



LIMBAJELE SPECIALIZATE:

ABORDĂRI CURENTE ȘI PROVOCĂRI PENTRU VIITOR

Presa Universitară Clujeană

Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate
al Universității Babeș-Bolyai

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LIMBAJELE SPECIALIZATE:
Abordări curente și provocări pentru viitor

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Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate
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CUVÂNT ÎNAINTE

Într-o perioadă marcată de incertitudini, la aproape doi ani de la debutul pandemiei de COVID 19, conferința internațională *Dinamica limbajelor de specialitate: Tehnici și strategii inovatoare (ediția XI, 2021)*, organizată de Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate al Facultății de Litere (DLSS), Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca, a izbutit încă o dată să reunească, în mediul online, specialiști în domeniul limbilor străine pentru scopuri specifice care, prin eforturi susținute, în această situație inedită în care ne aflăm, au reușit să identifice oportunități pentru a contribui la dezvoltarea limbajelor de specialitate.

Toți participanții – cadre didactice din mediul universitar și preuniversitar, doctoranzi, cercetători și specialiști în domenii diverse din țară și din străinătate – au răspuns cu entuziasm apelului conferinței noastre și s-au întrunit online, în 9-10 septembrie 2021, pentru a prezenta și discuta evoluția și provocările disciplinare înregistrate în procesul de predare-învățare în contextul generat de pandemie. Ultimii doi ani ne-au arătat cât de importante sunt competențele digitale pentru toți cei implicați în procesul educațional, cât de necesară este utilizarea tehnologiei în predarea și învățarea de limbi străine, dar și câtă nevoie este de dezvoltarea competențelor interpersonale ale elevilor / studenților.

Astfel, lucrările selectate pentru publicare în volumul de față, realizate în engleză, franceză, spaniolă și germană, se concentrează tocmai asupra acestor aspecte. Prima secțiune, intitulată *Provocări și oportunități în contextul noilor medii de predare-învățare*, conține articole care analizează și subliniază necesitatea adaptării continue la contextul creat de pandemie, care a generat provocări legate nu numai de transpunerea materialelor de curs deja existente în materiale pentru predarea online, ci și de motivația studenților de a participa susținut la procesul de predare-învățare. Lucrările din cea de-a doua secțiune, *Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate*, se axează atât pe diferitele metode pentru abordarea inovativă a domeniului limbajelor specializate, cât și pe partea interpersonală a procesului educațional, în care motivația studenților și legătura emoțională care se poate stabili între profesori și studenți contribuie la succesul acestui proces atât de afectat de distanțarea socială impusă de pandemie. În cea de-a treia secțiune a volumului, *Varia*, se regăsesc articole dedicate dezvoltării creativității studenților, dar și diferitelor fenomene lingvistice.

Este, credem, evident faptul că, și în acest an, lucrările selectate pentru publicare reușesc să facă dovada faptului că demersurile colaborative interdisciplinare, interculturale și transfrontaliere sunt posibile și reprezintă fundamentul dezvoltării în cercetarea științifică și în îmbunătățirea metodelor de predare în domeniul limbilor străine.

Editorii

SECȚIUNEA I

***PROVOCĂRI ȘI OPORTUNITĂȚI
ÎN CONTEXTUL
NOILOR MEDII DE PREDARE-ÎNVĂȚARE***

Desafíos de la educación en línea con alumnos de Educación Primaria, ELE, club de lenguas

MAGDA-PETRONELA BANU¹

Resumen: El presente trabajo se propone indagar la necesidad de dar clases en línea en tiempos de confinamiento, con su aislamiento o distancia social, y el impacto del desafío tecnológico sentido especialmente por los educadores, al tener que enfrentarse al reto de transmitir contenidos y de formar competencias y actitudes en una variante al parecer carente de emoción y de empatía. El artículo se propone asimismo hacer hincapié en las reacciones de los alumnos de Educación Primaria, nativos digitales, que no han presentado dificultades mayores a la hora de plegarse a las (casi) nuevas modalidades de enseñanza, con respecto a las actividades llevadas a cabo en el club de español como lengua extranjera (Palacio de los Niños, institución pública y gratuita de enseñanza no formal). Se pretende también exponer las modalidades para mantener y fomentar la motivación y el interés del alumnado (deberes enviados por correo electrónico, instrucciones o explicaciones vía WhatsApp, instrucciones recibidas a través de Facebook, ambigüedades resueltas por teléfono, reuniones en Zoom, juegos a distancia, canciones españolas, proyectos divertidos online). Las conclusiones muestran mejoras en la flexibilidad y la adaptabilidad en el sistema educativo, tanto de los docentes como de los alumnos, como pruebas de resiliencia.

Palabras clave: *enseñanza en línea, reto, nativos digitales, Educación Primaria, resiliencia, motivación, ELE*

INTRODUCCIÓN

Según los datos ofrecidos por la UNESCO² (cifras del 26.05.2021), con respecto a los aspectos vulnerables relacionados con la educación en tiempos de pandemia causada por el virus SARS-CoV-2, la crisis no fue solamente de índole sanitaria, sino también de los sistemas de educación de todo el mundo. 210 millones de estudiantes y un 12% de la población estudiantil fueron todos afectados por el cierre de las escuelas en más de 24 países.

La pandemia (COVID-19) ha llevado consigo cambios de perspectivas en el sistema educativo de Rumanía también. Al suspenderse las clases presenciales, ante esta situación, aun los docentes más conservadores y reticentes han tenido que reinventarse profesionalmente, con el fin de adaptarse a *la nueva normalidad*.

En Rumanía, el paso a la educación digital, especialmente en el sector público, al tener que promocionar el bienestar socioemocional de los niños y jóvenes y seguir con su progreso escolar, supuso bastantes dificultades tanto para el profesorado como para el alumnado, al tener que adaptarse con rapidez a la nueva normalidad, casi de un día para otro, para afrontar con dignidad y con eficacia un nuevo tipo de enseñanza. El sistema educativo rumano, en su

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² <https://es.unesco.org/covid19/globaleducationcoalition>

gran mayoría, carecía en el mes de marzo de 2020 de una infraestructura tecnológica adecuada (Botnariuc et al. 2020, p. 9). No había aspectos uniformes o plataformas anteriormente verificadas o llevadas a la práctica con los alumnos de primaria o infantil y sus padres o familias; por consiguiente, para muchas personas fuera del campo informático, sin experiencia previa, sin haberse entrenado en el dominio de una plataforma escolar, de hecho, muchos sin haber probado antes ni siquiera una forma de *home schooling* o cursos a distancia, todo el proceso de transformación y de cambios de paradigmas significó un verdadero desafío, claro, más llevadero por las oportunidades de aprender algo nuevo y útil.

El Ministerio de Educación y de Investigación de Rumanía (MEC), con el apoyo de otras instituciones, había puesto en marcha previamente algunas actividades mediante componentes digitales dirigidos a docentes y alumnos, como el programa SEI (Sistema Educacional Informatizado), e-Twinning o los proyectos ROSE (Romania Secondary Education Project) o CRED (**Currículo Relevante, Educación Abierta para Todos**), en que se pretendía formar competencias tecnológicas o bases de recursos educativos abiertos (Botnariuc et al., 2020, p. 7), pero no todos los educadores o alumnos se habían aprovechado de sus ventajas.

Por una parte, había docentes, entre los cuales algunos de ellos ya estaban acostumbrados a un nivel bastante reducido de trabajo telemático o de adiestramiento en el espacio virtual de aprendizaje; por otra parte, había niños pertenecientes a una nueva generación llamada *nativos digitales*, la de *los mileniales*, generalmente acostumbrada a adaptarse a la tecnología, la generación de la comunicación virtual, con su capacidad de procesar con facilidad la información del entorno informático, prefiriendo actividades del tipo *multitasking* (Ceobanu, 2016, p. 43-45). Pero no existía una preparación previa para hacer educación en línea de forma exclusiva, ni para los docentes ni para los alumnos. Había educadores que no poseían informaciones y tampoco dominaban las competencias digitales; el currículo no tenía adaptaciones suficientes a esta forma de aprendizaje (Botnariuc et al. 2020, p. 7), los alumnos de Primaria del sistema público no tenían práctica en trabajar con plataformas educativas.

ASPECTOS GENERALES DE LAS ACTIVIDADES EDUCATIVAS DE APRENDIZAJE EN LÍNEA

Según los momentos y estados a nivel nacional (*escenario rojo* – enseñanza *online*, *escenario amarillo* – los alumnos de la Educación Primaria desarrollan actividades presenciales o *escenario verde* – todo alumnado va a la escuela, de forma presencial, física), la educación en tiempos de pandemia supuso varias fases, cada una con sus retos.

Durante la primera fase, al principio, a partir del 11 de marzo de 2020, el momento en que se suspendieron las clases presenciales (*f2f*), las sugerencias de los departamentos de educación (a través de cartas abiertas y mensajes transmitidos por los grupos de trabajo de los profesores y maestros), con respecto a las lenguas extranjeras y la Educación Primaria, se realizaron con los alumnos actividades relacionadas con la profundización de los elementos anteriormente enseñados y desarrollados en las clases presenciales, en ningún caso con el avance de la materia escolar; se recomendaba hacer uso de recursos educativos en línea, del tipo *open sources*, dado que se desconocía la duración de la pandemia a nivel nacional. En aquel momento, los docentes enviaron a los alumnos, de forma electrónica, a

distancia, materiales de refuerzo, propuestas de actividades lúdicas, fichas o enlaces hacia fuentes digitales libres para el uso escolar, en función de la particularidad de la asignatura impartida por cada docente.

En la segunda fase, casi un mes después, en la misma primavera del 2020, momento no muy claro de arranque de las actividades en línea, porque no hubo un punto fijo común, aún no había un marco propicio para proyectar actividades o para enseñar en línea. Según un artículo (Ionescu, 2021), en el año 2020, el 57% representaba el porcentaje de los profesores preocupados más por el uso de la tecnología en el proceso de aprendizaje y una preocupación del 38% por los aspectos pedagógicos, cosas que cambiaron en el siguiente curso escolar, en que el enfoque de los profesores de usar la tecnología había tenido un descenso en febrero del 2021: solamente el 36% era el porcentaje de los profesores que estaban preocupados por aspectos técnicos, cambio debido a la adquisición de destrezas tecnológicas a lo largo de los meses de práctica.

En mi caso, el trabajo telemático con los niños resultó algo insólito, aunque estaba matriculada en unos cursos universitarios a distancia en aquel momento y estaba acostumbrada a usar la plataforma *Moodle* y había asistido a webinarios o a otras actividades que últimamente se solían hacer a través de los proyectos internacionales o presentaciones de las editoriales extranjeras, asimismo teniendo conocimientos básicos de usar el ordenador, *Skype*, *WhatsApp* y *Facebook*, sin embargo, a mí también me tomó por sorpresa el momento de tener que enseñar en línea.

Lo frustrante era no estar avisado para una situación tan especial y de cierta magnitud; de repente, los docentes, muchos de ellos *inmigrantes digitales*, como también era mi caso, debían tener competencias digitales a nivel profesional, adiestrados en educar en línea o a distancia, según el caso, en variante sincrónica o asincrónica, y hacer uso de varias plataformas, gestionar aspectos diversos de enseñanza con rapidez y eficacia. Plataformas como *Moodle* o *Google Classroom* o aplicaciones como *Zoom*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Cisco Webex* eran para bastantes docentes unas desconocidas. En aquellos momentos funcionó mejor que nunca la colaboración entre los compañeros y los consejos de los familiares con más conocimientos técnicos; se intercambiaron ideas y recursos audiovisuales/videos explicativos para instalar o descargar programas, se resolvían dudas acerca de la seguridad de las plataformas, se buscaban y enviaban más materiales para mantener la seguridad de los datos y la seguridad de los niños en el medio en línea, con la ayuda de los medios de comunicación como *Facebook Messenger* o conferencias telefónicas clásicas, seguidas por las videoconferencias por *WhatsApp*, etc.

En todo caso, fue muy importante mantener a los alumnos en conexión con las actividades educativas, respetando las normas previstas en las pautas y las guías del Ministerio de la Educación de Rumanía (Droc et al. 2020, p. 16-25).

COMUNICACIÓN ESCOLAR Y EFICACIA CON LOS NATIVOS DIGITALES Y SUS FAMILIAS

Según la guía del MEC, en cuanto a la colaboración con los padres de los alumnos, se recomendaba tener una comunicación estrecha, comunicar con las familias, para que se asegurase la asistencia y la participación de sus hijos durante las clases. Asimismo, se recomendaba ofrecer asistencia técnica a los padres y alumnos, por si fuese necesaria. Es

decir, los padres eran responsables, como en el caso de las clases presenciales, de la asistencia a las clases de los niños. Ellos eran los que también les tenían que asegurar el acceso tecnológico, la adecuación del ámbito para desarrollar sus actividades escolares, sin elementos perturbadores, con ropa decente y sin consumir alimentos durante las actividades escolares (Droc et al. 2020, p. 21). De hecho, se disponía una serie de reglas para asegurar un buen proceso de aprendizaje.

En 2020, la sociedad rumana no estaba preparada adecuadamente para comunicar tan bien como para poder hacer escuela en casa, a distancia o en línea. Claro, había y aún hay muchísimos docentes que utilizaban modalidades de comunicarse con los padres de los niños a través de grupos de *WhatsApp* o *Facebook* y ya habían intuido el potencial de este medio virtual para los fines educativos y al haberse prefigurado puentes de transmitir mucha más información por este medio que anuncios de reuniones con los padres, fotografías de las actividades desarrolladas en el ámbito escolar o deberes escolares, pero desde aquí, desde una aplicación sencilla y al alcance de muchas personas que disponían de al menos un móvil inteligente, hasta trabajar con plataformas educativas, había mucho que aprender.

Además, era una gran desconocida cómo trabajaban más personas a la vez dentro de una familia, utilizando el mismo y único modo de comunicarse, porque había tanto el alumno como el docente con todas sus particularidades, tan variadas, con su familia, sus necesidades y sus desajustes: dos o más hijos o hermanos que tenían que estudiar en casa, utilizando por turnos o al mismo tiempo la misma y la única herramienta tecnológica, padres que tenían que trabajar en casa en un cuarto e hijos que hacían escuela en línea en otro cuarto (esto, en los casos afortunados), abuelos agobiados por tener que atender a más nietos que hacían escuela en casa a la vez, etc.

En primera fase, en marzo de 2020, al iniciar la pandemia en Rumanía, no resultó difícil mandar materiales a los alumnos, a través de sus padres, por mensajes a sus móviles o correos electrónicos, grupos de *Facebook* o de *WhatsApp*, directamente, o a través de la colaboración con los compañeros docentes, usándolos como intermediarios de la comunicación. Las inconstancias de comunicación aparecieron al querer probar la retroalimentación, corregir deberes, resolver dudas, animar tanto a los niños como a sus familias (madres, padres, abuelos-as, tíos-as, etc.); hubo muchos padres que enviaron deberes de los alumnos a través del correo electrónico, pero hubo también bastantes padres que no lo hicieron, u otros casos en que fueron muy concienzudos inicialmente, para llegar hacia el final a cansarse y a no enviar nada. La recomendación del MEC, a través de sus guías, era evitar agobiar a los alumnos y a los padres con los deberes, en el sentido de no hacer presiones acerca de esos (Droc et al. 2020, p. 20).

ENSEÑAMOS Y APRENDEMOS EN CASA. LA GESTIÓN DE LAS CLASES Y DE LOS ALUMNOS EN EL ÁMBITO DEL E-LEARNING – VENTAJAS E INCONVENIENTES

La enseñanza del tipo *e-learning* supone una conectividad directa o aplazada entre emisores y receptores, en el ámbito de la enseñanza apoyada por medios electrónicos, con sus elementos innovadores e interactivos que ofrecen la oportunidad de hacer de un medio informacional un poderoso aliado de los docentes (Cucoş, 2006, p. 101). Hasta aquí, perfecto, pero... ¿cuánto tiempo deben quedarse los niños delante de las pantallas de los

móviles/tabletas/portátiles/ordenadores, para no cansarles los ojos o para no llevar a tener dolores de espalda u otros problemas de salud?, ¿cómo bloquear el chat o parar las conversaciones no deseadas entre los miembros de la clase?, ¿cómo anticipar, evitar o parar formas de agresión (alumnos que quieren tener el control de los micrófonos o perturban de forma intencional las clases, o acosar a algún compañero en la forma privada del chat o por mensajería del móvil, durante las clases)?, ¿cuál es la mejor manera de gestionar la plataforma o la aplicación o la hora de hacer *streaming*, para asegurar la igualdad de oportunidades y participación equilibrada en las clases? ¿Dónde y cómo caben todas las responsabilidades del docente y los derechos de los niños en esta forma de aprendizaje? ¿Seremos todos *ciudadanos digitales* (Ribble, 2015, apud Pânișoară, 2020, p. 101) y nos someteremos a las mismas reglas? Surgían todas estas interrogaciones, dado que las dimensiones clásicas de la gestión del grupo de alumnos y del espacio escolar, con sus aspectos propios (*dimensión ergonómica* - disposición de los muebles en la sala de actividades, asegurar la visibilidad, posicionar y decorar el entorno; *dimensión psicológica* - recursos comportamentales, el elemento motivacional, educar la voluntad; *la dimensión social* - los alumnos como grupo social, la individualización, la cohesión, etc.; *la dimensión normativa* - las normas, reglas; la dimensión operacional - procedimientos y estrategias pedagógicas de intervención, *la dimensión innovadora*, etc.) (Iucu, 2008, p. 404-413) parecían haber cambiado de perspectiva.

Ante todo, aprender en casa significaba también compartir el espacio personal de los alumnos y de los docentes, a través de las pantallas de los ordenadores, tabletas, móviles; algunos alumnos se sintieron cómodos en el ámbito familiar, y otros, no. Para todos se constituyó en un momento de descubrir instantes de vida en casa, del espacio para trabajar, de percibir realidades cotidianas evidentes, que antes no se percibían. Para muchos, todo esto resultó más motivador y humano, además de compartir casi una intimidad, sin sentirse invadido, del ámbito del hogar, sin embargo, para otros, resultaron momentos que se deseaban ocultar o no dar a conocer.

En línea, se pudieron percibir *distractores nuevos: miembros de la familia* que ya no evitaban la zona de actividades escolares, a veces hablando en voz alta y olvidándose de que se podía escuchar toda la conversación telefónica que en aquel momento tenían, *mascotas* (gatos, perros, peces, loros), *varios ruidos* de la cocina o de las calles en que se vivía, con las sirenas de las ambulancias o de los coches de bomberos, etc. A lo largo de mi experiencia en línea, he tenido que explicar y rogar varias veces a los padres o abuelos dejar a los niños que dieran ellos las respuestas a mis preguntas, sin que ellos los interrumpieran con sus sugerencias o sus interpretaciones. Intentaba, sin que ellos percibiesen mi ruego como ofensa, recordarles a los adultos que ellos estaban allí para el apoyo técnico o emocional, pero no para suplir las respuestas de los niños o para corregirles ellos sus faltas. A veces, tenía la sensación de ser una actriz/locutora de televisión o una fuente de diversión, otras veces una forma de alternativa educacional para toda la familia, no lo tenía muy claro, pues escuchaba más de una voz que daba las respuestas a mis preguntas y aparecían más personas del hogar familiar para saludarme, al final de las clases.

Como algo positivo, el momento de confinamiento supuso un enriquecimiento léxico, por utilizarse y aprenderse también un vocabulario nuevo, del ámbito tecnológico, relacionado con la escuela en línea: *¿Me confirmáis, por favor, que se escucha?*, *¿Se oye*

bien o mal?, conectarse- desconectarse, abrir y cerrar el micrófono, bloquear el micrófono o el chat, compartir pantalla, bajar o subir el volumen, buscar la barra de herramientas, ¡Deja de escribir en el chat, por favor!, etc.

Para asegurar la participación equilibrada en las clases, en cuanto a la gestión de las respuestas, con igualdad de acceso a la comunicación, y, debido a los elementos técnicos de no poder mantener el contacto visual con cada miembro del grupo de participantes, al principio, he utilizado las listas de registro, por orden alfabético, para que todos participasen y para utilizar con máxima eficiencia el tiempo de la clase, intentando no superar las recomendaciones del MEC en sus guías para la Educación Primaria: para las actividades online, 20 minutos para la clase preparatoria (*clasa pregătitoare*) y para el segundo de primaria (*clasa a II-a*), 30 minutos (Droc et al. 2020, p. 23).

El horario podía ser flexible, por eso, el club del español tuvo que reconfigurar su horario, según el programa establecido en el sistema formal; ya no daba las clases por la mañana, sino por la tarde o al revés, según la disponibilidad de los participantes.

Total, las ventajas comunes, tanto para el alumnado como para los profesores: puntualidad de los profesores y de los niños, horario flexible, familiarización con el espacio de trabajo, posibilidad de profundizar aspectos de conexión humana, fuera del ámbito escolar institucional, mientras que los inconvenientes fueron: interrupciones de conexión, desarrollar estrategias de saltarse las clases o de esquivarse durante las actividades por el motivo de no tener conexión a Internet o el de tener muy mala conexión, la presencia de los distractores (miembros de la familia, mascotas), a veces, la precariedad de la retroalimentación inmediata y personalizada, la dificultad de poder ver y corregir inmediatamente los apuntes de los niños, deberes no enviados a tiempo, para nombrar solamente algunos aspectos.

MANUALES, RECURSOS, MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN USADOS DURANTE EL CONFINAMIENTO – ASPECTOS PERSONALES

En mi caso, en primera fase de la primavera pandémica, para los niños y las niñas de Educación Primaria, envié enlaces con juegos gratuitos educativos en línea puestos a disposición por el Centro Virtual Cervantes (*Mi mundo en palabras*, dirigidas a edades desde los 7 hasta los 9 años, nivel inicial y sugerencias de visionar, en sus variantes españolas, por supuesto, películas educativas y motivadoras para sus edades (por ejemplo, *El Ratón Pérez 2*, *Ferdinand*, *Coco*, *El libro de la vida*).

Hice uso del correo electrónico, *WhatsApp* y *Zoom*, especialmente porque los alumnos de estas edades estaban ya acostumbrados a su uso y no quería cansar ni a los padres ni a ellos con otras formas de comunicarnos; hubo una puesta en común de las modalidades de hacer las clases en línea y se llegó a estos acuerdos, porque me interesaba que todos los participantes tuviesen acceso a estos medios de comunicación. No tuve casos de abandono escolar a estas edades a causa de no tener acceso a internet o a no poder conectarse conmigo.

Resultó también muy útil el sitio de los manuales digitales, donde pude encontrar y aprovechar los recursos digitales en formato multimedia con los niños del manual *Comunicare în limba modernă spaniolă* (Bunuoro et al. 2019), para la primera de primaria.

Utilicé también varias fichas, materiales visuales escaneados, recursos auditivos o audiovisuales, enlaces de varias fuentes educativas, según las temáticas de las lecciones; por

ejemplo, al hablar de la capital de España, se presentaron y visionaron materiales auténticos audiovisuales sobre la promoción de la ciudad de Madrid (que se podían compartir directamente de internet o bajar y compartir), al tratar el tema de la ciudad de Barcelona, se enviaron enlaces de la página oficial del Jardín Zoológico de Barcelona o, para sobresaltar aspectos gastronómicos, se mostraron platos típicos de España (la paella valenciana, el gazpacho andaluz, la fabada asturiana, la crema catalana, el pulpo a la gallega, etc.), con sus recetas presentadas por nativos.

Para encontrar y seleccionar materiales atractivos y adecuados para sus edades, como de costumbre, se tenía que invertir mucho tiempo, para prepararse bien las clases.

INTERACCIÓN A DISTANCIA-EMPATÍA Y MOTIVACIÓN

En mi intento de dinamizar las clases, de determinar a los niños a ser activos y participativos, intenté llevar a la práctica algunos métodos clásicos, con pequeños ajustes, para favorecer la interacción y desarrollar la empatía, con el propósito de evitar la monotonía, de aprovechar el entorno familiar para conocernos mejor, sin olvidar de seguir con el progreso escolar. Dado también el hecho de que se memoriza el 20% de lo que se escucha, el 30% de lo que se ve, el 50% de lo que se escucha y se ve, el 70% de lo que se explica a otros y el 90% de lo que uno mismo experimenta y realiza (Giovannini et al., 1996, p. 27), me propuse animar el aprendizaje en cooperación, con el trabajo por parejas, o en pequeños grupos, pero también el trabajo individual.

Como procedimientos, métodos y formas de organizar la clase, se llevaron a cabo juego de roles, trabajo por parejas, lectura por papeles, trabajo en pequeños grupos, manualidades - proyectos culturales, juegos a distancia; preferí mantener la atención de los niños a través de métodos ya conocidos, añadiendo un poco más de dinamismo, por ejemplo, invitándoles a moverse por la casa en busca de algún objeto de cierta forma o de cierto color. En cuanto a la calidad de la lectura (lectura correcta, lectura consciente, lectura coherente, lectura expresiva) (Hobjilă, 2016, p. 66-67), a veces era difícil corregir en tiempo real a los niños y se perdía un poco el ritmo de la lectura, pero, como ventaja, resultaba más fácil de mostrar exactamente cuál era la palabra que yo quería que se volviera a leer o seleccionar de un texto, o mostrar la correspondencia sonido-letra, por tener todos la posibilidad de verla en la misma página, en la pantalla, y se podía subrayar de forma inmediata, con multitud cromática.

No hubo dificultades con los métodos elegidos; les gustó ser vendedor-a y comprador-a, fingiendo encontrarse en una tienda de juguetes en España, por ejemplo, igual que en la sala ordinaria de clase, también formar parte de un cuento e identificarse con los personajes, al ser Dorita, el Mago de Oz, el Espantapájaros, o el León, cambiando la tonalidad de voz y leyendo de forma expresiva, respetando la entonación y las reglas de pronunciación en español, les encantó visionar juntos fragmentos explicados y debatidos de la película El Ratón Pérez 2 y hacer también una manualidad que representaba al hada de los dientes de España, el simpático ratoncito, usando tijeras, pegamento, cartón y un calcetín.

Al hablar de los juguetes, cada uno pudo traer sin esfuerzo delante de sus compañeros su juguete favorito y describirlo, al estar a su alcance. Al hablar de elementos sobre la orientación espacial (encima de, detrás de, delante de, etc.), se utilizaron otros juguetes u objetos de sus casas o de mi casa, un motivo extra para conocernos mejor y divertirnos

juntos, además de avanzar en la práctica de la comunicación oral. Asimismo, al tocar el tema de las mascotas, pudimos ver en vivo gatitos y perritos muy juguetones y nos divertimos muchísimo, pero también se lloró mucho y hubo compasión por el pecesito-mascota recién fallecido de una niña. El mundo de los niños fue emocionante y casi todos mostraron muchísima disponibilidad de ser activos y de compartir aspectos bonitos a los demás, aspectos que, en la sala de clase, no se hubiesen podido percibir de la misma forma.

En los juegos de roles era a veces difícil seguir al compañero con el que se hablaba, o adaptarse al turno de réplicas, por no poder mantener un contacto visual muy claro, y, a veces, por problemas técnicos inherentes, pero a los niños les gustó la nueva experiencia a través de la pantalla del ordenador.

Al tener que trabajar en pequeños grupos, por ejemplo, para escribir algunas palabras u oraciones en distintos espacios de la pantalla, se apoyaban en usar la tecnología, les encantaba dar instrucciones de cómo y dónde encontrar cierto elemento en las herramientas, cómo usarlo, les encantó descubrir nuevas modalidades de escribir todos a la vez, en renglones distintos, sin sobreponerse, ni molestar al uno al otro. De esta forma, surgía una especie de emulación muy motivadora para los niños y las niñas, con respecto a escribir bien y ser el primero en finalizarlo de forma correcta, para poder tener tiempo a ayudar a los demás. También se daban instrucciones o consejos sobre las maneras de cambiar el fondo de pantalla, para personalizarla, o de cómo buscar recursos en la aplicación, con el fin de aparecer su imagen llevando una boina de pintor o cómo seguir ciertos pasos para poder seleccionar y aparecer llevando bigote; se sentía la satisfacción de todos de aprender algo nuevo y divertido, útil también durante las clases de lenguas extranjeras; se creaban de esta forma otros vínculos emocionales, que les hacían el confinamiento más llevadero. Se apoderaban de un espacio virtual que a ellos les encantaba, porque se sentían como personajes de un juego virtual, en que podían cambiar de aspecto y de disfraz.

Asimismo, se notó en la reacción de los niños una forma de sostenimiento recíproco, un modelo y una fuente de resiliencia; si entre los factores que se pueden enumerar para llegar a ser resistente en las adversidades se encuentra el apoyo social (Pavel, 2015, p. 234), en cuanto a los grupos con que trabajé yo, muchos de ellos representaron modelos de comunicación llena de cariño, compasión y coraje, aún a sus edades frágiles.

Por estar en sus casas, en un espacio percibido como amparador y muy personal, para muchos de los alumnos con los que trabajé, no había inhibiciones como en la escuela, por consiguiente, no tenían miedo a bailar, si escuchábamos una canción de los recursos del manual, o a expresar a menudo sus opiniones, con sinceridad y valentía, acerca de las actividades hechas.

CONCLUSIONES

La educación rumana durante la pandemia atravesada supuso cambios de paradigmas, una modernización tecnológica forzada por las circunstancias, al mismo tiempo necesaria y benéfica, con puestas en marcha de nuevos métodos y medios, en función de varias y desiguales dinámicas a nivel nacional, con sus altibajos, intentándose sacar lo mejor del momento y transformarlo en algo agradable, útil y rentable, con responsabilidad y honestidad.

Para los docentes más abiertos, representó una forma complementaria de la escuela tradicional, un acercamiento hacia una visión optimista, en conexión con el área de la amistad y de aspectos profundamente humanos, en que no se abandona a nadie, no se huye de la responsabilidad y se intenta con decencia y dignidad dar un ejemplo personal a los más jóvenes, muchos de ellos, unos niños que se están formando y fundamentando sus decisiones presentes y venideras en valores de entre las que observan y sienten a su alrededor, los que esperan al menos aferrarse a modelos dignos, motivadores, para poder seguir con la esperanza en un futuro favorable y seguro.

Para los niños y las niñas (alumnos y alumnas) de Educación Primaria y sus familias, con sus particularidades y exigencias, el periodo escolar en tiempos de COVID-19 seguramente no fue fácil, muchos con expectativas más concretas o esperando soluciones más rápidas, y, en algunos casos, sintiéndose defraudados por el sistema. Muchas familias apoyaron muchísimo a los docentes, con mucha lucidez y analizando con calma la situación inédita, accionando junto con los docentes, teniendo siempre en la vista la meta común: la felicidad, la protección, el bienestar y la seguridad, la educación de los niños. Cabe mencionar que muchos docentes también son padres y sus hijos/hijas forman parte del mismo sistema de enseñanza, así que la lucha constituyó también otra ocasión para unir y fortalecer a todos los actantes.

Para los más afortunados, que ya disponían de medios de comunicación a distancia y de poder hacer actividades educativas en línea, el momento representó otra forma de comprobar que el mundo es un pañuelo y las distancias no son tan largas entre los seres humanos. Vínculos emocionales se pueden mantener también a distancia, si hay bastante motivación en conservar y valorizar las relaciones humanas.

Desafortunadamente, hubo casos en que la educación no se llevó a cabo con un mínimo de lo que se esperaba o podía, por falta de implicación o por falta de recursos, buscándose formas de suplir lo no alcanzado.

Fue una lección para toda la sociedad, para conjugarse los esfuerzos y seguir en adelante, un ejercicio de reflexión y adaptabilidad que no daba tiempo a buscar culpables, sino identificar rápidamente y con mucha responsabilidad soluciones para que la situación se resolviese de momento y para mejorar aspectos venideros, para anticipar momentos de crisis. De hecho, otra forma del aprendizaje permanente, a lo largo de toda la vida, tanto para el profesorado como para el alumnado y los seres humanos en general.

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Practicing Writing (About Art) in the Pandemic

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Abstract: Blended learning has been adopted for quite some time by the different approaches to language teaching in higher education. Still, the new realities bursting into our lives no more than a year ago called for new, innovative methods, as well as greater efforts from the part of the teachers to offer their students the best possible tools that public health conditions allowed for. New technologies and remote teaching/learning methodologies have proved a necessity and have been identified as the only possible solution for education for quite some time now. While in teaching Art English blended learning had been implemented for several years (mainly by using blogging), the new technologies, platforms, solutions adopted by the University of Art and Design (UAD) of Cluj-Napoca have created a challenging context for new approaches to this discipline, especially in what the involvement of the students is concerned. Now, at the end of the third semester of remote teaching and learning, everything summed up, it appears that the results are somewhat better than expected, at least in getting the students to participate actively in the different online activities. Online teaching and learning have somehow proved more fruitful than face-to-face meetings, especially when (active) writing was involved. The students' answers to the proposed tasks presupposed a conscious use of the theoretical background, as well as of their critical thinking. The rhythm of the designed activities also proved beneficial for their exercise in writing about art. The present paper offers a glimpse into the more recent practices to teaching/learning Art English, new results, and new challenges. Based on what has already been achieved, some plans for the future can now be shaped, including the necessity of using new technologies in (tertiary) education.

Keywords: *Art English, new technologies, (active) writing*

INTRODUCTION

As part of the greater field of ESP, English for Art Purposes or Art English shares many features with other specialized languages, while also focusing on the needs and purposes of future artists, art historians, and critics. Since its beginnings in the early 1960s, as a practitioners' language movement, ESP professionals have agreed on some fundamental principles the approach should follow. At the very core of the ESP approach to language (and language teaching) should lie the needs and purposes of the learners. To distinguish what these needs and purposes of a specific group of adult learners are, multilayered research has been and is still done. One of their main goals is to reveal the specificity of the discourse used in certain areas and contexts. The methodologies and approaches have varied quite a lot, but the ESP pedagogy refers to the development of the basic language competencies (reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, oral interaction, writing) placed in specific contexts.

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An important aspect of ESP is that it is conceived as blending research and practice for pedagogical purposes. Any theory has to be validated by in-class practice to prove worthy. One of the latest developments in the field has been the Genre Analysis approach, pioneered by John Swales with his *Aspects of Article Introductions* (1981), followed by the 1990 ground setting book *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*. The three fundamental concepts of his approach: *discourse community*, *genre*, and *language-learning task* continue to be at the center of ESP teaching and learning up to this day. Later on (*Other Floors, Other Voices*, 1998), he added a new term to his genre theory, that of *textography*, to refer to the intricate interaction between text/s, context/s, and the way this influences the “textual lives” of different people, belonging to different discourse communities – computing, taxonomic botany, and English as a second language, while also to a larger academic discourse community, all of them living at the three floors of the same ethnographic site (an important university building).

Aiming to offer “a thicker” description of language-in-use, Vijay Bhatia, a former disciple of Swales, also focused on socio-cultural and psycho-linguistic aspects of text construction and interpretation. While at the beginning his interest was mainly in legal genres, his 1993 *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings* offers deep insights into other genres as well: the research article, the student laboratory report, the student dissertation, the sales promotion letter, the job application, and the advertisement. He elaborated on Swales’ approach, adding an important coordinate: the communicative purpose, which defines a certain genre and differentiates between genres. Any change in the communicative purpose brings about a change of the genre.

Other researchers insisted on the importance of placing the learner at the center of ESP pedagogy (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This means that any ESP teacher should ponder upon how specific his/her methodology should be, therefore developing more classroom-based research to find the right answers and adapt the curriculum and methodologies. Others shifted their interest on the corpus studies, trying to distinguish the most relevant aspects of the different corpora so as to promote some conclusions concerning the most efficient practices for ESP teaching and learning.

An extraordinary feature of ESP teaching-learning is mainly the capacity to adapt to variety (in topics, methodologies, different types of rhetoric – including new media and multimodality), to different contexts (classroom, business, online media), and to different situations.

The recent months brought humanity to face an unexpectedly harsh reality: the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Almost everything moved online, especially education. ESP courses also moved to the online environment, starting to use the most effective methods, materials, and student tasks, to serve the best interests of the learners. Some practitioners had already been using such tools, some had to adapt rapidly, even to improvise. The main question they had to answer was how to remain efficient in such new circumstances?

PURPOSE AND APPROACH: BE NOT AFRAID OF DIGITALITY⁴

A possible answer to the questions risen by the new realities brought about by the 2019 pandemic (most probably the only logical one) was to make recourse to the enormous number of resources of the digital space and to use the tools it has to offer efficiently. For that, ESP teachers had to quickly adapt and learn as much as possible about dealing with digital instruments that are best suited for the needs and purposes of their students, all in a limited amount of time.

The 2013 Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference held at Coventry University threw some light on language use in the digital age, revealing the fact that contemporary texts may be much more complex than 20th-century texts, if all the aspects of their production are taken into consideration, including their digital quality. The table below suggests that there are text types that had never existed before the digital era, while some texts achieved digital qualities (e. g. university lecturing), and others are considered to possess some “digital thrust” since they can adapt and use digital tools (e.g. research articles using corpus analysis).

born digital	achieve digitality	digitality thrust upon them
blogs tweets wikis emails Facebook text messages webpages reality TV YouTube	images political discourse teacher education university lecturing newspapers mourning persuading belonging expert medical advice technical instruction cinema and TV viewing	register analysis mental processes logical relations cohesive ellipsis focus method of development research articles spoken interactions
new digital texts to analyse	we [can] do things differently in digitality	digitality and research methods

Figure 1. *Language in a digital age.* Source:

https://www.academia.edu/25850539/2014_Language_in_a_digital_age_Be_not_afraid_of_digitality.p.4

When speaking about writing in the digital era, Kress (2014, p. 93) mentions (in semiotic terms) three major coordinates shaping the texts: “first, the characteristics of the social environments; second, the world of meaning multimodally conceived; and third, the technologies for producing and disseminating/distributing ‘texts’”. All three coordinates are to be considered as manifesting themselves entirely connected and intertwining. Social changes alter previously accepted meanings and shapes; language is no longer the only one to send messages (images play increasingly important roles); the use of the different

⁴ This phrase is taken from the title of a conference held in July 2013, at Coventry University, UK. (*Language in a digital age: Be not afraid of digitality*. Proceedings from the 24th European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference and Workshop)

platforms (with their capacities and limitations) also affects communication as we once knew it. According to Kress (2014, pp. 87-88), the most intriguing and problematic aspect of the new *text* is that of naming. There is, thus, a lot of confusion now about previously well-established categories such as *text*, *writing*, *image*, *discourses*, *mode*:

What had been discrete fields, relatively well understood, with settled sets of questions and sets of terms as a tool-kit, have merged or disappeared entirely: what has merged is a re-shaped, larger domain, with quite different textual ensembles, based on as yet not fully understood principles of composition: a field yet to be framed and explored (Kress, 2014, p. 88).

Kress wonders whether or not the old categories are still of help when composing and analyzing texts, or whether we should rather conceive new terms/categories to describe the new media/platforms, as well as multimodal messages.

Using the methods of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory of language and genre-based literacy pedagogy for about ten years, Helen Drury and her colleagues from The Learning Centre of the University of Sydney have managed to almost completely move their courses online by providing their Science and Engineering students with interactive multimodal learning modules, considered more efficient than face-to-face teaching. The materials and approaches were redesigned to teach academic writing online. While in the initial face-to-face ESP classes the approaches and materials of genre pedagogy were mainly designed for the deconstruction phase of genre teaching, through example discipline genres, in online genre-based pedagogy, students were provided with redesigned resources, so that they should be able to go through all of them at their own pace. The specific genres students needed to be aware of were products of the respective discipline practices; therefore, students were expected to be aware of their purposes, structures, and language particularities. This recontextualization of academic writing presupposed a lot of new resources, learning materials, and tasks, especially those originating in paper-based materials (dealing with the genre of the laboratory report, for instance). The new screen environment asked for new arrangements in terms of sequences, layout, foregrounding, as well as a translation of the spoken interaction developing in the traditional classroom environment into online interaction.

While the educational aim remained the same, the new design of the online class had to consider some aspects such as the navigation networks, the sequence and arrangement of subject matter, the choice of the right modes and modal resources to highlight the most important features (background color, font size, type, color, frame, etc.), modal interactivity and guidance based on the social relations, software technology (Drury, 2014, pp. 35-37). The paper-based genre of the laboratory report was thus redesigned as a website combining a theoretical frame and practical task-based activities that students were invited to access and practice. Colors and fonts highlighted language features, pop-up windows brought explanations or text samples, next to the genre structure; images and animations also helped a better understanding of the genre flow (move-structure).

The last two years have proved a real challenge for academia worldwide. The digital approach to teaching various disciplines and subjects has become a necessity. This has been the case of teaching Art English, as well. While some previous steps had already been taken in terms of devising blended learning resources and tasks by using the frame of the weblog,

the university's choice to use the Google Suite for Education platform had to be integrated into the course design, too. The present paper aims to share the experience and results of mixing the two platforms for teaching/learning writing about art through a genre-based methodology while also assessing the whole process; some shortcomings and further preoccupations for improving these tools in order to increase efficiency are also discussed.

METHOD

Coordinates of the Art English course

The curriculum of the Art English course conducted at the University of Art and Design of Cluj-Napoca focuses on the development of the four competencies (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) in the context of visual arts. During the first year of study, students practice reading and listening, while in their second year, speaking and writing about art. When writing about art, they are supposed to select the right genre to suit their communicative purpose, out of the genres devised by the artistic discourse community. This means that they need to be aware of the communicative purpose/s of a genre, of the context/s and social relations being established, of the move-structure, the most effective discourse strategies (rhetoric), and of the best linguistic choices. While in the previous years the theoretical frame deconstructing the genres and the respective sample texts (as exemplification for a better understanding) were provided by the teacher in class, using visual media and paper-based resources, these last two years the same teacher had to reconsider and redesign the course to fit the online medium. It is also true that some digital support had previously been provided on the dedicated weblog, where students could find a summary of each theoretical course and several tasks meant to engage them with the practice of some genre features, under the form of comments to each post (with the necessary incentives). The results were different than expected, though, as task engagement increased mainly as a result of the incentives given, and it was found that many students did their best to write the required comments. Still, most often, these were very short texts, ranging from two or three short sentences to a paragraph.

The online Writing About Art course was initially hosted by *G-Suite for Education*, later named *Google Workspace for Education* and including such applications as *Gmail*; *Calendar* (for scheduling of meetings, tasks, etc.); *Meet* (the videoconferencing program where the online meetings with the students happened for lectures, seminars, or other purposes); *Docs* (for editing documents to use online); *Sheets* (for different tables); *Slides* (for online presentations); *Forms* (very useful for conceiving different tasks and tests); *Classroom* (where the whole online educational process was displayed and all the other programs could be used); *Drive* (a very useful and generous storage place for all the necessary documents, forms, etc.); *Assignments*; *Sites*; *Groups*; *Persons* (a list of and access – via email – to the enrolled students; *Admin* (for the managers). However, the most relevant program for the course activity was *Classroom*, where all activities converged. Its structure roughly includes a calendar, the different courses a teacher may have, a stream (where all sorts of announcements are displayed, including those about new lectures, meetings, tasks), classwork (where all assignments, or tasks are displayed, their deadlines, necessary materials—videos, PDFs, forms, etc. and where the students post their homework which is to be evaluated and commented upon by the teacher); a permanent *Meet* link of the course,

a list of the enrolled students, and a grade record (where all the partial grades, results, and points are gathered, resulting in a final grade, according to the set criteria announced by the teacher) add to the effectiveness of the platform.

The English for Art course used *Classroom* as the main learning platform for students, as well as the weblog (with the same title). Virtual lectures were held on *Meet*, using slides to offer students a theoretical background of the course, respectively, of the genres of the artistic discourse community, while a written summary of the course was posted on the blog. To better understand how genres work, during the online meetings some relevant texts were discussed. The texts⁵ had been previously uploaded on *G Drive* and the links were posted on the *Classroom stream* so that students could access them for the upcoming meeting. The texts were analyzed based on genre methodology. The students were encouraged to find those features of the analyzed text which were relevant for the genres they belonged to. They had to become aware of how they could use a certain genre to fit a certain purpose they might have in their academic and professional careers. During the academic year 2020-2021, a number of 16 genres were studied, out of which 10 were studied in the second semester; some of these genres were initially paper-based and moved online (e.g., the art review), some were born online (e.g., the artist's blog, the artist website); the changes occurring while moving online had to be pinpointed, while the online features needed to be understood and exploited.

After the theoretical and practical study of each genre, students had to write similar texts. While the HTA⁶ students had to also write full genre texts for their semester projects, all students had to write at least one (longer) paragraph per written task, based on a video/audio or a written material/text belonging to the studied genres. They had to submit their written tasks within specified deadlines. Each task was attributed a certain number of points (from one to three). Credit assignments relied on a minimum number of four tasks, but students were encouraged to work more and gain 10 points, which would increase their final grade. An extra point would add if they solved at least three tasks on the blog, as well.

Statistic results

The whole writing activity of the students throughout the second semester of the 2020-2021 academic year is synthesized in the table below, except for the full genre texts written just by the HTA group. Percentages may vary depending on whether the students only used the *Classroom* platform to submit their answers or they also complied with the blog assignments on the same topics. The total number of enrolled students was 214. Some subjects proposed both written and audio-video materials as starting points for the writing activity, some only one of the two types.

The minimal requirement concerning the length of each assignment text was one long(er) paragraph. The last column of the table reflects the percentage of the students who chose to write longer texts, out of the overall number of students who solved the task.

⁵ The texts were written by previous generations of students, as course assignments and published in Crețiu, 2014.

⁶ Students enrolled in the History and Theory of Art program of the UAD.

Practicing Writing (About Art) in the Pandemic

Table 1. Writing activity statistic results for the second semester of the 20-21 academic year

No.	SUBJECT (tasks)	NUMBER of answering students per assignment type, based on		PERCENTAGE of answering students per assignment type, based on		PERCENTAGE of answers longer than 2 paragraphs, based on	
		written text Task 1	audio text Task 2	written text Task 1	audio text Task 2	written text	audio text
I	ARGUMENTATIVE essay	82 + 5 blog comments	100	38 - 40	47	75	50
II	COMPARISON	116 + 3 blog	156	54 - 56	73	29	51
III	(Seminar) RESEARCH PAPER	5 comments /blog	86	2	40	-	60
IV	ART REVIEW (negative)	136	-	64	-	70	-
V	ARTIST/DESIGNER CONCEPT STATEMENT	163 + 4 blog	4 blog comments	76-77	2	25	-
VI	ARTNEWS	8 blog comments	-	4	-	25	-
VII	INTERNET GENRES (artist blog + website)	35 already extant student blogs/web sites + 12 blog	-	16 - 22	-	16	-
VIII	GALLERY LABELS	133	-	62	-	-	-
IX	THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE	9 blog comments	-	4	-	-	-
X	THE EXHIBITION LEAFLET AND CARD	4 blog comments	-	2	-	-	-
XI	Less than 4 tasks	9		4		-	-
XII	Reaching the 10 points	56		26		-	-

Discussion and interpretation of the statistic results

- at very first sight, it appears that a great number of students (actually, the great majority) got actively involved in the writing activity during the semester; only

very few did not meet the requirements, therefore not obtaining the credits (4%); more than a quarter of the students solved as many tasks as to obtain the total of ten points (that would increase the final grade); there were also many students reaching for the 10 points but managing to add up to 8-9 points (not seen in the table above);

- a comparison of the numbers and percentages reflecting the choice between written and audio-video-based tasks reveals the fact that students tend to favor the audio-video materials if they have an option; multimodality is better appreciated by the students compared to written text only (which is a natural thing, considering art students mostly express themselves visually);
- students seem to prefer some genres that are closer to their artistic training and future careers; there were many students writing artist statements or designer concept statements, as well as revealing their attitude toward a negative art review (64%); the students were supposed to reflect on the reviewer's discourse choices and to rephrase them if they felt the evaluations were too exaggeratedly negative, too impolite, or too harsh. 70% of the students decided they had to write more than two paragraphs about the critic's choices. Interestingly enough, half of the students agreed with the negative evaluations, with or without redress; the other half felt they needed to "smoothen" the criticism; very few of the students were totally against negative criticism; apparently, the gallery label was an interesting genre, 62% of the students deciding to come up with their own labels. An explanation may be that it is a very short genre-text (of one or two paragraphs, rarely more); another explanation is that they had to write labels for three of their own works (offering that kind of information that they thought the public needed to better appreciate the works), which was a relevant aspect to consider;
- the research paper is not the most typical genre in art education, but if the subject can raise a real interest, the students would respond to the challenge. For example, one task question was "Does forgery pay?" (suggested by a HTA student). It was based on an audio-video material containing an interview given by an artist who used to make copies of renowned masters, for different reasons and different purposes. They had to formulate a thesis, come up with some arguments for or against the ideas presented in the video, and to suggest some bibliography. An unexpected 40% of the total number of students sent their comments and (out of these) an even more unexpectedly high amount of 60% chose to write more than two paragraphs to reflect their opinion based on some bibliography of their choice;
- some of the students also opted for blog tasks (probably needing the extra point); it is a matter of fact that due to the new online platform on which they could write and due to the new requirements, the online course had, the number of blog comments decreased dramatically as compared to the previous years of in-class teaching (just 42 blog comments compared to the hundreds in the previous years).

Sample analysis and discussions

Below are some suggestive samples of the students' texts reflecting answers to their favored genre-tasks (grouped as per task).

Practicing Writing (About Art) in the Pandemic

Task 5. Research Paper: Does forgery pay? *Your colleague [I.I.] from the HTA department wants to know what you think about this subject. Me, too! Watch the video, listen to what the artist has to say on the subject of art forgery. Consider this video as one research source. Try to find at least one more source on this subject. Write it down. Take a side: agree or disagree with him. Formulate your answer as a THESIS (underline it) of a research paper and think about 2-3 points of proof/arguments to support it (a paragraph). You can also formulate your thesis IN RESPONSE to what another colleague has already written.*

A5.1.

I listened to that video and heard about this "artist" and I come with another source related to this topic. He is also an "artist" in China who made 1 to 1 reproductions of Van Gogh and sold them in the center of the city at a stall. First of all, related to the video, it is very good that he is currently doing works and not signing them and letting people know that they are fake, instead, I do not support these actions at all because they do not seem conventional and do not bring tribute to the deceased artist as he said. I don't think it's okay, but definitely, the only people who buy what they do are normal people who have nothing to do with art in reality. In the end, even if it seems somewhat degrading and shameful to me to do that, everyone does what they think. As for the other Chinese artist, from what I saw, he is not doing well at all, although he is recognized for his work, he does not sell, and most of the time he is taken for a joke. Now all I can say is that I don't think you can afford to make replicas of Van Gogh and sell them in the city center, it's a gesture of disrespect to the artist. I would not agree for anyone in this world to copy my art and sell it at a lower price or advertise themselves. In conclusion, I do not encourage these actions and it does not seem to me that they represent you as any kind of artist you would be. I do not agree with them and personally, I would never buy or support a fake. Another source of information: <https://youtu.be/ZbZDO5y43ZU>.

A5.2. (ITA)

Art forgery (thesis) Forgery is an essential part of the art world that not only pays but pays off. Not only does it raise fundamental discourses on authenticity, style, and value, but it is also a remarkable form of art criticism, a vehicle to developing expertise, and, overall, it spices up the art market and the structures around it. Within this frame of thought, there are two manners in which forgery can occur – it can be illegal, or it can come in that form of certified fakes, sold as official replicas. This represents an important part of the art market and a great option for those who cannot afford original pieces. The world of fakes explores the power of images, their icon-like attribute and the overall power of this strange 'collaboration' between artists – the one that created the original and the one who created the replica. Fakes are a consistent part of any market; one wears fake purses, fake clothes and fake diamonds. We like the sense of making a statement without going bankrupt while doing so. If there is market demand, there is forged art, so why wouldn't it be paid for accordingly? And how much more interesting does this dialectic between authentic and fake become in a world where artworks are sanctified and where uniqueness plays such a significant role in the evaluation of value? Art forgery can certainly imply a dimension of 'integrity', as Ken Perenyi puts it. Art forgery can be seen as a commitment that would certainly involve getting everything as similar to the original as possible – and that can be spoiled by the signature of the art forger. Other sources: <http://umich.edu/~engtt516/forgerysource.html>

Task 6. A negative art review: *Read the text, notice the structure, and reflect on the discourse strategies used by the author for analyzing the exhibited works. Select one or two such analyses and focus on the evaluations. Then, by using your own words, try to rephrase them, whether more politely, or not. What do you think about how this exhibition is reviewed by the critic?*

A6.1.

[...] Here the evaluation is focused on the finish of the painting and the frame, so the formal aspects that can distract the viewer from looking at the actual painting. I think that he used humor to compare the resin to slime on a toad's back. I would rephrase it like this: The finish is so glossy that it could reflect the stars of the whole universe, and it looks like the surface of a balloon- ready to pop it's (!) potential.

A6.2.

[...] Here he pointed out the status of Julian Schnabel: an artist with a tragic life and a "tortured soul", that has every drop of paint as a treasure. I would rephrase it like this: the dramatic life of an artist relies on every drop of paint, and the last one means the end of a restless heart. Overall I think this exhibition is reviewed on a (!) ironic and tragic note at the same time, and the critic is using a lot of formal aspects as subjects for his negative evaluations. Also, I think that he uses a lot of sophisticated words in his art review.

A6.3.

[...] -The reviewer makes a valid criticism about the artist not thinking how his work would be perceived in a gallery, since the glossy finish of the artwork could reflect lights, which can overall detract (!) the attention from the artwork. He then follows up with a personal opinion rather than a fact, where he voices his disgust for glossy finishes and compares them to a toad's back.

[...] -The reviewer criticizes Schnabel (the artist) for his overall presentation, where he claims the artist has illusions of grandeur comparing himself to established masters like Picasso.

My overall opinion on Alastair Sooke's review of Julian Schnabel's *exhibition Every Angel has a Dark Side* is that while he makes some good points, a lot of his criticisms are very subjective, and the review only focuses on the negative side of things without acknowledging the good parts of the exhibition. The way he talked about the artist seemed very unprofessional, in some parts even insulting him. Reading it made me think that this must've been one of the worst exhibitions ever, but after looking it up, a lot of the reviewer's points seem downright exaggerated.

Task 7. Your artist statement/designer concept statement

Think about how your artist statement or designer concept statement would look these days. Focus on the most important aspects you would like to share and write one paragraph which should belong in your larger statement if written wholly.

A7.1.

Through my work, I investigate the people around me, the nature and my dreams. In my opinion the image has to make you understand the meaning of life through the eyes of the artist. I like to try new technology in creating my work, and there is no life without technology.

Through a variety of digital or traditional works, I use visual culture for more inspiration, and I move this in an artistic context. In my works I try to combine the two ways of art because every medium can be explored. I want to create a connection which makes us think of today's art, to appreciate it, because art has an important role in our lives, we are surrounded by it.

My research and creation processes involve a balance of quality and quantity. I am interested in the interaction between the two and I try my best to deliver a good quantity of visual product, but at the same time being a quality product.

A7.2.

My work investigates the meaning behind dreams, reproducing either the eerie feeling through a symbolistic interpretation, or the images as I see them.

Dreams have long mystified us, and their meanings seem nearly impossible to decipher, and most people dream in a nightmarish or negative manner. There are different characters that people from all around the world seem to have seen while sleeping. The most common one is "The Hatman", described as a dark entity, a tall shadowy figure, dressed in a long black coat with a hat. He's a hallucination often seen by people during sleep paralysis and the source of my inspiration.

In antithesis to him, stands a well-known biblical figure, Archangel Michael, that opposes in defense to the dark forces (?!). A protector both in the physical world and the spiritual one, he is the center of my art, either in a very direct way or an extremely subtle one, I leave meaningful symbols of him in every piece I create.

My art is inspired by the darkest, deepest, most horrific things I dream about and I fight that inspiration through painting. My finished art is a never-ending war between Truth and Evil

A7.3.

My work should be the cleanest way to improve your visual interface or graphic of your business/product. I prefer to reflect in my work all of the design principles, and my personality. I call that a good design.

In my work, the most important element is the user, because the user should be the primary recipient of my design. Every time I should resolve the user problems with the design (?!), that's called User Interface & User Experience Design, and that is what I do.

I create my work to improve the user visual experience, with my graphics, and my purpose is to create the most easy (!) user flow possible. In my opinion minimalistic and simple ideas can be the greatest key to create a good design. When you reach that it is easy to receive great feedback from your audience, and your users would be very comfortable with your design. In the past I was very confused about how to improve my work, because I did not try to understand people's needs and their problems. My inspiration is Dieter Rams, a German industrial designer from Braun company, his quotes inspire me to create a good design, and he motivates me to adopt a minimalist design.

In conclusion, for me, a good design should interact with the users. Also, the good design is not complex and complicated, with numerous add-ons, design should be simple and honest

The first observation about all of the above sample texts is that 6 out of 8 students decided to write more than just one paragraph, or at least, a longer one. A5.1. did not reflect the genre features of a research paper, although it partially tried to answer the requirements. Subjectivity prevails over objectivity. A5.2. complies with the requirements of the genre and clearly states a thesis, trying to also bring some arguments to support it; both answers suggest other bibliographic sources. All the A6 answers comment on the discourse strategies of the reviewer. A6.1. distinguishes humor as a strategy and tries to rephrase the evaluation to the artist's advantage. A6.2. also mentions irony as well as "sophisticated words"⁷. A6.3. seems to disagree with the evaluations of the artist's works and explains the choice. The A7 answers are more than one paragraph long, as required in the task description. They tend to be whole artist statements (a painter's, a graphician's, and a designer's), that is they are full genre-texts, not just the minimum required paragraph. Interestingly, A7.1 and A7.2. make use of the 'artspeak' usually associated with this genre. Artists always "investigate" things. Although not perfect, they are exercises in preparation for their future artist and designer statements: they mention the sources of inspiration, some techniques, some aesthetic choices; they also try to use a certain move-structure. The grammar, spelling mistakes, as well as awkward and/or not very clear formulations, are signaled in the texts.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the new digital realities, the ESP teacher is faced with a whole (new) series of questions to be asked (and possibly, answered): Where is the place of text in the new multimodal era? How is it influenced by the new media? How do the different platforms alter the previous shapes of composition? How should we analyze a text, describe it? In what terms? What are suitable categories? Do the old linguistic ones still apply? How do genres work in these new contexts?

The recent online Art English teaching-learning experience may be considered quite successful, on the whole, in answering at least some of the above questions. The genre-based approach and the different methodologies seem to have let themselves fruitfully tailored to the new medium. The most important aspect of this enterprise is the students' involvement. A much greater number of students wrote about art by applying the different genre features, as compared to the few who did that in the classic in-class course. A very important aspect of the online process of education is that students are offered the chance to work at their own pace, to choose the time to go over the theoretical information, and to solve the tasks, according to their schedules and preferences. The fact that they were not asked to write full texts, but a minimal paragraph, seems to also have contributed to their decision to work more. The choice of the working materials is another key to success. The students promptly and largely engaged in (written) discussions of/on intriguing and challenging subjects. Notably, the videos were the most appealing materials, although even a longer written text on a challenging subject did work.

A further preoccupation of the course should concern the speaking (about art) activities; new methods, as efficient as possible (given the drawbacks of large number

⁷ These are, in fact, a typical feature of the 'artspeak', so widely present in the art-related discourse; also see Crețiu, 2013.

conferencing), should be searched for and put to work, especially if the online medium continues to be the only option for education.

Thus, a return to the classic in-class, face-to-face, education should not in any way exclude the online component, which has proved very efficient in so many ways, provided the platform is still supported by the university. Otherwise, any other online platforms should be considered to blend in, adding a sufficient number and variety of proposed tasks to the direct experience, so as students should feel encouraged to work more to practice their English language abilities, at their own pace, and according to their preferences.

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Using ICTs in ESP: A Learner-Centred Analysis

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Abstract: This paper proposes to explore ICT and DDL (Data-driven learning) developments in university ESP classrooms by comparing corpus tools used by students with their use of other non-corpus digital tools for language learning. The selection of the tools was made according to the estimated digital competence levels in each situation. In this respect, a current European project (IDEAL--Integrating Digital Education in Adult Language Teaching) on which we are working, has been used as the framework for the analysis of the different tools and the student's interactions with them. For this approach, we have integrated corpus tools with other possibly useful language applications in two courses. Each course worked with authentic language by using both corpus and non-corpus tools. We have relied on a mixed method approach to analyse students' work with the tools during and after the courses. In general, the vast majority of the learners were satisfied with all the tools whereas there were notable divergences in terms of their tool preferences. As regards their performance, all the students scored higher in the post-tests after using the tools. Interviews and questionnaires disclosed higher degrees of satisfaction with DDL among the fourth-year students.

Keywords: *ESP, ICTs, IDEAL, DDL, mixed method*

INTRODUCTION

Among other observations in FL (Foreign Language) developments over the past 40 years, it is found that vocabulary knowledge tends to predict language proficiency, especially reading comprehension (cf. Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Nation, 2006; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010, among others). As Nagy & Townsend (2012) claim, the lexical knowledge gap found among many EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) learners becomes a main concern in academic settings, as it can be a hindrance for their literacy and competence needs at tertiary education levels. Webb & Paribakht (2015) identify major linguistic gaps not only among EAP learners but also in some of the course material and standardised tests used at university. These tests seem to lack lexical profile adequacy according to proficiency levels. Put differently, it can be said that corpus-informed vocabulary competence research for academic purposes does not yet materialise effectively in educational settings, and very few institutions integrate corpus analyses and approaches in FL curricula (cf. Aijmer, 2009; Pérez-Paredes, 2019).

In turn, the application of technologies in FL settings has become widespread, evolving from CBT (Computer-Based Training) and CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) to more interactive developments on the web 3.0. (Farr & Murray, 2016). Warren (2016) considers approaches with corpora in classrooms as "innovative ICT" forms of

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engaging learners with authentic language. Thomas (2020) and Cobb (2018) propose dynamic website interfaces where graded reader corpora can be accessed and exploited effectively for lexical and reading competence at different linguistic levels. Crosssthaite et al. (2021) explore corpus affordances among pre-service teachers in Primary and Secondary Education in Indonesia and observe that these teachers generally appreciate and value the possible learning benefit of the corpus approaches in their teaching contexts. However, in less ICT-developed countries like Indonesia, a major handicap is the ICT infrastructure itself, which often prevents good access to and interaction with the tools.

ICT was already explored in English courses for overseas students in UK universities more than three decades ago. It was experienced as a promising approach for the introduction of learners to authentic language interaction (cf. Higgins & Johns, 1984). In contrast with textbook material, this approach to electronic texts by means of concordances and key words in context enabled learners' autonomy to discover linguistic patterns and vocabulary use (with the instructor working as a mediator between content and students). Shortly after, it was found that exploiting computer-driven linguistic patterns (DDL--Data-driven learning) could benefit learners' linguistic intake and other competences (e.g., inducing, discovery, autonomous learning, etc). It has been well documented throughout the years since then and with different resources that DDL can be applied in the language classroom by using hands-on corpus resources as well as tailor-made concordance data at different levels and stages of language learning and education (cf. Boulton, 2010; Cobb & Boulton, 2015).

This paper describes DDL developments in university ESP classrooms by comparing corpus tools used by students with their use of other non-corpus digital tools for language learning. The selection of the tools was made according to the estimated digital competence levels in each situation. In this respect, a current European project (IDEAL--Integrating Digital Education in Adult Language Teaching) on which we are working, has been used as the framework for the analysis of the different tools and the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' interaction with them. Among other objectives, IDEAL aims to explore the usefulness of these tools for adult education, but in this case, we are particularly concerned with the application of DDL versus non-DDL tools.

For this approach, we combine electronic corpus tools with other possibly useful language applications in two ESP courses at university level. Each course introduces students to ICT resources for task development and completion. Three DDL websites (FLAX, Compleat Lexical Tutor, and Versatext) are included for lexical enhancement and reading material exploration. The non-corpus resources also focus on vocabulary and written / oral text comprehension in ESP. A mixed-method approach is applied to analyse students' work with the tools in different tasks during and after the courses. In general, most learners are satisfied with all the tools whereas degrees of satisfaction notably differ. As regards their performance, all students score better in post-tests after using the tools (versus their initial lexical knowledge and reading comprehension in pre-tests). Interviews and questionnaire answers reveal higher degrees of satisfaction among forth-year students with DDL tools.

ICT, DDL, AND LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES

The use of ICT resources in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) educational settings has expanded over the past decade. Parallel to this proliferation of FL learning tools, a noteworthy increase in European projects about digital education and literacy can be perceived. One of such projects is IDEAL (2019-2021), funded under the Erasmus + programme in the European Union. It comprises six research groups from different countries (UK, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Poland). Its main line of work is rooted in the analysis of digital competences that FL learning teachers have / lack in adult education. Five main areas related to digital competences (see Figure 1) are applied (using the Digital Competence Framework for Educators—DigCompEdu—cf. Redecker & Punie, 2017) to analyse European language learning instructors' strengths and weaknesses regarding digital resources.

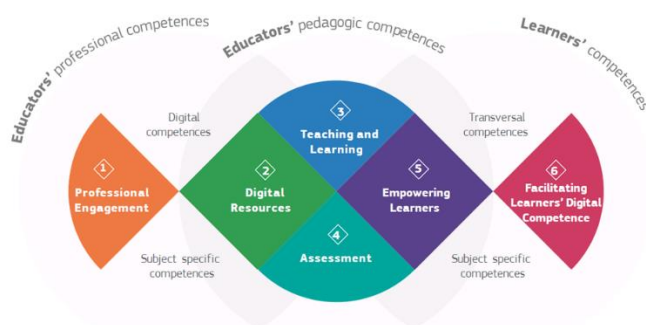


Figure 1. *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (Redecker & Punie, 2017)*

Self-assessment questions related to each area in Figure 1 were formulated via 150 questionnaires, which were then distributed in educational institutions across the six partner countries. These questionnaires presented digital competences from A1 (beginner) to B2 (advanced), and adapted such digital competences to language teaching, following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2018) with new descriptors. For example, for the “Digital Resources” area, competence item 2.3. is “I effectively protect sensitive content, e.g. exams, students' grades, personal data”, and the categories to choose from read as follows: 1) I never use electronic tools for that; 2) I do not need to do that, because the department takes care of this, 2) I protect some personal data, 3) I password protect files with personal data, 4) I comprehensively protect personal data, e.g. combining hard-to-guess passwords with encryption and frequent software updates (IDEAL desktop project, 2020, p. 18).

The results from the questionnaires point to an average level of A2 regarding digital competences found among FL teachers (Figure 2). The area of “Digital Resources”, especially in terms of digital tool selection and application in class, scored a bit higher, but, in general (Polish respondents being an outlier), there are noticeable digital knowledge gaps in most areas of digital education for FL teaching (IDEAL desktop project, 2020).

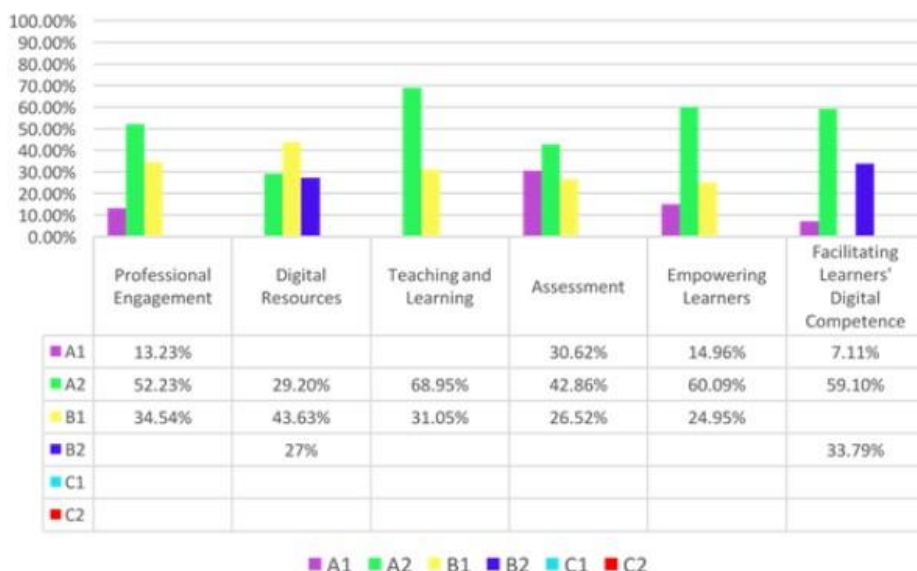


Figure 2. Competence percentages per area and level according to questionnaires in IDEAL

IDEAL proposes different strategies for each item in the areas. For example, if teachers chose item 2 (“I do not need to do that, because the department takes care of this”) in Area 2 (“Digital Resources”), competence 2.3. (“I effectively protect sensitive content”), the corresponding level (A2 in this case) is assigned, and some guidelines and recommendations are provided about the importance of the protection of sensitive content on the internet. This goal to explain and clarify the six digital competences for language learning in IDEAL is accompanied by the dissemination of 150 ICT resources, classified according to the six competences in Figure 1 and skills derived from such competences within the CEFR (2018). It is important, in view of the questionnaire results and input provided by focus and expert groups in IDEAL, to raise “awareness on the potential impact which ICT can have on teachers’ competences and the overall quality of teaching, the pedagogical benefits of the use of digital technology for language students and teachers” (IDEAL desktop project, 2020, p. 15).

The different tools are analysed and explained by IDEAL for FL teaching and learning as a type of in-service training to foster their use and development in adult education courses. The ICT resources are classified according to nine linguistic macro-skills and computer-mediated skills: Listening reception, Mediating a text, Mediating communication, Mediating concepts, Reading reception, Spoken interaction, Spoken production, Written and online interaction, and Written production. Currently, there are only 32 tools available on the IDEAL website⁹, and the search for the specific skills has not been refined yet. However, we intend to include 150 tools and their skill categorization by the end of the project. As a result, if we filter our search by the abilities of “Reading reception”, “Mediating a text”, and “Written and online interaction”, for example, we should obtain specific tools that focus on

⁹ <http://platform.ideal-project.eu/open-resources>

those three skills. Among these, only FLAX is included as a DDL tool so far, but others will be added soon (e.g., Versatext and Compleat Lexical Tutor). These three tools were used in our classrooms as DDL for authentic language interaction, vocabulary, and reading comprehension aims. Other non-DDL tools used in class from the IDEAL project are Playposit (reading and listening comprehension), KAHOOT (reading comprehension and vocabulary), Quizlet (vocabulary and mediating a text), and ACADLY (Reading comprehension, mediating a text, vocabulary).

FLAX¹⁰ is a collection of digital English texts, classified according to subject areas and topics (Witten et al., 2015). It is a website, but the app can be also downloaded to a mobile device. This kind of tool can be used in adult language learning courses at all levels, as the approach can be student-centred. For example, for intermediate levels and above, the tool can be used by the learners as a self-study and language revision tool. Because there are different corpora and resources that can be used with the tool, the type of classroom situations can vary from A2 to C1 levels.

Students at lower proficiency levels can work with easy topics in FLAX, such as beginner Earth science to identify important vocabulary and collocations (i.e., significant words that frequently accompany that key vocabulary in that context). More advanced students can use more collections and create their own exercises. In flipped classroom approaches, this tool can offer valuable preparation when used adequately at home before coming to class for related activities with vocabulary and expressions (e.g., preparing activities based on those words, writing compositions where FLAX-driven expressions must be used, etc).

Versatext¹¹ is a free on-line text concordancing tool where students can be guided to examine words in specific texts (Thomas, 2020). It can be used at intermediate and advanced levels of language learning, but not beginner, as it requires knowledge of word categories and use. Versatext can be used on any type of computer device and / or smartphones. It is user-friendly and intuitive. Teachers can explore the tool with students and instruct them to work with it on their own or in pairs. In-training service can be offered to teachers in the use of concordancing tools for different language levels. Because of its fairly user-friendly interface, EFL instructors can easily evaluate texts according to their degree of difficulty for different language levels. In this way, students at those lower levels can explore suitable texts for reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

Compleat Lexical Tutor¹² is a free website with different applications for learners and teachers to use on-line or to download for vocabulary, reading, and listening development (Cobb, 2018). In general, the tool suite allows students to examine different possibilities to work with text comprehension, vocabulary recognition, listening to text, and corpus analysis. It can be used at different levels, as there are vocabulary frequencies by which students' knowledge can be tested. Compleat can be used with any type of electronic device and / or smartphone / I-phone. Teachers can explore the tool with students and instruct them

¹⁰ <http://flax.nzdl.org/greenstone3/flax>

¹¹ <https://versatext.versatile.pub/>

¹² <https://www.lex tutor.ca>

to work with it on their own and / or by pairs / groups. For the selection of suitable texts at specific language levels, the VP (Vocabulary Profiler) utility in Compleat allows for the detection of texts according to their register, not only difficulty. This is important to determine whether certain texts can be useful for specific types of learners and contexts.

Our focus on vocabulary and reading comprehension in this study derives from the important aspect of authenticity in classroom-based DDL developments. Johns (1994) underscored the significance of learner-centred approaches when students are provided with the tools and authenticity of purpose in the tasks. This type of inductive method contrasts with more teacher-based features in reading, by which learners are given direct instructions and explanations about what to expect linguistically. In authentic reading approaches with DDL, Johns (1994) argues that it is crucial to explore “those very features of the original text (for example, the relative ‘weight’ of the elements of the message) that account for the choice” (p. 294).

Since the early 90s, many scholars have advocated the use of authenticity with corpus-driven linguistic information (e.g., Sinclair, 1991; Biber et al., 1994; Carter, 1998, among many others). More recently, other authors (cf. Allan, 2009; Hadley & Charles, 2017) have suggested that authenticity can be also achieved by means of modified / graded reader corpora. Such material is appropriate in low-proficiency FL courses. The key is to use easy-to-follow concordances with graded texts (e.g., simple stories) via friendly interfaces not demanding sophisticated searches, such as part-of-speech categorization, pattern retrieval, lexico-grammatical discrimination, and so on. One example is the integration of DDL in story-reading with audio-visual information and links to songs in Primary Education (Crosthwaite et al., 2021).

In our case study, ESP / EFL learners engage in autonomous learning tasks by combining more than one ICT resource. Jamshidifarsania et al. (2019) argue that the combination of ICT resources and reading instruction can foster motivation, reduce anxiety derived from cognitive load, and enable self-learning. Other authors (e.g., Kamil & Chou 2009; Kress, 2003, among others) describe benefits in teaching reading through computer-based approaches. In extensive reading (i.e., when learners are required to read a minimum number of texts during a semester), Ashtiani & Tahriri (2013) observe more positive learning outcomes when DDL-based input is used by EFL students. In contrast, Hadley and Charles (2017) observe less positive effects in DDL when extensive reading instruction integrates DDL in lower proficiency EFL groups. Instead, other ICT resources, such as logs and dictionaries, are perceived as more useful and affectively constructive for lower-intermediate EFL learners.

Xu et al. (2019) find that upper-intermediate level “students positively commented on the corpus-aided DDL in reading because (...) they were more engaged in reading (...) as they were given bottom-up data centering on the keyness of a text” (p. 24). These EFL learners referred to the notion of quickly grasping “the main theme and relationships of topic and sub-topics” (p. 24) by exploring keywords and their co-texts with the concordancer. In addition, they stated that “exploration of the texts is more effective because specific tasks are given” (p. 24), and that “the rich data displayed and the requirements to work out the themes and the underneath meanings help to improve critical reading ability” (p. 24). This positive affordance of concordances for reading can be confirmed by Ballance (2021):

“Concordances can provide narrow reading conditions that are not provided by natural text, and concordancing more homogeneous corpora can maximise the narrow reading effect” (p. 15). Ad-hoc corpora, created for the ESP setting where our learners interact (e.g., academic content and disciplinary texts), are especially relevant for reading comprehension assessment (cf. Curado-Fuentes, 2015).

CASE STUDY

A total of 40 students participated in this case study. 22 belonged to 1st year Business administration and Tourism studies, and 18 to 4th year in the same double degree. The mean age was 18 years old in the first case, and 20.2 in the second. There were more female than male students in the two courses (15 / 7 and 11 / 7). The subjects were Specific English I and Communicative skills in English respectively. Both subjects include a focus on the topic of Advertising and Marketing, where we developed this module for project-based work. The 1st year students must work on a product innovation project for Tourism (e.g., green resources, virtual tools, and so on) whereas the 4th year students focus on an advertising campaign to be able to clearly communicate goals, strategies, and techniques for Marketing.

Before each module, a pre-test on key vocabulary and reading comprehension was taken (see Appendix). The post-test after the sessions closely resembled the pre-test. There were 10 Multiple choice questions in the tests: 5 about collocational knowledge, 3 on word meaning, and 2 on synonyms. Also, a 5-question short reading comprehension exercise was included to find out about learners’ understanding of key ideas and issues in the text, the target audience, the media and instruments for marketing, and the reasons that make the product or service distinctive.

The sessions took four weeks (March / April 2021). DDL tools and other ICT resources were explored during this time with the main aim of vocabulary exploitation and reading comprehension. Based on our IDEAL project, Quizlet, ACADLY, Playposit, and Kahoot were selected. For the 4th year, ACADLY was not used; instead, students worked with on-line glossary-making on a Moodle platform. As regards the DDL tools, the 1st year students worked with Compleat Lexical Tutor whereas the 4th year students used FLAX and Versatext.

All the activities and tasks included Marketing / Advertising vocabulary. The focus was on form in the case of the DDL activities. For example, in the case of the Compleat Lexical Tutor activity, learners had to check key words from a small corpus of promotional texts by using the “Web concordance” utility. Some of the texts from that corpus were also examined in a different section of Compleat: Hypertext, where the text could be read and listened to at the same time via a text-to-voice plug. By choosing some key words from the texts, the concordance (MultiConc output) could be activated in the Hypertext utility so that the students could try to find out which word should go in a set of blank spaces. For example, the words “address”, “public”, and “focused” were checked in three different concordance sets (Figure 1). This development was always guided by the teacher.

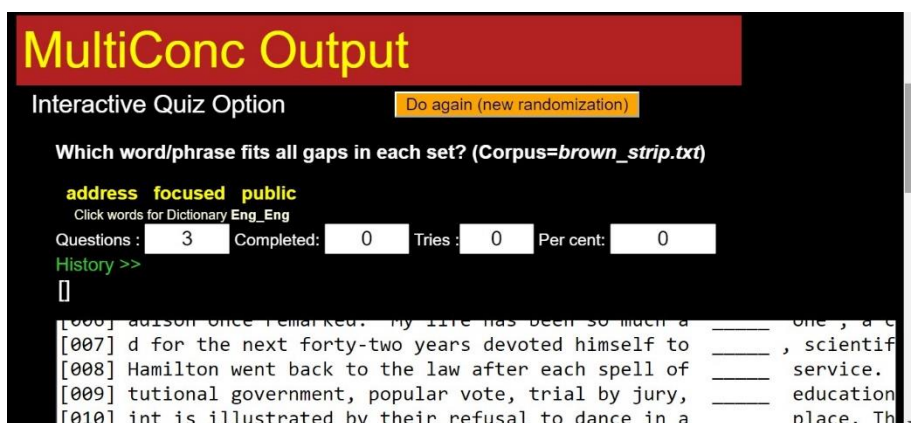


Figure 3. Examining key words from promotional text in Compleat Lexical Tutor

Due to space constraints, we cannot go into much detail about the students' use of non-DDL resources during the module. It must be said that the ACADLY tool was consistently deployed during the entire semester as a class organizing utility. Pre- and in-class assignments were accessed and carried out with the tool as a complement to other material and resources in class. For example, in dealing with the topic of innovation and creativity, 1st year students were polled about their own personal opinions. Such surveys included key words for the topic, which they indirectly exploited by answering the surveys and engaging in in-class discussions derived from their answers. They also generally scored well in ACADLY quizzes on vocabulary after the topics had been introduced and discussed. KAHOOT was also used for that purpose (reviewing topic words and collocations interactively).

Quizlet and Playposit were used for self-learning aims and pre-class / flipped classroom activities. In particular, during the sessions, 1st year students had to build their own wordlists using Quizlet. They collaborated in pairs and groups to select phrasal verbs from a list and explain their meanings in Spanish (Figure 4). The final lists were uploaded on a Moodle platform, where the teacher revised and corrected them. Playposit allowed learners to listen to a video and answer questions interactively. In this module, the video was edited by the instructor to explore word meanings and ideas in the subject of product innovation and development.

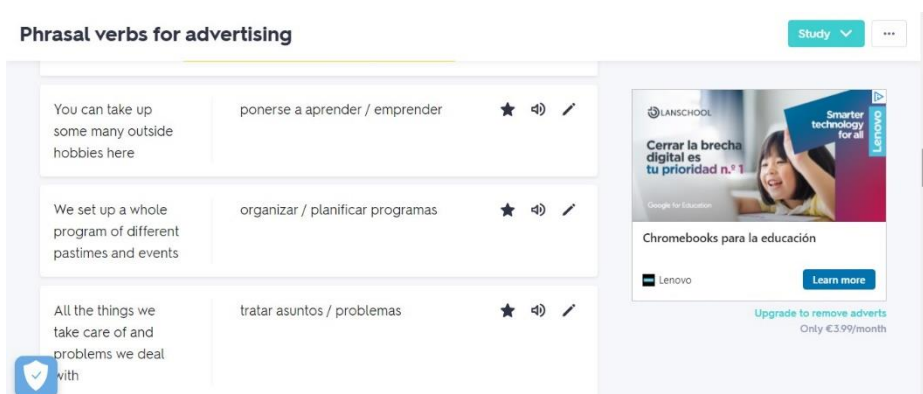


Figure 4. Students' decoding of meaning by translating key phrasal verbs in Quizlet

In the 4th year course, FLAX was used on different occasions throughout the semester. Like Compleat, it is not an easy tool to use, and so, teacher guidance was needed most of the time. However, for the activity in this module, students were already familiar enough with the application, and so, they mainly used it as a flipped classroom utility. They were asked to examine key vocabulary from Advertising and Marketing that could be important for their final project presentations. A first step was to check the frequent collocations that occur within the Social Sciences corpus of the tool with some keywords (e.g., the verb *address* + different word categories). Then, with the lexical information gathered, the students were told to create matching and gapping activities (see Figure 5) so that other students could try to solve them.

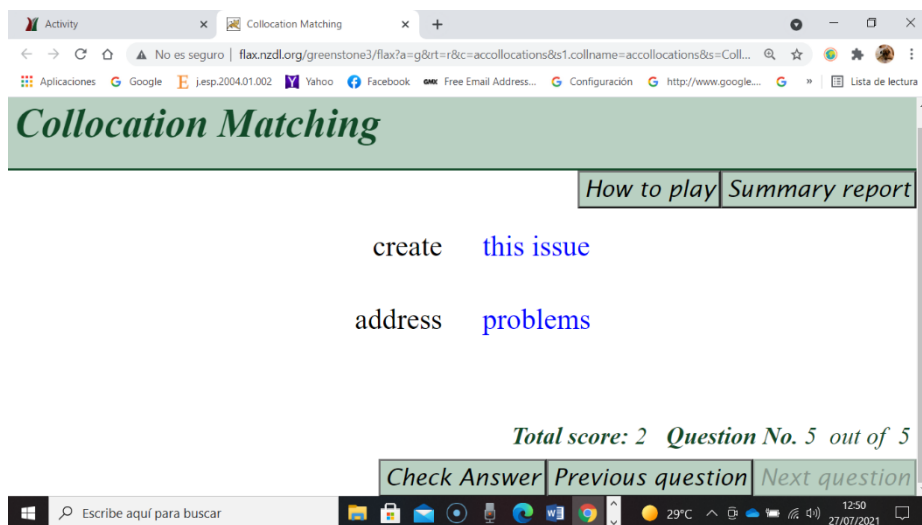


Figure 5. Exercise creation based on the collocational information retrieved in FLAX

The other DDL tool used by 4th year students was Versatext. It was only used in this module, but its deployment was generally found simpler and easier by students. Two utilities in this tool were examined in class: Wordcloud and Concordance. Students examined five different short texts on the subject of Marketing and Advertising to explore key words in context from an automatically generated word cloud according to frequency (Figure 6). Because these were short texts, the withdrawn concordance lines were few, and concrete examples could be read and analysed for a glossary-making activity on the Moodle platform. Such entries were based on the lexical information extracted from Versatext, provided and arranged according to noun, verb, and other word categories (Figure 7 is an example of an entry).



Figure 6. Word cloud generated in Versatext with specific short texts

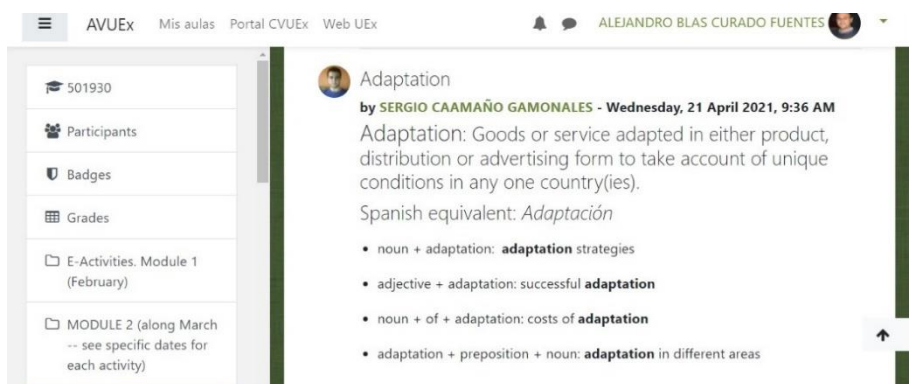


Figure 7. Example of a glossary entry based on lexical information from Versatext

As in the 1st year course module, the non-DDL resources in the 4th year class module were KAHOOT, Playposit, and Quizlet. The mechanics for their use were similar to the descriptions above. Vocabulary and conceptual revisions were enabled interactively and dynamically in KAHOOT, listening and text comprehension in Playposit, and wordlist and definition creation (done in pairs) in Quizlet.

RESULTS

Two sections can be inferred from the analysis of the data in this case study: 1) The comparison of scores from pre- and post-tests in each group. 2) The contrasted feedback from the students' answers to questionnaires and in short interviews.

For the first set of findings, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied because two dependent samples were being tested: Pre-test and post-test scores. This type of statistics works best to compare mean scores when the dependent variable is not normally distributed, and to determine if groups of scores lower than N=30 (minimum number for parametric tests) were significantly different. The 15 questions in the tests were compared for each student (vocabulary and text comprehension). For example, student 1 obtained 5 correct answers in the pre-test versus 10 correct answers in the post-test. Student 2, 4 versus 10, and

so on. Thus, according to the computation results, the 1st year students did significantly better at $p \leq 0.05 = .0001$, and with a value of $Z = 4.1069$ (> 1.96 to reject the null hypothesis). In the case of the 4th year students, they also performed significantly better in the post-tests: p -value = .0002 and $Z = 3.7236$. In their case, the significance is less high than in the first group due to their generally higher scores in the pre-tests.

The students' answers in the post-module questionnaires (see Appendix) showed their moderate satisfaction with using ICT resources. 1st year respondents liked ACADLY and KAHOOT more than others (a mean of 3.6 for ACADLY and 3.8 for KAHOOT), whereas 4th year students preferred Playposit (mean = 3.5) and KAHOOT (3.7). In the case of the DDL tools, the highest mean was achieved by Versatext (3), followed by FLAX (2.6) and Compleat (2.1). The reasons given by some students about why they liked a tool were: 1) It is fun (KAHOOT / Playposit); 2) Good for vocabulary (KAHOOT / glossary-making); 3) I can see my progress (ACADLY); 4) It is interactive (Playposit / KAHOOT). Only two reasons were given for their dislike: 1) Difficult (Compleat); 2) the interface is not very attractive (FLAX). Compleat was disliked by most students (14), followed by Quizlet (5+4), FLAX (8), Versatext (5), ACADLY (2), and Playposit (1+1). Noone disliked KAHOOT.

In a series of short semi-structured interviews as part of a final oral exam with 4th year students (see general questions in the Appendix), in addition to their general positive impressions with the tools in the module, some students put forward their interest in DDL tools for vocabulary learning. They generally liked the activities that empowered them with lexical knowledge for specific purposes. For example, five students commented on the use of a corpus of business letters (outside of this study's module) as a very useful tool to identify important expressions for their cover letters. Most people's answers pointed to the benefit in creating wordlists based on specific texts and analyzing the vocabulary. I asked some of them about Versatext in that sense, and five students said it was easy to use and good for specific vocabulary gain. In contrast, when asked about FLAX, most students did not value its benefits for language learning, and two of them regarded it as relatively useful. Instead, most people appreciated the use of glossary-making / blog applications for vocabulary. In terms of text / listening comprehension, they generally favored Playposit because of its interactive features.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall findings in this case study reveal key ideas that the DDL literature has already pointed out. Tools that imply hard DDL (e.g., inducing raw linguistic behaviour from electronic corpora in terms of keyness and frequencies) can be found more difficult and less satisfying in the learning process. In contrast, in our ESP context, the DDL tasks, integrated logically and reasonably within a project, tend to correlate with more positive considerations and results. Such is the case of the 4th year students' approach to glossary-making based on FLAX and Versatext. In the case of the 1st year learners using Compleat, it is obviously a failed focus, and different mechanics should be considered.

In any case, for vocabulary and reading progress, given the significantly higher scores in the post-tests, the DDL and non-DDL resources demonstrate their relative effectiveness. In agreement with results in our IDEAL project, Kahoot and ACADLY tend to be regarded as attractive and useful for language learning. Playposit is also valued positively, but its evaluation in IDEAL is not so positive.

In sum, two main concluding observations can be made in this study: 1) The importance of a friendly interface and simple tool management for student-centred work, and 2) The integration of ICT-mediated activities as part of a project-based learning approach. In the first case, we find that a tool like Versatext is beneficial due to its simplicity. In the second case, a sense of authenticity of purpose should be conveyed at all times. Students should be able to easily figure out the relationship between DDL work and the type of communicative purpose for which DDL can be useful (e.g., for writing cover letters). ESP learners can appreciate corpus-driven language if the tasks of exploring and discovering significant expressions are done to solve project-related linguistic problems.

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Appendix

Access to the questions in the tests, questionnaires, and interviews:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Wjr2Gwo-08SKTmaubism4NSkv-nFHMD_/view?usp=sharing

L'ébauche de la TA pré-ALPAC aux États-Unis et en France

ANDREEA GHIȚA¹³

Résumé : Cet article se propose de décrire les premiers essais en traduction automatique (TA) aux États-Unis et en France ainsi que de toucher aux rapports qui se sont établis entre eux et la linguistique. Plus spécifiquement, nous exposerons les tentatives de mécanisation avant l'ALPAC (1966), un rapport qui marque la fin de la TA de première génération. En effet, cette TA qui débute avec le mémorandum de Warren Weaver (1949) s'appuie essentiellement sur une traduction directe au sein de laquelle l'équivalent du mot de la langue de départ est recherché dans la langue cible. C'est la raison pour laquelle de nombreuses théories linguistiques axées sur le mot ont proliféré. Un exemple de machine de traduction directe, issue des États-Unis est le GAT - *Georgetown Automatic Translation* qui ne se base sur aucune théorie linguistique ou de traduction. Elle traduit du russe en anglais et est implémentée dans le cadre de l'EURATOM (La Communauté européenne de l'énergie atomique) en 1946. En France, l'amorçage de la TA met un peu plus du temps à se concrétiser, imputable en partie à Couffignal qui n'a pas réussi à construire un ordinateur. Cela va pousser le CNRS à acheter la machine anglaise Eliott 402, événement qui sera suivi par la fondation de l'ATALA (1959), association menant des études sur la traduction automatique et la linguistique appliquée. Finalement, le GETA (Groupe d'Études sur la Traduction Automatique) de Grenoble va faire la première démonstration publique en TA en 1967 sous la tutelle de B. Vauquois.

Mots clé : *Weaver, ALPAC, traduction directe, théorie linguistique, ATALA*

INTRODUCTION

La traduction automatique neuronale, une technologie qui domine à présent le marché des traductions, jouit déjà de presque 10 ans d'histoire. Conçue dans le but de réduire au maximum, voire d'éliminer l'intervention du traducteur humain dans le processus de post-édition, elle n'est pas encore à même de produire un texte cible hautement qualitatif sans agir de concert avec le traducteur humain. C'est la conclusion à laquelle arrive Schumacher (2020) après son étude sur quelques traductions effectuées à travers DeepL¹⁴ de l'anglais au français. Elle identifie quelques-unes des lacunes qu'il faut encore combler en matière de qualité de la traduction et conseille les traducteurs à « se distancier des propositions de la machine et enfin déjouer l'illusion de fluidité que peut produire la TA neuronale » Schumacher (2020, p. 85).

En 2017, Google Translate, un autre géant du marché des traductions renonce à la traduction statistique et décide de parier sur ce mécanisme fondé sur le mimétisme des

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¹⁴ DeepL - moteur de TA neuronale qui peut être consulté à l'adresse <https://www.deepl.com/translator>

réseaux neuronaux humains. Ce changement de paradigme dans le domaine ne fait que démontrer la validité ou l'actualité des prévisions et suggestions de Weaver qui constituent, en définitive, les fondements de toutes les avancées technologiques qui se sont ensuivies à partir de ce moment-là. Il est donc essentiel de rappeler les débuts de la TA sur le continent américain et surtout les propositions de Weaver qui d'une certaine manière semblent jalonner les étapes d'évolution de la TA.

Il est tout autant indispensable de faire connaître les rapports qui se sont établis entre la linguistique et la TA débutante. Pour cette raison, nous nous attacherons à décrire deux théories majeures de l'époque concernant la phrase qui se distinguaient grâce à leur potentiel de formalisation. Cette propriété les rendait compatibles avec une éventuelle intégration dans les premiers systèmes de traduction. D'ailleurs, nous allons montrer de quelle manière l'apparition de la TA de première génération est responsable de l'avènement de toute une gamme de théories axées sur le mot, notamment en France.

Finalement, nous allons brièvement passer en revue les premières initiatives entamées par la France en matière de TA qui ne sont pas du tout à négliger. En fait, la France est un pays qui connaîtra le succès dans ce secteur en raison du fait qu'elle réussira à éviter les retombées du fameux rapport ALPAC qui condamne la quasi-totalité de projets de TA à une disparition temporaire.

DE WEAVER À L'ALPAC

Selon l'avis de Hutchins, cité par Merten (2001, p. 169), le mémorandum de Warren Weaver de 1949 marquerait le début de l'itinéraire mouvementé parcouru par la traduction automatique.

Cependant, il faut remonter jusqu'en 1933 pour rappeler l'apport indéniable de Petr Petrovich Troyanskii dans l'histoire de la TA. Cette année-là, il a conçu une machine qui servait non seulement de dictionnaire, mais qui faisait aussi du traitement syntaxique. Ce travail pionnier est décrit par Hutchins (1995, p. 434) qui dit que la traduction mécanique de Troyanskii se faisait en trois étapes. Premièrement, un éditeur s'occupait de *l'analyse logique* des mots dans leurs formes de base et leurs fonctions syntaxiques. Ensuite, la machine devait transformer ce genre de séquences en séquences équivalentes dans la langue cible et enfin, un autre éditeur devait les convertir dans la langue cible, la seule langue qui lui était connue.

Quant au mémorandum de 1949, son auteur, Warren Weaver soutient que son apparition et les propositions qu'il y a incluses sur la traduction automatique visent à servir de stimulant pour quelqu'un qui aurait les techniques, les connaissances et l'imagination de les mettre en pratique. De la section qui renferme les remarques préliminaires du mémorandum, on retient l'idée que le nombre de langues est en croissance, ce qui pose un défi aux échanges culturels. À cet égard, Weaver suggère fortement que les ordinateurs pourraient mettre fin aux obstacles linguistiques qui en découlent grâce à leur capacité, vitesse et flexibilité logique. Il ajoute, par ailleurs, que ces qualités propres aux ordinateurs seraient une aide précieuse dans le processus d'obtention des traductions.

Dans une lettre que W. Weaver adresse en 1947 au professeur Norbert Wiener de MIT, il s'interroge sur le problème de la traduction qui devient difficile à gérer à cause de son volume élevé au sein de l'UNESCO. Il avoue avoir été informé sur cet aspect par Julian

Huxley, le premier directeur de l'organisation mondiale de la paix. Par la suite, Weaver juge opportun et surtout utile d'inventer un ordinateur qui accomplirait des tâches de traduction. Cependant, il recommande la traduction des textes exclusivement scientifiques pour éviter, de la sorte, les erreurs de traduction occasionnées par les ambiguïtés sémantiques. Mais, la réponse de Wiener est décourageante parce que selon l'experte en mathématiques et philosophie de MIT, la mécanisation du langage était à ce moment-là *prématurée*.

Par contre, Andrew Booth, professeur à l'Université de Londres à qui l'on doit le premier système de traitement automatique du langage, partage l'opinion favorable de Weaver quant à la possibilité d'aboutir à des traductions mécaniques. En fait, avant la visite de Weaver en 1948, Booth avait déjà mécanisé un dictionnaire et essayé de produire des traductions mot-à-mot.

En dépit du scepticisme auquel Weaver se heurte, il fait quelques propositions par rapport à la traduction et aux manières de faire face aux difficultés qu'un système de traduction automatique pourrait rencontrer. Premièrement, il propose d'examiner le *cotexte* d'un mot afin d'en choisir le sens approprié. Pour démontrer cela, il livre l'exemple de l'adjectif anglais *fast* et de ses deux sens (*i.e. rapid vs. motionless*). Ensuite, il propose de recourir au processus de cryptographie pour faire de la traduction. En 1947, Weaver (cité dans Koehn, 2010, p. 15) se prononce sur la nécessité d'approfondir le dedans du chiffrement à cette fin. Pour lui, un article en russe n'est rien d'autre qu'article en anglais codé avec des symboles étranges qu'il faut décoder.

Il est possible qu'il ait été influencé dans ce sens par la rencontre avec Claude Elwood Shannon, surnommé *le père fondateur de la théorie de l'information* (Ioan, 2009, p. 263). Le travail de Shannon pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale était parmi d'autres, celui de développer des systèmes cryptographiques. En fait, leur rencontre mène à l'élaboration d'un article commun, à savoir « La théorie mathématique de la communication ». Leur théorie s'appelle « le modèle de communication Weaver-Shannon » (1949), parce qu'elle expose les mécanismes entraînés par la communication et ses participants à la fois.

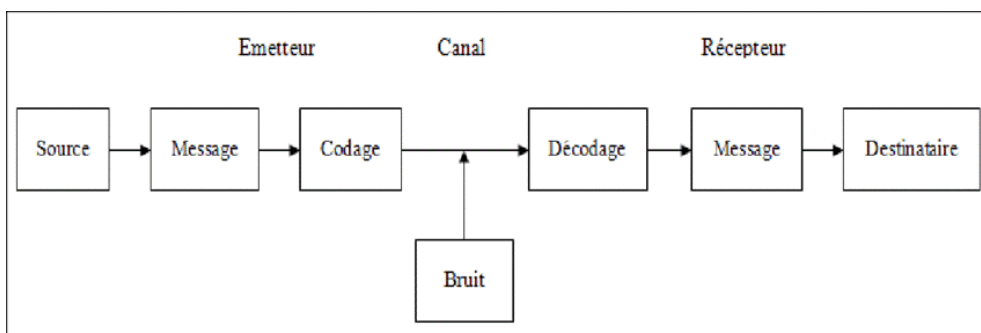


Figure 1. Le modèle de communication Weaver-Shannon (1949) Bertachinni (2013, p. 96)

La troisième proposition de Weaver dans son mémorandum est de puiser dans la profondeur des langues pour découvrir le langage universel, commun à toutes les langues ; trouver la structure logique des langues qui sera ensuite soumise au processus de mécanisation en vue de la traduction.

À part ces trois propositions que nous avons énumérées précédemment, Weaver prône le travail de Warren Mc Culloch et Walter Pitts de 1943 sur un système de réseaux neuronaux de première génération. En se basant sur leur théorème, Weaver arrive à la conclusion qu'une traduction pourrait être abordée comme un problème de logique formelle. Cela signifie que la traduction faite par l'ordinateur ne serait rien d'autre qu'une déduction des conclusions dans la langue cible partant d'un nombre fini des prémisses dans la langue source.

Suite au mémorandum de Weaver, un intérêt accru de la part des universités américaines pour la TA se fait ressentir. En 1951, à MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Bar-Hillel est chargé de la recherche sur la traduction automatique. L'année qui suit, MIT accueille la première conférence en traduction automatique, événement à propos duquel Hutchins et Somers (1992, p. 6) notent qu'un échantillon soigneusement sélectionné de 49 phrases russes a été traduit en anglais, en utilisant un vocabulaire très restreint de 250 mots et seulement six règles de grammaire. C'est lors de cette conférence que Bar-Hillel souligne l'importance de l'analyse syntaxique pour la traduction automatique. Une explication de ce fait est que ce philosophe-logicien est le créateur de la grammaire catégorielle, un formalisme qu'il utilise dans le traitement automatique du langage.

Pendant la même période, à l'Université de Georgetown, le français Léon Dostert devient le directeur du département de linguistique et met les bases d'un groupe de recherche dans le domaine de la traduction automatique. En 1954, de la collaboration de son institut avec IBM naît la première démonstration publique d'une machine de traduction (Hutchins, 1986, p. 37). Le communiqué de presse d'IBM (https://www.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/701/701_translator.html) se lisait comme suit :

New York, 7 janvier Le russe a été traduit en anglais par un « cerveau » électronique aujourd'hui pour la première fois. De brèves phrases sur la politique, le droit, les mathématiques, la chimie, la métallurgie, les communications et les affaires militaires ont été soumises en russe par des linguistes de l'Institut de langues et de linguistique de l'Université de Georgetown au célèbre ordinateur 701 de l'International Business Machines Corporation. Et l'ordinateur géant, en quelques secondes, a transformé les phrases en anglais facilement lisibles. [...] Plus de soixante phrases russes ont été données au « cerveau » en tout. Toutes ont été traduites avec aisance dans une démonstration réalisée conjointement par Georgetown et IBM dans le cadre d'une phase de la recherche d'élite d'IBM en calcul. Une poignée d'hommes s'était engagée individuellement dans des recherches dans diverses institutions pendant près d'une décennie pour faire en sorte qu'une machine convertisse clairement le sens des mots d'une langue à une autre [...]. (Notre traduction)

En outre, le premier journal de traduction automatique, *Mechanical translation* est lancé dans la même année, en 1954, sous le patronage de Victor Yngve. Il a non seulement le mérite d'avoir construit (de 1957 à 1965) le premier langage de programmation (i.e. COMIT – langage qui traite les chaînes de caractères), mais aussi un des premiers parseurs syntaxiques¹⁵ qui seront utilisés sur les machines de traduction. Pratiquement, il réussit à traduire en langage informatique les données linguistiques et les règles grammaticales qui les gouvernent. Dans son article de 1958 qui parle de ce programme, Yngve tient toutefois

¹⁵ Selon Jean-François Perrot (2010), l'analyseur syntaxique ou parseur syntaxique est un programme informatique qui réalise l'analyse syntaxique d'un texte tandis qu'un lecteur analyse les structures lexicales simples (les lexèmes) : « Un parseur reconnaît les structures de phrases complexes (auto-enchâssées). À partir du flot de lexèmes produit par le lecteur elle construit l'arbre syntaxique avec changement de dimension : le flot de lexèmes est unidimensionnel, l'arbre construit est une structure à deux dimensions obtenues par décodage. » (source : <https://pages.lip6.fr/Jean-Francois.Perrot/inlco/Automates/Cours2-9.html>)

à préciser qu'il est difficile de faire collaborer les informaticiens et les linguistes dans le but d'obtenir une traduction mécanisée.

COMIT vient à l'aide des linguistes parce que c'est un programme qu'ils peuvent aisément utiliser afin d'enregistrer leurs résultats linguistiques qui seront ensuite traités par les informaticiens. De cette façon, ils ont la chance de comprendre un peu le mécanisme de fonctionnement d'un ordinateur dans l'exécution de la tâche de traduction automatique. Yngve se sert du schéma suivant afin d'illustrer le fonctionnement de COMIT :

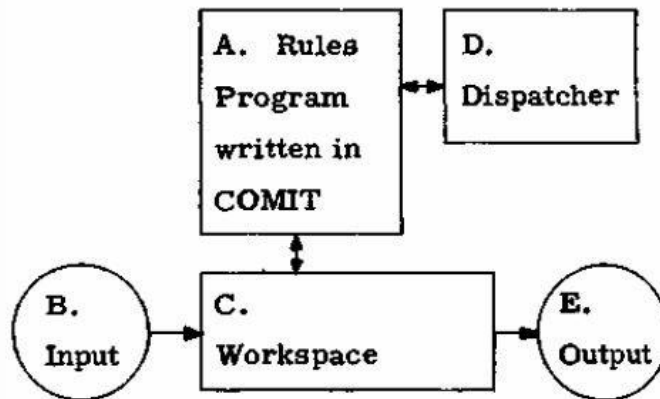


Figure 2. *Le fonctionnement de COMIT* (Yngve 1958, p. 26)

Comme l'on peut observer dans le schéma ci-dessus, le programme COMIT utilise des règles ayant une notation particulière. L'ordinateur exécute ensuite les règles (A) successivement dans un ordre préétabli lorsque le texte à traduire (B – *input*) est introduit dans l'ordinateur afin de générer la traduction (E-*output*). Et C. *Workspace* est l'étape de transformation du langage linguistique dans un langage informatique au moyen des règles mentionnées.

Malgré ces avancées dans le domaine de la TA, Bar-Hillel conclut dans son rapport de 1960 (i.e. *The present status of automatic translation of languages*) que seulement le traducteur humain pourrait résoudre les ambiguïtés existantes dans les textes. Il s'est déclaré résolument sceptique quant à la possibilité de bénéficier dans le futur d'une traduction de haute qualité entièrement automatique (FAHQT – *fully automatic high quality translation*). Il était peu réaliste que les machines puissent déchiffrer la sémantique et la syntaxe de la langue de la même manière que le cerveau humain.

Selon Hutchins et Somers (1992, p. 148) on peut opposer à la « Traduction entièrement automatique de haute qualité » ou FAHQT comme elle a été baptisée par Bar-Hillel, d'autres notions comme HAMT (Traduction machine assistée par l'humain), MAHT (Traduction humaine assistée par ordinateur) et HT (Traduction humaine). Il est clair que cette différenciation veut établir le degré d'implication humaine dans le processus de traduction. Sur le schéma suivant, les dénominations attachées aux types de traduction sont indiquées en fonction de deux critères, notamment la mécanisation et la participation humaine. Il est facile à observer aussi que ces critères se trouvent à des pôles opposés :

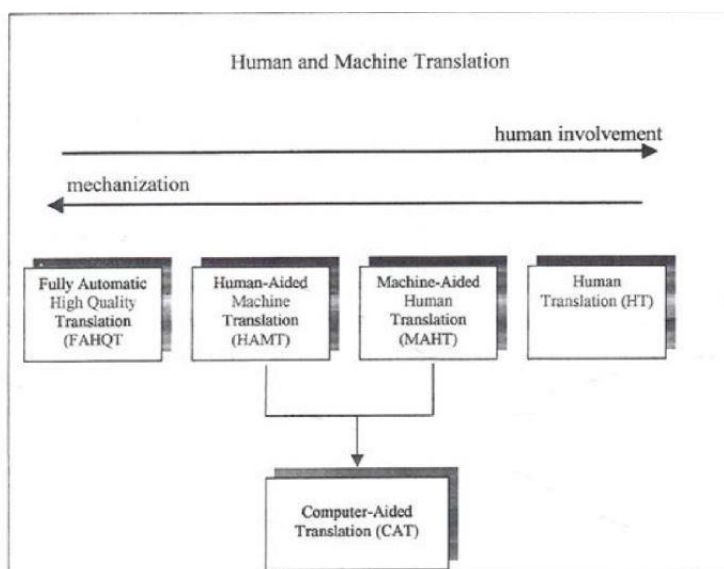


Figure 3. Traduction automatique vs traduction humaine (Hutchins et Somers 1992, p. 148)

Il s'impose également que le système sémantique incorporé dans la machine soit de nature logique ou formelle. Toutefois, il est difficile de bâtir un système si performant et surtout de l'appliquer au langage naturel. Afin de démontrer cette hypothèse, Bar-Hillel fournit l'exemple du mot *pen* dans la phrase suivante :

EN : Little John was looking for his toy box. Finally he found it. The box was in the pen. John was very happy.

FR : Le petit John cherche sa boîte à jouets. Il finit par la trouver. La boîte était dans le parc. John est très heureux.

Le constat de Bar-Hillel (1960) est que le traducteur humain est le seul qui possède des connaissances du monde réel ou *real world knowledge* pour qu'il puisse traduire *pen* avec *parc à bébé* et non par *plume*. La traduction faite par l'ordinateur est défailante dans ce cas-ci et afin qu'elle choisisse le sens adéquat, il lui faut du savoir extralinguistique. C'est seulement l'humain qui peut déduire le sens correct du *pen* dans cette phrase parce que pour une fois, ses connaissances sur les dimensions du *pen* et *box* l'aident à résoudre cette ambiguïté sémantique. Il s'ensuit que même pas un contexte élargi ne serait à même de résoudre cette ambiguïté dont la solution réside au-delà du texte. C'est exactement ce type de difficulté que l'Intelligence Artificielle veut surmonter et un exemple de tentative dans cette direction-ci est la sémantique lexicale de Yorick Wilks.

À quatre ans distance du rapport de Bar-Hillel qui se montre sceptique quant à la qualité d'une traduction automatique, *The Automatic Language Processing Advisory Committee - ALPAC* sera mis en place (1964) par le gouvernement américain. Même si son but était seulement d'évaluer le besoin de traductions des documents russes en anglais, ses conclusions vont servir de référence pour tous les projets de TA déroulés dans de divers centres de recherche au niveau global. Le comité sera présidé par John Pierce et parmi ses membres, on peut citer le psychologue John Carroll et son collègue Anthony Oettinger, les deux de l'Université de Harvard, Eric Hamp de l'Université de Chicago, le chercheur en intelligence artificielle Alan Perlis de l'institut de Technologie Carnegie et David Hays qui

faisait partie de RAND Corporation. L'objectif de ce comité était d'évaluer les perspectives de réussite de la traduction automatique.

En voulant découvrir si les traductions mécaniques russo-anglaises sont rapides, de qualité et faites à bas prix, le comité se sert des témoignages de la part des spécialistes. Suite à leurs retours, le comité tranche sur cette question en 1966, présentant les arguments suivants :

- Les traductions réalisées par la machine prennent plus de temps que celles faites par les traducteurs humains ; 65 jours pour le traducteur humain versus 109 jours pour la traduction automatique qui avait besoin de post-édition ;
- Le coût des traductions était plus élevé à cause de la post-correction obligatoire ;
- Les traductions automatiques étaient plus erronées que celles faites par les humains selon l'étude effectuée par Carroll.

Dans le même rapport, Victor Yngve estime que la traduction automatique ne sert à rien sans post-édition. Il ajoute aussi que la post-édition du processus global est lente et probablement non rentable. C'est pourquoi, pour ALPAC, les systèmes de traduction assistés par les humains sont une meilleure option que la traduction entièrement mécanique. Dans l'annexe 14 du rapport, on trouve l'opinion de 22 traducteurs sur la traduction d'un extrait d'un livre de cybernétique russe. Seulement 8 d'entre eux affirment que la traduction mécanique leur est utile, surtout pour les termes techniques. Huit autres trouvent que la correction que ce type de traduction exige est ennuyeuse et frustrante.

Les 34 pages du rapport incitent à croire que l'investissement de la part des gouvernements dans la TA était une perte d'argent à cause des progrès peu significatifs. Malheureusement, ces conclusions ont conduit à une période de manque d'enthousiasme de la part des chercheurs travaillant dans ce domaine. Selon les propos de Hrehovcik (2006, p. 63), le rapport a recommandé que la plupart des recherches sur la TA soient arrêtées immédiatement du fait de son incapacité à produire de la traduction utile.

Néanmoins, le côté positif de la traduction automatique qu'il faut absolument noter est l'influence que ces recherches ont eue sur le développement de la linguistique (Hutchins, 1996) anglaise et française. Cet aspect, sur lequel nous allons faire quelques précisions dans la section suivante de notre article, est inclus même dans le rapport ALPAC.

TA DE 1^{ÈRE} GÉNÉRATION ET LA LINGUISTIQUE

Les premiers modèles de TA sont ceux de « traduction directe » ou de « première génération » (Vauquois, 1975). Ils ont été utilisés largement jusqu'à la fin des années 60 quand on a vu l'avènement des traductions indirectes ou de deuxième génération.

Un exemple de machine de traduction de première génération est le GAT-*Georgetown Automatic Translation* qui ne se base sur aucune théorie linguistique ou de traduction. Elle traduit du russe en anglais et est implémentée au sein de l'EURATOM (La Communauté européenne de l'énergie atomique) en 1946. Vu le contexte politique de l'époque, il est tout à fait naturel que la plupart des systèmes de traduction directe aient comme cible la traduction des textes du russe en anglais. Les États-Unis craignaient les avancées technologiques et scientifiques de l'Union Soviétique (Hutchins, 1982, p. 21).

Dans le cadre d'une traduction directe, l'équivalent du mot de la langue de départ est recherché dans la langue cible. Voici la définition de Villard à propos de *la traduction directe* :

L'analyse syntaxique ne dépasse pas la reconnaissance automatique des parties du discours des mots ainsi que des fonctions syntaxiques des syntagmes. Cette 'analyse syntaxique' ne s'appuie sur aucune théorie syntaxique et n'atteint en aucun cas à la représentation de structures syntaxiques ; elle en reste, au mieux, à déterminer en quelque sorte la syntaxe des constituants immédiats des syntagmes. Dans ce système, il n'y a pas de séparation entre l'analyse de la langue source et la génération de la langue cible: les deux phases sont traitées par un seul module. (Villard, 1989, p. 58)

En complément de la définition extraite du travail de Villard, nous introduisons aussi le schéma d'Abdulsalami et Akinsanya, illustrant les étapes de ce procédé de traduction :

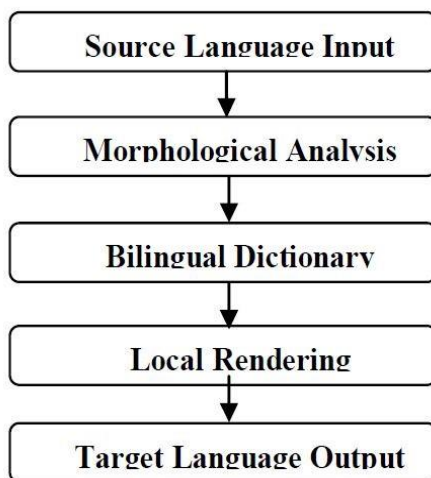


Figure 4. Les étapes de la traduction automatique par approche directe (Abdulsalami et Akinsanya 2017, p. 199)

L'analyse syntaxique était assez restreinte et son rôle était de distinguer entre les différentes unités linguistiques (nom, verbe, adjectif, adverbe, etc.) pour pouvoir traiter les homographes. De l'autre part, l'analyse sémantique était minimale, se limitant à l'usage des traits sémantiques comme humain ou non humain, concret ou abstrait afin de contribuer davantage à la désambiguïsation.

Par la suite, il est évident pourquoi l'influence de la linguistique dans les débuts de la TA se traduit dans la prolifération des théories liées au mot. À cet égard, les linguistes américains ne peuvent s'appuyer que sur la notion de morphème, créée par Bloomfield (1933). À l'inverse, dans les années 50-60 en France de multiples recherches de la part des linguistes se concentrent sur le mot, exactement quand la mécanisation du langage commence à se produire. Dans un effort de définir l'unité linguistique de base qui devrait être utilisée dans les langages de programmation, on développe des théories centrées sur le mot. De cette façon, les notions de *morphème*, *lexème*, *monème*, *lexie*, *unité lexicale* vont éclore en liaison avec le mot, ce qui signifie que la lexicologie prend de l'essor.

De plus, le colloque de Strasbourg, intitulé *Lexicologie et lexicographie françaises et romanes* (1957) agit comme moteur de la création du Trésor de La Langue Française¹⁶. Deux ans après la naissance du TLF, le colloque de 1962 organisé par l'Association pour l'étude et le développement de la traduction automatique et de la linguistique appliquée (ATALA – prend forme en 1959) est une autre preuve de l'intérêt porté au concept de *mot* dans le contexte de la traduction automatique et traitement du langage naturel.

La sémantique combinatoire bénéficie également des réflexions des linguistes structuralistes français impliqués dans les travaux de TA comme A.J. Greimas et B. Pottier. Ces fondateurs de la revue *Langages* (1966) à l'instar de Bar-Hillel (1955) se sont penchés sur la façon dont on peut traiter automatiquement les mots composés ainsi que les expressions idiomatiques. En effet, à cause du caractère idiomatique de la langue, la traduction des mots composés s'avère être un défi majeur pour la TA comme Greimas, cité dans Léon (2001, p. 97) l'avait signalé :

En ce qui concerne les idiotismes bilingues, on peut avoir deux positions extrêmes : i) la langue, considérée comme la structure des structures, résultat d'une évolution originale et unique, est idiomatique en tant que telle ; ii) un panchronisme à outrance qui, comme l'a formulé Weaver sous forme de paradoxe, le chinois n'est pas du chinois, mais de l'anglais codé en chinois. Dans le premier cas, la comparaison entre deux langues serait impossible. Dans le second cas, rien ou presque rien ne serait idiomatique, et la comparaison consisterait dans l'établissement de listes bilingues de structures et de syntagmes parallèles et équivalents. (Greimas, 1960, p. 41)

Pottier, de son côté, s'interrogeait sur la manière dans laquelle la machine serait à même de traduire des groupes de mots variant en nombre de signes graphiques d'une langue à l'autre. Il a été amené à nommer dans une première étape et puis à proposer des moyens de classer ces suites de mots qui forment une unité et dont la signification est globale et pas du genre componentiel (Pottier, 1962a, 1962b). Ainsi, on appelle *lexie simple* le terme *bateau* tandis que *bateau-mouche* est une *lexie composée* caractérisée par la non-séparabilité, non-qualification et non-quantification.

Grosso modo, en réfléchissant au problème du transfert du sens dans le cadre de la TA (1962c) Pottier recommande d'identifier les *lexies* en leur attribuant des *sèmes* dans son célèbre exemple avec la chaise, le fauteuil, etc. pour qu'on puisse enlever leur ambiguïté et pallier la polysémie. Pour ce faire, il envisage d'établir aussi le degré de figement propre à chaque *lexie composée*, ce qui a été et reste une mission très difficile comportant d'innombrables variables.

¹⁶ Le colloque de Strasbourg voulait que le Trésor de la Langue française soit un inventaire *objectif et impartial* du vocabulaire français. Quand même, ce dictionnaire a dépassé toute attente, devenant le dictionnaire le plus complet de la langue française du XIX^{ème} et XX^{ème} siècle. À part les données lexicologiques et sémantiques, il inclut une multitude d'autres données par rapport à un lemme (étymologiques, stylistiques, syntaxiques, etc.) Quant au travail acharné qui a mené à sa publication en 16 volumes (1971 - 1994) et l'apparition en 2002 de sa version en-ligne (TLFi), nous disposons des informations ci-dessus : « Pur produit nancéien, ce dictionnaire est en effet le fruit d'une grande aventure lexicographique qui, sous les directions successives du Recteur Imbs et du Professeur Quémada, regroupa à Nancy plus de cent collaborateurs durant 30 années au sein du Centre de Recherche pour un Trésor de la Langue Française (CRTLF), puis de l'Institut National de la Langue Française (INaLF) dont le laboratoire ATILF2 se veut être aujourd'hui le digne successeur. » Pierrel (2006, p. 25)

Quant aux théories linguistiques de la phrase existant déjà dans la période de début de la TA et ayant davantage un potentiel de formalisation, on peut mentionner la grammaire des dépendances de Tesnière (1959) et la grammaire générative de Chomsky (1965). Pourtant, ces deux théories syntaxiques ne seront testées que peu après, plus précisément par les systèmes de traduction indirecte.

En ce qui concerne le modèle grammatical de Chomsky, il se caractérise par une décomposition de la phrase en constituants immédiats ou syntagmes auxquels on attribue des fonctions grammaticales. Pour une meilleure lisibilité des constituants, ils peuvent être organisés sous la forme d'un *arbre syntagmatique*¹⁷.

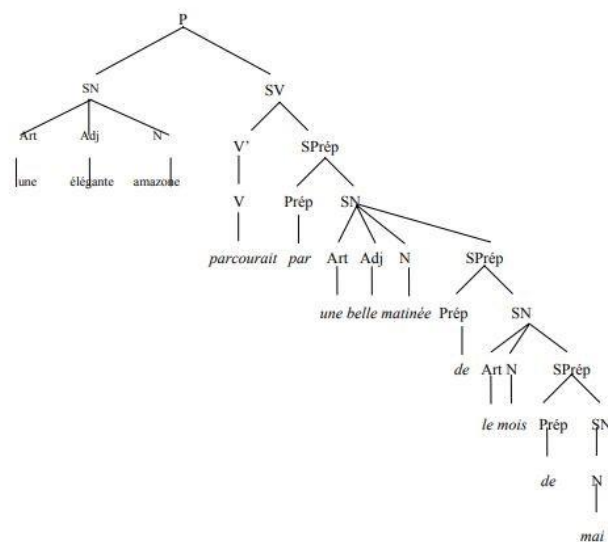


Figure 5. *Arbre syntagmatique* (Schwischay 2002)

Lucien Tesnière, quant à lui, envisage de représenter la phrase à travers une grammaire des structures de dépendance au lieu des structures syntagmatiques. En fait, la dépendance est « une connexion structurale qui s'établit entre deux mots, plus généralement, entre deux positions syntaxiques, de sorte que les traits syntaxiques et sémantiques de l'un restreignent ses possibilités de cooccurrence avec l'autre » (Bern Schwischay, 2002). Il est clair que Tesnière donne une position centrale à la sémantique et au lexique aussi, vu qu'il défend la thèse suivante : « Tout mot qui fait partie d'une phrase cesse par lui-même d'être isolé comme dans le dictionnaire. Entre lui et ses voisins, l'esprit aperçoit des connexions, dont l'ensemble forme la charpente de la phrase » (Tesnière, 1959)

Les propos de Tesnière ci-dessus fonctionnent comme justification du fait que l'analyse dépendancielle attribue des fonctions grammaticales aux mots qui sont les têtes des syntagmes. Cette approche n'est pas compatible avec celle du cadre théorique de

¹⁷ La figure est extraite de l'article *Deux modèles de description syntaxique* de Bern Schwischay (2002), disponible sur le site de l'Université de Osnabrück à l'adresse suivante : <https://www.home.uni-osnabrueck.de/bschwisc/archives/deuxmodeles.pdf>

Bern Schwischay procède à un examen approfondi de la grammaire de dépendances et de la grammaire syntagmatique, relevant leurs similarités, leurs différences ainsi que leurs lacunes.

Chomsky qui assigne une fonction grammaticale au syntagme tout entier. La grammaire de Tesnière offre également la possibilité de convertir la phrase dans un diagramme à branches, à savoir dans un *stemma*.

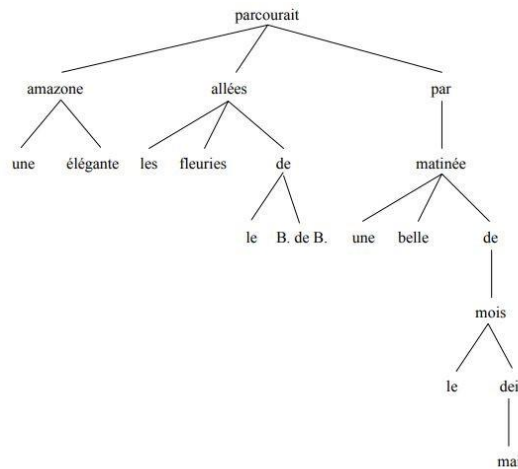


Figure 7. *Le stemma* (Schwischay 2002)

Les formes graphiques qui ressortent des deux modèles de grammaire sont particulièrement importantes parce qu'elles serviront de source pour la construction des structures arborescentes syntaxiques que les machines de traduction exploiteront, à leur tour, dans le processus de formalisation logique du texte. Koehn (2010, p. 13) reconnaît la justesse de ce raisonnement en affirmant que puisque les théories linguistiques modernes du langage utilisent des arborescences pour représenter les phrases, il est tout à fait logique que l'on pense à des modèles de traduction employant également des arbres.

TA DE I^{ÈRE} GÉNÉRATION EN FRANCE

L'amorçage de la traduction automatique arrive en France en 1959-1960, phase marquée par l'ouverture de trois centres de référence en la matière. Pour être plus précis, on parle du CETAP, « Centre d'études pour la traduction automatique de Paris », du CETAG, « Centre d'études pour la traduction automatique de Grenoble » et d'un troisième centre établi à Nancy et géré par Pottier et Bourquin.

Contrairement à l'intérêt des Américains pour la TA, on observe que celui des Français met du temps à se concrétiser. En dépit d'un retard de quelques années quant aux avancées observées ailleurs, les Français vont pourtant innover dans ce domaine. Nous avons déjà montré dans la section précédente que les recherches dans le domaine de la TA sont celles qui ont ouvert la voie à un nombre significatif des théories linguistiques en France.

Aimé Sestier, le dirigeant de CETAP, fonctionnant sous la direction de l'IBP (Institut Blaise Pascal) fondé en 1946 sera le premier à prendre en considération l'emploi d'une machine de calcul pour la traduction. Il suggère même de changer le nom du Centre d'études pour la traduction automatique (CETA regroupe le CETAP et CETAG) en *Centre d'étude et d'exécution de traductions automatiques* étant convaincu de l'utilité de la traduction automatique, aspect qu'il expose dans son article de 1959.

Pour construire un ordinateur pour la traduction, des fonds étaient bien évidemment nécessaires. À cause de l'insuccès dans le fait de trouver des partenaires et d'investissement, le projet s'est relevé impossible à mettre en œuvre. Vu ce manque d'implication et d'octroi de fonds, le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique en France (1939) décide de prendre initiative et finance la création d'un ordinateur. Cependant, L. Couffignal, celui à qui l'on avait assigné cette tâche, échouera dans ses efforts de mener à bien ce projet. Quand même, il faut se rappeler la principale réalisation de Couffignal qui a été celle d'organiser la conférence intitulée *Les machines à calculer et la pensée humaine*.

L'échec de Couffignal et de sa *pilot-machine* a poussé le CNRS à financer l'achat de la machine anglaise Eliott 402 en 1955 (Mounier- Kuhn, 1989, p. 258). Ce premier pas dans l'équipement des centres de recherches se poursuivra avec l'achat d'autres machines électroniques (ex. : IBM 704, CDC 3600, etc.) par le nouveau directeur du CNRS, Prof. René de Possel. Cette première étape importante qui correspond à l'approvisionnement du matériel est suivie par la rencontre de Lejeune et Delavenay de 1957, les deux pionniers de la TA en France.

Comme Jacqueline Léon nous l'indique (2002, pp. 7-18) suite à leur rencontre, deux réunions vont avoir lieu en mars 1958 sur la machine à traduire et « un groupe international d'études sur la traduction automatique » sera fondé. Delavenay et son rôle dans le développement de la TA deviendront plus importants parce qu'il fondera l'ATALA (1959), association dont le but est de faire des études sur la traduction automatique et la linguistique appliquée. Parmi les membres de l'ATALA, on dénombre les linguistes A. Martinet, B. Pottier et G. Mounin et nous avons déjà discuté les théories qu'ils ont mises en place par rapport à la traduction automatique.

Après la fondation de l'ATALA, le CNRS exige que les premières expériences de traduction automatique soient entamées dans les plus brefs délais au sein du CETAP et CETAG pour continuer d'y investir. En raison de ces pressions, A. Sestier, le chef de CETAP, quitte sa position en 1962, ce qui va mettre fin à la courte histoire de CETAP aussi. Il explique sa décision de la sorte :

La construction d'une syntaxe pour une langue naturelle est un problème de recherche fondamentale inséparable de celui de la sémantique ; ce problème a été abordé prématurément et exigerait, pour être résolu, de nombreuses recherches préliminaires (de psychologie et de théorie des automates, notamment) auxquelles la structure actuelle du CETAP ne se prête pas (Léon, 2002, p. 17)

Par la suite, le seul centre de recherches sur la TA qui survit en France est celui basé à Grenoble qui reste sous la direction de B. Vauquois et qui dans ce contexte, deviendra le nouveau CETA. Ce centre ne semble pas avoir été affecté par le rapport ALPAC dans son activité. Au contraire, son activité va prospérer et Vauquois va faire connaître au public ses premiers tests de traduction mécanisée en 1967.

CONCLUSIONS

Nous avons repris ici brièvement l'évolution de la TA aux États-Unis et en France de 1949 à 1966 parce que le rapport ALPAC de 1966 marque la fin de la TA débutante. Nous avons pu constater que la traduction automatique s'implante dans une première phase aux États-Unis lorsque Weaver écrit son mémorandum et dix ans plus tard, elle commence à se concrétiser en France à travers les études qui se déroulent au sein de l'ATALA. En fait, ce sont les études menées au sein de l'ATALA qui conduisent à la prolifération des théories

linguistiques concernant le mot. Des linguistes comme Pottier, Martinet ou Mounin, membres de l'ATALA voulaient créer des théories qui pouvaient être formalisées et par la suite, intégrées dans les machines de traduction directe. Quant aux théories linguistiques de la phrase à l'instar de la grammaire des dépendances et la grammaire générative, elles n'ont pas pu être mises au profit en raison de l'architecture de la première génération des machines de traduction.

Il semblerait quand même que la période de la TA pré-ALPAC aux États-Unis mériterait plus d'éloges que celle de France à cause de trois éléments incontournables. Le premier serait le fait que Weaver propose de mettre en valeur le cotexte ainsi que de mettre à profit le travail de Mc Culloch et Pitts. Or, il est évident que de nos jours ses propositions font figure de norme parce que le concept de neurone formel se trouve à la base du mécanisme de traduction automatique neuronale. Et il convient aussi de noter que cette technologie révolutionnaire considère un texte dans son intégralité en vue de la traduction, n'étant plus limitée à une traduction par des segments de phrase. Un autre élément à retenir est bien évidemment la collaboration de Georgetown et IBM qui aboutira à la démonstration de la première machine de TA. Et le dernier aspect qui mérite d'être gardé en mémoire serait la création du GAT, le premier système de traduction devenu non seulement opérationnel, mais aussi commercial.

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The Role of Student-Authored Video Recordings in Advancing Speaking Skills. Gains, Limitations, Direction

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Abstract: The present research is designed to determine the impact of student-authored video recordings on the speaking proficiency of ESP students. It supports the current shift towards remote learning solutions and the need to prepare the post-pandemic language classroom and therefore calls for a discussion of the potential usefulness of digital video recordings in enhancing students' speaking performance. This research will, thus, attempt to offer insights into the perceived gains of introducing video-based assignments in the ESP classroom. Modelled using an empirical approach, the research collects data from 100 video recordings authored by higher proficiency ESP students in Computer Science. Teacher ratings, as well as students' feedback regarding the effectiveness of digital video recordings in improving speaking skills will be encompassed in our research. To achieve the right balance, data supporting this study will also be correlated with students' open-class individual oral performance.

Keywords: *video recordings, asynchronous, speaking proficiency, student perception, affordances*

INTRODUCTION

The present research is part of an ongoing project designed to look at the impact of student-authored digital video recordings on speaking skills of students following an ESP stream. The knowledge that comes from this research incorporates project-based learning methodology with a particular area of blended learning: the video-based computer-assisted language learning (CALL). We therefore attempt to provide empirical and observational evidence for the potential benefits of student-authored videos required for the accomplishment of asynchronous oral task performance and, inherently, the development of second language oral proficiency. The research is driven by several motivations, and more significantly: 1) experience with both synchronous and asynchronous remote teaching methods has left us with the communicative skills conundrum, but, in this context, computer-assisted independent learning, especially through video tools, has proven its usefulness; 2) our needs analysis' results created a strong case for student speaking skills development and technology mediated teaching strategies; 3) students highly valued the flexibility of asynchronous video assignments which balanced some of the pressure of remote learning and allowed us to successfully model instructional strategies which can easily be applied in the post-pandemic classroom.

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Given the abundant web-assisted opportunities and challenges for education and learning that have emerged in the pandemic context, one has to acknowledge the leveraging of various modes of remote learning, as well as take note of its lasting power beyond the pandemic context. Certainly, there has been a global surge in digital demand for instruction, recently, along with a transformation of the way educators use technology. Nonetheless, increasingly available internet-accessible devices have made computer assisted language learning (CALL) a well-established practice for almost three decades (Leffa, 1993; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Leahey, 2011; Thomas & Schneider 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has forced an even more radical transformation of instruction, as most on-campus classes transitioned to synchronous video conferencing on various host platforms or reached out to asynchronous video tools to connect with and engage students. As schools reopen, surveys (The digital Learning Pulse, (2021), for example) report a significantly improved attitude towards online learning or a combination of onsite and online instruction, indicating both that a massive part of the fog of reluctance/unfamiliarity towards digital technology has been burned off and that more community responsive and pedagogically effective blended learning solutions need to be further developed. Therefore, such a priority supplements the motivation of our study which also invariably dwells on the proof-of-concept success of blended learning and promotes the use of such CALL tools like video editing software to enhance student speaking proficiency.

As the blend between technology and face-to-face L2 instruction has been found to be successful in terms of learning outcomes and student motivation, the fast-paced area of video-based CALL has seen a remarkable amount of interest over the past decade. Most CALL literature dwells on descriptive studies revealing the advantages and caveats of various types of technology used in foreign language teaching (Hanna & de Nooy, 2009; Sykes et al., 2013; Thomas & Schneider, 2020) or lays focus on learner perception, measuring its effect on both the instruction process and its stakeholders (Kocoglu, 2008; Ziegler, 2016). The abundant opportunities of CALL have attracted L2 teachers and researchers, as well as specialists from the field of applied linguistics, discourse analysis, sociology or psycholinguistics. Yet, it has become most particularly relevant for practitioners of experiential learning, who engage students in a “learning by doing” experience, stemming from areas such as English for Specialized Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Content-Language and Integrated Learning (CLIL) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

The present study is guided by the following questions:

1. Does the adoption of a video-based learning approach allow extended learning possibilities for students in terms of speaking proficiency?
2. Does the application of asynchronous video-based assignments/projects advance student speaking proficiency compared to synchronous oral tasks application?
3. Does the application of asynchronous student-authored video projects improve student outcomes in an ESP stream specifically?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our review of the field of blended learning (Bonk & Graham, 2005; Stein & Graham, 2014;) indicates that language learning with digital video software (Goldstein & Driver, 2015; Mikalef et al., 2016) is still somewhat of a niche approach, that has attracted especially the field of higher education. Among works with a more general orientation regarding the contribution of video production to foreign language teaching and learning, Goldstein and Drivers' 2015 volume is a ground-breaking endeavour filling multiple gaps on classroom digital literacy or digital video production activities for the L2 curricula. On the other hand, Mikalef's 2016 study explores video-based learning through the lens of adoption theory with the aim of determining a learner behavioural pattern which would help estimate learners' intention to adopt VBL.

Other studies are embedded in a more targeted approach, aiming to provide insights into particular aspects of video-based instruction, such as the retrospective affordances (Lavoie & Bouchard, 2017) of digital video artefacts, allowing students to self-monitor and observe their performance as well as providing comparable benefits to repetitive synchronous oral tasks (Kerr, 2020). Increased awareness of self-assessment (Young & West, 2018) was found to be an important factor contributing to the success of digital video recordings, as students can evaluate their response throughout various cycles of the editing process (pre-performance planning stage, post-performance stage, for instance). The use of text-to-speech software in the post-editing stage was also invoked as a particular case of integrated skills response, on the one hand, and a means of enhancing self-assessment, on the other. Video recordings are also a recurrent feature in the literature dedicated to the contribution of task-based approaches and project-based approaches to language learning (Spring, 2020). Arguably, short video projects (Foss et al., 2007; Miller & Hafner, 2014) are extremely popular for their learning output, but also for being easily shared with peers and the target community. Also, video crafting is reported to increase student motivation and feelings towards the class (Miller & Hafner, 2014), although there is a dearth of evidence regarding its measurable impact on a specific skill or proficiency.

While student-authored videos were more often regarded in the literature as mediators of peer assessment, there is relevant knowledge indicating that video tutorials, for example, can be also instrumented in reciprocal, peer teaching (Engin, 2014). In the context of a generative assignment, students adopt expert roles needing to explain and adjust information to peers, thus fully demonstrating their mediation skills. It is important to note, however, that such investigations connect the dots with the CEFR's action-oriented approach, as focus shifts on activities and on the participatory role of the learner in the process of language education, a process defined as one where "individuals act with language" (North & Piccardo, 2019). It has been, thus, outlined that as students are assigned with a video-based tasks, they respond through research-based practices, information-processing and content evaluation, which means they are involved in active learning, taking responsibility of their learning process (Staker & Horn, 2012; Hamdan et al., 2013). Closer to our interest, a rare study (Smith & Sodano, 2011) on the role of video portfolios in increasing student public speaking skills is significant. Not only does it underscore the high pedagogical value of video artefacts, but it supports tangible evidence of performance. Such results correlate with

research on the effectiveness of video data on improving presentation skills in the area of verbal and non-verbal communication, organisation and audience engagement.

The diversity of the literature therefore demonstrates that this area of language learning strategies is ripe with potential. Additionally, the Kaltura survey¹⁹, (2020), on the “state of the video in education” reveals that in terms of perception video use has abruptly switched from “nice-to-have” to “mission-critical”, but also that student population actively creating videos for class has surged to 44.6 %. Also, 73% of the respondents consider that video use has increased students’ achievements.

Therefore, it was also against this backdrop that we centred our research on the framework of literature dedicated to enhancing the appeal and capacities of digital video recordings as language learning tools, in order to map out a set of main trends and approaches. With growing popularity of video-based learning, yet mixed results of its effectiveness in both synchronous and asynchronous learning environment, it is important to note that a large part of the studies capitalize on student/teacher perception (Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2018; Borup et al., 2019;) to support the application of digital video recordings in advancing speaking skills and student participation (Castañeda & Rodríguez-González, 2011; Göktürk, 2016; Rojas & al., 2019). Another major component of current research is aimed at objectively determining learning gains, by comparing survey data or learner performance, either using quantitative analysis alone or combined with expert evaluation (Kirkgöz, 2011; Young & West, 2018; Tamanna, 2021). Objective measurements of oral proficiency, such as word counts, common error detection in L2, temporal properties of speech or fluency and syntactic accuracy, typically use statistical analysis along with automated technology and software for capturing and assessing speech. In this respect, we would mention Pratt which is an open-source speech analysis software with an impressively solid feature set, ranging from speech analysis, to speech manipulation, speech synthesis, to statistics and graphics. Also, TAALES (Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Lexical Sophistication) is another freely available resource used to measure second language lexical and speaking proficiency.

One significant outlier is easily observed in this overview. Literature assigned to the implications that digital video software can have for professional language learning contexts, and particularly ESP is quite limited, which enhances the motivation for our approach.

PARTICIPANTS

One hundred (100) Computer Science students (N=100) from the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca were anonymously included in this study. All the participants were second year students between the ages 19 and 20 and they were enrolled in a 3 year (6 semesters) undergraduate programme developed in two languages: Computer Science in English (70 participants) and Computer Science in German (30 participants). All students were taking a 2 semester ESP practical course delivered by the author. Based on the results of the initial placement test, a C1 average level was obtained for the students enrolled in the English programme and a B2 + level for the student in the German programme. Participants were not enrolled in any other

¹⁹ <https://corp.kaltura.com/resources/the-state-of-video-in-education-2020/>.

English language class but 70 of them were provided all instruction in English as required by the CS in English programme. The high degree of specificity of the task design, of the predicted professional register and the construct to be measured make it highly unlikely that the results of our research be compromised by gains from other courses held in English. No control group was defined as this research is cross-sectional and attempts to offer preliminary results in support of a descriptive model.

METHODOLOGY

The research reviews 100 student-authored short video projects with a focus on a set of qualitative features extracted from the CEFR oral performance assessment chart. However, as the construct “interaction” was not included in our ability-for-purpose statement, it was replaced by another feature, “topic development”, more adapted to the nature of our “monologic” task. To comply with validity standards, the TOEFL i6BT TEST rubrics for independent speaking have been considered, particularly the rubric “topic evaluation”. Thus, our feature set comprised the following categories: range, accuracy, fluency, coherence, topic development. The introduction of “topic development” allowed us resort to more specific constructs like “the ability to communicate professional information in a CS/STEM context” and to operationalize it accordingly: perform a heuristics evaluation of a website, for instance. “Topic development” included three sub-scales: content, theme-based vocabulary and task accomplishment. The latter was also included in the TOEFL i6BT TEST under the rubric “general description”.

Results pertaining to this asynchronous speaking assignment were contrasted with synchronous speaking performance. Aspects pertaining to the set key features were associated with CEFR rating descriptors for speaking in order to objectively compare oral proficiency in the two environments: open-class (spontaneous speech) and remote (recorded speech). Two key elements were considered in task design: what the students had to do with language as an indication of communicative effectiveness in a professional register (what criteria/operationalised constructs to be found in language) and what specific codes of relevance (Knoch & Macqueen, 2020) the student needs to activate as an indication of communicative effectiveness in a professional setting (professional language ability)? Consequently, the task required that students deliver a digital video recording in which they elicit a response in the form of a short three-minute presentation to an open-ended task. More specifically, the objectives for the assignment required that students conduct a heuristics evaluation for a website of their choice using a set of relevant criteria adapted from Nielsen’s method for usability testing. The recording needed to be submitted within a three weeks interval and uploaded on MS Teams platform, made available by the Babeş-Bolyai University to support remote learning. The assignment was designed as a realistic simulation of a workplace related task (as part of a web strategy audit procedure, for example), and it followed previous exposure to the topic, in order to create context, and to a repertoire of topic-specific vocabulary. In the pre-task phase were included synchronous consciousness-raising activities (Kirkgöz, 2011) and students were also directed to focus on some key language features. Ideally, in line with Knoch & Macqueen, (2020), we estimated that a task with high levels of specificity was recommended to ensure fairness and maximum benefits.

It is important to acknowledge that such an asynchronous speaking task was correlated with the needs analysis performed by the author at the beginning of the course of ESP for Computer Studies. On the one hand, at that point, results indicated an increased amount of interest for activities advancing speaking proficiency. Therefore, to narrow the perceived gap between speaking and the other language competence skills and to cater for the CS students' learning goals and interests, video-based speaking assignments were introduced. On the other hand, target domain-authenticity of the task also stemmed from the data collected during the needs analysis and, more particularly, from the domain task analysis which helped us group tasks of interest into logical groups, for instance, (Malika et al., 2019) and map the language use domain as well as identify the steps that are typical standard in the performance of selected task. All these elements allowed us to attain a high degree of authenticity of the task and expect positive washback. Another significant aspect intrinsically linked to the design of this particular video-based assignment is related to evaluation and self-assessment criteria. For the sake of transparency, detailed information about assessment criteria was made available in the description of the task, a strategy that also provided students with a set of expectations associated with language performance that they needed to consider in planning their response. The following criteria were used: fluency, appropriateness of language, resources of grammar and expression, relationship-building, providing structure. Students were also required to refer to the CEFR self-evaluation grid while reviewing their performance and crafting the final version of their response to the task. Additionally, they were recommended to use a rating scale graded from 0-5 (poor / fair / good / very good / excellent) to assess their overall oral presentation. Student overall performance score was compared to teacher scoring during post-task informal interviews.

Given the specialism of the participants in this research, who were all CS undergraduates, no prior tutorials or demonstrations were added and no digital video editing software training was conducted. Conversely, students had the opportunity to work with any software they chose as default for video editing.

All videos comprised an individual presentation of the website usability/heuristics evaluation along with a practical demonstration revealing various problems that had been identified during the analysis. In most cases, a "think aloud" methodology was used. Student selected input was required, with 87% of recordings featuring an evaluation for a different website. A thematic comparison revealed a stronger overlap between categories, indicating gaming and e-commerce website prevalence.

Student video recordings were viewed several times by the author and they were scored based on the rating scale described above. Notes and observations were made during the informal interview was conducted in the post-assignment stage. The interview was not recorded.

DATA ANALYSIS

Modelled using an empirical approach, the research collects data from approximately 100 video recordings authored by higher proficiency ESP students in Computer Science. The video materials corresponding to a scripted performance (“Heuristic evaluation of a website”) limited to a 3-minute span was considered for content analysis, along with observational and statistical analysis. Teacher ratings, self-assessment ratings as well as students’ feedback regarding the effectiveness of digital video recordings in improving speaking skills were also encompassed in our research. Student perception regarding the use of self-ratings was assessed during informal interviews. To achieve the right balance, data supporting this study was correlated with students’ open-class individual oral performance. For a broader understanding of spoken communicative performance as deployed in student-authored digital video recordings research from the field of ESP were associated with complementary studies from the fields of applied linguistics, discourse analysis, psycholinguistics or sociolinguistics.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research argue that the use of student-authored video artefacts significantly contributed to student speaking performance. Introducing video assignments had demonstrable implications for the students enrolled in the ESP class and learner language gains are supported by data retrieved from assignment results, teacher observations and reflections on the learning process, self-assessment scores and informal post-assignment student interviews, which provided evidence on student perception of the learning environment and instrument. Qualitative analysis was aimed at increasing the overall understanding of student scores and it mainly relied on interpretation of student performance based on the student-authored video recordings. A comprehensive picture of our findings is shown in Table 1, which comprises information collected from two data sources: the author’s research results and results stemming from our literature review.

Table 1. *Affordances and limitations of student-authored video recordings*

Language learning-oriented affordances	Student-oriented affordances	Limitations
In line with CEFR policy (learning through audio/visual tasks); Helps cultivate deep learning and higher order skills; Particularly relevant for mediation skills; Promote language acquisition (Felix, 2003); Enhanced speech planning; Integrated skills response (Reviewing, reporting, summarising, argumentative talk etc;	Relevant for ESP students’ learning needs; Increased motivation; Learners have higher control over task development (Kearney & Schuck, 2006); Enhance self-reflection, self-monitoring skills and stimulates revision; Learner autonomy and independent learning; Record of individual progress and error correction; Increased learner involvement in topic development; Increased structure awareness; Increased focus on the formal register;	Lack of interaction/interactive speaking (e.g. use of pragmatic competence); Over-emphasis on delivery modality; Time-consuming; Require software training and demonstrations; Increased frustration with software/ hardware and internet speed; Teacher training needed for software use; Privacy concerns ; Students may need some camera ethics guidelines;

Higher possibility to simulate spoken-like and written-like language continuum; Improved control of information organising routines through rehearsed speech; Training skills in the back (structure, timing, repair skills etc.), (Santoso, 2017); Can be embedded into akin CALL tools (blogs/vlogs, wikis, vodcasts, social networking sites, virtual worlds); Permanent evidence of speaking proficiency for both student and teacher; Can be measured objectively with the use of software (eg. automatic speech recognition, pronunciation programs); Increased objectivity in assessment through repeated viewings; Comparability of student performance; Foster a personalized learning experience (Campbell & Cox, 2018). Promote a digital learning environment.	Increased confidence level, minimized face-loss anxiety; Garner students interest, easily shared with peers (Spring, 2020); Flexibility to work independently (Kırkgöz, 2011); Better preparation if the response is recorded and stored; (Kırkgöz, 2011); Tangible evidence of performance (Guo, 2013); Transfer the weight of instruction to course deliverables and objectifies course outcomes; More time-on-task, better time-management awareness; Equal speaking time opportunities, including more introvert students; Availability of video resources, easy hosting and user-friendly video capture tools.	Feeling of disconnectedness and isolation; speaking into a camera/microphone may cause anxiety; Disagreement over specific communication skills impact (Spring, 2020); Delayed feedback ; Need for different rating scales linguistic benchmarks concerning digital video artefacts; Mixed results especially with lower -level students; Need to monitor students and limit script reading; Need for longitudinal studies, and multiple sources for data collection;
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The table summarizes the affordances of student-authored video recordings for supporting speaking proficiency provided by two groupings: learning process-oriented affordances and student-oriented affordances. It also lists a set of limitations that have been found to be applicable to the use of asynchronous video software.

The first grouping covers the dimension of L2 (language) learning – encompassing the active process of language acquisition and it is performance-based. The second grouping is focused on the student, and it includes a set of affordances that video editing tasks generate for the learner.

In line with the CEFR's action-oriented po

licy, learning through authentic audio/visual tasks that have an explicit finality has proved a meaningful experience for students, as 67% of the students rated them as having the highest positive impact on their overall L2 speaking proficiency. Compared to synchronous oral tasks aimed at engaging non-rehearsed, spontaneous speech, two aspects proved significant. First, students felt that success and student engagement was highly topic/context dependent. In this respect, authenticity of the task was highly relevant, thus outlining the need for a comprehensive domain task analysis and a language domain analysis in order to harness a successful learning experience. This also means participating in real-

life learning tasks, which not only adds relevance to the learning scenario, but connects them to the professional workplace world.

Second, even if reported as being more time-consuming, students still valued video asynchronous tasks over synchronous ones, as they relied on built-in flexibility (1). The possibility to work at their own pace, at a convenient time, to navigate between screens, to log in and log out from the task freely satisfied their independent learner needs. Additionally, it was also suggested that such asynchronous tasks blended particularly well with students' learning style options, as they typically preferred active experimentation and experiential learning.

Next, one recurrent feature in student feedback interviews was linked to the fact that video assignments promoted deep learning (2), compelling students to do research on the topic, to select and report information, to relate to the input material from the previous courses and use specialist knowledge. In contrast, students argued that open-class delivered presentations as well as spontaneous responses to synchronous speaking tasks were less structured, less methodical, while some students reported that they found it hard to verbalize their thoughts. Teacher observations also supported the respondents' latter claim regarding synchronous speaking tasks, also noting that more training was needed regarding "range" (especially regarding appropriateness of style and register), "accuracy" (students used a limited repertoire of grammatical structures, even higher proficiency students) and coherence (students resort to a "safe" set of cohesive devices, less visible speech organisational patterns etc.). However, "topic development" achieved the highest ratings, in both synchronous as asynchronous contexts while "fluency" also improved significantly. Another important thread running through the responses was related to the fact that the format of the assignment provided opportunity for self-assessment (3). The revision stage emerged almost naturally in the process of video editing, participants argued, yet it was also strongly associated to the use of the self-evaluation rubric. As a result, several digital recording drafts and trial files were produced before a final version could be created and submitted. When asked to reflect on the overall quality and role of this stage, students suggested that it had compelled them to be more aware of their speaking performance, especially in terms of structure, error detection and fluency. "Content development" was deemed, in fact, to have been the least affected by any modifications. However, having too many warm-up files was not perceived positively, due to the fact that task execution was believed to be time-consuming. In addition, although the self-evaluation rubric was considered beneficial and motivating (76%), forcing them to reflect on their performance, the CEFR self-assessment grid was reviewed as being more complex, making them more aware of what their "knowledge means". Also, the students suggested that more training in this respect was required as they found it challenging to navigate through the assessment criteria and make judgements about their performance. However, findings suggest that task performance/response improved on account of self-assessment in contrast with synchronous environments where such "trial" stages were not feasible.

Furthermore, a final core feature of recorded speaking tasks, as identified by the participants, regards a psychological component. Students responded positively to the video assignment as it dimmed their concerns over a variety of emotional and psychological issues triggered by open-class speaking activities. Interviews indicated that asynchronous video

recordings were, in general, anxiety reducing (4), yet some students expressed dissatisfaction over the spotlight effect (social-evaluative concerns) of the camera. An indicator of such a negative reaction could be considered the fact that some students preferred to edit a demonstration video, opting for a “physical” walk-through the various issues they included in their presentation, with limited or no full-screen capture of themselves (34%). The majority chose to include an assessment simulation in their videos, which is more interactive and allows for picture-in picture display or for the webcam and screen recording of their actions to fill the entire display area alternatively. The latter category was also the one who labelled the learning experience as a successful one, both in terms of attitude towards the task design and towards recording their presentation (cognitive and behavioural aspects, such as overcoming their anxiety). Hence, 48% of the students answered that they felt more positive about such speaking tasks than they did about face-to-face communication. In this sense, one comment stemming from students’ reflection on student-authored video recordings has proven extremely revealing: “I really enjoy such tasks, as I feel I can only speak if there is a computer in the room”.

This last remark brings forth an important aspect for our research: integrating video speaking tasks in the course was significant in helping with oral proficiency because it was “ecologically authentic” (Barab et al., 2000) (5). Not only is it important to acknowledge that speaking into a microphone or a camera and computer mediated communication is becoming a normalized activity for us all, but it is particularly relevant for this area of ESP and for its end-community of students and practitioners. Computer science students, thus, considered this assignment as a task of relevance on account of its compatibility with their real academic and professional environment. They could, therefore, relate naturally to a type of communication that was computer mediated and to a task that engaged them in domain authentic practice. In addition, such tasks allowed them to adopt real active roles in factually authentic contexts, in ecologically valid situations.

Last but not least, another aspect illustrating the affordances of asynchronous student-authored video recordings over synchronous speaking tasks addresses the implied volatility of in-class speaking tasks. In our informal interview cutting across the types of speaking tasks that had been included in the course, students indicated that the possibility to archive their work, to hold a tangible, material record of their performance (and progress) was a major advantage. Not only does every student have the opportunity to react to the task, record it, self-assess and share it for feedback, but their participation leaves a trace, providing students with a tangible record of individual achievement. Our findings indicate the importance of these practical implications for students’ engagement. Students find it particularly motivating to be able to look at the learning process based on a set of deliverables. This brings us very close to an outcome-oriented model within which student authored recordings create opportunities for students to acquire active roles in crafting polished products valuable in their own right (Herrington et al., 2003), products that can be stored, shared, and embedded into further computer-mediated extensions of students work, such as vlogs/blogs, YouTube channels, social media accounts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the affordances - gains, outcomes and limitations - of student authored video artefacts for student speaking proficiency. First of all, our preliminary results suggest that such assignments are highly valued for their built-in flexibility, allowing for self-paced, self-regulated student response and increased student-autonomy. Second of all, positive student perception on learning gains encourages us to believe that video assignments need to be considered as a valuable instrument for deep learning, involving an integrated skills response as well critical thinking and independent learning tools. What is more, such assignments help develop a greater sense of linguistic self-awareness, as the ability to record, edit warm-up files allows for self-monitoring capabilities and can be used for more objective formative assessment of success. This results in more planning of the speaking performance, thus better content development, but also translates in longer fluent runs and richer lexis. At the same time, the anxiety and inhibition-reducing effect of delivering a presentation in front of a webcam is not a negligible factor in advancing speaking proficiency as most students reported being positively motivated by such assignments. Integrating video speaking tasks has also provided means to satisfy students' needs for a more outcome-oriented learning model and blended naturally with the expectations and social behaviour of this particular ecological niche, the community of practice of computer science students.

However, the limitations of this approach are also an important part of our ongoing research. Literature suggests that the strongest negative factor related to student authored video assignments is triggered by software and hardware frustration and mostly by a striking lack of digital literacy skills among students and teachers alike. In addition, the second major concern is associated with difficulty of implementation for lower proficiency students. Therefore, the specialization of the participants and their higher proficiency language level may indicate non-generalisable attributes of this research. Also, as our preliminary results highly relied on data collected from informal student interviews and teacher observations and notes, global data triangulation with teacher evaluation scores and self-evaluation grids, on the one hand, and complementary data relating to several identical tasks is required. The author considers that assessment on account of speaking rubrics adapted for video recordings need to be developed for more accurate data provision and more valid interpretation of results. All things considered, this research achieved a twofold goal: it offered an analysis of student-authored video artefacts from the perspective of ESP, outlining that such assignments activated different affordances that those offered by synchronous communication. Also, it provided evidence to show that these affordances can support and maximize speaking proficiency especially if the task is ecologically valid for the students.

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From Transitioning to Settling in for the Long Haul: Teaching a Two-Semester ESAP Course Online during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: As a measure against the spread of Covid-19, schools were closed worldwide in the spring of 2020, which generated a sudden switch from face-to-face lessons to online classes. In the ensuing months, efforts were made to provide educational continuity remotely. The new educational context required quick adjustment of methodologies and teaching aids in order to support student involvement in learning. Having already dedicated an article to discussing his own teaching experience during the period immediately following the closure of schools, the author of this paper intends to continue the study of online teaching during the Covid-19 Pandemic by showing how he has moved beyond the emergency remote teaching. To be more specific, the article presents several aspects of building an online learning environment for a two-semester ESAP practical course taught at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeş-Bolyai University during the academic year 2020-2021. Mapping the virtual classroom, creating repositories and spaces for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, incorporating activities and tools to facilitate student engagement and cooperation are some of the points considered in this paper. The article comprises three sections. First, some peculiarities of online learning environments are pointed out. Second, the measures taken to design a long-term online learning experience are outlined. Third, the students' feedback on their online learning experience is analysed. This section, which is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the data revealed by a satisfaction questionnaire administered to the course attendants, forms the bulk of the article.

Keywords: *English for Specific Academic Purposes, emergency remote teaching, online learning environments, teaching methods, teaching tools*

INTRODUCTION

The closure of schools worldwide in the spring of 2020 as a preventive measure against COVID-19 involved moving instructional activities online in most educational institutions. Babeş-Bolyai University was no exception and it acted promptly by switching from face-to-face instruction to online classes in March 2020. During the spring semester of the academic year 2019-2020, efforts were made to maintain learning continuity in the online environment, which entailed significant pedagogical reconfiguration. The challenges posed by the unprecedented health crisis to the education system did not end with the coming of the summer holiday. The rapid global spread of COVID-19 in the fall of 2020 made it necessary to delay the reopening of schools at the start of the new academic year. The new situation required rethinking the pedagogical approach once more by transitioning from mere emergency remote teaching to designing long-term strategies more suitable for a

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satisfactory online learning experience. In the present article, the term “emergency remote teaching” is understood as follows:

a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is (...) to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis (Hodges, Moore et al., 2020).

This article draws on the teaching experience of its author and it presents aspects of building an online learning environment for a two-semester ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) practical course taught to approximately 230 first-year students specialising in Physical and Sports Education and Sport and Motor Performance at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeș-Bolyai University during the academic year 2020-2021. The paper first sketches the measures taken and the principles followed in the process of moving beyond the phase of emergency remote teaching towards a coherent long-term online learning experience. Then, the focus shifts to the discussion of the data collected by means of a questionnaire administered to the course attendants in order to measure their level of satisfaction with their online learning experience.

SOME PECULIARITIES OF ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

There are several factors to consider when building an online learning environment. First of all, considering that access to the internet is possible via some sort of computer (desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone etc.), online teaching/learning relies exclusively on Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). Designing virtual learning environments should therefore take into account some peculiarities of CMC concerning space (participants can be very close to each other or separated by vast distances), time (synchronous and asynchronous communication), channels (sight and hearing) and types of messages conveyed (words, photos, videos and audio) (DeVito, 2012, p. 7).

In addition, it should be kept in mind that the interaction in an online learning environment is shaped by the affordances and limitations of the hardware and software components of computers:

all resources have to be accessed via the computer medium (with the help of hardware such as keyboard, mouse or screen, and of soft-ware); and they are delineated by its possibilities (by features such as frames, hot buttons, pop-up menus, voting buttons, clickable options, push-to-talk devices) (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 37).

The emotional, cognitive and social challenges the online learners might face should also be taken into account when creating a virtual learning space. In this educational context, course attendants might suffer from anxiety for reasons such as the absence of some cues specific to face-to-face learning (vocal intonations and body language), techno-stress, cognitive overload, geographical distance between participants and greater monitoring of communication (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, pp. 80-81).

Furthermore, educators should be aware of the fact that the online educational environments bring about a reconfiguration of the traditional role of the teacher. Thus, online teachers should act as learning facilitators rather than knowledge providers, lecturers and testers. In this respect, one attribute of a successful instructor is “understanding the strengths and weaknesses of various online learning tools, and how these tools can be used successfully to achieve specific learning objectives” (Dawley, 2007, p. vii). Moreover, in order to facilitate learning, online teachers are expected to incorporate the resources available online into courses in meaningful ways, to emphasize student collaboration, to provide rules and protocols and to offer guidance (Ko & Rossen, 2017, pp. 38-39).

BUILDING AN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR AN ESAP PRACTICAL COURSE

Following the suspension of face-to-face lessons in March 2020, the switch to online classes did not happen according to a unitary policy in Babeş-Bolyai University. The faculties and departments were allowed to decide how to continue their educational activity remotely and to choose instructional tools in accordance to their needs. However, at the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021, in an effort to provide a common learning management system to all the faculties, it was decided that Microsoft Teams was going to be used as an instructional framework throughout the entire Babeş-Bolyai University.

The challenges posed by using Microsoft Teams to teach online derived from the necessity to convert a collaboration platform not designed for instructional purposes into a learning environment. Compared to educational platforms such as Edmodo, whose affordances permit the creation of diverse teaching activities and the monitoring of learning progress, Microsoft Teams has apparently very little to offer in terms of teaching tools. Nevertheless, it does offer some affordances that can be used successfully for instructional purposes: the possibility to group members in teams, chat function, shared document storage, organising information and content in channels, posting assignments, creating quizzes and questionnaires in Microsoft Forms, holding online meetings and screen sharing.

Smooth navigation is a key requisite for an enjoyable online experience. Therefore, special attention was paid to structuring the content of the learning environment built on Microsoft Teams. Channels were used as containers for elements pertaining to various areas of interest. Thus, all the teaching materials and informative texts related to a certain unit of the course were posted/uploaded in a corresponding channel. In addition, one of the channels named “Chat room” was dedicated to asynchronous comments on various short films posted by the teacher. Furthermore, all the information regarding the final semester assessment was assembled in a channel titled “Examination information”. As for the “General” channel, it was dedicated to the weekly video meeting, to quizzes and assignments. The students were periodically reminded about the function of the various spaces of the learning environment.

Another major concern was achieving a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Thus, the workload was distributed as follows: while the activities involving direct student-teacher and student-student interaction took place during the weekly video meetings, the tasks involving reinforcement of the newly acquired

knowledge and other forms of individual study were assigned as asynchronous learning. Feedback was offered to students either as individual written comments or at the beginning of each meeting when the most problematic aspects of the homework were checked under the guidance of the teacher. In addition to the weekly video meetings, the students received counselling during the “Office Hours”, a two-hour supplementary weekly video meeting.

Particular attention was given to designing each lesson dedicated to the online video meetings. PowerPoint slides were used as a supportive framework for the synchronous instructional activities. They were conceived as a combination of text and visual representation which accomplished several functions. Delivering information and facilitating understanding were two of these roles. As such, the presentations were designed to be visible, clear (accurately identifying ideas/concepts, breaking down complex processes and procedures into simple steps and presenting them in accessible comprehensible language), specific (containing illustrative concrete examples set in specific contexts) and coherent (organising various elements in a logical order and emphasizing the relationship between steps and constituent parts). Stirring students’ interest and focusing their attention on learning were two more effects expected from the PowerPoint presentations. This involved incorporating content and language relevant to the students’ domain of interest in the design of the slides.

However, encouraging student engagement in the lessons required much more than devising informative and interesting PowerPoint presentations. It also involved creating opportunities for students to interact with the content of the lessons. For this purpose, collaborative whiteboards were used in the form of Word documents prepared as worksheets and uploaded by the teacher in the “Files” section of a channel. These documents functioned as shared workspaces accessible to all the students and where everybody could write their ideas or answers.

In addition to the above-mentioned instructional tools, exercises designed on the Wordwall educational platform were particularly useful. The combination between images and colours, the wide variety of formats available and the interactive features made such exercises excellent asynchronous tasks appealing even to the students who did not show any interest in solving the exercises included in the course packet in traditional format.

The “Assignments” function proved another valuable feature of Microsoft Teams. It permitted the collection of written production during the semester as well as during the assessment period. Furthermore, the possibility to create quizzes was very useful in producing reading and listening comprehension tasks and vocabulary exercises.

STUDENTS’ FEEDBACK

At the end of the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021, students’ satisfaction with their online learning experience was measured by means of a questionnaire. Assessing the quality of the teaching activities and materials, identifying learning achievements and evaluating the navigation experience on the course’s online platform were among the main objectives of the survey. The questionnaire consisted of 16 mixed-type questions (Likert scale questions, multiple-choice questions, ranking questions and open-

ended questions). This blended formula was chosen in order to allow data collection on certain predefined aspects as well as to facilitate the identification of unforeseen causes of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and of suggestions for improvement. To answer the Likert scale questions, the students were asked to use a 1-5 scale in which 1=unsatisfactory, 2=satisfactory, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent. While the items included in the questionnaire are genuine and were designed specifically to measure students' satisfaction with the practical course considered in this paper, it draws partially on information on questionnaire design retrieved from www.hawaii.edu and www.questionpro.com. The questionnaire was created in Microsoft Forms and was administered online to students at the end of the practical course (May 17, 2021-May 20, 2021). It was answered by 69 students. All responses were anonymous.

The first stage of the survey was dedicated to identifying the students' general attitude towards online learning. For this purpose, the questionnaire opened with the following Likert scale question: "How do you feel overall about online learning?" As revealed by the answers (unsatisfactory 15%, satisfactory 26%, good 35%, very good 17%, excellent 7%), the students did not necessarily feel comfortable with online learning, but they were not completely averse to it either. However, given that the average rating was 2.77 out of 5, a slight tendency towards dissatisfaction can be noticed.

Considering that the quality of the online learning experience is directly determined by the equipment used to access the internet, identifying students' preferences in this respect was important. Therefore, the questionnaire continued with the following multiple-choice question: "Which of the following devices did you use most often to attend the English course?" According to the data collected, 55% of the students used a laptop computer or a notebook, 36% a smartphone, 6% a desktop computer and 3% a tablet.

The fact that roughly one third of the students utilised a smartphone to access the English lessons is not without significance. Notwithstanding the considerable educational opportunities created by the advancements in smartphone technology, such devices are suitable for short-term rather than long-term use for instructional purposes. Therefore, relying entirely or mostly on them to attend online classes is detrimental to the learning process. While they can make internet access possible where landline internet connection is unavailable and offer approximately the same affordances as laptop/desktop computers, smartphones have some shortcomings as learning tools. First, the mobility they provide can easily be mistaken for an opportunity to multitask. Thus, many of the students who used smartphones were under the false impression that attending classes can be combined with performing other activities such as driving, working out or fulfilling various tasks at work. Unfortunately, as acknowledged by the students, these assumptions proved to be erroneous. The mere fact that technology made it possible to join a video meeting did not guarantee successful learning, the acquisition of a foreign language being impossible in the absence of getting fully engaged mentally in the educational act. What is more, while smartphones are suitable for reading and writing short pieces of text, they are inappropriate for working with longer pieces of text; their small screens and keyboards make them unsuitable for reading and writing for extended periods of time. Finally, even though many applications have

been adapted to run on PCs as well as on smartphones, there are some significant differences between versions, which limits the possibility of smartphone users to participate in certain activities or to access some instructional resources.

Question 3 was the first of a series of fourteen items dedicated to gathering feedback on various aspects of the English language practical course. Rather than targeting a specific area, this question invited the respondents to rate the overall quality of the English course on a Likert scale. The responses indicated a high degree of satisfaction with 63% of the students rating the course as excellent and 30% considering it very good. Of the remaining 7%, 4% of the respondents found the course good and 3% deemed it satisfactory. The high degree of contentment is reflected by an average rating of 4.57 as well.

Item 4 was a dichotomous question which asked the students whether the knowledge they had acquired during the two-semester practical course would help them in their professional activity in an English-speaking country. The answers confirmed the high degree of satisfaction revealed by the previous question with 90% of the students answering in the affirmative and 10% in the negative.

For a better insight into the students' learning achievements, question 5 invited the survey participants to mention the most important valuable acquisitions to their academic and occupational domain of interest. Improvement in specialist vocabulary was the most widely reported gain. The students expressed satisfaction with having learnt useful terminology chiefly in the following lexical areas: the human body, physical exercise, sports branches, sports equipment, rules and regulations, nutrition, injuries and sports psychology. Another widely reported gain that students considered essential to their future career was learning to describe physical exercises. The respondents mentioned having enriched their content knowledge by acquiring information on the following aspects: the anatomy of the human body, the structure of the football pitch and the principles of designing healthy diets. Improvement in written and oral communication was also reported. Finally, having learnt the principles of writing essays was perceived by some as a valuable contribution to their intellectual development in that it taught them how to express and support an opinion and how to balance advantages and disadvantages.

Bearing in mind that smooth navigation is essential to a good online experience, this aspect deserves to be included in the assessment of the students' degree of satisfaction. Therefore, question 6 asked the students to rate their navigation experience on the course's online platform on the same 5-point Likert scale. In this respect too, the responses revealed a high level of contentment: 51% of the respondents rated the navigation experience as excellent, 36% considered it very good and the remaining 13% thought it was good.

Another major challenge posed by online teaching was achieving a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning. That is why, question 7 gave the students the possibility to evaluate the efficiency of the formula used to combine the two kinds of learning. According to the responses, the majority of students approved of how the workload had been distributed between the weekly video meetings and individual study. Thus, 61% of the respondents considered that synchronous and asynchronous learning had

completed each other creating a continuous learning experience. The fact that 30% of those surveyed were of the opinion that synchronous learning had been more efficient than asynchronous learning does not necessarily imply that the asynchronous activities were inefficient, but it could indicate the students' need for direct interaction with the teacher and with each other in the process of learning. Of the remaining 9%, 7% declared that asynchronous learning had been more efficient than synchronous learning and 2% believed that neither form of learning had been efficient.

The following two items of the questionnaire were aimed at obtaining a more accurate picture of the students' preference for certain types of learning activities. Question 8 required the students to rank the main five types of instructional activities used in the practical course during the academic year 2020-2021 in order of learning efficiency. The aggregate of the preference rankings provided by the students is presented in the table below. The values represent the number of times each activity was assigned each of the five positions.

Table 1. *The aggregate of students' preference rankings*

Instructional activity/Position assigned	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Activities involving direct interaction with the teacher and colleagues during the weekly video meetings (ADI)	56x	9x	3x	1x	0x
Solving interactive online exercises on Wordwall (https://wordwall.net/ro) or on English Grammar Online ... the fun way to learn English online (www.ego4u.com) (SIOE)	7x	39x	11x	5x	7x
Completing the 1st semester project (CSP)	1x	8x	32x	16x	12x
Studying individually from the textbook (SIT)	3x	12x	12x	9x	33x
Essay writing (EW)	2x	1x	11x	38x	17x

The data in the table is analysed by means of two procedures inspired by two social choice methods (Powers, 2015). One of the procedures, called *the plurality method*, generates rankings based exclusively on the first preference of the respondents; that is to say, the hierarchy of preferences is established according to the number of times each type of activity was chosen as the most efficient. According to this ranking method, in this particular case the highest score achievable is 69. However, in order to obtain results as accurate and comprehensive as possible, a second ranking procedure is used as well. The *Borda count*, as it is known, produces overall-preference rankings by taking into account all the positions each instructional type of activity was assigned. In other words, while *the plurality method* takes into consideration only the most efficient position, the *Borda count* assigns a value to each position in the hierarchy as follows: position 1=5 points, position 2=4 points, position 3=3 points, position 4=2 points and position 5=1. The instructional activities are ranked by the total number of points they received. In this situation the highest achievable score is 345 points (obtained if all 69 students assigned 5 points to a certain activity). The table below is a comparative presentation of the results obtained by means of the two above-mentioned procedures.

Table 2. *Comparative presentation of the rankings yielded by the plurality method and the Borda count*

First-preference rankings (plurality method)		Overall-preference rankings (Borda count)	
1. ADI	points 56 (81%)	1. ADI	points 327
2. SIOE	points 7 (10%)	2. SIOE	points 241
3. SIT	points 3 (4%)	3. CSP	points 177
4. EW	points 2 (3%)	4. SIT	points 150
5. CSP	points 1 (2%)	5. EW	points 140

At the very first glance, it becomes apparent that *the activities involving direct interaction with the teacher and colleagues* included in the weekly video meetings were by a great amount the students' absolute favourite instructional activity. 56 out of the 69 respondents (81%) chose the video meetings as the most efficient learning activities. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, no student rated this type of activities as the least efficient by assigning it the 5th position. What is more, it was assigned the 4th position by only one student. They ranked the highest in the overall-preference rankings (*Borda count*) as well.

The second position is occupied by *solving interactive online exercises* in both rankings. However, in this case, the comparison between the two rankings reveals that *the plurality method* is not the most accurate procedure to rank the instructional types of activities in order of their efficiency. Thus, the significant difference between the 56 points scored by the *activities involving direct interaction with the teacher and colleagues* and the 7 points obtained by *solving interactive online exercises* in the first-preference rankings would appear to indicate that the first activity is far superior to the latter. In actuality, the difference in value is not that significant according to the overall-preference rankings (327 points versus 241), given that on the *Borda* scale 327 points represents 98% of the total 345 achievable points, while 241 points means 70%.

Another discrepancy between the two rankings is noticeable in what concerns *completing the semester project*. While in the first-preference rankings this instructional activity is on the bottom rung, in the overall-preference rankings it is in mid-range position. The fact that completing the semester project ranks 3rd according to the *Borda count* shows that being assigned the 1st position only once does not necessarily mean that the students considered it the least efficient. In addition, as shown in Table 1, it was assigned the 3rd position 32 times, which is more times than any other type of activity. Thus, it can be concluded that overall, *completing the semester project* was considered the 3rd most efficient instructional activity.

Studying individually from the textbook and *essay writing* were rated by the students the two least efficient learning activities. As presented in Table 1, 33 out of the 69 respondents (48%) assigned *studying individually from the textbook* the 5th position and 38 students (55%) placed *essay writing* on the 4th position. The low popularity of these two types of activities among the students is confirmed by the overall-preference rankings in which *studying individually from the textbook* occupies the 4th position (150 points) and *essay writing* ranks the 5th (140 points).

Question 9 required the students to briefly explain their choices for positions 1 and 5 and it was designed to obtain a more comprehensive insight into the students' preferences.

Interactivity was the most appreciated characteristic of the weekly video meetings. Several positive impacts of interaction on learning were mentioned. First and foremost, the interactive nature of these weekly meetings was perceived as positive in that it offered the students opportunities to communicate and bond. Both teacher-student and student-student forms of interaction were appreciated. As reported by the respondents, the weekly video meetings gave them a sense of belonging; the opportunity to share and receive information within a community was considered highly favourable to learning. The students pointed out mostly the benefits of spoken interaction. This was valued especially by the students who declared a preference for learning by interacting directly with the teacher and colleagues over individual study. One of the students pointed out that participation in open-minded discussions during meetings had a beneficial influence on the learning experience. Another student declared that interaction facilitated improvement in speaking especially with respect to fluency. Overcoming the fear of public speaking was another benefit reported. One student declared that benefiting from constant feedback from the teacher and having the opportunity to speak during the meetings lead to a better management of public speaking anxiety.

A further strong point of the weekly video meetings that students reported was the presence of the teacher as a learning facilitator. In this respect, they mentioned having benefited from elements such as teaching materials (PowerPoint Presentations, collaborative whiteboard activities), teaching scenarios (integrating the four skills into the lessons and motivating students to focus closely on the instructional activities) and direct interaction with the teacher in the form of instructional explanations, clarifications as well as instant correction and feedback on the use of English. As reported, the combination of the above elements sharpened the students' focus, encouraged their engagement, facilitated understanding, improved acquisition and reinforced the newly acquired knowledge of English.

Solving interactive online exercises ranked as the second most efficient type of instructional activity. There were several merits of online exercises that students pointed out, the most important of which being their ludic nature. Some respondents declared that such activities had made the learning process more exciting and therefore more enjoyable. According to them, blending learning with having fun increased the ability to focus and thus made knowledge acquisition more efficient. Furthermore, as reported, reinforcing the new knowledge was favoured by solving exercises conceived as games. The visual components of the online exercises (pictures and multicoloured text) were also reported to facilitate the understanding of certain ideas and concepts.

Given the small number of students who voted the remaining three instructional activities included in the questionnaire as their favourite, this section of the survey provides little information on their strengths. Choosing one or the other as the most efficient was determined mainly by personal preferences for a particular learning style. Thus, the semester project was highly appreciated by a gregarious student because its completion involved communication and cooperation with other students in a team. On the other hand, an individualistic student declared *studying individually from the course packet* as the most appropriate learning activity. Finally, *essay writing* was chosen as the most convenient form of learning by somebody with a predilection for writing.

At the other end of the spectrum, the explanations provided for the fifth place allow an insight into the dislikes of the students. Thus, *studying individually from the course packet* was considered the complete opposite of the weekly video meetings. While some students gave vague explanations for their choice such as intrinsically disliking individual study, others were more specific. The main criticisms of this method of learning were lack of immediate assistance from the teacher and the impossibility to cooperate with the other colleagues. This was reported mainly by the students with low levels of proficiency in English. They complained that the course packet contained some information and/or specialist terminology that they found difficult or impossible to understand unaided. Another flaw of studying individually that the students pointed out was the difficulty to maintain focus for extended periods of time. Two causes were mentioned in this respect: boredom and multiple distractions. Finally, lack of self-discipline and shortage of time were also reported as reasons for not being able to benefit from studying individually from the course packet.

According to some respondents, *solving interactive online exercises* had its weaknesses too. Unlike some of the students for whom such exercises were challenging and therefore more motivating, others found some of their features inhibiting. One such characteristic was the time limit imposed on exercises. This was perceived by some as a stress-inducing factor that prevented them from finding the correct answer. Another reason for discontent was the too high level of difficulty of some exercises.

The reasons provided for choosing *essay writing* as the least efficient learning tool were highly subjective. Some students declared simply that they disliked writing essays in general, while others offered more specific explanations, such as not being proficient enough in English to do the task successfully or considering essay writing too demanding a task (requiring excessive time, research and creativity). As for those who deemed *completing the semester project* to be the least profitable instructional activity, they complained about it being used as part of the semester evaluation, which made them perceive the task as a constraint rather than an opportunity to learn.

The students' explanations of their preferences for certain learning types of instructional activities revealed a strong need for human interaction in the process of learning. As shown by the answers given to question 10 – “How would you rate the opportunities to interact with the teacher and colleagues throughout the course both synchronously and asynchronously?” –, conditions were favourable for communication for the entire duration of the English language practical course. Thus, 42% of the students rated the interaction opportunities as excellent, 32% as very good, 25% as good and 1% as satisfactory.

Considering that comprehensibility is essential to successful online learning, measuring the effectiveness of the English language practical course involves determining to what extent the students were able to understand the information conveyed by the teacher. For this purpose, four Likert scale questions were included in the questionnaire. Question 11 required the students to rate the clarity of the materials produced by the teacher (course packet, PowerPoint presentations, announcements, instructions, explanations and tutorials) judging by how easy it was to understand the lessons, information, ideas and concepts presented. The answers indicated a high degree of satisfaction: 69% of the respondents

considered that the clarity of the materials was excellent, 25% rated it as very good and 6% judged it as good. Question 12 was designed to measure another aspect of comprehensibility, that is, the effectiveness of the teacher's verbal explanations provided during the video meetings. From the students' responses, it is clear that they benefited considerably from the teacher's immediate assistance: 64% of the respondents considered the instructional clarifications excellent, 32% very good and 4% good. Question 13 was aimed at assessing whether the students understood the criteria according to which their performance would be evaluated in the final exam. As revealed by the responses, the students had a solid understanding of how they were expected to perform in the semester examination. They rated the effectiveness of the explanations provided by the teacher concerning the assessment as follows: 65% rated it as excellent, 28% as very good, 6% as good and 1% as satisfactory. Question 14 evaluated the quality of the teacher's feedback on student assignment completion and on performance during the first semester examination period and during the weekly video meetings. According to the answers, the students were generally happy with the feedback received: 64% rated it as excellent, 30% as very good and 6% as good.

The last two items of the questionnaire were intended as a concluding stage. They were conceived as open-ended questions and were designed to allow the students to express their likes and dislikes in a less guided manner than in the previous items. This section was aimed at collecting feedback that the students might have intended to provide on some of the points included in the preceding items but could not because of the limiting format of the multiple-choice questions. In addition, the questions were intended to allow students to express opinions/make suggestions on aspects that might have been overlooked in the design of the questionnaire.

In answering question 15 – “What did you like most about the course and/or teacher?” –, the students focused mostly on expressing their appreciation for the activity of the teacher as a learning facilitator. Many of the aspects reported in the answer to question 9 resurfaced at this point in a more elaborate fashion. Satisfaction was expressed with the quality of the teaching material designed for the synchronous and asynchronous online instructional activities. The following educational instruments were among the students' favourites: the course packet, the PowerPoint Presentations and the collaborative whiteboard. Several highly valued features of these materials were reported, among which are the explicitness, the conciseness and the logical structure of the information presented, the relevance of specialist language and knowledge covered, the engaging content and the high variety in terms of format, topics and online learning resources.

The way in which the various teaching materials were incorporated into activities and tasks as part of teaching scenarios was also a source of satisfaction. In this respect, several merits of the lessons were mentioned. Many students liked the fact that there was a logical progression throughout the lessons which facilitated understanding and learning. Other students declared having felt motivated to engage actively in the lessons by the fact that they had been allowed to interact first and foremost with their colleagues and the teacher but also

with the online learning environment. There were also those who enjoyed attending the English course because the lessons had been challenging and entertaining at the same time.

The students also appreciated the instructional explanations provided by the teacher. The teacher's willingness to take the time to rephrase the explanations as many times as necessary was perceived by the students as a sign of respect. This aspect was pointed out especially by the learners with lower levels of English language proficiency. In addition to the instructions pertaining specifically to learning English, the students acknowledged the importance of the tutoring in the use of various online learning resources, including explanations on how to navigate the course's learning environment.

Last but not least, a further important source of satisfaction reported was the positive emotional experience the students enjoyed while participating in the English course. First of all, as mentioned above, they considered that they had been treated with respect. The attention given to their needs in terms of teaching materials and instructional explanations, the opportunity to express their point of view and the feedback they had received were perceived as tokens of respect. Furthermore, the students enjoyed the atmosphere of calm and joviality created during the weekly video meetings. Some students went so far as to state that the good vibes they picked up during the meetings boosted their mood and helped them cope with remote learning. Another student appreciated the fact that the teacher had put the right amount of pressure on students: enough to determine them to learn continuously and to work on their projects without inducing excessive stress in the process of learning.

Question 16 – "What did you like least about the course and/or the teacher? Mention some suggestions for improvement" – was aimed at revealing students' sources of dissatisfaction and at pinpointing some areas for improvement. One thing worth noting right away is that most students (78%) had no complaints about the course. However, among the minority who did express objections, occasional homework overload and excessive video meetings duration were the major sources of discontent. Other causes of dissatisfaction included not enough feedback on student performance during the video meetings or in the final semester examination, difficulty in navigating the course packet, insufficient learning games or online exercises as homework, unequal/inadequate involvement of students in the video meetings and the teacher's occasional too high speech rate. What immediately stands out is the complete opposition between the perception of the minority and that of the majority: the very same aspects reported by most students as reasons for satisfaction were considered by some of the students sources of dissatisfaction. This discrepancy should not be treated lightly. While, to some extent it could be explained by student lack of attention or commitment to the course/learning, it can also be interpreted as a strong reminder of the fact that students are complex individuals who favour various learning styles. What works for most of the learners might not work for some of them. It results that testing students' satisfaction by means of direct discussions was not enough and that anonymous course satisfaction surveys should have been conducted periodically in order to identify areas of discontent among learners.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire revealed that creating a learning environment on Microsoft Teams was possible. Furthermore, it is clear from the students' responses that they had a genuine learning experience while attending and preparing for the practical course of English. The reasons for satisfaction mentioned by the students were manifold. They showed appreciation for their learning achievements, the teaching materials they had been provided with, the explanations and feedback received from the teacher, the instructional methods and the teaching scenarios used. In addition, they expressed satisfaction with their emotional state during the lessons; they reported having felt secure, respected, challenged, empowered, engaged, entertained and included in a community. All these reasons for satisfaction are in fact indicators of the complex role played by the teachers in the process of creating online learning environments; they are expected to act as dispensers of information, instructional material designers, learning facilitators, lesson managers, councillors, mediators, techies and entertainers. But, first and foremost, in order to combine these functions to the benefit of the learners, teachers need to be visionary thinkers. It is this ability that allows teaching on the internet to evolve from mere emergency remote teaching to more complex online learning strategies.

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Share a Story—Recycling ESP Vocabulary through Digital Storytelling

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Abstract: The necessity to adapt traditional methods of teaching to new technologies has unveiled numerous opportunities of digital instructional tools in the context of ESP teaching. More than adapting educational contents to the online format, ESP instructors must recycle both learning materials and experiences for increased learner engagement and effective learning. In doing so, the process of teaching and learning ESP encapsulates a strategic forging of circuits meant to activate knowledge and use of language skills. The recycling of vocabulary, reading and listening-based lexical phrases through digital storytelling is, in this sense, a resourceful mechanism of online learning. By revisiting language skills in small steps—from creating vocabulary mind maps to sketching digital stories—learners engage in an autonomous instructional adventure. It is the purpose of this contribution to examine the potential of digital storytelling as an instrument of ESP vocabulary recycling, and to explore the opportunities of enabling peer and self-assessment scenarios based on sharing the learning experience. Likewise, the contribution aims to identify affordances and challenges in the implementation of digital storytelling as a formative assessment strategy and sketch on the sustainable dimension of such digital learning sequences.

Keywords: *vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary recycling, digital storytelling, autonomous learning, gamified quizzes, emoji-coded idioms*

INTRODUCTION

Technology affordances in language education allow teachers and practitioners to design and create learning contexts that are resourceful, interactive and highly motivational for learners. Having experienced an entire academic year with instruction exclusively online, learners received numerous opportunities to expand their knowledge beyond the time-limited class framework and develop their own autonomous learning styles. If the initial tendency was to adapt contents and resources to the virtual classroom, most language teachers changed their strategies and opted for different methods, technological tools and assessment scenarios.

The reconceptualisation of learning and teaching needs implied that teachers gained new roles and responsibilities, particularly to prepare and train students to learn the necessary skills for an effective use of technology in the language learning process. Likewise, learners' needs analysis called for a more customised mapping of topics, contents and manners of teaching, as digital natives have a certain readiness to explore knowledge by means of technology. Pairing the two pillars of language education can be a challenging

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endeavour, especially given the fact that there are numerous available learning apps with remarkable pedagogical potential, but whose effectiveness is decreased if not properly applied in the teaching-learning process. In this respect, with digital natives' exploratory interest on one hand and the language teachers' pedagogical and didactic support, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes have become more than a matter of knowledge transfer, but rather a digital interaction with knowledge, skills and creativity exchanges.

As promising and resourceful technology can be in the context of digital language teaching, there have also been various challenges impeding the process and determining the educational actors to find alternative learning/teaching interactions. Affected by limited technological support, by difficulties in adapting and implementing curriculum, or by insufficient familiarity of teachers/students with particular apps and platforms, the instructional process was often strenuous and challenging.

Moreover, given the lack of face-to-face interaction throughout ESP classes, learners needed alternative interactive learning contexts, which meant expanding the tasks and activities or assigning more projects outside classes. Despite the time-consuming and work overload that some students complained about, these weaknesses could be transformed into learning opportunities, which, in the digital format, were perceived as less stressful and more engaging.

Gamified learning experiences, either as gamified quizzes or digital escape room challenges, digital storytelling as group project assignments or the use of Netspeak - a term coined by David Crystal (2006, p. 26) as a new electronic medium of communication - infusion to teach and recycle vocabulary were the main pillars meant to support autonomous learning in the ESP classes and to enable peer assessment via micro-communities of practice. These learning scenarios allow for a more engaging educational process and create valuable interactions that can serve as language learning success stories, particularly due to the fact that learners make use of language skills, technological abilities and creativity in testing their language proficiency as part of their autonomous learning process.

VOCABULARY TEACHING IN THE DIGITAL FRAMEWORK - FROM GAMIFIED LEARNING AND RECYCLING VIA NETSPEAK TO MIND MAPPING DIGITAL STORIES

Vocabulary Acquisition – Conceptual Guidelines

With its foundational role in language learning, vocabulary enables learners to build and expand all other language skills, being used as a vehicle of transforming ideas into written text of spoken interaction. When learning ESP, the process of acquiring vocabulary is even more complex, as it involves the recognition and use of particular terms and lexical chunks that might be less encountered in spoken language outside the field of study/interest. Nonetheless, the teaching of vocabulary is often a repetitive and strenuous act of exposing students to vocabulary items in different tasks and activities so as to make acquisition effective. In this respect, exposure to vocabulary needs to be extremely frequent, on the one hand, to ensure that learners recognise and remember a particular word/phrase and, on the

other hand, to facilitate proper use of acquired vocabulary items and proficiency in using these lexical units in written text or spoken interactions.

Nation (2013) thinks that exposing learners to a vocabulary item or phrase for 5-16 times ensures recognition and understanding of the word or chunk, which is only an initial stage in vocabulary acquisition. Proficiency, on the other hand, comes only when the learner is able to properly use the word contextually and integrate it in spoken language, which implies that it might “take 20 rounds of recycling for a learner to completely acquire the lexis” (Dokchandra, 2017, p. 548).

In conventional on-site teaching, many learners rely on the ready-given explanation of vocabulary, putting little effort in exploring the meanings and use of the lexis. Likewise, for ESL learning, the use of coursebooks/textbooks to provide task-based repetitions of the lexis allows for a more organised practice of vocabulary, whereas in ESP teaching it is mainly the role of the instructor to organise tasks revolving around vocabulary acquisition and to create learning contexts that allow for lexical recycling. With online learning and teaching, however, there are more affordances regarding vocabulary acquisition, particularly the fact that autonomous learning, consolidated through outside the digital classroom interactions or task completion, provides more opportunities for learners to practice and recycle vocabulary.

The process of vocabulary acquisition, spanning between these two dimensions of recognising and then recycling vocabulary, is also marked by the dissociation between *incidental vocabulary learning* and *intentional vocabulary learning*. The former, *incidental vocabulary learning* implies that “incidental learning of words during reading may be the easiest and single most powerful means of promoting large-scale vocabulary growth.” (Nagy et. al, 1987, p. 264) Nonetheless, it is a slow process that requires repeated engagements with words or phrases, sketching a type of learning that is “not focused and mostly contributes to subconscious learning of vocabulary” (Azim et. al, 2020, p.92). The latter, *intentional vocabulary learning*, indicates a type of learning where the emphasis is on memorizing “the information related to the focused vocabulary”, the disadvantage being that “it does not take into account the context of the words” (Azim et. al, 2020, p.92). Intentional vocabulary learning is often facilitated during in-class or outside class learning under the form of flash cards, respectively using Quizlet as an online equivalent.

Another aspect to consider in the vocabulary acquisition teaching/learning process refers to the contents and strategies of teaching vocabulary in the digital framework. Likewise, learners need to become acquainted to different types of specific vocabulary, to its usage and to the strategies to acquire vocabulary throughout autonomous learning. The categories of lexis that learners need to acquire refer to words, collocations, fixed or semi-fixed expressions and, according to the field of study/interest, particular technical vocabulary. However, it is not sufficient to delineate these categories as all-inclusive, but rather as clusters of subdomains which can organise vocabulary skills depending on the required language skills, productive or receptive.

Choosing the most frequent and effective vocabulary items from the plethora of words in English is a complex task that instructors get, but learners can pair their teachers’ input

with self-directed learning in an attempt to support vocabulary recycling. Vocabulary teaching must expose learners to various categories of words, collocations and phrases spanning from spoken and written vocabulary to core and non-core vocabulary and respectively to the more specific technical and semi-technical vocabulary. Firstly, learners need to differentiate particular *spoken vocabulary from written vocabulary*, since there is significant lexical negotiation that occurs mainly in the spoken discourse (e.g., well, so to say, that's right etc.), whereas other linking words/connectors are predominantly used in writing (e.g., furthermore, in addition, nevertheless, by contrast etc.).

Secondly, to improve vocabulary, learners need to recognise and understand *core words* and perform a systematic study of *non-core vocabulary*. McCarthy defines core words as "the most frequently occurring ones [...] because they have core meaning potential and are therefore usable in a variety of situations" (1990, p. 49). Suitable tasks to practice use of core words with learners are: choose the core word from a list including non-core synonyms - with the online version of using a Wordwall Find-the-match or Group-sort activity, choose the correct word to make a collocation - with a live worksheet as an online activity for self-study, choose the odd one out to practice antonyms or collocations based on core words - with Jamboard or Wordwall digital alternatives.

Non-core words, on the other hand, must also be introduced to ESP learners as they represent, to a great extent, the specific vocabulary they deal with in their field of practice. Non-core vocabulary represents "subject-specific vocabulary which is non-central as far as the language is concerned" (Brooks, 2014, p. 156). Depending on specific fields (medicine, business, legal) students will generally learn these words in contexts or in collocations/fixed phrases.

Thirdly, when choosing what vocabulary to teach to ESP learners, instructors must also include *discourse structuring vocabulary* and respectively *procedural vocabulary*. The first, obtaining abstract nouns, are mostly used to "structure discourse, to summarize or encapsulate previously mentioned ideas" (Brooks, 2014, p. 156) and they frequently occur in academic writing and newspaper articles, being suitable for teaching vocabulary along with receptive skills such as reading. The use of procedural vocabulary (e.g., kind, type, form, category, function), on the other hand, enables learners to "explain and make sense of more complicated words, paraphrase them, define them and organise them during communication" (Brooks, 2014, p. 156) and it can be encountered in dictionaries.

Eventually, specific scientific is likely to occur on a frequent basis in academic texts and/or audio recordings used for practicing listening skills. Selecting the appropriate vocabulary in this context is highly dependent on the specific field of study, language level that learners use and the extent to which they can manage autonomous learning to ensure vocabulary recycling.

In the context of the Lexical Approach, Dokchandra (2015, p. 54) illustrates the four elements of vocabulary acquisition which can function as dimensions or stages of vocabulary building.

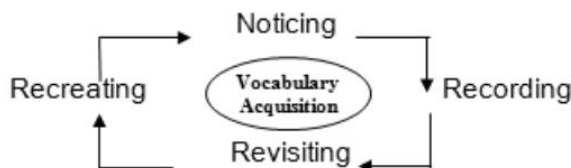


Figure 1. *Dokchandra's four elements of vocabulary acquisition*

The stages of learning a word or phrase, as indicated in the figure above, can show the functionality of vocabulary learning from receptive vocabulary knowledge to productive vocabulary knowledge, which also accounts for how autonomous a learner has become in using language.

Receptive vocabulary knowledge refers to the ability to understand a word when it is heard or seen while productive knowledge is the knowledge to produce a word when one writes or speaks. It is generally believed that words are known receptively first and only after intentional or incidental learning become available for productive use. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge should be regarded as a continuum on which a word grows from receptive to productive status. (Zhou, 2010, p. 15)

Having sketched the above categories and dimensions of vocabulary teaching, from spoken/written vocabulary to core/non-core vocabulary and to technical/academic vocabulary, we reckon that they can be taught as part of the noticing and recording sequences of the vocabulary acquisition process. At these stages, learners encounter the words and phrases, get frequent exposure in written texts and audio recordings and gradually become familiar with the vocabulary. The following stages - revising and recreating - account for recycling of vocabulary and will be tackled in the following section of the paper.

DIGITAL SCENARIOS FOR RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY ACQUISITIONS: GAMIFIED QUIZZES AND LEARNING IDIOMS VIA NETSPEAK

The tools and strategies that teachers use for vocabulary instruction in the digital framework are more generous than those used in conventional on-site teaching, as they allow for a balancing between guided instruction and autonomous learning. The best manner of acquiring and mastering vocabulary is by engaging in self-study and by practicing language in contexts where learners can exert their own skills and negotiate meanings. In this respect, the current academic year (2020/2021) has allowed for an exploratory endeavour in the digital teaching of vocabulary, paving the way for a set of teaching/learning scenarios that were highly appreciated by learners (undergraduate students enrolled in ESP courses from faculties of Public Administration, Geography of Tourism, Psychology, Sports).

Vocabulary teaching was a core element in all classes and it was often blended with the rest of receptive and/or productive skills to facilitate better acquisition. However, to give more autonomy to learners, several tasks were organised and prepared for students to complete either as graded extra work or as group assignment, along with optional tasks organised around the principle of communities of practice. “Communities of practice are

voluntary groups of people who, sharing a common concern or a passion, come together to explore these concerns and ideas and share and grow their practice.” (Mercieca, 2017, p.8)

The architecture of vocabulary teaching for each of the ESP classes along the current academic year was to enable learners to acquire vocabulary (*noticing stage*) in various structures - reading texts, writing assignments, listening materials, audio-video resources, then to facilitate usage of the taught vocabulary (*recording and revising stages*) and eventually to create learning contexts for the vocabulary recycling stage through digital storytelling.

The *recording and revisiting stages* of vocabulary acquisition were designed to expose learners to pre-compiled word lists²² and to teach and practice collocations, idioms, grammatical patterns, affixes and word formation, word family tasks, homonyms, synonyms and antonyms. The majority of tasks were designed using digital tools and apps such as Kahoot! Quizizz, Quizlet, Padlet, Jamboard, and Wordwall and covered mainly the receptive vocabulary acquisition. *Game-based learning* provided a resourceful instrument of vocabulary teaching and assessment, while, at the same time, being perceived as an entertaining learning context. “Gamification may provide an appropriate option to pair the demand for interactivity and digital expertise, on one hand, with the supply of assessment formats that teachers have at hand.” (Mudure-Iacob, 2021, p. 210)

The table below illustrates the affordances provided by these digital learning apps in the context of vocabulary acquisition, both for in-class and autonomous learning.

Table 1. *Affordances for digital apps suitable for in-class and autonomous language learning*

Digital app	Affordances for guided instruction	Affordances for autonomous learning
Kahoot!	-used for practice/assessment of idioms/collocations/synonyms/antonyms/grammatical patterns; -facilitates interactive learning and learner engagement-more suitable for whole class engagement; -provides instant feedback via leaderboards.	-learners can use quizzes for self-assessment; -opportunity to recycle vocabulary by creating their own Kahoot quizzes; -inclusion of productive vocabulary when creating their own quizzes (writing correct questions and finding suitable distractors).
Quizizz	-suitable for idioms/collocations/synonyms/antonyms/ grammatical patterns; -stimulates learners' motivation -can be organised as individual or group activity; -feedback and motivation are provided via Netspeak (memes and emojis).	-review and repeat options which encourage learners to improve their vocabulary skills by retaking the quiz; -allows learners to generate their own Quizizz.

²² The most important pre-compiled word lists, derived from corpora, are GSL (General Service List), UWL (University Word List) and AWL (Academic World List) and provide access to a systematic study of academic words. The disadvantage is that learners are generally reluctant to use such word lists, as there is little interactive feature.

Quizlet	-learners can practice and study definitions, synonyms, antonyms, collocations; -suitable for discourse structuring vocabulary; - learners can read/listen to spelling.	-learners can create their own sets of flashcards; -learners can play the Match and Gravity games, in which they have to identify words with proper definitions and respectively to write the correct word/ definition; -multimodal support- learners can use photos and audio to improve their definitions.
Padlet/Jamboard	-suitable for learning/introducing collocations/word formation affixes; -allows learners to work together in word formation tasks; -can be used for brainstorming existing vocabulary knowledge.	-can be used as an eportfolio and/or assessment instrument; -allows learners to structure vocabulary according to various categories (idioms, word families, suffixes and prefixes, collocations); -is a multimodal instrument and progress can be easily tracked.
Wordwall	-Very suitable for mixed-level classes; - learners can practice collocations, word lists, anagrams, jumbled sentences, phrasal verbs, idioms, word formation, flashcards, fill in the blanks.	-learners can use the app for productive vocabulary when creating sentences, acrostic poems; -flashcards can be recycled and updated along with vocabulary progress.

The use of gamified/learning apps and quizzes was particularly envisaged to support learners both throughout their guided learning and autonomous learning process by noticing, recording and revisiting vocabulary frequently. Another strategy that was used predominantly for introducing and practicing idioms and collocations in online teaching referred to using Netspeak as a recurrent feature of the digital language. “Coined as a need of identifying a new Internet language, as a blend between speech, writing and electronically-mediated features” (Crystal, 2004, p. 48), Netspeak is often encountered in online communication in the form of emojis, memes and gifs, being regarded as forms of virtual expression. By infusing teaching, learning sequences and feedback with Netspeak features, teachers can turn vocabulary teaching into a more digital native-oriented approach, creating thus entertaining learning contexts.

Emojis “(from the Japanese e [picture] + moji [character]) are graphic symbols with predefined names/IDs and code (Unicode), which include not only representations of facial expressions (e.g., 😊), abstract concepts (e.g., 🍌), and emotions/feelings (e.g., ❤️), but also animals (e.g., 🐼), plants (e.g., 🌹) activities (e.g., 🏊), gestures/body parts (e.g., 👉), and objects (e.g., 🖋️)” (Rodrigues, D., Prada, M., Gaspar, R. et al., 2018, p. 394).

Having the potential of making online communication during teaching and learning more authentic, and substituting paraverbal cues that face-to-face interaction genuinely provides, emojis were intensively used as a means of teaching and practicing idioms and collocations, along with memes, to illustrate the meaning of the idioms. Since idioms represent fixed expressions, whose meaning is different than the meaning of individual items composing it, learners often have to perform inference exercises to understand their meanings. By pairing the teaching of these vocabulary items with Netspeak visual cues,

students perceived the process of learning as a game in which they could guess and use intuition to reach the meaning, thus putting into practice critical thinking and logical skills.

The tasks designed for formative assessment and autonomous learning were “guess the emoji idiom” games, a coded emoji game that is becoming popular among ESP instructors, as it requires learners to identify the correct idiom based on an emoji code. These activities were used throughout the academic year with all ESP learners as a means of encouraging and stimulating incremental study of idioms by having learners complete sentences with the correct idiom derived from the emoji code, by exposing them to idioms under various forms (emoji coded, memes, standard fill-in-the-blanks tasks using Wordwall, matching Wordwall tasks, spin-the-wheel Wordwall by taking turns in producing a dialogue based on idioms use, Padlet organiser boards for idioms under different categories etc.).

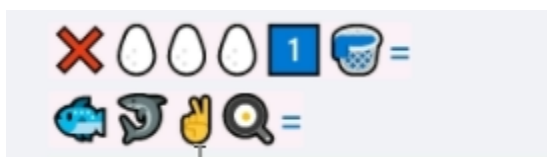


Figure 2. *Emoji coded tasks for teaching and practice of idioms*

Figure 2 above shows an example of the emoji coded guess the idiom game played by learners after learning new sets of idioms (the idioms being *don't put all your eggs in a basket* and, respectively, *to have bigger fish to fry*), at the noticing and recording stages, whereas the revisiting stage consisted of tasks in which they had to use productive vocabulary (idioms in this case) to generate dialogues, topic-based spoken interactions and stories. Figure 3 below indicates an example of how memes, as a Netspeak feature, were used to support understanding of idioms by pairing the idiom with a visual cue.

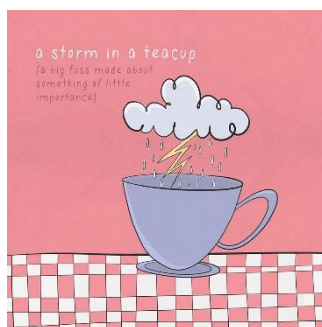


Figure 3. *Meme-illustrated idiom*

Source: <https://www.demilked.com/funny-english-idioms-expressions-meanings-illustrations-roisin-hahessy/>

After having practiced such scenarios of learning and using idioms in the vocabulary building process throughout several classes, learners were also required to complete a formative assessment challenge in the form of digital escape rooms, which also activated the collaborative feature in the communicative approach. The outcome was also to teach storytelling - a genuine competence that learners studying pedagogy have to build - and develop communication skills particularly through idiom-based knowledge.

Since idiom learning was an ongoing process throughout the two semesters, formative assessment at the end of each semester was organised as digital escape room activities. Integrating various listening, reading, writing and vocabulary skills, the digital escape room challenge tested learners' ability to use their vocabulary (idioms in particular) knowledge in order to break out from locked virtual rooms by reaching the correct password. Passwords were made from combinations of idioms that they had to identify from emoji coded tasks, paired with other receptive and productive tasks. Figure 4 below shows a digital escape room sample task blending idioms and vocabulary fill-in-the-blanks activity.

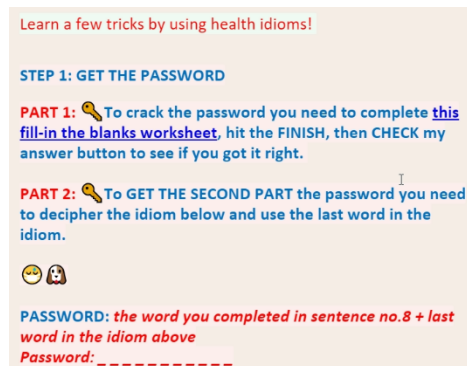


Figure 4. Digital escape room sample testing idioms and vocabulary acquisition

Both Netspeak infused online tasks and gamified learning apps provided valuable resources for increasing the level of autonomous language learning, while at the same time, being successful synchronous learning scenarios that can be easily blended in face-to-face instruction. The following and final step in the process of vocabulary acquisition was to facilitate learners to use and recycle vocabulary within productive skills by practicing it in written and spoken production. This was performed by using digital storytelling as a vehicle for promoting individual and/or group work and for encouraging learners to prove their vocabulary mastery using multimodality.

Telling the Story – Digital Storytelling as a Vocabulary Recycling Instrument

The final stages of vocabulary acquisition, as previously presented, *revising and recreating*, basically represent the manners in which taught vocabulary can be recycled and blended within the production of language skills. For an efficient mastery of vocabulary, after being repeatedly and under various forms exposed to specific vocabulary, learners have to continue using the lexis in the form of written or spoken production. In the context of digital ESP classes, the strategy of vocabulary teaching meant following the four stages of acquisition through activities such as gamified learning and practice (noticing, recording), emoji-coded games for idioms (revisiting) and respectively storytelling and digital storytelling for productive vocabulary (recreating).

To complete these stages and engage in the productive vocabulary process, learners had several tasks to complete throughout the second semester of the academic year. The tasks consisted of *creating stories* (vocabulary and topic-based, from emojis and visual symbols) – see Figure 5 - that could be either written or voice recorded, completing digital escape room challenges consisting of (Flipgrid) *audio-video responses of learners using idioms* in their own sentences as a follow-up to previous speakers, and, eventually, individual or group-work *digital story project*.



Figure 5. Sample task for vocabulary recycling:

Create a story (written or spoken) using these emoji coded idioms

Source: Guess the English idiom available at <https://www.history-tourist.com/>

Digital stories were used as the online alternative to storytelling, a powerful educational tool that is simply “the natural way through which people make sense of the events, situations and encounters they find themselves in” (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 260). Since learning/teaching was performed as an online process, there were various opportunities to give storytelling a multimodal shell and use digital stories for both teaching and reinforcement of learning. Digital storytelling is the modern expression of the art of storytelling, created with audio, images and videos, musical background and a script to organise the storyboard.

Digital storytelling allows computer users to become creative storytellers through the traditional processes of selecting a topic, conducting some research, writing a script, and developing an interesting story. This material is then combined with various types of multimedia, including computer-based graphics, recorded audio, computer-generated text, video clips, and music so that it can be played on a computer, uploaded on a web site, or burned on a DVD. (Robin, 2008, p. 222)

There are multiple reasons why ESP instructors would choose digital stories for their teaching, stemming from explaining concepts, making an argument or retelling events that are history-related or personal to using digital stories as a means of stimulating creativity, engaging students in autonomous learning or stimulating the development and use of other 21st century skills along with language learning. “Digital storytelling has the feature of being an instructional, persuasive, historical and reflective action” (Gürsoy, 2020, p. 103), with great pedagogical benefits in language learning.

If traditional (written or spoken) stories follow the introduction-plot-ending line, sprinkled with the presence of the hero and villain and a set of thematic characters, digital stories have their own mapping of the process, illustrated in stages. Lambert (2006) identifies

seven such elements of digital stories: point of view, dramatic question, emotional content, voice, soundtrack, economy, and pacing.

The point of view indicates the personal experience the author(s) bring to the story, the dramatic question is meant to draw attention and engage audience along the digital story until the end, when the question is answered, whereas emotional content can be seen as a mechanism of keeping viewers engaged in the story either by means of voice tone, background music, textual and visual content. Voice and soundtrack are both audio elements destined to customise the digital story and the aspects related to economy and pacing will indicate a mastery of technological skills meant to organise the script according to limited timespan and a certain rhythm to increase interest.

Likewise, the preparation and production stages of digital stories are described by Morra (2013) in a process made of the following steps: idea to start with, research and learning about the topic, writing the script, preparing the storyboard, creating or finding images and audio files, putting it all together, sharing the digital story and reflecting and feedback. It is in fact a puzzle making activity, which can be organised as autonomous learning and group work project, generating resourceful learning experiences. The first three steps in the above-mentioned list account for the noticing, recording, revisiting and recreating stages, being ideal opportunities for vocabulary recycling.

The tasks that our ESP learners performed in the context of recycling taught vocabulary were particularly useful for the first three steps - starting with an idea, research, writing the script, for which they used mind map apps (Coggle) and online brainstorming apps (Answergarden, Mindmap) to organise vocabulary and idioms that were needed for the chosen topics. The recreating stage meant engaging in actually writing the script or storyboard of the digital story, which gave way to creativity, structuring of vocabulary knowledge and tech skills. Prior to creating their own digital stories, learners were exposed to examples of digital stories created by the teacher, which had the function of introducing concepts, making an argument or presenting a personal experience. Furthermore, learners received teacher assistance while working with three different tools to create digital stories (Animoto, PowToon and StoryJumper) whose affordances and challenges are presented in the table below.

Table 2. *Affordances and challenges for digital apps used in creating virtual stories*

Digital tools for storytelling	Affordances	Challenges
Animoto	-easy to use, follows a slideshow pattern -provides various themes and soundtracks -suitable for beginner digital storytellers -possibility to upload recorded own voice	-free account -length of the video -users have to choose between recorded voice or audio background
PowToon	-allows learners to use animation and voice-over -generous image, stickers and video bank to use while creating the story	-lack of real-time collaborative capabilities -users need a lot of practice to find the balance between text and image

Storyjumper	-bookmaking tool with editable formats -learners can access templates created by their teachers -allows for scaffolding of tasks according to autonomy in learning or language level -facilitates social interactions as digital stories can be edited by multiple learners, who can use chat to collaborate -peer review opportunities -translanguaging features (can be translated)	-learners might prefer the ready-made templates instead of creating their digital story from scratch -more suitable for group work rather than individual learning (it is time-consuming)
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Eventually, to facilitate feedback for students' group project on digital stories (they had the option of choosing a topic that was part of the syllabus), peer assessment was taken into consideration in the overall grading process. Particularly, after having shared the digital stories with their colleagues, learners were invited to comment on (in writing or as audio-video Flipgrid response) and present strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and suggestions for improvements. Such peer assessment proved to be highly engaging and motivating, as most learners were impressed by the work invested in creating such digital stories. Moreover, the feedback that learners gave one another created micro-communities of practice, extending the know-how and used methods beyond the simple functional purpose of the assessment.

Likewise, in addition to facilitating social interaction, most learners appreciated the teacher-student collaboration that occurred throughout the completion of their project (even if it was autonomous learning, teacher assistance was available upon request). Equally important, another advantage was that, besides practicing specific vocabulary and creating digital stories, learners had an enriching experience of developing employability skills, as digital storytelling implies mastering technological, literacy, visual and language skills at the same time, while also counterbalancing social interaction and division of group work.

CONCLUSIONS

The potential that technology brings to the language learning process is undeniably remarkable, particularly because it allows for the integration of all language skills along the process, while, at the same time, catering for the digital natives. With various affordances provided by learning and gamified tools, ESP teachers find themselves at crossroads regarding the choice of a particular digital tool with a high level of pedagogical support. Moreover, since ESP courses are designed to facilitate specific vocabulary acquisition along with the set of receptive and productive skills, the digital framework of teaching and learning became a complex, yet complicated realm.

By exploring the options of facilitating ESP vocabulary acquisition, the current paper analysed and presented the stages that enable learners to learn and use vocabulary items, either throughout in-class guided interactions or along autonomous learning sequences. Moreover, learning sequence scenarios were exemplified for each of the stages of noticing, recording, revising, recreating vocabulary in the digital framework. The use of gamified quizzes, Netspeak infused vocabulary teaching of idioms and collocations in the noticing,

recording and revisiting stages of the vocabulary acquisition process was effective for stimulating learner autonomy, learner engagement and for creating interactive classes.

The challenging aspect of vocabulary teaching and learning, however, remains the extent to which vocabulary is recreated/recycled, given that it takes repeated and frequent exposure of the vocabulary items and various and proper learning contexts to stimulate creative and contextual use of lexis. Digital storytelling was, in this respect, a good practice strategy of recycling vocabulary, both as delivery of ESP instructional content and as an autonomous learning tool.

With the affordances created by digital storytelling (display of creativity, mastery of language skills, use of specific and topic-based vocabulary), learners enjoyed more interactive educational experiences. In addition, creating digital stories pairs language proficiency with other employability skills such as digital expertise, visual and technological literacy or communicative abilities, which were fully exploited throughout the process of creating digital stories. More than just completing ESP tasks and projects, learners were empowered to engage in peer assessment while evaluating the digital story projects, which triggered resourceful and insightful perspectives into the language learning process.

Envisaged as a hide and seek interplay along ESP classes, vocabulary acquisition and autonomous learning through digital storytelling proved to be a promising learning scenario. With both teacher and learners actively engaged in the design and assessment process, ESP learning can tell its own digital success story, with significant efforts behind, but with enriching and fruitful results at the end of the road.

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The Online Classroom. Students' Perception of Online Learning Activities and Educational Platforms: Benefits, Barriers and Solutions

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Abstract: The global coronavirus pandemic has forced both teachers and students to move to the online world and fundamentally change their approach to the educational act itself. Transitioning from face-to-face teaching and learning to online teaching and learning has led to significant changes in terms of course content and design, teaching strategies and methodologies and promoted the use of various online educational platforms and digital learning tools. The present paper aims to discuss these aspects from a student perspective. Reporting on the results of a small-scale survey conducted with undergraduate students from a large Romanian university, it identifies some of the challenges and affordances of online learning and teaching as perceived by students. Drawing on students' past experience while using various online educational platforms and learning tools, different types of teaching and learning methodologies as well as the advantages and disadvantages of attending courses online, it aims to identify the key aspects that influence the efficacy of the online learning process.

Keywords: *online teaching, online learning, student perceptions, online educational platforms, online learning experience*

INTRODUCTION

The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has led to widespread lockdowns and school closures around the world, forcing educational institutions to quickly revisit their educational practices and transition from a traditional, face-to-face educational model to an online teaching and learning model. Starting March 10, 2020, schools and universities across Romania suspended all face-to-face teaching activities and started implementing an online, remote teaching and learning model. The quick transition from a more traditional, face-to-face educational model to online education has had a significant impact on the educational act itself, forcing both teachers and students to rethink their approaches and attitudes towards the teaching and learning process.

While the rapid transition to online learning has put an enormous strain on every participant in the educational process, it has also created new opportunities to rethink what efficient teaching and learning in the 21st century meant and speeded up the implementation and use of various modern teaching methodologies and approaches. Along with these changes, a growing body of literature has also emerged, discussing not only the advantages, and limitations of online educational models, but also best practices and guidelines on how

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to design courses that enhance the efficacy of the online teaching and learning process and provide students with opportunities to continue learning remotely in an efficient way. The present study aims to contribute to this domain of inquiry, by examining Computer Science students' perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards online education while being enrolled in online classes throughout the academic year 2020/2021.

Online learning and teaching, sometimes referred to as e-learning can be defined as the use of the internet and various online and digital learning technologies, tools and platforms to deliver educational content in both synchronous and asynchronous formats, meant to improve students' knowledge and performance (Kumar et al., 2021; Bączek et al., 2021; Laksana, 2020). Although the origins of online teaching go as far back as the beginning of the internet era, when large companies and educational institutions started using the internet to provide continuous training and education remotely to students and employees (Nugroho et al., 2020; Sun and Chen, 2016), the fast-paced evolution of the internet and various digital technologies made online teaching and learning an inherent part of modern, mainstream educational systems.

While in the early days of online education most studies focused on the technical limitations and challenges of getting courses online (Huss and Eastep, 2013), attention gradually shifted towards more pertinent questions regarding online teaching and learning practices, including questions related to strategies and best practices to enhance the quality of online education, especially with regards to areas such as course content and design, teaching methods and approaches, student satisfaction, social interaction patterns as well as assessment criteria and feedback. In other words, as online education is becoming an ever-more important part of the modern educational landscape, and access to the internet and technology grows, the main questions related to online education are no longer limited to just the question of how to get courses online, but much rather on how to create an environment that caters for students' actual needs, provides possibilities for active and interactive learning, is challenging to students and offers a real alternative to more traditional learning models.

Like most other teaching approaches and models, online teaching and learning comes with both advantages and disadvantages, and in order to ensure the efficiency of the learning process, it calls for different teaching approaches and strategies that focus more on learner autonomy, instructor feedback and efficient communication between all parties involved in the educational process. Thus, compared to a more traditional, face-to-face teaching model, online education is often seen as a cost-effective solution that offers a greater level of flexibility and convenience than traditional educational models while also giving students better access to learning materials and resources "regardless of location and time" (Bączek et al., 2020, p.1). Moreover, it has also been claimed in the literature that online education gives students a better chance to share their opinions (Hwang et al., 2020), promotes autonomous learning, and contributes to improving the quality of education by fostering cooperation between students and enhancing their teamwork and problem-solving skills (Kumar et al., 2021).

While the efficacy of online teaching and learning has often been debated in the literature, especially when compared to face-to-face teaching models, recent studies point to

the fact that both educational models can lead to similar levels of academic achievement (Bali and Liu, 2018; Kemp and Grieve, 2014). Nevertheless, to ensure the efficacy of the learning process numerous barriers and challenges must be overcome, starting with problems related to the existence of proper technological infrastructure and a stable internet connection, through enhancing students' and teachers' technical and digital skills down to finding appropriate teaching methods together with adopting course content and re-evaluating assessment criteria (Bączek et al. 2021).

As a result, there seems to be consensus in the literature that the success and efficacy of online learning models is influenced by numerous factors, and in order to build a successful learning environment, it is important for teachers to make use of "multiple tools for different contexts, promote a positive attitude towards technology, [...], help participants develop appropriate skills, experience and training and provide sustained administrative support" (Menchaca and Bekele, 2008. p. 249). Similarly, based on a literature review, Sun and Chen (2016, p. 157) argue that the success of online education depends on three key criteria, including (i) the existence of a well-designed course content and motivated interaction between instructors and learners; (ii) the creation of a sense of an online learning community; and (iii) the use of various technological platforms and tools in line with the rapid advancement of technology.

In light of the above, the present study aims to examine the affordances and challenges posed by the implementation of an online teaching and learning model, as perceived by students. Drawing on the results of a small-scale study conducted at a large Romanian university, it aims to uncover the perceived advantages and disadvantages of online learning and teaching as well as students' expectations and attitudes towards areas such as course content and design, the use of various educational platforms, social interaction forms as well as assessment criteria and feedback. It is believed that the results of the present study will help identify and overcome some of the barriers to online education and outline successful practices and strategies, to help teachers design efficient online courses and improve the quality of online education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

Research Design and Objectives

This is a quantitative, survey-based study that was conducted online using a questionnaire created in Google Forms and distributed online on a private Microsoft Teams group between May 2021 and July 2021. The main objective of the survey was to evaluate and examine students' online learning experience and to gain a better understanding of their expectations and attitudes towards various areas related to online educational environments, especially in areas such as course format and materials, the use of various educational platforms and functionalities, social interactions with teachers and peers alike as well as questions related to assessment criteria and feedback.

Participants

The participants of the survey were 56 undergraduate students from Babeş-Bolyai University, who have been enrolled in online classes for three consecutive semesters. Students completed the survey anonymously, and each student was allowed to complete the

survey only once. Prior to completion, students were fully informed about the objectives and scope of the study and agreed to participate voluntarily. All questions – apart from the final notes section – were compulsory, and no exclusion criteria were set.

The Survey

The research was carried out by survey methodology, which involved distributing a questionnaire to 189 undergraduate students from Babeș-Bolyai University. In line with the general aims and objectives of the study, a questionnaire containing a total number of 34 items was designed, comprised of a combination of multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions.

The first part of the questionnaire contained questions related to participant demographics, including age, gender, previous experience with online learning, current level of digital competence as well as students' familiarity with various online educational platforms.

The second part of the questionnaire contained questions related to students' experience, perceptions and attitudes related to online learning and teaching in six key areas, including: (i) perceived advantages and disadvantages of online learning and overall satisfaction; (ii) perceived importance and attitudes towards various functionalities offered by online learning platforms and tools; (iii) students' general attitude and opinion regarding online education; (iv) preferred online class formats and teaching methods; (v) expectations regarding social interaction patterns and feedback; and (vi) final examination format and assessment.

The final part of the questionnaire gave students the possibility to express their thoughts regarding online education freely allowing them to bring into discussion anything they thought was relevant for the purposes of the survey.

Quantitative data was analysed descriptively, while data from the final notes was used to gain a deeper insight into students' general perception and attitude towards online learning.

RESULTS

Participant characteristics

56 undergraduate students from Babeș-Bolyai University completed an online questionnaire at the end of the second semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. The characteristics of students are summarised in Table 1. below.

From the 56 students who completed the survey, 32 (57.1%) were male, 23 (41.1%) were female, while 1 student (1.8%) preferred not to answer the question. Most of the respondents – 53 (94.5%) were between the ages of 18 and 21, while only 3 respondents (5.4%) were students aged 22 or older.

Out of the 56 students who have completed the survey, only 11 (19.6%) reported having taken online classes before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the great majority of the respondents, i.e., 45 students (80.4%), reported not having taken online classes before the start of the pandemic.

With regard to students' self-assessed digital skills, a total number of 44 (78.6%) students evaluated their digital skills as high, 12 (21.4%) evaluated their digital skills as moderate, and none of the respondents evaluated their digital skills as being poor.

Table 1. *Characteristics of participants*

Variables		n (%)
Gender	Male	32 (57.1%)
	Female	23 (41.1%)
	Prefer not to say	1 (1.8%)
Age	18-21	53 (94.6%)
	22-25	1 (1.8%)
	26-30	2 (3.6%)
Previous experience with online learning	Yes	11 (19.6%)
	No	45 (80.4%)
Digital skills	High	44 (78.6%)
	Medium	12 (21.4%)
	Low	0 (0%)

Regarding the most commonly used platforms during their online learning experience, all students who took part in the study reported having used Microsoft Teams, which was the official educational platform used by Babeş-Bolyai University, followed by Skype (46 students or 82.1% of the respondents) and various interactive learning platforms such as Pear Deck (37 students or 66.1%) and Kahoot! (35 students respectively 62.5% of the total number of respondents). The next two most commonly used tools were the tools offered as part of Google Suite (including Google Docs, Google Sheets and Google Slides) and Microsoft Office 365 (including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, etc.) with a total number of 34 students choosing this option. The other platforms mentioned in the survey in a decreasing order were Zoom, Google Meet, Mentimeter, Quizlet, Jitsi, Discord, Piazza and Moodle.

PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

The next section of the questionnaire focused on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of online learning, as reported by students, as well as on students' overall satisfaction with their online learning experience.

Problems faced during online learning

By far the most commonly reported problem that students faced during their online courses was technical problems, including lack of or poor internet connection, limited access to computers, etc., followed closely by time management problems and lack of social interaction with colleagues. Over half of the students who completed the survey also claimed to have had problems with self-discipline and motivation. The full range of problems reported, and their incidence rate is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. *Problems faced during online learning*

Problems faced while learning online	n (%)
Technical problems (lack of or poor internet connection, limited access to computers, etc.)	39 (69.6%)
Time management problems or too many tasks	39 (69.6%)
Lack of interaction with colleagues	38 (67.9%)
Lack of self-discipline and motivation	30 (53.6%)
Lack of feedback from instructors	21 (37.5%)
The use of too many educational platforms	19 (33.9%)
Difficulty interacting with instructors	17 (30.4%)
Lack of course materials	10 (17.9%)

Besides the problems shown in Table 2 above, some students have also reported problems related to overlapping work and study time, difficulty switching between their work and educational accounts where the same platform has been used, and lack of seminars for certain courses.

Perceived advantages of online learning

In terms of the perceived advantages and affordances of online learning, most students (40 of the total number of students who completed the survey) agreed that the main advantage of online learning was the flexibility with which they were able to organize their learning time. Moreover, 36 students felt that they had better access to learning materials, while 26 students appreciated the convenience and comfort that online learning has offered. The full range of options and responses is displayed in Table 3 below:

Table 3. *Self-reported advantages of online learning*

Problems faced while learning online	n (%)
Flexibility of organising my learning time	40 (71.4%)
Better access to learning materials	36 (64.3%)
Comfortable surrounding	26 (46.4%)
More time left to complete online assignments	17 (30.4%)
Easier to keep in touch with tutors	16 (28.6%)
Better feedback on my work	5 (8.9%)
Class interactivity	1 (1.8%)

Overall satisfaction

Despite the above-mentioned problems and difficulties, most students had an overall positive experience while completing courses online, with 39 of the total number of students taking the survey rating their online experience as either extremely enjoyable, very enjoyable or somewhat enjoyable, and only a minority of students – 17 in total -, rated their experience as either unenjoyable, very unenjoyable or extremely unenjoyable. The full range of responses is summarised in Table 4 below:

Table 4. *Online learning experience*

How would you rate your online learning experience?	n (%)
Extremely enjoyable	3 (5.4%)
Very enjoyable	9 (16.1%)
Somewhat enjoyable	27 (48.2%)
Unenjoyable	7 (12.5%)
Very unenjoyable	5 (8.9%)
Extremely unenjoyable	5 (8.9%)

Online learning platforms and tools

The next section of the questionnaire focused on students' attitudes and expectations with regard to the use of various online learning platforms and digital educational tools, as well as the importance of various functionalities that different educational platforms and tools offer. In this section, students were presented with 8 items, and for each of these items they had to choose the degree to which they found these aspects important for their overall learning experience. The results are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5. *Perceived importance of various online learning features, platforms and tools*

Statement	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Having the ability to interact with colleagues through chat, video calls, etc.	4 (7.1%)	12 (21.4%)	21 (37.5%)	19 (33.5%)
Being able to remain anonymous	17 (30.4%)	17 (30.4%)	15 (26.8%)	7 (12.5%)
The existence of breakout rooms or functionalities that allow for small group discussions	13 (23.2%)	21 (37.5%)	18 (32.1%)	4 (7.1%)
Being able to complete interactive quizzes and online games	4 (7.1%)	13 (23.2%)	27 (48.2%)	12 (21.4%)
Having the ability to collaborate on online discussion boards	7 (12.5%)	19 (33.9%)	22 (39.3%)	8 (14.3%)
Completing projects individually	2 (3.6%)	11 (19.6%)	19 (33.9%)	24 (42.9%)
Completing projects in teams	3 (5.4%)	12 (21.4%)	23 (41.1%)	18 (32.1%)
Being able to record classes	2 (3.6%)	9 (16.1%)	10 (17.9%)	35 (62.5%)

From the table above, it can be seen that for most students, creating appropriate means to interact with colleagues and having functionalities incorporated that allow them to keep in touch through chat and live video calls is important. This is in line with current views in the literature, according to which social interaction is a key factor contributing to student satisfaction in the case of online teaching and learning models.

Most students also agreed that functionalities that allow them to complete small group activities and collaborate on discussion boards were important, but they also claimed that it was not critical that these functionalities give them the chance to remain anonymous.

The responses also reflect students' strong preference towards project-based education and gamification, with many students saying that choosing platforms that give

them the ability to complete interactive quizzes and games and participating in either collective or individual projects was important.

Nevertheless, by far the most important functionality in students' view is the ability to record classes, which according to students, gives them the ability to revise course content and materials after class and deal more easily with difficult or hard-to-grasp concepts.

Students' attitudes and experience related to online education

Attitudes can have a significant effect on overall student satisfaction and successful completion of an online university course. For this reason, in the next section of the survey, we looked at students' attitudes and general opinion regarding various aspects of an online teaching and learning model. In this part of the survey, students were presented with 5 statements, and they had to choose the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The findings are presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Attitudes and experiences related to online education

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The learning materials posted by instructors help me better understand the materials.	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.6%)	12 (21.4%)	17 (30.4%)	23 (41.1%)
Synchronous classes are more important than asynchronous assignments.	3 (5.4%)	6 (10.7%)	16 (28.6%)	21 (37.5%)	10 (17.9%)
Pre-recorded videos help me better understand the class materials.	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.4%)	3 (5.4%)	14 (25%)	35 (62.5%)
I feel confident while using online learning platforms and tools.	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.4%)	18 (32.1%)	22 (39.3%)	12 (21.4%)
I find it easy to find the information I need to complete assignments / prepare for an exam.	1 (1.8%)	5 (8.9%)	18 (32.1%)	22 (39.3%)	10 (17.9%)
Online learning suits my learning style.	12 (21.4%)	9 (16.1%)	13 (23.2%)	14 (25%)	8 (14.3%)

As can be seen from Table 6 above, most students either agreed or strongly agreed that the learning materials posted by instructors were useful and helped them better understand the materials, while a similarly large number of respondents said that they found it easy to find the information and materials they needed in order to complete assignments or prepare for an exam. This is a welcome result, showing that most teachers successfully managed to convert class materials in more traditional formats for the online classroom.

In terms of class format, especially as far as the balance between synchronous and asynchronous activities are concerned, a great number of students felt that synchronous, face-to-face meetings are more important than asynchronous assignments. Nevertheless, the great majority of students said that pre-recorded videos posted by instructors help them better understand class materials, showing that in an ideal case, synchronous classes need to be supplemented by asynchronous recordings and materials to achieve efficient learning.

With regard to the last statement, students seem to be divided on whether online learning is suitable to their learning style, with approximately the same number of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement as the number of students who either disagree or strongly disagree with this statement.

Online class formats – assignments, teaching and learning activities, learning time

The next section of the questionnaire focused on various aspects pertaining to class formats and assignments. Regarding the class format students would prefer, the great majority of students responded that the best format for online classes would be to complete a series of learning activities autonomously, at their own pace, with occasional live meetings dedicated to feedback and clarification from tutors. Student responses are summarised in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Preferred online class format

Which online class format would be the most suitable for you?	n (%)
Taking part in a series of live, instructor-led activities and discussions with my colleagues then completing assignments	15 (26.8%)
Completing a series of learning activities at my own pace, with occasional live meetings with tutors	29 (51.8%)
Studying independently, at my own pace, with class materials / pre-recorded videos and then completing assignments	12 (21.4%)

With regard to how much time students would be willing to dedicate to complete assignments and take part in online classes, most students (more than 47.3% of the students who completed the survey) said that they would be willing to dedicate 90 to 120 minutes each week or “as long as they take.”

More than half of the students believed that online classes should last approximately 90 minutes, while 34.5% of students said that they would prefer online classes of just 60 minutes in length, with at least ten- or fifteen-minutes breaks between classes. The full range of the answers provided are summarised in Table 8 below:

Table 8. Length of synchronous online classes

How long do you think live online classes should ideally last?	n (%)
30 minutes	0 (0%)
60 minutes	19 (33.9%)
90 minutes	32 (57.1%)
120 minutes	5 (8.9%)

Interaction with tutors and feedback on students' work

The penultimate part of the survey looked at students' expectations with regard to social interaction forms and issues related to feedback from instructors.

Regarding the preferred means of interaction with instructors or peers, most students agreed that live chat with peers and instructors represented the best means to clarify questions and ask for help, closely followed by face-to-face meetings and a common

discussion board or platform which everyone taking part in the class had access to, giving everyone a chance to contribute to the discussion.

Table 9. *Preferred means of interaction*

What is the best way to clarify questions and ask for help?	n (%)
Live chat with my tutor/colleagues	28 (46.5%)
Face-to-face meetings	11 (19.6%)
On a common platform where everyone can see	11 (19.6%)
Email	7 (12.5%)
Anything anonymous	1 (1.8%)

Regarding the expected time to get feedback on their work or answers to their questions, most students agreed that feedback should ideally be provided within a day or in maximum two to three days. This shows students' strong preference for instructor availability and confirms the findings of Hodges and Cowan (2012, p. 144), according to whom "participants in online education courses require timely responses, clear instructions, and instructors who design good courses and who are available to them." The full range of responses is displayed in Table 10 below:

Table 10. *Expected time to get feedback*

How soon do you expect to get feedback on your work / answer to your questions?	n (%)
Within 2-3 days	20 (35.7%)
Within a day	20 (35.7%)
Within a week	5 (8.9%)
Within a few hours	5 (8.9%)
Until the next class	6 (10.7%)

End of term evaluation and examination

The last part of the survey aimed to evaluate students' expectations and opinions regarding assessment. The first part of this section contained four statements in total, and students had to choose the degree to which they either agreed or disagreed with the statement.

As can be seen in Table 11 below, most students agreed that weekly assignments played a crucial role in enhancing the efficacy of the online learning process. While students seem a bit divided with regard to the efficacy of using short quizzes at the beginning or end of each class, most students would agree that their activity throughout the semester should be taken into account during the evaluation process.

Most importantly, an overwhelmingly large number of students agreed that working on projects either individually or in teams would be a better alternative to a final exam, suggesting a strong preference for portfolio- or project-based evaluation.

Table 11. *Students Opinion regarding the end-of-term evaluation*

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A short quiz at the beginning or end of each class would help me do better at each course.	9 (16.1%)	10 (17.9%)	16 (28.6%)	16 (28.6%)	5 (8.9%)
Weekly assignments are necessary to achieve efficient learning.	2 (3.6%)	9 (16.1%)	3 (5.4%)	31 (55.4%)	11 (19.6%)
My activity during the semester should be taken into account during evaluation.	3 (5.4%)	2 (3.6%)	6 (10.7%)	14 (25%)	31 (55.4%)
Working on projects individually or in teams would be a better alternative to a final exam.	0 (0%)	2 (3.6%)	6 (10.7%)	9 (16.1%)	39 (69.6%)

The last question of the survey looked at students' expectations regarding the format of the final examination. In line with the responses stated above, a large part of students agreed that project-based evaluation would be a better alternative to quiz-type exams, but some have also considered continuous evaluation in the course of the semester to be a viable alternative. Students' preference for this form of evaluation is most likely due to the fact that, as expressed in private communication, many students have had concerns over the reliability of the results obtained during a quiz-type exam, which according to students can easily be fraud. The full range of responses provided by students are shown in Table 12 below:

Table 12. *Final examination format*

The best format for the final evaluation would be	n (%)
Presenting an individual or team project at the end of the term	27 (48.2%)
Continuous evaluation in the course of the entire semester	17 (30.4%)
A quiz-type exam at the end of the semester	11 (19.6%)
Any	1 (1.8%)

Final notes and comments

At the end of the survey, students were presented with the option to express any thoughts or ideas they had regarding their online learning experience and discuss any aspects that they felt have not been touched upon or discussed in the survey.

The most commonly discussed aspect at this part of the survey was students' desire to continue the digitalisation process, and to find appropriate ways to incorporate some of the advantages that online learning offers into more traditional classroom settings. Such views were expressed by students as:

I strongly believe that we should start the process of digitalisation regarding university courses after the pandemic situation comes to an end.”

There’s a lot to consider in online learning and at the end of the day, I think we can definitely take the positives out of it and introduce them in the regular class format. I think a healthy mix of asynchronous and synchronous activities is what would make the online learning experience better. I also think that 60-90 minutes classes in online format would be beneficial.

Besides these viewpoints, many students have also elaborated on certain challenges and difficulties they faced while completing online courses. One of the most commonly recurring themes in this regard has been related to the amount of work students were required to do during the semester, with many students claiming that they felt overwhelmed by the number of assignments they had to complete, which, in turn, made it difficult or sometimes even impossible for them to find a healthy balance between their study and leisure time:

Fewer assignments. There were too many assignments and not enough time. There was no time for going out for a walk, and there wasn’t enough time to do the weekly assignments. The assignments required around 2, maybe 3 days of research. Considering the fact that there were assignments for other subjects as well, we couldn’t enjoy any free time.

While most students reported having a largely positive experience while taking part in online learning, some students have said that they had an extremely negative experience:

Online learning has destroyed my mental health. I went from a happy, high-achiever and intellectually driven person, to a lazy depressed individual. During the semester, there were times when I would stay up at night, thinking that I am dumb and stupid. I have never had these feelings before. I used to get good grades; learning used to be easy. Now I am a shell of what I used to be.

Comments such as the one cited above raise important questions related to providing adequate support and counselling to students who struggle to adapt to online learning. At the same time, it highlights the need for instructors’ and educational professionals to pay more attention to students’ overall mental health as well as a dire need at the administrative level to provide timely and adequate counselling to help struggling students.

DISCUSSION & LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this study we focused on students’ perceptions, experience and expectations regarding online learning and teaching. Based on the results of the survey, it can be concluded that students’ perceptions and experiences regarding online education differed from person to person, with most students reporting both positive and negative experiences related to online education. Nevertheless, students’ responses seem to indicate that while online education might not be a suitable choice for everyone, many students would consider online learning to be a viable alternative to more traditional, face-to-face classes, with some students believing that the process of digitalisation and the implementation of blended learning models would be beneficial for their overall learning experience.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online learning and teaching, students’ responses closely mirror those reported in the current literature. More precisely, while most students appreciated the flexibility offered by online learning and teaching and the convenience of attending lectures and seminars from the comfort of their home, many students also reported having faced technical problems and having to deal with poor internet connection as well as finding it difficult to efficiently manage their time and keep up a

regular learning schedule. Although educational institutions have launched numerous programs to help bridge the digital divide and ensure that every student has access to digital and online education, these responses indicate that there is a need for enhancing not only the technical infrastructure but also offering continuous support and monitoring to help students keep on track with their learning paths.

With regard to the organisation of online classes, most students expressed a strong preference for shorter, more individual-focussed lessons, combined with a healthy mix of asynchronous activities. Nevertheless, as shown by students' responses, it is important for teachers and tutors to find a balance between assigning asynchronous assignments and synchronous meetings, paying attention to the time required for students to complete their assignments and actual time spent in class.

Moreover, the results of the survey also show that students have a strong preference for individual or collaborative team projects, which in students' view, could form the basis of either a continuous evaluation process or replace a quiz-based final exam. It is important to note here, that throughout the semester students have often claimed that when multiple-choice and quiz-type exams were used as a form for the final evaluation, they were either easily fraud or did not represent their learning process the best. Consequently, opting for project-based or portfolio-based evaluation seems to be the preferred method for the final evaluation, which will likely not only limit fraud during the examination period, but also contribute to developing creativity, promoting learning autonomy and instilling a sense of responsibility in students for their own learning process.

In line with the views expressed in current literature (Herbert, 2006; Hodges and Cowan, 2012; Huss and Eastep, 2013), students' responses point towards the importance of teacher availability and prompt feedback, which seems to be strongly correlated not only with the overall student satisfaction but also the efficiency of the learning process itself. As such, the results of the survey indicate that in order to improve the efficacy of the learning process, prompt individual feedback and instructor availability are critical factors. Students expect to get timely feedback from their instructors, at the same time expecting them to use a wider variety of communication forms, including individual and whole class synchronous meetings, private chats and common discussion boards.

Last but not least, students' responses show that it is vital for teachers to aim to provide class materials in a wider variety of digital formats and to incorporate more interactive teaching methods, including live quizzes, games and pre-recorded videos. At the same time, most students would appreciate to have the chance to record live in-class teaching sessions, which, in their views, would allow them to revisit the class materials and develop a deeper understanding of more complex concepts and ideas.

The findings of the study seem to align well with the existing literature, and it is hoped that the results of this small-scale survey will help teachers develop more efficient online courses that better align with students' actual needs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that given the small sample size, together with the fact that students were recruited from a single higher-educational institution, the results of the present survey might not be representative of the larger student population in Romania. Moreover, given the fact that the overwhelming majority of students who took part in this survey had strong digital skills and felt comfortable

using digital technologies, the results of the present study might not accurately represent the views and experiences of students who are less digitally skilled.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it cannot be denied that online learning, like most other teaching methods and approaches has its own advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, the positive responses of the students taking part in the survey point towards the conclusion that online education can be an efficient and viable alternative to more traditional teaching and learning models, which can be used not only in emergency situations but also alongside traditional educational models. In the end, it is the collaborative effort of teachers and students that will ultimately allow them to create an efficient learning environment that fosters creative thinking, allows for efficient learning, and caters to students' real needs.

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SECȚIUNEA II

***ABORDĂRI ÎN PREDAREA
LIMBAJELOR DE SPECIALITATE***

Different Dimensions of Learner Motivation in ESP for Bachelor Study Programs. Case study: An English for Legal Purposes Course

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Abstract. Learner motivation has always been a topic of interest for teachers as motivation is a key factor for successful learning. The current article aims to determine the type of motivation for a group of undergraduate law students enrolled in an ELP (English for legal purposes) course. The topic is of great importance for the language teacher who has to find efficient ways for actively involving students in this type of language course which is compulsory and is placed in the students' first year of academic studies. The study takes into consideration different types of goals that learners might pursue, goals related to different dimensions of motivation. A questionnaire comprising closed-ended and open-ended questions was used to collect data from three perspectives (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) via Google Forms. It is relevant to mention that all teaching was performed online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not allowing us to conduct the research face to face. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Keywords: *motivation; ESP; ELP; language learning; law students; higher education.*

INTRODUCTION

The background of this study is provided by the Babes-Bolyai University's language policy, which states that all students need to attend a specialized foreign language course in their field of study in the first year. At the completion of the course, they take a test intended to prove their competency in using specific specialized language.

The current article focuses on a research problem related to students' motivation to attend English for Legal Purposes Courses at the Faculty of Law, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The reason for approaching this issue is that learner motivation has always been a topic of interest for teachers as motivation is an important aspect of successful learning. Various studies have found that there is a close link between motivation and achievement in language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1980). Consequently, in Penny Ur's opinion a teacher's job is to do all she/he can "to encourage the development of ability and enhance motivation, on the understanding that each will contribute to the other (Ur, 1996:275)."

The challenge for the teacher in this case is the fact that compulsory language courses are often placed in the students' first year of bachelor-level study programs when they have little, typically no prior experience with the profession for which they hope to qualify during their studies. Therefore, the class teacher has to find out the kind of information students

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would be interested to receive from the course as a reflection of their learning needs. This type of research would reveal possible sources of intrinsic motivation.

The aim of the study is to put the spotlight on the different types of goals that learners might pursue in order to better address their learning needs and enhance their interest and participation in ELP courses. This topic is important to investigate because the findings will offer further evidence regarding the areas that need to gain importance in course development in order to meet students' expectations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning a foreign language is a complex endeavor and therefore much research has been conducted to understand the factors that influence this learning process. Tanaka & Ellis (2013, p. 63) argue that individual learner differences in the context of second language (L2) learning are grounded in learners' beliefs about language learning, language aptitude and motivation. In addition, Horwitz (1999) and Rifkin (2000) consider that learner beliefs are influenced by other factors such as learners' age, one's cultural background, the learning environment, the stage of learning, and the target language. In the same line of thought, empirical research supports the idea that motivation is an important predictor of achievement (Kohonen, 1992; Dörnyei, 1998).

As Harmer points out, the common perception of motivation is defined as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2007:98). Although this statement is not a scientific one, it highlights one important feature of motivation, namely, that it is a psychological construct. Therefore, the most difficult part in studying it comes from the fact that motivation cannot be observed or recorded directly. Then how can motivation be measured? A review of literature on this topic reveals that motivation has been measured in terms of observable cognitive (e.g., recall, perception), affective (e.g., subjective experience), behavioral (e.g., performance), and physiological (e.g., brain activation) responses (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Kruglanski, 1996; Mischel, Shoda & Rodriguez, 1989).

Motivation is measured in relation with the degree of achievement of a goal by a person. Goals can be classified in two broad categories: some have clearly defined beginning and end states that can be quantified (e.g., a two-task project), whereas others represent an ongoing motivational state with no specific end point (e.g., practicing sports). Usually, more than one dimension of motivation is present during the pursuit of one goal. (Magill, 2011).

A distinction is made between outcome-focused or extrinsic motivation and process-focused or intrinsic motivation. Outcome-focused motivation describes the motivation to attain the desired end state of a goal, such as completing ten out of ten tasks, passing an end of term exam or getting a scholarship. (Brehm & Self, 1989; Locke & Latham, 1990). This dimension of motivation stems from the external benefits (or rewards) associated with achieving a goal and targets the outcomes or consequences of goal-related actions.

Process-focused motivation refers to dimensions of motivation concerned with elements related to the process of goal pursuit and stems from the internal benefits (enjoyment, boost to self-image) associated with pursuing a goal – with less emphasis on goal completion. Intrinsic motivation focuses on enjoyment and interest during the process of goal pursuit (Deci & Ryan 1985; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 1996; Shah & Kruglanski,

2000). For example, students might be driven by the desire to have a fulfilling experience while working on a project or class activity rather than by the desire to finish them.

Fishbach and Choi (2012) compared the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on behavior. They conducted a study in which motivation is measured in relation to persistence. According to their findings, participants spent more time exercising on a treadmill when focusing on their workout experience than when focusing on the goals they can achieve by working out. In their opinion these results suggest that one way to distinguish between various dimensions of motivation is to create a context that emphasizes one of these dimensions (e.g., through experimental instructions). Consequently, “situations or experimental instructions that emphasize the experiential aspects of goal pursuit should increase internal motivation, whereas those that highlight completion or rewards might increase the external or outcome-focused dimension of motivation” (Fishbach and Choi, 2012, p. 105). They think that creating such experimental contexts would allow researchers to gain a clearer picture of the dimension of motivation in which they are interested.

Similar research was conducted at a regional level in different countries. In Japan, research focused on identifying the underlying structures of L2 motivation in Japanese EFL contexts (Irie, 2003). It suggests that Japanese university students appreciate a utilitarian value of learning English for exams or a career and have an interest in communicating with native speakers of the target language.

A comparable language learning quantitative research conducted in China by Wang (2010) aimed at determining if the integrative, instrumental, and requirement orientation exists among the participants (non-English major students). The results show that for EFL learners, instrumental orientation may be more relevant than integrative orientation. Requirement orientation is at the same time confirmed in the results meaning that, to the participants of that study, school credits are an important reason for studying English.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to explore the motivation of undergraduate law students to study an ELP (English for legal purposes) course. The authors focused on three language learning dimensions of learner motivation namely, integrative, instrumental (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and requirement (Ely, 1986). To define the terms instrumental motivation is the desire to learn a language in order to pass an exam or to get a good job, integrative motivation means the desire to communicate better with the target language speakers whereas requirement motivation refers to the course required credits.

Even if as indicated above, this course is compulsory, we want to enhance our understanding of various dimensions of motivation, as findings are salient for course development and for meeting students' expectations. The research was designed as a closed cohort study involving a number of participants who entered into the study at one defining point in time with the possibility to exit but presumably no possibility to bring new people in the group. This last feature could be seen as a limitation of the research as the number of the students who answered the questionnaire decreased in the end. It is a prospective study as it uses new data collected for this purpose.

Our research instrument was a Google forms online questionnaire that consisted of a mix of ten close-ended (multiple choice or Likert scale) and five open-ended questions,

aiming to gather students' views on what motivates them to attend the course. For data analysis, the quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and the qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis. The survey was written in Romanian as this was the respondents' mother tongue. We wanted to avoid a lack of answers due to a low level of English.

The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the different types of motivation exhibited by students who attend the ELP course?
2. What difficulties have students encountered when studying for this course?

Participants

The group of students targeted in the paper attended ELP classes and comprised 50 first year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Law, Babes-Bolyai University from which 40 were females and 10 were males.

A link with the online questionnaire was sent to them via email. The time limit for collecting the data was set for two weeks in the beginning of May 2021. The respondents provided answers on a voluntary basis, therefore, only a total of 18 respondents sent their answers back.

Data analysis

Pre-coded answers (multiple choice, Likert scale) within closed questions were analyzed in a quantitative manner using the functions provided by Google forms. The open-ended questions were investigated by identifying several concepts within students' answers.

As far as the students' language background is concerned, the data gathered indicated that more than half of the respondents (55.6%) started studying English at primary level; another consistent number (38.9%) had a first contact with English in pre-school and only 5.6% (i.e., one respondent) began studying English at high school level.

Three respondents replied that they have language competence only in English as a foreign language, while the remaining fifteen respondents are multilingual speakers (i.e., they can speak French, German, Italian etc.).

Four multiple-choice items focusing both on the receptive and the productive skills aimed to engage respondents in self-evaluating their language competence in English ranging from an A1 to a C2 level. The results for listening skills indicate that most respondents (72.2%) consider that they have a B2 level, 11.1% have a C1 level, 11.1% have a B1 level and only 5.6% (i.e., one respondent) have an A2 level.

Respondents are more confident as regards their reading. For this item, more than half of the respondents (55.6%) stated that they have a C1 level for reading in English. The remaining part of the respondents (38.9%) indicated a B2 level with only one exception indicating a C2 level (i.e., 5.6%).

Most respondents (72.2%) self-evaluated their speaking skills up to a B2 level, while 22.2.% considered they have a C1 level. Only one respondent (5.6%) indicated a B1 level in speaking skills.

The same high percentage (72.2%) is indicated for having a B2 level in writing skills. The remaining part is almost equally divided between C1 (16.7%) and B1 (11.1%) levels.

Asked whether they are motivated to attend the ELP course at Babes-Bolyai University, respondents chose on a 5-point Likert scale the highest levels of motivation. As such, 44.4% stated that they are motivated in addition to 55.6% who indicated a very high level of motivation (Fig. 1).

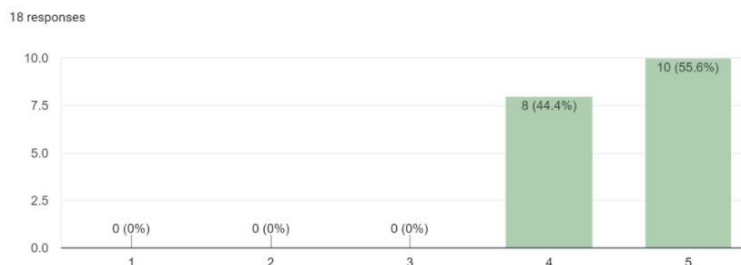


Figure 1. Respondents' motivation to attend the ELP course

Apart from this, respondents were required to indicate some type of evidence to support their choice in Fig. no. 1. The data gathered were analyzed qualitatively by identifying some cluster concepts that incorporated various keywords indicated by respondents. The three cluster concepts identified refer to:

- a) the practical utility of the ELP course (respondents get acquainted with terminology that is useful when discussing legal international cases);
- b) for further research (access to studies from other countries because English is a lingua franca in the area of international law);
- c) for enhancing their knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon culture and the Anglo-Saxon legal system.

We have selected some arguments from respondents' answers. These are indicated below, word-for-word, and our translation is provided in footnotes²⁶:

[Consider că este esențial în ziua de astăzi ca pe lângă limbajul de zi cu zi să cunoaștem și să stăpânim limbajul juridic]

[Mi se pare important să cunosc/ să știu cum să folosesc termeni juridici într-o limbă de circulație internațională]

[Faptul ca ne poate ajuta în meseria pe care o vom urma în domeniul juridic]

[Mă interesează sa pot compara sistemul nostru de drept cu cel anglo-saxon și particularitățile fiecăruia]

[Posibilitatea de a profesa în domeniul juridic în străinătate]

[Posibilitatea de a citi mai ușor articole, documente din jurisprudența altor țări]

Because motivation to learn a foreign language can undergo changes, we required respondents to choose the type of motivation they reckon they exhibit during the ELP course. Half of the respondents (50%) indicated that they have an intrinsic motivation for attending the course, while the other consistent part (44.4%) concluded that they have an extrinsic as well as an intrinsic motivation. Only one respondent (5.6%) stated that he/she has extrinsic motivation.

²⁶ [Nowadays, in my opinion, it is essential to be able to use legal English besides general English]

[I think that it is important to be able to use legal specialized language in a lingua franca like English]

[Terminology is going to be helpful in our future profession]

[I am interested in gaining knowledge of these two legal systems and being able to compare them]

[Knowledge of legal English would help me work abroad]

[I think it will help me to read useful studies, articles, and documents in my profession]

18 responses

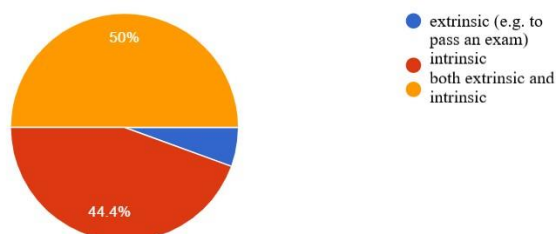


Figure 2. *Types of motivation exhibited by respondents who attended the ELP course*

Additionally, respondents were required to provide other details connected to their intrinsic motivation. Data gathered for this open-ended question provide an understanding of the key elements that support students' intrinsic motivation. Below are presented some word-for-word opinions indicated in the questionnaire²⁷:

[Exerciții practice, vocabularul utilizat]

[Să învăț cât mai mulți termeni juridici în limba engleză]

[Terminologia specifică, varietatea exercițiilor]

[Faptul ca pot intelege terminologia juridica intr-o alta limba și că pot compara sistemul dreptului național cu un altul]

[Faptul ca totul este pe înțelesul nostru, un curs interactiv si folositor]

Respondents' opinions were analyzed with regards to their topic. Thus, a cluster of three recurring concepts has been identified: a) terminology b) practical exercises c) interactivity and usefulness of the course.

Asked to provide suggestions for improving the course to increase students' level of motivation, eighteen respondents provided various different perspectives. Nine answers indicated that the course does not need any improvements and that respondents are satisfied with the teaching-learning sequence and content in the given context of the Covid -19 pandemic. Five answers focused on the need for increased interaction, either in the form of role-playing in the classroom or of discussing interesting study cases that would enhance students' motivation to communicate. Two respondents indicated that they would have liked to engage in more listening activities. Two respondents indicated that they would have liked to engage in activities that improve the speaking skills.

Equally important was to investigate if respondents perceive any connection between motivation and learning in terms of efficiency. Respondents' answers indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (5 being the most positive degree) that they consider the motivation-learning relation as an important one (44.4%) and a very important one (44.4%). Two respondents (11.1%) consider that the link between motivation and learning is not so significant.

²⁷ [Practical exercises, vocabulary use]

[To learn legal terminology in English]

[Terminology and the variety of exercises]

[The fact that I am able to understand legal terminology in a foreign language and compare two different legal systems]

[It has been an interactive, useful course, easy to follow]

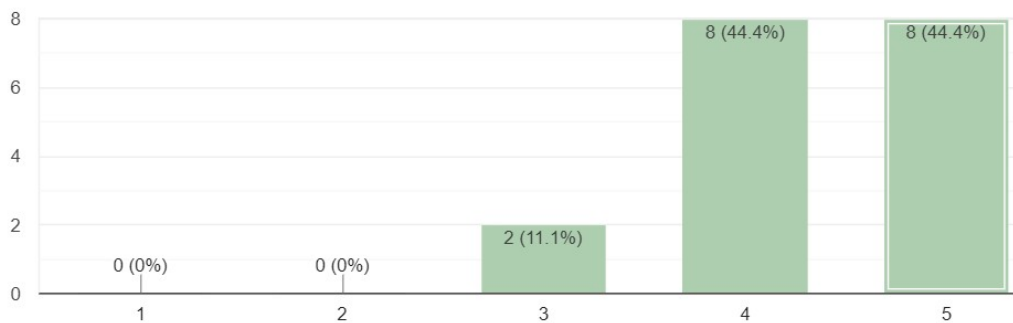


Figure 3. *The relationship between motivation and learning*

In addition to this, respondents were required to indicate in an open-ended question the factors that contribute to their demotivation during the course. Out of sixteen valid answers, seven replies mentioned no instance of demotivation, four answers referred to lack of time in order to study for the course, three answers focused on the online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, one student indicated a high number of classroom exercises while another respondent pointed out the fact that he/she is working during BA studies.

Furthermore, respondents were asked to envisage if they are going to use legal English after their graduation. More than half of the respondents (55.6%) are very confident about using legal English after graduation, while 33.3% indicate a satisfactory level of confidence. Two answers (11.1%) suggested that the respondents don't take into consideration the use of ELP after completing their studies.

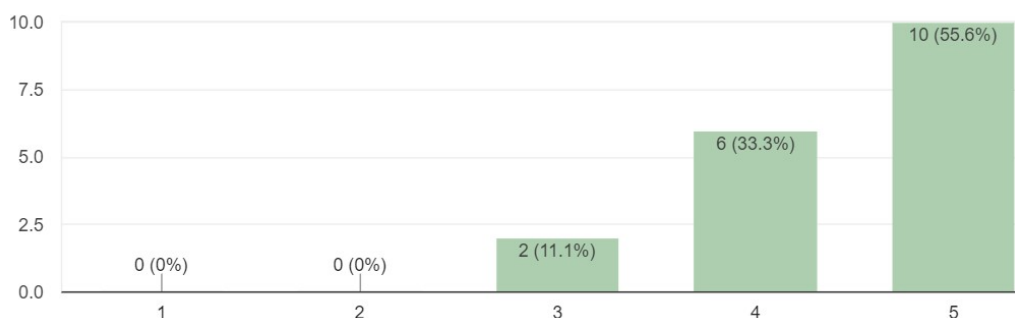


Figure 4. *The use of legal English after graduation*

In order to further understand BA students' motivation to study ELP, they were required to indicate some factors that enhance a high level of motivation. Thus, they indicated various elements that belong either to extrinsic motivation (e.g., job opportunities; English is an international language; to acquire specialized vocabulary, etc.) or to intrinsic motivation (e.g., easiness to interact in the classroom; the ability to read different resources, etc.).

Following this, respondents were required to be reflective and consider some pathways for improving their learning performance. This was an open-ended question and answers were analyzed qualitatively. Three clusters of concepts were identified in terms of

their frequency: 1) through practical exercises that would allow respondents to make use of the knowledge they have acquired; 2) by engaging in extensive reading and thus identifying relevant literature and research in the field; 3) by being offered the opportunity to study abroad with a scholarship. We have selected some word-for-word feedback provided by respondents for all the concept areas that were indicated. Our translation is indicated in footnotes²⁸:

[Probabil prin aprofundare, lecturând cărți/manuale de specialitate în lb engleză sau prin schimb de experiențe la o universitate din străinătate care să corespundă specializării mele (unde cursurile se desfășoară în lb engleză)]

[Prin exerciții în care să folosesc termenii de specialitate]

[Prin utilizarea ei în practică, prin citirea articolelor în limba engleză]

[Prin exerciții de writing, mă ajută să îmi fixez anumite noțiuni și să le înțeleg]

[Cel mai probabil prin mai multă muncă individuală]

DISCUSSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The first research question of the current study aims to find out the type of ELP learning motivation exhibited by the Babes-Bolyai University law students in their first year of bachelor studies. The answers revealed that three orientations exist among the participants: integrative, instrumental and requirement. Overall, they have a very high level of motivation, mostly intrinsic. The analysis of the details connected to their intrinsic motivation (gathered through various open-ended questions) revealed instrumentality as the most important factor for students to learn legal English. They mention the importance of mastering legal terminology for career development by being able to read articles and documents related to their field of interest. These results are consistent with Dörnyei (2001) who argues that for EFL learners, instrumental orientation may be more relevant than integrative orientation.

Integrative motivation comes second in importance. Respondents are interested in studying abroad and gaining knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon legal system.

Requirement orientation is at the same time confirmed in the results. To most of the participants of this study, passing an exam and school credits are an important reason for studying legal English.

The second question is related to the difficulties students have encountered when studying for this course. The results could provide an insight on the factors that could demotivate the students. Most of them mention no instance of demotivation whereas the others mention some difficulties due to the lack of time in order to study for the course or technical issues related to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings of this paper are grounded in the analysis of the eighteen answers we have received to the questionnaire. The study is limited in its outcome because of the low number of respondents. Thus, data cannot be generalized. In addition, many items in the

²⁸ [learning and reading more legal English books or by studying Law abroad]
[practising legal English through exercises]
[by using it, reading legal English articles]
[by doing writing exercises; this help me learn and understand better]
[by individual work]

questionnaire had an open-ended form and this self-reported data can carry risks of miscommunication or confusion (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2009). Moreover, it would be advisable to investigate the research questions with other research instruments, not only by using survey research. Thus, the data could be correlated and would provide a broader picture on motivation. Another limitation that could be mentioned here is that one of the researchers is also the teacher who taught the ELP course. Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2009) conclude that sometimes respondents offer statements that would please the researcher. Still, the questionnaire was offered on a voluntary basis and was anonymous and we consider that these details lifted any possible pressure from the part of the respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper investigated the central role played by motivation in studying a course in English for legal purposes at BA level. The interpretation of the findings yielded that there is a real interest from the part of the respondents to participate in this course (44.4% stated that they are motivated, 55.6% indicated a very high level of motivation). It is relevant to add that more than half of the respondents (55.6%) were very confident about using legal English after graduation, while 33.3% indicated a satisfactory level of confidence. Learning ELP in an online context, as for instance, the Covid-19 pandemic, can constitute a challenge both for the student and for the teacher. We had to adapt and pace the learning process and the teaching techniques so that these would accommodate BA students' needs. Consequently, the data gathered indicate that respondents appreciate the practical utility of the ELP course; they understand the need to study ELP to have access to further research and reliable literature that would allow them to master the legal system.

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Linguistische Merkmale der juristischen Fachsprache. Bemerkungen zur Fachlichkeit und Verständlichkeit juristischer Texte

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Abstract: Languages for specific purposes are often a challenge both for the general public and for linguists, translators and professionals of different fields, with regard to the specialized linguistic structures, terminologies and text types. The present paper illustrates this by means of legal terminology, that can cause difficulties regarding the understanding of different legal texts on the one hand, and on the other hand, claims objectivity, clarity, transparency and precision. Starting from the linguistic features of legal terminology on grammatical, semantic and stylistic level, the important aspects of the specialized language and comprehensibility are analyzed and problematized using legal texts as examples. Important questions are: How can specialized language structures and terms be successfully conveyed, e.g. in foreign language courses for specific purposes, so that the specialized information remains comprehensible to as many addressees as possible? What should translators of legal texts pay attention to in order to maintain the objectivity and correctness of the content and what tools can be offered to them? Last but not least, what problems do legal texts pose for the general public and how can they be prevented? The paper systematizes and exemplifies the characteristics of legal texts from several perspectives: the internal, interdisciplinary and external communication, students', translators' and linguists' successful work with them, from the didactic perspective and last but not least, from the intercultural and interdisciplinary perspective of understanding, since it is well known that legal texts must be comprehensible to a wide audience.

Keywords: *Fachsprachen, Fachübersetzung, juristische Terminologie, linguistische Strukturen, Fachlichkeit, Verständlichkeit/ Languages for specific purposes, Specialized translation, legal terminology, linguistic structures, specialized language, comprehensibility.*

EINLEITENDE BEMERKUNGEN

Der Umgang mit Fachsprachen allgemein stellt eine Herausforderung sowohl für Laien als auch für Linguisten, Übersetzer und Fachleute verschiedener Bereiche im Hinblick auf die fachspezifischen Strukturen, Terminologien, Textsorten und Stile dar. Die vorliegende Arbeit veranschaulicht dies anhand der juristischen Fachsprache, wo das Juristendeutsch einerseits Schwierigkeiten bezüglich des Verständnisses unterschiedlicher juristischer Texte bereiten kann, andererseits den Anspruch auf Sachlichkeit, Klarheit, Transparenz und Präzision hat. Ausgehend von den linguistischen Merkmalen der juristischen Fachsprache auf grammatikalischer, semantischer und stilistischer Ebene werden die Aspekte der Fachlichkeit und Verständlichkeit am Beispiel juristischer Texte analysiert und problematisiert. Wichtige Fragen dabei sind: Wie kann man erfolgreich die

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fachsprachlichen Strukturen und Termini vermitteln, z.B. im studienbegleitenden Fachsprachenunterricht, so dass die Fachinformationen verständlich für möglichst viele Adressaten bleiben? Worauf sollen Übersetzer juristischer Texte achten, damit die Sachlichkeit und Korrektheit des Inhalts erhalten bleibt und welche Hilfsmittel können ihnen geboten werden? Nicht zuletzt, welche Probleme stellen juristische Texte für den Laien und wie können diese beseitigt werden? Die Arbeit systematisiert und exemplifiziert die Eigenschaften juristischer Fachtexte aus mehrfacher Perspektive: der fachinternen, interfachlichen und fachexternen Kommunikation, des erfolgreichen Umgangs mit ihnen durch Studierende, Übersetzer und Linguisten, aus der didaktischen Perspektive und nicht zuletzt aus der interkulturellen und interdisziplinären Perspektive der Verständigung, da bekanntlich Rechtstexte für ein breites Publikum verständlich sein müssen.

KLASSIFIKATION UND HAUPTMERKMALE DER FACHSPRACHEN

Fachsprachen sind ein wichtiger Teil linguistischer Untersuchungen, bedingt einerseits durch die zunehmende Vielfalt der wissenschaftlich-technologischen Entwicklung, andererseits durch die Internationalisierung der Kommunikation und das erhöhte Interesse an dem Studium von Fachsprachen. Sie werden oft als „Kommunikationsmedium innerhalb von im weitesten Sinne technisch und wissenschaftlich orientierten Handlungs- und Arbeitssystemen“ definiert (Hahn 1980, S. 390) oder als „die einem fachlichen Handlungsbereich zugeordnete Sprachkompetenz, d.h. die Fähigkeit zur Produktion und Reduktion von charakteristischen, normierten Erzeugungs-, Organisations- und Verwendungsprozessen und deren sprachlichen Realisierungen in der Performanz“ (Bungarten 1981, S. 31; vgl. auch Codarcea 2015, S.137).

Fachsprache ist eine- insbesondere in den Bereichen Wissenschaft und Technik- häufig verwendete Bezeichnung, die alle möglichen Formen der fachbezogenen Verständigung (Kommunikation) meint und oft in einen Gegensatz zum Begriff der üblicherweise verwendeten „Gemein-“ oder „Standardsprache“ gestellt wird. (...) Fachsprache ist also ein Verständigungsmittel unter Fachleuten bestimmter Kommunikationsbereiche und primär an den Fachmann gebunden (Fluck 1985, S. 14).

Wir verstehen unter Fachsprachen heute die Variante der Gesamtsprache, die der Erkenntnis und begrifflichen Bestimmung fachspezifischer Gegenstände sowie der Verständigung über sie dient und damit den spezifischen kommunikativen Bedürfnissen im Fach allgemein Rechnung trägt. [...] Entsprechend der Vielzahl der Fächer, die man mehr oder weniger exakt unterscheiden kann, ist die Variante „Fachsprache“ in zahlreichen mehr oder weniger exakt abgrenzbaren Erscheinungsformen realisiert, die als Fachsprachen bezeichnet sind (Möhn/ Pelka 1984, S. 26; vgl. auch Hoffmann 2004, S. 234).³⁰

Fachsprachen werden von der Fachsprachenforschung horizontal und vertikal gegliedert, d.h. voneinander abgegrenzt (z.B. Fachsprache Medizin, Jura, Elektronik usw.) und nach der internen Strukturierung des Faches weiter ausdifferenziert. Hoffmann (1976, S. 184ff.) unterscheidet fünf fachsprachliche Hauptschichten: die Sprache der theoretischen Grundlagenwissenschaften, der experimentellen Wissenschaften, der angewandten

³⁰ Wenn Fachsprachen als Wissenschaftssprachen betrachtet werden, so ist der Forschungsgegenstand laut Hoffmann (2004, S. 236) einerseits die Kommunikation und Funktion der Sprache in der Wissenschaft, andererseits die Erweiterung von der kommunikativen auf die kognitive Funktion, d.h. die Rolle der Sprache als Erkenntnisinstrument.

Wissenschaft und Technik, der materiellen Produktion und die Sprache der Konsumption. Fachsprachen werden auch als Techniksprachen (Technolekte), Institutionensprachen (institutionell verfestigte Gruppensprachen) oder Berufssprachen (Sprachverwendung in unterschiedlichen Kontexten, z.B. sozialen, situativen, fachspezifischen, in denen das Rollenverhalten von Fachleuten im Mittelpunkt steht) aufgefasst. Sie können weiter ausdifferenziert werden, z.B. Werkstattsprache, Verkäufersprache, Amtssprache, Verwaltungssprache, Institutionensprachen, Techniksprachen, Theorie-/Wissenschaftssprache, Berufssprachen. Durch ihre Bindung an Berufs- und Freizeitgruppen können sie auch als Soziolekte aufgefasst werden und den Gegenstand soziolinguistischer Beschreibungen bilden (als Spezialsprache sind sie gegenstandsgebunden, als Soziolekt hingegen gruppengebunden).

Merkmale der Fachsprachen sind die Präzision, Sprachökonomie, Sachlichkeit, Normativität, Abstraktion, Komplexität, Funktionalität, Eindeutigkeit und empirische Überprüfbarkeit. Fachlexik, fachlicher Funktionalstil und spezifische grammatikalisch-lexikalische Strukturen grenzen sie von gemeinsprachlichen Texten ab. So z.B. enthalten Fachtexte zahlreiche Nominalisierungen auf *-ung*, Komposita, Affigierungen und Suffigierungen mit fachbereichsspezifischen Affixen, Präpositionalphrasen, Attribute und Appositionen, Wendungen und Kollokationen, Relativsätze, Funktionsverbgefüge, Passiv(paraphrasen), Modalverben, unpersönliche Verben im Indikativ oder Konjunktiv Präsens, Demonstrativpronomina oder Pronominaladverbien als Verweisformen, Konjunktionen und Wiederholungen als Verknüpfungsmittel, Parataxe und Hypotaxe, Relativsätze, Infinitiv- und Partizipialkonstruktionen (z.B. ist zu analysieren, lässt sich herstellen, ist messbar, in Vollzug setzen, zur Folge haben, es wurde bewiesen/gezeigt, eine Verbindung, die aus ...besteht, im Folgenden, man beachte, gewerbliches Schutzrecht, Emissionsgrenzwerte, Auflistung von endlich oder unendlich vielen fortlaufend nummerierten Objekten).

Aus lexikalisch-semantischer Perspektive muss zunächst einmal zwischen allgemeinerwissenschaftlichem, speziellem, populärwissenschaftlichem, akademischem und didaktischem Fachwortschatz unterschieden werden, d.h. Grundwortschatz vieler Fachbereiche, spezifischer Wortschatz für eine einzige Fachsprache, laienverständlicher Wortschatz und Wissenschaftssprache. Fachtexte haben eine hohe Anzahl von Fachtermini mit unterschiedlichen Abstraktions- und Schwierigkeitsgraden (je nach Fachbereich und Benutzergruppe), Nomenklaturen, Internationalismen, Fremdwörter, Anglizismen, Abkürzungen, Akronyme, Siglen, Symbole, Formeln, Diagramme, Abbildungen, Tabellen (z.B. Tiefwurzler, HF-Signal, Moniereisen, elektrische Spannung, Stoppventil, Off-Shore-Bohrung, Fingerabdruck-Scanner, DIN, H₂O, StGB), weshalb die Fachbezogenheit und Verständlichkeit der Fachlexik oft Schwierigkeiten in der Kommunikation und bei der Interpretation der Fachtexte stellen. Dabei muss aber bemerkt werden, dass die Abstraktheit und Verständlichkeit der Fachlexik auch davon abhängen, ob die Kommunikation fachintern, fachextern oder interfachlich erfolgt (vgl. Codarcea 2018, S. 207-224).

Nicht zuletzt sei der fachsprachliche Funktionalstil erwähnt: sachlich, deutlich, objektiv, emotionsfrei, erzählfrei, komprimiert und unpersönlich formuliert. Zweck dabei ist die Spezifizierung, Kondensierung, Anonymisierung und Sprachökonomie (hohe Informationsdichte auf wenig Platz, wobei die Kohärenz und Kohäsion gesichert bleiben

sollen). Fachtexte wollen eine zuverlässige Informationsquelle sein, haben oft einen normativen Charakter und folglich Anspruch auf Korrektheit und Präzision. Diese Aspekte können aber problematisch bezüglich der Verständlichkeit beim Umgang mit juristischen Fachtexten sein. Darauf werden wir im Folgenden näher eingehen.

JURISTISCHE FACHSPRACHE. DEFINITION UND LINGUISTISCHE MERKMALE

Die Sprache des Rechts und der Juristen hat eine Sonderstellung innerhalb der Fachsprachen, im Sinne, dass sie sich der Gemeinsprache und Alltagssprache bedient, da sich juristische Fachtexte sowohl an Experten als auch an das breite Publikum wenden, andererseits aber fachspezifische Eigenheiten aufweist und wegen der Formulierungen, benutzten Termini und gesetzlichen Abkürzungen oft Verständnisschwierigkeiten bereitet. Vladu (2020, S. 73-74) nennt als wichtiges Unterscheidungsmerkmal juristischer Fachsprache von der Gemeinsprache die Fachlichkeit (juristische Texte benötigen spezialisiertes Wissen zum Sachgebiet) bzw. Neutralität (die Gemeinsprache wird im Alltag verwendet und dient als Verständigungsmittel zwischen Mitmenschen).³¹

Die Sprache des Rechts bildet den Untersuchungsgegenstand nicht nur der Fachsprachenforschung, sondern auch der Übersetzungswissenschaft und Rechtslinguistik, einer relativ neuen Wissenschaftsdisziplin im Spannungsfeld zwischen Recht und Sprache, die sich besonders infolge der rechtlichen Integration Europas und internationalen Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet des Rechts entwickelt hat und im Zentrum der Untersuchungen die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Recht und Sprache hat:

Recht ist ein durch Sprache konstituiertes Phänomen; Rechte, Pflichten und Kompetenzen werden z.B. in Gesetzen, Verträgen und Urteilen ausschließlich mittels Sprache gegründet, verändert und aufgehoben. Ohne Sprache als Ausdrucksform kommt das Recht nicht aus, es ist unausweichlich an diese gebunden und wird durch sie vermittelt. [...] Für die Existenz des Rechts stellt die Sprache eine absolute Notwendigkeit dar, aber Recht besteht nicht nur aus Sprache; umgekehrt braucht auch die Sprache das Recht, um den rechtlich-fachlichen Inhalt aufzuzeigen, der mittels Sprache zum Ausdruck zu bringen ist. Im Recht verschmelzen die rechtliche Substanz und die Sprache zu einer Einheit, Sprache und Recht sind somit zwei Seiten derselben Münze – unzertrennbar (Lindroos 2015, S. 38-39).

Die juristische Sprache ist Thema zahlreicher Publikationen aus unterschiedlichen Bereichen wie z.B. Rhetorik, Semantik, Rechtstheorie, forensischer Linguistik, Interpretation von Rechtstexten, Verständlichkeit von Gesetzestexten. Lindroos (2015, S. 40) exemplifiziert dies an den sieben Schnittfeldern von Sprache und Recht:

- I. Forensische Kommunikation: z. B. das sprachliche Verhalten der verschiedenen Parteien vor Gericht,
- II. Juristische Argumentation: d. h. das sich hinter den Einzelargumenten verbergende juristische Denken und die juristische Logik,

³¹ „Als wichtige Merkmale der Fachlichkeit gelten die besondere Kenntnis in dem gewählten Bereich und wie gut man sich das Studium, die Lehre, den Arbeitsprozess, die Kommunikationsgewohnheiten darin aneignet. Diese Aspekte materialisieren sich in ein Bewusstsein für Methoden und Arbeitsprozesse und für gut funktionierende Zusammenhänge der Tätigkeiten in einzelnen Bereichen. [...] Die Gemeinsprache hingegen charakterisiert sich durch Laienschaft. Sie ist die Sprache des Alltags und bildet die Gesamtheit der sprachlichen Mittel, die allen Angehörigen einer Sprachgemeinschaft zugänglich sind und die Verständigung zwischen ihnen ermöglicht. Somit wird die Gemeinsprache als Sprachform zum verbindlichen Vorbild für alle Sprachteilnehmer“ (Vladu 2020, S. 73-74).

- III. Forensische Linguistik: z. B. Schallanalysen zur Täterermittlung, grafologische Prüfung von Texten und statistische Textanalyse,
- IV. Rechtliche Regelungen der Sprachverwendung: u. a. Benennungsprobleme im Namensrecht und Warenschutz,
- V. Rechtliche Geltung sprachlicher Handlungen: u. a. die sprachliche Markierung der Geltung von Gesetzen und Normen,
- VI. Kriterien der Auslegung von Texten: d. h. die Interpretation von Texten unter Berücksichtigung des Redezusammenhangs, des Weltwissens der Beteiligten und der Rechtskultur, und
- VII. Sprachliche Anforderungen an die juristische Formulierung: d. h. das Zustandebringen eines verständlichen aber zugleich unmissverständlichen Rechtstextes mittels Sprache.

Die Rechtssprache kennzeichnet sich u.a. durch *Systemgebundenheit* und *Mehrfachadressiertheit* (Gesetzgeber, Richter, Rechtsanwälte, Universitätsprofessoren des Rechts, sonstige Leute, die sich berufsmäßig mit rechtlichen Aussagen befassen, Laien); sie ist sowohl eine interne Fachsprache als auch ein Informationsmedium und ein juristischer Technolekt (Kęsicka 2020). Unter Rechtssprache versteht man die Sprache der *Gesetzestexte*, der *Rechtsanwendung* (Verwaltung, Justiz), der *Doktrin* (Jurisprudenz) und die Sprache der *Juristen* als selbständige Teilsprache, die neben den sachlichen Kriterien auch die Juristen als Adressatenkreis der Kommunikation berücksichtigt. In der Fachsprachenforschung gibt es unterschiedliche Bezeichnungen für die Fachsprache des Rechts: Rechtssprache, Gesetzes- und Amtssprache, juristisch-administrative Sprache, Gerichts- und Behördenterminologie, Juristensprache, juristische Fachsprache, Sprache des Rechtswesens, Gesetzessprache, Rechts- und Verwaltungssprache.

Die primären Gebote, die an die juristische Fachsprache gelegt werden sind: das Gebot der *Präzision*, *Verständlichkeit* und *Effizienz* (Mylbacht 2010, S. 35). Ausgehend von diesen Geboten werden in der Fachliteratur unterschiedliche Textsortendifferenzierungen gemacht: a. *Gesetzessprache* (generell-abstrakte Rechtsnormen), *Urteils-* und *Bescheidsprache* (Gerichts- und Behördenentscheidungen), *Wissenschafts-* und *Gutachtensprache* (Klärung fachlicher Fragen), die *Sprache des behördlichen Schriftverkehrs* (Antragsvordrucke, Merkblätter, Ladungen, Rückfragen), *Verwaltungsjargon* („formlose Erörterung fachlicher und halbfachlicher Fragen von Fachleuten“, Otto 1981, S. 51), sonstige *Textsorten* (z.B. das Gespräch zwischen Verwaltungsmitarbeiter und Bürger, die behördliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, vgl. auch Sandrini 1996, S. 14); b. *Rechtssetzung* (Verträge, Satzungen), *Rechtswesen* (Urteile, Aussagen, Gutachten, Klageschriften usw.) und *Verwaltung* (Behördensprache und institutioneller Schriftverkehr, Sandrini 1999); c. nach dem Kriterium „präskriptiv/ deskriptiv“: primär *präskriptive* Texte (Gesetze, Verordnungen, Verträge), *hybride* Texte, die primär deskriptiv sind, aber auch präskriptive Teile enthalten (Klageschriften, Anträge) und *deskriptive Texte* (Lehrbücher, Arntz 2001, S. 285).

Juristische Texte sind informativ und legen den Akzent auf die Informationsvermittlung, daher müssen sie aus einem objektiven Standpunkt personenneutral verfasst werden, eine distanzierte Stellung aufweisen, präzise, eindeutig, ökonomisch und verständlich sein. Sie haben eine „direktive oder deskriptive Funktion und können deklarativ, beschreibend oder erläuternd sein; sie sind von Genauigkeit und Funktionalität geprägt“ (Vladu 2020, S. 74). Die juristische Fachsprache bedient sich zahlreicher standardsprachlicher Wörter zwecks der Allgemeinverständlichkeit, gleichzeitig aber soll sie auch unmissverständlich sein und daher enthält sie zahlreiche Verweise auf die

Fachliteratur, Gesetze, juristische Instanzen, oft in Form von Abkürzungen (z.B. § 188: Zur Anwendung vgl. § 31 Abs. 5 KVBG). Der juristische Fachstil, besonders in Gesetzestexten, charakterisiert sich durch eine Reihe von *Merkmale* (vgl. die übersichtliche Aufzählung von Mahlmann 2021):

- *Abstraktheit* (der Gesetzgeber formuliert Regelungen abstrakt und vertraut hinsichtlich der angemessenen Anwendung in Einzelfällen auf die Fähigkeit der Gerichte, z.B. „Wer Eigentümer einer Sache ist, kann in den Schranken der Rechtsordnung über sie nach seinem Belieben verfügen.“, ZGB 641 I);
- *Schlichtheit, Nüchternheit* (wichtig sind Präzision und Logik, z.B. „Durch den Mietvertrag verpflichtet sich der Vermieter, dem Mieter eine Sache zum Gebrauch zu überlassen, und der Mieter, dem Vermieter dafür einen Mietzins zu leisten“, OR 253);
- *Knappheit bzw. Ausführlichkeit* (zwecks der Übersichtlichkeit beschränken sich juristische Texte auf das Wichtigste; in manchen Rechtsgebieten aber weisen sie einen hohen Detaillierungsgrad auf, z.B. in Massenverträgen oder allgemeinen Geschäftsbedingungen);
- *Technizität* (viele Fachtermini, Verweise auf andere Gesetze und standardisierte Normen);
- *auslegungsbedürftige Fachausdrücke*, die z.T. auch im Alltagssprachlichen Gebrauch vorkommen (notwendige Voraussetzung ist die Kenntnis des genauen Bedeutungsinhalts der spezifischen rechtlichen Begriffe, die manchmal im Gesetz selbst definiert werden, z.B. „Zugehör sind die beweglichen Sachen, die nach der am Orte üblichen Auffassung oder nach dem klaren Willen des Eigentümers der Hauptsache dauernd für deren Bewirtschaftung, Benutzung oder Verwahrung bestimmt und durch Verbindung, Anpassung oder auf andere Weise in die Beziehung zur Hauptsache gebracht sind, in der sie ihr zu dienen haben“, ZGB 644 II);
- *Mehrdeutigkeit* von Rechtsbegriffen in verschiedenen Rechtsgebieten (Strafrecht, Zivilrecht, Steuerrecht, Handelsrecht usw.), z.B. ein und derselbe Rechtsbegriff kann je nach Rechtsgebiet oder Zusammenhang eine unterschiedliche Bedeutung haben (z.B. die Legaldefinition von „Anlagen“ im Bundesgesetz über den Umweltschutz unterscheidet sich von der im Bundesgesetz für Raumplanung);
- *lateinische Begriffe* und Wendungen, die griffig sind und infolge des Einflusses des römischen Rechts auf die heutige Rechtsordnung in der Rechtssprache weiterhin gebraucht werden (z.B. in casu="Im vorliegenden/konkreten Fall", ratio legis="Sinn/Zweck des Gesetzes", in dubio pro reo=Im Zweifel für den Angeklagten“).

Busse (1998, S. 24-47) beschreibt die Spezifik der Rechtssprache anhand folgender rechtsbegrifflicher Merkmale: *Fachlichkeit, Intertextualität, Normativität, Funktionalität*

und *Institutionalität* der Rechtsbegriffe. Die Fachlichkeit kommt zum Vorschein in Texten und Textbezügen und knüpft an den juristischen Wissensrahmen an für die Begriffserläuterung (die Bedeutung eines Rechtsbegriffs steht explizit im Gesetzestext oder wird erläutert durch Bezugnahme auf einen komplexeren Wissensrahmen). Das Recht ist ein komplexes Gebilde aus Wissensrahmen verschiedener miteinander verbundener Typen, die in inner- und intertextuellen Relationen zueinander stehen (z.B. Gesetzestexte im StGB und BGB) und ggf. auf andere Textsorten Bezug nehmen (z.B. Kommentartexte, Urteilstexte, rechtsdogmatische Texte). Normativität und Institutionalität sind miteinander verknüpft, indem Rechtsbegriffe mit entsprechenden Institutionen verbunden und dementsprechend interpretiert werden; der normative Charakter der Begriffsdeutung hängt von der Entsprechung zur herrschenden Meinung und kanonischen Gesetzesinterpretation ab („die Normativität juristischer Begriffsdeutungen hängt untrennbar mit dem institutionellen Charakter des Rechts zusammen“, Busse 1998, S. 41). Hinsichtlich der Funktionalität dienen Rechtsbegriffe³² als Instrumente der Absicherung der Regelungsfunktion durch das Recht („Damit sie situationsgerecht und flexibel handgehabt werden können, bleiben viele Begriffe funktional offen“, Kęsicka 2020, S. 10).

Die juristische Fachsprache weist spezifische *linguistische Merkmale* auf (lexikalisch, semantisch, morpho-syntaktisch), die bei der Beschreibung, Interpretation und didaktischen Vermittlung herangezogen werden können. Die wichtigsten davon sind:

- der *Nominalstil* (Nominalisierungen, Genitive, Phrasen), z.B. die Verfügung über das Vermögen, die Nichtigkeitserklärung des Vertrags vom Gericht, die Genehmigung des Jahresabschlusses durch die Hauptversammlung, die Entscheidung des Gerichtes über die Bestellung des Gutachters, notarielle Niederschrift, herabgesetztes Stammkapital einer Handelsgesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung, bezüglich des Gegenstands der Gesellschaft, mangels Sicherheitsleistung;
- die *unpersönlichen Formulierungen*, z.B. Forderungen werden abgetreten;
- *Phraseologismen* und *Kollokationen*, z.B. ungerechtfertigte Bereicherung, natürliche/ juristische Person, Schaden ersetzen, den Vertrag eingehen/ abschließen, in Wahrnehmung persönlicher Rechte, jn. freisprechen;
- *Funktionsverbgefüge* (Verben im Indikativ 3. Person Sg.), z.B. das Gesetz tritt in Kraft, einen Vorstandsbeschluss fassen, eine Maßnahme ergreifen, eine Verpflichtung eingehen;
- *Modalverben* zum Ausdruck des Verbots, Gebots, der Erlaubnis oder Berechtigung, z.B. Die Satzung muss durch notarielle Beurkundung festgestellt werden, Zustimmungen müssen öffentlich beurkundet werden, die Benachrichtigungen dürfen unterbleiben;
- *Wortbildungsverfahren*: Terminologisierung, Komposition, Derivation, Konversion, z.B. Gesellschaft, Bestellung, Unternehmen, Schadenersatz,

³² Man unterscheidet zwischen primären und sekundären Rechtsbegriffen: die primären beschreiben spezifisch juristische Verhältnisse und Vorgänge, sie werden intern im Fachgebiet des Rechts gebildet; die sekundären stammen aus der Gemeinsprache und werden durch die Rechtssprache übernommen, mit derselben oder legal näher definierten Bedeutung (bestimmte und unbestimmte Rechtsbegriffe; vgl. Kęsicka 2020, S. 10).

- Kapitalbeschaffung, Rechtspersönlichkeit, Übermittlung, Wirksamkeitsvoraussetzung, Verfahren, Handeln, der/die Vertretungsbefugte;
- *Komposita*, z.B. Gläubigerverzug, Unterlassungsklage, Grunderwerbsteuererklärung, Grundkapitalsteigerung, Finanzdienstleistungsinstitut, Rechtsanwendung, -beratung, -geschäft, -streit, -verletzung;
 - *Ableitungen* auf -ung und anderen Suffixen, z.B. Haftung, Anhörung, Beglaubigung, Willenserklärung, die Ausscheidung, die Befugnis, die Nichtigkeit, die Kenntnisnahme;
 - *Fachtermini* und *terminologisierte Begriffe* aus der Allgemeinsprache, z.B. Besitz/ Eigentum, Gesamthandseigentum, Leihe/Ausleihe, Verurteilung („Missbilligung/negative Bewertung einer Handlungsweise“ vs. rechtssprachlich „Auferlegung einer gerichtlichen Strafe“), Bestellung („Auftrag zur Lieferung von etw.“ vs. rechtssprachlich die Ernennung/ Wahl in eine Funktion), Entscheidung („Festlegen von etw. Strittigem“ vs. rechtssprachlich „endgültiges Urteil, Schiedsspruch im Zivilrecht“), Vertragsbestimmung, Rechtsbegründung, Gesetzregelung, Notarbeglaubigung, auf Gerichtswege, Insolvenz (Zahlungsunfähigkeit)³³;
 - *lateinisch-griechische Fremdwörter*, z.B. Cessio legis=Forderungsübergang kraft Gesetzes, Debitor=Schuldner, ex officio=von Amts wegen, Culpa lata=grobe Fahrlässigkeit, praesumptio facti=Tatsachenvermutung, Amnestie, Notar, Bilanz, Aktie;
 - *geschlechtsneutrale Ausdrucksformen*, z.B. Pluralformen, Paarformen wie „Bürgerinnen und Bürger“, „der/die AntragstellerIn“, Sparformen oder Vollformen mit Schrägstrich und femininer Endung wie „Inhaber/Inhaberin“, „Antragsteller/in“;
 - *Konnektoren* und *Verweise als Kohäsionsmittel*, z.B. Wortwiederholungen, Paraphrasen, Pronomina, konkrete Teile des Gesetzes, anaphorische/kataphorische Sprachmittel, Korrelate, Hyperonymie/Hyponymie: „wenn nichts anderes bestimmt ist“, § 678 des Gesetzes;
 - *Adjektive* im Positiv, auf -lich, -bar, haft, -sam u.a., z.B. gesetzlich, juristisch, schriftlich, haftbar;
 - *indirekte Rede*, Fehlen von Dialogen und Stilmitteln, keine Gefühlsäußerungen oder persönliche Erfahrungen;
 - *lexikalische Metapher als rechtssprachliche Kondensation* mittels faktitiver Verben (z.B. erfolgen, ergehen, stattfinden, geschehen, eintreten): „aus der

³³ Die Top 20 juristische Begriffe im Rechtslexikon online sind: Rentenbesteuerung, Ruhestörung, Generalvollmacht, Kündigungsschreiben Wohnung Vorlage, Hausverbot, Schweigepflichtentbindung, Nutzungsänderung, Abtretungserklärung, Frührente, Einfriedung, Kontosperrung, Existenzminimum, Sicherheitsüberprüfung, Nutzungsänderung - Baurecht, Lohn- und Gehaltsgruppeneinteilung, Außenbereich, Stundenlohn berechnen, Kinderlärm, Sonderurlaub Hochzeit, Rückzahlungsklausel. Neue und aktualisierte Begriffe sind: Insolvenzmasse, Abmahnanwalt, Schuldnerberatung, Haftpflichtversicherung, Verbraucherinsolvenz, Gebäudeversicherung, Urheberrechtsverletzung, Insolvenzgericht, Gläubigervergleich, Schutzschirmverfahren, Schutzrechte, Übergangsregelung, Anzeigepflicht, Geschäftsraummieta, Krankentagegeldversicherung, Geschädigter, Urheber, Urheberrecht ausüben, Anlage, Faktischer Vertrag (vgl. <https://www.juraforum.de/lexikon/>, 25.07.2021).

Entscheidung findet die Zwangsvollstreckung nach den Vorschriften der ZPO statt.“, „Die Zeichnung der neuen Aktien geschieht durch schriftliche Erklärung“;

- *komplexer Satzbau* mit langen Sätzen und hoher Informationsdichte („Schachtelsätze“), oft subjektlos, viele Kommas und Verweise auf Fachliteratur und Gesetze, z.B. „Mörder ist, wer aus Mordlust, zur Befriedigung des Geschlechtstriebes, aus Habgier oder sonst aus niedrigen Beweggründen, heimtückisch oder grausam oder mit gemeingefährlichen Mitteln oder um eine andere Straftat zu ermöglichen oder zu verdecken, einen Menschen tötet.“- §211 (2) StGB, „Hat jedoch derjenige, welchem gegenüber ein solches Rechtsgeschäft vorzunehmen war, die von dem Vertreter behauptete Vertretungsmacht bei der Vornahme des Rechtsgeschäfts nicht beanstandet oder ist er damit einverstanden gewesen, dass der Vertreter ohne Vertretungsmacht handle, so finden die Vorschriften über Verträge entsprechende Anwendung“ (vgl. auch Košárková 2013, Mylbachr 2010);
- *Relativsätze, Konditionalsätze* (wenn, soweit, sofern, solange...so, dann), *Temporalsätze, Konzessivsätze, Finalsätze*, z.B. unter der Voraussetzung, dass..., in Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass..., „Absatz 3 gilt nicht, wenn das Unternehmen übernommen wird“, „Börsennotiert im Sinne dieses Gesetzes sind Gesellschaften, deren Aktien zu einem Markt zugelassen sind, der von staatlich anerkannten Stellen geregelt und überwacht wird, regelmäßig stattfindet und für das Publikum mittelbar oder unmittelbar zugänglich ist.“, „Soweit ein Aktionär nach Einberufung der Hauptversammlung dem Kreditinstitut zu den einzelnen Gegenständen der Tagesordnung Weisungen für die Ausübung des Stimmrechts erteilt hat, braucht das Kreditinstitut keine eigenen Vorschläge nach Absatz 2 mitzuteilen und den Aktionär nicht um Erteilung von Weisungen zu bitten.“, „Sobald einem Unternehmen mehr als der vierte Teil der Aktien einer Aktiengesellschaft mit Sitz im Inland gehört, hat es dies der Gesellschaft unverzüglich schriftlich mitzuteilen.“, „Eine Gesellschaft kann, gleichgültig welche Vereinbarung Vereinbarungen über die Berechnung des abzuführenden Gewinns getroffen worden sind, ... abführen“, „die der Zahlungsdienstnutzer angeben muss, damit der andere am Zahlungsvorgang beteiligte Zahlungsdienstnutzer oder dessen Zahlungskonto zweifelsfrei ermittelt werden kann“;
- *Kürzungen* (Abkürzungen, Akronyme), z.B. § 218: Anwendbar ab 16.6.1993 gem. Abschn. II Nr. 1 nach Maßgabe der Nr. 2 bis 9 der Entscheidungsformel gem. BVerfGE v. 28.5.1993 I 820 - 2 BvF 2/90 u. a.;
- Vermeidung von Fremdwörtern und Auswahl von *einheimischen Ausdrücken*, z.B. „der Squeeze-Out“= Ausschluss von Minderheitsaktionären, Übertragung von Aktien gegen Barabfindung (§ 327a BGB).

Die *Präzision* und *Ökonomie* in Gesetzestexten lassen sich an dem Lapidarstil (Knappheit), der haarscharfen Genauigkeit, der sachlichen, nüchternen Ausdrucksweise und des Ausdrucks vom Machtbewusstsein des befehlenden Staates erkennen. Die *Unpersönlichkeit* wird grammatisch realisiert durch: Passiv- und Passiversatzformen,

Reflexivkonstruktionen (sein/haben zu+ Infinitiv, sich lassen, z.B. „der Vertrag über die Verengung des gesetzlich festgelegten Umfangs des Gesamteigentums der Ehegatten ist amtlich zu beurkunden“, „Der Vorstand hat der Hauptversammlung die in § 175 Abs. 2 angegebenen Vorlagen vorzulegen.“), unpersönliche Pronomina (man, es), Partizipial- und Infinitivkonstruktionen (z.B. „Bei der Bekanntmachung dieser Festsetzungen genügt die Bezugnahme auf die vom Gericht eingereichten Urkunden.“, „Das Recht der Gläubiger, Sicherheitsleistung zu verlangen, ist unabhängig davon, ob Zahlungen an die Aktionäre auf Grund der Herabsetzung des Grundkapitals geleistet werden.“), substantivierte Verben zur Beschreibung juristischer Rolle des Handelnden (Antragsteller, Beklagter), abstraktes Agens (z.B. Das Gericht stellt fest, dass...).

Die *emotionslose Sprache* dient der Bewertung bestimmter Tatbestände unter dem Aspekt der Normkonformität (expressive neutrale Rechtswörter); gleichzeitig aber nutzt die Rechtssprache gezielt das affektive Potenzial allgemeinsprachlicher Lexik, um auszudrücken, was als erwünscht/unerwünscht gilt, das Unrecht zu verdeutlichen und „den Adressaten auf eine bestimmte, auch an kollektive Werthaltungen anschließende Wertung hin zu lenken“ (vgl. Keşicka 2020, S. 13-14). Solche affektiven Lexeme und Kollokationen sowie emphatische Floskeln sind z.B. Mord, Gewalt, kriminelle/terroristische Vereinigung, Bande, Drohung, es kann nicht außer Betracht bleiben, dringend geboten sein, mit Nachdruck ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass..., nicht zu erwarten sein, dass..., sich zugunsten des Angeklagten auswirken müssen, grob irrtümlich ist der Ansatz.

Der *direktive Charakter* der Rechtssprache spiegelt sich im Verhältnis „Autorität des Rechts und Gehorsamkeit von Normadressaten“ wider und wird sprachlich realisiert durch die Verwendung von performativen Verben (z.B. gebieten, verbieten, gelten, verpflichten, anordnen, untersagen, gestatten, zulassen) in normativen Rechtsakten zur Regelung sozialer Beziehungen, Formulierung von Geboten, Verboten, Erlaubnis oder Befehl, z.B. „Der Beschuldigte soll schriftlich bestätigen, dass er belehrt wurde“, „Jeder Beteiligte wird ohne Rücksicht auf die Schuld des anderen nach seiner Schuld bestraft“, „Widerruft das Gesetz die Strafaussetzung nicht, so erlässt es die Strafe nach Ablauf der Bewährungszeit“. Normvorschriften sind knapp formuliert und die Schlüsselinformation ist leicht auffindbar (vgl. Keşicka 2020, S. 15).

Zur Veranschaulichung dieser Merkmale seien ein paar Beispieltex-te gegeben: Gesetzestext aus dem Strafrecht (StGB), Beschlusstext des Bundesgerichtshofs (BGH) und Urteilstext aus dem Zivilrecht:

§ 211 Mord. (1) Der Mörder wird mit lebenslanger Freiheitsstrafe bestraft. (2) Mörder ist, wer aus Mordlust, zur Befriedigung des Geschlechtstriebes, aus Habgier oder sonst aus niedrigen Beweggründen, heimtückisch oder grausam oder mit gemeingefährlichen Mitteln oder um eine andere Straftat zu ermöglichen oder zu verdecken, einen Menschen tötet.

Fußnote. § 211: Nach Maßgabe der Entscheidungsgründe mit dem GG vereinbar, BVerfGE v. 21.6.1977 I 1236 - 1 BvL 14/76 (StGB)

BGH, Beschluss vom 23. Juli 2020 in dem Verfahren auf Aufhebung eines inländischen Schiedsspruchs. ZPO § 1059 Abs. 2 Nr. 2 Buchst. b, § 1042 Abs. 1 Satz 1; GG Art. 3 Abs. 1, Art. 20 Abs. 3 Der verfassungsrechtliche Grundsatz prozessualer Waffengleichheit aus Art. 3 Abs. 1 in Verbindung mit Art. 20 Abs. 3 GG, der für das Schiedsverfahren einfachrechtlich in § 1042 Abs. 1 Satz 1 ZPO geregelt ist, gehört zum verfahrensrechtlichen ordre public.

BGH, Beschluss vom 23. Juli 2020- I ZB 88/19 – Kammergericht. Der I. Zivilsenat des Bundesgerichtshofs hat am 23. Juli 2020 durch den Vorsitzenden Richter Prof. Dr. Koch, den Richter Prof. Dr. Schaffert, die Richterinnen Pohl und Dr. Schmaltz und den Richter Odörfer beschlossen: Die Rechtsbeschwerde gegen den Beschluss des 12. Zivilsenats des Kammergerichts vom 26. September 2019 wird auf Kosten der Antragstellerin zurückgewiesen. Der Gegenstandswert für das Rechtsbeschwerdeverfahren wird auf 851.916,34 € festgesetzt.³⁴

BGH, Urteil vom 23. November 2010 - VI ZR 35/10 - OLG Köln. Im Namen des Volkes. Urteil. BGB § 249 Abs. 2 Satz 1 Gb, Hb a) Ein Unfallgeschädigter kann (fiktiv) die vom Sachverständigen geschätzten Reparaturkosten bis zur Höhe des Wiederbeschaffungswerts in der Regel nur abrechnen, wenn er das Fahrzeug mindestens sechs Monate weiternutzt und es zu diesem Zweck- falls erforderlich- verkehrssicher (teil-)reparieren lässt. b) Vor Ablauf der Sechs-Monats-Frist kann der Geschädigte, der sein Fahrzeug tatsächlich repariert oder reparieren lässt, Reparaturkosten, die den Wiederbeschaffungswert nicht übersteigen, regelmäßig nur ersetzt verlangen, wenn er den konkret angefallenen Reparaturaufwand geltend macht.

Der VI. Zivilsenat des Bundesgerichtshofs hat im schriftlichen Verfahren mit Schriftsatzfrist bis 2. November 2010 durch den Vorsitzenden Richter Galke, die Richter Wellner, Pauge und Stöhr sowie die Richterin von Pentz für Recht erkannt: Auf die Revision der Beklagten wird das Urteil des 11. Zivilsenats des Oberlandesgerichts Köln vom 13. Januar 2010 im Kostenpunkt und insoweit aufgehoben, als auf die Berufung des Klägers das Urteil des Landgerichts teilweise abgeändert worden ist. Die Berufung des Klägers gegen das Urteil des Landgerichts wird insgesamt zurückgewiesen. Im Übrigen wird die Revision zurückgewiesen. Von den Kosten der ersten Instanz tragen der Kläger 74%, die Beklagten 26%. Von den Kosten der zweiten Instanz tragen der Kläger 69%, die Beklagten 31%. Von den Kosten des Revisionsverfahrens tragen der Kläger 66%, die Beklagten 34%. Von Rechts wegen.³⁵

ZUR FACHLICHKEIT UND VERSTÄNDLICHKEIT JURISTISCHER TEXTE

Die Sprache ist das wichtigste Verständigungsmittel in der Kommunikation und folglich stark konventionalisiert. Linguistisch wird die Verständlichkeit von Texten anhand der Einfachheit, Kürze, Prägnanz, Gliederung und Ordnung bewertet; es wird also auf *Wortwahl*, *Satz-* und *Textaufbau* geachtet. Die Antwort auf die Frage „Wie soll man formulieren?“ lautet „klar, knapp und verständlich“ (vgl. auch List 2017). Insbesondere im Falle des Juristendeutsch spielt Verständlichkeit eine grundlegende Rolle; damit verbunden sind auch weitere Merkmale wie Sprachrichtigkeit, Klarheit, Zweckmäßigkeit, Effizienz, Kürze, Genauigkeit, Funktionalität, Eindeutigkeit und Rücksichtnahme auf den üblichen Sprachgebrauch. Diese sind wichtige Aspekte der Informationsvermittlung sowohl bei der Interpretation juristischer Texte durch Fachleute und Bürger (Laien) als auch bei der Übersetzung und dem interkulturellen Vergleich von Gesetzesregelungen. Die juristische Fachsprache ist geprägt von Fachtermini und Terminologisierungen, sie benutzt oft allgemeinsprachliche Wörter mit fachspezifisch juristischer Bedeutung, die auf den ersten Blick verständlich scheinen, bei einer genaueren Betrachtung aber Schwierigkeiten bezüglich der Verständlichkeit und Begriffsabgrenzung darstellen können. Hinzu kommen noch der spezifische juristische Formulierungsstil und die linguistischen Merkmale juristischer Texte, die den wichtigen Aspekt der Fachlichkeit und Verständlichkeit in den

³⁴ Beschluss des I. Zivilsenats vom 23.7.2020 – I ZB 88/19- Zugriff am 10.07.2021 unter: <https://www.rws-verlag.de/aktuell/wirtschaftsrecht-aktuell/bgh-beschluss-vom-23-juli-2020-i-zb-8819-65033/>.

³⁵ Urteil vom 23. November 2010 - VI ZR 35/10 - OLG Köln. Zugriff am 10.07.2021 unter: <https://www.rws-verlag.de/fileadmin/zbb-volltexte/6ZR3510.pdf>

Vordergrund fachlicher, linguistischer und translatorischer Auseinandersetzungen bringen und darauf wird im Folgenden kurz eingegangen.

Juristische Texte, insbesondere Gesetzestexte müssen sprachlich richtig und für das breite Publikum verständlich formuliert werden. Eine klare Gesetzessprache schafft Normenklarheit, d.h. dass die Adressaten dadurch den rechtlichen Rahmen erkennen sollen und ihr Verhalten adäquat anpassen können, z.B. das Strafgesetzbuch (StGB). Genauigkeit und Eindeutigkeit sind besonders wichtig, daher muss auch die *Wortwahl* treffend und zeitgemäß sein; die Wörter sollen logisch richtig verwendet werden, Modewörter und Fremdwörter sowie veraltete Wörter und lange Wortzusammensetzungen sollten vermieden werden (z.B. „weltweit“ statt „global“, „Prozent“ statt „vom Hundert“). Da viele Wörter auch in der Allgemeinsprache vorkommen, müssen Missverständnisse vermieden werden und auf die Eigenheiten der Fachsprache beim Abfassen von Gesetzen und Rechtsverordnungen geachtet werden (z.B. „Eigentum“ und „Besitz“, „Darlehen“ und „Leihe“, „Mord“ und „Totschlag“, „Schuld“, „Widmung“); dafür können Begriffsbestimmungen vorgesehen werden. Im Falle der Polysemie müssen die Bedeutungsunterschiede und die richtige Verwendung gründlich überprüft werden. Fachausdrücke sollen eindeutig und einheitlich verwendet werden, zwischen Präzision und Verständlichkeit muss Ausgewogenheit bestehen.

Nützliche Hinweise zur *Satzlänge* und zum *Satzbau* sind:

- die Verwendung von kürzeren Sätzen, da sie einfacher zu verstehen sind;
- die Formulierung der Kernaussagen am Anfang;
- die Auflösung von Schachtelsätzen, die aus einem Hauptsatz und mehreren Nebensätzen bestehen, in mehrere Hauptsätze oder kürzere Satzgefüge;
- Hauptgedanken in den Hauptsatz;
- Bevorzugung der Verben;
- Vermeidung der Attributketten und langen Partizipialkonstruktionen (stattdessen Verwendung von Relativsätzen); keine Füllwörter;
- Vermeidung von Passiv, Bevorzugung des Aktivs;
- Vermeidung von Wiederholungen (stattdessen Verwendung von z.B. „dies“, „er/sie/es“, „solche“, „welche“ oder „dabei“, „hierdurch“, sofern eindeutig zugeordnet);
- erläuternde Zusätze („beispielsweise“, „insbesondere“, „vor allem“, „zum Beispiel“) sollten bei Überschreitung einer gewissen Länge in einen eigenen Satz gestellt werden.

Bezüglich des *Textaufbaus* helfen eine klare Gliederung und ein folgerichtiger Aufbau zur Sicherung der Verständlichkeit; Überflüssiges soll weggelassen werden und Aufzählungen (von Rechten, Pflichten u.a.) listenförmig angeordnet und durchnummeriert werden. Die sprachliche Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern soll in Gesetzestexten beachtet werden, dafür ist eine nützliche Lösung die Verwendung der geschlechtsneutralen Personenbezeichnungen (z.B. „Person“, „Mitglied“, „Hilfe“, „Kraft“, „Ratsmitglied“, „alle“, „diejenigen“, „niemand“, Pluralformen).

Nicht zuletzt seien noch ein paar Aspekte genannt, die zur Verständlichkeit beitragen: die *Schreibweisen*, *Abkürzungen*, *Stichtage* und *Fristen*. Zahlen und Bruchteile werden in Wörtern geschrieben, ab 13 in Ziffern; bei einstelligen Ziffern wird keine Null

vorangeschrieben; Geldbeträge werden in Ziffern geschrieben. Abkürzungen werden im laufenden Text von Rechtsvorschriften grundsätzlich nicht verwendet; sie werden in Tabellen, Übersichten oder Formeln zur besseren Klarheit geboten; Abkürzungen für Verfassungsorgane stehen im Abkürzungsverzeichnis des Bundesverwaltungsamtes. Bei der Formulierung von Stichtagen muss eindeutig ausgedrückt sein, ob der jeweils genannte Tag einbezogen wird; wenn als Stichtag der erste oder letzte Tag eines Monats/Jahres genannt wird, ist in der Regel der Schluss des letzten Tages des Monats/Jahres um Mitternacht (24 Uhr) oder der Anfang des ersten Tages des Monats oder Jahres um Mitternacht (0 Uhr) gemeint. Fristen werden grundsätzlich nach ganzen Tagen berechnet. (vgl. die übersichtlichen Empfehlungen für das Formulieren von Rechtsvorschriften herausgegeben vom Bundesministerium für Justiz 2008).

AUSBLICK

Ziel der vorliegenden Arbeit war es, die linguistischen Merkmale der juristischen Fachsprache aus der Perspektive der Fachlichkeit und Verständlichkeit darzustellen und die Schwierigkeiten beim Umgang mit juristischen Texten zu problematisieren bzw. Lösungsvorschläge für eine erfolgreiche Vermittlung und Interpretation der Rechtssprache zu bieten. Die juristische Fachsprache oder die Rechtssprache ist Gegenstand sowohl der Fachsprachenforschung als auch der Rechtslinguistik und Übersetzungswissenschaft. Sie wird aus verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten im Hinblick auf verschiedene Adressaten analysiert, z.B. Juristen in der fachinternen Kommunikation, Studierende von Fachsprachen, Linguisten und Übersetzer in der interfachlichen Kommunikation oder das Massenpublikum als Laien in der fachexternen Kommunikation, die sich zu verschiedenen Gelegenheiten mindestens einmal mit juristischen Texten, seien es Gesetzestexte, Vorschriften, Verträge, Amtsschriften u.a. auseinandersetzen müssen.

Die juristische Fachsprache charakterisiert sich durch eine Reihe fachspezifischer und sprachlicher Merkmale, die von grundlegender Bedeutung sowohl bei der weiteren fachinternen Differenzierung und Abgrenzung als auch bei der didaktischen Vermittlung und erfolgreichen Übersetzung sind. Fachlichkeit, Präzision, Abstraktheit und eine hohe Informationsdichte sind typische Merkmale von Fachsprachen, die entsprechend spezifische lexikalisch-grammatische Strukturen aufweisen (Nominalstil, unpersönliche Formulierungen, komplexe Syntax, Abkürzungen, Kohäsionsmittel, Fachtermini u.a.). Im Falle der Rechtssprache ist es besonders wichtig, dass sie verständlich und eindeutig ist, so dass sie auch von dem Durchschnittsbürger richtig verstanden und interpretiert werden kann. Obwohl sie sich in großem Umfang der Gemeinsprache bedient, stellen die zahlreichen Terminologisierungen in der juristischen Sprache Schwierigkeiten bei der richtigen Begriffsabgrenzung und Bedeutungsfixierung; wenn wir noch die Schachtelsätze, Latinismen und zahlreichen Abkürzungen und Verweise auf weitere Gesetzestextstellen oder Vorschriften hinzufügen, wird der Umgang mit juristischen Texten zu einer Herausforderung sogar für Fachleute, Linguisten und Übersetzer.

Der studienbegleitende Fachsprachenunterricht ist aus didaktischer Sicht ein nützliches Hilfsmittel zur Aneignung und Einübung der sprachlichen Strukturen juristischer Texte, der Fachlexik, Wortschatzabgrenzung, Terminologisierungs- und Wortbildungsverfahren. Probleme der Mehrdeutigkeit und Verständlichkeit können durch kurze, knappe,

eindeutige Formulierungen beseitigt werden. Im Falle der Übersetzung ist es wichtig, das passende Begriffs- oder Bezeichnungsäquivalent oder die passende Paraphrase zu finden; dabei muss auch auf den kulturellen Aspekt geachtet werden, z.B. im internationalen Recht oder Rechtsvergleich. In diesem Sinne braucht der Translator Jurakenntnisse oder sogar eine Jurausbildung.

Sachlichkeit, Klarheit, Präzision und Transparenz juristischer Formulierungen sind eine notwendige Voraussetzung für die Verständlichkeit der Texte und für eine erfolgreiche Kommunikation unter Experten oder mit Laien. Nützlich ist in diesem Sinne die Vermeidung von Schachtelsätzen und langen Partizipialkonstruktionen und die Verwendung stattdessen von kurzen Sätzen oder Satzgefügen mit logisch klarer Gliederung. Bezüglich der Fachlichkeit der juristischen Sprache ist die klare Begriffsbestimmung, Exaktheit bei der Beschreibung der Sachverhalte, Vermeidung von langen Wortzusammensetzungen und eine treffende Wortwahl besonders wichtig, weshalb eindeutige Definitionen zur Sicherung der Verständlichkeit entweder im Text oder Anhang geboten werden sollen. Die Verweise, Symbole und Abkürzungen sollen übersichtlich und leicht auffindbar sein. Besonders weil juristische Texte normativen Charakter haben, ist es wichtig, dass sie nicht missverständlich oder unverständlich für den Adressaten sind. Die Verständlichkeit soll jedoch nicht zum Nachteil der inhaltlichen und juristischen Genauigkeit werden; beide sollen in einem ausgewogenen Verhältnis zueinander stehen.

Schließlich soll auf die Rolle der Rechtslinguistik und die interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit zwischen Linguisten, Übersetzern und Juristen hingewiesen werden, die zum einen Lösungsstrategien zur erfolgreichen Vermittlung der sprachlichen und inhaltlichen Merkmale der Rechtssprache entwickeln können, zum anderen weitere problematische Aspekte bezüglich der Verständlichkeit und Fachlichkeit beim Umgang mit juristischen Texten aufdecken und zur Debatte stellen können. Juristische Texte werden für das breite Publikum entworfen und sollen folglich trotz der Informationsdichte verständlich bleiben.

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The Importance of Teacher-Student Emotional Rapport in the Foreign Language Classroom

OANA PAPUC³⁶

Abstract: Based on recent research in the realm of language learning and in the wake of adopting a more holistic approach stemming from positive psychology, some new directions in understanding the foreign language classroom are seemingly taking shape. These directions are marked by an interest in the emotional factors directing teacher-student interactions in online and offline classrooms. Thus, they inform not only language learning behavior, but also teacher and student attitudes to language learning, to multilingualism and to classroom performance of co-created social roles. These elements directly influence student success, if the latter is defined as having developed lifelong learning skills, alongside self-monitoring and self-assessment abilities.

Particularly in light of the reconfigurations brought about by the onset of teaching in the post-pandemic world, the author firmly believes in the importance of introducing concepts such as foreign language anxiety and enjoyment, teacher enthusiasm, to name just a few, in the vocabulary of experienced and beginner teachers alike. Student motivation and engagement have become even more so than before the affluent currency in the post-pandemic world. For these reasons, the current paper proposes drawing much needed attention to these aspects through a thorough review of the current literature on these themes, questioning how transference of these parameters can be made from offline to online modes of teaching and learning.

Keywords: *classroom identity, positive psychology, Foreign Language Enjoyment, Foreign Language Anxiety, emotional intelligence*

INTRODUCTION

The present paper advocates for researchers, teachers, curricula creators and policy makers alike to take into consideration the growing importance of the emotional landscape of classroom environments. These aspects have been revealed in recent years, by studies on the emotional background of professor-student and peer-to-peer interactions heavily influencing the rate of student success in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, the aims of this paper are to offer enough reasons for kindling the interest in promoting further research on the topic, in the hopes of improving existing approaches to the teaching-learning process, especially in the student-centered teaching paradigm.

In order to do so, a thorough review of literature was performed on a majority of studies published in recent years. In the selection of papers, special attention was paid to identifying key words related to the description of the emotional nature inherent to the interactions and activities that multilingual students and teachers usually engage in, during

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the teaching-learning process. The investigation was further guided by including research belonging to the realm of positive psychology. For this reason, terms such as ‘anxiety’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘personality’, ‘emotional intelligence’, and ‘motivation’ were added to an analysis that was already firmly situated in the interactionist perspective. Lastly, adding current reconceptualizations of multilingual interactions under the guise of academic exchanges taking place in superdiverse micro-communities provided the final touch in source selection.

Thus, it becomes paramount to deconstruct the term ‘emotional’ into meaningful and intelligible parameters to help other researchers in finding the right tools for inquiry when creating better suited activities for their students. For this purpose, the model proposed by Dewaele (2016, 2017) and his signature coordinates, Trait Emotional Intelligence, Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Anxiety in the Classroom will be further detailed. Furthermore, the importance of teachers being aware of their attitudes in relation to their students and the emotional imprint of past teaching experiences onto adopted teaching styles is imperative. An awareness of the emotional charge that teachers help build in the foreign language classroom is crucial as well, since many teachers are in fact English L2 (non-native) learners themselves (Medgyes, 2001). So, the processes of lesson planning and teaching are also modeled by the instructors’ own experience learning foreign languages, this playing an important part in reaching desired outcomes during lesson planning and during on-site performance.

Similarly, the aims of the current paper are based on the revealed importance of taking into account the emotional dimension of the teaching-learning process, which was initially derived from the author’s research on code-switching (Papuc, 2019). In fact, this ‘emotional factor’ was one of the main drivers of the student-professor and peer-to-peer conversations that were recorded taking place during a CLIL task-based seminar.

At the same time, empirically observing and taking note of many students’ informal confessions of their struggles in the foreign language classroom, be it an English for Specific Purposes class, or one for foreign-language learning (the author having experience teaching both), the same emotional factor arises as being one of the most difficult to manage by students. The literature on the subject of students’ experience in the ESL and FL classrooms reveals similar outcomes, the social anxiety associated with learning environments, as well as a lack of confidence and lower levels of self-esteem being cited as primary obstacles in the learning process:

[...] This phenomenon was already confirmed in Komlosi-Ferdinand’s (2020) study, where EFL learners stated that they expected unconditional emotional validation from the teachers, and in most cases their emotions and learning outcomes heavily relied on the educators’ skills and enthusiasm. The findings also confirm Pekrun et al.’s (2002) ideas, namely that emotions deeply impact on motivation and cognition (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019, p. 75).

Moreover, there is substantial individual student awareness of learning needs, strengths and weaknesses, as pointed out when qualitatively reviewing SWOT analyses modeled by the author, at the beginning of two distinct academic years (2019-2020, 2020-2021), as a classroom task. It must be noted though that these issues have not been engaged yet in statistically relevant forms of inquiry. However, at this stage, especially after the

transition from face-to-face teaching to online modes of academic interactions with students, this factor seems to be that much more important when mapping out the challenges and advantages of these two different forms of communication. Additionally, the challenges that were reported by students and professors alike when dealing with online teaching exclusively (Lischer et al., 2021) are pointing yet again to the social nature of this process. Nonetheless, this is an aspect that can sometimes be paradoxically overlooked when strictly focusing on the minutiae of creating teaching sequences, activities, and tasks spread out over the course of an academic year, alongside the development of various assessment tools. For this reason, it is of utmost importance for this aspect of the teaching-learning process to be taken into account, rather concretely during the lesson planning phase, so that student success may be reached in a more effective manner:

The only thing that teachers can draw from the literature on personality in SLA is the realization that different learners have different personality profiles that the teacher may be required to accommodate individually in interactions with students, depending on their profile. Crucially, all learners have the potential to make good progress. Teachers thus need to create a safe place, with a positive emotional atmosphere, where all students feel they belong, and where all get the opportunity to try out their new language skills with sufficient encouragement from teacher and peers (Dewaele, 2021, p. 9).

Concurrently, the rise in promotion of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework, as well as recent iterations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) offer well-rounded and realistic portraits of multilingual speakers when listing indicators of different language abilities. Furthermore, the realistic settings that are associated with various ‘real-life’ scenarios that require the use of these different abilities highlight the dialogic and social nature of language use. The addition of the pluricultural and plurilingual competences of current day speakers, in the CEFR, manages to ground language use in the interactionist perspective, as well as to take stock of the effects of spreading globalization and migration patterns. Thus, language use is not reduced to a purely linguistic framework, divorced from the reality of actual speaker behavior, communication purposes, speaker intentionality, the unpredictability of turns-at-talk, and the imperfections of multi-speaker interactions (overlaps, interruptions, shifts in topic, code-switching strategies, co-constructions and negotiations of social scripts and personas, and so on).

In other words, all these elements are explicitly marked as being crucial to foreign language communication unfolding between speakers, even though some of these phenomena might have been studied at micro-level in the past, by adopting primarily linguistic frameworks and models for understanding particular aspects related to language use. Whereas for a comprehensive understanding of ‘linguaging phenomena’ at macro level (acc. to Jørgensen’s model), the apparent rise of linguistic assemblages (Pennycook, 2017), superdiverse communities (Jørgensen & Ag, 2012; Jørgensen & Varga, 2011) and hypersubjectivities (Hall, 2014) require all to be reconciled in the sociolinguistic framework.

Lastly, since the setting of a classroom is, in fact, the terrain for an essentially social landscape in which performance-based tasks and activities are conducted, for the specific enhancement of writing, reading, speaking and listening abilities involving the use of a large

percentage of complex cognitive processes, it can be said that teaching and learning alike are both fundamentally and profoundly two-fold in nature - *intellectual* and *emotional*.

BELIEFS, IDENTITY AND EMOTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM - DISAMBIGUATION OF CONCEPTS AND KEY-WORDS

As mentioned in the Introduction, the author's initial inkling to realizing the importance of taking into account the emotional imprint of the teaching-learning sequences in the FL classroom, as a valuable parameter to be weighed in, not only in the design of lessons, tasks and activities, but in self-evaluations of one's performance as instructor, sprouted from the analysis of the factors in code-switching practices.

The author's doctoral research made use of a sample of two groups of second-year students enrolled in the English line of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Cluj-Napoca. Their interactions with both peers and their seminar professor, while accomplishing tasks set out for them in the Physiology laboratory included many instances of code-switching, respondents reported being 'at least bilingual'. These exchanges were mediated through a co-constructed micro-community specific English as lingua franca (ELF) that included elements of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Science (the field of Veterinary Medicine), and elements of 'informal' English, at a level common to all members of the seminar. Additionally, a host of other community-specific elements such as informal terms of address, expletives, recurring jokes, and numerous fragments of conversations uttered in seven different languages were recorded in audio and video format. All of these instances of multi-speaker interactions, and a few unidirectional turns-at-talk proved to be interspersed with seminar specific goals, tasks and roles.

Through further analysis, what also came to be expressed in speaker ad-hoc exchanges were manifestations of more than just the individuals' situated and discourse identities (Zimmerman, 1998). Zimmerman's framework of understanding the layering of social personas includes: the situated, the discourse and transportable levels of identity, intersecting and partially overlapping. The first one references individuals' persona(s) that are mostly correlated with the specifics of the professional settings in which interactions occur. The second level includes the discursive requirements of the conversations, or in other words, the a-priori sociolinguistic coordinates that influence message transmission and the successfulness of communication needs being satisfied for all parties involved, here included the purpose of interaction. The other coordinates related to this level of identity concern the sociolinguistic portrait of the speakers involved, meaning the configuration of their linguistic repertoires, the strategies they are most used to resorting to in conversation, and the limitations and affordances provided by the similarities and differences between differently developed linguistic repertoires. Finally, the transportable level of identity mostly concerns all those elements that are said to be unique to the makeup of every individual's psychological profile, elements that are carried out in identity performance, regardless of interlocutors and/or social settings.

Furthermore, it was uncovered during analysis, that in addition to the appearance of these switches, which were bound to occur in the context of multilingual spontaneous conversations, a large number of switches from seminar-based discourse to informal topics of discussion appeared in communication. In other words, transitions to and from different

social personas were prompted by linguistic changes, and were at the same time, the product of these shifts. This is due to the fact that different social scripts and implicit social personas become delineated through particular linguistic markers (i.e. speech acts, domain and interaction specific terminology, code-switching strategies), that in time, help embed these experiences in routine sociolinguistic strategies. These become associated with the manifestations of ‘professional/academic identity’ at large and other labels that the participants award themselves based on reviews of past performance in these community-specific interactions (such as, for instance, ‘diligent student’ in the social landscape of a classroom, or ‘competent language user’) with the help of the emotional imprint attached by participants to perceived failures and successes in task performance.

It is specifically the push-pull of the positive versus negative perception of performance in the foreign language classroom that tends to inform students’ process of self-labeling as either being competent or incompetent language users (Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Furthermore:

[...] bad performance, little progress in English tests, fear of being criticized by English teachers for bad test results are frequently mentioned sources for FLCA, which may in turn causes decrease of confidence and motivation, and increase of impatience in FL learning, while good test results, great progress in test results after hard work, promotion in relative FL standing, and being praised by English teachers for good test results are the main frequently mentioned sources for FLE, which in turn may contribute to boosting confidence, interest and motivation in learning English. These qualitative narratives provide a general understanding of the reciprocal influence of classroom emotions and FL achievement (Li, Dewaele & Jiang, 2020, pp. 502-503).

In other words, if a majority of positive or negative associations are generated over time, in this environment, the associated activities and even presence in the social landscape where these are unfolding can become either anxiety or pleasure inducing. Thus, the emotional imprint or charge felt by students in the FL classroom has the capacity to reinforce cycles of belief development. This is what is meant by Dewaele when using the parameters of Foreign Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Enjoyment in the Classroom.

To this process of belief development, which is imperative in identity construction and a main driver of future behaviors and performance (Dewaele, 2004; Dewaele & Nakano, 2012; Dewaele & Panicacci, 2017; Dewaele, 2021), contributes not only one’s actual activity in the classroom, but the added pressure of having an audience monitoring activities (both peers and the language instructor). In other words, the presence of other speakers, especially those interlocutors judged as being more experienced in language use, are regarded as unwanted participants in communication. Surely, in moments such as these, the social nature of communication and the purpose of developing these language abilities are momentarily overlooked, due to an overwhelming feeling of speakers developing a fear of being seen by others performing poorly, risking thus being labeled as incompetent. It is the same social stressor that in other participants harboring a more positive outlook on performance in a social arena that enhances motivation and helps achieve higher levels of success (Macklen, 2015; Cerasoli et al., 2014; Dembo, 2004). Thus, it is crucial that students learn to overcome the emotional discomfort that naturally appears in the learning process, since this is not linear and not one that is error-free. Furthermore, Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal

Development (1978) points out the fact that this emotional discomfort can actually be used by individuals as an indicator of simply moving forward and progressing through increasingly challenging levels in the process of learning when honing in new skills and expanding one's repertoire, both linguistic and factual.

At the same time, this is exactly where positive psychology comes in to help alleviate the tensions between the rather limited understanding of the process of learning as having the possibility of unfolding in only two opposing directions - complete success, or utter failure. In fact, both of these elements provide only a snapshot of temporary performance. The progression from 'beginner' to 'expert' is in essence marked by the appearance of both 'successes' and 'failures', the transition to expertise being determined not by an absence of the latter, but by a strategic integration of these in the understanding of one's potential, as well as strengths and weaknesses. These strengths could then be repurposed creatively, intelligently and in a tailor-made fashion for individual learner needs, to help students and instructors understand to what imbalances these so-called 'failures' or 'errors' are pointing to.

This is why it is crucial for teachers, students and policy makers to be aware of their internalized beliefs regarding the teaching-learning process and attitudes towards multilingualism since these influence choices in administrative decision-making and curricula and assessment tools development. They also appear to influence the quality of teaching activities, and students' motivation to persevere, especially when faced with some of their limitations or when making errors during the learning process (Noels et al., 2019). This is why it is also of great importance to contextualize and ground all of these elements in realistic requirements and scenarios that speakers might be faced with, when engaging with other multilingual speakers. The transparency of the purpose of these activities, as well as the complexity of multilingual exchanges should thus be explicitly highlighted to students, to promote a more holistic view of language use, as well as to help provide them with resources to be used in the development of metalinguistic and metacognitive learning strategies, seeing as how learner agency is at the forefront of the student-centered paradigm.

THE EMOTIONAL FACTOR INFLUENCING INTERACTIONS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

In order to better grasp how emotions seem to direct the flow of turns-at-talk and teaching sequences themselves in the CLIL classroom, an in-depth presentation of their occurrence is going to be detailed in the case study sample under investigation in the author's doctoral research. However, only the most relevant aspects pertaining to the 'emotional factor' (as coded in the thesis) will be mentioned, due to the requirements of this paper. The palpable significance of this factor in directing student conversations highlights the generalizability and importance of recognizing this particular marker as managing code-switching practices, especially in contemporary superdiverse micro-communities. The author is fairly certain that similar outcomes would be highlighted by applying this methodology onto a similarly-sized but different case study sample. In other words, this is one factor that is deemed as independent from the specifics of the professional dimension of these interactions, since the nature of communication itself, be it institutional or informal, is social and therefore involves different degrees of emotionality and speaker rapport. In fact, informal conversational styles infiltrate institutional talk at large (Keating & Egbert, 2005).

Furthermore, code-switches, even in institutional and academic contexts, are indicative of individual preference for linguistic expression. Thus, instances of student interactions where speakers saw themselves as belonging to the same in-group, according to the doctoral research, translated to a higher use of their preferred linguistic marked choices in conversations, these highlighting a co-constructed discourse aiming at reaching or expressing convergence with other speakers. The same mechanism however was applied by participants to distinguish themselves from unwanted associations with individual speakers, groups or changes in topic. These speakers suggestively disagreed with mainly the topic of the switch or speaker uttering the switch. The emotional factor of switching occurrences is therefore heavily intertwined with one's perception of self-identity, of belonging to a group, or even self-perception of potential inadequacy if access to certain groups is not given. Issues of politeness and the desire to save face in the social landscape of the seminar (Brown & Levinson, 1987) are also contributing factors to the appearance of this phenomenon.

Additionally, by emulating particular speakers' preferred code-switching patterns, (especially those students perceived as having 'higher' status in the social landscape of the seminar), those on the 'lower ranks' of the social landscape make use of 'linguistic priming' (Kootstra, 2015) to gain access to these desired social personas. In a sense, the use of code-switching was meant to indirectly help speakers climb the social ladder of the micro-community. Then, by using the term 'emotional' a direct correlation is made with participants' self-awareness of their position in the social hierarchy, and the emotional imprint that these perceptions bring up. At the same time, the term is also meant to include those ad-hoc, strong emotional responses belonging to those students comfortable enough in openly sharing how they feel in group settings, invariably adding an emphatic touch to their utterances (which may potentially attract other peers' attention to their behavior/requests/directive speech acts). Quite visibly, the use of ad-hoc code-switching instances represent individual reactions to the unpredictability of exchanges, topic changes and changes in speaker configurations. Therefore, it is these aspects that contribute to the development of either Foreign Language Enjoyment or Foreign Language Anxiety (see Dewaele) in the classroom (Uzun, 2017).

CHANGES IN LEARNER NEEDS AND COMPETENCE LEVELS REFLECTED IN THE CEFR

This change in paradigm can be observed at both micro-level, as presented above, but at a global one as well. In light of modern-day study exchange programmes, an increase in migration patterns and travel, a polylingual and pluricultural (Jørgensen & Ag, 2012; Jørgensen & Varga, 2011) understanding of our social environments seem to be taking center stage. Thus, the focus of foreign language teaching has also shifted towards awarding primacy to an ease of message transmission, alongside developing capabilities for managing fluency and self-expression (Hall & Nilep, 2015), while at the same time downgrading the importance of grammatical accuracy (that used to be central in more traditional models of teaching).

These changes are also reflected in not only the literature in recent years, but in recent iterations of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR, 2018). Since Blommaert's concept of transmobility (2010) and the state of multilingual superdiversity

(Hall & Nilep, id.) seem to accurately describe the sociolinguistic and pluricultural character of today's educational landscapes, the 2018 version of the CEFR has been equipped with the addition of the plurilingual and pluricultural descriptors as being key parts of the multilingual speaker's repertoire, so implicitly, of any foreign language student.

The EU's current understanding of multilingual speakers and multilingualism (Gajo, et. al, 2013) details important aspects pertaining to pluricultural speakers as they appear in the eyes of potential policy makers. It is in fact these policy makers' understanding of multilingualism that informs many teachers' approach and teaching methods in the foreign language (FL) classroom (be it online or offline). The 2018 version of the CEFR or Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment is a "transparent, coherent and comprehensive reference instrument" developed by the Council of Europe in an effort to produce a framework of reference for the creation and implementation of educational programs that nurture learners' abilities for enhancing proficiency in a variety of different languages. One express outcome of the CEFR is the production of teaching and learning materials to help educators manage students' different levels of development of their linguistic repertoires, but to also foster the development of learners' self-learning and self-monitoring abilities.

However, it is to be noted that the CEFR framework merely offers learners and educators a possibility of self-evaluation and potential didactic materials to be created. Oftentimes, it is suggested that the materials be individualized to learners' needs. Thus, the CEFR does not aim to discriminate against speakers based on 'inadequate' language levels development, but rather aims to help produce a grid of generalized reference points to help unify (and not uniformize) speakers' unique configuration of linguistic repertoires. Then, the CEFR can be viewed as a helpful instrument for developing a sense of metalinguistic self-awareness and self-acceptance for the purpose of achieving common communicative goals (such as, for instance, being able to understand phrases and expressions related to 'areas of most immediate priority, e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment', as one of the CEFR lower-level descriptors mentions), which would render communication between speakers a successful one, for all interlocutors, including students and teachers. Thus, it can be argued that there is a perceivable shift in desired learner goals - mastering on-the-spot fluency is seemingly trumping the more traditionally oriented development of the written and grammatical accuracy abilities.

Furthermore, in the pages of the CEFR, it is clearly stated that although the basic format of the framework is one that follows a vertical axis, along which six main categories pertaining to different levels of language proficiency are described, these six categories can be more broadly grouped into three main areas: Basic user, Independent and Proficient user. Moreover, these categorizations are explicitly described in the CEFR as "conventional, socially constructed concepts" (CEFR: 34), language 'proficiency', or 'mastery' being fully recognized as existing on a continuum, and not in compartmentalized boxes inside the bi/multilingual brain. However, what is also recognized is that clusters of these markers/descriptors can also help point to a more generalized view of where the speakers fall, more or less, on this continuum, in order to more accurately identify and perfect the coordinates that would lead to a successful adjustment of skills in interaction.

The goals of the framework recognize speakers as being social agents, in control of developing their linguistic repertoires to desired levels, as well as being endowed with metalinguistic and metacultural awareness, without which communication with other individuals would be problematic. The descriptors are also reflective of the autonomous and highly personalized character of not only linguistic and metalinguistic repertoires, but of used learning strategies as recognized in many millennial learners' behavior (Macklen, 2015). It is easy to state that the goals of the CEFR are pluricultural and plurilingual in nature, due to an emphasis being clearly placed onto recognizing and promoting otherness, these aims being implicitly inferred from its stated purposes:

- promoting and facilitating cooperation among educational institutions worldwide;
- offering a generalized framework for assessing speakers' differently developed linguistic repertoires on common grounds;
- helping educators, policy makers, and learners come together in co-creating a positive and efficient teaching-learning environment.

It is for these reasons that the CEFR draws attention to the perils of linguistic discrimination, since the levels used to describe learners' linguistic competence are not aiming to achieve any 'native-like mastery', but help individuals achieve desired levels of comprehension, reception and production, in various languages, for different purposes, in a variety of different situations. In addition, in the 2018 version of the CEFR, special attention is given to the decades of research that have been used in ensuring its action-oriented approach (CEFR, p. 26), with an express purpose of catalyzing a paradigm shift. This shift seeks to approach the process of language learning from a viewpoint where the students' needs are truly the center-point on which curricula are developed, and not the other way around. It is based on the individuals' needs and attributes, skills and knowledge already present, that the process of learning ought to start from, and not from a 'deficiency perspective' (CEFR, *ibid.*).

The current framework thus takes into account real-life learners, real-life educators and actual levels of knowledge, skills and preferred attitudes, in other words, the individual as he/she is, and not 'as ideally would be'. Interaction, communication wait for no ideal accomplishment of 'perfect conversations among perfect multilinguals' to manifest, but instead are happening in 'the here and now'. Which is why the CEFR created descriptors based on accomplishing 'real-life' actions that indicate whether one 'can' or 'cannot do' a specific activity, in virtually any language, the framework explicitly adhering to the principles of languaging theory (CEFR, *id.*, p. 28). Thus, language users are seen as being in a process of ongoing linguistic development, located simultaneously at varying points at the intersection of a plurality of linguistic codes developed to a variety of different degrees that comprise their ever-evolving linguistic repertoires (see Jørgensen). In other words, this is the working definition of the plurilingual speaker that the framework is predicated on.

Furthermore, a specific section of the framework is dedicated to interaction among participants, subsections of this part including markers pertaining to the comprehension of interlocutors, ability to converse about both informal and formal topics, and managing goal-oriented interactions. Developing the ability to understand an interlocutor includes sub-competences such as the ability to manage conversations about certain topics and managing the specific requirements of the setting of the interaction. The other two components of this particular descriptor can be subsumed to the degree to which the speakers' repertoires adjust to each other's idiosyncrasies, preferences and common linguistic resources.

Everyday conversation is seen as having a primarily social function in the CEFR, this aspect being evident in curricula-based methodologies used in foreign language teaching classrooms. In fact, informal conversational sequences occur even in formal educational contexts (Keating & Egbert, *id.*), between students and between students and their teacher. Thus, the ways in which these dimension can be seen as unfolding on-site make use of more than the speakers' linguistic resources and can be assessed by observing not only the teaching/learning sequences used, the directionality of speech acts, topics of discussion, turn and repair management (Ziegler et al., 2012), but also by preferences in interlocutor collaboration, and preferences in role enactment in group settings. The latter may heavily determine the frequency of interventions during conversations, in group work, pair work or between one-on-one interventions between the foreign language teacher and learner (Papuc, *id.*).

Similarly, 'goal-oriented cooperation' is one of the major abilities to be encouraged and proposed by the CEFR. Comprehension, the ability to intervene, to explain, to comment, to discuss various viewpoints, to challenge others if need be, or to summarize key points are mentioned as significantly important concepts building the foundation of this specific sub-competence. These descriptors can also be used as a lens through which the learners' activities can be assessed, especially when accomplishing tasks in pair or group-based work. It should be noted that in such instances, it may be appropriate for students to take up 'an authoritative, expert, teacher-like persona' during pair or group work. The professor in turn, can assume a role that is not completely stripped of its authoritative and expertise attributes, but is closer to fulfilling a collaborative role, encouraging learners in their task progression. In fact, an identical phenomenon of role-switching was observed by the author taking place between the participants in the research on code-switching.

In any case, these particular dimensions are especially important for taking into account that it is through the process of 'mediation' that knowledge is accessed through language (be it knowledge about languages or any other topic). The CEFR takes into account both the cognitive and relational dimensions of mediation, the latter being clearly linked to the social aspects of communication

THE CHALLENGES OF ONLINE ACADEMIC INTERACTIONS

Lastly, what ought to also be mentioned are the challenges posed by the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to mostly online modes of academic communication. Current research on this topic repeatedly mentions the importance of the mental health difficulties that were registered by both students and teachers alike, while working online, some of these being in fact issues that existed pre-pandemic and only worsened due to the imposed social isolation (Lischer et al., *id.*). These range from difficulties brought about by the new ‘at-home’ learning environment which caused stress related to time management, pandemic and workload fatigue, problems concentrating, distractions, issues with both learning and teaching due to unstable network connections and the general difficulties of having to transition away from more traditional face-to-face academic interactions. These stressors were also compounded by a generalized state of fear caused by the uncertain development of the pandemic, the threat of disease, loss of family members, restrictions in terms of individual autonomy and freedom, an increased sense of anxiety, and many others (Maulana, 2021; Yuzulia, 2021; Barrot et al., 2021; Hidalgo-Andrade, et al., 2021) to cite just a few studies.

Many of the issues reported by the respondents in these surveys are similar to the challenges described by students in the SWOT analyses mentioned previously. The majority were undergraduates studying in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University. It must be mentioned though that no quantitative analysis was performed on the collected data.

However, a qualitative assessment of the answers revealed obstacles that were reported as obstructing students’ perceived degree of expertise in the English for Specific Purposes classroom (English for Psychology and English for Special Education). A majority of the answers mentioned a direct correlation with challenges posed by the more difficult of the language abilities, namely the productive ones - writing, and speaking, most prominently. In other words, those skills that necessarily involved the (actual or presumed) presence, be it in writing or speech, of at least one other party were cited as being the most challenging. It is these competences that rely heavily on having developed not only discourse and conversation-specific skills, but are mainly social in nature, the sign of having achieved success in communication being directly dependent on successful management, negotiation and creation of ad-hoc or slightly delayed multi-speaker interactions, reactions to and comprehension of intended messages.

Thus, it is specifically the social nature of communication that poses such a threat to some students’ sense of identity in interaction, directly affecting their perception of the role that they play in these instances, based on whether these roles are perceived by others as ‘successful’. Therefore, the languaging phenomena mentioned so far and its correlations with aspects pertaining to both students and professors’ mental health, as well as attitudes towards multilingualism and the participants implicit ideological stance on the subject have also been brought to light as an outcome of many current-day speakers having to navigate linguistically superdiverse environments (Jørgensen & Ag, *id.*; Arnaut & Spotti, 2014; Jørgensen & Varga, *id.*). Consequently, this determined a rise in speakers’ needs to develop an ability to express their ‘hypersubjective identities’ (Hall, 2014), via code-switching for one, but also through the use of humor, playful switches in topic, creative uses of individual

linguistic repertoires, even in academic discourse, as evidenced in the author's thesis. It was specifically these apparent discontinuities and interruptions in the flow of the seminar-specific discourse that created a safe emotional space for the participants. This was achieved through a playful and creative use of the variety of socio-linguistic tools at their disposal, to not only successfully accomplish seminar tasks and activities, but to also help build rapport with a highly pluricultural and plurilingual micro-community.

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT & MOTIVATION

Some potential strategies that might be implemented in the classroom draw their foundation from the CEFR descriptors themselves, if directly taking into account the Interaction, mediation, and sociolinguistic appropriateness in the FL classroom descriptor, alongside that of Collaborating and leading group work, during lesson planning. Other proposed suggestions for improving student interactions and enhancing motivation (Cerasoli et al., 2014) would appear in the form of perhaps using an approach to teaching foreign languages that would borrow from a user experience design approach. This might allow a lot more room for flexibility and on-the-spot adjustment of the teaching sequences and activities so that the process would be conceptualized starting from the experience of foreign language/content learners, the process being tweaked and perfected along the way according to learners' actual needs, unequally developed competences and ever-changing linguistic repertoires. The difficulty would probably reside in steering away from the temptation of grasping onto traditional ideals of proof of language mastery residing in 'native-like' competence, fluency, mastery of specific accents, etc. Furthermore, especially in task-based courses, where the medium of interaction decided at macro-level is an unmarked code shared by all participants, code-switching/code-mixing and other creative uses of speakers' repertoires could be actively incorporated in the planning of particular tasks.

Perhaps specific beginner activities/tasks could be formulated on the principle of directly activating speakers' plurilingual and intercultural metalinguistic awareness via practicing through code-switching/code-mixing activities, with a joint follow-up exercise in reviewing the pros and cons of such methods being used ad-hoc, in the classroom. This approach would thus give speakers enough room to make use of their linguistic repertoires as they would see fit and feel comfortable, according to individual levels of development, but it should also be made clear to all speakers that they understand the key points of learning sequences, and that each and every individual can express oneself or ask for feedback or clarifications using the common agreed upon code to be used as mediation at classroom level.

Another useful strategy might be simply that of clearly stating from the very beginning of each lesson the short-term and long-term purposes of the activities, so that meaningful value is created jointly, with the help of the instructor, to ensure an increased level of motivation being sparked in the foreign language classroom. Even though it may appear as a rather simplistic solution, this step would ensure the development of students' autonomous learning strategies and self-assessment skills, which are all desired abilities, alongside that of having developed creative and critical thinking competence, useful in not only the academic realm, but beyond it as well.

Furthermore, policy makers and curricula designers ought to pay close attention to internalized personal biases and ideological beliefs that invariably influence attitudes, behavior, and individual choice at decision-making levels. This might be achieved by developing self-assessment tools to highlight these issues directly. Making sure that a clear connection exists between studies on actual linguistic behavior both inside and outside regulated environments and policy makers is the key to understanding the improvements that can be made to enhance the teaching of language related knowledge, competence, and skills. This approach could be more effective in achieving these goals rather than starting from an ideologically-based position that seeks to uniformize instead of helping to bridge individual differences into coherent strategies for achieving both mutual understanding and satisfying individual expression. At the same time, surveying teachers' attitudes towards teaching and perception of student success, failures, their relationship to students, attitudes towards learning and awareness of personal preference for learning methods, and transference in teaching styles could help improve not only lesson planning, but teaching as well (Dewaele et al., 2018), both online and offline.

Finally, it is specifically towards the rise of what has been termed in the literature as the prowess of 'soft power' (Armour, 2011) that would be worth drawing attention. The term was initially used in the field of international politics and economy, referencing a more effective mode of persuasion, one that is predicated on the ability to convince by attraction and not coercion. A similar method can also be recognized as having dictated the teaching approaches used in the student-centered framework. Especially when taking into account the emerging portraits of contemporary learners (Carr, 2010) who benefit from a more efficient learning (and teaching methods implicitly) by having the content adapted to personalized goals, capabilities, as well as molded onto patterns that make specific relevance to the learners immersed in the learning process, mixing non-formal techniques with 'authentic materials' in the form of popular culture and 'soft power pedagogy' (Armour, id: 34.) might become extremely effective. The shift that is being promoted is one inclined to nurture 'participatory culture' (Armour, *ibid.*) in an ode to the contemporary status quo being avid for expressing authenticity, a preoccupation resulting perhaps as a response to the rise in social media and technology mediating so much of our work-related and 'leisure-related' activities. It only seems natural in these circumstances to notice a similar shift being brought inside the 'confines' of classrooms (be they digitally mediated as well) by newer generations of teachers situated somewhere between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants', but working with mostly 'digital natives'.

Thus, it is suggested that the contemporary classroom should incorporate much more than items belonging to the 'real world' (mostly appearing in the form of so-called 'authentic materials'), but also seek to create an environment to emulate experiences that will be encountered by learners outside the realm of academia. Such an example might take the form of simply encouraging learners to open their laptops to access 'soft power artefacts' (Armour, *id.*, p. 36) in whichever form they might appear (written, audio and/or video, character play in video games etc.). Thus, by teachers daring to make more of an appeal to what their students consider as being fun in regards to the target-language being discussed in the FL classroom, perhaps even introducing elements of popular culture, an even more visible paradigm shift might be achieved by stepping further away from what Gee (2004)

deems as ‘school language’ and away from ‘the content fetish’ of traditional teaching frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS

Through a trickle-down effect, decisions taken at political and institutional levels inform the activities taking place in each and every classroom (especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic). Conversely, local research made on particular case study samples, alongside more generalized meta-studies have the power to influence the agents of change working at political and institutional levels, here included, classroom instructors. Therefore, the attitudes that both teachers and learners bring in the FL and ESL classrooms, as well as expectations in regards to the outcomes of the teaching/learning process, prior knowledge and content-related experiences and skills are both mirrored by and constructed in a mutually-influential loop by guidelines as those expressed in the plurilingual and pluricultural descriptors in the CEFR. Final recommendations include embracing an even more daring and creative application of these guidelines in current frameworks of language teaching and language learning, with an added emphasis on developing teachers’ self-awareness as to the biases they might harbor in relation to their students and teaching altogether, and developing at the same time, students’ level of autonomy, self-assessment, monitoring and critical thinking abilities when it comes to language learning.

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Technical Writing – A Useful Genre for Higher Education Students

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Abstract: When it comes to developing the writing skills of university students, most often they are “socialized” in academic writing, i.e. a writing genre that allows them to join the “conversations” taking place in the academic environment, with a primary focus on writing about research in its various forms. Writing conventions, vocabulary and types of discourse vary across disciplines, but the overarching rules of academic writing are slowly becoming universal across cultures and higher education systems.

We argue that there is a second writing genre that might be extremely useful to students studying especially in the STEM fields, namely technical writing. Even though it is usually broadly defined as the process of documenting complex technical processes, technical writing can be easily explained in two words: “simplifying complexity”.

In our paper, we set out to: (1) offer an introductory presentation of what technical writing is and (2) how it could benefit students, especially those studying in more technically oriented fields. Then we aim (3) to offer a few examples of the specificity of technical writing in comparison to other writing genres, alongside with (4) a few suggestions for activities with students that raise awareness about this newer writing genre.

Keywords: *technical writing, higher education, students’ writing, teaching writing*

TECHNICAL WRITING AMONG OTHER GENRES

Writing is one of the basic skills higher education students need to practice (and eventually master) throughout their academic career. This is why academic writing is considered to be a very important skill, often taught to students in pre-sessional courses, even before they begin their university lives. However, students need to engage with a variety of writing genres throughout their academic careers.

The Stanford Study of Writing³⁹, a longitudinal study carried out over a five-year period and aimed at describing all the kinds of writing students perform while enrolled in higher education, identified the several kinds of writing that university students engaged with (see **Figure 1** below).

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³⁹ Available here: <https://ssw.stanford.edu/>

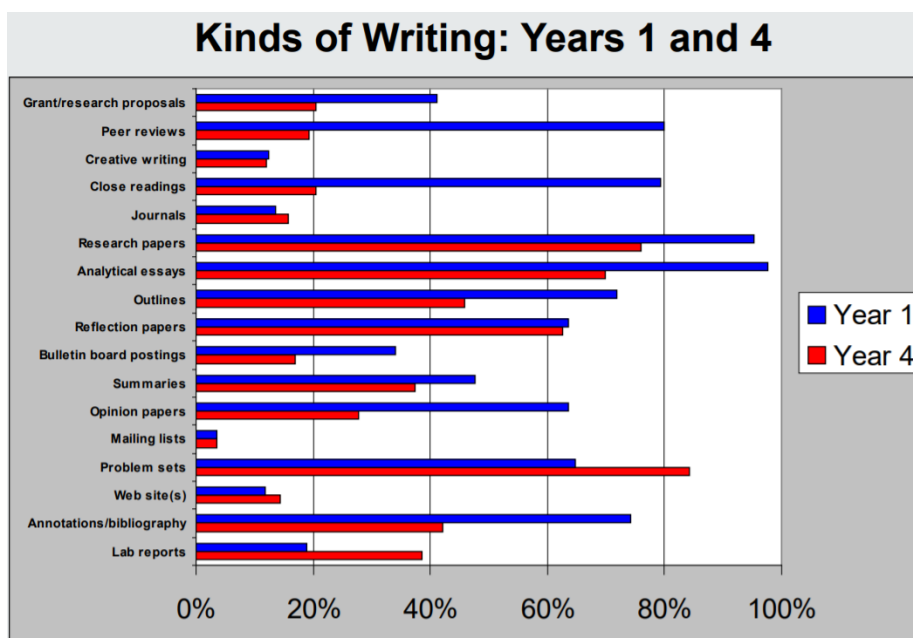


Figure 1. Results of the Stanford Study of Writing⁴⁰

The Stanford team called this skill “composition writing”⁴¹ (Fishman et al., 2005, p. 225) and admitted it is not limited to school subjects, as it also covers “extracurricular composition”, both in personal and professional contexts. MIT⁴² groups scientific and technical writing together, suggesting that *academic* and *technical* writing are just two facets of *scientific* writing (Kelley, 2006).

While most types of writing in the figure above may be included under the wider umbrella of *academic writing*, *creative writing* hints to literary practice. *Academic writing* itself is a type of *scientific writing*, according to MIT.

A British study of student writing (Nesi & Gardner, 2012) identified 13 genre families based on a corpus of texts collected from British higher-education students. These are: case study, critique, design specifications, empathy writing, essay, exercise, explanation, literature survey, methodology recount, problem question, proposal and research report (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p. 34). These genre families differ “in social purpose, in generic stages, and in the networks they form with other professional and / or academic genres” (idem) and serve five social functions, including “preparing for professional practice”, alongside “demonstrating knowledge and understanding”, “developing powers of independent reasoning”, “building research skills” and “writing for oneself and others” (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p. 36). Demonstrating knowledge and understanding also serves the social purpose of being able to explain technical terms or procedures and to develop the ability to describe the appearance or the workings of an object.

⁴⁰ The Stanford Study of Writing - https://ssw.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj10266/f/Senate_report_ObserFrom_SSW.pdf

⁴¹ Available here: https://ssw.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj10266/f/3cs_article.pdf

⁴² Available here: <https://web.mit.edu/me-ugoffice/communication/technical-writing.pdf>

Traditionally, the types of writing are considered to be: expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive and creative. If we are to look at the output, or the results of writing, in “the real world”, these could be re-categorized as academic, literary and technical. Academic writing produces a variety of academic publications (articles, reports, grant proposals, peer reviews, etc.), literary writing produces everything that can be understood as “literature”, while it remains the job of technical writing to produce instructions, guidance, and “user documentation”, alongside sales letter, letter of enquiry, memos, web pages and PowerPoint presentations, brochures/newsletters, and so on.

Naturally, each genre entails different methods, and this in turn leads to different teaching strategies employed for “socializing” students in each type of writing.

Technical writing has largely been ignored in higher-education settings, but we argue that it might be an important asset, with a high impact on students’ future employability, especially for those students who study for STEM degrees.

WHAT IS TECHNICAL WRITING?

Technical writing is defined as “writing or drafting technical communication used in technical and occupational fields, such as computer hardware and software, engineering, chemistry, aeronautics, robotics, finance, medical, consumer electronics, biotechnology, and forestry”⁴³.

The Society for Technical Communication⁴⁴ defines technical communication as any form of communication that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

1. “communicating about technical or specialized topics, such as computer applications, medical procedures, or environmental regulations;
2. communicating by using technology, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites; or
3. providing instructions about how to do something, regardless of how technical the task is”.

While “technical writing” might be a newer concept for our ears, it is a recognized field in Western Europe, with a tradition going back at least half a century (Britton, 1965)⁴⁵.

The most common contexts in which one comes across technical writing are the following:

- Using or reading a User Manual for a software/gadget we just bought and want to use
- Using or following Installation Guides for setting-up newly acquired items or software
- Using or searching for help regarding various functions of a gadget, items or software we are not completely familiar with (e.g. Zoom meetings – one thing to attend the meeting, a different set of skills needed to configure breakout rooms, for example)

⁴³ Wikipedia – <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/technical-writing>

⁴⁴ Wikipedia – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/society_for_technical_communication

⁴⁵ Available here: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/354886>

- Using or checking a set of minimal requirements a gadget has to meet in order to run a programme correctly

TECHNICAL WRITING – SKILLS FOR SIMPLIFYING COMPLEXITY

Technical Writing is not a skill or an activity we can play by ear or have an innate flare for. Due diligence and a sound knowledge of standards and tools are required in order to deliver high-quality documentation that is useful to the target audience, as well as compliant with international audit requirements.

A Technical Writers' activity is meant to simplify or break down complexity into easy to understand and easy to follow steps so that a specific goal can be reached.

Standards

For almost every domain which requires technical documentation, there are several international standards that must be observed: ISO⁴⁶, IEC⁴⁷, IEEE⁴⁸, ANSI⁴⁹, DIN⁵⁰, VDI⁵¹, and so on.

The documentation for each domain:

- may need to observe one or more standards at once
- may need to produce different or adjusted documentation deliverables, depending on the market they deliver products to, as each geographical region may have distinct standards

Technical Writing done correctly requires intensive research of these standards prior to actually starting to write documentation for a particular domain. Failure to observe these standards results in non-compliant documentation, which, in turn, leads to delays in introducing products on the market, and, sometimes even to hefty fines.

The good news is that the international bodies which write and manage these standards have adopted a cross-validation mindset, the result of which being the introduction of harmonized standards. A harmonized standard is a standard that, while still initiated by one international body, is recognized as valid by the other international bodies. To give just one example, ISO, IEC, and IEEE have harmonized a large number of standards, which are now interoperable.

Tools

Content can be written in any format. However, professional Technical Writing is done with tools which offer more control over content parsing, look, and feel, than simple Word or Notepad editors can deliver.

Professional editing (Cameron, 2011) is done in XML editors which enable writers to:

⁴⁶ Available here: <https://www.iso.org/home.html>

⁴⁷ Available here: <https://www.iec.ch/homepage>

⁴⁸ Available here: <https://www.ieee.org/>

⁴⁹ Available here: https://webstore.ansi.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI6fWy45n28QIVROh3Ch0uagZdEAAYASAAEgI7TPD_BwE

⁵⁰ Available here: <https://www.din.de/en/about-standards/din-standards>

⁵¹ Available here: <https://www.vdi.de/en/home/vdi-standards>

- Split content into content types and tag them
- Write content according to predefined tagged schemas
- Enhancing content with metadata and taxonomies

XML files have several advantages (Boiko, 2005):

- XML files have an interoperable format, which means that you can easily transfer them across tools and can easily edit them in a wide range of editors
- XML files consist of tagged and semantically rich content, which means that they can be interpreted and rendered differently by schemas and transformation
- XML files can represent the single source of truth for PDFs, web pages, CHMs, WebHelp, Epub, and many more, which means that once you tag and metatag your content properly once, publishing to any format you like is a click away

XML basically makes your content future-proof, transferable, versatile, and interoperable. Unlike XML, Word content for example cannot easily be transferred, it requires intermediate copy-paste to other formats, and it is more difficult to tag natively.

There are other editors and tools that support popular formats for technical documentation, like Markdown. Technical Writers are tasked to assess the relevance and outreach of the editing method and format they write in.

After content is written, it needs to be stored in one of the following ways: locally in folders, externally on drives, or on servers (physical or cloud). Content must also be managed (Buehling, 2015): versioned, updated, edited collaboratively, and published in various formats. The tools which take care of the end-to-end storage and management of your content are called DMS (Document Management Systems) and CMS (Content Management Systems). A DMS has fewer features than a CMS, and usually does not allow the content to be published on more than one platform out of the box.

Stylistic Guidelines

Technical Writing must produce documentation that is consistent in terms of wording, terminology, spelling, or punctuation. All these elements are captured in what is called *manuals of style*.

Companies have the freedom to produce their own manuals of style, but more often than none Technical Writers adhere to international guidelines. For the software and computer industry, the most popular style guides are:

- Microsoft Manual of Style (also known as Microsoft Writing Style Guide)⁵²
- The IBM Style Guide: Conventions for Writers and Editors
- The Splunk Style Guide⁵³
- Read Me First! A Style Guide for the Computer Industry

Paradigmatic Guidelines

Technical Writing can produce different outputs depending on the writing paradigm enforced. For Technical Writing, paradigms refer to the technique of structuring

⁵² Available here: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/welcome/>

⁵³ Available here: <https://docs.splunk.com/Documentation/StyleGuide/current/StyleGuide/Howtouse>

documentation (Boiko, 2005). One of the most popular paradigms for the software industry is DITA (Darwin Information Type Architecture).

DITA is the sum of the following principles (Closs, 2016):

- DITA is a way of writing based on specialization (topic types for different purposes, for example concepts, tasks, and references) and system inheritance (Darwin).
- DITA categorizes the information types (a topic consists of various information snippets for different purposes), the context in which these are used and the internal structure of a minimal communication unit (topic) (Information Typing).
- DITA is based on the XML standard, but it is a process and a method of working (Architecture).
- DITA entails the separation of content (writing) from output (publishing).
- DITA is a means of writing and storing information, not a deliverable.

DITA is currently embedded in most XML editors and CMSs, which makes it a staple any Technical Writer should know.

In addition to DITA⁵⁴, there are other paradigms that can be learned, depending on the field Technical Writers will work in:

- DocBook⁵⁵
- S1000D⁵⁶
- PiMod⁵⁷
- Information Mapping⁵⁸
- Functional Design⁵⁹

Methodology Guidelines

Technical Writing is always done with the target audience or end users in mind. The way information is structured, curated, and selected must match the technical or non-technical background of the audience reading the technical documentation (Bellamy et al, 2021).

From this point of view there are three main methodologies to choose from:

- Product orientation
- Functionality orientation
- End-user orientation

Here is a didactical example of how Technical Writers can structure the technical documentation if they had to write about a household appliance (a steamer). One can easily notice how the intent, goal, and target audience influence the Technical Writing style.

⁵⁴ Available here: <https://www.dita-ot.org/>

⁵⁵ Available here <https://docbook.org/docs/>

⁵⁶ Available here: <https://www.asd-europe.org/s1000d>

⁵⁷ Available here: <http://www.tcworld.info/e-magazine/technical-communication/article/documenting-with-pi-mod/>

⁵⁸ Available here: http://www.web.stanford.edu/~rhorn/a/topic/stwrtng_infomap/artclinfomappingtraining.pdf

⁵⁹ Available here: <https://scottmanning.com/content/functional-design-specification/>

Table 1. Sample documentation structure for an appliance

Product-orientation	Functionality-orientation	User-orientation
✓ The product and its components are described exhaustively. Key statement: “I want to know what the components of a steamer are.”	✓ The features and tasks that can be performed are described exhaustively. Key statement: “I want to understand how I can use the components of a steamer.”	✓ The actions or tasks that users must perform to reach a goal are described, explained, and sequenced. Key statement: “I want to steam my food, in order to be healthy.”
1. Steamer display 2. ON button 3. OFF button 4. Water control button 5. Temperature control button 6. Program selection button 7. Water compartment 8. Produce compartment	1. Water preparation 1.1. Measuring water 1.2. Enabling water supply 1.3. Adjusting water temperature 1.4. Allowed water types 2. Steamer usage 2.1. Turning on the steamer 2.2. Turning off the steamer 2.3. Selecting programs	1. Steaming vegetables 1.1. Prepare your workbench 1.2. Prepare your ingredients 1.3. Select your spice 1.4. Add water 1.5. Mix the ingredients 1.6. Add the ingredients in the steamer 1.7. Select the program 1.8. Boil the vegetables 1.9. Clean the steamer 2. Steaming meat 3. Steaming fruit

TYPES OF TECHNICAL WRITING

Technical Writing is an umbrella term for several types of writing:

- UI & UX writing (for software interfaces)
- Label writing (for machinery, safety postage)
- Guides: user guides, quick-start guides, installation guides, API documentation, product sheets – This topic was briefly touched upon at point 3.5, and will not be covered further.
- Visuals: diagrams, infographics, videos

An apocryphal quote from Mark Twain stated: “Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.”⁶⁰

UI Writing

UI writing refers to the text (labels, buttons, and controls), messages, tooltips, and overall logic display of UI (User Interface) elements. User guides are important because they are comprehensive guides of how a product works, but UI is just as important. The UI is the

⁶⁰ <https://marktwainstudies.com/the-apocryphal-twain-writing-is-easy-all-you-have-to-do-is-cross-out-the-wrong-words/>

business card of any product, and, as a result, it must be clear, logical, and intuitive, so that users are not lost or confused.

UI writing (Metts and Welfe, 2020) should be concise (“less is more”) and written in short sentences and paragraphs. Users tend to scan the text for the information they need, and not read through the entire text. Jargon should also be avoided (instead of saying “Error #494”, say “Log-in error.”) and, as far as possible, text should be written in present tense, using the active voice.

Resist going into too much detail. The user should know there has been an error at log-in, but probably is not interested in which call from what back-end database failed in order to produce that particular error. However, the most important thing is to always be mindful of is the user’s context, their experience, their knowledge and set of skills. For example, the overused verb “click” when writing instructions for a desktop program should ideally be changed to “tap” when writing instructions for a mobile/smart phone app.

Messages

Products may not work as expected at times. In these situations, it is important for users to know what they need to do next in those specific situations. Technical Writers must observe several principles when writing the following UI messages (Metts and Welfe, 2020): error messages, confirmation messages, or validation messages.

Messages must be helpful.

Error messages must address an expected situation by informing users:

- What went wrong
- What can be done to fix the issue
- What happens if instructions are not followed as instructed

Here is a faulty and unhelpful error message:

Ooops, something went wrong. Please shut down your application immediately to prevent any data loss. Check for other exceptions before you do this.

There are several reasons why this error message is not helpful:

- “*Ooops, something went wrong.*” - The message does not say what went wrong, therefore users do not know if it a system error or an error they as users have produced. This means that users cannot be sure that they will not repeat the same faulty steps and have the error spawned over and over again.
- “*Please shut down your application immediately to prevent any data loss. Check for other exceptions before you do this.*” – The message instructs users what they should do next, but the prerequisite is placed after the action itself, which is not logical. Moreover, the message is vague in specifying what exceptions users should check and how. In addition, there is no mention about the consequences of not following the instructions in the error message.

Messages must be clear, complete, and unambiguous.

Faulty example:

- “Sign-in unsuccessful! TRY AGAIN”

The error message does not instruct users as to why the sign in failed in the first place, so this error is likely to repeat itself over and over again until users figure out what is the root cause on their own. Users should not guess what went wrong, but be told explicitly what went wrong.

Improved example:

- “The account doesn’t exist. Enter a different account or create a new one.”

Messages must not be littered with jargon.

Faulty example:

- “Select Yes, if you configured your files, their settings, and their dependencies. Select No, otherwise.”

This confirmation message is displayed after a user configured or edited several resources. The message reminds the person about everything that was included in the wizard or the process. The user made some changes which they would like to save not to be lectured on the system architecture or design.

Improved example:

“Would you like to save your changes? Yes / No”

Messages must be polite, without begging or blaming users.

Faulty message:

- “Please wait a few seconds before you try again!”

Messages must be polite, but assertive. Using the word “please” in the example above does nothing to change the situation. If this error appears for a 5th time, users are already disturbed, and the word “please” can annoy them even more. The wording “a few seconds” is vague, as it does not tell the minimum amount of time needed before redoing the operation.

Improved message:

- “Wait 30 seconds, and try again. If the problem persists, report it here.”

Here is another faulty message:

- “You made a mistake, so the system cannot process your request.”

Messages must not blame, but rather instruct users. Everyone makes mistakes, so when users do something unexpected, they should be instructed about what went wrong and about what they can do next.

Improved message:

- “The file you added is too large. Add a file which is 2GB max.”

Messages should be as brief as possible.

Faulty message:

- “You forgot to enter your email! Please enter your email!”

This message contains superfluous information and could be rewritten, so as to be more straightforward, and, as a result to be processed much faster.

Improved message:

- “Enter your email address.”

Tooltips

Tooltips are brief, informative messages displayed when hovering over a UI elements. Tooltips must (Podmajersky, 2019):

- be helpful and as brief as possible
- be dynamically generated with relevant information for a specific item
- be consistent throughout the application
- be provided for unlabeled icons
- not contain information that is mandatory for task completion
- not be full instructions on how something must be done

UX

UX stands for User Experience, the result of the collaboration between developers, designers, and Technical Writers. UX must be intuitive and clear (Podmajersky, 2019), but this is not an easy task to achieve, as practice often shows it generously.

UX may seem logical and clear, but upon closer inspection, it can prove quite ambiguous.

In **Figure 2** below, there is a dialog enabling users to add rows and columns to a table. If we look at the available commands, two of them stand out: *OK* and *Apply*. For this example, looking at the dialog alone, users cannot tell the difference between these two commands. What is the difference between selecting *OK* and selecting *Apply*? Don't both of them do the same thing, namely inserting rows or columns?

For this example, users cannot tell the difference unless they do some trial and error, which is not what users should do. And here is the actual difference: *OK* inserts the number of rows or columns specified by the user *ONCE*, whereas *Apply* inserts the number of rows or columns specified by the user *REPEATEDLY* each time the user selects (presses) the *Apply* button.

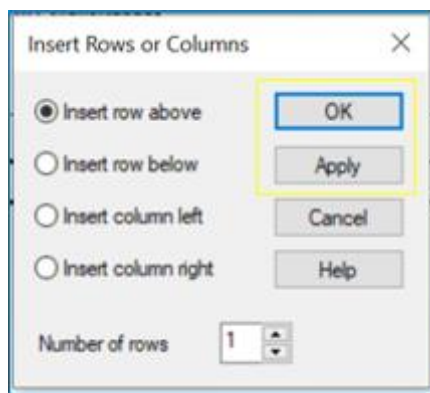


Figure 2. XMetaL dialog

Label Writing

Let us take the example of the warning signs on a tractor (see **Figure 3** below):

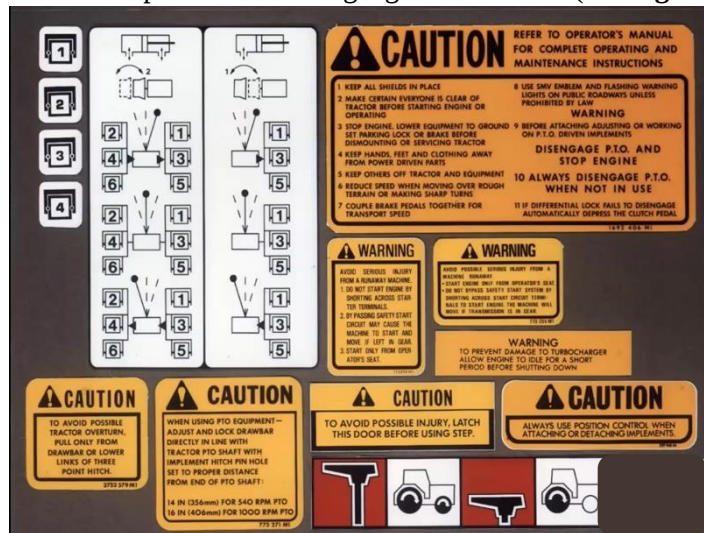


Figure 3. Warning signs for a tractor⁶¹

Their general purpose is to warn tractor users against improper use that may cause possible harm or injury, while helping them use it properly. These labels tend to build up over time, a new sign being added each time a new issue is brought to the awareness of the manufacturer. The people asked to write these labels are sometimes or in most cases the engineers of the company. Unless engineers have the right training and knowledge, the labels they produce can confuse people more than they should. Moreover, taken in isolation, each label may not look bad or be inherently wrong, but put together, labels tend to be repetitive and imprecise. Another thing to consider is the fact that engineers are often asked to respond exclusively to the task, therefore, to write one label, and not take into account the other existing labels.

The tractor driver could be overwhelmed by the number of the warning signs and may pay attention selectively to only some of them.

Technical Writers can simplify and organize the information, so that the desired end-result (i.e. the driver follows all instructions accordingly and minds all warnings) is easy-to-achieve constantly.

Visuals

Technical Writing requires more than the written word to make information clear and usable. Visuals are as important as the written word, which means that Technical Writers must also have the skill set and the tool knowledge to produce:

- Diagrams
- Infographics
- Interactive instructions (GIFs, video)

⁶¹ Image source: Summer School, <https://player.vimeo.com/video/570279441>, min. 15:00

Visuals can speak louder than words because they offer better support for understanding things at a glance, and, as such, they are a coveted addition to any technical documentation.

WHY IS TECHNICAL WRITING USEFUL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS?

All the examples presented so far can easily be turned into exercises for students to practice their Technical Communication skills.

Higher-education students who can harness Technical Writing (and Technical Communication in general) will be able to:

- develop general structuring & organization skills
- develop logical thinking skills & applying logic to identify procedural gaps
- identify assumptions and cultural stereotypes (double-click, for example) alongside enhancing their ability to analyze a situation
- acquire an additional skill useful on the labor market, including the habit for being aware of proper wording and sequence, depending on the specific context
- familiarize themselves with a new genre of writing and mastering the ability to express themselves clearly and consistently
- develop compliant software and products
- familiarize themselves with the principles of pragmatic communication

Technical Writing enables STEM students to become better communicators, to assume less, and to prepare themselves for working with people who do not have a technical background. Customers often have technical needs or want products that deliver something, but they can rarely provide the technicalities for this. STEM graduates interact with customers on many levels, and, as such they act as SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) who must be able to translate what customers need from a product or service into a technical design. The first step is gathering the requirements and asking the right questions, and Technical Writing practice gives STEM students an invaluable vantage point.

Technical Writing enables non-STEM students to practice a new genre which is specialized and has many practical applications outside Philology. In many ways, it is a gateway to a career in science, medicine, IT, transportation, or manufacturing, where non-STEM graduates can help domain specialists get their message across and reach their customers beyond technicalities.

For both types of students, the challenge is to develop the domain knowledge they need for a specific field, and this can only be achieved through close collaboration between the various university branches and faculties. Allowing students to opt in or choose courses outside their core curricula can pave the way for transferable skills that are a true asset in today's market.

When discussing the benefits of teaching technical writing, Soles, Perez et Fuentes (2007:14)⁶² also mention:

⁶² Available here: https://www.e-buc.com/portades/9788498803488_L33_23.pdf

- “In many different types of work, writing constitutes an important part of the everyday workload.”
- “[Writing skills] facilitate communication with co-workers, clients and supervisors, i.e. inside and outside the workplace.”
- “[Writing skills] are necessary for a successful career”, because well-written documents are always preferred.
- “Writing skills contribute to saving time and money.”

TECHNICAL WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

When devising activities for higher-education students, the sky is the limit and the goal of this section is to offer some ideas any instructor can pursue and develop further. Our suggestions include first some generic types of exercises, and then some specific exercises that can be used with STEM and non-STEM students alike.

Generic Exercises

1. Offer students a situation or a bunch of documents (standardized or not) and ask them to produce the script and/or the video/tik-tok tutorial for different target audiences.
2. Offer students a text which has concept, reference, and task information mixed together, and ask students to write separate topics.
3. Offer students a text which has too much information or convoluted information, and ask students to simplify and clarify it.
4. Offer students large chunks of text and ask them to parse the content into topics, and then reassemble them depending on orientation type (describing the product, explaining the features and functionality, giving users instructions to achieve their goals).
5. Offer students some text chunks and ask them to apply operators, so that some content appears in some publications/deliverables, but not in others.

Specific Exercises

Example activity 1: Instruction writing (individual activity)

1. Present them a short video on how to make Peanut butter & Jelly sandwich⁶³.
2. Ask them to write a list of steps for boiling an egg (easy) or creating a social media account (hard) with their grandparents as target audience.
 - Check whether they made any assumptions.
 - Check whether they included all needed steps.
 - Ask a colleague to test the instructions and follow the steps to the letter.

⁶³ Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN2RM-CHkuI&t=20s> – 00:38 → 01:31

Example activity 2: Filmed tutorial (pair activity)

1. Show students a short tutorial⁶⁴.
2. In pairs, ask them to select a simple topic from one other subject that they study and to make a similar tutorial. Help them (if needed) decide:
 - The topic selection (something that can be explained in under 3 minutes)
 - The steps needed to explain the topic
 - The directing for the videoclip
 - The voiceover/soundtrack (if need be)

When they finish the task:

- Check whether they made any assumptions.
- Check whether their explanation follows logical steps and can be easily understood.

Ask another pair to test the tutorial and report on what they understood.

Example activity 3: Instruction writing (group activity)

1. In small groups, ask students to write instruction for any computer operation (for example, how to print a file, how to make a back-up copy, how to use animations in PowerPoint, etc.).
2. When finished, swap instruction lists between groups, and ask them to test them and point out both easy-to-follow instructions as well as potential gaps.

Example activity 4: Checking for paragraph unity (individual activity)

1. Remind students that, when writing longer texts in paragraphs, they need topic sentences. Topic sentences provide a mini-summary of the entire paragraph.
2. Invite them to read the paragraph below⁶⁵ and to underline the content which is irrelevant or does not belong.

Technical writing is a major part of the working environment. In fact, almost anything that is written on the job can fall under the title of "technical writing." Through technical forms of writing, people send letters and memos, write proposals, compile reports, and provide documentation of workplace processes. The people who write these forms of communication are called technical writers, but anyone, no matter what their title, may be called on to produce such forms of writing. In addition, technical writing is used to generate sales, inform users of instructions, describe objects and mechanisms, and help you get a job. Without technical forms of writing, most businesses could not do business at all.

Check their answers and discuss strategies for revising paragraphs with topic sentences.

⁶⁴ Available here: <https://www.tiktok.com/@vera.mate/video/6911303538673077509?lang=en>

⁶⁵ Available here: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED425790.pdf>, p. 33

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- Functional Design - <https://scottmanning.com/content/functional-design-specification/>
- IEC - <https://www.iec.ch/homepage>
- IEEE - <https://www.ieee.org/>
- Information Mapping - http://www.web.stanford.edu/~rhorn/a/topic/stwrtn_g_infomap/artclInfoMapping Training.pdf
- ISO - <https://www.iso.org/home.html>
- Microsoft Manual of Style (also known as Microsoft Writing Style Guide) - <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/welcome/>
- PiMod - <http://www.tcworld.info/e-magazine/technical-communication/article/documenting-with-pi-mod/>

S1000D - <https://www.asd-europe.org/s1000d>

The Splunk Style Guide - <https://docs.splunk.com/Documentation/StyleGuide/current/StyleGuide/Howtouse>

VDI - <https://www.vdi.de/en/home/vdi-standards>

New Pathways in Teaching English for Specific Purposes within the Paradigm of Globalizing Higher Education

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Abstract: With the latest tendencies in globalizing higher education and creating a complex system of competences and structures that find a common form and understanding throughout international higher education institutions, revisiting the manner in which English for Specific Purposes is understood, constitutes a research endeavor which promises fruitful results. The present paper aims at drafting a clear picture of how the practice of teaching English for Specific Purposes needs to be understood under this new paradigm. Considering the most recent shifts in teaching routines caused by the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the technological developments, the impact of digitalization on the teaching process and, not least, the ever-changing needs of the labor market, there is a stringent need to forge new pathways, not only in teaching English for Specific Purposes. In addition, this paper discusses reestablishing the importance of this topic at an academic level and reinstating its relevance in developing quintessential professional knowledge.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes, foreign language teaching, globalization, globalizing higher education*

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, globalization is one of the most controversial concepts of our times. In modern terms, globalization, as it is defined by the creators of the idea, in the current context of the modern world of mass economy, respectively by the International Monetary Fund, would represent a historical process which came about as a result of innovation and technological progress. Even though the major impact of this process is associated with economic globalization, by way of developing practices to integrate state economies, but also by way of allowing the free movement of capital, goods and services and of internationalizing commerce, the concept of globalization also implies other types of behaviors, attitudes and tendencies. These tendencies become apparent in countless areas which define modern life and modern development processes. As such, the concept of globalization can be applied onto a wider dimension, that of cultural, political and even life-style globalization.

The wider notion of globalization functions just as well in the academic environment of higher education. And perhaps, this tendency to globalize higher education has never been more highlighted than as a result of the pandemic phenomenon Covid-19, which revealed a series of asperities in teaching practices. The afore mentioned difficulties became all the

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more evident when the transitioning process from more traditional teaching to digital teaching was forced on by the pandemic, and the effects of this forced transition were experienced also at the level of organizing/presenting the curriculum, the course materials, of initiating/developing learning strategies and of interacting and using digital resources, both from the perspective of the teachers and that of the students.

The unprecedented situation brought about by the pandemic resulted in accelerating the digitalization of the teaching process, an evolution which had become an aspiration in recent years, but which had not been accomplished quite so fully, at least until the critical ground zero of the pandemic.

Despite this element of surprise and forced acceleration towards the digital environment, digitalizing the teaching process at university level, as well as the somewhat forced transition towards an exclusively digital learning and later on evaluation environment had as consequence identifying a few positive aspects deriving from an evolution of this nature. Among the beneficial elements the pandemic induced digitalization set forward, we can list here: the use of innovative strategies for teaching specialized foreign languages, access to a wide variety of digital applications meant to assist the teaching process, the ease of access of digital materials, as well as their round- the- clock availability, a certain transparency of the teaching process and of the student involvement with the course and course tasks etc.

However, at the same time, the same process severely brought into the spotlight quite many systemic failures, which were merely highlighted by the pandemic, but which were more likely caused by the new avid tendency to globalize the entire academic process. In what follows, the present paper will attempt to address some of these issues caused by globalizing the higher education system, as well as to analyze certain teaching techniques, which the globalization of teaching practices within the higher education system has made popular, with the purpose of identifying their strong and weaker points as well as their effect on the “bigger picture”, on the functioning of the higher education system as one, global entity.

GLOBALIZING TENDENCIES WITHIN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

There has been an increase in tendencies to globalize the academic environment in the past decade. The idea of academic globalization is to some extent a natural process, generated by the fast-paced evolution of the modern world, where technology is the norm, a norm which manifests itself within the academic environment as well, through an acute need to keep up with this kind of progress, but also with modern ideology and with the way in which higher education can remain relevant regarding the education/training requirements currently available on the labor market, as well as regarding the skills the future graduates need to acquire. On the other hand, this wave of academic globalization can also be regarded from a critical perspective. There are theories, such as the one proposed by George Ritzer (1998) according to which academic globalization would create so called McUniversities, namely academic institutions based on what Ritzer identifies as educational consumerism which allows for consuming academic services and obtaining “goods” under the form of university credits, qualifications or diplomas.

Still, this perspective might seem extreme to a certain extent, though there are a few aspects of academic activity which could be associated with such consumerist practices and which could, in the long run, become contentless formalities engendered within academic protocol (e.g., standardizing all forms of evaluation, turning more complex examinations into schematic tests unable to assess a more thorough assimilation of information etc.). Yet, the present momentum towards the paradigm of globalization is not singular in the history of the academic world. Such tendencies have manifested themselves throughout time. Thus, at present, the English language can be considered a globalizing factor, having become the international communication language in academic and research environments. In a not-so-distant past, German had filled this function and, if we go farther back, Latin, when the first higher education institutions were first established. It appears that globalization, through a similar tendency of internationalization, represented from the very off-set a viable development path for the academic environment, starting with the very first decades of its existence.

In the present context, the globalization of the higher-education system seems to be the most natural evolutionary stage in the contemporary context of modernity. This type of evolution has a significant impact on the teaching strategies within the academic community, and teaching specialized foreign languages is not an exception from this globalizing rule. It is in fact, one more brick in the same, wide and almost infinite globalizing wall of academic structures, a feature which will be expanded upon in what follows.

TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER-EDUCATION GLOBALIZATION

In the context of globalization and implicitly as a part of the whole process of internationalizing higher education, it would be interesting to analyze the problematic of teaching practices in the field of English for Specific Purposes, a field which most acutely needs to keep up both with the rapid evolution of the academic environment and with the burgeoning realities of the modern world, in order to be able to train skills and create viable competences for students and future graduates. The actual tendencies, especially in this area, but not limited to it, reveal a trend towards an approach focused on acquiring sets of practical skills. The academic instruction of students in the context of globalization is no longer concerned with acquiring abstract theoretical knowledge, that is more or less related to their field of study. Within the new paradigm of globalization, superior academic training needs to be concerned most of all with practical aims, oriented towards the acquisition of highly practical competences that are specific to the field of study and producing personnel that specializes in the area of expertise pertaining to their professional profile.

These features may be considered direct consequences of the globalization process, which generated a mutation from what was once considered to be an in-depth assimilation of higher-education studies, towards a simplification of the academic path, from the perspective of a quantifiable consumerism, focused on creating licensed specialists in activities directly required on the labor market, who at the end of their academic studies acquire competences that are just as specific and directly applicable to their field of activity. The latter argument can be received either as a positive feature or a negative one, but one needs to take into account the fact that such an approach has as direct effect minimizing the

long-term role of higher education, by diminishing the importance of having a college diploma in the new globalized world. To a certain extent, globalization in this area tends to intellectually equalize societies and communities on the whole, and it does so by setting very low intellectual and academic standards, which cannot lead to creating qualitative learning.

When it comes to teaching specialized foreign languages, globalization proves to be quite advantageous. This is possible because of the fact that the curricula of the specialized foreign language courses have always been oriented towards the more practical aspects of the field of study, and the long and short-term objectives aimed at acquiring measurable skills, required by specific activities future graduates will be involved in at the end of their studies. One of the focal points in teaching specialized foreign languages within the new paradigm of globalization is working with interdisciplinarity at a more in-depth level within each faculty and if the academic context allows for it, at the level of other higher-education institutions.

In the particular case of teaching English for Specific Purposes, the idea of interdisciplinarity is intrinsic to the course itself, since English presents the highest degree of internationalization, which is visible in the way the curriculum is elaborated, making it easier for the course itself to relate to the requirements of the field of study (i.e., human resources, social work, sociology, law etc.). However, as part of the new paradigm of globalization, it should become mandatory to apply the principle of interdisciplinarity in order to elaborate an interdisciplinary curriculum that transparently asserts the relevance of all skills acquired within the field of study. Thus, for instance, the courses of English for Specific Purposes could identify even more precisely the type of competences and knowledge necessary for each field of study in particular, focusing on developing these competences through specific course activities: studying texts with topics and specialized language that are meant to support a thorough understanding of the information acquired in the courses specific to the field of study, using audio/video materials that are perfectly suited to the field of study, creating mock-up scenarios specific to the future field of activity and managing these situations according to the protocols acquired in other specialized courses specific to each field of study etc.

Taking the element of interdisciplinarity to the next level in the globalization paradigm, course curricula could be created in partnership with other institutions abroad. In this way, course curricula could be integrated in the new trend of globalizing higher education, and, at the same time, it would have countless benefits not just by completing a conceptual internationalization, but by achieving a specific internationalization of skills and competences, whose development and acquisition represent the major goal of the course itself. The interdisciplinary concept, both at a local/national level and at a broader level, integrated in the real paradigm of globalization represents just one of the new trends which are worth mentioning when talking about teaching English for specific purposes and if possible, teaching other specialized foreign languages. Still, the situation of courses of English for specific purposes occupies a privileged place in that it is much more open to globalization than other specialized foreign languages might be. The fact that English is almost universally the main language of international communication in academia and beyond, offers an advantage to specialized English language courses in the context of globalization.

Nevertheless, the new communication technologies used globally, both in the academic environment and in other communication contexts, also have some disadvantages when it comes to learning and teaching specialized English. These disadvantages were vividly highlighted by the new teaching and learning techniques imposed by the pandemic context, which forced academic activities into a system of computer mediated communication. The great variety of applications and resources meant to enhance course interaction, the excessive standardization of the evaluation process, the relatively low level of control over the evaluation process itself, are just some of the difficulties the new globally connected academic world has been experiencing. These difficulties had the detrimental effect of restricting the actual in-depth assimilation process and implicitly of restricting the acquisition of real language skills, at least in the case of the courses of English for specific purposes. One could say that the online scenario has imprinted on the academic system a purely algorithmic feature of the type 101010, creating a certain degree of standardized predictability, according to which the students understand that when they are able to produce a certain type of answer, their academic performance will be optimal, and it will ensure scoring the maximum 100 points in the final exams meant to test their language competence level. Still, such standardized tests may not be able to confirm the language competence level, with the desired accuracy, in an objective way.

Even so, the entire process of globalization within the higher education system cannot be limited only to the unprecedented context created by the pandemic phenomenon Covid-19 and teaching English for specific purposes in this context of globalization cannot be viewed only through the perspective of this singular situation. Still, concerning the teaching strategies supported by the paradigm of globalization, it is easy to observe yet another worrying trend that has gained ground, most probably also as a result of the so -called “popular culture”, and this refers to the excessive necessity of focusing teaching strategies and of cultivating as teaching techniques exclusively those that levitate around the principle of “teaching to entertain”. In this case, the predominant role of the teacher is that of a “mass entertainer” and to a lesser degree, if at all, of “educator” or “competency trainer”, especially since the major objective of a specialized language course is to increase the language competence level, to create viable, usable, quantifiable language competences.

The problem with this type of strategies is not their form per se. On the contrary, their form makes them easily accepted by the students, easily accessible due to the wide variety of applications available, which can also be integrated in most online teaching platforms, but also easily accessible (if access to the Internet is ensured) in the traditional face-to-face scenario. These approaches can become problematic from one essential viewpoint, which becomes evident by raising two essential questions to any course’s lifeline: Do such strategies contribute to forming language competences? Do they assist in any way in assimilating the specialized vocabulary and using it in appropriate situations? What is the student left with at the end of the course?

Sometimes when choosing teaching approaches, especially in the case of specialized foreign languages, there is this tendency of designing courses as products that are overly entertaining and easy to consume, similarly to any product on the economic market that is easily accessible and produces instant gratification. What is lost in this case, is the essence. A specialized language course, be it English or any other foreign language, is by definition

a higher difficulty course, ideally addressed to (although the course room realities often contradict this minimal requirement) attendees with a minimum B2 language competence level. Focusing excessively on teaching practices whose sole purpose is to make the course entertaining, can have the negative effect of diluting the importance of the specialized factor, of simplifying those notions that are essential and in the long run of limiting the all too necessary assimilation process in acquiring a superior language competence level.

The students' learning process is also negatively affected by the globalization paradigm in that it shifts the focus from knowledge acquisition to encouraging consumerist attitudes, to creating courses that end up being excessively popular, but not necessarily rich in quality content, but hyperbolized through an overwhelming variety of entertainment features. In very singular cases will a higher difficulty course become an increasingly popular course as well. This is why, quite too often, in the compromise between popularity and quality content, there is always a rush towards popularity within this paradigm of globalization, and this is an unfortunate consequence especially for the acquired competences, both long and short term.

Perhaps it would be useful to expand on the concept of popularity which needs to be analyzed in relation with one of the major consequences of the globalization paradigm within the higher education system, a consequence which can be identified as "educational consumerism". As early as the mid-90s various theories emerged, Levine (1993), Plater (1995), Ritzer (1998), theories which anticipated the globalization phenomenon which had already started to manifest itself more noticeably in the United States of America and which had already begun to make its mark on the higher education system there. According to the theories mentioned above, globalizing higher education means transforming higher learning institutions from traditionalist institutions that are hard to access into attractive locations, much more suitable for the modern world, based on accessibility, excessive positivism, automation etc. In other words, these theories suggest that because of the globalization trend, higher education institutions lower their standards to such an extent that they become accessible by definition, and returning to the initial, rather trivial concept, in institutions that are simply popular, merely producers of courses which mandatorily meet the same features and standards of the institutions that mass produce them. Ritzer (1998) uses the term McUniversities for such higher learning establishments, claiming that the way they function and operate bears similarities with the way the McDonald's fast-food restaurant chain functions or with the major shopping centers, popularly known as malls. Among the positive aspects that such an institution can create, Ritzer (1998) names the courses' high accessibility level, creating attractive campuses with countless facilities destined both for learning and recreational activities, an automated administrative system that is easy to use, predictable and standardized examinations.

The elements of concern, which Ritzer (1998) also highlights include eliminating everything that is considered to be negative from the students' university experience and forcing a generally valid positivism which quantifiably translates to restricting grading under a certain level, reducing the number of students that fail exams and creating what he identifies as "an inflation of the grading system". A part of these factors can become or have already become current realities as a direct consequence of globalizing the higher education system.

Some of these less than fortunate situations are already becoming the norm in the particular case of teaching English for Specific Purposes. The participants in these courses seem to operate in a more or less conscious manner, in accordance with the realities Ritzer called out in 1998. One of the least fortunate contexts and which also impacts the teaching strategies, derives from what Ritzer identified as general positivism, which is a central part of the current globalizing trend and which facilitates excessively the access to specialized English courses, even to recipients whose level of English is lower than B2 and more worryingly, even to recipients whose level of English is in the A1-A2 area. The fact that individual faculties create groups of “beginners” or “pre-intermediate” students for specialized English courses has a major impact on teaching strategies, turning specialized English courses into more or less hybrid courses or twilight courses within which the specialized element fades to make room for a necessary general English 1.0⁶⁷ dimension of the course. It is apparent from the offset that the groups that have an inferior language competence will not be able to acquire the language skills which are in fact the quantifiable goals of the specialized English course.

Still, in addition to these unfortunate elements, the globalization paradigm sets forward a set of positive facts, which to a certain extent promote viable teaching techniques especially in the case of a course of English for Specific Purposes. One of the most noteworthy such aspects is the fact that within the globalizing paradigm, the courses are completely centered on the academic and professional needs of the recipient, and the professional and academic desiderata are in line with the realities available on the labor market. A course in specialized English needs to answer a needs analysis very well, first from an academic viewpoint, by correctly identifying the academic competences the recipients of the course need to acquire, and secondly, bearing in mind the professional requirements, by training and developing subsequent competences, useful in the profession their line of study prepares them to specialize in.

In addition, the globalization paradigm, strongly highlighted by the pandemic context, created new communication opportunities in class, new and innovative ways of accessing and interacting with course materials, which have become available around -the -clock on the various teaching platforms in use. A higher transparency in tracking down student involvement with the class material throughout the academic year is easier to achieve now that digital portfolios have become a common part of the evaluation process. Tracking the progress on solving individual tasks and monitoring the progress of the acquired language skills in real time, can be considered important, additional benefits of teaching English for Specific Purposes in the new globalizing system which has come to life during the pandemic phenomenon, practices which will survive from now on as they support and are fueled by the globalizing and standardizing paradigm.

⁶⁷ 1.0 is a metaphor for a beginner's course.

CONCLUSIONS

The paradigm of globalization within the higher education system opens up new possibilities in terms of teaching and assessment in specialized English language courses. Most of these new possibilities have beneficial effects especially in terms of the students' preparation centered on labor market requirements, the increased variety of teaching strategies that can be integrated into modern online teaching interfaces, enriching and complementing the traditional face-to-face type of interaction, when possible.

However, it is advisable to take into account the possible problematic situations reported in this article, situations that arise from the perspective of the globalization paradigm, which refer to the excessive simplification of the academic system, the tendency to capitalize on the popularity of courses at the expense of their content and the tendency of excessive standardization in the evaluation process.

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SECȚIUNEA III

VARIA

Creative Writing as a General University Course

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Abstract: As creative writing programs undergo a continual process of development in various (predominantly Anglican) parts of the world, there is growing consensus that the utility of the skills that are developed goes beyond the confines of philology departments. At the same time, such programs enjoy a high degree of popularity among students, which in turn encourages institutions to provide further attention to them. With these facts in mind and by means of an online questionnaire applied to students from various fields, the present paper seeks to explore the potential interest and merits of introducing general creative writing classes to the curricula of every education program within Babeş-Bolyai University.

Keywords: *creative writing, courses, education program, writing skills, questionnaire*

INTRODUCTION

As an academic entity Creative Writing appeared towards the end of the 19th century, for the most part as a response to the theoretical approach to literature that was predominant at Harvard University. At the time, “on the scholarly side individual texts continued to be scrutinized for what they might reveal about larger cultural texts, [while] on the practical side there was the teaching of instrumental language” (Cowan, 2016, p. 44). For some, these approaches felt stale and so Creative Writing appeared as a third approach to writing, combining the theoretical and critical backdrop of literary studies with the practicalities of language application. The term *Creative Writing* itself appeared in 1925 in the book *Creative Youth*, written by Hughes Mearns. During his classes, Mearns would read poetry to his students, since this was considered the highest form of literature at the time. He hoped that, in time, this steady exposure to high-end literature would awaken the muses in the students, who would then go on to create poetry of their own. The Romantic implications are both palpable and expected, especially when considering that the class had no definitive methodology and the implied premise was that those students who were born to be writers would in some ways awaken that side of themselves. In spite of this fact, Mearns’ experiment is perhaps a first academic attempt at showing that a practical approach to literature was viable.

Of course, Creative Writing courses as we know them today – especially in the form of workshops – came about in the US, where the “democratization of creative power” (Dawson, 2005, p. 32) allowed society to accept that quality art could be made by individuals

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outside the circles of the intellectually elite. In this context, universities quickly sought to bring some form of methodological framework to an academic discipline that was growing in popularity (at least in America) and one of the earliest definitive consequences was the establishment of the Iowa Writers' Workshop (IWW) in 1936. Throughout the 20th century the IWW laid the groundwork of what a Creative Writing course aims to achieve, as well as highlighting the ways in which this academic subject stands apart from others, especially literary studies. One of the principal elements is that the focus is on technique rather than interpretation of the finished work. When examining a text, the most important question is not what the author meant to say, but rather how they went about saying it – the styles, language and approach that the writer adopts to reach his goal. And, like Mearns hoped that exposure to poetry would inspire others to write, the goal here is to give students the specific tools to create their own work.

Today, Creative Writing courses are hardly new. They may have begun in the limited confines of US English Studies departments and workshops in the mid 20th century, but since then their popularity has spread to multiple (albeit mainly English speaking) countries and can be found incorporated within different specialties. For example, in the UK the Higher Education Academy reports that “in 2013 there were 141 higher education institutions offering 504-degree programs in which Creative Writing was a significant element” (Cowan 2016:42). At the same time, in Dawson (2005) we find that Australian universities have also seen a rise in programs, while more and more research is constantly emerging (see the journal TEXT) that focuses not only on pedagogical considerations but also to the extent to which fiction writing can itself be seen as genuine research.

It is easy to see how integrating such a program within Philology departments makes sense. For one thing, students already deal in part or predominantly with critical interpretations of texts, which means that a course where they have to create a piece of literature should only be welcomed (not that this is always the case, of course). Yet even going beyond this already traditionally complementary position that Creative Writing modules usually assume, there is more that this field can do to contribute to students' understanding of literature. Austen (2005), for example, points out that critical analysis and writing are far more entwined than scholars might wish to admit to today. Specifically, she observes how

not only does effective essay writing require creativity, but [...] one must recognise that the writing of literature is a critical activity requiring writers to assess the works of others in order to gain inspiration for and insight into their own literary writing (Austen 2005, p. 3).

It follows then that one must develop creative skills in order to write effective critical essays and one must also develop critical skills in order to properly write literature. From here, Austen focuses in her article on what she sees as being some of the advantages that Creative Writing assignments would bring to traditional literature courses, such as dispelling student awe of literature, inspiring student excellence or dismantling the classroom hierarchy. And, while her focus is certainly on Philology students, it is easy to see how some of the advantages she lists might be useful in other departments.

The fact of the matter is that, while creative writing programs have so far been predominantly relegated to language departments, more recent discussions have brought to

light the possibility that the benefits that such courses bring to a student's overall education run far beyond the confines of philological professions. As M.M. Green points out,

from publishing to copywriting, editing, journalism, proofreading, public affairs, public relations, teaching, in-house business communications, information technology, market research, community work, from working in a literary agency, to working in a library or various branches of the media or many aspects of the cultural industries – in all these professional areas and more, training and experience in creative writing can give a significant advantage (Green 2012, p. 326)

In other words, the skills that a creative writing course develops – communication, attention to details, the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes, etc. – are useful to students belonging to a very broad educational spectrum. With this in mind, it becomes appropriate to discuss the possibility that a university might include such classes within every line of study.

Considering that modern educational systems tend to be student-oriented, a good place to begin a conversation about the above proposal is to ask students to what extent they think it would be a good idea to have a creative writing course offered to them during their three years of study. With this in mind, students from three different faculties from Babeş-Bolyai University – Political Science, Geography and Sports – were given a survey that is meant to investigate what experience they had with such a course, whether they would be interested in learning creative writing, whether it might be relevant for their specialties and, if they did have such a class in their curriculum, in what semester would they like to have it introduced. The present paper deals with analyzing the responses provided, focusing primarily on students' past experience, interest in creative writing and perceived relevance to their specialties overall.

METHODOLOGY

The data for the present study was collected during Spring 2021 from students from three faculties from Babeş-Bolyai University – Political Science, Geography and Sports. The survey conducted via questionnaire was meant to investigate the experience that students had with such a course, whether they would be interested in learning creative writing, whether it might be relevant for their specialties and, if they did have such a class in their curriculum, in what semester would they like to have it introduced. The questionnaire was sent to three significantly different faculties, in order to cover a wider range of participants and to be able to draw some more general conclusions. Student responses were entirely voluntary and, as a result, the number of participants differed from faculty to faculty. Thus, out of a total of 133 participants in the survey, ninety-eight were from the Faculty of Political Sciences, twenty were from the Faculty of Geography, while only fifteen were from the Faculty of Sport. Despite the lower number of participants from the latter two institutions, they are nevertheless sufficient to be able to make some preliminary observations regarding student experience and attitudes towards a potential Creative Writing course at each faculty in part as well as within Babeş-Bolyai University overall.

Since the survey touches upon the prospects of a Creative Writing course in general, the language used was Romanian rather than English. The questionnaire contains four main closed-ended questions, which are meant to determine whether students would be interested

in Creative Writing and when they would prefer for it to be studied. In order to elicit additional comments and insights into students' perspectives, the first three of these questions are each followed by one open-ended question as well.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first question is focused on whether students have ever participated in a Creative Writing course before. Here, of the students from the Faculty of Political Science twenty-one percent of respondents confirmed having past experience, which is not surprising since this institution is also the only one (to this author's knowledge) that already offers some forms of Creative Writing classes. Indeed, for the questions asking them to provide further details, a third of the respondents said that they took a class during their college years. The remaining two thirds gave various responses, mainly highlighting an access to optional Creative Writing classes in middle school. This latter information was rather surprising. It suggests that there are some isolated optional classes scattered around. However, with no national methodology to speak of, it is difficult to determine the nature of these classes. It also doesn't seem to be a widespread phenomenon in Romanian schools, since no students from the Faculty of Geography and only one student from the Faculty of Sports have taken a course before. All in all, it is clear that, while there already are some possibilities for students to take Creative Writing classes in Romania, access remains very limited and largely beyond student reach. This is one more valid reason for the implementation of a widespread program and BBU, since it would mean that this institution would begin taking on a gap that – considering contemporary pedagogical trends that emphasize more and more on the importance of general creativity – sorely needs filling.

The second main question of the survey focuses on whether students might be interested in taking a Creative Writing course, regardless of whether they had any past experience or not. Here, eighty-one percent of students from the Faculty of Political Science said that they would like to take such a course, fourteen percent were unsure, and five percent answered that they would not. There were fifty-two students here who gave further details regarding their choices and the vast majority of the feedback was positive. For example, one student mentioned that they would like to one day write a novella. Another said how they would love to learn how to put their thoughts in order in the manner needed to write a story and a third stated simply that they consider themselves a creative person. At least one student pointed out that the activities found in a creative writing course would help them get out of their comfort zone. Such remarks point to one of the central elements of a Creative Writing course which often makes it attractive to students, namely the space it provides them to express themselves, to be, for a lack of a better word, creative, and to see that creativity manifest itself in a finished product. On a more practical note, one student who studies communications and public relations mentions that it would help improve their discourse. Another, studying advertising, highlights the central role that creativity plays in this profession. These comments, and others like them, point to how a Creative Writing course can have a direct impact on their professions. Those who opted against taking the course predominantly justified their choices by saying that they simply weren't interested in the practice or that it simply had too little to do with their specialties.

In regard to the Faculty of Geography, seventy percent of students said that they would be interested in a Creative Writing course, a further twenty-five percent were unsure, and five percent were against it. Here, nine students provided further details which were either entirely positive or, at the very least, neutral. For example, one student expressed interest in writing a book, while another mentioned that it would be useful for developing their general creativity. At the same time, two students simply stated that such a class sounded interesting, and another expressed his lack of uncertainty as to whether he had an inclination for it, but none of the respondents who gave less positive feedback provided any further explanations to their comments. Finally, in the case of the Faculty of Sports sixty percent of respondents would be interested, twenty-seven percent were unsure, and thirteen percent were uninterested. Only four students chose to provide further explanation for their choices, all positive. Thus, one student mentioned that writing is itself a pleasant activity. Another mentioned their desire to write a book. The third mentioned their desire to better understand the structures of the books they loved to read, while the fourth student commented on how such a course would help develop their creative sides, which were otherwise left to wither in our current educational and professional environment.

If we take into account the feedback from all three faculties, some recurring themes appear. Many students consider that creativity does provide benefits for their professional development. Others mention how they are naturally creative people and that this would aid in developing their skills further. A few students expressed their interest in writing a piece of fiction and felt that they needed help in this regard. All in all, it seems clear that, on a personal level, students feel that there is something missing in their education, a problem which a Creative Writing course could help solve.

For the third question, students had to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how relevant they consider a Creative Writing course to be for their specialty. Here, most of the respondents from the Faculty of Political Science gave scores on the higher end of the spectrum, with thirty-seven percent choosing 5 points, thirty-one percent opting for 4 points and twenty-one percent for 3 points. The remaining nine percent were distributed evenly across the lower spectrum. Here some of the students who gave further details reiterated the importance that such a course can have on their professional developments. For example, one student highlighted the importance of storytelling in Advertising. However, most of the feedback, although still largely positive, focused once again on their personal interest in Creative Writing rather than responding to the specific question as to how it relates to their professions. In spite of this shortcoming, we can still say that the grades given, together with some of the feedback from the previous question, which would have been better suited here, point to a predominantly positive perspective on the relevance of a Creative Writing program.

Interestingly, the respondents from the Faculty of Geography gave rather similar scores, with thirty-five percent opting for 5 points, an equal percentage for 3 points and twenty-five percent for 4 points. Only one person chose a score for the lower end of the spectrum. From the 8 additional comments provided, most of the respondents seemed to be studying Tourism, which would explain their need for developing their communication skills. For example, three of the respondents pointed out how important it is to be able to communicate efficiently with tourists and that a Creative Writing course could help in this sense.

As for the students from the Faculty of Sports, sixty percent opted for 3 points, thirteen percent for 4 points and twenty-six percent for 2 points. Percentage-wise, this is in keeping with the observation from the previous question, suggesting that students are skeptical about the relevance of a Creative Writing course for their specialty. Only three students gave further details, and they were all negative, each stating that for their respective profession the class would be irrelevant. And yet, this seemingly unidirectional perspective doesn't quite match to the scoring that the students provided, which suggests that there would have been more variance in their feedback had more individuals given any.

The final question asked students to say during which semester they would like to take a hypothetical Creative Writing course. Here, the responses for all three faculties were fairly spread out, with no overall consensus to speak of. Nevertheless, the number of respondents opting for the first or second semesters of study somewhat outnumber those who wished for later date, so it is safe to say that the majority of students think that the course should take place within the first half of their educational experience. Whether this is an acknowledgement of the benefits to be gained and utilized throughout college, or merely a reflection of the belief that more important courses should be left for later is unknown.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introduction, to date, Creative Writing programs are mainly limited to English speaking countries. There is a myriad of reasons for this limitation, not in the least being the question that still lingers – can writing even be taught? In many parts of the world (Romania included) the legacy of the Romantic period is still felt, reinforcing the belief that literary talent is a gift from the divine. As such, one does not become a writer; rather, they either are one (and have been so since birth) or they are not. From this point of view, a Creative Writing course would, at best, be pointless, since there is nothing that a professor can teach that the Muses won't inspire within. On a similar line, other opponents of the endeavor to establish Creative Writing programs argue that "talent will be stifled by the requirements of a curriculum" (Cowan, 2016, p. 40), that imposing a specific methodology will only succeed in constraining and thus diminishing the aesthetic value of the work. And yet, these fears are contradicted by a growing number of highly successful writers who credit their beginnings to what they learned from programs like the IWW (people like Raymond Carver or John Irving). There is also the fact that other fine arts have had schools teaching the techniques of passed artists for generations with nary a question as to their relevance. And, last but not least, irrespective of the concerns expressed by some artists and academics, no one can deny the steady rise in popularity of Creative Writing programs among students.

Overall, the present study reaffirms this claim to fame. Of the 133 students who filled out the questionnaire, seventy-nine percent said that they would be interested, and sixty-two percent of respondents think that it is valuable to their specialties. Detailed feedback shows that, on a personal level, most respondents are either curious about taking such a course or they feel that they would need a class in school that would have them further develop their already existing creative natures. On a professional level, students seem to feel that communication plays a significant role in their future careers and that a Creative Writing course would aid in the development of this skill. This is the case in spite of the fact that only seventeen percent of the students have had any prior experience with Creative Writing.

These results alone would justify a serious discussion regarding the development of an institution-wide program at Babeş-Bolyai University.

The study is not without its limitations, however. Primarily, there are disproportionate response rates that have seen the bulk of the data at hand coming from only one of the three faculties. This means that, while the number of responses is sufficient to conclude that the students from the Faculty of Political Science are happy with their current Creative Writing program and would be amenable to its expansion and development, the same assurances cannot be given with respect to the other two faculties. As such, it stands to reason that more data is required – perhaps by sending the questionnaire or some variant of it to the other faculties – before any definitive conclusions might be drawn.

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The Genitive Case as a Way to (De)Construct the World

TEODORA ONUTZ⁶⁹

Abstract: The Genitive case in Indo-European languages can take multiple functions, depending on the linguistic branch and is often equated to denote possession. While this is mostly valid for Latin and Germanic languages, it only explains a small part of how the Genitive is used in Slavic languages, where it can show partition, negation, or reference. This points to an earlier purpose of this case, as it was developed within early Indo-European languages to divide the world seen as an undifferentiated totality into knowable parts that never lose their connection to their origin. As a figure of speech and visual symbol it is called a synecdoche and has been used since the earliest forms of writing as a steppingstone between concrete and abstract meaning. This paper suggests a novel teaching method and a new approach to understanding the Genitive declension as a way to deconstruct the world, by dividing it into fragments and highlighting the connections between them and the totality they belong to, without resorting to syntax and beyond the limitations of its use in a specific language. It also offers a possible glimpse into how people started to understand the world around them through the language they used, linking abstract concepts to everyday objects.

Keywords: *Genitive, deconstruct, declension, synecdoche, partition.*

INTRODUCTION

This study on the Genitive case in Slavic languages and, extendedly, in Indo-European languages was inspired by a very practical matter: trying to teach Russian declension to Romanian students. Although, initially, it seemed to be an easy task, as both languages have a case system it soon became clear that the standard way of explaining how and why we apply a certain declension did not work. In the Romanian system, one case and one declension are used to answer one question and reflect the intended object of that action. It is quite simple to tell what ending to use based on this pattern and only change it according to gender and number. However, this did not translate well into Russian, which like all the other Slavic languages, has a multitude of cases and declensions inherited from ancient Slavonic, which do not simply answer to one question like whose or whom. Contrary to Romanian, a Slavic declension shows more than just the direction of an action, the subject or the possessed object and should be analyzed differently to create a practical didactic approach.

The most intriguing of the Slavic cases is the so-called Genitive, as it was used to convey a large array of meanings, from the well-known possession, to names, the absence of something and numbers. This was also the case I have had the most difficulties explaining, since it rarely translates fully into other languages that have only kept the possessive meaning. Thus, the Slavic Genitive cannot be explained and identified merely by using one

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specific question but needs to be approached from a very different perspective, one that would synthesize the many ways it is used. This requires a linguistic analysis of its evolution from the ancient Indo-European common language to its modern descendants reflecting the workings of the human mind as it tried to understand the world by separating it into knowable items. This process led to a new way of looking at the Genitive case in Slavic languages and the suggestion of a new style of teaching. The Genitive declension should not be taught like other cases, namely as the answer to a question about the direction of the action taking place or about the possession of an object, but as a network of connections between a concept/word and all its divisions. This method is also estimated to limit the need for syntactic explanations that may or may not be suitable or the problem of finding equivalents in the student's native language. We would, therefore, suggest that the only requirement for understanding and using the Genitive correctly is to adopt a different teaching methodology and a new understanding of the Genitive as a different way of constructing and deconstructing the world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of Natural Grammar was formulated by Noam Chomsky in the 1960's. It was based on biolinguistics and argued that all people have the same core linguistic mental structure, regardless of social and cultural differences (Chomsky, 1976).

He rejected the behaviorist theory that saw the mind as a tabula rasa and treated language as a learned behavior. Language would therefore be seen as an evolutionary development unique to human beings that did not resemble any other means of communication of other animal species. Chomsky argued that some notions of syntax are at least in part inherited, and that children only needed to learn certain features of their native languages (Chomsky, 1968).

He based his ideas on observations about people's acquisition of languages and the great difference between the language stimuli that children are subjected to and the rich knowledge they develop in time.

Chomsky called this human capacity the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and suggested that one of the tasks of linguists should be to determine this LAD and the constraints it imposes on human languages. The universal features that would result from these constraints constitute universal grammar. He also introduced the concept of transformational grammar. This theory states that language consists of certain structures that can be deep or surface. Deep structure refers to concepts, thoughts, ideas and feelings, whereas surface structure refers to the words / language we use to represent the deep structure (Chomsky, 1972).

This article will focus on a feature that belongs to both types as per Chomsky. This structure appears particularly in Indo-European languages throughout their entire history, whether as a very complex morphological feature or a simplified modern version: the so-called Genitive case.

The Genitive case is identified with possession in most Indo-European languages and appears in other language families as well. It is a morphological aspect used to express mainly possessive relationship between two nouns. The specific ending representing

possession has been categorized as the Genitive case, but this is not its only feature. The same ending can express a plurality of other meanings and relationships between words. Relationships expressed in the same form can be (Hagège 1982):

Possession

- inalienable possession (“Mary’s height”, “Mary’s existence”, “Mary’s hands”)
- alienable possession (“Mary’s jacket”, “Mary’s drink”)
- relation indicated by the declension noun (“Mary’s husband”)

Composition (Partitive Genitive):

- substance (“a cheese wheel”)
- items (“a group of people”)
- source (“a portion of food”)

Participation in an action:

- as an agent (“She benefited from her father’s love”) - called the subjective genitive
- as a patient (“love of music”) - called the genitive complement

Origin (“men of Rome”)

Reference (“capital of the republic”)

Description (“men of honor”)

Apposition (Japanese ふ じ の 山 (Fuji no Yama), “Mount Fuji”; Latin urbs Romae (“city of Rome”)

Negation (У меня нет книги - I do not have the book / book)

The main focus of this article is on the Genitive representing possession, partition, participation, and negation as parts of the same worldview. Through the so-called Genitive ending, the world is constructed and deconstructed as a totality of possible fragments.

Cases and declensions are considered linguistic characteristics specific to Indo-European languages. This does not mean that all the languages in this family still have these characteristics, as some have lost them with time even if they did have them initially.

Indo-European is a declinate language. The declension is the change made to the shape of a word to show the grammatical connections that it establishes. The changes are sometimes made inside the word or at the beginning but most often at the end. It is possible that the endings of declensions to have initially had an independent meaning, that has now been forgotten. They were probably used like prepositions, auxiliaries, and personal pronouns. In declinate languages like Indo-European, words are built from a root that in the early stages was probably used independently to express ideas. The roots are modified and become like stems that through declension form words. The whole process was initially one of composition through which specific endings were added one after the other to pronounceable forms through which a meaning was communicated (Quiles & Lopez-Mencheró, 2011, p. 155).

Words communicate one meaning by themselves and another by how they connect to each other. Only some connections create coherent messages, based on how words are linked. This can be done by a limited number of ways: the order in which they are expressed, their ending – namely their declension, and/ or a small particle.

To understand the concept of declension we must go back to its original shape and role and understand that meaning does not lie in the words themselves but in the connections between them. The declension is an ending that is added to a word to give it a new meaning and to connect it to another word, a phenomenon that existed before the invention of cases. It is possible that in the early stages the declensions represented individual prepositions added to words.

A declension can appear in nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and numerals. The modern way of understanding how cases work is based mainly on syntax, which is used in the same manner in languages with or without declension to analyse a sentence. In Common Indo-European and in ancient languages the declension was done following a different system, as found today in Slavic languages because they detached later from the Common Slavonic and are thus closer to their origin (Onutz, 2019, p. 208).

In Romanian, the Genitive mainly expresses possession, but it can also include the categories of origin and reference. In English, possession is the only declension that still exists in nouns. In Slavic languages, the Genitive is used to reflect a multitude of meanings: possession, partition, participation, and negation. Because of their complexity I have chosen to focus on Slavic languages in analyzing the function of the Genitive in structuring the world. They also feature the animated / inanimate distinction, a remnant from an earlier stage in the evolution of Indo-European languages.

There are situations in which the Accusative is used in other languages, preceded or not by a preposition and in which the noun is not declined. In Slavic languages, the Genitive is used in some cases instead of the Accusative, when it comes to animated nouns. The difference of Nominative / Accusative / Genitive forms for animate / inanimate nouns also existed in Latin but in time it was lost (Monteil, 2003, p. 211).⁷⁰ (Our translation)

The animate/ inanimate distinction is very old and was used to divide living beings from objects. It influenced declensions, pronouns creation and was lost in some languages, like Latin and its descendants when noun genders started to get mixed up and the neutral disappeared. Thus, objects were no longer restricted to being only neutral, leading in some cases, as the Slavic example above, to using both Genitive and Accusative declensions to convey the same meaning.

This complexity makes a syntax-based approach difficult because the same syntactic role can be played by more than one declension and each declension can create new meaning if paired with a different preposition. For a non-native speaker/ learner this use of cases and declensions is not intuitive as it may not represent something they have encountered before or that is found in their own language. This article offers a different way to understand how the Genitive works by viewing the world as a network of connections from totality to fragments, from abstract concepts to concrete pieces, without the need of syntactic analysis.

⁷⁰ “Hay situaciones en las que el acusativo se usa en otros idiomas, precedido o no de una preposición y en las que el sustantivo no está declinado. En las lenguas eslavas, el genitivo se usa en algunos casos en lugar del acusativo, cuando se trata de sustantivos animados. La diferencia de formas nominativo / acusativo / genitivo para sustantivos animados / inanimados también existió en latín, pero con el tiempo se perdió” (Monteil, 2003, p. 211).

UNDERSTANDING MEANS CONNECTING

Comprehension is the ability to understand a spoken or written message. The first stage is identifying the words and separating them from the flow of speech; the second stage is establishing connections between them using grammar so that the communicated meaning is decoded. It is not necessary that all the words be identified for the meaning to be decoded, yet it is necessary to have sufficient grammar knowledge to be able to establish the connections between them.

Written comprehension is more easily acquired than oral comprehension because individual words are already separated by spaces as opposed to the flow of speech, and the reading process is considered to provide more time for reflection on meaning.

In any language, grammar is the backbone that creates meaning and brings order to communication, establishing the internal logic that it follows. Words help us divide the world as a whole into intelligible pieces, but grammar gives us the ability to understand the environment as a system we are connected to both individually and collectively. Breaking down our environment by naming it piece by piece means that the relations between its components could also be understood and expressed through words. This event that took place in the human mind at the beginning of speech can be reflected in how language was constructed and used. As it was mentioned before, meaning lies not in the words themselves but in the space between them, in the connection that is established through word order, endings and various particles such as prepositions. The most intriguing is what we call a declension, whereby changing a word's ending we convey a multitude of connections in the quickest way possible.

The origin of declensions must be sought in the ancient, Proto-Indo-European, which can help us understand how these features came about and what role they initially played. There are no written texts in this language, but attempts were made to reconstruct it based on the evolution of its descendants, amongst which we mention Haudry, J. (1992), Levin, S. (2002), Quiles, C., Lopez-Menchero, F. (2011). Thus, it was possible to identify its basic features, although all the steps of their evolution remain unknown. Grammar changes slower than vocabulary, which is influenced by culture, politics, technological developments, and legislation, thus it is easier to establish the grammatical structure of a language and its connection to other languages. Even with the migration of peoples across vast geographical areas the same language can be carried with them if they remain culturally distinct and do not assimilate.

It seems that the social structure of Indo-Europeans has allowed their expansion on two continents and the emergence of a variety of languages. There was no centralized power, only tribes grouped around a leader and when another strong leader appeared, he gathered around him a community with which he then moved to another area to have autonomy. Thus, a gradual migration took these populations further and further away from their place of origin (Monteil, p. 33).

The great Bronze Age migration and the spread of the Indo-European language led to the transformation of the source language and the emergence of new languages derived from it, which either simplified previous linguistic aspects or developed new nuances to existing ones.

An example in this sense, although with a sinuous evolution, is the evolution of the order of words from the common Indo-European to modern languages. In the common Indo-European language, the order of the words was flexible and depended on musicality, a phenomenon that later disappeared in Greek and Latin, which were subject to greater rigor (Casas, 2007, p. 16).⁷¹ (Our translation)

This ancient Indo-European characteristic like flexible order, musicality – that is phonetic rules when it comes to declensions and prepositions has been passed on to modern Slavic languages and in part to Romanian. This means that some declensions change not based on gender, number, or case but specific consonants or vowels.

Slavic languages contain some of the most complex and sophisticated morphology and phonetics of the Indo-European linguistic family. They also still retain the ancient distinction between animate beings and inanimate objects, which influences the way that words are declined. Nouns denoting animate beings always use the Genitive case, especially masculine nouns, even when they are syntactically considered to be part of the Accusative case. Within this context, it becomes particularly understandable why the so-called Genitive case in Slavic languages is so appealing from a linguistic perspective, as it reflects the way in which the world was appropriated and understood. Whether it expresses possession, partition, participation, or negation, the use of the Genitive revolves around the same basic principle: there is a totality in the world that can be divided into as many pieces as we want, yet they never cease to belong to the same concept.

In primitive thinking, a part did not cease to be in relation to the totality to which it belonged and could replace it symbolically. Possession meant nothing more than an affiliation of one object / subject to another. The explanation behind the existence of the Genitive lies in the way in which totality was perceived and further divided into fragments. Its existence supports the idea that there was a clear relationship between totality and its parts at some point in human history. “Water” as an idea would represent the object as a whole, referring to all the water that existed in the world, thus any fragmentation of it, any division into units of measurement remained a part of the whole. In Slavic languages, “a bottle of water” uses the Genitive to express this link, which could be translated into English as “a water’s bottle”. This representation of the world is very old and can also be seen in ancient pictograms and hieroglyphs.

The Egyptian hieroglyph - dšr,  meaning "flamingo" corresponds to the phonogram which means "red" and the bird is associated by metonymy with this color. Another type of metonymy is a synecdoche, where a fragment is used to represent totality, much like how a glass of water can still be linked to water as a concept by the Genitive ending.

A synecdoche - the use of an element or piece to represent the whole, for example a human head for man or metonymy - the use of an object associated with another object to replace it, for example a crown for a king (Marchese, 1995, p. 34).

⁷¹ Un ejemplo en este sentido, aunque con una evolución sinuosa, es la evolución del orden de las palabras desde el indoeuropeo común a las lenguas modernas. En la lengua indoeuropea común, el orden de las palabras era flexible y dependía de la musicalidad, fenómeno que luego desapareció en griego y latín, que fueron sometidos a un mayor rigor.

Furthermore, this ancient way of thinking is so deeply imbedded in the human mind that is still in use today in the new iconic languages we create. One significant example in this respect could be the floppy disk icon used for saving files in most Microsoft Word applications. The floppy disk was initially part of the file saving process and even though it has long been out of use, the iconography and an extended meaning are still in place.

Translated into language, the Genitive declension does a similar thing, it always shows a relationship between the whole and its fragments, pieces, and constituent parts and even their absence, expressed in the negative: “I have no fragment / no part / no piece of that totality”. Likewise, possession shows that a fragment, a part, a piece of a whole “belongs to me”.

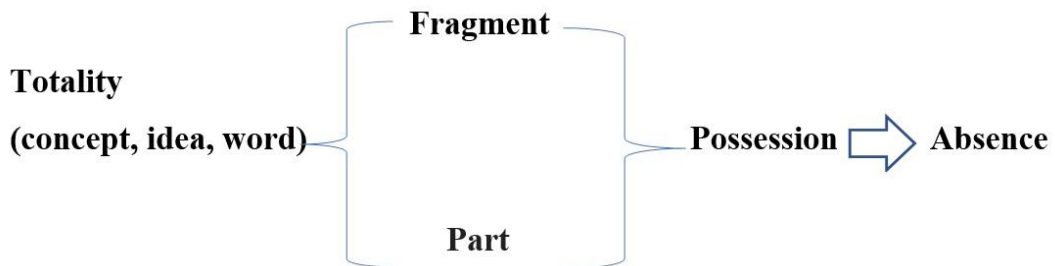


Figure 1. Connection in the Genitive declension

The key to understanding the functions of the Genitive and its use in any language is this relationship between totality - part - possession of a part - absence of possession. Therefore, any use of the genitive term, whether literal or figurative, could be included in this simple structure even when it refers to completely abstract concepts. I have chosen the following examples to showcase the use of the Genitive in Slavic languages and how it would be literally translated into English.

Examples:

стакан воды (Russian) – a glass of water (literally a water’s glass)

Szklanka wody (Polish) - a glass of water (literally a water’s glass)

Totality = water Part = glass

У меня нет стакана (Russian) – I don’t have a glass (Genitive ending)

Nie mam szklanki (Polish) - I don’t have a glass (Genitive ending)

Totality = the glasses that exist in the entire world

Part = one of those

Possession / absence = I do not own any part

Another feature of the Slavic Genitive is its use after numbers, reflecting the same idea of fragments that remain connected to a totality. When counting, the ending of a word changes after a specific number. It remains as it is for number one but gets a Genitive declension in the singular for numbers two, three and four and a Genitive declension in the plural for numbers five and onwards.

Examples:

один стакан (Russian) – one glass (Nominative ending)

два стакана (Russian) – two glasses (Genitive singular ending)

пять стаканов (Russian) – five glasses (Genitive plural ending)

jeden szkło (Polish) – one glass (Nominative ending)

dwie szklanki (Polish) – two glasses (Genitive singular ending)

pięć szklanek (Polish) – five glasses (Genitive plural ending)

The case of numbers requiring the Genitive declension is surprising for most students trying to learn a Slavic language, as their own Indo-European native languages do not possess this feature, nor do they understand the logic of such grammar. However, counting should be regarded as another type of division, as it suggests that from the totality of something that exists in the world, we take away a number of parts. This type of thinking does not affect the number one, as it remains a totality, it is whole. In a way, the number one approaches infinity and is never divided.

Teaching and learning the Genitive in any language should follow this structure, which captures an essential relationship expressed in morphological terms and further reflects the way that the human mind makes sense of its environment. Cognitive-linguistic evolution went from the word describing an object or an idea to its division into several fragments, to the possession of these fragments or their absence. In many languages, only the relation of possession expressed through the Genitive remained, while the other aspects it conveyed have been forgotten. This changed the way these languages understood the world as the morphology of a language is to be considered a reflection of how people think.

Not having any notion of case or declension in a language disconnects it from its origin and from the other Indo-European languages as well. Thus, in the teaching/learning process, instead of finding similarities and patterns, students only notice unfamiliar differences, and are limited to a mnemonic assimilation of language. When it comes to learning the declension of nouns, becoming aware of the existence of declensions in pronouns helps to intuitively assimilate the meanings they contain. The declined pronouns we use today are thought to have once been connected to nouns as declension themselves and have evolved into separate words in time. The best example is the Romanian Genitive-Dative pronoun that is also still a declension of nouns: *casa lui* – his house vs. *copilului* – the child's; *casa ei* – her house vs. *mamei* – the mother's. However, declensions are taught based on the syntactic analysis of the sentence, whether cases per se exist in a language or not. Thus, declensions end up reflecting only a syntactic role. Linking the use of declined pronouns to the declension of nouns without using syntax can bring an intuitive understanding of how meaning is created and, thus, lead to a faster, more efficient learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Grammar is the essence of verbal communication; it structures thought and makes messages cohesive, based on a mutually agreed compromise between human beings on what certain words mean. Declensions are an important part of it, whether they appear in nouns, pronouns, adjectives or even numerals. They have been developed because they offered an advantage in communication by making it more concise, more efficient, and able to express a multitude of meanings with a minimum of effort. Declined languages are some of the most effective in communication but difficult to learn properly when they are not native. Among them, Slavic languages are extremely complex as they have a six cases declension system for almost any part of speech, as well as gender distinctions, animate/ inanimate distinction, and phonetic rules. The Genitive declension is the most elaborate and widely used of all declensions. However, as stated in this article, if we approach it as a way to connect fragments to totality and concrete notions to abstract concepts we can discover an ancient logic, and a worldview dating back millennia.

Consequently, as revealed by their use of a Genitive declension, Slavic languages establish connections between the totality of a concept, its abstract existence in the universe and the pieces its users divide it into every time they take possession of it, contain it in a limited amount, count it and deny it. All Slavic languages have kept this grammatical aspect even though they have lost other particularities of their parent language - Old Slavonic. This shows that the Genitive declension still serves its purpose, albeit intuitively for a native speaker and plays an important part in communication.

The didactic of the language, however, does not always consider this when approaching this special Slavic linguistic aspect and simply explains it as either a phonetic declension, a matter of syntax or a list of endings, prepositions, and contexts to memorize. However, this defeats the purpose of the Genitive in the language and blurs the important meanings it intuitively conveys. This article suggests a new didactic approach, which does not use syntax, morphology and does not imply memorizing lists of words. This approach is based on a logical understanding of how the Genitive connects and deconstructs the world. The Genitive offers a unique view into the workings of the human mind as it moved from perceiving the world as an undivided totality and the environment as a flow of things and phenomena, to taking possession of it by dividing it into pieces that can be measured, controlled, handled, and understood in their relation to everything around them. The way we understand and teach declensions and the case system in any language will influence the way we view the world as a connected system that uses a minimum amount of energy to communicate or as chaos that surrounds us, never to be properly understood nor controlled. Language conquers chaos and makes the world a (de) constructed place.

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El aprendizaje de lenguas en contacto y el rescate del náhuatl en Zoquitlán (México). Un estudio de caso

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Resumen: El presente estudio de caso tiene la finalidad de informar sobre la situación actual y el rescate de las lenguas indígenas en América Latina, y, particularmente, en México. La investigación se llevó a cabo en el pueblo de Zoquitlán, en el Estado de Puebla de México, con un hablante bilingüe. Hemos analizado el modelo de educación bilingüe impartido a nivel nacional y local a partir de dos lenguas en contacto, el castellano y el náhuatl, y hemos reflexionado sobre las políticas estatales implementadas para el desarrollo pluricultural multilingüe. El análisis lingüístico se centra en la entrevista realizada en el idioma náhuatl traducida al castellano. Los resultados de este estudio de caso reflejan que la lengua náhuatl se ha transmitido por vía oral a otras generaciones y que gracias a las personas mayores se ha mantenido el idioma indígena hasta hoy en día. Asimismo, de la entrevista se destaca la idea de que el náhuatl, como lengua minoritaria, se va perdiendo a favor del castellano la lengua mayoritaria de comunicación en la comunidad de Zoquitlán y en todo el país.

Palabras clave: *lenguas en contacto, náhuatl, idioma indígena, bilingüismo, México*

LENGUAS EN CONTACTO EN AMÉRICA LATINA

Los pueblos indígenas de América Latina representan un tema de especial relevancia para los lingüistas y activistas en derechos humanos. A pesar de la atenta mirada de los gobiernos de cada estado a nivel internacional, nos situamos frente a un profundo desconocimiento sobre el conjunto de semejanzas y diferencias que caracterizan estas culturas. La razón de este hecho reside en que no tenemos muestras concluyentes de una sociedad homogénea, más bien todo lo contrario, del sur extremo del continente, la Patagonia, hasta el norte de México, encontramos una variedad de 522 pueblos indígenas y unas 420 lenguas habladas en todo el territorio latinoamericano. Bajo esta inmensa diversidad cultural podemos observar que existen aspectos lingüísticos comunes, una cuarta parte de las lenguas indígenas en uso en Latinoamérica se habla en más de un país. Estas lenguas son transfronterizas y suman un número de 103, un 24,5% de las lenguas indígenas presentes en América Latina, excepción hace el caso de la lengua quechua cuyos hablantes están ubicados en siete países a lo largo del continente: Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador y Perú. En el *Atlas sociolingüístico de los pueblos indígenas en América Latina*, publicado con el patrocinio de UNICEF y FUNPROEIB Andes (2019), se revela la fascinante diversidad y riqueza de las familias lingüísticas. El continente latinoamericano cuenta con 99 familias lingüísticas, la más extendida siendo la arawak, desde Centroamérica

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hasta Amazonia, de ésta última proceden más de cuarenta lenguas distintas. Según el Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas (2020), en el mundo se hablan alrededor de 7000 lenguas y un 43% de los idiomas están en peligro de extinción. Las estadísticas presentan una situación desfavorable ya que se preconiza que, a nivel mundial, hasta finales del siglo XXI aproximadamente 5000 lenguas van a desaparecer siendo sustituidas por las lenguas dominantes. Año tras año se ha hecho hincapié en la problemática de la uniformización lingüística y cultural del mundo, y especialmente, de América Latina. Numerosos estudios e investigaciones a lo largo de los siglos XX y XXI destacaron un serio desafío que la sociedad actual vive, como la pérdida de las tradiciones, culturas y lenguas precolombinas. Durante la época colonial la nueva sociedad latinoamericana ha sido sometida a un sincretismo cultural y religioso, aspecto que ha llevado a la pérdida sistemática de los valores autóctonos a favor de los nuevos adquiridos por la mezcla con los habitantes del Viejo Mundo. A mediados del siglo XX aparecen varias convenciones y declaraciones contra la discriminación como la *Convención relativa a la lucha contra las discriminaciones en la esfera de la enseñanza* (1960), *La Convención Internacional sobre la Eliminación de todas las Formas de Discriminación Racial* (1965), *el Pacto Internacional de Derechos Civiles y Políticos* y *el Pacto Internacional de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales* (1966) y, posteriormente, en septiembre del 2007, la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas aprueba la *Declaración sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, en la se reconocen tanto los derechos individuales como los derechos colectivos de los pueblos indígenas. La declaración fue solo la punta del iceberg, dado que el año 2019 fue declarado por la Asamblea General (ONU) el *Año Internacional de las Lenguas Indígenas*, y en febrero del 2020, la UNESCO ha declarado el periodo 2022 – 2032, el *Decenio de las Lenguas Indígenas*.

¿Cómo se pierde una lengua indígena? Es una de las preguntas recurrentes, la mayor preocupación es averiguar los motivos que llevan a la extinción de una lengua (Crystal, 2000). Una de las causas principales es la predilección al abandono de la transmisión intergeneracional. En segundo lugar, la exclusión de las lenguas indígenas en los espacios públicos e internacionales, la ausencia en los medios de comunicación, como la radio y la televisión, la disminución del uso de las lenguas en los ámbitos comunitarios y familiares. Otras razones serían las actitudes negativas de los miembros de las comunidades y pueblos indígenas hacia su propia lengua, la reducción de los ámbitos de uso, la decisión errónea de no usar la lengua indígena en nuevos ámbitos y contextos, la escasa o nula existencia de materiales escritos para la educación.

En relación con el número de lenguas indígenas habladas, cabe señalar que Brasil lidera el ranking de los puestos con 190 lenguas indígenas. En el caso de México, cabe señalar que es un país con una gran diversidad cultural por la presencia de los pueblos indígenas (Munguía, Delgadillo y Silvano, 2016) y cuenta con la mayor proporción de hablantes de lenguas indígenas (Díaz, 2018). Al otro extremo, señalamos que Puerto Rico, Cuba y Haití cuentan con la inexistencia de pueblos que hablen otros idiomas además de las lenguas oficiales de cada estado, español, francés e inglés.

LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS Y EL PLURICULTURALISMO

Tras el movimiento de la Independencia, el 27 de septiembre de 1821, los aborígenes de la Nueva España tuvieron la esperanza de que, una vez apartado el poder colonial, lograrían cambiar el rumbo de su destino en la jerarquía social del país. Pero nada más lejos de la realidad, ya que la mayoría de la población que habitaba en el territorio del actual territorio de México, especialmente los criollos, vieron la movida social como una modalidad de asumir el poder y seguir con el mismo trato sobre la población indígena. El 28 de septiembre de 1821, se creó el Congreso de la Unión, organismo que cuestionó si era necesario atender a estas culturas, o solamente seguir aceptándolas como fuerza de trabajo, “a lo que ya habían sido sometidas desde la llegada de los europeos.” (Rojas Hernández, 1997, p.2)

Cien años después, en 1939, se reúne la primera *Asamblea de Filólogos y Lingüistas* en la Ciudad de México, que intentó solventar el problema de los pueblos indígenas al crear el *Consejo de Lenguas Indígenas*, un organismo técnico que encomendaría realizar acciones futuras con respecto a la educación en el idioma de los autóctonos. En la misma reunión se decidieron parcialmente los organismos encargados de crear los alfabetos para las lenguas mixteca, totonaca, tarasca (P’urhepecha), náhuatl, mazateca, otomí y chinanteca. La novena junta resolvió entregar el proyecto tarasco (P’urhepecha), el único de la historia de la educación indígena de Michoacán, que ponía en verdad las bases para instrumentar una educación de calidad en las zonas rurales del estado. El proyecto dispuso de seis años de permanencia porque el gobierno federal cambió otra vez el rumbo de la educación indígena del país. En 1965 en Michoacán, se pusieron las bases del Centro Coordinador Indigenista en el Municipio de Cherán, y paralelamente, se instrumentó el Programa de promotores bilingües en las zonas indígenas, igual que el anterior, con el firme propósito de continuar con el proceso de castellanización.

La Dirección General de Educación Indígena fue creada en septiembre de 1978 y es a partir de la década de los ochenta, cuando se empiezan a cuestionar los programas de educación en las zonas indígenas. Las instancias de la Secretaría de Educación Pública simplemente se procedieron a la elaboración de algunos materiales didácticos en lenguas indígenas. Durante un largo período no existió una educación bilingüe normalizada en México, a pesar de haberse intentado por todos los medios posibles, sensibilizar a las autoridades educativas. Los profesores cualificados en impartir la enseñanza en uno de los idiomas indígenas, eran jóvenes que apenas habían terminado su preparación elemental, a los cuales se les ofrecían cursos de formación de unos dos o tres meses, después se les enviaba en las escuelas rurales para impartir la educación bilingüe.

A finales del siglo XX, México aún no contaba con un sistema didáctico que englobase también a las comunidades indígenas, la idea de los activistas a favor de los derechos lingüísticos y culturales era imprimir con mayor fuerza los programas de educación bilingüe desde los niveles de preescolar al nivel universitario; el reconocimiento y la oficialización de las lenguas indígenas; la introducción de planes de estudios de las escuelas Normales del país; el reforzamiento de la enseñanza de las lenguas indígenas en las escuelas secundarias; la inclusión en los planes de estudio de los colegios de Bachilleres establecidos en las regiones indígenas del país.

ANÁLISIS LINGÜÍSTICO

El análisis contextual y lingüístico consta de una entrevista realizada en el año 2018, en el pueblo de Zoquitlán situado a 3 horas de Puebla (México). Es una de las localidades más pobres del estado en la que viven más de veinte mil personas. La entrevista se compone de varias preguntas en lengua náhuatl. Los participantes son dos personas bilingües, padre e hijo, quienes desarrollan una conversación en náhuatl dialogando sobre temas sociales recurrentes y la situación actual de la lengua minoritaria. La entrevista nos fue proporcionada por el entrevistador, el hijo, con la finalidad de realizar un análisis lingüístico y difundir los resultados sobre el uso de la lengua náhuatl. Uno de los temas es la situación del habla náhuatl de manera sincrónica y diacrónica, la transmisión del idioma a las nuevas generaciones, la manera de hablar la lengua de los ancestros, así como el interés que los jóvenes presentan en aprender la lengua. Estamos frente a un fenómeno de diglosia en sentido amplio, donde las dos lenguas coexisten en el mismo territorio, pero el uso de cada una es diferente de la otra. El español ha sido empleado como lengua franca en la administración y educación por un período de tiempo, mientras que al náhuatl se le ha preservado el papel de lengua familiar, siendo hablado en ámbitos informales entre los miembros cercanos de la comunidad.

El náhuatl se ha transmitido de generación en generación de los abuelos a los nietos. El término “náhuatl” significa “sonido claro”, es una de las lenguas originarias de Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, siendo la lengua más hablada después del español. Al principio de la entrevista, el participante llamado Lauro Israel Sánchez Martínez, de sesenta y nueve años comenta que no ha recibido una educación formal en su lengua materna, el náhuatl, sino que adquirió la lengua durante los años vividos en la comunidad. Acerca del fenómeno de extinción de las lenguas indígenas, el náhuatl en Zoquitlán parece haber sufrido el mismo tratamiento. El paso del tiempo ha dejado una cicatriz cada vez más profunda y con menos posibilidad de sanar, y actualmente el náhuatl ya no se habla tanto entre las nuevas generaciones, *“se va perdiendo porque a los jóvenes que van creciendo... ya no les gusta hablarlo”*.

El idioma náhuatl es la lengua de los “Mexihcame”, pertenece a la familia Yutonahua y en la actualidad es la primera lengua con más de un millón de personas. En la entrevista, el participante cuenta que *“aquí el náhuatl lo hablamos todos”*, afirmando que en el pueblo existe una comunidad bilingüe náhuatl-español bajo el término “Mëxicatl”. Cabe mencionar que el sujeto siente la necesidad de aclarar que náhuatl y “mëxicatl” son lo mismo, *“porque a los Aztecas les llamaban “Mexihcahme”, entonces nosotros hablamos “Mëxicatl”*. El participante de nuestro estudio quiere subrayar la continuación de la tradición en nombrar su lengua y que “náhuatl” no es un término ajeno a sus creencias, pero prefiere el uso del otro término que le ofrece un sentimiento de intimidad. Sobre los “Mexihcame” averiguamos que son *“los que hablan la lengua”*, según la historia transmitida por vía oral que cuenta que estos habitantes venían de un lugar llamado “Aztlán”. El participante nos cuenta que los mayores siguen hablando la lengua de los antepasados, pero con el paso del tiempo corre el peligro de desaparecer debido a la falta de uso y de interés por parte de los jóvenes.

A continuación, el entrevistador, el hijo le pregunta a su padre cómo se llama el lugar donde están en este momento, formulando la pregunta en náhuatl y usando una palabra española “pueblo”. A raíz de esta pregunta, podemos observar que, según el padre, los

jóvenes tienen la tendencia de mezclar el náhuatl con el español, por esto la pregunta del hijo suena así: “Tlan i toka nin pueblo?” traducido al español por “cómo se llama el pueblo?”, mientras que el padre le corrige y le dice antes de responder a la pregunta, que “*en español se dice pueblo, pero en mēxihcahtl se dice “āltepētl” (lugar en la montaña)*”. El participante responde con la información solicitada al principio que, el pueblo se llama Zoquitlán y significa “*lugar de mucho lodo*”, ofreciendo la aclaración léxica de que “acuitlattlyo” en español se traduciría como “lodo”. Zoquitlán es uno de los 217 municipios del Estado de Puebla. El municipio de Zoquitlán comparte la misma forma de hablar náhuatl junto con: Ajalpan, Eloxochitlán, Zoquitlán, Coyomeapan, Coxcatlán, Zongolica, Tehuipango, Astacinga, Tequila y Los Reyes. Observamos que el participante no se muestra ofendido por el error que su interlocutor comete en el habla, pero considera necesaria su intervención para recordarle al hijo el término exacto en náhuatl.

El participante es padre de familia, esposo y abuelo. Tiene cinco hijos, tres varones y dos mujeres y señala que los tiene con “mo siuatl” o “mo tonana”, es decir, con “mi mujer”. Es interesante destacar que en la entrevista el participante se refiere solamente a los oficios de los hijos varones, dejando de un lado a las hijas. Comenta que el mayor es sacerdote “tata cura”, el hermano que le sigue es contador, y el hijo pequeño que realiza la entrevista ha estudiado sistemas computacionales. Tanto el término “contador” como “sistemas computacionales” los usa en español, porque, como él mismo lo justifica después, son palabras que no se pueden traducir al náhuatl, porque por aquel entonces estos trabajos aún no existían. Con respecto a las dos hijas, la única mención que se hace sobre ellas es que se casaron. El participante nos aclara que todos sus hijos trabajan y que siguen visitando la casa de sus padres en el pueblo.

A nivel lexical, el diálogo está construido con preguntas y respuestas en náhuatl, traducidas después al castellano por el entrevistador que es un sujeto bilingüe. Cuando nos ofrece informaciones sobre la familia, el participante utiliza algunas palabras en español porque tal como señala, “*cuando se hablaba en náhuatl aún no existía todo esto*”. De esta manera, se observa que en náhuatl se usan préstamos del español en cuanto al léxico que denomina nuevos trabajos como por ejemplo “contador”, “sistemas computacionales” “cura” (que viene de la expresión “tata cura”). Al contestar a las preguntas, el participante ofrece diferentes explicaciones para entender los términos en náhuatl y en español. En la entrevista, muchas veces compara las dos lenguas al darse cuenta de que los que van a escuchar la entrevista no siempre conocen los términos en náhuatl y recurre a traducciones, por ejemplo: “*en español sería*” ... “*en español se dice*” ... Al principio de la entrevista, al presentarse especifica la variante en náhuatl, “*en náhuatl se dice*”.

Las conjunciones utilizadas en el texto son la gran mayoría en náhuatl, pero, en algunas situaciones, el interlocutor utiliza las conjunciones más comunes en español como ayuda para poder llevar a cabo las frases. Proseguimos con un ejemplo en este sentido, respondiendo a la tercera pregunta “¿Tlan i n’ “mexihcahme”?” ¿*Qué son los “Mexihcahme”?* como parte de su respuesta, el participante utiliza tres palabras de origen español en su discurso en náhuatl, *lugar, pero y por qué*, ejemplificación en el texto “pero n’ tefba...” *pero no sabemos*; “pero nikahn...” *pero entonces aquí*; “porque sa yefba...” *porque ya que solo*.

En náhuatl los pronombres personales son: yo- nehhuatl, tú- tehhuatl, él- yehhuatl, nosotros- tehluan (tehluan-ti), vosotros- nanmehhuan (nanmehhuan-ti), ellos- yehhuan (yehhuan-ti). En la entrevista podemos observar que el participante utiliza el pronombre personal en frases como: “nen notoka Lauro...”, *Yo me llamo Lauro...*; “ipan o ti neske”, *crecimos con él*. El tratamiento de los adjetivos posesivos según Medina Ramos (1999) en náhuatl: no- (mi), mo- (tu, de ti, de usted), i- (su, de él, de ella), to- (nuestro), nanmo- (anmo-) – (vuestro, de vosotros, de ustedes), in- (su, de ellos, de ellas). Extracción del texto: /no/ - mi (fuente:1645 Corochi), o semi pronombre (fuente:1780 Clavijero), “no chocotzi” traducción en el texto “hijo”, “joven (masc), muchacho, soltero”, (fuente: 2002 Mecayán); /mo/ - tu (fuente:1645 Carochi), segunda persona singular (fuente: 2002 Mecayapan) “mo calixtik”, “tu casa” (no se encuentra en esta forma en los diccionarios, sino “calli”, sustantivo); /n’ton/ (probablemente to-) “toca” (prefijo “to”), traducción “de nosotros” (fuente:1571 Molina 2), la traducción en el texto *tu trabajo*. “To’s tefva” traducción en el texto *nosotros hablamos*, probablemente de “to-huaxca” – nuestro; /to/ (probablemente to-huaxca) “to kokolba”, *nuestros abuelos*; “to koneba”, *nuestros hijos*; “mo esposa” *mi esposa*, “mo siuatl” o “mo tonana”. “Amo” (vuestro), (amopan= sobre vosotros), (semipronombre posesivo; se componen de nombres, preposiciones, adverbios) (fuente: 1645 Carochi) y “no” (con verbo en modo imperativo/ subjuntivo, o en tiempo futuro) (fuente: 2002 Mecayapan).

En cuanto a los nombres, en náhuatl los sustantivos tienen cinco terminaciones; -lli, -tli, -tl, -in, -huil. Para formar los plurales de los sustantivos existen tres maneras de construcción, con el sufijo “-me”, con el sufijo “-tin”, con doblar la primera sílaba y usar la terminación “-tin”. Un dato muy interesante es que en náhuatl no se usan los artículos determinativos (*el, la, los, las*) con los sustantivos. “Panoltihztzinoh” “formulé de salutation” (fuente: 2004 Wimmer); “xibitl” (probablemente de *xiutin*); “mexicatli”; “Mahtlactli”, (diez) (fuente: 1611 Arenas); “Chicnahui”, (nueve) (fuente: 1765 Corté y Sedeño); “calixtik” (probablemente de “calixtia” con el sentido de “entrar” de acuerdo con 1765 Corté y Sedeño; o “portal”, conforme a 1611 Arenas); “tekipanoba” probablemente “tequipanoa” con el sentido de “mantenerse”, “vivir” (fuente: 1984 Tzinacapan); “náhuatl” – nombre que se dio a las naciones cultas que hablaban la lengua mexicana (fuente:1780 Clavijero). “Aztlán”, toponyme mythique (fuente: 2004 Wimmer), “blancura. Lugar de garzas” (fuente: 1579 Duran). La explicación del texto especifica que “Aztlán” es un lugar del cual *no sabemos exactamente dónde está, ya que solo era los que platicaban nuestros abuelos*, “Itech n; to kokohlba tech tlapovia o balahke de cen lugar itoka “Aztlán”. Pero n’tefba n’ nika amo tik yehmati nochí kaninh.” Por el otro lado, la descripción del lugar en el diccionario Duran se menciona que: “Poderosos, señor, lo que yo, tu indio siervo sé, de lo que me preguntas, es que nuestros padres moraron en aquel felice y dichoso lugar que llamaron “Aztlán”, que quiere decir “blancura”.

De acuerdo con Wolgemuth (2002) el plural de los sustantivos comunes en náhuatl se forman con: 1. el sufijo “-me”; 2. el sufijo “-tin”; 3. doblar la primera sílaba y usar la terminación “-tin.” Ejemplo: “mexihcahme” – (probablemente de “mêxihcatl” 2004 Wimmer), *los mexihcahme son los que hablan la lengua*. “Kokohlba”, (probablemente de “kokoltin”, “koltin”) *abuelos*; “âltepētl” la traducción en el texto *lugar en la montaña*, y “pueblos de todos juntamente” (fuente: 1751 Molina 1), “ville, communauté, pueblo/ les instances dirigeantes de la cité” (fuente: 2004 Wimmer). “Acuitlatlyo” traducido en el texto

como *lodo*, probablemente de “acuitlatl” en conformidad con la explicación de Wimmer 2004 “*Ecume d’origine végétale recueille sur la lagune.*”, por el otro lado, la traducción de la palabra “lodo” en el diccionario es: *akuitlatl – lodo*, también “*sokiyo*”- *lleno de lodo*, y “*sokitl*”- *lodo*; “*koneba*” probablemente de “*konetl*”, “*niño*” (fuente: 1984 Tzinacapan), o “*kokone*” *hijos, niños, niñas*. “*Sibatl*”, la primera grafía de la palabra “*siuatl*”, la segunda grafía, probablemente de “*souatl*”, *mujer casada, esposa, mujer, hembra*; “*tonana*” probablemente de “*tonan*”, *nuestra madre* (fuente: 1571 Molina 2), las dos palabras aparecen como traducción para el término español *esposa*. Miembros de la familia *tres hombres y dos mujeres*, “*tlaca*” de “*tlakaj*”, *humanos, hombres*; “*cibame*” desempeña el papel de *mujer*, pero tanto el término de *mujer* como el término de *hija, niña* se encuentran bajo otra forma, *niñas* = “*siuatoto*”; *niña* = “*siuatontli*”; *mujeres, hembras* = “*siuaj*”, *mujer, hembra* = “*siuatl*”. Los numerales: *cinco* “*maucuiltl*”, el término resaltado en el diccionario “*makuili*”; *tres* “*eyi*”, el término en el diccionario “*yei*”, probablemente un error de escritura/ dactilografía; *dos* “*ome*”. El sustantivo *sacerdote* es compuesto, en el texto, por dos palabras “*tata*” (definición en el vocabulario: traducción *taita, padre de los niños*, 1571 Molina 1) y la palabra en español *cura*; la traducción para *cura* y *sacerdote* en el diccionario náhuatl-español es “*teopixke*”, significado de *sacerdotes, padres, curas, ministros*. El interlocutor utiliza la palabra española, posiblemente, por varias razones: los hablantes de la zona donde habita no recurren a esta palabra en náhuatl, o el idioma náhuatl se va perdiendo y ciertas palabras fueron sustituidas definitivamente por sus variantes en español. El mismo tratamiento sufren las palabras que denominan los trabajos de sus otros hijos varones, *contador* se traduce en náhuatl como “*pouani*”, (administrador, contador, contralor), “*pouki*” (contador, contralor), quizás por la misma razón que en el caso anterior, esto es, el idioma náhuatl entra en desuso y los hablantes pierden la habilidad de hablarlo y encontrar siempre las palabras adecuadas. Además, una mención importante apunta que las preguntas recibidas fueron espontáneas, igual que las respuestas, eso denota que, de manera natural, estas palabras tienen una forma definida en su memoria y también en el uso. Sobre *sistemas computacionales* menciona que no tiene traducción en náhuatl, en cambio, no menciona esto sobre las otras dos palabras, asumiendo que el interlocutor conoce su forma en náhuatl, o que no conoce para nada la traducción de las palabras. Lo mismo pasa con la palabra *escuela*, en náhuatl es “*temachtilyan*”, “*tlamachtikali*”, “*tlamachtikalko*”, “*nemachtilyan*”, “*telpochkali*”, “*kalmachtili*”, el uso de cada denominación puede diferir de una variante de la lengua a la otra. El sustantivo “*muchacha*”, en náhuatl, tiene forma distinta “*n’takho*”, no se encuentra en el vocabulario, en cambio, la traducción del nombre se hizo de esta manera “*ichpokatl*”, *mujer joven, señorita, chica*.

En cuanto al tratamiento de los verbos señalamos que en náhuatl existen seis personas. Se emplea la segunda persona singular para hablar de usted/ *tú*, y se usa la segunda persona plural para *vosotros* o *ustedes*. Para los verbos intransitivos en náhuatl, no hay persona o cosa que reciba la acción del verbo. Los verbos transitivos, tienen complementos que reciben la acción del verbo. Los complementos pueden ser o sustantivos o pronombres. Los verbos reflexivos, el objeto de la acción es la misma persona que hace la acción. Siempre se usa el pronombre verbal “*mo*” con los verbos reflexivos. A continuación, presentamos la categorización de los verbos en náhuatl según las terminaciones de acuerdo con Medina Ramos (1999): 1. verbos que terminan en “-*cua*”; 2. verbos que terminan en “-*ca*”, “-*ta*”, “-

“-la”, “-za”; 3. verbos que terminan en “-qui”; 4. verbos que terminan en “-a”, “-i”; verbos que terminan en “-ma”, “-na”, “-mí”, “-ni”; 5. verbos que terminan en “-ia”, “-hua”. Los verbos en náhuatl no tienen forma de infinitivo, la forma de primera persona singular del presente es la forma del verbo.

El verbo reflexivo “motoka” = *llamarse* aparece en el diálogo con la forma: “tlan n’ motoka...”, pero en el diccionario se observa con la forma: *kenin motoka?* traducida, *¿Cómo te llamas?* / *¿Cuál es tu nombre?*”; “tikpia” = *tienes*, el verbo es conjugado en segunda persona singular en el *Diccionario en Línea Español-náhuatl*, AULEX, pero la forma conjugada y el infinitivo no se encuentran en el *Gran Diccionario Náhuatl* por INAH. “Iban kexqui xibitl tikpia?”, *¿cuántos años tienes?*, el infinitivo del verbo se traduce por *tener edad*, “uekaua”, y es parte de la quinta categoría de verbos en cuanto a la terminación. “Kijtobaya”, se dice, extracción del texto “ken iban Mexicatl ompa o kijtobaya”. En el diccionario de Téllez Nieto y Johansson (2010) aparece “mijtoa” se dice, se cuenta, “¿kenin mijtoa aka nauatl?”, *¿cómo se dice en náhuatl?*, “in yu mijtotika” para *así se dice*. “Tlapoba”, traducido como *hablar*, aparece varias veces en el texto con dos grafías, primero, “Kani n’ tik tlapoba náhuatl?”, *¿En dónde hablas náhuatl?* y segundo, “Nikan náhuatl tik tlapoua nochtli.” *Aquí el náhuatl lo hablamos todos*. Los resultados de la búsqueda en los diccionarios para el verbo *hablar* es “tlajtoa”, el término “tlapoba” no se encuentra en los diccionarios, en cambio, “tlapoua”, según la traducción al español, significa *sumar*, *sortear*. Los siguientes dos verbos fueron traducidos en el texto por *le decimos* y *les hablaban*, “tikilfia” y “okimilfiaya”; sin embargo, estas palabras no se encuentran en los diccionarios.

La siguiente pregunta hace referencia a la educación bilingüe que el hablante recibió: “Kani n’ o tik mo machti n’ nahuatl?”, *¿Dónde aprendiste náhuatl?*, la traducción en el diccionario para *aprender* es “tsaloua”, “tlasaloua”. El sujeto responde a la pregunta diciendo que *El náhuatl lo aprendí desde chico, desde que crecí*, “N’ nahuatl o tik ...ipan o ti neske”. En el diccionario AULEX, el verbo *crecer* aparece como “kueponi, ueyi, moskalti”; “ititihke” ha sido traducido como *enseñar*, en los diccionarios no se encuentra esta palabra en esta forma. El verbo *enseñar* en náhuatl es “temachtia, nemachtia, ititi, tlasalotia”. La siguiente pregunta alude a la opinión que el participante tiene sobre el idioma náhuatl en la actualidad, *¿Entonces, crees que el náhuatl se va a perder?*, “kemin tik o nita nahuatl, mo polos?”, traduce *perder* como “mo polos”. Esta forma no coincide con la del diccionario náhuatl-español utilizado para este análisis, el verbo es “tlapoloa”, “tepatilia”, y la forma de reflexivo *perderse* “tepoloa”. El segundo verbo de la frase no se encuentra en los diccionarios, el participante responde “tlen chokohti ashkan moskaltitibi, sekime amo on ki velita tlapovaske”, *los jóvenes que van creciendo, a algunos, ya no les gusta hablarlo...*, el verbo “moskaltitibi” surge como “moskalti”, probablemente la primera persona singular, presente de indicativo; “iban oksefpa sa kineloba ikan español”, *o, también lo mezclan con el español*, el verbo *mezclar* “teneloa”, pero la forma “kineloba” no se encuentra en los diccionarios. No obstante, encontramos la palabra dos veces en la misma frase.

“¿Tlan belis tech on ilfis de nika? Tlan i toka nin pueblo?” *¿Qué me puedes decir de aquí? ¿Cómo se llama este lugar?*, “belis tech on ilfis” *me puedes decir*, pero en los diccionarios el verbo *poder* es traducido como “uelitiotl” o “ueliti” *poder, tener fuerza*; el verbo *decir* se traduce por “ijtoa”, “itoa”, pero en el texto aparece como “ilfis/ ilfia”. La traducción *me puedes decir, se dice*, aparece con frecuencia más de una vez, cuando describe

el ambiente familiar, los miembros de su familia, etc. Observamos la predisposición para el uso de “ilfia”, en la explicación de la terminología tanto en español como en náhuatl. Cada vez que usa un término en una de las lenguas, va seguido por el verbo *decir*, *se dice* para subrayar la comprensión de significado en las dos lenguas; “tik ilfia mo esposa”, *en español se dice con mi esposa*, “ikan mexihcahtl tik ilfia”, *en mexihcahtl se dice*. El participante utiliza dos veces la forma “kilfia” en los contextos “nika español kilfia yen mayor”, *en español se dice el mayor*; “ken ikan español kilfia: se casó, *en español sería: se casó*. “Itoka” *nombrar*, en el texto se traduce como *se llama*, en ambos casos “Tlan itoka nin pueblo?”, *¿Cómo se llama este lugar?*; “Nika n’ “āltepētl” i toka: “Zóquitlan”, *Este “āltepētl” se llama: “Zóquitlan”*. A continuación, nos ofrece informaciones sobre sus hijos, a qué se dedica cada uno de ellos, en caso de los varones predomina el verbo “momachti” que significa *ser alumno, ser discípulo*, y así averiguamos que “yen mayor momachti para tata cura”, *el más grande estudió para ser sacerdote*; “ompa nokse ki bal toka nikni o ki momachti contador”, *el hermano que se sigue estudió para ser contador*; “iban tlan ashka ninka nech tlapobihtok n; choco ye o momachti sistemas computacionales”, *y el que me está entrevistando estudió sistemas computacionales*. Sabemos que las dos hijas se casaron y viven fuera de su casa, en ambos casos utiliza el verbo “namikti”, la primera vez es utilizado con doble /ii/ al final de la palabra, forma no encontrada en el diccionario. Por otro lado, la forma *casarse, toparse* se encuentra en el diccionario como “namiktia”, y el sustantivo masculino es “namiktin” *esposos, maridos, cónyuges*. Cierra el párrafo diciendo que *todos ya viven aparte*, para el verbo *vivir* la traducción del diccionario no coincide con la forma del texto “chantia” para *vivir, residir, morar, habitar*, “nekaki yelfa seka n’kate”.

“Chokohti nohti tekipanoba, nohti ke tech bal ita nika to altépetl.”, *Todos mis hijos trabajan, pero todos nos siguen visitando aquí en nuestro pueblo*. El verbo *trabajar* “tekipanoba” lleva una /b/ agregada a la forma original “tekipanoa”; “tetlapaloba” para *visitar*, verbo que no encontramos en el texto original, solamente en la traducción al español. Podemos observar la presencia de ciertos verbos en el diálogo. Al final de la entrevista explica el nombre de la bebida amarga en su lengua materna. “Kemi nashka shik ita, ni koni, tefba tik ilfia chicic. Itech español tikfia cerveza. Nika, tefba tik machilia chichic.” *Ah mira, por ejemplo, ahorita, estoy tomando algo a lo que decimos amargo...En español sería cerveza! Le decimos así, porque su sabor es amargo*. Subrayamos el uso del verbo *decir*, *decimos, le dicen*.

Como fórmula de cierre, el hijo le pregunta si nos quiere transmitir algo, “¿Tlan okse tik neki tik ilfis n’takho, hasta Rumania?” *¿Algo más que le quieres decir a la muchacha, hasta Rumania?* Observamos otra vez la presencia de “ilfis/ilfia”, en la respuesta *dile a la muchacha, si algún día viene es bienvenida*, “shik ilfi takho, tla semi vitz, nka tik chia, nika”, también la interferencia de la preposición *hasta*, en el sintagma *hasta Rumania*. Nos hace saber que *son bienvenidos todos los que nos quieran visitar*, “san aki, tik tlazotla tlen tech bal tlapaloba”. El verbo *ser* se traduce como “ka”, pero en el texto encontramos la forma “san aki”, quizás por la conjugación *son* traducida al náhuatl como “an”; *quieran* del verbo *querer* tiene dos traducciones, “tlaneki” y “moneki”; *visitar* tiene forma parecida en el texto con la del diccionario “tlapaloba” y “tetlapaloba”.

En el final nos manda saludos, *Ah pues, que les mando bendiciones...*, “Shik ilfi, nik titlanilia miek Dios...” igual que en la respuesta anterior utiliza “shik ilfi” para realizar una

pausa en el habla, “ilfi” y “shik” no se encuentran en el diccionario por separado. El participante nos *manda bendiciones*, *mandar* “nauatia”, y *bendición* “tlateochiualistli”, “miek Dios” es una construcción entre el adjetivo *mucho* y el sustantivo *Dios*, *bendiciones*.

La entrevista acaba con un mensaje que el participante transmite a todos los que quieren visitar el pueblo, enviando a todo el mundo sus bendiciones “hik ilfi, nik titlanilia miek Dios...”

CONCLUSIONES

Una de las primeras conclusiones que destacamos es la pérdida de la identidad y de las culturas originarias a favor de las lenguas dominantes en el caso de los hablantes de lenguas indígenas. Las lenguas minoritarias son poco valoradas y sus hablantes se encuentran en una situación de desventaja frente al colectivo de lengua mayoritaria (Canuto, 2017; Vernimmen, 2019). Tras la investigación documental llevada a cabo, nos hemos percatado del uso limitado de las lenguas indígenas en los países de América Latina y notamos que países como Cuba, Haití y Puerto Rico ya no cuentan con la presencia de lenguas indígenas en sus territorios, sino todo lo contrario, las lenguas de los colonizadores tomaron el papel de lenguas oficiales dentro de los países ya mencionados.

La segunda conclusión ilustra “la batalla” que tienen que dar los activistas y lingüistas en ciertos países con el objetivo de obtener derechos igualitarios para las comunidades indígenas monolingües. A pesar de los programas a favor del multilingüismo y multiculturalismo, observamos la tendencia hacia la discriminación de los hablantes de lenguas indígenas.

Finalmente, destacamos que, igual que en el resto de los países latinoamericanos, la implementación de leyes y medidas para el rescate del náhuatl en México se ve demorada siendo difícil eliminar el estereotipo acerca del aprendizaje de las lenguas originarias. En la página oficial del Gobierno de México hemos averiguado que el departamento de la Secretaría de Educación en Ciudad de Puebla ha elaborado siete programas de estudios para el 2021, con el objetivo de mejorar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de las siete lenguas indígenas en las escuelas de zonas rurales. La Dirección de Educación Indígena de Puebla cuenta con tres niveles educativos: educación inicial, preescolar y primaria; en la actualidad se atienden a más de 113 mil alumnos en todo el Estado. Hoy por hoy, 5 mil docentes de educación indígena imparten clases en las siete lenguas originarias empleadas en el territorio: el náhuatl, totonaco, tepehua, otomí, popoluca, mixteco y mazateco.

A pesar de las medidas legislativas tomadas a favor del manteniendo del uso de las lenguas indígenas, las actitudes de los hablantes nativos hacia sus lenguas siguen siendo opuestas: algunos están a favor del uso de las lenguas y otros, en contra. El participante Lauro Israel Sánchez Martínez nos cuenta en la entrevista que las nuevas generaciones ya no hablan el náhuatl o si lo hablan, lo mezclan con el español. Podemos observar que durante la conversación espontánea que lleva a cabo con su hijo, el hablante nativo de náhuatl tiene la tendencia de introducir palabras españolas para continuar su diálogo, por ejemplo: “tanto” en vez de *ixkichi*; “lugar” en vez de 1. “-kan”, “-ko”, “-uakan”, “-kan”, “-tan”, “-lan”; 2. *yeyantli*; “pero” en vez de *au*, *tel*, *yesej*; “por” en vez de *ik*, *ipampa*, “por qué” en vez *tlejka*; etc.

El análisis lingüístico llevado a cabo en la comunidad de Zoquitlán destaca por la importancia de la revitalización de la lengua náhuatl a pesar de la pérdida gradual del idioma a favor de la lengua dominante, el castellano. Los resultados de este estudio presentan un aspecto de suma importancia, esto es la transmisión de la lengua indígena por vía oral a las generaciones más jóvenes y el mantenimiento de la lengua gracias a las personas mayores. En este caso, igual que en otros contextos, como el ecuatoriano, si se trabaja desde el hogar y no solo desde la escuela, la lengua náhuatl podría cambiar de estatus y ser una lengua de prestigio (Chireac y Guerrero-Jiménez, 2021).

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Conceptual Metaphors of Geometric Shapes in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*

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Abstract: The article aims to identify and interpret the conceptual metaphors of geometric shapes in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* in order to reveal how society, Divinity and the main character's personal development is presented. In addition, the interconnections of the concepts will be analysed so as to unveil a novel interpretation of the text together with the number of figures included by the author in the text. Furthermore, the frequencies of the words from the semantic field of geometry will be detected and analysed in order to get a clear and complete picture of the society, Divinity and the main character's personal development.

The article's starting point is the detection of the metaphors of geometric shapes in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, followed by a conceptualisation stage. The interpretation of the conceptual metaphors reveals further interconnections among concepts, which become visible when the frequencies of the words from the semantic field of geometry are detected and interpreted. Another aspect considered in the analysis is the number of drawings included in the text to complete the image of the society, Divinity and the main character's personal development. All in all, cognitive linguistics comes with a novel approach to metaphorical meanings and reveals additional connotations and fresh interpretations of the author's intention, and Abbot's novella is not an exception.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, geometric shapes, society, Divinity, personal development*

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics used to be the ancient philosophers' preoccupation alongside other subjects, being considered necessary knowledge for a thinker and an intellectual. Nevertheless, there was a rupture in this approach at a specific time in history and mathematics, and other exact sciences, were separated from humanities. However, the history of literature proved that the connection between humanities and exact sciences could not be broken. Thus, some writers are also mathematicians, in whose works scientific facts and technologies are prevalent – as in the science fiction genre or those pieces of writing in which the characters are mathematical items as in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* by Edwin A. Abbot.

The artistic manner in which Abbot presents the unique world created in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* is worth analysing as the novella is a metaphorical expression of our world. Additionally, the story comprises an account of how people react to the unknown, progress, and the possibility of parallel worlds, the oppression of those who think

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differently compared to the majority, the social order, or even the creation of the world. Philosophical and religious implications can also be detected, and the existence of a mighty and all-known entity is conveyed to the reader. Moreover, the main character experiences different worlds, becoming aware of how ignorant individuals can be when they refuse to be open-minded.

Various stylistic devices and figures of speech in the novella abound, and the work can be considered a metaphor itself. Thus, the metaphors identified in the text can be conceptualised and interpreted in the manner they achieve the author's purpose in conveying his message. Their interpretation may reveal new meanings in understanding the novella and the eternal values comprised in it. Cognitive linguistics opens novel paths for text interpretation, and the conceptual metaphors detected in the text are relevant for unveiling the hidden meaning behind the words. The vocabulary from the semantic field of geometry is also relevant in the interpretation as the collocations of the terms denoting geometric shapes and the number of occurrences can complete the picture contoured by the identified conceptual metaphors.

All in all, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* deals with timeless themes, and the writer's style proves once again that mathematics can be a topic of interest for humanists as well. Moreover, when the novella is approached from the cognitive linguistics perspective, the interpretation enriches the meanings and completes the picture of the society, Divinity and the main character's development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts are part of our daily life, but they have also represented an appealing topic for researchers of different humanistic fields, from psychology to literature and linguistics. Thus, cognitive linguistics deals with conceptual metaphors and explains metaphorical meaning through the means of concepts. Consequently, literature can be interpreted from this perspective even when the topic seems to relate more to real sciences than to humanistic ones, as it is the case of the science fiction genre, in which technical terms are often used.

THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have significantly contributed to the birth and development of cognitive linguistics, and they are representative where the conceptual metaphor is concerned. Thus, creating a conceptual metaphor consists of several stages in which the metaphors are first identified and then conceptualised. The process ends with a step in which the concepts are linked, relating the source and target domain. Lakoff and Johnson's work, entitled *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), can be viewed as a milestone in conceptual metaphor theory, as the two authors not only explain why conceptual metaphors are relevant for understanding people's way of thinking, but they also supply examples of how a conceptual metaphor is created.

Furthermore, the book is followed by an additional piece of work in which a list of conceptual metaphors is compiled. Similarly, Berkley University offers a list of conceptual metaphors on a website, which provides a metaphor mapping that is a handy tool when a piece of writing is analysed to detect conceptual metaphors. The mapping considers both the source and target domain and resembles Charteris-Black's approach in detecting metaphors,

a method which is detailed in his work entitled *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis* (2004).

MATHEMATICS AND LITERATURE

Mathematics and literature seem opposed at first glance or even impossible to intermingle, but mathematics used to be a compulsory subject for any respectable scholar in Antiquity. Some writers are also mathematicians, and there are books in which the characters are mathematical items, as it is the case of the novella entitled *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. Rodica Chira describes the phenomenon of the intersection between the two sciences in *From Mathematics to Literature – an Interdisciplinary Approach* (2020), which offers a thorough analysis of Abbot's novella. The author presents some theoretical aspects of interdisciplinary, facts about the writer, the plot, the society in Flatland and the importance of specialised language in the novella under scrutiny. According to the author, the axiomatic method and demonstration are the approaches employed in the novella to present the Victorian society, politics, education, and Divinity. Furthermore, space geometry and the possibility for a fourth-dimension existence occur as the plot develops.

At the end of the novel, all these separate disciplines interpenetrate to give a coherent explanation of the universe. We learn that all the constituent elements of a historical epoch and a level of Reality are interdependent, that what happens at all existential levels is found in mentalities, in the logic of events, that such or such scientific reasoning is not or would not have been possible in another era or another context, that there are visionary personalities that go beyond the moment, who foresee future events, but as long as the majority of the population does not enter the game, does not become aware of it, these changes cannot become effective, they cannot happen (Chira, 2020, p. 98).

Subsequently, the dimension is of utmost importance in the plot, starting from a one-dimensional world and ending with the possibility of a four-dimensional one, because it allows the author to picture the society of his time artistically, and “therefore, interdisciplinary collaboration becomes a necessity” (Chira, 2020, p. 99).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cognitive linguistics comes with a fresh approach to metaphorical meanings and reveals the additional connotations of a piece of writing and novel interpretations of the author's intention. Thus, a piece of literary work can be analysed from the cognitive perspective, and the identified conceptual metaphors represent valuable tools for distinguishing the concepts within the artistic message.

Research Hypothesis and Research Questions

Literature is largely based on figures of speech, and authors usually use them for aesthetic purposes conveying concealed meanings to those who are open to perceive them. This is also the case of *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, in which the characters are represented by geometric shapes which belong to Euclidian mathematics. The novella is an allegory in which political, religious, and individual development aspects are dealt with so as to present a society in which being different or open-minded is frowned upon.

Therefore, the corpus is represented by the text of the novella *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* and the following hypothesis can be formulated: if the metaphors consisting of geometric shapes in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* are identified, analysed and subsequently clustered into conceptual categories, then a better insight of how Victorian society, Divinity and the main character's personal development will be achieved. Moreover, the article aims to answer four research questions: 1) Can the identified metaphors regarding geometric shapes be conceptualised and clustered into conceptual metaphors? 2) What is the relevancy of the detected conceptualised relations for the authors' intention to picture the society, Divinity and the main character's personal development? 3) What are the frequencies of the worlds from the semantic field of geometry? 4) Can a correlation between the number of occurrences of the words from the semantic field of geometry and the conceptual metaphors be established?

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the article is to identify conceptual metaphors in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. The detected conceptual metaphors in the novella will be analysed in order to reveal how society, Divinity and the main character's personal development is presented with the help of geometric shapes. In addition, the meaning of the identified concepts and their interconnections will be analysed so as to unveil a novel interpretation of the text so that the picture the society, Divinity and the main character's personal development could be complete. The frequencies of the words from the semantic field of geometry are also considered and interpreted in connection to the identified conceptual metaphors.

The following objectives will be achieved:

- a) to identify the metaphors which contain geometric shapes in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*;
- b) to conceptualise the identified metaphors;
- c) to detect the interconnections among the identified conceptual metaphors;
- d) to interpret the conceptual metaphors and the interconnections among them;
- e) to interpret the relevancy of the detected conceptual metaphors from the perspective of the conveyed message;
- f) to detect the frequencies of words from the semantic field of geometry;
- g) to interpret the frequencies of words from the semantic field of geometry.

Corpus Description

The corpus is a novella, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, written by Edwin A. Abbot in 1884, in which the author describes the Victorian Era making use of interdisciplinary, i.e. combining literature and geometry, approaching topics such as life in society or Divinity. Flatland is a two-dimensional world in which the inhabitants are geometric shapes devised in castes, and the story's narrator is A Square, who writes his first-person tale from prison. The former part is a description of Flatland, whilst the latter is the main character's journey in other two worlds, i.e. Lineland and Spaceland. While in Lineland, a world populated by points, A Square tries to convince its residents of the existence of a two-dimensional world, the roles are inverted when the character is taken in a

three-dimensional world and becomes aware of the third dimension. However, the disciple is returned to his own world after trying to convince his teacher of a fourth dimension. A Square ends in prison as all preachers of the third-dimensional world are either executed or imprisoned in accordance with their caste, and he decides to immortalise his story for his followers. Furthermore, the descriptions in the narrative are supported by drawing in order that the reader could understand the mathematical information properly.

Research Methods and Instruments

The approach applied in the current research is a mixture of the current methodology regarding the conceptual metaphor offered by the linguists George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Jonathan Charteris Black's methods of metaphors identification. Their methods are used to a certain extent to which techniques related to metaphors interpretation and conceptualisation have been added. Precisely, the process consists of 1) identification of metaphors, 2) conceptualisation, 3) interpretation, 4) establishing the interconnections among concepts, 5) interpretation, 6) frequencies identification of words from the semantic field of geometry, 7) interpretation.

Thus, the first stage is to identify the metaphors which contain geometric shapes in the novella, and the method used is mainly based on intuitive detection whilst reading the text thoroughly. Secondly, the identified metaphors are conceptualised, and conceptual relations are established using the lists of conceptual metaphors available in print and on the Internet. Moreover, new conceptual metaphors are created, and the richness of the metaphorical meaning of *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* can be exploited in numerous ways, and concepts can be connected in original combinations. Consequently, *The Master Metaphor List*, a publication based partly on George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's book entitled *Metaphors We Live By* and the online list compiled by scholars from Berkley University available on their website² are to be used in the stage of the conceptualisation. Furthermore, an analysis of the conceptualised relations is performed to reveal the meanings behind the concepts and identify and interpret the number of occurrences of words from the semantic field of geometry using the software *LancsBox* provided by the University of Lancaster.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Conceptual Metaphors of Geometric Shapes

The identified metaphors related to the geometric shapes have been clustered into conceptual metaphors. Thus, the main character, the square, has been considered firstly, then the line, which plays an important role in the novella, followed by the triangle, circle and sphere.

Conceptual Metaphors of the Square

A SQUARE IS A PREACHER

(1) [...] it is as natural for us Flatlanders to lock up a Square for preaching the Third Dimension.(Abbot, 2013)

² <https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Metaphor>

- (2) [...] to find in you³ - as being a man of sense and an accomplished mathematician, a fit apostle for the Gospel of the Three Dimensions. (Abbot, 2013)
(3)[...] much remains to be done before you⁴ are fit to proclaim the Gospel of Three Dimensions.(Abbot, 2013)
(4) Even to Women and Soldiers should the Gospel of Three Dimensions be proclaimed(Abbot, 2013)

There are many references to the square as it stands for the main character, and it is presented in its evolution from an ordinary geometric shape to a superior member of the society of Flatland from the perspective of how Divinity is perceived. Thus, the words from the semantic field of religion collocate with the term *square*, as can be noticed in the examples above. The verbs *preach*, *proclaim*, the nouns *gospel* and *apostle* lead to the conclusion that the square is a preacher of the superior world of Three Dimensions, perceived as Divinity.

A SQUARE IS ACUMEN

- (5) Our Professional Men and Gentlemen are Squares (to which class I myself belong) and Five-Sided Figures or Pentagons. (Abbot, 2013)
(6) Already the difficulties of avoiding a collision in a crowd are enough to tax the sagacity of even a well-educated Square.(Abbot, 2013)
(7) [...] if you are a Triangle, or Square, or even a Polygon, born with any Irregularity, you must be taken to one of the Regular Hospitals to have your disease cured.(Abbot, 2013)
(8) For why should you praise, for example, the integrity of a Square.(Abbot, 2013)
(9) [...] for I was covered with shame and humiliation that I, a Square, should have been guilty of the impertinence of feeling a Circle.(Abbot, 2013)
(10) My brother is one of the best of Squares, just, sensible, cheerful, and not without fraternal affection.(Abbot, 2013)

The main character is also well-educated even if it does not belong to the nobility in Flatland. The squares are superior to the middle class, and if their perfection by nature, i.e. four equal sides, four equal angles of 90 degrees, is not obtained by birth, it is reshaped in specialised institutions. The nouns *gentlemen*, *integrity*, *professionals*, and the adjectives *sensible*, *best*, and the expression *covered in shame* prove that a square is part of the higher social classes whilst the verb *cure* and the noun *hospital* suggest the reshaping needed in case of imperfection.

Conceptual Metaphors of the Line

A LINE IS DANGER

- (11) The tact and skill which suffice to avert a Woman's sting are unequal to the task of stopping a Woman's mouth.(Abbot, 2013)
(12) The dangers to which we are exposed from our Women.(Abbot, 2013)
(13) Under the skilful generalship of the Circles, almost every Woman's charge was fatal and very many extracted their sting uninjured, ready for a second slaughter.(Abbot, 2013)
(14) Add to this the power of making herself practically invisible at will, and you will perceive that a Female, in Flatland, is a creature by no means to be trifled with.(Abbot, 2013)

³ The square

⁴ A square

According to the author, the metaphors related to the geometric shape called a line contain the noun *woman* in its variants because the lines represent the females in the novella, according to the author. The danger is expressed by the words *sting, danger, meanest, fatal, slaughter*, to which an expression is added *by no means to be trifled with* which can be interpreted that it is not a good idea to treat a woman as unimportant.

A LINE' DIMENSION IS DEBATABLE

- (15) [...] seeing a Line, sees something that must be thick to the eye as well as long to the eye. (Abbot, 2013)
- (16) [...] all our lines are equally and infinitesimally thick. (Abbot, 2013)
- (17) [...] when I talk to them about the unrecognised Dimension which is somehow visible in a Line - say, 'Ah, you mean brightness': and when I reply, 'o, I mean a real Dimension,' (Abbot, 2013)
- (18) [...] a Line, if I may say, has 2 sides (for the Points of a line may be called by courtesy, its sides); (Abbot, 2013)

The dimension is of utmost importance in the book, and it appears to be an issue when it is related to a woman, i.e. a line and the fact that a line is one-dimensional or two-dimensional is debated and uncertain as it results from the modal *may* and the adjectives *thick, long*, and the collocations *unrecognised Dimension, somehow visible*, and *infinitesimally thick*. Thus, the verbs and collocation suggest that the line's second dimension is not accepted as a real one due to the fact that it is almost unnoticeable.

A LINE IS CONSPICUOUS

- (19) [...] brightness, as well as length, is necessary to the existence of a Line, if the brightness vanishes, the Line is extinguished. (Abbot, 2013)
- (20) No Female shall walk in any public place without continually keeping up her Peace-cry, under penalty of death. (Abbot, 2013)
- (21) [...] there are at least intervals of quiet, when the wife is neither seen nor heard, except for the humming sound of the continuous Peace-cry. (Abbot, 2013)
- (22) When we in Flatland see a Line, we see length and brightness. (Abbot, 2013)

Even if a line's second dimension is debatable, its presence is definitely noticeable due to its noise and appearance, which are characteristic to them. Thus, the nouns *brightness* and *cry* include strong visual and sound images in their meaning, and these features are consequently added to women's appearance.

A LINE IS THE PILLAR OF GEOMETRY

- (23) [...] the Sphere that the Straight Lines are in many important respects superior to the Circles. (Abbot, 2013)
- (24) [...] the penny will then have ceased to appear oval at all, and will have become, so far as you can see, a straight line. (Abbot, 2013)
- (25) Take for example an equilateral Triangle [...] you would see nothing but a straight line. (Abbot, 2013)
- (26) All beings in Flatland [...] present to our view the same, or nearly the same, appearance that of a straight Line. (Abbot, 2013)

(27) If our friend comes closer to us we see his line becomes larger; if he leaves us it becomes smaller: but still he looks like a straight line; be he a Triangle, Square, Pentagon, Hexagon, Circle, what you will - a straight Line he looks and nothing else. (Abbot, 2013)

(28) [...] and if a straight Line of three inches, moving parallel to itself, makes a Square of three inches every way. (Abbot, 2013)

(29) [...] as there is no Dimension behind a Point, a Point has 0 sides; a Line, if I may say, has 2 sides (for the Points of a line may be called by courtesy, its sides); a Square has 4 sides[...] The Cube which you will generate will be bounded by six sides. (Abbot, 2013)

The most numerous metaphors are those related to the extremely important role of the line, i.e. to be the starting point of geometry. Thus, the adjective *important*, the verb *make* in correlation with other geometric shapes, and the expressions *become a line*, *see a line*, and *look like a line* prove that everything can be a line or starts from it.

Conceptual Metaphors of the Circle

A CIRCLE IS A RULER

(30) [...] when the Chief Circle (in other words our High Priest) came to inspect the State Prison. (Abbot, 2013)

(31) [...] he is included in the Circular or Priestly order; and this is the highest class of all. (Abbot, 2013)

(32) [...] how an illustrious Circle, overcome by the artistic beauty of the forces under his command, threw aside his marshal's baton and his royal crown. (Abbot, 2013)

(33) [...] might even issue commands in the name of a priestly Circle. (Abbot, 2013)

(34) [...] many of the highest Circles, sitting as Judges in law courts. (Abbot, 2013)

The metaphors related to the geometric shape called A Circle contain adjectives such as *chief*, *highest*, *illustrious* and *priestly*, proving that the circle is Flatland's leader.

A CIRCLE IS EXCEPTIONAL

(35) [...] the more judicious Circle can in a moment pacify his consort. (Abbot, 2013)

(36) It was Pantocyclos - the illustrious Circle mentioned above. (Abbot, 2013)

(37) Can it be that I have so misbehaved to a perfect Circle? (Abbot, 2013)

(38) [...] the wisdom of the Circles. (Abbot, 2013)

The circle is considered superior to all two-dimensional geometric shapes, being endowed with exceptional features reflected in the metaphors with the help of the adjectives *judicious*, *illustrious*, and *perfect* and the noun *wisdom*.

Conceptual Metaphors of the Triangle

A TRIANGLE IS A WARRIOR

(39) Our Soldiers and Lowest Classes of Workmen are Triangles with two equal sides. (Abbot, 2013)

(40) IF OUR highly pointed Triangles of the Soldier class are formidable. (Abbot, 2013)

(41) A whole army of Polygons, who turned out to fight as private soldiers, was utterly annihilated by a superior force of Isosceles Triangles. (Abbot, 2013)

The term *triangle* collocates with words or expressions which prove its status as a warrior. Words denoting that the triangle prefers war are *soldier*, *fight*, *highly pointed*, *army*, *annihilated*, and *force*.

A TRIANGLE IS INFERIOR

- (42) If even the angle of a respectable Triangle in the middle class is not without its dangers.(Abbot, 2013)
- (43) Especially is this true among the lower classes of the Triangles. (Abbot, 2013)
- (44) [...] the Soldiers, and to the Workmen; who indeed can hardly be said to deserve the name of human Figures, since they have not all their sides equal. (Abbot, 2013)
- (45) Thus, in the most brutal and formidable of the soldier class - creatures almost on a level with women in their lack of intelligence. (Abbot, 2013)
- (46) If even the angle of a respectable Triangle in the middle class is not without its dangers. (Abbot, 2013)
- (47) Especially is this true among the lower classes of the Triangles. (Abbot, 2013)

Even if the triangle proves to have warriors' characteristics, they are not part of the upper classes of Flatland, as it can be noticed in metaphors containing expressions such as *lower class*, *middle class*, *hardly [...] deserve*, and *lack of intelligence*.

Conceptual Metaphors of the Sphere

A SPHERE IS SUPERIOR

- (48) [...] but I am a Being, composed as I told you before, of many Circles, the Many in the One, called in this country a Sphere.(Abbot, 2013)
- (49) [...] and the intestines of every solid living creature, even of the noble and adorable Spheres.(Abbot, 2013)

Both metaphors contain adjectives reflecting superiority, i.e. *noble*, *adorable*, but also the idea that the sphere consists of countless numbers of circles, which leads to the idea of supremacy.

A SPHERE IS INTRANSIGENT

- (50) Sphere. And what mean you by saying that I am no longer the Perfection of all Beauty? (Abbot, 2013)
- (51) Sphere. Not I. There is no such land. The very idea of it is utterly inconceivable.(Abbot, 2013)
- (52) And besides this, there is the Argument from Analogy of Figures.
Sphere. Analogy! Nonsense: what analogy? (Abbot, 2013)
- (53) Sphere. [...] no one has adopted or suggested the theory of a Fourth Dimension. Therefore, pray have done with this trifling, and let us return to business.(Abbot, 2013)

The sphere is narrow-minded and unwilling to accept the idea of being inferior as supported in the metaphors by the expressions *utterly inconceivable*, *I am no longer the Perfection of all Beauty*, the nouns *nonsense*, and *trifling*.

FIGURES OF FREQUENCIES

Occurrences of the Words from the Semantic Field of Geometry

Considering the book's theme and the author's intention to portray society and the allegorical aspect of the novella, all characters are geometric shapes, and subsequently, words from the semantic fields of geometry, specifically, and mathematics, generally, are used. Furthermore, the identified conceptual metaphors are focused on five geometric shapes, and their occurrences are considered relevant for the article's aim.

- Line/s 116
- Circle/s 106
- Square/s 72
- Sphere/s 62
- Triangle/s 30
- Drawings 16

The conceptual metaphors of the geometric shapes previously analysed are completed by analysing the number of occurrences of the five geometric shapes and the number of drawings supplied in the novella. Thus, the most numerous are the occurrences of the line, which represents the women in the book, followed by the circle, which symbolises the ruler, with over one hundred occurrences. The square, which stands for the main character, is positioned in the middle of the rank, followed by the sphere, the one who is sent from Spaceland to Flatland to make his world known. The last in line is the soldier, who is a triangle, with only thirty occurrences, whilst fourteen drawings complete the explanations offered by the author with two additional ones on the covers representing Flatland and the end of the book.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN CHARACTER, THE SOCIETY AND DIVINITY IN THE PRESENT CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

The main character's evolution, the society and Divinity in Abbot's novella become obvious considering their features after the stages of metaphors' identification and conceptualisation. A thorough examination of the conceptual metaphors and their interconnections complete the picture of the previous analyses, so that they reinforce the previous meaning and add novel connotations.

Firstly, the main character named A Square starts a journey in order to discover worlds of different dimensions so that he could understand his fellows' open-mindedness or, conversely, their narrow-mindedness. According to the metaphors identified in the corpus, the main character is acumen and only somebody who is well-educated, wise, sensible, and part of the superior castes can have such journeys. Consequently, only an individual endowed with these features can become a preacher of the Third Dimension, superior to the one which he inhabits. However, the character can perform his duty as a preacher only after he has experienced the one-dimensional world, i.e. Lineland.

Secondly, there are three other important characters in the two-dimensional world, representing the target in the conceptual relations, i.e. the line, triangle, and circle. While the line stands for womanhood, the rest are males, and the more numerous the number of angles and sides are, the higher the geometric shape's rank is. Furthermore, the sphere is a character

of utmost importance and an inhabitant of the three-dimensional world called Spaceland. It is considered to be a multitude of circles and presented in the novella as being sent to preach the existence of a superior world, Spaceland, a place related to Divinity. If the circle is a ruler, the sphere is above it as it comprises many circles, and the analogy can be performed as the circle is the top geometric shape in Flatland because it is a polygon with an infinite number of sides and angles. Furthermore, the angles of the circle, which is perceived as a polygon, are obtuse, and the conceptual metaphors also prove this fact. Similarly, the sphere is intransigent even if it is superior to the polygons, having the largest number of angles and sides. Consequently, the term *obtuse* in mathematics is related to the one used in ordinary language usage, which leads to the interpretation that Divinity is unwilling to accept viewpoints that suggest that superior beings exist.

Additionally, a character which has a special status is the Line, the woman, because it has no angles, but it is dangerous, quickly noticed around, and its dimension is subjected to debate, and what is more, it is considered to be the mainstay of geometry itself. Even though Flatland's society is ruled by those with the largest number of sides and angles, the Line represents the point from which geometry begins. Analogously, women are the pillar of society, they cannot be ignored, and if this is the case, they can be treacherous. Another dangerous geometric shape is the triangle, which is a soldier in charge of protecting the rulers, and additionally, it has to ensure that the laws and orders are respected entirely by all the inhabitants of Flatland. As previously mentioned, the number of angles and sides assures the rank in society, and the triangle possesses only three, which leads to the conclusion that the triangle is inferior to the other geometric shapes. The analysis performed in the current article supports this statement, and one of the conceptual relations is that A TRIANGLE IS INFERIOR, which adds to the previous one, i.e. A TRIANGLE IS A WARRIOR. If applying one of Logics' rules, it results that the warrior is inferior, the rulers are exceptional, the preachers are adamant, superiority is intransigent, and womanhood supports society, although women must be treated with cautiousness.

Additionally, the number of occurrences can be interpreted relative to the importance of the characters in the story and correlate them with the identified conceptual metaphors. Thus, women seem to be of utmost importance, which is also evident in the metaphors, as they support the world of geometry, i.e. the universe itself. The circles rule Flatland, and they are exceptional and essential in the plot, as it is proved in the two conceptual relations, as well. The balance is assured by the square, as it is part of the upper classes in Flatland and also the one who brings the knowledge/awareness of the existence of other worlds. The sphere comes next, but it is noticed only in the latter part of the novella because it belongs to Spaceland, a superior world, whilst the triangles are inferior, which is proved both by their frequency in the corpus and the conceptual metaphors.

The drawings can be perceived as familiar if geometry is considered, and their importance lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the author makes his point clear when he supplies information related to Flatland, Spaceland and Lineland, and on the other hand, two additional drawings are placed at the beginning and the end of the book. Thus, the former resembles a map of the worlds Flatland, Spaceland, Lineland, and Pointland together with a quotation, i.e. "A day and night, but this is wondrous strange", the title of the novella and the author, who is A Square (Edwin A. Abbot). The drawing on the back cover is much

simpler, and it represents the end, enriched with some inscriptions which make the reader believe that everything was a dream.

All in all, the frequencies of the five terms support the meanings revealed by the conceptual metaphors, and they prove how important a charter is in the plot. Furthermore, the drawings establish a link between literature and geometry as they support the explanations in the novella. The main character's journeys of contributing to his personal development open his mind and transform him into a preacher of the other worlds' existence. The society of the world created by Abbot is ruled by superior beings, and superiority makes them obtuse: Divinity is not willing to accept anything or anyone to be placed above them, and women are considered of utmost importance, and they should not be ignored.

CONCLUSIONS

The conceptual metaphor identification and interpretation are valuable methods to reveal helpful information that has not been noticed previously as the meanings are concealed behind words. Abbot's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, which metaphorically presents the Victorian Age, is not an exception and the detected conceptual metaphors clarify the image of the society, Divinity and the evolution of the main character.

Firstly, the identified conceptual metaphors state who the characters are in the novella and their role in the plot. There are five main characters, and the concepts related to them reveal some characteristics and the characters' importance in their society. Thus, the conceptual metaphors of the main character and storyteller, A Square, reveal its features, role and mission in society. He is well-educated, part of the upper classes, a sensible professional who will be the apostle of the Third dimension. Another important character is the Line, who represents women, and their role to support society, i.e. geometry, itself. Nobody can ignore a Line, and it is suggested that one should avoid ignoring them as they can be highly hazardous. Circles rule Flatland, and they are outstanding, similar to the Sphere, who, however, is superior, but their superiority leads them to intransigence. The opposite of the Circle is the Triangle, who maintains order and applies the rules imposed by the Circle.

Secondly, the frequencies sustain the detected conceptual relations as they correlate according to the importance of a character in the society and story. Thus, the women are the most important, followed by the leaders, preachers, messengers of the Third Dimension, and soldiers. Society proves to have a strict hierarchy thoroughly respected by everyone, and those who do not obey are imprisoned or killed based on their caste. Furthermore, Divinity is unwilling to accept a position of inferiority or that there is something or someone superior to it, showing narrow-mindedness. Conversely, progressiveness is a characteristic of the main character, gained on his journeys to worlds of various dimensions. Moreover, the drawings made by the author himself in the novella can be considered a bridge between literature and geometry.

In conclusion, the metaphors detected could be conceptualised, and they unveil how the society of the Victorian Era was portrayed by the author in an original manner, using geometric shapes as characters. The main character's evolution is characteristic of exceptional people who have a mission in their world even though the responsibility is unsafe, but accepted as a moral duty for their peers and followers.

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