Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics

Edited by
Réka Lugossy, József Horváth and Marianne Nikolov

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Introduction

Three years ago, we published the first collection of papers that were originally given as talks at the University of Pécs Roundtable (UPRT) conference. Since then, we have organized three more such events. The current volume features what we regard as the best fifteen papers from 2008.

Four themes have emerged in them as major threads. The volume opens with two papers that report on large-scale vocational-school projects, followed by six studies that are connected by their exploration of students' and teachers' views and beliefs. Each of the five chapters in the third part focuses on a specific language phenomenon, whereas the fourth part presents the analysis of individual variables in its two studies.

As always, we are indebted to the contributors for sharing their work with us. We hope that our readers, too, will find their dedication worth their time.

The editors

The Relevance of a Slovak Baseline Study for In-Service Teachers' Development in TEFL

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Introduction

The paper aims to analyze the English language teaching (ELT) situation in Slovakian vocational schools and teachers' needs in light of an examination reform. In the first part, I will give an account of the results of a survey on the teaching and learning conditions in Slovak vocational schools analyzing a baseline study conducted in the period of 2001-2003. As both teachers and decision makers perceived a strong need to explore this neglected area, empirical data were collected to find out as much as possible about the most important stakeholders' needs and views, so as to be able to investigate where teachers and learners of English need support and how the efficiency of teaching English could be improved. Three groups of stakeholders were targeted in the study: headmasters, students, and teachers. Although samples were not representative, respondents exemplify a wide range of institutions all over Slovakia. Mainly quantitative data were collected in order to gain insights into what school headmasters, teachers and learners of English consider priorities, strengths and weaknesses, and in what areas they would welcome change and help. In the second part of the paper I will summarize the outcomes of the survey with reference to how in-service teachers could benefit from them when preparing for the new level of school-leaving examination introduced in Slovak secondary schools in the 2007/2008 academic year.

The study

Background to study: the Slovak educational context

Schools in Slovakia have been changing significantly since 1989; demolishing the influence of Communist ideology, establishing private and church schools, giving more freedom to teachers in choosing the content of their teaching lessons have been the most important issues of the reform. The status of foreign language education has been recovered; languages are now offered to be taught in a much wider range and depth. The process of transformation has brought some positive results; however, the problems have become apparent, many of them related to

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neglected issues of vocational education which should have gained priority in development in the European context.

The baseline study was designed and carried out thanks to the cooperation between the British Council and the Ministry of Education and Regional Methodological Centre in Prešov, Eastern Slovakia. The aim of the research was to arrive at a clear picture about teaching English at vocational secondary schools. I was a member of a team of four secondary-school teachers and five university tutors whose role was to create data collection instruments, analyze data and prepare a report on the results of the research findings for the Ministry of Education.

Aims of the study

In order to fulfill the main ambition of the project, the following partial targets were stated (Czéreová, Kováčová, Oršulová, Pathóová, Rázusová, Rusková, Rýdza, & Timková, 2002):

- to work with a representative sample of respondents;
- to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on English language teaching from three different types of respondents: headmasters, English teachers and students;
- to describe the current state from the perspective of the respondents on the basis of statistical analyses;
- to word recommendations in order to improve English language teaching in Slovakian vocational schools;
- to publicize the results of the research for professionals in seminars and at conferences in Slovakia and abroad; and
- to familiarize decision-making bodies and institutions in Slovakia with the research outcomes.

Participants

When choosing the respondents of the study, we used questionnaires and an overview of statistical analysis of secondary schools prepared by the Slovak Institution of Information and Forecasting. In order to achieve equal representation, the type of the school and its geographical position were taken into consideration. Thus, 44 schools were chosen from the total number of 659 vocational secondary schools in Slovakia. The methodological centers helped with the distribution of the questionnaires: 400 questionnaires for headmasters, 1,000 for teachers and 1,000 for students (23 copies for 44 schools in average) were posted. The final data set included replies from 97 headmasters' questionnaires, 218 teachers' questionnaires and 728 students' questionnaires.

Data collection instruments and procedures

As a questionnaire is the right tool to obtain a high number of respondents' replies, it was chosen for the purposes of this study (Nunan, 1992, p. 143). A combination of closed and open-ended questions was used in the survey. The students' answer-sheets included questions to be assessed on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (from false to true statements): the respondents' task was to circle the reply closest to their opinion. Some items inquired into facts on English language teaching at schools as well as respondents' attitudes and opinions in the three questionnaires.

The first versions of the questionnaires were prepared in English in order to consult advisors of the baseline study; then, they were translated into the Slovak language and piloted on a small sample of schools. This procedure was helpful to find out whether the questions were understood properly, or unnecessary, and whether there was a need for additional ones. In some cases the questionnaires were amended according to the comments of the headmasters, teachers and students (Czéreová et al., 2002, p. 8).

Data analysis was based on descriptive statistics, using mainly data gained from frequency tables; they were presented in tables and figures. The results can be interpreted based on the relationships between the variables (using a Chí square test and Spearman's correlations coefficients, Czéreová et al., 2002, p. 9). The validity of the study was confirmed by reliability analysis and analyses of variables; these results, however, were not published in the final paper on the baseline study, as the time was too short to conduct all analyses before submitting the report.

Headmasters' views on English language teaching in vocational schools

The results summarize questionnaires administered to 95 head teachers from a total of 659 vocational schools. They comprise the most discussed topics and questions which were chosen as focal points of the research team (Kováčová & Pathóová, 2002).

As a result of statistical analyses the findings are as follows. Sixty percent of head teachers stressed the importance of English and German, whereas 20% stated that Russian was still taught. The recruitment of pupils was organized by publishing brochures on their school and study tracks offered, as was stated by 61% of headmasters. Fifty-seven percent organized Open Days to attract the attention of pupils, whereas 63% visited basic schools.

The majority (75%) of head teachers said that English was a key element in the school curriculum. Due to this fact 80% of them proved that it was essential to form language classes according to students' knowledge. They claimed that English language teaching groups were small, comprising between 11 and 15 students. There was a significant correlation between forming small language groups and taking into account learners' previous language proficiency.

The influence of the following aspects on ELT according to head teachers was as follows: eighty percent stated that the syllabus had a crucial influence on the quality of teaching process.

Headmasters stressed the need for different examinations, although it was generally known there were no standardized tests which might give valid and reliable feedback on the quality of language education.The school-leaving examination was only partly suitable for the participating schools, whose curriculum included one, as two thirds of head teachers claimed. Half of the respondents were convinced that the school-leaving examination was absolutely unsuitable for two- and three-year apprentice (vocational) schools.

Sixty percent of the headmasters believed that "Olympiad" (competitions in school subjects) together with International projects like Socrates and Leonardo were the most motivating and effective aspects to ELT and learning, whereas 25% listed some more specific activities, like working abroad, working with the internet and e-mail communication.

The majority (60%) of head teachers felt the weekly number of English lessons was too low at vocational schools. On the other hand, 40 percent claimed their schools had language laboratories, and at 20% of the schools, students had access to multi-media; however, 33% had no possibility to offer PCs for ELT.

Eighty percent of head teachers said they had either one qualified teacher of English, or non-qualified teachers; 20% stated that their English teachers were retired or pre-service university students with no final qualification. That is why 80% of head teachers wanted further education for their English teachers.

Ninety-four percent of head teachers identified "communication" as the main goal of ELT comprising three most important elements: grammar, professionally-oriented texts, and working on projects being of equal importance.

Teachers' views on ELT in vocational schools

These data were collected by means of a questionnaire from 218 English language teachers. Thirty-three percent o were based at apprentice schools, 24% taught at business or hotel academies, 19% were from secondary technical schools, 4% taught at specialized girls' schools and the rest were from other types of schools (Czéreová, Rusková, & Timková, 2002).

Regarding their qualifications, 68% of the English teachers claimed to have either a full-time university degree or part-time re-qualification courses. Almost one third were not qualified at all or had state examinations received at language schools or some other certificates. In harmony with what was anticipated, the overwhelming majority of the teachers (80%) had been teaching English from 1 to 12 years. It complied with the changed situation in Slovakia following the velvet revolution when the demand for foreign languages increased dramatically. The teachers who had been teaching English for more than 12 years were fully qualified.

The survey showed that they were interested in their further professional growth, as the majority participated in training activities. Most frequent work-

shops, seminars or courses were those run by the Methodology Centers in the first place, followed by the British Council and publishers. The findings concerning their English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training showed that less than a quarter of the sample had ever received any training in this area, whereas three quarter of the respondents had never participated in any ESP training activities; every eighth teacher asked for more training activities, out of which seven teachers explicitly demanded ESP courses.

As for teachers' attitudes towards the new school-leaving examination, one of the main aims of this questionnaire was to investigate the teachers' opinions on the school-leaving examination. Over 80 (37%) thought that it was fully suitable for secondary grammar schools, 72% indicated that the school-leaving exam was partly suitable for technical schools and 68% claimed that the school-leaving exam was completely unsuitable for apprentice schools. Ninety six percent of teachers agreed that a new school-leaving exam should be different for students of vocational schools.

As to the teaching materials, teachers used a wide range of materials in their classes. The most preferred book appeared to be *Headway* and *New Headway* (used by 50% of teachers), 25% used an old book, *Anglický jazyk pre stredné školy* [English language for secondary schools], 15% used others, including *Blueprint, Snapshot, Grapevine, New Hotline, Criss Cross*. Twenty-five percent worked with books on specific language, for example, *Commercial Correspondence and Ideas*, *English for Tourism, English for Hotel and Catering Industry*. The majority of the specific language books focused on business English. Forty two percent of teachers claimed that choosing a title of a textbook for a class was their own decision, whereas 81% based their decision on financial limitations.

As far as teachers' priorities are concerned, in the teaching process 92% considered teaching the language skills (writing, listening, reading, speaking) the most important area. The next in rank order was general vocabulary (87%), grammar (79%), specialized vocabulary (60%), translation (60%), and specialized texts/materials (50%).

As for the students' involvement in the English language teaching process, the teachers claimed that they involved students in making decisions about the selection of topics for the lessons (47%), and the methods used in the classrooms (45%), whereas 40 percent elicited information from students on lesson evaluations. Only 17% of teachers did not involve their students in any of these possibilities.

The vocational schools wanted to attract a lot of students; therefore, they organized several activities: so-called open days (57%) for their future students. Several teachers visited primary schools (63%) and had discussions with basic school pupils about their further study. Many schools published brochures (61%) and advertising materials.

According to the teachers' answers, students' progress in English could be influenced by appropriate streaming into groups. The findings showed that 52% of the teachers divided students into groups according to their level of English. As far as the average number of English lessons a week was concerned, the majority claimed to have three.

Looking at what we learnt about the teachers' views on their students' strengths in the command of English, the teachers ranked certain areas as follows: (1) Reading 98 (45%), (2) Vocabulary 80 (37%), (3) Listening 48 (22%), (4) Speaking 42 (19%), (5) ESP 36 (17%), (6) Grammar 30 (14%) and (7) Writing 16 (7%). This rank order clearly shows that despite the fact that literacy skills of these learners tend to be lower than those of their peers in grammar schools, teachers still perceive reading as the most important skill in English, whereas English for specific purposes is ranked only fifth.

Students' views on ELT in vocational schools

The target group of this part of the study was 731 students of secondary specialized, technical, and apprentice schools from different regions of Slovakia. Our aim was to get a picture not only of the quality of general English language and ESP teaching and learning but also of students' opinions on these matters (Oršulová, Rázusová, & Rýdza, 2002).

The growing importance of English knowledge was reflected not only in the teachers' and the headmasters' answers, but also in students' attitudes. Although the official report of the Ministry of Education attributed not always satisfactory results in ELT mainly to the students' lack of awareness, our survey revealed the opposite. Almost 90% of students considered English to be important for their lives and about 85% claimed that knowing English might help them get a better job not only within Slovakia but also abroad. Speaking in terms of motivation support, it was obvious that more than 30% of the participants thought of studying at university and wanted to pass an entrance exam. As a result, further research was necessary to find out what went wrong and demotivated students in classes over years.

As the changing social environment enhanced strengthening of language skills also outside the classroom, this phenomenon was also reflected in the pupils' answers. More than 30% claimed that they watched English language TV channels regularly. Undoubtedly, there were also changes in families: while only 10% of pupils' parents could speak English, the percentage of siblings speaking English was much higher – almost half.

Increasing requirements and a more demanding new school-leaving exam presupposed at least pre-intermediate knowledge of the students starting secondary school. The continuation of English language learning at secondary school was partially subject to high quality teaching at primary schools. However, this survey showed that around 35% of respondents had never learnt English at primary school. They could hardly achieve the requested upper-intermediate level in a 4-year period in two or three weekly hours. It was obvious to arrive at a conclusion that at specialized or technical secondary and vocational schools there were not enough weekly lessons of English as a compulsory subject.

Only one-fourth of students confirmed that they had extra English lessons (conversation or business correspondence). In a view of this situation it was clear that especially vocational and specialized or technical schools needed either a

higher number of lessons per week to be able to pass the new school-leaving exam or it would be better not to insist on a compulsory school-leaving exam for everybody, but in compulsory optional subjects only. Responsible authorities might also consider lowering the expected level and reconsidering achievement targets for vocational schools. Such an alternative would require further research to see what levels these students achieve as a result of their studies.

Among the textbooks used for teaching general English a prevalence of publications by foreign publishers was found, whereas traditional Slovak textbooks represented 5% only. Although ESP was expected to be taught as a vocational element in compliance with a valid teaching programme, the use of professional textbooks was very limited: none was used by more than 5% of the students. The reason could be financial. Consequently it could be inferred that it was necessary to initiate the writing of teaching materials for different professions (nurses, chemical engineers) for a reasonable price.

The research revealed also some weak points in ESP teaching, as almost 35% of the respondents claimed they had never had ESP lessons. However, about 40% thought it was important for their further profession and 65% understood that learning ESP was not a waste of time. In contrast, only 10% said they could speak English fluently on professional topics, whereas 60% could not. Cooperation between teachers and teacher-training institutions was necessary in order to start training teachers in content-based teaching, where content was the vocational element.

Satisfactory figures, however, appeared in relation between the teacher and the student. More than 70% of respondents expressed an opinion that their teachers were always well prepared for the lessons and only slightly more than ten percent thought otherwise. Sixty-five percent believed that their teachers were all right to learn from and almost 70% contested the idea that they had never understood the teacher's explanation. To confirm the validity of these findings, observations of classroom processes were suggested to see if students were simply trying to please their teachers or what other factors played a role.

Conclusions and recommendations

The results of this study underpin claims that were previously based on intuition only. The first point relates to the need for change: it was clearly expressed in the headmasters' views on language teaching. They requested standardized tests to cover general and vocational knowledge for higher quality of ELT. They claimed a different type of school-leaving examination was necessary for secondary specialist and apprentice schools and suggested increasing the teaching of English to 4-5 lessons per week. They wished to offer possibilities for further education of English teachers and to extend both general methodology trainings and seminars on ESP.

The second point for change became clear from the surveys of the teachers' views. Most teachers said a new school-leaving examination would serve their students' needs, but they also voted for different examinations for different types

of schools. As for qualifications, almost a third of the teachers were not qualified at all or had only proficiency examinations received at language schools or some other certificates to prove their language knowledge. The survey showed that the teachers were interested in their professional growth; the majority participated in training activities. The findings concerning the ESP training indicated that less than a quarter ever received training in this area.

The third point relates to the need for change in the students' views on the quality of general English and ESP learning. Increasing requirements and demanding new school-leaving exams presupposed at least pre-intermediate knowledge at entry to secondary school. The continuation of English language learning at secondary school was partially dependent on high-quality teaching at primary schools. However, our survey showed that more than a third of respondents had never learnt English at primary schools. Therefore, responsible authorities should consider lowering of the expected levels and reconsidering achievement targets for vocational schools. These findings are also relevant for the new school-leaving exam and in-service EFL teacher preparation.

The headmasters, teachers and students were interested in the teaching process. It would be advisable to continue the research further with the participation of other groups such as students' parents, the Ministry of Education, methodological centers, and other stakeholders in order to get a more complex picture about the teaching process at vocational secondary schools in Slovakia.

Firstly, we advised to continue discussions on the applicability of the new school-leaving examination for secondary vocational schools. The National Institute for Education in Slovakia (SPU) had been monitoring the process of learning and teaching of foreign languages (English and German) and mathematics since 2000; however, the first general test in English was compulsory only for secondary grammar schools in 2004, whereas other schools could join the testing process on a voluntary basis. National tests were prepared on the higher level (level A – this is a different label from CEFR, 2001 level) for more advanced students and also for a lower one (level B). All students have to achieve basic proficiency in order to pass the school-leaving examination. The following year when it was a compulsory test for the school leavers again, at the same time it was made clear for the students of other types of schools that there was no option of choosing the test, everybody graduating from secondary education had to take the A or B level test of general English or another foreign language. The authors of the tests had an intention to "produce" tests comparable to the international ones, the National Institute for Education claimed that the exams at A level were comparable to B2 of CEFR, whereas B level tests to B1 of CEFR. Since 2006 it has been compulsory for all students who have had at least three teaching hours of the foreign language weekly during their secondary study to sit for a final exam.

In my view, at that time it was a political decision to make a difference in levels of the exam more feasible in order to allow students of vocational and other types of schools to pass the exam and get a certificate of their accomplishment of secondary education. Level B suffered the most, as it had to be treated differently to satisfy the general public.

Secondly, it is necessary to ensure willingness of the school management to enable their teachers to participate in different seminars and workshops to help their professional growth, improve the quality of the teaching process and also to allow teachers to exchange ideas and experience with other colleagues.

In 2007 teachers started "protests" against the school-leaving exams requirements, saying that the Institution (SPU) had mixed up the lower level test with the higher one; thus, it became evident even for decision makers that something had to be done about the final school-leaving exam in English and they had to educate teachers.

Thirdly, we thought about finding the reasons for the low representation of the ESP element in teaching the language. We advised to establish a team of teachers-trainers whose responsibility would include methodology help for teachers at vocational schools. A training path developed independently by the experts in language education differs from region to region within the country; teachers are confused, they do not have a clear picture of what the difference is between the levels of the final exam, the skills that are to be practiced more with the students in order to achieve a higher level of the school-leaving examination.

Finally, it would be useful to (1) uncover the reasons for the absence of qualified teachers of English at vocational schools, (2) to start a database of on-line materials suitable for teaching English at vocational schools, (3) start preparation of vocational school teachers in pre-service education, and (4) to focus on the right collaboration and coordination of the work of university teachers at pedagogical faculties, methodologists at regional centers, specialists at the Institute (SPU) who deal with the school-leaving exams, and also the test writers themselves in order to improve the teacher training process.

The findings and recommendations should serve as a basis for the nationwide discussions and further in-depth exploration of ELT taught at secondary specialist and apprentice schools in Slovakia. The main perspective of the baseline study and these discussions was to support vocational schools with baseline information for further content-based teaching of English, and other innovative forms of teaching foreign languages.

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An Exploratory Study of Vocational Schools' Self-Assessment

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Introduction

This paper focuses on a segment of a large-scale research study initiated by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the Public Foundation for Education (PFE) and it was implemented with the support of the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education. The aim of the survey was to gain insights into the language teaching and language learning situation in Hungarian comprehensive and vocational schools. The survey was conducted in the 2007/2008 academic year in two phases and it involved 463 schools in the first and 67 institutions in the second phase. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, classroom observations and curriculum analysis.

The study involved three groups of stakeholders as participants (school management, language teachers, and students) and examined various areas of foreign language teaching in the secondary schools (e.g., infrastructure, teaching materials, curricula, entrance exams, teachers' qualifications, and classroom processes). A particular aspect explored participants' views at the institutional level: schools were asked to self-assess their achievements and problems as well as what opportunities they saw for development in their own contexts.

The findings are meant to provide feedback to participating institutions, teachers, students and their parents on what the baseline is like at school level and what major outcomes the managements of institutions are aware of, what problems they perceive and what their suggestions are for finding solutions to their problems. It is also hoped that decision makers at a national level also benefit from the results. In this paper we analyze what schools consider their main achievements in foreign language teaching, what problems they perceive in their schools and the ways and potential agents they suggest for improving their conditions in the area of teaching foreign languages for general and specific purposes. This last point is of special interest, as it would be a reasonable assumption that foreign languages are taught for specific purposes. Therefore, we examine if this is the case.

Nikolov, M & Öveges, E. (2009). An exploratory study of vocational schools' self-assessment. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 13-28). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Background to study

Although foreign language education has been on the agenda for about two decades in Hungary and various programmes are being developed these days, they tend to be launched without establishing a baseline. For example, no needs analysis preceded an on-going large-scale programme initiated by MCE in 2003 to improve vocational training at secondary level (www. szakma.hu) and relevant parts of the National Development Plan, the second phase of which targeted language teaching in vocational school (www.hefop.hu). The last major survey on language education was conducted in 1993 (Teemant, Varga, & Heltai, 1993), whereas a baseline study was published on the school-leaving examination in foreign languages with the support of the British Council (Fekete, Major, & Nikolov, 1999); however, its findings were not considered in the implementation of the school-leaving exams and that survey did not focus on teaching modern foreign languages for specific purposes. Since then, apart from comprehensive volumes on education in general (e.g., Halász & Lannert, 2006) and foreign language education in particular (Vágó, 2007), few studies have discussed language education in vocational schools (Einhorn, 2000, 2001). These institutions have been neglected and are often seen as second-rate compared to more academic grammar schools.

The place and prestige of vocational training is presently in transition in Hungary, as training requirement specifications are being redefined. An additional problem is that since 2007 vocational training and other issues of public education have been managed by different ministries with little information to build on (e.g., national data collections on vocational students in grades 9 and 10). These are the reasons why it was a timely decision on the part of the MCE and PFE to initiate an inquiry into the teaching and learning situation at all vocational institutions in the country.

The study

Aims of study

The purpose of the large-scale survey on foreign language teaching (FLT) in secondary comprehensive and vocational schools was manifold. It aimed to give an overview of the situation, to provide an empirical basis for stakeholders' assessment of the baseline and to allow them to initiate change in their practice. The survey was designed to investigate the main issues and to collect data from various informants from different perspectives. It aimed, for example, to shed light on specific areas: how secondary schools build on their students' proficiency level brought from primary school, the methods and procedures applied in FL classes and the role of language for specific purposes in the curricula and classrooms. Therefore, data were collected on background information, on teachers, learners and classroom processes and documents of language education in all schools participating in our survey. A further aim was to explore the qualifications and language proficiency of teaching staff in order to establish a baseline and to examine

future opportunities to develop language education for specific purposes. Thus, the study examined the aims the schools set and their implementation, their relationship with the job market at a national and international level. In addition, it investigated the students' language learning objectives, attitudes and self-evaluation, as well as the language teachers' motivation and self-evaluation, and their development of language proficiency in and out of class.

In this paper, however, we focus on a narrow segment of the large survey with the help of a qualitative approach to analyzing some of the data collected in the project. We examine what schools identified as their main achievements, problems and their needs, as well as the steps they suggest should be taken for further development.

Participants

The study was implemented in two phases and participants were different in them. In the first phase a total of 880 secondary schools were sent an invitation to participate in a national survey. Over half of the institutions, 463 schools responded and filled in two data collection instruments in the first phase of the project. In the second phase a representative sample of 67 institutions was involved. In these schools 332 teachers and 6,111 students filled in one of our data collection instruments, respectively (see Table 1 for details on the scale of the survey). We focus on the 463 schools teaching 167,983 students in the first phase.

Table 1: Participants in the two phases of the study

	Schools	Teachers	Students
Phase 1	463	--	167,983
Phase 2	67	332	6,111

Data collection instruments and procedures

The two phases were conducted in the 2007/2008 academic year. Prior to the first one, in the fall semester, data collection instruments were designed and piloted; then, data were collected between February and May 2008. In the first phase, school representatives filled in an online questionnaire comprising 13 questions, and a data sheet in the form of a spreadsheet file.

In the online instrument, the first two questions asked for background information (official code, types of vocational training, and name and e-mail address of the person filling in the answers). Further questions inquired about the selection and group allocation procedures, infrastructure, extra-curricular language learning opportunities, international relationships and study abroad options for students; qualifications and language proficiency of staff, course books and supplementary materials used for teaching foreign languages for general and specific purposes. The last three items were open questions investigating what achieve-

ments, problems and potential solutions schools perceive in their language teaching. The answers to these questions comprise the focus of our paper.

In the second phase four instruments were used: questionnaires for language teachers and students, an observation schedule and criteria for the analysis of local curricula. Table 2 shows all instruments and respondents (and documents). Data from these other instruments are used to triangulate findings in the discussion section. All instruments were worded in Hungarian.

Thus, in our study we analyze the answers to the open items filled in by the school management of 463 institutions in the first phase of the survey.

Table 2: Instruments and participants in the two phases

Phases	Instruments	Participants
Phase One	Questionnaire	School management
	Data sheet	School management
Phase Two	Questionnaire	Language teachers
	Questionnaire	Students
	Lesson observation	Students and teachers
	Criteria for analysis	Foreign language curricula

The schools filled in the questionnaires online on the project homepage (www.oka2008.hu). During the pilot phase respondents spent about 15 minutes to give their answers, thus, most probably, a similar length of time was devoted to answering all the questions, but no empirical data were collected on time. Questionnaires were administered in March, whereas data analysis was conducted in April and May 2008. In the first round of qualitative analyses all answers to the open questions were read and we established larger categories of emerging patters in the data sets on each question. In the second round further subcategories were identified and checked against the larger ones. This process of looking for further patterns and categories resulted in what follows.

Results

Schools' achievements in language teaching

The first open question in the questionnaire inquired about the three main achievements schools considered the most important in their language teaching in their vocational classes. This specification was important, as most institutions had various types of classes (e.g., grammar school), and according to the findings of the pilot phase, they had to be reminded to think of vocational classes only. Respondents were not asked to rank order what they perceived to be successes, but simply to list the three most important ones in three slots one below the other.

Out of the 463 schools returning a questionnaire 438 provided a total of 1.207 answers to this item. They were grouped at a primary and a secondary level, in eleven larger and 54 further smaller categories. The eleven main categories with the numbers of answers in them are shown in Figure 1.

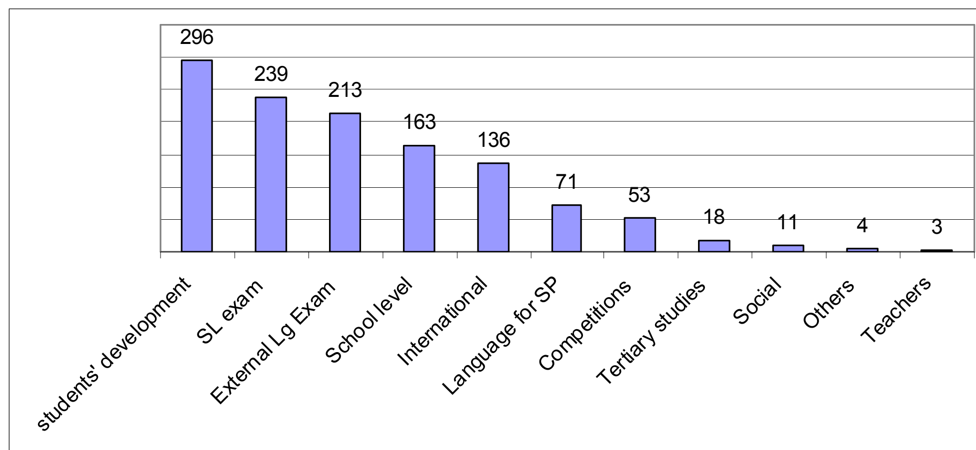

Figure 1: Main categories of achievements and their frequencies

The largest category of the answers comprises what institutions consider to be related to students' development (see Figure 1). The second and third main categories describe exam-related achievements (school-leaving exams: 239 responses and external exams: 213 answers). The fifth and sixth most often mentioned responses are categorized as school-level answers (163) and as international results (136). Fewer, 71 responses refer to language teaching for special purposes, whereas 53 answers are related to competitions. The last three main categories include eleven references to social achievements, four to other topics and only three items referred to teachers. The eleven main categories shown in Figure 1 are further grouped in Table 3.

The most frequently mentioned achievements are related to students' cognitive and affective development (296 answers). As can be seen, 202 answers (68%) concern their language proficiency development, improved motivation and enhanced attitudes come as the second most frequent (20%, 58 answers). Thirteen participants attribute better opportunities on the job market to their students, whereas twelve mention their higher intercultural competences. Other answers hint at students' better preparation to use the Internet (7) and their language learning strategies (4). The second and third most significant groups of answers (239 and 213) are concerned with successful second language exams – another subcategory related to students' achievements. The numbers of answers referring to the official school-leaving exam and external language proficiency exams are similar (220 and 213).

The fourth main category includes 163 answers and these are all related to what schools offer and provide. These successes involve improvement of technical equipment (34 answers), an increase in the number of language groups (29), better staff (20), an appropriate number of language lessons (18), the establishment of a language exam centre at school (15) or the opportunity to offer students more than one foreign language (13).

International relations were also often mentioned: a total of 136 answers cover them. Some of them comment on international projects with other institutions abroad (39), as well as practicum or job opportunities abroad (31 and 24, respec-

tively). These are fascinating outcomes, as most probably they offer students and teachers authentic opportunities to use foreign language in authentic contexts with peers and others in the same field.

Most interestingly, language learning for specific purposes (LSP), the area where vocational institutions should excel, was mentioned in 71 answers – not a large number in contrast with the totals in other categories. These answers did not provide a lot of insights into what the teaching of a language for specific purposes entails, but it was clearly identified as a major achievement at 71 schools out of 438. This means that approximately every 6th school mentioned some successes in relation to LSP.

Language competitions constituted the following group with 52 answers; however, most of the answers did not provide details: 46 answers did not define what competitions were meant.

The last four main categories comprising the fewest answers concerned students' access to tertiary education (18); eleven schools emphasised a social achievement claiming that language learning enhanced their students' access to equal opportunities, and three schools did not find anything worth mentioning as their success. Finally, only three answers revealed benefits related to language teachers. Table 3 shows the list of the eleven main categories on the left hand side and the secondary ones with what type of answers they comprise and how many times they were mentioned in the middle and the right columns.

Table 3: Primary and secondary achievements and their frequencies

Primary categories	Secondary categories	Frequencies of secondary categories
Students' development	Language proficiency	202
	Better motivation and attitudes	58
	Better job opportunities	13
	Intercultural competence	12
	Developed internet use	7
School-leaving exam (SLE)	SLE	131
	SLE advanced level	33
	SLE sooner	29
	Exam in vocation	27
	SLE intermediate level	19
External language exams (ELE)	ELE	131
	Intermediate level	39
	Language for specific purposes	19
	Advanced level	12
	Basic level	12
School level	Technical equipment	34
	More language groups	29
	Good teachers	20
	Enough classes per week	18
	External language centre	15
	More foreign languages	13
International level	Joint projects	39
	Work abroad for study	31
	Work abroad	24
	Exchange programmes	24
	Grants	8
LSP	Language for specific purposes	63
Competitions	Language competitions	46
Tertiary studies	Opportunity to go on with studies	12
	Tertiary studies in languages	6
Social	Equal opportunities	11
Other	No achievements	3
Teachers	In development programmes	2
	In-service training abroad	1

Problems in language teaching

The second open question explored what problems the institutions identify in their language teaching. A total of 1,302 answers were grouped at two levels. The eight main categories are visualized in Figure 2. The categories refer to the areas problems are related to.

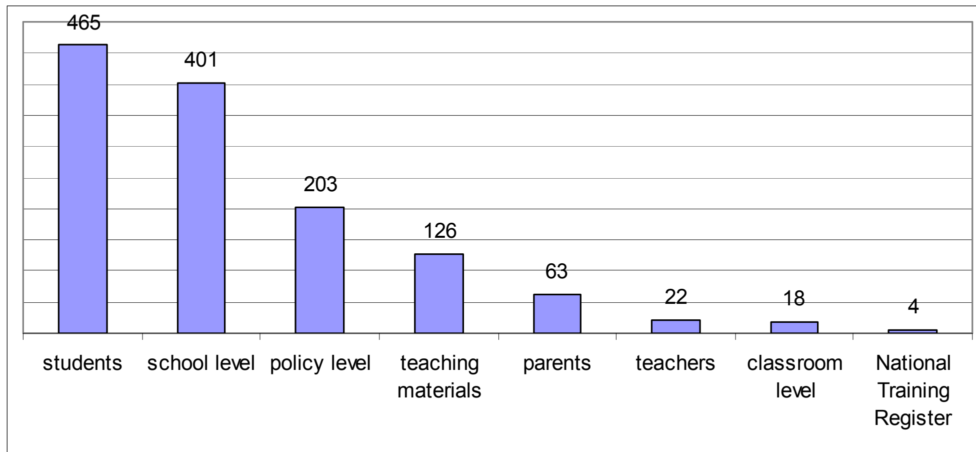

Figure 2: Primary categories of problems and their frequencies

The most frequently claimed problems are all connected with students: 66 per cent of the 465 answers refer to negative aspects of students' motivation and attitudes to language learning (305 answers). 155 answers (33% of all student-related ones) comment on cognitive problems, most of which are related to their mother tongue use and key competences.

The second group of problems comprises difficulties with school-level decisions: 401 answers refer to school issues which influence the efficiency of their language teaching. Three secondary categories seem to represent the most important problems within this second group: 127 participants (32% of all school-related answers) point out the difficulty of inappropriate language groups (too many students, heterogeneous levels in groups, etc.), 105 answers (26%) highlight the low number of language lessons, and 96 (24%) relate to deficiencies in the local infrastructure. Following a gap in the number of answers, 18 answers mention the fact that only one foreign language is taught. Eleven respondents refer to both the difficulties they face when teaching languages for specific purposes and the lack of differentiated education. There are a few references to the inadequacy of extracurricular language learning opportunities (9 answers), the lack of native speakers (7), the massive fluctuation in the teaching staff (7) and the necessity of providing language teachers with extra in-service training in language proficiency. As can be seen, few schools mentioned these latter ones.

The problems that need policy-level decisions relate to the inadequacy of primary school language teaching (50% of 203 answers). A less significant, but still often addressed problem concerns the lack of international relations (31 answers), such as work and study abroad opportunities, international projects and grants. Nine respondents point out problems with the financial support school receive, whereas inappropriate attitudes are also mentioned in relation to the prestige of the teaching career and knowledge in general.

As for the teaching materials, 126 participants identified them as highly problematic. More than half of the answers (52%) describe the inappropriate nature of the course-books and supplementary materials they use for teaching languages for specific purposes. This means that institutions do not feel they have good re-

sources at their disposal to teach the language of the vocation students study. Another important question raised was the lack of centrally issued digital teaching materials (13%). Approximately twelve percent of the respondents highlighted how boring and expensive materials are. Eight answers elaborated on how inappropriate the level of the books is. Three answers indicate that they would like to use locally made materials tailored to their students' needs. Two respondents would like to receive materials to implement content-based language teaching, whereas 63 answers refer to a very different domain: deficiencies in students' socio-economic status and a lack of appropriate parental support.

Problems with language teachers and classroom procedures seem to be scarce, according to the schools: 22 and 18 answers, respectively out of 1,302. Nineteen respondents find the methodology training of language teachers inadequate and three answers claim that teachers are not prepared to "handle behaviour" (discipline) problems at school. Several problems were identified with the content and procedures of language lessons (e.g., 5 answers point out a lack of variety of tasks). In terms of language exams, six answers considered the increasing importance of the new school-leaving exam negative, whereas one respondent stated that external language exams are attributed too much importance.

The numbers of answers finding fault with and blaming students and teachers are worth comparing: students were mentioned as the source of problems in 465 answers, whereas teachers were referred to a total of 40 times for the inefficiency of language teaching. Schools identify more problems at their own level than at the level of central decisions; an important finding indicates that parents' responsibility is also mentioned. Table 5 shows the most frequently worded problems and their frequencies described in this section.

Table 5: Primary and secondary categories of problems and their frequencies

Primary problems	Secondary problems	Frequencies of secondary problems
Students-related	Cognitive abilities	305
	Affective domain	155
	Overburdened	5
School level	Language groups	127
	Not enough language lessons	105
	Infrastructure	96
	Only one foreign language is taught	18
	Language teaching for special purposes	11
	Difficulties in differentiated education	11
	No opportunities outside class	9
	Lack of native speakers	7
	Major fluctuation in teaching staff	7
	Language proficiency of teachers	5
	Behaviour	2
Policy level	Language education in primary schools	102
	Lack of international relationships	31
	Lack of language campuses	24
	Changing requirements	16
	Lack of grants	11
	Inadequate financial support	9
	Overburdened teachers	4
	Lack of language competitions	3
Teaching materials	Books to teach language for SP	65
	Electronic/digital teaching materials	17
	Expensive teaching materials	16
	Teaching materials are not varied enough	15
	Books are inappropriate to students' level	8
	Lack of locally made materials	3
Parents-related	Inadequate parental support	63
Teacher-related	Inadequate knowledge of methodology	19
	Discipline and emotional issues	3
Classroom level	Preparation for exams	6
	Boring lessons	5
	Grammar-centred lessons	2
National Training Register	Minimum number of language lessons	2
	Language exams should be compulsory for more types of vocational training	2

Schools' suggestions for overcoming difficulties

The third open question elicited institutional views on how the problems listed in response to the previous item could be remedied. A total of 1,064 answers were written. The categories used for grouping the suggestions were identical to the

ones applied in the case of the problems. Similarly to the previous question, answers were grouped in eight main categories; frequencies, however, do not coincide with the ones under problems. The primary categories and their frequencies are shown in Figure 3.

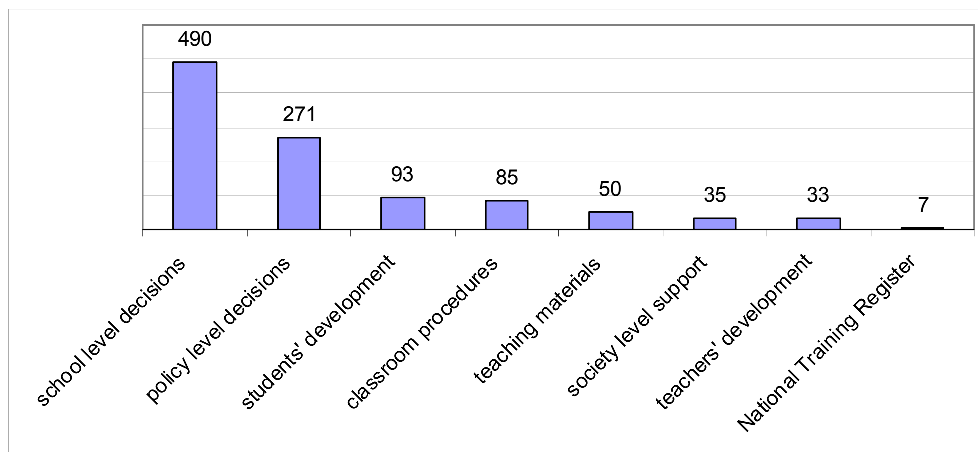

Figure 3: Primary categories of solutions and their frequencies

Although respondents identified students as the most problematic contributors to language teaching, the most frequently occurring solutions are school-related (490) and require policy level decisions (271). Student-related responses ranked third; but they are less frequently mentioned than the first two areas (93 answers). A similar number of responses (85) concerned classroom procedures, whereas 50 answers proposed to improve teaching materials. References to potential society-level changes were found in 35 answers and 33 respondents pointed towards necessary teacher development. Seven institutions suggested that the National Training Register should be modified.

The most frequent items of the 490 school-related responses concern development of infrastructure (118 answers, 25%), the increase and rearrangement of the weekly number of language lessons (109, 22%), the need to improve differentiated education at school (86) and the reconsideration of the procedures of students placement in language groups (78). Three out of these four subcategories were among the most frequently occurring answers, the only one receiving more attention as in need of development than a problem was differentiated education.

Similarly to differentiated education, the issue of extracurricular language development at school (29), the reconsideration of the admission procedures (21) and the employment of native speakers (14) were all attributed more significance as areas to improve than as problems (e.g., admission procedures were mentioned once as a problem, whereas 21 respondents suggested that they should be modified). Two suggestions were not referred to at all in the list of problems: increasing the number of teachers and approaching the school-leaving exam requirements in a realistic way were each mentioned by one school.

A total of 271 responses focus on policy-level decisions: 78 answers (29%) point out that schools' international relations should be organised in a more effi-

cient way, and 65 participants demand higher financial support from the state. It is worth noting that the problem of inadequate primary school language education, which was number one in the list of problems, was mentioned in as few as 44 answers as a way of solving problems. Either vocational schools are sceptical about primary school education or they trust themselves rather than others.

An even more significant difference is found in the case of the students. The problems related to them ranked first in the list of difficulties. However, only 93 answers proposed options related to students to handle the problems: 74 per cent of the answers claim that the affective domain should be developed in students. They suggest that students should be made more motivated and they should be made more aware of the importance of foreign language proficiency. This means that respondents are aware of the fact that the area they could improve concerns students' language learning attitudes and motivation. The issue is how they actually go about motivating their students in a favourable way. The answers seem to imply that motivation should be external; students should come to school with positive attitudes and strong language learning motivation. These are seen as prerequisites rather than results of pedagogical processes influenced by teachers.

Classroom procedures were mentioned by 85 respondents: the majority (45) would like to see more up-to-date methodology in the language classrooms; eleven participants find it necessary to integrate language for general and specific purposes. This number is way below expectations if we bear in mind that these institutions are vocational schools where all students engage with a specific area on a daily basis. Still, only eleven schools see language for specific purposes as a way forward and a means of motivating students.

In terms of resources, the most often mentioned problem was the lack of teaching materials specifically designed to teach a foreign language for specific purposes. Fewer participants focused on this issue when they were asked to suggest solutions (11 answers). A similar case was found on digital materials (17 institutions listed them among problems, but only 5 among solutions). Few participants suggested that the teaching materials should be more varied (16), more communication-centred (9), less expensive (3), and more appropriate to their students' level (1). Five schools think that locally made materials would be more useful to them, and one participant would welcome centrally compiled books and supplementary materials.

A total of 35 out of the 1,064 answers concentrated on the role and responsibility of parents. The suggestions were worded in general terms indicated that problems related to family background had to be taken care of but no specific information was given as to how.

Only 33 respondents mentioned teacher-related opportunities for further development: 28 answers consider in-service methodology trainings vital and five responses reveal the importance of preparing teachers to approach the students' behavioural problems more appropriately. All data on the categories, subcategories and frequencies on respondents' suggestions are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Categories and frequencies of suggested solutions

Primary solutions	Secondary solutions	Frequencies of secondary solutions
School-level decisions	Improve infrastructure	118
	Increase number of lessons	109
	Apply differentiated education	86
	Placement in groups	78
	Extracurricular opportunities	29
	Tighten admission procedures	21
	Employ native speakers	14
	Introduce internal language exams	10
	Teach two foreign languages	7
	Cooperate with primary schools	5
	Improve language proficiency of non-language teachers	5
	Bring expert on behaviour problems	4
	Improve cooperation within staff	4
Policy-level decisions	Develop international relations	78
	More financial support	65
	Develop primary school education	44
	Reconsider requirements	19
	Strengthen prestige of knowledge	10
	Year of Intensive Language Learning	8
	Construct guidelines for teaching students with special needs	6
	Involve teachers in development	5
	Competence-based education	5
	Harmonise first and foreign languages	4
	Provide more grants	4
	Strengthen prestige of teaching career	4
Students	Develop affective domain	69
	Develop cognitive skills	24
Classroom-level decisions	Use up-to-date methods in class	45
	Teach language for specific purposes	11
	Teach communication	9
	Use more varied teaching aids	8
	Develop language learning strategies	5
Teaching materials	Produce digital teaching materials	5
	Provide cheaper teaching materials	3
Parents	Improve parental support	35
Teachers	Provide in-service methods training	28
	Prepare teachers for discipline problems	5
National Training Register	Introduce external language exams	3

Discussion

In this section we discuss the above findings in the light the results of the large-scale survey. We compare and contrast what students and teachers think with the views of the institutions.

Findings on attitudes and motivation

First, let us see students' views on their language learning. A lot more students would like to study two foreign languages than schools assume and offer: this is what a third of vocational-school students, and two fifths of comprehensive-school students stated in their questionnaires. On the other hand, in vocational schools every fifth, whereas in comprehensive schools every tenth learner would avoid studying a foreign language if they could – a lower ratio than supposed by their teachers. These findings imply that teachers and school managers tend to under estimate students' motivation, needs and wants.

As for what languages students study, at comprehensive schools 60 per cent of students learn English and 40 per cent study German, whereas at vocational schools the ratio is the other way round. However, twice as many of the latter group would like to learn English than German. This means that many students are not offered the language of their preference and they are forced to study a language they reject. In comprehensive schools only half of the population studying German claim that they want to learn it. In other words, in both school types English is a lot more attractive for students, but their wishes are not granted. Thus, it is not surprising that both institutional respondents and teachers point out that there are serious motivational problems. This phenomenon is not new or specific to these schools after two decades of "free language choice". As English has become a world language, it has also become more attractive, whereas German has gradually lost most of its pragmatic value as a regional language (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006, Nikolov, 2003, Nikolov & Ottó, 2006). Most probably this trend explains why students are perceived as not motivated enough. From their answers it is clear that they are more interested in studying English than German; however, the majority study a language they do not see as their choice.

Language teaching for specific purposes

In the first two years (grades 9 and 10) students are not offered languages for specific purposes, whereas in upper grades the ratio is low: LSP is available in 28 percent of the groups mostly in year 13 after passing the school-leaving examination, and this option is not available to all students in vocational schools. This means that they must study general language for a minimum of nine years, before they might be exposed to the content they study for four year. This finding implies that schools and teachers assume that first a good general proficiency is necessary be-

fore students are ready for LSP. In addition to this point, language teachers' answers revealed that LSP usually means a narrow offer of special vocabulary only.

In contrast, three quarters of comprehensive school students and half of their peers at vocational schools claim that they would like to deal more with LSP. Interestingly, the majority of language teachers would be willing to teach LSP, but they do not think their students would find such a challenge realistic.

It seems a reasonable assumption that both students and their teachers would benefit from an innovative approach tailored to students' special areas of training. This particular avenue might be useful for another reason as well. As has been documented in Vágó's (2007) study, the majority of students in secondary education start in grade 9 as false beginners. This fact may also lead to demotivation and this unfavourable practice could be substituted by more challenging content and tasks in the form of either LSP or content and language integrated learning (a recent trend in methodology not explored in the study). Students in our survey would be willing to participate in such innovative approaches, according to their answers.

As data in the survey show, 95 percent of the schools can offer access to the internet and the mean number of students in groups is 13. In other words, optimal conditions could be ensured for LSP for the majority of students, although every third language teacher lacks appropriate qualifications, therefore, in-service programmes are definitely necessary to allow them to update themselves. Offering teachers in-service training to develop LSP materials tailored to their students' needs may offer opportunities to focus on students' communicative competence in their chosen vocation.

Conclusion

The findings of our study indicate that the institutions and their language teachers list among their major achievements that their students' language proficiency develops, as is documented in their exam results. Students' favourable attitudes and motivation were also among the successes they listed and no difference was found in the answers given by school administrators and language teachers after triangulation of the datasets.

As for their main problems, students' low level of aptitude and their negative attitudes and lack of motivation are blamed. This must mean that teachers often fail to match what learners must learn and their abilities, needs and interests. This is a major pedagogical challenge to be bridged by tailoring teaching to students' abilities and making language classes as intrinsically motivating and rewarding as possible. Complaints about the lack of motivation indicate that teachers do not perceive this area as their responsibility. They find fault in students, their parents and society, instead of taking steps to motivate their learners. Obviously, what language students are offered and the way secondary schools build on what their students know and set goals not necessarily in line with learners' needs and wants all interact in the specific classroom contexts.

The teachers' and institutions' answers to how they think problems could be solved indicate that they tend to expect help from elsewhere and they do not realize that they are the key stakeholders. This learned helplessness should be overcome by preparing teachers to find out about their students' needs and ideas on what they consider motivating and challenging. On way of implementing such goals may be a gradual shift towards language for specific purposes and content and language integrated learning, as they may offer innovative and motivating approaches to all stakeholders in these schools: most importantly, learners and their teachers.

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Exploring Gender and Target Language Effect on Hungarian EFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Leaning

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Introduction

The present paper reports on the findings of a study that examined Hungarian secondary school language learners' beliefs about language learning with the help of a popular self-administered questionnaire: Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Although numerous similar studies have been carried out in the past, the present study is unique in that it deals not only with gender effect but also investigates the differences in learners' beliefs in relation to the target language. Moreover, while most studies have been conducted with university students, this project examines the beliefs of adolescent language learners. The age of the respondents is significant because it may still be possible to reverse any negative or detrimental beliefs they might have at a young age, whereas research shows that adults' beliefs about language learning are relatively static and resistant to intervention.

Literature review

In the context of second language acquisition, beliefs are defined by Victori and Lockhart (1995, p.224) as "general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of language learning" (as cited in Bernat & Lloyd, 2007, p. 81). A considerable amount of evidence shows that these beliefs play a decisive role in language learners' successes, failures and experiences (Cotteral, 1999). Thus, knowledge of students' beliefs about language learning may provide language educators with a better understanding of their students' "expectations of, commitment to, success in and satisfaction with their language classes" (Horwitz, 1988, p. 283). Consequently, teachers can make more informed choices about teaching (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005) and adopt "a more sensitive approach to the organization of learning opportunities" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 494) in their lessons.

In the past two decades Horwitz's (1897) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) has been extensively used to investigate, among others, the links

Rieger, B. (2009). Exploring gender and target language effect on Hungarian EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 29-42). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

between beliefs and proficiency (Mantle-Bromley, 1995), the impact of culture on beliefs (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; McCarger, 1993; Horwitz, 1999), gender (Siebert, 2003; Tercanlioglu, 2005; Bernat & Lloyd, 2007), the dimensions underlying language learners' beliefs (Sakui & Gaines, 1999) and strategy use (Yang, 1999). The present study will examine the possible effect of gender differences and the language being learnt have on beliefs of secondary school students learning German and English. Although the influence of gender has been investigated by other researchers, the impact of target language on beliefs about language learning is a relatively untouched area, as is the responses of teenagers to the BALLI.

Concerning gender, Bacon and Finnemann (1992) claimed that women are more motivated, more open to authentic input and have a more positive attitude to target-language speakers. While Tercanlioglu (2005) found no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in Turkey, Siebert's (2003) BALLI based study (as cited in Bernat & Lloyd, 2007, p. 80), examining international university students in the United States showed significant sex related differences. The author found males rated their and their nationals' abilities more highly, and believed that a language could be learnt in a shorter time than women. More male students also believed that the learning of grammar was the most important part of language learning and that practicing with audio-visual material was crucial. Bernat and Lloyd (2007) found that the sexes differed significantly on only two BALLI items, as women were more likely to perceive multilingual as very intelligent than men, and also enjoyed talking to natives less than their male counterparts.

The rationale for looking at differences caused by the language learnt is that during the past several decades the English language has risen to the highest status. As English became the global lingua franca (McKay, 2003), languages which had strong regional significance, such as German had with its proximity to Hungary, have lost a considerable amount of importance. Thus, it has become relevant to examine whether learners have global beliefs about language learning or if these beliefs are influenced by the given language they are studying.

A controversial issue regarding the study of beliefs is that although it is known that some beliefs are detrimental to language learning (Horwitz, 1988), it has been found by several researchers, for example, Peacock (2001) that very little can be done to change learners' underlying beliefs. Only Mantle-Bromley's (1995) study, which was also the only one that examined young learners, showed that focused in-class treatment brought about change in learners' attitudes to language learning. This suggests that studying and identifying learner beliefs at a younger age when learners' attitudes are still likely to change (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) and can more easily be influenced by teachers, will have benefits for language education.

Method

As the aim of the study was to investigate the effect of gender and target language on learners' beliefs about language learning in a Hungarian context, close attention was paid to the choice of participants and the adaptation of the original Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory. The researcher took several steps to ensure that the variables were as restricted as possible to gender and the languages learnt. Moreover, a careful design and validation process preceded the implementation of the instrument to ensure its appropriacy for Hungarian foreign language learners.

Participants

The participants of the study were 61 students of an academically oriented secondary school in Budapest. The inventory was administered to four language learning groups, two of which were German language groups taught by Teacher A (N=30), the other two were English language groups taught by Teacher B (N=31). All, except for one 11th grade German group (N=15), were in year 10 of their studies. All students had several years of experience ranging from two to fifteen years in learning the given language, were at upper-intermediate level, and without exception had studied or were studying at least one other language. Moreover, all students had studied Latin. Respondents of both sexes (34 females, 27 males) took part in the survey.

As so many different factors, such as age, language proficiency, cultural background, setting and instruction influence beliefs about language learning (Horwitz, 1999), the researcher wanted to minimalize the interference of factors other than gender and target language. Thus, participants were carefully selected with the help of the two teachers so that they are close in age (10th-11th year secondary students), have similar backgrounds and learning experiences (attend the same school) and are taught by the same teachers (Teacher A or Teacher B).

Instrument

The instrument used as a research tool in the present study is a modified Hungarian version of Horwitz's inventory. The original BALLI consists of 34 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and was designed to assess language learners opinions on a variety of issues connected to language learning. The instrument is not a test, it does not provide overall scores but separate items yield descriptions of discrete student beliefs about language learning. Horwitz (1987) defines five major areas dealt with by the inventory: foreign language aptitude; difficulty of language learning; the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies and motivation. Along these lines, the researcher added five new items to the inventory that dealt with culture, attitude to communicating with non-native speakers and learning through using authentic materials. The new items were added to

tap into information about issues that have become increasingly relevant at present: As English has become the language of international communication, communicating with non-native speakers of the language is just as likely as communication with native speakers (items 22 and 39), this however also questions the place or importance of teaching culture in language lessons (item 38). Also, as a result of globalization and the Internet and multilingual DVDs, students today can access a huge variety of up-to-date authentic materials with great ease (items 36 and 37).

Procedures of validation

The original version of the BALLI has been extensively used over the past twenty years, thus gaining validity through repeated administration; however, since the instrument was supplemented and administered in Hungarian, validity of the new instrument had to be ensured. This was done by comparing two Hungarian translations and using the think aloud protocol with two members of the target population.

The BALLI has been translated into Hungarian by Albert (2004) and Piniel (unpublished). Drawing on the two Hungarian versions of the instrument, and with the help of a Hungarian and English language teacher, the more suitable translation of each item was chosen. Although backward translation is the most common way of ensuring reliability in such cases, the researcher felt that context sensitivity and appropriacy was a greater issue.

The chosen items were further tested for reliability using the think-aloud method with two members of the target population: Rebeka and Júlia. Both informants were 11th grade students at the school where the study was conducted, thus they were similar in age and have been socialized in a similar educational environment as the rest of the respondents. Moreover, Rebeka was a student of Teacher A and Júlia was a student of Teacher B. The two think-aloud sessions were followed by short follow-up interviews as suggested by Elekes (2002) to enhance the reliability of the results. The informants gave advice on wording and made comments concerning several of the items.

Interestingly, the same questions caused confusion or triggered strong responses from both informants. As a result of the think-aloud sessions a number of changes were made and new items were added: An additional question (item 38, see Appendix) was written to probe at low culture as both students interpreted the original culture question (item 8, see Appendix 1) to be about classical literature. Both informants claimed that they felt less anxious about speaking in English with non-native than native speakers, thus the original item "I feel shy when I speak in English" was substituted by two separate questions about communication with native and non-native speakers and separate items about wanting to have native and non-native speaker friends. Questions about the perceived importance of practicing with authentic material were added as they seemed relevant based on the literature (Bacon & Finnemann, 1992) and complemented the scale on learning

and communication strategies well and were also an area of interest for the researcher.

Administration of the instrument

Data was collected from participants in November 2007. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the regularly scheduled language lessons by the researcher. Before the inventory was passed out, the researcher promised anonymity to the respondents and provided a brief overview about the nature and aim of the study.

Methods of data analysis

Data gathered during the study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 13.0). Frequencies were used to analyze single items. For greater clarity ratings were collapsed into three categories: agree, neutral and disagree or in one case difficult, of medium difficulty and easy. To assess whether gender or language being learnt has a significant effect on participant's beliefs the non-parametric Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test was used.

Results and discussion

Some of the results corresponded and some contradicted the findings of earlier studies. Statistically significant differences were measured between the responses of English and German learning students in the realms of perceived language difficulty, communication and motivation. When comparing the data provided by male and female respondents, the researcher found statistically significant differences regarding the participants' attitude to using textually authentic written material.

In the present section, responses to the inventory items will be discussed in groups according to the five scales defined by Horwitz (1987), some groups being supplemented with additional items designed by the researcher.

Foreign language aptitude

With regard to beliefs about foreign language aptitude, the large majority agreed that some individuals possess a special ability for learning foreign languages (95.1%, N=58). Moreover, the majority of students (74.3%, N=47) partaking in the study believe that children are able to learn foreign languages with greater ease than adults, that it is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one (67.2, N=41) and that anybody is capable of learning a foreign language (60%, N=37). However, the greater part of the participants disagreed

both with the statement that people who are good at mathematics and hard sciences are less likely to be successful at learning languages (76.7%, N=46) and the notion that women are better language learners than men (65.6%, N=40). The largest portion of responses were neutral to the items about Hungarians' success at language learning (47.5%, N=29) and the link between intelligence and the ability to speak more than one language. Thirty-nine percent (N=24) of respondents disagreed with the idea that they themselves have special language learning abilities.

Although the Wilcoxon-Mann-Witney tests did not show any significant differences between participants based on gender or language learnt in this factor, some differences did surface. No statistically significant differences were shown but if one observes the responses given by males and females, it can be seen that more females (38.2%, N=13) than males (25.9%, N=7) agreed that it is easier to learn a second foreign language. Moreover a larger portion of male respondents (40.7%, N=11) disagreed with the statement that Hungarians are good language learners, which is contrary to the findings of Siebert (2003) (as cited in Bernat & Lloyd, 2007, p. 80). In the case of differences based on language learnt, there is a large difference between the percentage of English (48.4%, N=15) and German language learners (30%, N=9) who disagree with the statement about possessing language aptitude.

Difficulty in language learning

Responses to questions about the difficulty of language learning indicate that 93.3% (N=56) of the participants agree that some languages are easier to learn than others, 60.7% (N=37) claiming the language presently learnt to be of medium difficulty. A large portion of the respondents (48.2%, N=30) found that reading and writing in the given language was easier than understanding or speaking it. To the question "If someone spent one hour per day learning a language, how long would it take for them to speak a language well?" over half of the students (59%, N=36) estimated over 5 years, while 9.8% (N=6) unrealistically suggested 2 years or below.

The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests indicated significant differences between learners of English and German on two items. For the item probing at the difficulty of the language learnt (Mann-Whitney U=216, $\rho<.05$) the tests showed a lower mean ranking for learners of English (22.97) than learners of German (39.3), which means English language learners are more likely to perceive their target language as easy than German learners would perceive German. The other significant difference was found about item 35 "It is easier to read and write in English/German than to speak and understand it" (Mann-Whitney U=318, $\rho<.05$), showing a higher mean ranking for German language learners (35.9) than English language learners (26.26). This shows that learners of German are more likely to feel that writing and reading are easier than verbally communicating.

The nature of language learning

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (98.4%, N=60) agreed that it is best to learn a language in a target language country and that language learning is different from learning other school subjects (90.2%, N=55). Three items probed at the most important parts of learning a foreign language. Over half of respondents (57.4%, N=35) agreed that learning words is the most important, while the majority of responses were neutral concerning the importance of grammar (54.1%, N=33) and translation (54.1%, N=33).

Two items in the questionnaire dealt with the importance of culture in foreign language learning, to cover both high culture and everyday or low culture. Students were less opposed to learning about everyday target culture or native speakers' way of thinking (34.4%, N=21 disagreed) than high culture (55.7%, N=34).

Based on the languages learnt, there is a detectable, although not statistically significant, difference between English and German learners' general attitude to learning about culture: learners of German find both high (63.3%, N=19) and low culture (45.3%, N=13) less important in foreign language learning than English language learners (48.4%, N=15; 25,8%, N=8). Also, 30per cent (N=9) of German learners as opposed to 12.9per cent (N=4) of learners of English agreed with the statement that the most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar. This difference might be due to the strong influence of communicative language teaching on English language pedagogy whereby the learning of grammar has been moved to the background (Widdowson, 1990). However, since Nikolov's (2003) study did not find significant differences between the language teaching approaches used by German and English foreign language teachers in Hungary, this issue needs further investigation.

Learning and communication strategies

In relation to learning and communication strategies, the vast majority agreed that practice and revision (93.4%, N= 57) and practicing with audio recordings in particular (91.8%, N=56) is an important part of language learning. The majority of those surveyed also believe practice with authentic audiovisual (78.7%, N=48) and written texts (68.9%, N=39) is important, while 60.7% (N=37) said they enjoyed practicing with native speakers. 75.4% (N=46) of respondents said it is acceptable to guess if one does not know the meaning of a word in the given language, and a little over half (52.5%, N=32) agreed that is important to speak with an excellent pronunciation. Slightly over 90 percent (N=55) of students disagreed with the notion of not saying anything in a foreign language until one can say it correctly.

Although a large portion of participants claimed to feel shy when speaking in a foreign language with native speakers (41%, N=25), their reported shyness significantly decreased when speaking with non-native speakers (16.7%, N=10). Girls indicated more shyness than boys in both cases: When talking with native speakers nearly half of the female respondents (47.1%, 16) agreed that they felt shy as

opposed to 33.3% (N=9) of male respondents, similarly 21.2% (N=7) of females and only 11.1% (N=3) of males reported feeling shy when talking to non-native speakers. Learners of German also agreed with statements about feeling shy when speaking to native (46.7%, N=14) and non-natives (24.1%, N=7) to a greater degree than learners of English (35.5%, N=11 and 9.7%, N=3). This tendency of German learners to feel more anxious than English learners when speaking in the target language, corresponds with the finding that they feel written communication is easier than verbal communication significantly more than learners of English.

The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests showed significant differences in this factor both based on language and gender. Statistically significant differences connected with language were measured about the importance of excellent pronunciation (Mann-Whitney U=296.5, ρ<.05) and practicing with target language films (Mann-Whitney U=335.5, ρ<.05). Learners of English have higher mean ranking than those of German on both items (36.44 vs. 25.38; 35.18 vs. 26.68), thus results of the statistical tests indicate that English learners are more likely to perceive an excellent pronunciation to be important and are also more likely to believe that watching films in the target language facilitates language acquisition. The responses to the two items could well be connected, as those who are more open towards authentic audio(visual) input may also be more aware of the differences between native and non-native pronunciation, seeing the latter as a model for themselves.

Gender-based differences were detected in connection with one of the new items about practicing the language with target language magazines and newspapers (Mann-Whitney U=323, ρ<.05), showing higher mean ranking of female respondents (33.44) compared to male respondents (27.93). Although the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests only showed significant differences between female and male respondents beliefs about the importance of authentic texts, female respondents (85.3%, N=29) also held authentic audiovisual material to be more important than male participants (70.4%, N=19). These findings correspond with those of Bacon and Finneman (1992) who claim "women reported higher levels of exposure to authentic input" (p. 490).

Motivation and expectations

The majority of respondents (93.4%, N=57) agree that by learning to speak the language they will have better job opportunities, and claim they want to (93.4%, N=57) and believe they eventually will (67.2 %, N=41) learn to speak German or English well. And while 67.2% (N=41) of respondents disagree with the statement that they want to learn the language to get to know native speakers better, the larger half of participants claim they want to have native (57.4%, N=35) and non-native speaker friends (54.1%, N=33). 50% of the respondents agree that the language they study is thought to be important by Hungarians. Thus, on the whole, the results of the study seem to indicate that respondents are both integratively and instrumentally motivated (Dörnyei, 1990) to learn the given language; however, there is a strong discrepancy between the responses of German and English learners. In two cases statistically significant differences were measured by the

Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests. Concerning the importance of the language in the eyes of Hungarian people (Mann-Whitney U=220, $\rho<.05$) the results of the tests show higher rank order of English language learners (37.9) than those of German (22.59). The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests also showed a significant difference between English and German language learners' responses to the statement "I want to learn to speak English/German well" (Mann-Whitney U=346, $\rho<.05$), showing higher mean ranking for English learners (34.84) than German learners (27.03). This means learners of English are more likely to want to speak English well. Moreover, fewer German learners in the survey claimed to want to have native (40%, N=12) or non-native (50%, N=15) friends than English learners (74.2%, N=23; 58.1%, N= 18). Learners of German (86.7%, N=25) were also less optimistic than learners of English (100%, N=31) about getting better job opportunities as a result of speaking the language.

The difference in instrumental motivation can be explained by the differences in the status of the two languages in Hungary and all over the world, for despite the proximity of German speaking countries, the fact that English has become the global lingua franca (McKay, 2003) the language of the information highway (Moldiano, 2001) is very much felt in Hungary. Dörnyei et al. (2007) also found similar results with regard to the motivation of younger language learners in Hungary.

Limitations

Although a lot of thought had been put into the selection of the participants, two problems with the sample arose as the data was analyzed and interpreted. First, the ratio of male (N=27) and female (N=34) respondents is quite uneven. Perhaps by increasing the number of male respondents, a larger amount of significant gender related differences would surface.

As discussed above, the researcher attempted to find two groups close in age with similar backgrounds, language proficiency and educational experiences with the only difference being the language learnt. However, along with the two languages came two separate language teachers whose instructional style and personality may have also influenced the respondents' beliefs about language learning. Therefore, in the future it would be useful to conduct another survey with the students of four teachers, to increase the reliability of the results.

Conclusion

The outcome of study indicates that both gender and the target language effect language learners' beliefs about language learning, as the results of the data analysis indicated statistically significant differences connected with both variables. With regard to gender, the only significant difference found was the perceived importance of practicing the target language with authentic written texts, echoing

the claims of Bacon and Finneman (1992). Interestingly, the gender related differences reported by other authors could not be detected in the present set of data.

Analysis of the data showed that learners of German were more likely to find oral communication easier than written communication. Learners of English on the other hand, tend to believe their target language was easy and that practicing with authentic audiovisual material and having an excellent pronunciation is important more than German learners do.

Motivation was an area of great difference in the results, with learners of German reporting lower levels of motivation throughout. German learners are less likely to perceive their target language as important to the Hungarian population, and also were less likely to report that they wanted to speak German well. As both these findings portray beliefs that are detrimental to successful language learning, it suggests that Hungarian German teachers may need to compensate for the weakening status of German, perhaps by exploiting the proximity of German speaking countries, the easy access to German language television channels and magazines, German learners overall motivation and openness to verbal communication could be increased.

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Appendix: Németes kérdőív

Kedves Válaszadó!

Doktori disszertációmhoz gyűjtök adatokat a középiskolások nyelvtanuláshoz fűződő gondolatairól. Kérlek, szánjál pár percet az alábbi kérdések megválaszolására. Nincsenek helyes vagy helytelen válaszok, a saját véleményed-re és tapasztalatodra vagyok kíváncsi! A kérdőívre nem kell ráírni a nevedet.

Segítséged nagyon köszönöm!
Rieger Borbála, Ph.D. hallgató, ELTE, Angol Alkalmazott Nyelvészet Tanszék
Kérlek, karikázd be a számodra megfelelő választ!

1.	A gyerekek sokkal könnyebben tanulnak idegen nyelveket mint a felnőttek.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
2.	Egyesek különös nyelvérzékkel rendelkeznek.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
3.	Bizonyos nyelveket könnyebb megtanulni, mint másokat.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
4.	A német…	nagyon nehéz nyelv	nehéz nyelv	közepesen nehéz nyelv	könnyű nyelv	nagyon könnyű nyelv
5.	Szerintem jól meg fogok tudni tanulni németül.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
6.	A hazámban élő emberek jók a nyelvtanulásban.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
7.	Fontos, hogy németül tökéletes kiejtéssel beszéljen az ember.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
8.	Fontos a német nyelvű kultúrák ismerete ahhoz, hogy megtanuljon az ember németül beszélni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
9.	Nem szabad megszólalni németül, amíg az ember nem tudja hibátlanul elmondani, amit akar.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
10.	Annak könnyebb nyelvet tanulni, aki már beszél egy idegen nyelvet.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
11.	Akik jók matematikából vagy más reáltárgyakból, azok nem jók a nyelvtanulásban.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
12.	Németül legjobban német nyelvterületen lehet megtanulni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet

13.	Élvezem, ha német anyanyelvűekkel találkozom és gyakorolhatom a nyelvet.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
14.	Ha az ember nem ismeri egy német szó pontos jelentését, nyugodtan megpróbálhatja kitalálni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
15.	Ha valaki naponta egy órát fordít a nyelvtanulásra, mennyi időbe telne megtanulni folyékonyan németül beszélni?	kevesebb mint egy év	1-2 év	3-5 év	5-10 év	Napi egy órában nem lehet nyelvet tanulni.
16.	Különös adottságom van a nyelvekhez.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
17.	A nyelvtanulás legfontosabb része a szavak tanulása.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
18.	Fontos sokat ismételni és gyakorolni, miközben az ember nyelvet tanul.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
19.	A nők jobbak a nyelvtanulásban, mint a férfiak.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
20.	A hazámban élő emberek szerint fontos németül tanulni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
21.	Félénk vagyok, mikor németül kell beszélnem német anyanyelvűekkel.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
22.	Félénk vagyok, mikor nem német anyanyelvű külföldiekkel kell németül beszélnem.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
23.	Ha kezdő diákoknak megengedik, hogy hibázzanak, akkor később nehezebben fognak helyesen beszélni németül.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
24.	A nyelvtanulás legfontosabb része a nyelvtan elsajátítása.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
25.	Azért szeretnék megtanulni németül, hogy jobban megismerjem a német anyanyelvűeket.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
26.	Könnyebb beszélni egy idegen nyelvet, mint megérteni azt.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
27.	Fontos a németet hanganyag segítségével is gyakorolni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
28.	Az idegennyelv-tanulás különbözik más tantárgyaktól.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet

29.	A nyelvtanulás legfontosabb eleme anyanyelvünkről németre fordítani.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
30.	Ha jól megtanulok németül, jobb lehetőségeim lesznek a munkavállalás terén.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
31.	Aki egynél több idegen nyelven beszél, nagyon intelligens ember.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
32.	Szeretnék nagyon jól megtanulni németül.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
33.	Szeretnék német anyanyelvűekkel barátkozni.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
34.	Bárki meg tud tanulni egy idegen nyelvet.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
35.	Könnyebb németül írni és olvasni, mint beszélni és megérteni a német beszédet.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
36.	Fontos a német nyelvtanuláshoz, hogy az ember német nyelvű filmeket nézzen.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
37.	Fontos a német nyelvtanuláshoz, hogy az ember német nyelvű újságokat olvasson.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
38.	Fontos a német anyanyelvű emberek gondolkodásmódjának ismerete ahhoz, hogy megtanuljon az ember németül.	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet
39.	Szeretnék németül beszélő külföldiekkel barátkozni	teljesen egyetértek	egyetértek	egyet is értek meg nem is	nem értek egyet	egyáltalán nem értek egyet

Kérlek, válaszolj pár kérdésre magadról:

Nemed? Lány / Fiú (karikázd be a helyes választ!)
Hány éves vagy? __________
Mióta tanulsz németül? _________________________________
Milyen más nyelvet tanultál/tanulsz? _________________________________
Jársz német különórára? _________________________________

Köszönöm válaszaid!

“Teachers know best…” Autonomous Beliefs and Behaviours of English Majors: A Case Study of Three First-Year Students at Eötvös University

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Introduction

What prompted me to carry out research in this field was that few investigations have explicitly focused on the learning processes of first-year students at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), and to my knowledge, the relationship between students’ autonomous beliefs and behaviours has not been addressed so far. Anecdotal evidence by instructors describes Hungarian university students as rather passive and dependent learners, and teachers often feel new students do not have transferable study skills from secondary school when entering the university. A previous case-study of self-access language learning in Hungary (Édes, 2007) showed that the most frequently used teaching methods in primary and secondary schools in Hungary are teacher-centred, and learner autonomy is very rarely facilitated. Also, when trying to draw up the motivational profile of English majors at ELTE, Csizér, Kormos, Menyhárt and Török (2008) found that their respondents have favourable attitudes to English itself and have relatively strong instrumental motives. However, students claim that if they do not have to pass a language proficiency exam, they are reluctant to do extra studying to keep up or improve their level of English. It is concluded that the participants in their study shift the responsibility to the University and they use a very limited number of learning strategies, which indicates a relatively low level of learner autonomy.

This paper reports on a small-scale qualitative study into first year English majors’ beliefs about learner autonomy and their actual autonomous learning behaviour. The aim of the research was to examine the nature of the belief structures of this study cohort, and to what extent and how these beliefs are manifested in individual students’ learning behaviour. In addition, this study serves the purpose of a baseline study to my doctoral research, as it is aimed at testing the feasibility of the research design.

The paper starts with a discussion of learner autonomy and it briefly reviews the most salient research studies into autonomous beliefs and behaviours conducted in tertiary education. Next, the data obtained from questionnaires is ana-

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lyzed and the selection of case study participants is explained, then the findings of the three case studies are presented. The paper concludes by looking at the implications of the cross-case findings and suggests methods that could help students adopt a more autonomous approach to their studies at ELTE.

Review of literature

The topic of this paper is concerned with the psychological aspects of autonomous learning. Owing to the complexity of the topic and the length of this work, a detailed account of the available literature is difficult, so the literature review concentrates on the notion of autonomy and its component parts, then the control over the cognitive processes and the management of learning are discussed.

Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy has been in the centre of attention in the world of English Language Teaching (ELT) and rich literature is available on this topic. An indication of this richness is the fact that a search on the Google Scholar database on July 26, 2007 yielded 27,400 sources when the keyword "learner autonomy" was used. Although learner autonomy is widely-researched and a lot of articles have been published on it, there seems to be a debate about what constitutes the essence of the term. The works by different authors in the ELT profession (Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Pemberton, Li, Or, & Pierson, 1996) have two central features: The first feature is that learners take responsibility either partially or totally for the organisation of the learning process, from the selection of the study materials to assessment of the accomplished work. The second feature of autonomy is that learners take responsibility for their own learning. This is because learning, by its nature, can only be carried out by students themselves.

Benson (2001), who has published widely on learner autonomy, seems to favour the word control when he tries to define the construct. After examining the definitions proposed over the past twenty years of research, he argues that learner autonomy involves the control of the psychology of learning (cognitive processes), controlling the learning behaviour (learning management) and controlling the learning situation (learning content).

The level of control over the affective factors and cognitive factors in Benson's model is that of the learner and no teacher influence is included. However, in the literature the question about self-directed/other-directed separation persists. In order to clarify this construct along the lines of the issue of control, Little (1990, p. 7) argues that "the teacher has a role in autonomous learning, but autonomy is clearly not a teaching method, i.e. you cannot do it to your students." Responsibility cannot be shifted to the learner completely as autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction. Recognizing the importance of pedagogical control, Long (1998 cited in Carr & Ponton, 2000) proposed a theoretical framework which has four quadrants of a two dimensional matrix of high to low psychological control and

high to low pedagogical control. He claims that learning is facilitated best, when a match exists between the control levels of the student and the teacher.

Learner autonomy is also dichotomized into a process perspective and a personality characteristic perspective (Oddi, 1987; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Most researchers are in favour of the process perspective, which means that their interest is centred around the activities of the learner such as: goal setting, planning a learning strategy, acquiring resources and monitoring progress (Knowles, 1975). This viewpoint has been accepted by Zimmerman, Bonner, and Kovach (1996), and they call it "self-regulation." Their cyclic model involves cognitive and behavioural self-generated activities that help the learner accomplish their learning goals.

In line with the process and personality dichotomization mentioned in the previous paragraph, we can treat learner autonomy as a personal characteristic which results in certain behaviours that are associated with autonomous learning. Carr and Ponton (2000) describe the example of two university undergraduates working in the library on Friday night: they both study hard, while their friends are presumably in the bar. One of them is working in the library because there is an essay due in two days, and he has been postponing this work for weeks. The other student is there, because he is curious about the topic that their instructor mentioned during the lecture. If we examine their actions from the process point of view, both undergraduates show autonomous learning behaviour, as they identify learning goals, plan their learning strategy, gather resources and evaluate progress. The difference between them is that the second learner acts independently based on his will to get to know something of an important value and this leads him to achieve a desired level of knowledge.

It follows from the different approaches presented in the previous paragraphs that it is difficult to devise a reliable measurement of learner autonomy. Carr and Ponton's (2000) example shows that if somebody shows autonomous behaviour we cannot be sure that this person firmly believes in it. Similarly, Chang (2007) claims that having autonomous beliefs does not always result in actions for various reasons. She argues that "the goal is to use autonomous beliefs and actual autonomous behaviours in tandem to examine individual learner's level of autonomy to provide a way to fill in more of the complex puzzle in the realm of learner autonomy" (p. 326). This study adopts Chang's suggestions of double measurement of student's autonomy level: their autonomous beliefs and their actual autonomous behaviours.

Empirical background

Introducing autonomous learning schemes require learners to take responsibility for their learning, so it is necessary to investigate learners' beliefs, study habits, attitudes, and motivation in order to facilitate this change. Belief studies are often put into categories according to the research paradigm in which the study was conducted. In her excellent overview of belief studies conducted in the past decade, Barcelos (2003) groups these inquiries as being metacognitive, contextual and

normative. Her classification system is based on a definition of beliefs, research methodology, and the relationship between beliefs and other factors. Of particular interest to this paper are studies reporting context and setting specificity in relation to beliefs about learner autonomy.

A good example for a small–scale study of university students is that of Carter's (1999) who administered the Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument or BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) to 35 French majors at the University of the West Indies. Carter's study was part of a larger project that aimed to integrate autonomous learning into the foreign language syllabus at her campus. Carter's main argument is that university instructors have to examine the beliefs of students first to help them achieve full potential as advanced learners of a foreign language. She maintains that the rejection of ill-founded beliefs about language and language learning can help learners to acquire more refined study strategies, or in short, they would become more autonomous foreign language majors.

In her 1995 questionnaire study, Cotterall asked 140 learners at the University of Wellington a large number of questions that she felt were related to readiness for learner autonomy. Factor analysis identified six categories, "an issue about which one might expect any student to have a more or less coherent set of beliefs" (p. 196). They were

- the role of the teacher
- the role of feedback
- learner independence
- learner confidence in study ability
- experience of language learning and
- approach to studying.

Cotterall's 1999 study extends the one conducted in 1995 by adding new items to the factor structure previously identified, as students' perceptions were also asked about topics in current SLA research such as knowledge of learning strategies and self-efficacy.

Many researchers have examined the development of autonomy over a period of time in classroom settings with particular emphasis on changing roles for both the learners and their teachers (such as Chan, 2001, Dam, 1995; Littlewood, 1999). This study is also situated in a classroom, but the focus of the inquiry is not only how the learners adopt new learning strategies to improve their efficiency and how they enhance their self-teaching, but it seeks to find answers what might influence the change from thoughts (autonomous beliefs) to action (autonomous behaviours) at a Hungarian university.

Research questions

By carrying out this research study I expected to gain insights into how first-year English majors relate to learner autonomy. I also assumed that findings would reveal the source of discrepancy between beliefs and behaviours. Finally, I hoped that by gaining more articulate knowledge of students' practice, university instructors would be able to provide more conscious support for them. In the light of the three considerations above, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

Q1. How do first-year English majors perceive their own level of learner autonomy?

Q2. Why is there a mismatch between autonomous beliefs and autonomous behaviours of individual students?

Q3. According to individual learners, what factors influence their autonomous learning?

Method

Design

In order to explore the complexity of issues and subtleties related to beliefs and behaviours of English majors concerning autonomy, the case study approach was considered the most appropriate for this inquiry. The research was conducted in two phases by applying a mixed-method design (Creswell, 2003). The aim of using a quantitative phase was twofold. First, the closed questions were more amenable to quantification, that is, descriptive statistical analysis was used, and thus a group profile was drawn up. Secondly, the quantitative data served as a springboard for the case studies, as it helped to select the participants. Moreover, some of the interview questions were generated by examining the data obtained from the questionnaire study.

The trustworthiness of the study was attempted by triangulation of different data sources (questionnaires, interviews and teacher's notes). In what follows, a thorough description of research situation and the participants will be provided, to achieve transferability of the modest findings.

Participants

This study was conducted in a first-year Academic Skills class, and the researcher was the instructor of this particular group. The Academic Skills class is part of the introductory tier of English BA studies at ELTE, and it is compulsory for all students entering the programme. The class meets once a week for 90 minutes. The

syllabus aims at developing students' competence in academic writing and study skills needed for their university studies.

The reason why first-year students were selected to take part in the study is because they were at the beginning of their tertiary level study, and it was thought this study might reveal the beliefs students had brought to this programme. Also, by asking students about their experiences in the first term of their studies, we can gain insight into how their autonomy changes and how they try to maximize their learning opportunities as they are trying to get used to university life.

Instruments

The instrument used is an adapted version of a longer questionnaire used by Chang (2007). In her study, Chang aimed to measure the relationship of group norms and group processes with learner autonomy. The original instrument consisted of three sections with 20 Likert-type items in each. As learner autonomy is in the focus of the present study, only section A of Chang's questionnaire was used. In this part of the questionnaire there are ten statements regarding ways to learn English, for example: using resources outside the classroom, identifying your own weaknesses and mistakes. As seen in Appendix A, there are two different columns. The one on the left asks how responsible learners think they should be for doing this to themselves. The one on the right asks students to what extent they actually do it. With the help of this questionnaire, the aim was to determine the level of autonomy of each member of the group.

The main tool of research was a previously validated semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B), but students were also encouraged to elaborate on particular topics and introduce relevant issues. Some interview questions were adopted from the questions used in the qualitative phase of Chang's study (2007). The 10 questions concentrated on students' general learning experience at ELTE, the learning environment, the change in motivation and autonomy after they started their studies. Apart from this, interview participants were also asked to elaborate on each answer they circled on the questionnaires. In addition, teacher's notes taken about individual's progress, and informal discussions with participants during the term were used to confirm the findings of the questionnaire and the interviews.

Data collection

Students filled in the questionnaires during one of their Academic Skills seminars in November, 2007. The questionnaires were handed out at the beginning of the seminar, so as to avoid students rushing through their questions as fast as they could in order to be able to leave earlier. On average, it took students 15 minutes to complete the instrument, and it seemed that they were giving themselves time to consider their responses to certain items. It has to be mentioned that the unusual format of the questionnaire confused a few students, so the researcher gave

a spoken introduction in English and in Hungarian. Also, when it was needed the researcher clarified certain vocabulary problems.

Students demonstrating a high level of autonomous beliefs, but scoring low concerning autonomous behavior were selected to take part in the case study phase. As informants were to be asked about sensitive issues, such as their general learning experience, their relationship with instructors, teaching methods at ELTE etc., they were only asked to participate in the interview after the researcher had entered their final grade in their markbooks. Five students were approached by e-mail and all five agreed to take part in the study.

After conducting pilot interviews with two participants of the target group (Anikó and Kati), two case study participants (Zsófi and Fanni) were interviewed the following day. Due to her massive workload, the third participant, Paula, was only available for an interview in January. The interview sessions began with a brief explanation of the general context and the purpose of the research. The interviews lasted for 25-30 minutes each, and after they had been transcribed, they were sent back to the participants for checking and extra comments. The answers of case study participants to interview questions were subject to content analysis. Then, the data of the questionnaires and the interviews were compared and categorized.

Results

Results of the questionnaire study

For the four point 20-item Likert scale questionnaire, scores were calculated by assigning a value of '1' to answers 'no responsibility'/'not at all' and '4' to answers 'mainly responsible'/'very much' respectively. The points were added and students with a score higher than 35 points in each scale were considered to have a high level of learner autonomy.

Upon examining the results in Table 1, we can conclude that only one student out of the 11 participants has high level of autonomy. Ilona's high scores are not surprising, as she is one of the most conscientious students of the class. She is older than the rest of the group and she is studying towards her second university degree. Five students demonstrated a low level of autonomous beliefs (ABL) and low level of autonomous behaviours (ABV), but it is interesting to note that their belief scores were always higher than their behaviour scores, as they mostly circled 3-4 for autonomous beliefs, but usually 2-3 for actual behaviours. As finding out about the sources of discrepancy between beliefs and behaviours is in the focus of the study, those students were purposefully selected for the qualitative interview who scored 35 or more for ABL, that is, students with quite firm autonomous beliefs and less than 35 points for ABV. Five students met the criteria set by the filter SUM1> 35 and SUM2<35, and learners with the biggest difference between SUM1 and SUM2 were selected for the case study part. Thus, Paula, Zsófi and Fanni were selected to participate in the second phase.

Table 1: Group profile: scores for the questionnaire

Code name	Autonomous belief score (SUM1)	Autonomous behaviour score (SUM2)
Gábor	33	27
Kati	36	33
Fanni	36	27
Ilona	37	36
Anikó	36	31
Erika	29	22
Zsófi	38	30
Paula	36	24
Aliz	32	22
Peti	28	15
Berci	30	19

Case studies

Paula

Paula started learning English in kindergarten, but her formal English instruction began in Moscow, where she lived with her family for four years, from 1998 to 2002. She claims that she has picked up English herself. The major impetus for her was watching *Lord of the Rings*. She became a fan, and by spending a considerable amount of time chatting with other fans and doing extensive reading on the trilogy she managed to gain a very good passive vocabulary. She still reads a lot of books in English; therefore her essays are well-written with sophisticated vocabulary. She only had to rewrite her argumentative essay once, but it was due to weak argumentation and not because of language problems.

After returning to Hungary she started to attend a Russian bilingual school in Óbuda, and she only had three English lessons a week in the first two years of secondary school. She did a lot of self-study and passed an intermediate language examination at the age of 16. Having done that, she was exempted from attending English classes. She said she did not mind that because these lessons were in the morning and she liked sleeping a bit longer. She did not prepare a lot for the matura examination, "I just had a look at the exam tasks from the previous year" she said. The reason why she did not take the English final exam seriously was that she had always wanted to become a Hungarian major in the first place.

Paula always felt that she was quite proficient in English as she could read books with ease and got only 5s (very good) on her test in high school. She was shocked by the result of her first language practice test at the university as she received a 3 (mediocre):

> Well, it's obvious that we have to get used to it. For me, the English tests in the highschool were much-much easier. We concentrated on one tense, for example, and the test was only about that particular grammar point.

This suggests that Paula's English instruction might have involved doing grammar exercises and memorizing rules. This is supported by her other comment on why she does not want to improve her English on her own even though she is aware that she is not good at using the tenses:

> P: I know what I should learn but maybe it's just laziness…I don't know. I just hate cramming.
> T: What do you mean?
> P: Like sitting down and memorizing grammar rules of when and how to use them.
> T: Have you tried other strategies to learn them?
> P: No. I don't know other than cramming. Sitting down and learning the rules. I really hate doing that, so I don't do it.
> T: I'm sure you dealt with different strategies of language development in language practice lessons.
> P: Not really.

The word cramming or rote learning (*magolás* in Hungarian) was often used by Paula during the interview, and it is evidence that the teaching of grammar was deductive, and explicit in her secondary school. In addition, Paula had no formal English instruction after passing the language exam two years ago, getting used to intensive learning must be very difficult for as she is only familiar with few strategies.

As for selecting her own study materials and offering opinions on what to learn in the classroom she circled 2: she hardly ever does it. When she was asked to tell me more about this choice she said.

> P: No, I'm not like that. If that's the task then I do it. After all, she is the teacher and she knows best what we should learn. Of course, I have other ideas and sometimes I think a couple of tasks are pretty irrelevant, but I just say this to myself…and I do not really know how to start talking to a teacher.
> T: What do you mean?
> P: Some teachers allow us to call them by their first names and others do not let us do that. It is really confusing.

She added that Russian and Hungarian schools are very authoritarian and she feels awkward when a teacher at ELTE is friendly and does not act as a distant power figure. To her surprise, she is puzzled by being taken seriously, and she thinks that it used to be much easier and comfortable for her to ask for advice or just talk to teacher in high school.

Zsófi

Zsófi has been learning English since kindergarten. She did not attend a grammar school with a specialised English curriculum, so in order to get admission to ELTE she needed to do a considerable amount of self-study. She learnt English by joining chat rooms and she spent about two hours doing that when she was at high school.

She thinks that the major difference between high school and University is that she has more responsibility, which she sometimes finds daunting.

> We have to do things on our own. We have to find out what and how we should do the tasks set. There is no exact information about requirements, like which pages we should learn. I have to rely on myself. For example, I had to hand in an essay, but we got absolutely no guidelines. We were just supposed to write about something we dealt with during the term. Well, we all received very bad marks.

Zsófi felt very uneasy about this and she reckons that it is because of her personality that she likes being told what to do exactly.

It is interesting that she believes discovering English on her own is mainly her responsibility but she hardly ever does it. When I asked her about the reasons for this she mentioned that at home there is the TV and the Internet and finds it difficult to sit down. She just referred to this as laziness. However, she mentioned later in the interview that her timetable was terrible in the first term. She had lessons from morning to late evening with 3 to 4 hour long breaks. Even though she brought things to study and books to read she did not get around dealing with them. When she got home after "hanging around" in the university building and in the library all day, she had very low energy levels which explains why such a dedicated student often feels lazy to study when she gets home. She also mentioned that in these long breaks she mainly socialized with other students because she needs a network of friends to cope with the new study environment.

Zsófi also mentioned that she is very motivated to go and look for information in the library there is competitive spirit in the study group.

> I am quite a perfectionist. It is the question of vanity, I think… (laughing) … I do not like when the others are better than me.

This seems to echo Chang's (2007) findings that positive group norms have positive influence on individual student's autonomy.

Fanni

Fanni has been learning English for twelve years and last year she spent a few weeks in England as an au-pair. Being an au-pair was a detour in her life, as she had a terrible time working for the English family. When she returned she could

not start her studies at Pannon University in Veszprém and worked as a hostess and taught English.

She was determined to get into ELTE, and she was aware that she had to do a lot of learning to achieve her aim. Like Paula, Fanni passed the intermediate language examination in the tenth grade of the secondary school and had no formal instruction in the last two years of secondary school. As she said,

> My English knowledge declined sharply. After the language examination I did not have to go into English lessons. I regularly watched English movies but it was not enough to keep up the level of my English.

She achieved 94 per cent in the matura examination and this good result may be accounted for the very intensive self-study she carried out last year.

Fanni mentions that the major difference between University and secondary school is that there are not so many tests at ELTE, and they do not have to study regularly. There are a lot of courses she wants to go to, and she finds the university environment extremely inspiring. Unfortunately, she sometimes does not do the compulsory tasks set by the tutors teaching at the English Department and concentrates on her minor or other lectures she attends as a hobby. This shows an autonomous stance towards her university studies, but her English instructors might perceive it as laziness and carelessness.

Fanni claims that her autonomy has not changed at all after she has started studying at ELTE, as she knows the importance of it. The reason why she does not show autonomous behavior now in setting goals and stimulating her own interest in English is something she referred to as "the first year at the university thing…:" as she does not live at home anymore and she feels she has to be with friends and socialize after her dream, that is getting into ELTE has become true. Even though she is very happy about her major, she is not sure whether it is the right career path to take.

Like Paula, she feels that giving opinion on study materials and what to learn in the classroom is disrespectful "I have no right to judge a university teacher and his/her teaching methods. I am only a student and he must be somebody after all, he teaches at ELTE."

Conclusion

On the basis of three case studies generalizable results cannot be put forward, but this study draws the reader's attention to the possible causes of learners' passivity towards autonomous learning. In the case studies presented here, the students expressed that getting used to the new learning environment and the new expectations takes up a lot of their time and energy. Not attending English classes for at least two years after passing the state language examination, they must get used to intensive language learning again. They all view teachers as the providers of knowledge and not persons who facilitate their learning.

Despite these common things, the students exhibited individual differences in applying specific learning strategies, which were greatly determined by their personal qualities and their perceptions of the demands of the courses they were taking and the general learning context itself.

The modest cross-case findings produced thought-provoking results, but it should be mentioned that this research study was not without limitations. When administering the questionnaires convenience sampling was used, and as the researcher herself was the teacher of the participants the reliability of the responses could have been negatively influenced. Although the interview guide was piloted, extra questions and prompts are needed to gain a more in-depth, grounded understanding of the students, their interactions with the learning environment and their developing autonomy.

Within the stated limitations, this study lends support to the argument that in the secondary school learner strategies are not dealt with and the teacher being in charge of the organization of the learning process. At the university the freshmen are expected to be more self-directed; but without help and more thorough learner training this will not happen. Despite problems of language proficiency, underdeveloped research skills and applying a limited number of learning strategies, these students showed the potential to take a more autonomous stance in their learning. Furthermore, from the students' perspective, instructors who understand their background are probably better to assist them. For further research in the same context, it would be fascinating to conduct longitudinal studies that incorporate the perspectives of both the students and their instructors.

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Appendix A

Name:
E-mail address:

Learner autonomy questionnaire

There are ten statements here regarding ways to learn English, for example: using resources outside the classroom, identifying your own weaknesses and mistakes, etc.

There are two different columns.

The one on the *left* asks how responsible you think you should be for doing this to yourself.		The one on the *right* asks you to what extent you actually do it.
How responsible		To what extent
1---------2-------3-------4 Not a little some mainly responsible		1-----------2----------3----------4 Not at all hardly occasionally very much

Please circle your answer from 1 to 4 for *EACH column* according to your true feelings and experiences.

How responsible for	Statements	To what extent
1 2 3 4	1. identify my own strengths and weaknesses	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	2. set up my own learning goals	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	3. decide what to learn outside the classroom	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	4. evaluate my own learning and progress	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	5. stimulate my own interest in learning English	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	6. learn from my peers, not just from the teachers	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	7. become more self-directed in my learning	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	8. offer opinion on learning materials	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	9. discover knowledge in English on my own rather than waiting for knowledge from the teacher	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	10. offer opinion on what to learn in the classroom	1 2 3 4

Appendix B

- How long have you been learning English?
- What other languages do you speak?
- Why did you decide to major in English at ELTE? Have you got another major/minor?
- How did you prepare for the entrance exam/advanced level matura examination?
- Generally speaking, what is your learning experience here at ELTE? Are you satisfied with your learning environment? Your classmates? Your courses?...)
- What is the difference between studying in a secondary school and studying at ELTE?
- How is your own autonomy?
- Is there a change in your autonomy before you entered ELTE and after you started studying at ELTE? (If so, what is the reason for the change?)
- In your questionnaire, you wrote_______________, can you explain this more? What did you mean by that?
- In your questionnaire you mostly rated 3-4 for autonomous beliefs, but usually 2-3 for actual behaviours. (I will show them some examples and be more specific during the interview). Can you tell me why there is a difference?

"I will think about this..." A Case Study with a Lower-Primary School Teacher of English

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The context and the aim of the study

In this article I will report on the preliminary findings of a case study which started as a rather annoying experience. Four times a week, my elder daughter (aged 10) attended her compulsory English lessons. This meant that four times a week I received first-hand information about what was going on in primary EFL education in a prestigious primary school in Pécs, Hungary. Informal feedback gained from other pupils and parents came down to the same point: the teacher appeared to be in need of materials and teaching techniques for young learners.

After having observed the teacher's lesson on an open day, when parents were welcome to visit lessons, I concluded that my informants had all the reasons to worry: the teacher did not succeed in keeping the children interested, nor did the materials and the techniques used appear to scaffold learners' foreign language development. It was then that I decided to examine how the teacher's beliefs and practice relate, and to think about the most appropriate support she could receive in her professional development.

The aim of the study was to uncover the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning, and to help her question her beliefs. I intended to accomplish this by involving the teacher into professional discussions and in what I thought would be motivating activities for children: using authentic picture books in her classes. I hoped that by gaining more articulate knowledge of her own practice, the teacher would be able to provide more conscious support for young learners in the long run. In this article I will only focus on findings related to the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning, and the process of slow change that these beliefs started undergoing.

Lugossy, R. (2009). "I will think about this": A case study with a lower-primary school teacher of English. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 59-69). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Teacher learning

Johnson (2006) observes that teacher learning has been historically grounded in the positivistic paradigm: teachers were supposed to learn about the content they were expected to teach, then observe and master teaching practices, and finally develop pedagogical expertise during the years of teaching. The reflective movement (Freeman, 1992; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Schön, 1983) was a major turn in the field's understanding of teachers' work, as it brought into focus the complexities of teachers' mental lives, which came to be seen indissociable from their prior experiences and contexts. This also implied that the former paradigm, which attributed students' learning outcomes strictly to teaching behaviours, was no longer sufficient in second and foreign language educational research. A more interpretative and socially situated paradigm was offered by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), which understands cognition as indissociable from the social context and the shared, culturally organized practices this context engenders. The epistemological stance of this theory of mind is that humans develop as participants in cultural communities, and therefore, their development can only be understood in light of the cultural practices of their communities (Johnson, 2006, p. 238). Understanding learning as something which emerges out of experiences in social contexts implies that teachers make decisions about teaching which are in tune with their specific settings. This leads to the point which is most relevant for the present study: that teachers' knowledge is not just abstracted from theory but constructed in community in a dialogic process, and that classrooms are spaces for lifelong teacher learning (Johnson, 2006, p. 237).

Narratives of teaching experience

If teachers' knowledge is seen as constructed from previous experiences through social interaction, narratives of teaching experience become important in two ways. On the one had, as authentic accounts of teachers' actions, feelings and ideas. In this sense, teachers' narratives display the dual landscape typical of narratives: besides the landscape of action, there is a "landscape of consciousness" (Bruner, 1986, pp. 11-12) which displays the inner worlds of the protagonists and along with this a subjective treatment of events. On the other hand, there is certainly more to teachers' narratives than revealing information about teachers' individual and professional histories, and of the educational context in which they are rooted. They also turn out to be useful in that they involve teachers into a self-scrutinizing process, which is ultimately a process of becoming. In organizing their experiences in narratives, and eventually making sense of them, teachers need to be reflective and explicit about their minds. Thus, narratives contribute to developing higher-order thinking skills (Schank & Abelson, 1995), and along with this, informed practice.

A consequence of scrutinising the processes of the mind which underlie teaching is that practice may change. Bruner (1987) perceives autobiographic narratives as both shaped by culture, and shaping culture themselves. Extended to teachers'

narratives about their teaching, this idea suggests that making teachers tell their stories about teaching and reflecting on those interpretations in interaction may bring about changes in the way they reiterate their practice. In this sense narratives appear not only as research instruments, but also a potential way to influence the deep structures of teaching and learning.

Participants

The majority of the children participating in the study come from well-educated, supportive homes, where both staff and parents are supportive of any experiments the teachers might want to undertake. The school also places considerable emphasis on art education, as well as on instilling traditional values in children and nurturing a spirit of cooperation.

In terms of foreign language education, the school had voluntarily adopted a programme originally developed for adults, and therefore, hardly appropriate for children either in terms of content or methodology. The coursebook contains abstract dialogues organised around grammatical structures. In the lessons the children first listen to the dialogues, then read out the projected text along with the tape, and finally read a word-by-word translation of the text, which is also provided by the course-book. The school sticks to this programme for teaching English, German and French, despite pupils' and parents' obvious dissatisfaction and the lack of success in the long run.

Vera (a pseudonym) is a young lower-primary school teacher specialised in English. At the time of the study she had been teaching in this school for two years, and according to informal feedback gained from pupils and parents, she was not a popular teacher at all. To get a more suggestive picture of the teacher at work, I will briefly describe the lesson I observed on the open day. It started with a warm-up in which most learners took turns: the teacher said a word in Hungarian, while throwing a plush animal to a pupil, who was supposed to say the word in English. Next, the children listened to a course-book dialogue and read it out loudly in chorus along with the tape. After each English sentence they also read out the Hungarian translation, which was projected on the board. Most of the time it seemed that the pupils did not understand what they were reading and repeating. The 45-minute lesson was concluded by the children playing "What's the time, Mr. Wolf?" for fifteen minutes in the schoolyard. Apart from listening to the tape, in these 45 minutes, the children hardly had the opportunity to hear the target language, let alone hearing it in a motivating and memorable context. The teacher did not use the target language herself, and even the simplest commands were in the first language.

Procedures and data collection instruments

Partly because art education was highly valued in the school, and partly because of my beliefs in the power of good stories, I believed that one of the ways to promote good practice was to involve Vera in using authentic English picture books on a regular basis. Studies on using authentic picture books in primary language education (Elley, 1989; Jones Mourao, 2006) support the benefits of these books for children's language and literacy development, for group dynamics and for teachers' professional growth. The latter being a sensitive issue, I knew I had to be careful about wording my aims to the participant teacher. Therefore, I asked permission to experiment with picture books in her lessons with one group: I requested a 10-15 minute time-slot when I would share the books with the children, and occasionally involve them in follow-up tasks. While one of the aims was to increase children's motivation and create positive attitudes, my hidden agenda was also to increase the teacher's motivation and encourage her to develop more awareness of the needs of young learners.

I started using picture books in the class in March 2008. The initial three weekly sessions were reduced in the following school year to one or two per week. After using the books in the experimental group, Vera regularly borrowed them so that she could use them in other classes, too. I also lent her methodology books containing teaching tips for young learners. On our several informal meetings we also had the chance to talk over professional matters in a friendly manner.

In collecting data for the study I relied on classroom observation and evidence gained from children and children's notebooks. I also had access to the teacher's ideas through informal discussions and through a semi-structured interview, in Hungarian, that I carried out with her in May 2008. The interview was recorded, then transcribed and analyzed together with the notes taken after classroom observation and after our informal discussions.

Discussion of findings

I will discuss preliminary findings of the study related to the participant teacher's beliefs and practice. Based on data gained from classroom observation, from the interview and from children's feedback, I will examine Vera's practice in the light of her learning experiences as an EFL learner, a trainee, and as an in-service teacher. I will particularly focus on how experiences gathered in the teacher training college shaped her practice, and I will also point out implications for teacher education. Finally, I will touch upon the changes that have emerged in Vera's practice since the beginning of the project, and draw conclusions.

"Boring but useful"

What I have witnessed of Vera's practice (through observation and through data collected from children) suggests that she seemed to lack a repertoire of appropriate techniques and materials for young learners. Therefore, in the interview I decided to ask her about the areas I thought she relied on as models for her teaching: I inquired about her own experiences as an EFL learner, about the role of the lower primary teacher training college in shaping her practice, and about any other potential sources for beliefs, such as colleagues.

"Boring, but useful" was the way Vera described her English lessons in secondary school. She claimed that the only memorable and positive experiences during these four years were songs and listening activities, which she liked, but interestingly, does not implement in her lessons now. The "boring, but useful" belief is one that pervades her own primary school practice, as suggested by classroom observation and by her claim that *"there are certain tasks, however boring, that you have to do in the lesson even as a young learner …. such as translation, learning the words."*

She claimed that her experience as an au-pair in the US (3 years) was useful in that it gave her the chance to pick up language in context a lot faster and more easily than at school, but she also thought she could have done without it: *"One can learn English well enough at school. This is how we all did it, after all."* Although she highlighted the positive side of picking up language in a natural and meaningful context, neither classroom observation, nor feedback gained from children suggested that what was going on in her classes appropriated natural conditions for language acquisition. The activities she used with 10 year-olds were in tune with her own learning experiences and with the educational tradition she had been socialized into: they were predominantly form-focused, including translation, repetition drills and reading aloud. As far as she could remember, this is how she was taught herself, and she felt "she did it."

"It was all very useful… I don't remember anything": Reflections on teacher training

Vera's reflections on her experiences gained in the teacher training college turned out to be among the most controversial parts of the study. While at the beginning of the interview Vera referred to the education received in the lower primary teacher training college as very useful, she could not recollect anything that she felt truly significant in her education as a teacher of English: "*It was all very useful, very useful. … For example, we learned a lot of interesting things about literature. Don't ask me what, because I don't remember anything."*

Far from doubting the experience of "usefulness" that she cherished in connection with her years of study, the lapse in memory she displayed still suggests that the courses Vera attended at her teacher training college did not offer memorable input. This is reinforced by her evocation of her methodology courses: *"Yes, the methodology classes were also very useful… well, actually, they were good then, but now I don't know… No, I can't recall anything… For example, we had a subject called Class-*

room organization where we talked about seating arrangement… Then there were the teaching methods… you know, the kind of methods you can use in teaching. That was interesting, but even then I felt this was not enough … it didn't teach me how to teach. So there's nothing left of them now."

The extracts seem to reveal a lot about Vera's education as a pre-service teacher, and interestingly, they do so by their lack of information. Vera could only vaguely evoke the content of her studies. Up to a certain point she kept maintaining that it had all been very useful, but when it came to giving concrete examples, she appeared lost. What she could recollect were some of the titles and main topics dealt with during her courses. One of the possible explanations to the fact that she remembered only disconnected bits from her fairly recent training might be that most knowledge she received was not appropriately contextualized. Child psychologist Donaldson (1987) talks about embededness as a key notion in successful education: we understand and retain information embedded in a context that makes sense to us. In the interview Vera repeatedly claimed that in her classroom practice she could not rely on what she heard on theoretical courses. Referring to a course in psychology, she commented: *"it didn't really link to what we were supposed to know about real life in classrooms."* A very similar comment was made when she talked about her ELT methods course, which she found interesting, but not really helpful in practical terms (*"it didn't teach me how to teach"*).

Vera did not sound convinced of the dynamic interaction between theory and practice. Apparently, her training failed to make her see how theory and practice continuously inform each other in the classroom setting. Studies dealing with in-service teachers' beliefs and practice in Hungary imply that teachers fail to integrate into their daily practice the theoretical knowledge received at universities and training colleges (Lugossy, 2006; Nikolov, 2002). Thus, even when they are familiar with the relevant psychological and linguistic theories, teachers tend to teach the way they were taught, without examining whether their routines are in tune with the theories they at times explicitly believe in. These findings highlight the role of teacher education programmes in promoting a dynamic view of pedagogical knowledge, one which is constructed from insights into theory and practice alike. One of the ways to achieve this is by embedding relevant theories into trainees' personal learning experiences, and raising awareness of the principles that underlie certain choices in the classroom.

"As a matter of fact, we did not get any answers": Teacher training revisited

Although she started assessing her methodology training on a fairly positive note, Vera gradually allowed herself to shift from her apparent satisfaction and unquestioning attitude into a more critical stance. After the first sign of criticism ("*I felt this was not enough … it didn't teach me how to teach*"), she also commented on the futility of certain tasks that were considered important in the training programme, such as trainees having to write quasi-fictitious lesson-plans for the lessons they were going to teach: "*And then the lesson-plan…. that was killing me. We had to write*

down the questions we were going to ask and the answers we were supposed to get… But how was I to know the kind of answers children would give me? They are all different."

She concluded her memories about the value of EFL methodology training by stating, *"as a matter of fact, we did not get any answers."* This is a bold statement from someone who, not long before sounded fairly happy with her courses. By the end of her narrative, though, she grew more aware that her college education and her life in the classroom were on two separate levels, instead of being part of the same relational and integrated process of her learning to be a teacher. Even worse than not getting any answers seemed to be the fact that would-be teachers were not socialized into the culture of asking questions related to their professional lives, including the belief systems which had shaped their practice. This also implies that they were not given the tools to change their assumptions about teaching and learning and to adapt a new theory to their teaching contexts. Thus, they could hardly believe that their development was in their own hands.

Vera's recall of her pre-service experiences highlights another important finding, which relates to the role of professional narratives in developing teacher cognition. While she was unfolding the story of her education, Vera appeared to gain a more detached view and a more complex understanding of past events that she could now relate to her professional practice. This is in light with schema theory, which claims that we construct an understanding of the world based on narrative patterns (Schank & Abelson, 1995).

The in-service teacher

As an in-service teacher of English, Vera's beliefs and practice had been predominantly shaped by colleagues (*"When I didn't know something I asked my colleagues…"*) and, as discussed before, by her earlier experiences as a learner of English. In the interview she also recalled a video film on teaching English to young learners, which she liked due to the naturalness of the approach, and which had a short-lived impact on her beliefs: *"I used to think that the best way to teach children is to have a huge carpet, with children sitting and standing and hopping all around, chanting rhymes, playing games, … we tell stories. This is what I saw on a video."* However, she chose to reframe these beliefs in order to match the expectations of her environment: *"I still think that's important, but it's also important for them to know that they* [the pupils] *are on the lesson and not in a play-house… otherwise there would be a huge contrast between English and the other school subjects."*

The pedagogy presented on the video was obviously very different from Vera's experiences of teaching and learning in any school subject in terms of teaching techniques, teacher and pupil roles, seating arrangement, and materials used. Although she liked the atmosphere and activities, she most probably could not integrate these teaching tips into a coherent theoretical framework, and could not have argued why chanting, hopping and telling stories in the young learner classroom made sense in the long run. Therefore, she felt the need to resort to teaching methods she was familiar with either from her own experience as a learner, or from her colleagues' practice.

The issue of discipline seemed to be one of Vera's main concerns in connection with using non-traditional techniques. This is also apparent from the negative overtone with which she used the "play-house" metaphor in order to refer to a classroom which may involve less teacher control and a higher level of noise than traditional classrooms. Vera's fear of not being in control as a young teacher was made more explicit when she referred to the other school subjects as the norm against which she should compare her EFL practice, thus implying the dangers of doing something in a different fashion. When asked about what she meant by the "*huge contrast between English and the other school subjects*" and why this should be a problem, she pointed out that in Hungary pupils were used to lessons being more controlled, while a too democratic atmosphere in the English classes might cause discipline problems in the long run.

A point which was not articulated by the interviewee, but which may have contributed to her fear of "contrast," and which therefore kept her on the old path, was the lack of support from the environment. Classroom-based research, such as Nikolov's negotiation project (2000) in the young EFL class, reveals that both parents and colleagues take innovations in teaching with suspicion, and find too much autonomy on the learners' side unpleasant.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this case is that merely seeing examples of good practice is not enough for professional development. Empirical research on teacher cognition also reinforced that the shift in teachers' understanding does not occur through imposing new external resources, but by bringing into alignment teachers' underlying beliefs about teaching and learning with their explicit theories (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). I have already pointed out the importance of relevant theoretical frameworks as well as a reflective view on knowledge. Vera's portrait of her pre-service years, as discussed earlier in this paper, suggests that while she certainly received theoretical knowledge, these theories were not linked to relevant practice. This may be one of the reasons why she could not benefit from the positive lessons from the video: without understanding the rationale behind the teaching techniques she saw, Vera was stuck at perceiving them as isolated bits of her craft, and as such, she did not seem convinced of their effectiveness in the long run. Instead, she chose to subdue to silent peer pressure.

Change

An important part of the study refers to the changes that have occurred in Vera's classroom practice, as well as in her understanding of teaching and learning. Her first attempts to use the picture books were followed by enthusiastic reports on children's interest and the differences she perceived between how the groups reacted to the shared readings. Then she took to frequenting the local English teachers' resource centre library in order to borrow more picture books, which she regularly used in her lessons in all groups. Recently, she has also set up a small library in the English room. Finally, according to feedback gained from children,

"sometimes she even talks in English" in her classes. No wonder that the pupils I have asked claim to find more pleasure in their English classes than earlier.

As said before, the regular informal professional discussions as well as the semi-structured interview gave me opportunities to see more deeply into Vera's ideas about teaching and learning. Our discussions created a context for sharing and negotiating our understanding of education, in particular language and literacy development. Phrases like "*This is true. Now that you put it like this… I guess it's true," or "Yes, maybe… I will think about this. Actually, this is all ongoing thinking*" revealed Vera as a teacher who was open to reflect on her previous ideas, and as someone who recognizes teaching as a profession which involves not only doing, but also thinking (Freeman, 1992). It crossed my mind that Vera was this willing to accept my points due to the Hawthorne effect: she said what she thought she was expected to say. However, based on what I have seen of her personality during our shared work, and on the changes in her practice, I prefer seeing her as a teacher who is truly open to learning.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this case study are manifold. On the first level they refer to teacher development and suggest the need for teachers to take new challenges in their practice. Menacing as it may first seem, adopting new techniques and materials opens the way for teachers to rethink whether their current beliefs are in tune with their practice. This may eventually lead to changing some of their beliefs, and finally implement further changes in their teaching.

The study also brings evidence for the importance of teachers' working together. Vera's exposure to using authentic picture books and her gradual involvement in similar techniques helped her gain a new perspective on the opportunities she had in the young learner classroom. The innovations she introduced in her classes out of her own initiative (reading new books, setting up a small library where children could read when they finished a task) show that she also gained confidence, and did not mind taking risks, which is an essential element in implementing change.

I also benefited from the shared work with Vera. First, because in her classes I had the privilege to share picture books with young EFL learners on a regular basis, with all the beauties and difficulties this may present for teachers. Also, as a teacher educator I benefited greatly from the professional discussions we had. These discussions allowed me insights into the ideas which had shaped Vera's practice, and challenged me to rethink and share my own understanding of teaching and learning. In this sense, the importance of a discourse community in constructing knowledge in dialogue has appeared crucial. This also links to the role of narratives in organising knowledge: stories of professional experience may help teachers to perceive apparently isolated phenomena in a broader perspective, and grow more conscious practitioners. By telling the stories of her learning and teaching, Vera attained a more complex and a more subtle understanding of what she had so far taken for granted.

The power of qualitative studies resides in gaining a more in-depth picture of human behaviours and socio-cultural patterns which underlie behaviours (Webster & Mertova, 2007), partly due to the fact that they involve few participants. This also implies that the findings are less concerned with generalisability (Mackey & Gass, 2005). This is sad, because it would be fortunate to have more teachers willing to examine their beliefs and practice and see professional development not as a burden, but rather as an opportunity to grow and become happier. On the other hand, if the findings that have emerged were generalisible, this would raise serious doubts concerning the effectiveness of time spent during formal teacher training. However, as stated before, this study is by no means representative, and further research is necessary to uncover more general patterns in teacher development. But even this one case is disheartening enough to make teacher educators reflect on their beliefs and optimize their own practice.

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An Exploratory Study of Teachers' Views on First-Graders' Difficulties in Developing Reading Skills

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Introduction

This paper presents findings of the first phase of a study into how reading difficulties in Hungarian influence the acquisition of English as a foreign language (L2) among first graders. This qualitative, small-scale study aims to gain insights into emic perspectives on what teachers consider difficult and easy for pupils while learning to read in Hungarian. It also intends to explore the methods teachers prefer when teaching reading and the considerations they follow while choosing course books and compiling supplementary materials. First, I give a short background to the study; then, I introduce the participants and the procedure before I analyze the responses. Finally, I examine how the questions can be adapted for further research.

Background to research

First, I have to turn to studies on dyslexia to map the areas which can be problematic for beginner readers even if they are not dyslexic, because the difficulties pupils face while learning to read and the mistakes they make while reading are mainly analyzed in connection with dyslexia.

Recently, dyslexia has been a highly debated issue among teachers, parents, speech therapists and even the students who are labelled as dyslexic. In everyday conversations it is often used for difficulties occurring while learning to read. Disability, disorder and difficulty also often appear together with reading referring to problems of reading acquisition. In Torda's (2006) interpretation these stages refer to the severity of the problem. Disability is used for the most severe cases, whereas difficulty is used for the least problematic ones. Csépe (2006) defines developmental dyslexia as a severe reading disorder which can be easily distinguished from less severe reading difficulties and disorders. Thus, children who have difficulties while acquiring reading in their mother tongue (L1) are not necessarily dyslexic. Gósy (1999, p. 257) also claims that "although dyslexia is a kind of reading difficulty, not all kinds of reading difficulty can be considered dyslexia". According to Csabay (1994, p. 40), "nearly 20-30 per cent of the pupils treated as dyslexic are

Turányi, Zs. (2009). An exploratory study of teachers' views on first-graders' difficulties in developing reading skills. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 71-81). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

falsely diagnosed". They are not dyslexic, but have reading problems mainly due to their surroundings. Both family and school environment can be responsible for the development of learning disorders. As Gyarmathy (2007) states in the title of her book, "dyslexia is a specific teaching disorder".

Gósy (1994, p. 43) offers a criterion system to differentiate between reading difficulty and dyslexia. Dyslexia can be defined by applying the following considerations: (1) a significant leeway in reading achievement after two years; (2) no organic deviation in the abilities needed for reading; (3) normal intelligence; (4) normal achievement in other school subjects; (5) beginning of speech production at appropriate time; (6) formation of hand-dominance at appropriate time; (7) normal emotional state; (8) normal socio-cultural background; (9) normal student-teacher-parent relationship; and (10) appropriate parental and teacher help.

Both Csabay (1994) and Gyarmathy (2007) use the term *fake dyslexic* for students who have reading problems and are falsely diagnosed as dyslexic. Students diagnosed as dyslexic can be exempted from learning foreign languages at primary and secondary school. Although exemption often seems to be an easy and comfortable solution to their difficulties, their chances to be admitted to higher education or to get a high-quality job decrease dramatically. That is the reason why I find it important to explore if the problems occurring while learning to read are the symptoms of dyslexia and to what extent dyslexia and other kinds of reading disorders influence the L2 acquisition in a first grade class.

Subosits (1992, pp. 24-25) differentiates four main areas of errors children with reading disorders often make: (1) errors due to the disorder of optical perception; (2) acoustic-motor errors; (3) semantic errors, and (4) grammatical errors. According to Sarkady and Zsoldos (1992, p. 45), teachers mainly face technical errors while their pupils learn to read. These can be "letter and syllable replacement, deception in recognition, slow speed, comprehension difficulties and being unmotivated".

In her book on the history of teaching reading Adamikné (2006) offers a list of teaching techniques which can make L1 reading acquisition easier for pupils and allows teachers to avoid difficulties in their teaching. She suggests a preparatory period of six weeks before the actual teaching of reading starts, and reading and writing should be taught simultaneously. The font type and the gradually increasing size of the letters are important elements of a reading book. Upright handwriting should be taught and upper and lower case letters are to be taught separately. First, lower case letters should be introduced in an order which considers the effect of homogeneous inhibition. They are taught following the analyzing-synthesizing method. Words are divided into syllables at this stage. Upper case letters are taught when pupils know all the lower case ones.

These techniques follow the characteristics of the Hungarian language. Since it is an agglutinal language, words can contain many morphemes. All the segments must be stored in readers' short-term memory to process meaning. Smythe and Everatt (2001) use the word "diszlexiaveszélyeztetettség", meaning *at risk of dyslexia* when describing the importance of segmentation in Hungarian. Segmenting words can become automatic if syllabification is an essential element of teaching reading. Gyarmathy (2004) also mentions difficulties caused by misreading of suf-

fixes but she emphasizes errors at phoneme and grapheme level. Although the Hungarian alphabet is transparent and it is a phonetic language, which means that grapheme-phoneme correspondence should not be problematic as opposed to the deep alphabet of English, accent markers and their misuse may cause difficulties for dyslexics. The misuse of accent markers can change the meaning of words; thus, it influences comprehension.

After exploring the areas of reading acquisition which can be problematic for not only dyslexic pupils, but also learners with milder reading disorders and non-problematic beginner readers, in the next section I introduce the respondents of my research.

Participants

I have chosen five participants from among colleagues I know, thus, I involved a convenience sample in my study. They are all teachers in primary schools where pupils are taught in integrated classes. The extent of integration is different at the four schools.

Two of the respondents work at a Budapest foundation primary school with small classes of ten to twelve pupils. They usually integrate one or two children with behaviour or learning difficulties. The school employs teaching assistants to help subject teachers and a speech therapist as well to help pupils overcome difficulties.

The third participant teaches in a prestigious primary school in Budapest where problem children are offered help. Approximately twenty pupils attend a class. Although individual treatment and differentiation appear in class, it is an achievement-oriented school. Low-achievers are supported to find the areas they are good at, whereas gifted pupils are given opportunities to advance at their own pace.

The fourth teacher works at a church school in Budapest where children are taught in classes of about twenty. This school claims to integrate pupils with learning problems and behaviour difficulties.

The fifth respondent works at a primary school in Gödöllő where classes are taught in a friendly atmosphere. Besides integrating problem pupils, there are groups of children with special educational needs.

The five respondents have different lengths of teaching experience and academic backgrounds. Although they are highly motivated and well-trained in their profession, their opinion about the same questions is rarely similar, sometimes even contradictory. Instead of using their real names, I apply pseudonyms.

Claire is specialized in teaching pupils with special educational needs. She has 11 years of teaching experience with three first-grade classes. Claire is a devotee of education integrating problem pupils in mainstream schools. She is a regular participant of in-service teacher training sessions and works together with colleagues from other schools. Being self-confident, outspoken and strict with colleagues, parents and pupils, Claire is one of the most popular teachers at school.

Barbara has 21 years of teaching experience and has taught in five first grade classes. She is a well-trained teacher and also a teacher trainer at state primary-school with a good reputation. At the moment she is working on compiling a course book for teacher trainers. Her good sense of humour makes her both popular and respected among pupils. She puts special emphasis on getting as much background information about her pupils as possible before the beginning of first grade. Thus she plans differentiation in advance based on an overall knowledge of both abilities and family backgrounds.

The youngest participant, Hanna, has four years of teaching experience with one first grader class in a Catholic school. She is very determined, self-confident and down-to-earth. Constantly stressing the importance of national traditions, she organizes programs to allow her pupils to gain more experiences. She is open to new teaching methods, especially to teach reading, and uses them regularly. Her choice of reading is often influenced by the moral of the texts. Hanna introduced a cooperative way of developing reading comprehension in her class.

Erika graduated 11 years ago. Besides being a modest and extremely patient teacher, she specialized in special education. Her experience gained from special education is often detectable in her methods and attitude towards problems. She takes an active part in supervising the development of children with learning difficulties.

Maria has been teaching for seven years. She is highly motivated in acquiring and applying new methods concerning teaching. Maria is a teacher of great popularity among both children and parents. Her pupils are often winners of reading and writing competitions. Besides using course books, Maria finds it important to teach reading through tales with which children are familiar. She often makes puppets to help her pupils follow the dialogues while reading. She is creative in decorating her classroom with items used as prompts by the children during the lessons.

Data collection instrument

A questionnaire of eleven open ended questions was applied for data collection. The questions were first piloted with peers and an expert. Some of them were then rephrased according to the suggestions in the feedback. The questionnaire was then sent to the participants via e-mail. Three questions concern the difficulties and enjoyments connected to learning to read from the teachers' point of view. The other eight questions intend to detect the preferences teachers have while choosing a course book and method for teaching reading (see the Appendix).

Procedure

The original idea was to conduct semi-structured interviews with the participants, but since after days of negotiation we could not agree on a personal meeting, the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire in Hungarian. Both the questions and the answers were later translated into English to be used in this paper.

The participants got the questionnaires in March 2008 and spent nearly one week answering the questions. They received the questionnaire via e-mail, and they sent their answers back in the same way. None of the participants asked for clarification in connection with the questions. All of them asked me to share my findings with them after reading and analyzing their answers. The respondents let me use all the background information I know about them, but they asked me not to use their and their schools' names.

The analysis of the data followed five steps. First, all the answers were grouped according to the questions. Second, key terms and concepts of the answers were collected. Third, similarities were detected among the key terms and concepts and the possible interpretation of the similarities was given. Fourth, the logical correspondence between the answers of each respondent was explored. Fifth, outstanding differences among the opinions were identified and analyzed.

Results and discussion

In this section, I introduce the questions and the answers given to them; then, I discuss similarities and differences between the answers.

What do first graders enjoy the most while learning to read? Why?

Claire's, Barbara's and Erika's answers suggest that children enjoy the process of learning to read. They like playing with words, spelling non-words and realising the meaning of words after spelling them. Children enjoy that they acquire useful knowledge; they can read labels in shops, cartoons and titles of books at home. Barbara emphasised that her pupils feel proud of being able to read tales for themselves. Hanna's pupils find the biggest enjoyment in understanding and summarising what they read. Maria's answer concerns learning to write but not to read.

The answers suggest that the participants apply a teaching method which makes the process of reading enjoyable for the pupils. They also demonstrate that pupils enjoy having the ability of reading outside class in their every day life. Reading gives them the possibility to gain knowledge without help, no matter whether this knowledge comes from a tale or a label on a toy.

The respondents join the two parts of the question and answer them together. For further research the two issues – reason and result - should be raised as two separate questions to make their analysis more valuable.

What causes the difficulties?

Hanna claims that her pupils do not face difficulties while learning to read. According to the answers of the other four respondents the question can be understood in two ways. Claire and Barbara list difficulties children may face while learning to read. Erika and Maria try to find the causes of the difficulties occurring during the learning process. Both Claire and Barbara recognise difficulties in reading sounds into words and in reading comprehension. They blame insufficient reading techniques for the difficulties of comprehension in their answers. However, they do not go into details in connection with the techniques they find necessary for good comprehension.

Claire refers to problems with syllabification and thus finding word boundaries. Barbara argues that the lack of motivation for reading also sets reading development back. Erika's answer contains possible causes of reading difficulties such as speech impairments with sound replacement. The improper use of directions mentioned by both Erika and Maria is a focal point not only considering reading, but orientation in any kinds of course books as well. Finding an exercise on a page can become almost impossible if the directions given by the teacher are meaningless for the pupil. Maria also refers to the different levels of school readiness and the pupils' poor vocabulary. Erika mentions teaching techniques which can negatively influence reading development, namely the teaching of similar letters too close to each other and employing books with too many colourful illustrations.

How long after the beginning of the school year do these problems occur?

Hanna's pupils do not face difficulties. The other teachers recognise the problems relatively early, two months after the beginning of the academic year at latest. Claire and Erika apply a teaching method which starts with a six-week-long preparatory period to strengthen abilities necessary for reading. They both consider this period essential in detecting reading-related difficulties. For further research the question needs to be reworded thus the answers might contain more relevant pieces of information about learning to read as a process.

What considerations did you follow while choosing the course book for teaching reading?

Erika does not have the possibility to choose a course book for teaching reading, as her school has been employing books of the same publisher for a long a time and they do not intend to change them. Thus she did not answer the question. Three out of the other four teachers have no free choice either but they gave a theoretical answer to this question. The analyzing-synthesizing method is the most important consideration all the respondents would follow if they had the possibility to choose. As syllabification is part of the method, I treat syllabification as an equally

important thought for all of them. Teachers most probably find this method very effective as it is based on the characteristics of Hungarian and takes it into consideration that reading-related difficulties occur when sounds are read into words. Claire's choice is also determined by the authors, Mária Gósy and Anna Adamikné Jászó, whom she respects a lot. She prefers those books on which teachers' training courses are also based. Maria mentioned characteristics considering the layout of the books emphasizing that the size of the letters taught should gradually decrease while the length of the texts should increase gradually. Colourful illustrations are essential

What are the positive features of the book you use?

The answers suggest that although not all the teachers had the chance to choose, the books they use contain all the necessary elements they find important. Claire praises that the book she uses teaches reading and writing simultaneously applying the analyzing-synthesizing method with syllabification. She also favours that dyslexia prevention is included in the curriculum and children are encouraged to create their own learning tools by using the word cards attached to the book.

Besides being satisfied with the analyzing-synthesizing method and the syllabification technique, Barbara likes that exercises in her book consider pupils with different abilities. Although Erika uses a different book, she also appreciates exercises designed for children with attention deficit or poorer vocabulary. They both feel that there is time and opportunity offered for differentiation by the book they teach from.

The tales and poems introduced in the books are admired by Maria and Hanna. Maria emphasises the importance of the moral they teach and their rich vocabulary.

Although they apply different books, there are similarities among the answers which propose that there are different reading books which follow the same methodological principles about teaching to read.

What are the negative features of the book you use?

Hanna, Claire and Barbara criticise the layout of the books. They find the illustrations out-of–date. Besides calling attention to some aesthetic features of the books, all the answers, except for that of Maria who does not mention negative features, list features which can lead to difficulties while learning to read. Too small letters can cause visual mistakes. Segmenting too long words can cause difficulties in reading, similarly to too many difficult words which are not yet stored in the mental lexicon. Erika and Barbara find some words out-of-date in the texts thus difficult to understand.

Apart from difficulties it is also important to consider that an integrated class involves pupils with skills and abilities above the average. Only Erika criticizes the book she uses, on the basis of the lack of material devoted to those children

who can read when starting the first grade. Claire disapproves of the few reading comprehension tasks.

How strictly do you follow the curriculum offered by the teacher's handbook?

Claire, Maria and Erika use the same book. Although Maria pursues it, she integrates special needs into it and changes it according to certain programs at school, such as project weeks when the same topic is taught to all the pupils irrespective of the curriculum. Nevertheless, all of them find it useful to follow which suggests that this book is suitable for both pupils and teachers. Erika's answer praises the accompanying curriculum but she does not write down how strictly she follows it. Barbara does not follow the curriculum but uses it as a guide. Her answer might be explained by her longer teaching experience.

What is your opinion about the time frame of the curriculum?

Hanna is the only respondent who finds the time frame acceptable. Her answer might be explained by the homogeneous nature of her class. Her previous answer about difficulties suggests that there are no pupils who need extra time for differentiation. Maria and Claire mention that their school can offer only eight lessons per week on reading and writing as opposed to the nine lessons suggested by the curriculum. While Claire does not comment on the timing of the curriculum more, Maria emphasizes that by applying a few changes, the timing can be kept with a limited number of classes as well.

What do you consider a realistic aim in the field of reading to reach by the end of the first grade with your present or previous pupils?

Claire and Hanna find it important to let children get acquainted with the text before reading it aloud. While Hanna focuses on the performance of reading as an aim, Claire emphasizes comprehension. Her previous answers also suggest that comprehending written texts is of primary importance while teaching to read. Erika's answer suggests that her pupils have diverse abilities thus their achievement might vary from reading sounds into words to reading sentences. Surprisingly enough the differentiation practised by Erika considers the possibility of going to first grade twice. Maria seems to have the highest expectations concerning performance. Although she refers to fluency and perfect knowledge, she neither defines what she means by these terms nor mentions the level of comprehension she finds necessary to reach by the end of the year.

What areas of learning to read require the most out of class preparation from the children?

By out of class preparation all the respondents mean practising at home. While Barbara involves parents only in motivating pupils for reading, the other four teachers find the revision of school task necessary at home. The most often mentioned tasks are reading aloud sounds and syllables into words and dividing words into sounds. Answers 9 and 10 show that they expect children to carry out similar tasks at home to those of done at school. Thus reading homework does not require either creativity or individual solution of problems. Hanna did not name areas of reading where practising is necessary; she rather wrote about the efforts she has to make to persuade parents about the importance of practising at home.

What kind of additional methods do you apply to complement the ones offered by the teachers' handbook?

All the teachers, except for Erika who did not answer the question, design additional task sheets for the sake of differentiation. A further research might be conducted to the content of these task sheets. Although the importance of differentiation while teaching to read appears several times in the answers, only Barbara mentions those students who need differentiation because they are above the average of the class. The other three teachers seem to use it only for developing leeway. I find it surprising to apply this kind of extra material as all the reading books mentioned and used by the respondents are accompanied with practice books containing paper-based exercises.

Maria employs several tools to make learning more exciting. While practising the utterance of sounds she uses a mirror to show the proper position of the lips and the tongue. They perform the tales they read with puppets to check reading comprehension. She uses paper-based tools as well, namely memory-cards, pictures, puzzles. I hope the other participants do not mention similar tools in their answers because they feel them obvious to use while teaching.

Conclusion

The answers suggest that children enjoy the challenge of learning to read as they are equipped with a tool for gaining information from their surroundings without adult help. They also like the process of learning if it is full of exciting and motivating activities.

The difficulties described by the teachers seem to be similar mainly rooting from the agglutinal nature of the language. Pupils often find it problematic to read letters and syllables into words and to differentiate between similarly looking letters such as e / é or b a/ d. Children's poor vocabulary also constrains their achievement.

Answers considering the teachers' choice of course books show that their decision is based on the intention to help their pupils overcome difficulties. Negative features of the applied course books are mentioned mainly in those cases where teachers do not have the possibility to choose.

Although the difficulties described by the respondents are similar to the ones connected to dyslexia, none of the respondents mentioned that these difficulties occur just in the case of dyslexic pupils. Further research is needed to observe whether these reading difficulties can be overcome in the classroom or they are the symptoms of reading disorders or dyslexia. And if they are the symptoms of dyslexia to what extent do they influence the F2 achievement of pupils.

The answers also reveal that the participants find the time frame and curriculum attaching to the course books useful but they follow them only in accordance with individual needs.

Further questions investigating the methods and supplementary material adopted by teachers also show that the participants are highly creative and open to support their pupils to become successful readers.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

1. Mi az, amit az elsősök a leginkább élveznek az olvasás tanulása során? Miért?
[What do first graders enjoy the most while learning to read? Why?]

2. Mi okozza a nehézségeket? [What causes the difficulties?]

3. A tanév kezdete után mennyi idővel jelentkeznek ezek a problémák? [How long after the beginning of the school year do these problems occur?]

4. Milyen szempontok alapján választotta ki az Ön által használt olvasástanító tankönyvet vagy tankönyvsorozatot? [What considerations did you follow while choosing the course book for teaching reading?]

5. Mik az ön által használt tankönyv pozitív jellemzői? [What are the positive features of the book you use?]

6. Mik a könyv negatív tulajdonságai? [What are the negative features of the book you use?]

7. Mennyire szorosan követi a tankönyvhöz tartozó tanítói útmutatóban található tanmenetet? [How strictly do you follow the curriculum offered by the teacher's handbook?]

8. Mi a véleménye az ajánlott tanmenet időkereteiről? [What is your opinion about the time frame of the curriculum?]

9. Ön mit tart reális célnak olvasás területén az első tanév végére a jelenlegi / legutóbbi elsőseivel? Miért? [What do you consider a realistic aim in the field of reading to reach by the end of the first grade with your present or previous pupils?]

10. Melyek az olvasástanítás azon területei, melyek a legtöbb tanórán kívüli felkészülést igénylik a gyerekektől? [What areas of learning to read require the most out of class preparation from the children?]

11. Milyen egyénre szabott módszerekkel egészíti a tanítói kézikönyv módszertani ajánlásait? [What kind of additional methods do you apply to complement the ones offered by the teachers' handbook?]

The Identity of the Business English Teacher: A Pilot Study

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Introduction

Simultaneously with the increasing spread of qualitative research methodology in social sciences in the 1990s (Szokolszky, 2004) educational research turned towards classrooms; research interest shifted from teaching methods and materials to teachers, the "protagonists" (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 413) of teaching. It was in the 1990s that the previously unquestioned language content centred teacher knowledge concept gradually refocused towards teachers as individuals. In their influential article Freeman and Johnson (1998, p. 397) outline a revised model of the knowledge-base of language teaching: "We argue that the core of the new knowledge-base must focus on the activity of teaching itself; it should center on the teacher who does it, the contexts in which it is done, and the pedagogy by which it is done". The new model gives a central role to the teacher in understanding and improving English language teaching. It encourages the incorporation of insider accounts of teachers as learners of teaching and their professional development over time into the knowledge-base of teaching.

The present study is intended to contribute to the descriptions of career paths from the insider's point of view. Specialising within the field of ELT is considered a second phase of learning to teach, the description of this process might contribute to the knowledge-base of teachers. The reflections of teacher identity in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context are presented through two research interviews about the process of a teacher learning to be a Business English teacher (BET): an attempt is made to construct the Business English teacher identity.

Literature review

To be able to understand the factors contributing to Business English teacher identity the elements of the concept need to be considered separately, therefore, an introduction to the relatively new field of Business English, the Business English teacher and identity follows.

Bereckzky, K. (2009). The identity of the business English teacher: A pilot study. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 83-98). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Business English teachers

Business English is part of English for Specific Purposes as a distinct field from General English. To differentiate Business English from other work-related varieties of English, Picket defines it as the language used for "communication with the public and communication within (intra) and between (inter) companies" (1986 cited in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p.54).

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) differentiate English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP). EGBP courses "are usually for pre-experience learners or those at the very early stages of their career. They are similar to general EFL courses with the materials set in business contexts" (p. 55). ESBP courses "are run for job-experienced learners who bring business knowledge and skills to the language-learning situation. These courses are carefully tailored and likely to focus on one or two language skills and specific business communicative events" (p. 56).

When referring to BETs, Ellis and Johnson (1994) prefer to use *trainers* since "training is the word commonly used to refer to what adults receive in a company context" (p. xiv). Donna (2000) uses the term *language trainer* synonymously and simultaneously with *language teachers, instructors* and *consultants*, reflecting the variation in the environment of Business English instruction, which may be a company setting or a HE institute or even private communication training. It also seems relevant to mention Swales (1985, cited in Hutchinson and Waters, p.157) who refers to ESP practitioners rather than ESP teachers. This reference successfully combines the various context specific terms above. Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) speak about *ESP professionals* and *English for business purposes practitioners.* These latter terms imply another distinction between Business English instructors on the basis of their possession or non-possession of any kind of qualification. As the present study compares identities appearing in an interview with a BET who referred to himself as a teacher and in an interview with a Business English teacher trainer, the expressions teacher and trainer are used to differentiate them.

In terms of qualification, Ellis and Johnson (1994) list three types of BETs: those with a TEFL background with or without a university degree, those with a business background, and those with neither of the above i.e. native speakers of English working abroad for existential reasons. Still, most BETs seem to have a general English (GE) background on the basis of personal, informal communication. Concerning teacher education, the situation does not appear to have changed since 1981, when Greenall noted that science professionals rarely move over to ESP. Whatever the background, Ellis and Johnson emphasise that the most important requirement for BETs is to be experts in language teaching. In this respect, the situation in Hungary is somewhat different. Higher education (HE) expects, as is also confirmed in Bereczky (2005), candidates for BET positions with two degrees: business and teaching. As this is rarely a viable option, the second best choice is economists or people with a business degree with some English knowledge. Though there are a few such people, the majority of BETs both in language schools and in higher education are English teachers. BETs' situation in terms of qualifica-

tion is similar to that of CLIL teachers in Europe who tend to be qualified either in language teaching or teaching a non-language subject but very rarely in both, which is the stated ideal according to European Union policies (Eurydice report, 2006).

The basic roles of ESP teachers have been defined by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 149) who differentiate *teacher as provider of input and activities* and *teacher as facilitator*. In the former role, the teacher provides information and controls the class and the activities. This role seems to match the traditional role of teachers and apparently most likely to occur in classes for pre-experience learners. The latter role, also called *teacher as consultant*, is somewhat more difficult to adopt for professionals used to the traditional function of teachers. In this scenario, the course content is a result of negotiation with the learners, and course materials are also often provided by them. In some cases of this role, the teacher has comparatively little knowledge about the subject or skill content of the ESP course, rather, the teacher organises the information provided by the learners. In this role, the teacher who might even work in a team with a subject specialist serves as an intermediary between the learner and a specialist teacher.

Dudley-Evans and St John assert that the *teacher as facilitator* role is productive especially with learners with sophisticated and specified purposes, in other words, with job-experienced learners. As a conclusion, they advise that the teacher's approach should always be tailored to the learners' expectations as some learners might take to this approach, whereas some might prefer the traditional *teacher as input provider* role. However, Bell (1999) does not seem to share the view that the *teacher as facilitator* role is practicable when he writes "Without this specific background the trainer would be in the same position as the learners, reaching for the dictionary" (p. 5). Obviously, there is a disagreement as to how much background knowledge is expected from a BET.

Perceptions of BETs

Many concerns of ESP teachers seem to be shared by BETs. Both Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) and Hutchinson and Waters (1986) mention general English teachers' problem of not being trained to teach ESP, which is manifested in the fact that they often do not comprehend the content of the texts they teach. The extent to which an ESP teacher needs to understand the subject matter of ESP materials is expansively discussed. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984, p. 138) suggest that a "working knowledge" of the students' subjects be developed by the ESP teacher and advise that an ESP teacher work together with a subject teacher to acquire that knowledge in team-teaching.

Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) also state that it is the teacher who has to live up to increased ESP learner expectations. Hutchinson and Waters (1986) attribute the difficulty general English teachers find in coping with specialised texts to the traditional division of education into humanities and sciences, which places languages with humanities and provides hardly any education on sciences to language teachers. They also mention that the economic pressure that drives some

teachers to teaching ESP might cause resistance to learning about the new area. At the same time, Hutchinson and Waters argue for not using highly specialised texts in ESP classes claiming that "the linguistic knowledge needed to comprehend the specialist text is little different from that required to comprehend the general text. The difference in comprehension lies in the subject knowledge, not the language knowledge" (p. 159). This approach offers an answer to teachers' problem of not comprehending the content of ESP texts.

Hutchinson and Waters (1986) seem to foreshadow the view emphasised by authors on Business English (Ellis and Johnson, 1994; Donna, 2000) that the ESP or Business English teacher is basically a language teacher who does not need to be a subject specialist or subject teacher "but rather an interested student of the subject matter" (p. 161). Ellis and Johnson (1994) also argue that "even when working with pre-experience learners, it is not the language trainer's role to teach the subject matter" (p. 26). However, Bereczky (2005) analysing a teacher's personal account found that the reality of Business English teaching contradicts the above statement at least in Hungary. Her informant, T recounted several occasions when he was challenged by his students to explain business concepts.

The distinction between learners with and without business experience is also reflected in the problems their teachers might encounter. Teachers working with pre-experience learners in HE institutions are likely to have similar concerns to the ones Johns (1981) found after surveying 100 English for Academic Purposes teachers: low priority in timetabling, lack of personal/professional contact with subject teachers, lower status/grade than subject teachers, isolation from other teachers of English doing similar work, and lack of respect from students.

On the other hand, teachers working with job-experienced learners find themselves in the situation that they are service providers, whose clients, the students, have clearly articulated priorities in terms of lesson content and cost-effectiveness (Kennedy and Bolitho, 1984; Donna, 2000). Hutchinson and Waters (1986) describe the inhospitable circumstances in which some company courses are held, for example, classes in the shop floor or lack of a board, which create another new role for the teacher that of a negotiator for better circumstances. Such difficulties contribute to teachers feeling inferior or of a low status and call for a lot of adaptability and flexibility on their part.

Identity construction

Norton (1997, p. 410) defines identity as: "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future". Norton points out the connection between identity and desire – "the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety (p. 410)". Also, as desires are linked to material resources, identity changes with economic circumstances.

The notion of identity has been extended to incorporate a range of identities beside ethnicity for example profession. In that respect, McNamara (1997, p. 564) refers to Hogg and Abrams' (1988) "repertoire of social identities" and Giles and

Johnson's (1981) "multiple group membership" embracing familial, professional, class, gender, sexuality, age and other identities.

Among professional identities, the language teacher identity has received considerable attention especially the relationship between native and non-native speaker teachers of a language. Tang (1997) describes bilingual non-native ESL teachers facing students' judgements that they are not sources of real English and trying to cope with the feeling of inferiority and inadequacy for their jobs. In the Hungarian context, Medgyes (1994) recounts similar difficulties of foreign language teachers being less confident in their language use and cultural reliability. However, both authors find that the non-native teacher's knowledge about the difficulties language learners might face and about the local social and linguistic context contribute to a singular identity. On similar grounds, a peculiar identity seems to be emerging from the descriptions in previous sections referring to general English teachers being unprepared to tackle technical texts and the denial of the need for deep professional knowledge or extra science degrees for ESP teachers in the sources of literature. Another factor in contributing to this emerging picture is the large number of references to the teacher, e.g., trainer, ESP professional, consultant, etc. as if the notion of teacher was not adequate in the work context. The situation of the BET could be illuminated by the metaphor of Hutchinson and Waters (1986, p. 158) who term the field of business English "the Wild West of ELT".

Wishing to demonstrate how identity is co-constructed by speakers Johnson (2006) takes the local construction of talk, in his example the research interview, as means towards the construction of several possible identities ranging from good research participant, through critical reflective practitioner and institutional teacher identity to the professional identity of good teacher and ideal teacher. Johnson builds on two traditions of identity formation. Critical discourse analysis takes "teacher talk as a space for the articulation and the repression of voice" (2006, p. 213) where identity is a fixed entity that is to be discovered. Johnson himself prefers to take another point of view, the one of the social interaction approach emerging in conversation analysis that defines identity as "the set of verbal practices through which persons assemble and display who they are while in the presence of, and in interaction, with others" (Hadden & Lester, 1978, p. 331). Through the examination of the language resources the participants turn to, it is possible to point out the shifts of identity achieved by "positioning" of the other speaker which is either taken up or countered. Johnson calls this process "identity work" (p. 219).

A similarly dynamic way of identity formation is described in Bucholtz (2001) who approaches identity formation through the examination of identity practices reasoning that the speech community does not serve as an adequate basis for identity formation. Instead of looking at central members of a community and typical linguistic behaviour Bucholtz relies on the notion of communities of practice as they reflect better the ways individuals, including marginal members, engage in multiple identity practices simultaneously as well as the way they shift between identities.

The present paper is intended to present reflections of the professional identity of a BET as constructed in research interviews with a BET and a BET trainer.

Methods

Research question and aims

This pilot study was conducted with the aim of finding out about teacher identity in a specific context, the field of ESP and within that, the field of business English. The growing number of students studying business English in in-company or higher education circumstances makes the field a less marginalised area within ESP; in fact, the majority of ESP teachers seem to deal with business English at least in Hungary. Still, compared to general English, business English is a relatively new area for teachers, which makes it a promising ground for research. As the study intends to present the point of view of the participants, a BET and a teacher trainer, the findings could be educative for both beginner and practising business English as well as ESP teachers and teacher educators. The research intends to detect the similarities and differences in the identities of the BET emerging from an interview with a BET and an interview with a teacher trainer.

The participants

Both participants presented in this study are male teachers in their forties working in Hungary; their names used herein are pseudonyms. Tibor is Hungarian. He teaches general and business English in a higher education institute and in several language schools as a freelancer and is a non-native speaker of English. Walter is a native speaker of English; he is a teacher trainer in a higher education institute and has taught at several in-service courses for business English teachers.

Data collection and analysis

The present paper is a methodology pilot study in the sense that it attempts to detect reflections of teacher identity in recorded and transcribed research interviews.
The first version of the two interview guides (Appendix A and B) as described by Patton (2002) and McCracken (1988) were prepared based on relevant literature, Tibor's Curriculum Vitae, the Course Information Forms used in the institute where he teaches, and personal experience in teaching business English. The first draft of interview questions was discussed with fellow research students and their feedback resulted in a modified list which was subsequently presented to an experienced BET working in a business college different from the one described herein and to two research teachers to get expert opinion on the questions. The questions in the interview guide were remodified. The interviews were conducted

and audio-recorded in May 2005 for the purposes of a dissertation on BETs with the consent of the participants.

Several issues emerged during the interviews, which were not detailed in the interview guide resulting in a number of new questions. The long-term relationship as colleagues and the length of the interviews allowed for prolonged engagement (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) establishing rapport with the interviewees and created a climate of trust. The interview with Tibor was conducted in his mother tongue but he was always free to use any English term he liked. The transcription of the interview with Tibor and Walter resulted in 27 and 18 pages of text respectively, which were coded reflecting paragraphs in the talk. For the purposes of this study, the first five pages of each interview transcript were used (for samples see Appendix C and D) and examined for references to the field of business English, colleagues, teachers, self and general reference. Also, emerging categories were studied for a possible role in identity formation. Finally, the data from the two participants were compared to point out overlaps and differences. The translation of the Hungarian interview parts used as illustration in this study were prepared by the author and checked by the interviewee.

Results and discussion

References to the field of Business English

Both Tibor and Walter referred to BE as generally appearing in in-company courses. Walter remarked that in his opinion most in-company courses are "specific" (appearing three times in paragraph 34 and once in 38) in a way suggesting that those courses are rather ESP than just business English. Already at the beginning of the talk, Walter differentiated the two branches of BE, English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific Business Purposes (32) and then he added that

> 34 […] Whereas the … the other area, the English for general business purposes, which I'm sure you've done as well, em ... that doesn't-THAT might just require [what is?] an extended coursebook or … a college's coursebook which often happens here I .. I understand in Hungary that [different?] institutions produce a … coursebook.

Perhaps it seems for him that EGBP is simpler to teach than ESBP and in paragraph 66 he reinforces that saying that teaching BE is different from "classroom teaching let's say college or language school".

The field of BE also received more personal references. Walter predicts that each teacher will meet their limits:

> 40 But there's always gonna come times when you're offered a job or a course or something .. where you think to yourself: mmm, well, I might not be able to do that because I really don't know THAT MUCH or

(Mhm.) about that subject or my general knowledge of the business world is not as deep as I would like it to be.

Tibor's personal references to the field describe the difficulty of the first year in his BET career:

78 T: I had a paper (=certificate). I had some knowledge about that but the first year was UNIMAGINABLY difficult.

79 Ier: Aha.

80 T: It was very difficult […]

84 T: […] But the first year was really terrible.

Also, Tibor started to deal with BE because he saw that the field "has a future" (98) and "is developing fast" (100).

References to colleagues and BET roles

The following categories emerged in both interviews as references to colleagues: teacher, language teacher, English teacher, BET. Apart from these, Tibor also referred to general English teachers and subject teachers and Walter differentiated EGBP and ESBP teachers.

BETs were characterised by Tibor as having "subject knowledge" (17) and "knowledge of business topics" ("témakörök" 4, 21, 53, 116), "language knowledge" (25), "pedagogy, methodology" (21) and who are "up-to-date, flexible" (33) and who "manage" (33). However, the most important characteristic of a BET is that he/she "is not much different from a decent, honest language teacher" (2). This view is reinforced by the sequences saying that a BET "is just the same as a plain language teacher" (15) and "I still think it is better if the person is a teacher" (21). At the same time, Tibor states that soon there will be no demand for teaching general English (98) and that he still considers himself an "English language teacher who also teaches business English" (66).

Both interviewees assert that the ideal BET does not exist, though with a slightly differing reasoning. Tibor says the ideal BET would have two degrees but practically, it does not exist, as such people would not work for the money language teachers earn (9-11). It seems that for him such a generalisation does not make sense as teaching is an individual business, he considers teaching a "contact between people" (8). This view is further asserted by his using the expression "wonder teacher" (8). Walter keeps hedging his answers with "I think" and "in my experience" so as not to overgeneralise and prefers to refer to BETs as "people who teach business English" (28) or "teachers of business English" (32), though the expression BET also appears in his talk. Walter also mentions another type of teacher, the one who "come[s] from a business background, let's say, you have a

degree in economics or you have worked in a company" (40) and who has an "insider's view" (40) i.e. he takes it as an existing option.

For Walter a BET has a sense of "urgency" "priority" and "customer satisfaction" (28) which are all business language technical terms. The most outstanding characteristic of a BET is "interest", (e.g., in 28) which he uses 18 times in the five-page extract that was studied, interest in the world of business, in students, and business news. He makes it clear that for him a real BET is a teacher working in-company, though "of course there are Business English teachers who are forced to teach Business English and they DON'T always .. er … have any interest whatsoever in Business English" (28). Also, he claims that a BET is like a business person (28) and reinforces it with the requirement of "business-like behaviour" (66).

The above is not the only difference in the descriptions of BETs given by the two interviewees. Apart from interest, Walter frequently mentions experience e.g., "when I was working in Germany" (38); whereas Tibor emphasises subject knowledge and books (80, 86, 88, 90). Books appear as sources Tibor used to find information about economic terms and processes on his own and also as coursebooks that he had to cope with. This leads to one of the roles attributed to a BET, the information finder, which is also reinforced by the sequence "I tracked up […] I made sense of it […] I found it" (84). At the time Tibor was becoming a BET, around 2000, the Internet was not as widespread as it is nowadays and the most widely used sources of information were still books apart from personal consultation. It can be predicted that soon the Internet will be considered the primary source of information. Instead of books, Walter mentions materials, "not just books" (30).

As Walter equates BETs with in-company teachers almost exclusively, he finds that the problem with some BETs is that they teach like a general English teacher (38). The general English approach ("lots of translation, lots of ... multiple choice questions" 38), which is also connected with being exam focused, does not seem to be very professional in a business context, where there are "job experienced learners, who want PRACTICAL skills" (38).

As to BET roles, two roles have already been described, the information finder and the business person. In 66 Walter outlines the BET's negotiator role: "develop a relationship" with several people in a company "which means negotiating". Walter also appears to share the view that appeared in professional literature that a BET is rather a language consultant or a trainer with the different expressions e.g., "people who teach BE" (28) he used for a BET. At the same time, Walter refuses the general English teacher identity by not naming it at all in his whole talk during the investigated five pages. The following illustrates how he avoids the reference by using *they* instead:

> 37 Ier: So is this .. kind of teacher who teaches in er say, higher education that is pre-experience learners (Mhm.) very different from … from the one teaching in companies.
>
> 38 Tr1: In my experience …. yes. Er ((caughs)) whether it's a good thing or bad thing, I'm not too sure. Sometimes I think it's a bad thing … but

> er I'm not [totally sure of?] that one. Yes, if they do seem to be different in as much as they don't have this … deep interest in the world of business … or they seem to teach sometimes, and here's here's a negative comment coming now, they seem to teach sometimes … er …. in a very similar way to .. to lots of ... approaches to general English. So I- I've noticed in lots of institutions that they have this clear exam focus … on an intermediate level .. certificate, so all the work, even though it's a specific purposes examination, is exam preparation work. So lots of translation, lots of .. multiple choice questions.

Positioning for an identity

In several instances it appears that the speakers are negotiating an identity in question. For example, in 56 Walter illustrates the BET's business person identity with a certain positive overtone which is plainly refused by the interviewer in 57 "that's very bad for teachers" who have become self-employed not out of curiosity but due to economic pressure.

In 44-47 Tibor refuses the good business language teacher identity that the interviewer is trying to position him for first by silence and later by saying "E::r, it's not sure that I am so good a business language teacher" (47) and then goes on towards asserting his good teacher identity by referring to his experience.

As opposed to the impression that the numerous appearances of *interest* in Walter's talk create i.e. that BETs are largely motivated by interest and curiosity, Tibor's talk is full of *must* ("kell" 2, 4, 5, 7, 39, 82, 92) contributing to the image of Hungarian BETs motivated by pressure and force. Also images of fight appear in Tibor's talk "to wrestle with adults" (2) "to combat with a top manager" (55), "to tame" students (55), "I chased the subject teachers with my book" (80) presenting the harsh side of BET reality.

Strangely enough, Walter's self references seem to weaken his BET identity: numerous uses of "I think" and "in my experience", "I was like that" (i.e. uninterested in BE, 28), "my Business English career [if I could call it?] that" (38), "as a non-specialist" (40). Though, opposite to Tibor, he never mentions subject knowledge as such, Walter reveals that he possesses what most general English teachers with a humanities based background in Hungary lack by saying "I studied economics" (58). It seems that such knowledge is not regarded by him as something exceptional, thus it is usual; whereas for teachers who grew up in the socialist system, economics was certainly not among normal school subjects.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to discover teacher identity in a special context, the field of business English. The findings indicate that just like a non-native teacher feels insecure and inadequate compared to a native teacher, the studied BET, with a TEFL degree, feels he lacks knowledge about the business world, consequently he does not take up the identity of a good BET. However, he does take on the identity of a good teacher and turns to other sources of legitimacy such as a certificate in teaching business English.

Contrary to assertions in professional literature and the trainer's view that interest is sufficient for a general English teacher to teach business English, the BET participant in this study considers subject knowledge or knowledge about economy as essential. It has also been pointed out that while in the trainer's opinion the role of curiosity and experience emerges as significant in the career of a BET, the same role is occupied by written sources, for instance books (similarly to non-native speakers) and pressure from the social environment from the point of view of the BET participant. In other words, motivation tends to be perceived as intrinsic by the trainer and extrinsic by the BET participant. Probably this has something to do with history, as the interviewees were brought up in different countries with differing economic and social systems.

The emerging pictures of the roles of a BET are also different. For the trainer a BET is essentially a business person, his/her additional roles are negotiator and language consultant in an in-company setting. For the participating BET, the notion of BET is not separated from the notion of a good English teacher and is not confined to in-company settings. Nevertheless, the role of a BET exceeds the role of a language teacher as a BET needs additional business knowledge and his/her work involves a lot of struggle and hardships.

Certainly, this pilot study has not been able to detect all layers of BET identity due to lack of time and to the limited amount of data examined. The design of the study could provide more results with more than one rater and with analysing the whole of the interviews. Nevertheless, the study has been able to identify some instances of identity construction.

As a conclusion, BET identity appears to be unique and its complex nature deserves more attention in research. Also, the findings could contribute to teacher training regarding preparation for teaching language for specific purposes and content-based teaching in terms of the circumstances as well as the experience of learning to teach it and teaching it.

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Appendix A: Interview with a Teacher Trainer

Interview guide with 3 grand tour questions and prompts (McCracken,1998)

1. The attributes of a BET

Prompts:
What is a BET like?
Can you think of a very good BET and describe him/her?
Is a general English teacher (GET) different from a BET? If so, how?
What does a BET know?
What can a BET do (that a GET cannot)?
What skills does a BET have?
What is an ideal BET like?
How can a BET be successful/efficient?

2. Becoming a BET/Training BETs

Prompts:
How can somebody become a BET?
Are there any requirements for people who want to become BETs?
What kind of people do you train to be BETs?
When you train teachers what would you most like to convey?
What is your main message?
What would you like to achieve with the teachers you train?
What would you like to modify/change in them?

3. Teaching BE

Prompts:
Is BE teaching methodology any different from GE teaching?
What are typical BE classes like?
Could you describe them from the teacher's point of view?
What is the atmosphere like?
How does a BET prepare for classes?
What are your students (i.e. BET trainees) like?
Could you pinpoint concrete differences between GE and BE teaching?
What are the common points?
Do you teach Presentation Skills?
How do you teach Presentation Skills?
How does this process relate to teaching BE?

Appendix B: Interview with a BET

Interview guide used for the interview with 1 grand tour question and prompts (McCracken, 1998).

How have you become a Business English teacher?

question categories	*prompts*
1. identification	a) Do you consider yourself a BET?
	b) What is a BET like?
2. starting the process of becoming a BET	c) How did you start teaching BE?
	d) Tell me how you have become a BET
	e) What is your story?
	f) What motivated you?
	g) What has influenced you?
3. the in-service course	h) Were you trained to teach BE?
	i) Did you feel more confident after the course?
	j) What did you learn at the course?
	k) Did the course cause any changes in you or your classes?
4. self-development	l) What sources have you used for self-development?
	m) How did you experience the process of becoming a BET?
5. typicality of process	n) How different is that from other BETs` ways?
	o) How can somebody become a BET?
	p) Are there any requirements for people who want to become BETs?
6. the BET at present	q) How long have you taught BE?
	r) Do you feel you have changed in any ways due to teaching BE?
	s) Do you prefer teaching BE to GE?
7. the future	t) Do you have any plans for future development concerning teaching BE?
	u) Do you think you'll stay in BE teaching permanently or do you wish to move on to something else?

Appendix C: Sample Interview Transcript

Interview with Walter

Transcribing conventions:
Trainer 1: Tr1
Tibor BET: T
Interviewer: Ier
Pause of a half second: ..
Pause of 1 second: …
Pause of 1.5 seconds: ….
Laugh, sigh, minimal response of interactant etc.: (laughs) (laugh)
Unfinished word or sentence: What a-

Emphatic pronunciation: MOST of the time
Incomprehensible word or words: xxx xxx
Unclear word or words: [had]
Guess: [have?]
Transcriber's comment: ((happily))

25. Ier: So if we could go- or start with the- first the attributes of a Business English teacher.
26. Tr1: Right …ERM.
27. Ier: Can you describe the Business English teacher? (laughs)
28. Tr1: [Yeah, er?] I.. I don't know if there is such a thing as THE .. Business English teacher or A particular Business English teacher I think that … er… as far as my understanding goes .. most people I think who … who teach Business English … and .. I think .. maybe we'd better [be specific?] here Business English in a .. in [a/the] context [of?] teaching in companies or teaching er (Aha.) company … people is the fact that they are … and I don't want this to be detrimental to … other teachers, so please don't misunderstand this … or whoever listens to this tape. I think people who teach Business English .. have a number of attributes .. er which are … similar to people who work in business. And I think that is er … often sense of urgency, sense of priority … and .. often … a an acute sense of of customer .. satisfaction, customer care. Because I er in my experience at least a lot of Business English teachers are working for themselves or for companies but not on a .. salary basis but on a … a fee basis. So in many respects there's a precarious relationship between a teacher and .. his or her (pause) employer, let's say. Because they are not employed as such. So they have er they have this consciousness about er meeting customer needs and meeting them well … because they need to have satisfied customers to be reengaged and things like that. So I think that's one of the xxx attributes of Business English teachers. [Er but that's perhaps?] not a general attribute because there are all different types of Business English teachers. Er what do I think- I think that characterises most Business English teachers or comes to characterize most Business English teachers, I think, is an obvious interest in the world of business. And a more than superficial interest. So I think a lot of Business English teachers … who (pause) er … tend to specialize in Business English or do a lot of work in the field I think I think they keep up with the business news from TV, journals, Internet, things like that. Of course there are Business English teachers who are forced to teach Business English and they DON'T always .. er … have any interest whatsoever in Business English. Maybe you were like that at the beginning of your career. I ..I certainly was.

Ier: Actually I was. (laughs)

Appendix D: Sample Interview Transcript

Interview with Tibor

1. Ier: […] Tehát, az első kérdés, hogy milyen az üzleti nyelvtanár vagy, hogy hogyan lehetne, leírni egy ilyet.
2. T: Hát, szerintem egy üzleti nyelvtanár nem nagyon különbözik egy rendes, tisztességes nyelvtanártól csak mindössze nagy nehezen meg kellett szereznie egy bizonyos tárgyi tudást, ami eléggé messze áll egy bölcsészkaros angoltanártól. Sok különbség ezen kívül nem hiszem, hogy lenne, hát csak tanítás. Sőt nyelvtanítás. Mmm. Igen, meg hát mondjuk azért a hallgatókkal való kapcsolatban is más az embernek, hogyha felnőt-

tekkel kell megbirkózni, vagy top menedzsereket kell tanítani, kicsit másabb. De alapjában véve akkor is csak nyelvtanítás.

3. Ier: Mhm, OK. Mit tud egy üzleti nyelvtanár? … Amit esetleg egy általános nyelvtanár nem tud?
4. T: Hát, őőő, főleg a szaktárgyi tudás, tehát bizonyos, őőő, témakörökre gondolok én, hogy ha a tőzsdét vagy bankinget vagy, nemzetközi áruforgalom, vagy ha ilyesmit tanít, akkor azt előtte valahogy meg kell szerezni, úgyhogy ebben, a témakörben való felkészültsége más.
5. Ier: Mhm. Ő vannak-e olyan készségei az üzleti nyelvtanárnak, amik csak rá jellemzőek. Amit esetleg egy általános nyelvtanár nem tud?
6. T: Hát szerintem mindenképpen rugalmasabbnak kell lenni, mert ez az egész gyorsabban változik. Illetve az órára való felkészülésnél is rugalmasabbnak kell lenni, mert fel kell készülni arra, hogy a hal- ... a tanítvány az azt mondja, hogy neki ehhez most nincs kedve, vagy ő most nem ér rá, vagy ő most ezt szeretné, vagy holnap prezentálni fog nem tudom miről angol nyelven, és jaj segítsek. Úgyhogy így sokkal rugalmasabbnak, naprakészebbnek kell lennie, mint valaki másnak, aki 15 éve bemegy és megtanítja a present preferct-et ugyanúgy.
7. Ier: Mhm, oké. Milyen az ideális üzleti nyelvtanár? Egyáltalán van ilyen?
8. T: Hát szerintem nincs ilyen, hogy ideális tanár. xxx A tanítás az egy emberek közötti kapcsolat, és ha a tanár nem passzol össze a másik hallgatóval vagy a másik hallgató a másik csodatanárral nem passzol össze (Aha) vagy éppenséggel egy rossz tanár nagyon jól beválik annak a hallgatónak a különleges igényeihez. Azt nem mondanám. Az ideális az lenne, ha valakinek lenne egy üzleti végzettsége egy gazdasági végzettsége és egy nyelvtanári végzettsége, hogy biztosan álljon mind a két területen a lábán.
9. Ier: Mhm, mhm. És van ilyen? Tudsz ilyenről?
10. T: Hát szerintem nem, mert aki ilyen jól tud angolul és van hozzá egy közgazdasági végzettsége az nem annyiért dolgozik, mint mi. És valamivel jobb állásokat is tud találni. Én még nem nagyon találkoztam olyan valakivel:
11. Ier: Mhm, mhm. Akkor, ha ideális nincs, akkor beszélhetünk jó üzleti nyelvtanárról?
12. T: Hát persze.
13. Ier: Amilyen mondjuk Te vagy (laugh). De azért azt szeretném, ha Te mondanád el, hogy szerinted milyen a jó üzleti nyelvtanár.
14. T: Hát én csak azt tudom mondani, mint amit az első kérdésre válaszoltam. Ugyanolyan, mint egy jó sima nyelvtanár.
15. Ier: Tehát akkor mondhatjuk, hogy NYELVTANÁR.

My First Study-Abroad Experience

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Introduction

After many years of helping students to study abroad (SA), an opportunity arose for me to study in China. The four-month, government exchange program in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, West China, in 2007, satisfied personal and professional goals. The opportunity offered adventure and a unique chance to gain first-hand knowledge of SA and its implications for second language acquisition (SLA) as well as of personal factors that contribute to the success of SA. It also endowed me with personal experience and observations about the factors that motivate people to study abroad. Four months immersed in another culture would also provide a much-needed break from everyday stress.

The first part of the study will give an overview on diary studies in SA; the second, an analysis of the results of my diary from the aspects of cultural adaptation and personal growth. Then, I introduce the data collection instruments and the procedures of data collection in a step-by-step fashion. In the next section I turn to the analysis of data collected in the form of diary entries. The discussion of the results focuses on the comparison of the present findings with those of previous research. Coleman (1997) identifies four main objectives of students who want to study abroad: improved language competence, academic development, cultural awareness, and personal development. The findings of this study highlight the importance of the cultural and personal aspects. Finally, I focus on results of the program.

Diary studies on SA

The phenomenon of travelling abroad for study purposes has been researched since the 1960s. Initially studies focused on measuring students' language abilities using quantitative methods: Carroll (1967), Willis, Doble and Sankarayya (1977), Dyson (1988), Veguez (1984), Liskin-Gasparro (1984), Magnan (1986), Milleret (1990), Foltz (1991). (See Freed, 1995, p. 33). Second language acquisition in a SA context continued to be a primary interest of researchers in the 1990s, although there was a shift towards the use of qualitative means (Pellegrino, 2006, p. 94; Freed, 1995, p. 41). While the first studies focused mainly on the linguistic gains,

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later on more interdisciplinary fields, such as cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics were addressed.

Linguistic gains are still among the most important aims of SA. As Coleman (1998) claims, the main reason for students to take part in a SA exchange is to improve proficiency in the second language. Other frequently mentioned reasons are academic advancement, better understanding of another country, travel, 'wanting a break', experience of new teaching methods and the desire to gain another perspective on one's own country (Coleman, 1998, p. 46). Participants' perception of the host country and its citizens may change, and they may become more aware of their own traditions and environment. Self-development or personal gains are also invaluable involving greater self-reliance, self-confidence and adaptability.

It has been highly challenging for researchers to collect data during SA. Student experiences and perspectives have largely been collected with the help of introspective methods such as diaries, log-books, interviews and qualitative analyses like case studies or ethnographies (Pellegrino, 1998, p. 92). Some drawbacks of these techniques, according to Pellegrino, may be that learners are not always able to characterise certain processes correctly, because their perceptions may be subjective or be biased. Periods of change and development like SA can influence students in many ways and diaries could provide access to data that might otherwise be lost or forgotten. Diaries allow researchers to see students' private thoughts, expectations and attitudes. This way they can draw conclusions about language behaviours, students' success, and also gain deeper insights and depth of understanding of an individual's SA experience.

Areas examined in this study

Experiencing a new culture may result in memorable, often life-altering experiences for students. When studying abroad, students see different beliefs, customs, values, language and elements of a society that make the host culture unique. In this section I will overview the literature relevant to two major research interests in connection with SA: cultural adaptation and personal growth.

Cultural adaptation

Becoming adapted to a new culture means overcoming difficulties presented by a series of new and unexpected situations, re-evaluating values of the home culture and learning about the norms of second language (L2) culture. Social and psychological problems during SA have been studied since the 1950s. A cornerstone study is a much earlier work of Stonequist (1937), *The Marginal Man* highlighting problems of immigrants challenged by the influence of two cultures (in Bochner & Furnham, 2001, p. 36). Early studies followed the psychoanalytic tradition, dealing with the person and experiences of individuals encountering new cultures. The term *reentry shock* has also been introduced to describe experiences after returning home from abroad (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Jacobson, 1963). With the ex-

pansion of international foreign exchange programs education experts began to investigate the phenomenon of cultural adaptation. Intercultural research began to emerge and the research activities were directed towards the description and analysis of the social and psychological problems experienced by students traveling overseas (Carey, 1956) as well as adjustment problems of foreign students traveling to the United States. In the 1960s two new concepts were introduced into the study of cross cultural adjustment, one being 'culture shock' first coined by Oberg (1960), explaining difficulties posed by encountering a new culture, the second is the U-curve hypothesis of adjustment.

The term "culture shock" refers to "the distress experienced by the sojourner as a result of losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social interaction" (Bochner & Furnham, 1984, p.167). In other words, the person may be so unfamiliar with the host environment that he has no guidance as to what when or how to do. Although recently the term culture shock has been replaced by acculturative stress in the literature of psychology (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 298) I will continue to use the original term. Oberg (cited in Kraft, 2004, p. 33) defined six aspects of culture shock as follows:

- strain due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations;
- a sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in regard to friends, status, profession and possessions;
- being rejected by and /or rejecting members of the new cultures;
- confusion in role, role expectations, values, feelings, and self-identity;
- surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation, after becoming aware of cultural differences;
- feelings of impotence due to the inability to cope with the new environment.

When living abroad, the individual goes through stages of adjustment in the following order: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment (Kraft, 2004, p. 33). This four-element list later had been extended by re-entry shock and adjustment. In other words, adjustment is like a roller-coaster of emotions. These ups and downs may appear at different times for different individuals and their lengths may vary as well.

Culture shock in its broader sense has been applied to culture fatigue and language or role shock as well. Bochner and Furnham (1984) developed a list of three conditions that the length and extent of culture shock may depend on: (1) cultural differences, that is, the difference between the sending and the receiving culture, (2) individual differences in how different people are able to cope with difficulties and (3) sojourn experience: "if sojourners are carefully introduced into a new society by close, sympathetic host culture friends, the evidence indicates that they may encounter fewer problems" (Bochner & Furnham, 1984, p. 171). Van Rheenen suggests that if anxiety is very powerful, it can result in either returning home, with-

drawing from the host culture, relationships and becoming non-productive or giving up the own culture and become native (1996, p. 93).

Bochner and Furnham claimed that acquiring the social skills of the host culture (e.g., negotiating everyday social encounters) was more important than adjustment (1984, p. 164). The social skills model suggests that problems in the new culture are attributed to the lacking cultural skills and knowledge, so to overcome challenges one needs to learn these cultural skills and knowledge. A method that is concerned with providing students with a "working knowledge" of life in the target culture is Intercultural Awareness Raising (IAR). The student might not only learn facts, but coping strategies for living in the foreign culture (C2) as well. It might prove to be a helpful educational tool for minimizing negative effects of SA. The aims and objectives of IAR have been described by Hall and Toll (1999). IAR activities to help acculturation include "familiarization with factual information important to life in C2" (Hall & Toll, 1999, p. 9); identification and recognition of cultural factors (e.g., own culture and background, stereotype) influencing being intercultural; realisation that intercultural awareness is a dynamic process; identification and recognition of personal factors, attributes and skills affecting ability to adapt to life abroad; development of attitudes and strategies that will help adaptation. IAR activities might help international students understand cultural values and that cultural background may influence their perception of others. Students may establish adaptation and coping strategies easier as a result of such preparation.

Personal growth

Personal growth and increased knowledge of the target culture seem to be essential constituents of the SA experience. Research suggests that students' opinion about themselves, the target culture and language change during SA as well as and their opinions on their own culture and values. Bicknese's 1974 study showed that students learn to appreciate their own culture more, while learning to appreciate the target culture. Laubscher (1984) claimed that students became "more independent and self-reliant, more confident in their own abilities, and more tolerant and accepting of cultural and personal difference than they had been before studying in another country" (cited in Pellegrino, 1995, p. 113).

Gmelch (1997) describes two main areas of change in student perceptions: increased self confidence and increased adaptability. Students examined in Gmelch's study claimed they were better able to handle situations and also better able to cope with inevitable problems or surprises (Gmelch, 1997, p. 484). Stisworth (1988) has discovered personality changes in three areas during a short stay, namely: less conventional attitudes, more adaptable thinking and higher degree of autonomy and independence. Gmelch (1997) adds that students show more confidence when talking to strangers and when gathering information (Gmelch, 1997, p. 486). Interactions and solving problems help students to being more mature and add to their personal development.

Clément (1978, p. 55) pointed out the improvement of attitude towards the host nation in his study of a short-term immersion program in Quebec. Coleman (2004) listed three main personal objectives of SA namely independence and self-reliance, confidence, and self awareness. A similar concept can be traced in Murphy-Lejeune's model for learning abroad (2003) where she outlines four areas of development: cognitive, strategic, social and personal. Personal and interpersonal attitudes include openness — curiosity, tolerance, flexibility — and critical awareness of self and others — learning culture as interculture (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 102).

Personal gains of studying abroad include greater knowledge of the target culture and society, greater appreciation of own culture as well as the target culture, independence, self-reliance, increased confidence, self-confidence and tolerance, greater objectivity, personal growth, and improved attitude towards the host nation.

The context of research

In this section I will focus on the description of the program and the environment the SA experience took place. The Gansu International Sister City Exchange Program is described in the program's handbook as follows:

> Trainees will be provided with both classroom-based courses and a variety of field trips to experience Chinese language and culture, engage in observing and understanding of the modern Chinese society especially the development and achievements in the Northwest of China. (*Handbook of Gansu International Sister City Exchange Program*, 2007)

Designed for representatives of sister cities and provinces, a multinational group of 18 people took part in the program. Delegates represented Madagascar, the Philippines, the USA, New Zealand, Hungary, Romania, Namibia, Japan, Uruguay, Mexico, Brazil, Cuba and Egypt. All participants were adults aged between 21 and 55 years. The professions of Chinese participants were different, but almost all of them were officers and office workers at different government offices. The international group contained people of various professions ranging from teachers to office managers and from accountants to environmental specialists.

The international group took part in the same activities, although it was not a close-knit unit. Everybody had their own interests and over the period of four months the group divided into three or four smaller groups. Their cultural, social and conversational standards were as different as their interests. Participants of this course were not explained fully about course content prior to arrival, which in many cases undermined students' motivation and performance during language tests. As a participant very thoroughly explained in her final report for the program,

> This year there were many delegates in the group. It seems to me that it is difficult to serve everyone's needs when the group is so diverse. We are all different ages and most of us have different interests and reasons for applying for this program. In my opinion, for any future ambassador programs, the Gansu Foreign Affairs Office should play a bigger role in deciding who comes on the program.… The GSFAO and their corresponding partner in our hometowns could then work closely together to determine areas of interest, or establish further links by selecting suitable delegates.… I believe that this would mean that before the start of the program both sides could set clear objectives. Then both the Delegate and the GSFAO would be clear on expectations and desirable outcomes from the program. I feel that this year some delegates may not be able to derive the full benefits from being here, as they either did not make good use of their time here, or that their objectives in coming here were not firmly established in their home country. (M. J., GSFAO Sister City Exchange Program delegate, 2007)

I, too, have to note that lack of information about the course influenced not only the tone of my diary but my attitude towards SA. On the whole, this experience was not a classical study-abroad experience, but rather a cultural immersion program with special attention to official relationship-building.

The period examined was a four-month sojourn in China from September 3 to December 20, 2007. Participants of the sister city exchange program stayed in Lanzhou, at Lanzhou University Foreign Expert Guesthouse. This small guesthouse provided very good standard accommodation which was certainly above my expectations. Every candidate lived in a single room with own bathroom with a shower and bath. The guesthouse provided daily cleaning, a common kitchen and laundry room.

My typical daily routine involved getting up around eight in the morning and attending classes from nine to twelve. With a two-hour lunch break (which is customary in Chinese offices) the day continued with either more classes or cultural visits. Two afternoons a week left some time for going out in the town to experience culture and encounter locals and some studying or watching Chinese television (as English-speaking channels were not available). As seen above, we were provided with a complex program as well as a set of challenges to overcome during our stay.

Research design

In this paper I follow the qualitative research tradition characterized by rich description, natural representation, and few participants. I am the only participant whose view is analyzed throughout.

The constructivist format of the study makes it possible to focus on the specific context of SA. Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, the study tries to provide as much detail as possible of the situation under investigation (Creswell, 2005, p.

8). Thus, the construct of the research is to "inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning" (p. 9). Brecht and Robinson (1993, p. 4) also claim that "it is precisely in the study of such complex processes as SLA during study abroad that a qualitative approach is most appropriate and effective."

The diary is a tool for ethnographic, introspective research. Through the eyes of the writer we gain insights into the personal experiences, own perceptions of students during the SA. These accounts are difficult to generalize, but they give a deeper understanding of the SA experience of learners. This is why bias and subjective perception is not considered to be a drawback in this research tradition.

Diary

Data collection method

During the period I kept a journal of my experiences. While attending various social functions and private meetings I had the opportunity to observe international and Chinese counterparts. Upon returning to the accommodation I took notes of my experiences and later compared them to relevant literature.

Diary studies in linguistics have constraints and obvious values as well. One of the constraints is that entries are written after the event, often days later. This poses loss or altering of information. The entries might vary in length and depth as well. In this case entries are rather sketchy and subjective by nature. On the other hand, an introspective method like this allows for examining thought processes that occur while observing various events.

Audience

The diary was written primarily to aid memory and contains personal reflections on happenings during the sojourn. I have been writing diaries for more than ten years now with the aim of self-development. Normally I do not write for the public, but in this case I was aware that the diary might be used for further research. I kept it in English, so the analysis and quoting would be easier and also because the lingua franca in the group was English and most of the time it was easier to reflect on things in English.

Procedure

The diary was written on a computer during the four-month sojourn. I wrote three or four times every week and tried to record every interesting event. The number and length of entries varied, and they were thematic, rather than chronological. The time lapse between the episode and the diary entry also varied. I tried to record an entry that night or the following morning, but most often it was not possible because of the busy schedule. I usually ended up trying to catch up at the

weekends but sometimes I recorded happenings straight away. My aim with writing the diary was to record the experience.

Researcher's bias

Writing a diary during my sojourn in China proved to be an interesting experiment as well as an exercise, as I read a lot on examining SA with the help of diaries. The diary is analyzed in retrospect, but subjectivity is unavoidable, since the writer of the diary and the researcher is the same person.

Analysis

In the following I will analyse my data according to two focus points: cultural adaptation and personal growth. I collected recurring themes in connection with the point under examination and I will present them in a chronological manner.

Cultural adaptation

In retrospect, traveling to China was a stressful experience for me. In the following I will draw examples from my diary of different stages of cultural adaptation. I decided to structure the analysis of data referring to cultural adaptation under five main headings: (a) getting there, exposure to a new culture; (b) culture shock; (c) elation, excitement, adjustment; (d) adaptation; (e) inconveniences, frustration.

Getting there: Exposure to a new culture

Getting there was a long, tiring journey with a 10-hour wait at Beijing Airport. I did not bother to look around; I remember the first question I asked the information was where I could find a place to sleep. I opted for a place called "hourly lounge" where small rooms with a bed and TV were rented for an hourly fee, instead of trying to look around in the town or in the airport. Usually I try to get out of the airport when I travel, but then I was genuinely tired and not interested. I figured I would see a lot of China while I was there. As the first diary entry illustrates, being tired was one of the main initial themes:

> When we got to the guesthouse I was dead tired but I still washed and disinfected the bathroom because I really needed to have a shower. The room was nice … and cold. There is a wonderful loud bell on campus which wakes you up 6 in the morning and does not shut up until 10 in the evening. (3 September, 2007)

The other apparent pattern that re-occurs throughout the diary is comments on other people's English. The very first impression was made by flight attendants who wanted to know whether I wanted "pig or chicken" for dinner. I remember I was speechless and had to ask again.

> I have met the rest of the group. Mostly younger than me. Otherwise most of them are pretty irritating with their minimal English and lousy pronunciation. So I made friends with the two New Zealanders (kiwis) and the one American guy who is as young as my brother and really crazy but has a great sense of humor. (4 September, 2007)

Culture shock

From this excerpt it is clear that as many other people, I started focusing on the weaknesses of the situation I was in. It is common in the initial stages of cultural adaptation to focus on things missing or weaknesses in the host culture, as explained in Aghdami and Williams' article, "Managing Migration" (2008). The following excerpt illustrates a criticism on the lack of communication:

> Fun, fun, fun day at the quarantine. Chinese counterparts did not find it necessary to let us know to take two original copies of our health examination -or whatever it was called- form, so whoever did not have an original, stamped, signed copy complemented with blood and heart results got stabbed again by non-professional Chinese hospital assistants. (5 September, 2007)

Feelings of frustration and irritation can be observed in the following quote as well:

> Our leader, or program manager as she likes to call herself, Mary, is really irritating. Her pronunciation is bad, bad, bad, but her vocabulary is surprisingly wide, mainly in official terms. But she very often says?' Maaaaybeee it's beeeter for you to …' and then she would give a piece of advice. (4 September, 2007)

I often pointed out small uncomfortable things in connection with food, travel and the organization of the programs. This cathartic piece of writing expresses irritation in connection with badly organized photo shoots. "OK. First stop, Wuwei. Lots of horses. This is an extremely touristy place. Again we waited around, took a group shot IN THE RAIN! What do we need all these group shots for? (9 September, 2007)." I noticed that slight comparisons were made in connection with the comfort level of the hotel. I was still pointing out what, in my opinion, Chinese culture lacked:

> We arrived to Shandan by the evening. The hotel was -ah my god (!)- terrible. The elevator does not seem to be in fashion here. Walls are wet. Toilet does not flush. Noise, dirt… Common bathroom opposite and men do not shut the door when washing. (9 September, 2007)

Elation, excitement, adjustment

Around this date I found the first evidence for the thought of becoming friendlier with the host culture. It occurred as a reflection on the trip to Dunhuang:

> But when we got to Dunhuang… well, it was almost as I dreamed. It is a very busy row of caves. Listed as a World Heritage site in 1987. I saw pictures of hunters shooting arrows backwards – to say the least about Hungarian heritage. It was not as I imagined from the inside. So we rode the camel later. I thought it was going to be a lot scarier. It wasn't. At the end of the day I established I wanted to live in Dunhuang with my camel. These places I found peaceful enough and less scary than the rest of China I saw so far. (12 September, 2007)

My birthday fell on a very busy week. I was expecting to feel homesick, but as we had many activities going on I did not notice being homesick. On the contrary, a trace of elation can be noticed in the day's diary entry:

> Today is my birthday. I woke up at a great hotel again, the others said happy birthday early in the morning, after breakfast. We went to the Jade cup factory today and I got a present from one of the local dignitaries. A pair of jade cups and a pair of small bowls. They are so beautiful. I felt like at home. These people are as nice as the nice people I met at home…. All in all, I had a great birthday. At dinner I got a cake and flowers!!!! I love the Chinese! But the hotel room was the second worst. M. and I were actually making fun of the "hardships" of having to stay at a different hotel. (14 September, 2007)

Surprisingly, road trips proved to be the times when I felt less depressed and more at home. Comparisons were still made with home, but more in a positive sense, that is, when I saw or experienced something resembling something at home or reminding me of home, I felt better.

> This weekend we had another road trip to Labrang. The Tibetan Autonomous prefecture is a very friendly place. The first day we got to a very cold hotel, had lunch (a great one with real bread) but dinner was the greatest. We went to the grasslands which is a great "puszta" (plains). Mongolian-type people were giving a performance, and danced to us while we were eating dinner. One of the songs was dedi-

> cated to me. Maybe they saw some kind of resemblance. (29-30 September, 2007)

Stress and language learning

After the first two weeks of touring the country we were required to engage in everyday activities like studying, which to most of us proved to be quite stressful.

> They really want us to learn Chinese (Mandarin, to be exact). I don't know how they imagine this. This is a language that is impossible to learn in a little more than 3 and a half months. Our grammar teacher is quite strange. A bit old school and does not explain a lot. We have to figure out things pretty much by ourselves. And through the homework. (17 September, 2007)

I have to admit that my expectations towards our language teacher were largely based on my own school experiences and on the ways I was taught English, as well as on educational traditions I encountered in Hungary. I was expecting to receive the communicative language teaching "treatment" as I have most often used this language teaching approach in Hungary. Our conversation classes followed this approach, but not the grammar classes. The grammar book consisted of short texts and Chinese characters we had to copy many times. Reading and translation were emphasized. I found this approach very similar to the reading approach that was widespread around the 1930s. I found this approach very outdated, this is why I referred to it as "old school".

The next quote shows that a challenge with language learning I have always had is intensified under foreign circumstances.

> A test is always frustrating. I wonder how to perform stress-free language learning? S. wanted to kill himself, he was so frustrated. But how will I possibly do the stupid final exam in a language I am not even interested in, and quite honestly at the moment hate from the bottom of my heart. Although some of the culture is interesting. These people are just crazy. (19 November, 2007)

Initially, I had not been motivated to learn Mandarin at all. I did not have positive attitude towards the situation (taking part in a program in China), the language, as I had not been interested in Chinese language or culture before; therefore, I did not have very positive attitude towards the people of the host nation either (although I have to admit, they were exceptionally nice and friendly towards our group). This affected the success and rate of my language learning. In other words, I learned very slowly and was not successful, especially in the writing tasks. In addition, I have always been anxious as a person and in language classes I experienced anxiety even more intensively. In this case the intensified anxiety was combined with test anxiety, resulting in an extremely negative reaction towards the

language and the hosts. Strangely enough, this experience did not make me revisit my own ideas about testing as a teacher, because I realized that the main reason for the high level of my language anxiety was my negative self-perception.

Inconveniences, frustration

Experiencing some inconveniences resulted in frustration and the feeling of culture shock as these examples show:

> Strange that for a week we had no heating in the classroom. They were repairing something on the system. It did not help my morale! (23 November, 2007)
>
> Exams tomorrow! This is crazy. For the second week we have been studying, eating crackers, living on coffee and smoke, not going anywhere. Our tutor has been very helpful. She came every day and helped not only us but Joe as well. Vivien is a genius. How can she learn so much in so little time. I remember I have never been the quickest of learners. (9 December, 2007)

As we can see, the U-curve hypothesis of cultural adaptation is somewhat altered here as the first phase, honeymoon or initial elation, cannot be observed. One explanation for this may be the intensity of pre-departure homesickness which stems from personal reasons, namely getting married six months prior to departure. This resulted in feelings of not wanting to leave and depression.

Adaptation

At the beginning of the SA, adaptation experiences showed in the form of difficulties. When the way of life did not seem to be that weird, difficulties were accepted as different ways of doing things.

> We went to a small restaurant to learn how to cook an egg dish, a beef dish and noodles. The kitchen was dirty, the dishes turned out to be very delicious. No connection, I hope. In the afternoon I learned some more, cooked soup for dinner... (18 November, 2007)

During the first weeks I wanted to keep myself occupied by establishing a regular daily routine? doing the washing in the morning, having breakfast, going to classes, having lunch with the others, going shopping and cooking or studying in the evening. This strategy prevented me from spending too much time with being depressed. Later on I tried to insert activities which involved getting out of the usual, safe circumstances and experiment. I have noticed that group-mates who were seeking the opportunities to use Chinese had more fun and became more

confident, so I tried to join them, as the quote above shows. As a result I developed a more positive self-perception.

Personal growth

"Before departure it might not be clear what role time spent abroad will play in one's life. But returning home most people realize: being abroad was the most important experience in their lives" (Udvarhelyi, 2007, p. 66). The quote best summarizes my feelings towards my SA. I was newly married, and the thought of being separated from my husband for four months resulted in a negative attitude towards the experience. There were, obviously some cognitive reasons that made me choose to embark on the endeavor, namely the interest in SA and the insight I could get that would facilitate my research. In addition, it seemed to be a nice chance for travelling, and to get away from the stressful workload. In the following I will depict parts of my diary that illustrate personal growth or personal development. The excerpts are grouped under five headings: health, work, opportunities, confidence, and adaptability.

Health

Sport and a healthy way of life contribute to self-confidence. This has always been part of my self-development process, so I was happy to find opportunities for exercise on the campus:

> The university is soo big and it takes 8 minutes of quick walk to get to the gate from the guesthouse which is at the opposite end of the campus. I do take the occasional walks from the guesthouse to the shopping mall though. (6 September)

The following quote reflects on negative home experiences connected to stress. Besides the health issue a decision to have more free time and relax was formed pertaining to my future lifestyle.

> Things have sped up quite considerably. Yesterday I noticed I missed a deadline for home (…) In 2 weeks we have the Chinese exam, we only have 7 teaching days till then. I am not very good at Chinese. I feel the pressure I had at home coming back. I think at home I should just eliminate everything that is not work and 1 teaching and enjoy my free time and not work. It has not done too much good to my health so far. (25 November)

Work

Healthy ways find a way in the workplace as well. I was amazed that work policy supports the healthy way of life as described in the following quote: "The office atmosphere looks quite relaxed, the have a two-hour break in lunchtime and do gymnastics around three in the afternoon. Quite healthy" (20 September). Usually, the stage following the initial elation contains references to home, home relationships and usual circumstances. In the following extract though, work, that is my job at home, is referred to as something that is not missing.

> Me, on the other hand was lucky cause my papers got accepted. I can't thank enough my instincts to have made an extra copy and had it signed and stamped by my doctor. I guess I have worked around stupid people enough to know to make doubles of every piece of paperwork. Oh, how I love my job. In fact, how I love not being in my job at the moment. (5 September)

In this quote I also reflected on my working style as well, by referring to making copies of everything. I concluded that my style would have been efficient under the new circumstances as well.

Opportunities

Other course participants tried to take part in as many activities in the native environment or with locals as possible. They went on visits to family homes, went on trips by themselves or just went out for dinner more often. Most of the time I was reserved, other members of the group got out more than I did. In the following here is an example when I did get out.

> We went to a calligrapher who is a very nice man … Jeff, Graham and I went to his home with Rachel. The gate of the housing estate was kept…. But the calligrapher and his wife are real darlings! He has a small room in the flat where he paints his calligraphy. He showed us the letters from the different dynasties. Then we tried… I thought it was going to be a lot easier! It is not! I have always been great in drawing! This is difficult! Graham did very well! I guess he picked the right brush. His was a lot thicker than ours. We got a book signed from him with all his works! (7 Oct, 2007)

Confidence

Confidence for me includes understanding of the culture I live in, as well as accepting its representatives. In these examples I was interacting both with Chinese people and the culture as well. I was happy to start integration into the host cul-

ture and gathering new experience that made me feel almost like an insider: "Oh, some of us sang. On stage. Well … " (7 Sep).

> We have Tai Chi classes! It is amazing how they accommodate to almost every request of ours! Tai Chi is great, everything is about breathing. The teacher thinks I am talented! Hah! The teacher is very European and very nice. I like this form of exercise, and I think I could do more of it. Everybody enjoys Tai Chi. (11 October)

Adaptability

Most examples show how others are becoming more adaptable, coping with everyday life's challenges or problems. This excerpt shows how I coped:

> I usually go somewhere with somebody and get back home around 8 or 9 in the evening, by which time I am so tired that I only have energy to watch a film, take a shower and sleep. I usually have to wait for my husband to get home and stay awake until and after 11 at night. Jeff usually comes around and checks on everybody. (21 September)

Students find different elements of SA useful. I understood that interaction with locals is the best way to learn, and to avoid feelings of loneliness or depression. It is extremely difficult to interact with locals without speaking the language, especially in China. My next comment, however, is directed towards the future. It shows that I grew interested in the culture and its people and want to prepare for meeting them again. At the end of my diary I reflected to my time in China from a personal point of view in the form of lessons learned:

> Next opportunity I have I go out whatever it takes. We need to get out and meet the locals otherwise you get less experience. Less things you learn. Revise your Chinese – you never know! (December, 2007)

As an inventory of personal gains observable in the diary I would list: 1. appreciation of my approach to work, 2. appreciation of Chinese people, 3. appreciation of Chinese art and culture, 4. lessons for home.

Opinions of other participants

Towards the end of the course I asked my group mates to provide input for my investigations. They were asked to answer two questions:

- Why did you decide to participate in this program?
- What did you expect to achieve in China?

Out of the eighteen people I received answers from five. Two out of five people answered they were inclined to travel, also two people wanted to take time off and have an opportunity for a 'paid vacation'. Three people claimed they heard a lot about China and its people, and one person had many Chinese students at the home university so she wanted to learn the language and find out more about their country and way of life. One person had done a lot of traveling before and was internationally inclined, and on top of that the dates of the program suited her schedule.

Three people thought it was going to enhance their career or get better job opportunities for them. Most of them did not have firm expectations. This was explained by the lack of information participants got before the start of the program. Everybody expressed an interest in China. One person wanted to find out how a university works in China. Somebody had no firm expectations but was prepared to be very flexible. Another respondent wanted to see the sights at the area and communicate with Chinese people. This attitude is very conducive to effective language learning. This person was prepared to make the most of the program before the start.

To me, my group mates seemed to be better prepared than I was, having personal interest in Chinese people and their way of life. One of them took a course on Chinese civilization, read a lot and saw many films on China.

Summary for further studies

SA gains cover a wide spectrum including cultural, linguistic, academic and personal aspects. Apparently the biggest gains can be detected in areas that were the most interesting or salient. In this paper I have looked at how a personal diary can aid analyzing a SA. Two aspects were examined in detail: short-term cultural adaptation and personal gains. As established earlier, a diary is valuable both for the student and the researcher especially if important periods of change are observed. They report introspective data on the experience and records events, feelings that might be forgotten in time. My diary provides valuable reflections on the SA to China, the underlying emotional and cognitive processes as well as some personal gains.

Individuals may experience different degrees and lengths of cultural adaptation stages. Here, in the U-curve hypothesis of cultural adaptation, the missing first stage called initial elation or honeymoon was observed. The culture shock and adjustment phases took up the majority of time spent in China. Even though diary entries were mostly written in a sarcastic or dissatisfied tone, they reflect the characteristic processes of SA. On the basis of the personal gains inventory, we can see that most evidence shows the appreciation of the target culture and its people. Increased tolerance was observable towards the end of the SA.

When living abroad, far from the usual, I relied on the resources I gathered that far: personally, linguistically and materially. Adapting to the circumstances, joining group activities, being open and positive, not commenting negatively are repeated comments as well as advice for myself. Unfortunately, passive intake of

cultural and personal values is characteristic throughout the diary. The process of becoming more tolerant was not observable until November. Change of habits can be detected at the beginning, on 4 September referring to cleaning and it continues describing changing walking habits, smoking and drinking coffee, eating nothing but crackers. This element is described at various times referring to the flexible approach adopted while living in China.

Preparation for the experience is invaluable as it may eliminate separation anxiety and lessen culture shock. Raising intercultural awareness, gaining useful knowledge of the receiving country and its culture are as useful as "motivation, a positive attitude, purposefulness and commitment" (Hall & Toll, 1999, p. 7).

Conclusion

Overall, this qualitative study illustrated that introspective research methods such as the analysis of diaries can be used for observing periods of change. It is important to discover tools that allow researchers to get a picture on patterns of students' time abroad. Self-analysis requires distance from the event, in this case four months allowed the researcher to look at her own experiences in a more objective way. The multicultural environment proved to be challenging as well as the lack of information before the course. Designers were criticized because they failed to provide information on the course content and did not select the course participants carefully enough. This way, candidates were not able to benefit fully from the experience. Unexpected results of the analysis of short-term cultural adaptation process were uncovered. In this case the first stage was missing, that is explained by the high level of pre-departure anxiety and stress. Personal gains observed include appreciation of work, people and culture. The data also indicate that motivation is very important for maximizing the positive impact of the study abroad.

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Use of Epistemic Modality by Non-Native Speakers of English

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Epistemic modality

In his study of the semantic function of modality Lyons (1977) defined epistemic modality as "any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters, whether this qualification is made explicit in the verbal component... or in the prosodic or paralinguistic component" (p. 797). With this definition of epistemic modality Lyons was among the first to include different markers of epistemic modality that were not based on modal verbs alone, claming that various devices are available to refer to how certain the speaker / writer feels about the content of his/her utterance.

Even though modal auxiliaries are still regarded as the prototypical realizations of epistemic modality, a number of lexical verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and multi-word units can be used to express epistemic modality associated with a number of discourse functions. Furthermore, epistemic devices express different degrees of certainty concerning the validity of assertions, and many linguists use gradience to clarify epistemic classification. For example, Hyland and Milton (1997) place epistemic devices on a continuum of probability which contains three categories: *certainty* (highest probability), *probability* (medial probability), and *possibility* (low probability). However, as Hoye (1997) pointed out, there is a lack of principled account of how we arrive at an explicit interpretation of the degree of certainty of each device since the differences in meaning arise from their context of use. The modal notions of probability can be asserted and focalized in accordance with the speaker's need to be formal, indirect, tentative, or whatever the pragmatic constraint happens to be, and it is obvious that they are to be accounted for in terms of utterance.

Epistemic modality is of central importance to the formation of argument in both spoken and written discourse since it helps writers and speakers to qualify claims at an appropriate level of commitment. However, many studies point out that qualifying one's own claims by means of epistemic expressions is difficult for both native and non-native language users. Still, it seems logical to conclude that non-native language users, due to imperfect knowledge of L2, will encounter even more problems when it comes to expressing more subtle differences in the levels of assertion.

Letica S. (2009). Use of epistemic modality by non-native speakers of English. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 119-134). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Insights from studies on the use of epistemic modality

Most studies on the use of epistemic modality were conducted for purposes of academic writing instruction. Some studies concentrated on the use of epistemic modality across different disciplines (e.g., Rizomilioti, 2006), while others investigated the use of epistemic modality across different languages (e.g., Bester-Dilger, Drobnjaković & Hansen, 2007; Recky, 2006), or both (e.g., Vold, 2006). Even though research on epistemic modality was closely associated with written discourse, some researchers (e.g., Carretero, 2002; Kärkkäinen, 2003; Recsky, 2006) have embarked on the analysis of epistemic markers in spoken discourse as well.

However, in the studies that were to inform about the extent of use of epistemic modality and and the level of commitment expressed, very often non-native user performance was measured against the one of a native speaker, and trainee academics' performance was measured against the performance of experienced writers as evidenced in corpora of published papers. There are still very few studies which take into consideration the ways second/foreign language learners qualify their claims as speakers and writers in their own right. Most research on non-native use of epistemic modality has focused on written language and mainly on the use of epistemic devices in academic essays (e.g., Hyland & Milton, 1997) and in master and doctoral theses (e.g., Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2005).

Hyland and Milton's study (1997), based on a corpus of one million words, compared the expression of doubt and certainty in the examination scripts of 900 Cantonese speaking school leavers writing in English with those of 770 British learners of similar age and educational level. The analysis revealed that non-native writers differed significantly from native writers in relying on a more limited range of items, offering stronger commitments, and exhibiting greater problems in conveying a precise degree of certainty.

McEnery and Kifle (2002) studied the differences in the use of epistemic devices in two English language corpora consisting of argumentative essays written by non-native (Eritrean) second-year university students and native British school children of around 16 years of age. However, they observed the opposite trend. They found that non-native writers used more tentative or weaker devices, while the native writers employed stronger devices. Their results were attributed to the type of non-native language instruction claiming that the non-native speakers were trained not to use strong devices and to sound more tentative in making claims, but McEnery and Kifle also pointed out that choice of a particular epistemic device over others may depend on the learners' personal beliefs and attitudes as well as on the cultural differences between writers.

The only study of non-native use of epistemic modality in the spoken language, at least to our knowledge, is Kärkkäinen's study (1992), which analyzed the use of epistemic devices by non-native (Finnish) speakers of English against the native speakers of English in simulated task-oriented conversations. Despite the fact that she examined spoken, not written, and less formal language use, her results were compatible with Hyland and Milton's (1997) findings. Kärkkäinen found that non-native speakers used fewer epistemic expressions and favored different types than native speakers.

The above mentioned studies offered an overall characterization of non-native use of epistemic modality and the differences were mostly attributed to two factors. While the differences in the degree of commitment in expressing epistemic modality were mostly attributed to cultural style, non-native speakers/writers' limited use of epistemic devices and apparent problems in conveying a precise degree of commitment was contributed to limited proficiency in a non-native language. However, no study was found which tried to rule out cultural style/difference that might have acted upon the degree of conviction expressed in spoken or written language or the one that closely compared the use of epistemic modality in two different discourse modes.

The study

Aim of the study

In order to contribute to filling the above mentioned gaps, this study aims at comparing the use of epistemic modality in Croatian and English spoken corpora produced by the same speakers in Croatian as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language. We were interested to see 1) how speakers of the same cultural background express epistemic modality in both a native (Croatian) and a non-native language (English) in similar oral tasks; 2) whether the claims they make in the two languages differ in terms of commitment; 3) whether the range of epistemic devices used can be related to the proficiency in each language; and 4) whether the non-native use of epistemic modality matches the one previously reported in spoken English discourse.

More precisely, in this study we tried to provide answers to the following research questions:

- Is there a difference between the frequency and range of epistemic devices language users use in the mother tongue and the foreign language?
- What are the differences in grammatical distribution of epistemic devices in the two languages? Does the distribution of devices in a non-native language match the formal linguistic description of use of epistemic modality in that language, or is there evidence of cross-linguistic transfer?
- How does proficiency relate to the frequency of use and the type of epistemic devices used in both languages?
- Is there a difference between the degree of certainty (level of commitment) participants express in native and non-native language?

Formal differences between the use of epistemic modality in English and Croatian written and spoken discourse

Even though the study was not intended as a systematic appraisal of contrast and equivalence between English and Croatian in the epistemic devices domain, we believe it is necessary to provide at least some information about the ways both languages codify epistemic modality in written and spoken discourse. Unfortunately, there are no comprehensive studies in Croatian that analyzed the use, distribution or relative frequency of different markers of epistemic modality. However, from English and Croatian contrastive analysis studies conducted on modality in general, it is apparent that Croatian and English express a similar range of modal meanings (Kalogjera, 1982).

Both languages codify epistemic modality through a combination of lexical (lexical verbs, adverbs etc.) and grammatical or grammaticalized devices (future and conditional forms, modal verbs). In both languages we have modal auxiliary verbs, adverbs, adjectives, modal verbs, and nouns. Here are some lexicogrammatical realizations of epistemic modality in English and Croatian:

1. modal adverbs (e.g. (E.) probably – (C.) vjerojatno)
2. modal auxiliaries (e.g. (E.) may - (C.) moći)
3. modal verbs (e.g. (E.) I think – (C.) mislim)
4. modal nouns (e.g. (E.) probability – (C.) vjerojatnost)
5. modal adjectives (e.g. (E.) possible – (C.) moguć)

However, Croatian equivalents of the English modals are fully conjugated in the same categories as main verbs and are therefore inflected for tense and mood, while English modals are uninflected for person and severely limited in respect to tense.

Furthermore, when analyzing the function of epistemic modality in spoken language, a wider and a much less precise set of devices needs to be taken into account. In both languages epistemic modality can also be associated with a grammatical construction (e.g. question tags), and be expressed by the prosodic system. Karkkainen (1992) claims that in spoken interaction linguistic categories expressing epistemic modality include all of the realizations found in the written discourse, but to a different extent whereby, for example, in spoken discourse modal adjectives and nouns are less often used. The same finding was confirmed by Recsky (2006), while there are no studies concerning the ways epistemic modality is most often realized in spoken Croatian. We hope that this study can give some insights into that area as well.

Corpora and instruments

The two corpora used (English and Croatian) were taken from a study conducted by Mihaljević Djigunović (2006). The first corpus was compiled from picture description tasks in English performed by 33 Croatian students, and the second corpus was compiled from picture description tasks in Croatian performed by the same 33 students. Both consisted of approximately 18,000 words. The participants were Croatian university students of around 20 to 23 years of age who had English as a foreign language course as a part of their regular university curriculum.

Both picture description tasks were taken from a Hungarian testing project (Fekete, Major, & Nikolov, 1999). As the pictures were not very clear there was some room left for interpretation, and we assumed that the type of task used to compile the corpora would provoke the use of epistemic devices. During the picture description tasks in both languages the participants were given the same instructions; however, the pictures the participants were describing in English and Croatian were not exactly the same. In the picture description task in English the participants were asked to describe a kitchen, while in the Croatian one they were asked to describe a garden. The fact that two different pictures were described in each language was assumed to be convenient for the purposes of our study for two reasons. First, we assumed that by describing the same picture in both languages students would become less interested in the task as they would have previously made certain conclusions about what particular objects in the picture were and would have had ready-made answers. The second reason is that the students are usually more familiar with the vocabulary related to kitchen than garden environment in their foreign language and we supposed that the former task would not create difficulties caused by the vocabulary they were not familiar with. In that way we tried to ensure that the use of epistemic modality is referred to the level of certainty expressed while describing the picture and not to the linguistic content itself.

The picture description tasks were performed orally on separate occasions and were audio-taped. Later they were typed into a word processor to be turned into machine-readable texts. Each picture description task in both corpora contained metadata about each participant's name and gender. Those were systematically encoded so they could be later retrieved for a comparison of each participant's performance in both native and foreign language.

As a part of the Mihaljević Djigunović's study (2006) all the participants were also asked to take a cloze test in both Croatian and English language. The results on the test were used in the present study as the measure of their proficiency in each language.

Methodology

In order to identify epistemic devices in both English and Croatian corpora we needed a list of epistemic devices both languages have at their disposal to express epistemic modality. The English list was taken from Hyland and Milton (1997),

which was the result of the analysis of the Brown and Lancaster/Oslo-Bergen (LOB) corpus of the most frequent devices in written language. Since no exhaustive list of epistemic devices exists in the Croatian language, the list was compiled from various studies that dealt with epistemic modality as a non-primary subject (e.g., Kalogjera, 1982; Sesar, 1992; 2001), and in consultation with an expert on modality in the Croatian language (Sesar, personal communication, January, 2008). However, since we were trying to capture epistemic modality markers in a spoken corpus our lists were supplemented by additional markers found in reference grammars (e.g., Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985) and research literature on epistemic modality in spoken language (Kärkkäinen, 1992). The list of Croatian epistemic markers was also extended with markers found in reference grammars (e.g., Silić & Pranjković, 2005), and in consultation with experts in the Croatian language.

The concordance feature of the *Antconc 3.2.1.* program for Windows was used to capture all of the instances of epistemic devices from the two corpora. The concordance output was then subjected to qualitative analysis in order to isolate true epistemic devices from other entries. Since differences in meaning which can be assigned to each modal arise from their contexts of use, each epistemic marker had to be accounted for in terms of utterance. For example, in the English corpus we found 198 instances of the modal auxiliary *would,* but only in four contexts it functioned as an epistemic auxiliary. The same inspection was conducted for homonymous examples of words such as *possible* and their Croatian counterparts.

As the corpora were not part-of-speech tagged, each epistemic device was individually classified as belonging to a particular grammatical category. However, in the course of qualitative analysis other unpredicted epistemic devices were identified. As it is often pointed out in corpus studies, quantitative work with large corpora automatically exclude single and possibly idiosyncratic instances in favor of what is central and typical. Therefore, more thorough qualitative analysis of the corpora had to be conducted in order to capture all the instances of epistemic modality markers. The criteria used to identify epistemic modality markers in the corpora were the following: the marker had to explicitly qualify the truth value of a certain propositional content, and the marker also had to be a lexical or grammatical unit (not an entire utterance).

Furthermore, in order to be able to compare the level of certainty expressed by each epistemic device in both corpora, each device was considered in the context of use and placed on the probability continuum as devised by Hyland and Milton (1997). Finally, all the devices were divided into three categories: *certainty* (highest probability), *probability* (medial probability), and *possibility* (low probability). As McEnery and Kifle (2002) pointed out, the placement of individual examples into concrete categories is to some degree subjective, so independent verification of decision making was undertaken and reference was made to arbitrating linguists.

Results

Total frequency and range of devices in the Croatian and English corpora

From Table 1 it is obvious that, overall, the participants used fewer epistemic devices in English than in their mother tongue, which has been confirmed in previous studies as well. However, the range of epistemic devices used was wider in English (L2) than in Croatian (L1).

Table 1: Total number and range of epistemic devices used to express epistemic meanings in both corpora

	Total no. of tokens	Total no. of types
Croatian	359	28
English	273	31

Even though the finding could be attributed to the fact that the English language seems to have more epistemic devices at its disposal, it was obvious that more thorough analysis had to be conducted. Correlations were computed between types and tokens of epistemic modality in native and non-native language. The analysis revealed (Tables 2 and 3) significant positive correlations between the number of devices used in L1 and L2, and the number of their types in L1 and L2. The participants who used more types and tokens in L1 tended to use more types and tokens in L2.

Table 2: Correlations between number tokens of epistemic modality used in L1 and L2

	Number of tokens in L2	Number of tokens in L1
Number of tokens in L2		
Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	33	33
Number of tokens in L1		
Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	33	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Correlations between number of types of epistemic modality used in L1 and L2

	Number of types in L2	Number of types in L1
Number of types in L2		
Pearson Correlation	1	.395*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.023
N	33	33
Number of types in L1		
Pearson Correlation	.395*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	
N	33	33

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Most frequent items expressing epistemic modality in L1 and L2

In order to look into the frequency and variability of epistemic devices in both languages we made up a list of 10 most frequent epistemic devices in both corpora.

Table 4: List of 10 most frequent epistemic devices in both corpora

Rank	L2 corpus			L1 corpus		
	type	token	%	type	token	%
1	think	108	39.5	mislim	57	15.8
2	probably	53	19.4	vjerojatno	51	14.2
3	maybe	22	8.1	možda	44	12.2
4	seem	16	5.9	čini (mi) se	39	10.8
5	looks	14	5.1	izgleda	26	7.2
6	suppose	10	3.7	valjda	23	6.4
7	don't think	8	2.9	pretpostavljam	18	5.1
8	guess	4	1.5	očito	15	4.2
9	of course	4	1.5	kao da	12	3.3
10	would	4	1.5	recimo da	11	3.1
Total		243	89		296	82

Table 4 shows the clustering of epistemic use around a very small number of devices. In the L2 corpus 10 devices accounted for 89% of all the devices used, while in L1 they accounted for 82%. Since we were dealing with the spoken language, it was expected that there would be a degree of routinization of epistemic expression where the participants would be using some epistemic markers to the detriment of others. The verb *think* and its translation equivalent *mislim* was the most frequently used epistemic device in both corpora. This finding is consistent with Kärkkäinen's study (2003), where the participants also showed clear preference for that verb in expressing epistemic modality in spoken discourse.

However, the participants were found to be more heavily dependent on a limited number of epistemic devices. In the L2 corpus two epistemic devices, namely, *think* and *probably* accounted for almost 60% of use of epistemic modality while, in

L1 the same percentage was accounted for with the use of five devices in the highest frequency band.

Another, unexpected but important, finding was also obtained through a comparison of ten most frequently used devices in both corpora. Six out of ten devices used in both corpora were epistemic devices with the same meaning and level of commitment, and their order of frequency was identical in each corpus. What is more, the top five devices were actually translation equivalents (Table 5).

Table 5: Translation equivalents found in the top frequency band of epistemic modality

L1 corpus		L2 corpus	
Rank	Epistemic device	Epistemic device	Rank
1	mislim	think	1
2	vjerojatno	probably	2
3	možda	maybe	3
4	čini (mi) se	seems	4
5	izgleda	looks	5
6	valjda (adv)	suppose (v.)	6

Intrigued by the idea that participants were transferring from their L1 in the use of epistemic devices in L2 we decided to look into the distribution of grammatical categories in each language to see whether there were any preferences in terms of grammatical category in each language.

Grammatical distribution of epistemic devices

For comparison of grammatical distribution in the two languages all the epistemic devices found in the corpora were analyzed in terms of grammatical category. The distribution in both corpora is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Grammatical categories denoting epistemic modality in both corpora

Epistemic grammatical category	L1 corpus	L2 corpus
lexical verbs	176	170
adverbs	174	89
adjectives	9	2
modal auxiliaries	0	12

As can be seen in Table 6, to express epistemic modality the participants most often used lexical verbs and adverbs in both languages. In fact, in L1 epistemic modality was almost exclusively expressed by these two grammatical categories each accounting for around 49% of all the devices. The only additional category was the adjectival category, which accounted for only 2.5% of devices used. In the L2 corpus, epistemic modality was distributed among four categories. Lexical verbs and adverbs accounted for more than 60 and 30% of all the devices respectively, and the two other categories were modal auxiliaries (4.4%) and adjectives in only two instances (0.7%).

Even though modal auxiliaries have been reported elsewhere as the most frequent grammatical category in the use of epistemic modality (e.g., Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2005), a smaller proportion of auxiliaries in our study can be justified by the discourse mode. Recsky (2006), in her study of spoken discourse, also reported 60% of epistemic devices being lexical verbs. She also reported that epistemic modality in spoken English is seldom expressed by adjectives and nouns, which corresponds to our findings as well.

However, comparing the two corpora in our study it became apparent that the number of lexical verbs used was almost the same, while adverbs were used in a higher proportion in the L1 corpus. Furthermore, it seems that the previously detected greater number of tokens of epistemic modality in L1 could be assigned to more frequent use of adverbs in L1. Since adjectives were found in a low proportion in each corpus, additional differences between the two corpora were found only in the use of modal auxiliaries in L2. As the use of modal auxiliaries in the Croatian language is limited in expressing epistemic modality (see Besters-Dilger et al., in press) this finding was expected.

We believe that preference for the adverbial category in both corpora could be attributed to the spoken language as adverbs are far more common in speech than writing due to their mobility in the clause structure (see Quirk et al., 1985). However, preference for the category of lexical verbs may be due to the transfer from Croatian, which has very few modal auxiliaries that can express epistemic modality, and the use of lexical verbs still offers an overt and precise means to express the degree of commitment in speech. Even though the frequency of adverbs in the L2 corpus could be accounted for by the fact that adverbials offer a far simpler means for speakers to express an attitude to their statements and are much more common in the spoken language, it seems important to point out that with the use of adverbs it is easier to adjust the strength of claims with fewer grammatical complications.

Proficiency as a factor in the use of epistemic modality in both languages

As limited frequency and range of epistemic devices used in a non-native language was often attributed to non-native proficiency, we were interested to see whether proficiency in each language correlates with the frequency and type of epistemic devices used in both languages. However, in the case of L1, no significant correlations were found with either the frequency or range of epistemic devices (Table 7 and 8).

Table 7: Correlation between proficiency in L1 and frequency of epistemic devices

	Proficiency in L1	Number of tokens in L1
Proficiency in L1		
Pearson Correlation	1	.012
Sig. (2-tailed)		.948
N	33	33
Number of tokens in L1		
Pearson Correlation	.012	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.948	
N	33	33

Table 8: Correlation between proficiency in L1 and range of epistemic devices used

	Proficiency in L1	Number of types in L1
Proficiency in L1		
Pearson Correlation	1	.150
Sig. (2-tailed)		.404
N	33	33
Number of types in L1		
Pearson Correlation	.150	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.404	
N	33	33

Positive correlations were found only between proficiency in L2 and the range of epistemic devices used (Table 9).

Table 9: Correlation between proficiency in L2 and range of epistemic devices used

	Number of types in L2	Proficiency in L2
Number of types in L2		
Pearson Correlation	1	.354*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
N	33	33
Proficiency in L2		
Pearson Correlation	-354*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
N	33	33

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Even though it seems logical to conclude that the range of epistemic devices would increase with the increase in proficiency, the correlation between L2 proficiency and number of types was not high. Furthermore, the lack of correlation between L2 proficiency and frequency of use of epistemic devices may point to the

fact that factors other than proficiency may be at play when it comes to the amount of epistemic devices used in both native and non-native speech.

Degree of certainty expressed by epistemic devices in both corpora

Following suggestions in the literature (e.g., Hyland & Milton, 1997), epistemic devices in both corpora were divided into three categories in terms of the degree of probability they expressed. Total numbers of types and tokens of epistemic modality in the two corpora are given in Table 10.

Table 10: Epistemic devices used in L1 and L2 corpora in terms of degree of probability expressed.

corpus	possibility no. of tokens / %	probability no. of tokens / %	certainty no. of tokens / %
L2	31 / 11 %	232 / 85%	10 / 4%
L1	80 / 22%	245 / 68%	34 /10%

In contrast to previously mentioned studies where the non-native use of epistemic modality in written and spoken discourse was found more clustered around one of the ends of the continuum, in our L2 corpus 85% (232) of epistemic devices were found to express medial probability. Even though the participants also used both stronger and weaker claims it was noticed that there was a slight tendency to use more devices expressing low possibility.

Exactly the same distribution was observed in the L1 corpus.

Comparing the two corpora in terms of the degree of possibility expressed it becomes obvious that the devices expressing medial possibility in L1 accounted for a somewhat lower percentage of all the devices used in the corpus, meaning that the probability in L1 was more often graded using devices from the two extremes of the continuum. The same result was obtained in some of the previous studies which compared the gradience of epistemic modality of non-native and native speakers. In those studies the finding was explained by participants' inability to convey precise and more subtle levels of possibility and it was attributed to non-native proficiency. However, in our study, no significant correlation was found between L2 proficiency and the degree of assertion in L2. The only significant correlation found was between tokens of medial probability in L1 and L2 suggesting that clustering of degrees of epistemic modality between the two ends of the continuum could be connected to practices in using epistemic modality in participants' L1 (see Table 11).

Table 11: Correlation between medial probability in L1 and L2

	Tokens of medial probability in L2	Tokens of medial probability in L1
Tokens of medial probability in L2		
Pearson Correlation	1	.733*
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	33	33
Tokens of medial probability in L1		
Pearson Correlation	.733*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	33	33

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and implication for further study

In our study that compared the use of epistemic modality by the same speakers in their L1 (Croatian) and L2 (English) we hoped to give more insight into the factors that may be at play in frequency and range of epistemic devices used, as well as the level of commitment expressed in non-native spoken discourse. The overall findings will be presented and interpreted here in terms of four research questions defined at the beginning of the study.

Our study showed that the participants used epistemic devices less frequently in their L2 than in their L1, while the range of devices used in both corpora was very similar; in both languages they relied on a limited range of devices. Even though the lower frequency and limited range of devices usually found in non-native corpora were often attributed to the proficiency level and inability to express subtle differences using epistemic modality, we believe that the limited range of epistemic devices used can be, at least to some extent, attributed to the tendency of the spoken language to routinize epistemic expressions. Proficiency, however, was also found to correlate with the range of epistemic devices used in the non-native language, but no significant correlations were found with the frequency of devices used. A further insight into the factors contributing to the frequency and range of epistemic devices in the non-native corpus was obtained through the comparison with the native corpus. Both the range and frequency of epistemic devices used in the non-native language were shown to correlate significantly with those in the native language. The apparent tendency to map the practices of use from L1 onto L2 were further confirmed in the use of translation equivalents among the top five most commonly used devices in both languages. However, in order to determine which of these factors had a greater role to play, in future studies it would be advisable to have a control group of participants (whose native language is L2 in question) performing the same type of task.

The same control group would also help in determining factors that could account for grammatical distribution in the use of epistemic modality. Even though grammatical distribution in the non-native language was found to correspond to

the most often used grammatical categories in spoken English, similarities found in both languages (that is, in the frequent use of verbs and adverbs), could be also attributed to the transfer from the native language, and to proficiency as well. Preference for lexical verbs over modal auxiliaries may be ascribed to native language transfer, but preference for adverbs may be due to lack of proficiency as adverbs are syntactically easier to manipulate. In future studies it would be interesting to look into the correlations between participants' proficiency and the grammatical categories they use in expressing epistemic modality.

In terms of the level of commitment expressed in the non-native language no preference was found for either weaker of stronger devices, and the frequency of devices used did not correlate either with the proficiency in the non-native language or practices in the native language. However, clear preference for the category of devices denoting medial possibility was found, correlating strongly with the one in the native language. On the other hand, we believe that the type of task (picture description) could have provoked the clustering of epistemic expressions around the medial band as the participants might not have felt the need to use more subtle gradience while performing the task. In future studies exploring the use of epistemic modality in spoken discourse it would be advisable to use conversational exchanges, which might be more revealing of the range of epistemic use.

Since in our study proficiency was shown to correlate only with the range of epistemic devices used in the non-native language, it is advisable to include it as a variable in all the studies on epistemic modality use in the non-native language and to specify the level of proficiency of the speakers in the study, as the use of epistemic modality of the speakers in our study did not show proficiency to be the most important factor in accounting for differences in the performance.

Furthermore, it seems crucial to point out that in the studies on the use of epistemic modality it is necessary to combine both qualitative and quantitative results: quantitative studies are often performed using large corpora and automatically exclude some idosyncratic instances in favor of what is central and typical. This is especially important for the studies that are trying to provide pedagogical implications, as the analysis of actual language use would be more informative than traditional normative principles.

Limitations of the study

Even though it is possible to assume that certain variables such as proficiency, native language transfer, and cultural transfer could have influenced particular aspects of the use of epistemic modality in the non-native language, the interplay of these and possibly other factors is impossible to explain within this study alone as, due to a number of limitations, we are able to generalize only to the included participants. Apart from the relatively small corpora used in the study, the type of task used to compile the corpora was not found very suitable in provoking more subtle degrees in the use of epistemic devices, and different types of conversational exchanges are suggested for those purposes.

The study showed that, in order to get a good insight into the use of epistemic modality by non-native speakers, it is extremely important to compare the same speakers' native and non-native performances. However, it is obvious that an additional control group of native speakers of L2 would be necessary in order to account for all the similarities and differences found in the corpora. We believe that the lack of such corpora in this study prevented us from making more concrete conclusions about factors at play in the non-native use of epistemic modality.

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Coherence and Originality in University Students' Writing in EFL: The Zagreb-Pécs Project

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When students are admitted to the universities of Zagreb and Pécs to major or minor in English, they have had some exposure to the intricacies of writing in that language. Among other activities, they have been involved in reading textbook and other type of fiction and non-fiction prose and poetry, they have acquired how to use the code for grammatical utterances, they have been building and applying a large vocabulary, they have been made aware of the use of cohesive devices in connected prose, and they have experimented with various approaches to stating a position and arguing for it. In fact, one reason they can be admitted to these institutions is that they have formally proven, in a proficiency exam, that they have achieved B2 level in writing. Some of these students realize that their oral communication skills can be relied on when writing. They have some level of awareness also of the theoretical underpinnings of writing and the testing of their skills. Many make a conscious effort to develop strategies and techniques necessary to meet the formal requirements of the writing component of EFL exams and so they can represent those aspects in their scripts. They use a good range of correct structures and idiomatic language, they do their best to cover the topics set by the task, and they revise their work for gaps in cohesion and coherence.

In writing this paper, we wanted to explore the worlds as represented in the writing of such English majors and minors at the two universities: ten students from Zagreb and ten from Pécs. As long-distance colleagues on these campuses, we have been involved in developing EFL writing skills in the past several years (Horváth, 2001; Zergollern-Miletić, 1996). During this time we have come to appreciate the opportunity that we can devote attention to aspects of our work that are slightly beyond what students will expect us to do. Our experience with writers in Zagreb and Pécs has deepened our conviction, albeit independently of each other, that there are two qualities of student writing that need especially careful attention if the aim, as it has been with us, is to maintain and further raise student motivation: coherence and originality.

These are probably the two most subjective facets of writing. Writing coherently entails familiarity with genres, options in approaching a topic, ordering thoughts in a logical manner so that there is an effect of togetherness. How the

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genre, for example, of a personal letter is realized, whether a seemingly formal approach to a topic is permissible, and just how logical what one student has written may appear to be to another or to the teacher, however, are issues making even coherence, a criterion regularly assessed in formal EFL practice, a contentious one. Originality, by contrast, usually gets center stage at university only when there is a breach in the academic integrity in the use of sources – that is, when plagiarism is suspected. In our exploratory and qualitative study we will provide examples of what the two of us have identified as original and coherent writing by the twenty students: their stories, personal essays, and blog posts. These scripts are reflections of these students' worlds and of their perceptions of them, their reaction to various events, and their reflections about themselves.

The theory of coherence and originality

Of the two notions, coherence appears to be the more manageable. It can be dealt with locally, that is, within a shorter segment of text, and globally, throughout an extended prose. When EFL writing is evaluated, it is often a criterion made part of the assessment scale. Both local and global coherence refers to thematic connectedness forming an overall unity of ideas and togetherness. However, even views about this aspect of writing and writing assessment have prompted considerable discussion recently.

Research in the field has attempted to address these concerns using qualitative and quantitative methods. In Knoch's study (2007) it has been found that the way coherence was applied in assessment systems lacked proper specificity, often causing problems in interpreting markers' comments on students' writing when ideas of what is regarded as logical sequencing of arguments, description and discussion were analyzed. Others (for example, Allison, Varghese, & Mei, 1999; Kang, 2005; Lee, 2002; Palmer, 1999; Todd, Khongput, & Darasawang, 2007) sought pedagogically sound procedures that can be used in making students aware of issues of coherence and apply what they have learned in their texts. From our point of view, Lee's approach is especially valid. In it, students' attention is brought to the need of helping the reader understand the micro- and macrostructure of their text (2002, p. 139). We agree that coherence is a phenomenon of text connectedness, one in which the bonds are made by the writer as well as the reader: coherence is a socially constructed notion. In this study, we define coherence as the degree to which a part of or the full text is characterized by connectedness. Also, agreeing with Todd, Khongput, and Darasawang's stance (2007), we take into account explicit and implicit links as well.

Moving on to the more intricate notion, originality, first of all, we have to state that obviously, we regard each individual student writer as an original person and thinker. No question about that. However, the degree of originality of the communication of this quality can vary from student to student. The literature on writing posits originality as an important element of effective, good writing. Nevertheless, authors addressing this issue mostly focus on the originality on scholarly work, primarily research papers, where originality is contrasted to plagiarism (Pe-

corari, 2003). Abasi, Akbari, and Graves (2006), although primarily writing about originality in research papers, also take into consideration other forms of academic writing. In their article, the notion of writing is tightly connected with identity. According to them, writers have to represent themselves in their texts and establish their identities (see also Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, on culturally defined aspects of individualism).

Our position is that the representation of the author and the establishment of the author's identity are especially important principles in writing personal essays and other genres where the state of something originating from a place or person is relevant: such as an opinion piece where the aim is to share a point of view. When students have the power of such expression, and it is clear from the classroom context that the exercise is a genuine one (that is, that their opinions are treated as tenable rather than just a part of their writing samples), the sharing of views may become not just a meaningful exercise but an exercise full of meaning. In our definition, a text is original when it is the writer's own formulation or reformulation of a theme, however small, with a presence of ownership palpable. It is the degree of this *ownness*, the centrality of the origination, that has been an exciting phenomenon for us as teachers and researchers. It is this element of written expression we are so closely drawn to in our teaching practice and in this paper.

But what is it that we own when we are original? Surely we have all been influenced by what we have read, by what we have seen and heard – so that coming up with completely new ideas about a theme is doomed to failure. It has already been discussed somewhere, public wisdom holds. And yet it is not as simple as that. The originality of a student's text is captured every time she reformulates for herself a core cultural, social or historical theme – when refusing or avoiding an "influence" may be futile. This theoretical student, however, can find and let her readers explore the essence of that experience: the origin of it and sometimes the process and processing of it, too. How conscious this effort is, of course, will vary from person to person: from writer to writer and from reader to reader. Prior (2001, p. 79) suggests that writing pedagogy has a role to play in making this process more conscious: "Learning to write, to engage in meaningful and recognizable forms of literate activity, involves living through concrete histories of reading, writing, talking about and using texts." By constructing original texts, skills are practiced, knowledge created. This is true in the traditional one-on-one contexts as well as in those applying new technologies such as blogs. As shown by Bloch (2007) and Leja (2007), by creating their blogs, students as the publishers of their own texts enter into special dialog where they become the public originators of ideas.

In our investigations, we will focus on three (sometimes overlapping) aspects of originality. The first aspect is voice, a unique character, individual way in which such involvement with a theme is realized, almost as if the indirect written mode were transformed into the more direct, oral channel (Hirvela & Belcher, 2002; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Matsuda, 2001). The notions related to this aspect include a strong authorial presence and the creative use of expressions. The other aspect is seemingly the opposite of originality: role-playing. In texts that are characterized by this feature, the writer engages in what Prior (2001, p. 79) refers to as "living

through concrete histories of reading," assuming the role of someone else. It is through some form of imitation that we acquire a language – and, not surprisingly perhaps, through playing roles that we can discover our true selves as people and as writers. The third aspect is concerned with what we call personal history. This is a thematic subcategory with one or more specific narrative elements whose representation in the text appears to be the main organizing principle, or, in other words, the origin, the inspiration of the script. These stories are non-fictional texts that operate with events whose description is realized at a high level of concreteness and realism (Strunk & White, 2000; Zinsser, 1998). They originate from a specific location and time.

The Zagreb and Pécs academic contexts

The Zagreb students whose work we chose took Writing Skills in the academic year 2007-2008. This was a one-semester course for English majors within the 'pre-Bologna' program. The course was primarily aimed at developing students' skills in writing personal and argumentative essays. It also introduced students to the basics of writing research papers.

Students represented in the Pécs collection took a Reading and Writing Skills course in the B. A. program in 2008. A weekly two-credit course open to majors and minors as well, this process-oriented course aimed to maintain and raise students' interest in and enthusiasm about written expression. One way of doing so was by designing reading and writing activities relevant to the age group and individual differences (Nagy & Nikolov, 2007). In that process, some of the reading material was student-produced. These texts took the form of blog posts that students were required to submit online or offline. Most chose online blogs, and thus many of the posts discussed in this paper are available on the internet in their entirety. The focus in classes and tutor comments was on the positive, on the message and this was encouraged in students' peer responses as well (Horváth, 2009).

Method

We undertook to investigate the nature of Zagreb and Pécs students' writing in terms of coherence and originality. Following an exploratory path, we aimed to capture and interpret the qualities inherent in the personal writing of these students.

The students and their scripts

From each university, ten scripts were chosen in the spring semester of 2008. First, we shared the most recent student scripts with each other. From Zagreb, this meant personal essay course requirements students had submitted electronically. The colleague in Pécs read these texts and chose those ten that he found most co-

herent or original or both. Meanwhile, the Zagreb colleague read blogs of B. A. students who were taking a Reading and Writing Skills course with the regular blogging course requirement. Ten posts were chosen by the Zagreb colleague. Each student is represented by one text. Students' real given names are used, by permission. See Tables 1 and 2 for the authors and the titles of their work.

Table 1: The Zagreb collection

Author	Title
Ana	Recollections of War
Andrea	There Is No Place Like Home
Andrija	What Lead to the Frustration of Not Being Able to Think of a Good Subject for a Personal Essay or Most Commonly Known as the F. N. B. A. T. G. S. P. E. Syndrome
Boris	The Fear of Getting Fat
Borjana	Life Is What You Make of It
Iva	Borrowed Memories
Karmenka	My First Date
Marina	Changes
Matija	How I Ended Here
Stela	Kindergarten Schooling

Table 2: The Pécs collection

Author	Title
Adrienne	Outrageous
Balázs H.	Could it be Worse?
Balázs Sz.	Losing Your Way
Ildikó	How to Find Mr or Ms Big?
Keve	Catcher in the University, No. 3
Márk	Cooking is a Natural Part of Life?
Péter	My Birthday
Teodóra	Easter
Tímea	Paulo Coelho – My Favourite Writer
Zsuzsanna	Tale in the Reality

Procedures

Because of the qualitative slant to our study, we chose to apply the following cyclical model. It is partly informed by contrastive rhetoric (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) as it taps into the written productions of students coming from two neighboring countries and cultures. As we aimed to make the research as closely relevant to our teaching as possible, we opted to apply steps we normally use in our pedagogical practice. For this reason, after reading the twenty scripts a number of times, we started their interpretation from the two points of view. This followed a scheme similar to the one when we evaluate and mark scripts. The next step was the content analysis of the twenty scripts within the two collections. The aim at

this stage was to highlight thematic similarities and differences between the Zagreb and the Pécs collections. Afterward, we categorized the coherence and originality features of each script.

Upon completion of the first three steps, we shared our findings with each other, allowing us to reflect on them. As a result of this process, we were able to see how our interpretations differed and offer further insights, thereby contributing the internal and external validity of the project. A final check of categorization aimed to enhance the reliability of the endeavor. However, it stands to reason that other forms of interpretation are not excluded and we hope we will be able to continue with the project, partly by triangulation with students' insights.

Results and discussion

Coherence

Planning on the paragraph level

Evidence of well-planned paragraph-level discussion was found in most of the twenty scripts. As students learned about topic sentences and read various examples of topic development, this aspect of coherence appeared to be the most commonly shared feature across both the Croatian and Hungarian texts. This may already have been determined in the selection stage, of course, as both of us made initial choices partly based on this criterion. Here, we will quote and discuss what we regard as the best examples.

A Hungarian student, Zsuzsanna, writes on her blog about a charming real-life story she found in the local newspaper. It is about a small wild pig saved by a family, and later adopted by the local zoo. The blogger introduces us to the event, presents the dramatic moment in the piglet's life, and reports on the happy ending. Here is a part of her narrative:

> But this animal disturbed the neighbour of the family who decided to make tasty food from him. How cruel people are! Luckily, the family called the Zoo of Veszprém, so the wild pig was taken away. What a nice survivor! He has been named Gerzson, and he has been treated well. Now he is one of the most visited and liked animals in the zoo. Moreover, he got a female partner called Juliska and now they are living together. I think this news is similar to a modern fairy tale with a very nice ending.

Karmenka, a student from Zagreb, is another skilled user of tools building local coherence. In her essay titled "My First Date," she guides the reader through all the steps leading to her first date. She writes about her nervousness before it. "I was running around trying to do a million things at the same time." She writes about her fear that she would not look beautiful. "The moment I heard the click of

the lock I knew I looked horrible." Then she shares with us a slight disappointment with the date:

> My chariot was an old van. Rust covered the bumper and one half of the door. Upon climbing into the van, I was greeted by seven people – my best friends and their dates. This was the night of my dreams, and it was going to be shared with seven other people.

Borjana, also from Zagreb, started studying English and Italian as a mature student, after working for eight years. In her essay she discusses her fears. "I must admit I was terrified at first. My knowledge of English was very poor …. My Italian was even worse …" She talks about the advantages of being more mature – she is more experienced and more conscientious. The paragraphs develop smoothly as the author brings up the disadvantages – she needs more time to study and prepare for the exams. Nevertheless, she is glad that she took that step. She really believes in what she wrote in her title: Life is what you make of it.

Overall coherence

In this section, we will give two examples of fully organized texts. Again, there are many more scripts we could highlight from this point of view, but the ones that we chose to feature under this heading seem to be the most representative. Marina's essay, from Croatia, deals with her ideas about changes and how she can or cannot deal with them. Changes are, as she realizes, inevitable. They can hurt, but they can also bring good things in life. The way she constructs the discussion is characterized by explicit and some implicit links that result in the overall effect of a fully coherent piece. As it is a short, three-paragraph composition, we will reprint it full:

> I believe that sometimes I worry too much. At those moments I cannot sleep because I think about various people I know, about their weird behaviour and all the changes I have experienced recently. As the light outside becomes brighter, I try hard to figure everything out.
>
> I have seen many different faces; friendly faces which turned out to be hostile, unfamiliar faces which I adore now, worried parental faces which can sometimes cause such a variety of strong feelings. There are faces I meet regularly, but cannot develop any feelings for them. I wonder how I stopped caring about some people. How they simply disappeared and became distant memories. Things change so rapidly. My entire world has changed since the beginning of this year. Maybe it was just me? I lost some friends, but gained much more- I gained true friends, because I learned how to recognize fake smiles. I learned how to hear passing remarks and see the blank look in people's eyes. I learned how to recognize and understand true love and most importantly, to listen to the voice coming from within me.

> Changes are inevitable. So is the fact that we meet various people every day. In the past, this has caused me many sleepless nights. One of those nights I realized that I cannot_change other people. I knew that all the time, but only recently I became aware of it. The only thing I can influence and control is my own mind. I can sleep now. Everything changes, but I smile.

Márk (Hungary) entitled an entry on his blog "Cooking is a Natural Part of Life…?" He writes about how annoyed he gets by people being surprised at his ability to cook. He tells the story about his learning how to cook: his parents divorced, so his father had to learn how to cook. In fact, we could have placed this text under the heading of personal history for its originality as well, but the overall organization is so masterly we felt we had to reprint Márk's blog post, too, almost in full:

> See, I never understood people who said that for them scrambled eggs is beyond their understanding. Even less when they said its creation is their limit. Neither did I comprehend, when someone was quite surprised when I told them that for example 'Yesterday I had tortellini carbonara-style' 'Oh, you are rich going to restaurants' 'Well, this is not entirely the case; I made it.' 'You can cook?' 'Why? Who can't?' And I really did think so.
>
> I'm not boasting... Far from it, but here is an example. When I was young... At least far younger than I am now. At least a dozen years younger than I am now... Anyway: My mother had supreme sovereignty over the kitchen and all that was going on within. (And who doesn't like what his/her mother 'brews') Consequently – at least as far as I know – I can't recall my father ever preparing a meal. Ergo, my assumption was that he can't. But when they divorced, things as one can guess changed a little, and as he lived alone for a while he started cooking, and – long story short – what he made was almost as delicious as my mother's and in certain cases he even surpassed her. (For example I taught her (my mother) THE spaghetti bolognese which I've learnt from my father.) And independent sources confirm that both of them are great cooks. (Both of them are chemists, so that may be the trick, I don't know.)
>
> So I asked my father about this and how it is. He told me, that there is nothing special to it... He just started and relied on his *imagination* so to say. And on what he felt fitting for that certain type of food. And basically it's all in the spices.
>
> So I started the same... And since then those who tasted what I created did like it. (Of course, because I never served anything which I really screwed.) Which was surprising at first, because when it comes to tastes – as with many other things – I am quite egoistic. So I never relied on anything but what I personally would have liked to come out of a certain recipe... And I assumed, that if I can do this, anyone could – anyone

> who tried, that is. But I would like to see other opinions naturally. Is there a certain *taste* required for cooking, or anyone can do it?

The examples of effective local and global coherence in the scripts indicate that these students have been able to apply what they have learned at university and in their own personal development.

Originality

In this section, we will address the three types of originality we have identified as representative categories: voice, role-playing and personal history. We will discuss a number of scripts in terms of content and hope to be able to convey the effect they have had on us: that we hear the authors' voices in these texts. The students' texts make the reader attentive and curious. They convey the authors' feelings, so the reader gets irritated by the things happening to the authors, happy because of the authors' happiness. This is why we find the texts by our students original – they are interesting and inspiring.

Voice

Two Croatian essays go back in time to reveal memories about the Croatian War of Independence. One of them is by Iva, and it is called "Borrowed Memories" (we will present the other essay about war later). Iva gives an account of a girl, the author-narrator, whose town wasn't affected by the war. Seemingly, her memories are not original: they are borrowed. She says her own memories include only air-raid sirens and her family's prayers that her father should stay at home. The only bad memory from the period is the birth of her brother, around whom, she claims, everything started to revolve. Her first contact with the ugly aspects of the war happened when she was a freshman living in a dorm. During a storm, one of her friends started crying and shaking, remembering her experience of the war. So, the girl retold her story. And she talked about the bad things, but she also talked about certain understanding and humanity among people. And she talked about photographs – the material thing most cherished by people who have been through a war. After the war, returning to their little town, her father collected photographs – their own, but also other people's. He had the opportunity to return some of them to their owners, but some of them he could never return. So these photos became memories borrowed from other people - borrowed in the same way that the author of the essay borrowed all these stories and memories from her friend, not having much of her own. Let us hear Iva's voice, from the beginning of the essay:

> Almost every memory or feeling that I have about the war is borrowed from somebody else. The few memories that are my own are more like pictures frozen in time. The news, the basement in my building, my fa-

> ther trying to act like everything was normal. And it was in a way. At least for me.
>
> The war stopped 21 kilometers from my town. In Varaždin. Not even one bullet was fired in Ivanec. There were no soldiers, no shots, no war. Nobody from my family was recruited. I remember a period when my mother and father were unusually silent. I asked her why, she only said to me to be quiet and pray to God that my father stays with us. That was the only time in my life that I didn't ask more questions. The war came, and the war was over.

A completely different theme, and a completely different voice is heard in Hungarian Balázs H.'s blog post about visiting his old grammar school, finding out that the authorities are sometimes concerned about trivial matters:

> A boy stabbed two forks and two knives into his apple while having lunch, and a woman who works there warned the headmaster, who decided to speak with the parents in connection with this fatal crime and started an official punishing procedure against this student, who was called in the office and was told that they let him go only if he told some names. Names, in connection with what? What was it, an interrogation? And anyway, imagine that your parents are called in the headmaster's office, and, as evidence they're shown an apple with forks and knives in it and are told that you get a hard punishment because of it. The thing I'm most afraid of is that our old head master now really thinks that he saved the world again …

In an amusing way Balázs is criticizing the powers to be, who use that power to confuse people around them.

Tímea (from Pécs) devoted one of her blog posts to the novelist Paulo Coelho, her favorite writer. In that piece she explains why she loves Coelho's novels – sharing with her readers her original interpretation. She says "… he writes about his own 'philosophy', about the souls, and he has his own spiritual world." Tímea says she has decided to read one of his books that has not been translated into Hungarian yet, but was available in English.

> So I am going to "use" it not for pleasure but for the improvement of my English, too. I look forward to writing about this novel here, in my blog, in the future.

Role-playing

In this category, the two scripts share the authorial stance whereby the student engages the reader in role-play. Croatian student Andrija plays the role of someone who cannot write an essay as he experiences writer's block. The role play starts right with the title, a long one at that: "What Leads to the Frustration of Not

Being Able to Think of a Good Subject for a Personal Essay, or Most Commonly Known as the F. N. B. A. T. G. S. P. E. Syndrome". He is telling his teacher why he has not been able to find a good and interesting topic for his essay: "Now I am sitting in my chair, looking very dull in the screen of my computer, thinking about the fact that in fifteen minutes I will have to be finished with this because, you have guessed correctly, it is Friday, 1 p.m., and my frustration is getting bigger by the minute." The ending is rather hopeful, although it may not seem like that at first: "One truly asks oneself what good are all of one's education and knowledge if one cannot even think of a subject and write a simple personal essay. I hope you will read my second essay on How to avoid the F. N. B. A. T. G. S. P. E. syndrome, and live to tell the tale." One wonders, of course, whether that sequel has ever seen the light of day.

What surely has seen that light is another sequel by Keve, a Pécs student, who decided to write a series on his blog about "The Catcher in the University." His inspiration lay in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* but Keve talks about various events happening to him, combining his narrative with thoughts and impressions. The style indeed reminds of Salinger, but Keve is writing about his friends and acquaintances, about his own feelings and thoughts: "After we drank our coffee, we went for a taxi because no more buses were running that late and she told me that she lives quite close to the hostel. She did too. I sort of went with her to the door. 'Well, that was one helluva good time we had. Thanks!' 'Thank you for the coffee.' – she said smiling, but her smile was a bit different now. She had this sort of an embarrassed smile. I was also a bit nervous I have to admit. 'So good night then! Will see you at the university, right?' 'Sure! Good night to you too"' – she answered and slowly went inside. I sort of stood there for a while, just couldn't start my legs which were still shaking if you want to know. God, I like that girl! Now I like her even more!"

Personal history

Not surprisingly, the personal history category proved to be the most populated. Whether it is in Croatia or Hungary, students will write about themselves, their families, birthdays, studies, the big event in life when we are young. Several essays are more or less directly connected with their authors' studies. Matija's script (Zagreb) is entitled "How I Ended Here". The author opens it with the following words: "The last months of high school. The question of my future education hangs above my head like an axe. Where to next? What can I study after high-school? My thought: absolutely nothing." He finished grammar school and was considered too clever not to study at the university. Now, he says, he is alone in the dark. This honest approach is present throughout the essay, where the author describes his troubles studying English and his present regret that he did not study to be an x-ray technician. X-ray technicians study less and have better pay-checks than people who finish their studies of English. And, at the end, Matija decides: "So, my decision: x-ray technicians here I come!"

Stela is sharing with her readers her experience as a kindergarten teacher. The event made her realize she was not experienced at all, which she says made her disappointed, ashamed, making her all but lose her enthusiasm about teaching. In telling that story and reflection, she is making fun of herself all along, as well as bringing the reader to the scene, sharing the "horror" of that kindergarten experience. The story is full of specific (and exaggerated) observations and images:

> I decided that it would not be such a bad idea if I entered the teaching arena in order to get a general feeling of my future profession. In a very Mary Poppins kind of mood, as a freshman in college, I found employment in a kindergarten, teaching English to five-year-olds. My month-long training gave me some general guidelines, but nothing could prepare me for the horror of dealing with little five-year-old fallen angels with an attitude.

For another Zagreb student, Andrea, studying at the university means living away from home. "There Is No Place Like Home" is the title of her essay, and so are the closing words. Although the title may sound like a cliché, nothing in her essay is one. She talks about her difficulties in Zagreb, the big town she came to after spending all her young life in Poreč, a beautiful small town at the seaside. She misses everybody there, and telephone just cannot replace the people she loves.

Adrienn, too, lives away from her Hungarian home, so she put up in a dorm, which is the place where one of her blog posts originates ("Outrageous"). Her neighbours at the dorm got robbed – someone stole their laptops. It took her some time after she learned about the news to realize that she had actually seen the thief committing the crime. "I became excited, confused and my heart started to beat so strongly. I saw the guy while he was committing the theft." She wonders what he was doing carrying several bags on a Monday afternoon (when students usually do it on Friday afternoons, before going home). She concludes: "This case made me realize how important a reliable person in people's lives is. I took it for granted that my flatmate, and friend at the same time, is honest and trustworthy. But now I see that it is a thing to be appreciated."

Balázs Sz., another Hungarian student, writes about feeling that his life is too quick for him, that he does not have time to be who he is. He does not know what to write, and he is supposed to write something for his blog. He has studied a lot; he is worrying about his studies. He concludes: "And then we'll see how this semester ends."

An anxiety of a different sort troubles Croatian Boris, who is afraid of becoming fat. He first gives a personal definition of what being fat means. "I would define being fat as having minimally 15 kilograms more than you really need. I tolerate an excess of bout 5-7 kilograms and consider it normal. I even endorse it. It makes women more feminine. It is a sign of good health. You cannot trust hungry people." He complains that it is not sociably acceptable to be fat. Then he admits that being fat also means being incapable of performing certain physical activities. He concludes that he is not afraid after all, because he watches himself, and if he does get fat, he will make sure to have a wife to take care of him.

Péter (from Pécs) is reporting on his two birthday parties. The first party included the paternal side of his family, and it took place on the exact day of his birthday. The maternal side of the family celebrated with him the following Sunday. The third one, that with his friends, is yet to happen. Peter describes the preparations, the food and the discussions with the guests. He was very happy about everything: "I was having a really long discussion with our guests. They asked everything: How is uni going? How did you manage to finish the semester? And I can continue the list until the sun goes down. … I have to emphasize that I spent a really good time with them."

Teodóra (Hungary) writes about her family's love for holidays: "In our family every holiday is a special event. When we were small children – a long time ago – my parents tried to create the conditions for family celebrations. My sister and I came to like the little customs." She once saw the Easter bunny (now she knows it was her father). The most remarkable Easter Monday was last year when her friends played a prank – they threw several buckets of ice-cold water at her, just for a laugh.

Finally, Ildikó, also from Pécs, asks "How to Find Mr or Ms Big?" She thinks that the age 18 or 19 is suitable for someone to find someone to be with. She realizes that it is not always easy. After the "hunting time", there comes a time when people get to know each other. That period, in Ildikó's view, may be a bit embarrassing. For her the most beautiful period of anyone's life is the first two months of a relationship. According to her, "This is the time when you're just trying to do everything well, it's the 'dream-time' when you imagine living with that man forever, getting old and having at least eleven children creating a football team, walking and speaking a lot, planning (of course it's hidden from the other), and during this time it's revealed whether you suit each other or not." Rather idealistic, we dare say, but this is Ildikó's opinion. Maybe she will change her mind about the eleven children?

Interplay between coherence and originality

We have seen examples of coherent and original student writing. We have not made a formal evaluation of which were the "most" or "least" original and coherent in them as the point is that in each there is an element of both. After this summary of those qualities, however, there is one more intriguing phenomenon we need to discuss: the relationship between coherence and originality. It can be argued that the less original an idea and its framing is, the more likely that its reception will be followed easily, and thus regarded as coherent. Schemata belong to this field as well as stereotypes and cultural values that we are exposed to throughout socialization. In the previous discussion, too, we have seen examples of students' relying on this shared set of notions and truisms. Conversely, one may posit that the more coherent a text is, the more likely it follows schemata, the less likely that we will see in it an original contribution. We believe, and in fact we have seen in these student samples, that the two can co-exist. Let us share two examples where the two qualities combine and enhance each other to produce a

lasting impression. The first is a full paragraph by Keve, the writer of the Catcher chapters; the second, the first two paragraphs by a Zagreb student, Ana.

> We had a helluva good time, we really did! I mean we could have gone on talking for the whole night or something, we had such a nice conversation and all, her English is pretty good you know, I truly liked that. She was telling me how they got too damn loud with her friends at a place so the waiter practically threw them out, I was telling her how I ended up with the two girls that night and all, it was really fun, we kind of laughed our heads off or something. Funny thing is, she truly liked my stories! She was laughing like a madman sometimes! That just made me feel so overjoyed that I already forgot how depressed I was.

A writer who is obviously enjoying what he is doing, Keve has developed a knack for Salinger's style and been able to blend that in with his persona in this narrative. The idea is imitation, as we have seen before: Holden Caulfield from The Catcher in the Rye taking shape at the University Pécs and interacting with local students and professors. The quoted text tells the simple story of meeting with Dóra in a pub and its effect on the narrator's spirits, with a classic last line that sounds Salinger and Keve at the same time. The voice and the role-playing seem to seamlessly produce a narrative where every piece has its place and function, relying on the reader's appreciation of the playful nature of the text.

Ana has a completely different experience to share: a memory of war lived through as a young child.

> A colleague of mine reminded me recently of a topic I had not thought about for a long time. I was just that age that I can remember what was happening, but did not quite understand it at the time. Sometimes it feels as if it was all a dream from which I awoke to find myself in a new country. I was luckier than most because my part of the country wasn't really affected and I was too young to fully comprehend the circumstances. Personally, I didn't know anyone who was killed or had even spent time in the army. I was in a shelter with my family for a few weeks I think, but I don't remember being scared. My seven-year-old self didn't really understand what was going on, or why exactly somebody was attacking us, and I would even go so far as to say that I thought it was fun hiding in the shelter with all my neighbours, playing cards and listening to songs on the radio. My parents assured me that it was all pretend, and that nobody would get hurt. When the news came on, my mother covered my eyes so that I couldn't see the bloody corpses splattered across the road, and when I did get a peak, she comforted me by saying they were just actors, that it wasn't real.

Although the title of the script, "Recollections of War," intimates what it will be about, the text itself does not reveal its theme until the fifth sentence. The superb use of such seemingly simple words as *topic* and *it* is all there is for us to get the

feeling early on that the story, the ideas will be memorable. Then we are made part of Ana's reflection on what she as a little girl may and may not have gone through during the war in Croatia between 1991 and 1995. Throughout the essay, she speaks about the war as something rather vague and seemingly not real. Ana is being candid about her not understanding the causes of the war then. "My seven-year-old self didn't really understand what was going on, or why exactly somebody was attacking us, and I would even go so far to say that I though it was fun hiding in the shelter with all my neighbours playing cards and listening to songs on the radio."

She is candid about her present not knowing whether the war was worth all the trouble and people's suffering. "My grandparents always tell me how much better it was in the old days. I know that's just one account of the story, and other very different versions exist." She even imagines how it would have been growing up in socialism. Around the time the war started she was supposed to become a member of Tito's pioneers, a children's organization during socialist time in Yugoslavia, so she was quite disappointed she could not join the little "army with blue hats and red scarves around their necks". Neither was she happy about the change on the national banner – when the star was replaced by the Croatian coat of arms. Ana is giving a child's perspective of the events that are sometimes referred to as some of the most tragic ones in Croatian history, remembering her disappointments that now seem funny. The target of the paragraph quoted gives us a concrete image of what happened that evening – and possibly other evenings, too: the inclusion at the end of the parental effort to make the child believe that all of what is shown of the war is fiction is what brings the experience close to the reader.

Conclusion

In our writing pedagogy, as well as in this study, we have aimed to communicate the positive: what we regard as bright and relevant, useful and fluent, coherent and original. This paper has presented our interpretation of twenty students' recent work that we have found to display relevant aspects of two qualities of writing in EFL that are hard to grasp but without which neither the writer, nor reader will find the experience motivating. We have seen these students managing the micro- and macrostructure of their texts, trying to plan and execute narratives and exposition, while also being able to focus on what really counts in such communication: that an idea, a feeling, an event is further explored as they do so.

As we continue our exploration of the field, we would like to even better represent these students. Case studies with a pair of Croatian and Hungarian students may reveal strategies and intentions at work when such essays and blogs posts are created. Students' interpretation of their own work and of that of their peers may further highlight what they regard as coherent and original. Examples such as those presented here can be applied in our classes as thematic and stylistic prompts as they may serve as a springboard for awareness raising activities.

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No Problem

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Introduction: Responsives in speech act theory

Research in speech act theory has been one of the central topics of linguistic pragmatics for several decades now. Since Austin's seminal William James Lectures presented in 1955 (Austin, 1962), criteria and methods of the classification and empirical as well as formal description of speech acts, interaction of their illocutionary and/or perlocutionary force have been amply discussed by dozens of pragmaticians including Austin's student, John Searle (1969, 1979, 1983) and Searle's colleagues, Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish (1979). In the first phase of the history of research in speech act theory priority was given to outlining and arguing about the theoretical framework in terms of various models, and later, in the second phase, especially since the publication of the results of Blum-Kulka and coworkers' seminal research (1989), empirically-based investigations in describing and analyzing particular speech acts as well as contrasting their linguistic representation, relying on material gained from various, genetically related or typologically significantly different languages started to gain more ground. In both phases of the history of research on speech acts priority was given to identifying and describing illocutionary acts which highlight the speaker's role and attitude to the act of communication, and also to perlocutionary acts performed in response to illocutions.

Hardly any studies have so far been initiated with the aim to analyse and describe hearers' speech acts performed in response to given types of illocutionary acts listed in Bach and Harnish's classification of communicative illocutionary acts (Figure 3.1, Bach & Harnish, 1979, p. 41). Such acts do not strictly fall within the type of perlocutionary acts as defined by Austin (1962, p. 101). Perlocutionary acts, in his understanding, are hearer-oriented acts in the sense that they express the speaker's (often indirect) act on the hearer resulting from his illocutionary act. As Bach and Harnish point out, they refer to the "intentional production of effect on (or in) the hearer … from steps of the speech act schema" (1979, p. 17). One of Austin's classic examples is the relation expressed by the 'speech act verbs' (Wierzbicka, 1987, pp. 65 and 126) *argue* and *convince*, of which the former strictly expresses the speaker's illocutionary act, whereas the latter refers to his perlocutionary action, the effect that the speaker aims to achieve by his argumentation (Austin, 1962, p. 102). Along such lines, perlocutionary acts are still understood as speaker-oriented acts with the hearer's role understood as 'effected',

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rather than 'initiated'. Hearers in communication may, however, have a more active participation in discourse, expressing their responses to the speaker's act verbally, this way themselves becoming speakers.

Depending on the type of discourse and its register, thus a constant change of roles as speaker or hearer can be observed frequently, for instance, in conversational turn taking. In verbalizing reactive turns to speaker's speech acts, respondents themselves act as speakers by performing illocutionary acts of particular types. It is such types of speech acts that have not been extensively analyzed and described so far by speech act theorists. The present study will aim to discuss this latter type of speech acts via investigating the usage factors, structural types of occurrence and functionality of one particular expression: *No problem*, a formulaic construction – as will be pointed out – mainly used with the communicative force of expressing responses to illocutionary acts of thanks, request and orders, the latter two acts interpreted as belonging to the types of directives.

Although the relevant, basically theoretically based pragmatics literature gives ample space to discussing these three acts (see Bach & Harnish, 1979, pp. 52, 54, 73-86, Searle, 1979, pp. 32-51, Levinson, 1983, pp. 239-240, 256-264, Geis, 1995, pp. 122, 153-176, Alston, 2000, pp. 97-101), it leaves hearer/speaker oriented reactive responses to them practically undiscussed. We have to note, however, that although responses to acts of ordering, requesting and thanking can be taken to function as expressing illocutionary force and thus they can be identified as illocutions simultaneously carrying perlocutionary force as well, *respond*, the verb that seemingly serves as a label for the responsive type of speech acts, does not strictly satisfy the criteria of expressing illocutionary force, as it may fail to satisfy acceptability, or at least, it may be judged to be strange (a kind of stretched expression) under conditions of the performative formula-based testing according to several native speakers, as illustrated by (1):

(1) ? I hereby respond to your request/order/ expressions of thanks.

This suggests that responses, responsive utterances at best should be treated as 'quasi-illocutions' rather than clear cases of perlocutions.

Responses such as *No problem* can be interpreted to express the communicative force of acknowledgement of understanding the force expressed by their underlying illocutionary acts of thanking, ordering or commands. As such, they are expressive markers of cooperation on the recipient's part. In Austin's categorization, the act falls within the type of 'behavitives', which "have to do with attitudes and social behaviour" (Austin, 1962, p. 152). He notes that "behavitives include the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct" (1962, p. 160). Austin, also vaguely, stresses their connections with commissives (1962, p. 161). In terms of the taxonomy of illocutionary acts proposed by Bach and Harnish they can be characterized as belonging to the type of constatives (Bach & Harnish, 1979, p. 41). Both interpretations are based on the expression of attitudinal force on the responding speaker's part in the act of communication.

As noted above, leading proponents of speech act theory have all neglected studying the role and typology of responses in their work. It was discourse analysts like Coulmas and Aijmer who gave the field more attention, however – we have to note – not with adequately systematic care. In studying the functions of the *You're welcome*, one of the standard responsive expressions to thanks, Coulmas notes that its communicative function is to "recognize the gratitude and relieve the speaker of its burden" (1981, p. 77). In her investigations of responses to thanks, Aijmer notes that "responses to an act of thanking seem to be infrequent in English compared with other languages", and adds that *You're welcome* is used in formal registers (1996, p. 40). This is not the case for responses to requests for which she gives an extensive list of options, however, quite interestingly, not including expressions such as *Sure* and *No problem*, although her study is corpus-based (1996, p. 142-144). In most studies describing responses to requests, discussion of the role of the expression *No problem* is simply missing, although, as pointed out later based on its occurrence in corpora, carrying this communicative force is exactly one of the critical communicative functions of the expression. Although both *No problem* and *You're welcome* are expressions acceptably and naturally used in responding to acts of expressing thanks, *No problem*, *Sure*, but not *You're welcome* are colloquially used as responses to requests, and also to orders, as shown by (2):

(2) Speaker A: Would you pass me the salt, please?
Speaker B: No problem./Sure./*You're welcome.

In his extensive study of response formulas to the expression of thanks used in British, Irish, and American English, Klaus P. Schneider stresses the formulaicity of expressions such as *No problem*, *You're welcome*, *Anytime*, used for such communicative purposes. Accordingly, the communicative force of these expressions is not decoded compositionally (2005, p. 101) due to their non-compositional nature. However, Schneider also calls attention to a certain degree of variability in the syntactic structure and even in the lexical makeup of *No problem*, as shown by the examples given in (3):

(3) (a) It's no problem.
(b) It was no problem.
(c) It's no trouble. (2005, p. 113)

Let us note that such variability is not at all characteristic of formulaic expressions and idiomaticity; therefore, we believe that the lexical patterning of this type of responsive act is a fairly young development in English, its frozen nature has not yet fully developed. On the other hand, its communicative function, illocutionary force has already been formed and coded. Schneider notes that responsive *You're welcome* is used in British English at a rate of 57.1% in more formal contexts, and in Irish English the rate of its occurrence in formal registers amounts to 64.7%, whereas in American English occurrence of its formal use only amounts to 50.7%. Concerning the occurrence of *No problem* he points to a significantly higher grade of frozenness of lexical patterning in American than in British English, where the

lexical item trouble can also occur in the formulaic construction (2005, p. 132). In Aijmer's view, such responses to thanks serve as realization types to express the communicative strategy of minimizing the favor expressed in/by the act of acknowledgment, therefore, she takes them to belong to discourse markers grouped under the term 'minimizers' (1996, p. 164). Schneider calls them 'thanks minimizers' (2005, p. 104). Based on corpus investigations he points out that *No problem* is used as a responsive to the speech act of thanking at a higher rate of significance in Irish and American English than it occurs carrying this function in British English (2005, p. 118). He claims that the lexical expression of thanks and that of responses to them together constitute adjacency pairs (2005, p. 101). In her investigations of the act of requests in English and German, Baron also stresses the role of *No problem* as a minimizer. She notes that in responses the pragmatic load of the construction (called by Baron 'pragmatic routine') is to express "compliance with a request … the willingness of the hearer to perform the future act in question for his/her interlocutor" (2003, p. 195).

Representation of *No problem* in learners' dictionaries of English

Following the above review of the relevant literature let me now see how functions and usage factors expressed by formulaic *No problem* are accounted for in seven learners' dictionaries. I have consulted the following dictionaries: (i) *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (4th edition) – *COBUILD 4*, (ii) *Reader's Digest Word Power Dictionary - RDWPD*, (iii) *Franklin's Language Master 4000* and *6000 - FLM* , (iv) *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (4th edition) – *LDOCE 3*, (v) *Longman Dictionary of American English* (3rd edition) – *LDAE 3*, (vi) *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2nd edition) – *Macmillan 2*, (vii) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (7th edition) – *OALD 7*.

The following usage-based descriptions (rather than definitions of meaning and usage) were given:

COBUILD 4: No definition or description of meaning given.

RDWPD: No definition or description of meaning given.

FLM: No definition or description of meaning given.

LDOCE 4 (spoken)
used to say that you are happy to do sth or for someone else to do sth: '*Can I bring a friend?*' '*Sure, no problem.*'
used after someone has said thank you or said that they are sorry: '*Thanks for all your help.*' '*No problem!*'

LDAE 3
used in order to say that you are very willing to do sth: '*Can you help?*' '*Sure, no problem.*'

used after someone has thanked you or said s/he is sorry: '*Thanks a lot.*' '*Oh, no problem.*'

Macmillan 2 (spoken)
used for saying that you will be happy to do what someone is asking you to do: '*Can you look after the children for an hour or so?*' '*No problem.*'
used as a polite way of answering someone who has thanked you for sth, or said they are sorry for sth: '*You did a good job today – thanks.*' '*No problem.*'

OALD 7
(informal) also: *Not a problem.*
used to show that you are happy to help sb or that sth will be easy to do: '*Can I pay by credit card?*' '*Yes, no problem.*'
used after sb has thanked you or said they are sorry for sth: '*Thanks for the ride.*' '*No problem.*'

I have to say that the above definitions (given in only four of the seven dictionaries consulted) all grasp relevant facets of the meaning, communicative force of the responsive expression used under given conditions of the relevant speech act. The meaning of the formulaic expression has been interpreted pragmatically rather than semantically. A highly positive feature in each heading is illustration of the meaning/usage described by an example helping the user identify the potential speech act represented. However, it can also be seen that the information packed in the descriptions is far from being systematic. Not all dictionaries gave precisely circumscribed register-based information about the usage of the expression described. Neither do they identify the relevant speech act underlying their descriptions in precise terms. Whereas the responsive function to thanks is circumscribed by all of the dictionaries studied, its minimizer function described by Schneider (2005, p. 104) has simply been neglected. Another weakness uniformly present in all of the definitions is lack of nominal identification of the responsive force of the expression in cases of the speech act of requests. This function of the expression can only be inferred from the descriptions. Yet another weakness of dictionary representation is caused by the fact that practically the same type (with almost identical wording) of characterization of communicative force can be read under other formal expressions of responses to thanks in the dictionaries, for instance, under *You are welcome* and *(It's) my pleasure.* Consequently, learners are left without explanation about possible differences in the grade of expressed force and usage across registers of these responsive formulas. Variability in structuring and lexis is weakly accounted for in OALD 7 only.

Corpus-based investigations

With the aim to gain control over the data of dictionary-based identification of the speech act formulas and force carried by *No problem*, I studied the frequency and types of occurrence of the collocational pattern *no problem* in two corpora: BNC, a standard general corpus of 100 million words, and the BYU Corpus of American English, the volume of which amounted to 360 million words in 2007. The total frequency of occurrence of *no problem* in BNC amounted to 1,188, and in BYUCAE it amounted to 4,235. Data of the clause-based syntactic as well as discourse-based (pragmatic) distribution of *no problem* as a collocational pattern in both corpora are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Syntactic and discourse-based distribution of *no problem* in BNC

Total of frequency in corpus:	1,188
Types of syntactic-pragmatic occurrence:	
(a) direct object	641
(b) part of VP	276
(c) clause-initial, separated by comma	142
(d) expressing readiness to do sth (frequently followed by *at all*) in response to directive speech acts	59
(e) formulaic response to sy's expressing thanks	37
(f) other	33

Table 2: Syntactic and discourse-based distribution of *no problem* in BYUCAE

Total of frequency in corpus:	4,135
Types of syntactic-pragmatic occurrence:	
(a) direct object	2,002
(b) part of VP	1,194
(c) clause-initial, separated by comma	590
(d) expressing readiness to do sth (frequently followed by *at all*) in response to directive speech acts	187
(e) formulaic response to sy's expressing thanks	158
(f) other	104

It can be observed from the data of both Tables 1 and 2 that intra-sentential frequency of occurrence of collocative *no problem*, a compositionally interpretable construction, is significantly higher than that of extra-clausal, non-compositionally decodable, formulaic variants of this lexical structure expressing illocutionary/ perlocutionary force in itself. That is, discurse-pragmatic functions expressed by this formula have a much lower rate of occurrence in usage than clausally expressed, lexico-semantically-based roles. I believe that this is probably due to the fact that non-compositional, formulaic usage of the construction occurs as a relatively young expression type of English discourse, especially in spoken, informal registers. Measures of types of occurrence of *no problem* in the two corpora based on British and American English show a greatly similar distribution. Differences

in figures shown in the two tables are due to the difference in volume between BNC and BYUCAE. It can also be observed that the frequency of occurrence of responses to directives (d) is slightly higher than that of responses to thanks (e) in both corpora. This difference in distribution of the two types of responses noted has a slightly higher significance in BNC than in BYUCAE. Let me note that type (c), the occurrence of *no problem* clause initially, separated by comma, has a markedly lower frequency in both corpora than types (a) and (b), which fill clause-internal positions.

However, its frequency of occurrence in both corpora considerably outnumbers cases of its formulaic, speech act related manifestation. I believe that type (c), in which *no problem* is separated by a comma from the propositional part of the clause, is in the process of undergoing a functional shift by gradually losing its compositional nature. The direction of this functional shift, due to the gradual increase of the pragmatic-functional load, force of the collocation is obviously pointing toward the development of the expression's non-compositionality, resulting from the increase in its rate of formulaicity, potentially resulting in its development into either type (d) or (e) depending on the type of illocutionary force expressed. The frequent co-occurrence of the intensifying adverbial *at all* with *No problem* inferentially identified as a response in type (d) no doubt serves to enhance the 'minimizer' role played by the formula in the act of responding to directive speech acts.

Native speaker testing

With the aim to gain control over the information found in dictionaries and corpora, I performed empirical testing of the intuitively based knowledge of native speakers about the type of illocutionary force, usage factors and estimated frequency of types of responses of positive force expressed. I involved forty adult native speakers of American English in two tests. In the first they were asked to elicit and describe the communicative force of *No problem* based on sample situations created by them. Results gained are shown in Table 3 in rank order of their frequency in the material of the participants:

Table 3: Results of elicitation test of illocutionary force expressed by *No problem*

Identification of illocutionary force	Frequency among testees	Examples
(a) Offering of forgiveness	36	A woman bumps into you on the trolley and says '*Oops! Sorry about that!*' You say '*No problem.*' '*Mom, I forgot to take out the trash, I'm sorry.*' She responds, '*No problem, dear.*'
(b) Positive response to asking a favor	33	Someone says '*If it is not too much trouble, could you pick some eggs up at the store?*' Possible response: '*No problem.*' '*Could you help me pick up the kids from the school, dear?*' Reply: '*No problem.*'
(c) Spontaneous, informal response to expression of thanks	30	'*Thank you for your help.*' Response: '*No problem.*'
(d) Negative prosody in case comment and response express fundamentally sarcastic tone of meaning	16	'*Thanks so much for that searing criticism.*' Sarcastically, reply: '*No problem.*' '*Thank you for ruining my day.*' Reply: '*No problem.*'

Interestingly, no discussion of expressed forgiveness as an offer can be traced in the relevant pragmatics literature outlined above, even though exactly this usage of the expression was judged to be most common by my informants. This type of usage was not represented in any of the seven learners' dictionaries and we cannot find its formulaicly expressed occurrence in the observed corpus data, either. Probably this is due to the fact that both corpora were largely based on written rather than spoken material. (It is usually noted by corpus linguists that most general corpora are based on written material at the rate of 90%, and only approximately 10% of their data derive from spoken linguistic sources. This is a serious restriction for discourse-based investigations, especially for those aiming to study the occurrence and role of expressions having a discourse marker status, formula mainly occurring in spoken discourse.) Our observation, therefore, supports the idea that mere corpus-based investigation of (mainly spoken) discourse and texts may not in itself provide reliable, valid results about the data analyzed. Control testing to be performed over corpus-based evidence, using native speaker testing should be a must, and alternatively, testing native speakers' intuitive judgment of usage factors have to be supplemented by control testing by way of applying corpus linguistic methods.

Observing the nature of the speech act, forgiveness, observed in type (a) of illocutionary force shown in Table 1, let me note that in this type of act *No problem* is usually interpreted compositionally by respondents, that is, this is the type among those identified which is decoded with the lowest grade of perception and acknowledgement of formulaicity. This certainly points to a transitory stage in the development of the collocating lexical pattern in becoming a formulaic expression already observed in its potential to express other types of speech acts, for instance,

responses to requests and thanks. In terms of the speech act taxonomy outlined in Bach and Harnish, the expression of forgiveness, - Type (a) in Table 3 – therefore, can be identified as a responsive to a concessive act of acknowledgement falling under the domain of constatives (1979, p. 41).

Usage type (b) identifies responses to requests with a noted positive semantic prosody especially within informal registers, whereas usage type (c), responses to the act of direct and forceful thanks, occurs in formal and informal registers alike, according to my informants. Although the number of subjects participating in the elicitation tests was not high, it can still be seen that the rank order of *No problem* used as a response to directives (requests and orders) is higher than that of responses to the expression of thanks, which observation shows correspondence with our corpus-based observations. Type (d), expressing negative semantic prosody in the form of sarcasm in response to thanks, was noted by less than 50% of the informants. This type of usage was simply left out of consideration by all of the corpus-based dictionaries and was not manifest from our corpus-based data either, again probably due to the overwhelming ratio of representation of written registers in both of the corpora used in our investigations and also in those underlying the dictionaries consulted. Let me note here that the act of expressing sarcasm was not included by Searle or Bach and Harnish in their taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In my view, sarcasm falls within the domain of responsive constative acts which have an indirectly expressed non-literal communicative force to express a face-saving action, a kind of trivial criticism expressed in conversational turn-taking (Jorgensen, 1996, p. 613). Obviously, it conveys a negative semantic prosody.

In my second test I asked my native speaker informants to express their intuitive judgment about the frequency of three commonly used, synonymous forms of response. They were also asked to characterize their usage. Results gained with an occurrence of higher than 30 included the following characterization:

(*You're*) *welcome.* – Highest frequency, spontaneous, usually informal, but occasionally carries a more formal tone than *No problem*. Used both in British and American English.

(*It's*) *my pleasure*. – Less common in US, it is judged to be used in more formal registers.

No problem. – Informal, common in business related registers. Commonly used in American English, especially in response to requests and expression of thanks following concrete completion of action.

It can be seen from the above results that formulaic *No problem* is a responsive formula characteristically used in colloquial forms of discourse registers in American English. In the course of gaining expressed formulaicity the expression has gradually lost its compositional nature and is usually interpreted non-compositionally. In formal registers other responsive forms tend to be accepted

and used, formulas which have become standardized not exclusively in American, but also in various regional varieties of English.

Conclusion

In this paper I have studied the formulaicity and usage factors of the responsive expression *No problem*. In my survey of the relevant linguistic pragmatic literature on speech acts I have pointed to inconsistencies in its characterization and description of its expressed illocutionary force by key thinkers of the field. In studying the representation of the expression in various learner-based monolingual dictionaries, besides acknowledgement of their scrutiny in describing the responsive acts themselves, I called attention to an important lack all of them had: absence of nominally expressing the type of illocutionary force under each usage factor described or characterized. A perhaps even more serious drawback of dictionary representation is lack of precise description and separation of the register-based features of various types of near synonymous responsive formulas used in the language. It has been pointed out that clarification of usage-based differences and a subtle identification of the types of illocutionary force expressed by/in using the formula can only be achieved by parallel investigations using corpora and empirical testing of native speakers' intuition offering the possibility of gaining simultaneous control over the validity and representativeness of the data resulting from such empirically based studies.

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How Do Croatian Learners of English from the County of Međimurje Use Their Dictionaries?

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Introduction

Although dictionaries had been important companions of foreign language learners throughout the 20th century, it was not before its last quarter that second language acquisition theorists began to be really interested in testing them. A period of more intensive dictionary testing started in the late 1970s with the conference *Dictionaries and their Users,* organized by Reinhard Hartmann. The first to study the foreign users of dictionaries more thoroughly was Tomaszczyk (Cowie, 1999, pp. 175-98). He was followed by Béjoint (1981). In the 1990s and early 21st century various researchers carried out studies concerning different aspects of dictionary needs, skills and use, whereby the focus of the interest was on examples, labels, grammatical information, phraseological units, pronunciation and differences between monolingual and bilingual dictionaries (Atkins, 1998; Cowie, 1999; Tono, 2001; Wingate, 2002)

In their analyses, the researchers aimed at finding the advantages and disadvantages of various types of dictionaries both from the view of experts and language learners. According to the results of the representative research in seven different European countries, about 75% of the students tend to use bilingual dictionaries (Atkins 1998). On the other hand, most researchers and teachers prefer the use of monolingual dictionaries (Snell-Hornby, 1984). The widespread opinion among them is that using bilingual dictionaries slows down the acquisition of second language. This occurs because bilingual dictionaries hypertrophy the tendency of the student to translate from mother tongue into foreign language instead of encouraging the student to start thinking in foreign language. Additionally they lead students to the false belief that there is a one-to-one correspondence between lexemes in two different languages (Bratanić, 2001).

Most of the research was mainly concentrated on how dictionaries are used rather than on giving practical answers to the question how the users

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should be trained to develop adequate skills to use dictionaries for improving their knowledge of foreign languages (Bratanić, 2001).

For many years researchers were sceptical about the inclusion of dictionaries into foreign language tuition. This was probably the result of the reaction towards the grammar-translation method and of the acceptance of the audio-visual method as well as of later methods which emphasized the communicative role of language (Wright, 1998; Vilke Pinter, 2002). However, thanks to the results of the research in cognitive linguistics and the development of lexicography, the idea of the inclusion of dictionaries into foreign language classes has been widely accepted (Vilke Pinter, 2002). Another important reason for the long rejection of inclusion of dictionaries into schools was that young learners were believed not to be able to use dictionaries at all because of their complexity (Bishop, 1993)

Although the potential of dictionaries in foreign language learning is yet to be investigated, it is obvious that knowing how to retrieve information from a dictionary enhances one's perception about meaning and vocabulary organization as well as facilitates vocabulary retention (Borić, 2001).

Description of study

Aim of study and research questions

The aim of this study was to investigate the dictionary skills and habits of Croatian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) from the Međimurje County preparing for their final school exam and intending to continue their education at university or college. The researchers concentrated on the following questions:

- Which dictionaries do secondary school language learners in the County of Međimurje possess and use?
- How often do they use their dictionaries?
- When do they consult a bilingual or a monolingual dictionary?
- What kind of information do they want to find?
- Are they taught at school how to use their dictionaries?
- Do they know how to retrieve information from their dictionaries?

Participants

Research was carried out among 18-year old students in their last year of secondary school preparing for their final exam and planning to continue their education at university or college. The researchers distributed 100 questionnaires and the students filled out 81 of them.

They were from the following four secondary schools in Čakovec: grammar school (25 students), commercial school (25), technical, industrial

and crafts school (16), and secondary school of crafts and building (15). With one exception, whose mother tongue was Serbian; all the other 80 students (98.77%) were native speakers of Croatian.

The vast majority of respondents had started taking EFL in Grade 4 of primary school when they were between 9 and 10 years old and had been learning it for 9 years at the time of our data collection. Only 12 students had started to learn it in secondary school, so at the time of data collection they were bringing their fourth year of learning English to a close. Some had learned English outside school, whereas one student had had a maximum of 15 years of tuition of EFL. The average length of learning was 8.1 years.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of grades in EFL of the respondents in this study. The mean grade was 4.1, so they can be regarded as successful learners of English.

Table 1: Distribution of grades in EFL

Croatian grades	American equivalents	number of respondents
excellent (5)	A	31
very good (4)	B	30
average (3)	C	15
sufficient (2)	D	1
no answer		4
mean		4.1 very good (4) = B

Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study: a questionnaire and a test. The questionnaire (see Appendix *A*), which had 12 questions, was a Dictionary User Profile Form, aiming at obtaining information about the dictionary users: their native language, length of learning EFL and where they have been learning it, grades in English in the previous school-year, whether they have been taught to use dictionaries, what dictionaries they possess and for how long, why they have chosen them, how often they use them, whether they know when to use a monolingual or a bilingual dictionary, what monolingual and what bilingual dictionaries seem most useful to them.

The second instrument was a Dictionary Research Test (see Appendix B) with 52 questions on eight different tasks: identification of part of speech, recognition of grammatical properties of words, lexical items and their expected place in a dictionary, selection of the appropriate prepositional complement, understanding polysemous words in context, reading the IPA, cloze test, selection of appropriate word. The design of the test used in this study was adopted from the EURALEX- and AILA-sponsored research described by Atkins and Varantola (1998), but there were modifications made to meet the needs of south Slavonic languages (Vrbinc & Vrbinc, 2004). The sample sentences included sentences that are contrastively different in English and Croatian, thus posing problems to Croatian learners of English.

Both instruments were produced in Croatian, so that participants could complete them in their native language and to ensure that they would understand all the questions in the test.

Procedures

In all four schools the data were collected in the first half of April 2008. The researchers acquainted the students with the aim of the research and distributed the questionnaires and tests, but the students were asked to fill in the questionnaire and to do the test at home. They were told that there was no time limit, but that the papers would be collected ten days later. The students were asked not to use their dictionaries in certain tasks and the researchers explained why. When dictionaries were allowed, the students were asked to indicate whether or not the dictionary had been consulted in that particular instance.

Results and discussion

Students' answers to the questions on dictionaries in the questionnaire

In question 4, students were asked whether they had learnt at school how to use dictionaries. 67% of the students in our sample answered positively. 28% of them or 19% of the total number of respondents wrote that they had been systematically taught how to use a dictionary and had received precise instructions about it.

Almost four-fifths (78%) personally own a copy of either a monolingual or a bilingual English dictionary. They have owned it for an average length of 6 years. 76% are in possession of only one dictionary, 14% possess two and 5% three or four dictionaries. Only 18.52% own a monolingual dictionary. They possess the following dictionaries: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE), Cambridge Dictionary of American English, Oxford Dictionary of Business, Concise English Dictionary, MacMillan Essential Dictionary for Learners of English (MED), New Opportunities Mini Dictionary, Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (Webster). They possess the following large-scale classical bilingual dictionaries: Filipović (English-Croatian), Drvodelić (English-Croatian), Drvodelić (Croatian-English) and two more recently published large-scale ones: Bujas (English-Croatian), Bujas (Croatian-English). The list of bilingual dictionaries includes various medium-size and pocket size dictionaries: Langenscheidt Universal Dictionary (LUD) (English-Croatian & Croatian-English), English-Croatian Dictionary (Mozaik), Grahovac & Pavlinek (G&P): English-Croatian & Croatian-English School Dictionary (Školska knjiga), Hlad: Dictionary of Idioms, Mikulić: English-Croatian and Croatian-English Pocket Dictionary with Grammar, Bro-

zović & Gerčan (B&G): English-Croatian & Croatian-English Dictionary for Primary School Learners, Mišćin: English-Croatian and Croatian-English Dictionary – Alfa, Standard English-Serbo-Croatian Dictionary (Prosveta). European Dictionary has been found as the only multilingual dictionary.

The most important reason for purchasing their dictionary in the sample was a teacher's recommendation (22%). The same percentage of respondents received it as a gift. 15% bought a dictionary because it looked easy to use. Other reasons for purchasing were low price (12%), parents' recommendation (10%), friend's recommendation (9%), or bookseller's recommendation (6%).

In questions 8 and 9, the students were asked about the frequency of use of a monolingual and bilingual dictionary respectively. 37% never use a monolingual and 30% a bilingual dictionary; 46% seldom use a monolingual and 41% a bilingual dictionary; 17% often use a monolingual and 28% a bilingual dictionary.

We were eager to learn whether the students use dictionaries that they do not personally own. According to the respondents' answers to question 10, 84% never use a non-personal dictionary in the school library and 16% only seldom. 30% never use such a dictionary in class, 41% seldom and 28% often.

Question 11 aimed at finding out which of the two kinds of dictionaries (English monolingual or bilingual) students use for particular tasks. In order to understand an English word, 37% use a monolingual and 57% a bilingual dictionary. 10% use a monolingual and 88% a bilingual dictionary to find English translation of a Croatian word. 65% use a monolingual and 28% a bilingual dictionary. According to 84% of the students, the most useful monolingual dictionary is Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, whereas 70% of the students mention various pocket-size dictionaries as most useful bilingual dictionaries.

Results of the dictionary research test

This test consisted of eight tasks, each comprising several questions. Each task aimed at testing a specific skill, ability or expectation of a dictionary user. The obtained results are presented below.

Identification of part of speech

All of the Croatian bilingual dictionaries that students mentioned in the questionnaire as well as the majority of the existing monolingual English dictionaries include different parts of speech as separate entries. It is, therefore, necessary for dictionary users to be able to determine the part of speech before looking up a word. In task 1, students had to identify the part of

speech of the word in italics, but they were not allowed to use their dictionaries.

Although this was a rather uncomplicated task, the results that can be seen in Table 2 are not as good as expected. Only one fifth of the respondents identified the word *after* as a preposition and as a conjunction (questions 1/1 and 1/2). Almost one half of the tested students were able to identify *present* as adjective (question 1/3), but they had more problems with the same lexeme used as a noun (question 1/4). 22% identified it as an adverb. It was most probably due to the fact that *at present* is translated into Croatian as an adverb. Participants in our study were pretty good at identifying the lexeme *just*, because more than two thirds of them gave the correct answer in question 1/5 (69%) where it was used as an adverb. However, 62% identified it as an adjective in question 1/6. Our initial assumption was that most mistakes would be made in the first two and in the last two questions, because even in their mother tongue, native speakers of Croatian have difficulty distinguishing between prepositions and conjunctions as well as between adjectives and adverbs. Obviously, they have learnt pretty well to distinguish between *just* used as an adverb and as an adjective. Normally, it is easier for Croatian speakers to distinguish between nouns and verbs both in Croatian and in English, so they were not included in the test.

From the obtained results we can claim that the respondents have difficulty in finding the right part of speech when consulting their dictionaries.

Table 2: Identification of part of speech (in percentages)

Question	Adverb (a) /Noun	Adjective	Conjunction (c)/Adverb	Preposition	Don't know
1/1	(a) 52	6	(c)4	*20	18
1/2	(a) 33	1	(c)*19	7	20
1/3	7	*48	14	5	26
1/4	*38	9	22	9	22
1/5	0	15	*69	5	11
1/6	4	*62	6	13	15

* correct answer

Recognition of grammatical properties of words

Task 2 tested whether students are familiar with certain grammatical restrictions and properties of English lexemes (e.g., transitivity and intransitivity, verb complementation, countability or uncountability, predicative and attributive use). Here, they were allowed to use their dictionaries.

It can be seen from *Table 3* that students' correct answers range from only 11% in question 2/11 to 58% in question 2/9. This indicates that only very few students knew that only *lone* can be used attributively. From the answers to the same question, we can also conclude that many students did not recognize that *women* is plural or that they do not know that indefinite articles

cannot be used with plural nouns. Questions 2/7 and 2/8 show the interference with Croatian. In Croatian, *discuss* requires the use of preposition *about* and *enter* is followed by preposition *into.* In both questions, most students chose those answers (57% in question 2/7 and 48% in 2/8).

From the low percentages of dictionary use in Table *3,* it can be seen that our participants seem to have been sure about the correctness of their answers. Table 4 reveals that sometimes they consult wrong pocket-size dictionaries that cannot provide the right answer.

Table 3: Answers to questions concerning grammatical properties of words and dictionary use (in percentages)

Question	Answer				No answer	Dictionary
	a	b	c	d		
2/7	57	40*	1	1	1	+1 -99
2/8	14	48	1	37*	0	+3 -97
2/9	9	58*	10	22	1	+0 -100
2/10	33*	41	1	22	3	+0 -100
2/11	73	11*	13	3	0	+8 -92

*correct answer

Table 4: Dictionary look-ups for grammatical properties

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary		Dictionaries consulted	
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
2/7	1	--	OALD	--
2/8	1	2	LDCE	Filipović; Mikulić
2/9	--	--	--	--
2/10	--	--	--	--
2/11	--	6	--	Filipović; Mozaik; B&G; G&P; LUD

Lexical items and their expected place in a dictionary

Task 3 tested students' expectation of where in the dictionary they can find different multi-word lexical items (e.g., idioms, phrasal verbs, compounds). Since the inclusion of multi-word lexical items varies from dictionary to dictionary, we did not allow our students to use their dictionaries, because we were afraid that they might be misled into wrong thinking that correct answers could be found in their dictionaries.

Our initial hypothesis was that although there would be some students who believe that idioms and phrasal verbs are treated as independent entries in dictionaries, the majority of students would try to find adjective and noun combinations under nouns, phrasal verbs as run-ons under verbs and verb-noun combinations under nouns. This hypothesis was grounded on the practice of most English-Croatian dictionaries. The answers in Table 5 show that the results have confirmed our hypothesis.

Table 5: Students' expectations of the location of multi-word lexical items (in percentages)

Question	In the entry for …			
3/12	hard 19	nut 58	hard nut 12	don't know 11
3/13	pay 27	dividend 53	pay dividend 9	don't know 11
3/14	come 58	through 15	come through 12	don't know 15
3/15	colour 65	colours 20	--	don't know 15

Selection of the appropriate prepositional complement

Students' ability to find the correct prepositional complement of various English words was tested in Task 4, which consisted of five sentences where grammatical collocations are different in English and Croatian. The percentage of correct answers is shown in Table 6. The answers also reveal that they were mislead by their mother tongue too.

Table 6 also shows that a slightly higher percentage of students consulted a dictionary than in task 2. We supposed that if a student was not acquainted with the correct preposition, he or she would check it in a dictionary. However, these percentages were lower than expected. Our respondents seem to have relied too much on their knowledge or guessing. Table 7 shows that they hardly ever used monolingual dictionaries that could really help them to find the right answers.

Table 6: Selection of the appropriate prepositional complement (in percentages)

Question	Answers				No answer	Dictionary
4/16	with 53	by 38	for 6	at*	--	+1 -99
4/17	at* 30	of 1	in 58	with 10	1	+6 -94
4/18	at 15	over* 52	on 6	in 27	--	+5 -95
4/19	for 62	at 1	on 15	by* 22	--	+11 -89
4/20	for 16	in* 52	to 25	7	--	+6 -94

*correct answer

Table 7: Dictionary look-ups for prepositional complements

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary		Dictionaries consulted	
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
4/16	--	1	--	Mikulić
4/17	1	4	MED	Mikulić; Filipović; Mo-zaik; LUD
4/18	--	4	--	Filipović; B&G; LUD; G&P
4/19	--	9	--	Filipović; Drvodelić; Bujas; LUD;B&G; G&P
4/20	--	5	--	Filipović; Mo-zaik; LUD;B&G; G&P

Understanding polysemous words in context

Task 5 tested how well the students understood polysemous words in context. The students were allowed to use their dictionaries. They could either translate the word into Croatian or copy the definition from a monolingual dictionary. The percentage of correct answers is shown in Table 8.

It can be seen from Table 8 that much higher percentages of students consulted dictionaries in this task than in any other task. In our opinion, there are two reasons for these higher percentages. Firstly, in this task students themselves had to provide an answer and could not choose the correct answers from several possibilities. Secondly, whenever they did not understand the meaning of the lexeme in question, they consulted their dictionaries. It is a pattern of behaviour which complies with our expectation that dictionaries are mostly used to find the translation of an unknown word and much less for anything else. Table 9 shows that the respondents also used their monolingual dictionaries in this task more often than in any other previous or following tasks (on average 17.5% per question).

Table 8: Understanding polysemous words in context (in percentages)

Question	Answers		No answer	Dictionary
	Correct	Incorrect		
5/21	20	67	13	+16 -84
5/22	17	46	37	+10 -90
5/23	11	37	52	+31 -69
5/24	46	31	23	+11 -89
5/25	73	2	25	+10 -90
5/26	30	13	57	+27 -73

Table 9: Dictionary look-ups for polysemous words in context

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary		Dictionaries consulted	
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
5/21	--	13	--	Filipović; Bujas; Mozaik; B&G;LUD;G&P;Mišćin
5/22	3	5	OALD; Mac-MillanED	LUD; Mišćin, G&P; Miku-lić
5/23	3	22	OALD	Filipović; Mozaik; B&G; Mišćin;G&P; Prosveta; LUD
5/24	--	9	--	Filipović; Mozaik; B&G;LUD;G&P;Mišćin
5/25	--	8	--	Filipović; Mišćin, G&P; Mikulić
5/26	1	21	MacMillan	Filipović; Mozaik; B&G; Mišćin;G&P; LUD

Reading the IPA

Task 6 tested the students' ability to deal with the IPA, which is used in many English-Croatian bilingual dictionaries and in many British monolingual dictionaries. Six pretty frequently used words were written in the IPA and the students were asked to write them down by using normal letters. We hypothesized that many secondary school students cannot read the given pronunciation. The results presented in Table 10 confirmed our initial hypothesis. On five questions they gave between a quarter and a fifth of correct answers. In this task we have also observed very high percentages of no answers. This shows that the students might not even have tried to give those words, because they were so sure that they could not guess the right answers.

Table 10: Students' ability to read the IPA (in percentages)

Question	Answers		No answer
	Correct	Incorrect	
6/27	62	36	2
6/28	25	16	59
6/29	25	4	71
6/30	20	2	78
6/31	21	16	63
6/32	20	10	70

Cloze test

Task 7 was a cloze test, which contained 14 slots. They had to be filled with parts of lexical and grammatical collocations. Although the students were encouraged to use their dictionaries, it is obvious from the results that they were reluctant to use them. There are as many as four questions (see Table 11) where not a single respondent consulted his or her dictionary. The correct answers range from only 1% (question 7/37) to 72% (question 7/40), indicating that they were not familiar with the lexical collocation *fill* and *make up the prescription* and that they were familiar with the other one required in 7/40 (i.e, *take medication*). One possible reason for not consulting their dictionaries may also be that they simply did not know what to look up. Table 12 reveals that they did not use monolingual dictionaries at all. Some of them used pocket-size dictionaries which were not of great help. The respondents again used their dictionaries only to find the meanings of unknown words. We believe that students should be systematically taught which words in word combinations they should look up if they want to become efficient dictionary users. A specialized dictionary of collocations would be of great help to do this task successfully.

Table 11: Correct and incorrect answers of the cloze test (in percentages)

Question	Answers		No answer	Dictionary
	Correct	Incorrect		
7/33	53	--	47	+0 -100
7/34	33	53	14	+0 -100
7/35	33	16	51	+1 -99
7/36	36	36	28	+7 -93
7/37	1	57	42	+7 -93
7/38	2	51	47	+2 -98
7/39	32	6	62	+2 -98
7/40	72	2	26	+1 -99
7/41	12	52	36	+0 -100
7/42	26	49	25	+1 -99
7/43	45	28	27	+5 -95
7/44	53	14	33	+1 -99
7/45	44	11	49	+4 -96
7/46	53	15	32	+0 -100

Table 12: Dictionary look-ups for cloze test

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary		Dictionaries consulted	
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
7/33	--	--	--	--
7/34	--	--	--	--
7/35	--	1	--	LUD
7/36	--	6	--	Filipović; LUD; Mikulić; G&P
7/37	--	6	--	Filipović; LUD; B&G;G&P
7/38	--	2	--	LUD; G&P
7/39	--	2	--	LUD; G&P
7/40	--	1	--	B&G
7/41	--	--	--	--
7/42	--	1	--	Filipović
7/43	--	4	--	Filipović; Drvodelić; Mišćin
7/44	--	1	--	Filipović
7/45	--	3	--	Prosveta, LUD; Mišćin
7/46	--	--	--	--

Selection of the appropriate word

Task 8 tested students' ability to choose the appropriate word from a list of four items to fill the slot in relatively difficult contexts. They were allowed to use their dictionaries. They used them on average 15.5% per question (see Table 13). It is a lower percentage than in task 5, but here we recorded the highest percentage of dictionary consultation on a question in the whole test (question 8/51). Although the students had problems selecting the right word, they still did not consult their dictionaries often enough. They seem to prefer to guess the right answer rather than spend the time on dictionary consultation.

Table 13: Selection of the appropriate word (in percentages)

Question	Answers				No answer	Dictionary
	a	b	C	d		
8/47	42	30*	4	14	10	+12 -88
8/48	11	11	64*	11	3	+4 -96
8/49	14	4	42	38*	2	+9 -91
8/50	15	18	52*	9	6	+23 -76
8/51	40	21*	9	10	20	+36 -64
8/52	17	41*	8	7	27	+9 -91

*correct answer

Table 14: Dictionary look-ups for appropriate word

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary		Dictionaries consulted	
	Monolingual	Bilingual	Monolingual	Bilingual
8/47	--	10	--	Filipović; Mozaik; Mikulić; LUD; B&G; Mišćin
8/48	--	3	--	LUD
8/49	--	7	--	Filipović; LUD; Mikulić; Mozaik
8/50	3	16	OALD; LDCE	Mozaik; Filipović; LUD; Prosveta; B&K; G&P; Mikulić; Mišćin
8/51	--	29	--	Mozaik; Filipović; LUD; Prosveta; B&K; G&P; Mikulić; Mišćin; Bujas
8/52	--	7	--	Filipović; LUD; Mikulić; Mozaik

Conclusion

The results of our study yielded some interesting findings about dictionary possession and dictionary consultation.

Concerning dictionary possession, we have noted three important facts:

- Most students in our study personally possess at least one dictionary. That is positive, but we think it is still not enough. In our opinion, every single student in the final year of secondary school willing to continue his or her education at the college or university level should possess one.
- They possess a wide variety of bilingual dictionaries, but considering their length of study and presumed level of knowledge of English some dictionaries are inappropriate. Some students in their final year used dictionaries that were designed for primary school students, which cannot help them solve their problems.
- Less than one-fifth of the students in our sample possess a copy of a monolingual English dictionary. We strongly believe that many more students should be in possession of such a dictionary, because they are often the only dictionaries that could help them to solve many problems that students of EFL have at their level (e.g., to find right grammatical or lexical collocations).

Concerning dictionary consultation, we have noted a couple of interesting things:

- Although students were encouraged to use their dictionaries in tasks where they would be of help, the results have very often shown strikingly low percentages of dictionary consultations. Even when they did not know the right answer or when they were in doubt they preferred to rely on their partial knowledge or they guessed the answer rather than looking up words in a dictionary. One reason for this might be that this computer generation considers dictionary consultation to be too much time-consuming.
- Although results of the questionnaire show that the participants in our study theoretically know when to consult a monolingual and when a bilingual dictionary, the results of our Dictionary Research Test show that some of them very often consult a wrong dictionary.
- Although 67% of the students stated in the questionnaire that they were taught in school how to use a dictionary, the results of our Dictionary Research Test have shown that our respondents often do not find what they are looking for and they do not know where and how to look up.

- We have also seen that they mostly use their dictionaries to find the translation of an unknown word, but they extremely seldom use them to see how a word is used.
- In secondary schools in the county of Međimurje more effort should be devoted to the development of dictionary skills of students of EFL. In other words, students should be systematically taught how to use dictionaries. Provided that we are right in our thinking, we would be glad to hear that this article initiated a new wave of that kind of systematic tuition.

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Appendix A

Dictionary User Profile Form

The aim of this questionnaire is to discover how dictionaries can be improved. You can help us by filling in this questionnaire. The questions are about both monolingual (i.e. English-English) dictionaries and bilingual (i.e. English-Croatian) dictionaries.

1. What is your native language? ________________________________

2. How many years have you been learning English for and where?
____

3. What was your final grade in English last year? ___________________

4. a. Have you learnt at school how to use a dictionary?
Yes No
b. If you answered yes, please answer the following question
Have you been systematically taught how to use a dictionary and have you received precise instructions about it? Yes No

5. If you personally possess a dictionary or dictionaries that you use when studying or reading texts in English, say which ones (title, editor, published by, date of publication).
A
B
C
D

6. How long have you possessed the dictionary or dictionaries that you listed above?
Dictionary A ______ years Dictionary C _______ years
Dictionary B ______ years Dictionary D _______ years

7. What were your reasons for choosing the dictionary or dictionaries?
a. Recommended by the teacher.
b. Recommended by the bookshop.
c. Recommended by the parents.
d. Recommended by a friend.
e. It didn't cost much.
f. It looked easy to use.
g. It had good illustrations.
h. It was a gift.
i. Some other reason (please specify) _______________________.
8. How often do you use a monolingual English dictionary?
a. never b. seldom
c. often (every week) d. constantly (nearly every day)

9. How often do you use a bilingual English dictionary?
a. never b. seldom
c. often (every week) d. constantly (nearly every day)

10. How often do you use a dictionary / dictionaries that you personally do not possess?

	never	seldom	often	Constantly
in the school library				
in class (provided by the school library by the teacher or by a class-mate or a schoolmate)				
at home (borrowed from the town library, school library or a private person)				

11. What kind of dictionary would you normally use for each of the following purposes?

	English monolingual	Bilingual
to understand an English word, e.g. during reading		
to find the English translation of a word in Croatian		
to check on how to use an English word that you already know, for instance, when you are writing an essay or a an e-mail or while chatting on the Internet		
some other reason (please specify)		

12. Which of all the dictionaries you use seems the most useful?
a. monolingual dictionary (specify which one/ones)

____

b. bilingual dictionary (specify which one/ones)

____

Appendix B

Dictionary Research Test

Thank you for helping us by doing these tests. The point is not to test you personally, but rather to assess the usefulness of the dictionary that you are using. (However, we will sometimes ask you not to use your dictionary for a particular question.) We are using the same tests for all students, whatever their level of English, and so you should not worry if you can't answer all the questions. Please use the dictionary that you normally use, whether it is a monolingual English dictionary, or a bilingual one (in English and Croatian).

Please give details of the dictionary you are going to use for the tests (title, editor, published by, date of publication):

1. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.

Do you know what part of speech the word is that you are looking up? For instance:
in: I'm going to *address* the letters. the word *address* is "verb"
in: What's her *address*? the word *address* is "noun"
So the correct answer to the question "What part of speech is *address*?" is marked like this:

	noun	adjective	verb	preposition	I don't know
I'm going to *address* the letters.			x		
What's her *address*?	x				

Now answer the following questions by putting a cross in the appropriate box. In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *after*?

	adverb	adjective	conjunction	preposition	I don't know
1/1 I went for a swim *after* breakfast.					
1/2 *After* you'd left, I got a phone call from John.					

In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *present*?

	noun	adjective	adverb	preposition	I don't know
1/3 Both kinds of nucleic acid are *present* in all cells.					
1/4 At *present* the outlook appears bleak.					

In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *just*?

	noun	adjective	adverb	preposition	I don't know
1/5 He has *just* arrived					
1/6 Many Americans viewed it as a *just* war.					

2. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.
Circle the correct answer.
2/7 You should discuss ___________ with your doctor.
a. about this problem c. on this problem
b. this problem d. over this problem
Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question?
No Yes – which:

2/8 Soldiers entered ________, apparently searching for weapons.
a. in the houses c. to the houses
b. into the houses d. the houses
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

2/9 He still denies ________ his wife.
a. murder c. to murder
b. murdering d. of murdering
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

2/10 His books have given _________ to many people.
a. enormous pleasure c. the enormous pleasure
b. an enormous pleasure d. enormous pleasures
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

2/11 _________ women drivers are advised not to pick up hitch hikers.
a. Alone c. An alone
b. Lone d. A lone
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

3. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.
Put a cross (x) against the word that you would look up first if you wanted to find the following items. For instance, *hot cross bun*: if you think you would find *hot cross bun* under the word *hot,* mark the box as follows:

at HOT	X
at CROSS	
at BUN	
at HOT CROSS BUN, as if it were a “word” in its own right	
I don't know	

Now answer the following questions in the same way: say where you would really look for the expression – there is no “correct” answer to these.

3/12 hard nut

at HARD	
at NUT	
at HARD NUT, as if it were a “word” in its own right	
I don't know	

3/13 pay dividends

at PAY	
at DIVIDEND	
at PAY DIVIDENDS, as if it were a “word” in its own right	
I don't know	

3/14 come through

at COME	
at THROUGH	
at COME THROUGH, as if it were a “word” in its own right	
I don't know	

3/15 The word *colour* is a colour, but *colours* is a plural noun with a special meaning: where would you look it up?

at COLOUR	
at COLOURS, as if it were a “word” in its own right	
I don't know	

4. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Complete the sentences below by putting a cross (x) against the preposition which you think is the correct one to fill the slot. For instance, if you think that "It's cruel to pick an animal up *by* its tail" is correct, mark it like this:

It's cruel to pick an animal up _______ its tail.

with	
by	x
on	
at	

Now answer the following questions by putting a cross in the appropriate box.

4/16 I'm surprised ________ you.

with	
by	
for	
at	

Did you use your dictionary …?

No Yes – which:

4/17 Students who do not have a computer are __________ a disadvantage.

at	
of	
in	
with	

Did you use your dictionary …?

No Yes – which:

4/18 I couldn't hear what she was saying _________ the noise of the crowd.

at	
over	
on	
in	

Did you use your dictionary …?

No Yes – which:

4/19 Profits declined ________ 6% this year.

for	
at	
on	
by	

Did you use your dictionary …?

No Yes – which:

4/20 We achieved a small increase ________ profits of $3257.

for	
in	
to	
by	

Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.
Read the following sentences carefully. Focus on the meaning of the underlined word. What does this word mean (you can translate it into Croatian or copy a suitable definition from a monolingual dictionary)?

5/21 The arms will need shortening.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5/22 The main course was a bit heavy on the garlic.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5/23 He has never courted popularity.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5/24 She held fast to the railings and refused to move.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5/25 I told her to leave, for I was very tired.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

5/26 Ringed by soldiers for protection, he tried to address the crowd.
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

6. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.
The words underneath are written in the way they are pronounced. This is how pronunciation is written in monolingual dictionaries. Which words are these? (Pronunciation was given in the IPA.)

6/27 unimaginative
6/28 birthplace
6/29 northern
6/30 approach
6/31 breathing
6/32 showgirl

7. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Read the following short English passage, and give one single word which will fill each of the numbered slots. In some cases, there are several correct answers.
A Visit to the Doctor

I did not feel well and went to see the doctor. She asked me what was wrong. I explained (1) ________ her that I (2) _________ a cold. The doctor did a physical examination, (3) ________ a diagnosis, and (4) _________ (a) medication. A pharmacist had to (5) ________ the prescription. This medication is sold (6) _______ prescription (7) ______ . She told me to (8) _________ the medication twice a day. The medication is reported to be very effective (9) _________ the common cold. The doctor also (10) ________ me some advice. She said that I was allergic (11) _________ certain types of meat and should not eat them. She suggested that I (12) _________ a warm bath once a day in order to relax. She also urged me to (13) ___ calisthenics every morning and (14) _______ a long walk every afternoon.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer individual questions? Circle "Yes" or "No" for each word separately:

7/33 (1) No Yes – which:
…
7/46 (14) No Yes – which:

8. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.
Circle the correct answer.

8/47 We believe that the cumulative effects of renewed prosperity will ________ expectations.
a. overcome b. surpass c. undermine d. succeed
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

8/48 He will _____ leaving the door open – it drives me mad!
a. hold on b. go onc. keep on d. carry on
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

8/49 I do not believe that this preposterous scheme is _______ of our serious consideration.
a. worthless b. worthwhile c. worth d. worthy
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

8/50 There was a _________ of brakes as the car took the corner too quickly.
a. squawk b. squelch c. screech d. scream
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

8/51 _________ through the attic and see if you can find anything for the jumble sale.
a. Rummage b. Ravage c. Forage d. Salvage

Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

8/52 It is often difficult for ex-convicts to keep to the _________ and narrow.
a. wide b. straight c. deep d. long
Did you use your dictionary …?
No Yes – which:

YOUR OPINION ABOUT THE DICTIONARIES YOU USED:

Were you satisfied with the dictionary / dictionaries you used or not (write down the title of the dictionary / dictionaries you are referring to)?

What did you not find in the dictionary / dictionaries (write down the title of the dictionary / dictionaries you are referring to)

What did you like in the dictionary / dictionaries (write down the title of the dictionary / dictionaries you are referring to)?

What problems did you have when using the dictionary / dictionaries?

RESEARCHERS FROM THE FACULTY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN ZAGREB – CENTER IN ČAKOVEC
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Language and Gender: How Question Tags Are Classified and Characterised in Current EFL Materials

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Introduction

Soars, Soars, and Sayer (2001, p. 64) claim that "the use of short answers, reply questions and question tags is often quoted as the sign of a successful speaker of English". This statement is important in English language teaching for a number of reasons. First, the reader should note that Soars *et al.* do not differentiate the language learner from the native speaker: If they are to be successful, they need to master the use of the above structures regardless of their first language (L1) background. Second, the citation refers to speakers of English, and indeed, the elements that lubricate communication are most frequently found in spoken discourse. Finally, once their importance is recognised, one would expect that there is some unanimity among linguists as far as their taxonomy is concerned, which is then reflected in the presentation and practice sections as well as skills development tasks in course books.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate if there is any similarity in the classification, specifications, and functions of question tags in contemporary popular English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching materials and self-study books. The basis of selecting these sources was primarily availability: if a reference book was available at a reasonable price. Popularity was another factor in selection, for most of the literature referred to features on lists of set books in university language practice courses or is used in English classrooms. The motivation for the topic choice derived from a personal interest to clarify what would function as a solid working definition of question tags, how exactly they are formed and used, and what cultural load they carry that might come in convenient when teaching them.

Question tag classifications for the language learner

A question tag might look easy to define as a structure at first sight, but the literature in this field provides rather vague definitions. Learner-centred resource books tend to describe it as an interrogative ending added to a sentence. By implication rather than explanation, a question tag ends in a question

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mark and is separated from the host sentence by a comma. Since question tags are characteristic of spoken English, intonation patterns accompany descriptive norms.

"Keeping the conversation going" and "inviting listeners to communicate" are the two functions listed in *New Headway Intermediate* (Soars & Soars, 2000, p. 155). Meaning is dependent on intonation: If the tag falls, it implies expectations of agreement, while a rise shows that the speaker knows the answer, but is not absolutely sure. They also state in a subsequent point that question tags can be used with negatives to make a polite request or ask for help. In form, the rule claims repetition of the auxiliary verb, or the appropriate form of "do" if there is none. They call the language learner's attention to the exception of "aren't I" after a first person singular subject.

Thomson and Martinet (1993, pp. 113-114) classify question tags under two main headings according to their function: (1) asking for agreement, or (2) confirmation. After a discussion of how they are formed, i.e. an affirmative statement is normally followed by a negative tag, and the other way around, they describe patterns of intonation that will determine the functions. In a successive point, they list the characteristics of comment tags, which may indicate among other things interest, surprise, delight, anger, suspicion, disbelief, or noting a fact. Here, an affirmative statement is followed by an affirmative tag, and a negative statement by a negative tag.

According to Quirk and Greenbaum's classification (1993, pp. 194-196), tag questions are one of the three major question types together with yes-no questions and wh-questions. Similarly to Thomson and Martinet (1993), they subcategorise them on the basis of intonation and statement type. They emphasise the importance of an assumption, as expressed by the statement and an expectation, as expressed by the tag. When the speaker wishes to indicate inference, repetition, or, less frequently, sarcastic suspicion, both parts are positive. In a later section (p.201), they demonstrate how a tag question in a command can confirm the omitted second person subject of a command. In a complex sentence, tag questions are attached to the that-clause but stand in contrast with the independent clause, for the range of negation applies to the entire sentence (p. 346).

In a descriptive grammar of English, Swan (1992, point 515.4) labels question-tags after imperative sentences as "special difficulties". In point 515.6, he goes on to describe how ellipsis of the subject and the auxiliary verb is common in sentences with question-tags. Ellipsis can even be used in simple informal questions, with the restriction that the tag must be positive.

Vince (1998, p. 164) discusses intonation first, as it is this pattern that differentiates best between a real question and a request for confirmation from expectation of agreement. He then continues to briefly describe the usual forms, followed by the less common types of positive tag after a positive sentence, "will" and "won't" with imperatives, and the use of "shall we" after "let's". His practice exercises include 26 sentences, ten of which are positive sentence negative tag combinations, eleven are negative-positive, and only five are imperatives with positive tags. Most interestingly, Vince did not list any

similar sentence-tag combinations, nor did he mention sentences with ellipsis where the tag carries the subject and the verb.

Németh (2006, pp. 217-220) arranges question tags into six groups of rules. The first two of these are the most frequent examples of positive sentence negative tag, and negative sentence positive tag, while the third group lists the irregular cases with morpho-syntactical variations, issues of subject-verb agreement, problems with negatives and complex sentence structure as well as imperatives. A separate point deals with similar sentence and tag structures with the attributed function of adding stress, or expressing surprise, worry, interest, aggression, etc. It is to be noted that she is the only grammarian to provide an example of negative-negative combinations: "You won't tell me the truth, won't you?" (p. 218). Her fifth point describes intonation patterns where a falling intonation indicates expectation of agreement, and a rising tone signifies a genuine question. The last note reminds the language learner to use a negative sentence with a positive tag with a rising intonation whenever asking for information or a favour. The practice part has 73 sentences, 29 of which need a negative tag, while a positive tag is required in the remaining 44 cases, 11 of which follow imperatives. Again, no sentence made use of a similar sentence-tag combination or an elliptical structure.

Thomson and Martinet (1992, pp. 27-30) compile three exercise banks to let the learner practise the use of question tags. The first one, which is labelled easy on a three-degree scale, contains altogether 36 exclusively negative sentence positive tag combinations. There is a note here, saying that all of these tags take a falling intonation with the exception of item 30, an offer. Exercise number 13, a moderately difficult one, is a list of 36 positive sentence negative tag questions, mainly with a statement intonation. The last bunch of 36 is a proportionate representation of each group. Interestingly, Thomson and Martinet do not deal in practice with imperatives, same sentence-tag combinations, or ellipsis, either.

All the above learner-friendly self-study books discuss form, meaning, and intonation. They agree that question tags are a combination of a sentence and a tag that repeats the verb and the subject, typically with a reversed polarity. Some grammars find it important to list elliptical examples and imperatives, too. Function is viewed as either asking for information, or asking for confirmation. Meaning is clarified through intonation: A rise indicates a real question, while a fall seeks confirmation. The biggest disagreement seems to be in the name of the structure. Question tag, question-tag, tag question, and tail question (Coles & Lord, 2003) all appear as equivalent terms indicative of the same phenomenon. I will now turn to how more scientific materials approach the form and function of question tags.

Question tag classifications in research publications

Reference materials that address the linguist rather than the layman draw a more detailed picture of the structure and function of question tags. In the past thirty years a number of terms have been coined to refer to the main sentence: "anchor" (Huddleston, & Pullum, 2002), "basic clause" (Östman, 1981), "host clause" (Cattell, 1973), "main clause" (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999), "matrix clause" (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, (1985), or "stem clause" (McGregor, 1995). This is followed by the tag clause with an auxiliary or a modal verb, and a personal pronoun, "there", or "one" in what Tottie and Hoffmann (2006, p. 283) label "canonical" examples. Clarifying the terminology, they state that a combination of an anchor and a tag is a tag question. These complex sentences normally show reversed polarity in the anchor clause and the question tag with positive main clause-negative tag as the most frequent combination (Biber et al., 1999, p. 211; Tottie & Hofmann, 2006, p. 289), but sometimes constant polarity is allowed. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 813) question the existence of negative anchor and negative tag combinations.

However, the condition of occurring in sentence-final position is not always met, and, similarly to many other languages, there are a number of invariant tags, like "innit" and "weren't it" in British English (Tottie & Hoffmann, 2006, p. 286), and "right", "okay", or "hunh" in American English (p. 307).

Multifunctionality is one of the characteristics of tags, but given the specific social context and the intonation pattern, the primary function of a question tag can be identified (Holmes, 1983, p. 45). Table 1 provides an overview of the classifications by Holmes (1995), Algeo (2006), and Tottie and Hoffmann (2006).

Table 1: Question tag functions

Holmes (1995)	Algeo (2006)	Tottie and Hoffmann (2006)
Informational	Informational	Informational
Confirmatory	Confirmatory	Confirmatory
Facilitative		Facilitating
Softening		
	Punctuational	Attitudinal
	Peremptory	Peremptory
Challenging	Antagonistic	Aggressive

Table 1 describes question tags as falling into either of two broader categories of function: epistemic modal, or affective. Epistemic modal tags express speaker uncertainty and so are related to content, while affective tags show politeness. In Holmes's classification, modal tags have a rising intonation and affective tags normally have a falling one, but the correlation between form and function is not exact. All three taxonomies work with informational and confirmatory tags, the functions of which are asking for information and asking for confirmation, respectively. These categories seem to play an exclusive

role in student-friendly self-study reference books. Holmes (1995, p. 80) defines facilitative tags as devices that display positive politeness or a desire to continue conversation. Softeners express negative politeness, and accompany directives and negative criticism. Finally, challenging tags are strategies of confrontation either to provoke a reply or to amplify the force of negative utterances.

Algeo's punctuational tags point up for emphasis what the speaker has said, as in "You classicists, you've probably not done Old English, *have you?* Course you haven't" (Tottie & Hoffmann, 2006, p. 299). Peremptory tags follow an anchor that states a universal truth or something obvious for both parties, like "You're an industrious little fucker aren't cha?" (Penn & Krakauer, 2007). Aggressive tags imply that the listener ought to know, and so are provocative and insulting.

Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) adopted the terms "peremptory" and "aggressive" from Algeo, and "facilitating" with a minor modification from Holmes, but use "attitudinal" to indicate a stance-marking function, i.e. to emphasise what the speaker says without expecting involvement or a reply, as in the example "she'll be in trouble, *won't she*, she often gets her own drinks anyway, she sort of like, she's at that age she can, it's only when they get out there together" (p. 300).

The linguists and researchers I have selected approach the issue in more meticulous detail. Their use of the terminology seems to clarify the vagueness of what qualifies as a question tag, and sheds light on the differences between the question tag and the tag question. However, there is no unanimous agreement as to the existence of same way negative question tags, and their categories of pragmatic function have considerable differences, albeit with overlaps.

Research questions

The research questions of this study are

- How could the question tags from the elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate books of the series be classified in terms of form and function?
- To what extent are the results of this classification in keeping with current research findings?
- How are the form and function of the question tags from the skills development parts supported by the presentation and practice sections?
- What gender differences can be described in question tag use?

Method

For the empirical part of the analysis I chose the texts of the *New Headway* series, for this is a popular course with teenage and adult language learners. I made no selection in the materials but rather investigated all the printed pages including the tape transcripts. The investigation covered the elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels, that is, the ones that take the learner to the attainment of CEFR level B2 (Smith, 2006). Another reason for choosing these books and workbooks from the series was the importance attributed to question tags at a pre-intermediate stage by Soars *et al.* (2001, p. 64).

The procedures of the analysis comprised two fundamental parts. Frequency counts and simple descriptive statistical procedures were followed by a more qualitative section to identify the functions question tags carried out in these texts. A secondary aim was to generalise to theory: verify or refute the categories in Table 1.

Results and discussion

Altogether 104 sentences were collected as a pool of examples. For purposes of operationalisation, these were then turned into an Excel table so that SPSS could carry out the analyses on the dataset. As it seemed impossible to determine some of the values that characterise oral language in the examples taken from the workbooks or printed material, these sentences were dealt with separately. An entire presentation and practice section is devoted to question tags in *New Headway Intermediate* (Soars & Soars, 1999, pp. 109-110; Soars & Soars, 1997, p. 70), which might distort the results due to their inauthentic nature. Therefore, two sets of processes were run on the dataset: one on all the question tags, and another one omitting sentences from the unit in question. The remaining anchor-tag combinations might not all be good examples of authentic language in practice; still, they reflect what the writers and materials developers believed to mirror English in use.

After compiling the large dataset, I listed the following categories to characterise the instances: question tag type, intonation, function, speaker's gender, gender, and context. Question tag type indicated polarity, mood, and whether the sentence was elliptical. Intonation had the values of rising and falling, depending on the closing pitch. Since determining function was one of the aims of the investigation, I worked with no pre-determined labels here, but rather tried to see emerging patterns. Gender differences were the easiest to identify on the basis of names if printed and tone when spoken. Finally, I determined the number of participants in a conversation and the length of talk when settling context.

Frequency count results

The first analysis was conducted on form (Table 2). Question tag type values here ranged from positive sentence – negative tag, through negative sentence – positive tag, same way positive, same way negative, imperative, to ellipsis.

As Table 2 shows, no same way negative example was found in the pool of 104 sentences. 56.7% of all instances, i.e. 59 items, worked with a positive sentence – negative tag combination, with negative sentence – positive sentence coming in second at 35.6%, 37 items. Tag questions with reversed polarity accounted for 92.3% of all cases. Five sentences were elliptical (4.8%), two positive sentences took a positive tag (1.9%), and only one imperative was found (1%). However, when compared with the dataset without the presentation and practice exercises, significant differences manifested themselves. First, all the sentences with ellipsis (5 cases, 16.1%) belonged to the listening material. By the same token, both same way positives (6.5%) and the single instance of imperative (3.2%) were found in the smaller set. Finally, the ratio of positive-negative and negative-positive instances became 21 (67.7%) to 2 (6.5%).

Table 2: Tag question type

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ellipsis	5	48	48
	imperative	1	10	58
	negative sentence - positive tag	37	35.6	41.3
	positive sentence - negative tag	59	56.7	98.1
	same way positive	2	19	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	

Three items presented themselves as outliers according to the grammatical and spelling rules delineated by the literature. On two occasions (Soars & Soars, 1999, p. 140), they ended in a question mark and an exclamation mark. This was attributed to the function they expressed, namely surprise. Intonation seemed to underline an emotional emphasis, which was indicated in print by the unusual marking. The third outlier also presented a problem as to whether or not it a tag question at all. "It's our pleasure. Isn't it, Bob?" (Soars & Soars, 1999, p. 52) was finally listed on the basis of its falling intonation, which is uncharacteristic of yes-no questions, and its function, which was confirmation.

As a next step, I carried out a frequency count on another aspect of form: intonation (Table 3).

Table 3: Intonation patterns in question tags

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		24	23.1	23.1
	falling	47	45.2	68.3
	rising	33	31.7	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	

Intonation could not be identified in the case of 24 printed sentences (23.1%). In the other 80 instances it was either given in the instructions or the key of the exercises, or could be traced back on recording. Most of the examples (45.2%) were uttered with a falling intonation, while 33 sentences came with a rising tone (31.7%). Falling intonation outnumbered a rising one in the skill-based part as well by 41.9%, 20 to 7.

As far as how question tags are used, I looked into which of the two sexes used them more frequently, to whom, and in what context. Women were found to use more question tags than men, 39.4% to 28.8%, and 54.8% to 38.7% in the larger and the smaller datasets, respectively. As far as the listener's gender is concerned, females were addressed in 41 cases (39.4%), and males in 31 (29.9%) in the large sentence pool. The smaller sample yielded dissimilar results: women received question tags 15 times (45.2%), while men did in 16 instances (51.6%).

In terms of context, all but two of the items in the skills sections appeared in oral language use. Thirty-two instances (30.8%) stood by themselves or in very short dialogues with the purpose of repetition, identifying patterns of intonation, or other drills. Conversations of more than three turns took up 49% of all question tags, and another 17 (16.3%) showed up in mini-dialogues of less than three turns. There was one occasion each for a prolonged four-partner discussion, and a monologue to an interview question. The two examples outside of spoken language appeared in letters to friends, the genre of which is often dealt with in ELT literature as speech written down.

Perhaps the most exciting part of the analysis was identifying function. It turned out in the early stages that confirmation and asking for information or a favour would not suffice. Apart from these, the following categories emerged:

- comment;
- criticism;
- order;
- inviting a remark of agreement, disagreement, or
- sympathy; and
- surprise.

Furthermore, in some instances I felt it necessary to modify the basic functions with qualifying markers as follows: criticism, surprise, reproach, or saving face. As a distinguishing feature between "confirmation" on the one hand, and

"inviting a remark" on the other, presence of information was put in focus. In the case of the former, the speaker was aware of the information but needed verification of knowledge, as in "I'm sure you don't sell pizza, do you?" (Soars & Soars, 2001, p. 120). In contrast, when the speaker invited a remark, they displayed no interest in the truth content of the topic, but rather aimed at involving the addressee in the conversation. An example of this category would be "You two have been very busy this year, haven't you?" (2000, p. 122). The emerging functional patterns can be seen in Table 4.

Disregarding 29 items where function was not identifiable because of the drill-like nature of the exercise, "asking for information" was found in 17 instances (16.3%), along with another 5 cases (4.8%) of critical, 1 (1%) of reproach, 2 (1.9%) of saving face, and 1 (1%) of surprise modifications. "Inviting remark" appeared in altogether 20 items (19.3%), where agreement far outnumbered all other types (N=18, 17.3%). Another large group was found to include 12 question tags of confirmation (11.5%), with a further 4 cases (3.9%) for qualified use. "Asking a favour" turned up in only 4 examples (3.8%), and expression of pure surprise twice (1.9%). Speakers used question tags to criticise an addressee on 3 occasions (2.9%), and to make simple comments without leaving enough time to even venture a reply 4 times (3.8%).

Table 4: Question tag function

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		29	27.9	27.9
	asking a favour	4	3.8	31.7
	asking for information	17	16.3	48.1
	asking for information, criticism	5	4.8	52.9
	asking for information, reproach	1	1.0	53.8
	asking for information, saving face	2	1.9	55.8
	asking for information, surprise	1	1.0	56.7
	comment	4	3.8	60.6
	confirmation	12	11.5	72.1
	confirmation, order	2	1.9	74.0
	confirmation, reproach	1	1.0	75.0
	confirmation, suggestion	1	1.0	76.0
	criticism	3	2.9	78.8
	inviting remark of agreement	18	17.3	96.2
	inviting remark of disagreement	1	1.0	97.1
	inviting remark of sympathy	1	1.0	98.1
	surprise	2	1.9	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	

Interestingly enough, the dataset without the presentation and practice section showed a somewhat different frequency distribution. "Inviting a remark of agreement" was the adopted function in 11 sentences (35.5%), by itself more than "asking for information" and "confirmation" put together (N=5, 16.1%

each). All the 4 comments belonged here (12.9%) leaving room for a single item (3.2%) of "asking a favour" and "confirmation, order".

Crosstabulation results

In the second round of descriptive statistical procedures, crosstabulation counts were employed to see how the formal and functional characteristics were distributed between the two sexes. This method was found convenient enough to see if question tag types, intonation, or function was gender dependent, or at least gender typical, and also to find out if there was a tendency to put question tags to people from the same or the opposing sex.

In the larger body of example sentences, although women and men were found to use almost the same number of negative sentence – positive tag combinations, proportionately the difference is high, 24.4% for females to 36.7% for males. An even more suggestive difference manifested itself with positive sentence – negative tags: women used this combination 28 times (68.3%), while men uttered 15 such sentences (50%). Both sexes used ellipsis by and large similarly, but the only instances of imperatives and of same way positive structures were given by men. The smaller dataset showed proportionately similar results.

Analysing the distribution of intonation patterns seemed to make sense only in the case of imitated or authentic texts, as opposed to grammar exercises and sentence manipulation. Therefore, only examples from skill-based sections were studied, the results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Question tag intonation patterns in genders

		Speaker's gender			
		unknown	female	male	Total
Intonation		2	2	0	4
	falling	0	12	8	20
	rising	0	3	4	7
Total		2	17	12	31

As can be seen in Table 5, intonation could not be defined in two workbook examples (Soars and Soars, 1997, p. 31 and p. 72), and another two cases in Kati's letter to her host family (p. 124). Out of a total of 31 sentences, women pronounced 12 out of 17 question tags with a falling intonation (70.6%) and only 3 with a rising tone (17.6%), this way they represented the two extremes. By contrast, men made a similar percentage of their tags with a falling pattern (66.7%), but double the amount with a rising one (33.3%).

The last analysis related to the distribution of function between the sexes (Table 6).

Table 6: Question tag function in genders – small dataset

		Speaker's gender			
		un-known	female	male	Total
Function		2	2	0	4
	asking a favour	0	1	0	1
	asking for information	0	2	3	5
	Comment	0	3	1	4
	confirmation	0	4	1	5
	confirmation, order	0	0	1	1
	inviting remark of agreement	0	5	6	11
Total		2	17	12	31

Disregarding the workbook examples again, men seemed to utter markedly more tags to invite their listeners into the conversation (N=6, 50%). They also asked more questions to get information (N=3, 25%). However, only single instances (8.3% each) of "comment"; "confirmation", and "confirmation, order" were found. Women, on the other hand, could be characterised best by making comments without expecting a reply (N=5, 29.4%) They also asked for confirmation more often (N=4, 23.5%), but invited almost half as many remarks (N=5, 29.4%) as men. Furthermore, "asking for information" featured among their tag functions twice only (11.8%). Women were also found to ask the only favour.

The results of the analysis of the entire database are presented in Table 7.

Since the sentences discussed here include inauthentic instances, as well as models for imitation or manipulation, the results in Table 7 show beliefs rather than facts about language use. Still, women were found to use numerically and proportionately more tags to invite a comment (N=12, 29.3%) than men (N=8, 26.7%). They also asked more often for information (N=12, 29.3%) but the proportion here gave the advantage to men (N=11, 36.7%). Paradoxically enough, men invited confirmation in 8 instances (26.7%), while women used tags with a confirmatory function in 7 sentences only (17%).

Table 7: Question tag function in genders – large dataset

		Speaker's gender			
		un-known	female	male	Total
Function		27	2	0	29
	asking a favour	3	1	0	4
	asking for information	3	9	5	17
	asking for information, criticism	0	2	3	5
	asking for information, reproach	0	1	0	1
	asking for information, saving face	0	0	2	2
	asking for information, surprise	0	0	1	1
	comment	0	3	1	4
	confirmation	0	5	7	12
	confirmation, order	0	1	0	1
	confirmation, reproach	0	1	0	1
	confirmation, suggestion	0	0	1	1
	criticism	0	3	0	3
	inviting remark of agreement	0	11	7	18
	inviting remark of disagreement	0	1	0	1
	inviting remark of sympathy	0	0	1	1
	order	0	0	1	1
	surprise	0	1	1	2
Total		33	41	30	104

Discussion

How could the question tags from the elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate books of the series be classified in terms of form and function?

The results of my investigation show that as far as form is concerned, reversed polarity was found to be dominant, as expected after consulting the technical literature, with elliptical sentences, orders, and sentences with constant positive polarity in minority among the examples collected from these books of the *New Headway* series.

Function, on the other hand, seemed to be a category with a number of grouping principles. Apart from the canonical types of asking for information or for confirmation, and subcategorisations of these, the pragmatic patterns included comments; orders; expressions of surprise; remarks inviting agreement, disagreement, or sympathy; criticism; and asking for favours.

To what extent are the results of this classification in keeping with current research findings?

The formal characteristics of my dataset matched the formal descriptions of both the reference literature for language learners and the findings of research publications. Only in some extreme cases were there minor discrepancies with punctuation or mode of language usage.

In terms of function, my emerging categories could be identified with corresponding labels from Holmes's, Algeo's, and Tottie and Hoffmann's work. This is modelled in Table 8.

Table 8: Tag question functions: Research publications and *Headway*

Holmes (1995)	Algeo (2006)	Tottie and Hoffmann (2006)	This study
Informational	Informational	Informational	Asking for information
Confirmatory	Confirmatory	Confirmatory	Confirmation
Facilitative		Facilitating	Inviting remark
Softening			Asking a favour
	Punctuational	Attitudinal	Comment
	Peremptory	Peremptory	
Challenging	Antagonistic	Aggressive	Criticism, Order

"Confirmatory" and "informational" are two groups in all the taxonomies. These were complemented by "inviting a remark", as Holmes's "facilitative" or Tottie and Hoffmann's "facilitating"; "order" and "criticism", similarly to "challenging", "antagonistic", or "aggressive" in the parallel classes; "asking a favour", like Holmes's "softening" category; and "comment", which Tottie and Hoffmann call "attitudinal". "Surprise" was the only pattern seemed to belong in two clusters: attitudinal and confirmation, since it was understood as an indication of stance, but asked for confirmation, as well.

How are the form and function of the question tags from the skills development parts supported by the input in the presentation and the exercises in the practice sections?

One of the greatest findings of this study was how the practice exercises, which were in complete harmony with the ideas in the presentation section, did not conform with the function as described on the basis of question tag usage in the skills materials. Despite the wide range of use tags were put to in the reading, writing, and listening parts, the grammar consolidation passage listed only three, and only two of these, namely informative and confirmatory, were practised. The alert language learner might feel confused when facing a sentence that does not meet formal requirements, as in "It's our pleasure. Isn't it, Bob?" (Soars & Soars, 2000, p. 52), or that differs in pragmatic function from the canonical examples, for example "Now, we're all going out tomorrow, aren't we? Shall we go for a pizza, or shall we go to the cinema? What would she like to do?" (p. 57).

What gender differences can be described in question tag use?

Since even the large dataset included barely enough instances to allow drawing a statistically significant conclusion, I had to settle for identifying tendencies. Another limitation was how the authentic and mock authentic tag questions in the smaller set produced contradictory results to the output of the large group of examples.

Still, women were found to use more tags with a "comment" function, that is, to indicate their stance without meaning to involve the listener. They also

used this structure to criticise, i.e. the aggressive end of the spectrum. Men, by contrast, applied question tags proportionately more to invite a remark, in other words, to invite the listener to contribute to the conversation.

Conclusion

Question tags in the *New Headway English Course* have been classified according to form and function. The description offered in this paper found that the most important distinctive features were question tag type, intonation, context, speaker's and listener's gender, and function. The emerging categories could be matched with findings in earlier research (Algeo, 2006; Holmes, 1995; and Tottie & Hoffmann, 2006). However, they were inconsistent with the description of use in learner grammars and in the presentation sections of the course material: The skills development parts applied question tags differently from how they were outlined in grammar input. Moreover, "gender" was not listed as a differentiating principle in the coursebook.

The comparative analysis of the quantitative part shows the importance of prudent materials development, especially in the case of an edited book. The intention to provide a clear, simple, and logical explanation is supported only as long as the rule reflects authentic language use.

One limitation of the study is the size of the dataset. As the number of the collected items was rather small, no statistical significance could be identified. Besides, further research is needed into how question tags are used differently by women and men, and whether coursebooks are compiled accordingly.

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The Influence of the Classroom Climate on Students' Motivation

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Introduction

The paper reports on the findings of a qualitative study into secondary-school students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language (EFL). It aims to explore the atmosphere of the classroom through the eyes of the participants and thus gain an emic perspective on the interaction between various motivational factors. Participants were 16 students at a secondary grammar school and data was gathered from a variety of sources including students' self-report diaries, the teacher's diary, focus group interviews, and reports given by external observers. My investigations found that the students had a clear understanding of the learning process and effective classroom management. The findings carry important pedagogical implications, as they highlight the responsibility of the teacher in creating a learning environment where students can attain their goals.

Learning motivation and especially students' motivation to learn a foreign language (L2) appears to be an area of general interest among educational researchers as well as practising teachers. Despite the fact that there is an extensive literature on the subject, no clear consensus exists over a comprehensive definition of the construct (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Although there are overlaps and recurring characteristics, different researchers suggest different frameworks, the most elaborate of which was probably proposed by Dörnyei (1994). He attempted to integrate the multitude of existing motivational variables into a multilevel model, which distinguishes three levels of motivation: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. Each of these reflects different dimensions of language learning: the social, the personal and the educational aspect respectively.

The new frameworks also inspired studies carried out in EFL settings and thus the classroom milieu got in the limelight. A new approach, the process-oriented view has gained ground, and researchers investigate the ways in which the different mental processes that affect L2 learning and achievement operate (Dörnyei, 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Motivation is now seen as a dynamic concept, in which time is considered to be a determining factor (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1996; Volet, 2001). Consequently, attention is directed towards attitudes and motivation concerning the learning environment, more specifically the course, and the role that peers and teachers play (see, for example,

Heitzmann, J. (2009). The influence of the classroom climate on students' motivation. In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 207-224). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Burnett, 2002; Nikolov, 2000, 2001; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999). Despite this shift in interest towards L2 learning settings, the number of empirical studies examining the classroom climate is relatively small.

Research on motivation in the classroom

Research focusing on the impact that experiences of an EFL class exert on learners' motivation and development has shown that the dynamics of the language classroom is a motivational factor as important as integrative orientation (see Brown, 1990; Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Crooks & Schmidt, 1991; Ramage, 1990). This finding is supported by Kormos and Lukóczky (2004), who suggest that a negative classroom atmosphere might lead to a decrease in motivation. In a case study of Hungarian secondary school students, they identify the following classroom-related factors causing de-motivation: lack of group norms, peers' attitude, lack of discipline, and the teacher's incoherent explanations.

The role of classroom climate is emphasised by several other researchers (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998; Ghaith, 2003; Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996); moreover, research has shown that the climate of the whole school influences the motivation of both teachers and students (Maehr & Midgley, 1991). In interpreting the findings of their research, Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy (2001) assume that factors such as the school's educational policy and teachers' beliefs and actions play a decisive role in forming students' motivation. A negative example is given by Williams and Burden (1999), who argue that in an achievement-oriented school, students will most probably set performance goals for themselves rather than learning goals, and their self-perceptions will be based on external rewards, such as marks and examination results. This practice, however, will not foster their ability to become effective and successful learners.

Closely related to the issue of classroom climate is another, equally important social influence on motivation and the role that peers play in the learning process. Aspects that have been researched include, among others, friendship, co-operative learning, and help seeking. While Goodenow (1993) argues that a supportive peer group facilitates learning, Ladd (1990) emphasises the benefits of good social skills, saying that students who are accepted by their peers also become more successful learners. Slavin (1990), on the other hand, approaches the issue from the perspective of co-operative learning. He assumes that the mere enjoyment that derives from collaborative activities may enhance students' motivation. Moreover, since peers help each other to understand and master the subject matter by discussing it, their achievement will also improve. A similar idea, help seeking from peers is discussed by Newman (1994), who has found that in a classroom where learning goals are emphasised, children are more ready to seek help when they face difficulties, in order to keep engaged in an activity.

Throughout the studies on classroom motivation, great emphasis is put on the role of teachers and, more specifically, on the effects of their teaching and communicative styles. Burnett's (2002) study, investigating the relationship between teacher praise and feedback and elementary school students' perceptions of the

atmosphere in the classroom, yielded a rather surprising result. On the one hand, he found no significant correlations between general teacher praise and students' perceptions of the classroom climate. On the other hand, feedback on ability exerted a direct influence on how students felt about their classes, while negative feedback and feedback on effort showed a direct impact on their relationship with teachers. On the whole, frequent feedback on ability and effort seemed to result in their satisfaction with the learning environment.

The importance of the teacher's communicative style is also highlighted by Piniel (2004). Exploring the possible sources of learners' anxiety in the foreign language classroom, she arrives at the conclusion that teachers' unclear explanations, unfair assessment, unpredictable classroom management, and instructions that are difficult to understand do not only cause feelings of apprehension but might lead to students' demotivation in the long run.

The focus in Noels, Clément and Pelletier's (1999) study is on the impact that teachers' instructional styles have on students' motivational goals. The authors assess the relationship between motivational orientations and various language learning outcomes within the self-determination paradigm, with specific regard to the way in which teachers interact with their students. The results of their investigations reveal that teachers who are supportive of learner autonomy and who also provide useful feedback about their students' progress may foster internally regulated motivation, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of achievement. These findings support the self-determination theory suggested by Deci and Ryan (1985) and are also in line with Guay and Vallerand's (1997) claim that teaching styles and learners' perceptions of these styles impact motivational orientations.

An intriguing question, 'What kind of classroom milieu is likely to facilitate learning and achievement?' is asked by Meece (1994). Drawing on the findings emerging from a series of observations of elementary science classes (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988), she identifies high versus low mastery oriented classes, and explains the reasons for students adopting either type of goal by their teachers' instructional strategies. She has found that in the high mastery classes, the teachers monitored their students' understanding of the material and gave support to their efforts to solve problems independently. They encouraged learners to actively participate in the lesson by leaving room for peer collaboration. However, extrinsic rewards like grades were rarely used as a means of motivating students. On the other hand, low mastery classes turned out to be dominated by rote learning and the recitation of the material. Students were rarely involved in the construction of meaning and they had little opportunity to co-operate with peers. Despite the fact that the teachers did not tailor the lessons to the learners' needs or abilities, assessment played a major role in the teaching process.

Similar findings surface from Syed's (2001) study, the aim of which is to identify the factors that help students to maintain their interest in learning an L2. The results suggest that the way in which the language is taught may act as an important motivational factor. Apparently, by making an effort to meet learners' needs and personalising the teaching material, teachers can enhance their students' motivation greatly.

The quality of the teaching programme was found to be accountable for students' wishing to continue their language studies in Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt and Shohamy's (2001) research. What makes their findings remarkable is the context of the study: the authors investigated the teaching of Arabic to Hebrew-speaking students in Israel. It seems that good quality teaching methods are always appreciated by the students, moreover, devoted teachers' efforts to promote motivation can even rise above political conflict.

The teacher's responsibility is also emphasised from another perspective. Apparently, teaching methods and evaluation practices may debilitate motivation if they make the differences in students' abilities clearly visible in the classroom (Ames, 1992; Maehr & Midgley, 1991). Whole class activities, group formation according to ability, and the public display of feedback convey the salience of achievement or competition; therefore, they direct students towards ego-involved performance goals. On the other hand, in classes where learner autonomy is supported and students' improvement is valued, learners are more positively motivated.

Nikolov (2001) takes an interesting approach to the issue when she interviews young adults who consider themselves unsuccessful language learners. Again, classroom experience, teaching methods and assessment practices seem to be salient factors accountable for student motivation and long-term learning outcomes.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relevance of theory in the classroom context, that is, to explore how different affective variables that are emphasised in the literature relate to everyday teaching practices. It investigates actual classroom practices in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivational factors trigger students' choice of action?
2. What role does the teacher play in enhancing motivation in the classroom?
3. How do peers contribute to a supportive atmosphere?

Methods

Participants and setting

The participants were 16 students from my own secondary grammar school, Béla III High School Gimnázium in Baja. The school has a good reputation for its high standard of teaching and is very popular in the region, which is indicated by the number of applications every year. In the past decade, there have always been twice as many applicants as there were places. Apart from the usual four years, the school also offers five years' tuition, which includes a year of intensive language learning, and a six-year programme starting with year 7 (age 12).

At the beginning of the data gathering procedure, the participants were in year 9, starting their third year at the school. Compared to the average Hungarian secondary school student, their general academic motivation could be described as fairly high: they all came to the school with the aim of continuing their studies in tertiary education and were working hard towards that goal.

Instruments

Data collection lasted for four years and included a wide range of sources. To address the issue of classroom atmosphere, verbal data was collected from the following sources: students' diaries, the teacher's diary, focus group interview, and external observers' reports. The majority of the information was provided by the focus group interview, during which the participants discussed the following questions:

- What should an English class be like?
- To what extent do lessons meet students' expectations?
- What are the good points of the lessons? What activities do they find useful?
- What would they do differently?
- Do they get enough help from the teacher to reach their goals?
- In what fields do they feel that they are making progress?
- How are English lessons different from other classes?

This data was supplemented by students' diary entries, in which they were asked to compare English classes with science lessons like Physics and Chemistry, and by the comments that were made by external observers after visiting English classes. In this paper, students are quoted under pseudonyms.

Data analysis

All the verbal data was analysed qualitatively using the constant comparative method, as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994), in order to find emerging patterns.

Results and discussion

What factors trigger students' choice of action?

A clear pattern seems to emerge from the data, which is consistent with Dörnyei's (1994) definition of the learning situation level. The findings uncover similar factors influencing the climate of the classroom and, consequently, students' motivational behaviour to the ones clustering around the teacher and the learning group in the multilevel model of L2 motivation proposed by Dörnyei (1994). As shown in Table 1, teacher specific variables are inclusive of the teacher's style, teaching methods, and her experience and personality, while group specific factors comprise group cohesion, goal setting and members' willingness to participate in the learning process. The only external factor that surfaced is the influence of the timetable.

Table 1: Factors influencing classroom climate

classification	Factor	frequency*
Teacher-specific factors	teaching style	
	- pace of lesson	13
	- arousing interest	6
	- discipline in class	6
	teaching methods	
	- explanation/rote learning	13
	- variety	11
	- student involvement	9
	teacher's experience and personality	8
Group-specific factors	group cohesion	7
	members' participation	7
	group goals	5
External factors	Timetable	11

*Note: Frequency indicates how often students mentioned the given category

As can be seen from the list classified as teacher specific components (see Table 1), the most important criterion perceived by students is their ability to follow the material. In terms of teaching style, this is determined by the pace of the lesson. The next element on the list is students' expectation of interesting lessons; however, it is remarkable that students seem to attach equal importance to discipline in the classroom. As for teaching methods, the quality of the teacher's explanation and her requirement of rote learning are given priority. Apparently, almost equally important is the use of a wide variety of tasks during the lesson and students' involvement in classroom processes. The third teacher-related factor, including experience and personality, refers to effective classroom management.

As regards motivational factors on the group level, three components emerge from the data: group cohesion, members' willingness to participate in different activities, and goal-setting. Group cohesion means the relationship of group members to one another, their willingness to co-operate and help each other, while group goals refer to the existence of a common goal pursued by the members. As will be seen later, these components are in close interaction with each other, as group cohesion and the existence of group goals greatly influence students' participation in the learning process and their contribution to the desired outcome.

The third factor that surfaced as contributing to the climate of the L2 class is the school timetable, an external factor, which is beyond the control of the participants, either learners' or the teacher's. Nevertheless, students seem to find it important to mention it for two reasons. As a negative effect, an unfavourable arrangement of classes might result in students feeling tired and hungry, which is likely to undermine their motivation. On the other hand, the number of classes allocated for the study of different subjects might account for their success or failure, which in turn enhances or decreases their motivation. In what follows, I will

examine these factors one by one and explore how their interaction exerts its influence on students' motivation in the classroom.

What role does the teacher play in enhancing motivation in the classroom?

Data collection involved open questions asking students to compare English classes with others. Interestingly, some subjects were not mentioned, while with others there were recurring themes. One of the central issues that surfaced was that students pursue specific goals, and they expect the teacher to create an atmosphere where they can attain their goals. In classes where the tasks are pitched at their level they can perceive their progress, as there is a harmony between their goals, the task types and their development.

The first teacher-related factor influencing motivation is concerned with the management of the class. According to the students, it is the teacher's responsibility to set the right pace that is appropriate for the group. They also expect the teacher to maintain discipline in the classroom as well as arouse and sustain learners' interest in the subject.

Timing seems to be important for several reasons. On the one hand, students need enough time to understand the material in order to be able to follow the lesson. If they are overwhelmed by information, they may not be able to cope. As evidenced by Excerpts 1 and 2, such a situation is considered unsatisfactory, as they would rather set a lower standard and reach it than remember nothing.

> Excerpt 1 (Focus group interview, pp. 9-10, 16)
>
> The problem [with Italian] is that we went too fast at the beginning. We should have done that slowly and in more detail. … We shouldn't run … but aim at learning this language at a certain level. … Because this way rather than achieving a level, no matter how low, we won't know anything.
>
> Excerpt 2 (Kitti, p. 10)
>
> I don't like it when I don't understand something, when we go on and I or somebody else lags behind.

On the other hand, students also voiced their criticism when they felt that a task "dragged on", or when "we spent too much time" on a given assignment even if they considered it useful. What makes this finding even more interesting is the fact that such critical comments sometimes coincided with my own concern about the pace of the lessons. This is how I wrote about it in my diary:

Excerpt 3 (Teacher's diary, p. 13)

> I don't know what it is, but I'm slow. I don't actually feel it in class, but when the bell rings I have the feeling these days that we have hardly done anything.

Closely related to this is the question of discipline. The findings reveal that students are highly motivated by consistent work in the classroom, which seems to be dependent on both the teacher's instructional strategies and their peers' attitude. They hold the teacher responsible for maintaining discipline either by conducting a well-paced class and implementing strict measures or, more preferably, by stimulating and sustaining learners' interest. It seems that the presentation of the learning material is often more important than the material itself; moreover, students are extremely motivated if they perceive their teacher's enthusiasm and interest in the subject. To quote a few opinions:

Excerpt 4 (Klára, p. 27)

> I think it is very important for a student to know that there is 'order' in a given class so he can learn properly and respect the subject, and, undoubtedly, it depends on the group (the teacher and students).

Excerpt 5 (Focus group interview, p, 20)

> [Discipline depends on] the teacher's personality. She should be sturdy, firm and strict in order to keep the discipline. … It would be important to have discipline, that the teacher could keep the discipline. … She could allocate seats for those who keep talking, or make them write tests but this may not be a good idea.

Excerpt 6 (Focus group interview, p. 21)

> The [Physics] teacher introduced this new thing that at the beginning of the lesson a few students sit in the front desks and write a test. This is because there was a lot of disruptive behaviour and they didn't learn for the lessons. But I don't think that it solves the problem because they keep talking in class. … I would try to make the lessons more interesting. … Students usually like watching or doing experiments, we could do more and then perhaps they would be more interested.

This idea of stimulating and sustaining learners' interest is a recurring issue. It seems that students are willing to listen to the teacher and actively participate in the lesson if they are sufficiently interested. When asked how they would make classes more interesting for students, they listed those activities that they missed: for example, experiments in small groups in the physics lesson and project work, stories, and the use of atlases in history classes. Moreover, it seems that the

teacher's enthusiasm and instructional style are better stimulants than the material itself. This can be concluded from the following quote:

> Excerpt 7 (Focus group interview, p. 13)
>
> I think any passage could be presented so that you say it is very good, interesting and you read it again at home. I think it depends very much on what plate that pasta is served on. … It is very important how it is presented.

English seems to be a positive example. If students can see that the teacher is interested in her own subject and she is also an active participant in the class, it can also act as a motivating factor. Apparently, students appreciate the teacher's favourable attitude, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

> Excerpt 8 (Focus group interview, p. 19)
>
> It shows that the [English] teacher is interested … and looks things up if we ask her. We can see that she is interested in the language and so she can teach it much better.

The second teacher-related factor accountable for the atmosphere of the classroom refers to the methods that teachers employ and their concept of knowledge. What appears as a result of particular interest is that there is often a difference between students' and teachers' conceptualisations of knowledge and what learning and development involves, which offers a plausible explanation of why learners' attitudes and motivation differ in various classes. While students state explicitly that understanding is the key to development, in classes such as Physics and Chemistry they often fail to understand the material. Given the fact that in these classes the main emphasis is put on declarative knowledge and rote learning, students see a basic conflict. Furthermore, they are perfectly aware of what they will need in the long run and they question the usefulness of such knowledge. In their own words:

> Excerpt 9 (Focus group interview, p.20)
>
> I lost the thread at some point and since then I haven't been interested. … My problem with physics and with other subjects, chemistry, for example, is that I don't understand the 'why' of many things. … The way these subjects are taught, I mean that we are not supposed to understand the rules, only know them. … And I don't like things that I don't understand. Rote learning is no use.

Excerpt 10 (Franciska, p. 16)

> English is also a subject but everybody has a different attitude to it. Physics, for example, is a compulsion, and I don't like going to those classes, I never understand the material properly. But I can follow the English classes all right.

Excerpt 11 (Focus group interview, p.13)

> When we are asked in [the Italian] class … we got a sheet of paper and if somebody recited what was on that paper they got a 5, but that is swotting, I just retell it and that's it. Somehow I don't think it is useful.

By contrast, they report feeling more confident in the English class, where procedural knowledge is given priority. Obviously, such perception increases their motivation:

Excerpt 12 (Erika, p. 17)

> We can usually cover more in English because we understand it better. Unlike physics, which is difficult to digest even after a week. [English] is one of the best lessons.

Closely linked to the above standpoints is students' apparent desire to become involved in the learning process. One obvious reason that they give is that they find a lesson far more interesting if they are not only passive recipients but can actually participate in the work. Another point that they raise is the fact that taking part in the classroom processes helps them understand the material and later recall it. The following remarks suggest that they are willing to use their cognitive skills and engage in intensive work:

Excerpt 13 (Focus group interview, p. 21) about the Physics class:

> Dictating the outline of the new material is boring. … besides solving tasks we could be involved. There aren't many opportunities to think and to talk about it. … I would try to find the answer to the whys, even if superficially.

Excerpt 14 (Karcsi, p. 5)

> The [English] lesson was good, not the type where you just sit bored, it was lively and it made us use our brains.

An equally important feature, variety, also emerges as an inevitable characteristic of a good English class. Obviously, completing various tasks and activities makes

a lesson more attractive for students. What is interesting, however, is that students also express their wish to develop different language skills. Sample comments are:

> Excerpt 15 (Focus group interview, p. 1)
>
> I think [a good English lesson] should be varied. There should be all kinds of tasks … reading, writing, comprehension, speaking. Different things like those extras that we did, passages, for example, or a game or an interesting task that hypes up the lesson and makes one lesson different from the other … so that they distinguish Monday lesson from Tuesday.
>
> Excerpt 16 (Focus group interview, p. 2)
>
> Everybody should have the possibility to develop and in order to do that we should speak and write, I mean we should do different kinds of tasks.

Finally, the third teacher-related component that was found to influence the atmosphere of the classroom is the teacher's experience and personality. Again, different subject teachers are compared and the findings seem to suggest that a helpful, attentive and reassuring teacher has better chances to motivate her students effectively. This is expressed in the following excerpts:

> Excerpt 17 (Focus group interview, p. 19)
>
> I often turn to you [the teacher] with a problem in English and I always get an answer. As I see it, due attention is paid. And when I ask something the teacher listens … I can feel that I am not just one of many people, but she pays attention to me personally.
>
> Excerpt 18 (Focus group interview, p. 20)
>
> When somebody doesn't understand something we can always ask [the physics teacher].

At the same time, although they are critical about any professional inadequacy, they are inclined to attribute it to the teacher's lack of experience. Example:

> Excerpt 19 (Focus group interview, p. 14)
>
> It is bad for me when I ask something and she cannot give a clear answer. It makes me feel insecure. … Our teacher of Italian has just started [her job] so she hasn't got as much experience. I think this is also part of it.

It is apparent from these findings that students have a clear picture of how classes should be taught. Furthermore, they are aware of teacher's responsibilities for creating a learner-friendly atmosphere in the classroom that facilitates their development. However, apart from emphasising the role of the teacher in creating an inspiring climate in the classroom, students also seem to be aware of the motivational power of the group itself.

How do peers contribute to a supportive atmosphere?

The findings reveal three group specific elements that are thought to affect the atmosphere, which include group cohesion, common goals within the group, and active participation in classroom processes. In students' opinion, a cohesive group is characterised by members who know and accept each other and are also ready to offer help. A perfect description of such a group can be seen in the following excerpt:

> Excerpt 20 (Focus group interview, p. 2)
>
> I think it is very important what the group is like … we need tasks through which we can get to know each other. … The group can work together much better if they know each other. We know what the other is better or less good at, what they like or don't like, and so we can adapt to each other and we can make headway by helping the other and those at the top can pull those who need it.

The last remark referring to the necessity of a leading personality in the group is also supported by the next quote, where *help* seems to be the key for improvement.

> Excerpt 21 (Beáta, p. 20)
>
> I like the group in which I am learning the language. The best thing is that there is always somebody to look up to, there is a leading person who helps others.

Concomitant of a co-operative classroom atmosphere, learners' active participation in the learning process, is a recurring issue in the present study. The findings suggest that students are rather critical of themselves and their peers in this respect. When comparing English with other subjects, they explain their peers' reluctance to get engaged in classroom activities with their obvious lack of intrinsic goals. With regard to the English class, however, they attribute their motivated behaviour to a common group goal and to the fact that all the members are willing to contribute to the successful completion of a given task. Apparently, their wish to master the English language enhances their cognitive engagement, which ultimately leads to a positive learning outcome. A sample comment written in English by the student:

Excerpt 22 (Kitti, p. 24)

> I think English lesson is more "familier". Because there are 16 person who learn English and I think we like English. We talk for anything with each other and the teacher and it is very good. The other lessons there are 36 person who don't like the lesson, the Chemistry or Physics or History. Not everybody has a future with the studies. But in the English lesson everybody has a plan with English. A little or a big, but there is. And I think it's the biggest different for the other lessons and the English lesson. 16 person have a "same" plan. I think it's important.

This seems to be in line with Meece (1994), who examined goal orientation in relation to self-regulated learning and found that students pursuing mastery goals become more successful learners, as they engage in activities more actively and use highly regulated learning strategies. The lack of a common goal makes it impossible to establish group norms, which obviously hinders efficient work in the classroom and, consequently, students' development. On the other hand, engagement in the activities may have a positive effect on the whole atmosphere of the classroom and can greatly influence the learning outcome. A positive example is given of the English class and it seems that the fact that all the members contribute to the successful completion of tasks evokes a 'we' feeling and strengthens cohesive ties:

Excerpt 23 (Beáta, p. 21)

> Learning was facilitated by the fact that the group was active, everybody is ready to work when there is a role-play.

Excerpt 24 (Klára, p. 25)

> I think the atmosphere of the classroom greatly contributes to my enjoying doing English, as do the happy moments and the fact that everybody works together intensively.

Students' views are supported by an external observer's following comments:

Excerpt 25 (Observer 1)

> All seem to enjoy this activity, and there is little hesitation among students to volunteer and go in front of class. … Students busily work on this…

As regards students' engagement in the lesson, another interesting finding surfaced from the data: co-operative atmosphere may also hold the attention of the quieter students. Although they do not play such an active part as some of their

peers, they may still feel involved and thus enjoy the lesson. To quote the shyest student:

> Excerpt 26 (Noémi, p. 30)
>
> It was good that I understood almost everything. … I had a feeling of success. … I think everybody liked [the lesson] because we laughed a lot, the atmosphere was good. It felt good that I was able to laugh so much in an English lesson, since I don't usually get the point, but now I did and it was a good lesson.

Finally, mention should be made of the school timetable, the only external factor that students seem to hold responsible for their motivated behaviour in the classroom. On the one hand, they voice their complaints about being tired and hungry in the 6th and 7th periods after a hard day. On the other hand, they attribute their successes and failures to the frequency with which they have different classes. With this respect, English has an advantage over the other subjects, as it is taught in five lessons a week. As they put it:

> Excerpt 27 (Beáta, p. 21)
>
> What is good in this subject is that we have classes every day and so you pick things up in every lesson.
>
> Excerpt 28 (Focus group interview, p. 12)
> I think another problem with the second foreign language is that we learn it in three classes a week and it is very little.

As can be seen from these discussions, the findings are indicative of a considerable level of learner autonomy. On the one hand, students are capable of deciding whether the teacher can explain the material so that they understand it; on the other hand, they can give an opinion about the way they acquire knowledge, they are able to assess and exercise control over their learning.

Another point worthy of mention is that motivational characteristics prove to interact with each other. The findings reveal that co-operative teaching methods make it possible for students to get involved in the learning process. By discovering knowledge for themselves and by scaffolding one another's learning, they have better chances to understand the material. This in turn motivates them to participate in classroom activities, which eventually fosters their development. In line with Dörnyei (2007), these results underline the motivational influence of the classroom environment and shed light on the importance of motivating instructional strategies.

Conclusion

This paper reported on the findings of a qualitative study, the aim of which was to explore the interaction between the various elements that contribute to a motivating classroom climate. Several motivational factors were identified that cluster around the teacher and the learning group, similarly to Dörnyei's (1994) proposition of teacher and group specific components on the learning situation level. The teacher-related elements emerging from the study I have conducted include the teacher's style and teaching methods as well as her experience and personality, while group-related characteristics comprise group cohesion, members' engagement in classroom activities, and the importance of a common group goal. In addition, the school timetable surfaced as exerting external influence on learners' motivation.

The students were found to display a high degree of maturity and developing autonomy and self-awareness as language learners. Besides voicing their need of a co-operative atmosphere and effective classroom management, they also appeared to recognise their own responsibility for developing their skills and knowledge.

The findings provide the teacher-researcher with invaluable feedback. On the one hand, they confirm my conceptualisation of knowledge and educational philosophy. Like my students, I also firmly believe that 'knowing how' is equally or even more useful than 'knowing what' and it seems that by conveying procedural knowledge my teaching practice meets their expectations. On the other hand, as data on other classes were also analysed to triangulate the findings related to English classes, students' criticism of certain teaching styles has given me inspiration to create a motivating learning environment. This is even more important as I cannot but agree with Dörnyei (2007, p. 735), who claims that "the motivational character of the classroom is largely a function of the teacher's motivational teaching practice, and is therefore within our explicit control."

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Foreign Language Anxiety – For Beginners Only?

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Introduction

Anxiety associated with foreign or second language learning and communication has long been in the focus of second language (L2) researchers. It has been investigated in the broader context of individual learner differences potentially responsible for differential success at language learning since the 1970s (Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz, 1990). The past twenty years, however, seem to have seen a real increase in the number of studies dealing with anxiety in the L2 domain. Attempts have been made to develop a firm theoretical basis for clarifying the construct of language learning anxiety, its development and maintenance, as well as its dimensions (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; 1991; 1994).

Instruments have been developed to measure general and skill specific types of anxiety arising in the context of learning a new language (Gardner 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; Kim, 2000; MacIntyre, 1988; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). As a result of these significant advances in theory and measurement since the mid-1980s, L2-related anxiety has become one of the major, most highly examined psychological variables in L2 research. It has been documented in learners of diverse target languages (TL) in various instructional settings and has been generally found to be one of the best predictors of performance and achievement in a foreign language (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre, 1999, 2002; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991, 1994). Correlational studies have established a moderately negative association between anxiety level and a wide range of language production measures, indicating that learners with higher levels of language anxiety tend to score lower on indices of L2 performance than their less anxious counterparts. Quantitative findings on L2-related anxiety have been complemented by insights gained from qualitative inquiries as well. Some of these examined anxiety from the learners' perspective (Bailey, 1983; Cohen & Norst, 1989; Hilleson, 1996; McCoy, 1979; Phillips, 1992; Price, 1991; Young, 1990), while others investigated anxious learners' reactions to their own performance (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Gregersen, 2003). In spite of the significant advances and the substantial volume of research conducted in the field, however, some very basic, fundamental questions about L2-related anxiety still appear to be unanswered.

The paper deals with one of these unresolved questions in the study of anxiety associated with second language learning. Specifically, it addresses the question whether foreign language anxiety (FLA) is generally characteristic at the early,

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beginning stages of language learning or may also be a problem for learners at more advanced levels of L2 proficiency – which is essentially asking whether proficiency is a primary factor in anxiety about foreign language learning and performance. As evidenced by the literature, this is an issue on which researchers are sharply divided and empirical findings are inconclusive. In a number of studies beginning learners were found to carry higher levels of L2-related anxiety than learners at more advanced levels of L2 proficiency (e.g. Gardner, Smythe, & Brunet, 1977; Gardner, Lalonde, & Pierson, 1983). Based on such findings MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, 1993) hypothesise that "as experience and proficiency increase, anxiety declines in a fairly consistent manner" (1991, p. 111), which implies that FLA is more characteristic at the earlier stages of language learning and is becoming less of a problem for more advanced learners. Contrary evidence was found, however, in a number of other studies. Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (1999) reported no significant differences between the anxiety level of beginning, intermediate and advanced foreign language learners, and several studies indicated that advanced learners scored higher on anxiety than their lower proficiency counterparts (cf. Cheng, 2002; Kitano, 2001; Saito & Samimy, 1996). Qualitative studies, investigating anxiety from the learner's perspective, also appear to indicate that some learners experience more anxiety than their proficiency would indicate (Hilleson, 1996). Rodriguez (1995) and Horwitz (1996) go even further and suggest that foreign language anxiety can be an important issue not only for language learners but even for non-native language *teachers*, notwithstanding the fact that they are supposed to be highly proficient speakers of the target language. Based on conversations with practising teachers Horwitz (1996) asserts that "*many* non-native foreign language teachers experience foreign language anxiety" (p. 365) (my emphasis), whereas Rodriguez's (1995) quantitative study documented anxiety among pre-service teachers.

These contradictory results clearly call for the re-examination of the role of proficiency level in feelings of foreign language anxiety. The inconsistent findings may suggest that anxiety about L2 learning and communication cannot simply be attributed to an insufficient command of the target language, i.e. proficiency level (Cheng, 2002; Horwitz, 1996). What is more, proficiency may not even be "the primary factor that determines the rise or decline of language anxiety" (Cheng, 2002, p.653). Since most previous studies focused on anxiety experienced by beginning and intermediate level learners, relatively little is known about anxiety at more advanced stages of L2 learning (e.g. Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1996; Young, 1994). The current research aims to fill this gap by examining advanced learners' feelings of L2-related anxiety in a Hungarian EFL context. The aims of the study were (1) to find out how pervasive FLA was among university students majoring in English, and (2) to examine their attributions of the causes of FLA. The paper first explores the scope, severity, and most salient features of participants' English-related anxiety, then it looks at what learners themselves had to say about FLA. The findings of the study have important implications for teachers of foreign languages at an advanced level.

Method

Participants

The participants included 117 first-year English majors from one university. The majority of these students were women, with a male-female ratio of 27:90 (76.9 % female). Their ages ranged from 18 to 24, with an average age of 19.37 (SD = 1.17). They had studied English for an average of 8.41 years (SD = 2.66), with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 14 years, and achieved an average of 516,5 scores on the TOEFL, with a minimum of 403 and a maximum of 630. The majority of these learners (71.8 %) had never visited an English-speaking country, and only a tiny minority (8.5 %) had spent considerable time (a year or more) in the target language environment. The remaining 19.7 % of the participants had only stayed for a few weeks or months (not exceeding six months) in either Great-Britain or the USA. In view of this, they can be considered typical EFL learners in the Hungarian context, learning the target language almost exclusively in a monolingual classroom.

Instruments

Anxiety was operationalised by the Hungarian language version of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. The Hungarian FLCAS (HFLCAS), checked through back-translation, tested for response and construct validity as well as reliability, has shown to be both reliable (α = .93) and valid (Tóth, 2008). The HFLCAS is a 33-item Likert-type scale with five possible responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It is meant to assess the degree of foreign language anxiety in the EFL classroom and in conversation with native speakers of English, as manifested in negative performance expectancies and social comparisons (a sample item is 23: "Mindig az az érzésem, hogy a többiek jobban beszélnek angolul, mint én"/*I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do*), psychophysiological symptoms (e.g. 20: "Angolórákon majd kiugrik a szívem, amikor érzem, hogy mindjárt felszólítanak"/*I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English classes*), and avoidance behaviours (e.g., 17: "Gyakran szeretnék inkább távol maradni az angolóráktól"/*I often feel like not going to my English class*). The items of the scale are reflective of the three anxieties that are regarded as conceptually important aspects of FLA according to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) theory: communication apprehension (a sample item is 27: "Izgulok és zavarodott leszek, amikor angolórán meg kell szólalnom"/*I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English classes*), fear of negative evaluation (e.g., 31: "Attól tartok, hogy a többiek kinevetnek, amikor angolul beszélek"/*I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English*), and test anxiety (e.g., 21: "Minél többet tanulok egy angol tesztre, annál inkább összezavarodom"/*The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get*).

To enquire into participants' attributions of the causes of foreign language anxiety, an open-ended question was designed, which read as follows.

According to surveys, many language learners feel embarrassed, tense, or even anxious when communicating in a foreign language in class, or other situations. What do you think the reasons may be for this phenomenon?

To elicit truthful responses Dörnyei's (2003) practical suggestions for handling sensitive issues were kept in mind when phrasing the open-ended question, such as presenting behaviour - in this case FLA - as rather common, and suggesting that the question is not personal but refers to other people. It was expected that students' answers to this question would not only point to potential causes but also provide information on how severe a problem language anxiety appeared to them.

Data analysis

To assess the scope and severity of foreign language anxiety experienced by first year English majors, and to identify its most important aspects, descriptive statistics were used. For each participant an anxiety score was derived, by summing up his/her ratings of the 33 items of the HFLCAS. The responses were quantified as follows: "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neither agree nor disagree" = 3, "agree" = 4, "strongly agree" = 5. The nine items of the scale worded in such a way as to reveal a lack of anxiety (a sample item is 18: "Magabiztosnak érzem magam, amikor angolórákon angolul beszélek"/*I feel confident when I speak in my English classes*) were reverse scored before calculating the total score, so that in all instances, a high score represented high anxiety (the other eight items were the following: 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 22, 28, and 32). Based on their anxiety scores participants were grouped according to the degree of anxiety they exhibited. The most anxiety-provoking aspects of English classes were determined by examining (1) item means, and (2) the frequency of responses with numerical values of 4 and 5, which are indicative of considerable/high levels of anxiety.

Participants' answers to the open-ended question of the anxiety questionnaire were analysed using the constant comparative method as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The analysis began by careful reading of the data in order to identify recurring themes and sub-themes. Initial groupings were modified and/or new headings created as a result of the procedure involving a constant checking of the established categories against the data.

Results

The scope and severity, and the most salient features of first year English majors' FLA

To find out whether first year English majors felt anxious in their university English classes and L2 communication in general, first their scores on the anxiety measure were consulted. Descriptive statistics for FLA total scores and item-ratings are given in Tables 1 and 2. Judging from the average item-rating (M = 2.56) and the corresponding FLA total score (M = 84.59), participants as a group could be described as slightly anxious, carrying a relatively low level of anxiety. However, the wide range of ratings (1.48 – 4.12) indicated that this group was not homogeneous in terms of how anxious its members were. The difference between the anxiety score of the least anxious vs. most anxious participant of the study was as huge as 87, with the former scoring 49, and the latter 136 on the HFLCAS.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for item-ratings and FLA total scores

	Mean	Std. deviation	Actual range (Possible range)
Item-rating	2.56	.59	1.48 - 4.12 (1 - 5)
FLA Total Score	84.59	19.34	49 –136 (33 – 165)

Table 2: Distribution of participants according to item-ratings and FLA total scores

Item-rating	FLA Total Score	N (%)
1 – 2: non-anxious	33 – 66	23 (19.7)
2 – 3: slightly anxious	67 – 99	68 (58.1)
3 – 4: considerably anxious	100 – 132	24 (20.5)
4 – 5: very anxious	133 – 165	2 (1.7)

Based on individual anxiety scores, participants were classified as (1) *non-anxious* (if they had a total score between 33 and 66, revealing virtually no anxiety), (2) *slightly anxious* (with scores between 67 and 99, indicative of moderate levels of anxiety), (3) *considerably anxious* (with scores 100-132, reflective of more than moderate anxiety), and (4) *very anxious* (in the 133-165 band, suggestive of high levels of anxiety). As Table 2 shows, more than half of the students (58.1 %) fell into the slightly anxious category, about one-fifth of them (19.7 %) formed the non-anxious group, and slightly more than another fifth of them (22.2 %) could be described as considerably or very anxious.

Responses to all items of the Hungarian FLCAS are reported in the Appendix, where the percentages refer to the number of students selecting each alternative. The most important aspects of participants' FLA were determined by (1) the frequency of responses with numerical values of 4 and 5, indicative of considerable/high anxiety level, and (2) item-means above 3, again suggestive of considerable levels of anxiety. As evident from Tables 3 and 4, the same items surfaced according to both criteria.

Table 3: Items showing the highest frequencies of responses coded as 4 or 5

Item	Frequency of 4s and 5s	%
11 (understanding why people can get upset over English classes)	71	61
10 (worry about no meeting the requirements)	54	46
2 (apprehension about making mistakes)	54	46
16 (anxiety about English classes even if wellprepared for them)	43	37
18 (lack of confidence when speaking English in class)	38	33
8 (anxiety during tests)	37	32

Table 4: Items with the highest means

Item	Mean
11	3.56
10	3.32
2	3.21
18	3.16
8*	2.92
16	2.84

*Note: The means of items 8 and 16 are slightly below 3, but in terms of the frequency of 4s and 5s they seem important to be considered.

These results show that the relatively high levels of anxiety among first-year English majors were related to the following variables: "understanding why people can get upset over English classes" (item 11), "worry over not meeting the requirements" (item 10), "apprehension about making mistakes" (item 2), "anxiety about English classes even if well prepared for them" (item 16), "lack of confidence when speaking English in class" (item 18), and finally, "anxiety during tests" (item 8). Two clear patterns seem to emerge from the above findings. One of them is anxiety over inadequate classroom performance, reflected in responses to items 10, 2, 8, and 18. Almost half of the surveyed first-year English majors (46%) reported having fears about not meeting the requirements of their English classes, the same percentage of them turned out to be worried about making mistakes in these classes, and approximately a third of them (32%) reported feeling anxious during English tests. Only 23% of the students said they felt confident when speaking English in the classroom (see Appendix), and 33% of them completely rejected this statement. The second pattern that surfaced concerns students' general feelings about their English classes, more precisely, their self-perceived anxiety level in these classes, expressed in responses to items 11, and 16. More than half of the respondents (61%) said they understood why people can get upset over English classes, and a considerable 37% reported they felt anxious about these classes even if they were well prepared for them.

Students' attributions of the sources and causes of FLA

Participants' responses to the individual items of the HFLCAS were supported and complemented by those given to the single open-ended question of the anxiety instrument, formulated as follows:

> According to surveys, many language learners feel embarrassed, tense, or even anxious when communicating in a foreign language in class, or other situations. What do you think the reasons may be for this phenomenon?

All but two students responded to the question, and the 115 questionnaires generated almost three hundred (297) responses addressing various sources of FLA. The high response rate seemed to indicate that first year English majors were not unfamiliar with L2-related anxiety, and they did understand "why people can get upset over English classes", as suggested by their responses to item 11 of the HFLCAS. Although the question was worded as if it referred to "other people", the depth and intensity of the answers gave the impression that many students relied on their first-hand experiences, which was also evidenced by their using the first person singular when expressing their views.

A review of responses indicated that the question was interpreted by participants in two different ways. Some 65 comments enumerated fears and worries related to L2 learning and performance, addressing the question "What is it that learners are afraid of?" A greater number of responses (216) were concerned with the deeper causes of anxiety, addressing the question "What factors may provide an explanation for the existence of language learning anxiety?" Responses in the two categories are presented in the subsequent two sections.

Student-identified fears and worries associated with FLA

As Table 5 shows, the 65 comments made by participants clustered around five main categories. The most oft-mentioned concern was related to mistakes. According to respondents, it may show up in anticipating and fearing *making* mistakes, and feelings of discomfort on *realizing* them. Respondents referred to fears of "speaking inaccurately/with mistakes", "making grammatical mistakes", "using incorrect grammar", "employing wrong sentence structure", as well as the fear of "facing one's own mistakes", etc., and described feelings of "uneasiness", "embarrassment", and "frustration" as a result of realizing them. As evidenced by responses to item 2 of the HFLCAS, virtually every other first-year English major (46%) was worried about making mistakes in English classes.

Table 5: Student-identified fears/worries associated with FLA

Fears/Worries	Number of responses
Concern over mistakes	27

Fear of peer derision	13
Worry about pronunciation	10
Fear of not meeting requirements	9
Fear of failure	6
Total	65

Fear of mistakes was followed by that of peer derision in the number of comments referring to it. Respondents wrote about fears of being “laughed at”, “looked down”, “run down” by group mates, and a dread of “ending up with egg on one’s face” in English classes. In fact, only 18% of the students reported that they find it embarrassing to speak English in front of peers, as indicated by their responses to item 24 of the HFLCAS, and a mere 8 % was afraid of being laughed at by classmates (item 31). The third language learner fear that appeared frequently in responses to the open-ended question concerned L2 pronunciation. Students identified two pronunciation-related worries as causes for concern, that of “Hunglish accent” and “mispronouncing English words”. Fear of not meeting the requirements, manifested in feelings of “not being good enough”, apprehension over “rapid pace of classes”, and “fear of lagging behind” was the fourth concern respondents identified as an important contributor to student anxiety. Although mentioned as a source of anxiety only by nine students, this fear was expressed by 46% of the first-year English majors, as evidenced by responses to item 10 of the HFLCAS (see Table 3). Finally, an unspecified fear of failure was the fifth concern students associated with feelings of FLA.

Student-identified factors accounting for FLA

Table 6 presents an overview of factors respondents offered as explanations for the L2-related fears and worries discussed above. As can be seen, the 216 responses centred around the following seven categories: (1) the very nature of FL communication, (2) personal attributes of the language learner, (3) majoring in a FL, (4) interpersonal factors, (5) competence in the FL, (6) instructional practices, and (7) lack of practice in FL communication. Within some of these main categories, students’ responses fell into several subcategories.

Table 6: Student-identified factors accounting for FLA

Factors	Number of responses
The nature of FL communication	9
Personality of learner	35
Being a FL major	6
Interpersonal	55
Classroom language learning	17
Teacher	20
Peers	18
TL Competence	63
Objective	19
Subjective	31
Processing-related aspects	13
Instructional Practices	26
General	16
Pre-university	8
Current	2
Lack of practice	22
Total	216

Comments belonging to the first category were reflective of the view that some anxiety is inherent in L2 communication. Students contrasted the "naturalness", the "matter-of-course-ness" of using one's mother tongue, which is "your own language" with the inherent "strange-ness"/"foreignness" of speaking another: a *foreign* language "you do not use every day, every hour". Respondents also referred to feelings of uneasiness stemming from problems of self-expression/self-presentation in the FL. The sample comment below is representative of responses in this category.

> I find it a natural reaction that someone feels embarrassed when speaking in a foreign language, because if you don't know something, it gives the impression that you can't speak, can't express yourself, and this is a very awkward feeling, as if you were stupid. (respondent 117)

As evidenced by the second group of responses, a considerable number of students were of the opinion that it is also a question of personality whether a learner feels anxious in the language classroom and in other L2 contexts. The following personal attributes figured most prominently in respondents' comments as features accounting for FLA: "being too shy", "full of inhibitions", "suffering from some inferiority complex", "lacking self-confidence", "overconcerned about other people's opinions/reactions/expectations", "do not trust themselves", "have some sort of social phobia", "don't like to/dare to speak up in Hungarian either", "suffer from stage fright", "generally nervous, not only in English", "maximalists", "always want to speak perfect English", "can't take failures in their stride". It was an interesting finding that some respondents associated many of these features with what they believed to be "the typical Hungarian national character",

and tended to attribute feelings of FLA, to some extent, to these personal/national characteristics. Some sample comments:

> We've got too many unnecessary inhibitions. This is a general Hungarian problem. (respondent 75)

> One reason is maximalism characteristic of Hungarian people. We're afraid of mistakes, because we set very high standards for ourselves. When we have to speak in a foreign language, we immediately want to speak it as if it was our native language, even if we know it full well, we don't stand much chance to do so, it is not realistic at all. (respondent 111)

Responses forming the third category were concerned with the trials and tribulations of majoring in English. Respondents expressed the view that the very fact of being a foreign language major may contribute to students' L2-related anxiety. To cite a few opinions:

> A student majoring in English has to fulfil very difficult requirements, which automatically causes stress, which, in my view, is a hindrance in foreign language communication. (respondent 15)

> English majors are expected to speak fluently and without mistakes. This makes those who want to come up to expectations even more anxious. This is why they make mistakes even in very basic things. (respondent 103)

In addition, the general atmosphere of the English department, "with the shadow of dropping out hanging over us", to borrow one student's words, was also considered by respondents a contributor to English majors' feelings of anxiety.

Social/interpersonal aspects related to instructed foreign language learning were also identified by respondents as an important factor accounting for FLA, as shown in Table 6. 17 comments referred to general characteristics of the classroom situation itself, 20 referred to some personal attribute or behaviour of the teacher, and there were 18 references to peers, all three presented as potential explanations for learner anxiety. As for the first subcategory, respondents contrasted the "artificiality and formality" of classroom language learning, the "frightening presence of so many people", "the strangeness of the environment" with the cosiness and naturalness of real-life communication. A sample comment is:

> I don't know why other students are anxious, but as far as I'm concerned, I simply don't like to tell my opinion in front of *almost total strangers*, and don't like to discuss *compulsory topics* with people I hardly know. (respondent 85) (my emphasis)

Several comments pointed to anxiety induced by "not having anything to say about set topics", which, according to one respondent, is aggravated by the fact that very often "students get to know each other via these conversations in English" (respondent 94).

As for the second group of comments related to interpersonal aspects of the classroom, respondents seemed to be unanimous in their opinion that teachers play a particularly strong role in how much anxiety learners experience in language classes. In their on words,

> It is the teacher's task to create a relaxed atmosphere. (respondent 57)

> It depends, to a large extent, on the teacher whether learners are at ease or not. (respondent 69)

Sense of humour, "willingness to laugh and joke with students", "putting some life into classes", "being informal", "praising and encouraging learners" were highlighted as teacher attributes contributing to an atmosphere conducive to language learning.

> When I enjoy myself in class I can learn much more, and perform much better than when I feel ill at ease. (respondent 69)

In contrast, disparaging remarks like "even a secondary school pupil is supposed to know this", "lack of humaneness towards learners", being "excessively strict", "teaching the curriculum rather than students", "not being patient enough to listen to halting speech" were mentioned by respondents as important contributors to learner anxiety. Several comments referred to the teacher's handling of mistakes. Teachers whose corrections were perceived by learners as "not benevolent, but rather wanting to prove how bad your English is", those impatient ones "who keep interrupting you and finishing your sentence for you", as well as those "who find fault with every word you say", and "correct mistakes in such a way that everyone finds embarrassing and humiliating" were, in respondents' opinion, responsible for many students' feelings of FLA.

The third aspect of classroom language learning respondents identified as a factor explaining learner anxiety was the presence of other learners. Comments in this category pointed to the problem that students inadvertently compare themselves to others, which may lead to feelings of anxiety if they are, or *think* they are less competent in the foreign language than their peers. To give some examples,

> In every group there are people who speak the given language very well, which makes those who *are* not so good feel anxious. (respondent 30)

> They are tense and anxious because they *think* the others are better than they are. (respondent 77) (my emphasis)

Pointing to challenges posed by more confident peers as a source of anxiety, one respondent highlighted a very important issue:

> As group numbers are very high, it's very easy to hide in the crowd. After a while the teacher will gauge the group's level based on the performance of the few who are active all the time, and will form expectations accordingly. As time goes on, those who are not so active will find it more and more difficult to speak up in English. (respondent 95)

As evidenced by the high number of comments (63) in the fifth category, referring to TL competence, many students believed there was a strong link between FLA and one's command of the foreign language. There were 17 responses reflective of the view that anxiety experienced in L2 learning and communication is "very much dependent on how well the learner knows the language". "Lack of vocabulary"/"poor vocabulary", and "inadequate knowledge of grammar" were identified as primary reasons for feeling anxious. Sample comments for this subcategory are the following:

> If someone does not know enough words with which to express his thoughts, or doesn't know the right ones, it will make him tense and embarrassed when using the language. (respondent 25)

> Insufficient knowledge of grammar and vocabulary cause tension and fears in learners. (respondent 115)

While this group of responses seemed to suggest that FLA is attributable to actual language problems, that is, learners' limited linguistic abilities, almost twice as many comments (31) were indicative of the opinion that it is how learners *feel* about their own competence, whether they are satisfied with themselves that determines how anxious they feel when using the FL. The following phrases were used by respondents to describe feelings of linguistic insecurity, accounting, in their view, for FLA: "not feeling confident about one's competence in the FL", "not trusting one' knowledge of the language", and "feeling that one does not know the foreign language well enough". A sample comment is given below:

> The learner cannot feel at ease because he is not confident about his command of English. He is more concerned with not knowing something or making mistakes than with saying what he wants to say. (respondent 20)

Also related to the incomplete mastery of the FL was a third group of responses, smaller in number (13), which identified processing-related difficulties as sources of anxiety in learners. Students referred to concerns such as the gap between receptive and productive skills, with speaking perceived as posing the biggest challenge, therefore arousing the most anxiety. As one respondent put it:

> It's strange, it seems we have no particular problems with vocabulary, we understand what we read or what's taught in classes, we can even produce quite sophisticated things in writing, still when it comes to speaking nothing comes to my mind, I can say much less than what I can understand. (respondent 24)

As other causes for concern students also mentioned the "frustrating imbalance between active and passive vocabulary", the "impossibility of applying so many grammar rules when speaking", and the "difficulty posed by understanding native English speech precisely".

Answers belonging to the sixth category revealed that instructional practices were also seen by respondents as largely responsible for learners' anxiety about FL learning and communication. The acrimonious comments made on Hungarian language teaching practices indicated that students viewed FLA as the direct consequence of grammar-centred teaching.

> Unfortunately, FL teaching in Hungary, even today, is very old-fashioned. What I mean by this is the relentless teaching of grammar rules without learners' having the chance of using the language in various situations. It's not surprising they feel anxious if they are told to aim at speaking accurately, without any mistakes, rather than encouraged to say what they can, the way they can. (respondent 17)

As a result of "rule-ridden language teaching" and "too much emphasis on accuracy", many learners, in the respondents' view, "approach the language only from a grammatical point of view"/"look upon the foreign language as a collection of frightening rules and definitions" rather than a tool to communicate with. They "keep thinking of grammar rules as they speak", and "have the feeling that the more grammar they learn the less they know", and this is what creates anxiety in them. The main problem, according to students, is that disproportionately less attention is devoted to developing oral skills than to "theoretical grammar instruction" (often in Hungarian!), "translation practice", or "exercises from the book", and this focus on grammar and written skills is reflected in testing and examination practices as well.

> It is grammar that tends to be tested. Real, practical knowledge of the language is not what they focus on, not even at the intermediate language exam. It's not whether you can speak fluently that is the main thing there. (respondent 108)

Most critical remarks were directed at language instruction at the secondary school level, however, some students expressed dissatisfaction with their current university English classes as well.

> Not even here, at university, do you have enough opportunity to speak English in class. (respondent 100)

> We should have more classes where we do nothing but speak. (respondent 117)

The last group of responses pointed to the lack of practice in authentic target language communication as a factor accounting for learners' feelings of FLA. Respondents expressed the view that students who spent no significant time in a target language country, for whom the primary locus of FL communication is the classroom, are very likely to experience FLA, as "they are simply not used to speaking the foreign language"/"lack the experience of communicating in the FL"/"speaking English is not a real-life experience for them". This is because, in the respondents' view, "in language classes they are not provided with enough opportunity to practice speaking", and "they speak very little English outside classes". The sample comment below is representative of responses in this category.

> Communicating in a foreign language can be very frustrating for people who haven't spent enough time in English speaking countries. As *speaking* the language is still in the background in language classes, learners who have no other chance to speak English feel tense and embarrassed about using it, because they don't have any hands-on experience. (respondent 100)

As evidenced by the wealth and richness of the ideas presented above, first year English majors had a lot to say about foreign language anxiety. According to their opinion, some anxiety is "part and parcel" of L2 communication, however learners with certain personality traits are more liable to experience L2-related fears and worries. FLA, in most respondents' view, is closely related to learners' competence in the FL, and their subjective feelings about it. Teachers, peers, the learning context, instructional practices, and lack of experience in TL communication were also mentioned by students as factors potentially responsible for language learning anxiety.

Discussion

The first aim of the study was to explore how pervasive FLA was among advanced level students of English in a Hungarian university context. The investigation was motivated by the debate in the literature about whether L2-related anxiety is typically characteristic at the early stages of language learning or may also be a problem for learners at more advanced levels of L2 proficiency. According to the results of the anxiety survey, most first year English majors in the study did not score high on FLA. At the same time, a sizeable minority (22.2%) of them was found to carry high levels of TL-related anxiety.

Compared to the claims of studies conducted in a North American college/university context, talking about "alarming levels of"/"significant" FLA in a "large number of"/"many" students (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991, p. 159; Horwitz et

al., 1986, p. 19; Horwitz, 2001, p. 121), with as many as 25-50% of them experiencing "debilitating anxiety" according to one estimation (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991, p. 159), and "about one third" of them "moderate to severe levels" according to another (Horwitz, 2000, p. 257), the present study, in a culturally/linguistically very different but also post-secondary FL setting, did not find FLA to be such an all-pervasive phenomenon among the university students surveyed but rather a problem severely afflicting a minority of them. However, in view of the fact that the participants of the study were representatives of a special learner population with more than average dedication to learn English, the finding that one in five of these highly motivated learners: would be English teachers or other EFL professionals, reported high levels of TL-related anxiety and more than half of them a moderate amount, indicates that FLA is not a negligible issue in the Hungarian EFL context either, not even among advanced learners.

The comparison of the results of the current research with those of previous investigations using the same anxiety instrument (Horwitz et al.'s FLCAS) reveals that the FLA sample means obtained in studies conducted in various instructional contexts with various target languages and learners with different levels of proficiency do not show a wide diversity. The 117 Hungarian first year English majors' FLA mean score (M = 84.59) was somewhat lower than those of learners in introductory FL courses in the American college/university setting (cf. Aida, 1994; Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 1998; Horwitz, 1986), but not considerably lower, as it fell into the same anxiety category (*slightly anxious*, band 67-99 on the FLCAS) as those of the aforementioned beginners. The similar sample means, irrespective of differences in learners' L2 competence, can be taken to indicate that proficiency level by itself is by no means a reliable predictor of FLA, in other words, high feelings of FLA may be experienced by learners not only at the early stages of learning, but at more advanced levels as well. The finding that first year English majors' anxiety level was not radically different from those of students in beginning FL classes appears to be in line with the results of a group of studies which - contrary to MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) assertion that FLA is more characteristic of the earlier stages of L2 learning and "declines in a fairly consistent manner" "as experience and proficiency increase" (p. 111) - indicated that advanced learners did not differ significantly from their lower proficiency counterparts in the amount of anxiety they carried, or, in some cases, even scored higher than them (cf. Cheng; 2002; Kitano, 2001; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999; Saito & Samimy, 1996).

In fact, the latter turned out to be the case when the anxiety level of the 117 English majors was compared to that of 66 non-English majors from the same university, learning English to meet the university's language requirement or out of personal interest. Although the vast majority of these students (60 out of the 66) were enrolled in pre-intermediate English classes, and they had studied English for a shorter period of time relative to the English majors (6.28 vs. 8.41 years), they reported significantly lower FLA (t = 2.373, p = .019). The significant difference between the two populations in terms of anxiety score means (M = 84.59, SD = 19.34 vs. M = 77.72, SD = 17.75) was also reflected in the distribution of students according to anxiety level. The number of respondents reporting no anxiety was considerably higher among non-English majors than among students majoring in

English (33.3% vs. 19.7%); the size of the slightly anxious group was approximately the same (54.6% vs. 58.1%), and there seemed to be notable differences in the number of anxious students. Only 12.1% of the non-English majors reported considerable levels of anxiety, and no respondent was found to be very anxious. The fact that English majors carried more FLA than the less proficient and less experienced non-English major group appears to be further empirical evidence in support of the claim that factors other than proficiency should be considered to better explain differences in anxiety level exhibited by learners with differing levels of TL competence (Cheng, 2002).

First year English majors' responses to the individual items and the single open-ended item of the anxiety questionnaire shed light on such potential factors. Of these, the *current learning situation* seemed to be the key factor in participants' TL-related anxiety, accounting for the relatively higher FLA these more proficient language specialists experienced compared to their less proficient, non-English-specialist peers from the same university. The analysis of English majors' responses to the individual items of the anxiety scale has showed that the items indicative of anxiety among a large number of students, even those with low or average overall FLA scores, were all related to university English classes rather than L2 situations outside the classroom. Specifically, all of these items were reflective of concerns over not being able to meet the demands set in these classes, or feelings of uneasiness associated with them. The fact that almost every other student expressed fears about not meeting the requirements of their university English classes and felt apprehensive about making mistakes, together with the findings that a fair number of them did not feel comfortable speaking English in class, reported anxiety about tests, and felt uneasy about classes even if well prepared for them, indicate that fear of inadequate performance and achievement in university English classes was the most important feature of the surveyed first year English majors' FLA, which can be attributed to the new demands placed on these learners in an intensive language learning situation.

This seems to be supported by participants' responses to the open-ended question of the anxiety survey, in which *being a FL major*, paradoxically enough, was explicitly suggested as one of the factors explaining FLA among students, because of the demanding requirements set for English majors and the high institutional/teacher expectations towards them in a competitive learning environment. The finding that learners' perceptions of/beliefs about what was expected from them as English majors: would-be experts of the English language, caused anxiety in students for fear of not being able to fulfil the image of the *expert-user of the TL*, lends empirical support to Horwitz' (1996) theory about why even non-native language *teachers* are susceptible to FLA. It also corroborates earlier empirical findings indicating higher anxiety among learners who take language courses/programmes for career reasons, whose anxiety is partly attributable to the importance L2 competence has for their future work (cf. Campbell & Show, 1994; Kitano, 2001; Rodriguez, 1995). It also explains why comparison/competition with peers figured so prominently in English majors' responses as an important contributor to learner anxiety in university English classes.

Conclusion and pedagogical implications

The most important finding of this investigation is that foreign language anxiety is not restricted to the beginning or early phases of L2 learning. The study of English major students has shown that long years of commitment to learning a foreign language and a relatively high level of L2 proficiency do not necessarily confer a sense of confidence in using the target language to every learner. Advanced L2 learners may indeed be more proficient in the language and more experienced as measured in years, however the expectations towards them, including their own personal expectations of themselves as L2 speakers, are also higher.

Therefore, language instructors should not believe that affective factors like learner anxiety are not to be reckoned with at higher levels of language instruction and thus look upon pedagogical approaches and techniques promoting a relaxed, low-anxiety learning environment as unnecessary extras, which can be dispensed with when dealing with learners at more advanced levels. First year English majors' responses to the open-ended item of the anxiety questionnaire made it clear that *instructional practices, classroom atmosphere, instructor qualities, teacher attitudes toward learners, methods of error correction and other teacher behaviours*, etc., are seen by learners as factors that do affect how much anxiety they experience in the L2 classroom. Thus, even if some anxiety is intrinsic to language learning, and learners with certain personality traits experience higher anxiety however ideal the learning environment may be, as suggested by participants, language instructors can still control a substantial part of FLA. They can eliminate, or at least minimise, the anxiety that is rooted in certain outdated classroom procedures, ineffective pedagogical practices, unengaging activities and teaching materials, and insufficient rapport with learners, etc., in short, a learning environment not sensitive to learners' affective needs. English majors' voices in this study indicate that a pleasant, supportive, low-anxiety classroom environment, one encouraging co-operation and collaboration rather than competition between learners, is not less important for learners at more advanced levels of L2 learning than for their less advanced counterparts.

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Appendix

Hungarian FLCAS items with percentages of participants selecting each alternative*

1……......................5**

1	Sohasem vagyok egészen biztos magamban, amikor angolórán angolul beszélek. [I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in my English class]	9	31	40	16	3
2	Nem izgatom magam amiatt, hogy hibázom az angolórán. [I don't worry about making mistakes in English classes]	8	38	27	22	5
3	Szinte reszketek, ha tudom, hogy fel fognak szólítani angolórán. [I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in my English class]	39	35	20	6	0
4	Megijeszt, ha nem értem, amit a tanár angolul mond. [It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English]	21	34	25	16	4
5	Egyáltalán nem aggódnék, ha több nyelvórát kellene felvennem angolból. [It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes]	7	25	20	30	17
6	Angolórákon arra leszek figyelmes, hogy olyan gondolatok járnak a fejemben, melyeknek semmi köze az órai anyaghoz. [During English classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course]	20	43	30	4	4
7	Folyton azt hiszem, hogy a többi diák jobban tud nálam angolul. [I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am]	11	33	32	15	9

8	Általában nyugodt vagyok, amikor angolból tesztet írok. [I am usually at ease during tests in English classes]	10	22	28	32	8
9	Pánikba esem, ha az angolórán váratlanul kell megszólalnom, anélkül, hogy arra előre felkészülhettem volna. [I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes]	29	33	26	10	2
10	Aggódom, hogy nem sikerül teljesítenem az angolórákon támasztott követelményeket. [I worry about the consequences of failing my English classes]	8	18	28	27	19
11	Számomra érthetetlen, hogy egyesek miért izgulnak annyira egy angolórától. [I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes]	17	44	22	12	5
12	Olyan ideges tudok lenni az angolórán, hogy azt is elfelejtem, amit tudok. [In English classes, I can get so nervous I forget things I know]	27	40	20	7	5
13	Engem feszélyez, hogy önszántamból válaszoljak az angoltanár kérdéseire. [It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in an English class]	36	34	20	8	3
14	Nem izgulnék, ha angol anyanyelvű emberekkel kellene angolul beszélnem. [I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers]	7	7	18	34	34
15	Nyugtalanít, ha nem értem, hogy miért javít ki a tanár. [I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting]	5	22	27	32	13
16	Akkor is van bennem izgalom, ha jól felkészültem egy angolórára. [Even if I am well prepared for an English class, I feel anxious about it]	17	28	18	27	10
17	Gyakran szeretnék inkább távol maradni az angolóráktól. [I often feel like not going to my English classes]	29	44	16	5	5
18	Magabiztosnak érzem magam, amikor angolórákon angolul beszélek. [I feel confident when I speak in my English classes]	11	22	44	20	3
19	Tartok attól, hogy az angoltanár minden hibámat kijavítja. [I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make]	28	48	20	3	1
20	Angolórákon majd kiugrik a szívem, amikor érzem, hogy mindjárt felszólítanak. [I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in an English class]	31	30	30	9	1
21	Minél többet tanulok egy angol tesztre, annál inkább összezavarodom. [The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get]	39	32	16	10	3
22	Nem érzek erős késztetést arra, hogy nagyon jól felkészüljek az angolórákra. [I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English classes]	32	41	17	10	0
23	Mindig az az érzésem, hogy a többiek jobban beszélnek angolul, mint én. [I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do]	7	33	38	15	7
24	Zavarba ejtő számomra a többi diák előtt angolul beszélni. [I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students]	24	35	23	14	4
25	Olyan gyorsan haladunk angolórákon, hogy félek a lemaradástól. [English classes move so quickly I worry about getting left behind]	23	40	25	7	4
26	Angolórán feszültebb és idegesebb vagyok, mint más órákon. [I feel more tense and nervous in an English class than in my other classes]	37	26	15	15	6

27	Izgulok és zavarodott leszek, amikor angolórán meg kell szólalnom. [I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class]	20	37	31	9	3
28	Magabiztosan és nyugodtan megyek angolórákra. [When I'm on my way to English classes, I feel very sure and relaxed]	7	22	37	30	4
29	Ideges leszek, ha nem értek minden szót, amit az angoltanár mond. [I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says]	18	44	29	9	0
30	Nyomaszt az a rengeteg szabály, amit meg kell tanulni ahhoz, hogy megszólalhassak angolul. [I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English]	27	38	14	15	5
31	Attól tartok, hogy a többiek kinevetnek, amikor angolul beszélek. [I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English]	39	44	9	5	3
32	Valószínűleg nem érezném magma feszélyezve angol anyanyelvűek társaságában. [I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English]	4	11	24	32	29
33	Ideges leszek, ha az angoltanár olyan kérdéseket tesz fel, melyekre nem készülhettem fel előre. [I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance]	21	28	34	15	1

* Data in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
** 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree