ENGAGED

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNING

4-5th October 2019

Budapest

Conference Selections

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Engaged –
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IATEFL-Hungary,
Budapest, 2021

Engaged –
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Kiadó: IATEFL-Hungary

Felelős kiadó: Barbara Horváth

Lektor: Árpád Farkas

Budapest, 2021

ISBN 978-615-81330-0-5

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Editorial Introduction

Editorial Introduction

The volume follows the by now well-established tradition of publishing a selection of papers based on presentations given at IATELF-Hungary conferences. This compilation contains six peer-reviewed and two non-peer-reviewed papers which were delivered at the 29th IATEFL-Hungary conference in Budapest, between 4–5th October, 2019. The contributions cover a wide range of themes, including issues in teacher education and in teaching and learning writing, as well as the role literature, extensive reading, memorisation and slides can play in the language classroom. All the papers provide the much-needed bridge between theory/research and classroom practice.

In order to improve employability and better prepare students for the job market, Helen Sherwin followed the career choices of 99 lower primary English teacher graduates in a teacher education institution in Hungary. The results of an online survey showed that almost one third of the graduates had either never entered or left the profession. However, an interesting finding was that despite the fact that only 20% of the courses were taught in English in that particular teacher education institution, the demand for those who speak English is such that primary English graduates were able to find jobs at international companies, in hospitality and sales, and even abroad, working, for example, for Aerospace (UK) or teaching English and Hungarian in Belgium.

Zuraidah Ismail's paper takes the reader all the way to Malaysia. Relying on, among others, online interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews, the author investigated how the beliefs of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Malaysia changed in the first year of their teaching career. For Hungarian readers, the research context is particularly interesting since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country where schools offer instruction in languages other than Malay. The participants of the study – albeit on a very small scale – reflect this diversity: Two teachers were Chinese, one Malay, and one Indian. The findings indicate that the beliefs of the four NQTs did indeed change over the year in four areas: attitudes towards the use of L1 in the classroom, classroom management, the role of assessment and exams, and decisions regarding activities and resources. Despite the very different teaching context, teachers elsewhere will find many commonalities as well as striking differences between their experiences and those of the participants of the study.

Editorial Introduction

Attila Wind's article on the development of second language writing as a complex dynamic system provides food for thought for both teachers and researchers. For teachers, the findings of the study highlight the important fact that students go through different learning paths with their language skills improving at individual pace. For applied linguists, the research stimulates discussion in that it raises the question of the application of linguistic complexity, for example, the use of longer words and subordination, as a measurement of learners' second language development. As one of the editors of this compilation noted, in language use it is the knowledge of how to adjust the complexity of language to the requirements of a particular situation which marks out a competent user, be it a written or a spoken context.

Similarly to Attila Wind's study, Jasmina Sazdovska's article aims to provide intellectual ammunition for teachers who take a critical stance and question long prevailing myths in ELT. In disagreement with post-Grammar-Translation approaches which have for long downplayed the significance of memorisation, Sazdovska argues not only for the reinstatement of memorisation in language teaching and learning but also offers a wide range of techniques that teachers can use in their classrooms. Importantly, the detailed discussion moves beyond mere description and includes suggestions for application as well as the rationale behind the use of the proposed techniques. The article contains many thought-provoking questions and arguments substantiated by research – just what the doctor ordered.

While Jasmina Sazdovska argues for the reinstatement of memorisation in language teaching, Rita Divéki and Anna Pereszlényi present their case for the return of another outlaw of language teaching, that of literature. Their paper discusses how literary texts can be used for nurturing global citizens through addressing often controversial issues, such as poverty, climate change, or fake news. The argument is that by engaging on their own terms, students arrive at differing interpretations, which can give rise to questions, discussions, and debates in the classroom. The benefits of the use of literature for the education of global citizens are further highlighted by the activity sequence the authors have used and present, and the feedback which they received from their first-year university groups. The findings of the study confirm that stimulating and accessible literary texts can indeed facilitate student engagement and interaction, and they can help students develop global competence.

Drawing on an extensive review of the literature, Zsuzsanna Soproni offers a set of advice for those who use or intend to use slides in their classrooms. Apart from outlining the advantages that the use of slides has for both teachers and students as well as the environment, the author discusses the pitfalls that this particular teaching aid may hold and makes suggestions as to how to overcome them. The literature review is complemented by tasks and activities tried and tested in the researcher's own English language teaching context. The paper also contains a survey conducted among students in a private business college in Budapest, one of the findings of which was that the participants found slides particularly helpful in their non-language classes.

Editorial Introduction

Csenge Aradi revisits the long-standing but still very relevant issue of the role of extensive reading in learner development. The study investigated teacher trainees' views of the effects of extensive reading on their academic performance. The participants were second-year English teacher trainees at a Hungarian university whose views were elicited via interviews and an online questionnaire. The results indicated that many students found the amount of compulsory reading (both fiction and academic texts) too much. Similarly, several participants argued that the course materials were not always of relevance to their current and future professional interests. As for the effects of non-compulsory extensive reading in which many of the participants engaged, on the whole the students claimed that there exists a positive relationship between extensive reading and improved language skills. In contrast, the connection between extensive reading and better academic performance was less detectable. One of the things that both teachers and lecturers can take away from the research is that extensive reading and reading for pleasure indeed increase motivation and promote language development.

Rachel Appleby provides much needed help with those dreaded writing classes. In addressing the problem, the author made reference to all the writing students do online these days and the difficulties she experienced when grappling with writing tasks as a native-speaker child at school in England. This latter point is worth emphasising as it highlights the fact that nobody is born with good writing skills. Rather, being a competent writer is the result of many years of hard work, be the writing done in one's first or additional languages. In the workshop on which the paper was based, Appleby guided the participants through a series of lessons and stages of writing, each of which contributed in their different ways to the final product of the writing class. The writing class took a genre-based approach and included students' research, peer feedback as well as scaffolding tasks. Of particular interest for teachers is the sample lesson enabling learners to successfully perform a blog-writing exam task.

The editors would like to thank the following reviewers for their contribution to the compilation: Katalin Brózik-Piniel, Annamária Fábián, Csaba Kálmán, Helen Sherwin, Margit Szesztay, and Zsuzsanna Walkó.

This and all the previous conference compilations are available on the IATEFL-Hungary website at https://www.iatefl.hu/node/123.

Éva Illés

On behalf of the Editorial Team:

Jasmina Sazdovska, Zsuzsanna Soproni, and Árpád Farkas

Peer-Reviewed Papers

Where Are You Now? Career Tracking With Primary English Teaching Graduates (2006–2019)

Helen Sherwin

Introduction

Since the 1990s, higher education (HE) has increasingly adopted a labour market orientation (Tremblay et al., 2012), and graduate employability is now a priority for HE institutions (Pavlin, 2019). The focus of university teaching has shifted from imparting theoretical knowledge to preparing students for the labour market with the knowledge, skills, and attributes that would help them do a job to the benefit of themselves, society, and the economy as a whole (Yorke, 2006). Today, the job market is more dynamic than ever. It changes constantly in response to developments in globalisation, demography, and technology (Eurofound, n.d.). Therefore, HE institutions must gain insight into and establish links with the job market to better prepare young graduates for it. A graduate-tracking survey is one way of promoting such communication (European Commission, 2017), so it should be done on a routine basis by HE institutions.

Gathering information on the professional progress of graduates through tracking surveys is important for several reasons. Institutions can assess the relevance of their degree courses to the labour market and implement changes as necessary (Beadle et al., 2018), better help school leavers make sound decisions about what to study by presenting them with evidence on where various degree courses may lead, and inform policy makers about changes that need to be implemented in higher education (European Commission, 2017). Also important is the fact that nowadays universities compete internationally for students, so global university rankings systems play a critical role in the lives of universities (Tremblay et al., 2012). Graduate employability is a key performance indicator in leading systems such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings or QS rankings, so universities need to possess evidence on employability.

International studies have been conducted into graduate tracking at EU level. CHEERS (conducted 1998–2000), REFLEX, and HEGESCO (completed 2010) examined the workplace relevance of degree programmes; the 2016 EUROGRADUATE study addressed the feasibility of creating a Europe-wide graduate tracking system (GTS; Frawley & Harvey, 2015). Findings revealed much variation in national research mechanisms such as differences in study design, and this makes it difficult to compare cross-country data (Beadle et al., 2018). In 2017, the EU initiated plans to establish a GTS at European level (European Commission, 2017) and while today, in 2020, national GTSs are widespread (25 countries conduct GTSs), significant differences in national approaches still remain (Beadle et al., 2020).

Graduate tracking in Hungary is well-established. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are obliged by the Act CXXXIX of 2005 (2005) on Higher Education to conduct career tracking, and the Hungarian Graduate Career Tracking System (GCTS) was created in 2008 to facilitate this process (Ádám, 2020). In practice though, the GCTS response rate is low ranging from 11% in 2015 (Pulay & Lengyel, 2017) to 23% in 2020 (Ádám, 2020), which weakens both the reliability and the validity of the data obtained.

There are some studies that track teacher education graduates in Hungary. These studies focus mainly on graduate destinations of primary teachers (Némethné Tóth, 2018), career-choice motivation (Chrappán, 2010), and relevance of the degree programme for primary (Finánczet al., 2016) and secondary teachers (Korpics, 2014). According to some studies, most graduates, around 80%, enter the teaching profession (Finánczet al., 2016; Korpics, 2014; Némethné Tóth, 2018) and are satisfied with the relevance of their degree course (Finánczet al., 2016; Korpics, 2014). Graduates also identified areas for improvement; for instance, universities should become more practice-oriented (Finánczet al., 2016) and teach competencies such as conflict management for dealing with people (Finánczet al., 2016) or assessing personality development in children (Korpics, 2014). These studies may well help institutions better equip their students for the job market.

However, low response rates (10% was achieved by Korpics, 2014 and 11% by Finánczet al., 2016), small samples (Némethné Tóth, 2018 surveyed 38 graduates), and the fact that these studies focused on relatively recent graduates, just 1–5 years from graduation (Finánczet al., 2016; Korpics, 2014; Némethné Tóth, 2018) perhaps limit the extent to which firm conclusions can be drawn about the situation of teacher graduates in Hungary. Also to the researcher's knowledge, there has been no GTS that specifically targets primary English teachers. Therefore, the small-scale study described below, which traces the careers of 99 primary English teacher graduates between 2006 and 2019, is an attempt to contribute knowledge to this area of the graduate employability of teachers in Hungary.

A second motivation for the study was personal curiosity. It is well-documented that in Hungary teachers are leaving the profession because of poor work conditions, low salaries, and low prestige (Eurofound, 2018). Also, many believe that the prestige of a lower-primary teacher of 6–10/12 year olds is less than that of an upper-primary or secondary school teacher of 10/12–18 year olds (Jancsák, 2014). It is therefore reasonable to assume that lower-primary teacher graduates would either not teach or would strive to move out of the lower-primary into the upper-primary/secondary sector, for which they would need to complete a higher master's level postgraduate (2-year, part-time) teaching qualification. However, based on the researcher's own informal contacts with ex-students, many of them do work as lower-primary teachers. Therefore, this study was conducted to gain a more realistic, research-based perspective on the actual situation.

Methodology

Context

In Hungary, the school system is, in the main, divided into primary schools which educate 6–14-year-olds and secondary schools for pupils aged 14–18 years. The primary sector is subdivided into lower-primary (6–10 years of age) and upper-primary (10–14 years). Teachers become qualified in Hungary by graduating from university-based teacher training institutions. Initial teacher training for lower-primary teachers lasts 4 years and culminates in a bachelor's (BA) teaching degree. For upper-primary and secondary teachers, training lasts from 5 to 6 years and culminates in a master's degree.

This questionnaire-based study was conducted at the lower-primary teacher training section of a university in Győr. The faculty organises a 4-year BA degree that qualifies graduates as lower-primary teachers, able to teach all Hungarian lower-primary curriculum subjects such as maths and PE to 6–10-year-olds, plus one subject specialism such as music or a foreign language to 6–12-year-olds. This study just focuses on graduates of the English language specialism.

The English specialism students study 80% of their 4-year BA in Hungarian through pedagogy-related and primary curriculum subjects such as child psychology, sociology, maths, PE, and music. The remaining 20% of the course is taught in English and aims to develop students' language proficiency to advanced level English through subjects such as language development and literature. The second aim is to develop the very specialised knowledge and teaching skills graduates need to teach English in primary schools through young learner methodology courses. Students also complete various teaching practice placements in local schools teaching both Hungarian subjects and English.

Participants, Research Question, and Data Collection

Between February and October 2019, primary English teacher graduates from 2006–2019 were surveyed about their work history. One hundred and thirty-eight individuals graduated from the programme between 2006 and 2019, of which 134 graduates were approached and 99 responded, giving an overall response rate of 73.8%. Six of the respondents were male; 93 were female, and their ages ranged from 22 years old to those in their later 30s.

The 99 responses were divided into three year groups according to the year in which the respondents graduated: Year Group 2006–2010, Year Group 2011–2015, and Year Group 2016–2019. Significant socio-political-educational changes occurred in Hungary from 2002 to 2019 (2006 graduates started their university degrees in 2002). Dividing responses into these different year groups would allow an analysis of whether the changes had affected the work history of the three different groups. Table 1 shows the number of graduates, responses, and response rate per year group.

Table 1

Response Rate per Year Group

Year Group	Number of graduates (4 not contactable)	Number of responses	Response rate
2006–2010	58	36	65.5%
2011–2015	41	30	75%
2016–2019	39	33	84.6%

An online Google Form survey (via Google Apps) was used to collect the information to address the research question of 'How relevant is the English programme to the graduates' careers?' The survey was shared through Facebook messenger or email, and each graduate was contacted individually. Respondents were limited to one response only, and the responses were anonymous. The survey (see Appendix) combined closed and open-ended questions and elicited information on four areas: background information, current job, work history, and evaluation of the programme of study.

Data Analysis

Responses to closed questions such as 'Are you teaching?' were tallied in year-group grids, one each for 2006–2010, 2011–2015, and 2016–2019. The resulting numbers were converted into percentages to facilitate comparison between the year groups and then represented visually on bar graphs and pie charts. Questionnaire data for the open questions such as 'What improvements would you make to the English programme?' were grouped into thematic categories.

Findings

The research question 'How relevant is the English programme to the graduates' careers?' is addressed through four findings:

Finding 1 The teachers: This refers to those respondents who are currently teaching.

Finding 2 The non-teachers: This refers to those who are not teaching, who either left or never entered the profession.

Finding 3 International aspect: This refers to graduates who settled abroad for a period of 7 months to 12 years.

Finding 4 Evaluation: graduate feedback on the English programme.

Finding 1 The Teachers

Overall, for Finding 1, three features emerged as significant: The majority of graduates surveyed are, in fact, currently teaching and teaching mostly in primary schools; a surprisingly high percentage either work or have worked in bilingual / international schools; few graduates have gone on to obtain the post-graduate qualifications that would enable them to move on to upper-primary or secondary school teaching.

First, that the majority of graduates are currently teaching, and teaching in primary schools, can be seen in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 depicts the ratio of 'teacher' versus 'non-teacher' graduates and shows that 70.7% of graduates (colour blue) are still teaching, 16.2% (colour orange) used to teach but no longer do so, and 13.1% (grey) never entered the teaching profession.

Figure 1

Ratio of 'Teacher' Versus 'Non-Teacher' Graduates

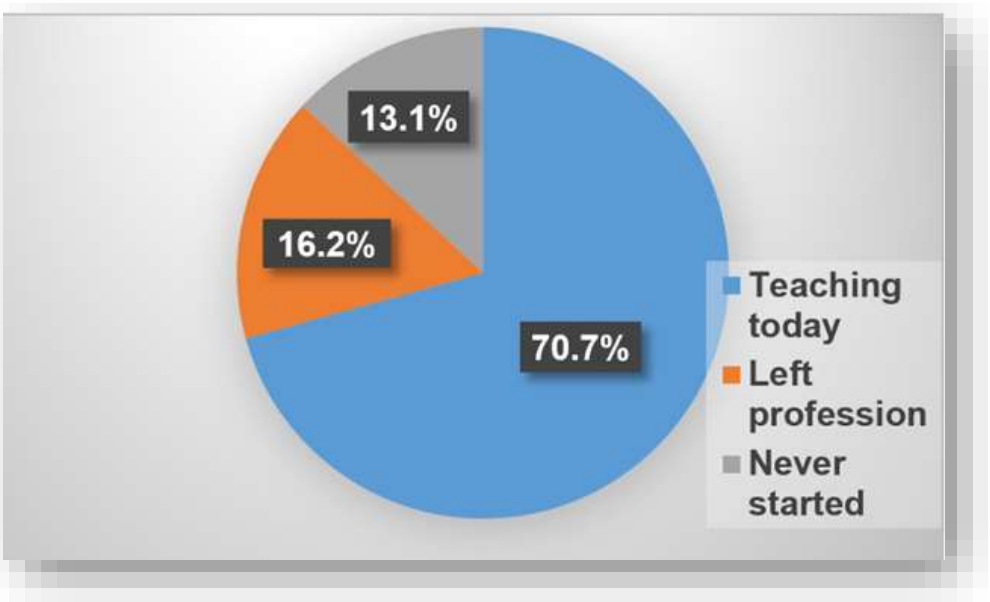
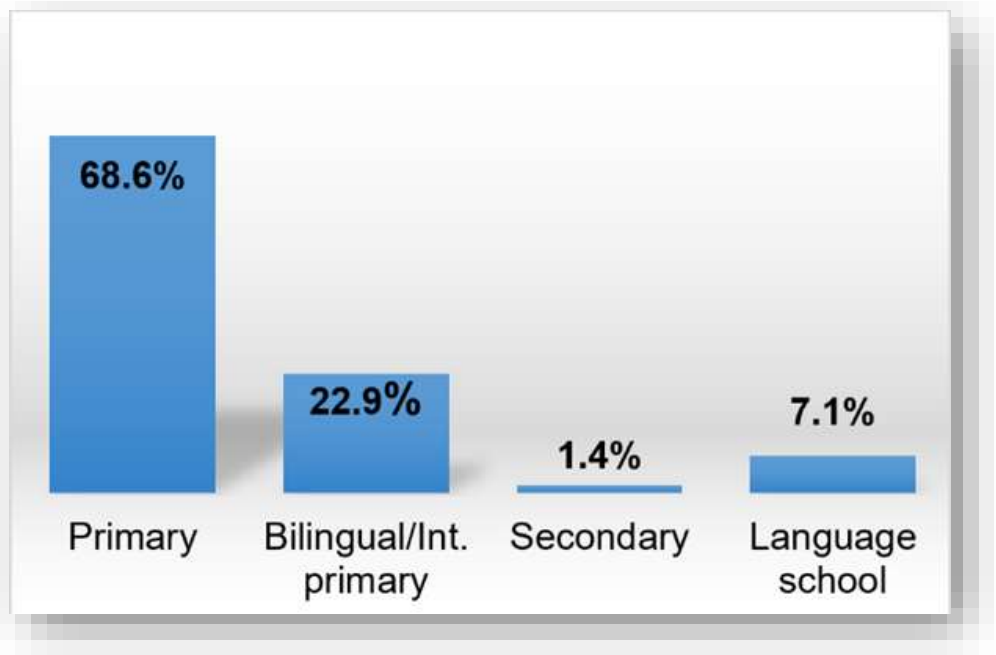


Figure 2, which depicts where teachers work, shows that the majority of teachers (91.5%), work in the lower-primary sector, either in mainstream (68.6%) or bilingual / international primary schools (22.9%). 7.1% teach English in private language schools and only 1.4% work in upper-primary or secondary schools.

Figure 2

Where Teachers Work



A bilingual (kéttannyelvű) state school follows the national curriculum of Hungary with certain subjects being taught through the medium of English. These schools are geared towards the Hungarian population and currently make up about 3% of primary schools in Hungary (Kovács & Trentinné Benkő, 2014). International schools are fee-paying schools and generally follow a UK or USA curriculum model. All subjects are taught in English. These schools are mainly (but not exclusively) geared towards the international community in Hungary.

Figure 2 also illustrates that a fairly significant proportion of the teachers (22.9%) currently work in a bilingual or international school. This percentage is even higher (26.7%) if those respondents are factored in who have taught in a bilingual school but no longer do so because they have left the profession or switched to teaching in a non-bilingual school. In other words, over one quarter of graduates (26.7%) will at some point in their careers have to teach curriculum subjects through the medium of English, and the subjects respondents mentioned were art and craft, science, maths, music, and PE. They will therefore be working as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teachers, which requires a higher level of language proficiency and a different methodological knowledge to teaching regular English language classes (Trentinné Benkő, 2015).

Figure 2 also highlights how few teachers (1.4%) teach in upper-primary or secondary schools. In fact, only eight from among the 99 respondents have completed the master's level postgraduate 2-year part-time teaching qualification that would enable them to teach English in an upper-primary or secondary school.

Finding 2 The 'Non-Teachers'

To recap, 29.3% of the participants are 'non-teachers', 13.1% never started teaching, and 16.2% have left the profession. The reasons given for leaving echo those mentioned in the introduction, and they include low salaries, stressful work, problems with colleagues and parents, few opportunities to advance, and lack of respect from society. The jobs the non-teachers do can be grouped in four categories, which appear in Table 2.

Table 2

The Non-Teachers' Jobs

Work category	Example
International company, for example, Danish, Czech, German, South Korean, UK, Italian, USA	Accountants, antiques dealer, copywriter, interpreter at NATO base, human resources, managerial positions, office workers, personal assistants
Hospitality	Flight attendant, hotel receptionists, restaurant work
Sales	Working in: Vodafone, optician's, home decor, jeweller's, bank work
Jobs Abroad	Working for Aerospace (UK), caring for special needs pupils (UK), a masseur (Austria), teaching English and Hungarian (Belgium)

What is interesting is the diversity of the jobs the graduates do and how unrelated their professions seem to be to their university degree courses. However, the respondents were unanimous in expressing how essential their English knowledge was in both obtaining and doing their work. They wrote, for instance,

> "I'm a Personal Assistant. I got this job because of my English knowledge" (graduate from 2006–2010 Year Group).
>
> "I'm working in the area of freight forwarding at Budapest with a South Korean company. Every day I use English language in written and oral as well" (2011–2015).
>
> "I work in a Michelin** restaurant.... I have got colleagues from abroad so the language of service and meetings are in English" (2016–2019).
>
> "I'm an antiques dealer. I sell from Hungary but strictly for the international market through eBay. I use English 24/7 in my job" (2006–2010).

In short, the non-teachers' work is diverse; English language knowledge is essential.

Finding 3 International Aspect

Table 3 presents information about how many respondents moved abroad and indicates that overall 17.2% of the 99 respondents moved abroad. The vast majority stayed abroad for 2–12 years. Two features though are striking: First, a large proportion (38.9%) of the 2006–2010-year group left Hungary. Second, this tendency fell drastically over time from 38.9% (2006–2010), to 10% in Year Group 2011–2015, to 0% in Year Group 2016–2019.

Table 3

Graduates Abroad

	Moved abroad	Stayed in Hungary
Overall	17.2%	
Per Year group		
2006–2010	38.9%	61.1%
2011–2015	10%	90%
2016–2019	0%	100%

The graduates travelled far and wide to Europe (the most popular), Africa, and Oceania. Countries visited in order of popularity were the UK, followed by Germany then France, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Kenya, Mauritius, and Sweden. The graduates worked in four areas: hospitality (e.g., hotel work in Scotland), international companies (e.g., freight agent for transportation company in Paris), education (e.g., teaching English in Kenya, Paris, Belgium; Hungarian in Australia), and sales (e.g., shop work in the UK). Again, it was their English knowledge that enabled the graduates to work and live outside Hungary.

On a final point, most graduates have returned to Hungary to work in various professions. Few though have returned to teaching.

Finding 4 Course Evaluation

Positive Feedback

In response to the question, "Was the course useful?" 92.1% of the respondents replied "Yes", 1.1% replied "No", and 6.8% "Partly". The graduates liked, in particular, the practical orientation of the programme with its very specific focus on methodology for teaching English to young learners. They commented, for instance,

> "I got lots of practical tips, ideas and games" (2006–2010).

> "We dealt with student-centred activities and methods and mainly concentrated only for [*sic*] young learners" (2011–2015).

> "I know how to teach in age-appropriate way so it's very important for the children's teaching" (2016–2019).

They appreciated, too, the English language development lessons.

> "The course gave me bravery to be able to talk and communicate in English" (2016–2019).

> "It was a huge advantage for us to learn English because you can go anywhere in the world and never feel lost because everybody speaks English and it makes it so easy to get on well with anybody" (2006–2010).

Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions for improvement revolved around three areas: changes to the degree programme, international opportunities, and the need for continuing professional development (CPD).

Concerning programme changes, graduates called for more methodology lessons, more language development lessons, and more opportunities for teaching practice (TP) "with children in school" (2011–2015). Respondents also asked for more methodology input in areas such as teaching very young learners (5–8 years), selecting course books, and using digital resources. Also, several respondents identified the need for CLIL training; for example, one respondent wrote, "that would be great if the students could learn more about how to teach PE, nature studies and art in English, because it can be important in a bilingual school" (2016–2019).

Others complained about the lack of CLIL materials designed specifically for Hungarian primary schools, with one even suggesting that university tutors should produce materials.

> "We don't have books for teaching in English like geography and art. It would be good if you (the researcher) can do something" (2011–2015).

Second, some expressed a desire for more international activities to be included on the English programme such as organising trips or study placements abroad, commenting, for instance, "Students should go abroad to English-speaking countries to practice the learnt curriculum in those areas" (2011–2015). Others asked for teaching practice to be organised abroad: "It would be good if we will go and do [*sic*] practice in UK [*sic*]" (2016–2019). Interestingly, the majority (75%) of these comments came from the 2006–2010-year group.

Third, several graduates mentioned a need for some form of CPD after they have entered the job market, particularly in the early career stage. Although lower-primary teacher graduates do have opportunities for CPD through completing master's-level teaching degrees, these respondents seem to be seeking a more practice-based alternative, geared towards newly-qualified teachers of young learners.

Some respondents called for early career support, writing comments such as "I needed help when I start [*sic*], like an Agony Aunt or something like that" (2011–2015) and "it was very hard the first year and I was lonely" (2011–2015). Some expressed a desire for networking, that is "Keep in touch, and share infos" (2016–2019). There were those who desired input on innovations in English language teaching asking for "university trainings for new innovative ideas like digital things" (2016–2019).

To sum up, this section highlighted the following points. First, the majority of the respondents are teaching, mostly in primary schools and far more in bilingual or international primary schools than expected. Second, 'Non-teachers' perform a wide variety of jobs for which English is essential. Third, a significant number of 2006–2010 graduates moved abroad but this drastically decreased over time. Finally, graduates in general seem satisfied with the relevance of the English programme, and some useful suggestions for improvement were made. These findings uncovered two particular issues that warrant further discussion, which are discussed next.

Discussion

The Relevance of the English Programme

In response to the research question 'How relevant is the English programme to the graduates' careers?', the answer is 'fairly'. To recap, the English programme aims to develop English language proficiency and English-to-young-learner methodology. It is clear that all respondents use one or both of these skill areas in their daily lives. Most respondents (70.7%) are teaching, the majority (91.5%) of whom are in the lower-primary sector. Thus, they choose to remain teaching the young age group which they were trained to do and do not, contrary to expectations, choose to obtain the post-graduate qualification they need to move up into the arguably more prestigious upper-primary/secondary level of education. Also, 92.9% of the respondents rated the course as useful, indicating that both teachers and non-teachers could use in their careers their knowledge of English or knowledge of methodology learnt on their university degree course. There is, therefore, a high level of match between the graduates' university degree course and their careers, suggesting that the degree programme enhances graduate employability, which is one of the main aims of HE.

However, the findings did illuminate one area of deficiency in the English programme, that of CLIL training. A higher-than-expected number of teaching graduates (26.7%) find or have found themselves working as CLIL teachers, for which they are currently not prepared.

Apart from a few language development lessons that teach vocabulary for primary maths, PE, and art and craft teaching, the English programme at the university where the study was conducted does not focus on CLIL training in any meaningful way. However, given that over a quarter of the English teaching graduates may have to teach CLIL at some point, there is clearly a need to do so. Also, it is likely that the demand for CLIL teachers will grow in the future, given that gradually more schools are introducing bilingual programmes (Trentinné Benkő, 2016). The respondents themselves identified lack of CLIL training as problematic, so clearly this is an issue that needs to be solved. One possibility could be to incorporate CLIL training into the existing methodology course, but given the current constraints on time for methodology, this would be difficult. Another possibility might be to introduce voluntary extracurricular CLIL activities as recommended by Kovács and Trentinné Benkő (2017) such as visits to bilingual schools. This would start to equip inexperienced teachers with the skills and knowledge they may need for CLIL situations. A third possibility is for the university where the study was conducted to organise short, in-service, young learner CLIL training courses. This would not only respond to the need for CLIL teachers in the labour market but also respond to graduates' calls for some sort of practice-based, young-learner-focused CPD. Indeed, the Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education obliges teachers to complete some sort of accredited in-service training every 7 years. A CLIL in-service course could conceivably fit within such a framework. Whatever the solution, the CLIL shortfall needs to be addressed.

International Aspect

A sizeable portion of the 2006–2010 graduates (38.9%) lived outside Hungary, but this number drastically decreased over time, and, to speculate, this downward trend may be a reflection of the recent socio-educational-political changes in Hungary. In 2004, for instance, Hungary joined the EU, so working in EU countries became easier; in 2006, Hungary adopted the Bologna system in 2006, thus increasing international cooperation in higher education (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2018); in 2008, the first incoming Erasmus students joined the English programme adding an international flavour; in 2012, the first English teaching undergraduates studied abroad with Erasmus; nowadays, holidaying abroad is completely routine for our students (Csapó-Horváth, 2021), but this was not the case with the 2006–2010 graduates. Put differently, the 2006–2010 group simply had less access to international activities, which may help explain why so many actively sought out international experiences by moving abroad and also why they in particular called for more international activities to be incorporated into the English specialism course.

On a final note, it is important to highlight one limitation to this study concerning how the data were collected for course evaluation. Graduates evaluated the programme as extremely useful (92.1%), but at the same time they highlighted deficiencies such as too few methodology lessons, language development lessons, teaching practice hours, and lack of CLIL training. This discrepancy can perhaps be explained by the well-documented problem of response bias in questionnaire-based research (Bowling, 2005), which is that respondents may feel pressured to give researchers the answers that the researchers want rather than the answers the respondents truly feel.

Although the respondents were assured of anonymity to encourage honest and open replies, it is possible these respondents had a desire to please their former teacher, the researcher, hence the positive response. Therefore, this researcher is cautious in making claims about what the very high satisfaction rating (92.1%) actually represents. Had the questionnaire been used in combination with group interviews, a more appropriate and accurate method to explore teacher opinions and thinking (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), a different picture may have emerged.

Conclusions

This is a small-scale study with English primary teacher graduates from one lower-primary teacher training institution, but as a starting point for further research, it does conceivably have relevance to a wider context. Indeed, this graduate-tracking study is currently being replicated with German primary teaching graduates from 2006–2019 from the same institution. Similarities or differences between the careers of English and German graduates are being examined; the validity of this study's findings is being checked; changes to the methodology course will be implemented as necessary.

Graduate tracking is enshrined in the Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education, so the researcher calls on fellow primary teacher educators to track their own graduates, either working on an individual institutional basis or even ideally at an inter-institutional level working under the auspices of teaching networks such as Óvó- és Tanítóképzők Egyesülete (OTE) [Association of Nursey and Primary Teacher Training Institutions]. It is important to do graduate tracking as findings may reveal issues of country-wide relevance. For instance, one finding that emerged from this study is the need for but lack of CLIL training at primary pre-service level. In fact, the researcher could find only two institutions that systematically do so: one in Budapest and one in Szeged. This implies that a research initiative of relevance to other English primary teacher educators working in similar circumstances might be to investigate this issue of CLIL in Hungary exploring, for instance, the number of English graduates who teach CLIL, their needs, how training institutions can address these needs, and the appropriacy of CLIL materials. This may be a valuable contribution to initial teacher education in Hungary and research into CLIL in general.

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Appendix

The Google Forms Survey Used for Data Collection

This English language questionnaire contains Hungarian words for reasons of clarity. The general term 'bilingual school' for instance, can refer to a variety of bilingual programmes but the term 'Kéttannyelvű iskola/bilingual school' refers to one specific school type in Hungary.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

A survey to find out what primary English teacher graduates from the Apáczai Csere János primary teacher training institution have been doing.

1. Tick the appropriate box.
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. When did you graduate? (day, month, year)

3. Where do you live?

4. Where do you teach? If you are not teaching, please go to question 11.
   - ☐ Kindergarten
   - ☐ Mainstream Primary School
   - ☐ Bilingual primary school (Kéttannyelvű általános iskola)
   - ☐ Secondary school
   - ☐ International School (primary)
   - ☐ Private language school
   - ☐ Private teaching
   - ☐ Other:

5. If you teach in a Kéttannyelvű általános iskola (Bilingual primary school) or International School, give details.

Your answer _____
_____

6. If you wrote OTHER, give details.

Your answer _____
_____

7. Which évfolyamok (school year) do you teach?

   - ☐ Kindergarten
   - ☐ Years 1-2
   - ☐ Years 3-4
   - ☐ Years 5-6
   - ☐ Years 7-8
   - ☐ Years 9-10
   - ☐ Year 11-12
   - ☐ Adults

8. What do you teach?
   - ☐ English language only
   - ☐ Hungarian subjects only
   - ☐ Both English and Hungarian
   - ☐ Subjects through English (e.g. PE in English).

9. If you teach subjects through English, which subjects?
   - ☐ Maths
   - ☐ Science
   - ☐ Music
   - ☐ Art and craft
   - ☐ PE
   - ☐ IT
   - ☐ Man and Society (ember és társadalom)
   - ☐ Other:

10. If you wrote OTHER, give details.
Your answer _____
_____

11. If you are NOT teaching, please answer these questions: What do you do? Where? Why are you working here instead of teaching?
Your answer _____
_____

12. Describe what you have done since you graduated?
Your answer _____
_____

13. Have you / are you doing further studies? (e.g. in English, dance, special needs). Give details: What? Where? Why? How long?
Your answer _____
_____

14. Was the angol tanító VMT programme useful in your career? Why? Why not?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Partly

Your answer _____
_____

15. What improvements can we make to the English VMT programme to make it more useful for you in your future careers?

Your answer _____
_____

Becoming a Teacher: The Learning Journeys of Newly Qualified Teachers

Zuraidah Ismail

Introduction

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) often start teaching with preconceived beliefs about teaching and learning based on their prior language-learning experiences from their schooling and teacher training. Exploring the learning journey of NQTs especially on what they think, believe, and know about language teaching is indeed an extremely complicated matter. One might feel challenged by the messy construct of what actually constitutes teachers' beliefs (Pajares, 1992). One of the most influential constructs is the role of prior beliefs of their own language learning. The prior beliefs constructed during school years, the challenge of accommodating new beliefs during teacher training, and adjusting beliefs once being a teacher make the evolution of one's beliefs quite complicated.

This paper is about the learning journey of NQTs specifically in Malaysian primary schools and their beliefs. The findings support the current movement towards viewing teachers' construction of beliefs as an individual process, and classroom experience in a given moment seems to be the strongest element in NQTs' belief formation. The potential impacts of the study include understanding the importance of providing effective support systems for NQTs and adjusting the curriculum structure, content, and pedagogy in pre-service English language teacher education to better prepare NQTs for the reality of the classroom.

Review of the Literature

Newly Qualified Teachers: Concerns and Challenges

The first years in the teaching profession seem to be the most challenging time in a teacher's career. The NQTs struggle during the first few years of their teaching career as they continuously keep adjusting their classroom practices and establishing their professional images (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Farrell, 2003; Li, 2017). There is increasing evidence of issues and challenges in teacher training and retention as NQTs deal with excessive workload and insufficient support from the administrators or experienced teachers. For instance, Crookes (1998) and Peacock (2009) highlighted that NQTs are left to survive on their own in less than ideal conditions, and as a result, early career teachers are leaving the profession. However, there have not been many in-depth studies in Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) concerning teachers' experiences in managing the complexities in the classroom during their first year of teaching. Li (2017) highlighted that there is still insufficient knowledge concerning NQTs who stayed in the teaching profession for less than 3 years. Often, NQTs have to make their own decision

to 'sink or swim' in dealing with the difficult situation in their career (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). The phrase 'sink or swim' is used to refer to the realisation made by NQTs of whether they choose to fail or succeed in their career. Lortie (1966; as cited in Fantilli & McDougall, 2009) used the term to reflect the phenomenon of the beginning, when teachers are thrown in at the deep end to sink or swim (p. 814).

The core concerns of NQTs, particularly ESL teachers, in studies conducted by Senom et al. (2013), Fantilli and McDougall (2009), and Farrell (2003) are meeting the students' needs, dealing with the complex nature of teaching and conflict with school administrators, colleagues, and societal expectations. During initial entry into teaching, almost immediately a NQT has to take on the same responsibility as a teacher with many years of service. Although all teachers are expected to manage the behaviours and the diverse needs of students, the top concern in Fantilli and McDougall's (2009) study for the NQTs was having to deal with the special needs students, as they required additional care and attention. It is a critical stage for NQTs to first deal with their own survival needs and focus on maintaining discipline. Once they are able to control the class, they would later be able to concentrate on teaching situation concerns and respond to the students' needs.

The second concern is matching the teacher's ideal vision of teaching and the realities in the classroom. Ideal visions of teaching or a set of beliefs of what effective teaching should be like are normally constructed from theories of teaching and learning gathered from training and/or their earlier experiences as learners. NQTs should be made aware that the point of teaching theory is to make informed decisions in the classroom. Thus, in SLTE, NQTs should be able to link theory with practice; in other words, they should be able to deal with idealisations and at the same time acknowledge realities. Farrell (2012) stated that NQTs carry the assumption that their task is to apply all the knowledge they gathered during training and hope all is well when they first enter a real classroom. In one of his studies, the participant found it challenging to carry out a student-centred approach in his classroom, which he believed to be a more effective way of learning since the school regulations would not tolerate pupils moving around, the noise level, and the lack of control of the class (Farrell, 2012). The same concern with the difficulty in applying theory to practice, especially adopting an appropriate teaching methodology or strategy, was found in one of the studies of pre-service teachers during their practicum or teaching practice (Ong et al., 2004, as cited in Senom et al., 2013). Johnson (1996) suggested that this scenario emerged due to inadequate levels of practical knowledge for the NQTs to deal with realities in the school. As Richards (1998) claimed, NQTs do not translate the knowledge they obtain from their SLTE preparation courses into practice automatically because they need to construct and reconstruct the theory and new knowledge acquired by participating in "specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes" (p. 164).

On top of the above concerns, NQTs also have to deal with conflicts and demanding expectations from the school administration and even from parents for them to be as good as experienced teachers. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) pointed out that meeting the expectations often results in the teachers' finding their work frustrating, unrewarding, and intolerably difficult. This would be particularly true when NQTs do not get the support to cope with the teaching challenges in the first year of teaching, either from the subject mentor, from colleagues, or from the school administration. Ismail (2017) and Farrell (2003) highlighted that NQTs receive little support from their environment, and such support is particularly needed by NQTs.

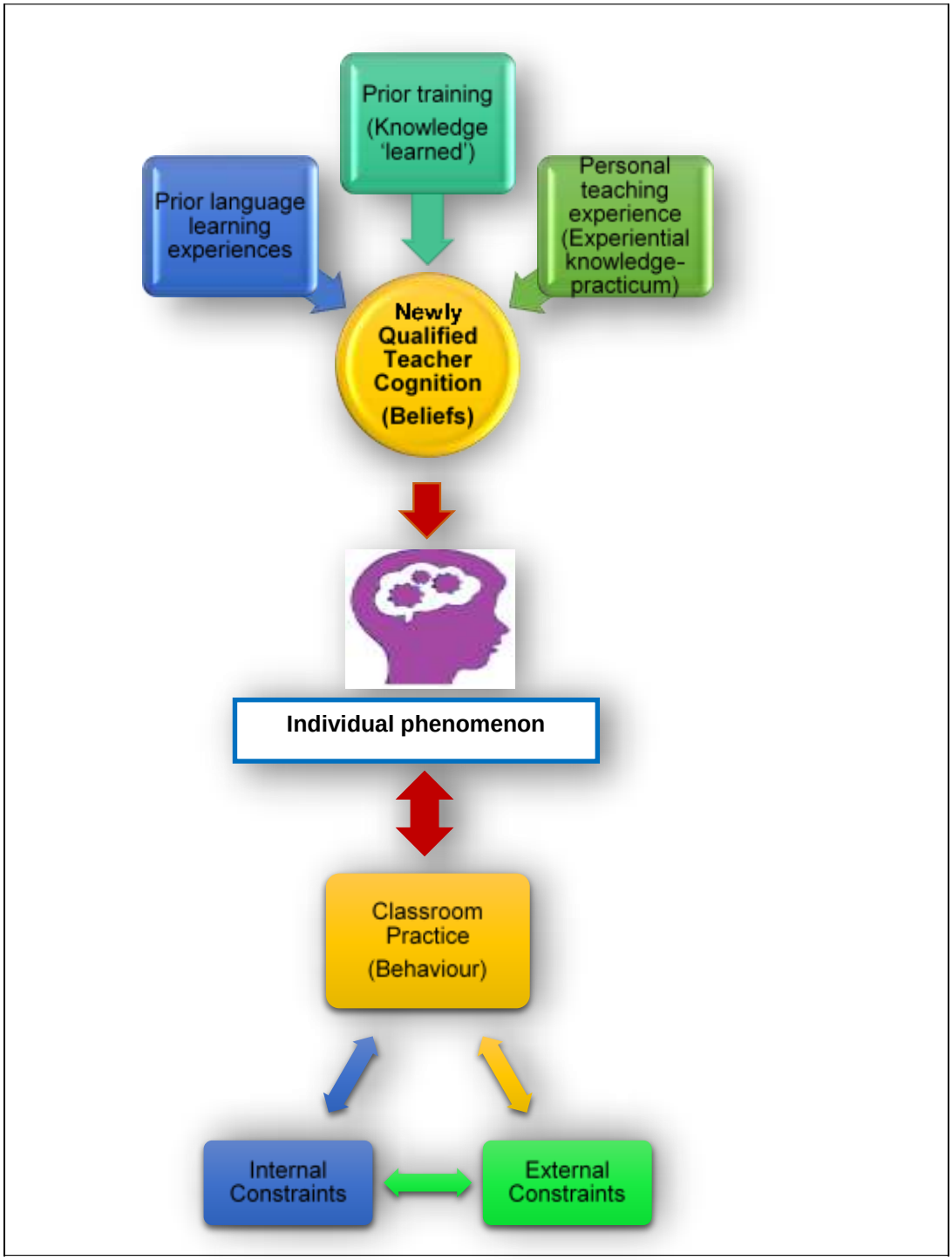
Graves (2009) and Gatbonton (2008) highlighted that NQTs are more concerned about classroom management, maintaining the flow of instructional activities, and the appropriateness of the instructional strategies in the earlier stages of teaching; thus, there might be less focus on students' learning. On the other hand, experienced teachers are concerned with keeping the language learners on task. Interestingly, Graves (2009) pointed out that the knowledge base of teaching is not a fixed set of knowledge, but it is developing gradually, and, consequently, it requires the content to be tailored to the teacher trainees' needs. In addition, the SLTE curriculum aims to help teacher-learners develop the tools to continue their learning once the teacher education programme ends. Therefore, the concerns and challenges faced by NQTs, which are often described as a reality shock, should be taken into consideration by teacher educators to find solutions to prepare the trainees for the transition upon completion of their training.

The Construction of Beliefs and Individuality Phenomenon

There are three fundamental elements involved in the construction of NQTs' beliefs, which include prior language learning experiences (PLLEs), prior training, and personal teaching experience (Borg, 2003). To summarise the NQTs' belief development as an individual phenomenon, Figure 1 below illustrates how these three fundamental elements contribute to belief development. The figure also illustrates how the constraints affect the belief–behaviour relationship. The arrow between the individual phenomenon ('individual choices of classroom behaviour' in context) and classroom practice indicates the relationship between individual beliefs and behaviour.

Figure 1

Elements and Processes in Belief Development as Individual Phenomenon, Based on Clark and Peterson (1984) and Borg (2006)



The figure may be seen as a combination of ideas from Clark and Peterson's (1984) model of teacher thought and action, and Borg's (2006) diagram of elements and processes in language teacher cognition. The diagram divides Borg's schooling or personal history and specific classroom experiences into three main elements, based on the findings of this study. This figure has similarities with Clark and Peterson's model in terms of the relationship between teachers' thought processes, teachers' actions, and their observable effects. However, in their model, the two elements are projected as two separate circles which are influenced by both constraints and opportunities of the inner cognitive world and the outer world of actions and effects. In the figure above, both internal and external constraints are separated. However, the relationship between the two is interrelated, and both play a role in influencing classroom practice or behaviour.

Methods

Research Questions

The qualitative case studies discussed in this paper set out to explore the evolution of knowledge and beliefs of NQTs in the first year of teaching and to investigate their opinions of the extent to which knowledge and experiences gathered from their prior training were helpful to them.

The study was driven by the following research questions:

1. What were the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning at the start of their teaching careers?

2. How did the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning change in their first year of teaching?

3. What factors influenced the changes in NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning?

Methodological Framework: Qualitative Case Study

This study focused on the teachers' knowledge and beliefs, which included what they knew, how they thought, how they developed professionally, and how they made decisions in the classroom in their first year of teaching. Creswell (2012) stated that the development of a complex, detailed understanding of teachers' beliefs can be established by engaging directly with the teachers, observing their teaching, and allowing them to tell their stories. Similarly, Pajares (1992) suggested that qualitative research is perhaps better suited to the purpose of investigating the "messy construct" (p. 307) of teachers' beliefs.

The multiple instrumental case study approach adopted in this research project provides insights into teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Creswell (2012) and Punch (2009) used the term *multiple instrumental case study* (also called collective case study), and Stake (1988) used the terms *collective* and *multi* interchangeably to describe this particular type of study in which a number of cases are studied jointly.

Research Context

The study took place in four public primary schools within one state in Malaysia where the NQTs graduated from the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE). Zheng (2015) suggested that as the social setting in which the teachers' work has a significant impact on their beliefs and practices, it is important to explore the interaction of teachers' beliefs and practices in their specific educational context. Other scholars have also highlighted the significance of the teachers' working context, which can impose various constraints on teachers' beliefs and their abilities to provide pedagogical instruction that aligns with their beliefs (Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015; Pajares, 1992). In this study, purposeful sampling was adopted; Creswell (2012) stated that using such a sampling strategy means that certain sites or people are selected because they possess a similar trait or characteristic. The participants selected belong to a common subgroup in the community: Teachers who graduated from the same education programme, and they were in their first year of teaching.

Participants

Four Newly Qualified English Teachers

The primary focus was a group of teachers from the first cohort of a new Bachelor of Teaching (Hons) course in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (Primary Education) at the ITE. The four participants were from different school types in Malaysia, which allows a fair range of different data presentation on the education in Malaysia. The two prominent types of school are the national school (NS) and national-type school. NS refers to government primary and secondary schools that are established and maintained by the Ministry of Education (MoE). These schools utilise a national curriculum, and the Malay language is used as the medium of instruction. Mother tongues are also offered at these schools with a minimum enrolment of 15 students per class. With regard to the other type of school, national-type schools were set up to cater for the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia. There are two types of national-type schools: national-type Chinese schools (NTCS) and national-type Tamil schools (NTTS).

Below is a brief description of the four participants in this study. The participants were given the following pseudonyms: Alice, Salina, Erni, and Joanna.

Alice: She is a Chinese teacher teaching in an NTCS. She received her education in an NTCS at both primary and secondary school levels. She did not enjoy learning the English language as a subject during her school years and only developed a love for the target language during her foundation years at the ITE.

Salina: Salina is an Indian teacher teaching in an NTTS. She received her education in a convent school where English was widely spoken. She enjoyed learning the English language during her school years especially when she was selected to take part in choral speaking competitions.

Erni: She is a Malay teacher teaching in a NS where the majority of the students are Malay. Erni attended national primary and secondary schools. She did not share much about her schooling experience since everything seemed fine to her.

Joanna: She is also a Chinese teacher teaching in an NTCS. However, during her primary and secondary school years, she attended NSs. She perceived learning the English language as fun.

Although two of the participants, Alice and Joanna, were from national-type Chinese schools, each with a similar school ethos, both of the participants offered unique and interesting data. They have slightly different beliefs about teaching and learning in an NCTS classroom. Salina was chosen because she worked in an NTTS, and her data were distinct from those of the others, although there were also similarities in beliefs and classroom practices to a certain extent.

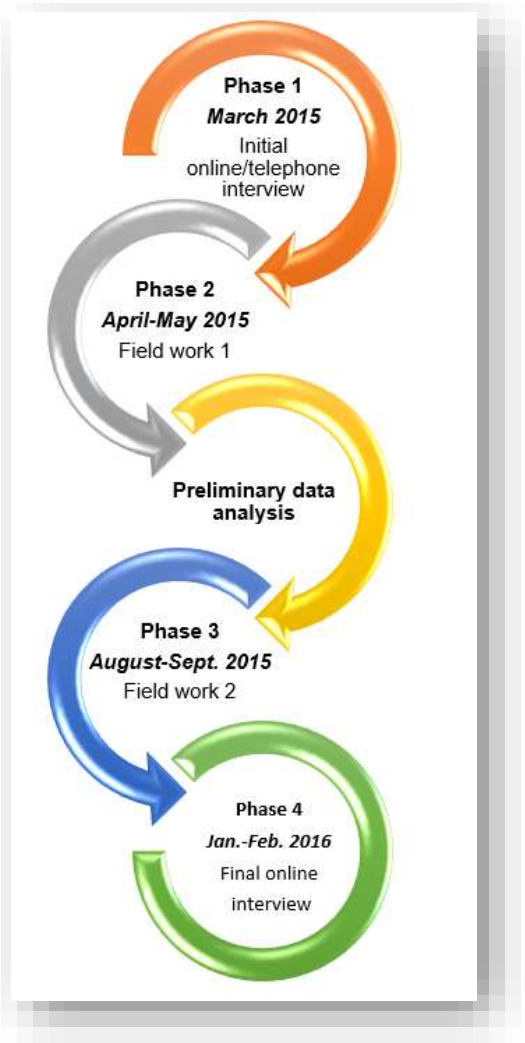
Data Collection

The data in this study were gathered primarily from online interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs). A total of 25 classroom observations and 25 SRIs were carried out with four NQTs over one year. Other sources of evidence such as journal entries, field notes, and the NQTs' lesson plans were also used. Different data collection instruments were employed to ensure that the data were triangulated and that research trustworthiness was enhanced. The research methods were chosen in reference to a set of general themes derived from the goals of the pre-service programme.

The study was conducted in four phases in order to track the changes in the learning journeys of the NQTs. The phases were established after taking into consideration the date the NQTs completed the degree programme and the dates they assumed duties as new teachers in their respective schools. The four phases of this study are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Research Phases



Phase 1 consisted of online interviews. One-to-one online interviews were conducted in March 2015 after the participants graduated from their degree programmes. The interviews served as background interviews which covered the four main themes of teacher learning (Richards & Farrell, 2005), which include the following:

- Teacher learning as skill learning;
- Teacher learning as cognitive process;
- Teacher learning as personal construction;
- Teacher learning as reflective practice.

The main aim of conducting these interviews was to explore the participants' beliefs about teaching and learning at the beginning of their teaching careers.

Phase 2 started in April and ended in May 2015. This was the first field work in the study. Although the school year started in January, the participants were posted to their respective schools in March 2015. The first face-to-face meeting with the participants to plan the classroom observations and journal writing was conducted a few weeks after they were posted. The preliminary classroom observations took place in the first week of April 2015, and these observations were followed up with post-lesson interviews, that is, SRIs. The primary purpose of the first meeting and preliminary classroom observations was to establish what the participants' beliefs about teaching and learning were at the early stage of their teaching career and to compile a list of the participants' common practices. Apart from that, the preliminary classroom observations and interviews in this phase also helped the researcher to make necessary adjustments to the classroom observation guide and to improve on the interview questions.

Phase 3, the second field work, started in August and ended in September 2015. This was a continuation of the previous field work with more focused themes added to the classroom observations and post-lesson interviews. The participants were asked to write their journal entries.

Phase 4 was conducted from January until February 2016. It was the final stage of the study, and the final online interviews were conducted. At this stage, the discussions in the interviews were based on the themes that had emerged throughout the study for the purpose of verification. The aim of these final interviews was to summarise and identify the ways in which participants' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning had evolved during their first year of teaching.

Data Analysis

There is a diverse range of qualitative data analysis methods, and one of the researcher's concerns is choosing the right ones. Creswell (2012) observed that qualitative research is interpretive research, whereby the researcher makes their own personal interpretation to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information. In addition, Cohen et al. (2011) stated that there is no single correct way to analyse and present qualitative data: "how one does it should abide by the issue of *fitness for purpose*" (p. 537), meaning that the researcher needs to be clear about what they want the data analysis to do as this will determine which approach to the data analysis is appropriate.

Since the study involved qualitative data collection and the data were obtained from various sources, Creswell's (2012) six steps of data analysis were used. Below is a brief description of the six steps of data analysis adopted in this study:

- Step 1: Prepare and organise data for analysis
  - 'oTranscribe', a free transcription tool, and NVivo10 software, a qualitative data analysis tool, were used to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. According to Mackey and Gass (2015), the process of transcription varies depending on the research goals.

- Step 2: Explore and code the data
  - Once the interviews were transcribed, it was important to run through the transcripts to obtain a general sense of the data in the preliminary analysis.
- Step 3: Coding to build description and themes
  - As for the main analysis, both the manual method and computer software were employed. NVivo10 is useful to organise and structure the data systematically. The data were highlighted and the themes developed by using Nodes in NVivo, which is a function similar to coding.
- Step 4: Represent and report qualitative findings
  - The findings are reported based on the NQTs' learning journey, which includes their prior knowledge and experiences before the first year of teaching, the starting of the first year, and during the first year of teaching.
- Step 5: Interpret the findings
  - From the codes and themes, one should be able to construct an understanding about what can be learnt from the data through interpreting the findings. The interpretation included advancing personal views, making comparisons between findings and the literature, and suggesting limitations and future research (Creswell, 2012).
- Step 6: Validating findings/trustworthiness
  - Creswell (2012) suggested several strategies, such as member checking or triangulation, as means to enhance the accuracy or credibility of the findings. Stake (1995) also encouraged the use of member checking, whereby the researcher asks the participant(s) of the study to check the accuracy of the account.

Results

This study aimed to examine the evolution of knowledge and beliefs of NQTs in the first year of teaching and to investigate their opinions of the extent to which knowledge and experiences gathered from their prior training were helpful to them. The findings of this study confirmed the literature on teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching, which included three elements: PLLE, prior training, and personal teaching experience (Borg, 2003). The findings regarding the beliefs and practices of the four NQTs showed that their knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning had changed in the following areas:

i) Attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English classroom;

ii) Classroom management;

iii) The role of assessment, exams;

iv) Teaching and learning activities and teaching resources.

Attitudes Towards the Use of L1 in the English Classroom

The four NQTs all referred to having to deal with the use of pupils' L1 in their English language classroom. During the initial stage of teaching, they implemented the 'English only' rule in their English language classrooms since they believed the use of the target language would help the students to master the language. However, after 3 months of teaching, during the second phase of classroom observation, they all showed greater tolerance towards the use of L1. Alice, for instance, increased her use of Mandarin. She would code switch and at times translate, which suggested that she could easily relate her own prior experience of attending a similar kind of school for her to try and understand her students. She shared:

> For primary most of the teacher they used code switching…that's why I could understand…but come to secondary, the teachers emphasised on English. They wanted us to use English all the time…even she's Chinese she didn't use Chinese with us. So, I find it very hard for us to understand and actually I lost interest in the class [*sic*]. (Alice)

Other participants were also more flexible towards the end of the data collection period. They would code-switch or allow their students to use national languages and/or their L1. For example, Salina said, "If I fully use English, they learn nothing…the objective cannot be achieved." Erni also raised the issue of English versus the L1: "I have the choice, I can speak English first, I can use English and translate but there's no impact, the impact isn't strong, the students will use Bahasa Malaysia [Malay language] straight away."

The four NQTs had to use another language sometimes outside the classroom or at times code-switch to the L1 or Malay with the same objective in mind, that is, to help the weaker students to comprehend the content of the lesson. Hence, the changes in their beliefs about their attitude towards the use of the L1 from 'English only' towards greater tolerance of the L1 ensured that learning takes place.

Classroom Management

The issue of classroom management seemed to vary according to the type of school or age and level of the learners. The ways the NQTs handled it varied and evolved over time. The NQTs' initial beliefs about discipline were that they were concerned with managing the students' behaviour and focusing on disciplining them. However, their beliefs had changed from strict to more flexible over time as a result of several factors, such as the students' language proficiency and their attitudes towards the L1.

Alice mentioned that caning is the culture in Chinese schools. It is the most effective punishment because "…it saves a lot of time, it's not that it really works to the students." Erni had used different approaches in disciplining the students ranging from using a ruler (to hit students with a ruler on their hands) to making them stand during lessons. Interestingly, Salina preferred giving advice to physical punishment. She felt that she could just give advice to the students, especially Year 5 learners, because "they are more mature."[1]

Thus, throughout the first year, except for Salina, all three participants had set specific classroom rules through trial and error. The rules were constantly evolving in the light of their actual effectiveness. By the end of the study, the participants had managed to establish a set of classroom rules that best suited their students. Their beliefs about appropriate classroom rules are likely to continue to evolve depending on the situation they find themselves in.

The Role of Assessment and Exams: From Focusing on Achieving Lesson Objectives to Exam-Oriented Teaching

Initially, the main concern of the NQTs was focusing on the learning process of the students and guiding them during the lesson to ensure that they understood the lesson content. They all believed that exam performance was not the most important outcome when they began, given that they had been through an exam-oriented system themselves. The four NQTs tried to create fun learning activities, and the focus was on content and achieving their lesson objectives. Salina, for instance, said, "It's not about getting A but it's like guiding the students throughout the year."

However, their beliefs changed gradually over the year. All participants shared the belief that exam performance outranks teaching and learning. Salina said that exams motivate the good students, but not the weak ones since they are labelled based on the exam results. Erni highlighted the importance of exams: "… at least I want them to pass…that's enough"; "…exam is the benchmark. So, I mean if many students failed, the blame is on us and not others." By the end of the study, due to the pressure from the administrators and the State Education Department, the NQTs held a similar belief about dealing with exams, which was to ensure that the students pass their exams.

Teaching and Learning Activities and Teaching Resources

The participants explained that at the beginning of teaching, their previous learning experiences during schooling and training helped inform their teaching practices, especially in making decisions about the teaching and learning activities and selecting teaching resources. There were instances, for example, both for Alice and Salina, when they had to change the way they approached the lesson due to external factors, such as demands from parents and the administrators. Alice, for example, was criticised when she conducted the spelling activity by introducing 'Hang-man', differently from other teachers. She had to follow the practice of other teachers in her school, which is the traditional way of conducting spelling, whereby the teacher dictates and the students write. As Alice herself put it: "I think activities would be like old… if… as for spelling you don't give them like normal spelling like… you tell the words they write on the board… on the book… you can use like… instead of that you can use the hangman game." Based on Alice's experience above, it seems that other people have the power over making decisions about what the teacher should do in their classroom, which only seems to allow teaching methods prescribed by them.

In terms of teaching and learning activities, all the NQTs had moved away over time from implementing more language games and songs to using the textbook. The NQTs shared the following views: "…developing own materials is time consuming and in real life

teaching you don't have to care much about evaluation and marks" (Salina), or "Long live the textbook!" (Erni).

Towards the end of the study, all of them either adapted activities from the textbook or maximised the use of the textbook. It was obvious that there was a common trend among them. Their initial ambitions of trying out a variety of activities and developing their own materials had become less apparent as the year progressed. The need for all students to reach the same point of progress based on the textbook to prepare for the exams had become more important.

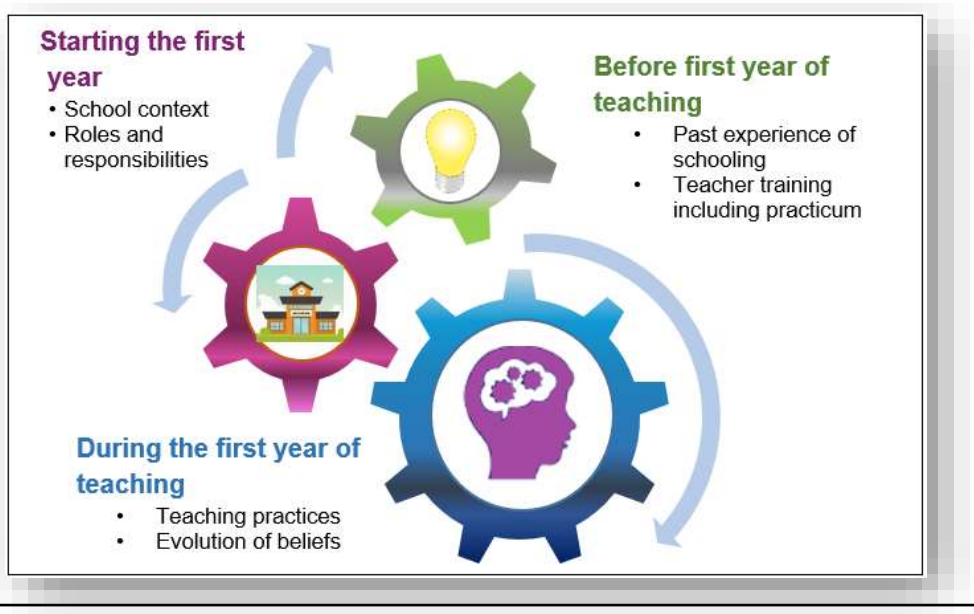
This finding indicates that the NQTs were restricted in attempting to be creative and to critically think about their instructional approaches. Such restrictions were in conflict with one of the learning objectives, which is to promote higher-order thinking skills. This scenario seems to limit the development of teachers' cognition.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed distinctive reactions towards the participants' first-year teaching experiences as well as shared areas of concern. NQTs are individuals who enter teacher training with a set of prior beliefs and experiences which later are likely to be more or less strongly adjusted or changed during formal training, upon completion of training, at the start of their teacher career, and during their teaching years. Figure 3 below illustrates the learning journey of the four NQTs: i) before the first year of teaching: their past experiences of schooling and teacher training; (ii) starting the first year: the context of the school in which the NQT is teaching and their workload in school; and (iii) during the first year of teaching: the thoughts and reactions towards the teaching practices and the evolution of beliefs during their first year in school.

Figure 3

The Learning Journeys of the Newly Qualified Teachers



The learning journeys in this study focus on each newly qualified English teacher's cognition or the evolution of their beliefs about teaching and learning during their first year of teaching and how these affected their teaching practices. The findings revealed that beliefs are unique to the individual and that they evolve in the light of individual experiences in particular contexts. Participants make adjustments to their beliefs differently from each other to a certain extent, and, therefore, the change in beliefs is influenced by their own personalities, their status as NQTs, the school context, the ethos, and the nature of the students they teach. Teachers have a set of different prior beliefs as a result of different prior experiences, even though on the surface they all seem to have been through a similar education system. Thus, beliefs are shaped by interdependent factors.

The findings suggested that the NQTs entered their schools with beliefs that were based mostly on their own schooling experiences and initial teacher education and that these were greatly influenced by their experiences during the first year they began to teach. The highlights of the findings include four fundamental themes: i) Attitudes towards the use of the L1 in the English classroom; ii) Classroom management; iii) The role of assessment and exams; and iv) Teaching and learning activities and teaching resources.

It was interesting to observe how the different experiences of schooling and interest in the language essentially affected the way these four NQTs refined their teaching and learning practices when they began teaching and their learning how to teach. Their learning curves show that their initial beliefs were quite strongly influenced by their prior language learning experiences and their teacher training experience. Each of them had to make adjustments to their beliefs and accommodate to the realities of teaching. To recapitulate, each of them had different schooling experiences: two in national schools (Erni and Joanna), one in a mission school where English was used widely (Salina), and one in a national-type Chinese school (Alice).

During the first phase of the first year of teaching, the four NQTs tried to apply the theories they had learned during training in practice. However, over time, contextual influences and norms limited the extent to which what had been promoted during their years at ITE could actually be applied. They started to show a change in their beliefs in the middle of the year, during the second data collection, as they adapted their classroom practices to students' needs, the school environment, demands from the parents, and other factors which at times forced them to adjust their beliefs. By the end of the first year of teaching, they were more or less explicitly forced to adapt the mindset they had originally arrived with to the given situation in their classroom, often adjusting their beliefs and practice during teaching and learning activities. The relationship between beliefs and practice in teaching has been well recognised (Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2006; Li, 2017), and Peacock (2001) believed that there is always a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices.

In addition, other research has suggested that we need to base studies of belief formation on an ontology that explicitly recognises the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. For instance, in Burns et al. (2015), the ontological focus for this

matter is to observe "the beliefs the language teacher held, how and why these beliefs were constructed, and how they related to practice" (p. 589) with the unit of study being the particular thoughts, beliefs, and decisions of individual teachers. Freeman (2016) lent support to this idea and mentioned that there were various antecedents that would shape the idea of thinking in language teaching. Since there has been a shift of focus in this field, Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) emphasised the importance of redrawing the boundaries of language teacher cognition, which could help the domain of teacher cognition to expand further.

Conclusion

This study has shown evidence of different learning journeys of NQTs in becoming a teacher. It identified different fundamental elements in the construction of teachers' beliefs, specifically those of NQTs. Since the classroom observations only involved students indirectly and the study was conducted in primary education, further research may be needed to look at secondary school students' perceptions of how the NQTs' beliefs and behaviour affected their learning process in the classroom, and from their perceptions, it might be useful to examine how these perceptions impacted the NQTs' beliefs and behaviour in their future lessons. It is a cyclical process which might be interesting to venture into, providing an in-depth account of teachers' thought processes from the students' perceptions. Despite the fact that the field of teacher beliefs is a well-established research area, a deeper understanding of how teacher beliefs dynamically interact with classroom practice and contexts and mutually inform one another should be acquired.

Note

1. Please note that the opinions expressed in connection with corporal punishment reflect the views of the participants **ONLY**.

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A Complex Dynamic Systems Theory Perspective on the Development of Second Language Writing: Two Case Studies

Attila M. Wind

Introduction

Since the introduction of tuition fees at tertiary institutions in Hungary in the early 2010s, studying abroad has become increasingly popular among Hungarian students. Students select their destinations, such as the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Denmark, or the United States (US), based on university rankings and geographical vicinity to Hungary. Prospective university students who are non-native speakers of English are required to take an international standardised test of language proficiency, for instance, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to be admitted to a university in the UK or in the US. Most reputable universities in the UK generally require a 6.5 overall score on IELTS (B2+ CEFR level). One of the four skills tested in the IELTS Academic or TOEFL examinations is academic writing, and it takes one fourth of the overall band score.

This study investigated the longitudinal development of second language (L2) writing by collecting quantitative data from two Hungarian EFL learners who were preparing for their IELTS language test. L2 writing was operationalised through the development of linguistic complexity.

Background to the Study

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory

According to Larsen-Freeman (1997), second language acquisition can be seen as a "dynamic, complex and nonlinear process" (p. 142). de Bot et al. (2007) pointed out that language development demonstrates some of the main features of complex dynamic systems such as sensitive dependence on initial conditions (Verspoor, 2015), the interconnectedness of systems and sub-systems (Spoelman & Verspoor, 2010; Wind, 2020), the emergence of attractor states in development (Wind & Harding, 2020), and both intra- and interindividual variation (Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Wind, 2014).

For example, Chan et al. (2015) investigated two EFL learners' development of syntactic complexity in speaking versus writing. Although the two learners were identical twins, their syntactic development exhibited inverse trends of development. In other words, although the initial conditions of the two learners were the same (educational background and context), the outcome was totally different.

Spoelman and Verspoor (2010) showed that linguistic complexity can be seen as a complex dynamic system including lexical and syntactic subsystems. These systems are interconnected, and a change in one system can have an effect on the other system. Wind and Harding (2020) demonstrated that a learner's self-regulatory system can enter into an attractor state when there are no significant changes in any systems. Larsen-Freeman (2006) investigated five EFL learners' development of linguistic complexity in L2 writing. It was demonstrated that the five learners in question had gone through different paths over time. In other words, there was inter- and intra-individual variation in the development of L2 writing.

In this study, two interconnected systems will be investigated: (a) lexicon and (b) syntax. In the next section, lexical and syntactic complexity will be discussed.

Linguistic Complexity

Linguistic complexity is a multidimensional construct consisting of at least two main constructs: lexical and syntactic complexity. Linguistic complexity is usually seen as absolute complexity (Bulté & Housen, 2012). In other words, the more complex the structures are in a learner's language output (e.g., essay), the more advanced or developed the learner's linguistic system is. However, there are other perspectives on linguistic complexity (e.g., Mazgutova & Kormos, 2015). In this study, linguistic complexity will be viewed as absolute complexity. However, Mazgutova and Kormos's (2015) recommendation that the target genre of an essay should be considered will also be taken into account. In other words, an essay can be considered more complex if it exhibits the linguistic features of the target genre. For example, if L2 writers are asked to compose academic texts, we should consider the fact that academic texts contain more phrasal (e.g., noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.) than clausal features (Biber et al., 2011). In other words, academic texts generally include long noun phrases, while speech includes more clauses. For example, the slightly modified first sentence of this paper (Excerpt 1) is a simple sentence. In contrast, Excerpt 2, a sample from the interviews conducted with one of the participants of this study, contains two sentences. The length of the two excerpts is identical (25 words).

Excerpt 1

(academic writing: 25 words; simple sentence; 1 clause; finite verb ratio: 25)

Since the introduction of tuition fees at tertiary institutions in Hungary in the early 2010s, studying abroad has become the prevailing fashion among Hungarian students.

Excerpt 2

(speech: 25 words; 1 simple sentence & 1 complex sentence; 4 clauses; finite verb ratio: 6.25)

Are you happy with the level of vocabulary?

No. I am not satisfied with my vocabulary because I feel that I repeat myself too much.

Excerpt 1 is made complex by phrases, whereas Excerpt 2 is made complex by clauses. Excerpt 1 exemplifies features of academic writing, whereas Excerpt 2 illustrates some characteristics of speech.

Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) claimed that L2 development proceeds from parataxis (coordination) and hypotaxis (subordination) to the emergence of grammatical metaphor. In other words, learners first express their ideas by sequencing self-standing words, clauses, and sentences (coordination). Second, learners are able to express logical connections of ideas (subordination). Finally, learners can express more complex ideas by relying on nominalisation. In conclusion, more advanced learners' language consists mainly of more complex phrases and not clauses. It is important to note that these features are true for L2 writing and not speaking.

Halliday and Mathiessen's (1999) theory was proven by empiricists such as Mazgutova and Kormos (2015), who investigated the L2 writing development of intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners. The participants took part in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme at a university in the UK. The authors found that intermediate learners improved in more aspects than upper-intermediate learners. In addition, learners used more complex noun phrases at the end than at the beginning of the study.

The Present Study

This study forms part of a larger project which adopted a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) approach to trace the development of linguistic complexity among a group of Hungarian EFL university students over a 9-month period (Wind, 2018). The current study focused on two specific learners and only for 7 months. The following research questions will be addressed in the analysis of the development of linguistic systems:

1. How do lexical and syntactic complexity change over the 7-month investigation?

2. How do lexical and the syntactic complexity interact over the 7-month investigation?

Method

Research Context

This study was carried out on a 9-month-long EAP programme from September to May at a university in Budapest. The primary aims of the programme were to develop the students' use of English in an academic context and to foster their analytical and critical thinking skills for academic study. The EAP programme was mainly targeted at students with IELTS scores of 5.5–6.5 (B2 on the CEFR). During the EAP course, the students were offered 3 hours of in-class teaching per week. The EAP programme adopted a task-based approach and comprised two modules: (1) academic reading and writing, (2) academic listening and speaking. During the classes, the participants completed language tests and vocabulary tasks similar to those included in IELTS examinations. The participants received written feedback in the form of an overall IELTS score. Furthermore, the students were required to take four vocabulary tests (from January to April) over the 7 months.

The Participants

Participant A, a 22-year-old female Economics bachelor student, was the first participant in this study. Participant A's English language education started at the age of 15 at a secondary school in Budapest. Her mother tongue is Hungarian. Previously, she had learned only German as an L2 at primary school for 8 years. At secondary school, she attended three English classes on a weekly basis over 4 years. At the end of secondary school, participant A successfully passed The European Language Certificates (TELC) standardised test at the B2 CEFR level. During her bachelor studies, she did not engage in formal language education apart from occasional private English language classes. Her main aspiration was to continue her studies in a master's programme at a foreign university. Since the master's programme required the applicants to take either the IELTS or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) language tests, participant A decided to enrol in the EAP course.

Participant B, a 19-year-old first-year Economics bachelor student, was the other participant of this study. Her mother tongue is Hungarian, and she had been learning English for 12 years at the beginning of the data collection. Participant B's English language education started at the age of seven at a primary school in Budapest. She attended three English classes on a weekly basis over 6 years. At the age of 12, she enrolled in a prestigious secondary school in Budapest. During her secondary-school years, she also attended three English classes on a weekly basis. At the end of secondary school, participant B successfully took a final exam in English at an intermediate level. Participant B wanted to spend several months at a university in Ireland. In order to improve her chances of obtaining an Erasmus scholarship, participant B wished to take the IELTS language exam. Therefore, she enrolled in the EAP course offered by a university in Budapest, Hungary.

Data Collection

This study adopted a mixed-method case study research design. The quantitative data were comprised of seven IELTS-type argumentative essays collected monthly over a 7-month period. The length of the observation period was determined by that of the EAP course the participants attended.

The writing prompts for the seven argumentative essays were all related to the topic of foreign language learning, a topic considered relevant and familiar to the participants. At data points 1 and 7 (see Table 1), the same writing prompt was used to render further comparisons possible. The participants were required to write the seven argumentative essays, one in each month. They wrote the essays by hand in their classroom, and the use of word-processing software, dictionaries, and reference materials was not permitted. The settings were similar to those of paper-based IELTS examinations. The participants were asked to work individually and to produce a written sample (at least 250 words) in approximately 40 minutes. The researcher did not give feedback on the learners' written samples during the data collection procedure.

Table 1

Data Collection

Data point	Participant A		Participant B	
	Writing prompt	Word count	Writing prompt	Word count
1	5	316	2	258
2	6	238	3	291
3	4	271	1	249
4	1	357	4	254
5	3	329	6	260
6	2	216	5	260
7	5	293	2	239
Total word count		6,187		5,720

Data Coding

The quantitative data analyses involved three stages: (1) computing the linguistic complexity indices, (2) plotting the indices, and (3) calculating correlations. Before data coding, the seven hand-written essays were digitalised by the researcher in order to prepare for the computational analyses.

Lexical complexity, a multidimensional construct (Jarvis, 2013), was measured by the average word length (AWL) index. Verspoor et al. (2017) argued that the AWL index is a general measure of lexical complexity. According to Grant and Ginther (2000), as learners progress, they tend to use longer words. For example, the word *help* consists of four letters, while its less frequent synonym *facilitate* consists of 10 letters. However, it is important to note that the AWL index is mainly used for the English language, in which less frequent lexical items (usually of Latin origin) tend to be longer. The AWL index was computed by the Coh-Metrix 3.0 (Graesser et al., 2004, 2011).

Syntactic complexity, also a multidimensional construct (Norris & Ortega, 2009), was operationalised through the finite verb ratio (FVR) index. The FVR index is calculated by dividing the total number of words by the finite verbs found in a specific text. Verspoor et al. (2017) claimed that the FVR index can be considered as a general measure of syntactic complexity at advanced levels. An increase in the FVR index suggests that L2 writers tend to use more noun phrases in their essays than verbs. The FVR index was calculated by the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyser (L2SCA) (Ai & Lu, 2013; Lu, 2010, 2011; Lu & Ai, 2015).

Quantitative Data Analyses

In order to address the first research question, the AWL and the FVR indices were plotted. In this way, the trajectories of the two indices were visually inspected. Second, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients were calculated in R Project for Statistical Computing 3.4 between the linguistic complexity indices to measure their statistical relationship.

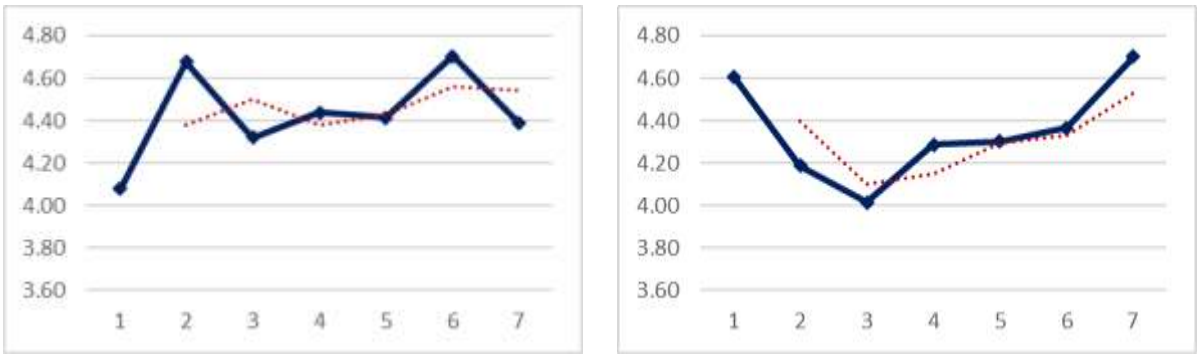
Results

How do lexical and syntactic complexity change over the 7-month investigation?

Figure 1 shows the trajectory of the average word length (AWL) index. It can be observed that participant A tended to use longer words in writing over the 7-month investigation. The AWL index increased from 4.08 to 4.68 from data point 1 to 2. However, the AWL index dropped at data point 3 and remained stable between data points 3 and 5. Nevertheless, the AWL index started to increase again at data point 6 and reached its highest point (AWL = 4.70). At data point 7, we can see a small drop again from 4.70 to 4.39. In order to see the trend line, 2 period moving averages were calculated and shown in red dotted line. The moving averages show a gradual increase in the AWL index for participant A.

Figure 1

Average Word Length (AWL)



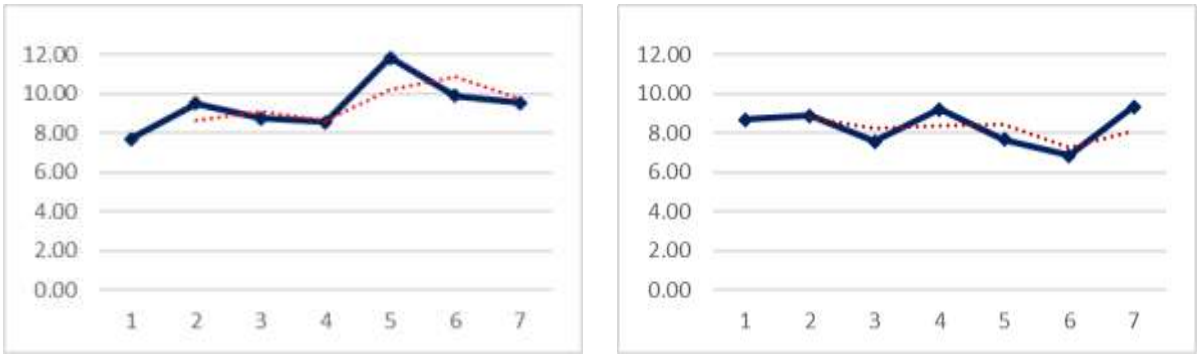
Note. Left: participant A; right: participant B.

Figure 1 also shows the AWL index for participant B. In this case, a U-shaped trend can be observed. The AWL index dropped gradually from data points 1 to 3 reaching its lowest point at data point 3 (AWL = 4.02). However, the AWL index started to increase gradually from data point 3 reaching its highest point at data point 7 (AWL = 4.70). Figure 2 clearly demonstrates that lexical development is nonlinear and that there is inter- and intra-individual variation.

Figure 2 shows the trajectory of the finite verb ratio (FVR) index. It can be seen that participant A tended to use more words per finite verb over the 7-month investigation. The FVR index increased from data point 1 to 2, but then it dropped and gradually declined up to data point 4. However, the FVR index rocketed and reached its highest point at data point 5 (FVR = 11.82). Between data points 6 and 7, a gradual decline can be observed again. The moving averages show an upward trend over time.

Figure 2

Finite Verb Ratio (FVR)



Note. Left: participant A; right: participant B.

Figure 2 also shows the trajectory of the FVR index for participant B (right). The FVR index increased from data point 1 to 2, but then it dropped. The same pattern can be seen between data points 3 and 5. However, the FVR index declined between data points 4 and 6 reaching its lowest point at data point 6 (FVR = 6.84). Interestingly, the FVR index rocketed at data point 7 reaching its highest point (FVR = 9.35). The moving averages of the FVR index show a gradual decline over time. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrated that the two learners developed their L2 writing in two different directions. In dynamic parlance, Figures 1 and 2 exemplify the notion of inter- and intra-individual variability. While participant A tended to use more words per finite verb, participant B tended to use fewer words per finite verb. Figure 2 also shows that the two learners went through different paths over time.

How do lexical and syntactic complexity interact over the 7-month investigation?

In order to see the relationship between lexical and syntactic complexity, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients were calculated. Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficients are positive in all combinations. However, none of the relationships was statistically significant over the 7 months.

Table 3

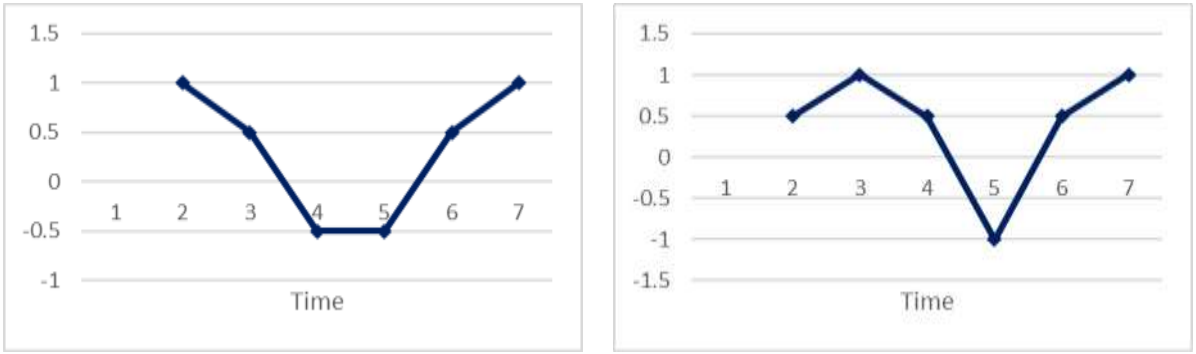
Correlations (Spearman's Rank)

		Participant A		Participant B	
		AWL	FVR	AWL	FVR
AWL	ρ	1.000	.5	1.000	.286
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.253		.535
	N	7	7	7	7
FVR	ρ	.5	1.000	.286	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.253		.535	
	N	7	7	7	7

In order to see temporal changes in the relationship between lexical and syntactic complexity over the 7 months, moving correlations were calculated. Figure 3 shows the interactions between lexical and syntactic complexity as a moving correlation in a window of three measurements. The trajectory of the AWL–FVR correlation for participant A (left) shifted between positive and negative values over the 7 months. The AWL–FVR correlation was predominantly positive except for windows 4 and 5.

Figure 3

Moving Correlations



The trajectory of the AWL–FVR correlation for participant B (right) shifted between positive and negative values over the 7 months. The AWL–FVR correlation was predominantly positive except for window 5.

The moving correlations show that the linguistic systems are completely interconnected, and the relationship is dynamic. None of the interactions remained constant over the 7-month investigation, which is perfectly in line with the CDST.

Discussion

How do lexical and syntactic complexity change over the 7-month investigation?

The two learners demonstrated different learning paths over the 7 months. Participant A improved her vocabulary and syntax in the course of time. The trajectories of the average word length index and the finite verb ratio indices show upward trend lines over time. These findings are in line with Verspoor et al. (2017), who also found that their two participants had improved their vocabulary and syntax. In contrast, participant B did not improve her vocabulary in the first half of the study. However, in the fourth month of the study, she started to use longer academic words as demonstrated by the upward trend line in the average word length index. Participant B did not improve her syntax over the 7 months as demonstrated by the slightly downward trend line. The trajectories of the AWL and FVR indices were nonlinear and showed inter- and intra-individual variability over time in line with Larsen-Freeman (2006) and Wind (2014, 2020). Wind and Harding (2020) also found that their participant did not improve his vocabulary and syntax in writing. The authors attributed the stagnation in development to the limited use of self-regulatory processes.

How do lexical and syntactic complexity interact over the 7-month investigation?

The correlational analyses showed a positive relationship between lexical and syntactic complexity indices. However, these results should be interpreted with care because of the limited number of data points and the low number of participants. The moving correlations show that the interactions between lexical and syntactic complexity indices did not remain static. The trajectories of the moving correlations showed ebbs and flows over the 7 months in line with Spoelman and Verspoor (2010).

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The present study investigated the longitudinal development of linguistic complexity by collecting data from two EFL learners over a 7-month period. By adopting the CDST perspective, this study demonstrated that the development of linguistic complexity is dynamic and nonlinear.

Pedagogical Significance

This study demonstrated that L2 learners go through different developmental paths. Consequently, it is "elusive" to make generalisations about learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 594). Teachers should bear in mind that students in a class will go through different individual developmental paths. In practical terms, teachers should not expect that students will develop in the same pace over time. Therefore, students who fall behind should not be stigmatised as slow learners. It might be the case that learners who fall behind might start to improve at a later stage.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, this study adopted a case-study approach. Therefore, the simultaneous development of lexicon and syntax cannot be generalised. Future studies should investigate whether there are positive associations between the development of lexicon and syntax. Second, the number of data points was relatively small (7) in this study. Therefore, the results of the correlation analyses should be taken into consideration carefully. Researchers carrying out future studies should try to collect more data from more participants in order to increase the robustness of the statistical analyses.

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EFL Teacher Trainees' Perceptions of the Effects of Extensive Reading on Their Academic Performance

Csenge Aradi

Introduction and Research Goals

The general accessibility to visual media entertainment and the emergence of social media platforms have raised concerns that members of Generation Z do not engage in extracurricular extensive reading to the same extent as their elder siblings or parents do and do not find reading a pleasant source of entertainment on the whole. Experience, however, might suggest otherwise. As an instructor teaching a variety of language skills and linguistics courses for first-, second-, and third-year teacher trainees at a Hungarian university, I experienced that students do show a great degree of interest in reading fiction and popular science, and a considerable quantity of the readings they cover is in English. The principal aim of this research was to investigate students' perceptions of the relationship between their L2 extensive reading practices and their overall academic achievement in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programme. The study revolved around three main questions:

(1) How do students assess the usefulness of the compulsory readings assigned in their classes?

(2) What are students' perceptions of their own academic achievement in the light of their L2 extensive reading practices? In this context, academic achievement refers to students' performance in both language and disciplinary (linguistics, literature, and methodology) classes.

(3) Would students appreciate the idea of introducing literature and extensive reading in language skills-oriented classes?

Given the fact that L2 extensive reading practices of teacher trainees have been given relatively little attention in the literature, there appears to be a need to explore this facet of second language acquisition in more detail in order to see what practical applications it might have for L2 instruction.

Literature Review

The impact of L2 extensive reading on foreign language learning has been investigated from a number of different angles over the past decades, with most studies focusing on vocabulary enhancement and general language development (see Bamford, 1984; Borsos, 2014; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Tudor and Hafiz (1989) examined a group of young (10–11 years) English L2 learners who were taking part in an extensive reading course in the UK. The results of the post-test focusing on reading and writing skills suggested that learners made considerable improvement in these two aspects of L2 competence, whereas there was little gain in vocabulary. On the contrary, in a pilot study conducted within the frame of an extensive reading programme, Horst (2005) found that there was measurable vocabulary growth among learners who read graded readers of their own choice. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) employed an interview-based design to see whether lexical expansion can take place as a result of extensive reading over a 1-month period. Their results suggest that 65% of the target items ($N = 133$) were learnt to some extent, and learners showed visible improvement in spelling. In a similar vein, Coady (1996) asserted that reading for pleasure can contribute to incidental vocabulary learning from the very first stages of instruction provided that the teacher facilitates and, to some extent, controls the learning process. It is important to note, however, that the issue of incidental vocabulary learning, that is, the learners' acquisition of new lexical items without conscious reflection, is a highly complex process shaped by the interaction of several intra- and extralinguistic factors including learner attention, salience, and exposure to input (Gass, 1999, pp. 319–322).

In their experimental research focusing less on individual language elements and more on reading skills, Javid and Al-Khairi (2011) found that extensive reading in the L2 contributes not only to better comprehension, but it can also potentially boost motivation. It appears that participants (undergraduates in a medical school, $N = 74$) considered the perks of extensive reading beneficial in an academic context. Beglar et al. (2012) investigated the potential influence of extensive reading on fluency. They launched an extensive reading programme (12 months) to measure if reading for pleasure contributes to an increased reading speed. The participants (first-year Japanese university students, $N = 97$) were divided into two groups: The experimental group had to complete one graded reader book every 2 weeks compared to the control group, which was not required to do that much reading over the same time period. The study concluded that participation in the extensive programme led to greater fluency and comprehension. In a similar cultural and educational context, Yamashita (2013) studied the effects of L2 extensive reading on L2 reading attitudes. The questionnaire-based research design yielded positive results with regard to learners' feeling of comfort and anxiety, meaning that students who engaged in regular L2 pleasure reading felt more comfortable and less frustrated when they had to read in English than those who did not. Furthermore, readers tend to attribute great intellectual value to their reading practices. Indeed, Murphy (2017) arrived at similar conclusions in his attitude survey conducted among EFL teacher trainees in Korea ($N = 29$). The outcome of the research suggests that those who read regularly were not only more proficient than their non-reader fellow students, but they also felt more comfortable in their second language. At the same time, there does not appear to be any difference in students' degree of comprehension and anxiety, which partially contradicts Yamashita's results. What Murphy pointed out is that

extensive reading in L2 continues to be an issue even in the teacher trainee population despite the fact that they are supposed to do reading in a language they are expected to be teaching in the not-too-distant future. He adds, though, that the limited availability of English books in the region can count as a decisive factor in the question.

In an earlier attempt to investigate EFL teacher trainees' self-perception as readers and as future teachers of reading, Tercanlioglu (2001) undertook a large-sample survey (*N* = 132 plus seven instructors) among Turkish pre-service teachers. The student participants had to evaluate themselves on a reader self-perception scale (RSPS) based on Henk and Melnick (1995) and also on a teaching reading self-perception scale (TRSPS). The analysis of the two data sets shows that teacher trainees have little confidence in their L2 reading abilities, but they do have the incentive to read in their free time. Tercanlioglu emphasised the need to provide guidance for future EFL teachers in improving their reading skills and help them become confident and efficient teachers. She also pointed out that reading is "complex and multidimensional" (2001, Discussion), and therefore reading skills should not be taken for granted. It is along these recommendations that I proceeded to conduct the present study.

Methods

Participants

At the time of the research, the participants were second-year English L2 teacher trainees at a Hungarian university. Having successfully completed their comprehensive exam in the autumn semester, the students were eligible to take the Integrated English Language Skills seminar. The seminar aims at improving advanced-level (C1) language skills, with the students generally being at an upper-intermediate plus (B2+) language level, some of them above. One of the topics discussed in class was literature and translation. It was while working on this topic that I made a preliminary enquiry about the students' reading practices and decided to further investigate the question.

Instruments

In order to obtain as rich and varied data as possible, the study employed a combination of two methods, namely, semi-structured interviews (*N* = 15) and a structured online questionnaire with multiple-choice and open-ended questions covering the same topics as the interviews (*N* = 11). The data collection took place at the end of the spring semester 2019. Whereas the latter enabled some quantification of the answers, qualitative data remained in the centre of the investigation as it was expected to provide more in-depth information about the possible relationships between reading motivation and perceived academic success (see Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 42–47). In this respect, the research corresponded to the criteria of a case study in the sense that it aimed at generating hypotheses about the relationship of two variables (L2 extensive reading practices and academic performance) and looked at mechanisms and patterns through description (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 151–156; Gerring, 2007, p. 38).

The semi-structured interview was divided into three main topics. At the beginning of each section, I recorded some data relevant to students' academic and linguistic background. With their ages ranging between 20 and 24 years, the participants were able to provide information about their generation's reading attitudes and habits. As to their majors, more than half (53%) of them study either History or Media besides English. While some of them are double language majors (e.g., English–German, English–Spanish), History appears to be the most popular second major among TEFL students within the university. The first part of the interview enquired about participants' academic interests and attitude towards academic reading and university assignments. The second part focused on students' extracurricular L2 reading practices and their potential influence on language learning and general academic performance. This section constituted the focus of the analysis. In the third and last part, participants were asked whether they had had any experience of the target culture literature being integrated into language classes in any phase of their studies, and whether introducing such a method would be beneficial for their L2 improvement. They were also invited to justify their opinions and/or provide some of their own ideas.

Since a semi-structured interview design was employed, the general directions of what the participants would talk about were determined in advance, but the information they provided to certain questions strongly shaped the next question(s) and the timing of the transitions to the next section. Having a relatively flexible and broad agenda made it possible for students to think about their answers and to elaborate on the topics they were keen on talking about. The interview design also enabled me to reformulate my questions when I considered it necessary. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian. They were recorded with the consent of the participants, and the audio recordings were then transcribed.

The structured questionnaire was organised along the same three topics as the interview (see Appendix for the English version), with the difference that it provided less space for extra information. It included Likert-scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions with short justifications for the answers. This option was designed for only those students who wanted to take part in the research but did not want or could not do the one-to-one interview session. Similarly to the interview, the first section asked for relevant personal information then went on to enquire into students' perceptions of academic reading and their L2 extensive reading practices, and finally it ended with some questions related to the idea of introducing literature in university language classes. The majority of the respondents were English and History/Hungarian majors (54.5%).

Results and Discussion

This section summarises the combined results of the interviews and the questionnaire, broken down into the three major research questions. The presentation of the data and the interpretation thereof are underpinned by extracts from the interviews and the questionnaires. To clarify the source of the quotes, interviews are marked with (I) and questionnaire responses with (Q). Also, the quoted respondents are assigned numbers (1–15) to preserve their anonymity; any information that might potentially give away the identity of the participants was omitted from the excerpts.

Question #1. How do students assess the usefulness of the compulsory readings assigned in their classes?

The idea behind investigating students' attitudes towards academic reading and their reading assignments at university was to see how motivated they were to study specialised texts and develop their academic reading skills. The questions in this section were primarily related to the amount and usefulness of the assigned university readings.

On average, the participants considered the amount of required readings (academic and fiction combined) excessive. Almost half of the questionnaire respondents (45.5%) and two-thirds of the interviewees (10 out of 15) found that it was virtually impossible to do a thorough reading of the weekly assigned texts. The other half of the participants claimed that the quantity of readings was not too much.

The question related to the quality and usefulness of reading assignments appears to have been more divisive. The questionnaire respondents gave their assessment on a 5-point Likert-scale (not useful at all – useful), whereas the interviewees had to give more elaborate answers. In the former one, the options "in some classes we read useful texts, in some we do not" and "sometimes they are useful, but mostly they are not" received equal scores (45.5% for each), and only 9.1% of the respondents (1 out of 11) thought the readings were "generally useful". The interview answers reflect similar tendencies as all but one student (14 out of 15) reasoned that the overwhelming majority of the assigned texts were of little use with regard to their future profession. Furthermore, the subject areas covered in university readings often do not tie in with the participants' topics of interest: In the survey, 63.6 % claimed that course materials had little to do with their preferred disciplinary fields, and slightly more than half of the interviewees (8 out of 15) reported that required readings sometimes overlap with their fields of interest.

The central question of this section – the one that is expected to provide a more detailed answer to the first point of the discussion – enquired about the participants' attitudes to compulsory readings in general. In the interview as well as in the questionnaire, this was an open-ended question. Based on the answers, there appear to be two distinct sets of behaviour emerging: Students are either low-motivated, and thus they give up every attempt to accomplish the readings, or they plan in advance to read all the assignments but fail to do so because of the lack of time:

> "Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to read all the compulsory readings – even if I did, I don't think much would stick, they [instructors] simply give too many articles and books to read" (*I5*).

> "To be honest, over the past two years I've read like… six or seven (?) of the assigned readings" (*I9*).

Moreover, there are some students who make a thorough selection of the texts according to their estimated usefulness in the exam:

> "I read the compulsory books when the notes I took in class are not enough for the exams or when I have time to do so" (*Q4*).

> I always carefully consider what is worth reading because unfortunately I don't have enough time to work on all the suggested readings. I usually obtain some information about the books and select the ones that are accessible, interesting and useful. (*Q6*)

In an answer to the first research question, it seems that the students have a generally low or mixed opinion about the usefulness of compulsory university readings, and, therefore, they show little motivation to read for their classes. Lack of time and interest are probably the two major reasons for this tendency. The students, however, appear to adopt a different attitude when it comes to extracurricular extensive reading. More than 80% of all respondents claimed to have liked reading prior to being admitted to university, and about a third of them (32%) reported that their love of reading played a role in their choice of career. At the same time, to the question "Has your attitude towards reading changed since you started university?", almost half of the students (12 out of 26, 46%) answered that their motivation to read in their free time had dropped because they simply did not have the time or the intrinsic motivation to do so. Students on average have 1 to 3 hours a week for extensive reading, and only a few of them estimated that they have between 6 and 9 hours for this activity. Interestingly though, a minority of them (23% of both interviews and questionnaire responses combined) noted that they had come to appreciate (extensive) reading more than before:

> "I'm reading more books in English these days" (*Q2*).

> "Yes. I've realized that reading plays a huge rule in erudition. A scientific piece of work is a lot more detailed, comprehensible and useful than the notes of an upper-grade student, for example" (*Q7*).

> "I appreciate it a lot more when I have time to read fiction" (*Q8*).

> "I've become comfortable with reading books in English, and now I enjoy it a lot" (*I2*).

> "It gives me a lot of self-confidence that I can understand scientific articles in English. It makes me want to read even more although I think I am still quite slow" (*I3*).

> "Much as though I love reading in Hungarian, reading in English gives me some special experience. It's like real achievement, and the message comes across more strongly" (*I14*).

This leads us to the second research question of the study, which constituted the major focus of the investigation.

Question #2. What are students' perceptions of their own academic achievement in the light of their L2 extensive reading practices?

Besides the fact that participants reported to have liked extensive reading already in the years preceding their university studies, all of them did extracurricular reading in English although a fraction of the interviewees (3 out of 15, 20%) admitted to finding reading in L2 more difficult than in L1. The nature of the students' preferred reading genres varies to a great extent, ranging from online fashion magazines to science fiction and popular science books. In order to see how students see their own academic performance in the light of their L2 free reading practices, I focused on three different aspects of the question, namely

(1) the perceived relationship between L2 extensive reading and language improvement;

(2) the perceived relationship between L2 extensive reading and language learning motivation;

(3) any possible positive correlation between L2 extensive reading and academic success.

As to sub-question (1), all but one respondent (an interviewee) reported visible improvement in their L2 language proficiency since they had started reading extensively in English. When asked which areas of language competence or skills have improved most visibly, most students emphasised vocabulary (notably, passive vocabulary and better contextual understanding of lexical items) and the emergence of new reading strategies. In addition, three respondents (12%) mentioned that reading in L2 had contributed to their ability to think in English, which is also an important component of L2 proficiency. Not surprisingly, the answers given to this question tie in with those of an adjacent question, "In your opinion, which of the following skills can be best developed through reading in a foreign language?" To this question, the top three answers were vocabulary, grammar/use of English, and writing skills. Interestingly, only about 50% of the participants thought that reading speed can be improved through regular L2 reading.

Sub-question (2), that is, whether there is any perceivable relationship between L2 reading and language-learning motivation, yielded more varied results, but overall the answers reflected a positive relationship between the two. Similarly to the previous question, the respondents emphasised the supportive role of reading in enhancing vocabulary. Moreover, the majority of the participants (79%) considered their interest in Anglo-Saxon cultures a decisive feature in their intrinsic learning motivation. One questionnaire respondent framed language-learning entirely within a culture-oriented perspective:

> Language in itself does not mean anything. For me, it is rather a tool with the help of which I can get closer to a given culture and to the people who speak this language. Literature is an organic part of all this: through books I can reconnect with British culture, let alone the fact that the success of reading gives me a lot of self-confidence. (*Q6*)

One interviewee recounted his grandfather's personal experience: As a young man, his grandfather was a pilot and worked as a mechanic. Having learnt Russian, he started reading books in Russian, and the language he accumulated over the years meant enormous advantage in his work later. The same respondent emphasised that reading in L2 can be considered a motivating factor only if the learner likes reading in general; otherwise, it would only be a hindrance to their progress.

The area where participant answers appeared to be the most ambivalent was sub-question (3), enquiring about any possible correlation between L2 extensive reading and general academic performance. Contrary to the previous two questions, only few students (2 out of 26, 8%) were entirely confident that L2 reading influenced their progress positively in all fields of their studies. Some of the interviewees expressed the view that if there is any relationship between the two variables, then it might go unnoticed:

> "I think that it has contributed to my grades to some extent, but I do not remember the exact moment when I realized it… [reading] must have made some things automatic" (*I5*).

> "I hope there will be some correlation [in the long run], but I still read very little in English due to lack of time" (*Q9*).

> "I cannot answer this question yet" (*Q11*).

A couple of respondents, however, were able to point out the area(s) where L2 extensive reading has had a positive impact:

> "[My improved L2 reading skills] are a great help in my university studies, for example, when I have to read Maths articles in English" (*I2*).

> "I had to put like 20% effort into my English courses this semester to succeed" (*Q2*).

> "I know more technical terms, and I am more confident in building sentences than my fellow students" (*Q7*).

All in all, the students were hesitant to say that the practice of reading in L2 had a direct effect on their general academic performance. There might be reason to believe that the degree of perceived correlation is linked to respondents' preferred text genres. Interviewee 2, a teacher trainee in English and Maths, reads online science articles in their free time and, as shown above, claims to be able to read disciplinary texts in Mathematics more easily than before.

To summarise the results for research question #2, it can be concluded that the participants do see a positive connection between extensive L2 reading and academic accomplishment, but its perceived scope appears to be limited to foreign language skills and learning motivation. It has to be added, though, that based on the answers, it is not possible to decide whether the sense of accomplishment felt through reading triggers motivation or vice versa – most probably, success in reading increases motivation, but it is unlikely that a low-motivated student will engage in extensive reading.

Question #3. Would students appreciate the idea of introducing literature and extensive reading in language skills-oriented classes?

According to the answers, less than half of all respondents (11 out of 26, 42%) have taken part in language seminars or classes which included literary texts in the syllabus.

As to the open-ended question about whether introducing literature in language seminars would be beneficial methodologically, all but five participants opined that it would definitely be a useful and interesting addition to conventional language instruction, but the genre and the content of the texts should be carefully selected and adjusted to students' interests. As several of the respondents mentioned (11 out of 26, 42%), contemporary literature should take privilege over classical literature as the majority of students cannot really identify with the language and content of the classics. Three of the interviewees added that the selection should be a matter of student consensus, and not the authoritarian decision of the instructor.

In fact, some comments emphasised the role of the instructor as a resource of ideas and a debater. As one interviewee explained,

> "It's important that an instructor should be a good partner in debate in any subject. After all, their task involves managing us future managers [i.e., teachers]" (*I14*).

Another interviewee pointed out that the instructor/language teacher has a vital role in enhancing students' reading skills:

> "Instructors need to show us strategies to work on the text so that we can become more efficient" (*I13*).

It appears that guidance on the part of the instructor remains indispensable for learners who aim to be successful L2 readers.

Conclusions

The principal aim of this investigation was to reveal perceived relationships between EFL teacher trainees' L2 extensive reading practices and their academic success in an attempt to see whether extensive reading can be considered a factor contributing to language enhancement and increased academic performance. In general, it can be stated that learners see a positive relationship between L2 extensive reading and language improvement, and they show awareness of the areas where they think they have improved the most. At the same time, the majority of the participants appear to be doubtful about L2 extensive reading having a visible impact on their overall academic performance. They have also proved to be able to critically reflect upon methodological questions of language learning and evaluate their own progress.

Since the research focused on a very small and relatively homogeneous sample (the respondents attended the same programme and took the same courses), the conclusions cannot be generalised to the whole of the English teacher trainee population. At the same time, the research has hopefully highlighted some important aspects of student perceptions of reading in higher-level language instruction.

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Appendix

The Online Questionnaire (English Version)

Title: Relationships between L2 extensive reading and learning motivation

Section 1

Personal information

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. What are your majors at university?
4. Which of your majors do you like better?
   English
   My other major
5. Please justify your choice for question 4.

Questions about required readings at university

6. What is your opinion about the quantity of required readings assigned in classes (including all your courses, specialized and literary texts)?
   - On the whole, the quantity of requires (*sic*) readings is not much.
   - The quantity of required readings is acceptable, taking into account course types and requirements.
   - On the whole, the quantity of required readings is too much.

7. What is your opinion about the usefulness of required readings assigned in classes (including all your courses, specialized and literary texts)?
   - They are not useful at all.
   - Sometimes they are useful, but mostly they are not.
   - In some courses we read useful texts, in others we do not.
   - They are generally useful, but there are exceptions.
   - They are useful.

8. What is your attitude towards the required readings in general? Please give a detailed answer.

9. What are your main areas of interest? Please give a detailed answer.

10. To what extent do required readings cover your areas of interest?
    - Not at all
    - To some extent
    - About half of the texts cover my areas of interest.
    - They mostly do.
    - They completely do.

11. Did you like reading in your free time prior to university?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Do you think that your attitude towards reading had an influence on your choice of career?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Maybe

13. Has your attitude towards reading changed since you started university? Please give a detailed answer.

14. Do you read texts in English in your free time?
    - Yes
    - No

Section 2
Reading in English in your free time

1. How much time do you have for pleasure reading a week on average?
    - 1 to 3 hours
    - 3 to 6 hours
    - 6 to 9 hours
    - 9+ hours
2. Which genre(s) do you prefer? You can select more than one.
    - romance novels
    - historical fiction
    - fantasy
    - sci-fi
    - thriller, psychological thriller
    - detective stories
    - coming-to-age novels (Bildungsroman)
    - adventure
    - vampire novels
    - popular science/scholarly books
    - I prefer reading magazines and/or newspapers
    - other: …

3. Do you have a favourite author, book or book series? If yes, please provide the name or title.

4. Compared to reading in your mother tongue, what is it like to read in English? Please give a detailed answer.

5. What motivates you to read in English? Please give a detailed answer.

6. In your opinion, which of the following skills can be best developed through reading in a foreign language? You can select more than one.
    - vocabulary and word formation
    - grammar and usage

- writing skills
- communication skills and pronunciation
- reading skills
- reading speed
- imagination
- linguistic creativity
- abstract thinking (understanding abstract concepts and complex relationships within a text)
- other: …

7. Besides homework assignments and reading, in what other ways do you improve your English? You can select more than one.
   - watching films and series
   - speaking or corresponding with native speakers
   - teaching English (private tutoring, language school)
   - listening to music, reading and translating lyrics
   - translation
   - other: …

8. Do you see any relationship between reading for pleasure in English and your general academic performance? Please give a detailed answer.

Section 3
Literature in language classes

1. Do you think that it is methodologically justifiable to integrate literary texts into the syllabus of language classes? Please give a detailed answer.

2. Have you ever attended a language class where literature was, in some way, included in the syllabus?
   - Yes, and I found this idea useful/interesting.
   - Yes, and I did not find this idea useful/interesting.
   - No, but I think it is a useful/interesting idea.
   - No, and I do not think it is a useful/interesting idea.
   - No, and I do not have an opinion about this question.

3. Do you have any suggestions as to how literature could be integrated into university-level foreign language instruction? Please give a detailed answer.

Materials Design for Using Literature to Nurture Global Citizens in the EFL Classroom: A Pilot Study

Rita Divéki and Anna Pereszlényi

Introduction

Globalisation, technological advancements, an unpredictable job market, climate change, pandemics – just a few examples of the challenges we have to cope with in our everyday lives. Humankind faces a long list of global issues in the 21st century, which has been exacerbated by the "growing levels of disruptive communication" (Bennett & Livingston, 2020, p. 3), such as fake news and disinformation, even in developed democracies. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to understand what is going on in the world, what is true, and what is distorted information. All these changes have a considerable impact on education: There is a growing need to educate students who can adapt to an ever-changing world and tackle emerging issues in their lives. Educational policymakers have realised that students need to acquire new skills and knowledge in order to become individuals who will be able to rise to the challenges in our globalised world. In other words, those involved in education should nurture individuals who will know how to act as global citizens.

Owing to the promotion of global citizenship education, topics of worldwide concern, such as sustainability and climate change, have been added to coursebooks; language teachers have also started to discuss controversial topics such as poverty, human rights, or politics in their classes. However, there are many teachers who tend to be reluctant to address such issues in their classes (Haynes, 2009; Yoshihara, 2013) due to their sensitive nature. To overcome latent reluctance and to meet the growing demand for new aspects in education, it is suggested that literature could be used in the classroom: Literary texts provide a safe space for both teachers and students since they involve a, more or less, fictitious world with an imaginary plot and characters.

The main purpose of the research project including this pilot study was to investigate how global issues can be brought into the EFL classroom through the medium of literature. The research involved literary texts and worksheets that were tested in EFL groups. Apart from the authors' reflections, students' feedback was sought in order to examine how literature can be used to nurture global citizens. The pilot study described in the present article was action research, based on a previously selected poem and the accompanying worksheet. The article starts with a literature review on global citizenship education and literature in the EFL classroom. Then, the research methods are described, and the research results are presented. Finally, some pedagogical implications are discussed at the end of the paper.

Literature Review

Global Citizenship Education, Global Competence, and Nurturing Global Citizens

Having understood the urgency to deal with the increasing challenges of the 21st century, all the United Nations countries committed themselves to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015. Goal Number 4 of the SDGs is quality education for all, which aims to ensure by 2030 that

> all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015)

In order to achieve this goal, incorporating and prioritising global citizenship education (GCE) in all the UN countries' core curricula is vital. Although there is no widely agreed definition of GCE, it can be understood as an educational agenda, which aims to "empower learners to engage and assume active roles both locally and globally to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15).

The importance of nurturing global citizens was further emphasised by the fact that in 2018, OECD PISA started assessing students' global competence (PISA, 2017). According to their definition, *global competence* is

> the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. (PISA, 2017, p. 7)

Consequently, a globally competent student has the knowledge and skills to investigate the world (they are aware of, curious about, and interested in how the world works), they can develop an informed opinion about issues (by heavily relying on their critical thinking skills), they can recognise different perspectives (they are aware of their own perspectives, and they understand that others might not share them), they can communicate their ideas effectively (even across different cultures), and they are willing to act to make a difference in the world (Asia Society, 2017; PISA, 2017). In the light of students' constant need to succeed in a rapidly changing world, it seems crucial to implement global citizenship education and develop students' global competence on all educational levels and in all subjects, including English as a foreign language.

Global Issues in the EFL Lesson

The idea of taking a global perspective and discussing global and often controversial issues in the EFL classroom has been promoted by several authors (Brown, 2009; Jacobs & Cates, 1999; Maley, 2004; Ruas, 2017; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004) and organisations (Council of Europe, 2014; Oxfam, 2018; UNESCO, 2015). One reason for this is that the language classroom can be considered an "open-content space" (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017); therefore, it enables teachers to include important issues, using authentic and real-world materials and tasks, which creates a strong bond between the classroom and the community in which the students live. Other reasons include the fact that these topics usually feature in the curriculum (Oxfam, 2018) and that they often appear among language exam topics as well. Moreover, students seem to be interested in global issues, and if they are interested in the material, they will become more engaged during classes and will be more likely to become motivated to learn the language (Lightbown, 2013). Finally, from a language learning point of view, it is important to emphasise that dealing with such issues in class helps students work effectively on the four basic language skills (Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004) and vocabulary, and they can also develop their creative and critical thinking skills (Oxfam, 2018; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004).

Nonetheless, reservations have also been voiced about the ways teachers bring such topics to class (Perrin, 2010; Scruton, 1985). The most common criticism teachers face is the indoctrination of students as the discussion of these often controversial issues can provide teachers with a platform to express their own not necessarily unbiased views, and they may force-feed opinions to their students (Hess, 2004). Sometimes teachers might even want to present partial opinions or censor some views if they feel that they are not appropriate (Noddings & Brooks, 2017). Sargent (2007) also warned about the dangers of brainwashing students. However, he also recognises the possibility of discussing controversial issues in a multidimensional and critical way, without preaching one particular view.

As global citizenship education is a student-centred and interactive approach, methods and techniques promoting the active participation of students can help them develop various skills (Cates, 2002; PISA, 2017; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004). These learner-centred pedagogies include group-based tasks and project work, structured debates, organised discussions about images, videos, and thought-provoking texts (PISA, 2017). In order to raise students' interest, it is advisable to use relatable materials, thus global citizenship education in the EFL classroom easily lends itself to the use of literary texts as materials (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).

Using Literature to Educate for Global Citizenship

There has been a resurgence of interest in literature in educational research (Illés, 2020; Paran, 2008), investigating, among others, the question of whether literature is still relevant and effective in the 21st century EFL classroom. The benefits of literature include language learning and language skills development (Collie & Slater, 1987; McKay, 1982; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000), cultural knowledge (Collie & Slater, 1987; McKay, 1982), creativity (McKay, 1982), and motivation (Hall, 2005; McKay, 1982). However, solely these arguments may not be convincing enough when various other sources and media are available to EFL teachers.

First and foremost, it must be pointed out that all kinds of texts can be interpreted in various ways (Widdowson, 2004). Every text consists of words and sentences that have conventional meanings; however, readers "read their own different meanings into it so as to bring them in line with their own preconceptions" (Widdowson, 2017, p. ix). What makes literary texts unique is that "they provoke diversity by their very generic design in that they do not directly refer to social and institutionalized versions of reality but represent an alternative order that can only be individually apprehended" (Widdowson, 2004, p. 135). Thus, readers read the same text, but they see it differently; they "derive different discourse from it" (Widdowson, 2004, p. 136) by having their own interpretations. Focusing on the EFL classroom, different interpretations of the same text make the class think, discuss, question, and debate – skills that are much needed in today's world.

Another argument for the inclusion of literature in language teaching is that literary texts provide new perspectives and insights and can also challenge readers "in their established modes of thinking and feeling" (Delanoy, 2018, p. 144), which also contributes to the development of critical thinking skills. With the help of literature, students can identify "multiple perspectives on a subject" and the "perspective and values needed for a sustainable world" (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, p. 172), thus developing their perspective-taking, interpretation, and thinking skills, which are all elements of global competence.

Cultural differences presented in literary texts evoke and promote tolerance in the reader (McKay, 1982), and they may transform attitudes, eliminate prejudices, and introduce global issues (Ghosn, 2002). For instance, focusing on the concept of otherness, Burwitz-Melzer (2001) conducted research using a short story involving 24 German students and one non-German student. The chosen text introduces a family of Mexican migrant workers, who are illegally moving from one harvest site to another in the United States, from the perspective of a young boy, a non-native speaker of English rejected by other children. Activities included a creative writing activity in which the students wrote the last scene of the story in the form of a dialogue. Three scenes are included in the study, which show that the students were concerned about the boy's situation, feelings, and future as well. The extracts also indicated that the students understood the main conflicts: the tension between education and work, the migration problem, and the language barrier.

Focusing on another aspect of otherness, Merse (2015) posited that literary texts can also be used to "transport discourses of sexuality into the classroom" (p. 17). This seems to be timely as he found that "the selection of literature for ELT classrooms follows heteronormative standards" and despite the increasing literary diversity, ELT still "privileg[es] literary texts that foreground heterosexuality and heteronormative genders", widely overlooking sexual minorities (p. 17). As an example of dealing with LGBTQ issues in class, he presented a teaching unit he did in a university setting in Germany. He asked students to create an online blog about a literary text of their choice, fill the blog with their reflections on the piece, and then present it in class. As the students were free to choose their text, they included texts revolving around different issues, which included homosexuality. One group chose the short story *Brokeback Mountain* by Annie Proulx, which, according to the researcher's observations, led to an engaging debate in class about sexual identities, sexual norms, and reading LGBTQ literature in the ELT classroom. This shows that it is possible to engage students in discussion about topics in which some students are already interested when using literary texts.

According to Ellis (2004), students' reading development is also part of their global development as in order to become active citizens, they need to read (e.g., to follow the news). Based on Ellis' claims, Valente (2004) also attempted to raise his students' global awareness through extensive reading, using an integrated approach. His group of 14 Thai secondary school students were reluctant to read outside of class at the beginning of the project, and they lacked motivation to learn English using their coursebook. Then, throughout the year, he attempted to include key aspects of global awareness in the syllabus (e.g., global citizenship, international views, intercultural dialogue), and he used texts from contemporary young adult fiction revolving around challenging topics like equality and diversity. As initially the students were reluctant to read, he supplemented the texts with a wide range of "teen-relevant media as scaffolds" (p. 17), such as DVD versions of books, teen blogs, web-quests, and social networking sites. By adopting such a learner- and reader-centred, interactive approach, he was able to make the students discuss their personal experiences and respond to difficult issues.

As can be seen from the above examples, various controversial global topics can be addressed in class using literary texts. The success of such lessons usually depends on the selection of the right text and the students' engagement with it. In order to engage students, it seems essential to deal with the text through learner-centred, interactive approaches and concentrate on what personal experiences the students bring into the learning process, how they react to the characters' feelings, and the issues they face in these imaginary worlds.

The Rationale

The authors of this article had been teaching at a Hungarian university for 5 years and had encountered similar problems in their Language Practice seminars for first-year English majors, that is, students' unwillingness and lack of preparedness to discuss current global and local issues in class. Even though in 2015, the Hungarian Government signed the NEFE (International Development) Strategy and committed to introducing global education at all levels of education, the global perspective still fails to appear with explicit goals in the National Core Curriculum. One of the reasons might be that there is

a widely held belief in contemporary Hungarian society that education should be free of politics (Hunyadi & Wessenauer, 2016). For this reason, many teachers steer away from topics which are (even remotely) connected to politics, which results in the fact that these topics are avoided in class, and students do not have the opportunity to form opinions and to learn to express their opinion on these often controversial and complex issues (Hunyadi & Wessenauer, 2016). This may also be the reason behind Hungarian youngsters' feeling apathetic about politics, their being reluctant to participate in public affairs (Gáti, 2010; Integrity Lab, 2016; Szabó & Kern, 2011), and the low turn-out rates of their generation at national elections (Boros & Laki, 2018). Global citizenship education could, to some extent, remedy this situation as its main aim is to nurture conscious, democratic, active, and globally-minded citizens. As the EFL class can be regarded as an "open content space" (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, p. 160), with the only fixed material being the language itself, sustainable development or global content can be incorporated into it, and it can be a place where students' curiosity and appreciation towards social, economic, physical, and cultural issues are nurtured (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).

Although there have been some initiatives to revise coursebooks and include more intercultural materials to suit learners' needs, most of them still represent a static approach to culture. These descriptions in coursebooks present culture as knowledge and treat it as a "quantifiable learning outcome" (Cunico, 2005, p. 23). Consequently, the importance of factual knowledge is emphasised, which must be taught and might be assessed by the teachers. As an attempt to find a solution and counterbalance the lack of appropriate materials, several researchers suggested using literary texts revolving around controversial and/or global issues to develop students' intercultural competence (Burwitz-Melzer, 2001; Cunico, 2005; Matos, 2005) and global awareness (Myhill, 2007; Merse, 2015; Valente, 2004). Nevertheless, there is a relative lack of available empirical studies in connection with the use of literature in developing intercultural and global skills. As Hall (2005) noted, "literature is said to promote intercultural understanding and mutual respect, though how exactly it might do this is left implicit" (p. 73). There are numerous theoretical studies that are based on empirical evidence; however, the methodology which would enable teachers to use the materials in their classes is missing from many of them.

Research Questions

Our main purpose was to find out how literary texts can be used to develop global competence involving both teachers' and students' perspectives. Hence, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How can literary texts be used in the EFL classroom to develop first-year English majors' global competence?

2. What are first-year English majors' perceptions of activity sequences based on literary texts aiming to develop global competence?

Methods

In the following section, the research methods are discussed in detail. First, the participants and the setting of the study are addressed, and then the research instruments are described. Finally, the data collection and data analysis procedures are detailed.

Participants and Setting

The participants involved in the research project were from three Language Practice 1 groups at a prestigious university located in Budapest, Hungary. The course is an introductory, general English language course, which has to be taken by all the students enrolled in the English Studies BA programme or the English teacher training programme offered by the university. The primary aim of the course is to develop the students' overall language skills, but it also has to include some exam preparation as students have to pass a B2+ level language course at the end of their first year. Apart from having to cover the grammar points of a compulsory coursebook, the tutors are free to design their courses, so they can choose the topics they would like to include.

The research project was conducted at the end of the first semester, which, in this case, meant that the students had some previous experience of talking about controversial issues in the tutors' previous classes. Altogether 43 university students participated in the pilot research project. Convenience sampling strategies were used when selecting the participants: The researchers chose their own first-year language practice groups to participate. For the sake of simplicity, in the study Author 1's group is called Group A, and Author 2's groups are called Group B and Group C. The participants were all first-year English majors: They either took part in the teacher education programme or the BA English and American Studies programme. Except for two participants, all of them were Hungarian students.

Instruments

Materials

Prior to compiling the worksheets, appropriate literary texts had to be selected. Since no previous research with the same focus had been found, the authors had to determine the criteria for text selection as well. First and foremost, based on what the researchers learnt from consulting the relevant literature, it seemed inevitable to choose an interesting text for their classes and to involve the students in activities that would engage them in open discussions. Since the focus was not on teaching literature but on using it for skills development purposes, we decided to choose texts that were not included in the syllabi of literature courses at the university. For this reason, we mainly focused on contemporary authors with texts on topical issues. Secondly, the topic had to be relevant and possible to link to the topics that had been covered in the first semester (e.g., urban living, generational differences, advertising, the news). Thirdly, the language had to be appropriate (i.e., around CEFR B2) so that the text could be included in our general English language course. No criteria were set regarding genres or authors since the intention was to ensure variety.

Having taught the Language Practice course for 5 years to different groups every year, we managed to identify a topic with which we had mixed experiences. The topic of the news had left some of our students uninterested and passive during the lessons, and many of them admitted to not following the news regularly. Given the current political climate, we thought that it would be worth addressing the topic of *fake news*, which, together with hoaxes, conspiracy theories, and clickbait, for instance, constitute contemporary propaganda (Hobbs et al., 2019). The ubiquitous term *fake news* is a highly political and controversial word, which, as it "has become a global issue" (Hobbs et al., 2018), should be treated with care. Although it has numerous definitions, it may be best defined as "deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design" (Gelfert, 2018, p. 106). In order to sensitise our students to this controversial issue and to create engagement, it seemed to be a logical step to start with discussing hoaxes, which belong to a type of false information with "a motivation of humour" (Dearden & Baron, 2019, paragraph 11).

After reading numerous texts, our choice was Brian Bilston's poem titled *From the Encyclopedia of Alternative Facts*, in which the author lists numerous false beliefs and misconceptions. The poem met all our criteria: topic, length, and language. As the false beliefs and misconceptions listed in the poem serve the basis of numerous conspiracy theories and hoaxes, the poem lends itself to starting a discussion on how false information spreads and what dangers it might hold. Given the fact that the poem includes four stanzas, it is appropriate for a regular EFL lesson: It is short enough to be used as a warmer activity, but it has the potential to form the basis for a whole EFL session. Its language is not old-fashioned and as Brian Bilston is a popular poet, with thousands of followers on social media, we hoped that our students would find his poem appealing too.

As suggested by Ellis (2004), apart from the poem, other resources were used in class to make the lessons and the text more relevant to the students. Pictures and stories (hoaxes) were included to complement the poem and provide some further input for class discussions. The pictures selected by the authors were closely connected to the poem as they show some misconceptions, including one in the poem. The chosen hoaxes were short, humorous, and entertaining at first glance; however, the focus was on how these stories can present misconceptions and lead to fake news in some cases.

The Worksheet

Our main goal was to include activities with which we can develop our students' global competence, thus, with which we can initiate in-class discussions, improve students' speaking skills, research and presentation skills, as well as develop their critical thinking skills and creativity. We also included activities to encourage perspective-taking and argumentation. Two main criteria were set: The activities had to be based on the poem, and they had to be aligned with the aims of the lessons. Regarding the type of the designed activities, widely used tasks such as gap-fill were combined with some new types of activities. The worksheet (see Appendix) consists of nine activities which can be used as separate ones, which makes them interchangeable; however, the worksheet can be regarded as a sequence of activities as well. The worksheet comprises the following activities:

1 Warmer

The worksheet starts with a warmer which is a picture-based activity. Students describe the pictures, and they also add a headline to each of them. Some pictures can be related to more than one misconception; thus, students may interpret them differently. Hence, both the students' creativity and background knowledge are activated while they also get familiar with some misconceptions and hoaxes. Another warmer is also included, which is a prediction activity based on the title of the poem.

2 Reading Comprehension

The purpose of these activities is to develop students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary. Students work on the poem first, and then they read some stories complementing the content of the poem. A gap filling activity is the first one: Students fill in the gaps of the poem with the given words. The majority of keywords consist of familiar words and phrases, but they are crucial for the reader to understand the poem. Although the focus is on reading comprehension, this task also involves vocabulary building since two items (*dodgy* and *on the rise*) might be new to B2-level students. Then, the students get a short hoax with a glossary that they read individually or in pairs. Each student or pair reads about one hoax, and then the students are asked to form groups and give a short summary of the story they have read. Then, they are asked to discuss the reasons why some believe, if they do, these hoaxes.

3 Creative Writing

Students are asked to write another stanza to the poem after they brainstorm together and collect some ideas. In order to complete this activity, students need to rely on their previous knowledge and recall the misconceptions they are familiar with. The stanzas are distributed in class, and students choose their favourite one.

4 Argumentation and Discussion

Five lines of the poem, which are highly controversial but relatable as well, were selected, and students are asked to collect arguments for and against the statements. The activity enables students to put themselves in another person's shoes and think of some counterarguments that could be listed by the opponent. The activity leads to an in-class or group discussion.

5 Follow-Up

At the end of the class, students rewrite the poem so that it reflects reality. In this activity, students have to use their research skills to fact-check the poem and look behind each misconception so that they can debunk them and present the truth. In the next lesson, it is worth revisiting the task and discussing how the students verified their own ideas. The

last activity is a mini research project which includes a short in-class presentation: Students are requested to search for more hoaxes from the 21st century and present one in class.

Feedback Forms and Reflective Journals

In order to explore the participants' perceptions of the selected text and activities, a short feedback form was compiled. The questions were created by the researchers, and the form was piloted after the use of another worksheet we created for our ongoing research project on using literature to develop global competence in language groups, including first-year English majors. Since the students answered all the questions and reflected on the activities, no question was modified or reworded.

The paper-based form comprised five questions: three Likert-scale questions and two open-ended questions. Since the focus was on the worksheet, the students were asked how much they had enjoyed the activities, whether they found them useful, and which language skills and knowledge areas were developed during the session. The two open-ended questions were deliberately worded broadly so that the students could elaborate on the aspect which was the most important to them. The students were not asked to reflect on each activity separately as our goal was to use the poem in a natural classroom context and not in a research context so that we could avoid students feeling under pressure caused by the fact that they took part in a research project. The feedback form was anonymous; no personal information was required. It was also voluntary to fill in the form; however, all the questions were answered by the participants. The feedback forms were handed out at the end of class, and it took around 5 minutes to complete them.

Apart from the students' point of view, it was important to include another angle in the project to see what is happening in the classroom from the teacher's perspective. Therefore, the authors wrote reflective journals throughout the project, including their own impressions on each text and activity as well as their observations (e.g., students' reactions).

Data Collection and Analysis

Our complete research project, which included designing and piloting three worksheets based on literary texts with the aim of developing our students' global competence, took place in the second half of 2019. Regarding this part of the project, data were collected in December 2019. There were six sessions altogether when we used the poem and the worksheet in class. Two groups had a 40-minute session, and the students finished working on the worksheet in the next class, which took 25 minutes. In the third group, first they had a 30-minute session, and they finished working on the worksheet in the next lesson, which took 40 minutes.

In the case of two groups, students were asked to provide feedback on a paper-based form at the end of the second class. In one of the groups, students filled in the online version of the same form. However, all the responses were added to the online feedback form. Permission was also sought from the students to use their responses for research purposes. One student declined to give permission, so their form was not included in the research.

The reflective journals comprised notes taken after the sessions. We reflected on them, analysed as well as compared them. Similarities and differences were sought between the reflective journals and the feedback forms in order to compare the different viewpoints (i.e., those of teachers and students).

Results and Discussion

Ways in Which EFL Teachers Can Develop Their Students' Global Competence Using Literary Texts

Since two teachers were involved in the project, it was obvious that there would be slight differences in the lessons. From the reflective journals, it became obvious that it was inevitable to apply the same worksheet slightly differently as our groups and our syllabi were different. However, this also highlights the fact that the same text and same exercises can be used for different ends. In Group A, the activities were done at the end of a module on the topic of the news, so the students already had some prior knowledge about how fake news may spread, which definitely made it easier for them to engage in the discussions about misconceptions and false information. Before the students were given the worksheets, they had discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of following the news, read about bias in the news (from the *Outcomes Advanced Workbook*, Dellar & Walkley, 2012), and compared how different news outlets handled the same piece of news. Then, they got closer to the topic of the worksheet by using a website, called Factitious (n. d.), which helped them decide whether the selected news stories were true or false (the website also provided them with tips on how to spot fake news). In Groups B and C, news and fake news were not discussed prior to the lessons, so the students' contributions to the discussions were based on the worksheet and their personal opinions. However, it must be noted that both approaches were deemed successful by the researchers based on their students' engagement, which means that the worksheets can be used either to conclude units or to introduce issues or even as timesaver activities.

What both authors noted in connection with the level of the activities was that the language of the poem was not challenging enough for the students. As the main aim of the activity sequence was not vocabulary development, the researchers did not think it was an issue. When selecting the text, it was more important to choose one which makes it easier for the students to access the topic and engage with it, and Bilston's poem certainly did that with its contemporary language and catchy rhymes. The poem presented important misconceptions which served as a springboard for further discussions. The text was also used as a scaffold for creative writing and as entertainment for students. Although there was less emphasis on aesthetics as the poem was used in a language class, it must be noted that most students tried to add a stanza with rhymes and rhythm.

The atmosphere of the lessons also appeared in both reflective journals, two aspects of which should be addressed. At the beginning of the sequence, where the students were asked to come up with sensationalist headlines for the known hoaxes, they were noticeably having much fun while also drawing on their creativity. It seemed important to create a good mood at the beginning of the activity sequence because even though the poem sounded fun, it dealt with important issues which were addressed in the follow-up activities. It was also essential to work in a safe environment, where everyone was able to express their opinion, and where all opinions were respected. As these groups had been working together for months before they were asked to do the activities, presenting their ideas and views did not seemingly pose a problem since the environment was already friendly.

Finally, the importance of students' bringing their own experiences to the class must be stressed. Although the activities provided numerous opportunities for discussing personal opinions and experiences, two activities were specifically designed with this aim in mind. The creative writing activity enabled the students to recall their previous knowledge and add a stanza which included their own misconceptions and untruths. Then, in activity 6, by introducing the poem and asking students to put themselves into the shoes of people who would believe some lines of the poem, our aims were twofold: We wanted to develop their perspective-taking skills and their critical thinking skills. The students were invited to select the lines on which they wanted to focus. Because of this set-up, in Group A, there was an in-depth discussion on gender equality, the gender pay gap, and feminism, which appealed to many students, so it resulted in higher involvement and more willingness to communicate. This finding is also in line with what Merse (2015) found in his groups, namely that it is important to let the students decide what issues they would like to focus on and let them bring in their own experiences. In order to facilitate this, it might be worth looking for texts raising several issues – like Brian Bilston's poem.

First-Year English Majors' Perceptions of Activity Sequences Based on Literary Texts Aiming to Develop Global Competence

At the end of the lessons, the feedback form was handed out to the students in order to find out their opinion on the activities. The table below presents the responses given to the first three questions. Altogether 42 answers were provided for the three questions.

Table 1

The Students' Perceptions of the Activity Sequences

Questions	1 = not at all	2 = not really	3 = undecided	4 = some what	5 = very much
How much did you enjoy the activities in connection with the poem?		1	2	15	24
To what extent do you think these activities helped you develop your language skills (vocabulary, communication, etc.)?			8	22	12
To what extent do you think these activities helped you develop other 21st century skills (presentation skills, critical thinking, researching skills, etc.)?		1	2	24	15

The first question inquired into how much the students enjoyed the activities which centred around the poem. More than half of the students (n = 24) said that they enjoyed the activities very much; more than a third of them (n = 15) somewhat enjoyed the activity sequence, and there was only one student who did not really enjoy these lessons.

The students were also asked about the perceived language benefits of these lessons. It is important to note here that neither the level of the text nor that of the activity sequence exceeded the students' language level as it was designed for B2–B2+ groups who had to pass their B2+ exam at the end of the academic year.

In addition, some of the students had already passed their C1 language exam. More than a third of the respondents (n = 12) felt that doing these activities had developed their overall language skills considerably, and almost half of the students (n = 22) said that these activities had contributed to the development of their language skills to some extent.

Twenty-first century skills were also addressed in the feedback form. The majority of students thought that the lesson had improved their skills to a certain extent (n = 24); more than a third of them (n = 15) were positive about that. Regarding the sub-question of why (not) these activities expanded their knowledge about the world, some students (n = 9) noted that they managed to learn some new pieces of information and broaden their horizon. Some pointed out that these activities made them look up information (n = 3) that they would not have been interested in before these lessons. Some responses (n = 7) implied that the activities made the students think about current issues in the world or about how easy it is to influence people. A few students (n = 2) added that as a result of the classes, they would not believe everything that is on the Internet. One of the respondents claimed that they would do some research before formulating opinions.

Although the results were aligned with the main aims of the lesson, certain changes to the worksheet could be proposed based on the students' responses. Even though the students took part in Activity 6 (the argumentation) and the follow-up research project eagerly, they hardly reflected on these experiences in the feedback forms (only a third of our students were positive that these activities developed their 21st century skills). This implies that more emphasis should be put on developing students' critical thinking skills. As Activity 6 and the research project were well-received by students, more tasks which aim to improve 21st century skills could be added to the worksheet. Focusing more on activities such as Activity 6 might be also justified by the fact that the language of the poem was not sufficiently challenging for the students.

Conclusion

The main aims of this pilot study were to gain insight into how using literary texts in the EFL classroom can contribute to the development of global competence and, more specifically, to see what teachers can do to nurture global citizens with the use of literary texts, and what students think of using literary texts in the language class. In order to explore this, the authors conducted action research in their first-year university groups among students majoring in English, which involved trying out an activity sequence based on a poem, writing a reflective journal about it, and asking the students' opinion using a feedback form.

Based on the findings, it seems that selecting a thought-provoking and accessible text centring around global issues and planning engaging activities which make the students interact with the text and each other may help students develop their global competence. In order to successfully engage students in discussions about worldwide issues, it seems essential to create a friendly and safe environment and to let students select the topics and contribute to the discussions with their own personal experiences. Even though doing such activities in class might need careful planning and much time, the pedagogical affordances seem to make it worthwhile.

As there has been no investigation about using literary texts for global competence development in Hungary, the present study filled a research gap. In her previous small-scale pilot study, Divéki (2020) found that university tutors working in EFL teacher education think that it would be worthwhile to include global competence development more in the training as it would prompt novice teachers to talk about global issues in the future. Further classroom research could include using similar worksheets centred around different topics and texts and then comparing the findings. Also, it would be beneficial to ask other university tutors to do the same sequence with their groups and gain data about their perceptions. Finally, it would be worth doing similar projects in a secondary school setting and involving more teachers in order to be able to draw up some recommendations and compile some good practices.

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Appendix

The Worksheet

From the Encyclopedia of Alternative Facts – Brian Bilston

1. News

Below you can see some pictures that (probably) do not reflect reality. What do you think about them? Discuss them in pairs, also, say some sentences about them.

How would these stories be presented in the news? Write news headlines based on the sentences.

2. *From the Encyclopaedia of Alternative Facts* – based on the title, what do you think you're going to read (genre, content)?

3. Fill in the gaps - Put the keywords into the text.

POLITICIAN, EQUAL, TERROR, CLIMATE, CHANGE, RISE, DODGY, LEGAL, MONSTER, AFFECTS

Frankenstein was the _____'s name.
There's no such thing as _____ change.
A solero is a type of hat.
The planet is not round but flat.
Six is the _____ drinking age.
Women are paid an _____ wage.
Elvis was influenced by Take That.
The planet is not round but flat.
Achilles had a _____ knee.
_____ comes from refugees.
Insomnia _____ most cats.
The planet is not round but flat.
There are no fascists on the _____.
A _____ never lies.
It's impossible to _____ a fact.
The planet is not round but flat.

4. Group work: You are going to read about different hoaxes. After reading your text, please tell the others about what you've read and then together, choose the best hoax. What do you think made them believable?

5. Can you add some common misconceptions, hoaxes to the poem? Write a new stanza in pairs on the post-it given to you.
Stand up and walk around in the classroom with your partner, read all the stanzas and choose your favourite one. Why did you pick this particular stanza? What do you like about it?

6. Statements: Choose a statement and collect arguments for and against it. (It's compulsory to come up with at least 2 in each column)

There is no such thing as climate change.
Women are paid an equal wage.
Terror comes from refugees.
There are no fascists on the rise.
A politician never lies.

Selected line:	
Arguments for:	Arguments against:

7. Discussion

a. Why would someone believe these lines?

b. Do these hoaxes and misconceptions represent danger to our societies? Why (not)?

c. What can you do to avoid believing these pieces of information?

d. What can you do to avoid spreading these pieces of information?

8. Hoaxes vs. reality

Could you transform the poem so that it reflects reality? In pairs, rewrite the poem so that it shows reality.

9. PROJECT

Read about more hoaxes from the 21st century, choose one and present it and debunk it next time in a 3-minute-long presentation.

Slides for All:
How to Use Slides in the Language Classroom

Zsuzsanna Soproni

Introduction

In the developed world, computers have become an omnipresent piece of equipment of classrooms in the 21st century. According to an OECD study, 72% of students used computers at school in 2012, and the ratio of computer users (to non-computer users) in Hungarian schools grew from below 70% to around 75% between 2009 and 2012 (OECD, 2015, p. 54). To cite another example, the average number of computers per public school in the United States was 189 in 2008, the figure being substantially higher in secondary schools (301) but slightly lower in smaller schools (87) and in rural areas (147) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Indeed, today it is hard to find a university lecture or seminar, however interactive it may be, without some accompanying slides at least. In order to help instructors, most subject textbooks these days come with accompanying slides for the teachers, for example, McGraw Hill Education offers presentation slides as part of its instructor resources (McGraw Hill Education, n.d.). Thus, the question arises as to what extent language teachers are supposed to rely on using slides in the language development classes that are part of some university programmes.

English language teaching (ELT), too, is permeated with the use of technology and impacted by the developments in information and communication technology if we compare today's classroom practices and the available materials with those of 30–40 years ago (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012). With the help of the Internet, it has not only become easier to locate foreign language materials, be they written or audio-visual, but language games and exercises with automatic scoring or feedback have become more accessible not only to teachers but learners as well. The top-rated three English language learning software packages are: *Living Language English*, *Tell Me More English*, and *Rocket English* (Learn English, 2021). Websites and applications that allow interaction, whether written or spoken, have made it possible for students to practise their skills and for teachers to better involve learners (e.g., *Mentimeter*, *Slido*, etc.). A simple Google search for "English language exercises" produces almost 300 million results. Thus, teachers and learners are no longer dependent on a library or a teacher to the extent they used to be; technology is there to assist English language learning.

The use of technology is promoted in various forms in education, for example, one ELT conference in Kosovo was entitled "Integrating digital literacies in the language classroom" in 2018. Little did we know how important digital literacy would become for teachers and learners in 2020 as a result of the switch to online teaching in many institutions. There are various organisations that promote Computer Assisted Language

Learning (CALL), including the European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning (EUROCALL), which is one of the founding members of "WorldCALL, an umbrella organisation that embraces a number of professional associations worldwide that promote the use of new technologies in language learning and teaching" (Davies, 2004). Technological solutions are also encouraged at the institutions themselves; in Hungary, for example, all marks and timetables in higher education are handled by Neptun, a web-based application. Institutions have introduced virtual learning environments, which are used to promote learner engagement. At an international business school in Budapest, for example, lecture slides, useful links, and interactive quizzes are available for students in Moodle, and other universities in Hungary use Moodle and Canvas, although some instructors have set up their own websites. During the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant emergency measures that saw the entire spectrum of education migrate to online platforms, the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs), such as Blackboard, Canvas, Google Classroom, Moodle, or communication platforms such as Slack or videoconferencing applications such as Teams or Zoom became vital.

As a result of the availability of good-quality infrastructure and the policy to provide edutainment to students, using slides has become the norm in business-focused modules at the aforementioned business school in Budapest. Although the language modules are different in nature since they are more skills-based than most business-related subjects, they, too, may require the use of slides in order to look professional or to be entertaining.

The presence of information technology is especially true of higher education institutions, in one of which the present small-scale research project was carried out in the autumn of 2019. The aims of this article are to give some practical advice to practising language teachers based on the presentations literature on how to use slides in the language classroom and to report the results of a small-scale survey on students' views on the use of slides in higher education seminars, including English language classes. In addition, the article also aims to present some examples of how the author incorporates slides into her English classes.

Literature Review

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Slides in Presentations

In-company and conference presentations are invariably accompanied by slideshows. A slideshow makes any presentation more impactful and entertaining: People need to be kept tuned in with slides and perhaps other media as Duarte (2012) pointed out. That is the reason why about 30 million PowerPoint slideshows are made by businesspeople a day (Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018). The funny remark that people who know what they are talking about do not need PowerPoint is attributed to Steve Jobs (as cited in Duarte, 2012), but the aim of the remark was probably to promote Keynote, the Apple product. Today, there are more than a dozen major presentation software or web applications one can choose from, many of which are offered for free. Whichever application one uses, slides are regarded to be "containers" (Duarte, 2008, p. 26) or "empty shells" (Duarte, 2012, p. 96) that presenters need to learn to use professionally. In general, slides are thought to be more engaging since they appeal to the senses if properly used (Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018).

There are several benefits discussed in the literature concerning the use of presentation software. Slideshows are certainly seen as modern, high-tech solutions in comparison with boards (black or white), or even flipcharts. With the use of slides, richer or more comprehensible input, in other words, more content may be presented. As Duarte (2012) pointed out, data, diagrams, "images, graphics and phrases" should definitely be projected (p. 97) to assist understanding (for a comprehensive discussion of types of diagrams, see Duarte, 2008, pp. 45–57). Pictures that tell a thousand words are said to "lower students' cognitive load" (Taylor, 2011, p. 47), and showing may at times indeed be "more powerful than telling" (Duarte, 2012, p. 120). Weissman (2011) even suggested that text should be replaced by images wherever possible. Medgyes (2020), however, warned presenters that using unjustified images might cause more harm than good (p. 77). Teachers can save time by using pre-prepared slides instead of writing longer chunks of text on the board (Leger, 2009). Slides may bring the class together and help them focus on the same task. They may even help the teacher move away from a teacher-centred approach. The use of multimedia "cultivates students' interest and motivation" and may "activate students' thinking" (Shyamlee, 2012, p. 152). Slides may help the teacher organise and manage their class and themselves more easily (Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018; Kernbach et al., 2015, p. 2), or teachers and students may believe so. Slides are also considered to be more environmentally-friendly than handouts (e.g., Leger, 2009). Slides may help the teacher move away from the coursebook for a while, thus adding variety to class activities, which was previously achieved by other means, for example, by using task sheets as supplementary material. As Kernbach et al. (2015) summarised, slideshows "improve the memorability of the content" (p. 2). With the incorporation of slides, the presenter is able to appeal to different types of learners with different learning styles, for instance, those who need to see visuals or the logical organisation of some elements for better understanding.

On the other hand, slides have drawbacks as well. The drawbacks become especially prevalent if the presenter does not use the slides appropriately, which is easy to do as the software is quite simple. Kernbach et al. (2015) pointed out that "PowerPoint is a visual tool because it allows mapping of content and inclusion of multimedia elements (such as video or animation), but users predominantly display text in bullet lists" (p. 2), which constitutes inappropriate use of the application. Moreover, if the presenter keeps reading out the information on the slides, the presentation will be more boring with the slides than it would be without them. Medgyes (2020) mentioned that one of the worst mistakes presenters may make is when they read aloud the plethora of sentences on their slides (p. 78). Slides may also become a distraction (Duarte, 2012) not only because the audience might prefer to read the information on the slide instead of listening to the presenter, but also because they may "overtax the audience's cognitive resources" (p. 114). A lot of data on a slide, for example, may be overwhelming, and the audience may suffer from information overload. Information overload, nevertheless, may lead to scarcity of attention, as Goleman (2015) emphasised. The presenter-teacher, too, may focus on the slides or on operating the software instead of focusing on their audience or students (Bell, 2014; Young & Travis, 2017). As Zelazny (2006) highlighted, presenters must focus on the audience, not the slides, because "eye-contact is a psychological handshake" (p. 130). Another disadvantage is that students may become passive (Taylor, 2011) as observers in classes rather than participants. Yet another downside is that slides are time-consuming to prepare, although the time gained in class may compensate for the investment (Taylor, 2011).

The thorough and time-consuming preparation that slides require presenters to invest in was also emphasised by Weissman (2011). However, a power failure may ruin the teacher's plans, so they need to have a backup plan as well. The pre-prepared slides may make the teacher less flexible, although this could be countered by co-creating the slides with the students, for example, by using Mentimeter (Taylor, 2011).

In summary, well-prepared slides may enhance the presentation or lesson, but poorly designed or poorly handled slides may hinder their flow. In Duarte's (2008) framework, the presentation development process should stand on three legs: 1) the message, or the idea we wish to communicate, 2) the visual story or the graphics we use to convey that idea, and 3) the delivery or the execution of the presentation (pp. 10–11). Thus, we can conclude that the complexity of the task does require presenters, lecturers, and teachers to undergo professional training.

Recommendations for the Use of Slides

There are some golden rules in the presentations literature that a teacher ought to familiarise themselves with before embarking on using slides. In business presentations, the use of one or two slides per minute is recommended (Duarte, 2012, p. 150), and most slides should focus on only one idea (Leger, 2009). Medgyes (2020) suggested the one idea per slide rule as well but pointed out that 20 slides would be sufficient for a 45-minute presentation (p. 77). Animation is a great way to make the slides more engaging but too many animations can become "distracting or even annoying" (Zelazny, 2006, p. 74). However, the rules of thumb presented here will have to be adapted for educational purposes, especially language classes, depending on the aims of the slides.

Generally speaking, the most important feature of well-designed slides is their clarity and simplicity. Slides need to be kept short and simple, as most experts suggest (e.g., Duarte, 2008, p. 34; Zelazny, 2006, p. 153), or as Taylor (2011) put it, "less is more" (p. 46). Most sources recommend that presenters use no more than five lines, no more than five words per line, and only one concept per slide (Young & Travis, 2017). Text-heavy slides, "slideuments" (Reynolds as cited in Duarte, 2008, p. 6), or too many numbers on one slide are to be avoided: Zelazny (2006) recommended that text slides should not include more than 30 words (p. 153). Duarte (2008) advised that two-line titles should be avoided and the use of sub-points as well, although they are offered and encouraged by PowerPoint templates by default. Medgyes (2020), too, discouraged users from using bullet points and too much text, as he put it (in Hungarian), it is the presenter's job, not that of the slides, to do the talking (p. 78). Small font size should also be avoided, as Zelazny (2006) put it, "no one will ever complain if the lettering is too big" (p. 99). Font size above 30 points is recommended by Duarte (2008, p. 234) because it requires presenters to focus on the most relevant points. Bell (2014) called our attention to avoiding putting too much information on one slide and reminded us to "use blank space as well" (p. 49). Similarly, a quotation, for example, is not to be longer than 30 words (Duarte, 2012). The slide should be seen as a billboard that is aimed at selling an idea or as Jay and Jay (1996) put it "a presentation is an exercise in persuasion (as cited in Zelazny, 2006, p. 7).

A lot of white or black space sharpens the audience's focus (Duarte, 2012, pp. 131–132), while displaying a white screen by pressing the letter W on the keyboard during a PowerPoint presentation might help the presenter or the teacher redirect students' attention to themselves or the interaction (Taylor, 2011). A blank screen removes the distraction of the slide or visual during lengthy transitions or while answering questions (Zelazny, 2006). Therefore, slides need to be airy and visually straightforward.

With the spread of visual communication and new sources of entertainment, the simplicity of slides, however, needs to go hand in hand with imagination, as Zelazny (2006) emphasised, "audience expectations for creativity and excitement are higher than ever" (p. 59). Reynolds suggested that presenters do the reverse of what the audience expects and that they take the audience on an unexpected journey of discovery (Reynolds, 2014). Therefore, visuals and slideshows need to be designed to make a remarkable impact; funny images are said to work most of the time. However, humour is to be incorporated carefully; it is only recommended when it is used to make a point, when the context calls for it, and when the presenter feels at ease with it (Zelazny, 2006, p. 72). Weissman (2011) also warned presenters about the dangers of jokes: They might not work, especially not the same way with today's diverse audiences because "comedy does not cross borders easily" (p. 12). In order to come up with imaginative slides, Zelazny (2006) recommended that presenters build on inspirations from colleagues, the audience, music, the arts, sports, and that they "think like a kid again" (pp. 82–84). Duarte (2008) believed changing your work environment may help trigger your creativity (p. 26) when working on your slides. The way the slideshow is presented can also enhance the way it is received by the audience, as the message of an enthusiastic presenter is more likely to be remembered.

The layout and organisation of each slide are as important as the clarity and simplicity of the message on them. Using images, diagrams, and data will enhance understanding and assist the speaker in convincing the audience, especially if they are eye-catching and creative (Duarte, 2012; Hadiyanti & Widya, 2018; Taylor, 2011; Young & Travis, 2017; Zelazny, 2006); therefore, language teachers should aim to design slides that please the eyes and help visualise the message, and, most of all, teachers should remember not to use plain text only. One source even goes so far as to recommend the ideal font type: Helvetica, while pointing out that Comic Sans is not taken seriously and that Times New Roman is outdated (Feloni, 2016 as cited in Young & Travis, 2017). Whichever font one decides to use, it must be carefully selected since fonts have personalities (Duarte, 2008). Medgyes (2020) discouraged presenters from using several fonts on the same slide and underlining or italicising words. As practical information for the use of PowerPoint, the most commonly used presentation software, it is also worth knowing that F5 will help you start the slideshow, while Shift + F5 will help you play the presentation from the current slide. Alt + F5 will start the presentation in presenter view, and B will give you a black screen and allow you to be in the centre of attention. In fact, the slides should illustrate, highlight, and summarise the content visually.

The organisation of slideshows and their internal structure are also considered important by many. Williams (2008) recommended various ways to jump start a presentation, and Zelazny (2006) pointed out that the introduction should "light a fire under the audience", meaning it should make an impact (p. 53). "Start with a bang", or "hook 'em early", as Reynolds (2014) said on his website. To help future presenters, Zelazny has come up with the PIP formula, which reminds presenters to carefully think about the *purpose* of the presentation, its *importance* to the audience, and the *preview* of the entire presentation. At the same time, the slideshow is not supposed to be an "anxious parade of knowledge" (Zelazny, 2006), p. 22), and there should not be too many details included. Williams (2008) also emphasised that presentations should "finish with a bang" (p. 30).

Being aware of the desirable features of slides will probably enhance teachers' understanding of the way slides work. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the message of presenters and the way they deliver it are far more important than what presenters show on their slides (Weissman, 2011).

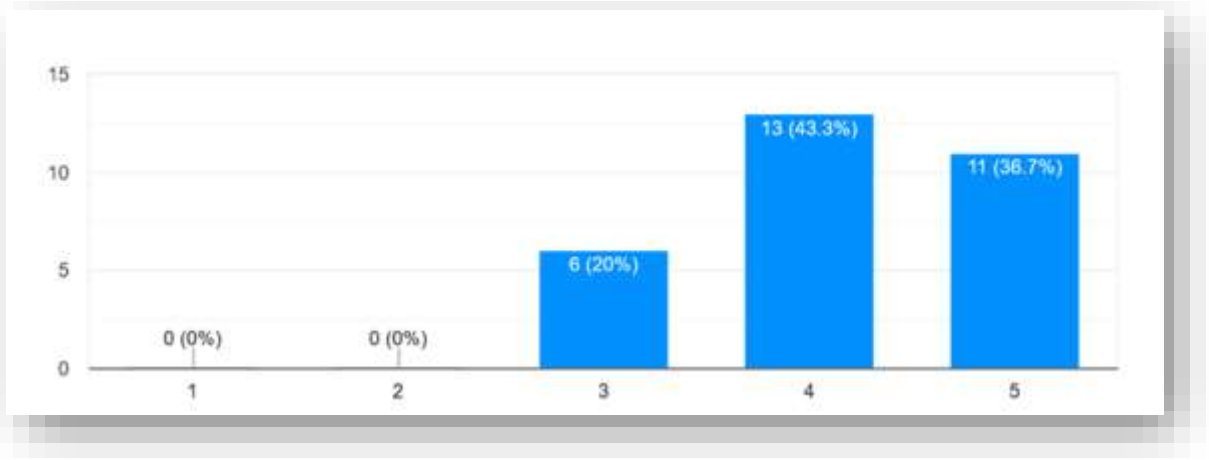
Small-Scale Questionnaire Study

In order to see how useful students find slides in their language classes, and how relevant the recommendations of the literature are in the given ELT context, a small-scale survey was conducted with 30 students studying at the business school in Budapest. The students were between 17 and 26; their average age was 21. Fifty-five percent of them were male students; one of the students did not wish to reveal their gender; the rest of the students were female. Students were invited to do a 10-item survey in Google Forms on a voluntary and anonymous basis, and they were asked Likert-type questions, open-ended questions, and they had to state to what extent they agreed with some statements. The questions and statements can be found in Appendix A.

Analysing the students' responses to Questions 1 and 3 in the questionnaire (see Appendix A), the results indicated that students found slides in non-language classes more important (M = 4.16 on a 1–5 scale, SD = 0.75) than in English language classes (M = 3.73, SD = 1.20), which means that publishers' decision to offer slides with business textbooks but not with English coursebooks seems justified. The majority of students considered slides important in non-language classes: Thirty-seven percent found them very important, and 43% found them important. This means that 80% of the students gave a rating of 4 (important) or 5 (very important) to the importance of the use of slides. In comparison, only 60% of the students gave a rating of 4 (important) or 5 (very important) to the importance of the use of slides in English language classes. The largest subgroup (37%) gave a rating of 5 to the importance of using slides in English language classes, but the second largest group (23%) gave a rating of 2 to its importance, thereby reducing the overall average. Figure 1 depicts the overall distribution of the ratings with regard to non-language classes.

Figure 1

Students' Views on the Importance of Slides in Non-Language Classes

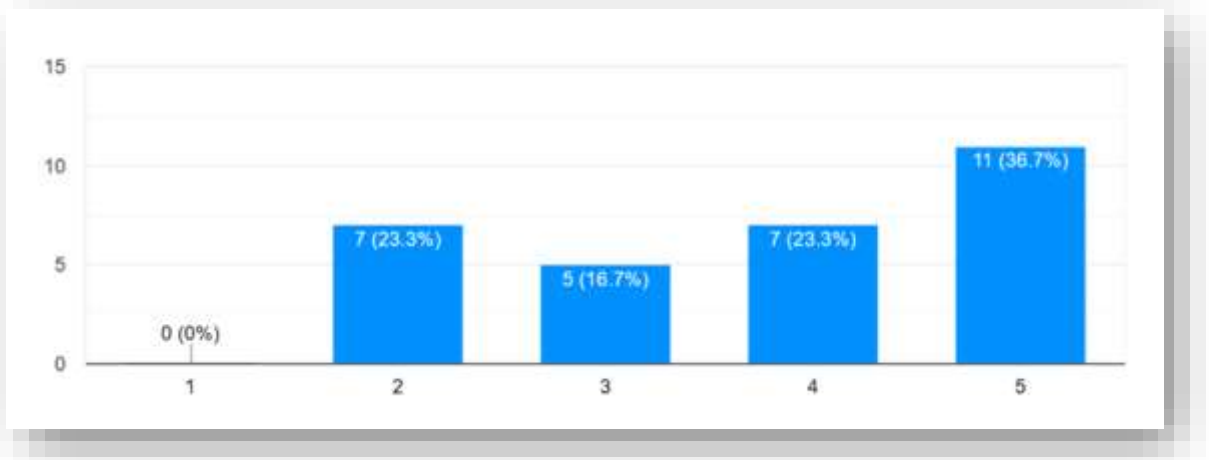


Note. 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important)

As it can be seen in Figure 2, the students' opinions ranged from not important to very important when they were asked about the importance of slides in language classes. Almost a quarter of them found slides not important, one sixth felt neutral, while another quarter found them important. More than a third believed slides were very important in teaching and learning languages in higher education.

Figure 2

Students' Views on the Importance of Slides in English Language Classes



Note. 1=Not at all important, 5=Very important)

When commenting on why they found slides important (or unimportant) in their non-language classes (Question 2 in Appendix A), four of the students mentioned visual learning as the reason, which may indicate the importance of presenting information in a visual form or supplementing orally communicated information with visuals. The students often referred to some aspect of independent study at home, which is greatly enhanced by the availability of the slides, for example, "I don't have to take notes and can easily study from the slides." As another student wrote, "it helps learning at home." Others found the slides useful for other reasons, for example, the fact they are in English: "because as english [*sic*] is not my mother language, with slides I will not miss these main point [*sic*]." The organisation aspect was also referred to by one student: Slides are used "in order to give an overview of the material." Slides were used as memory hooks as well, "seeing makes information more memorable", as one student pointed out.

In terms of language classes, the responses to the question on why slides are important (or unimportant) in language classes (see Question 4 in Appendix A) included various reasons. One interesting reason mentioned by two students was "to demonstrate things", which may be linked to the comments related to visual learning in connection with non-language classes. One student remarked that slides are important "because students can memorise it a lot easier" although it is not clear what exactly students can memorise more easily with slides and in what way slides help with memorisation. The focus of language and non-language or skills-based and content-delivery types of classes may have been touched upon by another student in the following remark: "I used to attend in classes without slides and still i [*sic*] didn't fell [*sic*] like i [*sic*] need slides." The same idea perhaps surfaced in the following comment: "I don't think slides are necessary for every English language class. Sometimes communication is more important." The complexity of language competence or communication is perhaps alluded to in the following remark: "Cuz [*sic*] that only highlights the main things and not the whole stuff which I need to pass the exam."

Students expressed their agreement on a 1–5 Likert scale to six statements concerning different elements/aspects of slide use (see Statements 5 to 10 in Appendix A). They appeared to find the structure of lessons with slides easier to follow: Fifty percent absolutely agreed with the statement. Forty percent of the students fully agreed that visuals (e.g., diagrams, pictures, graphics) presented in slides help them to learn, and almost 47% fully agreed that the lesson is better organised if there is a slideshow that goes with it. Fifty-three percent fully agreed that the information (e.g., text, data) presented in slides helps them to learn, while 33% selected the middle, neutral option. Altogether, 72% of the students agreed or fully agreed that the lesson is more entertaining if there is a slideshow that goes with it. However, only 3% agreed fully with the statement that if there are slides, the teacher focuses on the slides, and that does not help them to learn (Statement 10). Thirty percent totally disagreed with Statement 10. The average ratings for each statement can be seen in Table 1. For more detailed information on the distribution of ratings, see Appendix B.

Table 1

Average Ratings Given to the Statements

Statements	*M*	*SD*
5. I believe the information (e.g., text, data) presented in slides helps me to learn.	4.20	0.92
6. I believe the visuals (e.g., diagrams, pictures, graphics) presented in slides help me to learn.	4.10	0.92
7. I can better follow the structure of the lesson if there are slides and that helps me to learn.	4.33	0.80
8. I believe the lesson is better organised if there is a slideshow that goes with it.	4.20	0.96
9. I believe the lesson is more entertaining if there is a slideshow that goes with it.	3.93	1.08
10. I believe if there are slides, the teacher focuses on the slides and that does not help me to learn.	2.43	1.22

The small-scale study showed that the university students are aware of the different nature of non-language and language classes. They are aware that in their non-language classes slides will assist them in memorising the content, but in language classes communicating in a foreign language involves more than just reciting what had to be committed to memory. To some extent, the study also showed, although on a rather limited sample, that the lecturers in question handle their presentation slides professionally and that the presence of slideshows does not take away from the learning experience.

Experimentation With Slides

In the following section, some examples of slide-based language classroom activities will be presented. Based on the literature, and to some extent under pressure from fellow instructors whose classes are very professionally accompanied by slideshows, the author of the article started to experiment with the use of slides in her English classes. The slides presented below aim to bring the outside world into the classroom, to create an information-gap exercise, to revise a grammar point, to do a warm-up exercise, and to facilitate interaction between students.

In speaking development classes, the author found images useful to bring the outside world into the classroom in many ways and to generate discussion. One example of a picture-based exam preparation task can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

The Slide for a Picture-Generated Task

The task is for students to compare, contrast, and link the images. It is one of three tasks that constitute the oral exam of an in-house language competence test. The original task in which students had to describe and freely come up with associations related to one picture was changed to include the comparison and linking of two pictures. The decision to use two pictures instead of one proved to be a good one since students feel freer to talk and ramble about the topic, and thus produce more language samples when presented with two pictures.

A vocabulary revision task was managed by the author with the slide that can be seen in Figure 4 below. Here, half of the students in the group were asked to sit facing the slides while the other half were sitting with their backs to the slide, and the task was to define the different types of film listed on the slide. The activity is the transformation of an information gap exercise; instead of handouts, half of the students are shown slides in the front while the other half have to face the back of the classroom. Since the activity involves some physical movement around the classroom, it also disrupts its monotony.

Figure 4

The Slide for a Vocabulary Revision Task

For a quick revision of a grammar area, the slide in Figure 5 was used by the author. The topic of conditionals rarely sounds attractive to students; cartoons, nevertheless, are designed to be eye-catching and funny. Moreover, in this particular strip, students can easily identify and sympathise with the student since they are familiar with the three situations depicted in the images. The quick slide-based summary of the rules of the conditional aspect may then be followed by more serious work, which may include unfinished sentences such as the ones in Figure 6. The addition of the image, nevertheless, makes the slide useable on its own as well. In this case, rules and example sentences may be elicited from students.

Figure 5

A Slide for Revising Grammar

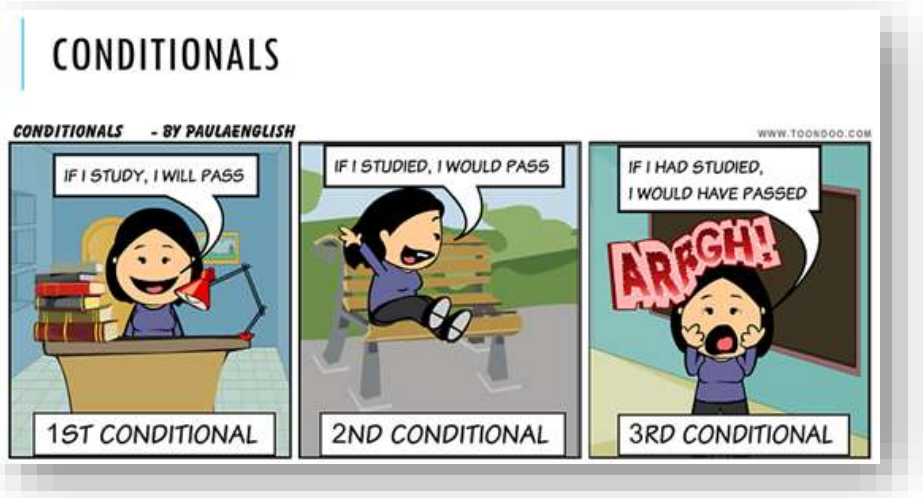
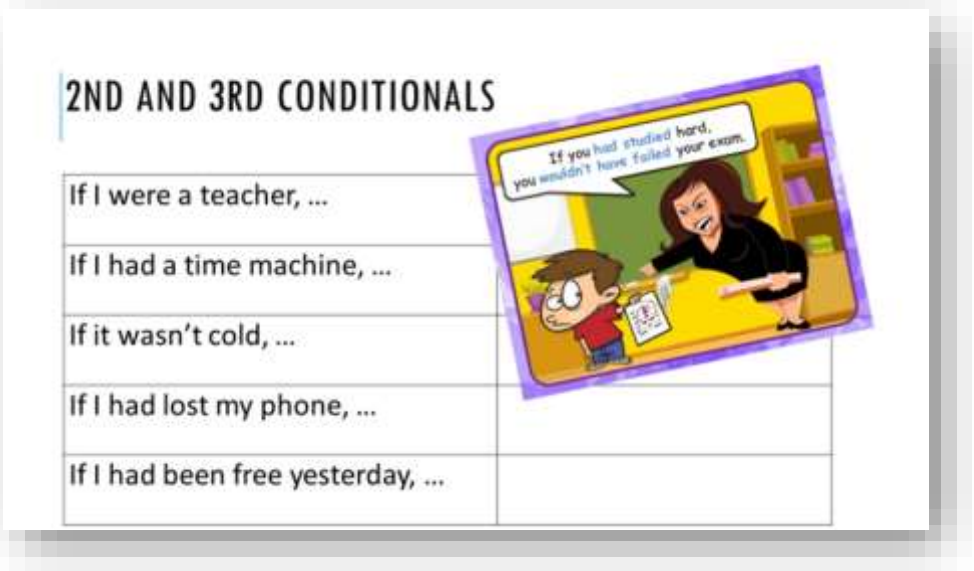


Figure 6

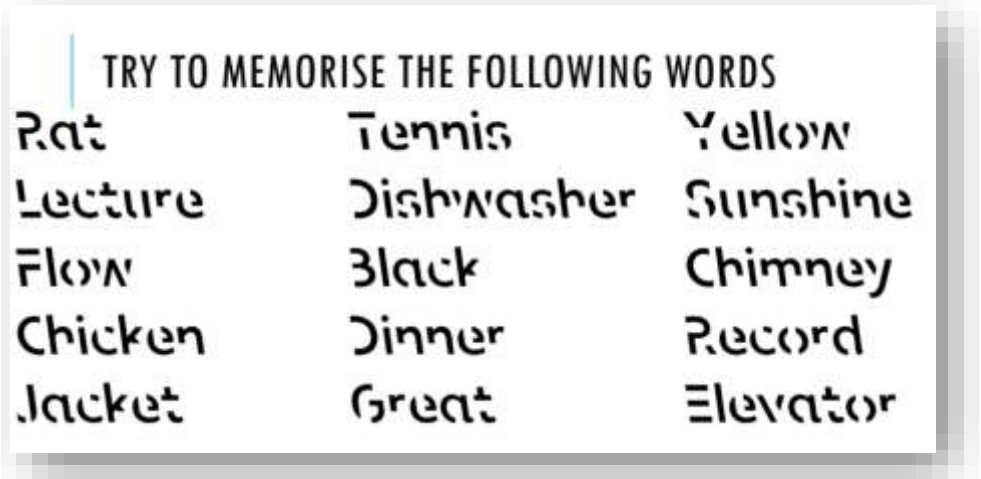
Further Slide-Based Work on the Conditionals



The slide in Figure 7 was used by the author as a warm-up exercise in an Academic Skills class, where the aim, in addition to introducing students to the basics of academic writing and referencing, is to familiarise them with learning styles and improve their academic achievement. In the slide, we can see the use of a font called Sans Forgetica, which was developed by a creative agency and a university behavioural business lab in Australia (Harris, 2018) and which, in small doses (Karvelas et al., 2018), helps people remember key phrases. The warm-up memory game with Sans Forgetica was used to inspire a discussion about the role of effort and memory in learning and recall.

Figure 7

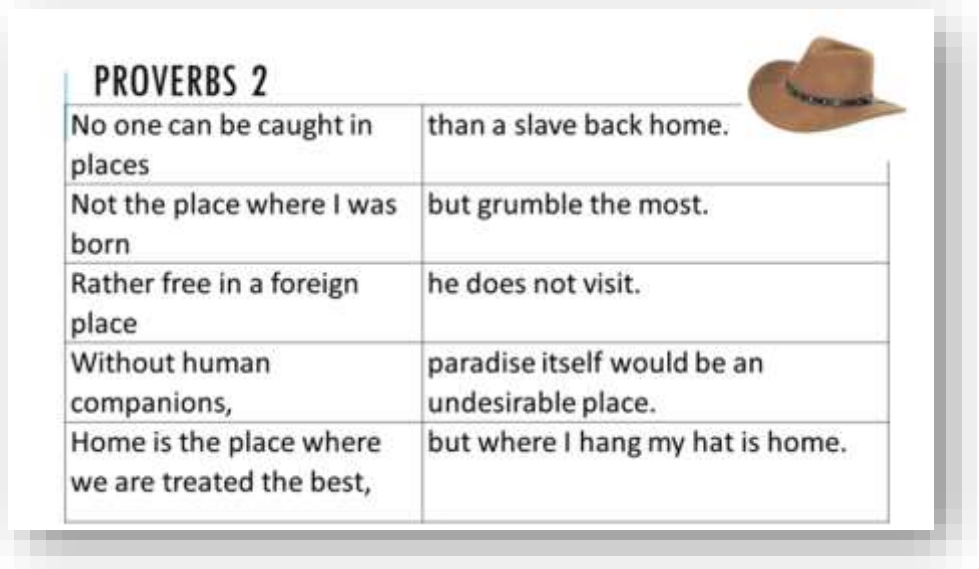
A Slide-Based Memory Game



Another warm-up exercise presented in Figure 8 includes the matching of beginnings and endings of proverbs. The slide successfully brought the class together at the beginning of the lesson and introduced the topic of the lesson (How do you make a place your own?) at the same time. After students did the matching, they were also informed about where the proverbs come from, as shown in Figure 9, which could provide food for thought in subsequent discussions.

Figure 8

A Matching Exercise

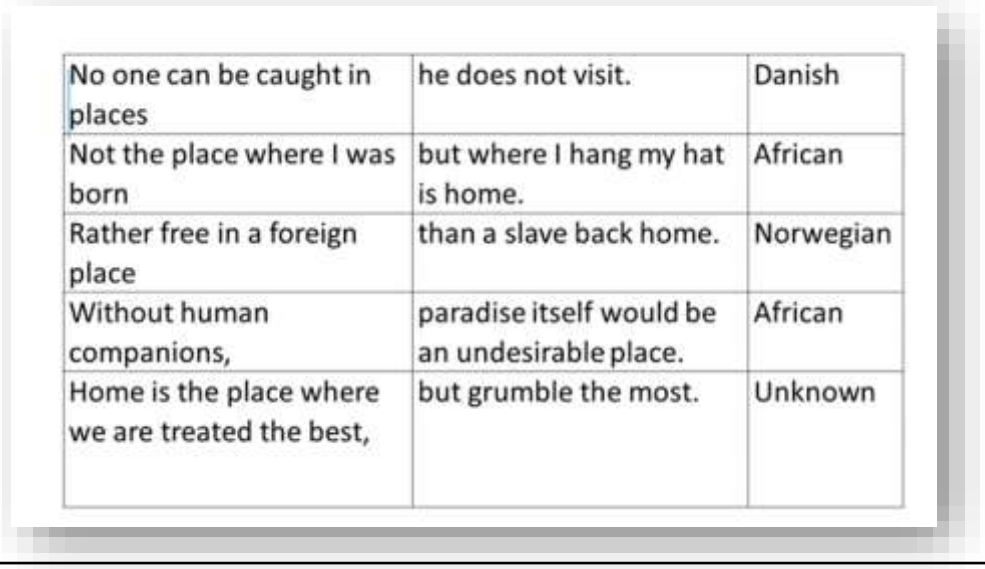


PROVERBS 2

No one can be caught in places	than a slave back home.
Not the place where I was born	but grumble the most.
Rather free in a foreign place	he does not visit.
Without human companions,	paradise itself would be an undesirable place.
Home is the place where we are treated the best,	but where I hang my hat is home.

Figure 9

Key to the Matching Exercise in Figure 8 With Sources Added

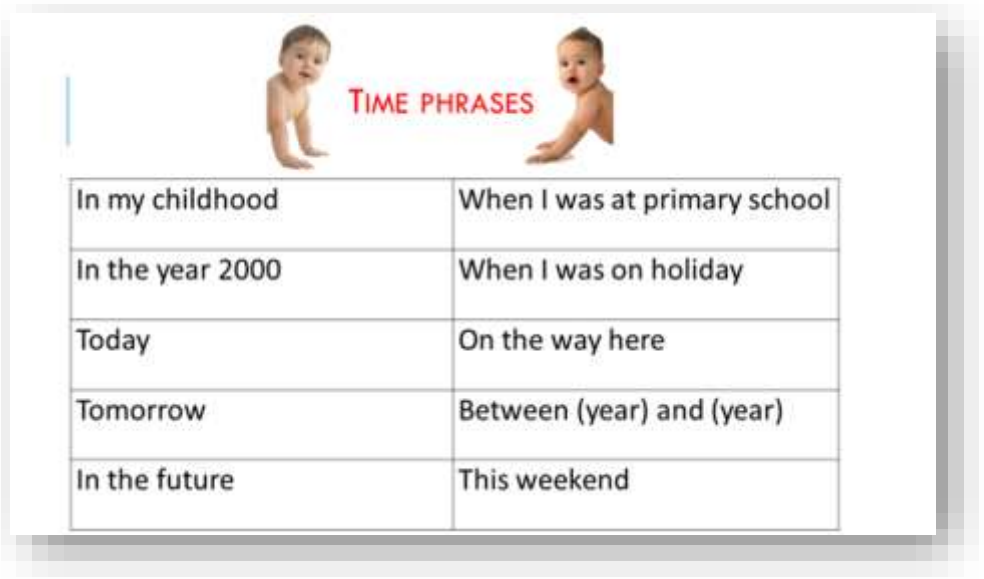


No one can be caught in places	he does not visit.	Danish
Not the place where I was born	but where I hang my hat is home.	African
Rather free in a foreign place	than a slave back home.	Norwegian
Without human companions,	paradise itself would be an undesirable place.	African
Home is the place where we are treated the best,	but grumble the most.	Unknown

A slide that was used by the author to facilitate student-to-student interaction can be seen in Figure 10 below. The slide was used to structure and perhaps stimulate a short discussion of pairs of students in which time phrases were to be practised. Students were free to select which phrases they would like to use, but a minimum of six were to be used. Thus, the exercise gave enough stimulus and freedom to students to conduct a conversation with the peer they happened to be paired up with. It was hoped that the baby photos would appeal to most students and help them open up.

Figure 10

A Slide to Enhance Student Interaction



Experimenting with slides proved to be a rewarding experience. Slides, especially if projected on a large-enough screen, command the attention of most students. Teachers are typically in a more advantageous position than presenters: They know their audience quite well, so they know what images, jokes would be attractive for their students. Teachers can also improve their slides based on their previous experience since educational slides are more likely to be recycled than one-time conference presentations.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to give some practical advice to practising language teachers and reported the results of a small-scale survey on students' views on the use of slides in non-language and English language classes in higher education. In addition, some examples of slide-based language development activities were presented.

Based on a review of the literature and the experience of experimenting with slides in English language development classes, the author believes that not all rules of thumb from the presentations literature may apply in language classes. Language teachers will need to develop their own methodology for the use of slides, all the more so because the switch to online teaching in 2020 has created an urgent need to use more visuals. One rule of thumb, though, that may be useful for language teachers in general is to use slides only if they themselves feel comfortable using them since their attitude to the medium will impact their students' attitude as well. Employing slides in language classrooms needs to have a clear purpose, otherwise it may appear redundant. The slides and presentations culture that surrounds students and teachers in higher education, especially in large institutions and classes, may have had a negative effect on some stakeholders. Some teachers and students, at least, might value personal interaction and person-to-person contact more than fancy images, especially in a communications classroom as they have been saturated with the easy-to-use and ready-made presentation slideshows that accompany textbooks.

From the data available from the 30 participants of the small-scale survey, it seems that it is not the entertaining aspect of slides that this small sample of students value the most. Students appreciate and believe that slides structure lessons or structure them better, and the visuals contribute to making the material more easily understandable. Based on the data available, it appears that on average, teachers probably incorporate slides into their lessons professionally, and most do not make the mistake of concentrating on the slides or the technology in lieu of their students.

The results of the classroom research described above seem to suggest that, in modern higher education, slides are not as vital in language development classes as they are in non-language classes, but they certainly contribute to making a class more varied. Tentatively, one may arrive at some conclusions concerning how slides are to be used in the language classroom, the first of which is that fewer slides would need to be used in a language class than are recommended or ideal for business presentations or lectures. The second may be that, within a lesson, a limited amount of time needs to be dedicated to classwork based on slides. The author's experience has also shown that slides used in the language classroom need to have a clear purpose, for instance, to provide a link to the outside world, to demonstrate a language phenomenon, to elicit discussion or opinions, or to provide a basis for pair work. Slides may also help to make the structure of the lesson more explicit so students can follow it more easily by, for instance, indicating the beginning of a new stage in a lesson.

Even if a clear purpose for educational slides is identified, it must be borne in mind that, as Duarte (2012) said, slides are "empty shells" (p. 96). When planning slide-based activities, Duarte's (2008) concept that their development is a "three-legged stool" (p. 11) needs to be taken into consideration. In teaching contexts, the message or idea of slides could be replaced by their educational purpose, but sufficient attention needs to be paid to the design and delivery of slides. Because of their visual and complementary nature, design and delivery are important factors in how slides will work. For example, copying a coursebook exercise onto a slide will probably be less effective than adapting it to a presentation software, which almost always will imply shortening and simplifying. Instructions, for instance, need not be added; those can be delivered in speech, while the use of a powerful image will probably make it more impressive.

In terms of limitations, the above findings have to be considered with caution given that the sample in this study is rather small and the context is fairly specific. Further research could identify the specific goals and functions that slides could have in language classes and which of those are considered to be useful by students and/or teachers. It would also be interesting to replicate the study with students and teachers who have participated in online language classes and to examine how the online context has affected their opinions concerning the use of slides.

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Appendix A

Online Questionnaire

Use of slides in English language teaching

This questionnaire aims to explore students' views on the use of slides in English language teaching. The questionnaire is anonymous and is made up of 10 questions only (3–4 min). Please add your textual comments in Questions 2 and 4.

Thank you.

Zsuzsanna Soproni, PhD
International Business School, Budapest

1. How important are slides for you in your non-language (e.g., business-related subjects) classes? (1=Not at all important, 5=Very important)

2. Why are slides important or unimportant in non-language classes in your view?

3. How important are slides in your English language classes? (1=Not at all important, 5=Very important)

4. Why are slides important or unimportant in English language classes in your view?

5. I believe the information (e.g., text, data) presented in slides helps me to learn. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

6. I believe the visuals (e.g., diagrams, pictures, graphics) presented in slides help me to learn. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

7. I can better follow the structure of the lesson if there are slides and that helps me to learn. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

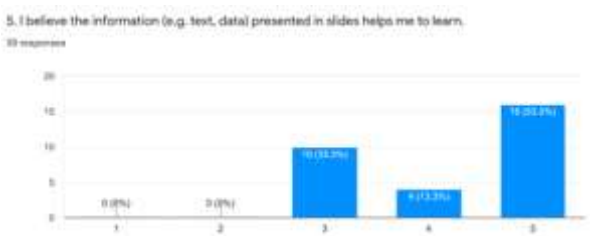
8. I believe the lesson is better organised if there is a slideshow that goes with it. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

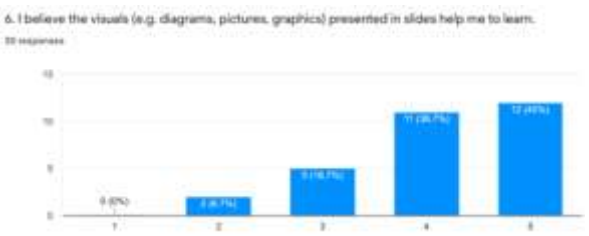
9. I believe the lesson is more entertaining if there is a slideshow that goes with it. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

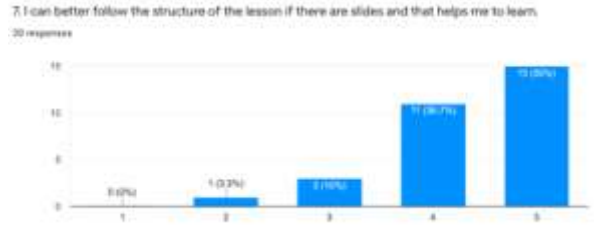
10. I believe if there are slides the teacher focuses on the slides and that does not help me to learn. (1=Totally disagree, 5=Absolutely agree)

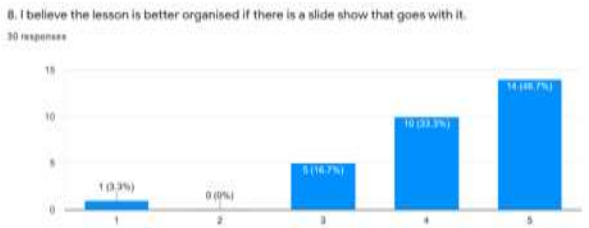
Appendix B

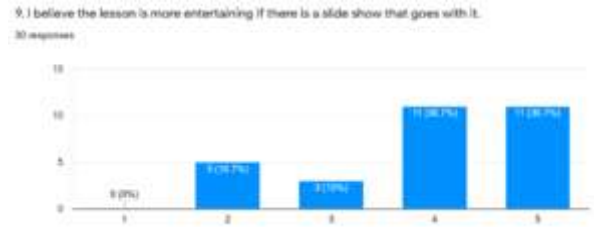
Distribution of Scores for Statements 5–10











Non-Peer-Reviewed Papers

Make It Stick: Taking the Stigma out of Memorising

Jasmina Sazdovska

Introduction

The role of memorising in English language teaching methodology has been changing closely in line with the general trends for preferences of various overall teaching methods. As language teachers, we occasionally immerse ourselves so deeply in our own field of study that we might at times lose sight of practices widely used in other fields. Few would argue that medical students should not commit to memory the elements of human anatomy or that those studying law should not learn by heart sections of the legal framework. The study of natural sciences demands the retention of numerous formulae, and even in primary school in maths we need to be able to recall in seconds basic multiplication, in chemistry the periodic table. The reason that language teachers pay less attention to memorisation might be linked to the strong backlash against the Grammar-Translation Method and the arguable need to distance ourselves from it.

In the Grammar-Translation Method, language learners were expected to commit to memory lists of vocabulary items and grammatical rules. As a result, memorising played a key role in language learning for a long period of time, lasting until the middle of the 20th century when other teaching approaches started replacing the traditional Grammar-Translation one. Most of these alternative approaches, including the now prevalent Communicative Language Teaching, frequently in part side-lined the use of memorising and translation techniques.

While some researchers (Cook, 2007, 2010; Duff, 1989; Gutiérrez Eugenio, 2013; Illés, 2011; Popovic, 2001; Stoddart, 2000; Vermes, 2010) have argued convincingly for the reintroduction of translation into the language classroom, few authors like Lewis (1996) and Pachler (2004) have contended that memorisation should follow suit.

These dormant ideas were awakened when I started reading for sheer pleasure what I thought was a book unrelated to my usual field of work in language teaching and learning. I had picked up *Make It Stick* (Brown et al., 2014) simply out of general curiosity as the title was closely linked to books of popular science that I had previously read and very much enjoyed. One was *The Tipping Point* (Gladwell, 2002) whose third chapter discussed the stickiness factor, which is the quality that makes a concept or product highly memorable, something to which people pay close attention for extended periods of time. The other book, *Made to Stick* (Heath & Heath, 2007), provides a template for making ideas sticky and states that in order for notions to be sticky they need to be: Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional Stories (SUCCESs). I found this scheme to be particularly useful when teaching students to make their presentations memorable and presented the approach at a NYESZE Conference (Sazdovska, 2014a). So, when I started reading *Make It Stick* (Brown et al., 2014), the ideas about memorising and the language classroom started percolating to the surface in my mind. I began thinking about how memorising techniques could be applied in our English teaching practice. These techniques were presented at the IATEFL-Hungary Conference (2019) and will be outlined here as 10 steps illustrated in the infographic in Figure 1. The infographic has appeared in several online reviews of the book (Bainad, 2018; Bruce, 2015), and I found it to be a useful structural framework for the conference workshop.

In what follows, each step will first be described, and then some practical implications and activities for the English language classroom will be proposed. At the end, brief summaries of tips on how to improve learning will be provided for both teachers and students. The tips are meant to be suggestions for broadening teachers' toolkits, which they may choose to use or adapt as appropriate for their own classroom. The conclusion links back to my personal experience with English language teaching and why I consider the memorisation strategies outlined here to be of importance.

Figure 1 (part 1)

Bruce's (2015, August 5) Summary of Make It Stick (Brown et al., 2014).

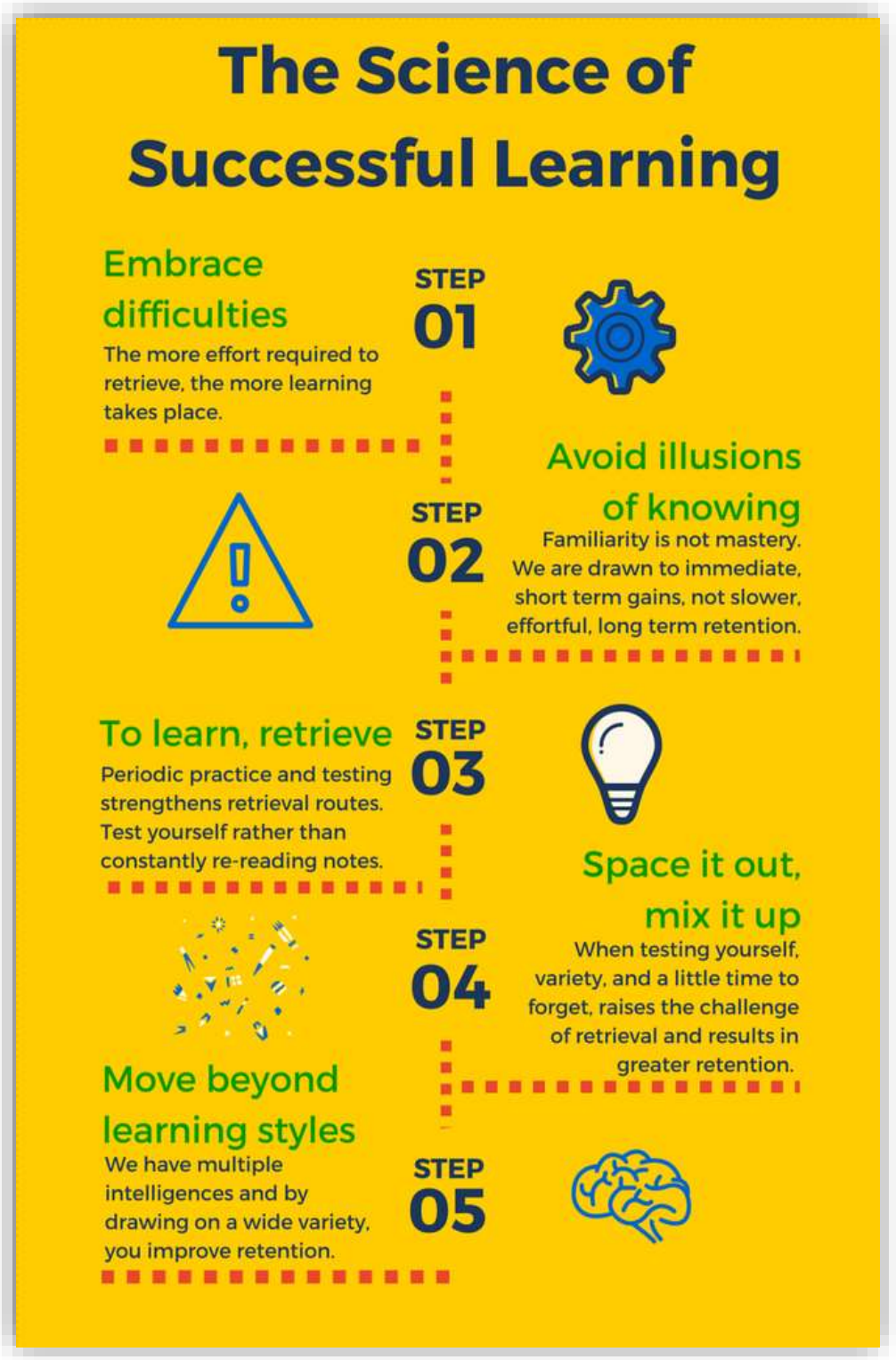
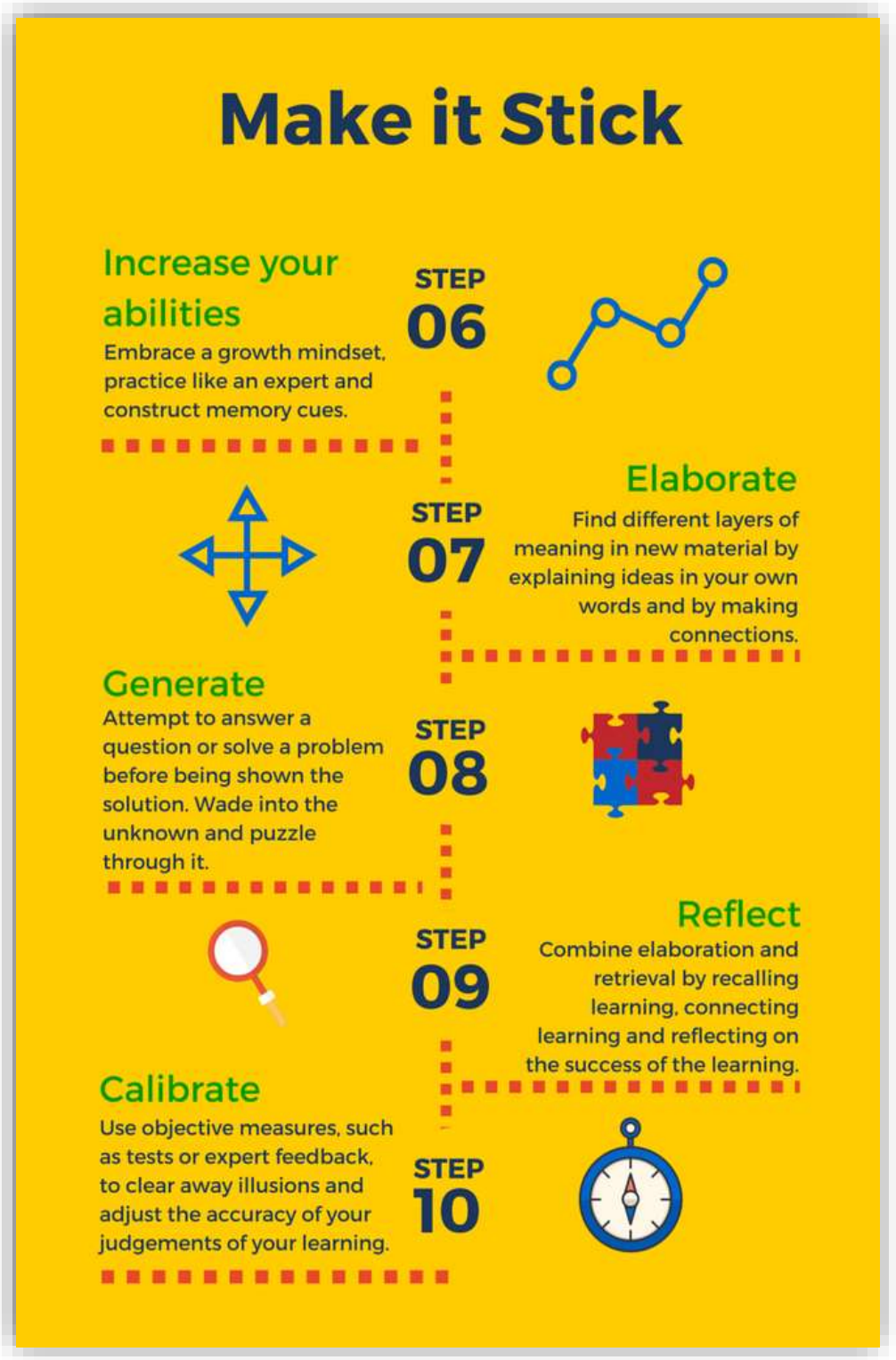


Figure 1 (part 2)

Bruce's (2015, August 5) Summary of Make It Stick (Brown et al., 2014).



Step 1: Embrace Difficulties

The first premise is that learning is and ought to be a difficult task. Committing facts to memory does not come easily or naturally to most people. Yet, the harder it is to retrieve stored information, the better we recall it when we finally succeed in the retrieval. For example, if we read a text, immediately afterwards it is relatively easy to summarise it. However, if we allow some time to lapse between the reading and the retrieval of the information, we will need to work harder to remember the details. In the long-run, the effort needed to recall the details of the reading will result in better recollection after a second, delayed rereading. Practising strenuous retrieval before a second reading is much more effective than a mere repeated exposure to the information. Repeated effortful retrieval strengthens and multiplies the neurological routes and connections, thereby leading to a more robust and durable form of knowledge. Even after you have mastered a field of knowledge or a certain skill, it is vital to occasionally keep practising the basics in order to stay sharp. Effortful learning helps to:

- Reconsolidate memory;
- Create mental models;
- Broaden mastery;
- Foster conceptual learning;
- Improve versatility; and
- Prime the mind for learning (Brown et al., 2014, pp. 82–86).

Short-term obstacles to learning, which counter-intuitively lead to better long-term retention, have been called desirable difficulties by psychologists Bjork and Bjork (1992). Such desirable difficulties include strategies for encoding (converting sensory information into meaningful cognitive representations), consolidation (the process of organising the mental representations), and retrieval (the ability to quickly access information that has been encoded and consolidated).

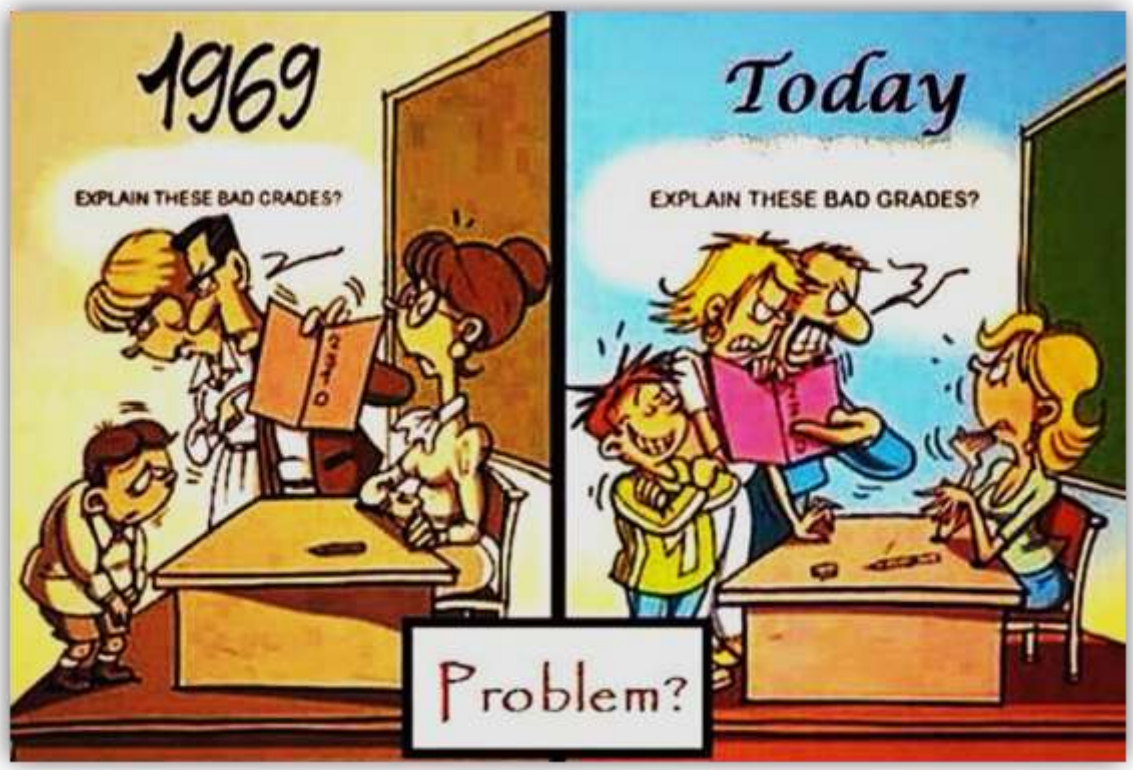
Application in the English Language Classroom

Misinterpretation of Communicative Language Teaching has at times led to the overuse of enjoyable 'communicative' activities that frequently consist of little else but simple fun and games with at best vague and at worst no learning objectives. Students—often supported by their over-protective, so called helicopter parents—have relinquished the responsibility of learning (see a popular meme in Figure 2) and have come to expect edutainment and gamification as a regular course of action in language learning. We need to dispel the myth of easy language learning resembling the process of acquiring the first language during infancy. Learning a foreign language is a difficult task, and we need to accept it as such. We need to foster in our students "a growth mindset with a strong expression of a belief in the potency of effort" (Mercer & Ryan, 2009, p. 439).

Students can have a rewarding experience not just from games in the classroom, but from successfully meeting the tough challenges of demanding tasks. This can be done by introducing desirable difficulties in all three stages of memorisation: encoding, consolidation, and retrieval.

Figure 2

Helicopter Parents and the Shift of Responsibility for Learning (ESL Printables, n. d.)



First, several tactics can be used to introduce desirable difficulties in the encoding stage of learning and memorising. When reading a text or a list of words, certain letters can be blanked out to slow down the students' reading and force them to pay attention and decipher the meaning. Soproni (2021) recommends using the unusual Sans Forgetica font (illustrated in Figure 3) to achieve the same sense of difficulty for students when reading a text on slides. Alternatively, students can be forced to guess the meaning of words before learning them by being asked to match the words with pictures or translations in their first language. Students can then check their guesses after they have been exposed to the words in a reading passage, listening task, or viewing exercise. This process of finding the answer or solution on their own is called generation and will be discussed again later on. Unsuccessful attempts at guessing are a valuable experience for students because this forces them to engage in deep processing where learners need to disentangle the correct answers from the mistakes. This process requires "persistence in the face of failure [which] is the key to success" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 93).

Figure 3

An Example of Sans Forgetica: The Quick Brown Fox (Earp, 2018)

Second, to enhance consolidation, students could be asked to pair up synonyms and/or antonyms of new lexical items. Categorising vocabulary into various groups can also serve as a challenging task where students need to organise the new information and incorporate it within their existing knowledge. Another way to foster consolidation is to ask students to reflect on, explain, or elaborate on the topic being covered. This can be done through summary writing tasks as well as debates and discussions.

Third, easy retrieval needs to be avoided. A simple way to do so has already been hinted at: delaying. For instance, after having students read a text and familiarising them with the new vocabulary, the teacher moves on to discuss and explain some grammatical structures found in the passage. After this detour, the students are asked to recall the vocabulary without the use of their notes. This is challenging not only because of the time lapse, but also because of the sudden change in topic and the lack of support from notes. The additional effort that students need to engage in to accomplish this task successfully will strengthen the neurological connections when students, at the end of the exercise, are allowed to check their notes.

Step 2: Avoid Illusions of Knowing

The fifth chapter of *Make It Stick* discusses the Dunning–Kruger effect according to which "people overestimate their own competence and, failing to sense a mismatch between their performance and what is desirable, see no need to try to improve" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 121). This means that when our students are studying, going over the text or exercise many times may give them the illusion of knowing when, in fact, they only have an automatic, temporary, and quick recall of the content, but they lack the understanding of the deep meaning, which comes from controlled, slow learning. Closely connected to the old Latin adage *repetitio est mater studiorum* (repetition is the mother of all learning), the illusion of knowledge might be one of the explanations for teachers' aversion of the practice of rote learning. This does not, however, mean that repetition is useless, but it does necessitate that repetition be accompanied by several activities that can help to avoid the illusion of knowing.

Application in the English Language Classroom

To achieve controlled, slow, and effective learning in the English classroom, several strategies can be applied which help to dispel the illusion of knowing.

- **Use frequent, low-stakes quizzes**: Instead of having one large, high-stakes, all-or-nothing test at the end of the course, it is better to have frequent quizzes which are less stressful for the students but have a cumulative effect on their grades and their knowledge. These quizzes can help students identify gaps in their knowledge and avoid the illusion of knowing. Elements which have been covered in previous quizzes can be recycled in future quizzes to maintain practice and circumvent the logic of 'I passed the test on that unit; I can forget about it now'.

- **Introduce regular consolidation exercises**: To avoid memorisation without understanding, it is key to use consolidation exercises on a regular basis. Consolidation was also mentioned in *Step 1*, and its prominence is even more evident here. Strategies that can support the consolidation of both vocabulary and grammar include, among others, the following: frequently asking for definitions of key terms, and even more importantly, asking learners to paraphrase the definitions; relating vocabulary items or grammatical structures to elements which have been previously studied; finding real-life examples in literature or film of the words and grammar being covered.

Step 3: To Learn, Retrieve

Of all the 10 steps listed in this paper, this one has the most in common with elements we usually associate with rote learning. For knowledge to be triggered reflexively and automatically, in a split second, exactly when needed, we need frequent retrieval of the facts in the form of repetition, drilling, and practice. This ability "to act out of reflex before you've even had time to think" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 121) is a key performance skill in almost any situation, but particularly for quick problem solving in emergencies. It is easy to think of examples where this reflexive retrieval could make the difference between life and death. A pilot whose aircraft has a failed engine needs to have immediate and perfect recall of all the minute details of the exact configuration of the particular model of plane they are flying in order to be able to maintain control over the craft and land it safely. Similarly, a neurosurgeon operating on a human brain does not have the luxury of time to muse over which blood vessels run in the treated brain area. Their knowledge needs to be subliminal and instinctive.

Often modern-day education reformers consider that education should mainly be about developing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). However, this opinion disregards the fact that according to Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) remembering and understanding are necessary prerequisites for HOTS such as analysing, evaluating, and creating. In fact, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) argued as follows:

> Transfer and retention are important goals of instruction. The more complex cognitive processes are useful in this regard. They transfer to other contexts from the one in which they are learned; once developed, they are retained in memory for fairly long periods of time. They also can be used as activities to facilitate mastery of educational objectives that include the less complex cognitive processes. In this latter case, complex cognitive process learning is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. (p. 232)

It is understandable that we, as teachers, would like to develop our students' creativity and critical thinking skills, but neglecting lower-level skills such as retention brings to mind a proverb attributed to Confucius: "Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous" (QuoteHD.com, n.d.).

Application in the English Language Classroom

The old-fashioned type of 'drill and kill' tactic, despite its undesirable reputation in Communicative Language Teaching, can and should have a respectable place in the language classroom **provided it is applied appropriately**. Frequent repetition and drilling used to promote quick retrieval can, as mentioned above, form part of activities for transfer of knowledge to different contexts as well as in the application of HOTS. For example, upon encountering new lexical items in a text or listening activity, students can be asked to perform several tasks that enhance memory and transfer:

- Guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context;
- Look up the words in a dictionary and check your guesses;
- Make flash cards with the new vocabulary, form pairs, and quiz your partner on the meanings;
- Complete a fill-in-the-blanks exercise with the new vocabulary;
- Play Taboo with the new lexis where students need to explain the meaning of the word to a partner without using synonyms;
- Use the new words to summarise and analyse the text;
- Use the new vocabulary to describe your own experience in relation to the topic at hand;
- Use the list of words to create a story on an unrelated topic.

Similar strategies can be applied for the learning and practice of new grammatical structures.

Perhaps one of the most useful suggestions for practising retrieval is frequent quizzing. The flash cards mentioned in the list above can be a valuable resource for this as they can be recycled into other units and used at any point in the course. Repeated retrieval can be fostered by using quizzes in class, but also by encouraging students to quiz themselves either in pairs or even at home alone. Regular formative testing with corrective feedback comments helps students to avoid misunderstanding or incorrect remembering.

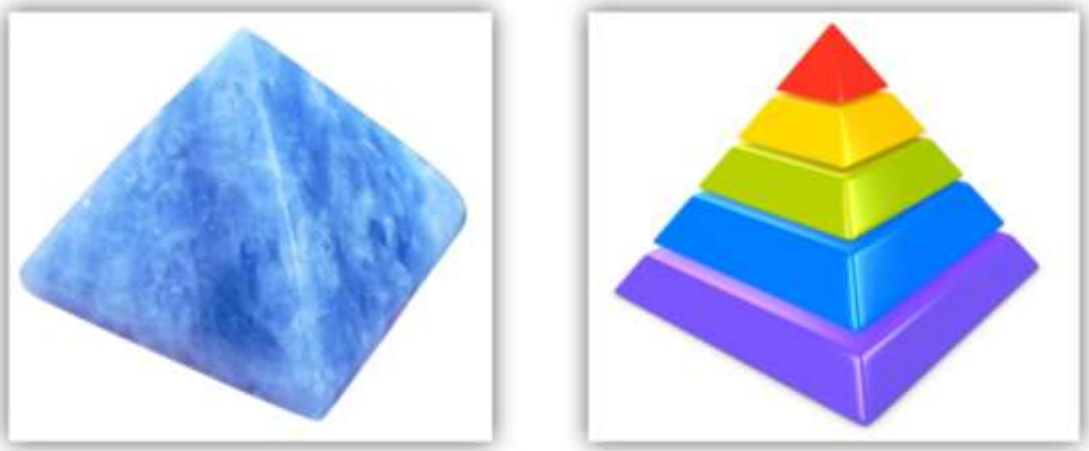
At this point, it is important to refer back to the notion of effortful learning. In order to introduce a desirable difficulty, after the initial, immediate testing of the new lexical or grammatical items, a somewhat longer time can be left until the next quiz. Such delaying of the subsequent retrieval practice makes the retrieval process more effortful which in turn leads to stronger retention.

Step 4: Space It Out, Mix It

The fourth step in promoting memorisation is also closely connected to the concept of effortful retention through desirable difficulty. The difficulty in this case is achieved through spacing out the practice over time and mixing topics. As illustrated in Figure 4, by default we often use mass practice, covering the whole of a unit or topic in one class, in a single stretch. The opposite of this is called interleaving, a strategy where several different topics are covered in the same class requiring students to make fast mental switches. This process of mixing up topics introduces the desirable difficulty because few of us switch easily.

Figure 4

Mass Practice Versus Interleaved Practice (Left: Earth Inspired Gifts, n.d.; Right: Krish for Business, n.d.)



Mass practice is associated with cramming before an exam. It entails memorising large sets of data without spaced out practice and frequent retrieval opportunities. Changing topics and varying activities can eliminate the boredom of drilling. Diverse practice exercises applied in a wide range of situations also force students to engage in sorting processes. Variation helps learners to "assess context and discriminate between problems, selecting and applying the correct solution from a range of possibilities" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 53).

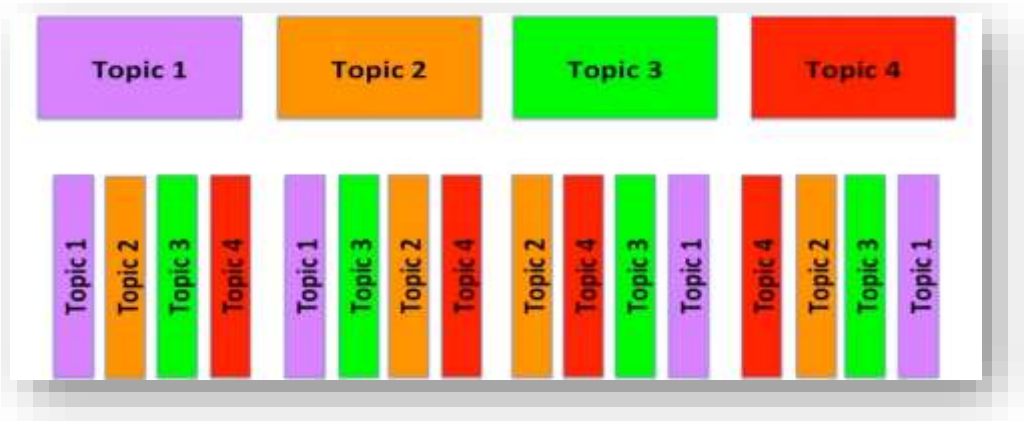
Application in the English Language Classroom

Figure 5 below illustrates the method of interleaving topics and units. This system of variation can be applied not only to topics but also to the types of activities and exercises, to the media we use in the classroom, and even to the kinds of skills required of students. In the language lesson, for example, we might introduce a certain grammatical structure, then apply practice and memorisation tasks, and quiz students on the grammatical unit. After that, we could introduce a text or listening activity where the grammatical structures appear and ask the students to identify all instances of the structure in question. Next, we switch focus from grammar to vocabulary and start dealing with the new words in the text and engage in several of the activities listed in *Step 3* (guessing, translating, flash cards). Subsequently, we can quiz the students on the vocabulary, and then switch topics and ask the students to use the same vocabulary in a debate on a different topic. Desirable difficulty can afterwards be introduced by jumping back to the grammatical structure and incorporating another practice activity.

Intermittent quizzes on vocabulary and grammar covered in previous classes are a great way to interleave. In fact, it is highly recommended that instead of three large, high-stakes tests, teachers use, for example, nine smaller, interleaved, unannounced, and low-stakes quizzes. The lower stakes of the smaller quizzes reduce the stress for the students as they will have an opportunity later on to improve their performance on numerous occasions. The unannounced nature of the quizzes, on the other hand, represents an element of desirable difficulty. Finally, this spreads out student effort during the whole of the course, thereby avoiding the dreaded cramming effect.

Figure 5

Method of Interleaving (Class Teaching, 2015)



Step 5: Move Beyond Learning Styles

Much has been written about the different learning styles and how to cater for them. Indeed, the idea of learning styles is so prevalent in education that it has now become "an integral part of how many people perceive themselves" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 131). The basic premise of the idea of learning styles is that different people process new information in different ways. In order for a person to be a successful learner, the information needs to be presented in their preferred style of learning (visual, kinaesthetic, auditory, reading/writing). If, on the other hand, the information is not presented in their preferred learning style, the learners are at a disadvantage compared to those whose learning style matches the presentation of the task. However, the labelling, classifying, and stereotyping of students in this case (as in many other cases) poses the danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy: "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 139). Students who are told that they are visual learners might become reluctant to tackle longer texts without illustrations compared to students who were told that they are reading types.

The notion of learning styles has not only permeated education but management too. The marketplace for education manuals, self-improvement books, and management guides is overflowing with dozens of different theories about learning styles, each accompanied by their own (frequently high-priced) assessment instruments. Some theories on learning styles contradict others, and very few empirical studies capable of validating certain theories of learning styles have been conducted. Moreover, Lethaby and Harries (2015) argued that perpetuating the neuromyth of learning styles might actually represent poor educational practice because "the emphasis on learning styles, we think, often comes at the cost of attention to… other important dimensions" (p. 25). Therefore, one might argue, it is better to concentrate on learner differences that have been tested and proved; differences that are possibly more important for education, such as different kinds of intelligence.

Gardener (2006) described eight types of intelligence: logical-mathematical, spatial, linguistic, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (relating to our natural surroundings like gardeners or hunters do). An arguably more helpful distinction in intelligences was proposed by Sternberg et al. (1999), who differentiate between analytical, creative, and practical abilities. This type of focus on students' intelligence and abilities, rather than on their personality and learning styles, opens up the possibility for learners to tap into all their cognitive resources.

Application in the English Language Classroom

What this means for English language teaching is that teachers need to challenge students' mental capacity by activating as many intelligences and abilities as possible when presenting new material. As opposed to other school subjects, language learning has its own four skills that students typically need to master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Which of these skills our learners focus on should not depend on their preferences but on the task at hand, and all four skills need to be sufficiently developed.

The added value for language teachers in avoiding the pigeonholing of learners according to their learning styles is that teachers and their students can, instead, focus on cognitive strategies that are more likely to work. The first of these is dynamic testing (Brown et al., 2014), an approach similar to 'trial by error', but much more systematic and used as a tool for needs analysis. In dynamic testing, there are three steps that students need to take. In the first step, students encounter a test, either a formal exam or a challenging experience. The students look carefully at the outcomes of the test and identify areas where their skills need further development or where they have gaps in their knowledge. In *Step 2*, the students dedicate themselves to improving these skills or filling these knowledge gaps by systematic, methodical practice, spacing, and mixing exercises, as well as reflection on how to improve the learning process itself. The third step consists of taking another test or attempting the challenge again and analysing the progress whilst identifying further opportunities for growth. The repetition of this growth cycle in a dynamic and methodical manner allows individuals to identify their own personal needs and then tailor their studying to meet these needs and produce the desired outcomes. What we can do as teachers is to support this process by providing frequent tests and quizzes along with personalised feedback for our students, which they can use as an opportunity for constant growth.

Another cognitive strategy that can be used to promote effective learning is structure building. Unlike learning styles, which are based on students' preferences on how information is presented, structure building focuses on the mental procedures we use to process information. Structure building involves identifying the most salient features of the new information and extrapolating from these features a coherent mental representation (Brown et al., 2014), thus constructing a cognitive framework. It appears that some of us find the building of such structures easier than others. These high-structure builders can more readily filter out the irrelevant information compared to the low-structure builders, who get distracted by unrelated details and have difficulty extracting just the key elements. It is important to note here that the ability for building cognitive frameworks forms a continuum. Therefore, the distinction between high- and low-structure builders is not necessarily a clear-cut categorisation, but merely a tool for pointing out tendencies in learning processes.

Being aware of these individual cognitive tendencies in the processing of information can be of benefit to language teachers. Two research studies can provide clues as to how to translate this awareness into teaching techniques to support low structure-builders. Both techniques are particularly useful for language teachers as they involve reading and listening comprehension. In the first, Gernsbacher et al. (1990) concluded that high-structure builders find it easier to discover commonalities in multiple sources than low-structure builders, whose cognitive frameworks become fragmented in such instances. The implications of this finding, for language teachers, is that when presenting information in a reading comprehension task and then moving on to listening or viewing comprehension on the same topic, we need to provide students with guidance and support in identifying the salient commonalities in all the sources. So, in addition to reading and listening comprehension questions, after the activities we need to pose questions like:

- Which three ideas can be found in the text and the video?
- Which words appear in both sources?
- Why do you think they are repeated?
- Which grammatical structures can be found in both the text and the listening task?
- In which situations are these structures used and what meaning do they convey?

The second study by Callender and McDaniel (2007) discovered that low structure-builders are capable of performing at the same level as high structure-builders if they are given embedded comprehension questions in the reading, which assist students to focus on key notions in the text. Most language coursebooks do actually contain reading, listening, and viewing comprehension questions. It is worth taking a look at these questions to evaluate whether they support the filtering of key information. If a need is identified, the language teacher can expand on the questions in the coursebook by adding further questions to help the construction of mental frameworks.

The third element of individual student differences that we, as teachers, can focus on instead of learning styles is the cognitive difference between rule learners and example learners (Brown et al., 2014). Rule learners apply a logic akin to inductive reasoning, meaning that when they encounter different examples of the same category of items, the learners are capable of extracting the underlying rule for what they all have in common. The next time rule learners encounter a new example of the same category, they can apply the rule and easily categorise the new case. In this respect, rule learners are similar to high-structure builders. Conversely, example learners remember the individual characteristics of each example of a category of items they encounter. Then, when they come across a new example of the same group, they take one of the previous examples and try to compare the two. This way of learning, which has elements in common with inductive reasoning, may require greater teacher support than its counterpart. Similarly to low-structure builders, example learners can benefit from the teacher posing questions that require students to focus on the commonalities of different examples of the same group in order to extract a generalisable rule. Just as with structure building, rule forming abilities lie on a continuum with the distinction between rule and example learners being one of degree rather than category.

For language teachers, this aspect is highly important when it comes to the teaching of grammar. The misinterpretation of Communicative Language Teaching as simply providing students with tasks, activities, and opportunities for conveying a message in English with a focus on fluency undermines students' accuracy by relying too heavily on first language acquisition strategies for intuitive, inductive learning of grammatical rules. From what has been discussed so far, it is clear that low-structure builders and example learners would have extreme difficulty with this intuitive acquisition approach. We need to bring back into the English classroom the explicit teaching of grammatical rules, but in a purposeful, communicative manner. After exposing students to contextualised examples of the use of new grammatical structures, English teachers need to help students to extrapolate the grammatical rule for the new structure, explicitly explain how to construct sentences using the new rule, and, most importantly, explain the contexts in which this new rule is typically used. The communicative aspect comes into play at the end of this process when students are given opportunities for practising the new grammatical structure in tasks and activities that mirror real-life situations for the meaningful use of the construction.

Step 6: Increase Your Abilities

Chapter 7 of *Make It Stick* (Brown et al., 2014) discusses the idea of cognitive growth and intellectual development through brain training and deliberate practice. Neuroplasticity means that our brain is malleable and capable of change, growth, and development as we acquire new knowledge (Bruer, 1999). Even intelligence, which many have considered to be genetic and static (at least in adulthood) can actually be increased through repeated exercises and by fostering a growth mindset (Mercer & Ryan, 2009). Crystallised intelligence (Brown et al., 2014) is the accumulated knowledge we have gained throughout our lives, and it can be developed through learning new information. Fluid intelligence, on the other hand, is the ability to find a novel solution to problems through deciphering unfamiliar relationships, which can be developed by brain training strategies. These strategies include problem-solving activities, anticipation exercises, working-memory and attention control tasks, as well as meditation techniques (Nisbett, 2009).

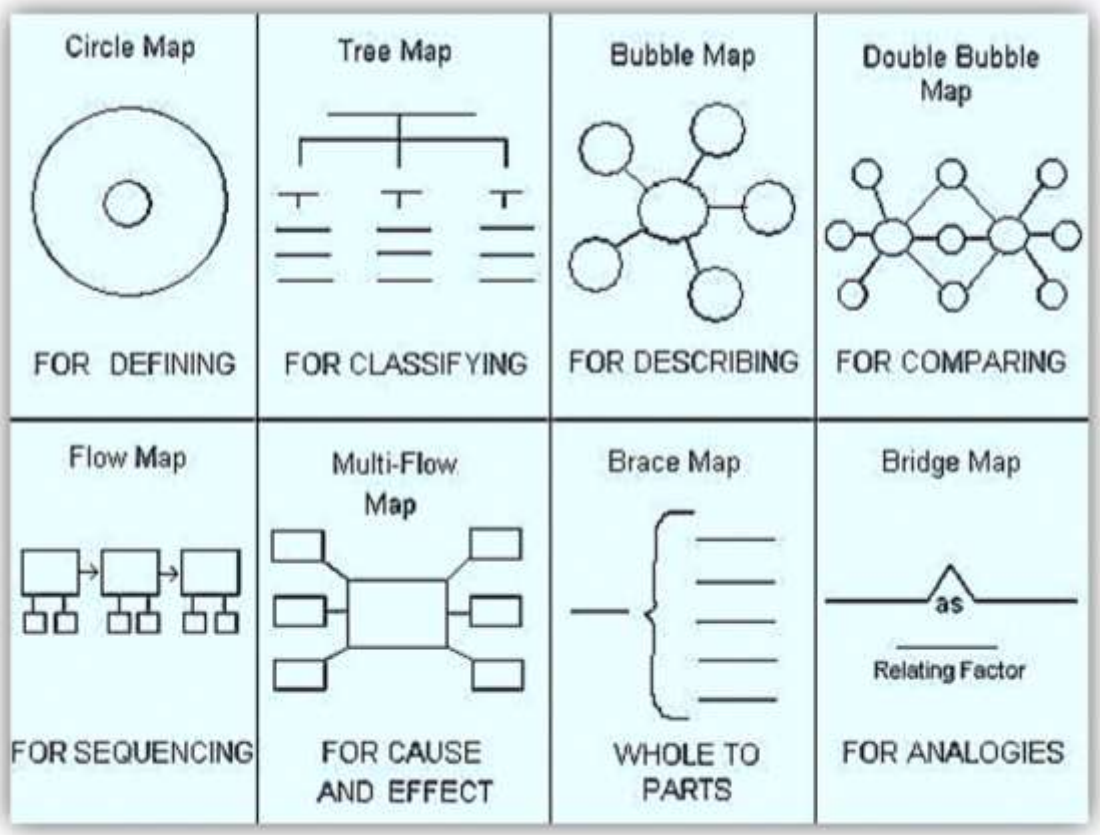
For students, simply being aware of neuroplasticity and the ability of our intelligence to improve is an empowering growth mindset (Mercer & Ryan, 2009). The idea that if we work hard and practise frequently, we can not only acquire new knowledge but also increase our ability to process it creatively is liberating and refreshing.

Dedication, commitment, and putting in the 10,000 hours of hard work needed to become successful in a particular field (Gladwell, 2008) can play a much more important role for the growth of our students than the actual starting point at which they find themselves in their quest for learning. Acquiring some mnemonic devices and memory cues, such as the use of graphic organisers; infographics; and acronyms, can speed up this process of development and growth.

Figure 6 illustrates how graphic organisers can be used as mnemonic tools. Circle maps and Venn diagrams (overlapping circles that illustrate the logical relationships between sets of items) can be used for definitions and bringing to light the overlap of notions. Tree maps can be used for categorising lists of terms, while bubble maps can be used for brainstorming, describing, and comparing. Flow charts can display sequencing or relationships, like cause and effect. Brace maps can be applied to illustrate the whole–part relationship, while bridge maps are useful for showing the common factors of two notions which are being compared.

Figure 6

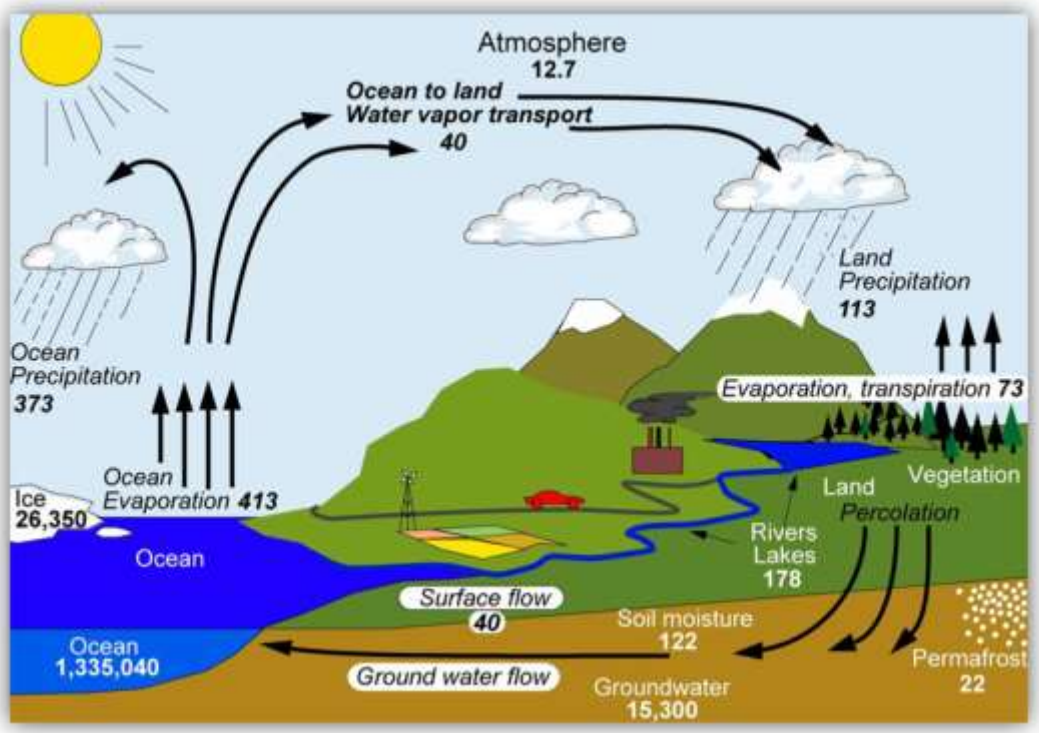
Graphic Organisers (KNILT, n.d.)



Infographics (seen in Figure 1 and Figure 7) can be excellent tools for visualisation, and they can be valuable in the classroom in three ways. First, they can be used to explain complex notions and help learners to understand these concepts through an image. Second, infographics can support memorisation of the notions by students describing the picture, summarising it, and recalling or redrawing it after it is out of sight. Third, infographics can serve as an excellent foundation for interactive tasks. For example, one student can see the graph and describe it to their partner who cannot see it and needs to draw it. Alternatively, two versions of the same graph can be created where some information from version A is missing but provided in version B and vice versa. This platform then serves as an information-gap activity where pairs of students need to jointly figure out the whole of the process or notion presented in the illustration.

Figure 7

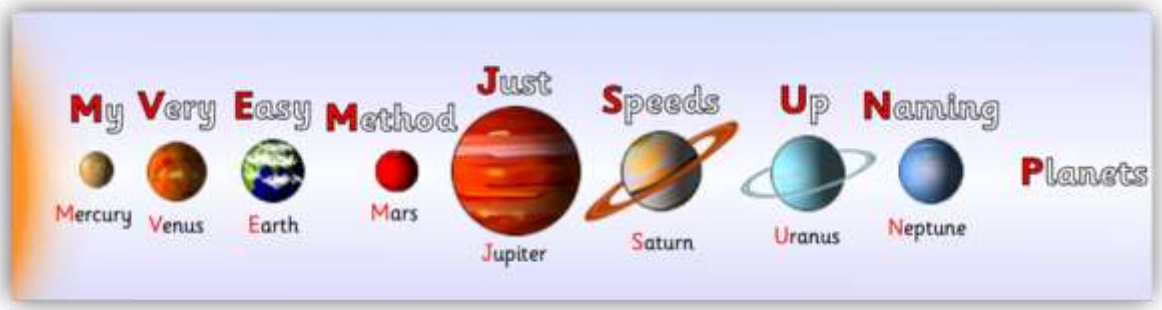
Example of an Infographic of Visualisation (Chart Diagram, n.d.)



Yet another mnemonic strategy involves the use of acronyms and initialisation. These are words or sentences whose elements are constructed from initial letters of the notions which we need to memorise. The acronym represents a key which triggers the memory. As seen in Figure 8, in the sentence 'My Very Easy Method Just Speeds Up Naming Planets', the first letter of each word is identical to the first letter of the name of the planets in the order in which they appear in the solar system. Once taught the technique, students can create their own personalised acronyms which they find easy to remember.

Figure 8

Example of the Use of an Initialisation (SparkleBox, n.d.)



Application in the English Language Classroom

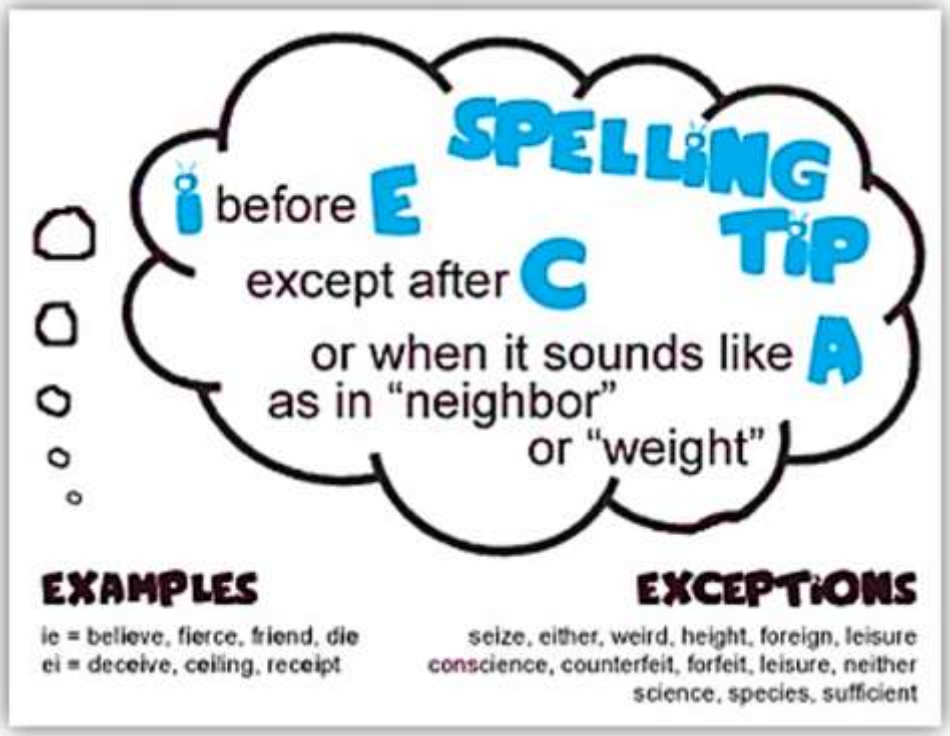
The memory cues mentioned so far can easily be transferred to English language teaching. For instance, graphic organisers (Figure 6) are excellent devices for arranging vocabulary lists into patterns that signal relationships between topic fields. A tree map can be used for juxtaposing words and their synonyms or their antonyms. Bubble maps, flow charts, and brace maps can be used for vocabulary areas to illustrate a larger topic with its constituent details. Bridge maps lend themselves quite easily to building activities for the creative use of language through similes, metaphors, and proverbs. Students can identify a common characteristic for the comparison made in a simile or metaphor and use that as a basis for creating a novel comparison. Bridge maps can also be used to build cross-cultural awareness through teaching proverbs in the language classroom (Sazdovska, 2014b). Learners of English can find an English proverb, identify the underlying folk wisdom being conveyed, and then look for a proverb in their own language that captures a similar sage insight.

The activities with infographics (Figure 1 and Figure 7) mentioned above, like summarising the illustration to a partner who makes a drawing and information-gap pair work, have fairly obvious application opportunities in the language classroom.

Other mnemonic devices that have been used in English language teaching have included rhyming techniques. These strategies are particularly useful for young learners. An example of a rhyme which is used to help learners (even native speaking children) to remember spelling can be seen in Figure 9 below. English language learners sometimes have difficulty knowing whether a word is spelt with "ei" or "ie" as in "deceive" versus "believe", so the easy-to-follow rhyme provides a memory cue, a type of scaffolding upon which to rely when in doubt.

Figure 9

Example of Rhyming Used to Remember Spelling (Teachers Pay Teachers, n.d.)



The mnemonic technique known as the method of loci or the memory palace is often used by people who show audiences at parties or even on TV their amazing ability to remember unusually large amounts of information. This strategy that dates back to ancient Greece consists of building a mental connection between certain physical locations (in a room or place which is very familiar to the learner) and the items which need to be memorised. The trick can be used in the classroom, which is a familiar place that both the language teacher and their students share. As illustrated in Figure 10, certain grammatical constructions and rules can be placed within the room at specific places. The teacher and the students can then think of features that can help them remember the location of the structures. For example, present tenses (present perfect perhaps or -s for third person singular in present simple) are next to the door as you enter; past tenses are at the far end of the room close to the windows (you could use this place for past perfect or irregular verbs). The clock represents a verb: Infinitive constructions with 'to' are before the clock, preceding it on the left, and structures with the '-ing' suffix follow the clock on the right. Posters with the grammatical rules and/or examples can also be displayed at their assigned places in the room. During the course of the lessons, both the students and the teacher can use pointing to certain parts of the room to signal which grammatical structures need to be used. Subtle self-correction through gestures that do not disrupt fluency but still signal the need to maintain accuracy can be used by the language teacher in a technique reminiscent of the Total Physical Response approach (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Figure 10

Loci or Memory Palace (iStock, n.d.)

Step 7: Elaborate

The last three steps will be covered somewhat more briefly than the previous ones because certain aspects of these steps have already been mentioned in one form or another.

Step 7 relates to elaboration, which is the process of connecting the newly acquired knowledge with previous information to build a more coherent mental framework that includes interrelationships. Hence, elaboration has obvious overlaps with *Step 5*, which dealt with ways of constructing cognitive models, and *Step 6*, which is about helping learners understand, memorise, categorise, and connect notions through mnemonic techniques. The process of elaboration requires learners to engage in mental activities that expand the concept being learnt by connecting it to other relevant pieces of information they have previously mastered in order to add detail and complexity to their cognitive frameworks.

Application in the English Language Classroom

The practical implications of incorporating elaboration in English language teaching are clear. In writing tasks, for example, students are often required to summarise a text in their own words. Activities involving paraphrasing are also instances of elaboration. New vocabulary can be deduced from context by looking at the logical links in the given text, or by looking up definitions, or by thinking of synonyms and antonyms. All these are various forms of elaboration.

Additionally, all the vocabulary activities listed in *Step 6* in connection with graphic organisers (Figure 6) provide ample opportunity for elaboration in the language classroom. Likewise, describing infographics (Figure 7) requires learners to use their own words to convey the meaning being illustrated and to make mental connections between the picture and their previous knowledge in order to be able to understand the illustrated concepts.

When grammar is taught, elaboration can help students to identify the commonalities of structures and develop the ability to build on existing knowledge. Let us take modal verbs, conditionals, and subjunctives as examples. At lower levels of proficiency, we can introduce some modal verbs with their basic usage. Soon after, we might introduce the first conditional and use elaboration as a tool to showcase the new use of 'will' and 'can' in these structures. Later on, we might broaden the list of modal verbs and introduce more complex conditional sentences. For this new knowledge to be more easily integrated into the students' cognitive models of English grammar, we may need to elicit previous lower-level instances of modals and conditionals studied in the past. Finally, at more advanced levels, we can talk about subjunctive structures, which requires learners to expand on their prior knowledge of conditional sentences and modal verbs.

Apart from summarising, paraphrasing, graphic organisers, infographics, and building on existing knowledge, further elaboration ideas for the language classroom can be seen in Figure 11. Here, we can see the teacher or a peer asking students to compare concepts, name their opposites, find examples or evidence for claims, write short stories or anecdotes on a particular topic, as well as ask and answer rhetorical questions. Most of us as teachers certainly use many of these techniques on a regular basis. What is different about the claims of Brown et al. (2014) in *Make It Stick* is that these activities are used in a conscious, explicit, and deliberate manner in order to expand not only the students' knowledge but also the array of learning and memorisation tools at their disposal.

Figure 11

Elaboration Ideas (Linder, n.d.)

Step 8: Generate

"Generation is an attempt to answer a question or solve a problem before being shown the answer or the solution" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 208). In this respect, the efficiency of generation as a learning strategy is closely connected to *Step 1 Embrace difficulties* and the notions of effortful learning and desirable difficulties. When we encounter a new concept or problem, we will remember the solution much better later on if we force ourselves to independently guess the meaning of the new concept or find the solution to the problem. This is a form of experiential learning, which means learning by doing, engaging actively with the subject matter. The initial great effort required in anticipating answers and solutions primes the mind for acquiring new knowledge even if the preliminary guesses are incorrect.

This is why some students and teachers like the concept of the flipped classroom, where learners have to do the reading before the lesson. Then, during the class learners can clarify new concepts with the teacher and peers, and engage in discussions and practical activities based on the reading they have completed at home. The procedure does not need to be formalised in this manner though. Students can benefit immensely simply by being advised to do the reading beforehand and attempt to answer the chapter questions that many textbooks contain.

Application in the English Language Classroom

Within the realm of English language teaching, there are several practical activities that teachers can apply in the classroom to foster generation. The first of these involves guessing competitions and challenges. Similarly to activities mentioned in previous steps, when encountering a new word or grammatical structure, students are encouraged to guess the meaning based on the context. This not only makes learning more effortful and thereby the ultimate, correct answers more memorable, but it also provides students with the invaluable skill of deducing, gleaning, and deciphering meaning from context. This pragmatic ability is vital not only for learners of a foreign language, but also for native speakers of a language who encounter a novel concept or vocabulary item.

The second activity is based on the good old fill-in-the-blanks type of exercise. The twist here is that the students do not first read a text and then fill in the blanks of a summary or paraphrase. Instead, the order is reversed, with the first version of the text students encounter having blanks that they need to guess while reading. Because no options are provided, the process requires an even greater effort than guessing the meaning of already given new words. Here, the reader needs to gather a large set of clues from the text to make the mental leap needed to anticipate the answers. After students have filled in the blanks in the first text, they are then provided with a paraphrased summary and asked to check their answers. It is important that the answers are not provided in an identical text where they can simply find the correct words by their position in the reading. In order to figure out whether they have filled in the blanks correctly, learners need to actually understand the meaning of both the original text and its paraphrased summary.

A third activity that also involves anticipation and guessing can be used for reading, listening, or viewing comprehension. With this technique, the teacher stops the students in the middle of the activity and asks them to guess what might happen next. This not

only primes learners to acquire new knowledge like in the first activity, but it also raises their interest in the topic and forces them to pay attention to details. Interesting pictures and even internet memes can be used for the same purpose. An example of this type of picture prompt for guessing what will happen next can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12

"What Will Happen Next?" Guessing Prompt (Imgflip, n.d.)

Step 9: Reflect

Reflective practice has been around for quite some time and has been recommended as a beneficial tool for the improvement of skills in many professions (Schön, 1983). Reflective practice entails thinking about how we learn and identifying which learning strategies have been successful in the past and which have not so that in future we can improve on our skill set for learning. This process of constant, deliberate improvement and expansion of learning tools is often guided by questions like:

- How did I manage to learn that?
- Why was it so difficult to learn this?
- What did I do well? What could I have done better?
- What can I do differently in the future to achieve better results?
- What skills do I need to gain to make my learning more efficient?
- How can I link what I am doing to the skills and knowledge I have attained in the past?

It is logical that being aware of the process of learning and consciously investing the effort needed to improve our learning strategies can lead to more successful learning in the future, yet teachers at times can forget to raise students' awareness of this positive cycle.

Application in the English Language Classroom

As English teachers, most of us have encountered the notion of reflective practice during our teacher training courses or have come across readings such as Green's (2011) *Becoming a Reflective English Teacher*. What we need to do is convey to our learners some of the skills obtained in our own reflective practice. One method of doing this is to regularly ask students to write short reflective paragraphs on their own learning strategies. A practical example can be the following writing task set for homework:

- Think about what we learnt in class this week. Write a paragraph about how it connects to your everyday life outside the classroom. Review your learning experience and identify strategies you can use next time to get better results.

This exercise can serve as a first step that our students can take on their reflective journey. At the end of the term or semester, a somewhat longer writing task can be set which asks students to reflect on their learning experience over the whole course, identify their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning strategies, and make a list of achievable goals for improving their learning tools in the next term.

Step 10: Calibrate

The final step of calibration concerns using tests as learning tools and incorporates aspects of *Step 2 Avoid the Illusion of Knowing*. While *Step 2* mainly focused on what teachers can do to help students avoid the illusion of knowing through the use of frequent low-stakes quizzes and consolidation exercises, *Step 10* views the issue from the students' point of view. Self-quizzing, taking mock exams, and completing comprehension and chapter review questions in textbooks can be valuable tools for students to assess what they have truly learnt and to identify areas for future growth. Sometimes students simply read through self-quiz questions and answer them in their head falling into the trap of thinking "yes, of course, I know that". Putting down the answers in writing, however, and verbalising the knowledge not only crystallises the knowledge and helps with retrieval (*Step 3*), but it also allows students to check and evaluate their answers against the key or by looking them up once more. Only by spotting and correcting our errors can we avoid the illusion of knowledge. Commonalities of this process can also be found with the notion of dynamic testing described in *Step 5 Move Beyond Learning Styles.*

Application in the English Language Classroom

The same process of self-quizzing is important for language learners, and as teachers, we need to be encouraging this practice by providing ample opportunity for students to do so both during and outside our lessons. One of the tips mentioned in *Step 3 To Learn Retrieve*, the flash cards, can also be used not just for building neurological connections but for testing how strongly these connections have been established. The flash cards with vocabulary items can be used for practice and also as self-assessment tools for students to see how far they have come.

Another activity for calibration is to ask students to work in pairs with each student creating a list of quiz questions on a unit. The students then exchange quizzes and complete them. At the end, the pair swaps again, and they check each other's answers. When the quizzes have been completed and corrected, it is important to ask students to look at their own answers one more time to identify areas where they need to improve in the future. This same process of self-reflection on errors can be applied after the completion of the regular low-stakes in-class quizzes or larger tests.

Finally, we need to provide plenty of feedback to our students and encourage them to actively engage with this feedback, not just by reading our comments but by making a to-do-list that learners can act on or by compiling a list of questions to ask the teacher concerning the feedback.

Summary of Tips for Teachers

What follows here is a brief summary of the most important elements of all the steps that teachers may want to have in mind when planning their courses and classes:

- Learning is effortful, so create desirable difficulties in the classroom;
- Interleave tasks and topics both in the lesson and during the course;
- Instead of one large test, use multiple low-stakes quizzes that count towards the grade;
- Use activities that require students to practise retrieval and generation;
- Incorporate elaboration into the tasks for students; and most importantly,
- Explain to students how learning works and teach them how to study.

Summary of Tips for Students

Apart from relying on the teacher to explain to them how learning works, students could try the following strategies to make their learning more effective:

- Read the chapter before class; flip your own lessons;
- Anticipate test questions and practise answering them;
- Quiz yourself, not just in your head; write down the answers and then check them;
- Review the study guides that many textbooks contain;
- Keep notes from class and from your readings;
- Organise your notes using graphs, maps, and illustrations;
- Space out practice and remember to revise old topics;
- Take practice tests and mock exams to calibrate your learning.

Conclusion

The reason that I decided to do a workshop on *Make It Stick* (Brown et al., 2014) is because I found the book to be very well-researched, highly motivating, and refreshingly liberating. With over 25 years of teaching experience at all levels of education and proficiency, in different countries and contexts, I have been struggling to help students achieve accuracy along with fluency. The Communicative Language Teaching method which I was trained in during the many teacher training courses I have attended has, at times, left me feeling frustrated and constricted. Some may think that translation, drilling, and memorisation are antiquated features of the Grammar-Translation Method, which we should have left far behind long ago. Nevertheless, there are elements of 'old' methods that we need not hastily disregard, and I strongly believe that the learning strategies outlined in the book are useful for language teachers and learners alike. Teachers need to be thoroughly familiar with all aspects of teaching methodologies used in the past so that they can take on a more eclectic approach and make informed decisions as to which strategy suits their learners best. This wider toolkit of teaching methods also needs to include strategies on how to improve the process of learning itself in addition to the willingness to encourage students not to relinquish responsibility for their own learning. The notion that students can learn to learn is empowering. Many of us agree that our students need to be autonomous learners who take charge of their own progress. It is time then to equip them to do so.

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Writing: A Step-by-Step Guide to Success

Rachel Appleby

Introduction

We often question our students' ability to write, or perhaps it is that we dread those classes where we are expected to focus on writing skills. Many students (and teachers) often find such lessons tedious and/or challenging; writing is sometimes considered the most difficult skill to work on. Yet, we should not underestimate the amount of writing our students actually do each day, maybe in their own language, but in English too. Take, simply, the amount that teens are writing online. They have their phones at hand all the time, and they are responding to messages and posts throughout the day. They may not be writing in full-sentence English, but they are 'putting words down', albeit online. As one blog put it: "They are texting… 8000 texts (per month) sent and received… Can you imagine probably 5–10 words on average per text…40,000–80,000 words per month: A collaborative monthly story of their lives in WRITING!" (Rosenthal Tolisano, 2010).

What can we learn from this, and how can we exploit it? What is it that motivates our learners to communicate so avidly in writing with each other? While we cannot fully anticipate the kinds of topics they might have to write about in an exam, in class we can encourage them to brainstorm together, interact, and challenge each other's ideas. What is also important in their interactions in writing online is that they are constantly responding or providing feedback to each other. Surely, this is something we can reflect, to some extent, in the classroom.

My earliest memory of writing a text of any length was in my first year at secondary school, aged 11 – "… about your summer holiday". It was the briefest of instructions, and—together with the rather low red-ink number I received as a mark—the experience has reminded me ever since that learners need guidelines for writing as well as constructive and supportive feedback. I got neither of these for my summer holiday essay. Nor did I really get any human response to the stories about my holiday, which until that moment had been a fantastic adventure for me. There was certainly nothing in the way of a fun or collaborative activity included in the process.

Context

My workshop at IATEFL–Hungary 2019 took an overview of how writing 'happens'—or can happen in our English lessons. It focused on involving students in raising awareness of text types and genres, and it looked at one example of how this can be exploited over a series of lessons. Finally, the session addressed exam-type tasks, which teens at schools in Hungary are usually required to do, and ways of approaching them, always keeping in mind how young people are currently communicating with each other.

Initially, the English teachers participating in the workshop were asked to consider their own practices when it comes to writing in class: if and how any model or sample text is provided, the extent to which tasks may be done alone or collaboratively, and also how the teachers' feedback might be handled at various stages. These were considered to be key aspects in successful writing activities: providing a model, working collaboratively, and ensuring meaningful feedback.

However, besides these issues, both teachers and students need to be acutely aware of the genre of the writing they are dealing with. This is the direction in which this session then moved. Nevertheless, in an attempt not to overload the audience late on a Saturday afternoon, only a few key features of genre analysis were focused on. These were highlighted by providing extracts from, for example, a formal letter, a novel, or a recipe. Participants then extracted key features and categorised them under the headings Vocabulary, Grammar, Organisation-Layout, and Style (for in-depth genre analysis, see Cook, 1989 or Swales, 1990).

A short activity then followed, where small groups chose a specific genre and outlined its ingredients, what sort of examples they could present and model for students, and how teachers could support their learners in producing something similar. They were then asked to focus on one key ingredient. For this, it was useful, for example, to note that the grammar of instructions in recipes in English is different from that in Hungarian: While in the former, the imperative is usually used ("Beat the eggs with the sugar"), in Hungarian, a first-person plural declarative would be used ("Keverjük a tojássárgáját és …").

While it is important to bear all aspects of genre analysis in mind, this session looked only briefly at the sentence-level characteristics; it focused largely on organisation and layout, deemed a more significant overarching feature and one often less considered in the ELT classroom.

Genre Analysis: To Do or Not to Do?

At this stage, I should point out there has been some contention as to the value of genre analysis, as exemplified by Thornbury (2013), suggesting that the characteristics of a genre can both "average" a structure and also imply a series of rules, rather like school rules (which we love to break, sometimes for good reason). However, in his blog Thornbury (2013) recognised that "ignorance of genres can exclude people from effective social participation", and in this respect knowledge of how language and texts work also helps us to make informed decisions.

Advanced Writing Class: Illustration

The session continued with an illustration of how an advanced writing class had proceeded, partly online, partly offline. The series of classes outlined a process whereby, following an introductory session, students did their own research into a particular genre online, in this case, a press release. Their task was to choose a topic of interest and find a press release related to that topic. They then had to post a link to their chosen example to a platform (Moodle), together with four to six comments on the extent to which their sample met the criteria which we had discussed earlier for that genre (How to write a press release, 2011). This required them to be aware of the ingredients of the genre, analyse their example, and offer a critique on its success. Students were then tasked with viewing each other's posts and making further comments. Overall, these two stages served to provide several models and additionally exemplified that while there may be rules to follow, they are often broken in real life (usually for a specific purpose, for some additional effect or meaning). Furthermore, the tasks required the students to analyse and comment on at least three press releases. Commenting on each other's work online and reading responses later turned out to be one of the most motivating features of the overall task. It had lent an element of authenticity in how the students tend to communicate out of class, online.

The students were then instructed to draft their own press release, liaise in small groups and give feedback, and ultimately submit a final draft. During this stage, again, clear deadlines had to be provided to ensure that each stage was completed on time. Finally, after receiving back their assignments, students were asked for feedback on the task itself. Despite a few initial teething problems with the platform, the comments were mostly extremely positive: "More genre analysis, please!", "I learnt about others' interests!" and "It was real, not some *** academic essay".

This exercise demonstrated that with support, guidance, and scaffolded tasks, these students were able to analyse a relatively complex text and ultimately produce something similar. Additionally, they benefited from learning about each other's interests (through topic choice), worked collaboratively, and finally produced quality work of an authentic nature.

Feedback: Teacher–Student / Student–Student

Before moving on, it is important to highlight the importance of appropriate feedback. On the one hand, we should be able to encourage our learners to give feedback to each other. Perhaps we can also discuss effective ways of doing this, for example, giving marks out of five according to categories (content, grammar, and so on) or even using a range of emoticons. This contributes to promoting a culture of positivity and being supportive. On the other hand, as teachers, we need to ensure that our own feedback is constructive and meaningful. While the school system may require a one-off grade for certain assignments, students need far more than this. In my own experience, they need feedback on two key areas: content (in terms of a human response) and the task itself. This means, firstly, responding to students on a personal level (e.g., for my school essay, "It sounds as if you had a great holiday!" would have been a treat!) as well as giving feedback on how successfully the task has been completed. This includes pointing out aspects done successfully as well as areas needing to be developed or improved. The 6/10 on my school essay, alongside various 'hieroglyphics' in red on the text itself meant that, feeling considerably embarrassed, I felt the best place for the assignment was a bottom drawer. Similarly, in a different project, "teens reported that what motivates them to write in school are relevant, interesting, self-selected topics, coupled with feedback from adults who paid attention and challenged them" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2009, p. 3).

Application: Exam Tasks

The IATEFL–Hungary session concluded by letting participants put some of the workshop ideas into practice and enabling them to think about how they would apply them to their own classes. This was done by looking at exam tasks which teens and school-leavers in Hungary are typically asked to write. The tasks included samples from Cambridge and Euroexam test papers.

Before launching into the first exam task, however, participants were led into the topic through a photograph of a trespassing cat on a lead (see below). They were asked to guess the situation and encouraged to consider 'cats as pets' and 'cats on leads', enabling the teacher to start drawing out points which could support various arguments connected to the topic.

Figure 1

Trespassing Cat on a Lead? (Author's Own Photo)

This led to the first C1 level exam task, which instructs students to write 200 words on the following:

> You have read a **blog post** about animal rights. The author argues for "a ban on keeping pets". Write an online comment, for or against this view.
>
> (Euroexam, n.d.)

Participants were first asked to consider, in small groups, how successful the lead-in activity would be with their students, what alternatives they could offer, and then what support they would need to give their students in order for them to be successful in the task. This final part related back to the four categories mentioned above (Vocabulary, Grammar, Organisation-Layout, Style). Key in this example is the task requirement to choose only one side of the argument and to support it with rationale. Additionally, the style in an online comment responding to a blog post would be neutral to informal, although it would be important to bear in mind that if disagreeing, it would be advisable to be more formal.

To develop the lead-in aspect of the task and attempt to approach the context of communication that teens are involved with, students could be asked to find and show their own pictures of pets in different places and contexts. An alternative approach (but one which still leads towards the task itself) could be to ask students to work with a mind-map and explore aspects of animals and humans living together. They could also start thinking about the pros and cons of owning different pets and group ideas under headings on a poster. Highlighted in the session was that it is important to encourage students to work collaboratively, and ideally on topics which are relevant or to which they can easily relate. (While some might consider the topic of pets to be rather trivial, anyone who owns a pet would have strong opinions on this topic.)

The second exam task was to write an email, stating a preference—with reasons—for one of three trips in the UK and asking for specific extra information. While this task looked at trips in the UK, virtually the same task could be handled using more likely trips closer to home, trips which a teacher's own students might be interested in and indeed could come up with. Obviously, the aim is to ensure the topic is relevant to students and provide a context which would encourage them to communicate and collaborate. This is greatly facilitated by breaking the task down. Students can work in small groups, each choosing a trip destination, and decide together what each tour could include, how long it would last, and what it would cost. They could also post information about it online to a platform or to a chat app with photos. They could then, individually or in groups, decide on the best trip and ask more questions. All this ensures high student involvement, attempts to mirror the kind of chat they do in their own lives online, and ultimately prepares them for the exam task itself. To address the genre of an informal email, the teacher could elicit the key features for this task: sender-receiver, purpose, titles (subject line), and register. The teacher could also write a sample email and elicit or provide a range of phrases which students could group according to function, before finally the students write their own exam task individually. Again, to consider this as process writing, students could be involved in commenting on each other's work according to the criteria relating to content (reason for choice, tour length, cost) and genre (see email features listed above) before submitting a final draft.

Finally, the third task looked at a for-and-against essay. For this genre, it would be hugely beneficial for participants to see model answers or examples and, specifically, to analyse different ways to organise content, that is, a block or a point-by-point approach (Academic Essay Structure Skills, n.d.). In looking at the basic analysis criteria in this context, participants especially highlighted the use of cohesive devices for expressing addition and contrast. Some mentioned that the style would be more formal and that credit would be given for a clear introduction and an appropriate conclusion. They also noted that in order to come up with ideas, collaborative classroom work can be very useful.

Conclusions

At the end of the session, it was specifically interesting to note which aspects or ideas mentioned had resonated most closely with the participants. While most IATEFL–Hungary conference attenders tend to be active classroom teachers willing to try out new ideas, running interactive classes, and not being prepared to repeat the same old ideas over and over again, many mentioned the idea of teachers themselves writing a model as unusual and as especially motivating for learners. (How I would love to have read about my secondary school teacher's summer holiday; it would have motivated me to write my own piece and may even have inspired me to include ideas I had not thought of, and I may also have learnt something about her, which would have helped build rapport between us. I have no doubt the effort it would have required of her would have been seriously outweighed by the benefits and impact it would have had on us!) Additionally, some teachers present at the workshop rarely ask their students to read and give feedback on each other's writing during the process of fulfilling a task, and others also felt reluctant to get involved and break a task down into so many stages [scaffolding]. In my own experience, this has made writing an all-involving process which both I and my students have benefited from. Finally, it was acknowledged that, without necessarily going into significant depth or detail of genre analysis, it is crucial that teachers are aware of different genre types, can distinguish these and highlight features in tangible ways for students, and can provide or make accessible several valid models and examples for analytical purposes, ideally as a class activity. To conclude, all participants agreed on the value of meaningful feedback and an environment where the teacher is fully aware of students' work and provides relevant tasks.

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Conference Selections

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Engaged – Spotlight on Learning is a compilation comprising a selection of papers presented at the 29th IATEFL-Hungary Conference, held in Budapest, 4-5 October, 2019.