# Limbajele specializate în contextul literației multimodale

Presa
Universitară
Clujeană

# LIMBAJELE SPECIALIZATE
# ÎN CONTEXTUL LITERAȚIEI MULTIMODALE

*Abordări metodologice, provocări curente*
*și perspective de dezvoltare*

*Publicarea acestui volum a fost finanțată*
*din Fondul de Dezvoltare al Universității Babeș-Bolyai 2022*
*(SEED Grant 2022-2023).*

Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate
al Universității Babeș-Bolyai

# LIMBAJELE SPECIALIZATE ÎN CONTEXTUL LITERAȚIEI MULTIMODALE

## *Abordări metodologice, provocări curente și perspective de dezvoltare*

*Editor*

**ROXANA MIHELE**

*Co-editori*

**Ioana Mudure-Iacob & Anamaria Lupan**

**PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ**
**2023**

*Autorii sunt singurii responsabili pentru conținutul științific al lucrărilor trimise spre publicare.*
*The authors are solely responsible for the scientific content of the works submitted for publication.*

**ISBN 978-606-37-1961-5**



**Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai**
**Presa Universitară Clujeană**
**Director: Codruța Săcelean**
**Str. Hasdeu nr. 51**
**400371 Cluj-Napoca, România**
**Tel./fax: (+40)-264-597.401**
**E-mail: editura@editura.ubbcluj.ro**
**http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/**

*Comitetul științific*

# *Cuprins*

**SECȚIUNEA II.**
**Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate**

# *Cuvânt-înainte*

Ajunsă la ediția de bun augur cu numărul XIII, conferința internațională „Dinamica Limbajelor de Specialitate: Tehnici și Strategii Inovatoare” patronată de Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate al Universității Babeș-Bolyai, a reunit ca de fiecare dată profesori, universitari, doctoranzi și cercetători de la 14 instituții din 4 țări diferite. Pasiunea împărtășită de toți participanții – evoluția galopantă a noilor metode, dar mai ales mijloace de predare a limbajelor specializate în lumea academică post-pandemică – a fost evidențiată prin prezentările atât în format fizic, on-site, cât și în format virtual, on-line.

Ideea subliniată de toți participanții la conferință și confirmată de membrii din audiență a fost că, în urma pandemiei de Covid-19, lumea s-a schimbat radical. Predarea în mediul academic s-a mutat ireversibil înspre varianta multimodală care îmbină prezența fizică a profesorilor și studenților în sălile de curs, respectiv metodele „tradiționale” de a preda, cu versatilitatea și ușurința în folosire adusă de noile aplicații și platforme digitale, dezvoltate predominant în timpul carantinei. Imposibil de evitat era și dezbaterea legată de facilitățile dar și provocările aduse de revoluționara emergență a motoarelor de căutare bazate pe inteligența artificială.

Cu un mare succes la studenții noștri, nativi digitali ai generației Z, folosirea inteligenței artificiale dă naștere la dezbateri aprinse în rândul profesorilor și specialiștilor în educație, legate mai ales de potențialele vulnerabilități de natură etică și pragmatică a folosirii I.A. în cercetare și evaluare. Deși dificilă și greoaie inițial, pentru generațiile de profesori născuți înainte de a apariția internetului, glisarea metodelor de predare spre varianta multimodală oferă azi rezultate surprinzătoare în captivarea atenției studenților, îmbunătățirea comunicării de tip tutore de curs-student, în eficientizarea asimilării noilor cunoștințe pe termen mai lung. Nu rareori, chiar dimensiunea ludică a metodelor și tehnicilor de predare aduse de noile aplicații digitale a sporit atât confortul emoțional al studenților, cât și bucuria resimțită de profesori la vederea creșterii implicării studenților în activitatea de predare-învățare.

Volumul de față, structurat în două secțiuni, oferă o selecție din lucrările prezentate în conferință (în limbile engleză, franceză, spaniolă și română). Prima, intitulată „Provocări și oportunități în contextul noilor medii de învățare”, evidențiază dorința autorilor-profesori de a folosi în predarea la clasă o multitudine de oferte de software educațional, inclusiv inteligența artificială. Autorii analizează cu acuratețe avantajele și dezavantajele acestora, impactul lor asupra învățării și eficiența acestora așa cum este percepută de către studenți.

A doua secțiune a volumului, numită „Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate”, pune în lumină diferitele competențe și abilități pe care profesorii de limbi străine le consideră esențiale pentru viitorul parcurs profesional al studenților lor. Într-o economie și piață a muncii cosmopolită, interdependentă și în continuă schimbare, pe lângă cunoștințele și abilitățile specifice domeniului lor, studenții au nevoie și de competențe interculturale, multiculturale, transversale care să faciliteze capacitatea lor de angajare. Profesorii sunt la rândul lor preocupați de internaționalizarea programelor de studiu, de rolul limbilor engleză sau franceză în construirea unei identități plurilingvistice într-o lume globală; de dezvoltarea abilităților de comunicare profesională a studenților dar și a modului în care se poate construi o programă de studiu a unei limbi străine care să facă față acestor multiple cerințe și inovații aduse de lumea contemporană.

Prin prezentul volum, vă invităm pe voi, cititorii, să pășiți alături de noi în descoperirea provocărilor și realizărilor profesorilor de limbi străine în activitatea lor de pregătire a specialiștilor lumii de mâine.

***Editorii***

# *SECȚIUNEA I.*

## Provocări și oportunități
## în contextul noilor medii de predare-învățare

# Not Your Average Chatbot: How ChatGPT Is Revolutionising Language Learning

**ADRIANA LAZAR**[1]

**Abstract:** This paper explores the potential use of advanced chatbots, particularly the recently developed AI-generated tool ChatGPT, in informing the ESP classroom experience and course design, as well as in shaping students' digital skills. ChatGPT has been accompanied by divided attitude since the release of its latest iterations, in 2022 and 2023, and has been reviewed both as a revolutionary and as hugely controversial resource for education and, in particular, the industry of foreign language learning. This research, therefore, attempts to weigh the opportunities for ESP instruction provided by this technology and for this purpose it takes an "early adopter" approach, whereby the use of natural language processing tools such as ChatGPT is seen as an implicit component of an integrating view on digital literacy. In this sense, this study revolves around the following research questions: How can Chat GPT be integrated into ESP course design and classroom activities to enhance language learning? What are the potential benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in ESP instruction, and how do students address them? and How does the use of ChatGPT in ESP instruction align with current trends and practices in digital literacy and language education? The paper is informed by survey data and semi-structured interviews conducted with undergraduate students.

**Keywords:** *ChatGPT, text-generative-AI, ESP, digital skills, foreign language instruction*

## CHATGPT AND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL LITERACY AND BEYOND

Since their release, the impact of the different models of ChatGPT on our digital horizon has not only been reviewed by mainstream media and

[1] Adriana Lazar (PhD) is an Assistant professor in the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes of "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca.

scholarly literature alike, but also queried and tested at unprecedented scale across an impressive variety of scenarios and use cases. Breaking popularity records, with 78% of the internet users having already engaged with it[2], and dubbed "best AI chatbot ever released" by *The New York Times*, ChatGPT set new milestones in versatility of use, powering a blizzard of capabilities, from translation or code writing to insight generation in atmospheric science, public health, biomedical engineering or sound art. The plausible assumption that this might not be just an average chatbot also draws support from the *2023 Educause Horizon Report*, which opens the discussion on a similar note, aligning public recognition and risk perception of a phenomenon that is already deemed a "macrotrend", and is estimated to become mainstream. The report acknowledges that "Artificial Intelligence (AI) has taken the world by storm, with new AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT opening up new opportunities for content creation, communication and learning, while also raising new concerns about the misuses and overreach of technology." (*2023 Educause Horizon Report. Teaching and Learning Edition*, p. 4). This alignment underscores the growing awareness of educational stakeholders of the possible implications and future trajectory of advanced chatbots for institutions of higher education and students.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the plausibility of considering one such chatbot as more than average conversational agent. Taking the flurry of divided opinion over the potential of chatbots, and more particularly ChatGPT, as a measure of their immediate impact on our digital toolbox and digital routines – an impact gauged critically, nonetheless -, rather than passing on controversial side-taking, this research also stems from another immediate context, prompted by what happens beyond the classroom, and is therefore aimed at meeting halfway the digital world that our students inhabit. As a result, the guiding contention of this paper is that, on the long-term, the increasing use and distribution of AI-generated tools, such as chatbots, needs to be viewed within the context of digital literacy education and, more specifically, within the context of AI literacy skills (Rodriguez-Garcia et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2021, D'Agostino,

---

[2] For ChatGPT statistics, see: https://www.tidio.com/blog/chat-gpt/.

2023). Mostly defined in empirical studies and subsumed to digital literacy, AI literacy is still under-conceptualised, however very briefly put, "AI literacy can be defined as a set of skills that enable a solid understanding of AI through three priority axes: learning about AI, learning about how AI works, and learning for life with AI" (Casal-Otero et al., 2023, p. 2). With the democratisation of AI technology and the recent focus on AI-enhanced tools, such as chatbots, this study could therefore drive the scope of current understanding towards a more integrated approach, moving from conceptualisation to practice-informed insight.

On this note, our research is exploratory and it is essentially built around three questions, namely: What are the potential benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in foreign language instruction, and how do students address them? How can ChatGPT be integrated into ESP course design and classroom activities? In what ways does the use of ChatGPT in ESP instruction align with current trends and practices in digital literacy? To garner knowledge and gain more experiential value, this study is also informed by the results of a student perception survey, structured around 4 key areas: foreign language instruction and main skills, student motivation and engagement, opportunities for digital literacy and opportunities for societal impact on information production and consumption.

While AI applications in education (AIED) go back to the seventies (Doroudi, 2022, p. 2), when the first intelligent tutoring system was projected as a model that would "run programs, ask and answer questions about them, and so on, at some reasonable level (...), a system that understood" (Moore & Newel, 1974, p. 202), first-generation chatbots were also in the loop, aiming at a conversational interaction that also offered the illusion of understanding to a limited input-sentence and response sequence. Ever since, the advent of machine learning algorithms and natural language processing enabled chatbots to turn into next generation AI-powered bot platforms, that can achieve something far more important than play the imitation game, thus mimicking understanding and generating human-like text: they can autonomously do specifically what they have been trained to do (Floridi & Chiriati, 2020, p. 683). This means that, in simplified terms, ChatGPT-3 can be described as a large language model that can "generate sequences of words, code or other data starting from a source input, called a prompt" (Floridi & Chiriati, 2020, p. 684). The generation process relies on tokens, which can be considered discrete units of language, or what we could call "pieces of words", where a token count of 1000 corresponds approximately to 75 words. It is also important to note that, trained on a multiple language dataset of hundreds of billions of words (Rudolph et al., 2023, p. 3), it does not crawl navigate the Web for information, but depending on user input, ChatGPT's operations rely primarily on statistical patterns and patters in the training data, without semantic understanding. The model's response is, thus, a continuation, that is the "best-fit" statistical prediction for any provided word sequences.

Its massive architecture enables our statistical interlocutor to write an essay in 120 seconds or spiral out of control into senselessness if no pattern, or "regularities" could be learnt from the database. If it provides shallow or bland information on a niche or uncommon topic, it means that the right answers do not appear as consistent patterns or regularities in the language data used for training, which makes the model strike its regularity limit. In this case, since it learned to comply with coherence not truth, it may generate plausible albeit factually inaccurate outputs, also known as hallucinations – a feature that has become almost as famous as the model itself.

To illustrate this relationship, I asked ChatGPT-3.5 to write a sonnet about a chatbot's regularity limit and its tendency to hallucinations, that is impressively self-referential:

> In lines of code, a chatbot's mind resides, / A virtual entity with vast array, / But 'mongst its capabilities, a divide, /Where regularity holds firm its sway. / For in the realm of text, it finds its groove, / Repeating patterns learned from vast terrain, / But when confronted with what's less behooved, / Hallucinations dance within its brain. (ChatGPT 3.5 generated text)

If anything, given that ChatGPT is not the product of a "mix of software and sorcery" (Roose, 2022, p. 7), but that we may still need to teach our students that it is not a system that understands, but a text-generation model that we can actually train, which needs to be primed, carefully prompted to activate correct semantic relationships, we may also need to reinforce the critical importance of the human factor. Anyone who has used it may have experienced the constant need for plausibility checking, as the system keeps information filtering mechanisms "under the hood": no technological filters, such as a PageRank algorithm, that told us something about the popularity of information or its semantic relevance, no social filters, aggregating the opinion of our friends in the likes of a newsfeed, just cognitive filters and a conversation box.

It thus becomes evident that chatbots, ChatGPT in particular, suddenly present us with new challenges, from technical to ethical ones. However, I would agree that

> Instead of treating ChatGPT as the horizon, (we need to) look farther out. Our approach to teaching should be guided not by one recent product but by reflection on the lives our students are likely to lead in the 2030s. What will the writing process look like for them? Will they use models as research assistants? As editors?[3]

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF AI TOOLS IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND DIGITAL ROUTINES

Guided by the need of exploring beyond ChatGPT, instead of seeing is as the horizon, I narrowed the spectrum to two neighbouring streams of developments, which could be considered as nothing short of indicative of a paradigm shift in how we consume and produce information. The first one pertains to the subtle, low-profile, yet significant transformation of our students' digital routine, and the second centres around the more prominent, high-profile transformation, initiated by the major players of the technology sector. Hence, as attention-grabbing as instances such as *The Washington Post*'s use of Heliograf, a robot that created real-time tweets to cover the 2016 Rio Olympics, the Associated Press employing Wordsmith, a natural language generation tool, to automatically summarise reports, TOEFL's

[3] Ted Underwood, professor of Information Sciences and English and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in the School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. See Susan D'Agostino, *ChatGPT Advice Academics Can Use Now*, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/01/12/academic-experts-offer-advice-chatgpt.

implementation of an e-rater for writing evaluation or, the recent inclusion of ChatGPT as credited author in academic articles, along with undetected ChatGPT-generated abstracts deceiving human reviewers may be, a more silent transformation has already taken place. Since November 2022, when the radically improved ChatGPT-3 model was released, individuals across the globe who have never crossed path with a chatbot started using it, as its features brought it to a mass audience.

This fact is also supported by the survey deployed with Computer Science students, as barely 3% report having previously used a chatbot, and 60% suggest present engagement with the tool specifically for foreign language skills improvement and practice. As both survey insights and unstructured interviews reveal, 80% of the participants in the study employ it daily or several times a week for specialism-related tasks and assignments. Testimonials indicate a certain digital routine involving ChatGPT, used overwhelmingly for retrieving information at the expense of traditional browsing, but also to write proposals, summaries, create well-received CVs and efficiently prepare for interviews, to brainstorm for BA dissertation topics and explore area for new work in academic research. Nonetheless, students also experienced the potential risks associated with collaborating with ChatGPT. Exams were failed as a consequence of overreliance on information provided by the model and submitted projects were rejected for plagiarism concerns, based on AI-generated text detections software results. Students inadvertently encountered biased information, highlighting the need for hypervigilance in discerning system hallucinations, and confess to have found themselves in an overly compliant and accommodating medium that had a very high tolerance for errors compared to a teacher.

In addition, at a more high-stake level, educational tech companies like Quizlet and Duolingo already use ChatGPT-4 powered features, while publishers started to update their editorial policies in response to the use of ChatGPT for text quality enhancement. Notably, while *Science* opted to impose a complete ban on the ChatGPT, Springer Nature adopted a position akin to Elsevier, publisher of almost 3,000 journals in the field of Science, tolerating the "legitimate uses" of AI tools under certain specific conditions and advocating for "transparent science" (*Nature* Editorial, January 2023). However, as AI superpowers keep rolling out with the emergence of the commercial ChatGPT-4 or, more recently, ChatGPT Plus, cases that are not discussed here, another transition needs to be mentioned, specifically as it can also impact academic life directly. Fine-tuning of models is hereby possible with the addition of plugins which make ChatGPT customisable, for text, audio and images, and pricing is based on the number of tokens/contexts used in various requests. Scholar AI is one such plugin, allowing users to work with open-access Springer-Nature articles with citations and hyperlinks, without any hallucinations or information cutoffs. Invariably, the availability of Open AI's low-cost and premium models may create disparities in knowledge acquisition and dissemination, as well as technical proficiency gaps, adding competitive advantage in research, analysis or content creation.

Furthermore, one cannot ignore another louder revolution, prompted by the high-profile players of the tech industry. As Microsoft implemented the technology into its search engine Bing, a trend also followed by Google with Bard, we are witnessing a whole new level of mass audience appeal of the technology developed by OpenAI, enabling individuals to interact with the web in the same manner that they would chat with GPT, hailing the new age of chatbot search.

Consequently, as personalised browsing experiences and AI-powered technologies continue to become prevalent what position are educational stakeholders, and foreign language instructors in particular, expected to adopt? To tackle this question, I decided to opt for in-class experimentation and demonstration with ChatGPT. During this phase, the collaboration with ChatGPT was seen as a strategy that added real-world value to students' larger spectrum of skills, which have become inseparable from the sphere of technology. To facilitate a reciprocal learning process, it was essential to collectively discover the inner workings of such a language model through a semi-structured approach that involved consistent teacher-guided testing and experimentation. Thus, driven by a collective sense of discovery, both for in-class and individual practice, the efficacy of ChatGPT-3.5 was systematically assessed across a series of diverse tasks, including generating Q&A sequences for reading comprehension, facilitating plurilingual translation, summarising, streamlining information, brainstorming for ideas in speaking tasks, or focused grammar practice. While ChatGPT was not employed for assessment purposes, it was tested for individual feedback. The tool's capabilities to generate new instructional content was also reviewed, alongside subsequent testing on conventional material. Furthermore, to ensure the validity of the survey, additional testing was required to examine efficacy in relation to specific reading and writing subskills and students who participated in the study also needed to document their testing experience by archiving screenshots that highlighted the input-output interaction. The involvement of our research in utilising ChatGPT also fostered a sense of critical distance, as information gatekeeping (Jones & Hafner, 2022, p. 154) increasingly became an emerging issue of our approach. Therefore, collaborating with ChatGPT enabled students to directly experience potential long-term implications and acknowledge the importance of critical thinking in digital literacy. Moreover, it helped them recognise that the "real goal of developing critical literacies is developing the ability to understand how this system works and how to formulate creative (and often collective) strategies to change it." (Jones & Hafner, 2022, p. 154). This also implies having students methodically evaluate the tool, identifying its affordances, risks and limitations and learning how to collaborate with AI-generated content without losing sight of the fact that the tool itself cannot substitute for a comprehensive learning experience.

However, beyond the technical and ethical considerations that our pilot project brought us to address, it gradually became important to recognise another striking reality: ChatGPT is actually capable of generating good quality texts, often "indistinguishable from human writing" (*2023 Horizon Educause Report*, p. 10). In line with scholarly literature on this point, it is crucial to acknowledge the possibility that we may be facing an age when "we can now mass produce good and cheap semantic artefacts. Translations, summaries, minutes, comments, webpages, catalogues, newspaper articles, guides, manuals, form to fill, reports …soon an AI service may write, or at least draft the necessary texts which today require human effort." (Floridi & Chiriati, 2020, p. 690-691). While this may be disconcerting in terms of jobs lost to automation (even future job availability by degree), or may generate debate over the digital divide and disparity in access to technology, which potentially exacerbate existing social inequalities, it also poses important challenges for foreign language instruction. "Reimagining assessment" (*2023 Horizon Educause Report*, p. 21), reallocation of resources and readjustment of focus in the syllabus towards higher order skills and learner creativity, adaptation of teaching methods with and beyond the integration of AI-powered tools, considering that future workforce may demand proficiency with these technologies, and placing emphasis on AI ethics and responsible AI-use may be just a few implications of large-scale generative AI use for foreign language instruction.

## STUDENT PERCEPTION SURVEY: EXPLORING THE CAPABILITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CHATGPT 3.5

In light of these swift transformations, as well as of the imperative to adjust our "early adopter" stance and establish a more systematic approach regarding the capabilities and challenges of ChatGPT for ESP instruction, a student perception survey, involving 85 participants from the Faculty of Computer Science of "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, was conducted. The survey consisted of five sections, designed to explore the opportunities and challenges of ChatGPT in the context of English language practice and use, as experienced by 2nd year Computer Science undergraduate students. The students' specialisation was treated as an independent variable of the study, as it was anticipated that their expertise in the field would shape their perception and impact the research outcomes.

The first section focused on "ChatGPT as a tool for practicing and improving language skills" and was viewed as a natural extension of in class-practice as well as an opportunity to expand upon and document the student-guided testing process. Aiming to report on the specific language skills targeted by students during their interaction with the system, results revealed a prevalence of writing fluency (87.1%) and vocabulary expansion (85.9%), followed by grammar and sentence structure (75.3%). Questioned on perceived effectiveness of ChatGPT assistance with grammar, only 10.6% of the students reported negative feedback, while over one third of the respondents suggested consistent effectiveness of the system in identifying grammatical errors. Confidence ratings support prior findings, with largely over three quarters of students expressing moderate to high confidence in the tool's input. Writing fluency enhancement also aligns with findings regarding the grammar item, as a striking 95% of the students agreed that the tool provided valuable suggestions and improvement for writing fluency. Testing of reading comprehension showed that the majority of students considered ChatGPT moderately to very effective in understanding the main ideas and details in a prompted passage.

However, it is also noteworthy, both from a technical and an ethical perspective, that when asked whether the tool could be efficiently used for scientific writing purposes, almost 60% of the students indicated a moderate level of effectiveness, and roughly 25% rated it as "slightly effective". This might suggest that while the tool's potential has a positive perceived value, its limitations may – for the time being - prevent AI-generated content from meeting the requirements of scientific writing. Additionally, both Listening and Speaking skills scored low on the interest/efficiency scale, as the free version of the system does not have built-in functionalities for these features. While all aforementioned items were evaluated using of a 4-point Likert scale, the final part of this section allowed for greater flexibility in gathering student feedback regarding the advantages and disadvantages associated with the integration of ChatGPT into their foreign language digital routine.

Student answers were qualitatively classified into several broader dimensions based on self-reported aspects and characteristics regarding the interaction with the model. Overall, in terms of language proficiency enhancement, most participants highlighted two major benefits that significantly impacted their work: availability of a vast vocabulary and expressions, and opportunities for accurate grammar practice and feedback that enhanced language acquisition and markedly improved writing skills.

Additionally, the collaboration with ChatGPT was suggested to support extensive advantages in terms of information retrieval, considered more time-efficient than search engines, but also more comprehensive in formulating responses, at it could harvest information from multiple sources and deliver it in a structured and personalised form. Students also appreciated the higher reliability of English as a language of communication with the model, while also noticing a language gap for other smaller languages. With a 24/7 availability, plurilingual responses, managing to help students bridge language proficiency gaps, the model was also reported to serve as a versatile communication assistant, providing explanations for complex concepts, help with brainstorming and drafting, and offering mnemonic solutions for better learning retention.

Rated overall as an extremely valuable asset, the main perceived disadvantage was associated to information bias and information distortion concerns. These aspects were related to limited training data, the knowledge cut-off set at 2021, but also to a lack of user control over reliability of the information provided, as sources used by the model are not disclosed or, if solicited, they may be fabricated material. ChatGPT was also considered over lenient, due to its tendency to generate responses which tend to be agreeable, often prioritising user satisfaction over factual accuracy. Notably, it could be observed that this tendency was generally perceived as demotivating for students, who suggested that unlike the student-teacher dynamic which was framed by trust and strategies that built student self-confidence, interacting with ChatGPT often instilled a sense of hypervigilance and self-doubt. Furthermore, in addition to the active engagement and critical thinking that students applied to their experience with the model, the potential of student-constructed responses also resided in the set of proposed suggestions, solutions and in their reflection over the long-term consequence of using ChatGPT. Mainly, it was noted that academic performance, progress and creativity could be hindered by over-relying on the model to provide solutions instead of focusing on the learning process itself.

**Table 1.** Student perception survey results: advantages and disadvantages of integrating ChatGPT 3.5 into Ss foreign language digital routine

| Advantages | Disadvantages | Solutions | Long-term consequences |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Language Proficiency enhancement:**<br>**- Vast vocabulary and expressions**;<br>**- Accurate grammar practice and feedback;**<br>- Offers solutions to problems with fluency and phrase structure;<br>- Assistance in reading/research "guides conversation in the right direction"<br>- Helps with formal, academic register;<br><br>**Information Retrieval and Accessibility:**<br>**- Fast information retrieval** compared browsing;<br>-High coverage of topics;<br>- Possibility of plurilingual prompts<br>- Higher efficiency in English;<br>- Helps non-native speakers communicate effectively in a foreign language;<br>- Helps overcome language barriers;<br>- Provides quality translations;<br>- 24/7 availability, regardless of location;<br>- Reduces research time;<br><br>**Efficient Communication Assistance:**<br>- Assistance with explanations, and clarification of complex concepts;<br>- Helpful for brainstorming practice;<br>- Provides useful mnemonic solutions;<br>- Efficient for drafting ideas;<br>- Provides sentence structure, helps with information organisation patterns;<br>- Provides long explanations leading to better understanding;<br>Summarising tool;<br>Writing assistant (especially for lower-intermediate English proficiency level); | **Response Accuracy and Completeness**<br>**- Inaccurate or incomplete responses**;<br>**Limited understanding;**<br>- Lack of comprehension of large texts ("it tends to forget");<br>**-** Lack of knowledge on technical or niche topics;<br>Dependency on training data;<br>Language/Knowledge gap for non-English speakers;<br>(Small languages gap);<br>-Non-factual/ Distorted information presented in logical sentence structure;<br>- Difficulty with cultural references;<br><br>**Reliability and Personalisation:**<br>**- Knowledge cut-off (2021)**;<br>- Use of potentially unreliable sources;<br>- Lack of personalization;<br>- Lack of context understanding;<br>- Leniency of the model towards errors;<br>- Self-correction<br>- Repetitive;<br>- Easily manipulated into accepting incorrect feedback;<br><br>**Technical and Miscellaneous Limitations:**<br>- Lack of audio support;<br>- Lack of language tutor features;<br>- Impersonal answers "empty shell" pattern for responses;<br>- Cannot provide sources for information; | **- Formulating prompts in detail;**<br>**- Use of English for prompts**;<br>**Use prompting, not a browsing style;**<br>- Asking multiple question for the same idea;<br>- Answers should be complemented with real-life practice for well-rounded proficiency;<br>- Double-check information for accuracy;<br>- Need to constantly filter information in spite of apparently logical structures;<br>- Higher specificity of prompts;<br>- Provide significant context;<br>- Understand how it works and how to use it; | - Could impede progress;<br>- Could replace certain language specialists (translators);<br>- Can lead to loss of creativity and critical thinking;<br>Over-vigilance could be problematic; |

A separate section of the survey aimed at assessing student motivation and engagement as a result of collaboration with ChatGPT for both core academic subjects and foreign language related tasks. Results indicate that a quarter of the students perceived ChatGPT as a motivating and engaging environment for language practice, while 60% suggested that it was "moderately interactive and responsive" to their individual learning needs. Compared to traditional classroom-interaction and to human conversation partners, ChatGPT was considered to be "equally motivating and engaging" by more than one third of the respondents. Significantly enough, this could mean that the model holds promising use for educational settings, especially for those who may struggle with classroom dynamics or who prefer digital interactions.

ChatGPT could also play an important role for personalised feedback provision, as 70% of the students reported that the model "efficiently adapted to individual proficiency levels" and a roughly similar percentage would recommend it as a tool for personalised and adapted feedback to other language learners "with some reservations".

A distinct section of the survey was designed to assess whether AI-generated content was positively/negatively associated to ethical concerns. While the most important perceived ethical concern was plagiarism (36.5%), followed by information distortion (29.4%), only 56.5 % of the students indicated being "highly aware" of the potential risk of plagiarism when using ChatGPT. In addition, a striking 80% of the students responded that using ChatGPT for assignments was not a form of cheating. What is more, slightly over half of the students believe that it would be "moderately important" for AI solutions developers and providers to prioritise ethical considerations in the design and implementation of their products. These results might suggest a potential gap in understanding the full extent of ethical implications of AI-generated text/products, although a more technical approach revealing the limitations of currently available AI output detectors also needs to be considered. A study conducted in 2022, entitled "Comparing scientific abstracts generated by ChatGPT to the original ones using AI output detectors, plagiarism detectors and blind human reviewers"

(Gao et al., 2022)[4], reveals that plagiarism detectors misattributed a 100% originality score to generated abstracts, while human reviewers provided inconclusive results. Such findings highlight the need for more explicit guidelines regarding academic integrity and AI-generated text, with a particular focus on developing and widely adopting software that can detect AI content appropriately.

As one connected finding from a separate section of the survey focused on digital literacy, it also revealed that a relatively small fraction of the students, approximately 25%, considered that ChatGPT was "not effective at all" in terms of "providing guidance or assisting with understanding the limits of information, misinformation and fake news". Moreover, while 55% of the respondents expressed a moderate level of confidence in their ability to critically evaluate information and differentiate between reliable and unreliable information, a modest 21% reported a "very high" confidence rate. On the one hand, this could indicate that a significant number of students may still lack the necessary skills and knowledge to confidently assess the credibility and accuracy of information. On the other hand, critical digital literacy has as much to do with the content as with the media themselves, their "affordances and constraints", "the (…) interaction they make available, the (often) invisible ways in which they process information and the way in which interfaces are designed" (Jones & Hafner, 2022, p. 152). In this sense, ChatGPT's text-box replies, the opacity of its workings, the way it is designed to impersonate a trusted source may be making us aware of the limitations of the model in terms of data accuracy and trustworthiness.

Additionally, the survey also reported that an overwhelming 98% of the students would further recommend ChatGPT as a valuable tool for enhancing digital literacy skills to students across various specialisations. Survey data also reveals the specific areas where the tools is seen as particularly beneficial, mainly information retrieval (80%), "solving problems using technology" (70%), while creating digital content was considered by 17 % of the participants. Furthermore, concerning institutional

---

[4] For details on this study, see Alkaissi H., McFarlane S. I. (2023). Artificial Hallucinations in ChatGPT: Implications in Scientific Writing. *Cureus* 15(2). Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: doi:10.7759/cureus.35179.

support for students across diverse specialisations in developing digital literacy skills, a significant 85% perceive this as an important step in curriculum design. These insights suggest a favourable reception of Chat GPT in the area of digital literacy and highlight student expectations concerning the role of educational institutions in providing resources that address the current digital trends and transformations.

## CONCLUSION

The last section was intended to support students in re-establishing a sense of critical distance, by employing an open-ended query regarding the potential implications of forthcoming ChatGPT versions, and other emerging AI-powered tools, in generating a paradigm shift of the way in which educational content is consumed and produced. For this conclusive part, on account of its explicitness, I resorted to Baker and Smith's framework, which categorises the educational context into three dimensions: student-facing, teacher-facing, system-facing (Baker et al., 2019, p. 5). Based on the provided comments, the following conclusions could be drawn. First, in terms of student-facing expectations, the most prominent dimension that emerged was the shift towards a personalisation of educational contents, to meet the individual needs of the student. Student controlled comments indicate that AI-involvement in education would heighten the necessity for tailoring content, activities, and assignment to align with student expectations and learning plan. Second, the teacher-facing insights reflect a type of change that would be directed towards an adjustment of the focus of instruction towards higher order skills, like critical thinking, problem-solving or information processing (over rote memorisation), and the integration of AI-powered tools in the learning process for more comprehensive, yet personalised, understanding and skill development. Thirdly, the integration of AI tools in instruction is expected to also have system-facing outcomes, highlighting the importance of adaptability and relevance of the curriculum. AI-driven education is expected to be more responsive to the evolving needs of the students, ensuring that it remains up-to-date and aligned with the changing digital eco-system.

In conclusion, as this research attempted to take ChatGPT off the pedestal and into the classroom in order to experiment with its capabilities and demonstrate its potential benefits for foreign language instruction, three possible red threads emerged from the findings of our study. First, the use of AI-enabled tools raises the critical issue of establishing common implementation frameworks that accommodate the needs of both teachers and students. This should adequately address technological and ethical considerations, ensuring transparency and inclusiveness for use and practice within the academic community. Second, one of the most notable findings of this research underscores the importance of a framework that acknowledges the growing emphasis on personalised learning experiences. As such, the ESP course design already holds inherent advantages, yet to fully leverage these advantages rooted in its needs analysis orientation, it may need to align its instruction strategies with the affordances and capabilities of AI-enabled tools. Thirdly, the use of ChatGPT for both in-class and individual practice in the context of foreign language proficiency improvement highlights the significant potential of customisable generative AI platforms designed specifically for language learning purposes.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alkaissi, H., McFarlane, S. I. (2023). Artificial Hallucinations in ChatGPT: Implications in Scientific Writing *Cureus*, Volume 15, No. 2. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: doi:10.7759/cureus.35179.

Baker, T., Smith, L., Anissa, N. (2019). *Educ-AI-tion Rebooted? Exploring the Future of Artificial Intelligence in Schools and Colleges*, London: Nesta Publishing. p. 1-53. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Future_of_AI_and_education_v5_WEB.pdf.

Casal-Otero, L., Catala, A., Fernández-Morante, C., Taboada M., Cebreiro B., Barro S. (2023). AI literacy in K-12: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of STEM Education* 10, 1-17. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-023-00418-7

D'Agostino, S., (2023). ChatGPT Advice Academics Can Use Now. *Inside Higher Ed*, January, 11. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/01/12/academic-experts-offer-advice-chatgpt.

Doroudi, S. (2022).The Intertwined Histories of Artificial Intelligence and Education. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence Education*. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-022-00313-2.

Editorial. Tools such as ChatGPT Threaten Transparent Science; Here Are Our Ground Rules for Their Use (2023). *Nature* 613, January. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: doi: https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-00191-1.

Floridi, L., Chiriatti, M., (2020). GPT-3: Its Nature, Scope, Limits, and Consequences. *Minds & Machines* (30), p. 681–694. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-020-09548-1.

Jones, R. H., Hafner C. A. ( 2022). *Understanding Digital Literacies. A Practical Introduction*. Second Edition, London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-321.

Moore, J., Newell, A. (1974). How Can Merlin Understand? In Gregg L. W. (ed.), *Knowledge and Cognition*. New York: Psychology Press, p. 202.

Ng, D., Leung, J., Shen Qiao, M., Chu, S. K. (2021). AI Literacy: Definition, Teaching, Evaluation and Ethical Issues. In: Doherty G. (ed), *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* (Volume 58). Maryland: John Wiley &Sons, p. 504-509. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at https://asistdl.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pra2.209.

Roose, R., The Brilliance and Weirdness of ChatGPT (2022). *The New York Times*, December 5. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/05/technology/chatgpt-ai-twitter.html.

Rudolph, J., Tan, S. (2023). ChatGPT: Bullshit Spewer or the End of Traditional Assessments in Higher Education?. *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching*. Volume 6, No.1, p. 1-16. Retrieved June, 1, 2023 at: https://journals.sfu.ca/jalt/index.php/jalt/article/view/689/539.

Seonghun, K., Yeonju, J., Seongyune, C., Woojin, K., Heeseok, J., Soohwan, K., Hyeoncheol, K. (2021). Analyzing Teacher Competency with TPACK for K-12 AI Education. *KI-Künstliche Intelligenz*. 2, p. 1-13. Retrieved June, 1, 2023, at https://www.springerprofessional.de/en/analyzing-teacher-competency-with-tpack-for-k-12-ai-education/19291726.

# English Language vs Programming Language(s): Using One to Teach the Other

**SONIA PAVLENKO[1] / MELANIA DUMA[2]**

**Abstract:** Computer science students learn at least one programming language (based on English terms) during their time at university, alongside learning English as a foreign language. The paper aims to explore the interaction between the acquisition of the programming language and that of English as a foreign language, with a focus on the way they interact. English is often used to teach programming, but could we use programming to teach English? Finally, the paper will suggest a list of useful approaches for teachers of English for specific purposes (specifically tailored for Computer Science students).

**Keywords**: *EFL, teaching programming, CLIL, English for IT purposes, OOP in ELT*

## INTRODUCTION

Language learning has always had an easily-identifiable, multi-faceted impact on the learners (O'Brien, 2017). The types of impact researched so far include at least cognitive, academic, personal, societal, intercultural, and economic dimensions.

Consequently, there are numerous models for content-based language programs, with different weights distributed between the "content-area" and the "(second)-language learning outcomes" (Archibald et al, 2006, p. 29).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become the umbrella term describing both learning another (content) subject, such as history, physics or geography, through the medium of a foreign language

1 PhD, Technical Writer @Ascom Mobile Solutions Romania.
2 PhD, Senior Technical Writer @RWS.

and learning a foreign language by studying a content-based subject (Darn, 2009). Even though it tends to focus on culture more than on specific topics, we consider that CLIL is a model that is easy to implement in teaching Computer Science as ESP. CLIL principles argue in favour of a communicative approach to language where it is the subject matter which determines the language needed to learn.[3]

When it comes to the field of Computer Science an ever-present question on online forums is "Can I learn English by coding?" (for example, https://www.quora.com/Can-I-learn-English-by-coding), hence this paper aims to suggest some possible approaches to teaching English to students with a Computer Science background.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH AND PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Ruby & Krsmanovic (2017) examined the relationship between English and programming languages aiming to establish the extent to which learning a programming language that uses English adds a burden to non-native English-speaking learners. Moreover, the prominence of Computer Science in today's world drives the accommodation of Computer Programming alongside basic literacy skills. It could even be argued that, at a given point, Computer Science might even overtake English as the desired skill to develop in younger age groups (alongside reading and writing).

World language statistics suggest that English is spoken natively by only 5% of the world population (Simons & Fennig, 2017), while the most widely used programming languages make use of English both in their learning and support resources, as well as in their written components (keywords). These components are what we would recognize as "words", alongside other logical and mathematical symbols and notations used to communicate instructions.

Therefore, there is an obvious discrepancy between English as the most widely used language in programming languages (Ruby & David, 2016) and

[3] For the complete list of principles and more details, see: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowing-subject/articles/clil-lesson-framework.

its limited usage/prevalence among native speakers. However, English is most used as a *lingua franca*, most often spoken by non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2006).

The most widely recognized model for second language acquisition is the one proposed by Krashen, who suggested five stages for language acquisition: (i) pre-production, (ii) early production, (iii) speech emergence, (iv) intermediate fluency and (v) advanced fluency (Krashen, 1982). This model emphasizes vocabulary size and comprehension. For instance, according to the same author, a first-stage learner might be able to use around 500 words, while speech emergence requires a vocabulary size of about 3000 words.

Gardner's (2007) model of language acquisition focuses more on the motivational aspects of language learners. One the one hand, there is a language-learning motivation and, on the other hand, a classroom-learning one. The first one relates to the learner, while the second one concerns factors streaming from the environment in which the language learning occurs, such as the teacher, the course content or the materials used. Gardner's model proposes four stages, namely (i) elemental, (ii) consolidation, (iii) conscious expression and (iv) automaticity and thought (Garner, 2007, p. 12). During the first stage, language learners acquire the basic "building blocks" of language, such as vocabulary, grammar or phonetics. At the next stage, they start combining them. Then, they can communicate with a conscious effort and finally, at the last stage, they "no longer think about the language", but rather "think in the language" (Garner, 2007, p. 13).

## USING PROGRAMMING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Computer Science has often been called an "English-first area of expertise"[4]. A software developer needs to be able to communicate with colleagues, superiors and customers, mostly in English, even before having to write the first line of code.

---

[4] https://www.microverse.org/blog/english-language-for-software-developers.

One of the most significant differences between English as a natural language and any programming language is their need for a social context (Ruby & Krsmanovic, 2017, p. 5). Any natural language needs a community of speakers which allows the language to be transmitted and to evolve. In the absence of such a community, the natural language becomes extinct. A programming language enables communication between a human and a machine, and a single programmer could start using the language independently, if it has been properly documented beforehand. A programming language might become obsolete because of other factors, including technical progress, but not because of a lack of a community of speakers.

When it comes to models for content-based language programs, the *Content-vs-Language* spectrum should be considered in terms of a student's L2 proficiency, the number of allotted course hours, and the content of the taught discipline (Archibald et al, 2006, p. 35).

In higher education, the number of contact hours should be considered, alongside any other work students might do outside of the scheduled classes. Moreover, if we take into account all the study load of an average university student outside the field of Humanities, we could say that English might not be one of their top priorities. Moreover, it is estimated[5] that it takes on average about 200 study hours for a learner to progress from one level to the next one (for example, from B1 to B2). Given the typical structure of the academic year and the length of the semesters, it can be inferred that a student would have to spend a minimum of seven hours per week studying English to progress from a B1 level at the beginning of the academic year to a B2 by the end of it. Research has shown that "in programs where students have limited second-language proficiency and less time is devoted to second-language learning, the concrete and highly-contextualized content found in content-based language teaching programs make it the most effective" (Archibald et al, 2006, p. 35). In other words, teaching English in combination with Computer Science content for computer science students might be the most effective strategy.

[5] See, for example, https://www.ef.com/wwen/blog/faq/how-long-to-learn-english/.

English and programming languages share a number of structural elements, such as morphology, syntax and semantics (Ruby & Krsmanovic, 2017, p. 7). Moreover, we should also consider the "implicit and explicit learning of English" that occurs during the programming learning process (idem). Ruby & Krsmanovic propose that "due to the language used in keywords and terminologies of constructs in a programming language as well as in the programming environment, learners are exposed to implicit learning of English" (2017, p. 9). However, the researchers recognize that this type of learning might not lead to working proficiency or fluency, but "it does introduce a language component to computer programming learning" (idem).

Moreover, coding as a skill has been included by Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum under the four main digital literacies of language, connections, information and (re)design (Dudeney et al., 2013). Stevens & Verschoor (2017) explored–how English teaching can be done "in conjunction with encouraging students to work with code", so that students develop both the "21st century skills" (World Economic Forum, 2015, p. 3) (such as Critical thinking and problem solving, Collaboration and leadership, Agility and adaptability, Initiative and entrepreneurialism, Effective oral and written communication, Accessing and analyzing information, Curiosity and imagination (Wagner, 2010, slide 4)), while also promoting language development. Anecdotally, there are already schools who use this as a business model, organizing courses that teach a mix of English and programming.

There are many documented examples of using programming in a language teaching classroom:

– Brown (2016) suggests that, while using Scratch with her students, the latter acquire the concept of planning (especially in their writing):

> "Teaching the logic behind conditional statements is the art of writing a great comparative essay or a great reinforcement to so many subjective decisions about literature. The If-Then-Else block requires students to weigh two possible scenarios and never leave anything out. There are so many applications to using that flow chart concept in English class" (Brown, 2016)

- Cohen (2017) uses Scratch and asks his students to code short conversations. As students plan their story, the teacher might step in and correct pronunciation, if needed, and, after the students run their program in front of the class, everyone may correct any spelling or grammar mistakes.

  *[The coding exercises] teach planning and logical thinking* (Cohen, 2017).

- Bradley (2016) used tutorials from Code.org in her English classes, which are accessible to students with diverse backgrounds, from absolute beginners in coding to more seasoned codes.

Consequently, where does one start as a teacher? Here are two possible suggestions:

- Hour of Code (hourofcode.com), or as part of Code.org
  - The page www.studio.code.org/courses offers a very easily accessible point of start for anyone, be them teachers or students. Tutorials start from Minecraft and Star Wars and go all the way to Classic Maze or Play Lab. There are also more grammar and logic-oriented tutorials, such as Text Comprehension or Conditionals.
- Scratch and ScratchEd
  - This will give the teacher the chance to use the students' knowledge in developing grammar knowledge, for example.
  - A project presented in Scratch might be more enjoyable and different from the classical "PowerPoint presentation" the students might have encountered in almost all subjects taught in school.

For a more knowledgeable learner, exercises might refer to other programming languages, starting with the easiest to learn: HTML, CSS, Python, Java, JavaScript, C and Ruby.

Another possible question to ask might be: how are learning a natural language and a coding language similar? Avagyan (2022) suggests seven possible answers:

- They both have **building blocks** (such as phonemes, morphemes, words, sentences for a natural language, or a literal or an expression for Python – a literal is the equivalent of the phoneme/word or lemma, the most basic building block of a programming language, while an expression is a combination of literals.)

- They both have **syntax rules** that need to be followed (for example, in English word order is an element of syntax, while for Python, a syntax rule is that statements end in a colon and subsequent expressions must be indented)
- They both have **semantics**. In other words, meaning is constructed based on the building blocks that you use, and on how these relate to one another. Of course, you can have proper syntax but incorrect semantics. A phrase such as "a square circle" might be syntactically correct, but semantically incorrect. Similarly, in Python, if you use the wrong semantics, you might get a string instead of a sum.
- To become fluent in either a natural language or a programming language, you need to build up your **vocabulary**. Vocabulary in a natural language is structured around meaning areas, while in Python, for example, you need to be aware of data structures such as sets, tuples, dictionaries and lists.
- Both types of languages require time to achieve **fluency**. As we mentioned above, a user must go through various stages of language acquisition, the earlier stages involving a lot of conscious effort until, at the closer-to-proficiency stages, language production might come without the need of a conscious effort.
- **Immersion**, understood as being an active part of a community, helps one learn faster. A community of speakers or a community of practice, in case of the developers, from which the learner can learn things by doing and actively use the knowledge already gained.
- However, there are also some drawbacks. Once part of a community, we become also a part of a "community of practice" and tend to adopt all its practices, even the ones that are not fully following the rules. We have all head of *Romglish, Frenglish* or *Spanglish*. For programmers, they might pick up practices that go against the best practices (for example, not commenting one's code).

We should also be aware of the difference between the two, and ambiguity provides a good illustration of this difference. Computers do not understand it, while humans thrive on it. Tone and intonation on the one hand, and irony and sarcasm, on the other, are also aspects that computers struggle with.

**TEACHING WITH A PURPOSE**

CLIL principles argue in favor of teaching foreign language by balancing learning against domain knowledge. Teachers must be familiar with their students' domain in order to mediate the language learning process. In practice, the CLIL approach entails adapting the information to the background knowledge of students, interacting with students by providing cross-domain or transferrable information, and conveying meaning by virtue of example and application.

For our use case, linking examples and explanations with Computer Science methodologies, and concepts serves to reinforce the retention of rules, meaning, and language behavior among students. Psychology and Linguistics (Pinker, 1994) claim that the human brain is a pattern-recognition machine. By translating rules and linguistic behavior into Computer Science concepts, teachers can get their message across easily, while students can deduct rules and internalize the knowledge.

**APPLYING OOP IN ELT**

OOP stands for Object-Oriented Programming and it is one of the pillar models of programming, so much so that it overarches programming languages and methodologies. Any Computer Science student is familiar with OOP, and, as a result, teaching English by making references to OOP principles can facilitate understanding, boost productivity, and build linguistic knowledge.

OOP is not the only model or paradigm English teachers can employ in their lessons. Other useful (though not the only) principles to get familiar with are: cache, database, Denial of Service, DevOps, DNS, endpoint, MFA, patch, pipes, port, stored procedure, SaaS, Social Engineering, threads[6]. However, for the purpose of this paper we will limit our examples to OOP.

## UNDERSTANDING OOP

OOP is collectively recognized as the paradigm upon which Computer Science is built, having emerged from collective effort.

OOP is defined as "a computer programming model that organizes software design around data, or objects, rather than functions and logic. An object can be defined as a data field that has unique attributes and behavior. OOP focuses on the objects that developers want to manipulate rather than the logic required to manipulate them." (Gillis & Lewis, 2021)

We claim that any English instructor should master the OOP core concepts to teach English to Computer Science students in a more relevant and contextual manner. The following OOP core concepts can be synthesized as follows (Gillis & Lewis, 2021):

- **Classes** are "user-defined data types that act as the blueprint for individual objects, attributes and methods". Classes can be viewed as abstract schemas or templates for concrete objects.
- **Objects** are "instances of a class created with specifically defined data. Objects can correspond to real-world objects or an abstract entity". Objects are the concrete materialization of a class, a token of a given type.
- **Methods** are "functions that are defined inside a class that describe the behaviors of an object. Each method contained in class definitions starts with a reference to an instance object. [….] Programmers use methods for reusability or keeping functionality encapsulated inside one object at a time." Methods can be viewed as the actions that turn an object from a static entity into a dynamic entity which can interact with other entities.

[6] For a more extensive list of terms, see: https://www.dpsolutions.com/success-center/it-terminology-glossary.

- **Attributes** – "the state of an object. Objects will have data stored in the attribute fields." Attributes can be viewed as the inherent properties of an object.

It is common knowledge that OOP is based on 4 principles, which will be dealt with in detail in the upcoming sections:

- **Encapsulation**
- **Abstraction**
- **Inheritance**
- **Polymorphism**

In each of the upcoming sections we aim at giving a theoretical definition of the OOP principle being discussed, a brief explanation or example of the principle, and a few suggestions related to how the principles can be applied when teaching English to Computer Science students.

## ENCAPSULATION

According to the Encapsulation principle, an object is self-contained and

> „only select information is exposed. The implementation and state of each object are privately held inside a defined class. Other objects do not have access to this class or the authority to make changes." (Gillis & Lewis, 2021)

In other words, encapsulation ensures that the state of an object can be changed if there are methods which allow this to happen under certain circumstances. For example, if you take the case of a TV, depending on the current state of this appliance, some behaviors are permitted while others are not. For example, you can turn on a TV, switch channels, and turn off the TV. However, you cannot switch channels if the TV is turned off, since this transition does not make sense.

When it comes to applying the Encapsulation principle in English teaching, we notice that objects change their state in language constantly. Words, strings, sentences change because of context or intent. In light of this, we would like to suggest 2 ways of applying the Encapsulation principle when teaching English.

For B1/B2 – level students, the principle can be applied when teaching derivations. Consonant doubling and vowel change can be viewed a processes which result from encapsulation. For example, a verb like "offer" will be spelt with one "R" when adding an "-ing" suffix ("offering"), as stress falls on the first syllable. Contrastively, a verb like "prefer" will be spelt with double "R" when adding an "-ing" suffix ("preferring"), as stress falls on the last/second syllable.

When instructing students how to accurately spell the "-ing" derivates, the following steps may be applied. You have a verb (a class) and you want to correctly spell its –ING form (its derivative token). Apply the following rule (method):

1. Divide the verb into syllables. The verb is a class and its derivative token must be spelt correctly.
2. Apply the following method or rule. If the stress falls on the last syllable, the consonant found in the last syllable must be doubled.

## ABSTRACTION

According to the Abstraction principle,

> „objects only reveal internal mechanisms that are relevant for the use of other objects, hiding any unnecessary implementation code. The derived class can have its functionality extended. This concept can help developers more easily make additional changes or additions over time." (Gillis & Lewis, 2021)

In other words, there must be a separation of concerns. The inner logic and complexity of the application should not be exposed to users, because it is not relevant for the regular actions users are meant to perform. For example, the code which powers a smart phone is quite complex, but the functions exposed to end-users are straightforward.

When it comes to applying the Abstraction principle in English teaching, we notice that, as English instructors, we have solid theoretical knowledge of Grammar. However, we should detach ourselves from abstract, theoretical terminology for as much as possible when aiming at fluency.

For B2-C1 – level students, the principle can be applied when teaching connectors, linkers, and discourse markers. Instead of introducing these terms directly and providing a theoretical, linguistic definition for them, text snippets can be provided and students can be asked to derive the use cases themselves. As a result, the importance and effectiveness of each category can be better understood.

For C2 – level students, the principle can be applied when teaching business jargon. In practice, developers must convince stakeholders that they should invest money in the code that is meant to solve business issues. However, developers find it a challenge to translate technical terms into business jargon, which is why this skill should be trained during English classes.

Provide students with an email written by a developer with the objective of convincing a non-technical stakeholder to invest in a particular feature set. Since the text is expected to be repleted with technical jargon, students may be tasked with simplifying and rephrasing the text to increase comprehension and facilitate stakeholder buy-in.

While it is important for students in the field of Computer Science to master technical jargon, it is crucial for them to effectively present business value to stakeholders. Hence, a similar exercise can involve extracting or formulating the business value underpinning a technical specification document containing various jargon terms, such as wireframe, minification, data mining, sandbox or A/B Testing.

**INHERITANCE**

According to the Inheritance principle,

> „classes can reuse code from other classes. Relationships and subclasses between objects can be assigned, enabling developers to reuse common logic while still maintaining a unique hierarchy." (Gillis & Lewis, 2021)

In other words, properties and behavior can be passed on from a parent class to a child class via inheritance. If several classes have common elements, a superclass must be extrapolated, so that classes can inherit the shared behavior from the common parent class. The main benefit of this approach is consistency and reusability. For example, if developers need to write code for different makes of cars and there are common elements that can be shared across, then super classes must be created.

When it comes to applying the Inheritance principle in English teaching, we notice that English instructors can facilitate learning by allowing students to extrapolate common patterns.

For B1-B2 – level students, the principle is relevant when teaching word formation. Students may wonder whether a word is spelt with one "L" or double "L" ("wonderful" or "wonderfull"). Confusion stems from the word "full", which is not a suffix. Whenever in doubt, students should be instructed to create an adverb from the adjective they do not know how to spell. Students can thus realize that there are now words spelt with three consecutive "L" ("wonderfullly"). Therefore, "wonderful" is always spelt with one "L". To help students recall spelling patterns, encourage them to think in terms of regressive inheritance.

For C1-C2 – level students, the principle is relevant when teaching how to convey emphasis via inversion. When constructing sentences that begin with "Not only" for example, students need to be made aware that it is necessary to decompose the Verb Phrase into its auxiliary and its verbal form, and then have its components swapped. However, in the case of Past Tense Simple, the process may sometimes lead to a misuse of tense for auxiliaries and to an incorrect verbal form. In such cases, it may be beneficial to explain to students that tense is inherited from the source sentence, so that they perform the decomposition of the Past Tense ("did" + first form of the verb) before the actual swap.

## POLYMORPHISM

According to the Polymorphism principle

> „objects are designed to share behaviors and they can take on more than one form. The program will determine which meaning or usage is necessary for each execution of that object from a parent class, reducing the need to duplicate code. A child class is then created, which extends the functionality

of the parent class. Polymorphism allows different types of objects to pass through the same interface." (Gillis & Lewis, 2021)

In other words, a class can be written once and act as a source of truth, but at runtime or exposure time, the class can manifest itself under different shapes or forms. For example, a class called "Speech" can be created. Then, at runtime, the class will instantiate a different word for Hello depending on the languages you need: "Bonjour" (for French), "Hola" (for Spanish), or "Ciao" (for Italian). This dynamic behavior, based on runtime conditions, is key to the Polymorphism principle.

When it comes to applying the Polymorphism principle in English teaching, we notice that there many language phenomena which fall under dynamic runtime behavior.

For B1-B2 – level students, the principle can be mentioned when explaining the usage of Past Tense verbs with 2 alternative forms.

For C1-C2 – level students, false cognates relevant to the Computer Science field ("alternative" / "alternate", "adverse" / "averse", "assume" / "presume", "breach" / "breech", "comprise" / "compose", "principal" / principle", to name just a few) can be explained by telling students that these are not cases of the Polymorphism principle.

## CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to teaching English, a variety of approaches are possible. The CLIL framework can provide examples of teaching coding or programming through English. In this paper, we attempted to provide arguments and examples of teaching English by using coding/programming concepts and approaches. English instructors should aim at familiarising themselves with Computer Science concepts, which go beyond the OOP principles mentioned in this paper. Failing to harness Computer Science concepts can lead to a less impactful delivery of English courses to students who will have many communication challenges as future developers.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archibald, J., Roy, S., Harmel, S., Jesney, K., Dewey, E., Moisik, S., Lessard, P. (2006). *A Review of the Literature on Second Language Learning*, University of Calgary. Language Research Centre. Retrieved May 9, 2023 at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498248.pdf.

Avagyan, E. (2022). 7 ways learning to code is like learning a language, *Educative*. Retrieved May 16, 2023 at: https://www.educative.io/blog/similarities-learning-language-coding.

Bradley, L. (2016). Coding in English class? YES! and not just an #hourofcode, but a #monthofcode! *Laura Bradley*. Retrieved May 20, 2023 at: https://laurabradley.me/2016/12/15/coding-inenglish-class-yes-and-not-just-an-hourofcode-but-a-monthofcode/.

Brown, J. (2016). Coding in English class – Perfect pair. *Current and Cool*. Retrieved May 20, 2023 at: http://currentandcool.blogspot.ae/2016/01/coding-in-english-class-perfect-pair.html.

Cohen, A. (2017). Teaching ESL through coding. *LinkedIn Pulse*. Retrieved May 20, 2023 at: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/teaching-esl-through-coding-alan-cohen.

Darn, S., (2009). Content and Language Integrated Learning. Retrieved May 12, 2023 at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/educational-policies-practices/articles/content-and-language

Dudeney, G., Hockly, N., & Pegrum, M. (2013). *Digital literacies*. Harlow: Pearson.

Gardner, R.C. (2007). Motivation and second language acquisition. *Porta Linguarium*, 8, 9-22. Retrieved May 15, 2023 at: http://hdl.handle.net/10481/31616.

Gillis, A.S., Lewis, S. (2021). Object-Oriented Programming (OOP), in *TechTarget*. Retrieved May 12, 2023 at: https://www.techtarget.com/searchapparchitecture/definition/object-oriented-programming-OOP.

Jenkins, J. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching world Englishes and English as a lingua franca. TESOL Quarterly, 40(1): 157-181.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition. Oxford: Pergamon.

Met, M. (1998). "Curriculum Decision-making in Content-based Language Teaching." In J. Cenoz and F. Genesee (eds.), *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters), pp. 35–63.

O'Brien, Mary G. (2017). *Literature Review on the Impact of Second-Language Learning*, University of Calgary, The Alberta Teachers' Association. Retrieved May 2, 2023 at: https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Specialist-Councils/SLIC-21%20Impact%20of%20Second%20Language%20Learning.pdf.

Pinker, S. (1994). *The Language Instinct*, William Morrow and Company.

Ruby, I., & Krsmanovic, B. (2017). Does learning a programming language require learning English? A comparative analysis between English and programming languages. Retrieved May 28, 2023 at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321345003_Does_learning_a_programming_language_require_learning_English_A_comparative_analysis_between_English_and_programming_languages.

Ruby, I., & David, S. (2016). Natural-Language Neutrality in Programming Languages: Bridging the Knowledge Divide in Software Engineering. In International Conference on Learning and Collaboration Technologies (pp. 628-638). Springer International Publishing.

Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (2017). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (20th ed.). Dallas, TX: SIL International.

Stemmler, K. (2022). 4 Principles of Object-Oriented Programming. Retrieved May 5, 2023 at: https://khalilstemmler.com/articles/object-oriented/programming/4-principles/.

Stevens, V.& Verschoor, J. (2017). Coding and English Language Teaching, *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language,* vol 21, no. 2, August 2017.

Wagner, T. (2010). Overcoming the global achievement gaps (slides). *American Youth Policy Forum*. Retrieved May 19, 2023 at: http://www.aypf.org/documents/Wagner%20Slides%20-%20global%20achievement%20gap%20brief%205-10.pdf.

World Economic Forum in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group. (2015). *New vision for education: Unlocking the potential of technology*. World Economic Forum. Retrieved May 15, 2023 at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf.

# Playing the System: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Toying with Game-Based Learning and Gamification in Language Mediation

**ALEXANDRA COTOC[1] / IOANA MUDURE-IACOB[2]**

**Abstract:** The current study focuses on analyzing the perceptions of ESP and EAP higher education instructors and students in Romania regarding the manner of utilizing gamification and game-based apps in language instruction and assessment, as well as the perceived potential that digital tools might bring to this framework. Allowing language instructors to design and use sustainable tasks in the teaching process, game-based apps and gamification can constitute exploratory instruments to facilitate a more customized access to autonomous learning for students, to provide engaging and interactive contexts of collaboration and peer-assessment, and to make the language instruction more dynamic.

**Keywords**: *gamification, game-based learning, language mediation, language instruction*

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the current scenario of post-pandemic language instruction in which learners' needs, interests, and learning habits have been reconfigured, language instructors in higher education were faced with the stringent need to adapt the teaching process while integrating various outcomes of the lessons learned from emergency remote teaching (ERT). The ERT framework was at the core of a cyclical pedagogical trajectory that instructors pursued, starting with the shift from exclusively on-site language

---

[1] Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania.

[2] Senior Lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania.

instruction to online mediation and then returning to a face-to-face format. This current phase involves an acknowledgement of having to perform in this newly configured role in order to meet the students' emerging needs and to match the spectrum of transferable skills required by both the academic environment and the workforce market. Such a newly configured stance that language instructors were challenged to adopt includes creating sustainable teaching resources, recycling and adapting open educational resources (OERs).

One potentially successful framework to apply for on-site and hybrid language mediation can include elements of gamification and game-based learning (GBL) as resourceful tools in reshaping the dynamics of instruction, while at the same time, enhancing participation, efficient exploration, and acquisition of language content and micro-skills. Gamification and GBL represent a coherent and resourceful follow-up to online classes in which quizzes and digital apps were used to transmit and adapt a lot of the analogue instructional content and assess learners' language skills in a more tailored and autonomy driven manner.

The integration of gamification and game-based learning can be a resourceful exploratory mechanism for designing more interactive on-site and hybrid language sessions, however, at the level of integrating such features in assessing learners, there are various factors to take into consideration. These factors include the perception that gamification/ GBL is not compatible with the regulated patterns of formal evaluation, the limited affordances of technological equipment, large groups of learners, various levels of digital literacies and willingness on behalf of instructors, the lack of a structured and continuous embedding of GBL in language instruction, time-consuming feature and the local force of habit of using formal evaluation.

The purpose of the current paper is to shed light on the place that Gamification and GBL occupy in the language instruction process, in terms of instructors' and learners' attitudes towards building a more digital native suitable learning environment. The discussion revolves around the analysis of results obtained from two questionnaires conducted within the DIAL4u (*Digital Pedagogy to Develop Autonomy, Mediate and Certify Lifewide and Lifelong*

*Language Learning for (European) Universities*) Erasmus+ project. Among other investigated dimensions, the two questionnaires, addressing language instructors and language learners, aimed to show respondents' perceptions of the degree of embedding, using and designing, as well as the usefulness of gamification and game-based learning in language instruction scenarios.

The theoretical framework focuses on aspects related to gamification and game-based elements included in assessment, impact upon student motivation, the capability of these gamified elements to customize sustainability of language tasks. The aims of the study, participants and procedure, research tools and hypotheses are all covered in the methodology section. A selection of results from the two surveys is then analyzed and discussed. In attempting to upgrade the language mediation process in favor of a more digital native learner-centered approach, the preliminary conclusions and future research prospects are sketched.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The experience of exploring the interactive, playful and jocular dimension of game-based and gamified activities in the ERT generated context of language instruction in higher education has led to a visible need for reconfiguration of both language mediation and formative assessment upon/onto face-to-face instructional performance in the post-pandemic framework. Language instructors have seized the opportunity to embed such tasks in order to stimulate and enhance motivation among learners, in an attempt to support them in their autonomous language learning journey and to ensure the customization of learning task sustainability. Seeing gamification as "designing information systems to afford similar experiences and motivations as games go, and consequently attempting to affect user behaviour" (Koivisto et al., 2014, p. 3030), instructors can tailor language instruction and particularly formative assessment in order to cater for (digital native) learners' needs and interests by designing digital escape rooms and using different platforms for educational games (iCivics, BreakoutEDU).

More widely used than gamification, game-based learning (GBL) brings forth different dimensions which are explored both in online, hybrid and on-site language mediation. Caponeto, Earp and Ott (2014) regard GBL as the inclusion of various games to ensure instructional goals, with an array of student-focused benefits such as motivation, interactivity, creativity, or entertainment. At the same time, GBL also supports teacher-focused benefits, varying from more accessible means of recording feedback, conducting formative assessment, recycling language tasks, grasping a real-time understanding of the way in which content was received and processed, or shifting roles from instructors to monitor. Some of the popular digital tools meant to conduct GBL formative assessment are Kahoot!, Quizizz, Quizlet, Sli.do, but, depending on the instructors' creativity and digital savviness, more digital apps can be used in the GBL process, along with organizing individual or team short competitions (word guessing, odd one out tasks, word formation, correct use of grammatical structures).

The constant feedback exchange between language instructors and learners provides for an ongoing formative assessment process, which is a prerequisite for the adaptation of teaching methods and materials used in foreign language classes.

> "Considering the learner-friendly feature of formative assessment and its function as assessment for learning, rather than of learning, paired with the digital framework in which learning takes place, a valuable strategy to keep learners engaged while also evaluating their progress is gamification." (Mudure-Iacob, 2020, p.95)

Both gamification and GBL approaches can modify the nature of assessment in language mediation, by changing the roles of the two actants (instructors become facilitators, whereas learners take on the role of content creators), while also activating the digital pedagogy framework in which assessment is seen as a collaborative endeavor. In this respect:

> "gamification has been adopted to support learning in a variety of contexts and subject areas and to address related attitudes, activities and behaviours, such as participatory approaches, collaboration, self-guided study, completion of assignments, making assessments easier and more effective,

integration of exploratory approaches to learning and strengthening student creativity and retention." (Caponetto et al., 2014, p. 56)

Another noteworthy dimension that both gamification and GBL bring to the language classes is humor, as a perceived benefit of partaking in playing games while learning or being assessed and as "a strategy to enhance language learning" (see Lombardi, 2012: 148). Humor can embody what Lazarro (2012) identifies as four key elements that generate fun and which can be adapted to language mediation in the following manner: easy fun deriving from exploring gamified scenarios (game-based platforms such as BreakoutEDU), hard fun triggered from completing challenges (digital escape rooms), people-fun or people factor as a result of collaborative games and competition (playing team games such as Kahoot! or Quizizz), and eventually serious fun, as these activities are part of the learning journey in the language mediation process.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Procedure

A total of 104 teachers and 150 students were involved in the study. The age of the language instructors who responded varies mainly from 31 to 50 years (with 72.1 % being in this age category and 27.9% being either at the beginning or nearing the end of their teaching careers), with their digital literacies rated as advanced (61.5%), intermediate (31.7%), and expert (6.7%). The students in the survey were mostly undergraduates (96.7%), while the remaining 3.3% were enrolled in M.A. or PhD studies, displaying digital skill levels evaluated as advanced (60%), intermediate (28%), expert (9.3%), elementary (2%), and beginner (0.7%).

### Research Instruments

The study, which aimed to collect quantitative and qualitative data using Google Forms, consisted of two questionnaires (one for teachers and one for students) and took place between Spring 2020 and Autumn 2021. Due to the pandemic-generated lockdown, 2020 marked the beginning of a quick transition to online instruction exclusively, with the teaching format being maintained for the duration of the Spring semester of 2022 at several educational institutions. Respondents participated voluntarily, personal data was kept confidential and the participants granted their informed consents.

The statistical analysis of the quantitative data was performed using the Jamovi software, version 2.3.21, and content analysis was used for the processed qualitative data. Out of the 56 questions in total for the teacher survey and 48 items for the student questionnaire, the current study includes a selection of questions pertaining to Digital platforms/apps and Digital Pedagogy.

**Methodology**

Our research hypotheses are the following:

1. There is a tendency to integrate game-based learning in customizing formative assessment in Romanian higher education institutions.
2. The interest in using gamification is at an incipient stage in language mediation and formative assessment design in Romanian higher education institutions.
3. There is unexplored potential in using digital tools in performing peer-assessment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In order to customize formative assessment according to (digital native) learners' needs and to pursue a continuity from the ERT learning context, we checked whether language instructors maintained a tendency to embed game-based learning for different reasons spanning from engagement, motivating students and encouraging them to perform in authentic class assignments and tasks.

When asking about the integration of game-based learning elements in the teaching and learning process, the purpose was to identify similarities and differences regarding the perceptions that respondents had in terms of the impact these elements had in language classes: increased student participation, creation of a competitive learning environment and the learning of concepts or phrases.

We noticed that the benefit of *increased student participation* was indicated to be the top advantage in embedding GBL features in language mediation, with 61.3% of students having opted for this feature and even more teachers, 73.7% having done so (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below).

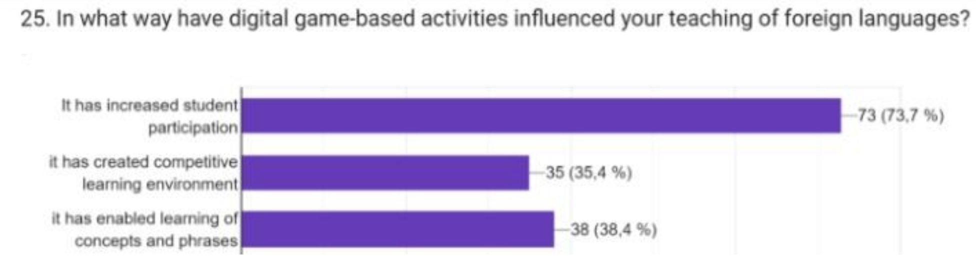


**Figure 1.** Perceptions of the influence of GBL on language teaching

*Source: Dial4U archive*

The facilitation of the *process of learning concepts and phrases* as an intermediary stage in formative assessment was chosen by 38.4% of teachers and 47.3% of students.

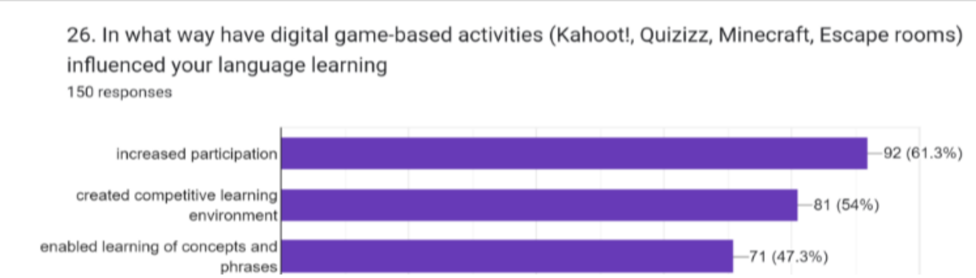


**Figure 2.** Perceptions of the influence of GBL on language learning

*Source: Dial4U archive*

One discrepancy between the two sets of answers was signaled with regards to *the creation of a competitive learning environment,* as teachers do not consider that GBL integration would influence the nature of such a learning environment (35.4%), whereas students perceive the environment as being very competitive (54%).

The default benefit of choosing digital apps to facilitate GBL to increase student participation is obtained through the various features that such game-based tools have: instant feedback, playful dimension, avatar and nickname options, building rapport strategies as they can play in teams or groups, and motivation elements via platform affordances (motivational memes after correct responses, building suspense with audio and visual cues). It is perhaps surprising that language instructors fail to seize the potential of using GBL in the practice of concepts, phrases, yet they may use it in the practice of macro skills. On the other hand, students perceive the GBL integration as an opportunity to learn concepts, phrases in a more interactive manner. When using Kahoot! Quizizz!, Minecraft, or Escape Rooms, students have the option of revising content and tasks, which enables self-assessment procedures.

The dimension of an enhanced competitive learning environment was reported relatively differently by language instructors (35.4%) as compared to students (54%). This is explainable in light of the fact that there are different roles that the two actants play in the language mediation process, instructors being the facilitators and coordinators of the activity, and students playing a more active role and being actually engaged in the task completion. Likewise, a competitive environment can also be perceived as either positive or negative by the two parties, depending on specific experience and social-emotional factors (personality traits, relationship with both peers and instructors).

The first hypothesis was validated, as we noticed that there is a tendency to integrate game-based learning in customizing formative assessment in Romanian higher education institutions.

In the context of analyzing the potential of GBL and gamification in language instruction, it is useful to understand to what extent language instructors resort to interactive materials in their classes as compared to handouts or other text-based materials. Related to the various types of resources preferred in building language skills, teachers reported that the use of interactive materials was lower than the use of text-based, visual aids and audio-video resources (see Figure 3).

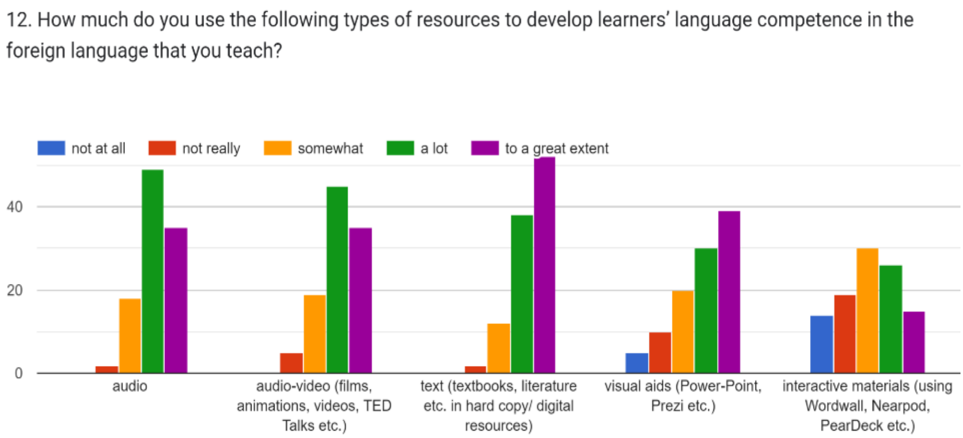


**Figure 3.** Teachers' preference for resources to develop learners' language competence.

*Source: Dial4U archive*

Language instructors indicated text-based resources to be the most popular category that was used in the teaching process, while interactive materials (facilitated by the use of digital apps and platforms such as Wordwall, Nearpod, PearDeck, etc.) were the least used ones. A similar result showcasing the status of interactive resources within formal language learning was obtained in the answers provided by students, students having identified audio and audio-video resources as the most frequently used resources in their autonomous learning process (see Figure 4).

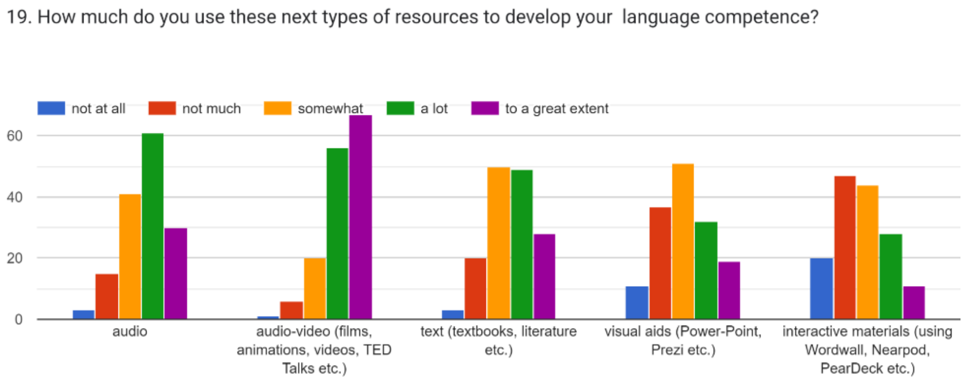


**Figure 4.** Students' preference for resources to develop learners' language competence.

*Source: Dial4U archive*

The respondents' answers show that both actants share the same limited experience in embedding interactive resources in the instructional and respectively learning activities. In the case of teachers, this may be explained by the tendency to use the same resources without significant adaptation of content, design or format and the extra initial effort required to digitalize tasks and assignments, and to get accustomed to the affordances provided by these apps. Even though "the end of 2021 marked the moment when instructors had already gained sufficient experience in online instruction patterns to acknowledge particular needs for reconfiguration of content, strategies and methods" (Mudure-Iacob et al., 2022: 133), the responses show there was still a disparity between the expected adaptation and digitalization of resources and the actual use of the same pre-pandemic text-based resources.

For students, the preference for audio and audio-video resources over interactive materials may be put down to the passive role that students play when making use of receptive skills (watching or listening to an audio material) and a potential lack of exposure to the interactive resources throughout the instructional framework. Given these limitations, it is not surprising why there still is some reluctance in using GBL/gamification while teaching foreign languages.

Even if GBL is represented in language instruction through the occasional use of interactive materials, the dimension of gamification as a tool for formative assessment design and language mediation is underrepresented and is only in an emerging phase. There is also the expectation that academic (language) instruction and the fun feature derived from the interactivity of apps appear not to be entirely compatible with the rigor associated with academia. Gamification (either in the form of serious games or digital escape rooms) entails a sequence of interactive tasks that learners need to complete based on a previously instructor-created aim, narrative and design. The effort that instructors, on the one hand, need to invest in facilitating and/or designing gamification learning scenarios in their language classes requires, to some extent, a degree of adaptability, expanding a standardized assessment format into a simulation of real-life learning situation and also building a community of practice. On the other hand, gamification has an impact upon language learners in terms of changing their roles from passive recipients of know-how into active digital learning content creators. This, in turn, leads to better learner engagement and autonomous acquisition of language skills.

The second hypothesis was thus validated, seeing that the interest in using gamification is at an incipient stage in language mediation and formative assessment design in Romanian higher education institutions.

Even if GBL and gamification are emerging tools in higher education language instruction, the potential they bring, along with the integration of digital tools, is high, but nonetheless not explored enough in language mediation. Beyond the scope of using such educational technology in formative assessment, digital apps can contribute significantly to shaping peer assessment and thus supporting autonomous and collaborative learning, which makes learning a more student-centered process.

When asked about the impact that playing educational games has on language learners, students indicated that they felt less inhibited and also enjoyed practicing and speaking the target language without the pressure and constraints derived from the formal setting of the classroom, in which students feel more instructor-dependent, when loosely following a handout. The wide majority of respondents (73% of students) indicated they have enjoyed the practice of language in such activities to a high and very high extent (see Figure 5), which implies that the benefits of using digital tools in the instruction and practice of foreign languages constitute a prerequisite for a participatory community of learners.


**Figure 5.** Benefits while playing educational games.

*Source: Dial4U archive*

Exploring the dimension of participatory culture in the language instruction framework is linked to the way in which learners are accustomed to carrying out practice activities and conducting peer-assessment during language classes. The respondents' preference regarding this kind of shared or individual activity can be seen in Figure 6 below and is indicative of the tendency to compete with others (hence the 35.1% preference over playing language learning games individually). Nevertheless, a high percentage was also obtained for the option of playing games both individually and with others (54.7%), which indicates that the digital apps' (Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Quizlet) potential to cater for both self-paced study/games and team games can support both individual and collaborative study. Working in teams, either to learn or to practice language, is indicative of learners' willingness to perform peer-assessment activities.

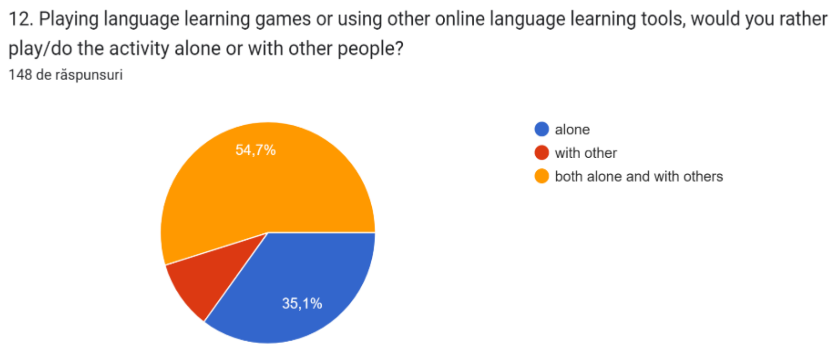


**Figure 6.** Preference for playing language learning games.

*Source: Dial4U archive*

Besides the benefits of playing educational games, there are also perceived positive influences on students' language learning when using digital game-based learning activities. Having the option of selecting various benefits from a suggested list, respondents have indicated an increased participation (61.3%), followed closely by the creation of competitive learning environments (54%), and the enabling of learning concepts and phrases (47.3%). Their responses reveal the key features of GBL and gamification in general: interactivity, participation, and dynamic peer-assessment activities.

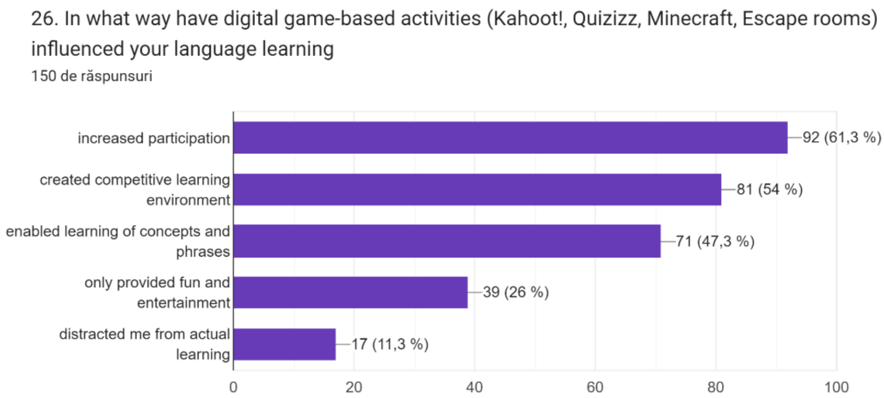


**Figure 7.** Perceived benefits of performing digital game-based activities

*Source: Dial4U archive*

The third hypothesis, showcasing the potential that digital apps and tools have in performing peer-assessment, has been validated as we witness that such apps can pave the way for students' building their own autonomous learning processes while, at the same time, becoming part of communities of learners in performing peer-assessment.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS

While exploring the affordances of game-based apps and gamified learning scenarios in the language classes, the current study has sought to analyze the manner in which and extent to which the two teaching and assessment approaches can support learner autonomy and make learning a more enjoyable and motivation-led process. The premises ranged from the language instructors' tendency to customize formative assessment with game-based learning apps to the incipient state of embedding gamification in language mediation and assessment to the untapped potential that the use of digital apps and tools may have upon language instruction. The verified premises confirmed that higher education language instruction can be properly tailored to meet the modified needs of (digital native) learners who have experienced the ERT scenarios and whose interests call for a delivery of content and methods closer to the digital environment and in correlation with soft skill building. Game based assessment may contribute to the fine tuning of advanced communicative and critical thinking skills as learners both troubleshoot problems and use specific language content for interactive communicative achievement of tasks.

In the context of the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the design of tasks and activities on the part of language instructors on the one hand, and to anticipate the challenges of misusing AI potential on the part of language learners on the other, it would be relevant for language instructors to include gamified elements and more authentic tasks in teaching and (formative) assessment. Language mediation can thus become a learning and practice environment in which toying with game-based learning will be done by mutually supporting learners, and the outcome of language instruction can match in a more practical manner expectations, wants and needs of learners preparing to use such language and 21st century skills in continually changing workforce markets.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Caponetto, I., Earp, J., & Otto, M. (2014). Gamification and Education: a Literature Review. In Busch, C. (ed.) *Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Games-Based* Learning. Berlin: Academic Conferences and Publishing International Limited. Retrieved April, 2 2023 at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266515512_Gamification_and_Education_a_Literature_Review3

Koivisto, J., Hamari, J., Sarsa, H. (2014). Does Gamification Work? -A Literature Review of Empirical Studies on Gamification. In Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, pp. 3025-3034, doi: 10.1109/HICSS. 2014.377. Retrieved May, 5 2023 at https://doi.ieeecomputer society.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377

Lazzaro, N. (2004). Why We Play Games: Four Keys to More Emotion Without Story. Retrieved April, 10 2023 at http://www.xeodesign.com/xeodesign_why weplaygames.pdf.

Lombardi, I. (2012). "Not-so-Serious Games for Language Learning. Now with 99,9% More Humour on Top", in Procedia Computer Science, Volume 15, 2012, p. 148-158. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877050912008289

Mudure-Iacob, I. (2020). Assessment of ESP Language Acquisition through the Lens of Gamification. In Nistor, R., Teglaș, C. (eds.) Limbajele specializate în contextul noilor medii de învățare: Provocări și oportunități, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, p. 93-107.

Mudure-Iacob, I., Cotoc, A., Hopartean, A.M., Micle, V.-D., Andronache, D., (2022). Autonomous Digital Language Learning in Higher Education. The DIAL4U Erasmus+Project. International Conference on Virtual Learning, ISSN 2971-9291, ISSN-L 1844-8933, vol. 17, p. 127-141, 2022. https://doi.org/10.58503/icvl-v17y202211

# Instructional Applications of PowerPoint: From a Visual Aid to a Multimodal Approach to Teaching

**VLAD-GEORGIAN MEZEI**[1]

**Abstract:** This paper explores various applications of PowerPoint to teaching an ESAP practical course to first-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The author views PowerPoint as a versatile tool for designing teaching materials and delivering instruction rather than a visual support for oral presentations. The desire to transform students from passive recipients of information into active participants in the process of learning is a central underpinning of the methodology behind the author's use of PowerPoint. The present study focuses on the merits of PowerPoint as a multimodal approach to teaching. Particular attention is given to methods of creating teaching scenarios and designing instructional materials by blending text, pictures, charts, audio tracks and videos into a seamless learning experience. Preparing students for dealing with text in reading comprehension and written production, encouraging speaking activities, explaining grammar and fostering vocabulary acquisition are some of the areas in which PowerPoint has proven especially useful. Descriptions of teaching materials are provided to illustrate the pedagogical gains brought by the integration of PowerPoint into ESAP classes.

**Keywords**: *PowerPoint, multimodal approach to teaching, ESAP, instructional materials, feedback*

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching an ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) practical course is a complex activity that involves devising coherent educational strategies aimed at enabling students to use English effectively both in academic and professional contexts. In addition to designing syllabi and writing instructional materials, ESAP teachers are also responsible for

[1] Lecturer, Babeș-Bolyai University.

planning classroom activities. This involves, apart from choosing relevant content, appropriate tasks and suitable teaching scenarios, presenting the educational materials to students in an appealing format that creates engagement, promotes understanding and enhances linguistic acquisition. In my opinion, Microsoft PowerPoint can be utilized as an instrument for creating materials for in-class activities that motivate learners to engage with the content of a lesson in a multitude of manners.

This article draws on my own experience of using Microsoft PowerPoint to teach a two-semester ESAP practical course to first-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Even though some of the instructional applications of PowerPoint presented in this paper have been briefly mentioned in two of my previous articles (Mezei, 2021; Mezei 2022), this is my first study entirely dedicated to using this software for educational purposes. The opening section of the paper is dedicated to a brief literature review that highlights the instructional potential of Microsoft PowerPoint. In the second part, my own approach to designing teaching materials is presented. The last section focuses on the discussion of students' feedback on the quality of the learning experience facilitated by the use of PowerPoint slideshows during lessons throughout the academic year 2022-2023.

## A BRIEF RATIONALE FOR USING MICROSOFT POWERPOINT AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL

Microsoft PowerPoint is a piece of virtual presentation software originally conceived as an aid to visual demonstrations in the business environment (Britannica). Employed initially by business executives and salespeople, Microsoft PowerPoint was integrated into education owing to its capability to facilitate demonstration and clarification of information (Oommen, 2012, p. 54). Thus, according to certain studies, as early as the late 1990s, college students considered PowerPoint-assisted lectures more stimulating than traditional lectures (De Wet, 2006, p. 30).

The instructional potential of Microsoft PowerPoint stems from its multimodal nature, which brings manifold benefits to the educational process. Teachers and learners alike can profit from using it. The possibility of combining colored text, images, animation and sound makes it an effective pedagogical tool that can appeal to diverse learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and creative) (Oommen, 2012, p. 54). In addition, highlighting keywords, displaying pictures and diagrams can enhance the effectiveness of a teacher's presentation in the classroom (Oommen, 2012, p. 59).

A major advantage that Microsoft PowerPoint offers designers of teaching materials is the possibility to organize the instructional content in such a way that it clarifies information and aids understanding. For example, the use of dynamic models, animation and variation of color may result in an effective illustration of certain key concepts (Szabo & Hastings, 2000, p. 187). Furthermore, the use of bullet points and visuals facilitates the reading and learning of complex materials (Widi Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018, p. 92). Moreover, students' self-efficacy regarding their note taking capabilities is positively impacted by the presentation of information in PowerPoint format. When exposed to clearly structured PowerPoint presentations, students become more confident about taking, organizing, understanding and using notes to prepare for tests (Susskind, 2005, p. 212). Finally, teachers themselves can benefit from the organizational virtues of PowerPoint in that the framework of the slideshow may help them organize their thoughts and display the knowledge in an orderly, easy-to-understand manner (Oommen, 2012, p. 54-55).

Creating student engagement is a further advantage of the multimodal nature of PowerPoint. Color coding, the use of different fonts, and visual effects contribute to gaining students' attention, which boosts the learning process (Corbeil, 2007, p. 649). What is more, PowerPoint-based lessons add variety to classroom activities, which is an effective method of holding students' attention and avoiding boredom (Oommen, 2012, p. 59). Distractions during lessons can be reduced due to the fact that PowerPoint helps students remain focused on the specific study topic. Furthermore, increased focus on the lesson encourages note taking, thus improving students' language learning experience. Speaking activities are also stimulated because students exposed to PowerPoint take part more willingly in class discussion (Obaidullah & Islam, 2019, p. 120). What is more, the interesting and enjoyable nature of PowerPoint-based lessons has a favorable impact on course attendance since students feel more motivated to attend such classes (Susskind, 2005, p. 208).

Classroom management is another area in which instructional materials created in PowerPoint have brought considerable improvements. Time can be used more efficiently when PowerPoint is integrated into lessons. Owing to the fact that information can be displayed instantly via PowerPoint, instead of spending time writing on the board, teachers can focus on monitoring student progress, adjusting the lesson to the needs of the students and providing feedback. Correspondingly, students spend no time waiting for the teacher to finish writing on the board. The pace of the lesson can also be improved, which results in higher student engagement in tasks (Taylor, 2012, p. 45).

In addition to the benefits they bring to in-class activities, instructional materials created in PowerPoint are easy to use outside the classroom as well. Handouts printed from PowerPoint presentations can be made available to students as summaries of the lessons in order to help them revise and study for exams (Widi Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018, p. 92). Moreover, such materials can easily be distributed to students as email attachments. They can also be uploaded to and downloaded from the Internet and converted to html webpages (Fisher, 2003). Downloadable PowerPoint files are valuable resources for further study at home (Corbeil, 2007, p. 649).

## USING POWERPOINT TO TEACH ESAP: A PERSONAL APPROACH

Having considered some of the instructional applications of PowerPoint as revealed by the above brief literature review, I shall now present my own approach to using this piece of software to teach ESAP classes. My personal teaching experience with PowerPoint started during the Covid-19-related school closure, when instructional activities moved online. In the pre-pandemic era, the two instructional tools I relied on the most during my lessons were a course packet of my own design and a whiteboard. While the former contained the study material to be covered during the semester in a predetermined, fixed form, the latter was an ever-changing workspace where content flow was regulated by the student-teacher interaction. Correcting spelling, presenting concepts or lexical items, highlighting text structures, discussing grammar, drawing mind maps, sharing ideas and building word webs were some of the most frequent activities facilitated by the whiteboard. Given the central role assigned to this teaching aid during my lessons, I paid special attention to whiteboard management. Whenever I was satisfied with the content of the whiteboard, I would take a picture of it so that I could replicate and possibly improve on it the next time I needed it.

The switch from face-to-face instruction to online classes in March 2020 deprived me of the whiteboard, which I substituted with PowerPoint-based materials. My approach to using PowerPoint for designing materials for classroom activities stems directly from this original necessity to find an instructional tool that would subsume the roles played in the pre-pandemic era by the course packet and the whiteboard. What is more, my preference for the term PowerPoint "slideshow" rather than the more popular "presentation" is motivated by the fact that instead of using it as a visual aid to deliver a lecture, I employ it as a supportive framework for my in-class teaching scenarios.

Despite their initial substitutive function, in the long run, PowerPoint slideshows proved to be far more effective than the pre-pandemic course packet and white board combination because of the supplementary multimodal possibilities they offered. In addition to the blend of content extracted from the course packet and information that would be displayed on the whiteboard, a PowerPoint slideshow may include any additional elements that can contribute to the enhancement of the learning experience: pictures, audio files and videos.

The major advantage of PowerPoint is that it enables a multimodal approach to teaching. The possibility of blending together text, pictures, charts, audio tracks and videos allows teachers to diversify and augment the instructional process. Slides for listening comprehension activities can easily be designed by simply combining text – in the form of fill-in-the-blanks, multiple choice and true/false exercises – with audio tracks. Furthermore, a combination of short pieces of text with pictures can be used to elicit ideas from students. Similarly, participation in a discussion on the following topic: "Some people maintain that football is the king of sports. Do you agree?" can be encouraged by playing a video that shows memorable football players in their prime on a musical background provided by The Fans' iconic "Olé, Olé, Olé (The Name of the Game)". What is more, associating images and words allows students to visualize the terminology studied, which improves lexical acquisition. Finally, inserting hyperlinks enables the creation of connections between various sections of the PowerPoint slideshow or between the slideshow and other documents or Internet pages.

Another strength of PowerPoint is the possibility of displaying information gradually. This functionality enables sequencing the lesson according to a teaching scenario planned in advance, which can be applied at two different levels. At the macro level (slideshow), slides can be designed for each step of the lesson and organized in accordance with the structure of a lesson plan. Such an organization may help students follow the lesson effortlessly in class. Furthermore, it may create a certain degree of predictability, which may allow students to revise the slideshows more easily at a later date. For example, if slideshows typically start with a slide dedicated to announcing the objectives of the lesson, followed by one or several slides focused on homework check and they invariably end with a slide containing information about the homework for the next lesson, students have no difficulty in localizing the above mentioned sections even if they have not attended the course.

At the micro level (individual slide), displaying the information progressively has several applications. This functionality is particularly useful when checking the answers after solving fill-in-the-blanks, matching or multiple-choice exercises. PowerPoint allows teachers to preset animations to display the answers gradually as the discussion about the exercise progresses. At the push of a button, words appear in the blanks, arrows of different colors connect the terms with definitions/images and green ticks are displayed next to the correct variants.

Choosing the order and the location in which various elements are displayed on the slide can also be used to create engagement in guided discussions when the teacher tries to elicit certain information from students.

One example of such an application is the slide that I use to introduce a grammar section dedicated to the sense verbs. This segment is part of a lesson focused mainly on anatomy specific vocabulary. The triggering factor is a definition included in a text about the human body according to which the brain functions as a coordinating center of sensation, intellectual and nervous activity. At the moment of the lesson the students have already read the text as part of their homework, and they are familiar with the above mentioned definition.

The first element displayed in the center of the slide is a representation of the brain. Next, students are asked to name the sensory organs and while they do so, images of an eye, an ear, a nose, a mouth and a hand are gradually displayed around the representation of the brain. Then, students are invited to mention the nouns naming the five senses (“sight”, “hearing”, “touch”, “smell”, “taste”) which appear next to the image of each sensory organ. Finally, students are prompted to think of some English verbs that enable us to express how the world is perceived through each sensory organ. As the discussion progresses, the following verbs are displayed adjacent to the nouns designating the five senses: “see”, “look”, “watch”, “hear”, “listen”, “sound”, “feel”, “smell” and “taste”. The final product is a radial diagram built from the center outwards.

Teaching students techniques for approaching academic texts both in terms of reading comprehension and writing is another area which can benefit from displaying information progressively on predetermined locations on the slide. Introducing students to summarizing techniques is a complex task because it involves instruction in reading comprehension as well as writing production. It can be facilitated by combining color coding the text with gradually displaying elements on a slide. This works well especially when pointing out different operations to be performed in order to summarize a paragraph in one sentence. The full paragraph and the summarized version are included on the same slide so that they can be easily compared.

Demonstrating how to summarize a text about various health problems caused by intense physical activity can start from marking in red several words such as “sprains”, “dislocations”, “fractures” and “strains” in the full paragraph and using the same color to mark the word "injuries" in the summarized version. This will draw students' attention to the fact that several words can be summarized as one word/phrase that names the category to which all items of the same kind belong. Other colors are applied to other words/phrases in the same way in order to show students how the transition from the full text to the summarized version has been performed. The demonstration can be continued by using the gradual display technique to draw a diagram containing the key elements of the original text and the relationships between them. Once the text has been mapped, writing a summary sentence can be easily done by connecting the components of the map according to the relationships identified in the previous phase. The same combination of color coding and progressive display of information can be used to teach principles of writing physical exercises, anatomical descriptions, physiological descriptions and essays.

Despite the wide range of possibilities to enhance the learning experience provided by PowerPoint, it cannot be used as an exclusive teaching instrument in ESAP classes. Involving students completely in classroom activities entails enabling them to engage directly with the content of the lesson. This requires using supplementary instruments. One of them is Microsoft Teams which functions as a learning management system. Another tool is a Microsoft Word document designed as a worksheet and uploaded by the teacher to Microsoft Teams, which serves as a collaborative whiteboard. All students have access to this document, which functions as a common workspace where they can write their ideas and answers. In addition, I integrate into lessons exercises produced on Wordwall (https://wordwall.net), an online platform dedicated to creating exercises such as *quiz*, *match up*, *label diagrams*, *missing word*, *hangman*, *maze chase*, *airplane* and *rank order*. These interactive exercises are connected to the slideshows by hyperlinks.

Finally, PowerPoint slideshows can function as a means of keeping a record of all the classroom activities. If uploaded after each lesson to Microsoft Teams, they help students keep track of course content throughout the semester, especially when they fail to attend all the classes or when they revise for the semester exam.

## STUDENTS' FEEDBACK

Students' level of satisfaction with the PowerPoint slideshows was measured by means of a questionnaire created in Microsoft Forms and administered to students during the last week of the practical course (May 15, 2023-May 19, 2023) via a link posted on Microsoft Teams. There were 77 respondents. All the answers were anonymous.

The questionnaire comprised 11 items, of which 8 were 5-point Likert scale statements and 3 were open-ended questions. The statements were designed to assess the effectiveness of PowerPoint slides in achieving objectives such as enhancing student focus on the lesson, creating engagement in classroom tasks, fostering specialist vocabulary acquisition, motivating participation in speaking activities, improving writing skills, facilitating grammar instruction and helping students to keep track of course content throughout the semester. At the core of all these statements lies the desire to investigate the multimodal instructional possibilities provided by PowerPoint from several perspectives. In addition, the 3 open-ended questions were conceived as opportunities for students to indicate areas of likes/dislikes and to suggest improvements.

The Likert scale statements allowed students to rate the effectiveness of PowerPoint slideshows on a scale from 1 (the lowest score) to 5 (the highest score). For statement 1, the scale score was designed to measure the importance of the role played by PowerPoint slideshows in the in-class instructional process. Each numerical value was associated with a different amount of importance in the following way: 1 = not at all important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = important, 4 = very important, 5 = essential. For items 2-8, the rating was done according to the degree of students' agreement with the statements as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

The responses obtained are presented in the table below. The numbers under the scores (inserted in columns 2-6) represent the number of students who assigned that particular value (score) to each of the eight Likert scale statements.

**Tabel 1.** The answers to the Likert scale statements.

| SCORES / STATEMENTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In my opinion, the use of PowerPoint slideshows in the class of English is … | 1 | 1 | 12 | 30 | 33 | 4.21 |
| 2. The PowerPoint slideshows helped me focus my attention on the lesson by combining pictures, text, animations, diagrams, tables and audio and video files. | 1 | 1 | 7 | 28 | 40 | 4.36 |
| 3. The PowerPoint slideshows motivated me to get involved in the classroom activities by combining pictures, text, animations, diagrams, tables and audio and video files. | 1 | 3 | 16 | 31 | 26 | 4.01 |
| 4. The PowerPoint slideshows helped me acquire specialist vocabulary by combining pictures, text, animations, diagrams, tables and audio and video files. | 1 | 1 | 11 | 33 | 31 | 4.16 |
| 5. The PowerPoint slideshows facilitated student participation in speaking activities by combining pictures, text, animations, diagrams, tables and audio and video files. | 2 | 2 | 13 | 34 | 26 | 4.04 |
| 6. The PowerPoint slideshows helped me understand how to write various types of texts (definitions, anatomical descriptions, physical exercises, summaries, essays). | 1 | 1 | 12 | 26 | 37 | 4.26 |
| 7. The PowerPoint slideshows helped me understand the use of certain grammar items in the context of physical education and sport (present simple, present perfect, imperative, conditional clauses, passive/active voice and modal verbs). | 1 | 1 | 15 | 32 | 28 | 4.10 |
| 8. The PowerPoint slideshows uploaded to Microsoft Teams as PDF files after each lesson have helped me keep track of the content studied during the lessons and will help me revise for the final exam. | 1 | 0 | 10 | 20 | 46 | 4.43 |
| **The total number of times each score was assigned** | **9x** | **10x** | **96x** | **234x** | **267x** | |

*Source: My own creation*

The first statement was aimed at identifying students' general level of satisfaction with the PowerPoint-based instructional materials designed for and used during the lessons of the practical course. As revealed by the answers, the majority of the students highly appreciated the use of these materials, with 33 respondents (43%) considering that using PowerPoint slideshows in the class of English is essential, 30 (39%) deeming it very important and 12 (16%) important. That 98% of the students rated the role played by PowerPoint in the classroom activities as at least important clearly indicates its significant potential as an instructional tool.

As shown by the responses to Statement 2, the PowerPoint slideshows helped students considerably focus their attention on the lesson. Thus, 40 students (52%) strongly agreed with this statement – thereby assigning the PowerPoint slideshows a score of 5 points –, 28 students (37%) expressed simple agreement –the equivalent of 4 points – and 7 (9%) declared themselves neutral – which corresponds to 3 points. The high degree of satisfaction is also reflected by an average rating of 4.36/5.

The answers to Statement 3 show that the PowerPoint slideshows contributed substantially to motivating students to engage in classroom activities: 26 students (34%) expressed strong agreement and 31 (40%) simply agreed with the statement. In comparison to Statement 1, a lesser degree of satisfaction can be noticed overall, with 16 students (21%) adopting a neutral attitude, 3 students (4%) disagreeing and 1 student strongly disagreeing. This is also noticeable in the smaller average rating of 4.01. However, the fact that almost three quarters of the students (74%) assigned scores of 4 and 5 indicates that student engagement was facilitated considerably by the use of PowerPoint slideshows.

According to the students' responses to Statement 4, PowerPoint slideshows were highly favorable to specialist vocabulary acquisition. The high scores assigned by the majority of the students (40% – 5 points, and 43% – 4 points) reveal a significant degree of satisfaction in this respect. These results are particularly encouraging since creating opportunities for students to acquire specialist language is one of the underpinnings of this practical course.

Statement 5 measured the efficiency of PowerPoint slideshows in terms of student engagement in speaking activities. Judging by the large percentage of respondents who expressed strong agreement (34%) and agreement (44%) with this statement, it can be concluded that more than three quarters of the students (78%) were motivated to participate in speaking activities by the PowerPoint-based materials.

Statement 6 was designed to gather feedback on the capability of PowerPoint slideshows to improve students' understanding of the principles and mechanisms underlying the writing of various types of texts. Given that helping students improve their academic writing skills is another underpinning of this practical course, the fact that 63 out of 77 students reported a high degree of contentment –37 (48%) strongly agreeing and 26 (34%) agreeing with the statement – is particularly rewarding.

Statement 7 was conceived to assess the capacity of PowerPoint to support grammar instruction. The survey participants were invited to evaluate the extent to which they were helped to understand the use of certain items in the context of physical education and sport. Taking into account that 28 students (36%) expressed strong agreement and 32 (42%) agreed with the statement, it can be inferred that for more than three quarters of the respondents, grammar instruction was boosted by PowerPoint.

Statement 8 was aimed at measuring the efficiency of PowerPoint slideshows as a means of storing the content covered during each lesson so that it can be retrieved anytime for revision purposes. As revealed by an average rating of 4.43, this statement produced the highest degree of agreement among the respondents. This is confirmed by the responses: 46 students (60%) strongly agreed, and 20 students (26%) agreed with the fact that PowerPoint slideshows uploaded to Microsoft Teams as PDF files after each lesson had helped them to keep track of the content studied throughout the semester and would help them to revise for the final exam.

Generally speaking, the analysis of the data collected by the eight statements revealed a high degree of satisfaction with the use of PowerPoint during the lessons of English. The number of respondents (at least three quarters) who expressed agreement and strong agreement with the statements was invariably superior to those who maintained a neutral attitude. Furthermore, the number of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements never exceeded 5. What is more, as shown in the final row of Table 1, the significant amount of contentment is confirmed by the total number of times each score on the scale was assigned.

For a better insight into the students' preferences, the first open-ended question (Item 9) invited respondents to state what they liked most about the PowerPoint slideshows. A content analysis revealed the following areas of satisfaction: multimodal content – the combination of text (colored/underlined/highlighted text), pictures, audio and video files –, appropriate structure – it helped to follow the lesson –, explicitness, engagement, interactivity, facilitation of understanding, participation in speaking activities, reaching acquisition of specialist knowledge and vocabulary, efficient grammar instruction, the teacher's use of slideshows and the opportunity to keep track of the content studied during the lessons.

The second open-ended question (Item 10) required students to mention what they liked least about the PowerPoint slideshows. The answers provided to this question are a valuable addition to the data collected because they reveal some areas of dissatisfaction that were not identified in the Likert scale section of the questionnaire. Despite the high degree of satisfaction indicated by the responses to the first eight items, it is noteworthy that 34 students (44%) expressed objections. Several major sources of discontent could be identified, among which overloading certain slides with text, including too many exercises of the same kind (e.g. fill-in-the-blanks), using fonts too small to be read from certain areas of the classroom and boredom resulting from repeating the same slide format. This feedback section will be particularly useful for revising and improving the PowerPoint slideshows before the next academic year.

The last item of the questionnaire was meant as an opportunity for the students to make suggestions for improving the PowerPoint slideshows. The recommendations made in this section are consistent with the objections mentioned in answer to the previous question and they include improvements such as using more videos, reducing the amount of text in certain slides and including more variety in terms of color theme or design.

## CONCLUSIONS

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that PowerPoint can become much more than a visual aid for oral presentations or lectures.

When used thoughtfully, it can function as a framework for a multimodal approach to teaching. According to the literature review, the multimodal nature of PowerPoint yields instructional benefits such as appealing to diverse learning styles, clarifying information, aiding understanding, enhancing student self-efficacy, facilitating student engagement, structuring learning content and improving classroom management. Furthermore, as shown in the presentation of my personal approach to using PowerPoint, this piece of software can enhance the learning experience by encouraging participation in classroom discussions, increasing lexical acquisition, facilitating grammar instruction and improving students' abilities to work with texts in the academic context. What is more, the feedback provided by students on the effectiveness of the slideshows used during the academic year 2022-2023 mostly confirmed the attainment of the purposes for which they had been created.

However, the fact that some of the students did not find my approach to using PowerPoint satisfactory goes to show that no instrument is 100% infallible. I am therefore aware that, as a teacher and material designer, my work continues indefinitely, and my only hope is to improve the slideshows by carefully observing students' activity in the classroom and by regularly asking them for feedback.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (Invalid Date). Microsoft PowerPoint. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/technology/Microsoft-PowerPoint on 5.06.2023.

Corbeil, G. (2007). Can PowerPoint Presentations Effectively Replace Textbooks and Blackboards for Teaching Grammar? Do Students Find Them an Effective Learning Tool?. *CALICO Journal*, vol. 24, 3/2007, p. 631-656.

De Wet, C. F. (2006). Beyond Presentations: Using PowerPoint as an Effective Instructional Tool. *Gifted Child Today*, vol. 69, 4/2006, p. 29-39.

Fisher, D. L. (2003). Using PowerPoint for ESL Teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, vol. IX, 4/2003. Retrieved from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Fisher-PowerPoint.html on 5.06.2023.

Mezei, V-G. (2021). From Transitioning to Settling in for the Long Haul: Teaching a Two-Semester ESAP Course Online during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In Nistor, R-M. & Teglaş, C. (eds.). *Limbaje specializate: Abordări curente şi provocari pentru viitor*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, p. 75-87.

Mezei, V-G. (2022). Capitalizing on Two Years of Online Education to Improve Onsite ESAP Classes. In Nistor, R-M. & Teglaş, C. (eds.). *Limbajele specializate în era digitală: Abordări metodologice şi practice*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, p. 165-174.

Obaidullah, M. M. & Islam, S. S. (2019). Students' Perceptions towards PowerPoint in Language Classrooms: Voices from the Inside. *EBAUB Journal*, vol. 1, p. 115-122.

Oommen, A. (2012). Teaching English as a Global Language in Smart Classrooms with PowerPoint Presentation. *English Language Teaching*, vol. 5, 12/2012, p. 54-61.

Susskind, J. E. (2005). PowerPoint's Power in the Classroom: Enhancing Students' Self-efficacy and Attitudes. *Computers & Education*, vol. 45, 2/2005, p. 203-215.

Szabo, A. & Hastings, N. (2000). Using IT in the Undergraduate Classroom: Should We Replace the Blackboard with PowerPoint? *Computers & Education*, vol. 35, 3/2000, p. 175-187.

Taylor, G. (2012). Making a Place for PowerPoint in EFL Classrooms. *OnCUE Journal*, vol. 6, 1/2012, p. 41-51.

Widi Hadiyanti, K. M. & Widya W. (2018). Analyzing the Values and Effects of PowerPoint Presentations. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, vol. 21, Supplement, June, p. 87-95.

# Ways of Integrating Educational Software in Teaching and Assessing ESP

**Alina Nicoleta Pădurean**[1]

**Abstract:** 21st century students or learners of any kind cannot be compared to any other generation. As psychologists asserted, Generation Z is a fully technological generation that cannot imagine life under all its aspects without technology. The pandemic that we went through has somehow managed to bring us all to the point where the Generation Z learners wanted us to be, i.e., in a quasi-online world where teaching and the teacher is doubled by technology. And somehow, we all have to adjust. ICT in education and the educational software is a benefit to all teachers not only to ESP teachers and practitioners. It opens up new ways of delivering and assessing the material, most of them more challenging, more real-life connected and interactive as the" traditional" teaching approaches. This study presents some apps and software that ESP teachers could use to make teaching more attractive and pleasant to the young generation of ESP learners, and the results of a study conducted on 125 ESP learners in universities and language centres as well as on a number of 15 teachers.

**Keywords**: *ICT, Generation Z, teaching ESP, educational software, research.*

## INTRODUCTION

The technological revolution and the rapidly accelerating use of the internet since 1993 coincide with great challenges that teachers have faced since the beginning of the 21st century. Studies have been conducted to assess the teaching-learning process and propose the best teaching methods that suit the young generation that is equipped with technological skills and has to face the rapid changes of the society. With the financial difficulties, materialistic lives and need to accommodate the demands of the new life, a

1 Assoc. Prof., "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad

generation gap was created between children and their parents on the one hand, and students and their teachers on the other. A drastic need also seems to be necessary in terms of pedagogical and educational methods.

In fact, most of the young students have become less motivated in classical classrooms due to many reasons that will be explored in this paper. Some of the reasons can be traced in the characteristics of generation Z, but the main reason is the great advance of technology and the students' dependence on a virtual world in every single detail of their lives including communication and games and the generation gap with the teachers who feel perplexed in using and merging technology inside the classroom environment.

Recent studies come to prove the necessity of merging technology with the teaching methods as German Lopez debated upon this possibility in "Pokémon Go, explained", i.e., the physical and virtual environment as shown in Pokémon game. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic that drove most schools and universities to adopt virtual learning and the dependence on technology for most of the activities prove the possibility of conducting a virtual teaching-learning process. Yet, the experience reveals the limitations of mere virtual learning. Hence, merging both physical and virtual teaching methods will enhance the usefulness of teaching for the coming generation and motivate them greatly.

Undeniably, a generation gap exists between any two generations. But the gap created between generation X, who are the ancestors of the young generation, and generation Z is very vast. The drastic change of life entails the drastic change in the mentalities and personalities of the young generation. So, the paper digs into the teaching methods, analyses them, assesses the best ones for the young generation and presents new methods and techniques in accordance with the features of generation Z. It is an extension of the previous studies and a basis for the prospective ones. Modern methods are always updated. This creates a need to search for the modern methods associated with each generation continuously. Yet, not all the methods are suitable for the "digital natives", i.e., generation Z. The teacher sometimes has to be creative and merge more than one method in the lesson plan to get the best results.

Every generation can be defined by certain features. A generation is a group of people that share certain characteristics as they are born in approximate times. (Elshami et. al., 2021, p. 540) Definitions of generation Z vary according to the different theories that tackle them. However, there is no standard age limitation that has been defined as some studies include the people who were born after 1995, while others start with people born after 2000. Yet, all agree that generation Z is the young generation. That is to say, generation Z is the generation whom we are currently teaching in schools and universities.

Oxford Learner's gives a concise definition of Generation Z (Gen. Z) as: "the group of people who were born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s, who are regarded as being very familiar with the internet." (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionaries, 2021) Oxford Dictionary defines their ages to be between the late 1990s, which can be any of 1997, 1998, 1999 A. D. and late 2010s, which include 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. However, this highly reliable dictionary marks the most common feature that distinguishes this generation, i.e., the great familiarity with the internet.

Cambridge Business English Dictionary defines the term as: "the group of people who were born in the US and Western Europe after 2001." Hence, Cambridge Dictionary restricts the year and place of birth for this generation to be only for inhabitants of US and Western Europe born after 2001. However, the term becomes widely spread in countries all over the world. The dictionary also identifies this generation with internet use: "Generation Z has been called the 'Silent generation' because of the time they will spend online." (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2011)

Thus, the first feature that can be derived is the overwhelming feature of this generation. It is the addiction to the internet or the fascination with the internet. They substitute the realistic with the virtual in almost every field of their lives. That is why they remain silent most of the time as they depend on their smartphones or laptops to satisfy their needs. Even communication with friends becomes virtual, and most of the time it is restricted to social media. That is why the generation gap becomes vast. Previous generations have social relationships, physical games, and hobbies, whereas generation

Z shows less interest in these activities or hobbies as electronics and technology dominate their lives.

Marked as the "digital natives" or "generation of the internet", generation Z individuals share specific features that are restricted to their age and coincide with the revolution of technology and the speedy developments of the Web sites. The spirit of the digital age has its great impact on shaping the personality of this generation. The demographic and psychological features they develop are much shaped by the specific changes that have been happening since 1993 A.D.

Generation Z has peculiar features which make them appear odd or unmanageable sometimes to their parents and teachers. This restless, impatient generation has its unusual, unprecedented nature, which makes them difficult to be understood by their parents or teachers. The reasons behind these peculiar characteristics that result in the vast generation gap are fathomed by S. Popova (2017). It is useful to introduce these reasons before elaborating on the specific features of generation Z. They are listed as follows:

1. "Difference in the speed of cognition (with the younger generation it considerably exceeds the analogous indicators of their parents)" (Popova, 2017, p. 25). That is to say the young generation shows unparalleled speed in perception and reasoning. This can be ascribed to the skills they get by dealing with smart devices and technology since childhood. Thus, the traditional ways of parents for explanation show little effect with this generation.

2. "Grandparents play a less significant part in the education of their grandchildren" (Popova, 2017, p. 27). Unlike the previous generations, generation Z shows no interest in the traditional pedagogy and moral stories that grandparents used to tell or even with the traditional methods of teaching that their ancestors followed due to the big gap between generations.

3. "Due to the tense economic situation in the country, parents spend more and more time at work, trying to earn more money" (Popova, 2017, p. 31). This is a very important factor that affects the psychological development of generation Z as most of the time they find themselves alone,

helpless, or not supported or protected by their parents. Thus, they are less passionate and more materialistic. “Increased consumerism contributed to the increase in the material needs of the society, which also forces the current generation of mothers and dads to work longer and spend less time with their children” (Popova, 2017, p. 32).

4. “According to statistics, parents of many generation Z youngsters are often divorced, therefore, in most cases, they are busy solving material problems rather than spending time with their children, sharing their life experience and views” (Popova, 2017, p. 34). This leads into a psychological scar that causes psychological problems for many people who are raised by such parents. In fact, the increasing number of divorces in the modern age threatens the stable healthy environment in which children should be brought up.

5. “The coming generation of the future students are better at typing than at writing anything. They are the children who were born in the world of computers, smart phones, fast and cheap Internet, and social networking” (Popova, 2017, p. 36). This phenomenon is clearly noticed with generation Z who relies more on printing, adopting short forms and abbreviations restricted to their relation. So, they tend to have low writing skills.

## EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE FOR GENERATION Z

### Active Learn

'Active Learn' is a highly beneficial platform accessible to both educators and students, granted that schools acquire an annual subscription. Teachers can utilize this platform to facilitate teaching, develop lesson plans, and assess students through unit and full-term examinations. The subscription includes exam papers, marking schemes, and grade boundaries, which simplifies teachers' tasks. As a result, teachers can focus on enhancing lesson delivery and incorporating engaging technology. For students, 'Active Learn' serves as an excellent resource for practicing newly acquired knowledge or revisiting topics they haven't yet covered.

**Linguascope**

'Linguascope' presents an intriguing opportunity to enhance student engagement and effectiveness in the learning process. By incorporating elements of gamification, students are motivated to actively participate and improve their language skills. The school, however, is required to pay an annual subscription fee for access, and students are encouraged to utilize the platform both in the classroom and at home to practice and reinforce their knowledge, regardless of whether they are learning new concepts or reviewing familiar ones. Depending on their proficiency level, students can select the Elementary, Beginner, or Intermediate modules. Once they have made their selection, they can choose a specific language and commence their revision within the chosen module. It should be noted that monitoring students' progress on this platform at home is challenging, unless they complete the accompanying worksheets and produce printed evidence of their work. However, alternatives such as reserving iPads or utilizing a computer room can allow for supervised work sessions to ensure students are actively engaged.

**Kahoot**

'Kahoot' represents a great platform that is really appreciated by all students. It comes with a variety of quizzes, based on vocabulary or grammar, depending on the subject you teach. For example, the quiz below is based on the conditional tense in French. As a teacher, I can check the answers before starting the quiz, in case the quiz is not designed by me. Alternatively, teachers can create their own quizzes and use them in the future. I consider it a great tool for a light lesson or just to praise students. They will need an iPad or a phone to be able to complete the quiz. Each quiz comes with a code that students need to insert into the website in order to play. It can be done together in class or even set as homework and completed at a later time.

**Memrise**

'Memrise' constitutes an effective and interactive app that can be set up by the teacher and helps students memorize a specific vocabulary in different languages, based on specific modules learnt at school. Students are invited by the teacher to create their own accounts. The teacher can set different tasks that the students need to complete by a specific date. The teacher can also monitor the students' progress online. It has been demonstrated that it has a bigger impact than just learning the new content from their books or folder.

**EdPuzzle**

'EdPuzzle' is a highly valuable tool for both students and teachers seeking to develop engaging online videos. It incorporates features such as open-ended or multiple-choice questions, audio notes, audio tracks, and comments directly into videos. One of its key benefits is the ability to utilize videos from popular platforms like YouTube, TED, Vimeo, and more. These videos can be assigned as homework, individual assignments, or as part of larger projects.

Teachers can employ EdPuzzle to assess students' comprehension and progress throughout the semester. Additionally, EdPuzzle facilitates the creation of online classes, allowing teachers to upload their own videos or choose from existing online content while adding interactive elements. To distribute the videos to students, teachers can provide an access code or a link that can be sent to students' email addresses.

One of the remarkable features of EdPuzzle is the fact that teachers can monitor students' engagement with the videos. They can track the number of students who watched the video, how much of the video has been watched by each student, and even review students' performance on specific tasks within the video, identifying correct and incorrect responses.

**MFL passports**

The 'Modern Foreign Language passports' (MFL) represents an interesting idea that is extremely helpful to motivate the pupils and engage them in extra activities. It is created by the teachers in the MFL department and is constantly updated with new, innovative techniques. Then, it is handed out to pupils who start working on it. It contains great challenges and tasks that pupils can work on regularly. At the same time, it also comprises a full list of useful resources and sites that help with completing all listed tasks. As a reward, the pupils receive achievement points, head teacher's awards, stickers or, if they are consistent throughout the year, they can even get Amazon vouchers, chocolate, or tiny prizes, to encourage them to keep going.

Dr. Lathan presents a list of identified teaching methods and techniques (Lathan, 2022). However, not all of them are suitable for our students as most of them are enrolled in pre-school and primary school education. Therefore, we have selected the most appropriate ones:

- Art-based projects
- Audio tutorials
- Bulletin boards
- Collaborative learning spaces
- Debates
- Educational podcasts
- Exhibits and displays
- Flash cards
- Guest speakers
- Hands-on activities
- Research projects
- Spelling bees
- Storytelling
- Student podcasts
- Video creation
- Word walls

Among these apps that are quite trendy in the Romanian academic system lately, I would like to mention the traditional PowerPoint that students love using for presentations, videos, audiobooks. We also use HotPotatoes for vocabulary activities, reading comprehension etc. Book Creator and Canva are also worth mentioning that we have been used to create digital books and audiobooks.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

ESP is regarded as an approach to teaching and learning English as a foreign language (Hutchinson&Waters, 1987, p.23). In contrast to other teaching approaches, the objectives and the content of ESP courses are based on the specific needs of target learners (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015, p. 17-20). ESP gains territory among language courses not only because it is the language of technology and commerce (Hutchinson&Waters, 1987, p. 58) but also because there is a real need to communicate in English in all fields of a person`s professional activity. As Hart (2003, p. 290) considers, language learners should engage in activities fostering real life use of language.

Universities and language centres focus on tailoring their curricula so as to fit the real needs of their learners. In universities, language courses are compulsory to a certain extent and thus, professors should organize their teaching material according to the students` field of study and interests.

We have conducted research among 125 students and learners in language centres and 15 teachers and professors tenured in universities and language centres to identify their opinion on the use of educational software during ESP classes. 20 of the 125 students are enrolled in language courses in two language centres in Arad and 105 students are enrolled in the preschool and primary school education study programme at "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, 1st and 2nd year of study. It should be pointed out that these students attend English classes during the 1st and 2nd year of study with a number of 2 hours weekly. All students are female students.

The professors involved in the research are English teachers at our university and at "Gal Ferenc" University from Bekescsaba, Hungary. During this study we shall present the findings and results of the questionnaire administered to students as the number of teachers involved in the questionnaire is statistically insignificant and we cannot draw appropriate conclusions. Moreover, they are tenured in only two institutions which means that, logistically, all of them use mostly the same devices.

In terms of procedure, we distributed a questionnaire via Google Forms consisting of 10 questions. Some of them were open-ended questions which required the students` opinion whereas others were multiple choice questions.

The questionnaire was distributed after the 1st semester of the academic year 2022-2023. The same questions were used for both students and course participants. The results collected via Google forms and analysed by the research team reveal some important conclusions for the use of apps in ESP teaching. The student participants work with texts, recordings, vocabulary sheets, apps specific to the field of education, namely preschool and primary school education and the ESP course attendees are enrolled in a Business English course. The results of the questionnaire are presented below.

## FINDINGS

We selected some of the most interesting and relevant answers provided by the respondents. As already mentioned, both groups received the same questionnaire, and the answers are slightly different because of the purpose they learn English for. Among other aspects, we wanted to find out what they read in English and where they find the reading material.

The results presented in *Figure 1* show certain differences between the students and the learners in the language centre. The differences are given by their area of expertise, interests and professional status. Students mostly read to accomplish certain academic tasks whereas course attendants read for information, to be up to date with certain facts and to improve their language skills. Both categories read blogs and posts. Students stated that they read scientific articles and books in English to find up-to-date information for their course assignments. In the English ESP class, they read stories and fairy tales in English because they have to perform various tasks using the reading material. The language centre learners read newspaper articles (*The Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*) because there they find out useful information for their field.

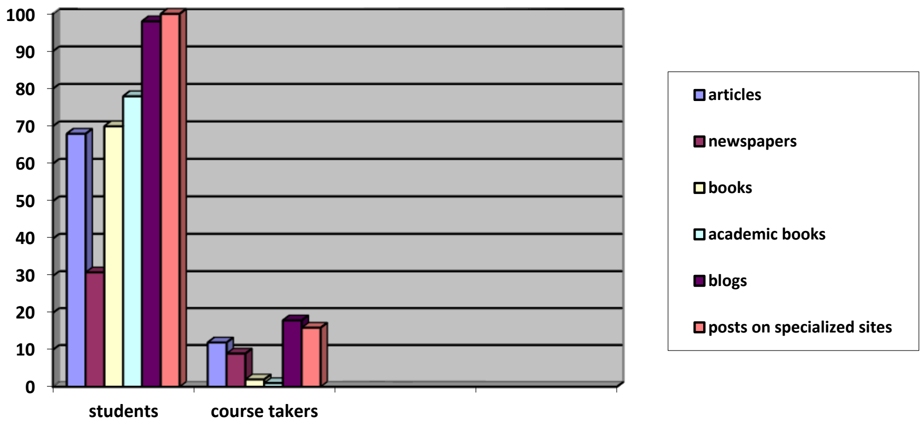


**Figure 1.** Reading preferences

*Source: My personal archive*

Another question, worth taking into consideration, refers to the use of online dictionaries. Their usage would enrich students` vocabulary as well as pronunciation. According to the data presented in *Figure 2*, students use certain online dictionaries and sometimes they access the audio pronunciation of a word they consider relevant for their field of study. 86.5% of respondents state that the use of online dictionaries has enriched their vocabulary and improved their pronunciation. On the other hand, all respondents declared that they haven't opened a printed dictionary in the past 5 years.

As far as the choice for a certain dictionary, 97% of the respondents, claim that their preference for Cambridge is subjective, namely it is the first dictionary that is listed by Google whereas Reverso is appreciated because it offers translation into Romanian. It also gives contextualized examples, making the students`/learners` job easier.

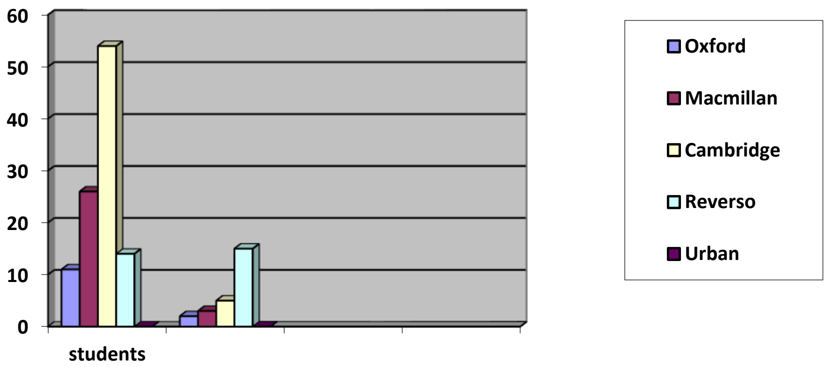


**Figure 2.** Use of online dictionaries

*Source: My personal archive*

Another aspect that we wanted to investigate referred to skill improvement. As we have used various apps and websites during the ESP classes in the first semester, we asked students to rank the skills that were mostly developed through these apps. Differences can be identified between the two groups and the reasons are quite obvious. Pedagogy students had more interactive classes that urged them to communicate, to deliver presentations, to act out, to debate and to create in English whereas Business English students were mostly engaged in writing and reading activities.

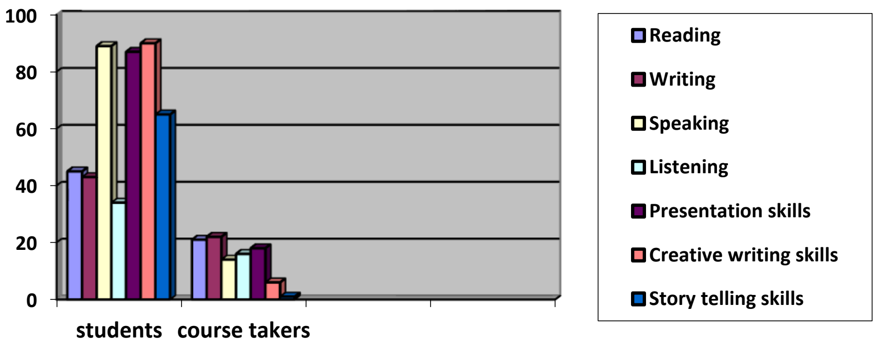


**Figure 3.** Skill development

*Source: My personal archive*

Students` preference for certain apps has also been analysed. Again, the differences are given by the purpose they use the apps for. Pedagogy students prefer apps that encourage creative writing, presentations, vocabulary development, interactive learning whereas BE learners prefer vocabulary development apps, grammar and reading skill development. The fact that some apps are not free of charge is regarded as negative by most students as they would like to try new apps, but the financial situation does not encourage the acquisition of software or apps. To our surprise, a significant percentage (45%) of pedagogy students pay for certain features offered by some apps or websites (Twinkl, Academia.edu, Canva). On the other hand, though having jobs and earning an income, course takers don't pay for any app. They use only the free ones.

The explanation for these preferences resides in the activities and materials their teachers use during the course. Pedagogy students get tasks like creating a fairy tale or story for their pupils, or designing some activities based on stories, poems, rhymes, presentations of a teaching method in English etc., whereas the course takers mostly read texts and perform tasks before, while and after reading it. They also have to translate BE materials or prepare presentations of the company and products they offer.

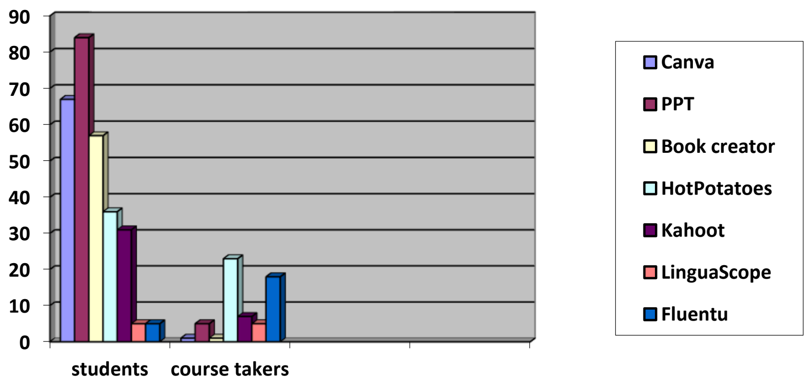


**Figure 4.** Apps' preference

*Source My personal archive*

The last aspect that we refer to in this paper takes into account the activities students and course takers enjoy doing with the apps. Again, there are differences between the groups given by the field of study or of expertize. Pedagogy students prefer creative writing tasks, games, presentations whereas BE course takers would rather do some multiple-choice activities, vocabulary games, reading comprehension tasks. From my experience with ESP students, I`d like to add that ever since our university implemented the language courses applied to the students` field of study, their results have improved. Moreover, teamwork with my colleagues who teach pedagogy is extremely beneficial for the students because they get to use the knowledge they acquire in various subjects during ESP classes as well. For instance, in the first semester, one task students had to complete was creating a story after a given pattern or based on some tips. We used Grammarly and Twinkl for tips and character sheet. Some students even let their imagination do its job and created amazing stories for kids. For this purpose, they used Canva or PPT. Below there is a collage of the 1st year students' activity. The advantages are obvious. Students practice vocabulary, develop creative writing skills, digital or craft skills, all necessary for future educators. Some books were digital, some were handmade, but all students admitted having improved their vocabulary, getting confidence in writing and reading aloud. They even accepted to read their creations to kindergarten and primary school students at an activity which took place during "Școala altfel".


**Image 1.** Students` book creation

*Source: My personal archive*

Another challenging activity was conducted during the second semester when students had to create bilingual audiobooks after a Romanian or international fairy-tale. They used PPT or Book Creator to prepare their audiobooks. After presenting the end results, the students stated that they improved their pronunciation because for certain words they had to look up the pronunciation in the dictionary, they learnt new words and vocabulary appropriate for young learners, they developed their digital skills as well as reading and speaking skills.

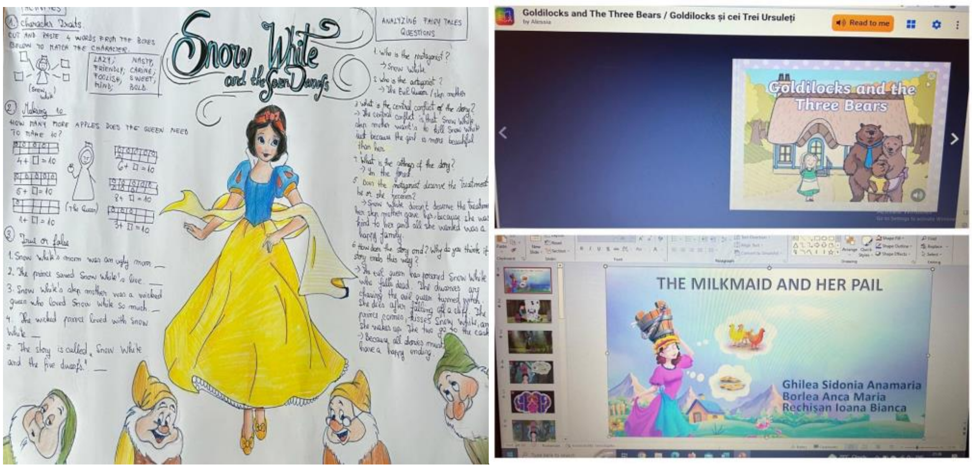


**Image 2.** Students` bilingual audiobook

*Source: My personal archive*

Another activity which is worth mentioning was conducted with 2$^{nd}$ year students who had to present a teaching method in English. The benefits of such presentation are manyfold. They improve speaking skills, presentation skills, public speaking skills, on one hand and on the other, they train vocabulary in the students` field of study. Though some students are familiar with these methods from other subjects, they had to use English during their presentations and the bibliography they read was in English as well.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious that without technology, education can no longer exist. The generations that we teach and that later are going to teach other pupils are digitally native and learn using apps and software. We have to face the fact that chalk and paper are no longer part of our class. They have been replaced by tablets, smartphones, and apps. And we have to admit that the classes are more interactive, more challenging and attractive with the help of apps. The use of apps in ESP classes has certain benefits that we have observed while analyzing the results of our research.

First of all, the use of multimedia elements such as videos, audio clips and interactive quizzes makes the learning process more enjoyable and motivating for ESP students. Secondly, educational apps designed for ESP classes often incorporate real-life scenarios and authentic language use. This exposure to authentic content helps students develop their language skills in specific professional contexts, such as education, business, medicine, engineering etc. By practicing with realistic materials, students can improve their language proficiency in relevant areas. Thirdly, educational apps offer flexibility and convenience, allowing students to access learning materials and resources anytime, anywhere.

This flexibility can be particularly beneficial for ESP learners who may have busy schedules or limited access to traditional classroom settings. With apps, students can learn at their own pace and review materials as needed. Educational apps often provide instant feedback on students' performance, allowing them to identify and correct errors immediately. This immediate feedback fosters self-assessment and self-correction skills, enabling students to become more independent learners. Students can practice and refine their language skills without having to rely solely on a teacher's feedback. And to conclude with, the use of educational apps in ESP classes allows students to develop technological competence, a skill increasingly relevant in today's digital world. Engaging with educational apps not only improves language proficiency but also equips students with digital literacy and proficiency, enhancing their employability in the modern job market.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Combley. R. (ed.). (2011). *Cambridge Business English Dictionary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elshami W., Saravanan C., Taha MH., Abdalla ME., Abuzaid M., Al Kawas S. (2021). Bridging the Gap in Online Learning Anxiety Among Different Generations. *Health Professions Education*. Nov; 21(4):539-548. Retrieved May 15, 2023 at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8631220/

Hart, I. (2003). The Outsider`s Gaze: A Learner-centred Approach to Language – Teaching Materials. *Educational Media International,* 40, p. 287-292.

Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-centred Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lathan, J. (2022). The Complete List of Teaching Methods [University of San Diego Online].

Lea, D., Bradbery, J. (ed.). (2021). *Oxford Advanced Learner`s Dictionary* (tenth edition). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Lesiak-Bielawska, E.D. (2015). Technology in English for specific purposes pedagogy. *English for Specific Purposes World,* 48(16), p. 1-23. Retrieved May 20, 2023 at file:///C:/Users/alina/Downloads/technology-in-esp-pedagogy.pdf

Popova, S. (2017). Teaching Generation Z: Methodological problems and their possible solutions. *Training Language and Culture*, vol. 1, (4), Dec. 2017, p. 25-38.

# Lo lúdico: la importancia en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de ELE

**ADA BABOI**[1][2]

**Resumen:** El presente artículo destaca la relevancia del juego en la educación, haciendo hincapié en la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera. Jugar y aprender al mismo tiempo proporcionan un ámbito dinámico y productivo, ya que el discente se siente más abierto al aprendizaje de manera agradable y efectiva. La valoración del juego como recurso didáctico y sus múltiples ventajas subrayan también su carácter adaptativo, ya que puede emplearse para la práctica de cada destreza. La motivación del alumno y los medios con los que los docentes cuentan hacen que la clase se convierta en un ambiente propicio para la adquisición del español. Este trabajo se propone, además de enfatizar el papel del juego en la enseñanza de la lengua, presentar algunos tipos de herramientas estratégicas para desarrollar el proceso de aprendizaje. La gamificación, tanto como el *game-based learning* (Aprendizaje basado en juegos - ABJ) utilizan los principios de los juegos para aumentar el compromiso de los estudiantes, la motivación y mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Para el diseño de una experiencia gamificada en contextos de aprendizaje, se requieren algunos elementos fundamentales: proporcionar una experiencia entretenida que pueda aumentar la motivación de los usuarios, una narrativa que dé sentido al contenido que se está trabajando, la activación de las emociones de los participantes y asegurarse de que los participantes estén al tanto de su progreso y, que tenga en cuenta la diversidad de personas que participarán en la experiencia.

**Palabras clave***: motivación, juegos, enseñanza-aprendizaje, gamificación, game-based learning (ABJ).*

[1] Estudiante de doctorado/ Universidad Babeș-Bolyai/ Facultad de Ciencias Políticas, Administrativas y de la Comunicación/Escuela de Doctorado en Administración y Políticas Públicas.

[2] Profesor asociado/ Universidad Babeș-Bolyai/ Facultad de Letras/Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras Especializadas.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Desde los más remotos tiempos, el hecho de jugar, los juegos y la práctica de los juegos han estado tradicionalmente ligados a la enseñanza. En la actualidad, se presentan como una herramienta de innovación estratégica para mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje. Varias perspectivas teóricas y prácticas que plantean este tema han surgido en las últimas décadas. Se trata de la gamificación (Deterding et al., 2011; Kapp, 2012), los juegos generalizados (Montola et al., 2009), los juegos serios (*serious games*) (Ritterfeld et al., 2009) o *Game-Based Learning* (Aprendizaje basado en juegos - ABJ) (Tobias, Fletcher & Wind, 2014). Aunque ofrecen diferentes enfoques, su punto común es el uso de los principios de los juegos o incluso los propios juegos como herramientas para mejorar el aprendizaje y aumentar la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes. Todas estas metodologías sitúan a los estudiantes en el centro del proceso de aprendizaje. Además de mejorar la motivación, los juegos pretenden apoyar técnicas participativas, experimentales y cooperativas que fomenten habilidades como el pensamiento crítico, la creatividad, la colaboración o la comunicación.

## LA SITUACIÓN DEL JUEGO

La literatura sobre el juego tiene mucho que ofrecer a la educación superior cuando se trata de proporcionar a los estudiantes experiencias de aprendizaje atractivas y profundas. Sin embargo, James & Nerantzi (2019, p. 18) sostienen que la educación terciaria ha separado el aprendizaje del juego y que la educación ha evolucionado para ser vista como un esfuerzo serio. Los adultos maduros reciben el mensaje de que jugar es poco productivo y profesional, al mismo tiempo (Brown, 2009, p. 27) y en algún momento se les hace sentir culpables por jugar. Muchos académicos han defendido y respaldado el juego en la vida adulta en respuesta a esta exclusión del juego de la educación superior (Brown, 2009; James & Nerantzi, 2019; Sicart, 2014; Swank, 2012). Algunos académicos han discutido explícitamente la falta de inclusión del juego en la educación superior (James & Nerantzi, 2019; Robinson, 2011). Según Robinson (Robinson, 2011, p. 32), una de las mayores tragedias de la educación es la ausencia del juego en el aprendizaje terciario.

Si bien los límites entre los conceptos son en muchos casos difusos, el debate terminológico se sitúa en los ejes pedagógico/lúdico y los juegos creados/la experiencia de juego. Por ejemplo, mientras que la gamificación se considera el diseño de actividades que utilizan "mecánica basada en juegos, estética y pensamiento de juego para involucrar a las personas, motivar la acción, promover el aprendizaje y resolver problemas" (Kapp, 2012, p. 89) y están más preocupados por la experiencia global de los participantes que por el uso de un juego en particular (Cornellà & Estebanell, 2017, p. 11) los *serious games* (juegos serios) ponen el énfasis en los objetivos de aprendizaje más que en la estructura lúdica. Según la ejemplificación de Wu & Lee:

> Los juegos sobre el cambio climático se consideran *serious games* que están diseñados para tener objetivos subyacentes más allá del mero entretenimiento, como los objetivos educativos. Las características del juego, como los objetivos, las reglas o el uso de la fantasía, no solo promueven la participación del jugador, sino que también influyen en el aprendizaje. (Wu & Lee, 2015, p. 414)

Dentro de este debate, algunos autores ven usos contradictorios de los juegos en la educación, pues serían lo contrario de serios (Wechselberger, 2013, p. 3). Por otro lado, Rubio (Rubio, 2013, p. 58) afirma que "los juegos educativos no siempre logran sus objetivos porque muchas veces descuidan integrar los aspectos más lúdicos del diseño del juego y se enfocan en la herramienta pedagógica". Muchos expertos ven el elemento del juego como central para la efectividad del aprendizaje con juegos (Gee, 2008, p. 260). En consecuencia, el diseño efectivo de las características del juego (interacción, toma de decisiones, diversión, desafío, competencia, etc.) puede despertar un mayor apego en los participantes, contribuyendo de esta manera al proceso de aprendizaje.

Dentro de todas estas tendencias, el *Game-Based Learning* (GBL/-*Aprendizaje basado en juegos-ABJ)* es una metodología basada en la creación de juegos y simulaciones o en la utilización de los existentes, preferiblemente digitales, como recursos didácticos en el aula. Cercana a la técnica de los juegos serios, su principal diferencia sería el uso de características lúdicas vistas en juegos no educativos para producir y mejorar la experiencia de aprendizaje del usuario. El conocimiento y la cultura del juego están aumentando en popularidad en cada nueva generación de estudiantes, lo cual sería un aspecto importante de tomar en cuenta. Esto significa trabajar con herramientas que son familiares para muchos estudiantes. Como Hamari et al. (2016, p. 176) afirman:

> Los juegos serios presentan la oportunidad de convertirse en permanentes, cuando la familiaridad con las ideas, las prácticas y los procesos están tan arraigados que se convierten en una segunda naturaleza. (Hamari et al. 2016, p. 176)

Sin embargo, es por esta razón que los componentes del conocimiento tácito (ideas, prácticas y procesos) son difíciles de medir.

Estos instrumentos de aprendizaje se encuentran en todos los niveles de educación, desde la primaria y secundaria hasta en la educación superior. También se utilizan de múltiples maneras en la educación superior. Aunque la mayoría de las experiencias de gamificación y GBL se basan en recursos digitales y videojuegos (de Freitas, 2006, p. 15; Crocco, Offenholley & Hernández 2016, p. 413), el nuevo auge que caracteriza a los juegos de mesa y sus diversas opciones abren nuevas posibilidades al uso de los recursos físicos en las aulas de educación superior. En este sentido, los nuevos juegos de mesa comerciales son un recurso potencialmente valioso y una opción válida para las actividades de enseñanza y aprendizaje en la educación superior.

## EL JUEGO EDUCATIVO: DEFINICIÓN Y RECORRIDO HISTÓRICO

"Los juegos son tan viejos como el hombre, ya que jugar ha sido una técnica de aprendizaje habitual a través de los tiempos" (Labrador & Morote, 2008, p. 71). Los animales lo han utilizado antes de que el hombre lo hiciera, para aprender habilidades que les serían útiles durante toda su vida. De esta manera, el juego se convierte en una actividad necesaria y eficaz para el aprendizaje, simulando de manera amena comportamientos como la persecución, la lucha y la caza para perfeccionarlos. Se podría decir que la relación entre el juego y el aprendizaje aparece con naturalidad. Ambos términos se refieren a superar desafíos, descubrir una solución, integrarse, deducir, inventar, adivinar y ganar con el fin de pasarlo bien, avanzar y mejorar.

Chamorro y Prats (Chamorro y Prats, 1994, p. 238) nos ofrecen unas ideas sobre cómo usar los juegos en la clase de ELE que nos ayudan a reflexionar. Según la definición que la Real Academia Española proporciona en cuanto al término *"jugar"*[3], es evidente la distinción entre el juego (primera entrada del diccionario) y el juego que se emplea en la enseñanza (tercera entrada del mismo verbo).

| | |
|---|---|
| Definición del verbo ***jugar***, *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* | 1. intr. Hacer algo con alegría con el fin de entretenerse, divertirse o desarrollar determinadas capacidades.[4] |
| | 2. intr. Entretenerse, divertirse tomando parte en uno de los juegos sometidos a reglas, medie o no en el interés.[5] |

Es decir, el objetivo del juego es que una persona se divierta y desarrolle habilidades a través de la realización de una serie de acciones que están incluidas en el juego. Además, la ejecución de estas acciones está relacionada con ciertas regulaciones que restringen la libertad del jugador. Y cuando hay varios jugadores que compiten, el elemento esencial del juego se inclina inmediatamente hacia lo que llamamos "competición". Por lo tanto, la finalidad del juego hoy no se limita únicamente a la diversión, sino también a un resultado, positivo o negativo. Este tipo de juegos no estimulan la satisfacción personal porque son parte de un proceso más complejo, desafiante y donde la competitividad no falta. La RAE define el nombre "juego"[6] como "ejercicio recreativo o de competición sometido a reglas, y en el cual se gana o se pierde."

[3] Hay 23 entradas del término *jugar,* de las cuales hemos escogido la primera y la tercera.

[4] Primera entrada del verbo *jugar* existente en el *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* – https://dle.rae.es/jugar – fecha de la consulta: 30 de mayo de 2023.

[5] Tercera entrada del verbo *jugar* existente en el *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* – https://dle.rae.es/jugar – fecha de la consulta: 30 de mayo de 2023.

[6] Hemos considerado la segunda entrada del nombre *juego* del *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* – https://dle.rae.es/juego?=form – fecha de la consulta: 27 de mayo de 2023.

La competitividad no debe ser una característica esencial de lo que entendemos por juego, sino que debe ser „toda actividad dirigida a alcanzar un propósito, con unos límites definidos que constituyen sus reglas y que incorpora un elemento de diversión" (Chamorro & Prats, 1994, p. 236). El enfoque comunicativo establece que los estudiantes son los protagonistas de la clase y los docentes actúan como mediadores. Sin embargo, es importante recordar que el objetivo principal de una clase es que los estudiantes aprendan y pongan en práctica las pautas a través de diversas tareas y/o actividades. Por lo tanto, el carácter competitivo del juego debe posponerse. Podemos utilizar la competitividad para lograr ese objetivo, pero no siempre es necesario.

Los juegos en la clase de ELE cuentan con dos requisitos fundamentales a la hora de ponerlos en práctica: los estudiantes y los docentes. Chamorro y Prats (Chamorro y Prats, 1994, p. 235) hablan de la creación de un pacto entre el profesor y los estudiantes, con reglas previamente establecidas y que en ocasiones se pueden modificar en función de las necesidades e intereses específicos de los estudiantes. En los cursos de lengua extranjera, tanto el profesor como los estudiantes deben tener conocimiento de sus obligaciones en el aula (las reglas a seguir), acuerdos tácitos y explícitos entre todos los involucrados. Los objetivos de enseñanza-aprendizaje son creados (por el profesor) con el fin de acomodar las necesidades de los estudiantes. La misma idea de que el profesor debe considerar el nivel de conocimientos de los alumnos, la edad, sus intereses y necesidades y el contexto es compartida por Labrador y Morote (Labrador y Morote, 2008, p. 80).

Estos autores (Labrador y Morote) (Labrador y Morote, 2008, p. 80) también resaltan que el profesor debe esforzarse para que los estudiantes comprendan la utilidad práctica del juego y lo utilicen para mejorar sus habilidades de comunicación. Chamorro y Prats (Chamorro y Prats, 1994, p. 236) afirman que "es efectivo hacer conscientes y partícipes a los alumnos de su proceso de aprendizaje", con el objetivo de fomentar su aceptación de los juegos y concientizarlos sobre su función y las oportunidades que ofrecen. Por otro lado, Labrador y Morote (Labrador y Morote, 2008, p. 80) subrayan que es crucial que los alumnos comprendan la utilidad práctica de la actividad lúdica en situaciones de comunicación formal, para que el aprendizaje sea valioso y se evite el sentimiento de pérdida de tiempo que a veces ocurre.

El objetivo de cualquier unidad didáctica, al igual que el de los juegos competitivos, es que los estudiantes adquieran conocimientos sobre un tema específico mediante el uso de los recursos lingüísticos que se encuentran en los manuales, y alcanzar un fin a través de diferentes métodos. Por lo tanto, se puede presentar el valor de los juegos en este contexto porque, al ser considerados como un recurso didáctico que combina elementos lúdicos y competitivos al mismo tiempo, tendrán una mayor eficacia.

Diversos autores establecen una categorización de los juegos teniendo en cuenta varios criterios como: competencia lingüística de los estudiantes, objetivo del aprendizaje, el estímulo utilizado (textos, imágenes, frases, mímica, etc.), destrezas, técnica utilizada, vocabulario específico, etc. A partir de los años setenta, con el enfoque comunicativo, se habla de la importancia que tiene en el aprendizaje que el estudiante se divierta.

De esta forma, para definir el juego, es necesario considerar varios puntos de vista y elementos involucrados en los objetivos. Aunque para algunos autores, el juego presenta tantas definiciones y elementos que resulta difícil definirlo (Chapela, 2002, p. 24) para otros, su único propósito es simplemente jugar (Decroly y Monchamp, 1986, p. 57). Por otro lado, otros autores creen que el juego está intrínsecamente relacionado con el trabajo y lo ven como una preparación para las actividades y experiencias a las que una persona se enfrentará en el futuro (Hughes, 2006, p. 35). Además de lo mencionado, es posible considerar la conexión entre el juego y una variedad de concepciones culturales (Huizinga en Corrales, 2014, p. 9).

Existe una variedad de teorías que intentan ofrecer varias perspectivas sobre la relación entre el juego y el aprendizaje. En su teoría metafísica, Platón relacionó el juego con el placer de obtener conocimiento, a través de su conexión con el arte (García, 2005, p. 67).

Sin embargo, Spencer (en García, 2005, p. 58) sostiene que el juego puede liberar la energía excesiva de una persona y ayudar a las personas a adaptarse a su entorno. En cambio, Patrick (en Hughes, 2006, p. 42) sostiene que el juego se puede usar para recargar la energía cuando las personas están cansadas o relajadas.

En el siglo XX, el historiador y antropólogo holandés Huizinga aborda este mismo concepto, le agrega una dimensión más metódica y enfatiza el papel que debe desempeñar el jugador (Huizinga en Corrales, 2014, p. 10):

> "Una acción o una actividad involuntaria que debe cumplirse en ciertos límites de tiempo y espacio, que sigue una regla consentida libremente, provista de un inicio y un final, acompañada de un sentimiento de tensión y de alegría de una conciencia de ser "de otra manera" que en "la vida real". (Huizinga, 1998, pp. 57-58)

## ALGUNAS VENTAJAS DE LOS JUEGOS EN CLASE

Más allá de la complejidad terminológica del campo o del formato específico de los juegos, los estudios sugieren que los juegos pueden producir algunas ventajas en la educación como su potencial de motivación, la posibilidad de generar un aprendizaje activo, su impacto en las habilidades personales y emocionales (superación de desafíos, confianza en uno mismo...) que favorecen la interacción y la sociabilidad y permiten el aprendizaje por competencias (Romero y Gebera, 2015, p. 2) así como la capacidad de ofrecer una visión general de temas complejos. Pero, sobre todo, estos juegos están diseñados para centrar a los jugadores en el proceso de aprendizaje (Garris, Ahlers & Driskell, 2002, p. 444).

Además, los juegos ayudan a motivar a los alumnos y a involucrarlos en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje al proporcionarles las herramientas necesarias para ponerlos en el centro de la acción docente y convertirlos en protagonistas de su aprendizaje (Cornellà & Estebanell, 2017, p. 12).

Asimismo, "desarrollar la expresión y comprensión oral y escrita", presentar y practicar vocabulario, estimular el juego como medio de estímulo para explicar exponentes lingüísticos, debe ser una parte importante del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en las clases de ELE. El *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza,* *evaluación* (MCER)[7] ya menciona el papel del componente lúdico en el desarrollo y aprendizaje de las lenguas.

El término „gamificación" se usa con frecuencia para referirse a toda experiencia relacionada con los juegos. Sin embargo, existen muchas formas diferentes de organizar, definir y diferenciar cómo el juego puede ser utilizado desde una perspectiva educativa.

Es importante subrayar que en el presente artículo utilizaremos el término *gamificación* en lugar de *ludificación*, ya que es la expresión que más se asemeja al término original anglosajón y que también se utiliza en otras lenguas. Aunque en este momento solamente el término *ludificación* se encuentra en el *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, y suele emplearse de manera sinonímica, hemos optado por utilizar la *gamificación* por sus características más universales.

La utilización de juegos con propósitos educativos se diferencia entre la aplicación esporádica de un tipo de juego y la implementación de una propuesta más sofisticada que modifique la metodología con el fin de mejorar una estrategia o programación didáctica particular. Por lo tanto, podemos distinguir entre el *Game-based learning* (GBL) / *Aprendizaje Basado en Juegos* (ABJ) y la *Gamification*, también conocida como *gamificación* o *ludificación*.

Las dos opciones pueden considerarse estrategias activas que utilizan el potencial del juego para fomentar el aprendizaje. Sin embargo, las dos opciones abordan los elementos de juego de manera muy diferente. En los siguientes apartados haremos una comparación en cuanto a estas estrategias.

## EL *GAME-BASED LEARNING* (GBL) – CARACTERÍSTICAS GENERALES

El objetivo final del aprendizaje basado en juegos (GBL) es aprender utilizando juegos como herramientas para aprender o trabajar conceptos.

[7] MCER- *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia* presenta en el capítulo 4 - *El uso de la lengua y el usuario o alumno*, el subcapítulo 4.3: *Tareas y propósitos comunicativos*, una serie de ejemplos en cuanto a los usos de la lengua con aspecto lúdico, que se podrían utilizar en la clase de ELE. - https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco/cap_04.htm, fecha de la consulta: 25 de mayo de 2023.

Durante el transcurso del juego o al concluir el mismo, el educador tiene la oportunidad de reflexionar acerca de los acontecimientos dentro del juego y los contenidos que se pretenden abordar. Esto con el fin de proporcionar una retroalimentación apropiada, evaluar el logro de los objetivos establecidos y perfeccionar las estrategias utilizadas. Como ejemplo, el *Escape Room* es un *serious game,* con sus particularidades, es decir, un tipo de juego importante dentro de esta estrategia.

La manera de implementación del GBL no tiene límites, lo que dificulta su sistematización. No se puede clasificar de acuerdo con una categoría específica porque dependerá siempre de los contenidos que se quieran trabajar y de cómo el personal docente pueda relacionarlos con el juego.

El propósito fundamental de todos los juegos es el entretenimiento. Ya sean tradicionales o contemporáneos, simples o complejos, todos persiguen proporcionar un momento ameno considerando diversos elementos como la competencia, la destreza, el azar, la estrategia, entre otros. Por eso, cualquier tipo de juego es útil si alcanza los objetivos propuestos: juegos de mesa, juegos de naipes, juegos de rol, juegos tradicionales, videojuegos, etc.

Además de su carácter de utilidad tan extensa, Cornellà & Estebanell (Cornellà & Estebanell, 2017, p. 14) añaden otras dos características del GBL. Ya que uno de los objetivos del juego es divertir, cualquier tipo de juego existente en el mercado podría ser utilizado. De esta forma, se podrían utilizar juegos comerciales, como también juegos creados para una determinada ocasión. Las autoras subrayan que la naturaleza educativa del juego no es imprescindible, aunque los juegos hayan sido concebidos para ámbitos académicos (Cornellà & Estebanell, 2017, p. 14).

Como hemos mencionado antes, un lugar particular dentro de este procedimiento lo ocupan los *serious games*. El autor de este sintagma (*serious games*), que no era muy común en su momento, Clark Abt habla en el libro homónimo *Serious Games* sobre cómo los juegos se pueden usar para educar, informar y divertir (Clark Abt, 1974, p. 11). Según el autor, estos juegos tienen una finalidad que va más allá del simple entretenimiento.

Actualmente, los juegos serios son experiencias que educan a las personas en el dominio de un contenido específico utilizando la mecánica del juego y el pensamiento del juego. Además de utilizar el pensamiento basado en el juego, sus técnicas se emplean con los propósitos de resolver problemas y motivar el aprendizaje (Kapp, 2012, p. 78). De esta manera, se pueden encontrar juegos serios para aprender a "controlar situaciones de liderazgo, para aprender técnicas de venta y otros temas comerciales o relacionados con la asistencia sanitaria" (Cornellà, Estebanell y Brusi, 2020, p. 16), como también con la "industria y producción, el calentamiento global", etc.

Para ejemplificar, hemos pensado en el *Escape Room*, que es una actividad de escapismo que se juega en equipo, y que supone intentar salir de una habitación dentro de un cierto tiempo definido, resolviendo enigmas y puzles. Las decisiones que los jugadores toman hacen que se llegue al objetivo final o no – salir de la habitación. De esta forma, el *Escape Room* se utiliza cada vez más como juego de aprendizaje.

En su blog, Sylvia Duckworth (Sylvia Duckworth, 2016)[8] subraya algunas ventajas para utilizar este tipo de juegos, además de resultar divertidos para todos los miembros implicados: tienen la capacidad de adaptarse a cualquier contenido curricular, fomentan el trabajo colaborativo igual que la capacidad de resolver problemas, desarrollan habilidades de comunicación y el pensamiento crítico. Dado que esta actividad se fundamenta en la investigación, también fomenta el pensamiento deductivo y la habilidad para desempeñarse bajo presión. De igual manera, constituye un medio para continuar desafiando a los participantes a perseverar, ya que se centra en los alumnos.

## GAMIFICACIÓN

El término le pertenece a Nick Pelling que incorporaba ideas de juego en las interfaces de usuario de las aplicaciones que desarrollaba para hacer las transacciones electrónicas más rápidas y agradables (Christians, 2011, p. 16). Pero, la definición que acoge un sentido más actual sería la de Sebastian Deterding, ya que "la gamificación es el uso de elementos del diseño de

[8] *Sylvia Duckworth, Shake Things up with Breakout Edu*, https://insideeducationoutsidethebox.wordpress.com/2016/07/17/shake-things-up-with-breakout-edu/, fecha de la consulta: 26 de mayo de 2023.

juegos en contextos que no están relacionados con el juego” (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, y Nacke, 2011, p. 10).

Para Oriol Ripoll (2014), citado por Cornellà, Estebanell y Brusi (Cornellà, Estebanell y Brusi, 2020, p. 12), “el objetivo principal, cuando se utiliza la gamificación, es que el usuario final tenga la sensación de estar viviendo una experiencia de juego”.

La gamificación consiste en crear un ámbito en el cual los jugadores se transformen en actores principales y donde evolucionen hacia el objetivo final. El juego persiste en el tiempo y es a largo plazo. Dicho de otra forma, la gamificación apoya la idea de creación de experiencias de aprendizaje, donde la tarea es la creación de propuestas didácticas por parte del docente para que los estudiantes aprendan. El sustrato es que se puedan vivir como un juego por parte de los aprendices, aprovechando la idea de utilizar elementos de juego a la hora de diseñarlas.

Para poder gamificar los entornos académicos, se necesitan algunas características para la creación de propuestas didácticas: deben ser divertidas, que aumenten la motivación, que cuenten con una narrativa a explorar, que se basen en la idea de progreso, que inciten emociones, que admitan la diversidad de los participantes, o el posible uso de la tecnología.

Para diseñar propuestas didácticas que capten a la audiencia y los jugadores, es importante subrayar el carácter divertido de las actividades. Siempre y cuando se logren integrar elementos de diversión de forma equilibrada, se garantiza el éxito de los juegos creados. Unas ideas que encajen con esta estrategia son ser un héroe, explorar el mundo, encontrar tesoros, competir, dominar habilidades, reírse, etc.

La teoría de la autodeterminación (Ryan y Deci, 2000, p. 60) tiene en su centro la motivación. Aunque los humanos son naturalmente proactivos y muestran un fuerte deseo de desarrollo interno, es necesario que los factores externos fomenten esta inclinación innata. Si esto no sucede, los motivadores internos se ven afectados. Según los autores Ryan y Deci (2000), estas necesidades básicas son la autonomía, competencia y relacionamiento social. La relación se establece entre varias personas y se puede hacer dentro de un videojuego o dentro de un juego por internet. La competencia busca controlar el resultado y el dominio de una experiencia. La autonomía se explica a través del control que uno quiere tener sobre su entorno para determinar el resultado final.

La motivación intrínseca se activará cada vez que las tareas involucren estas necesidades humanas. De esta forma, las personas harán las tareas por su propia cuenta y se „despertará" la motivación intrínseca en lugar de la extrínseca.

Otra característica muy importante es la narrativa que se tiene que desarrollar para dar continuidad y sentido a los contenidos. La gamificación se basa en una historia relatada para llevar a cabo unas acciones y llegar al propósito final, donde a través de pautas, el héroe pasa del mundo real al universo del juego.

Las emociones forman parte inherente del juego y representan uno de los objetivos buscados mediante estas estrategias. La capacidad de evocar emociones positivas durante la experiencia lúdica no solo contribuye a hacerla más atractiva, sino que también facilita el establecimiento de conexiones más efectivas con los demás.

La finalidad de la gamificación es el progreso que los alumnos experimentan y que resienten en el momento de superar retos o la consecución de nuevos niveles del juego. Este progreso puede ser observado y evaluado por el docente mismo, como también por el propio alumno que de esta forma se vuelve consciente de su trayectoria ascendente.

El uso de la tecnología puede ser un incentivo a la hora de aumentar la motivación de los alumnos, pero no es imprescindible en el proceso de la gamificación. Sin embargo, al utilizar aplicaciones para posibilitar la gamificación puede ser recreativo y útil. Para ejemplificar, ¡Mentimeter o Kahoot! son recursos donde los alumnos reciben un cuestionario y puntuaciones en función de la rapidez de la respuesta y también el grado de acierto.

Ya que los juegos son diferentes, también los jugadores son diferentes y no tienen los mismos intereses. La dinámica que se establece en cuanto al juego es determinada por los conocimientos, habilidades de los jugadores que de este modo crean la diversidad.

La variedad de los recursos, la facilidad de conectarse al internet, junto con las redes sociales, las aplicaciones móviles, la realidad aumentada que ofrece experiencias interactivas en dispositivos digitales, hacen que el mundo de la gamificación se convierta en una herramienta llena de interés tanto para los docentes como para los alumnos.

## CONCLUSIONES

El juego, por su carácter universal, ha sido utilizado en todas las etapas del aprendizaje, con énfasis en entornos educativos primarios. Sin embargo, con el auge de las nuevas herramientas y tecnologías, se han creado nuevas estrategias para el uso del juego como método de enseñanza. El *game-based learning* (GBL) y la *gamificación* son unos ejemplos de cómo se podrían desarrollar propuestas didácticas utilizando tanto los medios digitales, como cualquier juego tradicional. Ambas metodologías sorprenden y contrastan con las metodologías clásicas, por su carácter motivador, ameno, que activa al estudiante en el plano del aprendizaje, aumentando el rendimiento académico.

Indudablemente, la complejidad requerida en la elaboración de las tareas representa uno de los principales desafíos al emplear este enfoque metodológico. Su propósito debe centrarse en el avance de los estudiantes, el fortalecimiento de sus competencias y la mejora de la calidad de la propuesta pedagógica.

Finalmente, es importante subrayar que al diseñar una experiencia gamificada para un contexto de aprendizaje, se requieren algunos elementos fundamentales: proporcionar una experiencia entretenida que pueda aumentar la motivación de los usuarios, que cuente con una narrativa que dé sentido al contenido que se está trabajando, para estimular las emociones de los participantes, asegurarse de que los participantes estén al tanto de su progreso y, finalmente, que tenga en cuenta la variedad de personas que participarán en la experiencia.

## BIBLIOGRAFÍA


Abt, C. (1970). *Serious Games*. New York: Viking Press.

Arias Corrales, I. (2014). "El concepto de juego en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras". *Revista De Lenguas Modernas*, (20). Recuperado de: https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rlm/article/view/14982, el 16 de abril de 2023.

Brown, S. (2009). *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul.* New York: Avery.

Chapela, L.M. (2002). *El juego en la escuela*. México: Paidós.

Decroly, O. & Monchamp, E. (1986). *El juego educativo: iniciación a la actividad intelectual y motriz* (2ª ed.). Madrid: Morata.

Chamorro Guerrero, M. & Prats Fonts, N. (1994). "La aplicación de los juegos a la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera", en S. Montesa Peydró y A. Garrido (Eds): *Actas del II Congreso Nacional de ASELE. Español como lengua extranjera: didáctica e investigación,* Málaga: Universidad, pp. 235-246. Recuperado de: https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/asele/pdf/02/02_0233.pdf, el 4 de mayo de 2023.

Christians, Gerald, "The Origins and Future of Gamification" (2018). *Senior Theses*. Recuperado de: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent. cgi?article=1255&context=senior_theses, el 16 de abril de 2023.

Cornellà, P. & Estebanell, M. (2017). "GaMoodlification. Moodle al servicio de la gamificación del aprendizaje". Proceedings from *CIVE'17: V Congreso Internacional de Videojuegos y Educación.* Recuperado de: http://uajournals.com/ojs/index.php/campusvirtuales/article/view/367/266#, el 22 de abril de 2023.

Cornella, P., Estebanel, M., & Brusi, D. (2020). „Gamificación y aprendizaje basado en juegos. Consideraciones generales y algunos ejemplos para la enseñanza de la geología". *Enseñanza de las ciencias de la tierra,* 5-19. Recuperado de: https://raco.cat/index.php/ECT/article/view/372920/466561, el 23 de abril de 2023.

Crocco, F., Offenholley, K. & Hernández, C. (2016). „A Proof-of-Concept Study of Game-Based Learning in Higher Education". *Simulation & Gaming* 47(4), 403-422. Recuperado de: https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878116632484, el 23 de abril de 2023.

Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). *"From game design elements to gamefulness: defining gamification"*. Proceedings from 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: *Envisioning future media environments*, 9-15, Recuperado de: https://doi.org/10.1145/2181037.2181040, el 24 de abril de 2023.

Freitas, S. (2006). *Learning in Immersive worlds. A review of game-based learning*, *JISC e-Learning Programme*. Recuperado de: http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/35774/1/gamingreport_v3.pdf, el 23 de abril de 2023.

García, P. (2005). *Fundamentos teóricos del juego*. España: Wanceulen.

Garris, R., Ahlers, R., & Driskell, J. E. (2002). "Games, motivation, and learning: A research and practice model". *Simulation & gaming*, 33(4), pp. 441-467. Recuperado de https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878102238607, el 24 de abril de 2023.

Gee, J. P. (2008). "Video Games and Embodiment". *Games and Culture*, *3*(3–4), pp. 253–263. Recuperado de https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412008317309, el 24 de abril de 2023.

Hamari, J., Shernoff, D., Rowe, E., Coller, B., Asbell-Clarke, J. & Edwards, T. (2016). "Challenging games help students learn: An empirical study on engagement, flow and immersion in game-based learning". *Computers in Human Behavior*. Recuperado de: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.045, el 25 de abril de 2023.

Hughes, F.P. (2006). *El juego: su importancia en el desarrollo psicológico del niño y el adolescente.* México: Trillas.

Hughes, F.P. (2006). El juego: su importancia en el desarrollo psicológico del niño y el adolescente. México: Trillas.

James, A., & Nerantzi, C. (2019). *The Power of Play in HE: Creativity in Tertiary Learning*. Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Kapp, K. M. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Labrador Piquer, M. J., Morote Magán, P. (2008). „El juego en la enseñanza de ELE. Glosas didácticas": *Revista electrónica internacional*, n° 17, pp. 71-84. Recuperado de: https://www.um.es/glosasdidacticas/numeros/GD17/07.pdf, el 3 de mayo de 2023.

Montola, M.; Stenros, J. & Waern, A. (2009). *Pervasive games: Theory and design.* San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers Inc.

Pelling, N. (2011). *The (short) prehistory of "gamification" … | Funding Startups and other impossibilities.* Recuperado de: https://nanodome.wordpress.com/2011/08/09/theshort-prehistory-of-gamification, el 25 de abril de 2023.

Rittelfeld, U; Cody, M. & Vorderer, P. (2009). *Serious games. Mechanisms and effects*. New York: Routledge.

Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative.* Capstone.

Romero, M., & Turpo Gebera, O. (2015). "Serious Games para el desarrollo de las competencias del siglo XXI". *Revista de Educación a Distancia (RED)*, (34). Recuperado de: https://revistas.um.es/red/article/view/233511, el 26 de abril de 2023.

Rubio, X. (2013). "El pasado en tu sofá: juegos de simulación histórica en entornos computacionales portables". *HER&MUS, Heritage & Museography*, V (2), pp. 55-62. Recuperado de: https://raco.cat/index.php/Hermus/article/view/313394, el 26 de abril de 2023.

Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). "Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions". *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, pp. 54-67. Recuperado de: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0361476X99910202, el 27 de abril de 2023.

Sicart, M. (2014). *Play matters*. MIT Press.

Swank, J.M. (2012). „Using games to creatively enhance the counselor education curriculum". *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 7(4), pp. 397-409. Recuperado de: http://doi: 10.1080/ 15401383.2012.740365, el 27 de abril de 2023.

Tobias, S., Fletcher, J. D., & Wind, A. P. (2014). „Game-Based Learning". In M. Spector, M.D. Merrill, J. Elen & M.J. Bishop (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology,* pp. 485-503. New York: Springer.

Wechselberger, U. (2013). *Learning and enjoyment in serious gaming–contradiction or complement? Proceedings from DiGRA International Conference*. Atlanta: DeFragging Game Studies. Recuperado de: http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper_63.pdf, el 27 de abril de 2023.

Wu, J. & Lee, J. (2015). „Climate change games as tools for education and engagement". *Nature Climate Change,* 5, pp. 413-418. Recuperado de: https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2566, el 27 de abril de 2023.

# Adapting the ESP Teacher's Research Skills to Online Contexts: A Case Study

**ALEXANDRA-GEORGIANA SĂLCIANU**[1]

**Abstract:** Teachers who aim to make a difference not only by sharing good practice examples but also by bringing their theoretical contribution to the advancement of the field, and therefore don the 'researcher's hat', have been concerned with innovation in research methodology. Such an option has been generated by the multiple challenges the members of the teaching guild have had to face lately, such as an enhancement of the IT role in instruction, the online educational contexts imposed by external events such as the Covid pandemic and so on. Consequently, adapting one's teaching approach, as well as the skills required in order to document such adaptation has become a must. Therefore, the aims of this paper are as follows: (i) to propose a case study describing the main aspects included in a research activity in the field of engineering higher education based on designing an original instrument, namely an interview with experts which had to be re-shaped, adapting it to the online context imposed by the pandemic and applied by controlling the limitations the researcher was aware of, and (ii) to turn back with the experience thus obtained to the ESP classroom, in an effort to transfer such data and the acquired flexible, but well-justified, adaptation skills – as teaching input. The article proposes a range of tasks aimed at enriching the engineering students' research skills. The theoretical support underlying the decisions made, the innovative interview format, as well as the rationale for the changes operated on the classical face-to-face pattern, are presented.

**Keywords**: *educational research, online technology, interview with experts, case study, research skills transferability*

[1] Assistant Lecturer, PhD, POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest, Faculty of Engineering in Foreign Languages, Department of Communication in Modern Languages

**Motto**

"What is desired is that the teacher ceased being a lecturer, satisfied with transmitting ready-made solutions. His role should rather be that of a mentor, stimulating initiative and research."

(Jean Piaget)

## INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the current expectations from the most important employers that, upon graduation and identification of first employment, young engineers should already possess a considerable range of both hard *and* soft skills, it has become a must that academia reorient their curriculum, by structuring it in such a manner as to accommodate the latter type of abilities, certainly alongside the former, with a view to enhancing employability chances of their graduates.

Therefore, it has become a part of the university teachers' effort to try to re-design their own courses in order to foster such skill development, if they want to make a difference in the educational context they belong to.

In the case of ESP teachers at tertiary education level, the integration of new components can only be done after carrying out some sound empirical research, which can be based either on the trainers' own scientific interests, or on an effort to develop the qualitative elements of their pedagogical framework or principles. In quite a lot of cases, their classroom practice gets enriched by infusions suggested by their research results, with their students being considered real partners and valuable feedback sources. Thus, the mutual benefit of such an endeavour becomes evident, since both the teachers/researchers and the trainees have something to gain from such activities.

The context described in this study, an ESP practical course taught to first-year bachelor students in a technical university, can create a challenging and rewarding background for the transfer of knowledge regarding certain soft skills, such as *research methodological abilities*. As practice has shown, engineers, who also don the 'hat' of market researchers, financial and sales experts, are often in the position of having to draw up research materials which can further serve as support for carrying on technical activities.

Since in general there are no other courses providing such information, it is an opportunity for the students to both develop their linguistic competences, and increase their portfolios of soft skills, such as designing, using and interpreting research instruments - for instance *questionnaires*, *interviews* or *focus groups*.

Embedding these modules in an ESP module involves combining information of the linguistic and communication type with that belonging to the teaching of content – in this case research methodology abilities. As can be noted, it is a rather intricate approach, somewhat resembling the core traits specific to CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning courses.

If, under normal circumstances, the type of information that can be inserted in the ESP course can be in itself of particular interest to the future engineers/managers, the approach presented in this study does have an additional component of originality and innovation, since the entire enterprise, namely: (i) the scientific research based on interviews as data collecting instruments, and (ii) the turning of the research process phases into a module of original innovative tasks meant for integration in the ESP course of soft skills education, took place in the circumstances dictated by the COVID pandemic, which meant a series of adaptations and a huge effort to control limitations and various other drawbacks.

What is more, the task chain suggested to the engineering learners was also designed and taught during the COVID-19 pandemic, that is in an *online* mode. The necessary changes at both the research and the instructional stages, meant to adapt the effort to the real field conditions, are in fact the main components that are presented below. The project was carried out by following a multi-level program, comprising:

– the design of a *research activity*, which consisted in defining the objectives and information expected from the application of a scientific instrument, namely an *interview with specialists* in the field of marketing and advertising,
– the creation of the *instrument*, followed by its piloting, and using in taking a series of interviews,
– the *processing* of the collected data and their *interpretation* appropriately within the research activity,

- the development of the entire scientific research process into the core of a *chain of tasks* for the ESP classes while operating the necessary selections and adaptations,
- *teaching* the obtained mini module to the students in the real instructional setting, and
- the presentation of all the *transferable* aspects in this paper, as a *case study*, with a view to *sharing* it and establishing an arena of debate with fellow teachers interested in similar action.

## THE INTERVIEW IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH – FACETS IN THE DOMAIN LITERATURE

There are several issues to be discussed and clarified at this stage. Firstly, the literature on the methodology of designing and applying interviews in scientific research refers mainly to the traditional cases of face-to-face situations. There are some references to telephone interviews that were published in recent years, but in general not too many titles deal with what can be done in cases such as the pandemic lockdown, when such a manner of approaching the interviewees was actually no longer possible. Solutions identified and adopted are part of the researcher's personal effort to cope with that particular situation in a well-controlled manner.

Secondly, it is of significance that, although the initial research for which the interview was designed and used was part of an investigation focused on the current marketing and advertising phenomena, as seen by experts in the domain, the developed soft (sub)skills are transferable to the future engineering education graduates – as they can be very useful to them in various circumstances of their complex managerial and technical activities.

A survey of views on the role of interviews as scientific research instruments is mandatory at this phase, with an emphasis on the theoretical models of relevance. As pointed out in the literature (ADJP Quad, 2016), the interview is an instrument specific to qualitative research.

It can be of interest to extract some of the most important particularities of the interview which should be taken into account in order to efficiently make use of this tool. Very briefly put, open-ended questions should be used, since the researcher aims to get a high level of impartiality in the answers.

However, the advantages of interviews, in terms of eliciting sincere answers, are substantially conditioned by the manner in which the questions are built. This manner should be effective, which means using conciseness and a good way of contextualizing questions; this feature can be obtained gradually, by increasing one's awareness of the essential information to be gathered. In comparison with questionnaires, the number of respondents is usually quite reduced, but it should be added that this is normal in the case of interviews with specialists in a domain.

As far as the questionnaire administration manner is concerned, an interview can be organized either via email – which has the advantage of being easily implemented, and of allowing respondents the necessary time to ponder about all the aspects of a question, or by telephone, a rapid means, but with the disadvantage of unavoidably limiting the number of questions that can be asked.

As to the way in which the interview questions should be conceived, one good recommendation (Bell, 2014) refers to the possibility of designing a combination of both unstructured and structured types. It seems that in this manner a higher degree of flexibility can be achieved in applying the instrument. As pointed out in the specialized literature (DeCarlo, 2022) this is a semi-structured interview. What does this mean? Actually, there is a clear-cut topic or range of topics; the choice of open-ended questions is meant to allow the respondents to formulate detailed and sincere opinions.

There seem to be certain limitations, or even drawbacks connected with the qualitative interviews, mostly regarding the risk of considering the answers as being very accurate, of a categorical manner, as well as the possible distortions resulting from the available limited temporal frame, and also from the potential emotional components that can occur.

Some authors (Meho, 2006) propose mixed forms of administration of the interviews, e.g. by email and telephone; this approach can provide useful thinking time to the respondents, and it allows corrections and/or clarifications via the final telephone dialogue.

There are certain features that are specific to an interview with an expert in a domain of activity. Such an instrument is recommendable (Bayer, 2020) within the economy of a qualitative type of research when the researcher – who is at the same time the interviewer in most of the cases – wants to obtain information of depth from a person with expertise in a certain area of interest. The manner of addressing can vary on the continuum from formal to informal, depending on the case, and the optimal vehicle is the email or the phone.

As to the number of interviews with experts, the literature (Döringer, 2020) approaches this issue according to a criterion of significance, namely the volume and variety of data aimed at; therefore, one cannot talk about very drastic limitations. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate that experts in a certain field of interest with complementary professional profile and/or a range of competences be interviewed. Then, in case the interview is focused on a certain zone, the analysis of the two opinions on each aspect can become a rich source of information, thus having a high level of validity.

Any collection of guidelines for conducting research interviews, such as the one considered below (McNamara, 2022), covers at least minimal ideas about the following aspects: preparing for an interview, types of interviews, types of topics in the questions, sequencing of the questions, as well as their wording and manner in which an interview should be carried out.

An equally important piece of advice is that before starting the design of the questions and the implementation process, the scientist should be very clear about the objective(s) underlying each question, as they are closely related to the manner of formulating the items, thus avoiding redundancy or waste of precious time.

It is of interest to remark that one main bibliographic reference in qualitative research (Flick et al., 2000) comprises works of significance both on focus group based research (Bohnsack, 2000) and interview research (Hopf, 2000), which makes it clear that these two types of approaches to scientific research in the fields of social sciences and humanities represent, if appropriately organized and validated, valuable sources of information for sensitive zones in which relevant probing yields qualitative data, viz. data bearing a high degree of subjectivity.

Related to the remark above, it is also worth mentioning that, according to some authors (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008), for this type of research, opting for the two instruments, focus group and interview, combined, can increase the data value. Similarly, as shown in a study (Michel, 1999), it is a manner of supporting the researcher in emphasizing overlapping, or, on the contrary, in underlining subtle differences which could be nuances otherwise lost in the huge amount of qualitative results emerging from the investigations.

## THE INTERVIEW WITH EXPERTS – A CASE STUDY IN PANDEMIC TIMES

In this section, the case study format is preferred with a view to presenting those relevant aspects concerning the interview with experts that was designed for the research, and which underlies the tasks created for the ESP course afterwards. Thus, it is hoped that both the changes in the traditional format of the interview with an expert, as well as the rationale for using these changes can be presented.

To begin with, reference can be made to the limitations occurring during the research activity, and to some ways of anticipating and/or controlling them. As already mentioned, the largest part of the research project using interviews was configured and applied starting from 2020, a period marked by deep modifications of many aspects of the personal and professional life caused by the COVID-19 related restrictions. Implicitly, certain parts of the initial project of research were reconfigured once again, apart from the changes prompted by the initial trialing. The project comprised focus groups and interviews with experts, and both had to be reshaped. Hence, some innovative solutions emerged – the most important being the switch to the online mode – and they were applied in such a way as to ensure good control of the research.

Initially, the interviews with experts had been programmed as face-to-face instruments, but they had to be reconfigured as a sort of atypical combination of online mode, and clarifying short follow-up telephone conversations.

It is worth noting that such readjustments involved a higher time consumption in terms of design and organization, under new (and rather unprecedented) circumstances. That also meant a reduction in the number of respondents, in the case of focus groups, but with some flexibility, realistic solutions were eventually implemented.

It is worth mentioning here that focus groups were also created and used in the research, alongside the interviews with experts, given the importance of triangulations carried out, which validate the emerging conclusions. As emphasized in the literature (Statistics Solutions, 2022), for qualitative data four main components should be taken into consideration:

– *credibility*, reflecting the level of trust of the researcher in one's own investigations truthfulness,
– *transferability*, a feature that points to the possibility of reconfiguring the same context of the investigation for different circumstances,
– *confirmability*, meaning the elimination of any trace of subjective influence from the researcher, which can be guaranteed by mentioning all the design stages of the data analysis methods,
– *reliability*, ensuring the possibility of full replication of the research, at an accurate level, by another researcher, while maintaining a high degree of consistency of the obtained data profile.

This is one important reason why in the research underlying the task chain, both focus groups and interviews with experts were used, since there was an attempt to create content and objectives that were quite similar in both instruments, which, by further triangulation, should ensure good validity.

The research activity in which the interview with experts was used was focused on a general topic of interest for the teacher/researcher, namely relevant aspects in the field of *marketing and advertising*, which is the reason why, in what follows, only those components that are transferable are presented. They refer to the development of transferable subskills connected with options, selection criteria, main focuses and so on.

During the research, the creation of an explorative instrument was aimed at. The *interview with experts* instrument was applied in two distinct situations, which were complementary regarding the respondents' profiles, since both of them were specialists, with considerable expertise, developed while working for over a decade for an international advertising agency, with branches in many countries.

If initially the intention of the researcher had been to obtain a face-to-face interview, the solutions had to be modified, by adapting them to the pandemic context, with a series of changes being operated to maintain a high level of validity. What changed was the manner of obtaining the data, which was the email, to which, and this is quite important, telephone discussions were added, for clarifications and/or further explanations (even of some very recent terminology!).

This original innovative combination of asynchronous and synchronous channels had certain advantages in our opinion:

– some *details* in the answer emails from the experts could thus be clarified,
– a special kind of *environment* was created in this manner, encouraging very sincere answers on the phone from the interviewees, and
– they also benefitted from the necessary amount of *time* required to reflect and select key-ideas in their initial answers via email.

Consequently, it can be stated with great certainty that, although the COVID context could have represented a very serious hurdle, the adopted solutions proved to have good potential in generating more complex answers, useful for the research, as further triangulations have demonstrated at the general level of the study.

In accordance with the research deontology principles, complete confidentiality of the respondents' identity was ensured, they being referred to in the analysis as E1 and E2. They had been asked to participate in the research, which they gladly accepted. They were also informed about all the circumstances prior to the interview proper, via email, by means of an explanatory message. The purpose and conditions of the research activity were described, and they answered positively, giving the researcher their informed consent. The requirements related to scientific ethics were thus fulfilled.

An Interview Guide was created, which covered a five-question set, each with certain subpoints, meant to particularly address necessary details. All the questions were open-ended, thus allowing highly specialized experts in the investigated field to provide interesting details. The answers represent mainly qualitative data; however, to facilitate further comparisons and interpretations, a tabular format was created that can synthetically retain the main elements of interest for the research. Such a table, collecting the experts' answers, was designed, having the following headers, for each of which the rationale is also given:

– *Question Number* – naturally, the questions and subpoints are numbered for easy reference;
– *Question Theme* – which plays the role of an umbrella, under which key words and quotations are listed;
– For each interviewee: *Key words / Quotations* from their answers, sub-grouped per subpoints, which can facilitate comparisons conducive to a good understanding of the answers seen as complementary.

The resulting research study should also include a profile description of the respondents, which, in the case of an interview with experts, covered at least the number of seniority years in a certain area of the domain, reflecting their level of expertise, and the position each held. In the particular case of the research described here, E1 was an expert in the financial-commercial department, while E2 was specialized in creation.

It may be useful to provide the email text & transcript of the phone discussion, as appendices to the study; they should include the number of words (useful for the estimation of the weighting of some answers/opinions in the text economy). Should the phone conversation transcripts include various supplementary clarifications, it is advisable to set them in italics for maximum accuracy.

At the stage the interview answers are analyzed, in terms of working principles, some hints could be useful, and worth being introduced in the tasks chain meant for the teaching of creating and utilizing such methodological tools. Thus, when comparing the two sets of responses, it is beneficial to point out similarities and/or differences, which can then be analyzed, in terms of their potential causes. Similarly, points of coincidence, both in terms of preferences and negative opinions, in the answers can be retained, as well as items of high frequency. Should the explanations for certain phenomena that are investigated be different, the supporting arguments could be included in the table in a synthetic manner, since the experts can have quite different perspectives, which can reinforce each other. If a question has a filtering role, the exemplifications provided can be complementary as well, which may enhance the value of the research.

After the stage dedicated to presenting the data extracted from the interviews in an accurate, concise but selective manner, it is useful to list, in a condensed form, all the relevant aspects/information of interest gathered by applying the instrument, in the form of several main ideas. This list, generally comprising a maximum of 7 - 10 points, can be further used for triangulation and conclusive comparisons, which have the potential of identifying elements of substance.

## FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE – PROPOSED TASK CHAIN PRESENTATION

The experience acquired by teachers in their capacity as researchers can be a precious asset which, if appropriately transmitted to students, could have good chances of enriching their portfolio of the much-needed soft skills young graduates are expected to have from the very beginning in their career. In this section, such an exercise of including content that deals with key features of methodological research is presented, as a chain of tasks to be taught either separately - if required, or as an embedded unit/mini module in the ESP course for engineering bachelor students.

As a preamble to the task description and its rationale, the presentation of several general aspects is essential for a good understanding of the educational setting characteristics. The course is basically an ESP one, making selective use of an in-house course book, but also allowing about 30% for supplementary/alternative materials, prompted by the teacher's awareness of the learners' short- and long-term key needs, wants and interests, and, consequently, of their decisions in this respect.

The ESP course is designed in the post-communicative era fashion, i. e. it has a strong eclectic character, with interwoven and pedagogically well-justified principles. It can be briefly described by the following core aspects: learner-centred, task- and topic- based, aiming at developing the trainees' linguistic competences and communication abilities on the basis of (quasi-)authentic materials and situations proposed for the activities.

Lexical and grammatical development can naturally find its rightful place, as well, since one of the key principles is maintaining the teacher's flexibility and dynamic approach in creating the materials that are newly proposed as necessary additions to the skeleton syllabus. The manner in which the tasks are strung together is similar to the natural order in which language skills are acquired, starting from the receptive ones, and moving onto the productive, with simultaneous loosening of the teacher's control over the students' learning behaviour.

Since the frame ESP course book is at the B2/C1 – CEFR level, the proposed module follows the same lines, allowing – where, and if, the case calls for it, additions meant to increase the trainees' language competences.

One particularity of the educational setting presented was that of adapting the course, due to the pandemic conditions, to working in the online mode. The tasks given below are the result of modifying the initial face-to-face working mode patterns accordingly, in terms of both research activity, and the design and further teaching of the resulting skills development mini module.

Obviously, since the basic principles were maintained – although there were certain adaptations and amendments imposed by the given situation – the approach can, and should be, re-adapted to the working mode to be used, whether the so-called "traditional" one, or a mixed version.

The profile of the learners comprises several useful features, namely: they are students of the Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Business Engineering and Management – FAIMA, which makes them be quite interested in the acquisition and development of soft skills, which they consider as necessary in their managerial activity. However, when applied (selectively) to students of more technical specializations/faculties, the obtained feedback was almost equally good upon first piloting.

The existing specialized literature is not really very rich in providing suggestions of ways of putting research methodology aspects into CLIL teaching materials, with only one remarkable title that could be identified (Dawson, 2016). Consequently, the chain of tasks presented below, whose main principles observe the communicative/eclectic vein, could be seen as an exemplification of what can be done by a foreign language teacher donning the researcher's 'hat', as well as that of a materials designer.

The tasks are presented in some limited details, because of unavoidable space constraints, but always with the rationale underlying their design and manner of teaching. Should fellow ESP and/or CLIL university teachers try to adapt them to their own educational contexts, by adding new/different input, developing the amount of grammatical and/or lexical support etc., they should keep in mind the necessity of a sound framework of principles; furthermore, good knowledge of setting specific parameters is required.

As can be easily seen from the task description and rationale, the research methodology stage sequencing is followed as closely as possible in the design of the materials, as well as in the chosen learner grouping formats in the classroom: individual, pair/group work or whole class.

The Lead-in elicits information that the students might already know of, as regards the domains in which they have done/do/will do research, research studies already read so far, instruments of research used in the technical fields, as compared to the business domain, instances when an engineer has to do research of any type and so on.

This should be done as a whole-class activity, with the teacher listing on screen the essential information generated by the students. The rationale is clear, in addition to acquainting learners with the topic, this activity provides the teacher with information on the students' knowledge of the topic." This can be conducive to further amendments to the proposed approach and/or materials.

In Task 1 – actually a group of subtasks – the focus is on reading, with the students being given texts describing the interview as a research instrument. Moreover, interview questions (how they should be designed and ordered, types of questions and their roles, appropriate ordering of the stages in creating/using/discussing results etc.) can be the topic of such input texts, with particular emphasis on interviews with experts, perhaps exactly from the technical specialization area of the students.

The reading task requirements should cover subskills such as reading for gist, extracting main ideas, ordering stages/paragraphs/information in the text, as well as going more in-depth in terms of the lexis of research methodology. Examples of vocabulary to be reviewed should include terminology specific to the research activity, for instance respondent, item, open-ended question, processing of results, validity, statistical significance, triangulation. The format could be that of matching terms and definitions, followed by identifying instances of use, and then generating own content/sentences/short texts by individual students.

The rationale behind this set of tasks is creatively blending information about the research instrument design, use and peculiarities with the linguistic input pertinent to it. Furthermore, skill development takes place, getting the trainees closer to the stage of free production, especially if part of the task requirements are assigned as out-of-class work. This allows the learners to work at their own pace, and investigate the existing literature if they feel they should find out more.

The final stage, Task 2, consists in fact of a set of activities, which can be seen as a mini project - and taught as such. It involves organizing the learners in groups of three, to participate in a roleplay comprising the following "parts": the researcher and two experts to be interviewed.

The project should be initiated in the classroom, where the participants should: (i) choose the roles, (ii) choose the topic of interest from their own technical domain which should become the object of the interview, such as doing a market research for the launching of a new product/service etc. and (iii) establish the detailed profile of the interviewed experts. All these steps should take place in class, as group work, since it is only natural that they should agree on the initial data – which is a useful opportunity of oral communication practice.

Then each of the students has to work individually, outside the classroom, as follows:

– the *researcher* – to draw up interview questions, taking into account the previous unit input and the profile of the 'experts' to be interviewed, to order them, and be prepared to have both email questions and a telephone discussion for final clarifications,
– the two *experts*, who will have to answer via email, and then engage in phone conversations, with the interviewer.

As can be seen, the rationale is that of ensuring quasi-authentic conditions for the activity, which is meant to enhance the feelings of involvement, assuming responsibility, and to arouse the interest of the role players.

Having performed the interview roleplay in class, the members of the group have to reunite in order to generate the email text and phone discussion transcripts. Based on them, the trainees have to individually process them, and create a table in which they should extract information of the qualitative type, sorted out as key ideas and quotations.

The final phase includes individually writing a discussion of the findings, and the three texts obtained are to be presented to the entire class and to be discussed taking into account the following aspects: the qualities or flaws of the instrument, the value of the decisions made at each stage of the research process that was simulated, and the quality of the final written products.

Comparisons should be encouraged between the projects emerged in each group of three. The reason for the final discussions is that of making the trainees more aware of the main expectations about doing research based on a certain instrument – and in general, of concluding upon the benefits of having such a unit proposed for their ESP course.

## CONCLUSIONS

The proposal presented is only an interim stage, that of the design and piloting in the special conditions of the pandemic, namely in the online mode of work. However, some open conclusions can be drawn at this phase, to be of further used in rounding off the experiment.

It can be considered that the activity has been challenging but also rewarding for the teacher, and for the students. They can be both enriched by it, the trainees in terms of an extension of their portfolio of soft skills – and not only – while trainers can become more conversant with the multitude of roles they have to assume, in particular those of materials designers, researchers and facilitators.

Another thing worth mentioning is the fact that maintaining features such as adaptability, flexibility and a permanent state of inquisitiveness is one absolute prerequisite for making well-justified choices. What is more, teachers should instill the same approach principles in their students, who should develop the willingness to acquire new skills, and an increased awareness of their future professional and personal needs.

Finally, since at university level the expectations of significant stakeholders, such as the future employers, can be more easily met if the graduates prove that they possess not only hard/technical, but also a variety of the much-in-demand soft skills (which can help them to adapt to the tough market reality), this study is also meant to provide an example of skill transferability; this can take place from the teacher as a researcher to the teacher/materials designer and class instructor, with the taking into account of the necessary changes prompted by each educational setting specific features.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADJP Quad. (2016). *Research tools: interviews & questionnaires*. Retrieved March 7, 2022 at: https://lled500.trubox.ca/2016/225.

Bayer, M. (2020). *Expert Interview for College/University Students*. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://www.bachelorprint.eu/research/expert-interview/.

Bell, J. (2014). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers* (Sixth ed.). Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press. Retrieved March 7, 2022 at: https://handoutset.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Doing-Your-Research-Project-Judith-Bell.pdf.

Bohnsack, R. (2000). *Group Discussion and Focus Groups*. In Flick, Kardorff and Steinke (eds.). (English translation by Jenner, B.). *A Companion to Qualitative Research, SAGE Publications*. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=562e1f9e6143258b328b45a3&assetKey=AS:288785876176897@1445863326533#page=18.

Dawson, C. (2016). *100 Activities for Teaching Research Methods.* SAGE Publications Ltd. Library of Congress Control Number: 2016930297. Retrieved August 7, 2022 at: https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/100-activities-for-teaching-research-methods/book248142.

DeCarlo, M. (2022). *Scientific Inquiry in Social Work*. Retrieved January, 7 2022 at: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/scientificinquiry/chapter/13-2-qualitative-interview-techniques/.

Döringer, S. (2020). *'The problem-centred expert interview'. Combining qualitative interviewing approaches for investigating implicit expert knowledge*. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13645579.2020.1766777.

Flick, U., Kardorff, E. von, Steinke, I. (eds.). (2000). (English translation by Jenner, B.). *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, *SAGE Publications*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=562e1f9e6143258b328b45a3&assetKey=AS:288785876176897@1445863326533#page=18.

Hopf, C. (2000). *Qualitative Interviews: An Overview*. In Flick, Kardorff and Steinke (eds.). (English translation by Jenner, B.). *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, *SAGE Publications*. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=562e1f9e6143258b328b45a3&assetKey=AS:288785876176897@1445863326533#page=18.

Lambert, S. D., Loiselle, C. G. (2008). *Combining individual interviews and focus groups to enhance data richness*. Journal of Advanced Nursing 62 (2), 228–237. Retrieved August 7, 2022 at: https://www.academia.edu/36411325/Combining_individual_interviews_and_focus_groups_to_enhance_data_richness.

McNamara, C. (2022). *General Guidelines for Conducting Research Interviews*. Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://managementhelp.org/businessresearch/interviews.htm.

Meho, L. I. (2006). *E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion.* Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/asi.20416.

Michel, L. (1999). *Combining Focus Groups and Interviews: Telling How It Is; Telling How It Feels*. In Barbour, R. S., Kitzinger, J. (Eds.). (1999). Developing Focus Group Research. Retrieved August 7, 2022 at: https://methods.sagepub.com/book/developing-focus-group-research/n1.xml.

Statistics Solutions. (2022). *What is Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research?* Retrieved January 7, 2022 at: https://www.statisticssolutions.com/what-is-trustworthiness-in-qualitative-research/.

# *SECȚIUNEA II.*

## Abordări în predarea limbajelor de specialitate

# Developing the Intercultural Awareness of Lecturers Involved in Internationalizing the Curriculum – A Case Study

**SONIA-CARMEN MUNTEANU[1] / CRISTINA MIHAELA CÂMPIAN[2] / AURELIA CIUPE[3]**

**Abstract:** The European University of Technology (EUt+) is an alliance of eight European higher education institutions whose vision is strongly rooted in multilingualism and multiculturalism which are to become pillars of communication and education in each of its campuses. The present paper sets out to show how the EUt+ membership of the focus institution, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, prompts curricular transformation towards internationalization of teaching and learning. By surveying the academic staff's perceptions on the curricular transformation, we can conclude that the resulting harmonized curriculum for a European Degree in Engineering built by the EUt+ project has the potential to impact the focus university across the board, laying the foundation of an educational environment indicative of an internationalized curriculum. The academic staff involved identified aspects of intercultural awareness as advantages of implementing an internationalized curriculum, but also pointed to pitfalls. The results can inform the institutions' future decisions on internationalization policy and strategy and can open up further lines of investigation into developing intercultural awareness and sensitivity in internationalized higher education.

**Keywords**: *internationalization of the curriculum, intercultural awareness, European alliances, English medium instruction, higher education*

## INTRODUCTION

### Internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum

In the face of increasing challenges such as dynamic students' expectations, developing technologies and growing financial pressures,

---

[1] Associate Professor, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.
[2] Professor, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.
[3] Associate Professor, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.

higher education institutions (HEIs) develop their internationalization strategies to support mobile students, to provide global citizenship and professional competences and to diversify their resources (de Wit, 2010; Wachter & Maiworm, 2015). There are different rationales for internationalization and HEIs choose to build strategies around those that are more relevant for the specific national and institutional contexts in which the HEI is operating. Among the emerging institutional rationales, Knight (2008, p.25) mentions student and staff development, strategic alliances, and knowledge production. These are often the primary motivations that underlie campus-based strategies, referred to as 'internationalization at home'. They focus on infusing an international dimension into curriculum design and programs, as well as into the teaching and learning process, to provide an international experience for all students in the home campus. Beelen and Jones (2015) provide a working definition:

> Internationalization at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments. (p.69)

The policies, activities and processes that develop an international dimension of teaching and learning fall under another term, 'internationalization of the curriculum' (IoC). Although the trend started to gain popularity in the 1990s, defining internationalization of the curriculum is complicated. OECD's definition states that IoC refers to:

> Curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students. (Bremer& van der Wende, 1995, p. 4.)

However, others point to the need for a shared understanding of the term 'curriculum' (Jones, 2017) before defining IoC. In her seminal work on IoC, Betty Leask (2015) provides a comprehensive understanding of curriculum, stating that:

> Curriculum in practice … [is] inseparable from teaching and pedagogy ... [and] the processes by which we, as educators, select and order content, decide on and describe intended learning outcomes, organize learning

activities and assess learner achievements [as] being part of the curriculum. (p. 7-8).

Consequently, the process of internationalizing the curriculum means "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study" (idem, p.9).

Leask's conceptual framework of internationalization of the curriculum (Fig.1) has at its core the knowledge in and across disciplines, and the process of transformation of its dominant paradigm into emerging paradigms taking place under requirements of professional practice and citizenship, assessment of learning and development of skills (such as language ability and intercultural competence) across the program for all students. Contextual layers interact and influence each other and create the complex set of conditions for the construction of the curriculum. Academic staff and students are key stakeholders, often co-creators of knowledge in the disciplines.

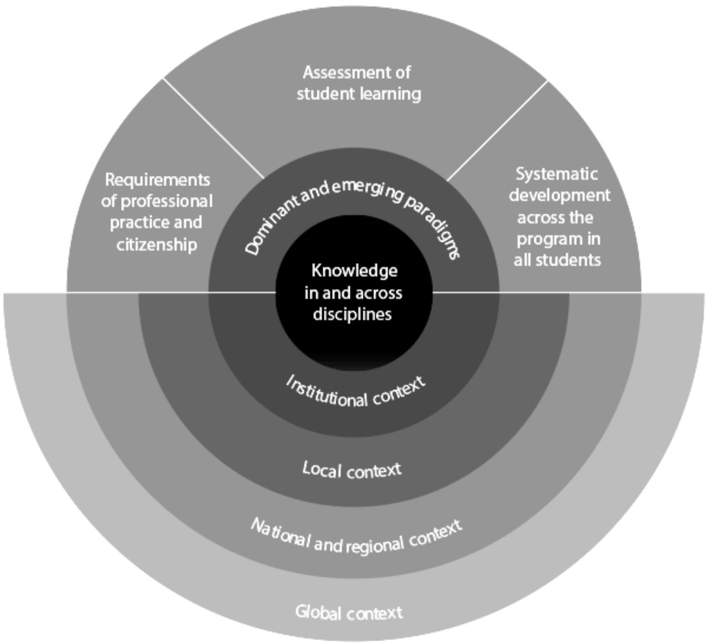


**Figure 1.** A Conceptual Framework of Internationalization of the Curriculum

*Source: Leask, 2015, p. 27.*

The process of internationalization of the curriculum is not homogeneous and uniform as some disciplines may be less open to accept the multicultural dimension of construction of knowledge while others can be more influenced by requirements of local employers or local/institutional professional associations and teams in designing the curriculum and setting the desired learning outcomes. The approach of the academic staff involved is rooted in the complex set of contextual conditions and influenced by how they have been socialized into their discipline and may be culturally bound by their own disciplinary training and thinking (Becher&Trowler, 2001). Hence, their agency in internationalizing the curriculum represents a defining factor. As Jones underlines 'academic staff must be involved and engaged, without this success is unlikely'. (2017, p.36).

**Context of study**

The present paper reports a case study in a higher education institution in Romania, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (henceforward TUC-N), and its internationalization at home approach. More specifically, we examine how membership of an international project and partnership (the European University of Technology, EUt+) triggers a process of internationalization of the curriculum in a number of domains of study it offers.

Internationalization has been a key component in the development strategy of TUC-N, ever since the fall of communism in Romania allowed universities to interact with international partners and develop an international outreach. TUC-N's ambition is strongly rooted in the European context of education, research, innovation and digitalization while providing quality education for all students and fostering professional growth of its staff[4]. In the current internationalization strategy, a number of measures are prioritized: increasing the number of programs taught in foreign languages, increased number of mobile students and staff, increasing and developing international partnerships, enhancing visibility and international prestige.

[4] See TUC-N Strategic Plan 2020-2024, https://www.utcluj.ro/media/decisions/2020/10/26/Plan_Strategic_UTCN.pdf.

In 2019, together with other seven European HEIs TUC-N founded the EUt+ Alliance with the main objective of setting up a European University of Technology, a project whose long-term objectives extend to 2035 when the university is envisaged to function autonomously while the eight founder institutions will become a federation[5].

With this objective in view, the members of the Alliance have already started to work towards the creation of common degrees in several engineering domains. From the common framework of competences to the learning outcomes for each specialization, the partner institutions need to harmonize how and what they teach in those disciplines. Their curricula for each of the targeted specializations will be transformed step by step moving away from the locally anchored cultural and disciplinary context to a more international one, so that the common European Degree in Engineering reflects a multifaceted disciplinary, cultural and social approach. Although the process does not involve all academic staff and educational programs of the partner institutions, it has the potential to impact a university's educational activities across the board. Transforming curricula towards a common degree requires reconsideration of existing dominant paradigms, acceptance of alternative views and the idea of cultural co-construction of knowledge. This is the very process Leask (2015) describes in her framework of internationalization of the curriculum.

In our study we wanted to find out if the transformation of curricula targeted by the EUT+ project in the TUC-N can be seen as a process of internationalization of teaching and learning with ripple effects beyond the EUt+ actions, transforming the perceptions, beliefs and practices of TUC-N academic staff and laying the foundation of an educational environment indicative of an internationalized curriculum.

## The Eut+ project and the resulting institutional context (TUC-N)

The EUt+ project aims to build European Degrees in Engineering[6], Bachelor's and Master's, with embedded mobility at its foundation. Rather

[5] https://www.univ-tech.eu/key-facts-and-figures.

[6] See also: https://www.univ-tech.eu/three-clusters-for-%E2%80%9Ceut-engineering-programmes%E2%80%9D.

than starting from scratch with a new program, the Alliance set out to develop it using the already-existing programs in the partner institutions and proceeding through three phases of curriculum management: harmonizing the pre-existing curricula in the partner institutions (from three to five campuses), decentralizing, and then, deconcentrating the resulting new curriculum. Once the curriculum is fully joined, students are free to choose their course according to the skills they wish to acquire, the partners they wish to visit and the details of the offering. What matters most is the pedagogical coherence of the courses which enable the acquisition of the required competences for the student's chosen specialization. The languages of instruction and communication in these multi-campus programs will be four of the languages of the Alliance: English, French, German and Spanish, with the other four (Bulgarian, Cypriot Greek, Latvian and Romanian) to become increasingly used both in delivering education and as languages of communication across campuses.

Starting from an inventory of shared core competences, academic staff define the learning outcomes necessary to build the desired competencies, design the curriculum, decide on course content, pedagogy and evaluation, and write up the syllabi of their disciplines which are included in the harmonized curriculum. At present the most advanced path is the one towards the common Bachelor's Degree in Engineering, for the first-wave engineering specializations (called 'clusters' in the project): Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Telecommunications and Networks Engineering.

The partner institutions which decided to co-create the European Degree in Engineering have committed themselves to taking all necessary measures and involving all necessary agents for the changes. The resulting context for each institution, the focus one included, is a complex internationalized campus defined by (but not limited to):

– *Multilingual practices*. Students are encouraged and motivated to develop their foreign language competence in order to be able to study in the harmonized programs and to function in the linguistically-diverse educational and socio-cultural contexts of the partner institutions. The common curriculum is envisaged to include mandatory paths to learning at least one foreign language at a B2 level of competence (certified by the end of Bachelor studies) and another one at a B1 level (certified by the end of the Master studies). A course on the local language and culture is offered in each campus, aiming to develop at least beginner level competence. With increased inter-campus collaboration and mobility of students and staff the home campus becomes a diverse medium for the use of the full plurilingual repertoire of the actors.

- *Developing intercultural competence*. This is a highly dynamic process to which EUt+ partners are committed, aware that an internationalized social environment alone, the 'social interactions inside and outside the curriculum, do not lead to an increase of intercultural competence *per se*' (Gregersen-Hermans, 2015, p.16). The harmonization of existing curricula allows for a more effective step, that of embedding intercultural competence development into the core of a more internationalized curriculum and linking it with professional and societal needs (Ji, 2020). The necessary changes occur on multiple levels: curriculum and syllabus planning, teaching methods and methods of assessment.

## Harmonization of the curriculum as an internationalization-at-home component

We argue in this study that the process of harmonization of curriculum, for the purpose of creating a European Degree in Engineering, has far-reaching effects for the internationalization of the TUC-N as a partner institution. Across the institution, internationalization is enhanced in its at-home dimension by measures and actions taken initially to develop the common programs, but which can lead to profound changes at the grassroot level of key stakeholders, such as the teaching staff, and thus pushing towards what can become an internationalized curriculum beyond the EUt+ project.

Curriculum has been seen as a 'complicated conversation'(Pinar, 2004, p.185-187), an interactive and dynamic process (O'Neill, 2015; Biggs & Tang, 2011) where academic staff agency can have an enabling or impeding effect on change and development (Annala et al., 2021, p.4; Priestley et al., 2012). The harmonization of curriculum requires from teaching staff in the very diverse institutional, social and cultural environment of the EUt+ Alliance to cooperate, negotiate and agree on what is the paradigm of their disciplines which should be imparted to the students. Decisions about curriculum design and innovation are not neutral (Leask, 2015). The harmonized curriculum requires from lecturers to reconsider their views on what is established knowledge (or the dominant paradigm) and direction of development in their disciplines and accept multiple views and contributions from other partners. If teaching staff engage in the 'complicated conversation' of changing existing curriculum to accommodate multiple international perspectives, the impact will ripple to the wider institutional environment, whether involved or not in the process of building a European Degree in Engineering.

In the study reported below we consider the process of harmonizing the curriculum from the perspective of the TUC-N teaching staff involved. The main goal is to find out if elements of an internationalized curriculum are present in the process, from the point of view of the lecturers involved. The theoretical underpinning of our analysis is Leask's *Conceptual Framework of Internationalization of the Curriculum* (2015, p.27). Our research pertains to the core level of the framework, *knowledge in and across disciplines*, as well as to the level of surrounding contexts, especially the *institutional context*. Internationalization of the curriculum is very discipline dependent and varies from institution to institution, because the set of conditions within which the curriculum is constructed emerges from the specific institutional goals, rationales and strategies for internationalization (de Wit, 2010). Teachers play a central role in internationalizing teaching and learning as they are key-decision makers in curriculum design and development (Leask, 2015; Williams & Lee, 2015; Woodruff et al., 2015). Their agency in curriculum changes and their perceptions of the process are paramount to shifting the institutional context to be more conducive to the development of an internationalized curriculum and to its main goal: educating globally competent professionals.

## RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHOD

In the context of creating a European Degree in Engineering in the EUT+ project, we wanted to find out *what the perceptions of involved teaching staff are regarding the harmonization of curriculum as a component of internationalization in TUC-N*. In the focus institution this is the first study that investigates the academic staff's views on a curricular transformation that will eventually involve and impact all disciplines and aspects of the Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering.

We designed a survey containing eight multiple-choice questions using Microsoft Forms which was addressed to the teaching staff involved in harmonizing the curriculum of disciplines in one of the targeted specializations, Civil Engineering. The survey did not collect any personal or demographic data so that anonymity of the respondents could be preserved. The language of the survey was Romanian, but questions and options are translated for the present paper. We collected 20 answers from English Medium Instruction course leaders, which represents approximately half of the academic staff usually involved in syllabus and curriculum design in this program. We provide a descriptive-summative interpretation of results and point out important issues and further lines of study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The harmonization of the curricula to converge towards a common one which allows students to acquire the set of competences all partners agreed on involves a process of reconsideration of the lecturers' views and professional practices as reflected in the content they teach. The first question of our survey addressed the issue of changing the current content of their syllabi. Half of the respondents said they were willing to change 50% or more of their current syllabi to align it with those of the partners, seven of them agreed to change a maximum of 50% and only three were willing to change no more than a quarter of what they teach. These responses indicate a disposition towards accepting multiple perspectives in disciplinary knowledge and pedagogy. Knowledge is not absolute and does not stem from a single view. As Webb (2005) notes:

> Content (that) does not arise out of a single cultural base but engages with global plurality in terms of sources of knowledge […] encourages students to explore how knowledge is produced, distributed and utilized globally […] helps students to develop an understanding of the global nature of scientific, economic, political and cultural exchange (p.111).

The willingness to change correlates with an awareness that it would bring an international perspective into the disciplinary knowledge and content they teach. Eighteen lectures stated that this would be a significant and very significant international approach to content and only two thought it would be little or moderately affected by an international perspective.

Lectures were asked next if the harmonized curriculum of the EUt+ project brings an international perspective into their pedagogical approaches to teaching their discipline. The majority (15 respondents) believed that it does and only five lecturers stated it would internationalize their approach little or moderately. Similarly, a little over half of the lecturers (13) believed that the harmonization brings a significant international perspective into their assessment methods, while others thought it would be a moderate (7) or little (1) internationalized perspective.

In an internationalized educational context, content, pedagogical approaches and assessment that consider the diversity of needs and styles of learning and developing professional competencies of students are more likely to be effective. The process of internationalizing the curriculum requires lecturers to engage in negotiation, to be flexible and aware of diversity, features of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). In our case, the harmonization of curriculum for a European Degree in Engineering displays these characteristics of the process of internationalizing the curriculum as described in Leask's *Framework*. Lecturers involved seem to be engaged in this transformation and are aware of its outcomes. Under their positive agency, the dominant paradigm of disciplinary knowledge offered to students becomes less anchored into one cultural paradigm, that of the local professional community, and emerges from the multiple perspectives of all partners involved into creating the new degree program. The resulting intellectual learning environment supports students to engage with culturally diverse people and ideas across the program of study (Leask, 2015). In this way, the harmonized curriculum of the Eut+ degree contributes to the development of intercultural sensitivity as a learning objective aligned with the *Competency Framework of the European University of Technology Masters of Engineering* which states that graduates will be able to 'manage a team or structure in an international, transdisciplinary and multilingual context, integrating social and legal aspects, interacting, integrating a wide variety of profiles, ensuring the integrity of the work and the expression of diversity'[7].

In the next part of the survey, lecturers were asked to consider possible benefits of the harmonized curriculum for students and involved lecturers. Tables 1 and 2 show the results.

**Table 1.** Benefits of studying a harmonized curriculum for students

| Benefits of studying a harmonized curriculum for students | No. of responses |
|---|---|
| *knowledge and professional competence synchronized with global needs of the domain* | 16 |
| *global perspective on the professional domain* | 15 |
| *ability to work in a diverse or multicultural team* | 17 |
| *intercultural competence* | 12 |
| *favorable attitude to a diverse or multicultural working environment* | 11 |
| *adaptability to diverse or multicultural learning/working environments* | 16 |
| *other (please, detail)* | 1 |
| *no benefits* | 0 |

**Table 2.** Benefits of implementing a harmonized curriculum for involved lecturers

| Benefits of implementing a harmonized curriculum for involved lecturers | No. of responses |
|---|---|
| *developing teaching and assessing competencies in an internationalized context* | 18 |
| *favorable attitude to a diverse or multicultural working environment* | 11 |
| *adaptability to diverse or multicultural working environments* | 12 |
| *awareness of cultural differences in professional practice* | 12 |
| *developing intercultural competence* | 15 |
| *other (please, detail)* | 1 |
| *no benefits* | 0 |

[7] *Memorandum of Understanding for the Competency Framework of The European University of Technology Masters of Engineering*, unpublished document.

The majority of respondents believe that students and lecturers will benefit from studying and working with a harmonized curriculum as intended by the EUt+ project. Most of the benefits reflect the three pillars of intercultural competence as described in Deardorff's model (2006, p.256): attitudes, knowledge and skills, set in a professional context. Even though developing intercultural competence did not fare on top of the benefits in itself, more than half of the lecturers mentioned it. This indicates that lecturers are aware of the transversal – rather than professionally-specific – competences developed through an internationalized curriculum and may be a first step toward including them among the strategic learning objectives across the board in the partner universities.

The lecturers' perspectives on the disadvantages of studying/working in a harmonized program for students and involved lecturers are shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.

**Table 3.** Disadvantages of studying a harmonized curriculum for students

| Disadvantages of studying a harmonized curriculum for students | No. of responses |
|---|---|
| *shallow knowledge and competence in the domain of study* | 1 |
| *low relevance of the acquired knowledge and competence for the Romanian economic, cultural and social environment* | 4 |
| *lack of synchronization between the requirements of local employers and the acquired competence of students* | 7 |
| *other (please, detail)* | 1 |
| *no disadvantage* | 9 |

**Table 4.** Disadvantages of studying a harmonized curriculum for involved lecturers

| Disadvantages of implementing a harmonized curriculum for involved lecturers | No. of responses |
|---|---|
| *changing teaching and assessment methods* | 3 |
| *frequent changes of the curriculum* | 7 |
| *increased workload for the teaching staff* | 9 |
| *increased number of international students in the class* | 2 |
| *communication difficulties in a diverse classroom* | 7 |
| *other (please, detail)* | 0 |
| *no disadvantage* | 6 |

Almost half of the respondents did not see any disadvantage for students enrolled in the harmonized programs and, correlated with the willingness to change content, teaching and assessment, it indicates that these lecturers may be the driver of the process of internationalizing the curriculum of their institutions.

There is, however, an awareness of possible pitfalls of the process, most notably when considering the (Romanian) local industry and employment environment. Lecturers identified *low relevance of the acquired knowledge and competence for the Romanian economic, cultural and social environment* and *lack of synchronization between the requirements of local employers and the acquired competence of students* as possible disadvantages of studying in an internationalized program. The reasons behind these choices can only be speculated, but they open a rich line of further study to see if their perceptions are related to the fact that local industry may be perceived as disconnected from global trends or as having specific needs that graduates might not be able to assess with a 'global lens'. To use Leask's terms, the emerging paradigm of the harmonized curriculum is situated in a dynamic interplay between local and global contexts whose directions of development and goals may not always converge. For higher education institutions the question of 'why internationalizing the curriculum?' must be a recurrent one along the process if they wish to clarify its complexities, tensions, dilemmas and challenges, and avoid some of the 'frustrations at the slow rate of progress in achieving curriculum internationalization goals' (Leask, 2015, p.24).

When looking at possible disadvantages of implementing the harmonized curriculum for lecturers themselves, the respondents marked all given options. The (frequent) changes they might need to make in the teaching and assessment of their disciplines, as well as increased workload are concerns voiced by a notable number of respondents. This can be correlated to the responses for our first question on the lecturers' willingness to change their syllabi to align with corresponding ones in the partner institutions. Half of the respondents would modify no more than 50% of their syllabi, an indication that limits are seen as necessary in what can be negotiated.

A more intriguing aspect, not unrelated to the previous one, is the fact that some of the lecturers predict difficulties of communication in a diversified classroom and see the increased number of international students in class as a disadvantage. Successful classroom communication is crucial to the teaching and learning process and difficulties arising from a linguistically and culturally diverse population of students and lecturers have been well documented in the literature on English-taught programs (English Medium Instruction) around the world with regard to language competence needs of both students and teaching staff, intercultural communication needs and pedagogical support, to name but the most frequent in the literature (Banks, 2017; Guarda & Helm, 2017; Macaro et al., 2018; Ozer, 2020; Wachetr & Maiworm, 2015; Wilkinson, 2005). Support to overcome such difficulties should be included on the agenda of priority actions of any higher education institution's strategy for internationalization (Middlehurst, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions strengthen their international outreach by becoming part of joint projects and alliances. The focus institution in the present study, TUC-N, develops its strategic internationalization profile engaging in large scale actions on multiple levels, from increasing mobility of staff and students to building an international campus at home.

The EUt+ project is set to create a European University and a European Degree in Engineering, therefore opening the road for its members to engage in curricular transformation in three steps: harmonizing the existing curricula for a set of specializations, decentralizing and deconcentrating. TUCN as a member of the EUT+ Alliance is fully engaged in the process which, at the moment is the initial phase, the harmonization. TUCN teaching staff involved in the harmonization of the curriculum are actors in the negotiation of content, pedagogy and assessment, unraveling a complex network of interdependencies of demands, from those of the program itself (i.e. common set of core competences) to those of the local and international context in which the programs will be implemented: multilingual practices, diverse economic, social and cultural environments and increased international student population. The process of harmonization displays characteristics of the internationalization of the curriculum at institutional level including the development of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence for both students and staff.

In the present study we wanted to find out what are the involved lecturers' perspectives on the harmonization process as part of internationalization of their university. The results show that the teaching staff are aware of the benefits of the process and are willing to actively engage in driving the transformation of their dominant paradigm of disciplinary knowledge to include a global/international perspective. The effects of such a mindset can go beyond the scope of the EUt+ project and set the university on the course of internationalizing the curriculum for all its students, across the campus. Further studies should investigate the lecturers' perception on the pitfalls of internationalization of the curriculum (beyond the harmonization phase) and the possible tensions between a desired global competence for graduates and the perceived needs of the local social and economic context. These can inform the institutions' future decisions on policy and strategy for internationalization at home.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annala, J., Lindén, J., Mäkinen, M., & Henriksson, J. (2021). Understanding Academic Agency in Curriculum Change in Higher Education. In *Teaching in Higher Education*, Taylor&Francis. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1881772. Retrieved on June 6th, 2023.

Banks, M. (2017). Exploring EMI Lecturers' Attitudes and Needs. *EPiC Series in Language and Linguistics 3*, pp. 19-26.

Becher, T., & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Discipline*s. London: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Beelen, J, & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining Internationalization at Home. In A. Curaj, Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J., Scott, P. (eds), *The European Higher Education Area*, Springer International Publishing. pp. 59-72.

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (4th Edition). The Society for Research into Higher Education.

Bremer, L. and van der Wende, M. (eds) (1995). *Internationalizing the Curriculum in Higher Education: Experiences in the Netherlands*. The Hague: The Netherlands Organization for International Co-operation in Higher Education.

de Wit, H. (2010). *Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe and its assessment, trends and issues.* https://www.eurashe.eu. Retrieved on Nov. 6th, 2022.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 10(3), pp. 241–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002. Retrieved on June 6th, 2023.

Gregersen-Hermans, J. (2015). The Impact of Exposure to Diversity in the International University Environment and the Development of Intercultural Competence in Students. A. Curaj, Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J., Scott, P. (eds), *The European Higher Education Area*, Springer International Publishing, pp. 59-72.

Guarda, M., & Helm, F. (2017). A survey of lecturers' needs and feedback on EMI training Unicollaboration and Virtual exchange. In Ackerley, K., Guarda, M., Helm, F. (eds). *Sharing Perspectives on English-Medium Instruction*, pp. 167-194. Bern: Peter Lang.

Ji, Y. (2020). Embedding and Facilitating Intercultural Competence Development. In *Internationalization of the Curriculum of Higher Education. Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 9(3), 13. https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v9n3p13. Retrieved on June 6th, 2023.

Jones, E. (2017) Internationalization of the Curriculum: Challenges, Misconceptions and the Role of Disciplines. In Casper-Hehne, H. & Reiffenrath, T. (eds.). I*nternationalisierung der Curricula an Hochschulen: Konzepte, Initiativen, Maßnahmen*, pp. 21-38. Bielefeld: WBV (W. Bertelsmann Verlag).

Knight, Jane. (2008). Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization. https://brill.com/display/title/37092. Retrieved on Feb. 20th, 2020.

Leask, B. (2015). *Internationalizing the Curriculum*. London: Routledge.

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A Systematic Review of English Medium Instruction in Higher Education. In *Language Teaching*, vol. 51(1), pp. 36–76. doi:10.1017/S0261444817000350. Retrieved on Jan 7th, 2020.

Middlehurst, R. (2008). Developing Institutional Internationalisation Policies and Strategies: An Overview of Key Issues. http://robinmiddlehurst.com › uploads › 2017/11. Retrieved on Nov. 6th, 2022.

O'Neill, G. (2015). Curriculum Design in Higher Education: Theory to Practice. In *UDC Teaching and Learning*. http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLP0068.pdf. Retrieved on Dec. 10th, 2022.

Ozer, O. (2020). English Medium Instruction at Tertiary Level in Turkey: a Study of Academics' Needs and Perceptions. In *Journal of Higher Education and Science*, vol. 10(1), pp. 88-112. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/higheredusci/page/11858. Retrieved on Nov. 2nd, 2020.

Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What Is Curriculum Theory?* London: Routledge.

Priestley, M., Edwards, R., & Miller, K. (2012). Teacher Agency in Curriculum Making: Agents of Change and Spaces for Manoeuvre. In *Curriculum Inquiry*. Taylor&Francis. vol. 42(2), pp. 191-214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00588.x. Retrieved on June 6th, 2023.

Wachter, B., & Maiworm, F. (2015). *English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education. ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education.* Bonn: Lemmens.

Webb, G. (2005). Internationalisation of the curriculum: an Institutional approach. In J Carroll, J. and Ryan, J. (eds.) *Teaching International Students: Improving Learning for All*, pp. 109-118. London: Routledge.

Wilkinson, R. (2005). *The impact of language on teaching content: Views from the content teacher*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228749089_The_impact_of_language_on_teaching_content_Views_from_the_content_teacher. Retrieved on Feb. 2nd, 2013.

Williams, R. D., & Lee, A. (eds.). (2015). *Internationalizing Higher Education*. New York: Sense Publishers.

Woodruff, G., Martin, K., & Katherine O'Brien, M. (2015). Internationalizing Teaching and Learning: Transforming Teachers, Transforming Students. In Williams, R. D., & Lee, A. (eds.). *Internationalizing Higher Education*, pp. 63-87. New York: Sense Publishers.

# Enfoques multiculturales e interculturales en clase de ELE

**ALINA-LUCIA NEMEȘ**[1]

**Resumen:** En un mundo de la globalización, donde se intenta borrar las fronteras, estandardizar los modos de vida y uniformizar las culturas (lenguas, costumbres, estilos de vida), hay características que individualizan una nación, que son inmutables, y cada país se construye a base de unos valores nacionales. Precisamente este intento de crear una tendencia común, mundial, y de integrar cosas diversas es el que crea más intercambios entre culturas diferentes. Por lo tanto, consideramos que es importante comprender y respetar las diferencias culturales, para vivir en un mundo más tolerante y multicultural, en el cual, muy a menudo, surgen retos que requieren una cooperación internacional. Es bien sabido que la lengua es un organismo vivo, que no se reduce a los elementos léxicos y de construcción de la lengua, sino se nutre de las creencias, las costumbres, los valores, la manera de pensar y de vivir de los hablantes. Por lo tanto, la lengua se adapta al cambio que interviene en el desarrollo social, cultural, económico, político, ecológico, etc., de la sociedad en la cual viven sus hablantes, pero también a las relaciones que se establecen con el medio internacional. Teniendo en cuenta estos aspectos, las clases de lengua extranjera deben adaptarse para preparar a los estudiantes para integrarse más fácilmente en diversas culturas. En el siguiente estudio vamos a presentar algunos aspectos relacionados con recursos, materiales, estrategias didácticas, que se pueden utilizar para mejorar las habilidades interculturales, multiculturales y comunicacionales del alumnado, fomentando una actitud de curiosidad, aprendizaje y aprecio hacia otras culturas para vivir en un mundo diversificado, multi y pluricultural, más propenso a la tolerancia y al respeto mutuo.

**Palabras clave***: enseñanza, aprendizaje, interculturalidad, multiculturalidad, competencias*

---

1 Profesora Doctora, Universidad "Babeș-Bolyai" de Cluj-Napoca, Rumanía.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Es consabido que en una clase de lengua extranjera es imprescindible introducir elementos de cultura y civilización para crear un ambiente cercano a una situación real, dado que ”Entre la lengua y la cultura hay una relación de interdependencia” (Nemeș, 2015, p. 102). Además, ”es imposible dominar una lengua sin dominar la cultura, el mundo que va unido a ella” (Olivares, 2000, p. 11).

En un mundo de la globalización, donde se intenta borrar las fronteras, estandardizar los modos de vida y uniformizar las culturas (lenguas, costumbres, estilos de vida), hay características que individualizan una nación y que son inmutables y cada país se construye a base de unos valores nacionales. A pesar de que este mundo está ”full of confrontations between people, groups, and nations who think, feel, and act differently”[2]) (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 4), hay una tendencia creciente de crear más intercambios entre culturas diferentes. Por eso, consideramos que es importante comprender y respetar las diferencias culturales, para vivir en un mundo más tolerante y multicultural. De hecho, el *Diccionario de la lengua española* (2022) de la Real Academia Española define la palabra «multicultural» como algo” caracterizado por la convivencia de diversas culturas”, es decir por la coexistencia en armonía de las diversas culturas del planeta. UNESCO (2006) define el término como ”un concepto dinámico y se refiere a las relaciones evolutivas entre grupos culturales” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 17). Si pensamos en las relaciones que se establecen entre las culturas, llegamos al concepto de «interculturalidad», palabra compuesta del prefijo *inter-* que significa ”entre”, al cual se añade el término ”cultura” seguido por el sufijo -dad que proviene del latín *-tas, -ātis* y” significa 'cualidad' en sustantivos abstractos derivados de adjetivos” (*Diccionario de la lengua española*, 2022).

Se dice que la lengua es un organismo vivo, que no se reduce a los elementos léxicos y de construcción de la lengua, sino se nutre de las creencias, las costumbres, los valores, la manera de pensar y de vivir de los hablantes. Por lo tanto, la lengua se adapta al cambio que interviene en el

---

[2] ”lleno de confrontaciones entre pueblos, grupos, y naciones que piensan, sienten y actúan de maneras diferentes” [n. trad.]

desarrollo social, cultural, económico, político, ecológico, etc., de la sociedad en la cual viven sus hablantes, pero también a las relaciones que se establecen con el medio internacional. Teniendo en cuenta estos aspectos, las clases de lengua extranjera deben adaptarse para preparar a los estudiantes para integrarse más fácilmente en diversas culturas. Para responder a esta demanda, la edición actualizada en 2021 del "Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza, evaluación. Volumen complementario" (a continuación, abreviado MCER) completa los descriptores de la competencia plurilingüe y pluricultural (MCER, 2021, pp. 39-40), introducida ya en la variante anterior, de 2001, que se añade a las competencias: lingüística (que se refiere al dominio del vocabulario, de la gramática, de la pronunciación, de la ortografía), sociolingüística (que trata de la adecuación sociolingüística), pragmática (que concierne la flexibilidad, el turno de palabras, la coherencia, la cohesión, la precisión, la fluidez) (MCER, 2002, pp. 99-127). En conformidad con los descriptores del MCER, a partir del nivel A2, el estudiante:

> Reconoce y aplica convenciones culturales básicas asociadas a intercambios sociales cotidianos (por ejemplo, diferentes rituales a la hora de saludar). […] Reconoce las dificultades que se dan en la interacción con miembros de otras culturas, aunque puede no estar seguro/a de cómo comportarse en estas situaciones. (MCER, 2021, pp. 139)

Gradualmente, el estudiante debe llegar a ajustar su forma de comunicarse al contexto intercultural, a ser consciente de las diferencias culturales y a gestionar los eventuales malentendidos. De esta forma, el hablante que posee un nivel C2:

> Regula sus acciones y la manera de expresarse según el contexto, demostrando conciencia de las diferencias culturales y haciendo sutiles ajustes para evitar y/ o aclarar malentendidos e incidentes culturales. (MCER, 2021, pp. 139)

Teniendo en cuenta el desarrollo de las relaciones internacionales, el crecimiento de las posibilidades de emprender viajes con fines turísticos, económicos, políticos, etc., a través de todo el planeta, se impone adaptar los manuales de lengua extranjera para la vida en un mundo diversificado, multi y pluricultural. Es evidente que, si se trabajan la competencia comunicativa y la competencia intercultural, se disminuye el impacto negativo que se crea cuando un individuo entra en contacto con una cultura diferente a la suya, lo que llamamos choque cultural, que se manifiesta como miedo, desconfianza, incomodidad, ansiedad o inseguridad, según el *Diccionario de términos clave de ELE*, que explica también que:

> Algunos autores han definido el choque cultural como la pérdida de la operatividad de las estrategias de resolución de problemas que el individuo ha desarrollado en su lengua primera, cuando trata de aplicarlas al contexto de la nueva cultura. Otros han descrito el fenómeno de la aculturación, compuesto de las siguientes etapas: 1) euforia, 2) choque cultural, 3) stress cultural y 4) asimilación o aceptación.
> Según las investigaciones actuales, se sostiene generalmente que cuanto mayor es la distancia entre la cultura propia y la extranjera mayor es el choque cultural. (Centro Virtual Cervantes, *Diccionario de términos clave de ELE*, 2023).[3]

El choque cultural se refiere también al proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera:

> El choque cultural consiste en una "sacudida" emocional y cognitiva que puede experimentar una persona al tratar de integrarse en una cultura distinta de la suya. Suele darse, por ejemplo, en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en condiciones de inmersión en la comunidad de habla extranjera, durante un periodo de tiempo que suele durar hasta que el estudiante se adapta a la nueva cultura.(Palacios Martínez, 2019, «choque cultural», recuperado de: https://www.dicenlen.eu/es/diccionario/entradas/choque-cultural, el 08.06.2023)

Precisamente para evitar situaciones desagradables, difíciles, hasta bloqueos, recomendamos la integración de actividades para el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural junto con la comunicativa en los manuales de ELE (español como lengua extranjera). Pero, ¿con qué frecuencia lo hacen estos manuales?

3 https://cvc.cervantes.es/ENSENANZA/biblioteca_ele/diccio_ele/diccionario/choque.htm, el 03.06.2023.

## LA MULTICULTURALIDAD Y LA INTERCULTURALIDAD EN LOS MANUALES DE ELE

La elección de los manuales presentados a continuación es arbitraria y pretende cubrir varios niveles, desde el A2 hasta un grado superior de dominio del español.

En primer lugar, empezamos por un manual de español para fines específicos, lo que supone que los aprendientes ya tienen cierto dominio del idioma. Al analizar el manual titulado "El español en entornos profesionales" (2016) de Elies Furió Blasco, Matilde Alonso Pérez, Laurent Marti, Miguel Blanco Callejo, notamos que cada unidad contiene al final un apartado dedicado a la interculturalidad, como sigue:

- Unidad 1: Meliá Hotels International
    - En la primera unidad hay diversas actividades para la ampliación del vocabulario, para el desarrollo de las destrezas de comprensión lectora, teniendo como recursos didácticos textos cuyos temas son *Los españoles prefieren el hotel como alojamiento de vacaciones* y *Los españoles vistos bajo el prisma de los estereotipos*. Asimismo, se pone en práctica la destreza gramatical con un ejercicio de redacción (hacer hipótesis, interpretar datos, etc.). Para trabajar la expresión escrita se propone la redacción de un breve artículo sobre la situación del alojamiento vacacional en el país de origen del aprendiente. Para la expresión oral, se requiere que los estudiantes señalen otros estereotipos sobre España y los españoles. Otra pregunta abierta que se hace es: *¿Cómo contribuyen los estereotipos a la imagen de España?*
- Unidad 2: Chocolate Valor
    - en la parte dedicada a la interculturalidad se insiste en la estructuración de los textos/discursos, el uso de los marcadores, a partir de textos y de publicidades para el chocolate, vinculado al placer, a la felicidad, a los hábitos de consumo. Las actividades propuestas son de comprensión de lectura, de expresión e interacción orales, comparando la situación de España con la del país de origen del alumno.

- Unidad 3: Abertis
  - los ejercicios de vocabulario, de comprensión de lectura, con preguntas abiertas de apoyo, de expresión e interacción orales giran en torno a las diferentes opiniones sobre las ciudades inteligentes.
- Unidad 4: Zeltia
  - la última parte de la unidad trata del panorama general de la investigación y del desarrollo de la ciencia, con aplicaciones en la medicina. Se ponen en práctica las mismas destrezas que en las unidades anteriores.
- Unidad 5: Real Madrid
  - otros temas de interculturalidad son la imagen de los españoles relacionada con su afición al fútbol, o con los deportes, la comparación entre el fútbol femenino y el masculino, temas tratados a partir de textos y de preguntas abiertas.
- Unidad 6: Avanzare
  - el punto central de esta unidad es la negociación, con temas de reflexión y de expresión de la opinión personal, como, por ejemplo, cómo negocian los españoles, el concepto de ”empresa nacida global”, la globalización, el papel de la tecnología y del dominio de idiomas extranjeros.
- Unidad 7: El Corte Inglés
  - la estructura de la unidad es similar a la de las unidades anteriores, a base de temas como: la industria, el comercio, la demanda del mercado internacional, la moda y las marcas internacionalizadas, la renovación de los mercados frente al comercio internacional.
- Unidad 8: Indra
  - esta unidad presenta algunos documentos nacionales de identidad como pretexto para hablar del intercambio de datos, de movimientos como: creacionista, loT, *maker*, con implicaciones sociales y empresariales, en una serie de ejercicios parecidos a los de las unidades anteriores.
- Unidad 9: Ferrovial
  - la reflexión acerca de la imagen que tienen los productos de las empresas españolas se encuentra en el apartado dedicado a la

interculturalidad. Se asocia la imagen de España con los inventos, la gestión de infraestructuras, los perfumes de lujo, los museos (por ejemplo, El Guggenheim).

El manual "El español en entornos profesionales" (2016) de Elies Furió Blasco, Matilde Alonso Pérez, Laurent Marti, Miguel Blanco Callejo se centra en actividades comunicativas y trabaja todas las destrezas: comprensión oral y escrita, expresión e interacción orales y escritas, pero lo más importante es que favorece la reflexión, la comparación entre culturas, lo que ayuda a desarrollar el espíritu crítico del alumnado. Además, las actividades son adecuadas para el trabajo frontal, individual y/o en grupo.

Apreciamos la presencia de actividades relacionadas con la interculturalidad, sobre todo porque este manual propicia informaciones referentes al entorno económico, empresarial, comercial, donde el componente cultural e intercultural desempeña un papel importante, que lo transforma en una herramienta muy útil en las clases de español para fines específicos.

Con el mismo específico empresarial, "Entorno empresarial, Nivel B2" (2014), de Marisa de Prada, Monserrat Bovet, Pilar Marcé, dedica una unidad a las *Diferencias culturales* (Prada et al., 2014, p. 135-140), con definiciones del término de «cultura», incluyendo diferencias entre los productos y la idea, en ejercicios de discriminación, de elección múltiple, de comprensión de lectura, de expresión oral. Entre los temas de reflexión sobre las similitudes y las diferencias entre las diversas culturas, mencionamos: la forma de vestir, los tipos de humor, los horarios, la puntualidad, los tipos de discursos en la negociación, las pautas de conversación, los valores de la sociedad (igualdad de oportunidades, familia, religión, medio ambiente, bienes materiales, tiempo libre, respeto por los ancianos y por los niños), de la cultura organizacional, el concepto de liderazgo, etc. Se trata de aspectos que ponen en tela de juicio las relaciones interculturales a nivel empresarial. En esta unidad los aspectos gramaticales no se tratan separadamente.

El manual "Avance. Curso de español. Nivel intermedio-avanzado" (Moreno et al., 2007) propone desde la primera unidad contenidos interculturales, a base del tema *¿Mundo globalizado? No, diálogo entre culturas*, al lado de contenidos gramaticales y de vocabulario, en actividades de interacción oral, de comprensión auditiva, de expresión oral y escrita (a partir de la pregunta abierta: "*¿Llegamos a convivir en armonía?*". Es una invitación a la reflexión, a la investigación (buscando informaciones en libros, por Internet), cuyo objetivo principal es la implicación del alumnado en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje.

El manual "Frecuencias B1. Español comunicativo para el siglo XXI" (2021) de Esteban Bayón, Carmen Cabeza y Carlos Oliva cuenta con contenidos culturales interculturales del universo hispánico (español e hispanoamericano), incluyendo recursos cinematográficos, imágenes que facilitan el aprendizaje de diversos temas como: la dieta mediterránea, platos típicos, ingredientes específicos de la cocina española, comida sana, huertos urbanos, etc. (Bayón et al., 2021, p. 164-181).

Los autores de manuales de español como lengua extranjera conceden espacio a la interculturalidad desde los niveles básicos de dominio de la lengua, según el *MCER*, como en el siguiente ejemplo: "Diverso 2 (A2)" (Encina et al., 2017). Desde la primera unidad que gira en torno al tema de reflexión sobre la importancia de la educación, introduce aspectos de interculturalidad (*La educación en otras culturas*), al lado de elementos de léxico, gramática, pragmática, que permiten el desarrollo de la conciencia crítica reflexiva.

Como se puede notar, los elementos interculturales y multiculturales ocupan un lugar importante en los manuales de ELE, desde los niveles básicos, donde no se enseñan como tema aparte, sino como parte integrante en la adquisición del vocabulario y de la gramática, hasta los niveles superiores, donde se dedican unidades o apartados a la reflexión sobre estos aspectos. Consideramos que la introducción progresiva de detalles interculturales, en función del grado de conocimiento de la lengua, de la edad y de los intereses del alumnado, de lo cotidiano a los contextos más especializados, es la variante adecuada.

## PROPUESTA DIDÁCTICA

En primer lugar, se recomienda definir el concepto de comunicación, según el modelo propuesto por Jakobson (Jakobson, 1975, p. 352-353): un destinador o emisor envía un mensaje a un destinatario o receptor, en un contexto dado, mediante un canal, utilizando un código (la lengua). La recepción correcta del mensaje depende de varios factores:

> El éxito en la comunicación viene condicionado por varios factores. En primer lugar, el conocimiento del código en que están codificados los signos del mensaje (básicamente, el código verbal, pero también los demás sistemas de signos acústicos, visuales, etc.). En segundo lugar, la familiaridad con los marcos de conocimiento y modos de organizar el discurso en la comunidad lingüística; ello le ayuda al emisor a planificar y al receptor a predecir la evolución y desenlace del discurso. En tercer lugar, las experiencias comunicativas compartidas por los interlocutores; estas experiencias ayudan a desarrollar unos procesos de inferencia que permiten emplear y captar implicaturas conversacionales, es decir, comunicar ideas sin necesidad de explicitarlas, por mera asociación con alguna experiencia compartida anteriormente. En la medida en que confluyen estos factores, se logra transmitir y captar hasta los más mínimos detalles y matices, al tiempo que disminuye el riesgo de deficiencias y malentendidos en la comunicación. (Centro Virtual Cervantes, *Diccionario de términos clave de ELE*, 2023).[4]

Después se sigue con la comunicación intercultural que supone el trato entre personas de diversas culturas, en contextos determinados. Para delimitar un poco el área temática con una sugerencia, se puede utilizar la definición de la cultura de Tylor, quien afirma que "es ese complejo conjunto que incluye el conocimiento, las creencias, las artes, la moral, las leyes, las costumbres y cualesquiera otras aptitudes y hábitos adquiridos por el hombre como miembro de la sociedad" (Tylor, 1977, p. 19).

El término «cultura» se puede dividir también en cultura observable/visible, que hace referencia a los productos como: música, literatura, costumbres, gastronomía, tradiciones, leyes, y cultura invisible, que hace referencia a las ideas, a los valores, a las creencias, a las actitudes, a las percepciones (ritmo de vida, criterios de educación, concepto de trabajo, de ocio, concepción de la familia, del bien y del mal). Esta distinción se ilustra muy bien en el símil del iceberg:

[4] https://cvc.cervantes.es/ENSENANZA/biblioteca_ele/diccio_ele/diccionario/comunicacion.htm, el 03.06.2023


**Imagen 1.** La analogía del Iceberg

*Fuente: https://connectingculturaldiversity.com/gestion-de-la-diversidad/comunicacion-intercultural-eficaz-claves/, el 06.06.2023.*

De esta forma se llega a la presentación de diferentes tipos de culturas y de modelos de diferencias sociales. A partir de unos ejemplos concretos, como los expuestos por el sitio web https://www.significados.com/cultura/, los estudiantes completan la lista. El sitio web clasifica la cultura según el sentido:

- histórico (cultura renacentista, barroca, etc.)
- antropológico (cultura griega, oriental, occidental)
- religioso (cultura cristiana, musulmana)
- socio-económico (cultura popular, de élite)
- subcultural (rockeros)
- contracultural (feminismo)

La discusión puede seguir basándose en los conocimientos previos de los estudiantes, en un ejercicio de tipo pregunta-respuesta dirigido por los docentes, como, por ejemplo: *¿Conoces tópicos nacionales?*, *¿Qué se dice sobre los españoles/ los rumanos/ los americanos…?*, ejercicio que se encadena con una actividad de expresión oral o con un texto *input* sobre el tema de los tópicos, adaptado de periódicos o revistas que destinan artículos o columnas a este tema. Estos textos amplían los conocimientos de los estudiantes con informaciones complementarias o explicaciones acerca del uso de estas características pertenecientes o relativas a un determinado lugar.

A la hora de comunicar con un hablante extranjero, muchas veces recurrimos a prejuicios y estereotipos que, en realidad, se deben evitar para una comunicación intercultural eficaz, dado que crean barreras. Por lo tanto, es un tema que es preciso abordar, ya que desde el nivel B2 el hablante:

> ** Describe y evalúa los puntos de vista y las prácticas tanto de su grupo social como de otros, mostrando conciencia de los valores implícitos en los que con frecuencia se basan los juicios de valor y los prejuicios.
> ** Explica su interpretación de presuposiciones, ideas preconcebidas, estereotipos y prejuicios culturales de su propia comunidad y de otras con las que está familiarizado/a. (MCER, 2021, p. 139)

En este caso, el humor podría crear un ambiente agradable y propicio para el trabajo. Para este fin, una herramienta útil sería el "Diccionario de lugares comunes" (originalmente, "Dictionnaire des idées reçues" de Gustave Flaubert), según el cual los alemanes son "un pueblo de soñadores"[5] [n. trad.] (Flaubert, 2002, p. 5), los ingleses son "todos ricos"[6] (Flaubert, 2002. p. 5), los franceses son "el primer pueblo del universo"[7] [n. trad.] (Flaubert, 2002, p. 38) y los italianos son "Todos músicos. Todos traidores"[8] [n. trad.] (Flaubert, 2002, p. 53). Para continuar, los estudiantes comentan los lugares comunes presentados y/ o buscan nuevos tópicos, de modo individual o en grupo, que exponen y comentan en clase.

Para ampliar el tema, se restringe la visión general sobre los tópicos a un campo específico, por ejemplo, al turismo o a la publicidad. Una posible pregunta que abra la discusión podría ser: *¿Qué imágenes/ tópicos utilizan las agencias de turismo para promover ciertos destinos turísticos?* Las respuestas quedan abiertas, hasta se puede dedicar un tiempo determinado a la

[5] Texto original, en francés: « Peuple de rêveurs ».
[6] Texto original, en francés: « Tous riches ».
[7] Texto original, en francés: « Le premier peuple de l'univers ».
[8] Texto original, en francés: « Tous musiciens. Tous traîtres ».

búsqueda de anuncios publicitarios relacionados con el tema propuesto, pero también se pueden dar ejemplos concretos para ilustrar la idea.

La imagen de Don Quijote se utiliza mucho en la publicidad.

> La presencia de don Quijote en la publicidad destaca en varios campos claros, comenzando por la literatura, el cine y el teatro, anunciando la propia obra o su adaptación y fuente de inspiración para otras. El segundo es la identificación con su lugar de origen y principales aventuras, La Mancha, tanto en productos de todo tipo, como constituyéndose en icono y foco de atractivo turístico de la zona. El tercero es la publicidad en general, con apariciones casi siempre centradas en las figuras y aventuras más conocidas de la obra: Don Quijote y Sancho Panza, los molinos de viento, Clavileño... Finalmente, están todo tipo de piezas y elementos publicitarios inspirados en el Caballero de la Triste Figura, desde logotipos a envases de productos, pasando por cajas de cerillas, cromos, calendarios y coleccionables. (MUVAP, 2023).[9]

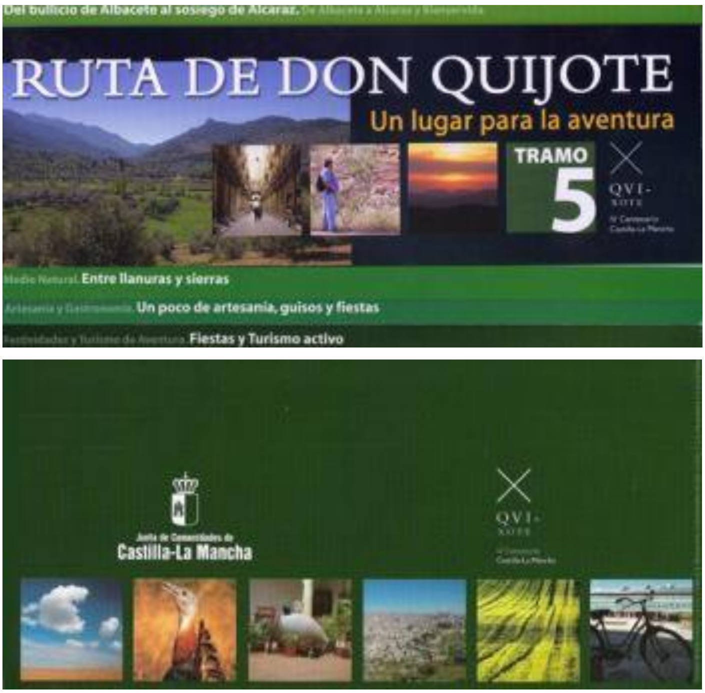


**Imagen 2.** Ejemplo de anuncio publicitario con Don Quijote

*Fuente: Museo virtual de arte publicitario (MUVAP), recuperado de: https://cvc.cervantes.es/artes/muvap/sala6/exposicion/anuncios.htm, el 06.06.2023*

[9] Sala VI: El Quijote en el lenguaje comercial y en la publicidad, recuperado de https://cvc.cervantes.es/artes/muvap/sala6/introduccion.htm, el 06.06.2023.

Los alumnos, individualmente o en grupo, pueden comentar anuncios publicitarios o imágenes publicitarias, hasta crear algunas. También se puede analizar la actitud de nuestro personaje, Don Quijote, y, de esta manera, es posible encadenar con otro aspecto relacionado con la comunicación y con la interculturalidad, el lenguaje no verbal.

Con tal de trabajar con el lenguaje no verbal (gestos, actitudes, postura, contacto visual, distancia entre los interlocutores), proponemos el uso de materiales audio-visuales que tienen mayor impacto. Más concretamente, sugerimos la utilización de un programa de televisión en el cual Teresa Baró habla sobre "El lenguaje no verbal en diversas culturas" (2016), disponible en *YouTube*[10]. En este video se explican diversos gestos, como el de saludar: dar la mano (sobre todo en los negocios), hacer una reverencia (en el caso de los japoneses) cuyo nivel de inclinación depende de la jerarquía, unir las narices (un saludo tradicional de los maoríes, una tribu de Nueva Zelanda), dar el as-salamu aláikum, el saludo islámico, acompañado por el gesto de tocar el pecho/el corazón con la mano, abrazar, dar besos (en España se suele dar dos besos, mientras que, en Holanda, Bélgica, Suiza, se suele dar tres besos y solo un beso en México). Este tipo de actividad se adecua desde los niveles básicos, dado que el hablante con un nivel A2" reconoce y aplica convenciones culturales básicas asociadas a intercambios sociales cotidianos (por ejemplo, diferentes rituales a la hora de saludar)." (MCER, 2021, p. 139)

A partir del nivel B1 del MCER, el hablante "se comporta, por lo general, según las convenciones relativas a la postura, el contacto visual y la distancia entre las personas." (MCER 2021, p. 139). En cuanto al contacto visual, en las culturas occidentales es una manera de abrir los caminos para la conversación, en otras culturas se evita la mirada. La sonrisa, en Asia, indica timidez, incomodidad, mientras que en el Occidente significa alegría, bienvenida, lo que puede producir, a veces confusión. La gesticulación, común para los españoles, representa una falta de buenos modales para otras culturas.

En breve, el lenguaje no verbal no es universal y puede producir malentendidos entre personas de diversas culturas, por lo tanto, requiere mucha atención a la hora de establecer relaciones personales o profesionales y se debe enseñar también en clases de lengua.

---

[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Quj6lyvVPTM, el 07.06.2023.

Un ejemplo ilustrativo es el movimiento de la cabeza hacia abajo que para los rumanos y los españoles significa afirmación, para los búlgaros es una negación. De igual manera, el movimiento de la cabeza de un lado al otro, de la izquierda a la derecha y de la derecha a la izquierda, significa negación para los rumanos y para los españoles, mientras que para los búlgaros es afirmación. En conclusión, un simple gesto puede distorsionar el mensaje que se quiere transmitir y ocasionar malentendidos culturales.

Para los estudiantes que ya tienen un nivel B1 - B2, en conformidad con el *MCER* (MCER, 2002, p. 25), y conocen la terminología básica del área de los negocios, otra posibilidad de abrir nuevas vías en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje es el uso de la herramienta digital de "Hofstede Insights" (2023) que permite la comparación entre países o regiones a base de las seis dimensiones culturales propuestas por Geert Hofstede: distancia al poder, individualismo, masculinidad, miedo a la incertidumbre, orientación a largo plazo, indulgencia. Normalmente, sirven para hacerse una idea general sobre la cultura organizacional de una empresa, para establecer estrategias de marketing, pero también se pueden adaptar a las clases de ELE, para uso general. Los objetivos de esta actividad tienen que ver con la formación y el desarrollo de las destrezas necesarias para el uso de la lengua española en general y para fines profesionales, competencias lingüísticas, discursivas, estratégicas, socio-culturales, pluriculturales.

A continuación, vamos a exponer los resultados obtenidos de la comparación entre España y Rumanía, con referencia a las seis dimensiones culturales mencionadas anteriormente.


**Imagen 3.** Comparación entre España y Rumanía

*Fuente: Hofstede Insights (2023), recuperado de: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=romania%2Cspain, el 06.06.2023*

Asimismo, esta herramienta permite a los usuarios desplegar las descripciones para cada dimensión y obtener más informaciones. Esta vez nos limitamos a la indulgencia.


**Imagen 4.** Grado de indulgencia en España y Rumanía[11]

*Fuente: Hofstede Insights (2023), recuperado de: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=romania%2Cspain, el 06.06.2023*

El uso de la herramienta digital en inglés invita también a un ejercicio de traducción, de mediación.

Teniendo en cuenta las descripciones concernientes a la indulgencia de los dos países, resulta que ni Rumanía ni España son países indulgentes.

[11] Rumanía 20: Con una puntuación muy baja de 20, la cultura rumana es una de moderación. Las sociedades con una puntuación baja en esta dimensión tienen una tendencia al cinismo y al pesimismo. Además, en contraste con las sociedades indulgentes, las sociedades restringidas no ponen mucho énfasis en el tiempo libre y controlan la satisfacción de sus deseos. Las personas con esta orientación tienen la percepción de que sus acciones están restringidas por las normas sociales y sienten que complacerse a sí mismas es algo incorrecto. España 44: Con una puntuación baja de 44, España no es una sociedad indulgente. Las sociedades con una puntuación baja en esta dimensión tienen una tendencia al cinismo y al pesimismo. Además, en contraste con las sociedades indulgentes, las sociedades restringidas no ponen mucho énfasis en el tiempo libre y controlan la satisfacción de sus deseos. Las personas con esta orientación tienen la percepción de que sus acciones están restringidas por las normas sociales y sienten que complacerse a sí mismas es algo incorrecto. [n. trad.].

Tienen una población que suele sentirse restringida en sus acciones por las normas sociales, por lo cual son sociedades pesimistas. Esta conclusión justifica la ampliación del campo de discusión.

El gráfico acompañado por las definiciones de los sistemas de valores nacionales y las eventuales actitudes que se deberían adoptar en las relaciones comerciales internacionales pueden representar el punto de partida para debates sobre las diferencias y las similitudes entre las culturas, la importancia del aspecto físico, la primera impresión en el trabajo, la vestimenta, los buenos modales, la gestión del tiempo, las barreras en la comunicación intercultural, la gastronomía, la religión, el estilo de vida, las fiestas y las tradiciones. Un enfoque comparativo permite al estudiante subrayar las diferencias culturales. La conversación puede empezar con un texto – pretexto, como: "Los saludos se internacionalizan pero es habitual encontrarse con peculiaridades típicas de cada país, región o cultura" (*Protocolo & Etiqueta*, 2023), adaptado de un sitio web dedicado al protocolo oficial, a la divulgación de reglas de conducta en la sociedad.

Para evaluar los conocimientos adquiridos, el docente puede proponer proyectos individuales o en grupo, que contengan varios aspectos relacionados con la comunicación intercultural.

Para resumir, las oportunidades que brindan los ejercicios propuestos para el trabajo en clase de lengua son: la adquisición de nuevos conocimientos mediante la investigación desarrollando competencias en este sentido, la posibilidad de hacer correlaciones entre conocimientos de varios dominios, dado que favorecen el trabajo interdisciplinario y transdisciplinario, el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, la estimulación de la creatividad y de la motivación.

## CONCLUSIÓN

En conclusión, enseñar las diferencias culturales es un proceso que requiere tiempo, paciencia, creatividad y motivación. Es importante fomentar una actitud de curiosidad, estudio, apertura y aprecio hacia otras culturas, para poder vivir o convivir en armonía en una sociedad más tolerante y multicultural. Los diferentes modelos presentados ponen en práctica varias destrezas con tal de mejorar las habilidades lingüísticas, comunicativas, mediáticas, pluriculturales, interculturales y multiculturales del alumnado, competencias imprescindibles para la integración en diversos contextos cotidianos y/o profesionales que suponen comunicación entre diversas culturas.

## BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Baró, T. (2016). *El lenguaje no verbal en diversas culturas*. Recuperado de *YouTube*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Quj6lyvVPTM, el 07.06.2023.

Bayón, E., Cabeza, C., Oliva, C. (2021). *Frecuencias B1. Español comunicativo para el siglo XXI*. Madrid: Edinumen.

Centro Virtual Cervantes. (2023). *Diccionario de términos clave de ELE*. Recuperado de: https://cvc.cervantes.es/ENSENANZA/biblioteca_ele/diccio_ele/indice.htm, el 03.06.2023.

Centro Virtual Cervantes. (2023). *Museo virtual de arte publicitario (MUVAP).* Recuperado de: https://cvc.cervantes.es/artes/muvap/sala6/exposicion/anuncios.htm, el 06.06.2023.

Consejo de Europa. (2002). *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza, evaluación*. Instituto Cervantes para la traducción al español. Recuperado de: http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco/cvc_mer.pdf, el 03.04.2023.

Consejo de Europa. (2021). *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza, evaluación*. *Volumen complementario.* Instituto Cervantes para la traducción al español. Recuperado de: https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco_complementario/mcer_volumen-complementario.pdf, el 05.06.2023.

Encina, A., Corpas, J., Gambluch, C. (2017). *Diverso 2 (A2)*. Madrid: SGEL.

Flaubert, G. (2002). *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*. Paris: Éditions du Boucher.

Furió Blasco, E., Alonso Pérez, M., Marti, L., Blanco Callejo, M. (2016). *El español en entornos profesionales*. Madrid: Edinumen.

Hofstede, G., Hosftede, G.I., Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations. Software of the Mind. Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival.* New York: Mc Graw-Hill.

Jakobson, R. (1975). *Ensayos de lingüística general*. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral S.A.

Moreno, C., Moreno, V., Zurita, P. (2007). *Avance. Curso de español. Nivel intermedio-avanzado*. Madrid: SGEL.

Nemeș, A. (2015). ”La cultura en clase de E/LE”. *STUDIA Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, PHILOLOGIA*. Volumul 60 (LX), 2. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară, p. 101-109.

Oliveras Vilaseca, A. (2000). *Hacia la competencia intercultural en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Estudio del choque cultural y los malentendidos*. Madrid: Edinumen.

Palacios Martínez, I. (coord.). (2019). *Diccionario electrónico de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas*. Recuperado de: https://www.dicenlen.eu/es, el 08.06.2023.

Prada, M. de, Bovet, M, Marcé, P. (2014). *Entorno empresarial: Nivel B2. Madrid: Edelsa.*

Real Academia Española. (actualización 2022). *Diccionario de la lengua española*. Recuperado de: https://dle.rae.es/, el 03.06.2023.

Tylor, E. B. (1977). *Cultura primitiva I. Los orígenes de la cultura.* Trad. por Marcial Suárez. Madrid: Editorial Ayuso.

UNESCO. (2006). *Directrices de la UNESCO sobre la educación intercultural*. Recuperado de: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147878_spa, el 07.06.2023.

V.V.A.A. (2023). *Hofstede Insights*. Recuperado de: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool, el 06.06.2023.

V.V.A.A. (2023). *Protocolo & Etiqueta*. Recuperado de: https://www.protocolo.org/, el 06.06.2023.

# Apprendre une langue étrangère : Mise en abîme identitaire

**ANAMARIA LUPAN**[1]

**Résume :** Le plurilinguisme enrichit la culture de l'humanité tout en proposant, comme l'a montré Wilhelm von Humboldt, différentes manières de penser l'univers. En effet, grâce à la multitude de langages, nous arrivons à mieux voir l'altérité ou, autrement dit, à être plus conscients que chacun construit son monde par le biais du système langagier qu'il emploie.
Afin de pouvoir s'approprier davantage la représentation du monde d'autrui on a deux solutions ; tout d'abord on peut apprendre la langue dans laquelle il s'exprime, opération chronophage, ou, une deuxième solution serait de faire appel à la traduction, exercice qui présente certes des inconvénients – il y a des aspects qui restent en deçà ou en delà de la traduction, qui échappent à la traduction – mais qui nous permet tout au moins d'entrer en dialogue avec Autrui. Dans notre étude nous voulons nous pencher sur le rapport établi entre l'apprentissage des langues étrangères et la formation de l'identité ; est-ce que l'identité peut-elle s'enrichir grâce à l'apprentissage des langues ? ou l'identité constitue plutôt un concept stable, immuable, quoi qu'il arrive à l'individu en question ? Un autre aspect qui nous interpelle est les buts de l'apprentissage des langues à l'époque de la technologie. Quels sont les avantages de ce processus si parfois les machines arrivent à mener à bien la traduction ? Serait-il possible que les outils technologiques remplacent la connaissance des langues étrangères ?

**Mots clé :** *traduction, apprentissage, langues étrangères, technologies, altérité*

## INTRODUCTION

François Grosjean montre dans son ouvrage *Parler plusieurs langues. Le monde des bilingues* (Grosjean, 2015) que le bilinguisme est monnaie courante dans la société actuelle. Attentif au phénomène langagier qui définit, selon

[1] Maître-assistante dr., Université Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.

lui, notre époque, il essaie de dresser une liste avec les raisons pour lesquelles les individus parlent deux langues :

> Le bilinguisme se manifeste dans tous les pays du monde, dans toutes les classes de la société, dans tous les groupes d'âge. Il se développe lorsqu'un individu a besoin de communiquer en plusieurs langues, et est dû à de nombreux facteurs tels que le contact de langues à l'intérieur d'un pays ou d'une région, la nécessité d'utiliser une langue de communication (*lingua franca*) en plus d'une langue première, la présence d'une langue parlée différente de la langue écrite au sein d'un même population, la migration politique, économique ou religieuse, le commerce international, les cursus scolaires suivis par les enfants, l'intermariage et la décision d'élever les enfants avec deux langues, etc. (Grosjean, 2015, p. 13)

Comme on peut l'observer, le bilinguisme est déterminé à la fois par des contextes personnels et par des situations professionnelles ou éducationnelles ; en outre, parfois le bilinguisme est vu à petite échelle (échelle personnelle) et parfois à grande échelle (commerce, politique, etc.). Dans chaque cas, quand on parle du bilinguisme on pense à un individu qui entre en rapport avec une autre langue. En effet, ce rapport est problématique étant donné que « plusieurs langues sont en fait plusieurs visions du monde » (Humboldt, 2000, p. 131) comme l'affirme Wilhelm von Humboldt, ce qui veut dire que chaque langue donne naissance à un autre regard sur l'univers.

Une question épineuse surgit : comment les langues forgent-elles les identités ? Dans notre étude nous nous proposons d'analyser et d'identifier la relation entre la / les langue(s) et la / les identité(s). Dans un premier temps nous allons nous pencher sur une radiographie des notions-clé de notre travail, la langue et l'identité, pour mieux circonscrire le sujet ; puis, dans un deuxième temps, nous allons examiner le concept d'« identité langagière » afin de rendre visibles les implications de cette notion sur l'ouverture au monde, sur l'apprentissage des autres langues étrangères ; et, enfin, nous identifierons et questionnerons les stratégies adéquates pour échapper à l'unicité de la langue officielle. Comme la problématique à laquelle nous tentons de répondre est très complexe, nous suivons une approche interdisciplinaire, située à la frontière de la philosophie, de la sociologie et de la didactique. Notre but est d'offrir un aperçu sur ce qu'apprendre, voire parler, plusieurs langues veut dire[2].

## LANGUAGE(S), LANGUE(S) ET IDENTITÉ(S)

Dans *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Foucault, 1966), Michel Foucault identifie et examine le devenir du langage. Si à l'âge classique le langage est perçu comme représentation de la pensée, étant, par conséquent, « invisible ou presque » (Foucault, 1966, p. 93), à la Renaissance celui-ci est considéré comme un élément allant de soi, sur lequel personne ne va s'interroger. Invisible, le langage n'était pas un sujet d'intérêt. Toutefois, pour le rendre visible, les gens y ont créé « un langage second – celui du commentaire, de l'exégèse, de l'érudition ». (Foucault, 1966, p. 93) Situation étrange, le double fait voir l'original. En outre, le XVII^e^ siècle marque un tournant dans la manière de penser le langage : si son existence se réduit à son fonctionnement, son existence doit toujours être démontrée ; d'où l'apparition de deux stratégies emblématiques même à notre époque : le commentaire et la critique. Bien que les deux aient le même but, rendre visible le langage, celles-ci ne suivent pas le même schéma : « la critique s'oppose au commentaire comme l'analyse d'une forme visible à la découverte d'un contenu caché » (Foucault, 1966, p. 94). Enfin, le langage commence à exister en soi-même au XIX^e^ siècle, au moment où il « devient objet de connaissance » (Foucault, 1966, p. 313). De plus, la littérature donne au langage un force : il peut créer des mondes. Objet parmi d'autres objets, le langage acquiert une individualité ; celui-ci existe sans être accompagné par un commentaire ou par la critique.

La langue est un concept difficile à saisir étant donné qu'il est employé à la fois dans la terminologie scientifique que dans le vocabulaire quotidien. En ce qui nous concerne, nous allons retenir quant à elles les remarques de Françoise Gadet :

2 Dans la constitution de cette structure nous faisons un clin d'œil au titre de l'ouvrage de Pierre Bourdieu (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Paris : Librairie Arthème Fayard.

> Au-delà d'objets d'étude supposés objectivables et délimités, les langues existent d'abord par les pratiques de ceux qui y ont affaire. Pour les sociolinguistes les langues sont ainsi des abstractions, largement politiques, plaquées sur des dynamiques langagières diversifiées et hétérogènes. (Gadet, 2021)

La langue, par conséquent, est déterminée par ses locuteurs. Son existence est définie par la pratique, par le discours. On voit déjà que la langue n'existe pas en dehors des gens qui l'utilisent. On pourrait même anticiper que celle-ci n'a pas d'identité en elle-même, mais, ce sont plutôt les locuteurs qui vont lui attribuer une certaine dimension identitaire par leurs actions : la fréquence, la manière et les circonstances où ils font appel à une cette langue.

On regrette que Foucault ne se soit pas penché sur la pluralité des langages, sur les langues étrangères. Toutefois, nous pouvons tenter de voir comment se présente la métamorphose de l'identité ou autrement dit de l'indentification, concept associé fréquemment au multilinguisme. L'identité, notion actuelle et qui bénéficie des études de plusieurs domaines[3], a fait couler beaucoup d'encre. Anne-Marie Drouin-Hans identifie la définition du mot « identique » dans le *Vocabulaire philosophie* de Lalande ; les aspects définitoires de cet adjectif déterminent de manière directe le mot « identité » :

> A) Est identique ce qui est unique quoique perçu, conçu ou nommé de manières différentes : ex. l'étoile du matin, identique à l'étoile du soir, le Léman, identique au lac de Genève ;
> B) un individu est identique à lui-même en ce qu'il est le même à divers moments de son existence ;

[3] Nous avons essayé d'identifier les colloques dédiés au concept d'« identité » qui ont eu lieu récemment dans l'espace francophone : *Enjeux de l'appartenance culturelle en Europe* (Université Catholique de Lyon, le 10 septembre 2020) ; *Les clés du succès de mise en valeur de l'identité culinaire pour le tourisme gourmand et culturel* (Canada, 2021) ; *Corps, identité(s) et sociétés* (colloque international, Strasbourg, les 8-9 septembre 2022) ; *Être francophone : langue, identité et transformation sociale* (colloque étudiant, Canada, Université Sainte-Anne, le 4 mars 2023) ; *Colloque de Criminologie : Violence, Stigmatisation et Identité* (Faculté de Droit, les Facultés de l'Université Catholique de Lille, les 16-17 mars 2023) ; *Langues et identité dans les récits d'origine du Moyen Âge* (journées d'étude, Université Savoie Mont-Blanc, les 3-4 avril 2023) ; *Pauvreté-Identité-Société* (Suisse, Berne, le 9 mai 2023).

C) Deux ou plusieurs objets de pensée, tout en étant numériquement distincts, peuvent être considérés comme présentant exactement les mêmes propriétés ou qualités. (Drouin-Hans, 2006)

Si nous suivons cette définition, l'identité serait, en effet, ce qui assure l'unité et la cohésion d'un individu ou d'un groupe ; par ailleurs, l'identité insère la différence au sein de la similitude étant donné que la distinction entre les objets n'est pas déterminée de manière inexorable par l'individu ou le groupe mais celle-ci demande un regard attentif sur les qualités et les propriétés du sujet en question. De plus, l'identité est aussi la continuité dans le temps : continuité d'un individu ou d'un groupe ; bien que le passage du temps implique des changements à plusieurs niveaux, l'identité n'est pas affectée par l'écoulement temporel étant donné qu'elle fait appel à la profondeur, c'est une « identité-ipséité » (si on fait appel à la terminologie forgé par Paul Ricœur) (Ricœur, 1985).

L'identité représente également les diverses facettes d'un même groupe ou d'un même individu. Nous devons ajouter que dans tous les cas on ne fait pas référence à l'identité *stricto sensu* mais à la cohésion, à ce qui assure l'unité et la continuité d'un individu ou d'un groupe. Nous désirons, par conséquent, employer une définition plus souple et plus large du mot « identité ». Par ailleurs, à notre époque *connectiviste*[4], l'identité dépasse les frontières étroites d'une similitude à soi pour faire appel à l'altérité. De cette manière on passe à des concepts plus généreux comme l'« identité culturelle », l'« identité langagière » ou bien d'autres notions qui essaient d'établir un rapport fragile entre les différences et les similarités. Le concept

[4] Quand nous parlons du « connectivisme » nous voulons faire référence aux études récentes sur les nouvelles théories de l'apprentissage : « Plusieurs chercheurs ont tenté de décrire le connectivisme, dont Guité (2004) qui le caractérise comme un modèle d'apprentissage qui reconnaît les bouleversements sociaux occasionnés par les nouvelles technologies, lesquelles font en sorte que l'apprentissage n'est plus seulement une activité individualiste et interne, mais est aussi fonction de l'entourage et des outils de communication dont on dispose. Un des impacts les plus systémiques du connectivisme réside dans sa capacité à reconfigurer l'éducation en optimisant la valeur des réseaux. Les liens entre les éléments de connaissance construisent un savoir encore plus intégré, à condition d'accorder de la valeur à la capacité d'objectivation de l'apprenant. Le connectivisme est en quelque sorte 'poussé' par la compréhension du processus décisionnel de l'apprenant (Anderson et Dron, 2011) ». (Duplàa, Talaat, 2011)

d'« identité » est indispensable à l'existence ; pareil au cas de la langue, qui comme on l'a vu, n'a eu d'existence propre qu'au moment où celle-ci a commencé à avoir une identité propre, le sujet, qu'il soit individuel ou collectif, ne peut pas fonctionner, comme nous le rappelle Tzvetan Todorov dans son étude sur la vie commune[5], sans le regard d'autrui. L'identité a besoin de celui qui est différent pour acquérir une voix propre.

À cet égard Carole Ferret observe que :

> Tandis qu'elle se galvaudait, la notion d'identité s'est en même temps communautarisée, en glissant nettement d'une dimension individuelle à une dimension collective. Si je parle de « mon identité », ce n'est pas seulement de moi, Carole Ferret, en tant qu'individu unique dont il est question, mais aussi en tant que membres de collectifs plus vastes : celui des Français, des ethnologues, des parisiens, des femmes, etc. En un mot, non tant « moi » que « nous et les autres » (cf. Todorov 1989), puisque chacun se définit aussi principalement par rapport à ceux qui ne font pas partie de son groupe. (Ferret, 2011)

La logique de l'identité étendue s'applique, selon nous, également à la langue. S'il y a une identité langagière c'est plutôt pour souligner la cohérence d'une nation et non pas pour élever des murs entre les nations. Autrement dit, le concept d' « identité langagière » est plutôt une invitation au dialogue qu'un indice d'enfermement. C'est, tout au moins, la prémisse de laquelle on part dans notre deuxième partie de l'étude.

## LES LANGUES : « SYMBOLES D'IDENTITÉ[6] »

Pierre Bourdieu attire notre attention sur le concept de « langue officielle » :

---

[5] Tzvetan Todorov, *La vie commune. Essai d'anthropologie générale* (1996). Paris : Seuil, coll. « La couleur des idées », p. 5 : « On dit que l'homme est un être social, mais que signifie exactement cette phrase ? Quelles sont les conséquences ce constat banal, qu'il n'existe pas de je sans tu ? En quoi consiste, pour l'individu, la contrainte de ne jamais connaître qu'une vie commune ? »

[6] Nous empruntons cette structure à Michael Byram : « Les langues sont des symboles d'identité ; elles sont utilisées par leurs locuteurs pour marquer leurs identités. Les individus s'en servent aussi pour catégoriser leurs pairs en fonction de la langue qu'ils parlent ». (Michael Byram, Conférence intergouvernementale, *Langues de scolarisation : vers un Cadre pour l'Europe*, Strasbourg, les 16-18 octobre 2006, p. 5, https://rm.coe.int/etude-

> Parler de *la* langue, sans autre précision, comme font les linguistes, c'est accepter tacitement la définition *officielle* de la langue *officielle* d'une unité politique : cette langue est celle qui, dans les limites territoriales de cette unité, s'impose à tous les ressortissants comme la seule légitime, et cela d'autant plus impérativement que la circonstance est plus officielle. (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 27).

Le sociologue français met en question l'unicité de cette langue qui est acceptée, d'ailleurs, sans hésitation ; de cette façon, *la* langue devient, en effet, la langue du pouvoir. Instrument de soumission, imposant des règles claires et précises, la langue constitue en égale mesure un outil de contrôle. La langue officielle, la langue du pays où on vit, joue un double rôle : celle-ci est à la fois marque identitaire et lieu d'enfermement, prison de notre épanouissement personnel. Elle nous met des lunettes : le monde qu'on voit est celui présenté par les lunettes obtenues parfois malgré nous ; autrement dit, la vie dans un certain contexte prédispose à l'accumulation des partis-pris et des habitudes qu'on arrive à considérer comme étant « normaux ».

En effet, la langue officielle présente certains avantages ; celle-ci offre de la stabilité, des points de repère, à une communauté. C'est elle qui va occuper le point central dans la radiographie identitaire d'une nation. Nommer une langue officielle c'est imposer une hiérarchie. La langue d'une nation est, pour ses habitants, la langue maternelle.

Jean-Paul Resweber[7] souligne dans son étude sur la philosophie du langage, l'influence de la langue maternelle sur l'individu. Selon lui, c'est celle-ci qui établit le rapport entre chaque personne et l'univers ; la langue maternelle a la force de tracer et de configurer les sentiers de la représentation du monde.

---

preliminaire-langues-et-identites-conference-intergouvernemental/16805c5d4b (consulté le 16 mai 2023)).

7 Jean-Paul Resweber, (1979). *La philosophie du langage*, 3e édition corrigée. Paris : PUF, coll. « Que sais-je ? », p. 17 : « On n'insistera jamais assez sur la fonction irremplaçable de la langue maternelle. C'est elle qui étend au niveau du corps social la perception du corps propre ; grâce à elle l'individu se réclame d'une logique, qui donne forme et force à ses actions ; en elle, il trouve à son désir une expression exemplaire qui le préserve du morcellement et du nivellement ».

Si nous sommes inquiets de cette place étrange, de cet écart établi entre la stabilité et l'emprisonnement de la langue officielle, Patrick Charadeau[8] nous rassure : il nous montre que c'est le discours, la manière de parler, qui assure l'identité culturelle et non pas la langue. Autrement dit, on échappe à la prison de la langue officielle si on envisage à la fois l'identité linguistique et l'identité discursive ; l'ensemble porte le nom, selon le linguiste, de « compétence langagière ». Ce concept est une construction, un rapport entre « langue-discours-identité-culture » (Patrick Charadeau, p. 346). Comme on peut le voir, les langues ont une influence significative sur l'identité mais cette influence est vécue de manière singulière (dans une certaine mesure). Pour rendre plus visible l'impact des langues sur l'identité d'une nation, Patrick Charadeau offre des exemples éloquents ; il nous rappelle que les cultures française, belge et africaine ne sont pas identiques en dépit de l'usage d'une même langue, le français.

On pourrait s'imaginer que la langue officielle était un miroir ; chaque membre de la nation projette dans ce miroir l'image qu'il a de soi et des autres en fonction de sa propre identité. Comme dans *Alice au pays des merveilles*, le miroir rétrécit ou s'élargit en fonction de l'individu qui se positionne devant celui-ci.

Au moment où on considère que la compétence langagière traite aussi de la culture et de l'identité, on s'inscrit dans une perspective qui favorise l'autoréflexion, l'autonomie et l'introspection. Les étudiants de FOS (français sur objectifs spécifiques) qui apprennent le vocabulaire de la restauration et de l'hôtellerie, par exemple, vont mieux comprendre le rituel que les Français utilisent à table s'ils vont s'ouvrir à la manière de vivre des Français. Les

---

[8] Patrick Charadeau, « Langue, discours et identité culturelle » (2001). Dans *Études de linguistique appliquée*, ISSN 0071-190X, Éditions Klincksieck, DOI10.3917/ela.123.0341, https://www.cairn.info/revue-ela-2001-3-page-341.htm&wt.src=pdf (consulté le 5 mai 2023), p. 343 : « Malgré des idées tenaces concernant l'existence et le rôle que peut jouer une langue par rapport à l'identité d'une communauté sociale, l'identité linguistique ne doit pas être confondue avec l'identité discursive. Cela veut dire que ce n'est pas la langue qui témoigne des spécificités culturelles, mais le discours. Pour le dire autrement, ce ne sont ni les mots dans leur morphologie ni les règles de syntaxe qui sont porteurs de culturel, mais les *manières de parler* de chaque communauté, les façons d'employer les mots, les manières de raisonner, de raconter, d'argumenter pour blaguer, pour expliquer, pour persuader, pour séduire ».

mots désignent des choses mais aussi une culture, une spécificité culturelle. Ainsi, le repas dépasse, pour un Français, le fait de se nourrir, et devient un moment convivial. Un étudiant roumain qui vit de manière directe l'art de se nourrir français (en immersion) ou qui l'apprend dans un contexte éducationnel (grâce aux documents authentiques), enrichit et multiplie son identité langagière ; à partir de ce moment, pour lui, le repas aura plusieurs dimensions en fonction du contexte auquel il se rapporte.

## LIRE DES TRADUCTIONS OU PARLER PLUSIEURS LANGUES : IDENTITÉS PLURIELLES

Le *Cadre commun européen de référence pour les langues* (CCERL, 2001) encourage et promeut le plurilinguisme ; pour les auteurs de ce guide, le plurilinguisme est synonyme d'une meilleure compétence de communication. Et cela puisque les langues apprises « sont en corrélation et interagissent » (CCERL). Si nous continuons l'analogie à laquelle nous avons fait référence dès le début de notre étude, plusieurs langues offrent plusieurs visions du monde et, en effet, plusieurs identités. Toutefois, malgré la perception de Humboldt, ces perspectives ne sont pas séparées ; celles-ci sont en interaction selon le principe des vases communicantes. Ainsi, parler plusieurs langues étrangères équivaut-il à vivre dans plusieurs pays et à avoir plusieurs identités, ou, tout au moins, plusieurs identités culturelles.

Le plurilinguisme a été étudié aussi par les linguistes ; arrêtons sur le travail de Merrill Swain et de Jim Cummins, auquel fait référence Grosjean dans son analyse sur le bilinguisme. Leurs études sur les enfants monolingues et les enfants plurilingues ont démontré que :

> les enfants bilingues sont plus sensibles aux relations sémantiques entre mots, plus avancés dans la perception du lien arbitraire entre la forme et le sens des mots, en avance sur l'analyse grammaticale d'une phrase, qu'ils montrent une plus grande sensibilité sociale et ont une pensée plus divergente (Grosjean, 2015, p. 156)

Comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, l'ouverture aux autres langues représente aussi une ouverture sociale ; apprendre et comprendre des langues étrangères correspondent à une meilleure adaptation sociale.

Comprendre la relativité du rapport entre *signifiant* et *signifié* favorise l'adaptation à de nouvelles situations. En outre, cette manière d'envisager la langue peut être encouragée par l'exercice de la traduction. Lire ou faire des traductions est un processus qui trace des ponts entre les cultures.

Si l'apprentissage des langues demande du temps, la traduction est une activité moins chronophage ; bien que la traduction ait reçu plusieurs définitions[9], celle-ci correspond, selon nous, à un outil de médiation culturelle. C'est la traduction – en tandem avec l'apprentissage des langues, qui est, certes, en quelque sorte, le couronnement du processus de traduction – qui assure en filigrane les liens entre des nations différentes, voire opposées.

Un regard similaire est à retrouver chez George Steiner qui disait qu'« étudier la traduction, c'est étudier le langage » (Steiner, 1978, p. 56). Nous adhérons à ce point de vue et nous voulons, en outre, aller plus loin ; ainsi, selon nous, étudier la traduction c'est étudier la langue et, en même temps, s'étudier. Comprendre la manière dont on organise l'univers, la manière dont on représente les choses, les mots qu'on a et qu'on n'a pas dans une ou plusieurs langue(s) est un véritable outil d'introspection.

À l'époque de la communication, de la connexion et de l'identité numérique se comprendre et comprendre autrui sont des processus essentiels. Puisque l'identité numérique est une identité si volatile, cet exercice d'auto-connaissance devient presque un devoir. Et comment le faire sinon en relation à autrui ? Nous imaginons alors, selon la perspective deleuzienne, un univers rhizomique (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980), où le rapport entre dominé et dominant n'existe plus. Dans cet univers parler signifiera établir des relations avec autrui, le comprendre et se comprendre mieux.

---

[9] La traduction a été envisagée de plusieurs points de vue. Nous allons reprendre quelques regards sur cette activité qui a interpelé des linguistes, des littéraires, des traducteurs, des didacticiens, etc. : « Comprendre c'est traduire ». [George Steiner (1978). *Après Babel. Une poétique du dire et de la traduction*, traduit de l'anglais par Lucienne Lotringer, Paris : Albin Michel George Steiner, p. 28] ; « […] la communication est une traduction. Étudier la traduction, c'est étudier le langage ». (*Ibid.*, p. 56) ; « dire presque la même chose ». (Umberto Eco (2003). *Dire presque la même chose. Expériences de traduction*, traduit de l'italien par Myriem Bouzaher, Paris : Bernard Grasset, p. 7) ; « construire un double du système textuel » (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

L'univers rhizomique de Deleuze réapparaît, sous une apparence un peu plus ordonnée, chez Umberto Eco. Son rêve de créer pour le monde de demain un espace d'entente grâce à l'ouverture à autrui, grâce à l'empathie, et grâce au pouvoir de l'imagination (se représenter la magie secrète cachée derrières des années et des années de signification pour chaque mot) peut sembler à la première approche une utopie :

> Le problème de la culture européenne de l'avenir ne réside certainement pas dans le triomphe du polyglottisme total […], mais dans une communauté de personnes qui peuvent saisir l'esprit, le parfum, l'atmosphère d'une parole différente. Une Europe de polyglottes n'est pas une Europe de personnes qui parlent couramment beaucoup de langues, mais, dans la meilleure des hypothèses, de personnes qui peuvent se rencontrer en parlant chacune sa propre langue et en comprenant celle de l'autre, mais qui, ne sachant pourtant pas parler celle-ci de façon courante, en la comprenant, même péniblement, comprendraient le « génie », l'univers culturel que chacun exprime en parlant la langue de ses ancêtres et de sa tradition. (Eco, 2003, p. 395)

Toutefois si les cours de langues se fixent comme objectif de présenter par-delà la langue d'une nation, sa culture, sa manière de vivre, de voir et de se rapporter à l'univers, cet espace pourrait prendre vie un jour. Si la langue a une identité, celle-ci doit être transmise et apprise dans un véritable cours de langue, un cours qui dépasse la composante linguistique et met en avant la compétence langagière, telle que nous l'avons présentée ci-dessus.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dans notre étude nous avons tenté de voir comment les langues définissent notre identité. Si chaque individu a, dans son groupe d'origine une identité multiple, appartenant, comme on a pu le voir, à la fois à plusieurs groupes et sous-groupes (professionnel ; religieux ; loisirs, etc.), la connaissance de plusieurs langues pose problème quant à la pluralité de l'identité. Si on est Roumain et on parle français on ne devient pas Roumain et Français. Toutefois, la langue maternelle (ou la langue de l'État dans lequel on vit) peut cohabiter harmonieusement avec d'autres langues étrangères. Et cela parce que l'identité langagière est une identité flexible, ouverte et tournée vers autrui. En outre, entre les langues, un dialogue fructueux se met en place et on arrive à mieux voir notre langue au moment où on apprend plusieurs langues étrangères. Le poète allemand Johann Wolfgang von Goethe affirmait déjà à la fin du XVIIIe siècle que « [c]elui qui ne connaît pas de langues étrangères ignore sa propre langue » (Goethe, 1842, p. 21). Cet aspect est d'autant plus visible à l'époque de la *connectivité*, de la globalisation et de l'échange interculturel comme mode de vie. Le nomadisme langagier pourrait, par conséquent, définir le mieux l'identité langagière actuelle. Si le *Cadre commun européen de référence pour les langues* ne vise plus la « maîtrise » d'une langue, c'est aussi parce qu'il encourage l'enrichissement langagier : aller de langue en langue, parler plusieurs langues afin de comprendre plusieurs cultures. La compétence langagière participe de manière directe à la mise en place d'un monde meilleur : un monde de la tolérance, du dialogue, de l'ouverture vers autrui. Dans un tel monde la guerre n'a pas de place. En conséquence, parler plusieurs langues veut dire mieux comprendre celui qui n'est pas comme nous et construire ensemble la paix et l'entente.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Bourdieu, Pierre (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Paris : Librairie Arthème Fayard.

Deleuze, Gilles ; Félix Guattari (1980). *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2 : Mille plateau*, Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, coll. « Critique ».

Eco, Umberto (2003). *Dire presque la même chose. Expériences de traduction*, traduit de l'italien par Myriem Bouzaher, Paris : Bernard Grasset.

Foucault, Michel (1966). *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris : Éditions Gallimard, coll. « Tel ».

Goethe. Johann Wolfgang von, Maximes et réflexions (1842). Traduit par S. Sklower, Paris : Éditeurs Libraires.

Grosjean, François (2015). *Parler plusieurs langues. Le monde des bilingues*, Paris : Éditions Albin Michel.

Humboldt, Wilhelm von (2000). *Sur le caractère national des langues et d'autres écrits sur le langage*, Présentés, traduits et commentés par Denis Thouard, Paris : Editions du Seuil, coll. « Essais ».

Resweber, Jean-Paul (1979). *La philosophie du langage*, 3e édition corrigée. Paris : PUF, coll. « Que sais-je ? ».

Ricœur, Paul (1985). *Temps et récit 3*, Paris : Seuil, coll. « Points ».

Steiner, George (1978). *Après Babel. Une poétique du dire et de la traduction*, traduit de l'anglais par Lucienne Lotringer, Paris : Albin Michel.

Todorov, Tzvetan, *La vie commune. Essai d'anthropologie générale* (1996). Paris : Seuil, coll. « La couleur des idées ».

**SITOGRAPHIE**

****Cadre commun européen de référence pour les langues : apprendre, enseigner, évaluer*, Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg, https://rm.coe.int/16802fc3a8 (consulté le 12 mai 2023)

Byram, Michael, Conférence intergouvernementale, *Langues de scolarisation : vers un Cadre pour l'Europe*, Strasbourg, 16-18 octobre 2006, https://rm.coe.int/etude-preliminaire-langues-et-identites-conference-intergouvernemental/16805c5d4b (consulté le 16 mai 2023).

Charadeau, Patrick « Langue, discours et identité culturelle » (2001). Dans *Études de linguistique appliquée,* ISSN 0071-190X, Éditions Klincksieck, DOI10.3917/ela.123.0341, https://www.cairn.info/revue-ela-2001-3-page-341.htm&wt.src=pdf (consulté le 5 mai 2023).

Drouin-Hans, Anne-Marie (2006). « Identité » Dans *Le Télémaque*, n° 29, https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-telemaque-2006-1-page-17.htm#pa9 (consulté le 20 mai 2023).

Duplàa, Emmanuel, Nadia Talaat, Connectivisme et formation en ligne. Étude de cas d'une formation initiale d'enseignants du secondaire en Ontario. Dans *Distances et savoirs* 2011/4 (Vol. 9), pages 541 à 564, https://www.cairn.info/revue-distances-et-savoirs-2011-4-page-541.htm (consulté le 20 mai 2023).

Ferret, Carole (2011). « L'identité, une question de définition », *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, |mis en ligne le 1er janvier 2012. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/asiecentrale/1516 (consulté le 1er mai 2019).

Gadet, Françoise (2021). « Langue » *in Langue et société,* HS1 (Hors-série), Mis en ligne sur Cairn.info le 23/09/2021, https://doi.org/10.3917/ls.hs01.0190 (consulté le 20 mai 2023).

# Hybridization, Remediation and 'Impurity' in a Global Context: English as the Global Language of Fractures[1]

**CĂLINA PĂRĂU[2]**

**Abstract:** Bridging ESP and critical thinking skills could be a valuable opportunity to further reflect on the complex discursive dynamics between shared assumptions about the world and idiosyncratic resources of meaning. ESP should not only be bound to disciplinary knowledge and vocabulary, but rather connected to the meta-discursive and meta-cognitive insights that enable students to become aware of the ways in which knowledge is represented and constructed through disciplinary discourses. This approach might require a distinct form of attention towards communicative abilities, 'global' competences and instruments of knowledge and inquiry. "Rhetorical awareness" and a special preoccupation with the idea of cultural or social imaginary could shape the ways in which students make sense of contexts in order to produce language. In a world in which context is specified by multilayered semiotic codes and relations, it has become increasingly important to match the process of language acquisition with the possibility of gaining interdisciplinary responsibility, cultural awareness and an understanding of the fractured transcultural modern "world system". Teaching specialized vocabulary is inseparable from a continuous reflection on the ways in which contexts mobilize "signifying practices". The paper aims at analyzing the role of various inherently global or transcultural forms of creolité in teaching ESP for students studying International Relations. Therefore, the focus will be on untangling the various literacies and associated skills needed to use English in a divided, fragmented and globalized public sphere.

**Keywords**: *language for specific purposes, world-system, meaning, hybrid, transcultural, intercultural communicative competence*

---

[1] This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-1234.

[2] PhD Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of Letters, "Babeș-Bolyai" University.

## THE LANGUAGE OF DIGNITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES

The idea of a global community is marked by a cosmopolitan dream of shared values, universality of human rights and collective frames of mediated culture. The interconnected world we are living in has been generated by the 'advent' of the free-market and the construction of a post-national global arena. The international sphere has become a reference point in shaping identities, trying to envision a sense of global citizenship and a transnational sense of community conflating challenges and passions. For Benedict Anderson, "imagined communities" have been created around the concept of nation-sates which have substituted the 'divine' legitimization of societies. Nowadays, we might need to ask ourselves how is an "imagined community" being created, not based on national or divine legitimacy, but rather as a reflection of "the multimodality of meaning making practices" (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 7) (which is no longer discourse or narrative centered). The multiple voices advocating for worthy causes and global issues are compelling, but how can they actually reconcile the complex intricacies of a discontinuous planetary community relying on English as a unified global language of advocacy, global social movements and 'residual' forms of subjectivity?

The holistic or discontinuous relations between forms of representation are negotiated by the global media, which is weaving in 'diversity', customizing various forms of global, transnational identification, as values of solidarity and cultures of protest are being played out inside and outside borders. As Dontella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow pointed out, the new "system of complex internationalism provides both threats and opportunities" (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, p. 2) as ideas and frames are undergoing processes of transnationalization to become the repertoires of social movements. Discourses underlying possibilities of political action usually follow the diffusion, domestication, externalization pattern (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, p. 2) as they contribute to the creation of solidarity networks across the globe. Human symbolic and narrative production has become even more entangled, as the intersections between subjective, national and global 'struggles' have changed our perceptions of 'community', integration, appropriation and participation. Then, what kind of sensibilities are fostered inside these new global 'archaeologies' that mobilize resources and how is the language of these hybrid sensibilities being created, naturalized and employed? In other words, which are the solidarity values that our global language still draws upon and how does it reconcile with the fragmentation brought by our contemporary individualized culture? In his book discussing the ways in which various paradigms have defined the relations between language and referent or between *bodies* and semiotization, Richard Terdiman notices that it has become even more difficult to "pass over the border of difference" not only because of ideological reasons, but also as a consequence of our fallacious competence "to ventriloquize for difference- to say in *their* voice what *they* would say, given that they are not *us*." (Terdiman, 2005, p. 149)

Postmodernism has sought to loosen the grip of *grand récits* (Lyotard) or meta-narratives as a teleological force of semiotic order, allowing for a more decentralized view on the circulation of signifiers and meanings. Nonetheless, this proliferation of meaning-making practices outside the narrative scheme of purposiveness has also made us witness a "multiplicity and scattering of facts" (Terdiman, 2005, p. 151) that can no longer be subsumed to a monolingual identity or frame. Despite this fragmentation, English is still the unified language of global representation, enabling individuals to inscribe their "dual memories" (Mignolo's concept referring to memories encoded using more than one language) in "deterritorialized" frames with their own specific "poetics of relation" (Édouard Glissant) that extends biographies and identities. So, how important is this competence "to ventriloquize for difference" on a decolonial global arena made up of both the communicable and incommunicable dimensions of exile, roots and subjectivities?

On the one hand, English language is undoubtedly the language of political engagement, public relations, scholarship and cultural memory, but, on the other hand, as Nick Stevenson puts it, "modern cultural forms integrate subjects into a depoliticized culture, which bypasses the public sphere where claims related to rightness could be discussed." (Stevenson, 2003, p. 70) This article is not going to focus, though, on re-definitions of community against the backdrop of global political engagement and global citizenship, but rather on the inseparable ways in which 'global' semiotic competences (defined in relation to the idea of a global 'community' of exchange and communication) both empower and "disenfranchise", (Corbett, 2003, p. 15) as they foster a hybridization of political realities and representational systems. The ultimate goal is to try to understand these interdisciplinary, intercultural and transcultural competences in the light of English for Specific Purposes at the academic level.

Foreign language teaching goals should be perceived as part of a broader humanistic curriculum (Corbett, 2003, p. 3), emphasizing the importance of 'intercultural communicative competence' that draws on a multidisciplinary field. The complexity of this competence lies in the focus on *mediation* as the core skill needed for the systemic positioning in-between different social, cultural and linguistic varieties. In his inaugural lecture at Collège de France in 1970, Michel Foucault had already pointed towards the ways in which the ritualistic dimension engraved in disciplinary knowledge and authorship prescribes us to distinct forms of belonging right from the very beginning of thought articulation. Furthermore, discourse is seen by Foucault as a separate reality containing its inherently disruptive uncertainties and fears which usually fail to prevail over the order and coherence of institutionally orchestrated discursive practices. The speaking subject is not seen as a bearer of discourse but more like a 'breach' in the predictable order of the discursive 'tapestry'. Drawing on Foucault's ideas, we might gain further insights into this in-betweenness of mediation that is central to the understanding of 'intercultural communicative competence' (ICC) as an essential skill for tackling symbolic reality at the intersection between the global and the local. According to Corbett, ICC encompasses a capacity to relativise oneself in the process of interpreting and relating information. Moreover, following Foucault, we might argue that this intercultural discursive relativisation is also a form of mediating between the uncertainties of discourse as an *event* and the socio-cultural reconciliation of this relativised self inside disciplinary structures. Discourse production at the crossroads between our 'mother tongue' and second language acquisition or between disciplinary certainties and inter-disciplinary uncertainties becomes, thus, a complex phenomenon that requires us to acknowledge the negotiation between various 'fears' or forms of in-betweenness and the multiplicities of self-assertion in a globalized world. These forms of mediation and relativisation are part of the complex infrastructure of scattered, externalized meanings and archetypes that make up our common, global language.

## THE VOICES OF DIFFERENT OTHERS AND MULTIPLE SELVES

One of the first concepts that will help us gain further insight into this multilayered transfer expands on Mikhail Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*. As initially conceptualized, the idea of *heteroglossia* applies mostly to literary forms as the interaction site of many forms of consciousness, voices and their discursive appropriation of reality and subjectivity. However, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese show how these 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' forces underlying the tension of dialogicality might also apply to language acquisition and language production from two main angles. First, Blackledge and Creese distance themselves from multilingualism which presupposes a separation of languages and find the concept of *heteroglossia* more appropriate for exploring "the stratified diversity of language" (Blackledge & Creese, 2014, p. 3) that points more towards multidiscursivity and the cluster of features embedded in language, understood as *practice* and performance. The second understanding of *heteroglossia* is related to the words of the others that lie at the core of language production as a "hidden dialogicality" (Blackledge & Creese, 2014, p. 9) (to use Bakhtin's expression) that underlies speech acts, language practices and ideological positions. The voices of multiple others and those of different selves are united in tension or conflict not only through various linguistic and ideological positions, but also through the meta-cognitive judgments that subjects make about this dynamics. Moreover, the construction of selves is, as James Collins and Richard K. Blot argue, linked to many other blendings and forms of transgressing "the recognizable ways of being in the world" (Collins & Blot, 2003, p. 102) which mix words and deeds, approximations and standards and various performative choices combined with their own anticipated or unanticipated effects in the world. In other words, the voices that we contest or adopt when we speak are related to forms of identity, but also to forms of transgression. Usually, in ESP teaching there is a focus on the standard scenarios, linguistic patterns, coined expressions or specialized vocabulary that enable students to navigate their complex disciplinary fields drawing on these instruments of field-related recognizable practices.

One step forward into the assumed inter-disciplinary nature of ESP would require special attention being dedicated to multidiscursivity, multivoicedness and forms of transgression that re-frame the goal-oriented approach to communication. For instance, in an ESP class for undergraduates studying International Relations (or Political Studies related fields), participants might be required to practice uncovering "hidden dialogicalities" by focusing on the ways in which different media articles are written as a response to other articulated positions and the various techniques used to undermine or to support referenced opinions. Moreover, various forms of discursive transgression could be studied in relation to the ways in which public statements of international interest are encoded and decoded using trans-national and trans-cultural frames which, nonetheless, draw on a separation of voices, social classes and identities. Another interactive task related to multidiscursivity might require students to predict stories, positions or content based on headlines and then discuss about the rationalization process behind their inferences and analyze the layered language of these rationalizations. This approach requires teachers to gather authentic materials and, at the same time, to design handouts that target specific vocabulary, concepts, patterns etc. Special emphasis should be placed on elicitation and the possibility of designing set of tasks that elicit language as part of a broader reflective and critical approach. Risk-taking, exploration and a willingness to observe the constantly negotiated coherence and fragmentation of our realities is mandatory as well. Another example of an even more comprehensive activity might include a project-based task that would require students working together trying to come up with a multimodal product illustrating the famous postmodern thesis "the personal is political". Students need to be guided throughout the pre-task phase towards the multiple meanings of the statement and the teacher might also need to provide them with illustrative examples from the field of modern art, cinematography, literature, photography, pointing towards the links between "the personal" and various social movements or political stances. A vocabulary-based task trying to define relevant terms and concepts (such as propaganda, protest, dissent, activism, advocacy, social movement, engagement, mass demonstration, manifesto, civil resistance, nonviolent campaign, disruptive tactics etc.) might also be useful, as well as a practical exercise focusing on political idioms and phrases (e.g. "to take a stance", "the system of checks and balances", "class struggle", "eco chamber", "a dog whistle", "put spin on an event", "be on the right side of history" etc.). Given this broad horizon, students will be left not only with the freedom of manipulating content, but also with the responsible choice between various dimensions, languages and media that could bear witness to our political realities from within the difficult task of trying to define their own meaningful "personal". Moreover, this approach will help them become more aware of the "yet unnamed, undescribed and unacknowledged forms of communication" (Adi, 2019, p.2) that we employ to get opinions and messages across as we move inside networks that describe new social structures as well as semiotic ones. Other project-based tasks related to cultural and inter-cultural communication as 'uncharted territory' might also be implemented in class, in relation to students' interests and feedback.

## THE LANGUAGE OF IMMEDIACY AND DISTANCES

So far, these theories have helped us focus on the hybridization of language and discursive practices as they encode multiple ways of articulating and dis-articulating senses of self and other at the intersection between the inner stratification of language and the interpersonal and inter-disciplinary organization of discourse. We shall ask ourselves how are these inherent forms of hybridity rediscovered, rejected or appropriated inside the new logic and emerging literacies of the global media. The media (and language itself as a medium) works as a conveying system that both discloses and occludes its "traces of mediation," (Bolster & Grusin, 2000, p. 5) exposing or hiding the representational or semiotic mechanisms employed. Jay David Bolster and Richard Grusin call this "the double logic of remediation", which reflects the two contrasting desires of our mediated culture that, on the one hand, strives for the immediacy of the real in its transparency and, on the other hand, it bends towards opacity as the 'mediators' gain more and more visibility in their hypermediacy. We already mentioned Foucault as one of the philosophers (among Latour, Jameson and others) who distanced himself from the traditional idea of language as an "invisible conveyor" (Bolster & Grusin, 2000, p. 57) between thought and reality.

Bolster and Grusin move one step beyond post-structuralism, arguing that language should not be isolated "as a cultural force" (Bolster & Grusin, 2000, p. 57) because it interacts with other media, creating "hybrids" of human subjects, language and things. Therefore, special attention should be dedicated to such intersections that draw on their particular co-constructed semiotic 'power'. This form of attention would direct ESP teachers towards the possibility of designing complex tasks that trace remediations through multiple media and their multidirectional effects on the appropriations of subjects, things, realities etc. Bolster and Grusin's analyses of cultural products illustrate a "double logic of remediation" that moves between transparency and opacity trying to paradoxically achieve the real by transgressing the limits of representation, either through emotional participation or by employing a special awareness of the medium. Of course, these are two distinct aesthetic experiences, informed by the "opposite manifestations of the same desire" (Bolster & Grusin, 2000, p. 53) to grasp the real. Alain Badiou (in *Le Siècle*) called this desire "the passion for the real" and looked at it in relation to the 20th century's avant-gardes that sought to break the immersive illusion of representation. In our century, this desire might have turned into a passion for hybrids that become "as real as their constituents," (Bolster & Grusin, 2000, p. 57) overthrowing the old semiotic order which still drew on the distinction between hypermedia and transparent media. In order to apply this discussion to language production and discourse, we could look at the hybridization of language practices not only from within, focusing on the merging of "social languages" (Gee, 2008, p. 90) or codes, but also on the meanderings of multiple remediations empowering or de-legitimizing discourses in the name of that 'real' of premediation. For example, during an ESP class for International Relations students, they could be provided with the possibility of exploring different cultural products, correlating various semiotic resources and media with their particular ways of fuelling the tension between the idea of a 'bare' reality and a mediated or a remediated one. Of course, this entails a thorough preparation stage that takes them through various examples that put into perspective the different conventions and effects such channels use or have and their relations to the presumptions of unveiling or constructing reality. One example of a simple task related to remediations could entail having students recording and comparing their successive reactions and interpretations (relying on designed handouts or questionnaires) surrounding the same event, public speech or story, by drawing on a voice recording first, a video recording and a written text. All these require, in turn, an openness towards the authentic meaning of interdisciplinarity and a willingness to embrace the risks of synthesizing or sampling.

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF IMPURITY

Looking at language as part of a hybrid structure, distributed at the margins of this desire to 'achieve' the real, would give us room to understand those inherent and external strategies that make language a visible or an invisible mediator at the crossroads of 'purity' and 'impurity'. James Paul Gee notices that the notion of 'impurity' (Gee, 2008, p. 93) is mainly used to refer to "social languages" that usually combine different identities, codes and styles and which are perceived as a 'deviation' from the standard, normative language. Moreover, Gee understands language practices in relation to how they fit in what he calls "cultural models", meaning "a vast store of simulations" (Gee, 2008, p. 104) that offers us simplified molds for the 'real' based on the distinct social theories that we embrace in order to justify our social realities. Thus, we could argue that the notion of 'purity' is not only dictated by linguistic standards, but also by the cultural models inside which we unfold discursive possibilities.

The notions of 'purity' and 'impurity' are also related to the discussion about remediation analyses, because they usually function in relation to the 'assessment' or interpretation of the transparency or hypermediacy of the various cultural products we come in contact with. Interesting activities might be designed in order to involve International Relations undergraduates not only in the process of recognizing and interpreting "cultural models", but also in the complex task of becoming aware of their expectations and appreciations regarding the 'purity' of "cultural models" and their possibilities of making sense of transgressions and discursive or cultural choices that do not fall under the umbrella of these shared simulations. For instance, one set of tasks might entail, first of all, a preparation activity that would expose students to different types of text, asking them to match those discourse samples with the "public relations" purpose they serve: publicity, promotion, lobbying or marketing. A preliminary reading activity might be required, in case students are unfamiliar with these terms. Afterwards, using the same texts/examples, students would have to underline phrases which they find very common for PR and less common or rarely employed in those kinds of contexts. They might also be asked to come up with three words that they associate with each phrase they previously underlined. After having compared and contrasted their choices and associations with their colleagues, they will have to discuss about the 'pure' "cultural models" those frequently used phrases draw upon and also focus on the idea of scattered or incomplete, or 'impure' "cultural models" based on the counterpart list of less common phrases from the text samples. The teacher shall guide the discussion providing them, at times, with useful insights into concepts such as: cultural myths, modern/contemporary archetypes, labeling, etiquette, stereotypes, imagery, jargon, narrative, symbol, ideology etc.

A distinct task that focuses on the possibility of understanding conventions or discursive patterns at the intersection between global trends, transnationalization and 'loose' local identities might involve re-writing a standard international press-release from the perspective of a 19th century character who does not posses the contemporary vocabulary. Students will find this task almost impossible, but as they try to explain various notions relying on creative alternatives, they might become more aware of the complex roots of discourse into the social, technological and cultural models that we take for granted.

The importance of schematic knowledge in shaping language and discourse could also be discussed in relation to metacognition. Just as in the case of the resisting container/conveyor metaphor in understanding language, there is also this incomplete perception about the assumed 'direct' relation between language and cognition. Cognition has this essential social dimension made up of our theories regarding memorability, our meta-beliefs and feelings about cognitive processes, "higher order judgments about the credibility of other initial judgments" (Yzerbyt et al., 1998, p. 69) etc. Besides all these conscious and unconscious processes influencing decisions about the ways in which "the everyday data generated by mental life" is going to be moulded, there lie also the explanations and the rationalization processes about those monitored operations. These rationalizations can be broken into parts and pieces allowing us to become more aware of the metainformational cues that make us gear learning and cognition towards the informative power of subjective feelings, personal attitudes and judgments.

We would like to argue that this intra-personal space that accommodates theories about memorability, learning and other types of metacognitive information is not only psychological and social, but also cultural. Thus, we could argue that the way in which we receive and interpret information is also influenced by the cultural 'maps' that we unconsciously draw based on a set of meta-spacial beliefs. In other words, what if our individual/personal ideas about what is culturally bound and what is transcultural or our judgments about cultural borders, margins and 'centres' or even our approximations about the 'risks' or difficulty of crossing or appropriating other cultural landscapes are influencing the complex routes of second language acquisition? In order to gain insight into this speculation, we need to have a discussion with our students about their perceptions about culture, borders, political 'margins' and 'centres' (e.g. the Global South vs the Global North, West-East), the "affect" associated with various languages and places, their thoughts about the manners in which distinct languages or spaces accommodate their identities etc. In order to illustrate the kind of relations I mentioned (space-language, in-between culturally-defined spaces and discourse etc.) the underlying ideas, perceptions and affects surrounding the phenomenon of global interconnection, in which we are currently living, might need to be briefly revisited.

Walter Mignolo works with two important concepts (adopted from Renato Ortiz) making a distinction between the accommodation of global designs into local histories: *múndializatión* (translated by Alistair Pennycook as *worldliness* in *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, 1994) and *globalization*, understood also in relation to the reverse process: the adoption and adaptation of local histories into global designs. These concepts are inseparable, in Mignolo's view, from the possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of colonial processes and epistemological orderings. Mignolo proposes the concept of transculturation as a useful instrument that could be employed to focus not only on every culture's transnational heritage, but also on the possibility of celebrating the "impure" and producing "border thinking". The politics of language are seen as being profoundly bound to the coloniality of power, but, nonetheless, there are so many examples, provided throughout the book, which point to the need of thinking (and talking) between languages, disciplines, cultures or literacies. Mignolo's ideas are not about a unification of "difference" in the "transcultural", but, quite the opposite, his concepts talk about fragmentation and the possibility of thinking from inside fractured spaces, on the brink of "dual memories" and shattered "postnational imaginaries". (Mignolo, 2000, p. 253) Thus, besides the dichotomous positioning towards globalization in terms of continuities and discontinuities, there is also a third way that looks at this phenomenon from the vantage point of "cracks", that we take not only as a 'split' between the local and the global, but also between political realities and semiotic resources. In other words, one of the key competences needed in the newly emerging global context might include the possibility of observing and making visible the "cracks" between discourse and reality as they articulate the remediation of various forms of cultural, linguistic or identitarian exile. The way in which we position ourselves inside these splits and continuities, our perceptions about “cracks” inside semiotic or political orders, our ‘personal’ ways of reordering subjective memory alongside global designs and our perceptions of in-betweennes all play a role in the process of second-language acquisition, as we constantly move between peripheries when we tackle new resources of meaning.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, ESP courses need to take into consideration the status of English as a language of worldliness, accommodating local histories, fractures, uncertainties and juxtaposed memories as it moves through a process in which communication and miscommunication possibilities are created together with other media. Teaching English in relation to what Walter Mignolo would call a “decolonization of language” implies encouraging new forms of attention and sensitivity towards processes of hybridization, remediation and fragmentation. That in turn would enable students “to grow beyond (…) cultural models” (Gee, 2008, p. 104) and become more aware of the complex dynamics between disciplinary knowledge and ‘residual’ knowledge. Teaching English for Specific Purposes needs to make room for “border thinking” and foster, at the same time, a special awareness about the effects of public discourses when it comes to the power they have “to ventriloquize for difference” or to multiply the ‘standardization’ of difference. Communicating in English to achieve specific goals should not be divorced from the possibility of working with and recognizing various forms of hybridity and ‘impurity’ as part of the predictable scenario of institutionalized discursive practices. Moreover, communicating inside disciplinary structures should be complemented by constant exposure to forms of remediation and to trans-disciplinary semiotic relations inside transitory political spaces.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adi, A. (ed.) (2019) *Protest Public Relations: Communicating Dissent and Activism*. New York: Routledge.

Badiou, A. (2005). *Le Siècle*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (eds.) (2014). *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*. New York: Springer.

Bolster, J. D., & Grusin, R. (2000). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Collins, J., & Blot, R. (2003). *Literacy and Literacies: Text, Power, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Corbett, J. (2003) *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching*. Sydney: Multilingual Matters LTD.

Della Porta, D., & Tarrow, S. (eds.) (2005). *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Foucault, M. (1971) *L'ordre du discours*. Paris: Gallimard.

Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. New York: Routledge.

Mignolo, W. D. (2000). *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pennycook, A. (2003). Beyond Homogeny and Heterogeny: English as a Global and Worldly Language. In Mair, C. (ed.). *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*. New York: ASNEL Papers 7, p. 3-17.

Stevenson, N. (2003). *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Questions.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Terdiman, R. (2005). *Body and Story: The Ethics and Practice of Theoretical Conflict*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Yzerbyt, V., Lories, G., & Dardenne, B. (eds.) (1998). *Metacognition: Cognitive and Social Dimensions*. London: SAGE Publications.

# An Investigation into the Effectiveness of Graph Analysis in an ESP Course – A Methodological Approach

**MARIA FALVO**[1]

**Abstract:** This research paper aims at investigating the effectiveness of graph analysis in ESP classes to develop students' ability in interpreting new information from visuals and use that information appropriately to make inferences. Graphs represent a powerful tool to analyse and interpret data through visuals, numbers and figures. Although they are mostly relevant for STEM disciplines, graphs can be introduced and regularly exploited to understand social phenomena. The present study investigates graphs as a tool to analyse critical issues like environmental crimes and offences. It involves students in Investigation Sciences from a public university who are primarily concerned with the development of knowledge to solve security-related problems and the coordination of actions for the protection and security of public and private interests. The participants are 30 students who are involved in carrying out several tasks on graphs following some detailed steps: from the early acquisition of the relevant vocabulary and terminology used to describe graphs to the analysis of a selection of graphs by the lecturer on the topic at hand, through inferring and interpretation of visual data, complemented by a summary in writing and followed by an oral presentation to the class to end with peer review comments and feedback given by the lecturer. Eventually, the findings suggest that some students perform better when they deal with breaking down data and extracting high-impact information to do summarising activities while others put more effort in interpreting data in order to understand the possible reasons underlying the phenomena.

**Keywords**: *interpretation of graphs, graphing skills, conceptual understanding, ESP class, infographics.*

[1] Lecturer in English Language and ESP at Magna Græcia of Catanzaro, Catanzaro, Italy.

## INTRODUCTION

Graphs are effectively used in several academic curricula encompassing STEM disciplines, social studies and business programs and prove to be successful in supporting students to interpret even complex data and make use of those interpretations to carry on writing tasks and oral presentations, in addition to be more responsive in participating in classroom activities and be able to retain a large amount of information.

Students who are familiar with the language of graphs, normally, feel more engaged than they are when they read findings on paper. In fact, reading can be tiring and sometimes challenging for students, especially in second language acquisition, where they are often required to skim and scan very long passages at times to do comprehension and summarising activities. In addition, they have to put a lot of effort into understanding some technical or specialised vocabulary, which often requires a translation into their native language.

The visuals and colours we find in graphs are undoubtedly more attractive for young students and allow them to interpret phenomena quite easily, enhancing at the same time their creativity, learning productivity and study skills. Indeed, since the school age, students are very sensitive to colours and visual aids and feel more motivated when they are engaged in classroom activities that involve their ability to make use of data, which are displayed in different ways to get information and draw conclusions.

In this paper, the focus is on the use of graphs in an ESP course to help students develop their ability to analyse and interpret data on environmental crimes across Europe. Also, the study aims at investigating students' graphing skills and the benefits that the proposed methodology has on second language acquisition and improvement of specialised terminology.

The paper is divided in four main sections: the first section revolves around some theoretical considerations on the definition of ESP, the use of graphs in ESP classes along with some preliminary considerations on the selected topic. The second section is the core of this study and covers the steps of the methodology proposed in the classroom. The methodology includes five steps, which are better detailed in the corresponding section. The third section presents the findings and results of this study at the end of the ESP course and eventually the fourth section includes some recommendations on how to better make proper use of graphs and lead students to plot a graph using the available data.

## SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE USE OF GRAPHS IN ESP CLASSES

ESP can be seen as a comprehensive term which refers to the teaching of English to those students who learn the language for a particular work or study-related reason. The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose of learning English. Hans and Hans (2015) suggest that ESP is more focused on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures, as it happens with English for General Purposes (EGP), which refers to the language used in everyday life for ordinary things and to communicate in a variety of non-specialized environments. ESP covers different subjects of study varying from law to business to computer science to tourism and so on, where English is not taught as a subject separated from students' real world, but it is integrated into a subject matter area relevant to learners.

ESP is specifically based on a "needs analysis" that determines which language skills are most needed by students/learners and, accordingly, it helps design the syllabus that is most suitable for students/learners' needs. In this respect, ESP programs should aim to emphasize the development of written skills and/or oral skills based on students' curricula.

In her study, Fitria (2020) emphasises that ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching in a highly motivating way because students/learners can apply what they have learned in their English classes to their field of studies. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they have to learn in their English classes reinforces what is taught and increases students' motivation in learning English. Students' abilities in their subject-matter fields improve their skill to acquire or master English. Subject-matter knowledge gives students/learners the context they need to understand English in the classroom.

In this respect, graphs prove to be an effective and engaging tool to foster specialised terminology acquisition and encourage the learning of English. According to Peachey (2016), there are many reasons why we should be using infographics as part of our teaching and learning practice. Perhaps one of the most fundamental reasons is simply because they are everywhere nowadays. They are a way of exploring relationships in data as well as a way of displaying and reporting data, making it easier to report patterns and relationships, shapes of distributions and trends.

Infographics have become a predominant part of the way people choose to communicate information and as such we need to help our students understand this genre of communication and work with it effectively (Peachey, 2016, p. 8). The author also stresses the idea that the study of many academic topics involve the understanding of a lot of statical information; therefore, the use of graphs both to understand and communicate information can strengthen students' academic study skills and help them become more successful. Moreover, if we take into account the use of graphic materials to build new engaging ways to improve language learning, the above considerations are in line with the current mainstream trends in teaching English as a second language, which highlight the benefits of providing students with new engaging ways to hook their attention by offering stimulation of their imagination.

However, graph analysis can be really challenging for students. Lapp and Cyrus (2000) indicated that students experience some difficulties while interpreting graphs: a) they lack prior knowledge of the graph content; b) they are unable to contextually comprehend concepts; c) they do not have enough knowledge about the language and rules of graphs or their skills are inadequate in putting knowledge into practice and d) they have problems in defining variables and connecting graphs with variables (Lapp & Cyrus, 2000, pp. 504-510).

Based on the study mentioned above, the author has observed that in her experience with the students, the same difficulties are encountered; in particular, they have 1) poor to inexistent knowledge of the graph content prior to the classroom activities and 2) they do not have enough language knowledge to interpret a graph and state their opinions in plain English.

## SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SUBJECT AREA

The selection of environmental crimes or "envicrimes" graphs was primarily based on the assumption that they encompass several categories of environmental offences, which could leave room for a variety of analyses along with some more considerations based on the recognition that it is a time critical issue that involve young generations worldwide claiming for their commitment and requiring collective awareness. In this regard, students of Investigation Science are mainly interested in the analysis of the different techniques involved in the investigation of crimes. Due to their variety, envicrimes offer insightful information to students. Specifically, they wonder why in some European countries there is a much higher frequency of environmental violations compared to other countries; therefore their focus is on understanding if the difference in terms of numbers between European countries is a consequence of their specific laws, which are ineffective to combat envicrimes or, whether, the difference comes from inadequate investigation techniques. Lacking adequate control over the territory and cultural resistances are also under scrutiny.

The four graphs presented in the lessons are taken from the same source, the *European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation*. The first is a pie chart showing the Member States involved in environmental crimes along with the percentage of cases referred for each of them between 2014 and 2018 (see fig. 1 below).

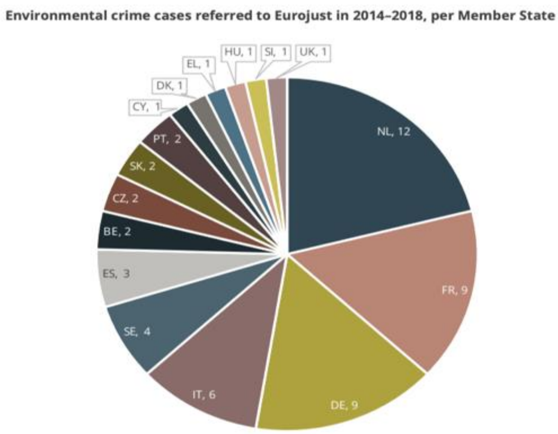


**Figure 1.** Environmental crime cases referred to Eurojust in 2014-2018, per Member State

*Source: Report on Eurojust's Casework on Environmental Crime January 2021*

The second pie chart illustrates the type of environmental crimes and the percentages for each crime from the largest to the smallest: trafficking in waste, trafficking in wildlife species, air pollution, illegal trade in hazardous chemicals, hazardous contamination in food, illegal construction works and related issues (see fig. 2 below).

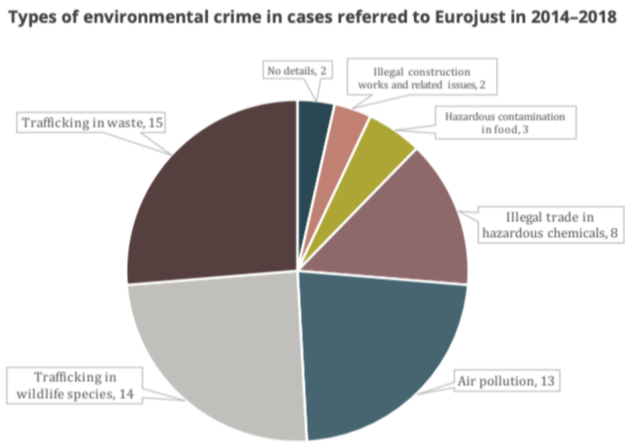


**Figure 2.** Types of Environmental crime in cases referred to Eurojust in 2014-2018

*Source: Report on Eurojust's Casework on Environmental Crime January 2021*

The third graph represents a bar chart showcasing the number of environmental crimes referred per year in the same time span (see fig. 3 below).

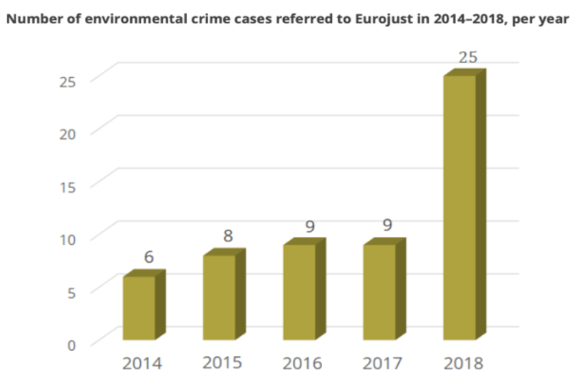


**Figure 3.** Number of environmental crime cases referred to Eurojust in 2014-2018, per year

*Source: Report on Eurojust's Casework on Environmental Crime January 2021*

Eventually, the fourth graph is a pie chart which illustrates the correlation between other types of crimes and environmental crimes and their respective percentages (see fig. 4 below).

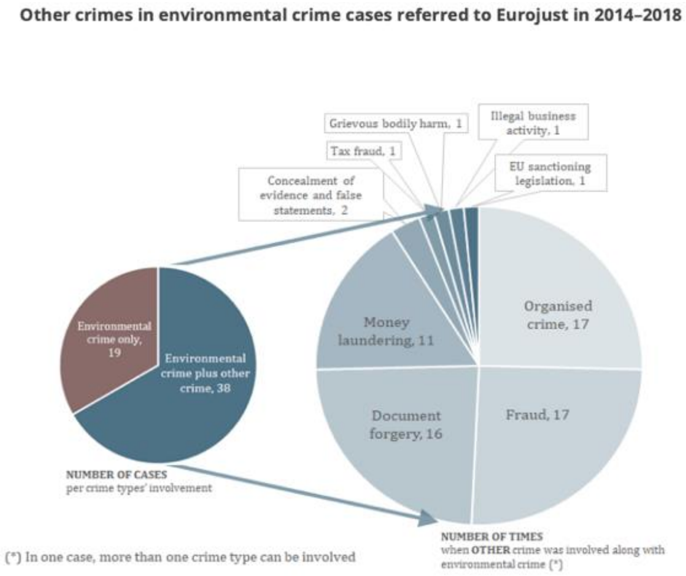


**Figure 4.** Other crimes in environmental crime cases referred to Eurojust in 2014-2018

*Source: Report on Eurojust's Casework on Environmental Crime January 2021*

## METHODOLOGY

Students involved in this study are enrolled in the first year of the degree course in Investigation Science, a new degree course started in 2021 in a public university in South Italy. They are 18 and 19 years old and they completed secondary school. On average, the number of female students enrolled in this new degree course is higher than that of male students. 20 female students and 10 male students took part in the study. Overall, their level of English is lower intermediate.

In this project students are required to present four groups of data according to the graphs included above and interpret the findings from their analysis. In the phase of graphs selection, the language instructor needs to take into account the students' interests as well as the subjects they are offered in the degree course.

Four types of graphs have been included in the lessons which are reported above: bar graphs and pie charts. Bar graphs are used to show relationships between different data series that are independent to each area, while pie charts are designed to visualize how a whole is divided into various parts.

The three research questions underpinning the methodology developed afterwards are:

1) Based on their previous knowledge, are students familiar with the language of graphs? If not, what are students' challenges?
2) Which tasks prove to be more successful in graph analysis and why?
3) Can the proposed methodology be effective in an ESP class and boost specialised vocabulary acquisition?

Based on these research questions, the lecturer developed a methodology consisting of several teaching steps:

1. preliminary activity: acquisition of the vocabulary used to describe graphs
2. mixed graph tasks with grammar content to boost vocabulary retention
3. writing activity (group-based)
4. oral presentation of students' summary
5. closing comments from students and feedback from the instructor

Preliminary activity: students show to have poor to non-existent knowledge of the language used in graph analysis. They have never been involved in graph analysis before enrolling at university. To cope with this gap, the language instructor relies on pre-teaching vocabulary strategy to introduce students to new vocabulary words before presenting the graphs. According to Miller and Veatch "when teacher pre-teach vocabulary, they introduce unfamiliar words to students before they begin to read the text, and students have a heightened awareness of the vocabulary they will encounter while reading (Miller and Veatch, 2011, p. 19). This strategy is particularly helpful in situations where students will encounter words that have no familiarity and have trouble understanding the meaning from context or word analysis. This strategy is also particularly beneficial for English learners where students struggle with academic language. In graph analysis, students cannot rely on the context since there is not enough information, therefore they need to use the vocabulary taught to make their interpretations of graphs.

Time needs to be spent developing students' vocabulary to enable them to communicate their ideas precisely. A useful framework for developing academic language with bilingual students was described by Cummins. He suggested that first there needs to be a focus on **meaning**, followed by a focus on **language** and then a focus on **use** (Cummins, 2000).

On these grounds, the teaching steps in this preliminary activity may be summarised as follows:

1. Selection of words to pre-teach based on the graphs to be analysed by students;
2. Focus on pronunciation, drawing attention to each syllable, examine word parts to identify prefixes, suffixes, roots…;
3. Provide the word meaning through a student friendly definition. Dictionaries are not always helpful in providing a clear definition of a word for students (Beck & McKeown, 2022);
4. Show the word in a sentence to clarify the meaning in context;
5. Ask students if they need further clarifications.

In the tables below, the author has included a few examples taken from the pre-teaching activity carried out in the classroom, encompassing some words which were particularly tough for students to memorise and use correctly. Table 1 includes two verbs with opposite meanings: rise and plunge respectively, one noun: increase and one adjective: sharp. All these are widely used in graph analysis (see table 1 below). Instead, table 2 presents the same words in context. In this case, words are shown in meaningful sentences to help students memorise their use in context.

**Table 1.** Some examples of target words and their definitions[2]

| Target word | Dictionary definition | Student friendly definition |
|---|---|---|
| Rise (v.) | a) To move upward: ASCEND<br>b) To increase in height, size, volume or pitch | Rise has to do with something that's becoming taller or higher, like when you rise from your chair or your marks that rise when you study harder. |

[2] Definitions have been taken from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

| Target word | Dictionary definition | Student friendly definition |
|---|---|---|
| Increase (n.) | The act or process of increasing such as addition or enlargement in size, extent, or quantity | It is when something becomes larger or more numerous or more important, like when you increase your knowledge by studying or when there is an increase in the number of students enrolled in your university. |
| Plunge (v.) | To descend or dip suddenly | Plunge means that there is a rapid fall, like when someone loses their reputation after a scandal or when an accident occurs and a car plunges off the bridge. |
| Sharp (adj.) | Involving an abrupt or marked change especially in direction | When you want to describe a rapid change in direction like a sharp curve on the road or when you say that a car has made a sharp turn. |

*Source: My personal archive*

**Table 2.** Target words in context[3]

| Target word | Sentence in context |
|---|---|
| Rise (v.) | The number of worldwide social network users is projected to rise to almost six billions in 2027. |
| Increase (n.) | There has been an increase in the consumption of ready-to-eat food, such as mixed salads containing raw vegetable and other ingredients such as meat or seafood. |
| Plunge (v.) | Bank shares plunge on contagious fears; precious metals rally. |
| Sharp (adj.) | There has been a sharp drop in residential property prices and there have been a succession of disappointing car and retail sales figures. |

*Source: My personal archive*

In the following step, students are invited to complete a series of tasks in an attempt to make them use the vocabulary acquired. Traditional language activities include:

- Matching phrases and their definitions
- Matching words and phrases to the pictures
- Put the words in the correct group
- Reading a text and describing graphs: true/false statements
- Rearrange scrambled words to form meaningful sentences
- Complete the sentences using prepositions of time and other words appropriate for each picture

[3] Sentences in context have been extrapolated from articles on the web to show students examples of where to find target words.

- Gap-filling multiple choice (Choose the best answer)
- Label the pictures with the provided vocabulary and use your own ideas to answer the questions (open-ended questions)
- Use the pictures and your own ideas to make sentences using the vocabulary provided

Steps three and four are intertwined: in these two steps students are involved in a group based writing activity: firstly, they take notes about the most important information shown in the four graphs; then they use their notes to write a summary and make their own inferences; lastly they prepare an oral presentation based on the information they take from the graphs and the inferences they make. Five groups of students took part in this classroom activity. This step is particularly challenging and highlights two major areas of problems for students: 1) the ability to extract and interpret information and describe relationships among data set and 2) language barriers.

As to the first point, Gott and Duggan identified layers of complexity to reading, interpreting, and analysing data shown in tables and graphs (Gott & Duggan, 2003). These include:

- reading off particular data from points on the table or graph (easy)
- selecting sections of relevant data from complex data sets (more complex)
- identifying and interpreting patterns within different types of data (most complex).

To guide students through the writing activity, it is useful to provide students with some sentence starters. Sentence starters represent the focal point to begin writing or saying an interpretation of the data that are displayed in graphical forms. Sentence starters which can be provided to students include:

- This graph/pie chart shows/illustrates/represents
- A difference between… and… is….
- A similarity between… and…is…
- When we first looked at this graph/pie chart…
- The data that most stood out to us were…
- A probable reason for this difference is…

With regard to the challenges that the use of the language of graphs inevitably raises, these depend not only on the unfamiliar vocabulary which is sometimes difficult for students to grasp, but also on non-specialised terms, i.e. words such as "constant", "average", "decline", "accurate", "rate", "steady" and the like, which have been shown repeatedly to cause difficulties for students. These are just a few examples of words that are not used commonly outside the learning context.

The final step draws attention on the oral presentations of students' written summary. In this step, the role played by the lecturer in asking for comments and giving feedback to students is essential to support students in assessing their own and others' presentations (peer feedback) and to provide useful points to improve their skills. In order to develop and refine their presentation skills, students need practice but also appropriate feedback on their performance. Indeed, students can benefit from feedback given immediately after their oral presentations, which can deepen their understanding of the standards required in academic setting. In the course of these feedback sessions, the lecturer takes notes and afterwards uses the notes as the basis to give more feedback and lead further discussions in class. Students, on the other hand, are encouraged to ask the lecturer questions and ask their classmates to make comments and remarks on their oral presentation of the findings.

This also implies a challenge for the language instructor: to be able to construct an engaging and positive learning environment for presentations and subsequent feedback sessions, since students often feel insecure and uncomfortable as they are at the centre of attention and are afraid of the instructor's and their classmates' judgments.

At the end of the activity, in order to test their engagement in graph analysis, the instructor presented students with a simple survey based on multiple-choice options. The activities have been grouped in three categories roughly corresponding to the outlined steps. The numbers in brackets correspond to the numbers of students who expressed their preferences by selecting one activity for each category.

**Table 3.** Survey results[4]

| Which activities did you find more engaging? Student qualitative comments | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Pre-teaching activities** | **Writing summary** | **Oral presentation** |
| Matching phrases and their definitions and words and phrases to the pictures (4) | Note-taking (3) | Present findings to the class (15) |
| Put the words in the correct group (1) | Break down data and extract information (12) | Receive comments from the lecturer (10) |
| True/false statements (5) | Interpret information (10) | Receive comments and remarks from classmates (5) |
| Rearrange scrambled words to form sentences (3) | Make inferences (5) | |
| Complete the sentences using prepositions of time and other words appropriate for each picture (3) | | |
| Gap-filling multiple choice (12) | | |
| Label the pictures (2) | | |
| Use the pictures and your own ideas to make sentences using the vocabulary provided (0) | | |

*Source: My personal archive*

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The findings show that students prefer to carry out some pre-teaching activities than other based on the perceptions they have of the complexity of the tasks they are required to do. In the pre-teach step, using pictures to make sentences based on students' ideas and the task requiring them to rearrange scrambled words to form sentences are perceived as very challenging. By contrast, tasks such as putting words in the correct group or labelling pictures are seen as less engaging as they require less effort from students. The most preferred activity in the pre-teaching step was gap-filling multiple choice (20% of students chose it). The rationale is that students are usually familiar with this task which is extensively used in reading and listening comprehension activities and use of English exercises.

[4] The survey has been conducted at the end of the cycle of lessons over 30 students.

The writing activity showcases some interesting findings as well. According to students' responses, the results highlight two main ways of graph analysis: 1) some groups of students prefer to break down data and extract high-impact information (numbers) to summarise the content of the graphs in writing (20%); 2) other groups put more effort in interpreting data in order to understand and discuss possible variations and causes of the phenomenon to present their findings, going beyond visual data (17%). According to some scholars, students with higher levels of graphical literacy are better able to find information in graphs, and they spend more time looking at conventional features of graphs to generate more accurate interpretations (Okan, Galesic & Garcia-Retamero, 2015).

Nevertheless, we also find some limitations in the use of graphs, mainly:

- Graphs give us an insight of the design of an investigation, but they don't tell us everything. For example, they don't usually tell us which variables were controlled, the sample size, or the method of measurement. This means that we always need to question the validity and reliability of the graphs being used and also the actual context of the investigation. Therefore, the source is something we should watch out for when selecting our graphs;
- The scales on the axes can be stretched or shrunk to emphasise one side of a relationship or to make a point that may not be justified by the data;
- A graph shows a relationship but it does not necessarily tell us the reasons behind it. In our bar graph for example (see fig. 3) we may easily infer that there was a dramatic increase in the number of environmental crimes from 2014 to 2018, but it does not show why this happened. We may need to read the whole report issued by Eurojust to explain why.

With regard to the third category, findings are interesting as well. Despite shyness, students accepted to take part in the oral presentation activity with enthusiasm. This might depend on the small size of the group and the positive feeling in the classroom. 17% of students expressed their engagement in receiving comments by the instructor. The rationale is that they feel encouraged when they receive positive comments on their work or feel more stimulated when they get remarks by the language instructor on how to improve their oral skills. Few students, on the other hand, preferred to receive comments and remarks from their classmates. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that they feel anxious about receiving negative remarks or to be judged by their peers and may lose confidence in themselves. Working in group, however, helps them overcome the initial embarrassment as students feel more protected by the peers than when they carry out either writing or oral activities alone.

Overall, students consistently improved their vocabulary and this proves that exposing students to pre-teaching activities repeatedly, planning writing tasks to be complemented by oral presentations allow students to achieve better results. The pie chart below gives us an overview of the most selected activities in percentages.

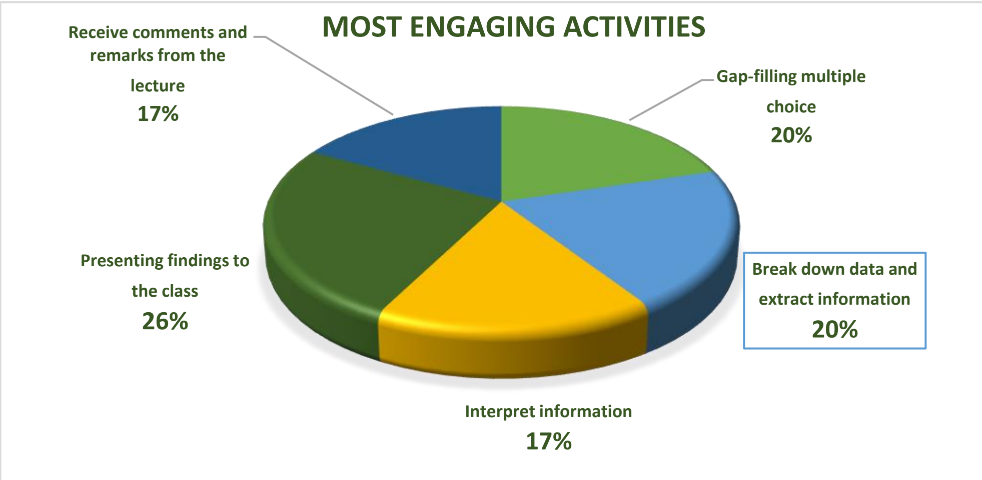


**Figure 5.** Most engaging activities selected by students after completing all the tasks

*Source: My personal archive*

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students' prior knowledge was inadequate for dealing with graph analysis and interpretation because of their lack of terminology and the difficulties with working with more than one variable at a time, i.e.

comparing, inferring, working with multiple data. The proposed approach to analyse graphs seems to have a positive impact on students' overall performances and achieve the goal of fostering new vocabulary acquisition through the tasks carried out.

Furthermore, this study shows that a good approach to graph analysis helps develop and/or strengthen in students several key competencies:

- Using language and data appropriately: knowing about graphs and inferring information strengthens students' ability to develop their own ideas. It also helps them to effectively communicate their own, since students are required to focus on multiple data, organising data, analysing data and making sense of information to be able to provide information and communicate with others;
- Participating actively in the process of data selection and contributing to organising data available to make inferences. Graphs are also a useful way of providing evidence to get people to agree with a particular argument;
- Critical thinking: analysing and synthesising data from various sources is essential to develop arguments and support one's own ideas.

This approach can be complemented by the construction of graphs by students. However, this task should be carefully thought and planned since several factors need to be considered with regard to students' skill levels which are likely to be influenced by:

- Their previous knowledge of the topic
- The available data (selection of articles containing factual information and an appropriate amount of information)
- The complexity of the data to include in a graph
- The tools required for creating a graph
- The time factor

Some recommendations for the language instructors in helping students to correctly interpret a graph would include:

- Support students in the investigation of the graph to understand what the graph tells them;

- Give time to students to investigate the relationships presented in the graphs and make inferences from them;
- Teach students to break a graph into sections and analyse them separately;
- Check whether the students' vocabulary size allows them to describe appropriately the graph. If not, help students develop the vocabulary.

It is recommended that lecturers should use graphs effectively in learning environments to improve students' graphing skills and more opportunities should be given to students from different disciplines other than STEM disciplines to deal with infographics.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (2002). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, New York: The Guilford Press.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*, Bristol (UK): Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Fitria T.N. (2020). Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to the Students in English Language Teaching (ELT). *Journal of English Teaching Adi Buana*, English Education Department, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana, vol. 5 no. 1, p. 55-66, https://doi.org/10. 36456/jet.v5.n01.2020.2276. Retrieved July, 18 at https://jurnal.unipasby.ac.id/ index.php/jet/article/view/2276

Gott, R. & Duggan, S. (2003). *Understanding and Using Scientific Evidence: How to Critically Evaluate Data*, London: SAGE Publications.

Hans, A. & Hans E. (2015). A Comparative Study of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, ARC Publications Pvt Ltd, vol. 3 no. 11, p. 26-31. Retrieved July, 14 at https://www.arcjournals.org/ pdfs/ijsell/v3-i11/4.pdf

Lapp, D. A., & Cyrus, V. F. (2000). Using Data-collection Devices to Enhance Students' Understanding. *Mathematics Teacher*, vol. 93 no. 6, p. 504–510, https://doi.org/10.5951/MT.93.6.0504. Retrieved May, 2 at http://calcnet.cst. cmich.edu/faculty/lapp/mt2000.pdf

Okan, Y. Galesic, M. & Garcia-Retamero, R. (2015). How People with Low and High Literacy Process Health Graphs: Evidence from Eye-Tracking. *Journal of*

*Behavioral Decision Making*, vol. 29 no. 2-3, https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.1891. Retrieved April, 16 at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/bdm.1891

Peachey, N. (2016). *Exploiting Infographics for Digital Literacy and Critical Thinking*, Torquay (UK): PeacheyPublications.

# Towards a More Student-Oriented Approach in Teaching ESP. An Experiment Involving Students in the Course Design of *English for Art*

**ANDA-ELENA CREȚIU**[1]

**Abstract:** The last few years triggered many challenges and prompted everybody to adapt to new situations (whether pandemic-caused or not), to the extensive use of the online medium and the numerous sources, materials, apps, and available communication channels. In many ways, these recent years have brought about many changes in every corner of our lives, education included. The pace of change has accelerated, and teachers worldwide have had to adapt and adjust to the new realities and the new needs of the students. A recent opinion poll with the UAD students revealed several changes in their ESP needs and course preferences concerning course content and assessment management. Based on the poll results and students' proposals, some new directions and methods are being devised and implemented by the English for Art course tutors, engaging the students to a higher degree in the content design, the choice of the materials, and new ways of assessment. The present paper tries to share this (ongoing) experience, cast some light, and raise questions about what should change in the ESP teacher's approach to the challenges of newer realities.

**Keywords:** *ESP, Art English, student's needs, academic, specialist, adaptation, adjustment*

## INTRODUCTION

Many changes have occurred at all levels of our society since Romania became part of the European Union. Access to information, freedom of speech, the possibility to travel without (so many) restraints, the possibility to study abroad and to receive guest teachers, to work abroad, etc., have all become usual today. Higher education has also made many changes in the

[1] Assoc. Prof., University of Art and Design, Cluj-Napoca

last thirty years and is continuously changing. The number of students and specializations increased; diversity is crucial to everyday study life.

The language policy of the European Union has been implemented in our country throughout the last decades. To promote mobility, intercultural exchanges and understanding, multilingualism, the current goal is that every European citizen should master at least two other languages besides the mother tongue. Many programs have been devised, various institutions have been created, and consistent funding has been allotted to achieve this goal. Since 2005, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) attests to the level of language competency of European citizens. In 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution concerning European education as a shared holistic approach. Article 29, part of the *Sector-specific measures and considerations,* refers explicitly to European citizens' need to acquire at least two more foreign languages by the end of their secondary education. English, in particular, is being mentioned:

> 29. Underlines the importance of learning foreign languages, and of English in particular; underscores the need for Member States to take action to support the development of linguistic competencies at all levels, especially in primary and secondary education, to embrace the Council of Europe's goal of 'plurilingualism' and to achieve the benchmark of all pupils having sufficient knowledge of at least two other official languages of the EU and its Member States at the end of lower secondary education at the latest […] (European Parliament, 2021, accessed May 8, 2023)

Much has been done, and more will be done in this field. The Erasmus+ mobility program has proved very successful. The more recent provisions extend the areas of the program beyond education to training, youth, and sport, and the timeframe from 2021 to 2027. However, one of the core objectives of Erasmus+ remains linguistic support. Language study aims to increase mobility efficiency, making it more effective in inducing better learning performance. (Iskra, 2022, p. 3).

While the linguistic policy of the European Parliament mentioned above may be targeted toward primary and secondary education, the importance of teaching-learning foreign languages in higher education cannot be neglected. The role of English as a *lingua franca* prevails. The reasons for its dominant position over the last decades are numerous and include: a large number of non-native speakers; the large geographic areas of its use, not being limited to countries where it is an official language; its unity when used in its standard form (although linguists speak about many "Englishes"); its market value (when used both privately and in professional settings); the simplicity and logic of its grammar and the ease of learning the language (at least, at elementary and medium levels); its association with wealth and progress, science and technology, as well as with all kinds of entertainment. Its pragmatic and functional roles make it a valuable instrument of communication. It might appear that English challenges European multiculturality and diversity, which is not necessarily a fact. The newer provisions already mention the necessity of a third language spoken by each European citizen. In many practical instances, English has facilitated non-native speakers' communication and the acquisition of another language.

In higher education, however, the ESP variant of English is generally adopted. It refers to "language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular social groups." (Hyland, 2007, p. 391). The reasons come naturally: higher education domains tend to be narrowly specialized, each having developed its distinctive discourse. The specific discourse is directly related to the official language (and mother tongue) and the aforementioned *lingua franca*. Building the proper skills (competencies) to deal with the English-mediated specific discourse is necessary. Communication among specialists in a specific field is open worldwide (the Internet and the World Wide Web communication tools are daily routines). Access to the most recent pieces of information in a field, to the latest discoveries and practices, is facilitated by the *lingua franca.* English has also become a specialist *lingua franca*.

As Flowerdew mentions,

> If ESP can be broken down into the two branches of EAP and EOP, EAP itself can, in turn, be broken down into English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) […] While EGAP is concerned with the provision of English for students in all fields of study,

> ESAP is focused on the needs of students from specific disciplines. (Flowerdew, 2016, p. 7)

The English language teacher's real challenge becomes establishing the exact necessities of the specific field students. Conducting effective needs analyses is the first step to take in this respect.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR TEACHING-LEARNING *ART ENGLISH*

A complete needs analysis to devise an ESP course presupposes taking some well-thought steps, as suggested by Hyland: "The use of systematic means to define the specific sets of skills, texts, linguistic forms, and communicative practices that a particular group of learners must acquire is central to ESP, informing its curricula and materials and underlining its pragmatic engagement with occupational, academic, and professional realities" (Hyland, 2007, p. 392). One of the previous needs analyses conducted more than a decade ago revealed the following aspects: art students needed English to access art-specific information (about painting, sculpture, graphics, photography, conservation and restoration, textiles, fashion, design, art history, and even more specialized sub-fields) in order to keep in touch with the latest themes, subjects, techniques, materials, events, contests, important venues, etc.). The information came from numerous diverse sources, from written texts in textbooks and art magazines to audio-video materials. They also needed to function in foreign art universities (during Erasmus mobilities) and to communicate within and outside their field (reading bibliography, listening to lectures, exchanging knowledge with their colleagues, participating in some group activities, etc.). Sometimes, they needed to apply for art competitions by submitting the proper documents written in English to accompany their portfolios.

Acquisition of the specific field vocabulary had to be the first step; then, using it in different, more complex structures was the next. Building on extant morpho-syntax knowledge of English, adding semantic-rhetorical and pragmatic accents to the texts they were supposed to read and write, as well as to the spoken productions related to subjects of interest, were meant to sharpen their ability to use English for their purposes. Nevertheless, the real fruitful approach has proved to be applied genre analysis. Bhatia's "thicker" description of language-in-use, bringing in socio-cultural and psycholinguistic items, has been adopted by many ESP teachers because it offers a complex answer to the question "Why are specific genre-texts written by specialist communities the way they are?" (Bhatia, 1993 p. 11) Therefore, the *Art English* course syllabus was designed to include the most representative genres developed by the artistic discourse community and academic genres placed in the more specific context of arts. They included formal analysis, expository, argumentative, compare and contrast essays, the artist's statement, the art review, the exhibition catalog, the leaflet, and the exhibition card.

Later, with so many changes occurring in daily and academic life, another needs analysis revealed that art students required mastery of language skills to function in the cyber world. Therefore, some new genres were added pertaining to computer-mediated communication and using the Internet, which is present everywhere. Some older genres moved online (e.g., the art review), some were completely new (the artist's blog, the artist's website), and some were adapted to be part of the newer online genres (e.g., the artist's statement, the designer's concept statement).

The latest trends in academic education involved online courses (initially as the only ones possible during the pandemic, later as one possible option among others). The syllabus, teaching, and learning methodologies had to adapt while keeping the course's main structure. The theoretical part was delivered as lectures, as usual, together with some relevant texts. Then, the students were encouraged to apply the new knowledge by working on some materials provided online (using the Google Workspace platform) while also being assessed for their work. They worked very well. However, at the final examinations, the results were not as expected. They did not respond well to the theory-related subjects. Nor did they do well with the studied texts. It became evident they did not get the intended skills despite the available bibliographic materials and the in-class work. What may have caused the not-so-good results?

A new survey was recently done involving participants from the two years of study to determine the possible changes in students' interests and preferences concerning *Art English*. The survey was administered by posting it on the two Google Workspace Classrooms and elicited 157 answers from the students belonging to the 1st and the 2nd years of study of the Fine Arts and Decorative Arts Faculties of the University of Art and Design in Cluj. The questions and answers are summarized below.

**Table 1.** Results of the survey.

| No. | Question | Answers | number | Percentages % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Self-assessment of the level of English competency | B2 | 62 | 39.5 |
| | | C1 | 39 | 24.8 |
| | | B1 | 31 | 19.7 |
| | | C2 | 7 | 4.5 |
| | | A1+ A2 | 13 | 11.4 |
| 2 | Years of English as foreign language study | over 8 | 70 | 44.6 |
| | | Since I can remember | 48 | 30.6 |
| | | 6-8 | 27 | 17.2 |
| | | Under 5 | 12 | 7.6 |
| 3 | Should a foreign language be studied at the tertiary level? | yes | 120 | 76.4 |
| | | no | 37 | 20.6 |
| 4 | Should the language study be adapted to the specificity of the field, or should it refer to the general language? | adapted | 120 | 76.4 |
| | | general | 37 | 20.6 |
| 5 | What exactly do you consider the most important aspect/s in the study of E.? | Acquiring a specialized vocabulary | 126 | 80.3 |
| | | Using the specialized vocabulary | 103 | 65.6 |
| | | Organizing a specific type of discourse/ text | 91 | 58 |
| | | Extracting necessary information | 70 | 44.6 |
| | | Handling specialized texts; consciously working with the text (keywords, main ideas, important details) | 82 | 52.2 |
| 6 | What should the *Art English* course tackle? | Some examples:<br>Oral communication<br>Acquiring and using specific terminology<br>More specificity (each art branch should work with specialized materials)<br>Specific texts (genres) (e.g., public presentations/ speaking; job applications)<br>More grammar, pronunciation<br>Image analysis | | |
| 7 | To what extent can *Art English* help you become internationally recognized? | To a large extent | 134 | 85.4 |
| | | To a small extent | 20 | 12.4 |
| | | Not at all | 3 | 1.9 |
| 8 | | No | 97 | 61.8 |
| | | Yes | 60 | 38.2 |

| No. | Question | Answers | number | Percentages % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Have you used *Art E.* outside the E. course? How? | Apply to international contests and internships.<br>Find tutorials to learn how to use different programs (Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Blender, etc.).<br>Find videos for the Art History course.<br>Communicate with other students abroad and incoming.<br>Find foreign partners for some projects.<br>Navigate the Internet, Internet interactions.<br>Apply for foreign scholarships.<br>Write texts published in specialized magazines.<br>Take part in international workshops and different projects.<br>Reach potential customers.<br>Online courses<br>Erasmus +<br>I wrote a motivation letter to apply to a foreign university.<br>Read bibliography for other courses.<br>Talk to people on the street, give instructions, directions, etc.<br>To mediate between speakers of other languages.<br>Watch movies and documentaries.<br>Promote my art on different social media; give details and explain certain aspects.<br>Write on my blog/website.<br>Communicate with international clients (as a graphic designer).<br>I do commissions for foreign clients.<br>To write my artist statement. | | |
| 9 | Do you consider online platforms helpful in learning a foreign language? | yes | 150 | 95.5 |
| | | no | 7 | 4.5 |
| 10 | Do you consider accessing online materials helpful to learn a foreign language? | yes | 148 | 94.3 |
| | | no | 9 | 5.7 |
| 11 | What kind of online materials do you consider most helpful? | Videos<br>Documentaries<br>Audio-video<br>Movies<br>Short videos to learn terminology.<br>PDF-s<br>Interviews of different artists<br>Books & audiobooks<br>Anything helping with the listening skill.<br>The video part is very important when speaking about art. | | |

| No. | Question | Answers | number | Percentages % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Q & A-s<br>Blogs<br>Tutorials<br>Podcasts<br>Recorded courses and seminars | | |
| 12 | How would you improve the *Art English* course? | Work separately with each art group.<br>Use more field-specific materials.<br>More videos than texts; I prefer listening rather than reading a text.<br>More interaction and production.<br>More grammar.<br>More creative tasks.<br>Oral presentations (of exhibitions, artists).<br>Changing the exam's percentage value in the final grade.<br>No deadlines(!) | | |
| 13 | How much will *Art English* help you with your graduation paper/ thesis/ dissertation? | Great extent | 91 | 58 |
| | | Very much | 53 | 33.8 |
| | | Not at all | 13 | 8.2 |
| 14 | How much do you think *Art English* will help you in your future career? | Very much | 145 | 92.4 |
| | | So-so | 7 | 4.5 |
| | | Not at all | 5 | 3.1 |

*Source: personal archive*

## INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Although the number of respondents was not as high as hoped (157 out of nearly 350), the results are valid because of the similarity of responses. The table does not reproduce all 157 when they are similar or very similar. To a large extent, the results of the survey were those expected. However, some changes have occurred since the previous needs analyses. They may be attributed to the large-scale changes in our lives brought by the last years of pandemic struggles and online education, but not entirely. Students have become more result-oriented, practical, and aware of their needs and purposes. They also have adapted to (and adopted) a speedier pace (maybe except for their homework deadlines!).

1. A particular shift has occurred during the last decade in the competency levels; today, more than half of the students consider themselves beyond the medium level of language proficiency. Previously, the great majority were situated at medium and beginner levels. It is the

natural consequence of the increase in the years of study: almost three-quarters have studied English over eight years.

2. More than three-quarters of the students consider studying a foreign language at the university level necessary if it is adapted to the specificity of the studied field. In other words, ESP is largely favored among students since they are aware of its enormous potential help. The 20% share of students preferring general English is somewhat in accordance with the number of lower-level competency students.

3. The students perceive the specialized vocabulary as one of the most critical aspects of studying *Art English*. The majority feel that acquiring such a lexical tool is of utmost importance. Many of them also understood that besides acquiring specific terminologies, it is also essential to be able to use them in the proper contexts and according to their purposes. Thus, the terminology of the art branch they belong to appears as a fundamental request to the *Art English* course. This interest is also in full accordance with what they suggest as course improvements: that is, a more specialized field-specific work (something like English for painting, for sculpture, for art therapy, for conservation and restoration, for photography, for ceramics, for textile art, for fashion, for design, and, why not? of history and theory of art). However, besides the genres already studied, they also need new ones, such as public presentations and job applications, which are rather job-oriented than academic. Image analysis, although dealt with by the *Art English* course, appears as an increased necessity, probably not exclusively involving the English course; an increased interest in the oral practice of *Art English* is manifested as well, coming as a newer tendency (they propose "creative talks").

4. More than half of the students consider that they also need to be able to understand and create well-structured art texts, as well as deal with such texts to obtain what they need, which, quite surprisingly, is not always information (!); this may appear as a contradiction since information is obtained through finding keywords and distinguishing the essential details, and formulating main ideas, that is, by logically working with a text. There are some gaps to fill here, strongly related to functional literacy.

5. Not surprising at all, is students' preference for videos to the detriment of "simple" texts. They plainly state that they would rather listen (and, of course, watch!) than read. Art discourse is visual; it has its typical elements, functions, and values. While this is an artist's primary tool, the written and the spoken word cannot be excluded. Communication within and without the art discourse community must involve word-mediated discourse. Understandably, texts are not atop the preference list. Still, art students and artists, not to mention art critics and historians, need to use them extensively in many contexts and for various purposes.

6. The preference for more specificity occurs again where the choice of materials is concerned; they would rather work with sub-field-specific texts/videos than with more general art-related ones.

7. The online medium is perceived as the most practical way to access materials and assignments. At the same time, the teaching platform is a possible handy mediator between materials and their needs and goals. Some online genres are pretty familiar to them.

8. The creativity of the tasks is also brought into the discussion; they would probably rather be creative with the proposed assignments than work within some coordinates, which is understandable but still arguable in what the extent of that creativity might get.

9. 92% of the students know that *Art English* will play an essential role in drafting and completing their bachelor theses or future dissertations. Therefore, almost all of them intend to use bibliographical sources in English.

10. Over 92% of the students are convinced that *Art English* will be part of their future careers (more than 85% understand the role of the language in their international relevance as artists). Actually, many students have already used Art English outside the academic course for different purposes, from practical ones, such as watching professional tutorials to master specific techniques, asking and giving instructions, watching movies, to academic ones, such as accessing online courses, reading bibliographies or during Erasmus + academic experiences, and to professional ones, such as writing job applications, contacting customers, applying for grants, online self-promoting, etc.

## COURSE DESIGN CHANGES. SOME LIMITATIONS.

Based on the results of the survey and its interpretations, several changes in the course design have occurred already, and more are to be implemented in the following semesters. However, while some students' preferences are justifiable and natural, others cannot be accepted. While increasing the number of video materials may be considered, any language teacher must not seriously consider renouncing the written text, no matter how "visual" these contemporary manifestations of our society may appear. There is a fragile threshold between functional literacy and (more or less generalized) ignorance.

When analyzing ESAP writing particularities, Flowerdew also notices that "students are likely to be more motivated if they are working with disciplinary texts and tasks than with other more 'general' texts and tasks, which they may find trivial." (Flowerdew, 2016, p. 10). He also reports the pressure put on other ESAP practitioners to incorporate more discipline-specific texts in the textbooks (Flowerdew, 2016, p. 10). While the need for more specialization of the *Art English* may be accepted to a certain extent, there is not enough time and space to implement it to the desired details. The university schedule does not allow that amount of time (and space) to work with small groups. Concessions need to be made. Possible subdivisions of the allotted time (which is extremely limited) may be a solution. Fragmented scheduling would require much previous planning and perfect communication channels.

Moreover, as Flowerdew mentions:

> the EAP course […] can focus on a 'common core' of language which is found across the disciplines, in whatever variety of English one cares to choose […] There is no need to teach such specialized language, as it will be acquired […]one way or the other. (Flowerdew, 2016, p.11).

There is also the problem of the content qualification of the language teacher. Students often expect specialized knowledge from that teacher, which is wrong. A hybrid approach is then advised on this matter of specificity; however, it requires a lot of time and dedication from the language teacher. Several steps in that direction may be taken, however.

1. A more careful selection of the proposed texts should be considered. The criteria should include the degree of specialization. Some freedom in choosing the preferred materials should be granted to the groups of students while keeping the bigger picture in mind: that is, the texts, as various and field-specific may be, should belong to the same genre. Authentic materials "can increase students' motivation and expose them to real language and cultures as well as to the different genres of the professional community to which they aspire" (García-Ostbye & Martínez-Sáez, 2023, p. 56, quoted in Mestre-Segarra, 2023, p.364).

2. More vocabulary exercises of various types should be devised for each study sub-group, helping the students use the specialized lexical items in various contexts. Appealing to their professional knowledge and creative writing ability is also to be considered; they should also be encouraged to propose such terminology themselves and bring it to the general knowledge of the group, especially if there are any unclear aspects concerning the meaning and the rhetoric-pragmatic aspects of the terms used. Attention should be paid to the case of lexical items with different meanings in different art branches (e.g., *glazing* – in painting and ceramics; the term refers to different materials, although the effect sought is quite similar). A more elaborate type of activity in this respect would be the compilation of a kind of branch-specific list of terms (or even a small dictionary) as an open (shared) online document, where students could add any such terms whenever they come across it, with a translation and some examples of its in-context use. The document would also serve future generations of students, who could improve it altogether. Although specificity may be considered to any practical extent for future professional artists, the students enrolled in the history and theory of art program need to be aware of as much terminology as possible since they are expected to deal with all the art branches as historians, critics, or curators, etc.

3. The genre approach should be further maintained since students already know it is a good instrument for text-structuring according to any

communicative purpose they might have. Besides written texts, more oral genre manifestations should be dealt with. More genres should be added to the study, as proposed by the students (e.g., contacting a gallery by email, job application, letter of intention); more attention should be paid to the oral variants of the already studied genres; for example, students might give oral presentations of design projects, or analyze a work of art, or give an oral artist statement to accompany a short video, or animation, or a video resume— as a newer, multimodal approach to an existing genre, one that "is perceived as an innovative recruitment and selection tool attracting growing interest […]" (Mestre-Segarra, 2023, p. 349). Whenever possible, students should be encouraged to speak in English about art (oral production) and converse about art with colleagues (oral interaction). Oral productions (such as a video resume, but not just that) naturally imply what Mestre-Segarra calls "embodied modes" of expression such as gestures, head movements, facial expressions, posture, as well as spoken language, together with "disembodied modes" involving clothing, background, and surrounding objects, and "filmic modes" (most probably employed by artists) such as images—including moving ones and camera shots, music + sound effects, written words, proxemics (Mestre-Segarra, 2023, p.3 6).

4. Moreover, each class should integrate an "oral moment" related to the subject studied, even briefly. Following the good results and the increased interest in the oral tasks proposed over the last few years, each assignment should contain an oral variant, too; the students should be allowed to choose whether they want to solve the assignment individually or in pairs (even in groups, if they so decide), record the task and turn it in on the online platform.

5. However, the writing part must not be ignored. Each task devised for a subject should be balanced to keep students interested. The purpose is to help students develop all the necessary competencies, not just those they prefer at a given moment. Writing offers the medium for a more in-depth probing or pondering upon some subjects, and written texts are still widely used in all contexts, professional or otherwise.

6. A certain degree of creative freedom should be granted in the task-solving while keeping the discourse community's standards. Students should be aware that they may be creative only as far as the respective genre-specific requirements are fulfilled; otherwise, the very purpose of their creativity may be lost.

7. No matter whether the *Art English* course occurs on-site or online, the online platform must be kept. All the tasks should be posted there so that the students can solve them at their own pace when they decide. The deadlines should still be maintained despite students' reluctance to accept and comply. Both the theoretical part and the studied texts will be made available on the platform for easy access.

8. The online platform is perceived as an advantage by students regarding assessment. They consider they have more time to access the tasks and feel less pressure to solve them; meanwhile, students welcome the teacher's comments on their answers (they almost always offer feedback by agreeing with them or asking further questions).

9. An increased number of video materials, as recent as possible and of good quality, should be sought; some should be branch-related, some more general. They are to be used on the online platform as subject materials or used for specific assignments. However, each such video material should elicit some response from the students. They are also encouraged to propose videos they find to be of interest to their colleagues as well as to the course itself.

10. The online medium should also be considered a tool students can use to manifest their creativity as artists and as communicators in English. Therefore, they should be allowed to create and propose their online genre-related activities; that is, they should be encouraged to have a blog or a website where they should post specific English texts and oral productions alongside the uploaded images of their art creations. This task is undoubtedly an excellent exercise for their future practices. Some incentives should be granted for such activities (following an already established *Art English* practice).

11. A change in the ratios of the final grade should allocate a more significant value for the semester tasks to the detriment of the final test/exam, as suggested by the students.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our digital era presupposes continuously adapting and mastering the necessary cyber genres. The worldwide spread of the English language in all kinds of communication makes it the instrument without which one cannot function efficiently in any profession. Communication skills must involve multimodality as a form of expression (or discourse strategy). More practice employing multimodal elements appears as a necessity in an ESP course.

Although the students' preference for oral tasks is obvious, the ESP teacher should never renounce the written text; a simple reason is that no discourse community has given up the written variants of its specific genres. Specialists in any field need to be able to understand and produce written texts for different purposes.

An essential aspect of ESP teaching is undoubtedly the use of authentic materials because they elicit the best responses from students to the proposed tasks. The responsible ESP teacher should seek help selecting these materials; the best help would come from the field professionals, but students may be requested (or challenged) to join the effort, too. Although the ESP teachers will most likely try to deal with the different specialized discourses, one must not expect them to become specialists in the respective fields, too.

The ESP course must permanently adapt to students' needs, preferences, and goals; they may change with the new tendencies in society or with new generations. For that, periodic surveys (polls) should be conducted to distinguish these possible changes, which may be of various types. Only after becoming aware of and balancing all problematic aspects should the ESP teacher bring changes to the syllabus, methods, and course pedagogy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bhatia, V. (1993). *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings.* Pearson Education Limited, Harlow: Longman Group, UK Limited.

Council of Europe. (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Accessed May 8, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

European Parliament.(2021, November 11). *REPORT on the European Education Area: a Shared Holistic Approach.* Accessed May 8, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0452_EN.html

Flowerdew, J. (2016). English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). Writing: Making the case. *WAP, Writing & Pedagogy, Vol. 8.1*, p. 5-32.

García-Ostbye, I. C., & Martínez-Sáez, A. (2023). Reading Challenges in Higher Education: How Suitable are Online Genres in English for Medical Purposes? *ESP Today, 11 (1)*, p. 53-74

Hyland, K. (2007). English for Specific Purposes: Some Influences and Impacts. In J. A. Cummins (ed.), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Springer. p.391-403

Iskra, K. A. (2023, 04 27). Language policy. *Fact Sheets on the European Union.* Accessed May 8, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/erpl-app-public/factsheets/pdf/en/FTU_3.6.6.pdf

Mestre-Segarra, M.-Á. (2023). A Multimodal Rhetorical Analysis of Video Resumes. *ESP Today, Vol. 11(2)*, p. 349-370.

# Environmental Communication

**OCTAVIA RALUCA ZGLOBIU**[1]

**Abstract:** The role of Environmental Communication is tremendously increasing every day since society faces new and complex environmental challenges and difficulty in planning sustainability. The present paper provides an insight into the various communication strategies and tools used in promoting environmental awareness, engagement, and action. Topics such as environmental journalism, public relations, advertising, social media, community engagement and advocacy are being discussed and understood not only as the prerogative of the new modern communicational paradigm, ranging from the digital literacy to the input of the AI, but also as the means to develop effective communication plans and messages for addressing environmental changes.

**Keywords**: *environmental communication, environmental awareness, environmental specialized communication, environmental discourse.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is the most important medium through which changes are verbalized, conceptualized, and negotiated (Fairclough, 2013; Halliday, 1994). Therefore, acknowledging that information creates our discourse and that our discourses create our reality, is by far the most important key element in developing an understanding of how language can encode views and perspectives. Environmental discourse is a type of discourse built on such linguistic mechanisms and to understand the ethical considerations and responsibilities of environmental communication implies understanding the mechanisms of communication in the first place. James Cantrill and Christine Oravec (Cantrill and Oravec, 1996, p. 2), the founding scholars of

---

[1] Lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

environmental communication, underlined that the "environment we experience, and affect is largely a product of how we come to talk about the world". According to Muir (Muir, 1994, p. 146), "the machine in the garden, the brushfire of activism, and the library of genetic diversity are all metaphorical frames which have been used to shape perspectives on the environment", as he emphasizes:

> From all these metaphors, two stand out as central elements of twentieth century discourse on the environment. The first, a more natural metaphor, describes the interconnected web of our ecological system; the second, a more technological view, perceives the earth as a spaceship, gliding among the stars: Interconnected Web and Spaceship Earth. (Muir, 1994, p. 146)

To be able to understand how we perceive the environment is very important as it shapes our future actions, and these actions may affect our lives more than we can imagine. Beyond the everyday usage of the environmental topics on news media, blogs, popular films and so on, one may never think of the fact that environmental legislation relies on environmental communication, and that the consequences of the way we use, misuse, interpret or encode perspectives in environmental discourse may influence the decisions we take for our future environmental actions.

Environmental communication emerged as a field back in 1970 and it paid attention to the study of the relation between the role of communication in shaping attitudes and behaviors, thus many scholars from various fields and disciplines commenced to analyze the impact the environmental activism had on the public sphere through language. Along time, scholars started to develop different approaches and theories to explain the relationship between the environment and the way in which we communicate, for example, the information deficit model, or the risk framework (Lester, 2019). The deficit model operates on the assumption that people are not informed enough, and the lack of knowledge they have, along with the failure to understand how environmental issues work, is at the core of their lack of involvement in environmentally friendly behaviors. The deficit model was criticized, and many argued that no matter how informed and trained a person may be in environmental issues, they may still not choose to act upon it. Research has shown that the process of informing people, or providing information, does not necessarily trigger changes in their attitudes and behaviors (Lester, 2019). On the other hand, the risk framework promotes that social amplification risks are not solely determined by their physical characteristics, but are also shaped by social, cultural, and psychological factors. According to this framework, risks can be amplified or attenuated through a variety of social processes, such as media coverage, personal experiences, social networks, and institutional practices. The key here seems to be the design of effective risk communication strategies, since the process goes beyond the simple fact of providing information, but it aims at building trust, addressing uncertainty, and involving stakeholders in a global participatory act:

> What is at stake is the survival of the planet itself, and the life-support systems it provides for humans and other species. At the same time, the risks are highly uncertain, and only partially knowable and manageable. The risk portfolios of individual countries and places are also becoming progressively more global in their sources. And so the increasing globalization of risk confronts humans with some of their most challenging and perplexing risk problems. (Kasperson and Kasperson, 2005, p. 12)

Later on, the emphasis was placed on the intersection of communication, culture and social justice (Anders and Cox, 2023) in the sense that the research undertaken in this sector was preoccupied mainly with ways in which communities are affected by environmental issues and how communication may or may be not used to promote equity and inclusivity in environmental decision-making.

Nowadays, environmental communication is an interdisciplinary field that covers a wide range of topics, such as environmental journalism, risk communication, climate change communication, and sustainability communication. It is in this time, that maybe more than ever before, promoting informed public discourse and action, may be a sine quo non condition for a healthy and prosperous society, taking into consideration the recent experience of the pandemic and the avalanche of the phenomena of fake news that humanity has been witnessing along it.

## THE COMPLEX NATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

In an era dominated by the accelerated information exchange, by digital and technological discoveries, fake news, and distorted communication, we strongly believe that decoding communication in the first place and laying the basis for a proficient use of environmental communication in the specialised domain at the same time, is more than a necessity. On the other hand, training communication *per se* is very useful in applied sciences, if we take into consideration that some domains are not prone to communication at all (Zglobiu, 2021), and in a very competitive labour market, not only hard skills, but also the soft skills are required and looked for by most of the environmental companies and not only.

Robert Cox and Paedra Pezullo in their book *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Cox & Pezullo, 2018, p. 22) proposed eight key pedagogical values for environmental communication, which we consider to be the "nucleus" of environmental communication in terms of learning objectives, and are summarized in the following:

1. To understand the ethical principles of environmental communication and the acknowledgement that it operates as a care discipline.
2. A historical overview and comprehension of the environmental topics and their relation to communicative practices used in various disciplines, and how these were influenced by cultural beliefs, laws, and practices in time.
3. To understand and to deepen into the different communication theories, principles and keywords which are relevant to the environmental discourse in the public sphere.
4. To develop a sense of communication inquiry in the specialised field.
5. To critically analyse different voices and stances in the public sphere and how they constructed their environmental communicative pattern, to sustain, adapt and craft sustainable messages in the specialised field.

6. To understand how cultural similarities and differences across symbolic interactions shape environmental communication, and the significance it has in a globally connected world.
7. To introduce basic notions of democracy, public sphere, civic rights and to encourage students to participate as specialists in the elaboration of environmental legislation.
8. To develop critical thinking and research abilities, to attain performance in oral and written communication skills required in the field of expertise.

As far as the appropriate approach one may want to pursue in its endeavour to study environmental communication, Pezullo (2017) identifies seven approaches for studying it:

1. environmental personal identity and interpersonal relationships (assessing one's ecological footprint),
2. environmental organizational communication studies, (the strategies of institutions to organize themselves around environmental matters),
3. environmental science, technology, and health communication (how scientists may communicate more effectively with the public),
4. public participation in environmental decision making (drawing on rhetoric, discourse studies),
5. environmental mass media studies (drawing more on a social scientific perspective: discourse analysis on mainstream news coverage of environmental topics),
6. green applied media and arts (environmental journalism, for example, green design, or environmental architecture)
7. environmental rhetoric and cultural studies (environmental advocacy campaigns, movements or controversies in the public sphere).

The ability to understand that communication leads to real-world outcomes, helps the future experts in the domain of environmental sciences to develop a more professional approach in any of the work-related contexts they may be active in.

## PLAYERS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The public sphere is understood as a democratic space (Cox and Pezzullo, 2018, p. 41) where information circulates in different ways and is defined as "the forums and interactions in which different individuals engage each other about subjects of shared concern or that affect a wider community, from neighbourhoods to international relations." Communication plays a central role in each category, starting from the citizens and civil society, NGOs, politicians and public officials, businesses, scientists, and scholars, they are all linked through the means of communication. We believe that studying the different typologies of environmental discourse for each category deepens the ability to perceive the connections one may interfere between all these categories in the public sphere, and it awakens the potential of the paramount comprehension perspective in order to obtain the skills to assess the variables that play a key role in future sustainable environmental development. In this endeavour we intend to:

> describe some of the voices you may hear in the public sphere on environmental matters. Individuals in these (…) groups take on multiple communication roles—writers, press officers, group spokespersons, community or campus organizers, information technology specialists, communication directors, marketing, and campaign consultants, and more. (Cox and Pezzullo, 2018, p. 41)

Let us take for example the case of Roșia Montană: a small town in western Romania, which became the centre of controversy over a proposed gold mining project. A foreign company intended to develop a large gold pit mine in the area, and the logistics of the project would have implied the relocation of residents and the destruction of several historic buildings and archaeological sites. The project triggered protests and opposition from residents, environmental groups, and cultural heritage advocates. The controversy soon became a national and international issue, and it created a very powerful public circle space in terms of environmental communication, and it became one of the most significant victories for environmental and cultural heritage advocates. For the understanding of the public sphere as a discursive space, we would suggest the following model for the case study of Roșia Montană:

a) Overall description of the situation [types of discourse involved]
b) Voices [different actors + types of discourse used]
c) Instances [coverage and framing]
d) Scientific approach [academic writing]
e) Possible approaches [text productions]

Another very important aspect in environmental communication is that this type of communication goes beyond the public sphere, and is co-dependent on many social aspects

> It is recognized that different factors can influence user cognition, such as social and cultural values, lifestyle and professional interests, past experiences, gender, age, personality, and ethnic groups. Moreover, cross-cultural studies have shown that mental representations of public spaces may differ for people from different cultural backgrounds. (Portella, 2014, p. 2)

It is the discursive dimension where all these above-mentioned elements come in together and in order to understand the players in the public sphere and their positions, one needs to be able to deconstruct discourse and be aware of the constitutive parts of a communicational space.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The hierarchical model of influences in journalism (Shoemaker and Steven, 2014) lies at the central core of any type of journalism and applies to any type of news, including environmental news. The model assumes that journalists are influenced by a wide range of factors in the process of making the news, starting from personal beliefs and values, and going all the way towards political affinities. The hierarchical model comprises of five layers of influence: individual, routines, organization, extra media, and ideology. Each layer has a specific input into the production and the shaping process of the content of the environmental news. In this complex web of factors,

> Understanding environmental journalism and the practices, values, and roles of environmental journalists is very much about understanding the nature of media organizations and the working conditions and pressures that influence the process of public communication about the environment. (Hansen, 2020, p. 231)

Once again, discourse plays a central role and it becomes obvious, taking a look at the main theories and practices in environmental journalism, (starting from simple aspects such as types of journalistic texts, the rules for elaborating clear and concise texts, and going all the way to discussing journalistic values and the construction of expertise and credibility), that without basic elements in communication and discourse analysis, one may not be successful at such a task.

The Environmental Public Relation refers to the basic notions of public relations and types of environmental topics which have been used to brand or rebrand specific products on our market. The following case studies, for example, can be analyzed from the communicational perspective in order to provide an appropriate context for the understanding of the communicational act from the PR perspective:

A. Coca-Cola's ”PlantBottle” packaging: In 2009, Coca-Cola introduced a new type of packaging made from plant-based materials instead of petroleum. The ”PlantBottle” was designed to reduce the company's carbon footprint and promote sustainable packaging.
   a) How was the event advertised?
   b) What types of discourse was used?
   c) How was the coverage and framing realized?
   d) What types of symbols were used? What about images?

B. Toyota's "Prius" hybrid car: Car manufacturer Toyota introduced the Prius hybrid car in 1997, which quickly became a symbol of environmentally friendly transportation. The company has since invested heavily in hybrid and electric vehicle technologies, positioning itself as a leader in sustainable transportation.
   a) How was the event advertised?

b) What types of discourse was used?

c) How was the coverage and framing realized?

d) What types of symbols were used? What about images?

A very special attention must be given to the understanding of the notions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and to the way in which environmental communication is used as a tool by companies to demonstrate they run responsible environmental practices.

The effect of greenwashing (Miller and Maxwell, 2020) can be best understood if we mention the case of the famous fashion retailer H&M. In 2019, the Norwegian Consumer Authority accused H&M of greenwashing because they claimed that certain clothing items were made from sustainable materials, thus a large part of their so-called "Conscious Collection”. The Norwegian Consumer Authority found that H&M's claims were misleading and lacked sufficient evidence to support them. As a matter of fact, some of the clothes in the "Conscious Collection" were made from conventional cotton, which is not a sustainable material, and the collection represented a very small percentage of H&M's total production. After the confrontation, H&M company apologized and agreed to improve their sustainability communication and reporting transparency. This case highlights the importance of accurate and transparent communication in sustainability claims and the potential harm of greenwashing.

The ethical considerations in environmental communication occupy a central position: we believe that the act of environmental communication should be governed by honesty and transparency, no matter the environmental ideology it serves or what type of company it represents.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADVERTISING

Environmental Advertising refers to any piece of visual and/or linguistic material, used in association with the environment, in an attempt to correlate the item which is being advertised to the ideology of the notion eco-friendly. It is also known as green advertising and is addressed to a very large category of consumers, especially those with an eco-friendly way of living. This type of advertising can easily turn into greenwashing if the companies who use it are not sustained by genuine sustainable practices. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that "there appears to be a growing desire to protect the environment, as evidenced by consumers' willingness to avoid products that they believe contribute to environmental degradation" (Kangun and Grove 1991, p. 48).

The environmental advertising is widely used especially in environmental campaigns and the message is constructed accordingly, for example Apple's "Better" campaign. In 2017, Apple launched a campaign to promote their commitment to sustainability. The campaign consisted of a series of videos and advertisements (publicity) that emphasised the company's efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and use renewable energy. Another successful campaign for Apple was "Think Different" and it conveyed the following message:

> Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. 'he rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules and they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do. (Think Different: Apple's Blue Ocean Formula for Success, 2023)

In Romania, we can mention two successful campaigns: "Plant a Tree" and "Greenpeace Romania". They both used environmental advertising materials, videos, trailers, advertisements, websites, in order to raise awareness among the Romanian citizens and to invite to an eco-friendly way of living.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Social media is probably the most powerful tool in environmental communication. Pellow (Pellow, 2018) argues that social media is used in many aspects of environmental justice struggles and its impact upon environmental communication cannot be denied. One of its most common usages is that of sharing information: Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, they all are great platforms for sharing research, news, information with environmental content. The risk with the online platforms is that information may be misleading or misinterpreted by its readers. Official information thus may be found on official websites and should be consulted first, for example:

1. Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests: https://www.mmediu.gov.ro/
2. National Environmental Protection Agency: http://www.anpm.ro/
3. National Administration "Romanian Waters": http://www.rowater.ro/
4. National Agency for Mineral Resources: https://www.anrm.ro/
5. National Research and Development Institute for Environmental Protection: http://www.incdpm.ro/
6. National Institute for Marine Research and Development "Grigore Antipa": https://www.rmri.ro/
7. National Meteorological Administration: https://www.meteoromania.ro/
8. Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority: https://ddbra.ro/
9. Romsilva - National Forest Administration: https://www.rosilva.ro/
10. National Institute of Research and Development for Biological Sciences: http://www.bioresurse.ro/

Another usage of the social media in environmental communication is that of campaigning and activism. Environmental advocacy may take many forms on social media, for example the campaign Every Can Counts, launched within a larger project Restart Europe, where people from all over Europe are encouraged to take part in the Recycling Challenge and film themselves while throwing a can in the recycling bin in the most creative way possible (See appendix 1). Crowdsourcing and building communities are another two successful usages of the social media in environmental communication. The notion of crowdsourcing implies that social media is used as a tool for gathering data and information from citizens, for example EBird Romania or I Naturalist (see appendix 2) where people have their own input materials in terms of hotspots and species observed. And last, but not least, social media offers the opportunity to build communities, for people who share a common interest in the environment, thus providing a platform for discussion, collaboration, and the sharing of ideas and resources.

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS: WHERE AND WHY?

The importance of environmental skills has been demonstrated in different contexts and social settings, among which we emphasise the following:

a) Environmental non-profit organizations: this type of organizations is heavily relying on communication as a part of their working-structure. They need to inform the citizens, to educate the public on different environmental causes and advocate for sustainable developments.
b) Government agencies: The role of such agencies is to inform the public about environmental legislation, regulations, policies, and initiatives. They need skilled communicators since working with a large public requires a specialised type of communication, differentiated discourse patterns and so on. (See Appendix 3)
c) Corporate sustainability: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) requires effective environmental communication strategies to develop and implement the company's sustainable business practices.
d) Journalism and media: play a crucial role in disseminating information on environmental issues, runs educational campaigns and tries to create awareness on the importance of sustainability.
e) Education and academia: Instructors and researchers working in environmental domains, communication, and related fields require communication skills to teach, conduct research, and communicate their findings and results to broader specialised and non-specialised audiences.

Besides the institutionalized settings mentioned above, we can also mention consulting (offering services to businesses, organizations, and government agencies to help them communicate effectively), or community engagement, maybe one of the most important instances, as effective environmental communication empowers people to take action to protect their environment on one hand, and to educate people and raise awareness on eco-friendly ways of living, on the other.

## THE FUTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

As we witness the raise of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, environmental communicators are very much needed to develop new and interesting activities on the virtual platforms. Now, more than ever, we have the chance to create simulated environments and to offer, at the same time, a real simulated experience in terms of awareness and understanding of the mechanisms of ecosystems. The use of AR and VR can boost interest in youth, and with an interesting narrative overlapping the virtual experience, we may achieve amazing results in teaching the youth the most important aspects of how to preserve the ecosystems.

We also advocate for the introduction of storytelling and the role of environmental communicators here is a crucial one: focusing on storytelling as a means to educate and engage audiences is by far more effective than statistics and plain numbers. Stories tend to stir emotional reactions in people, metaphorical language within stories operates at a cognitive level, mapping the metaphors of the environment to very personal experiences in the audiences. So, greater emphasis on storytelling has a huge potential in terms of raising awareness on environmental issues.

Environmental communication can also foster collaborative and participatory approaches. In a fast-changing world, the need to involve communities in decision-making processes, may be a winning solution, not to mention the amazing solutions citizens offered on crowdsourcing platforms.

Communication, in general, has a very inclusive aspect, which we believe it could be used successfully for integrating cultural and linguistic diversity, because addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, calibrating the message according to the cultural aspects of different communities, can only improve the quality of feedback from the audiences and raises the probability of engaging them responsibly in environmental sustainability.

## CONCLUSIONS

One of the main purposes of environmental communication is to provide focus on solutions. In our opinion, communication offers the chance of a shift of stances, turn-taking, a change of paradigm, in terms of not only raising awareness on different environmental issues we face nowadays but also initiating the uprisal of solutions input through communication. It is, after all, environmental discourse that ultimately will shape our future environmental reality.

## APPENDIX

**Appendix 1:**
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/every_can_counts_romania/,
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/everycancountsromania)

**Appendix 2:**
EBird Platform: https://ebird.org/home
INaturalist Platform: https://www.inaturalist.org/observations

**Appendix 3**
Environmental Protection Agency: https://www.epa.gov
Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor: http://www.mmediu.ro
Agenția Națională pentru Protecția Mediului: http://www.anpm.ro

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cantrill, J. G., & Oravec, C. L. (1996). Introduction. In J. G. Cantrill & C. L. Oravec (Eds.), *The symbolic earth: Discourse and our creation of the environment* (p. 1–8). Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

Cox, R., & Pezzullo, P. (2018). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Sage.

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnold.

Hansen, A. (2020). *Sources, Strategic Communication, and Environmental Journalism*. In D. B. Sachsman & J. M. Valenti (Eds.), Environmental Journalism. Routledge.

Hansen, A., & Cox, R. (Eds.). (2023). *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication.* London: Routledge.

Kangun, N., Carlson, L., & Grove, S. J. (1991). *Environmental Advertising Claims: A Preliminary Investigation.* Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 10(2), p. 47-58.

Lester, L. (2019). *Environmental Communication: A History of the Key Concepts*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Miller, T., & Maxwell, R. (2020). *Greenwashing: Environmentalism and the Mass Media* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Muir, S. A. (1994). *The Web and the Spaceship: Metaphors of the Environment*. ETC: A Review of General Semantics, 51(2), p. 145–152.

Pellow, D. (2018). *Social Media and the Politics of Environmental Justice*. University of Arizona Press.

Portella, A. (2014). *Design and the Built Environment*. Ashgate Pub Co.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective.* Routledge.

Zglobiu, O. R. (2021). *A Case Study on Needs Analysis in English for Academic Environmental Purposes.* In L. Escobar & A. Ibáñez Moreno (Eds.), Mediating Specialized Knowledge and L2 Abilities (p. 159-173). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Internet sources**

Pezzullo, P. C. (2017). Environment. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication and Critical Studies. Oxford University Press. Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.575.

"Think Different: Apple's Blue Ocean Formula for Success", *Blue Ocean Strategy* (blog), https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/blog/think-different-apple/ accessed [the 8th of April 2023].

# Prospective Course Aimed at M.Sc. Students in Biology: Steps in ESAP Syllabus Design

**ADINA-MARIA MEZEI**[1]

**Abstract:** The present study sets out to design the content of an ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) course aimed at M.Sc. students in Biology. The reason behind this endeavor is that the current B.Sc. course cannot cover sufficient specific-subject topics due to time constraints. After providing a rationale for this enterprise, we present a literature review regarding curriculum/syllabus design, methodological and needs analysis implications, with the purpose of discerning among possible approaches to take. A discussion on some types of syllabuses is included. Following this, we focus on identifying both the target learners' specialist-subject background and the existing M.Sc. specialized program contents. In the final stage, we outline the main topics that could be included in the prospective course.

**Keywords***: curriculum, syllabus, needs analysis, English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), English for Biology students*

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of the present study is to investigate the design process of an English course aimed at Master's degree students in Biology-related specializations at "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca. The need for such an endeavor has arisen as a result of our experience in teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes (ESAP) to first-year students at the Faculty of Biology and Geology. These students are enrolled in the following undergraduate programs: Biology (3 years), Biochemistry (3 years), Environmental Biology (3 years), Industrial Biotechnology (4 years) - the

[1] Assistant Lecturer, Babeș-Bolyai University

Romanian line of study, and Biology (3 years), Ecology and Environmental Protection (3 years) - the Hungarian line of study.

The students under discussion are required to attend a foreign language course as part of their first-year undergraduate program for the duration of two semesters (i.e., a 56-hour practical language course). This course is compulsory, but students have a choice in terms of the foreign language that they want to study out of the following: English, French, German, Russian, Italian, or Spanish. The minimum proficiency level should be B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (i.e., the CEFR scale). At the end of their B.Sc. program, these students need to sit a language proficiency exam, based on the results of which they are issued a language certificate. This certificate is necessary for enrolment in their bachelor's degree graduation exam and, subsequently, for admission to various master degree's programs.

Despite having only recently started teaching this learner category, we have taken notice of the broadness, diversity, and interdisciplinary nature of their relevant thematic areas. Furthermore, it has become evident to us that the undergraduate course duration does not allow for extensive specific-content coverage. This was the reason behind the current attempt at designing a prospective ESAP course as part of a master's degree program, which constitutes the next logical stage in some of these students' educational pathway.

## CURRICULUM, SYLLABUS, AND THEIR INTERPLAY WITH METHODOLOGY

First, we would like to discuss some definitions developed around the notions of *curriculum* and *syllabus*. At first, there seems to have been some confusion in the specialist literature with regard to the distinction between the two terms (Nunan, 1988, p. 5-8), but in time it has become generally accepted (in current practice) to see *curriculum* as a description of what is to be taught and what students should be able to do by the end of a course, while *syllabuses* often, if only subtly, stipulate the methodology to be used throughout the course.

A more traditional view (the *narrow* approach to syllabus design) regards *curriculum* as the step preceding the development of a syllabus, dealing with the initial planning, implementation, and administration of educational programs. It also operates based on a clear-cut distinction between *syllabus design* (primarily preoccupied with the decision-making process through which course content is determined, i.e., the "what" of course design) and *methodology* (dealing with the establishment of language activities and tasks, i.e., the "how" of course design). The *broader* view proponents in their turn somewhat blur the division between content and tasks, according to Nunan (1988, p. 8). Methodology is largely influenced by the perspective adopted on syllabus design, as well. A definition of the two is specified also later by Nunan (1991), signaling the fuzziness that results from the narrow approach (e.g., task-based):

> Traditionally, syllabus design is concerned with the selection and grading of content, while methodology is concerned with the selection and sequencing of tasks, exercises, and related classroom activities. Metaphorically speaking, syllabus design is concerned with the destination, while methodology is concerned with the route. With the development of task-based approaches to language learning and teaching, this distinction has become difficult to sustain. (Nunan, 1991, p. 283)

A more recent analysis regarding *curriculum* and *syllabus* can be found in Richards (2017). This time the perspective is somewhat changed in the sense that Richards adopts a top-bottom approach, starting his discussion from what he names a *curriculum-based approach to language teaching*. He distinguishes between *curriculum* (needless to say, including syllabus considerations throughout his book) seen as *product* and as *process*. In the former case, *curriculum* is defined in similar terms to Nunan's (1988) traditional view mentioned above: "[…] a set of statements, documents, […] that represent a plan for the achievement of specific educational goals, which may be at the national, regional, school, or institutional level." (Richards, 2017, p. 6). In the latter instance, Richards develops an entire theory on curriculum and syllabus posited somewhere at the convergence of "backward" and "forward design."

Richards (2017) concentrates on the interplay in curriculum design between internal and external factors, adroitly specifying the role that may be occupied by various interested parties (*see* citation below). Internal factors are linked to the changing views on the nature of language and to how languages are learnt, which are mainly the work of researchers. Nowadays, the focus has shifted towards the application of communicative teaching principles in class to a greater or lesser extent. Curriculum is also affected by decisions made by governments, educational authorities, employers, and learners, who, in their turn, are under the influence of needs and requirements coming from various stakeholders (external factors). Out of the varied aspects specified by Richards (2017, p. 5-6), the need for delivering results in the shortest time possible and to a high level of efficiency must be pointed out.

> The challenge for the language-teaching profession, therefore, is to develop language programs that respond to the practical demands for proficiency in English but are also informed by current research, theory, and best practice. […], we could say that researchers focus on *means*, while administrators and planners are more interested in *ends* or outcomes. Teachers, of course, are interested in both means and ends. (Richards, 2017, p. 6)

According to Richards (2017), forward and backward design are two ways of developing the curriculum or syllabus as *product*[2]. Forward design is adopted whenever there is a sort of linear development of a course, in the sense that "the output from one stage serves as the input to the stage that follows" (Richards, 2017, p. 14). Such planning, as he puts it, is useful in situations when the final course objective is not "clearly defined" (Richards 2017, p. 14). Backward design starts with the outcomes, which are then followed by the establishment of the content and teaching activities. He illustrates "the forward curriculum design process" as shown in *Figure 1*, while *Figure 2* shows the alternative.

[2] Although a differentiation between the two terms is specified, in practice, when speaking about the actual process of course design, they seem not to have been consistently employed.

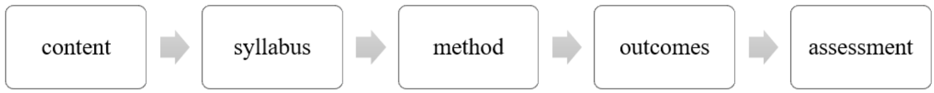


**Figure 1.** The curriculum design process described in terms of forward design.

*Source: Richards, 2017, p. 15*

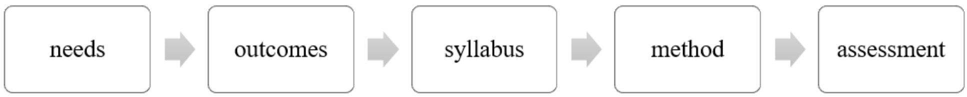


**Figure 2.** The curriculum design process described in terms of backward design.

*Source: Richards, 2017, p. 16*

Richards (2017, p. 16) considers that the forward-design process is the choice at hand in less 'favorable' situations (i.e., for teachers with restricted resources or limited access to professional development); however, we would argue that this may in fact constitute the first part of any attempt at designing a course, irrespective of the theoretical standpoint. Establishing content to be included in a course (e.g., in connection with themes) is itself a means of conducting needs analysis, in our opinion, and thus, it could be seen as part of the first step (i.e., of needs analysis) in the backward-design process. However, what can be retained is the idea that curriculum, and implicitly syllabus design can be the result of both forward and backward design in practice.

Subsequently, Richards (2017, p. 17) develops the idea of the "emergent curriculum", this time viewed as *process* (referred to as the process or ecological approach to curriculum). A comparison is drawn between the curriculum as product and as process, with an explanation given in the form of the relation between curriculum and testing: in curriculum as product, testing is used in the form of achievement testing, whereas in the process curriculum, teaching and assessment are interwoven, the latter serving as a means of evaluating the next step to be taken in the teaching process.

To us, this differentiation seems to reflect the process of curriculum/syllabus development in time: even after the syllabus has been established, its first implementation (being our topic of interest here, we will discuss more in terms of syllabus) will include continuous assessment to check whether either content, or the methods used are relevant to the learners. After the syllabus has been tested a couple of times, there will be a tendency to secure its framework and to concentrate more on achievement testing.

This focus on curriculum as process is similar to the already 'classical' learning-centered approach proposed by Hutchinson & Waters (1991). According to them (1991, p. 72-77), syllabus design as process relies heavily on the enactment stage, which necessarily includes methodological aspects. Sometimes, methods or techniques are *a fait accompli* when coming to be used in class, because the syllabus as product already includes them (e.g., in a task-based syllabus), other times they are selected during the instruction, which means they are determined during the teaching and learning process. Decisions regarding methods are reflective of the approach one has on the nature of language and on the teaching-learning process.

A historical overview of them is provided in several studies (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991; Harmer, 2007; Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012, Richards, 2017). Briefly put, language was first accounted for in terms of grammar (and vocabulary) in a decontextualized approach (classical or traditional grammar), then it was analyzed in terms of syntagmatic notions and structures (structural account); after that, in the context of transformational-generative grammar, a distinction between *competence* and *performance* was made. Next surfaced discourse analysis, the notional-functional approach, and register analysis. Other language accounts influencing the perspective on language as object of study were the cognitive perspective, which viewed learners as thinking beings, after which the affective factor (learners as emotional beings) was taken into consideration.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS. DEFINITION, RELEVANCE, APPROACHES

In what follows next, we present some general aspects regarding needs analysis defined as "techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design" (Nunan, 1988, p. 13). Needs analysis may be regarded as the initial step to undertake at the outset of any course development, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and, by extension in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Jordan, 1997; Hutchinson & Waters, 1991; Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012). Although in the early stages it has been associated with these two types of teaching English, we can, however, state together with Hutchinson and Waters (1991) that needs analysis should stand at the basis of any enterprise of course design in teaching English as a second language. One thing that differentiates between language teaching discussed in terms of general and specific purposes is the importance given to it. (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991, p. 53).

The relevance of needs analysis has emerged with the advent of communicative theories occurring around the 1970s (Harmer, 2007). According to Richards (2017), there were also some pre-ESP movements arising as a response to the need of preparing students to enroll in US or British universities around the 1950s. Communicative approaches were a sort of counter-reaction to the way teaching and learning a language were viewed up to that point. In other words, the obsolete principles of *language as form* to be rendered in an accurate manner were substituted with the perspective of *language as content* to be produced in an interaction, with the purpose of achieving a communicative end. The change in thought led to a transformation of the methods applied in class, and thus methodology in its turn metamorphosed. Needs analysis models proliferated in response to the updated learners' and other interested parties' requirements.

Hutchinson & Waters (1991, p. 54-56) introduced the well-known conceptualization framework concerning needs analysis, at the basis of which stand the following terms: *target needs* ("what the learner needs to do in the target situation") and *learning needs* ("what the learner needs to do in order to learn"). *Target needs* is a blanket term which includes *necessities* ("what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation"), *lacks* (the missing items from the *necessities* category that need to be covered by the language program) and *wants* (learners' subjective needs, including those of an affective kind).

According to Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 123-126), needs can be identified from *the target situation analysis* (*objective needs*, for example, with respect to learners' professional activity), personal information about the students (*subjective needs*, *wants*, *means*), a *present situation analysis* (from which learners' lacks can be derived), the *learning situation analysis* (adequate ways of learning the language), and information about how language will be used in the target situation, which may encompass *linguistic analysis*, *discourse analysis*, *genre analysis*. As can be noticed, their term usage includes Hutchinson and Waters' 1991 interpretation now in the context of both ESP and EAP.

Jordan (1997, p. 23-28) also underlined the importance of needs analysis, discussing in terms of the *target-situation analysis (TSA)* – the situation envisaged in terms of the future, or of needs, the *present-situation analysis (PSA)*, *learning-centered approaches* (the *negotiated syllabus* as introduced by Hutchinson and Waters (1991), in which it is taken into consideration that not only the learners' needs should be evaluated, but also the learning process itself), *strategy analysis* (with an emphasis on ways of learning rather than instructional strategies, based on the idea that as systematic as teaching may be, learning is a process which somehow escapes systematization), *means analysis* – a context-sensitive account of needs, or *language audits* - usually carried out by companies, institutions, or countries. In time, the scope of needs analysis has been the object of study for many other researchers, which led to terminology proliferation, as a logical consequence of this specialization process.

In order to explain the importance of needs analysis, we will draw on our previous experience as a program manager at a private language study center, offering both corporate and open language courses. Conducting a needs analysis is a key aspect in the success of a language program, which, in the aforesaid situation, can be measured in terms of course reordering (defined as the process of placing an order for a new/renewed module of language services) and of customer satisfaction (the course objectives have been attained). In both situations (corporate and open language courses), the sponsor is primarily interested in getting the best value for money. The patron may be represented by a person different from the actual course attendee(s) (e.g., company management representative, such as an HR agent of a company, or even the general manager of a company), or it could be that the course attendee is also the one who finances his/her language training (open courses). Next, we will refer only to the former situation.

In this case, analysis will have to consider the sponsor's necessities foremost. Analyzing a description of the target situation may serve this purpose (following, for example, from a structured interview with the interested party). However, the necessities, lacks and wants of the course attendees, which may diverge at certain points from those of the company, are also of relevance. Linguistic lacks may be determined with the help of proficiency language tests, but wants and necessities can rather be traced by discussions with the future learners in the target language.

Missing out on the inclusion of one or the other in the course design may lead to losses either in terms of course continuity, or of successful implementation of the training content. The former would be the result of the sponsor not being convinced that the language course attains the established goals. The latter would be concerned with sparking and maintaining the learner's interest, who, consequently, puts effort in assimilating the content to a greater extent. The situation described can be regarded as a case in point for the fact that learners' perceptions as to what is relevant to them may be different from other interested parties' perspective (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991, p. 56).

When it comes to our students' situation, it is mainly up to the teacher to assess the applicability of a course content. To understand some of the ESP practitioner's duties, you may refer to Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 14-17), who mention the roles of teacher, course designer, materials provider, researcher, or evaluator. Speaking of the last one, the concept of *negotiated syllabus* emerges once more (*see* also Hutchinson & Waters (1991).

There are several methods of collecting data for needs analysis discussed in the literature. Out of these, some of the ideas put forward by Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 132-137) will be exemplified next. *Questionnaires* are usually applied in large-scale projects to obtain quantitative information, while *checklists* may be used for the determination of attitudes and feelings, i.e., in a qualitative approach. When it comes to these categories, as mentioned by the quoted authors, the actual phrasing of the questions may sometimes lead to ambiguities. And, we would add, it may steer the respondent towards a 'preferred' answer. If the question is "Do you prefer a friendly student-centred approach to a rigid teacher-dominated one? yes/no" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012, p. 133), how many respondents would choose "rigid" over "friendly"?

The *analysis of authentic spoken and written texts* is viewed as a key aspect in needs analysis, useful for both the target and the present situation. By analyzing texts used by the (target) learners, the course designer can identify topics of interest, vocabulary or grammar features occurring with a higher frequency, specificity in discourse, or favored genres. *Structured interviews* are a set of questions devised in advance, to which other open questions can be added during the interview, if clarifications are needed. *Discussions* are the more spontaneous, less structured, and informal variant of structured interviews. In this case, immediate feedback is provided by students; however, the opinion expressed may or may not be representative of the majority (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012, p. 137).

*Observations* refer to the "shadowing" of a person carrying out a particular task or of an entire process as illustrations of actual target language usage. It may raise concerns in the people being observed regarding their performance or the sensitivity of certain data. It is a means of analyzing both TSA and PSA (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012, p. 135). *Assessment* "includes formal and informal judgements of students' performance and progress through classwork, assignments and tests" (Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 137). In other words, assessment is part of the syllabus enactment, although, as it might be expected, it is also part of the initial part of the process, that is, of needs analysis (Jordan, 1997; CEFR Companion Volume, 2020).

We would maintain the term *course design* when speaking about the dynamic, ongoing process of syllabus/curriculum development (stages involved: initial planning, implementation, evaluation, renewal). It can begin at any point as illustrated in *Figure 3* below, depending on the means at the course designer's disposal. We would reserve the terms *syllabus* and *curriculum* for the process results, i.e., when dealing with them as products.

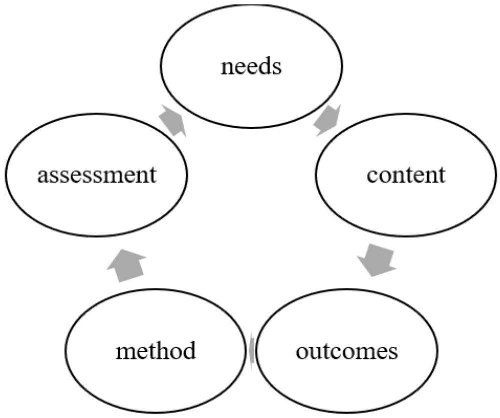


**Figure 3.** Forward-backward approach to course design.

*Our perspective*

## SYLLABUS APPROACHES

There are many ways in which syllabuses have been categorized. Nunan (1988, p. 12) distinguishes between product-oriented and process-oriented syllabuses - the former ones organize their content in terms of the outcomes of instruction, whereas the latter place the learning process at the core and are organized with respect to task and activities. Next, we will present an overview of his main categories.

In the *product*-oriented typology, Nunan (1988) includes *grammatical syllabuses* (similar to *structural syllabuses* in Hutchinson & Waters, 1991) which start from the assumption that by teaching grammatical items, arranged from simple to more complex aspects, in a linear manner, authentic communication can ensue outside the classroom. The main criticism (Nunan, 1988; Richards, 2017) they have received is that they disregard the pragmatic aspects in language use (they ignore that the same sentence can be interpreted differently in various contexts, i.e., it can fulfil different functions). Nowadays grammar interpreted at text level may be included in some integrated syllabuses (Richards 2017, p. 207).

In the *functional-notional* design, the syllabus is arranged according to *notions* (e.g., time, cause, properties, and shapes) and *functions* (e.g., introductions, greeting, persuading). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1991, p. 32), the connection between the structural syllabus and functional/notional grammar can be rendered as "structure + context = grammar". Although these functional-notional categories show that language is more than a string of grammatical issues to be checked when planning a course, it may still prove rather difficult to grade functions (Nunan, 1988, p. 36-37). Additionally, this syllabus type is placed among the criticized *synthetic* approaches (which focus on language parts being taught gradually until an entire structure of language emerges (Wilkins 1976 a*pud* Nunan 1988, p. 27), rather than on learning as a process). Besides grammatical syllabuses, we would mention *vocabulary* ones (also called the *lexical approach*), as described by Richards (2017, p. 208-210). They have emerged as a result of recent developments in corpus studies and concentrate on the idea that studying language chunks need no longer be posited at micro-, but rather at macro-level.

*Process* syllabuses are taken to include both *procedural* and *task-based* ones, which place tasks and activities at the center of the syllabus, and do not result from a previously determined linguistic description (Nunan, 1988, p. 42). A useful distinction is made between pedagogic tasks (taking place in class) and real-life ones (to be performed in real-life). There are several ways in which tasks have been addressed (Nunan, 1988, p. 44-48), and they continue to be a central approach in current literature, as we shall see below in our discussion on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. One downside of this approach resides in the difficulty in evaluating learner's language performance (Richards, 2017, p. 125).

At the opposite end of synthetic syllabuses, we can find *analytic* ones, in which language has not been subjected to grading. These have been equated with *content-based* syllabuses. Content may be described in terms of situations, topics, themes, academic subjects (Nunan, 1988, p. 38). The advantage in using such an approach (currently closely connected to Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL, in which a specialist-subject matter is taught in a second language, the focus being on teaching content rather than language) is that no methodology needs to be postulated at the outset (Richards, 2017, p. 165). Lastly, the *natural approach*, having communicative skills as goal, is included in Nunan's *process*-oriented typology (Nunan, 1988, p. 52). This approach is criticized for ignoring social factors and for assuming that developing an ability (e.g., listening to the radio) can easily be transferred to other situations (e.g., listening to academic lectures) (p. 52).

Richards (2017) supplementarily talks about the *skill-based* or the *text-based* syllabuses. As the name suggests, the former is centered around the skills that need to pe put into practice by learners. The main skills (e.g., reading) are further divided into a set of micro-skills (reading for specific information, understanding explicitly/implicitly stated information etc.) (*see* Richards, 2017, p. 201-203 for criticism faced by these). The *text-based* perspective analyses written/oral texts in terms of discourse types. It has been part of EAP or ESP courses, or a component of CLIL, but it being product-oriented is viewed as one of its shortcomings (Richards, 2017, p. 179).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is one of the most famous illustrations of the backward design approach (Richards, 2017, p. 152). It is classified as *competency-based* syllabus design. It came to light in 2001 and was subsequently updated as the *CEFR Companion Volume, 2020*. In this latter version, it is specified that, although CEFR has been mainly used in assessment, it was originally devised as a policy instrument with the intention of fostering "the right to quality education for all." (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 11*).* One of its main purposes nowadays is the promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism through the introduction of concepts such as: *mediation*, *plurilingual/pluricultural competence* and *signing competences*. Additionally, as illustrated by its subtitle, it is concerned with learning, teaching and assessment (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 28).

CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 22) posits itself within the category of *action-oriented* approaches, setting itself apart from linear syllabuses, which, for example, focus on notions and functions. It starts out by working backwards, from learners needs to the design of courses based on real-world communicative needs organized around real-life tasks and accompanied by "can do" descriptors that communicate aims to learners (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30).

This approach is reflective of current views on learning and teaching a second language. But the question which arises is how to put these principles into application in an ESAP context. It is true that learners and stakeholders may get a better insight into what learners should know by the end of the course. However, in practice, teachers may encounter difficulty in assessing what exactly to teach (be it steps in making a poster, specialist-subject terminology, academic terminology, some general words, grammar related to the text/topic etc.). Richards (2017, p. 152) highlights that it is left to the teacher to decide what is appropriate in each context. He also points out that *the English Profile® Project* (North, 2014; Harrison & Barker, 2015 *apud* Richards, 2017, p. 152) is currently developing descriptions in terms of vocabulary and grammar for each level of the CEFR. In our opinion, this undertaking has been much-awaited by many ESL teachers/assessors, because the description in terms of "can do" statements, however practical it has proven to be in assessment, still needed further pinpointing. And through this project it turns out that vocabulary and grammar are being reinstated in a new, technologically improved variant.

As can be seen from work on the *English Profile®* at this stage (English Profile: The CEFR for English (2015)), the aim of the project is to create a corpus regarding what is learnt at each CEFR level in terms of vocabulary (mainly General English so far) and of grammar in order to help teachers and learners (and other categories, as well). In our perspective, the "emerging" syllabus can be seen as the result of an interplay between salient features of vocabulary (e.g., words, phrases, idioms (re)occurring in texts on a given topic) and intertwined strands of grammar. The latter underlies the thematic part, out of which it is the course designer's/teacher's job to select the one(s) appropriate to the target group of learners. The degree of complexity of the grammatical items will be selected according to the general course level, at which point the descriptions from *English Grammar Profile* may become relevant (*see* explanations regarding the usage of "may" in the *English Grammar Profile* section at https://www.englishprofile.org/english-grammar-profile).

In what concerns vocabulary (*English Vocabulary Profile* section), the topics involved pertain to general vocabulary, which may be less helpful in the context of an ESAP course. (Some topics retrieved on March, 25th, 2023, at https://www.englishprofile.org/wordlists/evp include: *animals, arts and media, body and health, clothes, communication, crime, describing things, education, food and drink, homes and buildings, money, natural world, people: actions, people: appearance, people: personality, politics, relationships, shopping, sports and games, technology, travel and work.*)

Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 127) mention that carrying out needs analysis may lead to unexpected situations. They provide an example in which asking the future students the question "What do you need/want *from the course*?" instead of "What do you need English for?" resulted in the restructuring of the course during its implementation phase. Still, our needs analysis can only attempt to address the question "What do the learners need from the course?" indirectly at this stage. It can do so based on a set of assumptions derived from an analysis of the thematic content covered by the prospective students' bachelor's and master's degree courses. Our intention is to outline a course syllabus in terms of content, without making it too detailed an account (it might become restrictive in the implementation phase). This might occur if we devised a task-based syllabus based on *a priori* assumptions, although, methodologically speaking, we believe that this type of approach may be appropriate at the level of study targeted. Tracing tasks can be done later, while the course is being implemented. In other words, in our case we would rather adopt an approach which puts less emphasis on fixed outcomes (Richards 2017, p. 294).

## COURSE OUTLINE

Our first step is to identify some subject-specific topics common to our prospective students. The reason for that lies in the vastness of the thematic areas particular to the targeted learners' programs. The five specializations analyzed are included in three different fields of study at the Bachelor of Science level: *Biology* (specializations: Biology - the Romanian line of study (RLS), Biology – the Hungarian line of study (HLS), Environmental Biology - RLS, Biochemistry - RLS), *Applied Engineering Sciences* (specialization:

Industrial Biotechnology - RLS) and *Environmental Science* (specialization: Ecology and Environmental Protection - HLS).

In order to get an idea as to the specialist-content knowledge covered within the respective B.Sc. programs, we undertook to find the courses common to the five programs by analyzing the curricula published for the 2022-2023 academic year, covering all B.Sc. years of study. The search was first run according to the discipline codes, which should be the same for the same course within each line of study. Next, we examined if there were any exact matches between course titles across the two lines of study (because the discipline codes are different). Then, we associated some courses between the two lines of study, with very similar designations (6 matches). In order to restrict the data, we excluded elective and optional courses. Additionally, we ignored Physical Education and Foreign Language courses, because they were not part of our object of study. Out of the results obtained, we excluded courses which were a double, in the sense that they ran across two semesters.

The number obtained is rather high (more exactly, a total of 33). The courses cover vast areas of study, which do not refer strictly to Biology in the narrow sense of the term (explained from a non-specialist's point of view), but also to correlated sciences applied to the study of living organisms, i.e., to Biochemistry, Biophysics, Biotechnology and Mathematics: *General chemistry, Histology and anatomy of plants, General cytology, Structural biochemistry, Systematic botany, Introduction to life and earth sciences, Invertebrate zoology, Organic chemistry, Human histology and anatomy, Biochemistry of metabolism, Cellular and molecular biology, Zoology of eucelomatous (invertebrates) or Invertebrate zoology, Human Anatomy, Biophysics, General and population genetics, Biostatistics, Mathematics with applications in biology or Applied mathematics in biology, Vertebrate zoology, Biochemistry, Genetics, General microbiology, Molecular genetics, Analytical chemistry, General ecology, Plant physiology: nutrition functions or Plant physiology, Animal physiology: integration and coordination in animal organism or Animal and human physiology, Introduction in biotechnologies or Introduction to biotechnology, Ethology, Evolutionism or Evolutionary biology, Plant physiology: growth and development or Plant physiology, Immunobiology, Animal ecophysiology,* *Biodiversity conservation and nature protection*. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach is applied in the B.Sc. programs in question.

Next, we moved on to applying a similar analysis to the 2022-2024 M.Sc. programs curricula, with the difference that we included elective and optional courses this time. The M.Sc. programs considered are: Medical Biology[3] - RLS, Medical Biology[4] - HLS (2 years), Molecular Biotechnology[5] - RLS (2 years), Systemic Ecology and Conservation[6] - RLS (2 years), Terrestrial and Aquatic ecology[7] - HLS (2 years). The resulting common courses are the following (total number – 21): *Molecular anthropology, Advanced aspects of cellular structure and ultrastructure, The basis of mass spectrometry and its clinical applications, Clinical biochemistry, Biogeography of Europe and Romania, Bioinformatics, Applied molecular biology, Medical molecular biology, Stem cells and regeneration, Endocrinology, Fundamentals of entrepreneurship, Medical genetics, Medical imaging, Molecular immunology, Modern biochemical and biophysical methods, Research planning in Biology, Oncobiology, Medicinal plants and their pharmacologically active metabolites, Molecular taxonomy and ecology, Recombinant DNA technology, Toxicology.*

Although we obtained a high number of courses this time, as well, we can notice that there is a restriction in thematic content, which now rather revolves around aspects related to the molecular level, either in terms of medical applications, biotechnologies, or ecology. Whereas the first type of data (at the B.Sc. level) helps in gaining a better understanding of the subject-specific background the target students should have, the content included in the existing M.Sc. programs is of use in the sense that it restricts the prospective students' areas of interest. Naturally, the results may not automatically reflect the target students' needs entirely, as they could be more interested in other specialized parts of the curricula, the content of which is contained in a non-recurrent course. However, it offers an understanding of the subject areas to be taken into consideration when

[3] Field of study: Biology
[4] Field of study: Biology
[5] Field of study: Biology
[6] Field of study: Biology
[7] Field of study: Biology

devising activities or tasks for the seminar part of the prospective course. In other words, they would be part of what Dudley-Evans & St John (2012, p. 11) named *carrier content*, defined relative to *real content*.

Next, we are going to present our proposal for the prospective course, designed in terms of content. Fourteen course topics and seven seminar topics are included:

**Tabel 1.** Prospective M.Sc. Course Syllabus – Students in Biology-related specializations

| **1. Lectures** |
|---|
| **Week 1:** Communication in Academic Scientific Research |
| **Week 2:** General, Academic and Specialized Language |
| **Week 3:** Vocabulary Building Strategies |
| **Week 4:** Developing an Academic Style |
| **Week 5:** Rephrasing and Paraphrasing |
| **Week 6:** References and Quotations |
| **Week 7:** Process and Procedure |
| **Week 8:** Cause and Effect |
| **Week 9:** Describing |
| **Week 10:** Comparing and Contrasting |
| **Week 11**: Fact and Belief, Hedging Language |
| **Week 12:** Summarizing, Synthesizing and Reporting |
| **Week 13:** Argumentation and Discussion |
| **Week 14:** Connected Discourse |
| **2. Seminars** |
| **Week 2:** Academic Vocabulary and Style. Practical Applications |
| **Week 4:** Vocabulary Building Strategies. Practical Applications |
| **Week 6:** Molecular Biology. Specialized Terms and Language Practice |
| **Week 8:** Biochemistry. Specialized Terms and Language Practice |
| **Week 10:** Medicinal Plants. Specialized Terms and Language Practice |
| **Week 12:** Biotechnologies and Medical Imaging. Specialized Terms and Language Practice |
| **Week 14:** Conservation Efforts and Ecology. Specialized Terms and Language Practice |

The teaching method for the lectures would mainly be *interactive lectures*, while the seminars would include *technologically-assisted instruction*, *corpus tasks*, *individual*, *pair* and *group work*. The assessment would *involve a written practical exam* (50%) and *a project-based evaluation* consisting of the students' creating a glossary of specialized terms (50%). The bibliography would revolve around three main aspects: *academic writing* (example of bibliographical reference to be included: Bailey (2017), *communicative grammar* (e.g., Leech and Svartik, 2013) and *corpus linguistics* (e.g., Vander & O'Boyle, 2021).

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the present study was to take the first steps in course design aimed at M.Sc. students in Biology. Since the ESAP language course already in place at undergraduate level seemed insufficient in terms of duration, we wanted to identify other poignant language needs learners in this category may have. Setting in place a language course during a M.Sc. program means that the necessary subject-specialist knowledge has been covered, and, therefore, a task- or project-based approach may be easier to be implemented and more adequate at this level. In the present article we have outlined the prospective course content while considering students' relevant topics of interest. Additionally, we have determined that the next step to take would be further research into aspects linked to communicative grammar, current corpus linguistic studies and, last but not least, into certain areas of the subject-specific content. Further considerations linked to methodology can be determined later on as a result of future investigations and as part of the emergent syllabus.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bailey, S. (2017). *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International* Students. (5th ed.). Routledge.

*English Profile: The CEFR for English* (2015). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved March 25 2023 at: https://www.englishprofile.org/.

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved June 15 2022 at: www.coe.int/lang-cefr.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (2012). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*. (15th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jordan, R.R. (1997). *English for Academic Purposes: A Guide and Resource Book for Teachers*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Teaching*. (4th ed.). Pearson Longman ELT.

Hutchison, T., & Waters A. (1991). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach*. (6th edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (2013). *A Communicative Grammar of English*. (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative Tasks and the Language Curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2 (summer, 1991), p. 279-295.

Richards, J. C. (2017). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. (2nd ed). Cambridge Professional Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vander, V. & O'Boyle A. (2021). *Corpus Linguistics for English for Academic Purposes*. (1st ed.) Routledge.

# Teaching Employability: Students' Perspective on Work-Related Skills Taught in Universities

**CRISTINA SILVIA VÂLCEA**[1]

**Abstract:** The end of education is not education itself, but the creation of skills likely to qualify graduates for certain positions where they could implement and develop new approaches or technologies with a view to enhancing work efficiency. In the case of tertiary education, the main purpose is to prepare specialists able to respond to the needs of the labor market by their smooth integration in organizations where they could fulfil their tasks efficiently and knowledgeably. For that to happen, attending university courses should not be viewed as a purpose in itself, but as a period of accumulation of both knowledge and skills at implementing and adapting the knowledge to a proper workplace. Preparing students to become employees should be a desideratum for all universities as a sign of their responsibility to both students and society that expects people to be ready to take over from where their grandparents and parents left off. Teaching employability is about endowing students with cross-field skills, theory-practice transfer, good control of the field vocabulary (jargon), working in a team, communication at workplace, decision making and problem solving. Against this background, this article intends to identify the employability skills that Romanian university programs develop in their students and the students' degree of satisfaction as far as their preparation for their future working life is concerned.

**Keywords**: *employability, skills, university, employer, adaptivity*

## EMPLOYABILITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO UNIVERSITIES, EMPLOYERS AND STUDENTS

Though employability might seem an easy topic with an authority in charge with its implementation, the subject stirs disputes caused by the lack of commitment of the three major instances co-interested in the existence,

[1] Lecturer, "Transilvania" University of Brașov, Faculty of Letters, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics

implementation and functioning of employability. Secondly, feeling accused of the lowering degree of graduates' preparedness for the labor market, universities react and bring into discussion their role and objectives in as far as the graduates' qualities are concerned. The beneficiaries of employability skills, the employers, have come to acknowledge the gap between the skills learnt in universities and the skills needed in companies and have equally suggested solutions likely to bridge the gap and to diminish the rift between the graduates' skills and the market's needs. The third part involved in the process is the government that can legally solve the situation by bringing together the interested parties, by mediating discussions and by issuing laws likely to help interests converge. Yet, governments refrain from getting involved while maintaining the universities' responsibility for the graduates' skills. The graduates themselves, though not involved in the discussions directly, being actually ignored, suffer the blame and the consequences of not meeting the expectations of the employers.

Though more parties have a say in the issue of employability and despite the universities' protest against them being totally charged with the acquisition of these skills by students, having students learn without any concern about what happens in the world outside the university's walls would place universities in an unrealistic and anachronous position to the expectations of the students themselves. Universities teach knowledge, but not independently of what is needed by the communities where they function or of the trends in world industry, economy and social sciences. The pressure on universities results from the connection between the universities and their employability ranking which is an important reflector of a university's correct teaching/ learning strategies oriented towards the labor market satisfaction and towards the achievement of the students' full potential as employees. The correlation between the graduated university and the position obtained by the graduates, even if contested by certain universities, is an important criterion for helping candidates choose a certain university thanks to graduation prospects conferred to the graduate. Such a ranking hosted by Times Higher Education[2] for 2023 is an illustration of the

[2] In the 2022 ranking a number of 250 universities from 44 countries around the globe were indicated as trustworthy for employers and recruiters based on the skills that graduates

way in which powerful international recruiters and employers appreciate graduates and their working skills depending on the universities that they graduated. Moreover, Mihut (2015, p.50) claims that the university's prestige may play an important role in the graduate's recruiting process, which might mean that the more prestigious the university, the more likely the graduate is to obtain a good position, which does not mean that the personal features and the acquired skills of the candidates will be disregarded. Nevertheless, the employers and recruiters consider that universities famous for their study programs and for the work-related skills that are instilled in their students regularly have graduates that are well-prepared for the competitive labor market. Gabor et al. (2019. p.2) pinpoint the importance of transversal competences[3] that could play a role in the graduates' preparedness for the labor market, as they might increase their chances of employability.

The reason no authority deals openly with the topic of employability might be the lack of precision of the term and its variability depending on the labor area the graduates access. Employability for young medical graduates describes skills different from what is expected from an engineer or from a teacher. This might indicate the need to have the employability skills described per area of studies or per branches of areas so that graduates know what is expected from them and pertinent measures could be taken for employability skills to be acquired by graduates. Employability has been given different definitions depending on the broadness or narrowness of the approach or on the period when it was given. One comprehensive definition was provided by International Labor Office (2013) which focuses on the

---

acquire while still students. Sadly, no university in Romania is among the first 250 universities in the world which are believed to instill in their students skills likely to make them attractive for international employers. The list can be consulted at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-graduate-jobs-global-university-employability-ranking. Some of the criteria which are taken into consideration are: how many graduates from a particular university create new businesses and what their annual revenue is, their main employers, the number of presidents that graduated from those universities, the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize winners. The site was accessed on May 16, 2023.

[3] According to UNESCO Education Policy Brief (2014) transversal competences refer to the competences which are not directly related to the job or to the area of knowledge. They may be used in a variety of contexts where employees need to make use of critical thinking, inter- and intra-personal skills, media and information literacy.

concept of 'adaptable' knowledge and skills to realities that each period brings along.

> "[…] portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual's capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions. Individuals are most employable when they have broad-based education and training, basic and portable high-level skills, including teamwork, problem solving, information and communications technology (ICT) and communication and language skills... This combination of skills enables them to adapt to changes in the world of work." (ILO, 2013, p.3)

Adaptability is sought in an array of work-related situations where education and training do play an essential role. Portable or transferable skills are preferrable given that graduates may eventually work in a domain quite different from or related to the one they graduated from. Yorke (2006, p.13) deems that "employability goes well beyond the simplistic notion of key skills and is evidenced in the application of a mix of personal qualities and beliefs, understandings, skillful practices and the ability to reflect productively on experience." Yorke includes personal qualities in the equation of employability which is considerably different from education, training or skills. Resilience, talents, character features all contribute to employability.

A different approach to employability has been taken by Römgensa et al. (2020, p.2600) who suggest an integrative method where higher education learning, skill development and workplace learning are dealt with together as a natural continuation of university-related skills developed into work-related skills. A similar idea was issued by Boud et al. (2001, p.4) who proposed a new concept at that time of 'work-based learning' which they defined as "the term that is used to describe a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces. Such programmes meet the needs of learners, contribute to the longer-term development of the organization and are formally accredited as university courses." They indicate that all the parts implicated in the process gain as a consequence of the implementation of this program.

One pertinent question to be asked could be about who should decide on the skills appropriate for the areas of the labor market. One possible answer could indicate a joint action of universities and major employers interested in attracting young graduates. By a permanent dialogue between the employers (future beneficiaries of the graduates' knowledge acquired in universities) and the universities (which are not expected to compromise on knowledge and quality) an important tool is laid in graduates' hands while still being students. A similar stand is taken by Little and Brennan (1996, p.5) who consider that the element that distinguishes this approach from any others is:

> The aspect that distinguishes work based learning from other processes of learning is the part that negotiation between individual, employer and higher education institution plays: negotiation between these three stakeholders in identifying achievable learning outcomes which are meaningful and challenging to the individual, are relevant to the employer and have academic credibility; establishing, through negotiation, appropriate methods of and criteria for, assessment acceptable to all parties; establishing and maintaining, through negotiation, a supportive learning environment (based primarily in the workplace). (Little and Brennan, 1996, p. 5)

The evident difficulty of dealing with employability may equally result from the instability of the market which dictates the jobs of the future, to which universities barely adapt, if ever. The predictability of the market and the capacity of universities to cope with the advancements of technology and teaching methods are two key factors that reflect on graduates' likelihood of getting the necessary skills for employability.

Still, employability skills cannot be obtained simply by exposing students to possible employers, they presuppose a long-focused training aiming at embedding in students a range of abilities that improve students adaptability, communication, field knowledge, critical thinking, etc. It goes without saying that employability skills are bound to the character and personality of the graduate just as they are intrinsically related to their availability to learn and openness to challenges. Boudreaux et al. (2021) carry out research which seems to support the idea that personal features such as being rewarding (easy to work with and relate to), being able to learn the job (learning the job while working) and being willing to work hard do represent important personal features that could explain the differences between the graduates' success in developing employability skills. Moreover, the employability skills that graduates should be in control of should be transferable (understood as the knowledge which is implemented in other contexts different from the one where the information was initially acquired). Practical multidisciplinary study programs have been created (De Rodanas Valero et al., 2020, p. 247) having as basis the idea of transferrable skills.

## STUDENTS' SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Despite the lack of unity, research has revealed that most employers indicate the pre-eminence of certain skills over others given their major impact on graduates' becoming employable. Given the multiplicity of variables that contribute to the creation of the concept of employability, Fugate et al. (2004, p.16) refer to it as to a 'construct'. Archer and Davison (2008, p.7) carried out a survey where employers were questioned on what they considered to be the most important skills for employability. The results indicated that the main skills identified by employers are in decreasing order: communication skills, team-working skills, integrity, intellectual ability, confidence, character/personality, planning & organizational skills, literacy (good writing skills), numeracy (good with numbers), and analysis & decision-making skills. The variety of skills indicates that employability is decided on a scope of skills which range between taught ones and personal ones. For example, communication skills for employability need to be demonstrated by graduates in contexts such as "working with people from different backgrounds; locating, organizing, evaluating information; public speaking; and working in teams." (Kleckner & Butz, 2022, p.195). All these communication situations reveal the multiple positions that graduates can have in their career, indicating a fluidity and an adaptability which presuppose practice and experience. The ability to adapt to people's educational background proves a graduate's control of the language which may lead in the end to a fruitful business outcome for the company that might hire the graduate. Knowing what to do with the information (where to find it, how to deal with it, how to interpret it) is a valuable skill which hinges on the concept of literacy. Another set of skills that impact employability is dictated by personality or character which might impact employability by means of "behavioral adaptability, self-knowledge, career orientation awareness, sense of purpose, self-esteem and emotional literacy" which are considered by Potgieter (2014, p.34) as 'attributes and abilities'.

## STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH UNIVERSITY-TAUGHT SKILLS

The objective of the study has been to measure the degree of satisfaction in students as far as the university-taught employability skills are concerned. Students from the university who benevolently decided to participate in the survey were asked to anonymously answer a six-question questionnaire. Because the questionnaire aims at measuring students' satisfaction, the Likert scale is believed to be the most appropriate using a five-point scale from 'definitely' to 'definitely not'. Given the chosen scale, the students' answers are expected to provide degrees of opinion which might help understand what employability elements need further inclusion into students' training.

"Transilvania" University, located in the Times Higher Education (henceforth THE) ranking between positions 1201-1500 in the 2023 ranking, scores the lowest in research (10.4) and teaching (15) and the highest in *industry income*[4] which THE defines as *knowledge transfer*. This is meant to exemplify the relationship between universities and the business/ industrial environment, which stands evidence of the knowledge transfer from

[4] Times Higher Education in its methodology on the calculation of 2023 universities' ranking defines industry income as "An institution's ability to help industry with innovations, inventions and consultancy […]. This category suggests the extent to which businesses are willing to pay for research and an institution's ability to attract funding in the commercial marketplace – useful indicators of institutional quality. The indicator seeks to capture such knowledge-transfer activity by looking at how much research income an institution earns from industry, divided by the total number of academic staff it employs." https://www.timeshighereducation.com/sites/default/files/breaking_news_files/the_2023_world_university_rankings_methodology.pdf

universities to businesses. Though industry income is indeed a criterion for measuring a university's success, students may be more interested in the teaching criterion as that can truly impact their choice of a certain university and their possible future success in getting a job. The industry income criterion proves the university's awareness of the importance of strengthening contacts with the entrepreneurial environment at the local, national and international level. "Transilvania" University's mission as defined on the site is to "produce and transfer knowledge to society […] and develop the interaction between the university and society, through partnerships in accordance with the principles of a knowledge-based society"[5], which explicitly shows the university's boundedness to the community where it activates and the responsibility it holds towards the society. The university has started a program, AFCO (graduates in front of companies) which brings together graduates and companies, thus giving graduates the opportunity to present their research projects and/ or products to the companies interested in recruiting skilled students while still studying. Exposing students to companies, helping them understand that they train to be later recruited by these possible employers is an illustration of the fact that universities admit employability is a key skill that they must teach students while preparing to become specialists in their fields of studies. Although serious steps have been taken in the direction of students' preparation for their professional life, there are many other aspects that still need improving in relation to employability skills. This is the reason for which this survey was conducted.

The questions in the survey addressed employability skills targeting the scope of skills developed throughout university studies, in the sense of their comprehensiveness (question 1), the theory-practice transfer (question 2), the specialized vocabulary characteristic for each faculty (question 3), the teaching of communication skills (question 4), the decision-making process (question 5), and the work-related solution finding (question 6). The questions in the questionnaire are introduced in the footnote[6].

---

[5] The statement has been taken from the university's site https://www.unitbv.ro/despre-unitbv.html accessed May 23, 2023.

[6] The questions of the questionnaire:

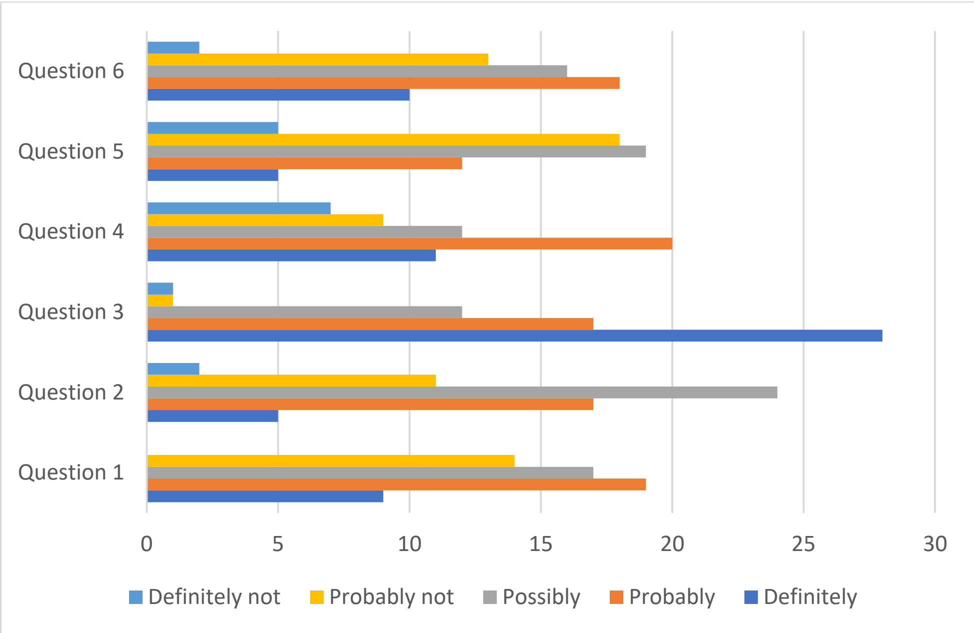


**Figure 1.** "Transilvania" University students' perception on employability skills taught in university.

Students' answers have revealed that there are areas they are preponderantly satisfied with (the case of their exposal to a vocabulary adapted to their domain) and dissatisfied with (as in the case of the communication skills which they consider insufficiently taught). Their answers cover all five options, with the exception of the first question when the option 'definitely not' has not been selected by any student. Another aspect that is worth mentioning is the fact that with the exception of question 3, in no other case the option 'definitely' has not scored highest, which signals that students are not entirely satisfied with the employability skills

---

1. Do you consider that the university offers you opportunities to develop skills across a larger domain than your strict area of study?
2. Do you consider that there is a real theory – practice transfer offered by university?
3. Do you consider that you are exposed to a good amount of specialised vocabulary in your field of study?
4. Do you consider that the university ensures considerable communication skills for your future career?
5. Do university studies prepare you for making work-related decisions?
6. Do your studies prepare you for finding work-related solutions?

taught in faculty. In three cases (question 1, 4 and 6) out of five the option 'probably' scores highest which means that the students are not totally confident that employability skills are integrated in their training program.

In the case of the first question which targets students' satisfaction related to the comprehensiveness of their field, their answers prove that the university's curriculum opens up a range of opportunities by approaching an interdisciplinarian inclusive perspective. Interdisciplinarian teaching strengthens students' comprehension of a wider field of study which might in the end lead to their having multiple or better chances when looking for a job. The absence of the 'definitely not' option might be a proof of the encyclopedic vision of Romanian higher education on knowledge in general. Still, it cannot be overlooked that an important part of the respondents, more than those in favor of 'definitely' consider that their studies are not wide enough to offer them a real insight into areas connected to theirs.

The neutrality of the option 'possibly' which scores highest in the second question is an important signal that the theoretical teaching is not always accompanied by practical demonstrations which would give students the possibility to see and better understand how theory is turned into practice. Too much theory and too little practice could negatively influence students' opportunities of being attractive for employers by their lack of vision of how processes are run in any domain. A supplementary sign that students are not satisfied with the practical aspects of their training is the little amount of 'definitely' answers which is further strengthened by some students' 'definitely not' answers. Equally, the students who chose 'probably not' are significantly more by comparison to those who believe that the transposition of theory into practice is a fact.

The specialized vocabulary is the only issue where the majority of respondents consider that they are exposed to a technical vocabulary, a jargon-like vocabulary, which is indeed an important asset that students can easily gain by continuous exposure throughout their studies. The importance of the domain-bound vocabulary is largely acknowledged as having a huge impact on the graduates' employability especially when students learn domain-bound vocabulary in English which Thomas et al. (2016) deem as a 'unique selling point'. Martinaj (2020) claims that speaking foreign languages enhances effective and cross-cultural communication which is highly desirable when competing for a position in a company. Considered a hard skill, the ability to express fully developed ideas in English or any other foreign language in a professional environment is a more and more appreciated one and many study programs are either completely taught in foreign languages or they study foreign languages for four semesters. In either Romanian or any other foreign language, students are exposed to specialized vocabulary which prepares them for their careers.

Perspectives are various when it comes to institutionally taught communication skills and in this respect most students consider that they 'probably' are exposed to them. Communication is not simply talking, though students might be tempted to believe so. Communication is among others about encoding and decoding, channel selection, context, registers, coherence, cohesion, interruptions, repairs, feedback, etc. The complexity of communication in a work-related context must be taught so that the students, future graduates, are aware of the dangers and traps that may lead to failures to understand or communicate a message, an idea. Conscious of these labor market realities, the university has introduced communication courses irrespective of the field the students prepare in. Despite these measures, there are still students who believe that the university does not help them at all in developing their professional communication skills.

Making decisions in general is not an easy task, but making a decision in a professional environment implies not only the decision-maker but the whole company. Making a decision may be a spontaneous act, but it does not mean that it is recommended to happen in this way. Students need to envision decision making as a process which presupposes critical thinking abilities, availability to listen to others' opinions, data collection and selection, abilities to analyze and to foresee possible consequences of decisions. Decisions must be informed and logical in order to entail the expected results. In the case of this research, most options are for the neuter answer which might indicate that students are not aware of this skill teaching taking place. Their second option is for 'probably not' which brings into discussion an old problem of the Romanian educational system that feeds both pupils and students with data without letting them solve and find solutions for study cases. The reproductive character of the learning (learning the answers by heart) which was and still is encouraged in national examinations deprives students of the chance to critically think and analyze the problems with their resources relying on their information. By not accepting other answers but the ones that the teachers believe to be true, Romanian students lose the ability and courage to express their opinions and turn from very young ages into perpetuators of other people's ideas, not theirs. The number of the students who believe that decision-making skills are completely absent from their institutional teaching is equal to that of the students who think that they 'definitely' benefit from this instruction. Summed up, the 'definitely not' and 'probably not' answers outnumber the 'probably yes' and 'definitely yes' answers which should make the whole system feel uneasy and concerned about finding better ways of exposing students to this experience that could be of so much help for the students.

If the respondents find fault with the decision-making process, the situation seems to be better for finding work-related solutions. Pegg et al. (2012) profess that finding solutions is the ability of 'analyzing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions'. Sometimes dealt with together, sometimes separately, decision making and solution finding are absolutely critical to graduates as the immediacy of their needing to deal with them is overwhelming. Sequentially, finding a solution is prior to making a decision as the solution and its viability will lead in the end to a decision. The respondents' superior evaluation in the case of solution finding may be a consequence of their awareness that solutions come from their learning, their experience, which they might consider as approachable. Another possible answer for the students' more positive attitudes to solution finding may result from the fact that they understand that solution finding relies on creativity which is according to Pardo-Garcia et al. (2020, p. 6) a way of obtaining "new and efficient solutions with divergent thinking".

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article has been to measure the students' satisfaction concerning university taught employability skills in terms of their effectiveness. The results of the survey have indicated that students appreciate to a high degree the effective use of field-related vocabulary which could give them the confidence that they could face challenges when practicing their jobs. Besides vocabulary, more than 50% of the respondents consider that solution finding skills are dealt with in university courses and that they benefit from that. The criterion where opinions are divergent is the criterion of communication skills as the answers are not conclusive with a slight negative tendency. Equally, the respondents' options are not optimistic in as far as the theory-practice transfer is concerned, which speaks about the students' need to be exposed to practical transposition of theory into practice in laboratories or companies. It is important to notice that with one exception (the vocabulary that students are exposed to) in no other case the option 'definitely' has been chosen by the majority of students. Though steps have been taken in the direction of introducing employability skills in the teaching there is still more to do in this respect. By collecting students' opinions and by organizing round tables where all the interested parties should participate, there are chances of improving students' employability.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer, W., Davison, J. (2008). *Graduate Employability: What do employers think and want?* London: The Council For Industry and Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A25673 on 20.03.2023.

Boud, D., Solomon, N., Symes, C. (2001). New Practices for New Times. In David Boud and Nicky Solomon (eds.), *Work-based Learning. A New Higher Education?* The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, p. 3-17.

Boudreaux, M. J., Ferrell, B. T., Hundley, N. A., & Sherman, R. A. (2021). A Personality-Based Measure of Employability. *Journal of Personnel Psychology.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/1866-5888/a000283

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A., Ashforth, B. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Volume 65, Issue 1, p.14-38.

Gabor, M.R., Blaga, P., Matis, C. (2019) Supporting Employability by a Skills Assessment Innovative Tool—Sustainable Transnational Insights from Employers. *Sustainability.* 11(12):3360. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11123360. retrieved from https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/12/3360 on 25.03.2023.

International Labour Office (2013). *Enhancing Youth Employability: The Importance of Core Work Skills.* Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents.pdf on 25.03.2023.

Kleckner, M.J., & Butz, N.T. (2022). Developing Entry-Level Communication Skills: A Comparison of Student and Employer Perceptions. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 85, p.192 - 221.

Little, B., Brennan, J. (1996). A Review of Work Based Learning in Higher Education. Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment. Retrieved from https://oro.open.ac.uk/11309/1/A_review_of_work_based_learning_in_higher_education.pdf on 1.04.2023.

De Rodanas Valero, M., Reid, T., Dell, G., Stacey, D., Hatt, J., Moore, Y., Clift, S. (2020). Embedding Employability and Transferable Skills in the Curriculum: a Practical, Multidisciplinary Approach, *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 247-266. DOI: 10.1080/23752696.2020.1816846. Retrieved from https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/embedding-employability-and-transferable-skills-in-the-curriculum on 10.04.2023.

Martinaj, F. (2020). Foreign Languages: The Key Factor in Employability. *Management*, 161–178. https://doi.org/10.26493/1854-4231.15.161-178. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349748942_Foreign_Languages_The_Key_Factor_in_Employability on 10.04.2023.

Mihut, G. (2015). What Germany and Romania Have in Common: The Impact of University Prestige on Graduate Employability. *Working Papers in Higher Education Studies*, 47-67. Retrieved from https://rihe-journal.com/index.php/rihe/article/view/6 on 25.04.2023.

Pardo-Garcia C, Barac M. (2020). Promoting Employability in Higher Education: A Case Study on Boosting Entrepreneurship Skills. *Sustainability*. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12104004. Retrieved from https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/10/4004 on 8.03.2023.

Pegg, A., Waldock, J., Hendy-Isaac, S., Lawton, R. (2012). *Pedagogy For Employability*. York: Higher Education Academy.

Potgieter, I. (2014). Personality and Psycho-Social Employability Attributes as Meta-capacities for Sustained Employability. In Coetzee, M. (ed.), *Psycho-social Career Meta-capacities*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-00645-1_3

Römgensa, I., Scoupeband, R., Beausaert, S. (2020). Unraveling the Concept of Employability, Bringing Together Research on Employability in Higher Education and the Workplace. In *Studies in Higher Education*. Routledge, 2588–2603. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1623770. Retrived from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344748761_Unraveling_the_concept_of_employability_bringing_together_research_on_employability_in_higher_education_and_the_workplace on 10.03.2023.

Thomas, A., Piquette, C., McMaster, D. (2016). English Communication Skills for Employability: the Perspectives of Employers in Bahrain. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, 13(1). Retrieved from https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.18538/lthe.v13.n1.227/full/pdf on 16.04.2023.

United Nations Educational (2014). UNESCO Education Policy Brief (Vol.2), 2014: Skills for holistic human development. Paris. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245064 on 2.03.2023.

Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in Higher Education: What It Is –What It Is Not. In *Learning and Employability*. York: The Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225083582_Employability_in_Higher_Education_What_It_Is_What_It_Is_Not on 7.04.2023.

De Rodanas Valero, M., Reid, T., Dell, G., Stacey, D., Hatt, J., Moore, Y., Clift, S. (2020) Embedding Employability and Transferable Skills in the Curriculum: a Practical, Multidisciplinary Approach, *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 5:1, 247-266, DOI: 10.1080/23752696.2020.1816846. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/Cristina/Downloads/Embedding_employability_and_transferable_skills_in.pdf

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-graduate-jobs-global-university-employability-ranking. Retrieved from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/impact-rankings-2023-results-announced.

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2023/world-ranking. Retrieved from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/impact-rankings-2023-results-announced.

# The Improvement of the Contemporary Advertising Discourse

**OLGA BĂLĂNESCU**[1]

**Abstract:** The present paper intends to bring into strong relief the major importance of the theories of advertising within the delicate process of building efficient advertising. Taking into consideration that the ever-growing and developing society needs more and newer modalities of satisfying needs, on the one hand, and that producers fight for bringing their products on the market although there are other dozens on the shelves of the supermarkets, on the other hand, the advertisers have a hard job to accomplish: to attract the attention of the consumers on their products/services, namely to improve their advertising discourse. This is the point where theories of advertising provide help by offering ingenious clues and answers to their questions. The present study aimes to present to what types of products the theories of advertising could be efficiently applied, in order to get a positive feedback from the consumer.

**Keywords:** *cognitive level, affective level, behavioral level, target, AIDA principle.*

## INTRODUCTION

Conceived in the American space in the 20s, the advertising theories propose the following major objective: conquering the consumer, in the sense of determining him to adopt a favorable attitude towards purchasing the promoted product and neutralizing his indecision or indifference shown to the products on the market. The theories of advertising aim to get the target audience out of inertia and attract them into a dialogue as tempting as possible with the advertiser, with advertising as the main means of communication. That is why the construction of an advertising message as

[1] PhD Lecturer, The University of Bucharest.

sharp as possible has become an increasingly accentuated concern of advertisers.

Since the range of products/services on the market began to diversify, advertisers sought to diversify their advertising message too, in order to achieve effective results. And the effectiveness of the message translates itself into increased sales and increased turnover.

The basis of the advertising theories is the hierarchy of the effects obtained. It was found that the target audience can be accessed in three distinct stages named after the major attitudinal component targeted (Bonnange, Thomas, 1999 p. 76). These names have been preserved in the later literature, as it will be shown below.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A first stage of accessing the target audience is at the cognitive level. The cognitive stage (known as *"learn"*) aims at informing the consumer about the product. The second stage of accessing consumers is at the affective level. This accessing stage aims at arousing the interest and appreciation of the target audience towards the promoted product. It starts from the premise that now the consumer knows the promoted product/service from the previous stage *(Learn*) and it is necessary to crystallize his preferences towards what he is purchasing through affective arguments. This stage is called "*like*" (Dagenais, 2003, p.250). The third stage of reaching consumers is a behavioral one (called *"do").* This corresponds to the positive realization of the favorable attitude of the target audience towards the promoted product.

This stage naturally ends the cycle of actions initiated by the advertiser in the sense of determining his interlocutor to purchase the advertised product.

In pragmatic terms (Reboul, Moeschler, 2001, p.18), this stage would represent the perlocutionary component of the message initiated by the issuing speaker (the advertiser): the consequence of reception, appropriate decoding and, above all, acceptance of the message quantified in the number of registered sales as a result of the broadcast of the advertising message in civil society. This stage is based on an effective achievement of the other two previous stages: properly informed and emotionally won, the consumer will consent to the purchase of the product. Between the rational, logical, scientific argument and the affective one, of a purely subjective nature, the latter will be stronger, taking precedence. It is not by chance that the saying "*a person convinced against his will is of his opinion still*" exists in current British advertising (O Shaughnessy, O Shaughnessy 2004, p.115).

These three stages of accessing consumers, ordered according to the nature of the promoted product/service, the structure of the target audience, the stage of the product's life (launch, maintenance, decline), the degree of consumer involvement in the product purchase process (cheap products vs. expensive or luxury products), generates certain persuasive formulas which, properly applied, can increase the impact of the advertising message on the target audience. We should remember the advice given by Ogilvy (1999, p.63): there are no recipes for success in advertising creation. The originality of each individual creator is absolutely necessary, by individualizing the respective campaign, in the sense of imposing it in front of the competition, which has become, day by day, increasingly fierce (Brierly, 2013, p.137-150; DeLozier, 2014, p.180 -224).

Chronologically, *the theory of learning* was the basis of advertising creation (in the American cultural space) at the beginning of the manifestation of competition in the market. Pharmaceutical laboratories were the first to use the advantages of applying this theory in the construction of initiated advertising campaigns. Historically speaking, we are in the interwar period, a time when few manufacturing companies resorted to advertising to promote their products. The competition is not annoying yet. New products on the market need only to be announced and introduced to combat public attachment to traditional products. As long as the competition did not inconvenience the producers, advertising was interested only to inform the target audience.

The ordering formula for the stages of accessing the target audience is: LEARN – LIKE – DO. The public is first properly informed, through clear and objective messages (by means of which the consumer understands what distinguishes the new product from those already existing on the market;

then an emotional argument is communicated to him that will impress him to such an extent that he will want to purchase the product thus promoted).

Learning theory is also taking shape in Europe. The big detergent manufacturers (Procter & Gamble, Colgate, Lever) were the first investors in the 20s-60s who focused their attention on the LEARN – LIKE – DO formula. They created a code of thinking, a creative strategy that involves traversing the following path:

• Formulating a promise (product x manages to whiten laundry better than any other similar product on the market);

• Statement of the benefit obtained from using the product *("you will have impeccably clean laundry"*, a result you have not achieved before);

• Evidence (testimonial).

It should be noted that the tone is informative, new, attentive to the event.

But gradually, all the manufacturing companies will benefit from the advantages of the technology and soon their products will bring the same benefits to the consumers. In the conditions of competition, it becomes dangerous for the advertiser to stay within the perimeter of this advertising theory.

*The theory of cognitive dissonance* was formulated and developed also in the American space, in the 50-70s. During this period, theories of consumer behavior and motivation began to be formulated, based on different persuasion strategies (Kevin, 2021, p. 189):

• Logical motivation strategies *("reason-why*");

• Affective motivation strategies.

The logical motivation can aim at: assumed modernity, saving time, increasing the beneficiary's prestige in society. Affective motivation is most often aimed at sexuality, less often at patriotism.

After the market was invaded by logically motivated advertising constructions, the consumer felt the need for something new: affective motivation. Therefore, the association of the new brand with traditional and familiar settings or values (landscapes with identity value, national emblems, family scenes) takes place.

The cognitive dissonance theory assumes a short-circuiting of the consumer's cognitive universe in order to bring to the fore a superior reality compared to the one already known. The higher level is only achieved by purchasing and using the promoted product.

*"Cognitive dissonance"* kicks in when the buyer's choice is made. He has appealed to the information provided clearly and precisely by learning theory and wants certainty that his choice is correct. One can, therefore, apply this theory during the product's shelf life (its prestigious period of life). One purchase is not enough for the manufacturer. He needs to make the consumer loyal to his product, so that the first purchase is followed by other such steps, the consumer becoming a frequent user of the respective product. The ordering formula for the stages of accessing the target audience is DO – LIKE – LEARN, i.e. an extension of the LEARN – LIKE – DO modules, specific to the theory of learning.

The post-behavioral schema maintains the consumer's belief that his choice was good and he will keep on trusting in the qualities of the advertised product/service. Every person needs certainty, all the more so since the purchased product implies an increased degree of responsibility on the part of the buyer. Cognitive dissonance was first observed in behaviors that constituted high financial stakes: decisive lifestyle changes produced by the purchase of expensive objects (automobiles, appliances, televisions, banking services intended to support individual well-being).

The advertiser has two objectives to fulfill:

• Convince the consumer at the time of purchase;

• To strengthen his loyalty to the brand, between two purchases.

The first objective could be achieved by approaching the learning theory. For the second, a new approach was needed, the one brought by the theory of cognitive dissonance, which gradually began to be applied to the promotion of products for which the consumer's involvement had weakened (detergents, for example), proving to be a theory with a wide spectrum of applicability. Thus, the following creative strategy is proposed (Sutherland, Sylvester, 2008, p.129):

• Directing the message to a target audience segment satisfied with the quality of the product that the advertiser intends to promote;

• Slipping in an element that disturbs the cognitive universe of the consumer: although he is fully convinced of the quality of the previously purchased product, being satisfied with the choice made, he begins to have doubts about his option, doubts fueled by the unexpected intervention of the advertiser who calmly informs him that there is a superior product on the market than the one he opted for. The news unsettles him as he sees his choice shadowed and his comfort threatened. At this moment the question is treacherously induced: should he give up this brand?

• Restoring balance through a happy and surprising coup de grace. It is now revealed to him that the new product actually belongs to the same brand that, interested in satisfying its loyal customers, has launched a new product, superior to the previous one. We are facing a brand loyalty scheme, to confirm leadership. Schematically, the strategy can be represented by the triadic relationship satisfaction – anxiety – increased satisfaction.

There are products for which information is difficult, sometimes even impossible to give: products that require our senses (taste, smell, hearing, touch). The advertiser, eager to attract the consumer in a more captivating advertising construction, was faced with the difficulty of describing the taste of a new food product, or the smell of a perfume. he then focused his attention on composing a message that is more metaphorical than argumentative, more suggestive than explanatory.

The theory of the childish impulse finds its application precisely in the case of the promotion of these "*sensory*" products, for which the appreciation originates, exclusively, at the sensory level, not cognitive. These products are liked simply for their special taste, for the pleasant smell or for the softness of the texture. They are food products (pizza, juices, sweets, types of sauce), perfumes, fabrics.

The formula for accessing the consumer is given by the following ordering of the modules: LIKE – DO – LEARN. As we observe, the consumer is first impressed by the product. On an affective level, certain favorable feelings arise that give him the conviction that he likes the promoted product, corresponds to his inner values, creates a feeling of well-being. At this point, the consumer will purchase the product, fully satisfied with the choice made. The real qualities of the product are revealed to him only after the purchase. Let's imagine that we are at the puppet theater. We watch the unfolding of a pleasant, interesting story, in which the main character is the promoted product itself. The story tells us practically nothing about the product (qualities, benefits obtained), but it is so passionate that the product will be immediately wanted (liked). Only after the purchase (do), the consumer will realize (learn) the qualities of the product.

The creative strategy proposed by this theory is as follows:

• Creating a pleasant story that impresses and in which the guarantor character attracts the consumer (even the product itself can be used as the guarantor character);

• Highlighting an essential (but subjective) advantage to persuade the consumer to buy the advertised product.

The major risk to which an advertising message built on the basis of one of the presented theories had been subjected, was that the target audience would forget the brand name, although they retained the qualities of the product or the benefits brought by it. Arriving in front of the shelf, most of the time he buys a different brand than the one whose promotions he had just seen/heard recently (Bonnange, Thomas, op.cit., p. 112). Therefore, advertisers were concerned with finding out a method by which the brand name would be remembered by the target audience in order to ensure increased sales.

An advertising message must not only catch, and retain the attention of the target audience, but also impose the name of the promoted brand through a clear construct, in which there is no hesitation regarding its attribution. This is *the theory of building brands.* The formula for reaching consumers is to call LIKE – LEARN – DO. This hierarchy is very close to the learning theory (Sorrentino, 2014, p. 37). It refers to products with strong consumer involvement (expensive products: cars, household appliances, banking or insurance services. Also in this category, although it does not compare in price with the products mentioned above, we can also include medicines, due to the high responsibility which the consumer assumes following their purchase and use).

A good example of the effectiveness of the theory of attributed learning (or building brands) is offered by micro-informatics: The IBM Company established itself among competing companies not so much by the superiority of its own product in relation to similar ones of its competitors, but by the strong brand personality.

It is therefore necessary for the product not to hide its brand, to make it visible, memorable, because the phenomenon of memorizing the advertising message by consumers without them remembering the brand name is known. They will purchase the generic product (television, say) without turning to a specific brand, and the effort of the advertiser (and implicitly the budget allocated by the manufacturer for advertising) will be almost non-existent.

This theory served a lot to impose brands on the market. It was found that the consumer public, in the choices they make, is influenced by:

- What he thinks;
- What he thinks other people would think (O Shaughnessy, O Shaughnessy, op.cit., p. 117-145).

Confirmation is a powerful motivator for people. The more insecure we feel, the more likely we are to be influenced by others. If a brand is heavily advertised, it will be perceived to be more famous, more popular. But a risk factor can intervene at this moment: the increased popularity may be perceived as the product's availability for many consumers. From the elitist status of the brand, the product will be seen as a popular one, which the consumer will no longer use on special, rare, unique occasions, precisely because he is afraid of what the people around him will say. He is convinced that using a popular product for a one-off occasion will be looked down upon. The following conclusion is imposed: exaggerated and excessive popularity tends to devalue the currency of exchange (Percy, 2021, p. 118).

**CASE STUDY**

*The theory of learning* finds its applicability, at the present time, in the case of introducing new products to the market. Being in the launch period, the products need to be accompanied by correct information, relevant and accessible explanations that bring the consumer closer to the product through knowledge. A very ingenious exploitation of learning theory was applied by the Romanian advertiser in the promotion of Spectrum vitamins. At the time this product entered the market, there was already serious competition. As all vitamins are dietary supplements intended to improve the health of the body, the advertiser had to create a consumer niche for the Ginseng Spectrum, ABC Spectrum products.

He chose to target the female audience, interested, permanently, in acquiring the most attractive look possible, and offered the necessary information (chemical composition of vitamins) in a dichotomous system: the scientific universe supported by the scientific discursive register, built on the basis of real percentages of chemical elements from the composition of the promoted vitamins, on the one hand and the feminine universe, supported by the non-technical affective register, built on the basis of the qualities desired by any woman.

The specialized literature (Bălănescu, 2009, p. 193) teaches us that products with a maximum degree of involvement on the part of the consumer (and medicines are part of this category) need the body of the text which, in order to be read by the consumer, should to be composed of two discursive-textual segments, one referential and the other affective. This would be the typical example of double body text.

That is what happens in the present case. The first discursive-textual segment seems to be referential, representing a list with the percentage of each chemical element in the composition of the promoted vitamins. Moreover, in order to make his consumer (the woman, in this case) pay attention to these apparently dry numbers, the advertiser chooses those chemical elements whose symbols represent the first segment/syllable of a word denoting a ardently coveted feminine quality: charming, for example. We have to mention that the text has its specific value only in Romanian, as an interesting puzzle is developed. The second textual discursive segment is referential because it contains semantically specialized lexical and idiomatic units with the help of which the immediate benefits brought by the promoted product are described.

We will now turn to *the theory of cognitive dissonance*. In 2008, the Dove Company successfully used this theory in promoting the new Dove soap. The advertising construct is based on an inspired discursive cohesion established at the level of compatibility of the iconic message with the discursive-textual one: *"It looks like soap, it foams like soap, but it is not soap."* And yet, on an iconic level, we are represented by a bar of soap. The consumer will watch the advertisement with intrigue (the AIDA principle has every chance to develop accordingly). The cognitive universe of the consumer is contradicted, apparently, by the text that contradicts the image. The natural question arises "*what is the promoted object then?"*

Anxiety is dissipated by restoring cognitive balance, with the following revelation: "it's one-fourth moisturizer." Here's another ingenious pragmatic act cut behind the text: the advertised product is a soap with a special chemical composition (1/4 moisturizer, beneficial for daily skin care).

The efficiency of the theory of cognitive dissonance has also been proven in the construction of social campaigns, Romanian advertising assuming, at the present time, advertising creations of which Ogilvy himself would have been proud, as he said (Ogilvy, 1999, p.29) that he would wished he had created them himself.

A good example is provided by the "*Save the Snow Men*", a social campaign initiated by Apa Nova in 2009. We know that the iconic message has the duty to attract attention by activating the AIDA principle. In this ad, the iconic message is not only attention-grabbing, but shocking: the snowman is in a green park in the middle of summer. *The cognitive universe* of the receiver is contradicted: the snowman can only be seen in winter, which means that the snowman in the picture must be made of a conventional material to suggest to children that they can no longer enjoy winter because of the changes dramatic climates as such a real symbol of winter would have shown.

The contradiction of the cognitive universe becomes painful because it predicts disturbing changes in climate and, by implication, in life on Earth.

Another example is provided by the *"Say No to Nuclear Energy*" campaign initiated by the Green Peace organization in 2010. This iconic message also shocks. The 4-eared stuffed/plush bunny is a serious warning, a wake-up call to the genetic mutations that can result from the mismanagement of nuclear energy. The context is, again, suggestively exploited. From the multitude of ways of representation, the advertiser chose a plush toy, i.e. a sign (from a semiotic perspective) of childhood that will be devastated all over the planet. The child becomes, in this advertisement, an indirect, but very effective guarantor character.

And if the traumatic reality would eventually set in, man's survival capacity would adapt him to the newly created alien notions of life. But, at the discursive-textual level, the advertiser insists on the appeal to reason, so that humanity does not have to end up in this pitiful state. By pragmatic act, we mean that behind the warning *"it is not absolutely necessary*", it is hidden the advice that no principle, no so-called major objective could justify the sacrifice of life on Earth.

We will now demonstrate the effectiveness of *the childish impulse theory*.

It is known that products with minimal consumer involvement (juice, beer, lipstick, biscuits) do not need body text. But the advertiser felt that his ad paled in comparison to another sophisticated ad that brought witty, substantial and eye-catching text at the same time (for a car, for example). and then he created an ingenious story to get in front of the target audience. Such stories were created by companies producing mineral water. In the Romanian cultural space, the stories about the weary traveler who "heals his wounds and his soul" but "a water of legend" (Izvorul minunilor, a trade mark) have already remained in the collective mind, or about the Ice Fairy who falls in love with the Prince of Fire (Dorna), or about the "strong families" who, fed with this water, keep their "green leaves all year round (Hera).

In the American cultural space, the Coca-Cola Company has, over time, impressed its consumers with ingenious, pleasant, funny stories. It's as if we feel the fatigue of the driver who, after driving several hundred miles, exhausted and thirsty, stops at a gas station where he gains legendary powers after drinking an ice-cold Coca-Cola. We remember the reply of the salesman at the gas station: *"Yes, brother, this is Pansville - where the red Coca-Cola sign stops more people than the traffic light at the corner*"[2].

[2] American Society for Advertising (n.d), *Coca-Cola Advertisements,* available on www.iquads.ro/revistapresei_6724/in_istoria_advertisingului.html, accessed 01.04.2023, time 18.24.

In June 2009, the McCann - Erickson Agency from Romania implemented the "*Same taste - zero sugar*" campaign in our cultural space to promote a new Coca-Cola product. The product was addressed to a very wide audience, but each individual segment was properly targeted. The advertiser created a story for each category of consumers, so that everyone can find themselves in this promotion campaign. Thus the students were pleasantly impressed to read “*Same taste – zero sugar. Why not sessions with zero failed exams*?” Young women concerned about their figure received the message: *"Same taste - zero sugar." Why not a beautiful body with zero cellulite?"* Partygoers of all ages got the message: *"Why not parties with zero hangovers?"*[3]

The theory of childish impulse is applied in the Romanian cultural space and in the promotion of products with a maximum degree of involvement on the part of consumers. BCR chose to apply this theory out of a desire to break the iconic cliché established in advertisements: the kindly clerk shaking hands, smiling, with the customer satisfied with the contract just signed. The start was given by Banca Transilvania which introduced, as a guarantor character, the Fairy, the symbol of the fantastic universe of the fairy tale that became reality thanks to the banking services accessed. BCR creates a new, modern-day story with a present-day White Harap who brings his beloved wife, the Red Emperor's daughter, a fairy tale life. Through a pragmatic act, BCR sends us the message that a loan for personal needs from BCR can make your life a story, and since young people at the beginning of their journey really need help, the difficulty seems completely solved by BCR, which comes to support the needs of young couples.

*"Together we change the story*" is a title that arouses personal interest. The LIKE level is activated, the consumer being attracted to the fairy tale universe that opens up to him. He wants to be part of the story and live in a wonderful, wonderful world, all the more since, from the information provided -through a referential speech- he understands that this would be possible.

In the second example, the childish impulse theory evokes nostalgia. It appeals to the elderly audience, familiar with the sad, communist times,

---

[3] McCann – Erickson Agency in Romania (n.d), *Coca-Cola* Advertisements, available on http://www.adbrands.com.coca-cola-magazins-ads, accessed 02.04.2023, time 14.55.

when you could only get a Pepsi-Cola under your arm, but also to the young audience, whose curiosity is piqued by wanting to know this story. It is an invitation to the troubleshooting of memories, which adorn those gray times with a pleasant, bright aura, just because the refreshment taken under the hand represented a victory, a reason for maximum satisfaction.

All LIKE levels are activated first. By purchasing the promoted drink, the elderly will discover the unchanged taste that will satisfy them with the choice made, and the young will agree that the soft drink is really tasty and that it is not exaggerating when its qualities are praised.

The logo appears at an iconic level: the brand name inscribed on the product has become a guarantor. The slogan *"Yesterday. And also today"* ensures the permanence of the promoted product on the market.

We will now deal with the theory of attributed learning, which finds its applicability also in the promotion of new products, which involve an important, revolutionary innovation (the promotion of microwave ovens on the Romanian market required the use of the precepts provided by the theory of attributed learning). But there is an essential differentiation between learning theory and attributed learning theory in that the former prioritizes the product (objective), while attributed learning theory prioritizes the brand (affective). The explanation is simple: at the time when advertisers began to apply the theory of learning in their creation, the market was not suffocated by the competitive phenomenon. The product, once out on the market, could live freely, its existence not being threatened by other similar products that sought to position themselves in front of the same target audience. It is interesting to note which are the reference points we refer to when imposing a product with brand status on the market.

Green (Green, 2011, p. 23-30) believes that these are: a reference group and the social class of the consumer. By "*reference group*" is meant that group whose behavior is taken as a model by the consumer, because the latter's attachment to the group can change his identity. The option belongs to the consumer who wants to become a different person, imitating the lifestyle of the group that can fulfill, in the process of behavioral remodeling, two functions:

• Normative function – manifests itself when the consumer establishes his behavioral standards without reference to the group;

• The comparative function – occurs when the consumer compares himself with the group.

When we talk about the social class of the consumer, we mean the socio-economic status of the collective (to which the consumer belongs) in relation to another layer of society, from the following points of view: income, occupation, lifestyle, education, value system . A persuasive strategy may be successful with one social category, but will not resonate with others. But, as the consumer society develops, we notice that the differences between social strata disappear and others appear: gender, ethnicity, age (Kevin, op.cit., p. 104).

Bhagwati Jagdish (Jagdish, 2014, p.82) believes that the experiences previously accumulated by the consumer (emotionally grounded experiences) are added to the benchmarks we refer to in the process of imposing the brand on the market. It is therefore necessary for the advertiser to create a guide that contains the values valued by the consumer to whom it is addressed (Sutherland, Sylvester, op.cit., p.93-103; Ivanov, 2021, p.201).

*The theory of attributed learning* highlights the importance of brand personality, which should not only attract the eye and attention of the consumer, but also determine the retention of the brand name. In the specialized literature (Wallheim, 2021, p.45) a test is proposed: in the case of a TV commercial, we can watch the commercial with the TV sound at a minimum, placing (mentally) a competing brand in place of the brand in the commercial. This exercise in imagination is intended to highlight the following observation: if the applied substitution works, it means that the ad has no style and the brand has no personality.

There are a number of elements that particularize the style of the ad, thus identifying the brand in an unmistakable way:

• The slogan;

• The logo (the swoosh symbol for Nike);

• Visual mechanisms, mascots, associated with the product (the Energizer bunny for durable batteries, the purple cow for Milka, the deer for Ciuc beer);

• The guarantor character (VIP: Madonna for Pepsi, unknown character: cowboy for Marlboro);

• Color (Pepsi - blue, Orange - orange).

The style therefore represents the clothing of the brand. The style must be constant to give stability to the brand, to make it unmistakable.

The manufacturing companies have started for some time to get involved in the social affairs of the city, to their credit, attracting the consumer's support precisely by allocating some funds (social campaign construction) in order to improve everyday life in a spiritual aspect: they are social campaigns which educates the target audience in the sense of changing some negative attitudinal manifestations (campaigns against domestic violence, for example), or in the sense of increasing attention to one's own health, or even life (campaigns to prevent road accidents, to raise awareness of the need to carry out medical tests, to environment protection).

Coca-Cola understood that one of the shortcomings of the young generation is the distance from reading books. That is precisely why he launched the "*Read Books*" campaign. What attracts, persuades and convinces at the same time in the present case is the simplicity of the ad: two words written on a red background. But who doesn't recognize the graphemes specific to the Coca-Cola Company? As for the background color, red, it has been claimed by Coca-Cola since 1930, when it changed Santa's clothing from green to red in the campaign that became famous with Santa Claus enjoying a Coca-Cola after a day full of gift-giving activity all over the world. To these two clues that lead to the identification of the Coca-Cola brand (the background color and the specific graphemes) is added the slogan "*Thirst to read*" which is associated with the brand name "A.E.R" (Association of Romanian Editors). Thirst, as a physiological state generated by the lack of liquids, refers, through its own lexical meaning, to the tasty Coca-Cola juice. In the ad, the advertiser exploited the figurative meaning, referring to the imperative need to read, not just anything, because you can also read on the Internet, but books, the sign of culture.

The Coca-Cola Company has developed in several European countries, including Romania, a sustained social campaign to encourage young people to read books, knowing their reaction of rejecting books, seen as anachronistic and useless elements in favor of conversations held on the networks of socialization. Young people are the main consumers of Coca-Cola, so the advice from the friend who accompanies them in absolutely all moments of life will have a chance to be received and listened to carefully. And then followed, because the credibility of the brand conveys, through an image transfer, confidence in the promoted product: in the present case, in this social campaign, the promoted product is the concept of reading the book, an absolutely mandatory act in the intellectual formation of the young generation.

The personality of the brand is felt at a glance. Although not named as such, the Coca-Cola brand makes its presence and authority felt in front of the target audience. And he, the target, recognizes his interlocutor, receives and follows his advice thanks to the authority that the brand enjoys in front of young people. Marketing studies carried out after this campaign have shown that many young people have actually started reading books. Consumption of Coca-Cola also increased, as consumers appreciated the brand's involvement in amicably solving a serious social problem.

## CONCLUSIONS

The clearest observation at the end of this study is that the major objective of making use of the theories of advertising when building an advertising discourse is to humanize the message so that the consumer should feel the promoted product/service closer to his universe, and should thus tend to purchase it in order to have a more comfortable life.

Starting with the theory of information, it can be easily noticed that the main character in the advertisement has been chosen as close to public as possible. He/she is a person who identifies with the consumer: he/she looks and talks like the consumer, as if they were one and the same person.

Going on to the theory of cognitive dissonance, the above mentioned principle is kept, and the action, strange as it may be (the danger of the nuclear energy, for instance), is placed within a very popular context, a well-known environment (such as a park, or a teddy-bear) in order to make the consumer react on the spot of the moment when seeing the advertising. The consumer is thus invited to realize that a great danger may happen anytime within his calm and peaceful universe, disturbing it to death.

There is no recipe of using the theories of advertising in order to improve the advertising discourse and to make it more efficient, namely to sell more and more products to more and more consumers, but it should be kept in mind that the closer the advertiser is to his target, the more successful his advertisements will be.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bonnange, C., Chantal T., (1999), *Don Juan sau Pavlov? Eseu despre publicitate,* București: Editura Trei.

Brierley, S., (2013), *The Advertising Handbook,* the 4th edition, London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

D & AD Editor,(2022), *The Copy Book. How Some of the Best Advertising Weiters in the World Write Tgeir Advertisng,* Taschen: Bibliotheca Universalis.

DeLozier, M. Wayne, (2014), *The Marketing Communication Process,* New York: McGraw – Hill, the 4th edition.

Green, J., (2011), *Advertising*, Bew York: The Rosen Publishing Group.

Ivanov, A., (2021), *How To Create an Idea if You Are Not Ogilvy,* Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Jagdish, B., (2014), *Free Trade Today,* third edition, Princeton, New York: Princeton University Press.

Kevin, Ph., (2021), *Wealth and Democracy: a Political History of the American Rich*, New York: Broadway Books.

Ogilvy, D., (1999), *Ogilvy on Advertising,* London: Printing House Prion Books Ltd, Imperial Works.

Percy, L., (2021), *Strategic Advertising Management,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reboul, A., Moeschler, J., (2001), *Pragmatica azi – O nouă știință a comunicării,* Cluj-Napoca: Editura Echinox.

O Shaughnessy, J. & O Shaughnessy, N., (2004), *Persuasion in Advertising,* London & New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Sorrentino, M., (2014), *Creative Advertising*, London: Ed. Lawrence King Publishing, Sage.

Sutherland, M., Sylvester, A. K., (2008), *De la publicitate la consumator*, București: Editura Polirom, Colecția Collegium.

Sutherland, M., Sylvester, A. K., (2000), *Advertising and the Mind of the Consumer*, New York: Allen & Unwin Printing House.

Taplin, W., (2013), *Advertising*, New York: Eds. Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Wallheim, R., (2021), *On the Emotions,* New York – New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, third edition.

**ONLINE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

American Society for Advertising (n.d), *Coca-Cola Advertisements,* available on www.iquads.ro/revistapresei_6724/in_istoria_advertisingului.html .

McCann – Erickson Agency in Romania (n.d), *Coca-Cola* Advertisements, available on http://www.adbrands.com.coca-cola-magazins-ads

# Music, an Amazing Tool for Teaching English

**ALINA-DANA VIȘAN[1] / LAVINIA MARIA NIȚULESCU[2]**

**Abstract:** This paper reports on several activities based on using music and song lyrics in order to introduce or boost certain grammar structures or to present new vocabulary. When teaching English, either in school or in college, it should be first of all fun and entertaining. More and more often, music and activities based on song lyrics are used to build listening and comprehension skills. The authors advance new ideas related to the use of songs for practising many English structures or even as triggers for writing essays or debating topics. Song lyrics can enhance the practice of the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Songs can enable learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, increasing their awareness of 'difference' and embracing tolerance. Furthermore, music lyrics may deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the traditional course books.

**Keywords**: *music, lyrics, vocabulary, songs, grammar*.

## INTRODUCTION

As Professor Mircea Miclea PhD put it so eloquently during the conference entitled "How We Think Our Own Education for Tomorrow's World"[3]: "Teach them emotions and then they will also remember the contents you have taught them". The way we teach emotions is through music and song lyrics. In this approach, the authors were influenced by some of their former teachers, among whom a Latin professor at the University, who, being aware that his subject could be viewed as boring, used to engage

[1] Senior lecturer, The University Center UBB Reșița.
[2] Senior lecturer, The University Center UBB Reșița.
[3] 26 May 2023, The University Center UBB Reșița.

and attract the students by proposing 10 minutes of music for developing our knowledge about singers, bands and songs of the 1990's. His class was always successful, and students were more eager to learn and practice Latin after this musical intermezzo.

Music and song lyrics can have numerous educational functions besides their entertaining purposes. The use of music can boost the language development and it can help learners develop their understanding of other cultures and learn tolerance and understanding.

At the same time song lyrics can deal with universal themes such as love, war, and loss. Moreover, music and song lyrics represent effective listening activities meant to bring about many benefits. Not only with young learners but also with university students, music and song lyrics can be used to teach important concepts, as the authors found themselves, having taught school pupils and college students. In their opinion, one of the many benefits of using song lyrics in classroom is that students are excited to be taught and learn because they are having fun.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

"*Cunoașterea* în general și mai ales dezvoltarea capacităților de cunoaștere, realizabilă prin *educație, sunt fenomene globale, integratoare, holistice*. Diversificarea și compartimentarea fenomenelor sunt determinate de argumente metodologice, care au condus la pregătirea formatorilor pentru specialități din ce în ce mai înguste, uneori neglijându-se faptul că ele trebuie concepute ca părți componente, mai mari sau mai mici, mai accesibile sau mai puțin accesibile, ale unui întreg." (Vasile, 2019, p. 331)[4]

The teachers in the elementary and pre-school education must be aware of the interdependence between the right and the left hemispheres of

[4] (Vasile, V. 2019, p. 331). Learning in general and especially the development of learning abilities achieved through education are global, integrating, holistic phenomena. The diversification and compartmentalisation of these phenomena are determined only by the methodological arguments which have led to the instruction of trainers for more and more narrow specialisations, sometimes neglecting the fact that they must be designed as bigger or smaller, more accessible or less accessible component parts of a whole. (Our translation)

the brain, and the need for their harmonious development in order to ensure a balanced human personality, while for the foreign languages teachers it is very important to be aware that both language and music acquisition develop in the right side of the brain.

In his article "Educația muzicală la frontiera cu alte discipline școlare" (Musical Education and Its Influence on Other School Subjects), Vasile mentions that "educația muzicală și legăturile ei mai ales cu alte discipline în special umaniste, deoarece trecerea la abordarea didactică prin competențe nu numai înlesnește, dar și implică abordări interdisciplinare, iar documentele curriculare trebuie racordate la aceste deziderate, urmând să ofere sugestii, propuneri, soluții. (2019, p. 331)"[5]

As a symbiosis between lyrics and melody, as it is called in "Educația muzicală la frontiera cu alte discipline școlare" (Musical Education and Its Influence on Other School Subjects) a song offers the double advantage of developing both the literary reception and the musical one. It is well-known that the literary texts accompanied by melodies are more easily assimilated by the pupils, especially the very young ones. This is the reason why many foreign languages teachers use the advantage of teaching those languages by means of songs with adequate texts which present new vocabulary or grammar structures. (Vasile, 2019, p. 334-335).

Such interdisciplinary approaches which have the advantage of increasing the creative and inquisitive spirit would enhance vocabulary and grammar structures retention and would avoid mechanical learning of some texts, formulas, theorems which disappear from the student's mind immediately after passing certain tests or exams.

However, the building of students' skills may be achieved only by teachers who possess the necessary competences for their didactic position among which we must rank first the inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary competences.

---

[5] (Vasile, V., p. 331) talks about musical education and its influence on other subjects, especially humanities, as passing to a didactic approach through competences not only makes it easier but also involves interdisciplinary approaches and the curriculum documents must be connected to these desiderata, thus, offering suggestions, proposals, solutions. (Our translation)

Music can be used to teach grammar and vocabulary but also you can learn different cultural elements. Many students of ours had their first encounter with English through song lyrics. This is the reason why, the use of music and song lyrics in the classroom acts as a motivator and entertainer: the students are more attentive, and they have fun.

There are numerous articles on this topic of using music to enhance the learning and the motivation to learn English.

John McRae in his book Literature with a Small 'l': Developing Thinking Skills in Language Teaching and Learning distinguishes between literature with a capital L - the classical texts e.g. Shakespeare, Dickens - and literature with a small l, which refers to popular fiction, fables and song lyrics. (McRae, 1994, apud Mijušković, M. 2020, p. 3)

In the article "Use of Music and Songs as Pedagogical Tools in Teaching English as Foreign Language", the authors highlight the following aspects: "Songs and music can certainly be considered as one of the most useful language learning tools that aid second language teaching without putting a lot of academic pressure on the learners". (Kumar et al., 2022, p. 1)

As Vera and Luna from the University of Málaga put it: "teachers are encouraged to use music in class by choosing songs, rhymes, and chants to promote children's happiness and wellbeing. They think that relaxed pupils can be taught more effectively. " (Vera & Luna 2013, p. 18)

> This idea is related to Krashen's hypothesis: For optimal learning to occur the affective filter must be weak. A weak filter means that a positive attitude toward learning is present". Song may be such a filter enabling the acquisition of knowledge. (Krashen,1982 apud Vera & Luna, 2013, p. 18)

Lems highlights that "using songs and music in ESL/EFL teaching can help to create a happy, interactive, and intellectually stimulating atmosphere for language learning". The digital revolution brought along tremendous changes in teaching practices worldwide, and access to music is one great benefit. Online music resources only a click away makes music an easily available teaching tool. (Lems, 2016)

Songs do not only offer language practice opportunities through repetition but also by developing listening skills and phonological skills and provide a relaxing learning atmosphere. Hence, many linguistic features may be reinforced by using songs while teaching English. Songs can be diffused into different stages of lessons as warm-ups or fillers to keep the students interested in the lesson (Johar et. al, 2020, Magulod et. al, 2021, apud Kumar et al. 2022, p. 2).

Mizener in her article *Enhancing Language Skills Through Music* (2008, p. 11) points out that "researchers and practitioners recognize that musical activities reinforce many aspects of language development." She considers that singing and listening, rhythmic speaking, chanting are likely to enhance language development.

In *Music, Language and the Brain*, Patel (2008) explains that "within our own minds are two systems that perform remarkably similar interpretive feats, converting complex acoustic sequences into perceptually discrete elements. He notes that the capacity to refer to already acquired sound categories, to use rhythmic and melodic sequences for achieving regularity, to integrate the new and to extract emotionally hued meanings from acoustic signals demonstrate that the domains of music and language use some of the same mechanisms". (Patel, 2008, apud Segal, 2014, p. 11)

Certain forms of music, such as pop songs, work especially well for teaching English language learners (ELLs). Murphey (1990), in his article *Song and Music in Language Learning: an analysis of pop song lyrics and the use of song and music in teaching English as a Foreign Language* explored why pop songs seem so effective in teaching English to ELLs. He found that pop songs have the magic combination of high-frequency words, repeated often, and the use of first and second person. As a result, listeners feel personally and emotionally involved with the songs. (Murphey, 1990, apud Lems, 2018, p. 15)

There is only one conclusion to draw after reading all these articles, namely music and song lyrics can be used from primary school to lower secondary school and high school because teachers can always adapt the assignments to their students' level. Music creates a relaxed environment for learning a foreign language not only for primary school pupils but also for university students.

The next subchapter will present the authors' course ideas for university students based on music and song lyrics. This subchapter intends to prove that music-based activities in teaching English can be successfully used for ESP as well.

**BRITISH / AMERICAN ENGLISH**

We read in the literature that rhythmic presentation helps memorization especially when the verbal information is significant. We have also discovered during our courses that the process of language learning in the classroom may be enabled by teaching different aspects of language using songs. The use of students' favourite songs creates opportunities for us to revise grammar structures and help the students store the information in long term memory. Music can help learners to retain vocabulary since it tends to remain in our memory. Murphey calls this ability "the song-stuck-in-my-head-phenomenon" which stands for "the echoing in our minds of the last song we heard". (Murphey, 1990, Apud Alipour, Gorjian & Zafari, 2012, p. 140)

Thus, English songs may be used for a wide variety of ESL learning and teaching activities. They may trigger discussions on a topic or even become the centre of a debate. This is especially true when it comes to songs developing a particular topic. Songs are also great for shaping listening skills. I have been teaching English for 20 years and my favourite exercise with music is still filling in the blanks as students listen to a song. Besides this fill-in exercise, music and song lyrics may be used for teaching grammar. Most songs reflect the singer's background and in order to teach the cultural and linguistic differences between British and American English I have chosen Sting's *Englishman in New York*.

The teaching session was designed around this song as a tool for teaching Culture Shock to my students of Intercultural Communication, but I have also used it in my English seminar with the Social Work students and the Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-school Education ones in order to talk about vulnerable categories of people, in particular immigrants.

The practical course is organised starting with a pre-listening activity, where the students are asked about the kind of music they listen to, about their favourite singers or bands. Then I ask them about Sting and his music and if they have ever heard about The Police, Sting's former band, followed by some biographical data about the singer whose song we were about to listen to, data we can easily find on the internet. They found out about Sting:

Sting's real name was Gordon Matthew Thomas Sumner CBE and he was born on the 2nd of October 1951. He is a well-known English musician and less known as an actor. He was the singer and bassist of the famous rock band The Police from 1977 until 1986. Then, he started a solo career and his music combines elements of rock, new-age, classical, reggae, jazz and world beat.

According to the designed teaching session, the first section above is followed by a fill-in activity during the listening phase.

First of all, students are asked to listen to the song and fill in some missing words from the song lyrics. We shall discuss and explain the meaning of use of certain words such as 'alien' (because probably they know only the meaning connected to Ridley Scott's famous film) and 'propriety' (not to be confused with 'property'). [6]

Another important vocabulary explanation comes for the phrase "manners maketh man". Nowadays this phrase broadly means that your mannerisms and characteristics make you who you are, that is to infer that people are judged by their manners and behaviour. But in its first use, (as

---

[6] The song lyrics are available at: https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sting/englishmaninnewyork.htmle.
I don't drink coffee, I take tea, my dear
I like my toast done on one side
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk
I'm an Englishman in New York
See me walking down Fifth Avenue
A walking cane here at my side
I take it everywhere I walk
I'm an Englishman in New York
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien
I'm an Englishman in New York
Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien
I'm an Englishman in New York
If "manners maketh man" as someone said
He's the hero of the day
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile
Be yourself no matter what they say

*manners maketh man)*, it likely had a larger meaning - that manners make us human - that politeness and etiquette are what keep us from going back to savagery.

Then they are asked to listen again to the song and detect five British elements mentioned in the song and the Americans' attitude towards the British newcomer. This may start a debate on how we should behave with such vulnerable categories, either old people, abandoned children or immigrants.

The session ends with the post-listening activity, consisting in several tasks and activities.

One exercise would be to make a repository with the British/ American words they already know, to find others as well on the hands-out the teacher gives them.

**Table 1.** American English – British English.

| **American English** | **British English** | **American English** | **British English** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antenna | aerial | Checkers | draughts |
| Mad | angry | Thumbtack | drawing pin |
| Anyplace | anywhere | divided highway | dual carriageway |
| Fall | autumn | Pacifier | dummy |
| Bill | bank note | Trashcan | dustbin, rubbish-bin |
| Attorney | barrister, solicitor | Generator | dynamo |
| Cookie | biscuit | Motor | engine |
| Hood | bonnet | Engineer | engine driver |
| Trunk | boot | Movie | Film |
| Suspenders | braces | Apartment | Flat |
| Janitor | caretaker | Overpass | flyover |
| drug store | chemist's | Yard | garden |
| french fries | chips | gear-shift | gear-lever |
| the movies | the cinema | Alumnus | graduate |
| Stove | cooker | Boiler | Grill |
| Crib | Cot | first floor | ground floor |
| Thread | cotton | Rubbers | gumshoes, wellington boots |
| Wreck | crash | | |
| Intersection | crossroads | Sneakers | gym shoes, tennis-shoes |
| Drapes | curtains | Purse | handbag |

*Source: American English to British English Vocabulary (thoughtco.com)*

The last exercise would be to comment on the following picture and statement:

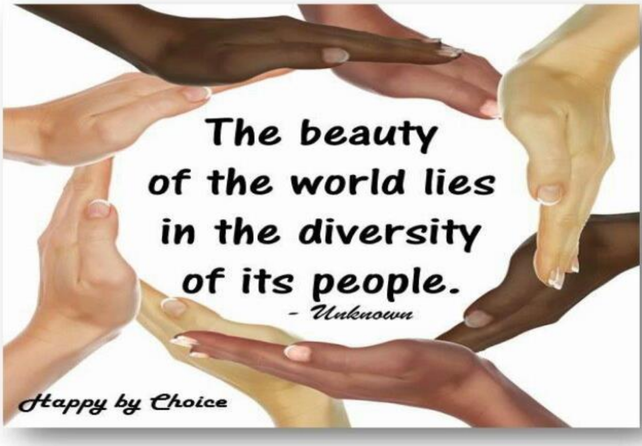


**Image 1.** People's diversity

*Source: Facebook*

*The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people*. This would be a very good opportunity to write an essay and also practice the writing competence besides listening, reading and speaking, which were already developed in this lesson.

The goals of this course would have been reached if the students have:

- Learnt some British/American new words.
- Understood the differences between high context culture and low context cultures, British/American cultures.
- They had become more aware about the problems immigrants face when they arrive in their new country and have to learn ways of making their life easier in the new country.

## TEACHING GRAMMAR BASED ON SONGS

When teaching or revising grammar, there are numerous ways to use songs with your students. One of my favourite topics is the If Clauses revision by using Beyonce's song If I Were a Boy…

This song and its lyrics are not only about *If Clause type 2* but also about a debate on gender equality.

As already described, the structure of the didactic approach is made of three stages:

– Pre-listening activity:

I usually start by asking questions about what kind of music they listen to and then I introduce the singer asking them questions about her. The second pre-listening activity is to give them the title If I were a Boy …and the students must predict what the song might be about. The title has a very obvious meaning and it would be very easy for the students to explain it.

– While-listening activity:

When it comes to English songs, they are an amazing pedagogical tool in teaching English as a foreign language because they create a fun-filled learning environment, and this is the reason why songs can be used to teach or to revise grammar in a less rigid environment. The following assignments will showcase this bottom line.

We start by a fill-in-the-gaps exercise where students have to fill in the missing words of the song lyrics. This first assignment is targeting listening comprehension. For very advanced students, I take out one word in every line of the song, so they must be very fast in writing the missing words. The students are so thrilled when they are listening to music and they do this assignment like playing a game.

"If I 1. ….. a boy
Even just for a 2. …
I'd 3. …. out of bed in the morning
And throw on what I 4. …. then go
Drink 5. ….. with the guys
And chase after 6. ….
I'd kick it with who I 7. …..
And I'd never get 8. ….. for it
'Cause they'd stick up 9. … me

[Chorus]
If I were a 10. ....
I think I 11. …. understand
How it feels to 12. ….. a girl
I swear I'd be a 13….. man
I'd 14. …. to her

'Cause I know how it 15. ….
When you 16. …. the one you wanted
'Cause he's taken you for 17. ….
And everything you 18. …. got destroyed.”[1]

– Post-listening activities:

This is the moment when the students are given different assignments concerning If Clauses. After listening to the song, the first assignment would be for them to find all the If Clauses in the song. During this assignment, we observed our students’ increased engagement and motivation to perform the task. They succeed to fulfil the assignment in a shorter period of time than when they solve classical grammar exercises.

If I were a boy,
I’d roll out of bed in the morning
If I were a boy,
I would understand
I’d be a better man
I’d listen to her
If I were a boy
I would turn off my phone
I'd put myself first

The second activity proposed to them is to imagine what they would do if they were the opposite gender. This assignment besides practising a grammar structure also makes them imagine how would it be to be someone else, being in someone else’s shoes.

The third task is assigned to them when they are asked to write an If Clauses chain imagining how they would behave if they were the opposite gender:

– An example for the girls to continue: If I were a boy, I would drink beer with the guys. If I drank beer with the guys, I would….
– An example for the boys to continue: If I were a girl, I would wear high heels. If I wore high heels, I would…

[1] The song lyrics are available at https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/ifiwereaboy.html

This assignment will help them figure out if they have a profound or shallow perspective of the other gender. The discussion of their If Clauses chain, will guide them to see beyond the shallow features of their counterparts.

The fourth activity would be to start a debate on the everlasting topic about man/woman equality: *Do you think men and women are equal? Why? Or why not?*

The students shall be divided into 2 groups: one group made up of those who agree, and the other group composed of those who disagree. Each group must write minimum 5 and maximum 10 arguments to argue their case.

The objectives of this lesson are reached if the students have:

- Revised the use of If clause type 2.
- Understood the meaning of some American words or phrases.
- Developed a better awareness about gender equality.
- Another objective would have been to develop and to uplift creativity and fantasy by using the If clause chain and arguments for a debate.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Music has always been said to be a universal language. This may function up to a certain point at an instrumental or purely melodic level, but when songs have lyrics, we are all eager to hear them well and understand their message. This undoubtedly adds to the artistic experience. When it comes to English songs, they are an amazing pedagogical tool in teaching English as a foreign language because they create a fun-filled learning environment, and this is the reason why songs can be used to teach or to revise vocabulary or grammar in a less rigid environment. Synergy has always been a fruitful endeavour, and interdisciplinary approaches which have the advantage of increasing the creative and inquisitive spirit would enhance the conviction regarding the unity of human knowledge and would avoid mechanical vocabulary or rigid grammar structures retention which disappear from the student's mind immediately after passing certain tests or exams. We learn more easily and remember better when we are lured and conquered by a combination of artistic stimuli, and enveloping language facts in a mesmerising shroud of melody will work wonders.

Most songs reflect the singers' background and thus they may be used to highlight the cultural and linguistic differences between the British and the Americans. Songs can start a discussion or even a debate on gender equality as it was the case for the song *If I Were a Boy*. There is an endless richness of topics in song lyrics, a lot of everyday facts with which we can identify ourselves or extraordinary facts taking us to amazing journeys in time and space, along with pure poetry.

Students are more focused and interestingly enough, they are more eager to acquire the new vocabulary and they are more interested in the English seminars and even their attendance has increased. Music will always open minds and hearts.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alipour, M., Gorjian B., & Zafari, I. (2012). The Effects of Songs on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Recall and Retention: The Case of Gender. *Advances in Digital Multimedia (ADMM)*, 140, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. ISSN 2166-2916, Retrieved April 6, 2023 at: (PDF) The Effect of Using Songs on Young Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning: A Case of Gender | Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies - Academia.edu.

Lems, K. (2018). New Ideas for Teaching English Using Songs and Music. *English Teaching Forum*, EJ1181080, v. 56 n1 p. 14-21, **ISSN:** ISSN-1559-663X. Retrieved April 29, 2023 at: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1181080.

Lems, K. (august 2016). Learning English through Music in the Digital Age. TESOL Video News. *The Newsletter of the Video and Digital Media Interest Section*. Retrieved April 6, 2023 at: http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolvdmis/issues/2016-07-26/4.html.

Kumar, T., Shamim, A., Mehrunnisa, Y. M. & Shamsy, A. (2022). Use of Music and Songs as Pedagogical Tools in Teaching English as Foreign Language Contexts. *Hindawi Education Research International*, Volume 2022, Article ID 3384067, 9 pages. ISSN: 2090-4002 (Print)/ISSN: 2090-4010 (Online). Retrieved April 26, 2023 at: https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/3384067.

Mijušković, M. (2020). *A Literature as a Tool for Language Teaching*. PPT Presentation, Retrieved May 10, 2023 at:

https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_5827/objava_74241/fajlovi/A%20LITERATURE%20AS%20A%20TOOL%20FOR%20LANGUAGE%20TEACHING,%2027%2004%202020.pdf.

Mizener, C. (2008). Enhancing Language Skills Through Music. *Journal of General Music Education*, Volume 21, Issue 2, p. 11-17. Retrieved April 29, 2023 at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1048371308316414.

Segal, B. (2014). *Teaching English as a Second Language through Rap Music: A Curriculum for Secondary School Students*. Master's Thesis, The University of San Francisco USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. Retrieved April 6, 2023 at: https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1117&context=thes.

Vasile, V. (2019). Didactica domeniului Arte. Educația muzicală la frontiera cu alte discipline școlare (Didactics of the Arts Domain. Musical Education at the Border with Other School Subjects). În (In) Pânișoară I.-O., & Manolescu, M. (coord.) (eds.), *Pedagogia Învățământului Primar și Preșcolar* (The Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-school Education). vol. II, Iași: Editura Polirom. p. 330-339.

Vera, B. B., & Luna, R. M. (2013). Teaching English through Music: a Proposal of Multimodal Learning Activities for Primary School Children, *Encuentro. Revista de investigation e innovación en la clase de idiomas.* 22, p. 16-28, ISSN 1989-0796, Retrieved April 26, 2023 at: teching_Becerra_Encuentro_2013_N22.pdf (uah.es).

*** *American English to British English Vocabulary*. American English to British English Vocabulary (thoughtco.com).

https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sting/englishmaninnewyork.htmle.

Beyonce - If I Were A Boy Lyrics | AZLyrics.com.

# Nimic nu e ce pare. Filozofia teoriilor conspirației (II)

**HORIA CĂPUȘAN**[1]

**Rezumat:** Lucrarea aceasta reprezintă a doua parte a unui studiu mai amplu care încearcă să defrișeze – desigur, nu în premieră – un domeniu imens, arătând că teoriile conspirației, poate din cele mai vechi timpuri până în zilele noastre, pot fi tratate în modul în care școala folcloristică finlandeză, de exemplu, a studiat producțiile folclorice – evidențiind un număr de structuri, teme și motive recurente. În partea a doua a lucrării va fi vorba despre o analiză a tipului uman care apare în teoriile conspirației, caracterizat prin câteva trăsături tipice (ilustrate cu exemple din mediul românesc, dar și din cel internațional), urmând să propunem apoi o analiză a unei serii de tipare narative conspiraționaliste.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *teoria conspirației, viziune conspiraționalistă, tip uman conspiraționalist, structură narativă, motiv.*

## INTERESE[2]

La caracterizarea potrivit căreia în teoriile conspirației evenimentele sunt produse întotdeauna – sau aproape întotdeauna – de cine vrea să le producă ar mai trebui adăugat că acești agenți ai istoriei au interese. Într-adevăr, nimic nu i se pare conspiraționistului mai suspect decât acțiunea dezinteresată. Chiar și așa-zisele „întâmplări”, gesturi aparent fără scop ascuns, maschează întotdeauna o acțiune interesată (de altfel, Daniel Pipes remarcă omniprezența, în cadrul teoriilor conspirației, a întrebării *cui bono?*

---

[1] Asist. univ. dr., Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Facultatea de Litere.

[2] Prima parte a lucrării de față a apărut în anul 2022 în volumul *Limbaje specializate în era digitală: Abordări metodologice și practice*, ed. R. M. Nistor *et al.*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, p. 229-241.

(Pipes, 1998, p. 64-65)). Iată cum sună, de exemplu, o asemenea punere în scenă conspiraționistă într-un editorial de Ion Cristoiu[3]:

> Un asemenea scandal (scandalul Caracal – n.n. H.C.), ca și cel de la Colectiv, ar fi fost foarte oportun pentru aceia care doreau să accentueze dezgustul față de clasa politică și, în consecință, să stimuleze apariția unei a treia forțe în viața politică" (Ion Cristoiu în dialog cu Ionuț Cristache, emisiunea *România nouă*, TVR1, 21 octombrie 2020).

(Deci cineva a avut interesul să se producă dezastrul din clubul *Colectiv* și moartea a două fete ca să fie favorizat USR-ul?). Sau, în viziunea lui Cosmin Gușă:

> Deci, încă o dată, cine avea interesul ca această poveste (amendarea lui Mircea Geoană pentru conducere în stare de ebrietate – n.n. H.C.) să apară la suprafață exact acum? (Cosmin Gușă în dialog cu H. D. Hartmann, *Gold FM*, septembrie 2021, citat de NCN, 10 septembrie 2021).

Din nou, pentru conspiraționistul Cosmin Gușă pare absolut imposibil ca o amendă să fie pur și simplu o amendă și în spatele acesteia să nu se afle alt interes al cuiva.

La fel ca întâmplările, și acțiunile dezinteresate sunt doar perdele de fum: „Să nu ne facem iluzii! Pentru Occident ceea ce contează sunt mai ales banii." (senatorul PUNR Octavian Căpățână, jurnalul TVR1 din 3 august 1990, într-o emisiune în care, de altfel, se vorbea despre planurile maghiarilor în privința Ardealului și se arăta o hartă în care Ardealul era reprezentat cu aceeași culoare ca Ungaria, hartă care ar fi apărut în Franța – n.n. H.C.); „De ce ar avea nevoie Klaus Iohannis de un război în zonă?" (subtitlu dintr-un editorial al aceluiași Ion Cristoiu, www.*mediafax.ro*, accesat la data de 18 februarie 2022).

De altfel, interesele acestea sunt, la fel ca puterile conspiratorilor, nemăsurate: „Les complots d'Istiqbar et de l'arrogance mondiale" (formulă

[3] Domnia sa nu este la prima explicație conspiraționistă. Într-un editorial din *Zig Zag*, 17 iunie 1990, Ion Cristoiu a pus violențele mineriadelor pe seama unei încercări nenumite de „compromitere a poporului român". La fel, într-un editorial din *Cotidianul*, 22 august 1997, a vorbit despre „atragerea în cursă" a lui Miron Cosma. E drept că la domnia sa predispoziția conspiraționistă pare să se fi accentuat cu timpul.

ritualică a propagandei iraniene auzită deseori la Radio Teheran, vocea Republicii Islamice Iran); „[...] Și de aici (de la revenirea evreilor în Anglia sub Oliver Cromwell – n.n. H.C.), evreii au luat toată Anglia și de aici toată lumea.” (comentariu la un articol din *Cotidianul*, 17 ianuarie 2023, postat de un cititor care semnează *Fără alogeni paraziți în funcții publice*); „Nemții vor să pună mâna pe toate resursele energetice din Marea Neagră” (Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, postare pe *Facebook* citată de *România TV*, 15 ianuarie 2022); „Marea resetare” (titlul unui editorial de pe *cotidianul.ro* de Călin Matieș, reluat de NCN la 21 ianuarie 2021). Chiar la o analiză sumară, pot fi identificați numeroși termeni recurenți care indică această „hiperactivitate” din spatele respectivelor interese: *complot, conspirație, subminare, învrăjbire, destabilizare, noua ordine mondială*; mai nou, termenul *resetare* pare să primească tot mai multe sufragii.

Aceasta nu este, însă, decât o parte a poveștii pentru că, în mod oarecum inexplicabil, există un fel de insule de puritate neatinse de corupția înconjurătoare. Ei bine, împotriva lor își mobilizează conspiratorii toată sârguința, pentru că acești „puri” „deranjează”: „De bună seamă că decizia lui (a lui Nicolae Ceaușescu – n.n. H.C.) de a plăti toată datoria României a deranjat pe multă lume” (participant la un priveghi la mormântul lui Nicolae Ceaușescu, citat în documentarul *Nostalgia dictaturii* (2019), regizat de Marius Theodor Barna); „Autorul (unei broșuri conspiraționiste despre prăbușirea URSS – n.n. H.C.) pare să ezite în privința celor ce au provocat prăbușirea URSS-ului: SUA, evreii, francmasoneria sau Vaticanul” (Thom, 1996, p. 313). De aceea, pentru conspiraționist, istoria lumii e un fel de câmp de luptă într-o viziune maniheistă de tipul *Hitler contra Iuda* (titlul unei cărți conspiraționiste pro-naziste) ori Republica Islamică Iran împotriva aroganței mondiale ori români – sau oricare alt popor – vs. străini. Dar, după cum am spus, conspiratorii au puteri nelimitate, iar forțele binelui nu pot decât să piardă, oricât și-ar proclama invincibilitatea. De aceea conspiraționistul e în mod natural nostalgic: „Înainte (în perioada lui N. Ceaușescu – n.n. H.C.) aveam un nivel de dezvoltare a economiei și a asistenței sociale egal cu al Germaniei” (Ilie Neacșu, editorial în *Europa*, 24 februarie 1995) sau „Dinainte (în vremea URSS-ului – n.n. H.C.) avea toată lumea de lucru, era o frăție adevărată între popoare. Acuma evreii și tadjicii sunt peste tot [...] evreii au pus mâna pe banii partidului comunist." (replica unui pensionar din filmul *Febra lui Petrov* de Kirill Serebrennikov, 2021).

Așa merge lumea. Omul e sub vremi, „politica e o curvă", iar cei buni n-au nicio șansă.

Pe lângă puterile și interesele nemăsurate, o altă caracteristică a conspiratorilor e că dispun de bani în cantități uriașe, pe care sunt gata să îi folosească în scopuri necinstite. Aluziile la corupere sunt mai mult decât frecvente în viziunile conspiraționiste: „Andreea Esca a luat 10.000 de euro ca să stea la izolare" (manifestantă împotriva interdicțiilor din pandemie, citată de *România TV*, 25 octombrie 2020); „Cristoiu a luat mită de la gruparea șiită Hezbollah" (titlu din *România Mare*, 24 martie 1996). Se înțelege că, atunci, cei mai probabili conspiratori sunt bogații. De exemplu, o versiune a teoriei conspirației pretinde că, în esență, pandemia de *Covid 19* ar fi fost o încercare de a diminua populația săracă a Mexicului (*Radio France Internationale*, 21 noiembrie 2021, emisiunea *Grand reportage*). Tema a avut ecou și în țara noastră; astfel, o profesoară de muzică din județul Botoșani se întreba retoric dacă a existat vreo persoană bogată care să fi murit de *Covid 19* (B1 TV, 24 februarie 2022).

E drept că uneori – și chiar destul de des – conspiraționiștii par să adopte o atitudine etică și să vorbească despre vinovăție și pedeapsă. Dar să nu ne înșelăm: o asemenea evocare a pedepsei și răsplății nu înseamnă că am intrat într-un altfel de univers. Simplu spus, întotdeauna pedeapsa pentru o conspirație este o altă conspirație: „Și francezii și-au luat-o dacă n-au vrut să-i lase pe musulmani" (aluzie la interzicerea purtării vălului islamic în Franța și la atentatele de la Paris din 2015, auzită de autorul lucrării de față într-un bar din Cluj – n.n. H.C.).

Chiar și fenomenele atmosferice tind să se supună aceleiași logici:

> După opinia specialiștilor, numai niște state extrem de puternice (SUA, Rusia, China, Ucraina) puteau produce asemenea fenomene atmosferice (inundațiile catastrofale din România anului 2006 – n.n. H.C.) [...] fără îndoială că aici plătim pentru atitudinea slugarnică față de americani a lui Traian Băsescu. (text de pe prima pagină a revistei *România Mare*, 31 octombrie 2006).

Generalul Emil Străinu, într-o postare pe *TikTok*, accesată la 25 martie 2023, dezvoltă pe larg această idee: sovieticii ar fi pedepsit România prin cutremurul din 1977 și pe armeni prin cutremurul din 1988, iar inundațiile din România anului 2006 ar fi fost provocate de Uniunea Europeană, care voia să reducă astfel producția românească de legume. De remarcat că, după revista *Rolling Stone*, președintele american Donald Trump ar fi fost preocupat de ideea că Republica Populară Chineză ar putea poseda o armă secretă care să provoace uragane în Statele Unite (citat de *G4Media.ro*, accesat la 20 septembrie 2021), ca să nu mai vorbim de faptul că tema conspirației climatice a ajuns și subiect a numeroase filme.

Astfel atingem un alt punct nodal al teoriilor conspirației – ideea conspirației ca pedeapsă. Cum însă conspiratorii nu cunosc decât propriile lor interese, pedeapsa se confundă cu răzbunarea. Într-adevăr, agenții din teoriile conspirației sunt mari răzbunători. Aceștia nu se dau în lături de la nimic ca să-i elimine pe cei care nu le fac jocul: „Că la noi, tot ce-o fost fermă de porci, tot ce-o fost rasă de porci, tot, tot, tot o fost distrus. Și pe urmă, s-o văzut că americanii o scos fix același lucru”. (auzită de autorul lucrării de față într-o sală de jocuri din Florești).

În mod analog, într-o interpretare conspiraționistă longevivă, Revoluția Franceză ar fi fost, în esență, răzbunarea templierilor (deveniți acum francmasoni și *Illuminati*) împotriva regalității franceze. Să mai notăm că, de exemplu, și extrema dreaptă maghiară propagă o interpretare conspiraționistă a Primului Război Mondial și a Tratatului de la Trianon, conform căreia, prin acest tratat, în esență, Ungaria ar fi fost „pedepsită”.

## S-AU ÎNȚELES

Dacă față de cei care-i contrariază, conspiratorii din teoriile conspirației nu au niciun pic de milă, în schimb, când e vorba de relațiile dintre conspiratori, ei manifestă o remarcabilă toleranță. Într-adevăr, cine parcurge asemenea liste de conspiratori nu poate să nu fie intrigat de lungimea lor și de caracterul lor eteroclit; conspirațiile adună laolaltă conspiratori din toate cele patru zări: „Împotriva lor (a sârbilor – n.n. H.C.) s-au ridicat Islamul, NATO, Uniunea Europeană, Francmasoneria, Iudaismul, Vaticanul și rămășitele degenerate ale fostului Imperiu Austro-Ungar.” (Ilie Neacșu – editorial în *Europa*, 24 februarie 1995); „Cei trei cavaleri ai Apocalipsei pregătesc cruciada împotriva ortodoxismului românesc" (aceeași revistă, legendă așezată deasupra a trei fotografii reprezentându-i respectiv pe episcopul reformat László Tőkés, pe șef-rabinul Moses Rosen și pe papa Ioan Paul al II-lea, 23 ianuarie 1993); „La orizont, un nou pericol: Vaticanul. Teze cominterniste preluate de papa Ioan Paul al II-lea" (titlu în *Națiunea*, 4 februarie 1993).

Un preot ortodox expune teoria cum că Iosip Broz Tito ar fi fost în realitate mason, la fel ca papa și majoritatea episcopilor catolici și că, de fapt, ar fi fost înmormântat în secret la Vatican (*apud* Pipes, 1998, p. 157). S-ar părea că toți conspiratorii s-au adunat în același loc și cu cât o asemenea colaborare pare mai improbabilă cu atât mai mult un conspiraționist tinde să o considere plauzibilă. Revoluția bolșevică rusă ar fi fost generată de marea finanță evreiască (conform lui Arthur Rosenberg sau Henry Ford), regele Mihai ar fi fost agent al, sau doar manipulat de, KGB (conform propagandei FSN-iste din anii '90), islamul ar fi o creație a iudaismului (conform lui Vasilis Bakoiannis, 2006) etc. Dictatorul guineez Ahmed Sékou Touré, după un conflict de graniță cu trupele portugheze din Guineea-Bissau, denunța „un complot internațional al Portugaliei, Statelor Unite, NATO, al Franței, Vaticanului, Coastei de Fildeș și Senegalului, coordonat de a cincea coloană de ofițeri SS naziști" (*apud* Aguirre, 2016, p. 443); într-o manieră similară, adepții teoriilor conspirației denunță mereu o conspirație a participanților eterogeni.

O asemenea formulă e departe de a fi un simplu accident sau o excentricitate. Ea ține, din contră, de o altă presupoziție profundă a conspiraționismului, care s-ar putea numi „corb la corb nu-și scoate ochii": conspiratorii se înțeleg perfect între ei. Dacă se ceartă e doar o aparență, numai se prefac că se ceartă. În realitate ei conspiră împreună. De exemplu, Ion Cristoiu a explicat cum arată pentru el mecanismul alternanței la putere în România contemporană:

> – Domnule, eu nu prea pricepându-mă la fotbal, n-am știut ce înseamnă aia „cooperativa". Dar pe urmă am aflat... Înseamnă că sezonul ăsta câștigăm noi și sezonul următor îi lăsăm pe ei să câștige. Tot așa și cu stânga și cu dreapta.
> – Și-atuncea cine câștigă acuma?
> – Dreapta ia totul. Și locale și parlamentare. (Ion Cristoiu în dialog cu Roxana Ciucă, *Antena 3*, 4 septembrie 2020).

Modelul este, după cum se vede, acela al blatului din fotbal. Este tema conspiraționistă pe care Daniel Pipes o rezumă prin afirmația „inamicii aparenți sunt, de fapt, prieteni” (Pipes, 1998, p. 166). Tot de același model narativ țin și considerațiile deputatului PSD Paul Stănescu cu privire la o înțelegere tacită ce ar fi existat între Viorica Dăncilă și Klaus Iohannis (rezumatul poziției sale la *Digi 24*, 5 martie 2021). Mai recent, a provocat o oarecare indignare o postare a Albei Iulia Catrinel Popescu, cadru didactic la Universitatea Națională de Apărare Carol I. În realitate, din perspectiva morfologiei teoriilor conspirației nu era vorba despre ceva deosebit, propunându-se doar un exercițiu conspiraționist pe tema „Putin și Zelenski numai aparent se ceartă”: „Zelensky e doar un provocator, înțeles cu președintele rus, ca să justifice o intervenție rusă în Europa” (vezi, între alții, *G4Media.ro*, accesat la 5 martie 2022). Poziția autoarei a fost apărată de Ion Cristoiu în editorialul său *Poliția gândirii*, apărut pe *mediafax.ro*, accesat la 6 martie 2022.

Există indicii vizibile, pentru orice conspiraționist, ale unor asemenea înțelegeri oculte. De exemplu, decorațiile: „Dar jocurile sunt deja făcute în favoarea lui Berlusconi (de-aia a fost decorat Tăriceanu când a fost în Italia).” (*România Mare*, 17 martie 2006); „Această criză creată, să nu uităm, de doi decorați ai statului francez – Dan Barna și Dacian Cioloș” (Cosmin Gușă, în dialog cu H. D. Hartmann, *Gold FM*, citat de NCN, 28 octombrie 2021).

O variantă a acestui motiv este ceea ce am putea numi „complexul conspiraționist al lui Ribbentrop-Molotov”, ideea că doi sau mai mulți agenți conspiratori se înțeleg pe spinarea altuia sau a altora, în special în ce privește împărțirea teritoriilor. Un asemenea complex transpare din interpretările conspiraționiste ale Conferinței de la Ialta sau din acelea, la fel de conspiraționiste, ale întâlnirii Bush-Gorbaciov din Malta. La modul mai dramatic, actualul conflict dintre Rusia și Ucraina a reactivat puternic complexul Ribbentrop-Molotov. De partea ucraineană, fostul deputat Ilia Kiva a susținut că invazia rusă în Ucraina e doar o pregătire a unei împărțiri a Ucrainei între Rusia, Polonia, Ungaria și România (vezi site-ul *evz.ro*, accesat la 9 martie 2022). Dar și de partea rusă, oficialități precum Nikolai Patrușev sau Dmitri Medvedev acuză statele NATO, în special Polonia, că încearcă să împartă Ucraina în beneficiu propriu (vezi site-ul *știri pe surse.ro*, accesat la 24 mai 2022). La modul mai ușor, iată și acest dialog între doi realizatori de televiziune:

> – Păi, cum adică, era consiliera doamnei Merkel și scria pentru o platformă pro-rusă?
> – Asta n-arată decât că nemții și rușii sunt mână-n mână." (dialog între Răzvan Zamfir și Radu Buzăianu, emisiunea *Bună, România*, 1 aprilie 2019)[4].

## VIZIUNEA SOCIALULUI

O asemenea viziune a socialului se potrivește foarte bine cu o imagine piramidală a societății. La primul nivel apar misterioasele entități care dețin puterea. Dacă privim modul în care conspiraționiștii înțeleg relațiile sociale, nu se poate să nu ne atragă atenția un aspect: în narativele din aceste teorii abundă expresii ale ordinului, ale comenzii, ale dominației: „Lenin [...] îi dădea ordin lui Ana Pauker" (persoană necunoscută, probabil din București, anti-semit obsesional); „Presa care scrie [...] după ordin de zi pe unitate" (Victor Lungu, 29 noiembrie 2021); „Numai un cuvânt să fi zis Biden și toți maimuțoii aia din Uniunea Europeană ar fi luat instantaneu poziție de drepți" (Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, postare pe *Facebook* citată de *România TV*, 15 ianuarie 2022); „[...] pentru că așa aveți ordin de la Uniunea Europeană, să amestecați populația" (postare pe *TikTok*, accesată la 3 mai 2023). Pentru Radu Moraru, Emmanuel Macron și Volodimir Zelenski sunt „sclaveții lui Rothschild" (poți să fii președintele țării și, în același timp, „sclavete") (citat de pe pagina *media.ro*, accesată la 15 martie 2022). După Liviu Alexa, „pentru ei (Uniunea Europeană – n.n. H.C.), noi, românii, nu suntem decât un popor de sclaveți" (NCN, 27 octombrie 2021).

În universul conspiraționalist, unii dau ordine, alții se supun necondiționat. Nu se poate altfel. Avem, așadar, un fel de imagine piramidală

---

[4] Cum genul thriller-ului sau al romanului polițist este organic legat de teoriile conspirației, firește că acest topos apare și aici. Astfel, în romanul polițist al Agathei Christie, *Moarte pe Nil*, doi iubiți se prefac că se ceartă pentru a masca pregătirile pentru asasinarea proaspetei soții a bărbatului. Într-un alt thriller, *Alb letal*, de Robert Galbraith (J.K Rowling), în mod analog, un bărbat și o femeie pretind că se ceartă pentru a ascunde pregătirile pentru asasinarea soțului femeii.

a puterii. În partea superioară a socialului găsim oamenii sau entitățile cu putere reală, mult mai reală decât a acelora care apar în prim-plan – entități precum „Trilaterala”, „iudeo-francmasoneria”, „Înțelepții Sionului”, „Clubul Bilderberg” și altele asemănătoare, *the happy few* care conduc lumea. Imaginea potrivită – și, de altfel, deseori folosită – este aceea a păianjenului care își țese firele (imagine frecventă și în propaganda comunistă, care apare și într-o poezie a lui Tudor Arghezi, cel din perioada lui realist-socialistă). Apoi, cu o treaptă mai jos, se află aceia care sunt doar scoși în față pentru a crea iluzia puterii – o pură iluzie. Mai sunt, apoi, dedesubt, executanții zeloși, al căror număr orice conspiraționist îl vede întotdeauna supradimensionat. Ei sunt de obicei denumiți prin termeni împrumutați din domeniul societăților secrete și al spionajului: *spion, agent, infiltrat, acoperit* etc. Tot aici intră și foarte numeroșii *trădători*. Relația lor cu centrul deținător al puterii reale este marcată prin verbe denotând înșelăciunea (*a prosti, a fraieri, a se folosi de* etc.): „Americanii ăștia, ce bine se folosesc de evrei.” (persoană necunoscută, dialog cu autorul acestor rânduri); „Iancheii l-au prostit pe Gorbaciov ca pe-un copil mic.” (Ilie Neacșu, editorial în *Europa*, 25 februarie 1995).

Mai sunt, în fine, aceia (cei mai mulți în lume, eventual) care cred că au oarecare putere, dar, în realitate, nu au niciuna și trăiesc în iluzia auto-determinării. Conspiraționiștii își dedică existența tocmai luminării acestora. Un clasic conspiraționist, precum *Protocoalele Înțelepților Sionului*, se prezintă ca dezvăluire făcută celor mulți a unui plan de acțiune pus la punct în cadrul unui congres sionist. De asemenea, mai recent, la noi, revista *România Mare* a pretins frecvent că deține informații provenind de la „adevăratele Servicii Secrete” sau de la „ofițerii patrioți”.

## ȘANTAJUL

Înrudit tipologic cu conspirația este șantajul. Descrierea conspiratorilor ca fiind în același timp și șantajiști deosebit de pricepuți e foarte frecventă în teoriile conspirației. Astfel, ca să dăm două exemple discutate în *România Mare*, aderarea lui Radu Mazăre sau a lui Gheorghe Flutur la PD ar fi fost rezultatul unor operațiuni de șantaj. Și Aldous Huxley se poate să fi fost șantajat cu referire la dependența lui de droguri (conform lui Marius Ghilezan, *Ziua News*, 24 aprilie 2022) și, astfel, ar fi scris *Minunata lume nouă*. Bill Clinton ar fi fost șantajat de Mosad pentru a obține eliberarea agentului israelian Jonathan Pollard. De asemenea, o teorie conspiraționistă frecventă atribuie sprijinul american pentru Ucraina unui șantaj efectuat asupra lui Joe Biden (v. Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, postare pe *Facebook* citată de *România TV*, 15 ianuarie 2022). Să ne amintim și de personajul Grigore Bucșan din excelenta piesă a lui Mihail Sebastian, *Ultima oră* – conspiraționist dominat până la absurd de obsesia șantajului.

## TRĂDAREA

Încă și mai marcantă din punct de vedere simbolic, în universul conspiraționist, este tema trădării – și se poate înțelege de ce. În fond, dacă alții se înțeleg pe seama ta, te șantajează sau te lovesc pe la spate, nu e de mirare; la ce te poți aștepta de la ei? În schimb, trădarea este un eveniment mult mai traumatic; un trădător este cineva care a fost cu tine, pe care l-ai crezut a fi „de-al tău" și care „a trecut la inamic". Pentru conspiraționist, obsesia conspirațiilor e egalată doar de obsesia trădărilor. El știe că trăim în vremuri de „trădare aproape generală", ca să îl cităm încă o dată pe C.V. Tudor (OTV, 12 februarie 2010).

Astfel, ca să dăm câteva exemple, *România Mare* a întocmit o listă cu 176 de trădători precizând totodată că în această listă nu apar și liderii UDMR, „care nu prea au ce trăda, patria lor fiind alta" (23 martie 1994); pe alte meridiane, propagandiștii organizației Statul Islamic îi numesc pe șiiți „urmașii vizirului", cu referire la vizirul șiit trădător care a deschis porțile Bagdadului în fața invadatorilor mongoli. „Capul trădătorilor vrem!" proclamă și senatoarea Diana Iovanovici-Șoșoacă (BZI, accesat la 9 mai 2023). Complexul trădării este foarte prezent și în interpretările comuniste ale istoriei, manualele de istorie din perioada respectivă fiind pline de fraze care acuzau complicități între, de pildă, guvernul german, alcătuit din reprezentanți ai Partidului Social Democrat, și burghezie sau de formulări generice de tipul: „individul X a trădat clasa muncitoare sau poporul". Piotr

Wierzbicki remarcă, la rândul său, puternica prezență în propaganda comunistă a figurii trădătorului dintotdeauna (Wierzbicki, 1996, p 312).

În unele viziuni, trădătorul devine o adevărată prezență covârșitoare: „Pentru că așa ne-a fost dat nouă, românilor, să avem parte tot timpul de cozi de topor.” (colonel Jipa Rotaru, emisiunea *Pagini de istorie. Răscoala lui Horea, Cloșca și Crișan*, la *Radio România Cultural*, 24 februarie, 1992), față de care se impune o reacție fermă: „Domnilor, lăsați la o parte blândețea și dați de pământ cu hoții și trădătorii de țară” (*România Mare*, 4 februarie, 1994). Ca în *Infernul* lui Dante, în iadul conspiraționist trădătorii merită cercul cel mai de jos.

## ATRAGEREA ÎN CURSĂ

O formă particulară de trădare este atragerea în cursă. Aceasta presupune un subiect de obicei bine intenționat, dar naiv, pe care un altul, mai puternic sau mai viclean, îl determină să comită o acțiune pe care o va regreta mai târziu. Și acest gen de situație apare extrem de frecvent în teoriile conspirației. De exemplu, potrivit interpretării lui Ion Cristoiu, atunci când a decis să pornească ultima mineriadă, Miron Cosma ar fi căzut în plasa întinsă de președintele Emil Constantinescu (într-un editorial din *Cotidianul*, 22 august, 1997). S-a vorbit și despre capcana în care ar fi căzut Saddam Hussein în timpul celui de Al Doilea Război din Golf, deși Thierry de Montbrial, care citează interpretarea respectivă, o respinge cu prudență (de Montbrial, 1996, p. 233).

## ÎNVRĂJBIREA

Scenariul învrăjbirii presupune o acțiune deliberată în care un subiect provoacă un conflict între două sau mai multe persoane care, altfel, ar fi avut interes mai degrabă să fie unite împotriva „învrăjbitorului”. Și acest scenariu apare foarte frecvent în teoriile conspirației. De pildă, conform versiunii tipice din leninism, puterile imperialiste sunt cele care provoacă războaiele – în general, statele comuniste având tendința de a se considera singurele puteri pacifiste. Și alții sunt suspectați de acțiuni care dezbină: „Familia

Rothschild împrumuta bani ambelor părți în conflict pentru că nu le păsa cine câștiga sau pierdea." (Louis Farrakhan *apud* Pipes, 1998, p. 69).

## PREFĂCĂTORIA

Lista trăsăturilor atribuite conspiratorului ideal nu ar fi completă dacă nu am menționa și prefăcătoria. Conspiratorii sunt prefăcuți și nu doar pentru că trebuie să se servească de această trăsătură de caracter pentru a rezolva o problemă – nu, ei sunt așa de la natură, pur și simplu. Iată care era interpretarea dată de interlocutorul meu anonim, deja menționat, prohibiției din SUA din anii '20:

> Interlocutorul: Și atunci gangsterii erau tot evrei.
> Subsemnatul: Păi nu erau numai evrei, mai erau și italieni și irlandezi și greci...
> Interlocutorul: Și de ăia tot evreii se foloseau. Și americanii se foloseau de ei ca să arate că nu se poate.

Adică guvernul SUA putea fi atât de prefăcut încât pe față încuviința prohibiția, iar pe la spate îi folosea chiar el pe gangsteri ca să demonstreze că prohibiția nu funcționa. Pentru a rămâne tot la realitatea americană, e de notat că aproape toate teoriile conspirației referitoare la momentul 11 septembrie 2011, indiferent dacă e vorba de variante mai „intelectuale" sau mai „populare", au în comun ideea că guvernul Statelor Unite știa de pregătirea atentatului (din nou, omniscienţa conspiratorilor), dar a ales deliberat să nu dezvăluie nimic publicului. De altfel, conspiratorii nici nu ar putea să ascundă atâtea lucruri, de la dovezile existenței unor civilizații extraterestre până la traseul fondurilor secrete ale lui Ceaușescu, dacă nu ar fi fundamental ipocriți.

## CONSIDERAȚII FINALE

Încă o dată, credem că această analiză poate să surprindă caracterul extrem de divers și totodată extrem de unitar al teoriilor conspirației. Fie că e vorba de personaje tipice sau de narative recurente, ne întâmpină același *air de famille*. Analizând numeroase basme, folcloriștii ruși și finlandezi au identificat o serie de teme și motive recurente, precum și roluri stereotipice pentru personajele diferitelor povești. Propp (Propp, 1970), de pildă, vorbea despre aproximativ 31 de funcții narative care emerg constant în basmele rusești și despre tipologia actanților care participă la aceste structurări narative. Credem că am arătat că și teoriile conspirației țin de același tip de univers narativ; și aici ne întâmpină tipare specifice și recurente, circumscrise semantic viziunii despre lume pe care o promovează și validează conspiraționistul. Astfel, „atotputernicul din umbră", „șantajistul", „prefăcutul", „intrigantul", „trădătorul" etc. – dar și „victima naivă" sau „co-participantul neștiutor" – sunt actorii recurenți ai scenariilor narative conspiraționiste în care „nimic nu e ce pare" și „nu există coincidențe", determinismul stăpânind în mod absolut, dar în care există, în schimb, din abundență proiecte malefice, „interese" oculte și „înțelegeri" secrete.

## BIBLIOGRAFIE

*** (2019). *Protocoalele Înțelepților Sionului*. În românește de Ion I. Moța. Bacău: Editura Vicovia.

Aguirre, Pedro Arturo (2016). *Istoria megalomaniei. Deliruri și fantezii ale cultului personalității în politică*. Traducere de Elena Anca Coman. București: Editura Nemira.

Bakoiannis, Vasilis (2006). *Strigări în pustiu*. Galați: Ed. Egumenița.

Christie, Agatha (2022). *Moarte pe Nil*. Traducere de Justina Bandol. București: Ed. Litera.

De Montbrial, Thierry (1996). *Memoria timpului prezent*. Traducere de Nicolae Bălteanu. Iași: Editura Polirom.

Pipes, Daniel (1998). *Paranoia conspirației. Originea și înflorirea sistemului paranoic*. Traducere de Ligia Caranfil. București: Editura Antet.

Propp, V. I. (1970). *Morfologia basmului*. Traducere de Radu Nicolau, studiu introductiv și note de Radu Niculescu. București: Editura Univers.

Sebastian, Mihail (2019). *Ultima oră*. Caracal: Ed. Hoffman.

Thom, Françoise (1996). *Sfârșiturile comunismului*. Traducere de Gabriela Gavril. Iași: Editura Polirom.

Wierzbicki, Piotr (1996). *Structura minciunii*. Traducere și notă asupra ediției de Constantin Geambașu. București: Editura Nemira.

UNIVERSITATEA BABEŞ-BOLYAI
BABEŞ-BOLYAI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITÄT
BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
TRADITIO ET EXCELLENTIA

FACULTATEA DE LITERE
UNIVERSITATEA BABEŞ-BOLYAI

D·L·S·S
DEPARTAMENTUL DE
LIMBI STRĂINE SPECIALIZATE

*Dinamica limbajelor de specialitate:*
TEHNICI ŞI STRATEGII INOVATOARE

UNIVERSITAS CLAUDIOPOLITANA
ROMANIA
PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ

ISBN: 978-606-37-1961-5