preferred the query preparatory might be indicative of one more aspect of their interlanguage pragmatics. As a rule, they were not able to select the appropriate strategy for a particular situation, but rather preferred one strategy to others and applied it across all scenarios. This would also support Kalisz's (1993, p. 111) critical comments on the validity of Wierzbicka's (1985) ruminations on the use of the interrogative in Polish for requests. My data, if constituting a limited corpus, demonstrates that, due to positive transfer from L1, these Polish students had already acquired the use of query preparatories to convey the speech act of a request in the target language. Finally, the relative absence of mood derivables in both scenarios should be considered a stable feature of their competence, a positive phenomenon, especially judging by the possibility of negative transfer from Polish.

Although the data shows that the students were developing their pragmatic competence towards using the conventionalized query preparatory with *could*, the reasons for this positive change might be multifarious and not necessarily based on their realization of sociopragmatic conditions valid for native English context and use. Native English speakers use query preparatories because economy of communication takes precedence here, that is the request of a person higher in the

hierarchy must normally be more mitigated and less direct in English, but in the classroom context conciseness takes precedence. Therefore, the form *Could you…?* is typically used, although it is in the middle of the politeness continuum of requests (cf. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Additionally, Ellis (1992, p. 18) remarks that in the classroom there is no need for elaborate requests. For him even a *propositionally reduced directive*, such as *Once again, please*, is as possible as *Could you repeat it once again?* In my data no examples of the former were provided by the students. It seems that the students preferred this strategy also due to negative cultural transfer. In the Polish education system, a student is expected to show respect to the teacher, similar to that paid by a minor to the elderly, which is regulated by the institution in which they interact (Marcjanik, 2009, pp. 63–64). This is visible in the language forms a student uses when addressing a teacher, that is more mitigation and less directness than in everyday, colloquial language use. This might be the reason why in the samples provided almost all head acts were performed as conventionally indirect query preparatories, e.g. *Could you repeat?*, which are very polite forms in Polish. Only a few students chose a different strategy, that the mitigated performative *I ask you to repeat*, which is the conventionalized form translated from Polish, namely *Proszę powtórzyć*.

Over the period of the study almost no changes were noticed in internal modifications of head acts. The learners underused downtoners and overused syntactic downgraders and the politeness marker *please*. The same was observed by Faerch and Kasper (1989, p. 232) in their group of Danish learners of English and German. They noticed that *please* is particularly attractive because it has two functions of "illocutionary force indicator and transparent mitigator". Also a study conducted by Barron (2003) revealed similar patterns. Something that appears to be a vital marker of the students' negative transfer was also their tendency to position this politeness marker at the beginning or end of the request, that is externally to the head act. For example, out of 28 instances of *please* used in request 3, only six were positioned internally and in request 12 the ratio was 8 to 2. Ogiermann (2009a, pp. 203–204) argues that this preference is a manifestation of transfer from Polish. In her view, a lexeme expressing what *please* does in English is present in many languages, but languages differ in positioning it within an utterance. She argues that in English *please* is most often classified as an internal modifier whereas in Polish it is always external, that is Polish *proszę* cannot occur in the head act because it is a performative verb in itself. The high percentage of outside head act use of *please* in my data seems to corroborate this conclusion.

The evident underuse of other pragmatic features in FY could be attributed to the students' relative low proficiency level (some of them at the start of the program were intermediate EFL learners). However, the absence of progress in SY should be explained on other grounds, such as relative difficulty of internal modification acquisition. It has been argued in other studies that "internal mitigation is particularly sensitive to level of proficiency and is part of a late developmental stage" (Trosborg, 1987, as cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009, pp. 100–101). Simultaneously, the data indicates the students used more syntactic internal modification, which is definitely due to their intensive classes of English grammar in the

first year of their studies. Ogiermann's (2009a) data also shows that Poles and Russians rely more on syntactic downgrading, such as tense and negation. All in all, at this stage of their interlanguage pragmatic competence development they could not apply linguistic resources with native-like appropriateness either.

5 Final Remarks

To explain the non-target pragmatic performance of the students participating in this study, it is useful to consider Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's (2010, p. 50) conclusions concerning learning idiomatic language. She claims that during language production, for example, under time-pressure conditions, language learners need to engage in more conscious processing or control over forms which they have not acquired well enough. This applies in particular to controlling and arranging all the aspects necessary to produce a contextually appropriate utterance. In our case, conventionalized utterances were replaced with supplementary phases, which are more direct and thus impolite. This explanation is supported by Schmidt's (1990, p. 136) proposal that "control processing, associated with novice behavior, cannot be carried out concurrently with other demanding task".

Despite the fact that the study relied on a small sample, its strength lies in its attempt to gain insight into the participating students' interlanguage pragmatic competence. The author realizes, however, that in order to investigate it more fully, more data, and from the later stages of their interlanguage development, are necessary. It would also be insightful, for example, to study request realization in macropragmatic language use (Cap, 2010). Nonetheless, already at this interim stage it has been possible to offer vital conclusions about the development of pragmatic knowledge and competence by EFL advanced learners and to set out aspects requiring classroom instruction and practice. It is assumed that the data to be collected in the third year will show, following Ellis's (1992) assumption, that learners will start to perform L2 speech acts by means of several formulaic routines, and begin to modify these initial routines, thus increasing their range of strategy types and mitigation. This means, in particular, less external mitigation, more indirect request strategies (e.g., towards strong hints), and using typical English lexical downgraders (e.g., consultative phrases, downtoners or understaters). Finally, the students also need to acquire and apply the knowledge that British speakers of English display a tendency to avoid "naming the hearer as actor; and they will call on a varied repertoire of external modifiers to accomplish their goals" (Stewart, 2004, p. 117).

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New Technologies and the 'Wow' Factor: Investigating the Relationship Between Time of Exposure to New Media and Students' Opinions on Game-Supported Language Learning

Krzysztof Kotuła

Abstract The present paper focuses on the problem of video game-supported language learning. In order to examine students' opinions on the subject, a study was conducted among 47 learners of French attending the same secondary school. The study had three major goals. Primarily, it was undertaken to indicate students' general perception of game-supported language learning, that is to determine whether they really consider this type of tasks as interesting and profitable. The second aim was to find out whether opinions of individuals coming across this kind of technology for the first time would be divergent from those who benefit from it regularly during foreign language classes. Finally, another important goal of the research was to determine whether variables such as gender, length of foreign language instruction, as well as pupils' general views on the nature of second language learning and the self-perception of their language abilities can have an impact on their perception of game-supported language learning.

1 Introduction

In spite of the accelerating development of new technologies, the problem of video game-based (and supported)[1] language learning is still a marginal one. Literature specifically devoted to this issue is not rich (see deHaan, 2011, pp. 46–47; Li,

[1]Sometimes, playing video games in the language classroom is the central element of the course. Such an approach can be called game-based language learning. On the other hand, playing video games can constitute only a part of a course. Such an approach could be called, following the distinction made by Ellis between task-based language learning and task-supported language learning (Ellis, 2003, p. 28), *game-supported language learning*, that is language learning which combines game use with traditional pedagogy. In the present paper, this approach is also referred to as *computer-enhanced ludic techniques*.

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Liu, & Boyer, 2009, p. 136). Oddly enough, computer-assisted language learning constitutes a fast developing domain and the benefits of the videoludic strategies' implementation in foreign language teaching have been known for many years. Therefore, it may seem that many teachers would try to use in their lessons activities enabling combination of ludic elements with new technologies. Many authors enumerate various potential advantages of this type of innovations. According to Thomas (2012, p. 11), "games can be motivating, reduce anxiety, focus learners on communicating in the target language rather than on using correct linguistic structures, provide more introverted students with a greater range of opportunities for self-expression and create an informal atmosphere that enhances learner receptiveness". Mawer and Stanley (2011, p. 10) also emphasize that thanks to the use of video games in language learning, skills and behaviors, such as "creative problem solving, calculated risk taking, persistence, attention to detail [and] effective collaboration" can be effectively developed.

2 Video Games in Foreign Language Teaching

Aiming at the incorporation of videoludic strategies[2] into the syllabus, the teacher is naturally confronted with the question concerning the type of games and the manner of their application. Researchers dealing with this subject hold widely divergent opinions on this issue. Depending on assumed research perspective (probably as well as personal preferences), they assess in different ways the utility of various types of games in foreign language teaching.

2.1 Role-Playing and Adventure Video Games in Language Teaching

According to Cruz (2007), role-playing games (RPGs), containing long hours of dialogues and vast quantity of written text, are the most suitable for the purpose of foreign language teaching. According to this author, learners can play a game in class being simultaneously immersed in a foreign language environment, where characters speak with various accents. It enables learners to develop listening comprehension skills. At the same time, this type of games allows the development of reading comprehension skills, as players can progress in the game, provided they have accomplished the goals transmitted by means of the text. In a similar way, other authors praise advantages of adventure games (e.g., Chen, Chen, Chen, &

[2]This term is transplanted from French, where the term *vidéoludique* appears, for instance, in the papers by Berry (2011).

Yang, 2012), which can successfully enhance the development of learners' receptive skills.

Obviously enough, these authors assume that a computer game used in foreign language teaching is bound to contain a considerable amount of linguistic material. Unfortunately, by doing so, they seem to disregard the aspect of its nature and quality, which is clearly a key factor. It is often difficult to find a logical correspondence between the content appearing in this type of games and the subjects developed during classes, usually imposed by the textbook or the syllabus. What is more, such games are usually very complex and their accomplishment requires huge amount of time. Usually, enduring training is a necessary requisite for effective participation. It may turn out that some learners are unable to cope with this kind of challenge or this way of learning a foreign language does not live up to their expectations. Technical aspects may also hinder the implementation of this type of activities, as to take part in the game, a separate computer post must be reserved for every participant. This may prove highly problematic, taking into account school reality, even if it is not confined to the case of the Polish education system. In addition, many of the games suggested by the above-mentioned authors are commercial software and thus they would have to be purchased by the school.

Doubts can be amplified by the fact that all the quoted researchers remain concentrated on receptive skills, such as reading and listening comprehension. It is necessary to inquire whether, assuming that the aim of the above-mentioned activities is the development of this type of skills, it would not be better to provide learners with typical, skills-oriented tasks suited to a particular level of proficiency and compatible with the content of the syllabus. All things considered, it seems that encouraging learners to play games individually, beyond regular classes, can be regarded as an effective solution.

2.2 Life Simulation Video Games in Language Teaching

Life simulators are equally appreciated by some of the researchers. Rannali (2008) argues that they can be easily adjusted to the needs of foreign language teaching. For instance, they may come in handy in the vocabulary acquisition process. Such games are beneficial as far as the imitation of real life activities is concerned. Our everyday reality sets the pattern for *The Sims'* characters' surrounding: they live in the city, learn, work, get into contact with different people, etc. All these facts mean that the incorporation of this type of game into a standard foreign language syllabus is much simpler than in the case of RPGs or adventure games. However, the lack of spoken language may prove problematic—characters communicate in an non-existent language and the software delivers messages to the player by means of written text and pictograms transmitting, for example, the character's thoughts.

As is the case with RPGs and adventure games, the technical aspects may also impede the process, as it is essential to provide every learner with a separate computer post. It is also necessary to take into consideration other factors. Since

The Sims is a popular game, some participants may be perfectly familiar with it and therefore it is not essential for them to understand instructions in a foreign language to play the game effectively. In the case of these people, the impact of the computer game's application on the development of their language skills may go unnoticed. What is more, disparities between players' competences can result in growing tensions among the members of the group, precluding accomplishment of the tasks assigned by the teacher. People who know the game well are given a significant advantage over beginners. Admittedly, researchers (e.g., Purushotma, 2005) point out that it is possible to modify the software by introducing hints in mother tongue in order to increase the chances of beginning players. However, this task is extremely labor-consuming as well as requiring teachers to demonstrate advanced IT skills. Nevertheless, beyond any doubt, playing games, such as *The Sims*, when it occurs at home, may contribute to the acquisition of a significant amount of new vocabulary items.

2.3 Arcade Video Games in Language Teaching

Sometimes, the interactivity of video games can become detrimental. J. W. deHaan has conducted an interesting research aiming at the assessment of arcade games' utility in foreign language teaching. In the article devoted to the sports game application during foreign language classes, deHaan quotes the comments made by one of the learners. In fact, the game's design prevented him from mastering new vocabulary, as instead of consciously following virtual characters' utterances, he remained concentrated on kicking the ball (deHaan, 2005, p. 280). On the basis of these facts, a statement can be made that, in some situations, computer games' interactivity may turn out to be an obstacle in a foreign language acquisition, rather than a form of assistance. It applies especially to the situations in which understanding verbal instructions doesn't constitute a *sine qua non* of successfully completing the game. If the context, visual prompts etc. are sufficient to make out the goals of the game as well as the means of attaining them, language remains redundant.

Similar conclusions were formulated in the paper devoted to the software *Parappa the Rapper* (cf. deHaan, Reed, & Kuwada, 2010). According to the authors, its application had a minimal impact on the acquisition of new vocabulary. It was attributed to the fact that in this particular game, based on sequential console's buttons pressing so that an appropriate melody emerges, the primary concern relates to the sense of rhythm and manual skills. The software does not require players to understand the lyrics. As there is no logical connection between the understanding of verbal communication and the player's success or defeat, the usefulness of this type of software in the context of foreign language teaching is disputable.

2.4 Puzzle Video Games in Language Teaching

Another interesting game genre in this context are puzzle games, "in which the primary conflict is not so much between the player-character and other characters, but rather the figuring out of a solution, which often involves solving enigmas, navigation, learning how to use different tools, and the manipulating or reconfiguring of objects" (Wolf, 2008, p. 270). Contrary to the majority of software belonging to the above-mentioned categories, logical games can facilitate even whole-class cooperation, teaching negotiation skills and successful communication. The primary concern is therefore shifted from receptive to productive skills. Students may give and receive instructions, interact, persuade and negotiate with others.

There are various arguments in favor of the application of logical games. There is a whole range of this type of software available for free on the Internet; therefore, the teacher can benefit from unlimited freedom of choice. These are usually flash games and they do not require high-performance computers. Each of them challenges players in a different way and makes possible to practice communication skills in different ways. The rules in this type of games are usually simple and the time needed to master them can be reduced to a minimum. Their structure and playing pattern are also simple, based on the attainment of successive levels, allowing entering the game or interrupting it at any moment, but also to regulating the time devoted to this activity. Owing to this fact as well as their diversity, they can be easily integrated into the syllabus (an exemplary lesson plan is presented in Kotuła, 2012). Such games have been used by the author of the present paper since 2010 and the are the main focus of the present paper.

3 Research Project

3.1 Research Goals

The research conducted by the present paper's author was concentrated on two major goals. Primarily, it was meant to indicate students' general perception of game-supported language learning. The basic aim was to determine whether learners really consider this type of tasks as interesting and profitable. The second aim of the research was to find out whether opinions of individuals coming across this kind of new technology for the first time would be divergent from those who benefit from it regularly during foreign language classes. It may happen that learners who are not used to the implementation of new technologies in educational contexts might prove extremely enthusiastic about the teacher's attempt to introduce such innovations. However, this tendency may also be opposite since learners used to one, standard way of conducting foreign language classes may react unfavorably to innovations, judging them as completely useless, especially in the

case of computer games, usually associated with a trivial kind of entertainment rather than with serious work. It is also necessary to take into account the evolution of learners' points of view. It may turn out that, depending on the first impression made by the software, learners may initially judge its potential as either very high or very low. Then, by gradually getting accustomed to the tools and suggested methods of work, they can moderate their attitudes and opinions. One of the basic reference points here is the conception of the 'wow' factor formulated by Murray and Barnes in 1998. These authors define it in the following way (1998, p. 250):

> The 'wow' factor encompasses both extremely positive and extremely negative initial reactions in the user (teacher/learner) towards a software package. This immediate, instinctive evaluation can color the user's opinion of the program as a whole, even on a medium- to long-term basis. The causes of such reactions can stem from the seemingly most innocuous design features such as background music, stereotypical images and the reward feedback. Less evident causes can originate from teacher/learner hostility (technophobia), a high learning curve (cognitive overhead, Conklin, 1987), and disillusionment after anticipation of an educational panacea.

Theoretically, it could be expected that the young generation, instinctively associating computer games with entertainment and pleasure, would welcome games as an interesting, original element diversifying foreign language classes. One cannot forget that in the case of teenagers, computer games constitute an ordinary way of spending free time and they are considered as an inseparable element of the surrounding reality. According to Nichols (2013, p. 47):

> In the United States, estimates suggest that almost 70 percent of households play video games (…) The average player age has risen from 29 years in 2004 to 35 years by 2010. (…) Similarly (…) the European audience for them has grown considerably. (…) The average video game player in the United Kingdom is 33 years old (…) in Spain (…) 26 years old, and in Finland 30 years old. In Japan, the second largest market for video games worldwide, almost 80 percent of households play video games.

The situation in Poland looks alike, as, according to the report *Dzieci aktywne online* (*Online active children*), 70 % of children aged 4–14 use a computer, and computer games are the most popular way to do it (quoted after Błaszkiewicz, 2011, p. 35).

Nevertheless, it is unclear whether learners treat this kind of tasks as purely entertaining and enabling to break down the school routine, considered interesting on the sole condition that they appear from time to time, or whether they are convinced that playing video games may really have a positive impact on language skills development. It is also interesting to what degree such factors as sex, personality, length of foreign language instruction, learners' personal opinions concerning their language skills, potential and the nature of second language acquisition in general influence their opinion on the usefulness of new technologies in language learning.

3.2 Research Participants

47 learners attending the same secondary school took part in the research. All the participants belonged to the age group 17–18 and they had been learning French since junior high-school. Therefore, it can be asserted that this group consisted of emotionally and intellectually mature individuals. The participants were divided into two groups. The first group (referred to as group A) consisted of 24 learners, 14 girls and 10 boys. The members of this group had been taught by the author of the present study since the beginning of their education in the school. Throughout their education, during French classes, they had numerous opportunities to play different computer games, as well as accomplish games-related tasks. The second group (referred to as group B) comprised 23 students, 15 girls and 8 boys. All the students in this group had been taught by two other teachers of French working in the same school. On the basis of interviews with those learners, it can be stated that they had never had an opportunity to use video games during their French classes. What is more, their teachers had hardly ever incorporated new technologies into their lessons. The learners from group B were selected in such a way that their language skills were comparable with the competences of the learners from group A. Judging by the ability to solve language tests, the learners representing both groups were comparable in terms of their overall proficiency level ($\sim$B1).

3.3 Research Procedure

As far as the classes conducted with group B are concerned, the aim was to render conditions from the classes with group A, by means of the same software, equipment and methods of work. The students from group B attended two consecutive 45-minute lessons containing game-supported language learning activities. These classes were conducted by the present researcher. The participants were introduced to three computer games: *Snail Bob 2*, a platform game where players have to help the hero to get through various levels setting different goals; *Pierre Hotel*, where participants play the role of a husband wandering through a suspicious hotel, looking for his wife who has been kidnapped by an unidentified man; and, finally, *Cover Front*, a point-and-click exploration game, where players go back in time to the First World War and become spies who enter the residency of a German officer; their task is to scour the place for trails necessary to unveil the secrets of the building. All the above-mentioned titles are flash games and they are accessible for free on the majority of servers offering this kind of software. However, only the first one is accessible in various language versions. The two remaining were translated from English into French by the teacher and then, appropriately modified in *FFdec* software allowing the real-time edition of ActionScript without need to decompile the .swf file and export it to .fla format.

The interactive whiteboard was used as an interface during the lessons to perform the assigned tasks. It is possible to provide two arguments in favor of this solution. Firstly, the school where the research took place is not equipped in computer language classroom. Therefore, it was not possible to ensure access to a separate computer post for every learner. Secondly, apart from guaranteeing good screen visibility for all the participants, an interactive whiteboard gives the opportunity to instinctively manipulate virtual objects by means of touch.

As far as the way of playing is concerned, two different kinds of settings were applied. In the first one, a chosen learner was responsible for performing the necessary actions while playing the game, whereas the teacher followed the game as both arbiter and spectator supervising the information exchange and encouraging all the learners to participate, and, if necessary, responding to their mistakes. In this case, the game was progressing as follows: randomly chosen learners were coming to the board and a volunteer was giving them a command (for example, in imperative mood). The player could ask to repeat the instruction, or suggest its modification if it was unclear. This stage could have been preceded by speculation about the possible game course and hypothesis concerning an optimum way of accomplishing the following level. In the case of any failure, the analysis of its causes was effected. The learners were instructed to find out the reasons for the failure as well as possible solutions making it possible to prevent defeat during the following attempt. The application of this game served as a pretext for introducing or practicing various grammatical structures. In this specific case, the games' exploitation contributed to the revision of the imperative mood and expressions describing goals, like *pour que*/*afin que*, imposing the usage of subjunctive mood.

In the case of the second setting, the learners worked in teams competing with one another. Every team had to provide appropriate commands to go through the game and their work was assessed taking into consideration their communication skills and language accuracy of given commands.

3.4 Description of the Research Tool

An online questionnaire prepared by means of *Google forms* was used as a research tool. All the students from both groups were asked to fill in an identical questionnaire composed of 22, five-point Likert-scale items concerning their opinions about the game-supported language learning (6 questions), as well as general views on the nature of language learning and the self-perception of their language abilities (16 questions), presented in random order. Six games-referring questions (see Table 1) were formulated by the researcher and 16 remaining questions (see Table 2) were adapted from *Student Questionnaire to Investigate Learning Preferences* (Richards & Lockhart, 2007, p. 21), as well as *Learners' Motivations, Goals, Needs, and Beliefs Questionnaire* (Martinez & Sanz, 2008, pp. 90–91). As already mentioned, the main aim of the study was to determine factors which

Table 1 Cronbach's alfa values for game-supported language learning-related statements

Game-supported language learning-related statements	Group A α = 0.94	Group B α = 0.94
1. When I play video games in the classroom, I feel more confident than during other communicative activities	If del. 0.94	If del. 0.94
2. Playing video games in the classroom is enjoyable	If del. 0.94	If del. 0.93
3. Playing video games helps me to consolidate the previously acquired knowledge	If del. 0.94	If del. 0.92
4. Playing video games helps me to memorize new grammar rules	If del. 0.93	If del. 0.93
5. Playing video games helps me to memorize new vocabulary	If del. 0.94	If del. 0.95
6. Playing video games enables me to speak French more fluently	If del. 0.93	If del. 0.94

Table 2 A summary of correlations with the variable *general GSLL perception*. Correlations in bold are significant at $p < 0.05$

Questions	Group A			Group B		
	Valid	Spearman	*p*-level	Valid	Spearman	*p*-level
1. How long have you been studying French?	24	0.13	0.54	23	0.12	0.57
2. I learn foreign languages without effort	24	−0.28	0.17	**23**	**0.84**	**0.00**
3. I consider myself a proficient French user	24	0.32	0.12	**23**	**0.54**	**0.00**
4. If someone does not understand me, I try to say it in a different way	**24**	**0.55**	**0.00**	23	0.38	0.07
5. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of memorizing a lot of vocabulary	24	−0.23	0.27	23	0.34	0.10
6. French is a very difficult language	24	0.28	0.18	**23**	**−0.75**	**0.00**
7. It is better to learn a foreign language in the country in which it is spoken	**24**	**0.49**	**0.01**	**23**	**0.52**	**0.00**
8. When I speak French I do not care about the mistakes I make	24	0.23	0.26	23	0.05	0.79

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Questions	Group A			Group B		
	Valid	Spearman	*p*-level	Valid	Spearman	*p*-level
9. I try to practice French outside the classroom	24	0.32	0.12	**23**	**0.48**	**0.01**
10. I like the teacher to explain everything to us	24	0.22	0.28	23	0.34	0.11
11. I believe that I will ultimately learn French very well	24	−0.35	0.08	23	0.35	0.09
12. I like working in groups	**24**	**0.63**	**0.00**	**23**	**0.67**	**0.00**
13. I often play video games at home	24	0.17	0.41	23	0.15	0.49
14. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules	24	−0.07	0.72	23	0.05	0.81
15. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes	24	−0.05	0.80	23	0.27	0.21
16. I feel confident speaking French in front of other people	24	0.37	0.07	23	0.05	0.81

influence the perception of game-supported language learning as well as to find out whether the results of the questionnaire would be different in group A and B.

3.5 Data Analysis

No missing data were present for responses on any item. Therefore, all the data obtained via the questionnaire was retained for the analysis. For all the calculations, the analysis was performed by means of the *STATISTICA* version 8 software program. After establishing the internal reliability of the items measuring participants' opinions relative to playing video games in the language classroom, these elements were combined (see Table 1). Numerical values attributed to the six items were summed up and the obtained value was ascribed to the new variable which we shall call *general GSLL perception*.

Since in the present study none of the variables of interest proved to have normal distribution, non-parametric tests were used. The association between the way of perceiving computer games by language learners from both groups and their

opinions about their own language skills was examined using Spearman's *rho* correlations. The numeric value of the Spearman's correlation coefficient provides an estimate of the strength of the relationship between two factors. The Mann-Whitney *U*-test was used to compare the game-supported language learning perception in both groups as well to assess the differences between male and female participants' opinions on the subject.

3.6 Results

3.6.1 Participants' Opinions on Game-Supported Language Learning

In general, in both groups, the participants' opinions on game-supported language learning (ranked on the scale 1–5) were quite positive ($\bar{x} = 3.84$ in group A and $\bar{x} = 3.48$ in group B). However, in both groups, some of the students had a very negative perception of the game-supported language learning, as manifested in very high standard deviation values (SD = 7.12 in group A, SD = 7.93 in group B). As can be derived from the pie charts below (see Fig. 1), these individuals constituted a minority. 50 % of the participants representing group B and as much as 61 % of those belonging to group A, expressed very positive opinions (4–5) about the incorporation of video games into foreign language classes.

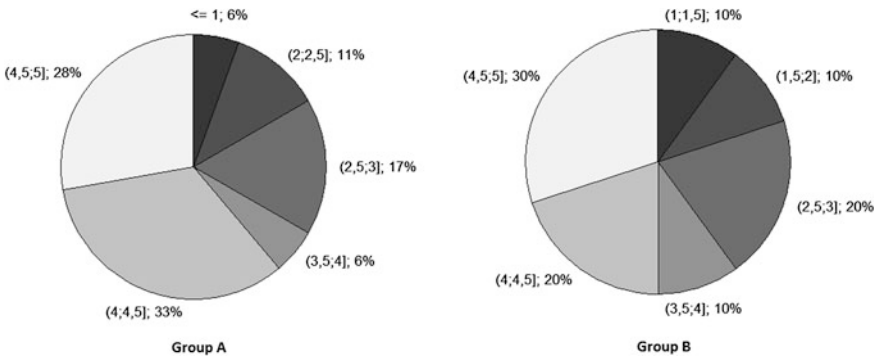

Fig. 1 Graphic representation of participants' opinions of game-supported language learning (scale 1–5)

3.6.2 Correlations of the "General GSLL Perception" Variable

The *general GSLL perception* variable was used to determine correlations between the way of perceiving computer games by language learners from both groups and their opinions about their own language skills, as well as the nature of second language acquisition. The assembled data are presented in the Table 2.

The analysis of the correlations allows noticing several interesting tendencies to be. First of all, only two among statistically significant correlations with variable *general GSLL perception* reach a similar level in both groups. They refer to variables 7 ("It is better to learn a foreign language in the country in which it is spoken") and 12 ("I like working in groups"). The second of these correlations can be explained in a relatively simple way: it seems that people who are eager to cooperate and approach enthusiastically tasks which are based on collective problem-solving are likely to appreciate games as a specific type of activity. This correlation also indicates how games are perceived by individuals with a particular kind of personality (openness, the fact of being outgoing, etc.). As far as item 7 is concerned, a positive correlation is also clearly visible but it is harder to explain. Instinctively, one would tend to believe that the game-related challenges would be eagerly faced by those who are self-assured, aware of their potential and convinced that they are able to learn a foreign language in exolingual environment, that is individuals who are not so susceptible to the context of the instructional process. Yet, the correlation indicates an opposite tendency.

With regard to the correlations with the variable *general GSLL perception* reaching a similar level in both groups, which are weak and failed to reach statistical significance, it is necessary to mention correlations with items 1 ("How long have you been studying French?") and 14 ("Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules"). In the first case, no significant relation between the length of language instruction and a positive or a negative opinion concerning video games can be determined. In the case of item 14, the correlation is virtually non-existent; therefore, it is difficult to reveal the connection between the participants' opinion about the incorporation of video games into foreign language classes and their view concerning the pertinence of formal grammar instruction. Variable 14 can be juxtaposed with item 5 ("Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of memorizing a lot of vocabulary"), as both statements are relative to the participants' opinions on the nature of second language acquisition. In this case, the difference between two groups is noticeable since a weak negative correlation appears in group A while a weak positive one occurs in group B. Those correlations are however too weak to be conclusive. All things considered, one cannot pin down the existence of a significant correlation between learners' opinions about those two chosen aspects of foreign language learning and views on game-supported language learning.

With regard to other statements concerning opinions about second language acquisition, as well as self-evaluation of target language skills, the correlation of the variable *general GSLL perception* with variables 3, 4, 9, 10, 15 and 16 will now be discussed. The first item belonging to this group ("I consider myself a proficient French user") relates directly to the self-evaluation of the level of proficiency in French. In group B, one can observe a distinct but not very strong statistically significant positive correlation. As a result, the potential of video games was rated higher by those participants who consider themselves skillful French users. In group A, in spite of being visible, this tendency was distinctively weaker. In the case of item 4, ("If someone does not understand me, I try to say it in a different

way"), a reverse tendency can be observed, as this correlation in group B fails to reach statistical significance. As far as statement 9 is concerned ("I try to practice French outside the classroom"), it relates to the fact whether a particular learner is motivated to improve his or her own language skills apart from regular classes. A visible, positive correlation in group B indicates that games were appreciated by active learners, going beyond institutional surrounding in search of additional opportunities to practice French. This relationship can be also observed in group A; however, in this case, it seems visibly weaker.

Variables 10 ("I like the teacher to explain everything to us") and 15 ("I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes") are thematically related because they refer to the teacher's behavior during classes and learners' expectations concerning this behavior. In both cases, the correlations of these variables with the *general GSLL perception* variable are rather weak, which indicates that learners' traits, such as the tendency to attain a high level of foreign language correctness, do not have a significant impact on their positive perception of video games. A similar conclusion can be drawn on the basis of item 8 ("When I speak French, I do not care about the mistakes I make"): a weak correlation suggests that learners who are not preoccupied with language correctness do not necessarily constitute a group particularly admiring video games. It undermines to some extent a stereotypical vision of video games being, above all, a source of entertainment ensuring spontaneous expression in a foreign language with a particular focus on the content of the message. The last correlation from this group, referring to item 16 ("I feel confident speaking French in front of other people"), is relatively distinct only in the case of group A, without appearing in group B.

An interesting phenomenon can be observed in the case of variables 2, 6 and 11, and their correlation with the variable *general GSLL perception*. As far as the two first cases are concerned, they have a distinctive feature: if in one of the groups a very strong correlation occurs, in the second one a weak correlation with an opposite sign exists. In the case of item 11, correlation coefficients are the same, but have an opposite sign. What is more, three items are thematically interconnected. Statements 2 ("I learn foreign languages without effort"), 6 ("French is a very difficult language") and 11 ("I believe that I will ultimately learn French very well") relate to self-confidence, the effort one has to make to learn foreign languages, as well as the opinion about the complexity of the French language. However, these three items are not strongly correlated with one another, a sole strong correlation occurring between items 2 and 6 in group B (-0.94 at $p = 0.00$). As far as the connection between these variables and the opinion about video games is concerned, one can observe that in group B games were appreciated particularly by the participants convinced that French is not especially difficult and that they will be able to speak it fluently in the future. The fact that this correlation is reversed but weak in group A may indicate that those who are considerably less convinced about their potential also start to gradually appreciate the virtues of game-supported language learning. Eventually, interestingly enough, neither in group A nor in

group B was it revealed that participants who play video games beyond school on a regular basis are likely to particularly appreciate the use of computer games in the classroom (see item 13, "I often play video games at home").

3.6.3 Differences in Game-Supported Language Learning Perception in Group a and B

Another crucial issue is to affirm whether the opinions of the members of both groups on game-supported language learning vary in a statistically significant way. Since both groups consisted of learners attending the same school, belonging to the same age group, learning the same foreign language and representing a similar level of language proficiency, the main feature enabling differentiating between the participants was their sex. The analysis of the correlations with variable *sex* seems to indicate that girls are less self-confident as far as their capabilities and the likelihood of their mastering a foreign language in the future are concerned. In group A, the correlation between the variable *sex* and variable 11 ("I believe that I will ultimately learn French very well") was −0.40 at $p = 0.05$ and that between *sex* and variable 16 ("I feel confident speaking French in front of other people") was −0.46 at $p = 0.02$. In group B, these values were −0.42 ($p = 0.04$) and −0.51 ($p = 0.01$), respectively. What is interesting, these results did not have an impact on the participants' views on using video games in speaking activities. No statistically significant differences were found between boys' and girls' opinions on the subject. Similar Mann-Whitney *U*-test results were observed both in group A ($U = 38$, $p = 0.85$) and in group B ($U = 40$, $p = 0.86$). The Mann-Whitney *U*-test was also used to compare the general game-supported language learning perception scores for the N = 24 participants in group A and N = 23 participants in group B. The results indicate no significant differences between the two groups ($U = 148$, $p = 0.35$). Therefore, one can hardly detect any significant differences in the opinions on game-supported language learning among the members of both groups.

4 Conclusions

In conclusion, it is vital to indicate that beyond any doubts Murray and Barnes (1998) are right by stating that people's responses to new technologies can be widely divergent. In the context of foreign language teaching, techniques going beyond common practices may be the source of both enthusiasm and extreme reluctance expressed by learners. As has been proved in the research project described above, it concerns also computer-enhanced ludic techniques. It has been proved by the existence of considerable discrepancies in the evaluation of game-supported language learning in both groups. The similarities between these groups seem to indicate that the 'wow' factor may influence, as is stated by Murray and Barnes (1998), the evaluation of a particular technology in a long-time perspective. If the 'wow' factor

was short-lived, in the course of time, the tendency to moderate extremely positive and negative opinions would have occurred. Yet, as indicated by the results of students in group A, the opinions of learners using this technology remain widely divergent and, what is more, even if representing a minority, there are still individuals expressing strongly negative attitudes to computer-enhanced ludic techniques' implementation in foreign language instruction.

As far as the learners' preferences are concerned, it turned out that, as it could have been expected, game-supported language learning is more appreciated by active learners, enjoying group work and looking for various opportunities to develop their language skills outside school. However, contrary to deeply-seated stereotypes, neither was it revealed that people playing video games outside school are much more enthusiastic about this type of classroom activities, nor was it confirmed that such games can be exclusively appreciated by boys, reputed to be much more susceptible to technical novelties. As the findings of the study indicate, game-supported language learning seems to constitute a form of instruction which is highly estimated by the majority of the participants, but at the same time, it still arouses strong, negative emotions of some learners.

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Part III
Linking Theory and Classroom Practice

CPH Theory, Early Classroom Instruction and Age-Related Issues that Are Separable from Age

David Singleton

Abstract This paper starts with a brief critical overview of the hypothesis—often elevated in popular discourse to 'theory'—that language learning is subject to maturational constraints of a kind which beyond a certain age preclude the complete acquisition of the language in question (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011). It goes on to relate this 'theory' to the practical question of when the teaching of languages should begin in schools, and concludes that the relationship between the two is extremely problematic (Singleton, 2012). In conclusion the paper points out that some of the age-related issues that can be identified as relevant to language learning are not in fact strictly related to maturation (Moyer, 2013) and could be seen having the capacity to manifest themselves pedagogically in something like an age-neutral manner.

1 The CPH and Early Language Instruction

In the 1950s and 1960s the case for introducing additional languages (henceforth L2s) into primary schools was much influenced by the 'younger = better' ideas of the neurologist Penfield (Stern, 1983, p. 132), whose proto-critical period viewpoint (see Penfield & Roberts, 1959) posited that the optimal period for language acquisition ended when the plasticity of a child's brain began radically to diminish, according to the received wisdom of the time, in the second decade of life. This postulate and the research that seemed to favour it were often cited in support of Penfield's widely disseminated ideas advocating the early introduction of L2 instructional programmes into schools. One might note that, according to at least one commentator, Penfield's views regarding the desirability of early L2 instruction owed more to his personal experience of enthusiastically immersing his own children in L2s at an early age than to his work as a scientist (Dechert, 1995).

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Findings concerning age-related dimensions of L2 acquisition in naturalistic settings seem to offer broad support for the critical period perspective. At an anecdotal level, many of us are familiar with cases of immigrant children acting as interpreters for their parents and grandparents. At a research level, immigrant studies which have been conducted for several decades have shown that immigrants who have some years' experience of the language of the host country, and whose exposure to the L2 in question began in childhood, after a number of years tend to outperform those whose exposure began later (see, e.g., Hyltenstam, 1992; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979; Oyama, 1976, 1978; Patkowski, 1980; Piske, Flege, MacKay, & Meador, 2002; Singleton & Kopečková, 2013; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978).

With respect to formal instructional L2 learning environments, however, research has long confounded the enthusiasm of Penfield and like-minded researchers, not to mention numerous regional and national governments, in failing to confirm the long-term benefits of an early start in formal situations. Muñoz (2008a, b, 2012; cf. Singleton, 1995) argues that, in fact, the expectation that younger instructed beginners will in the long term outperform older instructed beginners after the same amount of classroom exposure is not warranted, certainly not in typical limited-input classroom settings. Her claim is that the kind of language learning at which young learners seem to excel in naturalistic environments requires vastly more input than a typical instructional setting supplies. The implication is that younger learners in the classroom setting cannot hope to have the same learning advantage as younger learners in the naturalistic setting. Older instructed learners, Muñoz suggests, can be expected to exhibit a faster rate of learning than their juniors in formal educational settings owing to their superior cognitive development and their greater consequent capacity to cope with the kind of learning opportunities which most classrooms make available. The notion that our learning mode and capacity changes as we pass from childhood to adolescence to adulthood is indeed accepted as a truism in the educational literature (cf. Feldman, 2009). Given all of this, the concept of younger beginners in an L2 instructional setting outperforming older beginners in such a setting over any time-scale appears highly dubious.

2 The Debate Regarding the Relevance of the CPH

Some researchers who subscribe to the notion of a critical period (or sensitive—see Granena & Long, 2013) for language acquisition in humans have had no hesitation in claiming that it constitutes an argument for early L2 instruction (cf. Muñoz, 2012). Thus, Spada (2004) had the following to say ten years ago:

> 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.

Likewise, publications for language teachers and publicity for commercial early foreign language programs (cf. Rokita, 2006) frequently invoke the notion of maturational constraints in their advocacy of the early introduction of foreign language instruction (for more on this point, see Singleton & Leśniewska, 2012).

Not all CPH supporters, however, are convinced that the purported existence of a critical period for language constitutes an argument for early L2 instruction. Johnson and Newport (1989, p. 81) conclude the following from their own data:

> (…) 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.

DeKeyser (2003) broadly concurs. For him, school-based L2 learning is typically explicit in nature, in his view unaffected by the critical period, so that for him the kind of learning that goes on in schools is largely untouched by maturational constraints.

On the other side of the CPH debate, there are CPH sceptics who, despite their doubts about maturational constraints, have declared themselves enthusiastically in favor of the early introduction of L2s into the school curriculum. Genesee (1978) and Hatch (1983) took such a position many years ago on the grounds of the desirability of as long as possible an exposure to the L2, and of the importance of laying an early foundation to L2 learning so that ground can later be covered that might otherwise be neglected. These are purely educational arguments, made with little or no regard for the CPH debate and little or no relevance to it. In a similar vein are Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović's (2006, pp. 250–251) more recent remarks:

> The arguments for early instruction can be summarized around the following points: (1) studies in child and adult SLA research indicate that the length of exposure may influence SLA in a favorable way, though longer exposure to L2 does not guarantee better outcomes automatically; (2) as the general curriculum for learners expands with age, one of the areas of knowledge that could be acquired early is an L2; (3) in a globalized world, early L2 learning may contribute to understanding and appreciating different cultures, values, and speakers of other languages; (4) the ability to use two or more languages may enhance cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness, and thus, may influence the L1 favorably through raising awareness and may encourage the further language learning.

3 The Debate Regarding Maturation

The debate about the role of maturation in second language acquisition is, as Mitchell, Myles and Marsden rightly say (2013, p. 20) "far from resolved". There are, let it be said, some grounds for skepticism in relation to the critical period in general about which much ink has been spilled (see, e.g., Birdsong, 2014; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Singleton, 2012; Singleton & Muñoz, 2011). In fact, the argument being made in this article holds good whatever the degree of (in)validity of the

CPH. Accordingly, in order that we not be taken too far down the track of (in the present context) minimally relevant discussion of the counter-evidence to the CPH, just one point will be made here in this connection which should give us pause.

With regard to the endpoint of the critical period, although puberty is often, following Lenneberg (1967), mentioned in this regard, other (often *radically* different) suggestions proliferate (cf. Singleton, 2005). On the superabundance of critical period termini argued for in various parts of the research literature Aram, Bates, Eisele, Fenson, Nass, Thal and Trauner (1997, p. 285) comment that "the end of the critical period for language in humans has proven (…) difficult to find, with estimates ranging from 1 year of age to adolescence". In fact, this is a very conservative retailing of the range proposed, a range which undermines the plausibility of the whole notion of a critical period, and deprives the concepts of 'early' and 'late' L2 learning of any kind of stable reference point. If there were clear and incontrovertible evidence of an offset point for a window of opportunity for language acquisition, it ought surely to be possible for researchers to agree where it is situated.

In any case, the problem with relying on a purely maturational explanation for differences between L2 learners is that the age notion is, as Montrul (2008, p. 50) expresses it, "a macro-variable that cannot be isolated from other co-occurring factors". Moyer (2013, p. 1) says something similar: "a host of interrelated variables is at play, having to do with learner orientation and experience". She suggests that we need to take "a more nuanced look at what underlies age effects in SLA".

4 'A More Nuanced Look'

So let us take, following Moyer (2013), 'a more nuanced look' at age-*related* factors that are *not strictly related to maturation*. Let us examine the two such factors which have been prominent in the recent literature. First let us look at the question of amount and kind of L2 input which the acquirer experiences in the acquisitional process. Second, let us explore the affective dimension of acquirers' coming to grips with the L2, the personal and emotional aspects of their interaction with the L2 and its users. We shall see that there *tends* to be a favorable association between particular operations of these factors and L2 acquisition among children, but that this association is by no means rigid. If it is the case, as it seems to be, that a disassociation is possible between the factors in question and age, in principle it ought to be possible to exploit them in the classroom with learners of any age.

We begin, then, with the matter of input. It is worth saying that investigating the factor relating to the experience of input by simply counting the number of months and years spent in an L2 environment is an unsatisfactorily crude way of proceeding. We can probably all tell stories about cases of the contrasting effects in different individuals of the same period of time spent in an L2 context—for example, stories of different students going away for their 'year abroad' and coming back with vastly different levels of target language improvement, depending on the

nature of the contact they have had with users of the language concerned. It is abundantly clear we need to more in this matter than quantify unit of time, and that a qualitative, fine-grained approach is called for when researching exposure to input (cf. Muñoz & Singleton 2011, pp. 10–19).

Thus, for instance, Jia and Aaronson (2003) were able to show that the same length of residence in an L2 environment might be associated with widely varying amounts and intensity of L2 exposure and use. Using a fine-grained measure, that is to say, a measure of the degree of richness of the L2 environment beyond the confines of the classroom, they documented how in this respect the immigrant children in their study benefited from more contexts of L2 interaction—that is more, and more useful and usable input—than the adolescents. It seems then that in the naturalistic setting, youngers acquirers are the winners as far as input experience is concerned. This may indeed be one of the explanations for the long-term superior attainment of younger migrants in the acquisition of additional languages.

Moyer (e.g., 2005, 2013), focusing on older, formal learners, argues that it is important to examine the range of contexts of target language use in terms of the relative interactivity required by those contexts. For example, getting input from television programs is obviously rather different from getting input in the framework of face-to-face interaction (cf. Kopečková, 2012). One might intuitively expect the latter kind of input experience to be more beneficial, which by and large it is. Face-to-face interaction also appears to trump what teachers typically provide. In Moyer's (2005) study, formal learners of German as a foreign language were tested on their spoken and written performance. The analyses showed that experience of interactive realms of contact had significantly more impact on learners' spoken performance than instruction (cf. Flege, Munro, & MacKay 1995; Moyer, 2004, 2013).

We turn now to the affective dimension. In reference to migration contexts, Jia and Aaronson (2003) talk about the higher degree of friendly contact that younger migrants typically have with their host community peers, as compared with their seniors, and argue that their resultant greater readiness to interact in the L2 may have a role in accounting for the long-term advantage that tends to characterize younger beginners in naturalistic situations. Research conducted among non-Anglophone immigrant children in Dublin primary schools (Carson & Extra, 2010) has borne out Jia and Aaronson's work, pointing to a 'best friend' factor as important in promoting these children's opting to interact in English outside the classroom. As they comment (Carson & Extra, 2010, p. 49),

> The reported choice for English with best friends is particularly high, and may be understood within a context where children select to use English as a lingua franca with children from language backgrounds other than their own, or indeed select to use English with children who share the same other language. (…) It seems that the shift towards English language use here is located within friendships rather than family connections (…).

Another Dublin study (Eriksson, 2011), in this case an investigation of the intergenerational transmission of language and culture in Russian-speaking families in Ireland, showed friendship with peers outside the Russian-speaking community to

be strongly associated with the use of the dominant host country language, English, by children in such families.

Again the message seems to be that children in naturalistic situations profit more than older acquirers from affective aspects of encountering new languages, which seems to benefit their L2 acquisition. We can note, however, that, again, such benefits are not by any means exclusively associated with early, naturalistic acquisition. Moyer (2004) encountered this powerfully when investigating the L2 proficiency of 25 successful late L2 learners. She found that in their predictive power factors such as satisfaction with phonological attainment and level of motivation were as strong as (or stronger than) age of onset and length of residence combined (56 %) (Moyer 2004, p. 81). Furthermore, the interview data gathered by Moyer in this study brought to the fore influences on the learners' individual learning experience such as their attitudes towards the L2 culture, their perceptions of foreignness and belonging, and their intentions in regard to staying in the L2 community. In her most recent work Moyer (2013, p. 178) emphasizes, on the basis of an array of research findings, that, in regard to phonology, "an individual must be willing to invest deeply in the target language to reach the advanced level" and that late learners' success in their struggle with the challenges of the target language will be "commensurate with their view of [its] value, their attitudes about its speakers, and their views on the value of language-learning in general".

Native-like performance in the L2 in adult learners is often associated with strong motivation to pass for native speakers (cf. e.g., Marx, 2002). One thinks, for example, of the exceptional (Anglophone) learner in Moyer's (1999) study, who was very strongly motivated at a personal level to sound like a German native speaker, and who succeeded in this ambition. In another study, Kinsella and Singleton (2014) studied 20 native English speakers who had been raised monolingually, who had not begun learning French before the age of 11 and whose average age of significant exposure to French (arrival in France) was 28.6 years. All were now resident in France, and all reported at least occasionally passing for native speakers of French. Three of the twenty participants scored within native speaker ranges on all the tasks they were asked to perform in French. All three successful subjects conducted their social life primarily through French; all identified themselves closely with the Francophone community; all considered it important to pass for native speakers of French; and all had French partners. Again, such findings show that the positive impact of affect on L2 attainment is not confined to young learners.

5 Pedagogical Implications

Factors such as engagement with L2 input and the affective dimension seem to operate at all ages, although in naturalistic circumstances, they seem in general to operate more favorably in respect of younger learners. Accordingly, their effects have often been taken to be maturationally rooted. To repeat the point, however, the

impact of such factors is not, in fact, age-bound. With regard to the formal instructional context, the suggestion here is that there would appear to be some likelihood of benefits accruing in terms of L2 school learners' attainment—whatever their age—if we could maximize the chances of the activation in the classroom of factors such as deep and varied engagement with input and affective connection to L2-associated phenomena (cf. Cook & Singleton, 2014, Chap. 7). There are many people in our field who could talk more knowledgably and more insightfully about this pedagogical dimension than the present author. The discussion that follows is intended merely as a first, modest exploratory sketch of the possibilities, which more expert didacticians may wish to take further.

Let us start with the question of the extent to which teachers can influence learners' motivation and engagement. It has clearly been shown that teachers can do a great deal to promote and sustain higher motivation levels. One example of the kind of intervention that is possible in this connection is relates to helping learners to identify short-term goals and encouraging them to reflect on their progress and achievements. Teachers can, for example, provide learners with self-assessment checklists to identify skill strengths and weaknesses, weekly checklists to track their progress on meeting particular learning goals, and self-reflection tools (e.g., learning diaries) to help them build autonomy and take charge of their learning (Ushioda, 2003; Marshall, 2002). The research consensus is that this kind of action on the part of teachers can have genuinely positive results in terms of learners' reception of and involvement the input they encounter.

By way of another example, researchers increasingly concur with the experience-based folk-wisdom accepted by many language teachers, according to which using varied and challenging instructional activities can help learners stay focused on and engaged with instructional content (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). This is not exactly a ground-breaking proposition, but in the workaday world it is often lost sight of. Keeping classes alive and full of adventure is not easy for the worn-down teacher! But when attention is paid to this aspect of the teaching process, the outcome in terms of learner reaction is such as actually to make the teacher' life easier.

With regard to affect, some research and practical experience suggest that there is an interaction between the social factors associated with classroom learning and the L2 learner's attitude, effort, classroom behavior and achievement (Florez & Burt, 2001). In question here are factors such as the group dynamics of sets of learners in interaction, the general comfort and enjoyability of the social aspects of the learning environment, and the level and quality of learners' partners' motivation. Clearly, these are areas in which teacher intervention can make a difference. This is not to say that it is an easy task to make meaningful improvements in such domains. If teachers are aware, however, of the fact that keeping an eye on these dimensions and that giving social aspects of learning situations the occasional steer can have a positive effect on learners' approach, they will almost certainly keep this to the forefront of their minds and practice, if only to get more return on their efforts.

Many researchers and practitioners speak of the benefits of providing opportunities for the continuation of L2 use when learners are not in class. Project-based

learning (see Stoller, 2006), for example, supplies learners with a bridge between practice in class and outside of class. In addition, project-based learning supplies opportunities for learners to work with others to accomplish tasks, using the target language in real life (see Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 2003). Project work thus combines advantages in respect of encouraging engagement with input with possibilities for enhancing the socio-affective relationship between learners and their learning activities. In the best circumstances collaboration in the context of project work can result in friendships, or the strengthening of existing friendships, and we have already seen the significance of the friendship factor for L2 attainment.

As was said above, this brief pedagogical discussion is intended merely as a suggestive beginning for a thoroughgoing survey of the pedagogical *optiques* and devices relevant and helpful to any endeavor to facilitate greater engagement with L2 input and a higher level of positive affect in learners in relation to elements (including people) associated with the L2. There are certainly also other non-maturationally based factors not discussed above which favor younger naturalistic acquirers but which can be brought to bear pedagogically on instructed learners of various ages.

6 Envoi

Bruer's (1999) wisely comments that a danger of focusing on maturational issues is that it prompts us to pay too much attention to *when* learning occurs and too little attention to the *conditions of learning*. Despite such counsel, there seems to be something of a fixation on the *when* of learning, with the age factor, worldwide, in relation to the introduction of additional languages into school curricula. Foreign languages (especially English) are now being taught in primary schools from Catalonia to China. Indeed, in some countries commercial companies are advertising English language services aimed at two-year-olds, the suggestion being that very early language learning will give the children in question a clear advantage in their later educational and professional careers. The results of such early formal L2 learning, alas, are consistently disappointing. In the light of the seemingly unstoppable trend in relation to early language learning, it may be worth our while, therefore, to look for pedagogical approaches which can begin to facilitate the replication of some of the favorable conditions associated with early naturalistic L2 acquisition. Certain of the relevant factors are identifiable, as are a range of pedagogical approaches which address them. If such approaches are implemented with classroom learners, of any age, their impact may admittedly be limited, but there is at least a chance that our obsession with strictly maturational issues can be replaced with a focus on issues over which we have some control.

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Reconciling SLA Theories with Classroom Practice: Designing a Principled Eclectic Bridge

Magdalena Walenta

Abstract The relationship between second/foreign language acquisition (SLA) theory and classroom practice is not straightforward. While some SLA theorists claim that they have no obligation to look for pedagogical gains, others believe that their research outcomes should ultimately be tested against the needs of genuine classrooms. Meanwhile, teachers and teacher educators find it difficult to translate the plethora of abstract theoretical proposals into the hands-on experience of teaching. The paper explores the theory/practice interface with the aim of arguing that SLA research has a lot to offer to language pedagogy, as long as the theory-laden and often conflicting proposals are reconciled into pedagogically-adequate, classroom-relevant answers—a scenario calling for principled eclecticism. The design guidelines for principled integration are discussed in terms of three design axes—*language* axis, *learning* axis and *learner* axis—encouraging theoretical pluralism, yet preventing its unconstrained growth and potential incoherence. The theoretical discussion is related to the hands-on experience of designing activities for a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) course, where an attempt has been made at organizing varied SLA theories along the three proposed axes.

1 Introduction

Given that human ability to naturally acquire languages starts to gradually diminish around puberty (Bley-Vroman, 1989; Skehan, 1998, pp. 2–3), it seems reasonable that courses for foreign/second language (L2) learners should be grounded in SLA theory, as the randomness of first language acquisition (FLA) is no longer a sufficient model (Strozer, 1994, p. 205). However, bridging classroom practice with SLA theory is not always considered a viable option. As some SLA researchers note, they have "no necessary obligation to look for pedagogical pay-offs" (Jordan, 2004, p. 15) as the goals of their research do not directly "impinge on questions of

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language pedagogy [or] language teaching methodology" (Gass & Schachter, 1989, p. 3). Similar views are expressed by teachers and teacher educators, who have understandable difficulty finding their way in the maze of theoretical proposals (Jordan, 2004, pp. 16–17; VanPatten, 1996, p. 53; Whong, 2011, p. 15), their idiom seeming too abstract, technical and divorced from classroom reality, to genuinely inform their choices.

The paper wishes to explore the roots and nature of the theory/practice split, with the aim of highlighting possible measures to help reconcile SLA research with language teaching pedagogy, both at the macro-level of a theoretical framework and at the micro-level of classroom procedures. More specifically, the aims of the present paper are threefold:

- to provide an overview of the roots and manifestations of the theory/practice split evident in the SLA field, as well as a critical analysis of some current attempts at reducing the gap;
- to develop a theoretical framework to bridge the theory/practice gap, grounded in the eclectic position yet aimed at remedying some of its current shortcomings;
- to apply the theoretical framework to the hands-on experience of teaching by exemplifying how it may be put to use in solving a specific pedagogical problem.

2 The Theory/Practice Split—An Overview

2.1 The Roots of the Theory/Practice Dichotomy

The theory/practice split evident in the SLA field is often traced back to the advent of Chomskyan linguistics (Jordan, 2004, p. 127), which shifted the focus away from behaviorist assumptions and structural descriptions of language and set out to explain the phenomenon of FLA as a research paradigm in its own right. As pointed out by many (e.g., Jordan, 2004; Whong, 2011, p. 49), the shift also left its mark on the SLA field, which started to distance itself from the issues of language teaching. As Jordan (2004, p. 127) explains, it was Chomsky's approach which marked the beginning of an important shift "away from the emphasis on the pedagogical implications of research, and towards an explanation of the phenomena of SLA as a research project in itself", with academics developing a more rigorous theory of the L2 system at the expense of focusing on its possible pedagogical implications.

On the one hand, the split reflected the gradual disillusionment with Chomskyan transformational grammar, which fell short of the initial expectations of it becoming a powerful pedagogical tool (cf. Lester, 1967, for a positive account and Newmark, 1971, for its critique). On the other hand, it was a logical corollary of the paradigm's move away from the behavioral assumptions about language learning (lending themselves easily to pedagogical modifications, cf. the audiolingual method, Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 50–69) and towards the concept of an innate predisposition

(Whong, 2011, p. 49), by definition impervious to teaching (Uriagereka, 2000, p. 42). In consequence, as Whong (2011, p. 49) explains, "since the late 1960s a rift has developed between researchers studying the formal properties of language and those interested in the teaching of language"—a kind of a "double split" (van Lier, 1994, p. 30), which pushed SLA with theory in one direction, and education with practice in another.

2.2 The Manifestations of the Theory/Practice Dichotomy

2.2.1 Property Versus Transition and Generative L2 Acquisition Research

As Jordan (2004, p. 199) points out, the theory/practice split is probably most pronounced in the generative SLA framework (e.g., Polomska & Wekker, 1995; Towell & Hawkins, 1994; White, 2003), which aims at analyzing the linguistic behavior of non-native speakers in terms of "interlanguage grammars (…) constrained by principles and parameters of UG [Universal Grammar]" (White, 2003, p. 1), and thus rarely features pedagogical aims on its agenda.

According to White (2003, p. 151), the paradigm's major concern is that of analyzing L2 representation at a given learning stage and capturing its formal property—in particular the ability to absorb L2 parametric values (Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p. 260). As White (2003, p. 151) further explains, "[w]hat remains to be considered is how development takes place, in particular, what drives transition from one stage to another". Similar views are expressed by Gregg (2005, p. 6), who points out that generative L2 acquisition research—while equipped with a well-developed property aspect—is still far from becoming a transition theory. The situation seems only natural given that the principles and parameters model, from which it originally derived, was put forth as a solution "to the logical problem of language acquisition, abstracting away from developmental issues altogether" (Borer, as cited in White 2003, p. 152).

Interestingly, as Jordan (2004, p. 255) observes, it is the developmental aspect which is most sorely missing from the educational point of view, as it might potentially indicate—by acknowledging that UG is *not* a causal explanation and thus needs a supplementary learning theory—the scope for a possible pedagogical intervention. In Jordan's (2004) words: "Chomskian theory is almost exclusively concerned with (…) a property theory. *This state of affairs is the exact opposite of the situation in SLA* where most of the interest lies in the development of Interlanguage" (p. 109, emphasis original). And while the lack of a transition theory is openly admitted by generative SLA researchers (e.g., Gregg, 2005, p. 6; White, 2003, p. 152), they also repeatedly stress that the focus of their research lies *elsewhere*, and thus they "have no necessary obligation to look for pedagogical pay-offs [as] their real purpose is to describe and explain certain phenomena" (Jordan, 2004, p. 15).

2.2.2 Paradigmatic Theories and the Patchwork of Insights

Importantly, as many point out (e.g., Bialystok, 2001, p. 54, Bogusławski, 2006; Whong, 2011, p. 49), the circumscribed, paradigmatic nature of research is by no means limited to the Chomskyan paradigm. As Bogusławski (2006, pp. 24–25) explains, the "pedagogical paradox" of theoretical linguistics, in its entirety, resides in the fact that the majority of what is being researched has little bearing on pedagogical issues—the theories either offering knowledge a priori, which children "can't help but acquire" (cf. Uriagereka, 2000, p. 42), or—fighting for a dominant position on the theoretical scene—getting entangled into one of the numerous, conflicting paradigms: generative, cognitive and other, all of dubious pedagogical application (Bogusławski, 2006, p. 23). As Whong (2011, p. 49) sums up, there is a general tendency for each SLA theory—be it generativist, general cognitive or environmentalist—to see itself as the *only* correct approach and concentrate on "debating minor points within an agreed general theory" rather than engaging "with others whose basic theory is at odds".

Unsurprisingly, as Bialystok (2001, p. 32) points out, the strict adherence to a given paradigm—while stimulating progress within a given school of thought and fueling substantial academic debate (cf. Kuhn, 1962)—may lead to rigid divisions, causing understandable confusion on the part of practitioners, wishing to ground their practice in the *best* of what they know about second language learning and teaching (Brown, 2002, p. 11) yet faced with a plethora of *conflicting* answers. The fact that, as Kumaravadivelu (2006, pp. 169–170) points out, there are few signposts for finding one's way in the theoretical maze, does not make things easier, resulting in the current state of applied linguistics being perceived as a "patchwork of insights" (Widdowson, as cited in Jordan, 2004, p. 13), stitched together with the "haphazard" thread of "random and expedient use of whatever techniques comes most readily to hand" (Widdowson, 1990, p. 50).

2.2.3 The Transmission Model of Teacher Education

As Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 166) points out, the lack of a coherent theoretical foundation is further exacerbated by the transmission model of teacher education, leading to "an unfortunate division of labor between the theorist and the teacher". The state of affairs—clearly visible in the prevalent teacher education models (p. 216)—with researchers conceiving knowledge, teacher educators transmitting it and teachers passively consuming it (pp. 216–217), does not encourage much dialogue between the respective parties. As Skehan (1998, p. 261) points out, it reduces the teacher to a "pawn within a larger structure", leaving very little food for critical thought (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 166, cf. also Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 182).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 217), the "debilitating dichotomy between theory and practice", having been firmly institutionalized in the teaching profession, is not only perceived by prospective teachers as something which

naturally goes with the territory, but also responsible for depriving teachers of an indispensable tool for critically analyzing their practice and adapting the theoretical package accordingly. The irony of the situation lies, as Skehan (1998) observes, in the fact that teachers—who need assistance *most* in order to cope with the complex, ever-changing classroom scenarios—are forced to "improvise with the minimum of guidance" (p. 261, cf. also Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003, p. 7).

2.3 The Theory/Practice Dichotomy—Current Attempts at Reducing the Gap

2.3.1 Back to School

Despite the numerous challenges presented above, there are many (e.g., Bogusławski, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Whong, 2011) who believe that bridging linguistic theories with classroom practice is not only possible but also indispensable. As Long (as cited in Jordan, 2004, p. 15) points out, researchers have "the social responsibility (…) to help improve the efficaciousness of classroom teaching". In a similar vein, Bogusławski (2006, p. 25) argues that it is "in offering assistance to the process of practical acquisition of foreign languages" that linguistics can "find its most effective public justification".

In light of the above, it comes as no surprise that those who believe in the theory/practice interface, point to *language classrooms* as the ultimate test-bed for SLA theories. As Nunan (1994, p. 268) forcibly asserts, "in the final analysis all linguistic theories, as well as research conducted in laboratory contexts and simulated settings, must be contested against the reality of genuine classrooms". Kumaravadivelu (2006) adds that it is the language classroom where teachers—confronted with the "unpredictable learning/teaching needs, wants, and situations"—become the architects of the theory/practice interface (p. 157), as it is them who—"based on [their] understanding of language, coupled with the needs of [their] students"– ultimately decide which theories to take on board (Whong, 2011, p. 17). And, as Larsen-Freeman (2000, p. 184) points out, even if the choice is constrained by factors outside teachers' control (such as a preselected set of teaching materials or an external syllabus), whatever happens in the classroom "resonates with their [teachers'] own values, experience, and fundamental views about teaching and learning" (p. 181) and thus it is them who, in the end, decide.

2.3.2 The Eclectic Position

Encouraging teachers to take "liberty with the pedagogic formulations prescribed by theorists" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 157) naturally points to theoretical and methodological eclecticism as possible means of bridging the theory/practice gap. Yet, as pointed out by many (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Larsen-Freeman,

2000; Lowe, 2003; Mellow, 2002; Widdowson, 1990), the eclectic position—while undoubtedly welcome—must be approached with caution.

On the positive side, it helps avoid the theoretical tug-of-war and counterbalances the incompleteness of single theory reliance (Mellow, 2002, p. 2). As Whong (2011) observes, while mentalists are busy explaining language in terms of domain-specific or general cognition (p. 95), and interactionists are engrossed in proving its environmentalist roots (p. 96), the irreconcilability of their respective positions "does not necessarily matter for language teaching" (p. 95), where *anything* that helps the learner "move (…) continuously toward the automatic, linguistic end of [their] performance" is welcome by a conscientious teacher, regardless of what the theoretical motivation for the difference is (p. 95). On the other hand, by inviting theoretical and methodological pluralism, the "pick[ing] and choos[ing]" (Whong, 2011, p. 135) may lead to "arbitrary, atheoretical [and] incoherent" (Mellow, 2002, p. 2) decisions, especially that, as argued above, training programs—often reducing teachers to faithful followers of pedagogical prescriptions (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 182)—rarely assist them in forming a coherent view of their practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 216).

2.4 *Summary of the Findings—Moving Towards Principled Eclecticism*

Even a brief and necessarily incomplete overview of the roots and manifestations of the theory/practice split evident in the SLA field clearly shows that there are many stumbling blocks which might potentially prevent the theory/practice bridge from taking shape. While the circumscribed nature of theoretical proposals makes them a rather dubious pedagogical tool, the dichotomous nature of SLA research, with many conflicting views and few organizing principles, further deepens the theory/practice split. Added to this is the transmission model of teacher education, distancing the theorist from the practitioner even more, and so it seems that the reconciliation of SLA theory with classroom practice is not a viable option.

On the other hand, despite the countless challenges, the theory/practice interface is believed by many to be not only desirable but also achievable—as long as the absolutist and often conflicting proposals are contested against the reality of genuine classrooms and unified by the practitioner within an eclectic approach. However, the eclectic position—while undoubtedly contributing to the formation of the theory/practice bridge—also entails potential danger, as it solves the weakness of single-theory reliance, yet offers few guidelines for the teacher as to which theories to include or exclude, thus leading to unconstrained pluralism and potential incoherence of classroom procedures. Given that it is the language classroom where linguistic theories affect the L2 learner *most* (as opposed to L1 acquisition research which targets a system already *in place,* cf. Bogusławski, 2006, p. 25) the emerging "patchwork of insights" (cf. Sect. 2.2.2 above) is by no means a welcome scenario,

as it may prevent a harmonious development of the L2 system (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 183).

In light of the above, it comes as no surprise that researchers advocating the eclectic position, simultaneously stress the need for design guidelines, ensuring principled integration. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out, it is the "pattern which connects" (p. xiii) the different linguistic and extra-linguistic threads of eclectic methodology, which guarantees its overall success (pp. 224–226). A similar view is expressed by Mellow (2002), who calls for "guiding principles", ensuring "coherent choices of learning activities" within an eclectic paradigm (p. 2) or Widdowson (1990, p. 50) and Lowe (2003, p. 6), who caution against random pluralism.

Interestingly, similar concerns are voiced by architecture theorists (Basista, 1995, p. 15)—the analogy quite fitting once we acknowledge that *both* teachers and architects, although dealing with different substance—assist the creation of a new system (be it a building or teaching methodology) by coordinating an array of, often conflicting, aspects. As Basista (1995, p. 15) points out, the role of architecture is to bring order into space, a task achieved by unifying varied competing criteria by following a set of firmly established guidelines—often operationalized as design axes: a set of "imaginary line[s] passing (…) through a composition (…) so as to give an impression of balance" (Fleming, Honour, & Pevsner, 1999, p. 34). In the case of architectural creation, the three design axes were long ago (c. 10 BC) defined as *durability*, *utility* and *beauty* (Vitruvius, 1999), their threefold nature (O'Gorman, 1998) ensuring principled integration of structural, pragmatic and aesthetic demands of the project, while guaranteeing relative design freedom.

3 Developing a Three-Axis Framework—Designing a Principled Eclectic Bridge

Building on the insights gathered thus far and shifting the discussion from architectural concerns back to language pedagogy, in the sections which follow, I propose a three-axis framework as a possible contribution to bridging the theory/practice gap. The framework, while deriving from the eclectic position, is aimed at introducing specific measures to curb its unconstrained growth. To that end, three design axes for a principled eclectic methodology are introduced: *language* axis, *learning* axis and *learner* axis, as a possible means of helping teachers find their way in the theoretical maze and select classroom activities in accordance with a consistent philosophy (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 183). While the framework draws on a number of theoretical proposals (e.g., Cook, 1993; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2013; Gregg, 2005; Kumuravadivelu, 2006; Mellow, 2002), its main aim is to weave the various threads into a pattern of three, clearly defined axes, easily discernible in classroom contexts. The design guidelines are intentionally broad, so as to allow the generation of various classroom scenarios

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 199), yet tight enough to ensure principled use of varied theoretical insights.

3.1 Laying the Foundations

The original inspiration for the framework comes from Cook (1993) who suggests that a comprehensive theory of SLA needs to answer the same three questions that Chomsky (as cited in Cook, 1993, p. 3) defined with respect to FLA research, namely: i. *What constitutes knowledge of language?* ii. *How is knowledge of language acquired?* iii. *How is knowledge of language put to use?* While it is by no means my wish here to lay the foundations for a comprehensive SLA theory (a task beyond the reach of most distinguished scholars (cf. Jordan, 2004, p. 262) not to mention my modest proposal), I nevertheless believe that the questions—once *asked* by teachers (i. *What* is it that I teach? ii. *How* do I teach it? iii. *Who/What* do I teach it for?)—form very convenient guidelines for understanding, personalizing and optimizing their practice. It should be observed that, without prescribing ready-made answers and implying specific theoretical assumptions, they transform the patchwork of theoretical and methodological insights into a coherent shape, growing alongside the three identified directions: *language* axis (the *What?*), *learning* axis (the *How?*) and *learner* axis (the *Who/What for?*).

3.2 Language Axis

The first, *language* axis derives its name and conceptual content from Kumaravadivelu's (2006) classification of language teaching methods, with the *language*-centered ones overlapping with my distinction. As Kumaravadivelu (2006, pp. 90–91) explains, *language*-centered methods are concerned with "explicit introduction, analysis, and explanation of linguistic system" and thus aimed at helping the learner grasp the target grammar, the rules of its usage assumed to underlie successful language use (cf. Hymes, 1972). Understood as such, the axis coincides with the *property* view on SLA (cf. Gregg, 2005; White, 2003, p. 151 and Sect. 2.2.1 above), in that it focuses on the grammatical subsystem ("the very basis of language", cf. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2013, p. 41) and thus becomes a possible candidate for the *property* slot (without presupposing any specific learning route and hence inviting various forms of pedagogical intervention, cf. Mellow, 2002, p. 5). The axis is also discernible in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski's (2013, p. 35) classification of language teaching goals, where he defines *epistemic* aims as: "pursuit of knowledge, training of the faculties of the mind, focus on form and the underlying system". Finally, it fits in with the *form* dimension of Mellow's (2002) *form/function* axis,

where learning activities are characterized as either form or function oriented, with the form-oriented ones focusing on "language as a structural system" (p. 3).

3.3 Learner Axis

The *learner* axis, on the other hand, closely coincides with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) *learner*-centered methods, which are concerned with "learner needs, wants, and situations" (p. 91), juxtaposing purely linguistics gains with functional aspects of language learning, in particular "learning to mean" (Halliday, as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 8) in a specific social context. This axis is also echoed in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski's (2013) characterization of *utilitarian* teaching goals: "training for interaction, preparing learners for the sociopragmatic pressure of on-line communication" (p. 35) and Mellow's (2002) function-oriented activities, focusing on language as a "system for expressing meanings" (p. 3). Thus, while a range of activities may be involved here, they all focus on meaning-based communication, facilitated by various interactional patterns (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, pp. 128–129). Given that—as Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (2013, p. 41) points out—the communicative impact of lexis is instantaneous and dramatic (as opposed to grammar, which has limited influence on successfully encoding/decoding of the message, cf. Skehan, 1998, p. 3; VanPatten, 1996, p. 17)—successful completion of such activities typically entails the teaching/revising of relevant lexical items.

3.4 Learning Axis

Finally, the *learning* axis may be correlated with Kumaravadivelu's (2006, pp. 91–92) *learning*-centered methods, principally concerned with cognitive processes of language learning, in particular "intake factors and intake processes governing L2 development" (p. 134, cf. also VanPatten, 1996). It should be noted that the *learning* axis—by enumerating conditions conducive to interlanguage development (cf. Bialystok 2002; Sharwood Smith, 2004; VanPatten, 1996)—supplies the much needed *transition* path for the, otherwise, static system (cf. Jordan, 2004, p. 163; Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p. 248 and Sect. 2.2.1 above). It is also parallel with the second dimension of Mellow's (2002, pp. 4–5) model—the *construction/growth* axis—characterizing classroom activities in terms of the underlying learning *route*, understood either as construction (explicit) or growth (implicit). Importantly, the *learning* axis—introducing pedagogical intervention at the input/intake transition stage (VanPatten, 1996, p. 10)—remains *neutral* with respect to the construction/growth distinction proposed by Mellow, which obtains later, at the intake/developing system interface (Lee & Benati, 2009, p. 76). Thus, while residing in explicit intervention, helping the learner attend to input, it may, potentially, influence both explicit learning (cf. Bialystok, 2002, p. 153;

Skehan, 1994, p. 187) and/or implicit acquisition (cf. Little, 1994, p. 104, Paradis, 2009, p. 60).

3.5 *Arranging the Axes*

While the above discussion is—due to the limited scope of the paper—necessarily limited, what I hope to have demonstrated so far, is that the axes are broad enough to encompass a number of theoretical proposals and resultant methodologies, in that they indicate three distinct directions, yet leave the choice of a specific path to the teacher. And indeed, it is not the use of *particular* theories that conditions the framework's success, but rather how they *interact* to form a coherent and complete structure. In other words, the success of the eclectic bridge hinges on the teacher asking all three questions (i. *What* is it that I teach? ii. *How* do I teach it? iii. *Who/What* do I teach it for?) and combing the resultant pattern of *language*, *learning* and *learner* axes into a coherent pedagogical answer. As in architecture, the possibilities here are countless, yet, obviously, ending the paper on a vague note like this would not contribute any firm footing to the theory/practice interface. Therefore, in the sections which follow, I present results of a small research, with the aim of exemplifying how the three axes may help the teacher make a better sense of his/her practice and transform a range of theoretical and methodological options into a coherent answer to a specific pedagogical problem, thus possibly adding a brick—even if a small one—to the theory/practice bridge.

4 Applying the Framework—Constructing the Theory/Practice Bridge

4.1 *Research Context and Theoretical Background*

While the need for principled integration in language pedagogy is, in my view, universal, the modest scope of the article cannot exhaustively analyze all its possible facets. Therefore, the research focuses on a CLIL instructional context which, while priding itself on its integrative nature, unifying language and content, is still searching for optimal means of striking the right balance between them (Coyle et al., 2010, pp. 32–35; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2010; Lyster, 2007)—a scenario possibly calling for a principled eclectic methodology.

While the tug-of-war between language and content may take on many different forms, one of its aspects concerns the challenge of incorporating grammar teaching into a predominantly content and lexis oriented methodology—a very urgent pedagogical problem faced by CLIL practitioners and acknowledged by theorists (cf. Coyle et al., 2010; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2010; Lyster, 2007). As Lyster (2007, p. 58) explains, "content instruction and its lexical orientation do not readily

bring grammatical issues to the forefront [and thus] teachers are (…) inclined to do so either incidentally or in a decontextualized manner"—neither of the options, as research indicates (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002, p. 5; Lyster, 2007; VanPatten, 1996, p. 59; Yu, 2013), bringing satisfactory results. In consequence, students—while expanding their content knowledge, lexical repertoire and communicative ability—do not demonstrate consistent grammatical accuracy, on a par with their interactive skills (Lyster, 2007, p. 29)—a possible reason for the discrepancy lying in the fact that learners (especially adult ones) are able to process and negotiate content without recourse to linguistic form, as context and lexical items seem enough to ensure communicative success (Skehan, 1998, p. 3; VanPatten, 1996, pp. 16–17).

Importantly, while the above scenario may be satisfactory for many, it turns out to be problematic for architecture students taking part in a CLIL course, who—wishing to successfully function in a highly demanding international work environment—simply cannot afford to rely on lexical and pragmatic clues alone, as they may help them perform well on routine tasks, yet be of little use in more complex, technical discourse (cf. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2013, p. 41). In the case of in-service architects, it is not only the sentence structure which might fall apart for want of relevant grammar but—a rather unfortunate scenario—a building structure as well (should the lexical diet prove insufficient for successful message comprehension). In light of the above, it comes as no surprise that in a questionnaire administered to a group of 20 architecture students participating in a CLIL course, 100 % of the respondents agreed that grammar *should* constitute part of the course: twelve people agreed (6 on a Likert scale), six people strongly agreed (7 on a Likert scale) and two people mildly agreed (5 on a Likert scale), thus substantiating the theoretical assumption (e.g., Coyle et al., 2010; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2010; Lyster, 2007) that the teaching of content-specific vocabulary (to the exclusion of morpho-syntactic aspects) falls short of genuinely integrating linguistic and extra-linguistic aims of content-based methodologies.

4.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

As shown above, a very specific pedagogical problem was discerned, namely: how to incorporate grammar teaching into a CLIL course for architects. In order to verify the validity of the three-axis framework, the next step was to check whether the analysis of the situation in terms of the theoretical axes could contribute to solving the pedagogical challenge. This led to the formulation of the following research question: *Does the analysis of a CLIL classroom activity in terms of the proposed axes help the teacher utilize a range of theoretical assumptions and methodological options to solve a specific pedagogical problem?*

On the basis of the previous discussion, it was hypothesized that the question will be answered in the affirmative, thus supporting the underlying assumption that the incorporation of the three-axis framework will contribute to bridging the theory/practice gap.

4.3 Research Method and Participants

The conducted research can be qualified as action research (Nunan, 1992, pp. 17–20, 229), whereby a "self-reflective inquiry [is] carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice, or enhancing understanding" (p. 229) and, in a school context, is typically initiated by the practitioner in response to a classroom problem that needs tackling (p. 19). Here, the study was instigated by a CLIL teacher (the author herself), in response to the problem specified above, faced by a group of 20 adult, L1-Polish learners of English at a B2+ level, all in-service architects and architecture students taking part in a CLIL course. The investigation took the form of three successive classroom activities, gradually modified according to the proposed framework. After conducting each activity, the teacher analyzed it in terms of the three axes (the analysis is provided below, following the presentation of respective activities) and, in the case of activities A and B, introduced changes accordingly. In addition, activities B and C were followed by a short evaluation questionnaire (one *yes/no* question), where students appraised their usefulness and congruence with the course (there was no appraisal of activity A as it did not result from any prior pedagogical modification but constituted a regular classroom procedure and a starting point for further investigation).

4.4 Research Procedures

4.4.1 Activity A

The initial activity was aimed at familiarizing students with a state-of-the-art type of glass façades and, simultaneously, introducing/revising useful phrases for describing building elements and structural solutions. To that end, a handout with a drawing of a relevant wall section was prepared, indicating elements to be matched with appropriate descriptions, such as "aluminum strips, pre-curved", "nano-coated double glazing, self-cleaning", "laminated safety glass fin", etc. In addition, to ensure successful task completion, potentially difficult vocabulary was pre-taught by means of a "spot-the-word" game (students asked to spot a word which matches a given picture/definition). The activity ended with students discussing in pairs the proposed solutions and, ultimately, sketching and presenting an alternative detail.

Relating the activity to the three proposed axes reveals that it is the *learner* axis which is central here, as the *Who/What for?* question seems easiest to answer. This comes as no surprise given that CLIL is perceived as the "ultimate dream of Communicative Language Teaching" (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p. 3), contributing to it a much needed "authenticity of purpose" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 5). Unsurprisingly, architecture students typically perceive such tasks as purposeful and relevant to their needs. Not only do they give them a chance to learn and discuss

state-of-the-art solutions and encourage creative thinking, but also equip them with a handy set of useful, content-related phrases. Unfortunately, the *learner* axis seems to be the *only* one easily discernible here. Given that the teaching of words and phrases (a convenient shortcut to successful communication, cf. Skehan, 1998, p. 3 and Sect. 3.3 above) falls within the *learner* category, the *language* axis seems to be devoid of substance. Consequently, the *learning* axis—facilitative of cognitive processes leading to interlanguage expansion—has no material to operate on, as grammar, the one "holding the key to continued interlanguage development" (Skehan, 1998, p. 7) is not targeted at all.

4.4.2 Activity B

To remedy the situation and *yet* preserve the overall shape of the activity (its content and communicative focus of unquestionable benefit to students), in its revised version, next to the existing *learner* axis, a parallel *language* axis was introduced, targeting a specific grammatical point: the subject/object question distinction—a perennial problem for many students, leading to potential misunderstanding (cf. activity C). Thus, the content-focused activity was supplemented with a form-focused one, where relevant rules were presented and illustrated with examples (e.g., "Who designed the façade?"/"What did the architect design?" etc.)—the *language* axis becoming explicit rule presentation, followed by practice and freer production activities.

Unfortunately, as questionnaire results indicate, students did not perceive the activity as congruent with the course. 18 out of 20 respondents (all of whom agreed that grammar teaching *should* be incorporated into the syllabus, cf. Sect. 4.1 above) decided that this kind of instruction does not match up with the course extra-linguistic content. The result is hardly surprising given that, in this form, *learner* axis and *language* axis give rise to two *unrelated* instructional practices—the former focusing on negotiating architectural content, of immediate relevance to the learner, the latter introducing grammar, embedded in architectural terminology yet, other than that, detached from any communicative concerns. It should be observed that the questions illustrating the grammar point: "Who designed the façade?" (answer: the architect) or "What did the architect design?" (answer: the façade), are not aimed at communicating *anything* as the answers are merely stating the obvious. Indeed, as VanPatten (1996) aptly remarks, this form of grammar instruction "conflicts with the more fluid, learner-centered, and content-based nature of communicative classrooms" (p. 59, cf. also Walenta, 2016).

4.4.3 Activity C

To prevent the *language* axis and *learner* axis from diverging—in the final version of the activity—they were conjoined with a perpendicular *learning* axis. Observe that the *learning* axis—aimed at facilitating cognitive processes leading to

successful intake accommodation—may reside in encouraging form-meaning pairings (cf. Ellis, 1997, pp. 148–166; VanPatten, 1996; Walenta, 2016), that is the connections between referential real-world meaning and how that meaning is encoded linguistically (VanPatten, 1996, p. 10) and thus may constitute a convenient bridge between *language*-centered and *learner*-centered methodologies. More specifically, it may reside in hooking specific grammar points (otherwise perceived as detached from communicative concerns) onto meaning-bearing elements, of *immediate* relevance to the learner—a strategy undertaken in the third, final version of the activity. This time, students—while analyzing the structural solutions of the glass façade—were asked to answer pairs of questions of the following type: "What braces the glass fins?", "What do the glass fins brace?" Thus, in order to successfully complete the content-oriented activity, students *had* to comprehend the questions. Given that the key lexical items were *identical* in both, the developing linguistic system had *no choice* but to switch to the analytical mode (Skehan, 1998, p. 54) and analyze grammar—either constructing/retrieving the relevant rule *or* relying on the teacher explaining it (the explanation—now—of *immediate relevance* to the learner, as it was the only means of decoding the message).

The activity seems to work in the context for which it was intended, with 19 out of 20 respondents wishing to have similar tasks incorporated into the course. In addition, as a pilot study results indicate (cf. Walenta, 2016), C type activities are not only perceived by students as useful and congruent with the twofold nature of CLIL objectives, but also result in higher accuracy and retention rates of target grammatical features than the corresponding B type activities.

4.5 Discussion of the Findings

The results of the action research seem to confirm the assumption underpinning research question 1, that is the hypothesis that the theoretical three-axis framework may contribute to bridging the theory/practice gap, by helping teachers find their way in a range of theoretical assumptions and methodological options and put them to use in solving a specific pedagogical problem. In other words, while clearly not qualifying as a principled eclectic *methodology,* the action cycle may exemplify how, at the micro-scale of a specific activity, the abstract design axes may surface and translate into a pattern of concrete classroom procedures, connecting *language*, *learner* and *learning*—three very different, yet indispensable facets of any successful eclectic methodology.

Obviously, a success of a single activity, developed in the course of a small-scale action research cycle (by definition not well guarded against the threats to external and internal validity, cf. Nunan, 1992, p. 18), does not allow extrapolating any firm conclusions at this point. Nevertheless, it seems justified to say that the results give *some* empirical support to the validity of the three-axis framework as a useful tool for bridging the theory and practice of SLA. Clearly, more research is needed to

examine the issue in depth. To begin with, the reliability of the findings could be strengthened by the involvement of an outside researcher (cf. Nunan, 1992, p. 19). In addition, aside from the need to replicate the study in order to increase its generalizability, it would be particularly interesting to see how the design axes resurface in different combinations, depending on the specifics of varied instructional contexts.

5 Concluding Remarks

As Brown (2002) points out, teachers are classroom "technicians" (p. 11), responsible for controlling everything that happens in there. While the comparison seems to capture *some* aspects of the teaching profession it definitely does not do *full* justice to it. By coordinating theoretical "facets of language and work[ing] to develop them depending on the particular needs of students" (Whong, 2011, p. 96) teachers—rather than merely adjusting elements in the classroom machinery—seem to be *designing* and *constructing* a complex methodology, and thus adding a final touch to the eclectic theory/practice bridge—a highly challenging task, obviously calling for some guidelines. As I hope to have argued and exemplified in the article, the three theoretical axes: *language* axis, *learning* axis and *learner* axis, are a possible means of helping teachers construct a more stable structure, while its ultimate shape is, clearly, entrusted to them—its leading architects.

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Raising Strategic Awareness as a Prerequisite for Successful Strategy Training

Olga Trendak

Abstract Nowadays learning a foreign language is no longer limited only to extensive practice and memorization of new structures and items of vocabulary. Other changes have also been observed, such as, among others, the fact that it is not only the teacher who is responsible for the process of language learning. Language teachers of the 21st century are fully aware of the fact that they need to shift this responsibility onto their students as only this can make their language learners more autonomous and independent. One of the ways of achieving this is by means of strategy training, also referred to as strategy-based instruction (SBI) or strategic intervention. In fact, this notion and its role in the foreign language classroom has gained immense popularity over the last few years. Numerous researchers have appreciated its value and concur with its effectiveness. More importantly, though, there are several empirical studies (Carrier, 2003; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Kusiak, 2001; Kohler, 2002; Seo, 2000; Trendak, 2012) which prove that strategy training can be efficacious when learning (and teaching) the target language. The aim of the paper is to address the notion of strategy training and its particular components. Emphasis will be placed on the process of raising students' strategic awareness, which many researchers perceive as an indispensable ingredient of SBI.

1 Introduction

As Rubin, Chamot, Harris, and Anderson (2007, p. 141) report, extensive research investigating the role of language learning strategies (LLS) in the foreign language classroom has led researchers to believe "that learners should be taught not only the language but also directed toward strategies they could use to promote more effective learning". Another argument strongly suggesting the need to draw

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students' attention to strategies was put forward by Anderson (2002). The researcher stated that "rather than focus students' attention solely on learning the language, second language teachers can help students learn to think about what happens during the language learning process, which will lead them to develop stronger learning skills" (2002, p. 3). One of the best ways of achieving this goal is by implementing strategic intervention. The main idea behind strategy-based instruction (SBI) is that it is absolutely vital to help students deploy strategies as they play a key role in the development of independent learning (Droździał-Szelest, 2004, 2008). Many researchers are of the opinion that students with strategic knowledge of the processes of language learning "become more efficient, resourceful, and flexible, thus acquiring a language more easily" (Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006, p. 1). Although the notion of strategy training has been present in the literature for some time, there still remain issues which have not been resolved. For instance, the choice of the language of the training, the selection of strategies to be taught, the intensity or the type of the training, that is whether strategic intervention that teachers/researchers introduce in the foreign language classroom should be separate or integrated, embedded or explicit, still engender dissension among researchers. Luckily, what seems incontrovertible is the fact that strategy training can facilitate language learning. What is more, to quote Chamot (2005, p. 128), "strategy instruction can contribute to development of learner mastery and autonomy", an issue which has been raised by many other researchers (cf. Cook, 2008; Droździał-Szelest, 2004; Oxford, 2011; Sikorska, 2008). Therefore, SBI should constitute an indispensable component of every language learning course. Regrettably, this is not always the case (Droździał-Szelest, 2008; Michońska-Stadnik, 2008; Trendak, 2012). Among the numerous causes of this situation one can mention time limitations, teachers' attitudes or curriculum restraints, to name but a few. The present paper will address the role of raising strategic awareness in the process of implementing strategy training. This metacognitive component is deemed absolutely necessary if the training is to prove efficacious and, therefore, certainly merits more comprehensive investigation (Anderson, 2002; Chamot et al., 2004; Macaro, 2006). Mention will also be made of the remaining three steps of strategy-based instruction.

2 Components of Strategy-Based Instruction

Throughout the years numerous researchers have put forward a great many strategy training models that can be incorporated into the foreign language classroom (Harris, 2003; Macaro, 2001; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). More thorough examination of these models reveals that the instruction is initially scaffolded. It is only later, in further stages, that language learners receive more independence and are allowed to experiment with new strategies. As Rubin et al. (2007, p. 142) report,

despite the fact that there are certain elements which differ, common to all these models is a set of four stages presented below:

(1) raising awareness of the strategies learners are already using;
(2) teacher presentation and modeling of strategies so that students become increasingly aware of their own thinking and learning processes;
(3) multiple practice opportunities to help students move towards autonomous use of the strategies through gradual withdrawal of the scaffolding;
(4) self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies used and transfer of strategies to fresh tasks.

The researchers also add that strategy training should by no means be perceived as mechanistic since it entails a great deal of evaluation and reflection on the part of students and teachers. In addition, it should be borne in mind that such factors as background knowledge, the task performed or the context exert a profound impact on the training as well. In further parts of the paper the author will place emphasis on the first stage of the training, namely raising learners' strategic awareness. Mention will also be made of the techniques which might prove efficacious when implementing the remaining three stages.

3 Metacognition

Researchers concur that raising learners' metacognitive awareness is an indispensable component of any strategic intervention. In order to be successful when learning the target language, students need to be made cognizant of their own thinking processes. This cognizance, referred to as *metacognitive awareness* (Chamot et al., 2004; Rivers, 2001) should never be underestimated as it constitutes a powerful tool in the process of language learning. Furthermore, it is believed that this knowledge (Chamot et al., 2004, par. 5):

> leads to reflection, to planning how to proceed with a learning task, to monitoring one's own performance on an ongoing basis, and to self-evaluation upon task completion. In other words, it leads to self-regulation of one's learning. Students with greater metacognitive awareness understand the similarity between the current learning task and previous ones, know the strategies required for successful learning, and anticipate success as a result of knowing how to learn.

When discussing the value of metacognitive awareness, Anderson (2002, p. 4) states that "the teaching of metacognitive skills is a valuable use of instructional time for a second language teacher. When learners reflect upon their learning strategies, they become better prepared to make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning. Strong metacognitive skills empower second language learners". He goes on to add that fostering learners' metacognitive skills can in fact result in better understanding of the target language and, hence, better performance.

Anderson formed his own model of metacognition and divided it into five principal stages: *preparing and planning for learning*, *selecting and using learning strategies*, *monitoring strategy use*, *orchestrating various strategies* and *evaluating strategy use*. As far as the first stage is concerned, Anderson (2002) stresses the role of the teacher who should guide students and encourage them to ponder over their learning goals and plan their actions accordingly. The goal needs to be formulated with great precision, though, as only this way is it possible for the learner to further their process. As for the second stage, it is essential that teachers provide their students with information about a vast array of language learning strategies and, more importantly, instruct them how to apply LLS in order to be successful. Students should be made cognizant of the fact that certain strategies will not yield satisfactory results when applied in inappropriate contexts. Teachers should let their students know which strategies work best with particular types of tasks. For instance, students might be told that effective listening strategies include elaboration, inferencing, selective attention and self-monitoring (Oxford, 1990). Anderson (2002, p. 3) goes on to say that "the metacognitive ability to select and use particular strategies in a given context for a specific purpose means that the learner can think and make conscious decisions about the learning process". In the third stage of the model, that is monitoring strategy use, students are reminded to incessantly reflect on the strategies that they are using and consider whether these strategies are employed as intended. When discussing the fourth stage of his model, Anderson states that it is the ability to organize different strategy types that helps to differentiate between good and weak students. The latter clearly lack this capability and, hence, are far less likely to improve their linguistic performance. Additionally, students need to be told when to move on to a new and more effective strategy. The last stage entails deep reflection about the efficacy of strategy use. Anderson (2002, p. 4) encourages students to answer the following questions: (1) What am I trying to accomplish?, (2) What strategies am I using?, (3) How well am I using them?, and (4) What else could I do? Anderson explains that that in order to be successful, the learners need to be able to identify their learning goals and the strategies they have at their disposal to achieve this goal. Being able to gauge the effectiveness of the strategies applied is another important element. By providing answers to these four questions the learner ruminates on and evaluates the cycle of learning, which is a feature attributed to good learners. It should be borne in mind that the metacognitive skills presented in Anderson's model can in fact overlap, which means that students might make use of more than one skill when performing a certain task.

4 Raising Learners' Strategic Awareness

There is a plethora of ways to make language learners more cognizant of LLS. The choice hinges on one salient factor—learners' age. The teacher needs to collate as much information about students' encounters with language learning strategies as possible. The easiest way of doing it is by engaging in a discussion with the class.

Holding a discussion can prove equally efficacious for younger and older learners. However, what needs to be borne in mind is the fact that the terminology used will have to differ. The language used by the teacher has to be adjusted to the level of the group he or she is currently working with. Otherwise, students might feel perplexed or, worse yet, demotivated. Rubin et al. (2007, p. 144) imply that among younger groups it would be advisable to use the term *special techniques for learning* instead of the word *strategy*. The discussion with older and more mature learners can include more advanced terminology. Prior to implementing strategy training, Trendak (2012) introduced a few awareness raising sessions which comprised analyzing different types of strategies, using for this purpose Oxford's (1990) classification system. Each strategy was elaborated on in detail. The researcher, who was at the same time the subjects' teacher, provided at least one example of each of the strategies discussed. At the end of the discussion the subjects were to select the strategy that appealed to them most and least and justify their choice.

Additionally, students may be encouraged to explore the field of language learning strategies on their own, that is by reading extensively about LLS and about the learning process (Rubin et al., 2007). One of the biggest advantages concerning this technique is that students can read about LLS at their own pace and outside the classroom. Reading materials about strategies can function as a complement to strategic intervention conducted in the classroom. Moreover, they "can help tackle possible student resistance by promoting the idea that learners can take charge of their learning and consider which strategies work best for them and for their particular problems" (Rubin et al., 2007, p. 152). On the negative side, language learners may encounter certain problems in terms of advanced terminology and the complexity of certain concepts which might require explanations from, for instance, the teacher. Furthermore, many students may simply lack the necessary motivation when asked to do some reading on strategies, treating it as a complete waste of time and effort.

Another way of raising learners' awareness of language learning strategies is by implementing strategy questionnaires. One of the most popular surveys that can be introduced among younger students is the one designed by Cohen and Oxford (2002), namely *Young Learners Language Strategy Use Survey*. The survey is divided into six parts, each dealing with a different skill or subsystem. Thus, the teacher can investigate students' vocabulary, translation, reading, listening, writing or speaking strategies. Additionally, the language applied by the authors is adjusted to the needs of the students surveyed. Older learners might benefit from other questionnaires such as, among others, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) by Oxford (1990), the *Survey of Reading Strategies* by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), the *Learning Style Survey* by Cohen et al. (2003) or *Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire* (MALQ), created by Vandergrift et al. (2006), to name but a few.

Questionnaires are one of the most frequently applied instruments for collecting information about language learning strategies. There are a great many advantages associated with this tool. To start with, it can be implemented among a great number of subjects, which makes it easier to collate abundant information about

issue under investigation (Pawlak, 2009). What is more, to quote Gao (2004, p. 3), questionnaires "have helped to generate a broad picture of strategy use across different learner populations and to establish relationships between various learner factors and learners' strategy use". Therefore, questionnaires can additionally help the teacher/researcher to learn more about the relationship between certain variables and the application of LLS. Finally, the analysis of closed-ended questions is relatively easy and straightforward, which helps to save time (Pawlak, 2009). There are, however, certain issues that need to be taken into consideration when designing and implementing this instrument. The tool needs to include questions which are easy to comprehend for the respondents, both in terms of the content and form. Furthermore, questionnaires should be complemented with other tools as they do not always capture the context in which language learning strategies are applied. For example, we learn about the frequency with which a particular strategy is deployed; however, we are not provided with information pertaining to the circumstances in which it occurred (Pawlak, 2009).

Another instrument which can prove immensely helpful when raising students' strategic awareness are diaries. When describing this tool, McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 22) refer to it as "personal, with oneself as an addressee, long-term, and (…) relatively unbounded in the kinds of facts it records, at least within the broad area with which it is concerned". Diaries make it possible to collate abundant data pertaining to issues in question. They also help to perceive the developmental changes among the students as the teacher can see how the application of a given strategy altered over time (Dörnyei, 2007; Pawlak, 2009; Tanaka, 2009). More importantly, though, as Rubin (2003, p. 14) comments, diaries "help students become aware of their learning process and to begin to reflect on new ways to address their learning problems". The researcher adds that this tool enables the teacher to draw the student's attention to the process of language learning and the problems that might be associated with it. Additionally, diaries make students cognizant of the possible solutions to the encountered learning difficulties.

Obviously, diaries are not flawless and they have in fact received some criticism from researchers. To start with, this instrument may be inappropriate for certain learners. There are students who simply do not want to share their emotions with others and who will, therefore, find keeping a diary very unappealing or will even openly oppose it. In addition, there is no guarantee that the data the students provide the teacher/researcher with are accurate and that they reflect the learning reality. There are students who have a propensity to skew facts only to impress the teacher/researcher. Of course, such a situation is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to avoid and can occur even when other instruments are applied. Furthermore, the amount of information obtained can be overwhelming and, thus, difficult to analyze. Even worse, the data produced may be irrelevant as some students might face difficulty in comprehending the task and, therefore, their entries may veer away from the main topic. This is why many researchers call for the implementation of additional questions that could guide the students, show them which areas they should focus on and significantly curb the amount of extraneous information

(Anderson, 2005; Pawlak, 2009; Rubin, 2003). Examples of additional questions include the following (Pawlak, 2009; Rubin, 2003; Trendak, 2012):

- Do you plan how to learn grammar?
- Describe how you feel as you work on the assignment or in class? What did you do about those feelings?
- How do you evaluate your progress?
- What do you do to learn grammar more effectively?
- Which language learning strategies do you apply most/least often when you learn grammar?

In one of her studies, Trendak (2012) sought to investigate the grammar learning strategies (GLS) applied by forty advanced learners of English. In order to gather the necessary data, she used, among others, learner diaries complemented with six extra questions that the students were encouraged to answer. The questions were provided in English to avoid any possible misunderstanding. The students were informed that the questions were voluntary and that they were not obliged to answer them as long as their entries were related to language learning strategies. Apart from collating the data pertinent to the study, Trendak learnt more about the participants' attitude to the process of language learning. Some of the entries include the following:

- Strategies opened my eyes.
- Completing my diary made me analyze the things we do during the lesson;
- I didn't even know that there are so many learning strategies. (…) I think that thanks to such lessons I will choose more wisely the strategies which could help me to learn.
- I found writing the diary useful because it made me think about the ways of learning.
- Completing this diary made me realize how senseless my attitude to learning is. I am slowly thinking of changing this situation. It is possible that conscious learning will be more profitable.

Of course, not all the entries were as enthusiastic as the ones listed above; however, the findings of the study showed that keeping a diary can in fact be a very valuable way of making students more cognizant of language learning strategies and the learning process as such. What is also interesting is the fact that students who were rather shy and reserved during language lessons opened up when writing their diaries and shared their thoughts and emotions very willingly. In fact, many of them produced long and, more importantly, relevant entries.

Another method that could prove helpful when raising students' awareness about LLS is a time-saving technique which Rubin et al. (2007) refer to as *ask a question*. Whenever a student produces a correct answer to the teacher's question, the teacher asks him or her to explain how they arrived at that particular response. Thanks to this technique, the student can share his or her knowledge with other students, especially those who are less proficient in terms of strategy application. The teacher must keep in mind that certain students might require further hints, such as

additional questions, in order to access their strategies (Rubin et al., 2007). *Focus groups* could also prove highly efficacious in terms of raising strategic awareness. In this case, learners are divided into smaller groups, called focus groups. Each group selects a particular language skill and identifies a goal associated with it, for instance being able to read medical articles in the target language. Then they choose a problem that prevents them from achieving their goal, such as inability to comprehend certain words, and try to arrive at a solution. Effectual though it is, the technique is a time-consuming one, an issue that teachers have to bear in mind when planning their lessons.

5 Presenting and Modelling Strategies

In this stage, it is crucial to show students that language learning strategies are not abstract and elusive ideas. One of the ways of achieving this goal is by sharing one's thinking processes and modelling strategy selection and application. Rubin et al. (2007) encourage teachers to engage in the process of thinking-aloud while performing a task. The researchers go on to say that "students may benefit from the teacher providing simple, concrete, personalized exemplifications such as, 'Visualizing is a learner strategy. It helps me make sense in the story, then I know that I need to check what I just read, because I probably misread something" (2007, p. 145). The next step following teacher modelling is a brief class discussion during which the teacher asks students about the strategies he or she has used. Additionally, students might be asked to comment on the value of the strategies used and whether they would apply them when performing a similar task.

Another technique that students, especially younger ones, can benefit from, is *visual reinforcement*. Here, teachers prepare images, for instance in the form of pictures or posters. Each picture stands for a different learning strategy. For example, a cat looking intensely at a fly could represent the strategy of selective attention while a handshake could stand for the strategy of cooperation.

The think-aloud hot seat and *the think-aloud protocol* can also be applied to draw students' attention to the notion of a learning strategy. In case of the former, the teacher chooses a student who sits in front of the whole group and shows other students how he or she deploys a particular strategy. As Rubin et al. (2007) admit, in such situations students are more likely to mention different LLS, even those that their teachers have not expected. As far as the latter activity is concerned, the teacher works with one student only, asking him or her to perform a certain language task and, once it is over, to describe what language learning strategies have been used.

6 Providing Practice Opportunities

Once students have acquainted themselves with the available strategies, they should be provided with a chance to use them in practice. The types of activities will differ among students, depending on their age and level of linguistic advancement. Younger and less proficient learners may benefit from a task in which, on the basis of the pictures they see, they have to predict the title of a magazine article. When designing activities for such a group, one should take into consideration the fact that these students lack advanced vocabulary and can be easily demotivated when faced with more sophisticated terminology. That is why, the teacher needs to prepare tasks which will boost students' self-confidence and show them that even if their target language is limited, they can still perform an activity by, for instance, using their prior knowledge (Rubin et al., 2007).

Older students, on the other hand, certainly need more challenging tasks. One of them is an activity called *Strategy search game* (Oxford, 1990). There are a few possible ways of playing the game. Students may be divided into smaller groups, each of which receives a set of different situations, such as, for instance (1990, p. 33):

> You are an American high school student in your third year of French. Your task is to work with a small group to write and participate in a 30-minute play, all in French, about teenagers in France. You don't know much about teenagers in France, and you are terrified about speaking French in the play, but you are relieved that your friends are involved in it with you.

Students' task is to decide which language learning strategies will work best for a particular situation. In a different task, called *Embedded strategies game* (Oxford, 1990), students receive a set of language activities. Then they are asked to decide what language strategies are embedded in them. Some examples of the activities include the following (Oxford, 1990, pp. 27–29):

- Read the newspaper in the target language to practice the language and keep up with event.
- Color-code your language notebook so you can find things easily.
- Schedule a break from language learning when you are tired.
- When you can't seem to find the word to say in the new language, ask for help from somebody else.
- Stop to determine whether you are feeling especially nervous before you go into language class.

It is vital to remember that each activity aimed at practicing strategies should be initially heavily scaffolded (Rubin et al., 2007). In this way, students receive extra support from their teachers, which in turn could increase their confidence and encourage them to use strategies more independently. In the course of time, the support received should be reduced to a minimum so that students are not too reliant on their teachers and act more independently.

7 Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness

The final stage of the training is a salient one and should not be omitted. Rubin et al. (2007) claim that, thanks to this phase, teachers can foster students' capacity to analyze their own learning and to expand their procedural knowledge. This step of strategy-based instruction can take on a variety of forms. Oxford (1990) suggests the use of a self-evaluation questionnaire that will help students look at their linguistic progress in greater detail. The survey is divided into four parts, each corresponding with one language skill. Students first need to answer four questions in each part and then evaluate their overall progress in connection with a particular skill. The three possible answers include the following: *doing just fine, about where I should be*, *not too bad, nothing to worry about*, and *serious problems* (Oxford, 1990, p. 183). The survey may be followed by a short discussion to encourage students to share their thoughts and emotions concerning their learning process.

Teachers may also design their own surveys that would address the issues they are mostly interested in. The questions included could refer to the strategies the students found particularly effective and/or ineffective when performing certain tasks. Students could also be asked, for instance, what strategies they would like to learn about in the future and why. Alternatively, teachers might ask their students to create a list of language learning strategies they have used to complete a given activity. They could then be requested to explain to other students how a particular strategy has been applied and whether it has yielded satisfactory results (Chamot et al., 1999; Rubin et al., 2007).

8 Obstacles

Despite the numerous advantages of conducting strategy training, there are also a few obstacles that teachers and researchers need to be wary of. To start with, not all researchers see eye to eye on the language in which strategies are introduced. Chamot (2005) points out that beginners are at a loss to understand complicated instructions how to make use of LLS. However, as the researcher admits, "postponing learning strategy instruction until intermediate or advanced level courses deprives beginners of tools that could enhance language learning and increase motivation for further study" (2005, p. 122). As Macaro (2001) and Chamot (2005) argue, it would be difficult to avoid students' mother tongue during strategy instruction among beginners or even intermediate students. Therefore, some researchers call for the introduction of L1 during the initial stages of SBI, with the proviso that the teacher and the students use the same mother tongue. As students become more proficient, L2 can be used more often (Chamot, 2005; Chamot et al., 1999). The only disadvantage of making use of the L1 is that, to quote Chamot, "use of the native language takes time away from exposure to and practice in the target language" (2004, p. 20).

As was mentioned in previous parts of the article, developing students' metacognitive skills is a significant element of strategy-based instruction. However, it is frequently argued that younger learners are not fully cognizant of their learning processes since metacognitive understanding is perceived as a developmental process (Hacker, 1998; Rubin et al., 2007). Such a situation makes it more difficult for younger learners to fully benefit from strategic intervention. However, as some studies demonstrate, there are children who, even at the age of six, are capable of describing their thinking processes (Chamot, 1999).

When discussing the potential impediments associated with SBI, Rubin et al. (2007, p. 148) mention the effect combining multiple LLS together with difficult texts. It is believed that a combination of a wide variety of language learning strategies and complex authentic materials can in fact put a strain on learners' mental processing (Harris & Prescott, 2005). That is why, it would be advisable to initially provide students with a cluster of strategies adjusted to their learning needs. Students should be given the opportunity to practice these strategies as often as possible and, once they have become more accustomed to them, they should receive a wider range of learning strategies and be encouraged to use them more independently.

Finally, there is the issue of teachers' attitude towards implementing strategy training. There are teachers who are unwilling to introduce LLS as they fear they may lose authority in their students' eyes (Oxford, 1990). After all, the role of the teacher in the foreign language classroom changes together with the introduction of strategies. He or she is no longer the leader and instructor. Instead, the teacher becomes a guide or even an assistant, a change that not everyone is willing to accept. Additionally, some teachers lack the necessary knowledge about strategies and SBI and, therefore, deprive their students of a chance to enhance their learning. Another limitation is the fact that teachers frequently do not have the necessary time to introduce strategies as they are obliged to cover the required material (cf. Trendak, 2012). Thus, they cannot allot any extra time to strategy instruction. Drożdział-Szelest (2008) goes one step further and argues that strategy training in the foreign language classroom in many Polish schools is more a myth than reality and that the situation will not change unless certain procedures are imposed. She emphasizes that, when teaching a foreign language, practitioners should focus on providing their students with the necessary tools that would allow them to take active part in the learning process.

9 Conclusion

Despite the possible obstacles associated with strategy training, teachers should remember that the time invested in introducing learning strategies will be of great benefit to their learners. In fact, as many empirical studies prove, the benefits derived from SBI certainly outweigh the disadvantages. By being engaged in strategy instruction learners become more autonomous, more effective and more

responsible for their learning process (Cook, 2008; Derenowski, 2011; Oxford, 2011; Tseng et al., 2006). The training also helps them to gain greater understanding of the learning strategies that they are already using (Drożdział-Szelest, 1997). What is more, thanks to participating in strategy training, students learn how to deal with learning difficulties they encounter along the way. They know what tools they have at their disposal to overcome the stumbling blocks that prevent them from making progress in the target language. Applying strategies spurs students to be more reflective and to monitor their own performance, which can lead to perfecting their learning process (Sikorska, 2008). When conducting the training, teachers should pay attention to raising their learners' strategic awareness as it is this particular factor that may increase the chances of success. Rubin et al. stress the fact that "awareness of LLS and how well they work for a particular task for a learner's particular goal is central to the successful use of cognitive and affective strategies" (2007, p. 151). Therefore, it is the author's firm belief that awareness of language learning strategies can benefit the whole learning process and, thus, should by no means be neglected in the foreign language classroom.

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Teaching Foreign Language Literature with the Use of Film Adaptation and the Problem of Medium Specificity

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Abstract Film adaptations of literary works can be successfully used in foreign language literature classes to the advantage of students. This goal can be achieved through the discussion of the changes that occur when a novel is adapted to screen, with particular stress on the alterations stemming from media specificity. The present paper argues that students can be motivated in their research and that the use of film in the foreign language literature classroom can lead them to interesting conclusions concerning the source text. The article will also discuss the objections raised in the field of adaptation studies against fidelity criticism. Theorists have long called for the independence of film from the novel on which it is based, which could lead to abandonment of the notion of a film adaptation's inferiority with regard to its source. A case will also be made for comparative analysis of film and its literary source material. Moreover, traits which are unique to the particular media and their influence on reception will be described. Finally, it will be argued that film can be used to facilitate deeper understanding of the works of foreign language literature, and to help students recognize new interpretations of literary works.

1 Introduction

At the time of ubiquity of audio-visual, electronic media also in foreign language literature classes one should not avoid using them to the advantage of the students. One of the manners in which this goal can be achieved is the discussion of changes made to a text when it is transposed from one medium to another. Once a novel is adapted to screen, alterations stemming from media specificity are unavoidable. The existence of such differences may constitute an incentive on the part of students to do more extensive research and can lead to interesting and creative conclusions with regards to the source text. However, it should be stressed that in the field of adaptation theory such an approach, referred to as comparative or fidelity criticism,

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has recently been considered controversial. Theorists have long called for the independence of film from the novel on which it is based, which could lead to abandonment of the notion of film adaptation's inferiority with regards to its source. This has been a difficult task because the comparative analysis of film and novel is to a large degree instinctive and readily employed by students. Moreover, emphasizing the traits which are unique to the particular media may shed new light on the discussed work. As a result, film can be used to facilitate a deeper understanding of the works of literature, and help students recognize new interpretations of the discussed works. While highlighting the sources of prejudice against film in literary circles, the paper will argue in favor of the use of film adaptations in teaching foreign language literature, and focus on the awareness of medium specificity, a crucial factor in adaptation studies.

2 The Importance of Media Literacy in Literature Classroom

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries literature lost much of its audience in favor of the newer media: film, television, the internet. Their extensive use cannot be ignored simply because they are the prevalent form of gathering information to which the new generations of students are exposed. The situation in which the new, electronic media suppress their older, printed counterparts, such as novels, newspapers, or postcards, has been an ongoing process for over a hundred years. Its results may alarm social scientists, investigating the changes the new media trigger in society. Already in 1965 the father of media studies, McLuhan (1997a, b, c, p. 211), noted that:

> The youngster today, stepping out of his nursery or TV environment, goes to school and enters a world where the information is scarce but is ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, schedules. He is utterly bewildered because he comes out of this intricate and complex integral world of electric information and goes into this nineteenth-century world of classified information that still characterizes the educational establishment.

McLuhan's astute observation of the changes that are being brought about by electronic media still applies today. Students, who are daily exposed to the deluge of information which they experience through the multimedia devices not only in their homes but also in their pockets (cell phones have long ago caught up with the multimedia functionality of personal computers), can experience a feeling of sensory deprivation when they enter a text-only classroom. The increased presence of the electronic media also in the literature classroom seems to have become necessary. As will be argued below, it can be beneficial to use the media literacy of the students to boost their interest in the medium of printed literature, written in a foreign language. One of the techniques in which electronic media can be applied to a great effect in the literature classroom is the comparison of the work of literature with its film

adaptation. However, it should be noted that numerous scholars dealing with adaptations studies have voiced their opinions against such an approach. The reasons for such an attitude are complex and need further explication.

3 Critical Responses to Fidelity Criticism

In adaptations studies, the fidelity-based approach has been as one of the example of resident prejudice against film, because it underscores the secondary (or derivative) character of the film adaptation. It has been criticized as being "basic and banal," since it may inadvertently lead to conclusions that "the book was better" (Welsh, 2007, p. xiv). Stam (2008, p. 4) lists a variety of reasons for the assumed superiority of literature. First, cinema is a relative newcomer and had to mature next to the novel, which before the advent of film had already been fully formed and perfected. Moreover, films based on novels are inadvertently judged by the standards of the latter, which appeared first.

Since literature has been losing its audiences to cinemas and television, film adaptation of a work of literature has frequently been perceived in negative light, when compared with its literary source due to the assumed rivalry between literature and film, in which literature defends itself against the *aggressor*. The belief is that the two art forms cannot coexist and exchange influences in a way that is beneficial to both, but rather the reverse. Before film achieved the status of art and became a cheap form of entertainment for the masses, it was already seen by Leo Tolstoy as shattering the world of literature. He wrote in *New York Times* (January 31, 1937)

> You will see that this little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life-in the life of writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art. We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary.

It seems that film is still seen as a revolutionary force, which wants to "usurp the throne" and abolish the culture of the written word (Stam, 2008, p. 4). However, Tolstoy's predictions concerning film's influence on the way books are written was accurate. One of the most popular bestsellers of contemporary young adults' literature, the Harry Potter series, exemplifies the new approach to narrative, successfully utilizing cinematic techniques (cf. Cartmell & Whelehan, 2005). This again may serve as an argument in favor of using film in literature classes, since it shows that young readers have already internalized the cinematic techniques to such a degree that their use in literature appeals to them immensely. Since the cinematic modes of perception have already become part of their cognitive apparatus, it would be worthwhile to use this skill to make connections between the film and the novel on which it was based.

Another charge against film adaptations, made to discount their use in literary studies, is connected with the *myth of facility*. The supposition that it is harder to

read a book than to watch an adaptation is conducive to such statements as: "it takes no brains to sit down and watch a film" (Stam, 2008, p. 7). Hollywood blockbusters, filled with action sequences and fast-moving plots contribute to the perception of films as a mindless and intellectually undemanding pastime. If watching a movie can amount to passive and undiscerning intake of information, the same could theoretically be said of the filmmakers, who are only required to point their cameras in the right direction and register what is in front of them. According to Stam (2008, p. 7), this myth is tied to the notion of the effortlessness with which a film can be produced.

Such a view denies filmmakers' individuality of their vision and artistic input, and by the same token, belies the audiences' individual reception of and insights into the film. While passive viewing may indeed be undemanding, watching the film with developed skills of critical analysis can bring just as beneficial results as literary studies. Moreover, the claim ignores the amount of labor that goes into each film. The multi-million dollar Hollywood productions can hardly allow themselves to leave space for cutting corners or minimalism. Even the seemingly uncomplicated actions films can provide a plethora of double meanings or thought-provoking ambiguities, which may fail to catch the focus of an untrained eye. Thomas Elsaesser, while analyzing John McTiernan's movie *Die Hard* (1988), expressed his surprise at how much work is put into Hollywood productions. Everything from *mise en scène*, through meaningful details in the soundtrack, to staging, to purposefully committed continuity errors which may be qualified as so-called *bloopers* can all work to produce a desired effect in a single scene (Elsaesser, 2002, p. 54). The facility of watching a film is thus carefully crafted, as in the case of literature, reaching mastery when its meaningfulness does not disturb the ease of reading. A further argument against fidelity criticism is leveled by Thomas M. Leitch. He asserts that as long as faithfulness to the source remains the focus of adaptation studies, it will continue to guarantee movies' second-rate status (Leitch, 2007, p. 330).

Instead of fidelity criticism, a number of approaches to adaptation can be discussed. For instance, Linda Hutcheon suggested three criteria of defining adaptation. The first perceives adaptation as a *formal entity or product*. It entails transposing the source material in detail, so that the source or sources remain recognizable and are acknowledged by the adapter. Nonetheless, the adaptation requires changes, which can concern the frame of reference (shifting the point of view from which the story is narrated), medium (adopting a novel to screen) or ontology (fictionalizing a historical account). The second criterion is the *process of creation,* which involves reinterpretation and recreation of the source material. Third, the *process of reception* can also define adaptation due to its intertextual features; audiences familiar with the source novel will experience the adaptation differently and will be finely tuned to any variation between the two (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 7–8).

An alternative to Hutcheon's classification is proposed by Stam (2008, p. 4), who suggests that the discussion over the quality of adaptations should give way to the examination of their theoretical and analytical status. This prompts Leitch to cite

Stam as a scholar who breaks new ground, shifting the focus from the traditional priority of literature to intertextual studies, treating the source and the adaptation separately, with regards to the context in which they took shape (Leitch, 2007, p. 332; Stam, 2000, p. 62). Leitch (2007, p. 332) concludes that the traditional model of adaptation studies, which stresses literature, with the distinction of classical literature worthy of adaptation, should be abandoned. Instead, he calls for a study of literacy, "the study of the ways texts have been, might be, and should be read and rewritten." Adaptation studies, therefore, should concentrate on the motives of the authors and the possible outcomes of the adaptation. Leitch's proposition is important, for it would not only mean equality of both the source (or multiple sources) and the adaptation, but that the adaptation process itself, with its context, motives and results, is the main focus.

4 Making a Case for Adopting a Comparative Approach

None of the aforementioned arguments diminishes the appeal which the film adaptations hold for foreign language literature classes, despite the gravity of the arguments they represent for the development of the medium of film. Regardless of one's stance towards comparison of film adaptations with their literary sources, one cannot break the link which connects them. Moreover, in the age of multimedia, it seems essential to use film adaptations to lend some of its appeal to the classic works of fiction. Likewise, the new adaptations, as can be seen on the example of Baz Luhrman's *The Great Gatsby* (2013), update some of the cultural references to make them more approachable for contemporary viewers.[1] Finally, numerous features of film adaptations (always created by teams of people) disclose the various interpretations of the source material, from the personality of the protagonists (i.e., most often revealing the views on the characters of the actors or the director), to the social (e.g., presented through camerawork) or aesthetic interpretations (i.e., revealed by anything from *mise-en-scène*, music direction, to costume choreography). Thanks to a detailed analysis of the adaptation in conjunction with the source novel, play, or short story, students can be offered a wide range of interpretations which may put the literary work in a new light.

While discussing a film adaptation in terms of interpretation or commentary on the novel, one should, however, be aware of the features which are not necessarily a result of the authors' interpretation but are necessitated by the specificity of the medium to which the material has been adapted. For instance, the basic difference between the signifying systems of the literature and the cinema is the way they work. A film operates perceptually, uniting verbal, aural and visual signifiers, which influence the audiences through their senses. By contrast, a novel works conceptually, rather than

[1]For instance, the music accompanying the lavish parties of the twenties is produced by the music celebrity Jay-Z and reflects the musical tastes of modern, young audiences.

through the senses, by the use of a verbal sign system (McFarlane, 2004, pp. 26–27). This difference in semiotics between the novel and its film adaptation has a profound influence on the shape of the latter.

Symbols or codes used by the language of the cinema usually require no explanation since they are subliminally perceived and understood in the contemporary society.[2] An example of this is the fade-in or fade-out technique, which signifies a time-lag or an interval; it requires no explanation because it closely resembles slow opening and closing of the eyes of the observer, which is usually a sign of falling asleep and waking up, respectively. The subsequent conclusion that a substantial amount of time has gone by can be affirmed by the events in the scene, such as a reference to time on the part of the characters. Similar, although more obvious codes suggesting the flow of time are the rapidly changing seasons or fast-moving hands of a clock. However, their use has become less common; as Płażewski (2001, p. 423) points out, such stereotypical devices have quickly become too trite for filmmakers to even dare use them on screen.

Płażewski's claim is substantiated. Symbols available to film may quickly lose their originality and, as such, break the suspension of disbelief, which the cinema typically strives to attain. Fortunately, film as a multi-layered medium and draws on a variety code-systems, which are readily available. Brian McFarlane (2004, p. 29) identifies them as extra-cinematic codes:

(1) *language codes*—the audience may respond differently to different tones, accents, and to what they imply about the characters' social status or disposition;
(2) *visual codes*—every filmgoer may focus on other elements of what he or she is seeing and interpret them differently;
(3) *non-linguistic sound codes*—films abounding in sounds that are different than the spoken words, from the soundtrack to background noises; all these elements add to the cinematic experience and need attention to 'decode' the message of the film;
(4) *cultural codes*—depending on what culture or time-period is portrayed, the cultural standards presented in the film may be familiar or alien to the audience, and thus, are in need of interpretation.

The variety of symbols and codes available to film point to an important characteristic that can help differentiate between the novel and the film: the distinction of linearity and spatiality. A novel is composed of words, which form sentences in a sequence. This linearity can be contrasted with the film's spatiality, which, at any given moment, exposes the viewer to a panoply of stimuli. So much information transmitted in one frame cannot be matched by a single word, which can be considered finite and discrete (McFarlane, 2004, p. 27). The succinctness of information

[2]It should be noted that the language of film can be indecipherable by people who had no previous contact with the medium (see McLuhan's discussion of John Wilson's study on film viewing by non-literate societies in Africa, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, pp. 126–132).

contained in an image means that it could transmit not only the meaning of one word, but whole sentences or paragraphs. This, according to McFarlane (2007, p. 9), leads individuals 'trained' in letters to disbelieve that "a narrative mode which expands itself in, say, two hours (…)" is as "striking (…) in complexity and subtlety in their own way (…) as those a novel may develop over several hundred pages".

Differences that emerge between the novel or a play and their film adaptations, are often the most striking, not in terms of fidelity, but interactivity and their effect on the audience. With the emergence of the cinema it was feared that, as was earlier the case with photography, films would diffuse indecent materials and demoralize the society (Semonche, 2007, p. 6). The Hayes Code, which effectively censored American films from the 1930s to the 1960s, openly asserted that film can "lower the moral standards of those who see it" (ArtsReformation.com). F.R. Leavis, an influential British literary critic, described the intentions of adapting *Women in Love* to screen as "an obscene undertaking," without actually having seen the movie (Christie, 1969, p. 49, as quoted in McFarlane, 2007, p. 5). Suspicious of the new medium, he projected his own expectations on the new film. Some of these worries do seem valid. Film is, almost by definition, immensely more graphic than a book. As Stam points out (2008, p. 5), movies, such as *City of God* (2002), sometimes "provoke an outrage not provoked by the source book". This occurs because visualized violence is much more direct.

When Kroeber wrote that "sight is immediate, whereas language requires time," he suggested that literature leaves, and indeed must leave, more opportunities for reflection than film (2006, p. 7). A number of studies sought to show that audio-visual media engage emotions rather than the intellect. Instead of conforming to the syllogistic logic of the written texts, audiovisual message is rhetorical, based on the opposition of the audiovisual elements which are validated by the context (Fiske & Hartley, 2001, p. 117). The rhetorical language of film is visible in the often quoted experiment of the Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov, who proved that proper use of film editing can modify viewer response. By juxtaposing an impassive image of a man's face with shots suggestive of appetite, sexuality or death, he elicited different descriptions of the face; depending on the subsequent shot, it became hungry, lustful or mourning.

Another, yet related, difference in responses to literature and film is related to the depiction of violence. Kroeber (2006) suggests that a person's physical and mental reactions to a brutal scene of violence can be very different, depending on the medium through which they are expressed. Reading involves decoding of the written language. A sentence on paper may take diverse forms, depending on the reader's imagination. It may be dissected, considered from any perspective and analyzed for its subtleties, allusions, and intra- and extra-textual analogies. It does not rush the reader. He or she may look at the letters in amusement or fright, pondering at the many possible visions the words evoke, as well as what the writer had in mind. Film, on the other hand, is a fleeting, rushed experience. It allows for little or no time to think. The scenes, which the reader's imagination can make innocuous, assault the film spectator with real imagery, their threat immediate and alarming. Although we are only the spectators, 'protected' from harm by the glass

or cloth of the screen, the feeling of danger pervades us as well, shutting out all other stimuli (Kroeber, 2006, p. 2). In this respect, film clearly exemplifies one of the key concepts introduced by McLuhan, that of a hot medium (Understanding Media, p. 159):

> A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in 'high definition". High definition is the state of being filled with data. A photograph is, visually, 'high definition'. A cartoon is 'low definition' simply because little visual information is provided. (…) [H]ot media do not leave much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.

It is by the very nature of the medium and the low participation of the audience in creation of the film's message that it has such a strong influence on the viewers.

On a different note, Stam (2008, p. 16) enquired whether adaptation can be seen as a process of transition to a more or less appropriate medium. One of the aspects of narrative to which film is especially suited is conversation (2008, p. 19). While the novel is very adept at conveying the inner workings of the mind, such as the stream of consciousness, film is a perfect medium for conveying interpersonal relations, for example, by means of conversation (Stam, 2008, p. 19). As a consequence, despite the visual character of film, Stam (2008, p. 36) identifies its narration as primarily *vococentric*, focusing on the voices of the narrator or the characters. Yet, it must be stressed that it is the dialogues that are most often abridged in the process of adaptation from a written medium into film.

In Shakespearian theater, the stage was poorly decorated and the audience had to imagine even the most extravagant environments. This was accomplished by the power of words, so vividly expressed by the Bard's lush language which guided and spurned the audience's imagination. Similarly, novelists went to great lengths to make the reader see the fictitious world in his mind's eye. In the hot, 'high definition' medium of film, the context needs no lengthy presentation, and dialogue is immediately 'grounded' in its setting, both visually and aurally. Any 'bookish' descriptions embedded in the speech of film characters immediately ring false. The amount of information provided by the acting and social context is so rich that the actual words uttered become secondary to the message conveyed by the context. As a result, the rich sentences of the literary originals are often simplified for the adaptations.

Filmmakers and writers seem consistent in their contempt for long and convoluted dialogues, which, if present in the source novel, have to be simplified in the adaptation. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, a successful screenwriter of faithful adaptations of classics, such as E. M. Forster's or Henry James's, has noted that "dialogue in a novel is always full of artifice (…) unwieldy in the mouths of actors on the screen", and as such she usually cuts three-quarters of it out (Boozer, 2008, p. 7). In a similar vein, the novelist John North described the process of writing an adapted screenplay as mainly "(…) a labor of simplification (…) [with] little tolerance for complexity or irony or tergiversations" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 1). The dialogues in an adaptation become shorter at the expense of their complexity. If the film is to be successful, it must be understood by almost anyone and at the same time, avoid sermonizing.

Hitchcock considered this an improvement over the haughty style of literature: "The screen (…) can take a novel, a story, a biography, and most certainly a play - and improve it (…). [However,] the film must still retain its universal appeal. The general public will not be talked at, and will never allow themselves to be forcibly educated from the screen" (Hitchcock & Gottlieb, 1995, p. 180).

Another reason for abridging the length of dialogues is more practical. From the historical perspective, with the onset of sound cinema, Hollywood producers feared losing the overseas markets, due to the language barrier. They especially favored musicals, not because they introduced the novelty of song and music in the filmic medium, but for pragmatic reasons; reducing the dialogue to a minimum and stressing the music was a way to make the film understandable across all cultures. The studios did not want to lose the profitable overseas outlets due to language barriers (Płażewski, 2001, p. 106). As a consequence, the first pictures of the sound era were musicals with a limited amount of dialogue, which was supposed to reduce the risk of cultural rejection. This fear did not disappear over time. Alfred Hitchcock was afraid that in the process of translation into other languages, some of the qualities of the picture might be lost and be detrimental to the overall value of the motion picture. For this reason, he tried to reduce the talk to the minimum and tell the story visually, with the speech only as a part of the atmosphere (A Talk with Hitchcock, Part 1).

Another characteristic of film adaptation is that it has to fill 'blank spaces' left in the original text. As Stam noted (2008, p. 22), "filmic characters not only act, they also react and listen (…) register surprise or boredom or curiosity, something usually left unspecified in a novel but absolutely crucial in film". A piece of prose has to leave many of such details to the reader's imagination. A narrative would lose its dynamics if it contained detailed contextual descriptions during lively conversations or in moments full of action. Such situations may seem ideally suited to the medium of film, because it can present their, often bewildering, momentum, while retaining a great amount of contextual detail.

It should be briefly remarked that adaptations of theater plays have a different status than those of novels or short stories. The differences between how film and theater are perceived are historically grounded. In the words of Sontag (1974, p. 340): "The history of cinema is often treated as the history of its emancipation from theatrical models (…). Movies are regarded as advancing from theatrical stasis to cinematic fluidity, from theatrical artificiality to cinematic naturalness and immediacy". While literature has demanded great respect of the source from film adaptations, theater has had the opposite effect. Theater acting, techniques and props, while perfectly suited for the stage, proved artificial and unappealing on film. As a result, they have engendered such disapproval that the less *theater* the audience recognized in film, the better it was received.

The penchant for reality is among the defining characteristics of film. A novel uses the readers' imaginations to partake in the creation of the presented world, to make it believable and to magnify their impressions. Film uses special effects and tricks the eye to the same effect. The more believably the world is presented, despite the logical fallacies of its internal logic, the greater impact it has on the observer.

In theater, such tricks were seldom employed: it is much easier to fool the camera than the eye of a shrewd, on-the-spot observer. Theater would not utilize the gimmicks of illusionists and street magicians, and symbolism was favored at the expense of emulating reality. The principles of theatricality and Aristotle's unities have delineated the approach most suitable to the medium of theater: to represent reality rather than imitate it. For that reason, plays have evoked certain ideas or feelings by simply hinting at them. In *Macbeth,* a man with a wooden sword could stand for an army, and a twig for woods. Such theatrical symbolism would not do in a film, which is a medium so engrossing, so dense in its audio-visual message, that it obscures other conscious thinking processes while the film is playing. One of the consequences is that ideas directly expressed or shown are understood, even if they do not follow a logical train of thought. The language of film seldom requires the audience to think back and imagine something which has happened in the film's past tense, because the audience is too absorbed by the picture to imagine it on its own; instead, flashbacks or voiceovers are used. This constitutes a change in approach to violence. Talking about the death of Caesar will not suffice to influence the audience; the film audience has to witness the murder, it has to *touch* the wounds with its eyes to believe in their existence.

Despite the 'hot' density of the filmic medium, loss of information is unavoidable in the adaptation process. For this reason, a distinction needs to be made between what can be conveyed in the adaptation with little or no change. For this purpose, McFarlane makes distinguishes between transfer and adaptation: transfer denotes inclusion of narrative elements which can be readily used in film while adaptation involves inclusion of elements which have to be changed, or adapted, to successfully fulfill their functions in the new medium of film (McFarlane, 2004, p. 13). As for the former he states: "(…) what novels and films most strikingly have in common is the potential and propensity for narrative (…) [which is their] chief transferable element" (2004, p. 12).

Certainly, some aspects of novels are more easily transferrable or adaptable to film than others. A question needs to be asked whether there exist elements for which adaptation is impossible. James M. Welsh dismisses the notion of the 'unfilmable' as a myth, stating that everything can be adapted to film given sufficient initiative and imagination. He counters the claim that film can only show the surface, obscuring complex emotions and psychology, with the examples of directors such as Akira Kurosawa or Ingmar Bergman (Welsh, 2007, p. xv). A more recent example of an adaptation which is successful in bringing 'unfilmable' material to the screen is James Franco's *As I Lay Dying* (2013). The film uses to a great effect the split screen technique to fluently depict the numerous changes in viewpoints and interior monologues of the protagonists of Faulkner's story. Finally, despite the direct and immediate nature of audiovisual presentation, the filmmaker can also experiment with the indirect and the unseen. What is absent from the picture can speak volumes. At the extreme end of this approach, Jean Baudrillard stated it was the symbolic void that governed over the forcefulness of the picture (Pierzchała, 2005, p. 55).

5 Closing Remarks

In the process of adaptation, filmmakers can interpret the work of literature so successfully that it becomes a text of its own. As Linda Hutcheon noted, the process of interpretation and recreation is related to the classical art of imitation, mimesis; the latter was used in Western culture so as not to exploit the old masterpieces but for educational purposes (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 20). The technique was commonly used as an exercise broadening the student's rhetoric skills, gradually modifying the classical works one word (metaphrase) or one phrase (paraphrase) at a time (Baker, 1998, p. 111). As in the case of adaptations, the texts were modified in a personal manner. Hutcheon (2006, p. 20) sees such changes as analogous to adaptation where mimesis and creative elaboration on the subject of the original serve the purpose of making the text one's own. Students' attempts to critically analyze such individualized approaches of the adapters can lead the former to a more profound understanding of the characteristics of both media and the message they seek to convey.

The purpose of literature, including foreign language literature, has traditionally been perceived as the duty to both educate and entertain readers. The media which gained significance in the twentieth century, such as film or television, still seem to bear the stigma of entertainment industries which tend not to educate its audiences or even to produce the opposite result. When the traditional written media seem to no longer appeal so much to the younger generation, students can be introduced to them with help of the more popular, electronic media to which they are accustomed.

It has been stated that the rhetorical message explicitly expressed by films may alienate viewers. According to Hitchcock, a good movie does not try to educate its audience, a quality which the literature has been able to develop through centuries. The remark of the famous *auteur* seems to point to the density of the filmic medium which would make a heavily didactic tone unbearable. Yet film acquired its own, subtle means of expression. While bearing them in mind, the audience can juxtapose the literary work with its filmic interpretation. Through distancing themselves from the hot, engrossing medium of film, students of film adaptations can effectively co-create the text's meaning, as it is automatically done during the reading of a written text. Hence, film can be *cooled down* and juxtaposed with the written text to allow a rich plethora of interpretations by a trained observer. Honing such critical skills allows for an application of linear logic, originating from print culture, to a nonlinear, hot medium of film. With the well developed critical apparatus, and weary of the medium specificity of written works of literature and film, the latter can also be used with the intention of Horace and Spencer—to teach and delight, also in the foreign language literature classroom.

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