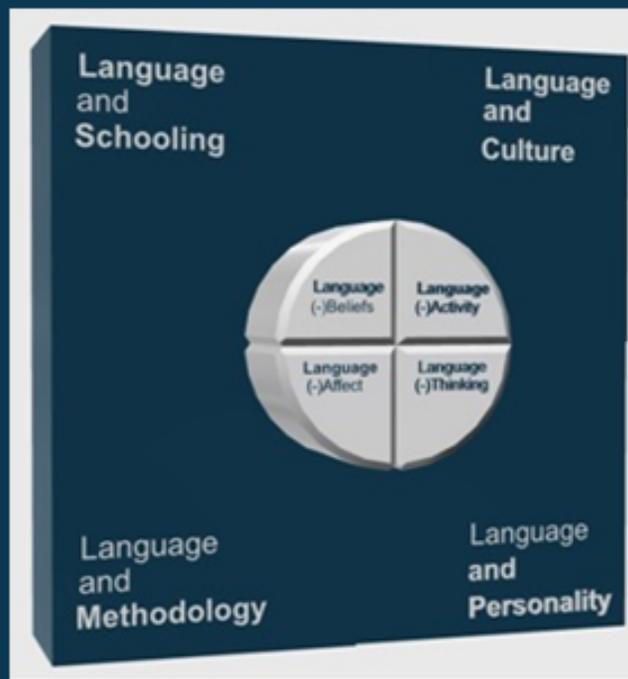


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EXAMINING LEARNER AND TEACHER LANGUAGE IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

On our ERL path to learner and teacher language identity

Language takes to us spaces we have never “visited” before. The learning (with comprehension) of a new word or phrase opens a gate to an entirely new experience, expanded awareness of the surrounding reality, and greater appreciation of the human limitations and possibilities at the same time. This novel experience is thoroughly personal in that each of us, with a different mental structure, incorporates the new items in a fully unprecedented way, and at every stage of the individual intralanguage, each of us arrives at a unique whole. Hence, the process of incorporating any particular language items reaches beyond the concept of construction, and appears more reminiscent of **composing** (as in music) in that it consistently implies unknown combinations and constructions which cut across not only different semantic fields, but also multiple disciplines and reality dimensions.

This process of language composing underlies entire education, retains a **highly personal** character, and drives the formation of learners’ and teachers’ identities altogether. Its significance becomes straightforward once we come to realize how much our idea of other people, their personalities and knowledge, rests on their understanding and use of – first/native or second/foreign – language. Their language identity – understood by us as a highly personalized four-dimensional hybrid encompassing their language views, language activity, language affect, and language matrices – largely shapes all learning and teaching environments and it also determines all learners’ educational (and frequently also later professional) success. Needless to say, this applies to all educational levels and settings, with the linguistic functioning of learners and teachers invariably occurring in the foreground of their work and studies. The process is, naturally, socially- and culturally-conditioned, which in ERL Journal is consistently reflected through its authorship cutting well across country and continent borders.

It is due to the fact that this key position of language across the educational board remains underrated that this volume continues ERL Journal’s sequence – after we have focused on the concepts of *experiencing of language* in Volume 1 and *enhancing multiculturalism* in Volume 2 – with the notion of *language identity*. This volume’s eponymous concept has recently given rise to the **ERL online Sessions** held by ERL Association, with the first event of this type being organized in the wake of COVID pandemic, during which learners’ and teachers’ identities have been put to a kind of test they had never undergone before. The first session thus concentrated on ‘*learner and teacher language identities*’, understood wider than ‘language learner identities’ in that whilst the latter (narrower) concept can be paraphrased as ‘the identity of language learners’ and relates to how students situate themselves in the world as language learners only, the former one encompasses entire education (and life altogether) and pertains to how students situate themselves in the world on the level of language, not necessarily with reference to (L1 and/or L2) language education only.

The volume addresses **LEARNER AND TEACHER LANGUAGE IDENTITY** on several levels, that is on the strata on individuals' awareness, official documents, educational texts, and didactic practices. In each of these four dimensions the facet of learners' and teachers' language identity can be argued to be systematically taken for granted and thus substantially – and detrimentally to all educational stakeholders – essentially neglected. With 9 papers scattered across the four levels named, Volume 3 constitutes an appeal for placing 'learner and teacher language identity' in the centre of educational discourse. Its message chimes in with a joint publication issued recently under the ERL Framework under the title 'In the Search for A Language Pedagogical Paradigm', "aimed at cohesion and coherence across multiple approaches to how language is and should be implemented into education" (ibidem: 9), in which the concept of same understood language identity of teachers and learners plays a major role. The volume closes with a review of another ERL-oriented publication concerning the 'educational role of (four) language skills' across education, followed by a brief report on the aforementioned ERL online Session. We hope that the readers of Volume 3 will share our belief that the notion of 'learner and teacher language identity' opens lots of spaces worth exploring.

M. Daszkiewicz

* *In the Search for A Language Pedagogical Paradigm* (2020). Daszkiewicz M. & A. Dąbrowska (Eds.). Oficyna Wydawnicza „IMPULS”, Kraków.

Part I

Theory and Practice of the Educational Role of Language

PAPERS

ELT written discourse vs. a teacher's speech: experience of Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This article aims to contrast examples of teachers' speech as spoken pedagogic discourse with the written discourse of a Teacher's book enclosed with an international English language teaching (ELT). During any EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lesson based on published ELT materials, a teacher uses printed texts of ELT materials, adjuncts and expands them in the learning process according to a particular educational setting and learning needs. The teacher sets tasks from a textbook but articulates them through his/her own interpretation related to local educational paradigm and social ideology. Being a mediator between the written discourse of ELT materials and the learners, the teacher produces his/her speech, which presents another example of pedagogic discourse. Applying methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) we compare examples of the written discourse of the Teacher's book (TB) and the teacher's spoken discourse. We analysed how the latter was developed on the basis of a detailed lesson plan from the Teacher's book (TB). The comparative analysis reveals a difference between the spoken teacher's discourse derived from the discourse of ELT materials and the written discourse of the TB in that it shows the dominance of the teacher's discourse within the local educational paradigm over those who produce such ELT materials.

Keywords: *pedagogic discourse, classroom discourse, critical discourse analysis (CDA), written discourse of textbook, teacher's speech*

Introduction

Following Michel Foucault's statement that "pedagogic discourse is a means by which notions of class, race, and gender are structured and reproduced within society" (Foucault 1971), critical discourse analysts have turned their scientific attention to classrooms and textbooks, where the results of exercising discourse structuring can be easily observed and examined. To base the importance of CDA studies on ELT we will quote a statement of other CDA proponents, Marianne Celce-Murcia and Elite Olshtain, who have been researching ELT discourse for the last decades: "Many critical discourse analysts believe that education in general and foreign language education, in particular, are ideological and political, but that most language teachers are unaware of this." (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain 2000: 10). Whether we agree or disagree with the authors, the analysis of a teacher's speech within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis may give clues to a difference between the spoken teacher's discourse developed on the basis of a detailed lesson plan from the Teacher's book (TB) and the written discourse of the TB. In a natural sequence of the lesson flow, the teacher processes the written discourse of TB, reacts to it and structures his/her own discourse as an interpretation of ELT material discourse through interaction with the students. To observe the correlation between written textbook language and a teacher's spoken language both processes will be examined through CDA methodology.

Theoretical background

Pioneers of discourse analysis in educational contexts deeply and intensively studied the relations between language (its genres, registers and structures) and education as a social and political practice. Theory of pedagogic discourse introduced and developed by Basil Bernstein in "Class, Codes and

Control', followed those studies. This theory analysed how pedagogic discourse functions in society and maintains social order, and pedagogic discourse itself is defined as "a principle of appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (Bernstein 1990: 118). Ursula Clark develops speculation on the nature of Bernstein's definition of pedagogic discourse stating that this discourse must be considered as "totally dependent upon other discourses which are drawn from outside in order to form its own" (Clark 2005: 35). Compared to Foucault's understanding of pedagogic discourse, social nature of pedagogic discourses and their possible analysis is viewed differently by Bernstein. Bernstein offered to analyse pedagogic discourses "for their power to reproduce dominant/dominated relations external to the discourse" (Bernstein 1990: 65) and speaking about the voices of classes and genders he insisted: "What is absent from pedagogic discourse is its own voice" (Bernstein 1990: 65).

The prominent studies to argue against the concept of socially neutral pedagogic discourse became works of Alastair Pennycook (Pennycook 1998) who looking at ELT practices states that language is always located within larger discursive frameworks and always is a part of the cultural and political moments of the day. These new theories about ideology and discourse of education were developed applying critical discourse analysis to written discourse of ELT books (Pennycook 1998, Phillipson 1992).

Another approach to pedagogic discourse was applied in the cross-intersecting area of linguistics and pedagogy when a concept of classroom discourse as a way to use language in educational environment was introduced in pedagogic literature (Cazden, John & Hymes 1972, Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz 1982, Brophy & Good 1986). Over recent decades classroom discourse has been described through the analysis of spoken discourse, which focuses on how a teacher interacts with students in a classroom (Walsh 2012). In its turn, a teacher's speech has been analysed through teacher-student exchanges using different approaches: exchange structure theory (Berry 1981, Christie & Maton 2011, Rose 2014), IRF cycles (Initiation-Response-Feedback/Follow-up) (Alexander 2000, Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). Such studies of classroom discourse developed a pedagogic approach to classroom interactions and focused on improvement of teaching and learning through understanding "how interactants collectively co-construct meanings, how errors arise and are repaired, how turns begin, end and are passed or seized" (Walsh 2011: 25)

The popularity of studies devoted to critical discourse analysis (CDA) has increased greatly since the 2000's. CDA attempts to find out the relations between language and power, and many methods and methodologies have been elaborated based on the works of founders of CDA methodology (Fairclough 1992, Halliday 1994, Foucault 1971, Van Dijk 1997, Wodak & Chilton 2005). To answer the key question of how discursive power can be exercised in order to control the 'mind', researchers around the world incorporate CDA in their studies on ELT discourse.

The scope of spoken and written pedagogic discourse attracts researchers' attention by rich material for investigation: CDA is used as a tool for evaluation of EFL textbooks (Hamdan 2018, Mehran & Mohsen 2015; Kazerooni & Omid 2017), practitioners investigate educational contexts as social practice applying CDA for different kind of lessons: EFL lessons focused on reading skills and critical thinking development (Cots 2006, Rahimi & Sharififar 2015, Amari 2015), and to see how language in classroom illustrates power during lessons of mathematics (Walkerline 1988, Zevenbergen 2000).

Interestingly, the ways in which a teacher's spoken discourse is based on or related to the written discourse of ELT textbooks have not been widely examined. Despite a variety of studies and a substantial amount of research papers in the field of pedagogic discourse in general, this question still remains beyond systematic study and analysis.

Our research question, then, is about the interpretation of written discourse by a teacher and his/her production of spoken ELT discourse in the course of a lesson based on the written discourse. Are there any elements in a teacher's speech that may influence the delivery of the written TB discourse to learners? How can such an analysis of a teacher's speech contribute to ELT practice?

We agree that “the same tasks and the same teaching materials can result in very productive or very unproductive lessons depending on the way the teacher organizes classroom interaction” (Evnitskaya 2018: 16) and it is hoped that such an investigation will provide a better understanding of how such discourse analysis can improve the communicative and social practices of teaching English around the world.

This research aims to conduct critical discourse analysis of the written discourse intended for teachers (Teacher’s Book of ELT course) and samples of the teacher’s speech to reveal the correlation between reception, production, and delivery so that power relationships in the teacher’s discourse and written discourse of TB can be distinguished.

Methodology

CDA provides a toolkit for observing the use of language and to analyse the written and spoken discourse we will use Fairclough’s three-dimension model (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2003). The model allows to conduct empirical research being focused on three aspects of communication: 1) textual analysis which implies the linguistic analysis of text; 2) analysis of discursive practice, where a researcher examines the process of producing and receiving the text; 3) analysis a broader practice which a particular communication belongs to. As it was designed by the author of the model, the analysis of linguistic elements of the text will inevitably be followed by the analysis of discursive practices and vice versa (Fairclough 1992: 73). Text analysis is to be focused on formal features (lexis, grammar, syntax) and gives understanding of how discourses are implemented linguistically. Analysis of discursive practice reveals how text producers are using existing discourses and creating new ones. We will approach the textbook written text and examples of teacher’s speech as two different text samples applying for both of them an analytical structure of Fairclough’s model.

Viewing ‘language as a form of social practice’ (Fairclough 1989: 20) we accept that pedagogic discourse is a form of social practice. Assuming that the context of language use is crucial to discourse we will analyse how pedagogic discourse unfolds within a classroom produced by the teacher and what are its connections with the written discourse of TB.

Materials and methods

To investigate the intentions, techniques, and discursive strategies of ELT written discourse and its interpretation in spoken teacher’s discourse we selected an international ELT course with a global focus that is designed to be used in diverse social contexts around the globe. Most well-known ELT publishers market their courses as a pack of ELT materials, which usually includes a textbook, a workbook, a teacher’s book, audio or/and videos, extra resources. Such courses tend to apply a holistic methodological approach, incorporating not the one (only communicative or only grammar) approach, but a combination of them and fit a framework of development principles derived from second language acquisition research and experience (Tomlinson 1998: 5-22). For our research, the five-level general adult ELT course Language Leader was selected as a course claiming “to provide a thought-provoking and purposeful approach to learning English” (Kempton & Lebeau 2008a: 4). Among all the variety of English courses, we selected the English-language course “Language Leader” because the participants of our experiment had not used it before and in this way we hoped to obtain fresh impressions of receiving the discourse and spontaneous ‘live’ reaction in its interpretation. The course contains a textbook, a workbook with an audio CD, a class audio CD, as well as a teacher’s book with a test master CD-ROM, for this study a pre-intermediate level course was selected. One limitation of this approach is that teachers who were offered to develop a lesson based on the lesson plan from the Teacher’s book were performing a mock lesson, not a real one which is a part of the curriculum. In this case, one has to acknowledge that students’ performance and responses may differ from normal conditions.

A fragment of the textbook “Language Leader Pre-intermediate” and the corresponding chapter with a detailed lesson plan from the teacher's book was given to the teacher-participants. According to the study focus, the fragment offered to participants was supposed to have clear and direct instructions together with recommendations on how to implement communicative techniques and discursive strategies. The set of materials for teachers consists of (1) a fragment of Chapter 1 from TB (Kempton & Lebeau 2008a: 8-12) containing a detailed plan on how to conduct activities using the textbook material and (2) a fragment of the textbook unit 1 (Kempton & Lebeau 2008b: 6-7).

The participants of the study are 12 EFL teachers of the Foreign Languages department from Kharkiv National University of Radio Electronics, Ukraine. They are non-native speakers; they have been teaching English to adults for more than 10 years and they are actively using in their teaching practices various international multi-levelled packs of ELT materials.

The participants were asked to prepare a detailed instruction or exact sentences to be used during the lesson based on the set of materials. The interaction between teachers and students lies beyond the scope of our research, for this reason only the examples of teacher’s speech were taken for the analysis. These with examples of the teacher's interpretations of TB discourse were considered as examples of the teacher’s spoken discourses and analysed via Fairclough’s model.

Results and discussion

Analysis 1. CDA of the chosen TB fragment

According to Fairclough’s model, the first step was to provide semantical, grammatical and syntactical analysis of the text of the chosen fragment. Regarding the lexis of the text, it is noticeable that most of vocabulary is closely connected with the educational setting (a picture, the exercise, students, activity, the questions, the coursebook), contains a lot of intertextualised extracts from the coursebook and employs verbs denoting actions needed to acquire knowledge. These verbs form two sets: 1) verbs with direct meaning of physical actions: *do activity as per coursebook, show the differing stress, ask students*, 2) indirect verbs to describe actions assigned to be performed by students: *have a class discussion, let students guess, elicit the meanings*. The language of the TB text mostly consists of simple syntactical structures with imperative forms prescribing a particular action during the lesson. There are some variations of indicative mood sentences (e.g. *Students look at the pictures and describe what they see*) aimed to explain/provide support to the reader. These variations present usage of modal verbs as well: *students will either have to know the words or to guess, you may like to show the differing stress, although they [students] could check answers in pairs*, etc. Nevertheless, the communicative purpose of such structures remains similar to the imperative forms: to provide clear instructions on how to use the material of the textbook and conduct the lesson in pursuit of lesson aim and objectives.

Moving through the second dimension of the model, we generated a table to represent a ‘text’ seen as “an actual instance of language use” (Fairclough 2003: 3). To take into account the relations between language and discursive practice we analysed the elements of the ‘text’, where linguistic structures become a part of the whole text production process, which involves a genre and style, a text mission, type of publishing, physical embodiment of the text.

Table 1: The second dimension of written discourse of TB fragment.

Elements of the text	Information	Message
A genre and style	Methodological guidance for teachers related to Common	Learning takes place as student-centred and outcome-oriented education focused on the development of independent learning, study habits and self-

	European Framework of Reference (CEFR)	assessment. A teacher performs roles of a moderator and facilitator of brain-storming activities, as well as a controller, manager, assessor, lecturer.
A mission	TB is to provide “all the support teachers need from detailed teaching notes to extra photocopiable activities”, “there are warning points to alert teachers about possible problem areas as well as teaching tips to help them” (Kempton & Lebeau 2008a: 5).	A teacher uses a textbook implementing the recommendations from the TB and making his/her own decision to achieve the aims and objectives defined by a syllabus.
A physical embodiment of the text	A hard-cover black and white book printed on white thick paper with a colourful cover, high-quality printing and binding technology.	Discourse producers (publishers and authors) have determined the type of paper (its size, colour, weight, etc.), technology to suit best and efficiently a particular publication and to facilitate and promote its use by teachers.
A type of publishing	Trade publishing (books for general readers market and wider consumption) provided by Pearson Education, Inc. – “the company offers its services to teachers and students worldwide.” (Pearson Education, Inc. at www.bloomerg.com)	Teacher’s book as a part of the pack of ELT materials in this series is an important element of the course, which is relevant, valid and reliable due to the reputation of its publisher.
‘Linguistic units’ of the TB text	Simple and precise language of instructions and recommendations, inserted extracts from the textbook, syntactical structures with a high level of directness for the stages of the lesson and medium directness for the possible problem areas.	TB authors manage what material is to be taught and how, prescribing the way of presenting a piece of learning material, its amount and sequence of its practice as well as allowing teachers to extend or adjust it.

The second dimension of ‘discursive practices’ reveals that the ‘text; (written discourse of methodological guidance for teachers) is produced in the context of a particular ELT publication related to the certain educational framework of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The third dimension of Fairclough's model will bring us back to general definition of pedagogic discourse, which at this stage of the analysis is considered as a social practice. Following Bernstein's understanding of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein 1990: 65), we look at the written discourse of methodological guidance for teachers as social relations of power between textbook producers and teachers. Discursive practice as a TB text, produced in the context of global EFL course, allows us to see

how a teacher is offered, assigned and expected to perform particular roles in educational setting. These roles are a manager in the classroom, moderator and facilitator of brain-storming activities.

Analysis 2. CDA of spoken discourse

Following the analysis of written discourse, we have analysed examples of spoken teacher's discourses that presented interpretations of the TB instructions. The same three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough (1992: 73) has been used. At the first level of the model – the linguistic analysis of the text – we revealed particular features at lexical, grammatical and syntactical levels.

1. The vocabulary of teacher's spoken discourse didn't go beyond the scope of the lesson and educational setting. Compared to the written discourse of the TB, the examples of spoken discourse contained the same lexis from the textbook and teacher's book, whereas the number of words grew: every instruction received additional follow-up sentence: e.g. "Open your books at our first unit. Look at this big picture (letter A) and small ones (letters B, C, D). What can you see? Is it snow?" Similarly, new verbs in teacher's speech were used to serve in classroom management. They are (1) verbs to mark the transitional move between lesson stages: *go on, move on, let's start, let's begin* and (2) verbs to arrange pair and group work: *make the pairs, split into four groups, let's work in pairs*. Corpus of nouns was enriched by grammar nomenclature: teachers explained material actively using such words as a *noun, adjective, ending, derivation*. In contrast to the neutral style of the TB fragment the language of teachers also contained a lot of personal pronouns, e.g.: "Look at ex.1a. Read the task 1b. What are you going to do? Take your time to do it. Let's pronounce together these 4 words. Repeat after me, please. Do you have any of this weather in our country? Do hurricanes happen in our country?"

2. Syntax of teacher's spoken discourse in some way reflected the TB written discourse, but normally imperative forms were supported by general and/or special questions or follow-up sentences, e.g.: "Let's work in pairs to check your answers. What are the correct words for number 1? Do you agree?" To illustrate how the range of grammar grew while completing the task from the TB, the following comparison can be used:

TB written discourse directive: "*Do activity as per Coursebook: 1b. Read these Internet reports. 2. Choose the correct word*".

Teacher's speech examples: "Let's move on and you are to read the text on page 6. Look 'Online News Weather'. While reading, choose the correct word", "Have a look at ex.1b. You have to read three extracts describing extreme weather and correct words", "Let's go back to our coursebooks. Read the task 1b. What are you going to do? How many reports are there in the text?"

3. If syntactical range of structures used by teachers is obvious and we can state that there appeared numerous examples of special and general questions, grammatically the teacher's speeches did not vary so much compared to the TB discourse. There were still a lot of imperative and indicative mood sentences and teachers avoided to use complex tenses. A range of modality was restricted by request: "Can anybody tell what you can see", hypothesis: "How can we speak about a day with rain?", and permission: "In the same way you can form new words from the words like wind and snow. You can use these new words to answer my question".

The second dimension of Fairclough's model implies analysis of the discourse in its unity with extralinguistic conditions: when a researcher examines what has been used to create and produce the text and how it is related to other texts. At this point, we approach the teacher's speech – 'the text' – as a discursive practice which reveals how language is used within the broader social practice such as teaching English as a foreign language. The text encompasses linguistic units of teacher's speech and the entire visual discourse including images from the coursebook, teacher's clothes, teacher's voice,

teacher's non-verbal behaviour, classroom environment, furniture, equipment, the social roles being represented in teacher's speeches.

Table 2: The second dimension of teacher's speech as spoken discourse.

Elements of the text	Information	Message
Teacher's clothes	Semi-formal clothes	A teacher performs a dominant role of controller, classroom activities manager, lecturer and assessor
Teacher's voice	A loud and well-accented voice,	
Teacher's non-verbal behaviour	friendly gestures signalling about cooperative intentions, walking around the classroom, moving empty chairs, cleaning the blackboard, standing in front of the blackboard	
Classroom environment, furniture	Standard spacious classroom for 30 students, heavy metal-framed desks	Learning takes place within the local educational system
Learning materials	Black and white copies of images from the coursebook stapled with the handouts	A lesson does not belong to the academic curriculum of the local institute, cost and availability of ELT materials restricts usage of original coursebooks
'linguistic units' of teacher's speech	Imperatives, questions, explanations, requests, echoing, summarizing	A teacher performs a dominant role of controller, classroom activities manager, lecturer, and assessor.

Thus, during interaction with students in the classroom the teachers were producing *the text* in order to fulfil a teaching task taken from the written discourse of the TB in *the context* of a particular EFL classroom environment playing social roles of a teacher peculiar to the local educational setting.

The analysis of teacher's speech within the third dimension of Fairclough's model aims to reveal how "social agents make or '*texture*' texts by setting up relations between their elements" (Fairclough 2003: 8), so power based on ideology located both in the structure of discourse and in the discursive practice might be revealed.

Having analysed how teachers implemented a received discourse during observed EFL lessons we can point out the following:

1. Most teachers used the TB discourse to present instructions and conduct certain activities and, in most cases, they supported these 'intertextualised' patterns by follow-up questions, paraphrasing, explanations or requests:

Directive: "*Have a class discussion about which situation students think is the most serious*"

Teacher's Speech Examples:

T1: "Now let's discuss some facts from the text. What do you think about every situation? Which situation is the most serious? Why? "

T2: "No doubts all these situations are very serious, but which one do you think is the most dangerous?"

Directive: "*Ask students if they know any other words to describe extreme weather.*"

Teacher's Speech Example:

"I offer you to talk about extreme weather. Split into 2 groups. One group discusses extreme weather in our country, another one - extreme weather in different countries. Share your ideas. What is the most popular extreme weather? What are the most dangerous regions to live in? What countries did you discuss?"

2. Most teachers developed the activities using the TB discourse, but adjusted them taking a leading role in these activities without giving students a chance to perform the intended action:

Directive: *"Let students guess or elicit the meanings of words blizzard, storm, drought"* – [meanings are provided in the TB below the directive].

Teacher's Speech Examples:

T1: "Let's guess the words to describe these extremes. Blizzard. Storm. Drought. What do you think? Drought is a long period of dry weather when there is not enough water. What picture depicts it?"

T2: "Look at the words. Can you guess what they mean? The first word is blizzard. It is a storm with a lot of wind and snow. We usually have it in winter. What picture depicts it?"

T3: "The word blizzard – what picture does it match? A? C? Right, D! Can you describe the picture D? It is a storm with a lot of wind and snow."

3. The task "to elicit the rules" was completed by direct elicitation in 3 cases, whereas 9 teachers made it through explanation. Below there are examples of the teacher's speech:

Directive: *"Elicit that with types of weather we can put -y on the end to make adjectives"*

Teacher's Speech Examples:

T1: "Give me examples of extreme weather from the text. Which words are also types of weather? How to make a word to describe the weather with rain? With snow? Look at the words from the text. How can we speak about a day with rain? Winter with snow?"

T2: "In English there are words that derive from another. There is a sun in the sky. But you can also say: 'It is sunny today'. So, the word sunny derives from the sun. In the same way, you can form new words from words like wind and snow. You can use these new words to answer the question: What's the weather like today? It is windy."

4. During the lessons the teachers were not using a plan offered by the teacher's book strictly or literally: 9 of 12 changed the order of tasks and skipped some activities.

Through the third dimension of the model, we can see power of a teacher when he/she creates pedagogic discourse. The purpose of the message inside the teacher's spoken discourse is to explain, to show and to share knowledge. In contrast to the TB discourse, the directives of the TB fragment are to bring the process of teaching in alliance with the approach defined by the authors as 'a broadly communicative methodology' (Kempton & Lebeau 2008a: 4) and guided discovery of grammar when "learners are encouraged to work out the rules for themselves" (Kempton & Lebeau 2008a: 6). Promoting teachers to perform the actions listed in lesson plans the authors provide implementation of this pedagogic paradigm. Pointing out that the teachers took responsibility to create new activities other than implied by the directive "Elicit that with types of weather we can put -y on the end to make adjectives" we would consider it as a reflection of a pedagogic paradigm shared by the teachers not that one shared by the authors of the TB. The message of pedagogic discourse changed and the social roles of a teacher within and out of the TB discourse changed as well. As a result of discourse collision power within the teacher's discourse became dominant. Existing pedagogical skills obtained by teachers within the local education system prevailed over the directives of the TB written discourse.

The dimension of discursive practice as a communicative event allows us to see producing teacher's discourse within a social institution – in the given case it is a state university under the governance of ministry and departments of higher education. This reveals power behind the discourse, which is expressed by local educational standards, ethics and norms of teaching practices implemented and used in a particular educational setting.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of written discourse of the teacher's book as a part of the ELT pack of materials and spoken discourse of teacher's speech when delivering a lesson based on the EFL coursebook revealed some interesting features of delivering written pedagogic discourse by speakers who are supposed to produce generically the same discourse as agents of pedagogic discourse. The difference between the two discourses concerns extra-linguistic factors, which embody different messages. The teacher's speech analysis helped to see how the messages of the TB discourse are interpreted by teachers and whether they are taken into action. Interpretation of the discourse is a complex process: it implies understanding of words and sentences, but it is also "a matter of judgement and evaluation" (Fairclough 2003: 11). We found out that whereas the authors created the lesson plan in order to organize classroom work, most of teachers (who were receivers of this pedagogic discourse message) did not fully employ the recommended approach. Teachers created a new discourse based on the TB text and this new discourse reflected their judging whether it is important to conduct activity "elicit grammar rules" in the offered way. The observed lessons took place in the EFL classrooms of higher education institution and the teachers followed the standards of local educational system performing roles of a lecturer, controller and manager. During the lesson the teachers were not developing a repertoire of the roles intended to perform by ELT materials producers such as a moderator or facilitator of brainstorming activities. From this point of view, ELT materials producers – the authors of the written discourse – came into conflict with the local educational system, and as a result, social roles of teacher changed having created a new form of social practice in a realm of pedagogic discourse of ELT practice. It proves that social agents of the discourse can 'texture texts' and thus have some freedom when articulating discourse (Fairclough 2003: 22) and this study shows that teachers may implement the power of using discourse to suit their beliefs and settings when providing new semantic meaning to fulfil educational purposes. Further research should be addressed to the educational setting where teachers' beliefs and standards of the local educational system influencing teacher's educational roles and their language were developed.

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Semantic number in relation to English language learner awareness

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Abstract

This paper focuses on semantic number in English and its effect on students' understanding of countability and how they see the world through English. Semantic nominal plurality of reference is not always equivalent to a marked plural noun or S-V plural agreement. The paper aims to explain and illustrate whether morphosyntactic markedness of number coincides with semantic specificity/informativity, and if EFL learners' worldview shifts depending on their awareness of semantic number. The linguistic issue of number is paired with education, i.e. learners' development in a foreign language framework. The research was targeted towards English majors (Faculty of Philology, Skopje, N. Macedonia), whose knowledge of number agreement (competence) in English was explored via a questionnaire covering various instances of number inconsistencies. It is noteworthy that most students afterwards stated a rising level of confidence in communicating in English due to a higher level of language accuracy and semantic awareness.

Keywords: semantics, number, agreement, countability, accuracy, EFL, ELT

Introduction

It is indisputable that humans feel the need to quantify the world around them. Every object or person, even abstract concept and occurrence that has language counterparts through the category of nouns, can be counted or measured, i.e. can be marked in language in regards to its countability or quantity. However, the issue that arises and is covered in this paper is to what degree number markedness in English is visible or built in the nominal structure itself, how the corresponding verb form agrees with it, and what influence it has (if any) on how learners of English view the world, and even their identity. Singularity and plurality are basic characteristics of nouns, but if a noun does not externally expose both forms (especially the plural one), it should not be classified simply as an exception or an irregularity, but rather considered a seemingly deceptive abnormality. The categorization of the grammatical category of number is based on varying degrees (partitivity, collectivity, distributivity) linked to the nominal descriptions. Research on number treats the plural as wielding far more complexity than is thought. "Number might appear to be one of the simplest natural categories, as simple as 'two and two are four.' Yet on closer inspection it presents a great many difficulties, both logical and linguistic" (Jespersen 1924: 188). Therefore, number is not a binary distinction of singular vs. plural determined in a purely grammatical manner, but a multi-faceted linguistic phenomenon of markedness and unmarkedness, simultaneously embedding syntax and semantics; the former being key to EFL learners' grasp of language accuracy, and the latter being key to EFL learners' communication skills and identity.

Theoretical linguistic background: connection to ELT

Works by linguists like Bock, Corbett, Gillon, Lasersohn, Link, and Pelletier represent the backbone of the theoretical framework regarding the category of number in English. Each linguist contributes to this language issue in their own specific way, highlighting the discrepancies, thus proving that the contrast between "one" and "not one" (or "more than one") is an inherent property of the noun, rooted in conceptualization.

Bock & Miller's work (1991) is regarded to be seminal, detailing how a superficially simple syntactic operation of S-V number agreement is occasionally derailed in sentences like: **(1)** *The cost of the improvements have not yet been estimated.* Examining the incidence of such agreement errors, they concluded that this was largely due to the presence of subject-like semantic features in the immediate preverbal nouns, regardless of the number of the head noun; proximity being the key feature. Questions arise regarding the semantic vs. syntactic nature of sentence subjects. The semantic features of sentence subjects are relevant to the syntactic process that implements agreement. In addition, Bock et al. (2001) have researched nouns that are at the intersection of grammatical number and their conceptualization (e.g. *scissors*), as well as complex subject NPs (e.g. *the advertisement for the scissors*); they use the term 'attraction', which has been established in language use. Learners of EFL juggle such mutual dependencies in order to be grammatically accurate; they especially need to be sensitive to semantic number at a point in processing in their mind when such information is less accessible, thus not be misled by mere proximity for S-V agreement. It is expected that learners be sensitive to such conceptualization and complexity at a later stage of their learning English, having done suitable accuracy-oriented activities. The CEFR further states that consistently maintaining a high degree of grammatical accuracy belongs to C1 and C2 levels, as accuracy is related to internalized linguistic information (Council of Europe 2001: 114, Housen & Kuiken 2009). Conceptualizing the language, though, implies digging deeper in the core of English and visualizing not the meanings of words, but rather the contextualization of grammar, specifically number.

Corbett (2001, 2006b) conveniently summarizes language phenomena; even though quite theoretical, he unifies the underlying concepts. Corbett's all-inclusive monograph (2000) is considered to be the most comprehensive work thus far addressing the morphological-typological point of view of number. Number, with all its singular-plural subtleties, especially interpretations used for special emotive purposes in language, is the most underestimated of all grammatical categories. Furthermore, forms (e.g. *mines* and *wines*) which are morphologically equivalent may have completely different semantic values (Corbett 2000: 55). Therefore, transferred in an EFL context, learners must not simply take it for granted that the morpheme for plurality (-s) is a straightforward embedded notion of "more than one"; in fact, nouns are tricky and not clear-cut in regards to their participation in the number system. The Agreement Hierarchy is closely linked to collectives – or 'corporate nouns' – as 'collectives' has been an overused and loaded term in linguistics (Corbett 2000, 2006a). Distance/proximity does influence S-V agreement: the further away a target is from its controller, the lesser the probability of syntactic agreement. For example: **(2)** *The couple has since moved away and now live in Essex.* – doesn't sound strange to the ear although *has* is a singular verb and *live* is plural, both verbs referring to the same corporate noun: *couple*. EFL learners do grasp the underlying semantics behind collective nouns but are faced with a dilemma when it comes to the choice of either singular or plural verb form for S-V agreement, i.e. the acceptability of both forms depending on whether they view the noun in a collective or distributive sense. The semantic number of collective nouns actually opens learners up to "the interpretation of the *idea* of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker of number" (Quirk et al. 1972: 360, Svensson 1998), as they start to comprehend the fluid nature of number and its inextricable link with reality.

As regards plural NPs, Gillon (1987) raises the issue of when such phrases are susceptible to a collective reading, and when they are viewed distributively. In syntax, the plural is treated as an operation that is not about counting, but about dividing. Gillon (1992) focuses on the semantics of the noun, stating that plurality is not the same as collectivity: a plurality is nothing more than the sum of its atomic parts, whereas a collective is more than just the sum of its atomic parts, it is a unified constituency (the key word being 'unified'). Searching for a common semantics for English count and mass nouns, Bunt (1979), Gillon (1992), and Lasersohn (2011) analyze and exemplify the differences between such nouns. Transferring these linguistic concepts into the field of ELT means opening a stretch

of undiscovered land for EFL learners, and possibly even expanding their worldview on how the feeling of unity among group members in real life is expressed through English. Link (1998) raises awareness of the problem of precision in English, stating that a typical difficulty for EFL learners is the fact that plural terms are notoriously vague in their reference, so achieving language accuracy implies learners' need for recognition and use of fine-tuned language. Additionally, the elaborated descriptive scales in CEFR state that C2 Reading is characterized by "understanding subtleties of style and meaning which are both implicitly and explicitly stated" (Council of Europe 2001: 239), and C2 Writing is characterized by "conveying finer shades of meaning precisely" (Ibid: 241).

Pelletier (1974, 2010, 2012a, 2012b) claims that the traditional account of viewing nouns is syntax-driven: they come with certain syntactic features (to guarantee well-formedness) plus an intrinsic semantic value. The lexical items are additionally assigned either a mass (uncount) or a count feature, and this feature controls the syntactic admissibility or inadmissibility. He advocates an alternative approach, interpreting nouns not simply as always belonging to either the mass or count category, but as specific occurrences thereof. Thus, semantic number in a given noun is not fixed, and in consequence should definitely not be treated as such. Pelletier (2011) turns towards descriptive metaphysics and Sapir-Whorfianism to put into perspective the count-mass distinction, concerned slightly more with a philosophical standpoint – the relation between correct semantic analysis of linguistic phenomena and the reality that is supposed to be described, e.g. the fact that *knowledge* is a mass term, while *belief* is a count noun has raised questions about whether *knowledge* is in fact an all-encompassing singularity. Chierchia (1998: 99) states: "The mass/count distinction does not appear to be reducible to any physical notion, it does not appear to be based on any pre- or extralinguistic psychological feature of our cognitive system, it does descend from logic." In the realm of EFL, the count/uncount distinction of nouns is taught early on in the learning stages (CEFR A1-A2; see British Council), as these two concepts are distinguished by the feature of countability, i.e. whether the noun can be counted (plural -s is added) or not (plural -s is not added). However, new developments in English have shown that due to linguistic economy, it is perfectly fine to pluralize certain uncount nouns, albeit the semantics of the nouns changes course (semantic narrowing: *what* is counted?) (Zhou 2012). EFL learners are in the midst of these changes and pointing out to them that count vs. uncount is not a battle of one *or* the other widens their horizon on how so much meaning can be imported in the plural suffix or lack thereof.

In English, the feature of countability is inherently marked inside the singular noun, i.e. it is externally the unmarked form, while the plural noun represents the morphologically marked form. The meaning of 'more than one' is coded in the noun through the inflectional suffix -s (and its irregular variants), but this need not necessarily regard the semantics. Mathieu (2014) explains that there are instances in which this is not a clear-cut situation: **(3)** *Do you have children?* – is a much more appropriate question to ask than **(4)** *Do you have a child?* The former contains a plural noun morphologically marked for number, but semantically unmarked in that context, while the latter contains a singular noun morphologically unmarked for number, but semantically marked. Linked to ELT, in a communicative event (e.g. getting to know the interlocuter, first impressions), the EFL learner needs to increase the area of congruence in the understanding of the specific situation for the interest of effective communication (Council of Europe 2001: 51). Semantics comes into play here as the learner must be aware that the inherent contextual sense of this example of a politeness (conversational) convention in English is related to their sociocultural knowledge of the language, hence an aspect of knowledge of the world (see the Illustrative Descriptor Scales for Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in Council of Europe 2018: 137-138). Although this convention might differ from their native tongue or culture (e.g. countries with a one-child policy), EFL learners must take into account the strangeness, even rudeness, of **(4)**. In addition to organizing words into well-formed sentences, learners need to be equipped with their interrelations (semantic competence) so as not to leave any room for misunderstanding.

The Hypothesis of Cognitive Individuation refers to how people conceptually distinguish count-mass nouns in their mind beyond grammatical categorization. It states that count nouns refer to entities that speakers conceptualize as kinds of individuals, distinct and countable, whereas mass nouns refer to entities that in the minds of speakers are conceptualized as non-individuated, non-distinct and uncountable (Wierzbicka 1988). On the one hand, *constellation* or *library* are considered mass nouns, while their building blocks – *star* and *book* respectively – are count nouns. When people imagine a library, they conceptualize the spatial aspect of the noun and its collectivity, not focusing on its components, regardless of the number of components, i.e. books. These examples further demonstrate the importance of conceptualization and countability for the EFL learner, regardless of how abstract they might be for them (Radden & Dirven 2007), e.g. getting the more advanced EFL learner to explain the difference between *noodle* and *spaghetti*, and why *noodles* is correct, but not **spaghetthis*, will surely be a challenging task, yet will open them up to the opportunities of viewing the world differently through the spectrum of English.

There is no such thing as total synonymy between two nouns in English, but there is near synonymy. The literature on the count-mass noun distinction often points to lexical doublets, consisting of a count and a mass noun that are taken to be near synonyms. Some doublets have little logic to them being divided, while others lexicalize a distinct set of attributes, e.g. *carpets/carpeting*, *clothes/clothing*, *coins/change*, *leaves/foilage*. In such cases, the paradox is that each doublet refers to the same semantic entity, but the difference lay in the fact that one of the nouns is a marked plural count noun or a noun in pluralia tantum, while the other is a mass noun (Ojeda 2005).

Research questions

Grounded in the described theoretical background on semantic number as well as ELT, the research that was conducted on students aimed to answer and interpret the following questions:

- a) *Is semantic nominal plurality of reference always equivalent to a marked plural noun (in an NP) or S-V plural agreement in a sentence? How aware are you [as students] of this?*
- b) *Did you [as students] experience any shift in your understanding of English or reality in general after doing the questionnaire and the class discussion? Explain.*

Expressing singularity and plurality on a syntactic level can create dilemmas as to which form of the verb (singular or plural) is most appropriate in relation to the noun/NP and, primarily, its semantic number, leading to the aspect of language accuracy in EFL learners. Consistently maintaining a high degree of grammatical accuracy is a qualitative aspect of C1/C2 language use on an analytic scale (Council of Europe 2001). This was in fact the starting point when deciding on the background of the research focused on semantic number and, on a broader scale, how it is associated with the way EFL learners view not only English, but reality as a whole.

The research that was done was targeted towards EFL students (English majors); more precisely first-year (CEFR B2) and fourth-year (CEFR C2) students at the Department of English Language and Literature (Blaze Koneski Faculty of Philology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, in Skopje, N. Macedonia) in the academic years 2017/2018, 2018/2019, and 2019/2020, therefore covering a time span of three years and a total of 310 students (Year 1: 145; Year 4: 165). Their knowledge of semantic number and S-V agreement in English was explored via a questionnaire covering various instances of number inconsistencies, and their answers were later analyzed. The data that was cumulatively yielded is visually represented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 (in percentages). The next step was class discussion, during which the students were additionally asked a contemplative question: to explain how this specific linguistic issue influenced their awareness of the complexities in English as well as their worldview.

The aim of this research was to examine students' competence in number agreement in English for the purpose of making them aware of the significant role of semantics (semantic number) in EFL learning and language accuracy, and how sometimes a noun outwardly marked for number can be

misleading, yet it is the connection between number and reality that students need to be cognizant of. These target groups were chosen primarily due to the fact that they represent the beginning and final stages of academic studies, in addition to the fact that they were heading on the path to becoming English teachers or translators, and it is these professions that should first and foremost strive to language perfection, to knowing the hidden intricacies of English, and to being perceptive of reality.

The Appendix at the end of this paper shows the questionnaire, consisting of 28 sentences, created for the purpose of this research (adapted from Quirk et al. 1972); each sentence with a different and tricky syntactic and semantic number issue, i.e. a different NP in sentence subject position, followed by a choice of two options for the corresponding verb form. The students' task was to circle the correct option (S-V agreement), and they also had some blank space at the end if they felt they needed to expand or comment on any of their choices.

Being knowledgeable about the students' level of English and grammar awareness, I set off on this research with certain expectations in mind: the first-year students (B2) would make more mistakes than the fourth-year students (C2) since the former up to the point when they were given the questionnaire would still not have covered the unit on number in detail in their grammar classes, while the latter, being more advanced grammar-wise, would have covered not only number but all the other grammatical categories, so they would predictably make fewer mistakes and be more alert regarding number inconsistencies in English. This should certainly not be an excuse for the first-year students, but bearing their background context, particularly the fact that they each came from a different starting point, these expectations were grounded in reality. Furthermore, students of both years were expected to encounter difficulties with sentences 25 and 26 because their head nouns are collectives, so students would undoubtedly be confused as to what the correct option is, especially since they were told only one option was to be circled in the sentences in the questionnaire.

Results and discussion

Regarding the research results, what became quite visible when analyzing them was that sentences 6 (the second verb), 8, 10, 11, 13 and 17 had a rate of 100% correct answers among first-year students, whereas more examples, i.e. sentences 5, 6 (the second verb), 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 27 and 28 had a rate of 100% correct answers among fourth-year students. Therefore, students starting even from year 1 are already well aware that in English, plural syntactic agreement occurs: after 'both of the NP', in an NP with 'and' (coordination), after a plural NP + quasi-coordinator ('along with') + singular NP, after nouns with zero plural before which there is a plural modifier, and after 'most of the NP'. Students in these cases are led to the correct choice of verb form by activating their knowledge of semantic number. In addition, it is clear that there is more accuracy among fourth-year students. When analyzing the opposite case, or a rate of 100% incorrect answers, it is interesting to note that this did not occur in any sentence. Moreover, students of both years were well aware that in sentence 16, 'most of the news' ('news' being a noun marked for plural but expressing semantic singularity) is followed by a singular verb, so they were not misled by the -s suffix in 'news'.

Regarding instances of unexpected data, for sentence 6 (the first verb), 33% of the first-year students and only 22% of the fourth-year students circled the correct option, while for sentence 25, 76% of the first-year students and only 15% of the fourth-year students circled the correct option. This would imply that the dilemma underlying whether to use a singular or a plural verb after the 'neither of + plural pronoun' construction is not yet clear enough for students. It is indeed baffling for them because they cannot decide with certainty which form takes precedence over the other, thus controlling the verb: 'neither' (singular verb) or 'them' (plural verb)? In fact, they are mistaken because they view 'neither' as a partitive marker of the NP, in addition to wrongly assuming that proximity is the leading factor.

The low percentages of correct answers for both years of a suitable verb form after 'each of the + plural noun', 'neither-nor' (with 3 person singular), 'neither of + plural pronoun', dependent clauses with

plural nouns, ‘most of the + pluralia tantum noun’, and ‘a pair of + plural noun’ demonstrates that students might not be well instructed in or still have not fully grasped the semantics of the mentioned NPs with modifiers, relying largely on proximity for S-V agreement. Furthermore, syntactic agreement with collective nouns is a separate unit for them since they have knowledge about such nouns in English and what they represent, but it seems that they have limited themselves to strict grammar rules only, not viewing the adjacent environment and its influence on the collective noun. There might be other factors at play that should be considered, aside from students’ reliance on proximity. Hoshino et al. (2010) have noted that if an individual is bilingual in two languages that compute grammatical and conceptual number similarly, then bilingualism itself might not be expected to affect the ability to produce agreement correctly in each language. They state that a small number of studies have examined the production of such S-V agreement in bilinguals. In each case, these studies show that bilinguals appear to exploit grammatical and conceptual information in each of their languages (Nicol, Teller & Greth 2001, Nicol & Greth 2003). Nicol & Greth (2003) have argued that bilinguals tend to transfer agreement strategies from L1 to L2; if L1 does not easily enable transfer to occur, then the acquisition of agreement in L2 will presumably be more difficult. In the context of this research, L1 (Macedonian) and L2 (English) do compute grammatical and conceptual number similarly, however the issue lay in ‘each’ and ‘neither’, which are gender-variable (three forms) and number-variable (two forms) in Macedonian, as opposed to English, which has only one form for all genders and both numbers, thus affecting students’ accuracy in L2 S-V agreement. In addition to L1-L2 transfer constraints, the performance of bilinguals may differ for their two languages. Studies suggest that for relatively proficient bilinguals, L2 is likely to be processed less automatically and to make additional demands on cognitive resources compared to L1 (Segalowitz & Hulstijn 2005, Miyake & Friedman 1998, Michael & Gollan 2005). In Hoshino et al.’s study (2010), bilinguals who were relatively (but not highly) proficient in L2 failed to demonstrate sensitivity to conceptual number in L2, suggesting that adequate cognitive resources are required to maintain the conceptual representation of the subject during the computation of S-V number agreement in L2.

For sentence 25, 76% of the first-year students and only 15% of the fourth-year students circled the correct option. This too was an unexpected and disappointing percentage regarding the fourth-year students, especially since they should have paid closer attention to the clue in that sentence (NP ‘an amazing *formation*’), implying a unity (collectivity) and leading them to choose the singular verb after the collective noun ‘flock’. After the results were fully analyzed, the next step was that each sentence in this questionnaire was discussed in more detail in class with the students, as they were asked to respond to and explain their reasoning behind choosing one option over the other. The first-year students justified doing much better than the fourth-year students for that specific sentence because they had just studied the wide variety of collective nouns a few lessons previously in their Contemporary English Language classes, so it was still “fresh” [several students’ choice of wording] in their minds. This explanation, combined with research on retention and EFL performance (Craik & Tulving 1975, Ellis 2003), was the main motivation for my present research on S-V agreement with subject-position NPs containing ‘each’, ‘neither’, and collective nouns. The underlying issue with collective nouns therefore arises as to how students should apply their theoretical grammatical knowledge (competence) into real-life communicative contexts (performance) and how they should expand the concepts of collectivity and distributivity. Students from both years added a prescriptive comment at the end of the questionnaire that ‘flock’ was actually a collective noun that could be followed by both a singular and plural verb, however their choice was influenced by the fact that “it just sounded more natural”, or even “sometimes the true meaning is hidden on a deeper level” [students’ words]. Only a few explained their mistake as “unfortunately not having read the whole context of the sentence” and “if only I had relied on the surrounding elements” [students’ words].

Regarding the above stated second research question, after the class discussions were finished, 88% of the students voiced their opinions on this questionnaire as being beneficial to their view of the world, the wholesome development of their identity as EFL learners, and especially to their awareness that what is on the outside (morphological number) might not always be connected to what is on the inside (semantic number): “I had no idea how much meaning there is in the plural suffix, so I’ll be much more alert, for the sake of precision”; “I’m an English major and it’s my responsibility to use language correctly and with care when expressing something, so this has been a point of awakening for me”; “I can add a whole new depth of meaning and this easily transfers to culture”; “I have experienced a growing level of confidence in communicating in English, so I am going to be more accurate when expressing even minor things”; “This has changed my perception of how English works and how closely tied it is to reality”; “Semantics is visible even in something as small as a suffix, but it’s so meaningful”; “I could never have imagined that even politeness is connected to English plurals”; “I now realize that a whole worldview and culture can be expressed through a suffix or lack of a suffix, and so I’ll be more adaptable and certainly more open-minded”; “English doesn’t function on its own, but it’s part of a community and reality, and language and reality go hand in hand”; “This observation might seem silly, but I feel like I’ve unlocked another aspect of my understanding of how the world works”; “You can’t judge a book by its cover in the same way that you can’t judge a word by what it looks like – it has life inside it” [a selection of students’ quotes].

The limitations of this research will be overcome in future research, as the following are some suggestions for enhancing the existing research at the intersection of semantic number and ELT: **(a)** covering a broader span of number inconsistencies in English; **(b)** doing the questionnaire online so that more students (even including English majors from other countries) could be reached for the quantitative research, implying that there are pertinent variables that have to be considered (e.g. L1 interference); **(c)** examining the consequences of L2 proficiency in more detail so as to better understand its relation to cognitive resources and how they are used in planning well-formed utterances; **(d)** doing a longitudinal study on semantic number in a much wider time frame; **(e)** analyzing the National Curricula and Teaching Plans for EFL in primary/high school education in N. Macedonia regarding their inclusion of and approach towards number; **(f)** tasking the fourth-year students who have taken the EFL Methodology (practical) course to create age-appropriate and level-appropriate accuracy activities that focus on number (for primary/high school EFL learners).

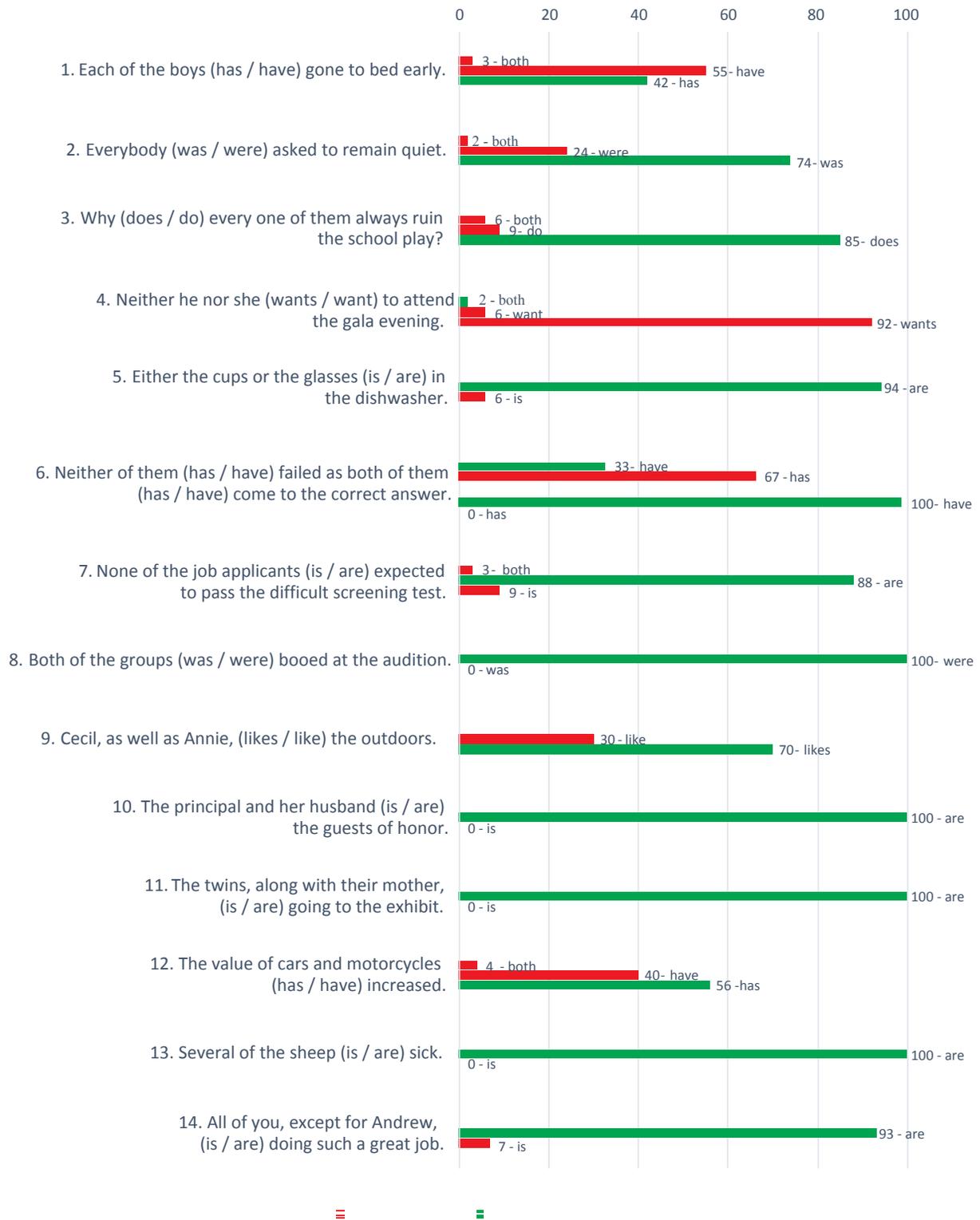
Conclusion

The prescriptive rule EFL learners are introduced to about the difference between count and uncount nouns is that only count nouns can be made plural since they are loaded with information regarding countability, while uncount nouns cannot be made plural because of their homogeneous composition. However, this interpretation is quite limited and semantics enters into the equation as well, so it should not be unusual that EFL learners are introduced to semantic number as well. Consequently, it has an impact on the form of the following verb. Singular noun-singular verb and plural noun-plural verb isn’t as straightforward as it seems, as singularity is not always unmarked, while plurality is not always marked. In fact, syntactic number agreement involves close collaboration between lexical, morphological and semantic information inherent in the nominal structure, as well as reference, in order for there to be harmonization among the sentence elements. The research done among University students of three generations demonstrates that EFL learners’ view of the English language and reality is intertwined, hence awareness of such issues brings about awareness of the inner workings of English paired with a shift in their worldview. Bock & Miller (1991) call S-V agreement a superficially simple syntactic operation and this proves that further research on this language issue is worthwhile.

Appendix (Questionnaire):

1. Each of the boys (has / have) gone to bed early.
2. Everybody (was / were) asked to remain quiet.
3. Why (does / do) every one of them always ruin the school play?
4. Neither he nor she (wants / want) to attend the gala evening.
5. Either the cups or the glasses (is / are) in the dishwasher.
6. Neither of them (has / have) failed as both of them (has / have) come to the correct answer.
7. None of the job applicants (is / are) expected to pass the difficult screening test.
8. Both of the groups (was / were) booed at the audition.
9. Cecil, as well as Annie, (likes / like) the outdoors.
10. The principal and her husband (is / are) the guests of honor.
11. The twins, along with their mother, (is / are) going to the exhibit.
12. The value of cars and motorcycles (has / have) increased.
13. Several of the sheep (is / are) sick.
14. All of you, except for Andrew, (is / are) doing such a great job.
15. All of the milk (has / have) gone bad, so don't drink it.
16. Most of the news (is / are) unfortunately bad, but please don't get worried.
17. Most of the seats at the theater (was / were) taken, although we arrived on time.
18. Here into the main ring of the circus (comes / come) the trained elephants.
19. Beyond the mountains (is / are) a fertile valley.
20. One hundred dollars (is / are) not a lot of money for a high-quality bike.
21. A pound of cookies (costs / cost) just over a dollar.
22. Measles (is / are) one of the most uncomfortable diseases.
23. (Has / Have) the pair of earrings been found?
24. The United States (is / are) a country of contrasts.
25. The flock (is / are) creating such an amazing formation in the sky.
26. The jury (was / were) polled for their verdicts.
27. The members of the band (has / have) arrived for practice.
28. The library, holding thousands of books, (is / are) free to all.

Figure 1: Percentages of correct and incorrect answers from the questionnaire (Year 1).



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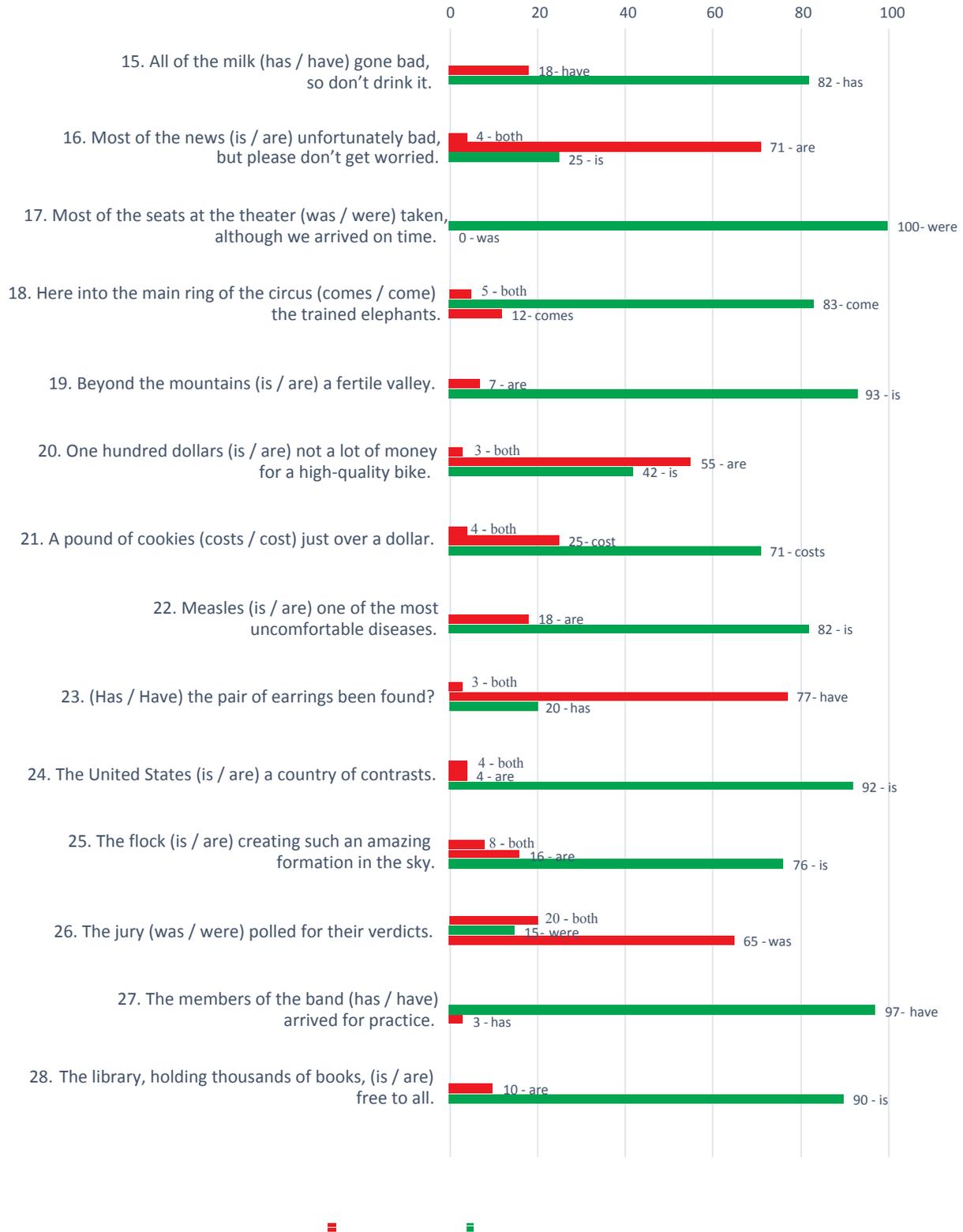
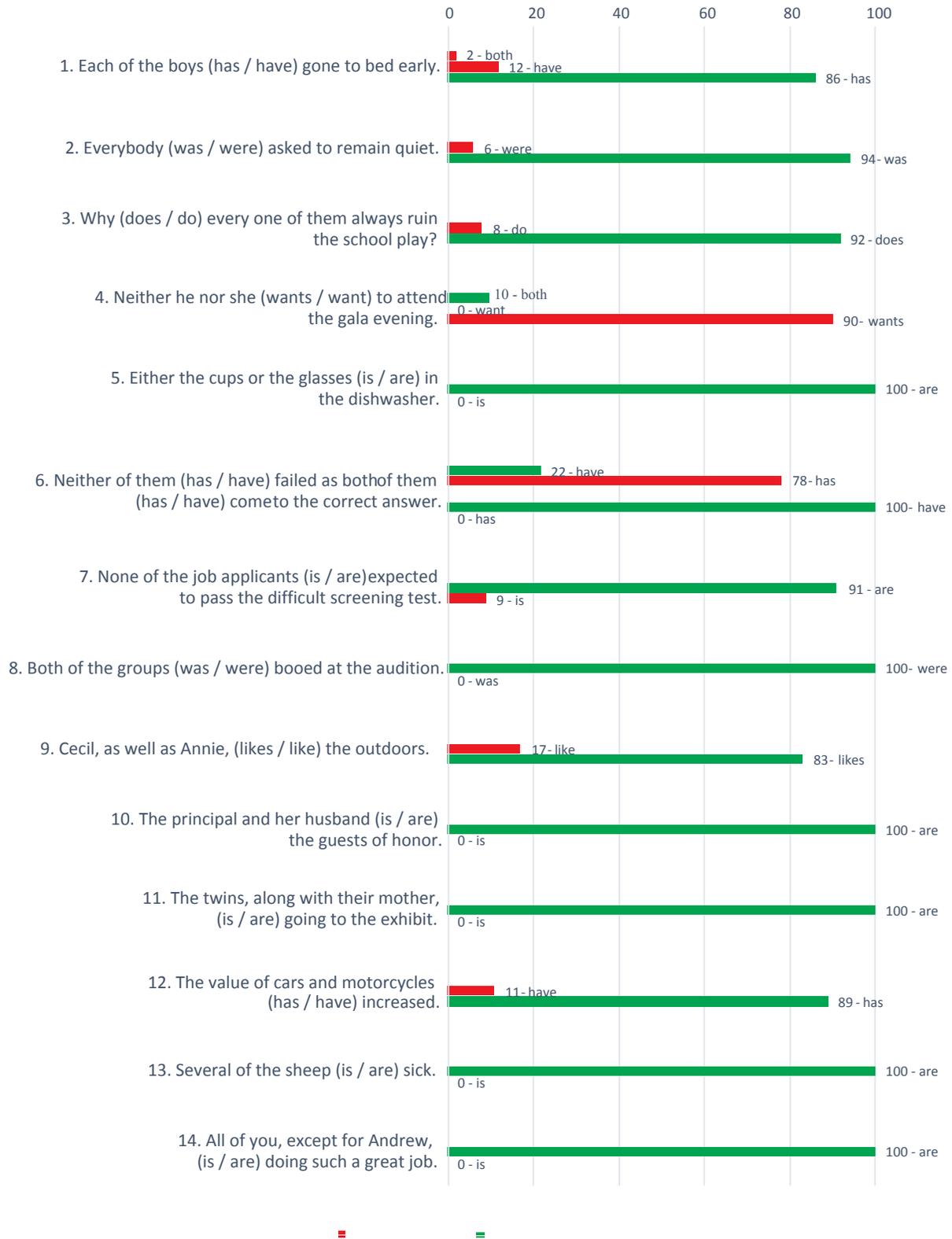
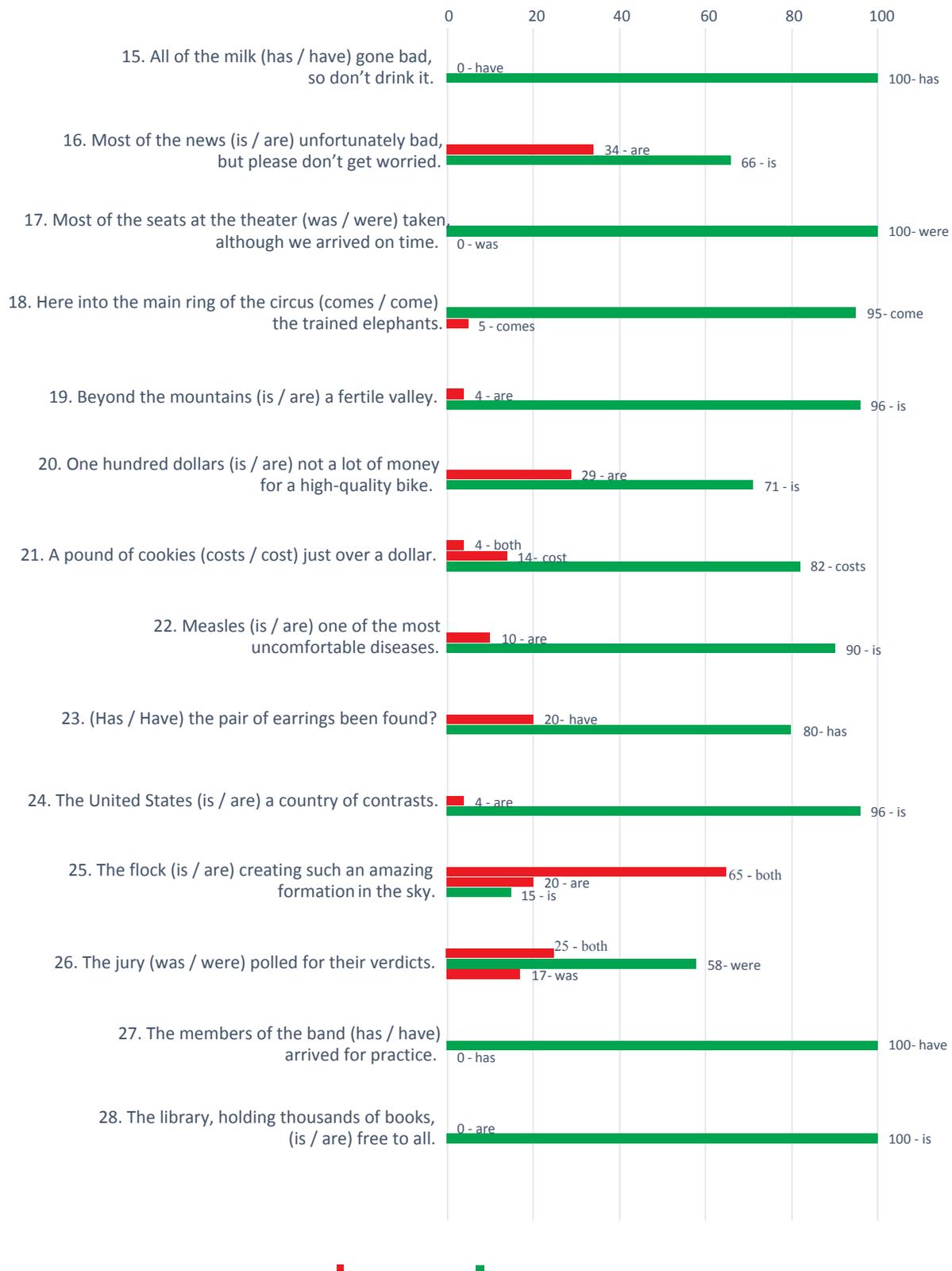


Figure 2: Percentages of correct and incorrect answers from the questionnaire (Year 4).



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**‘Embedding wellbeing’ in the French language curriculum
How to help first year university students develop their perception of learning,
motivation and self-efficacy**

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Abstract

Research carried out by one of the authors shows that when students flourish their positive wellbeing will support their learning, allowing them to engage with the different tasks set and to develop their sense of self-efficacy (Thompson & Vailes 2019, Vailes 2017). This article aims, first, at introducing the concepts of self-efficacy and wellbeing essentials, their relevance, and the urgent need to fully incorporate them as part of the language curriculum. Secondly, we share our experience of creating a new first year French Language curriculum in the School of Modern Languages at the University of Bristol, and, finally, reflect on the findings of the research conducted throughout the 2019-2020 academic year. The curriculum can either support or impair one’s wellbeing depending on whether it does or does not cultivate students’ autonomous motivation and enables students to encounter regular competence, autonomy, relationships and belonging. (Larcombe et al. 2017). Our overall conclusion is that this new approach to the French language curriculum empowers students to develop further confidence in their skills and their ability to learn effectively, thus demonstrating great ‘learning gains’.

Keywords: *self-efficacy, wellbeing essentials, embedding wellbeing in the language curriculum, awareness and attitudes, learning gains*

Introduction

This article draws heavily on the ongoing work conducted by one of the authors into what leads some students to flourish and some to languish at university (Vailes 2017). Vailes combines her work as Director of French language teaching at the University of Bristol with broader investigation into wellbeing in education in response to the now well documented mental health crisis in UK universities. This research in the UK context led to an encounter with similar work in Australia (Larcombe et al. 2017) which has informed her subsequent approach and is discussed in further detail below.

Houghton and Anderson (2017) have argued persuasively that considering the links between mental wellbeing and learning when designing and teaching the curriculum can foster and promote the notion of equitable success for all students and staff. In response to this need, English-based universities and colleges have started collaborating with Advanced HE in a project entitled ‘Embedding Wellbeing in the Curriculum’.

This paper investigates the content and potential benefits of a program that similarly aims at embedding wellbeing in the French Language curriculum and to foster the development of first year French Language students’ perception of the five well-being essentials introduced by Larcombe et al. in their Enhancing Student Well-being Handbook: autonomous motivation, competence, autonomy, positive relationships and a sense of belonging. We will first look at the notion of self-efficacy, motivation and wellbeing essentials rooted in the development of the new French Language program at the University of Bristol. We provide a general description of the new curriculum, an analysis of the students’ feedback, and future recommendations. The overall aim is to demonstrate that embedding

wellbeing in the curriculum is required not simply to help students transition effectively into university life but also to support young people's mental health in a wider context.

Theoretical background

Self-efficacy is a concept that emerged from the work of Albert Bandura, a psychologist who recognized its importance for human wellbeing. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief (or confidence) that they have the motivation, intellectual capabilities and vitality needed to successfully undertake an activity within a specific situation (Bandura 1994, 1997, Stajkovic & Luthans 1998a, 1998b).

Research suggests that self-efficacy clearly increases and improves motivation, a concept which numerous scholars have identified as a key factor in academic success (Murphy & Alexander 2000). For example, students' intrinsic motivation and high subjective task-value have been shown to be associated with both their enjoyment of and high effort spent on school activities (Deci et al. 1991, Meece, Wigfield, & Eccles 1990) as well as with their academic achievement (Gottfried 1990, Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried 1994). Likewise, the concept of intrinsic motivation (Deci et al. 1991, Gottfried 1990) was introduced to discuss the level of motivation an individual will have for academic subjects. Larcombe et al. (2017) call this autonomous motivation and state that we automatically become motivated when we do things because we find the activity intrinsically interesting or satisfying, or when we believe our actions will facilitate valued goals. They add that we experience competence (self-efficacy) when we manage interactions, tasks, and challenges that we face effectively.

Larcombe et al. (2017) add three concepts to the concepts of self-efficacy and autonomous motivation; stating that students' mental wellbeing and academic achievement are both heightened by learning environments that actively foster five wellbeing essentials:

Belonging is used to describe the feeling we experience when we feel accepted and valued by others within social groups and organizations. We develop and achieve positive relationships when we trust, rely on and care for others and believe others trust, rely on or care for us. Finally, autonomy is felt when our actions, tasks and goals are self-chosen and self-concordant (authentic), rather than imposed or controlled by others (p. 8).

The new French Language curriculum which was implemented in the French Department at Bristol University strives to embed these concepts and this framework with the aim at enhancing the autonomous motivation of Year 1 French Language students and of ensuring that it is backed by continuous relatedness, autonomy and competence (Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci 2006, Deci & Ryan 1997) hence creating a stronger sense of belonging within the French Language community. This should also enable individuals within that community to also develop an authentic sense of individual identity as learners and linguists. Brownell and Tanner (2012: 341) state that "Identity is not a stagnant property, but rather an entity that changes with time, often going through stages, and is continuously modified based on the surrounding environment". Although this new curriculum resolves to help students improve the above competences and skills, it also intends to encourage students to establish a new sense of identity: that of a language learner and linguist as well as an independent critical thinker.

Methodology

First-year French language degree students at the University of Bristol have a compulsory French language module. It represents three hours of language teaching a week. Up until 2018-19, language skills were taught separately: students had three one-hour weekly seminars: one for reading and writing, one for speaking and listening and one for grammar and linguistic skills. Group size varied: from 16 to 20 students for reading-writing, 8 to 10 for listening-speaking and 25 to 30 for grammar and linguistic skills. Students could thus have up to three different language tutors for their French language module and be with different peers for each seminar group.

During the academic year 2018-19, a review was conducted amongst the French language teaching team to evaluate the need for a revised first year language curriculum to improve the students' learning experience (O'Neill 2015: 18) and develop positive strategies to support a successful transition into Higher Education (Ming 2015). The perceived challenges linked to the existing program were the following:

- Teaching skills in isolation was perceived by tutors as challenging and unnatural.
- Tutors felt too much time was spent doing and correcting exam type exercises in class rather than engaging in meaningful activities.
- One-hour seminars only allowed for a limited number of in-class activities and gave too little time for in-depth learning.
- Students had limited opportunities to get to know each other and their tutor well, which negatively impacted the development of a learning community.
- Although students would complete the homework and in-class activities as expected, some seemed to lack the motivation to fully engage in the learning process during the seminar sessions.
- Most activities from the first week of teaching onwards were aimed at preparing students to their final year exam and labelled accordingly, developing a 'teaching to test' philosophy.
- Some students appeared overly anxious about their end of year language exam and results, demonstrating a 'learning to test' mentality.

When designing a new curriculum, a reflection on both what to teach and how to teach it is essential to support student wellbeing (Larcombe et al. 2017). As the assessment format could not be changed due to institutional constraints, there was little flexibility in changing what to teach as we need to maintain constructive alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the assessments tasks (Biggs & Tang 2011: 11). It was therefore decided to focus on 'how to teach' in order to foster a "learning climate that nurtures and sustains autonomous motivation through regular experiences of belonging, positive relationships, autonomy and competence" (Larcombe et al. 2017).

The revised module was piloted during the 2019-20 academic year with 156 students in the first year of their French language degree at university. Due to institutional constraints, the grammar and linguistic skills weekly seminar was not included in this project.

The two separate one-hour weekly seminars (reading-writing and listening-speaking) became a weekly two-hour integrated skills seminar as such pedagogical approach "treats the language as a mean of communication and interaction which boosts the motivation and confidence of learners" (Gautam 2019).

Seminar size was limited to 12-15 students and taught by one tutor. The aim was to encourage group work interaction that "promotes a positive affective climate" and "motivates learners" (Ellis 2012: 185), in order to foster both a sense of belonging and positive relationships between students and between students and their tutor.

The students were offered a task-based syllabus that encouraged them to engage in meaningful language learning activities and foster collaboration and cooperation (Gautam 2019). A task-based approach also enables students to develop their cognitive skills (Sanchez 2004) which support critical thinking and autonomous learning.

As suggested by Larcombe et al. (2017), to foster their sense of competence students need to gain the necessary skills to become effective learners. Activities on how to learn rather than what to learn were designed to that end, encouraging self-reflection and peer feedback. Furthermore, the end of year language examination was not mentioned by the tutor until the end of the first semester to limit anxiety and encourage autonomous motivation.

Data collection

Before the full project could be conducted, a full ethics application was submitted to the Arts Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Approval was granted but the committee questioned the risks of the project unintentionally drawing out evidence of stress, mental illness and ultimately affecting students' wellbeing as it was a wellbeing study. We reassured the committee that the study was not about assessing student's level of wellbeing but evaluating whether the learning environment we had created when designing the new curriculum actively fostered the five wellbeing essentials: autonomous motivation, belonging, relationship, autonomy and competence.

To gather data, an online survey was created using [onlinesurveys.ac.uk](https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk). The survey was distributed in class via the university VLE, a week before the end of the first semester, halfway through the students' first academic year. The project was presented to the students at the beginning of their Christmas break and they were given the choice to participate or not during this non-teaching time. All responses were anonymous.

Given the concerns raised by the Faculty Ethics Committee, we explained to students that the project would examine their perception of the new first-year French language curriculum and that we would use the data to analyze what had the most impact on a student embarking on a language degree at the university of Bristol, in order to provide solutions, make possible further changes to the French Language curriculum and foster the wellbeing of both students and staff.

The survey consisted of 42 items combining Likert scale and open-ended questions (annex 1). It was divided into six sections: 1. General information to gather students' demographics; 2. Initial motivation to study French at university; 3. Perception of their integrated skills seminar; 4. Relationship and sense of belonging; 5. Sense of competence; 6. And a final section to understand their level of motivation after 11 weeks at university and their overall perception of the module against Larcombe et al.'s previously mentioned five essentials of wellbeing (autonomous motivation, belonging, relationship, competence and autonomy).

Although the main objective when creating the survey was to evaluate whether the new curriculum actively fostered the five wellbeing essentials, we used this opportunity to gather students' feedback about several aspects of the module to evaluate its overall effectiveness. In this article, we shall focus only on the questions/answers relevant to this project.

79 students (50.5%) took part in the survey, principally female (87.3%) and from a white/Caucasian ethnic group (83.5%). Only a small majority (55.7%) had gone to state schools compared to 45.6% having received a private education. The majority (86.1%) had taken a French A-Level qualification rather than an International Baccalaureate. Half of the participants (50.3%) were enrolled in a language degree, studying French plus one or two other languages. The other half were single honors French or joint school students, enrolled in degrees such as French and English, French and History, French and Law, etc.

The diversity of this group may appear limited but is representative of the cohorts we welcome in the French department. Therefore, although the participation rate only represented half of the cohort, it provided a good insight into the students' perception of the module.

Findings

Autonomous motivation

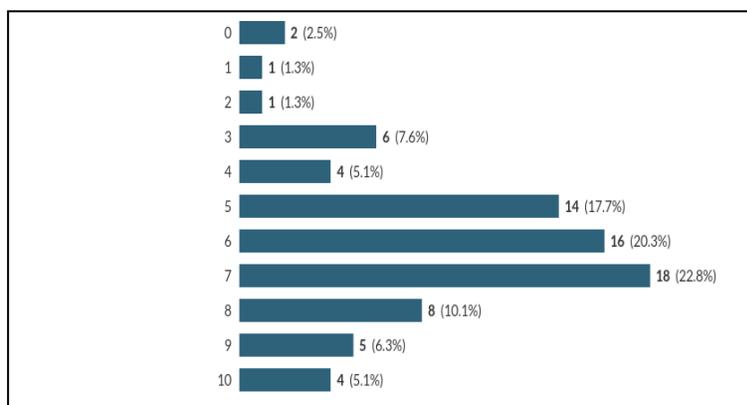
As explained earlier in this article, autonomous motivation means becoming motivated when we do things because we find the activity intrinsically interesting or satisfying, or when we believe our actions will facilitate valued goals.

When asked about their overall level of motivation for their French module at the end of the first semester, 64.6% rated it between 6 and 10, of which 43.1% only gave it a 6 or a 7 (Figure 1).

Question 37 - *On a scale of 0 to 10, how motivated are you?*

Not at all = 0 vs completely = 10

Figure 1: Autonomous motivation.



The data gathered from question 32 – *I enjoy learning new things for my personal development* – shows a high level of interest in developing one’s general knowledge for their own benefits as 83.6% rated it 6 and above. Question 33 - *I believe the teaching should be focused on what will be covered by the exam paper* – confirms this autonomous motivation as only 52% rated it 6 and above, of which 21.5% gave it a 6.

Answers to question 27 - *This seminar makes me want to practice my language skills outside of the class, in my own time* – rated 6 and above by 73.1%, demonstrate a high level of motivation towards improving one’s language skills. This is confirmed by the qualitative data collected. Many students commented on their interest in French language and culture, as well as their motivation to improve their level of fluency and confidence. They seem to genuinely enjoy learning French and to understand its practical value for their future personal and professional lives. On the other hand, some students justified their choice of doing a French degree by being good at the subject in secondary school. This raises the question of the nature of their motivation in pursuing a French degree.

Furthermore, only 54.5% found the seminars interesting and satisfying - question 36 - with 33% giving a 6 or a 7, and only 2 students (2.5%) completely satisfied. When asked if the topics studied in class matched their interests (question 12) and if they found the activities engaging (question 13) respectively 59.5% and 55.7% answered 6 and above, with a high concentration of 6, 7 and 8. And only 34.3% agreed (6 and above) that the seminar made them want to explore the topics covered in class in more depth, in their own time (question 26). In the qualitative data, students mentioned the mixed level of interest in topics and activities offered in class, the lack of speaking opportunities and the slow progression pace.

Autonomy

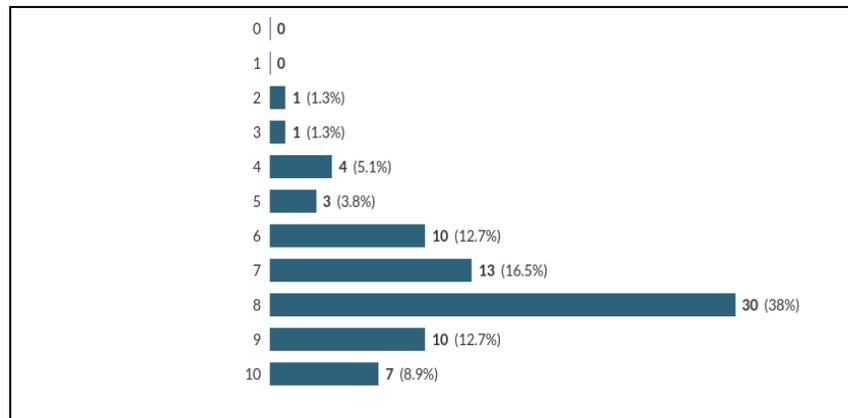
Autonomy is felt when our actions, tasks and goals are self-chosen and self-concordant (authentic), rather than imposed or controlled by others.

At the same time as showing motivation, answers to question 27 - *This seminar makes me want to practice my language skills outside of the class, in my own time* – demonstrate a good level of autonomy in the learning process. This is confirmed by question 25 - *I believe I have a certain level of autonomy in my learning* – where 88.8% of the respondents gave ratings between 6 and 10 (Figure 2).

Question 25 - *I believe I have a certain level of autonomy in my learning.*

Not at all = 0 vs completely = 10

Figure 2: Autonomy.



Belonging and positive relationship

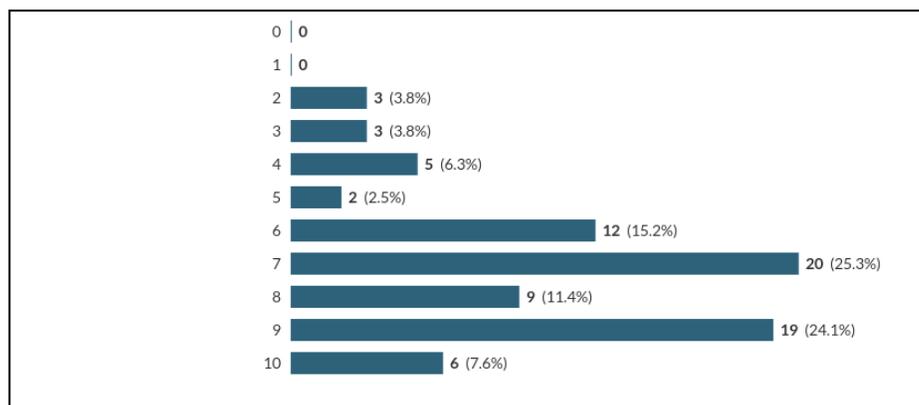
Belonging is used to describe the feeling we experience when we feel accepted and valued by others within social groups and organizations. Positive relationships happen when we trust, rely on and care for others and believe others trust, rely on or care for us.

When answering question 38 - *On a scale of 0 to 10, how included and recognized do you feel in your Integrated Skills seminar* – 83.6% of students evaluated their sense of belonging between 6 and 10 (Figure 3).

Question 38 - *On a scale of 0 to 10, how included and recognized do you feel in your Integrated Skills seminar.*

Not at all = 0 vs completely = 10

Figure 3: Belonging and positive relationship.



This may have been fostered by the pedagogical approach that encouraged students to interact and work with their peers. Question 18 - *I believe I am given enough opportunities to interact with my peers* – gathered 72.2% of 6 and above, with 22.8% of 10. To question 19 - *I believe I am encouraged to work with my peers* – 84.9% answered 6 and above, with 32.9% in complete agreement.

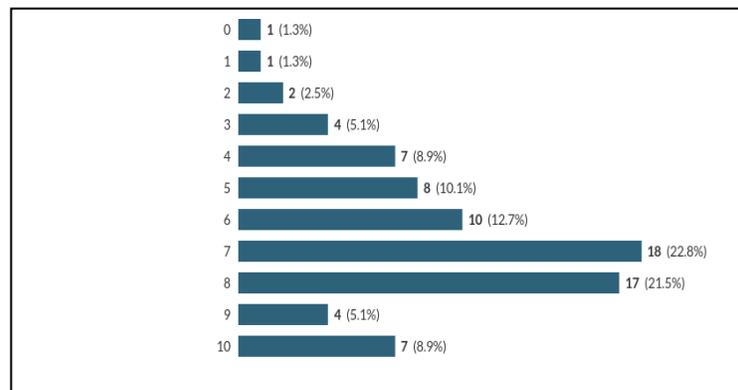
Yet, despite this strong sense of belonging, when asked how they felt the Integrated Skills seminar facilitated positive interpersonal experiences (question 39), only 71% scored it 6 and above (Figure 4).

The qualitative feedback highlighted that students tend to compare themselves negatively to their peers, which could hinder their willingness to work together and their sense of connection. This seems to corroborate answers to question 22 - *I believe I can rely on my fellow students in the Integrated Skills seminar for support (academic and/or pastoral)* - and question 23 - *I believe I can rely on my Integrated Skills Tutor for support (academic and/or pastoral)* – which showed a stronger trust towards their tutor (74.8% above 6) than their peers (64.6% above 6, of which 25.3% of 6).

Question 39 - *On a scale of 0 to 10, how do you feel the Integrated Skills seminar facilitates positive interpersonal experiences.*

Not at all = 0 vs completely = 10

Figure 4: Belonging and positive relationship.



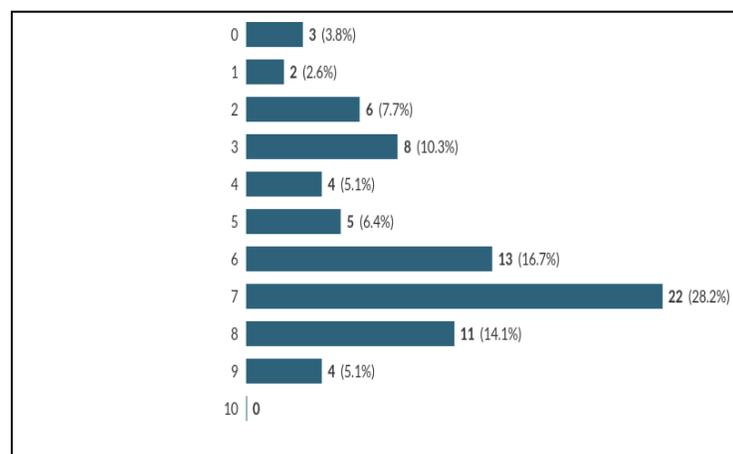
Competence

Competence (or self-efficacy) is the ability to manage interactions, tasks, and challenges that we face effectively. When asked if the French integrated skills seminar made them feel effective and competent learners (question 41), only 64.1% rated their level of competence between 6 and 9, with no students giving it a 10 (Figure 5).

Question 41 - *On a scale of 0 to 10, how do you feel the Integrated Skills seminar makes you feel effective and competent in French language learning.*

Not at all = 0 vs completely = 10

Figure 5: Competence.



Answers to question 14 - *I believe I am developing new skills* – question 15 - *I believe the tasks are challenging at the right level* – question 16 - *I understand the purpose for the specific exercises I am asked to complete* - and question 17 - *I believe the workload for my Integrated Skills seminar is manageable* – all scored 70% or more above 6. This demonstrates that students believe they can manage the work they are given.

However, in the qualitative feedback questions - how effectively and competently students believe they can complete those tasks. Many students raised concerns about their ability to improve and progress at the same pace as their peers, mentioned their fear of speaking in front of the class, expressed their feeling of not being good enough and not as good as their peers, as well as their concerns about passing the exam and being able to complete the different tasks.

Discussion

As we can note from the data, developing and implementing this new innovative program which attempted to embed wellbeing in the curriculum for first year students clearly presented some challenges. We had no expected outcomes as we had no prior data, and the discovery that students reported lower levels of self-efficacy or sense of competence (64.1%) and level of motivation (64.6%) compared to their sense of belonging (83.6%), sense of autonomy (88.8%) and positive relationships (71%) was an interesting finding. It left us wondering if students were valuing what we had done to create a positive learning environment, but still somehow felt individually inadequate in their studies. This is an idea that we will explore further in our future studies.

This small study seems to support previous research on the existing link between self-efficacy and motivation (see page 3 Murphy & Alexander 2000). Competence levels can enhance or impede motivation. A notion that Elliot & Dweck (2005) have confirmed, stating that perceived competence is the best predictor of motivation. The comments made by our students that they chose to take French at university because it was their best subject at school also strengthen this notion. Lei (2010) investigates the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on students' learning. The research demonstrates that intrinsically motivated individuals enjoy learning and discovering new information and do not require external benefits or enhancements. Extrinsically motivated individuals, on the other hand, depend on rewards and results to motivate themselves. Those two different approaches could have different impacts on the overall learning and performance of our students. Further research in the relations between the experience of competence and motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic) would be highly beneficial.

Qualitative data from future focus groups would help us gain a clearer understanding of what makes students feel more competent and how lower levels of self-efficacy/competence specifically affect their level of autonomous motivation. Questions on what drives their interest in pursuing a French Language degree could be asked: are they mainly extrinsically or intrinsically motivated individuals? Drawing from the work by Ormrod (2008) may help us to assess the specific advantages and disadvantages of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and its link to our first-year student levels of motivation and views on learning and success. To understand if our students are more interested in getting good grades, doing better than their peers or are extremely interested in the subject they have chosen for their degree program would also prove extremely advantageous for the work to be carried out over the next few years.

The use of a well-researched self-efficacy scale such as the one successfully designed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) may also be required in future.

Looking at the results of this work, we will continue the development of the first year French Language curriculum by interrogating our teaching strategies, and will carry on reviewing not only how to teach but also what to teach, looking into content that allows all students to engage fully with the curriculum and realize their full potential. This might help us to gauge if there is a clear correlation

between engagement with the material taught and motivation. Of course, part of the problem is that this language unit is a compulsory unit for the whole cohort and not everyone is going to be interested in every topic. Also, we need to cater to the full ability range, which means the pace will only ever be 'right' for those sitting smack in the middle, unless we start streaming learners.

A 2015 poll by the British Council discovered that around 524 out of the 2,098 UK adults surveyed said that they felt extremely nervous at the idea of speaking in a foreign language whilst abroad. In her report Bowler (2020) states that the UK continues to trail behind other European countries at language learning. She reported that only 32% of British young people aged 16-to-30 feel self-assured when reading and writing in a foreign language. This is much lower than in the rest of Europe which has an overall average of 89 per cent. This cultural aspect may play an important part in the way students feel in the French Language classroom and will need to be explored further. Could this explain why many first-year students reported lacking confidence and did not like speaking in front of their peers?

Shavitt, Lee and Johnson (2008: 1103) assert that culture includes "shared elements that provide standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting among those who share a language, a historical period, and a geographical location." It would be interesting to see if there are subjective differences in our student population. One might want to explore if students enrolled on a four-year French Language degree, considered as language specialists, and students taking French as an optional unit as part of their degree, considered as non-specialists, have a different view on language learning and whether this has an impact on the feedback received. Does it also modify the link between motivation and competence beliefs?

The introduction of the conscious competence model whose origin is uncertain but has been attributed to Howell (1982) might also prove advantageous. Howell talks about 4 levels of competence: "Unconscious incompetence" - this is the stage where you are not even aware that you do not have a particular competence. "Conscious incompetence" - this is when you know that you want to learn how to do something, but you are incompetent at doing it. "Conscious competence" - this is when you can achieve this particular task, but you are very conscious about everything you do. "Unconscious competence" - this is when you finally master it and you do not even think about what you have to do, such as when you have learned to ride a bike very successfully" (Howell 1982: 29-33).

By sharing this model with students, we might alleviate some of the frustration which often surrounds the feelings of incompetence also known as competence frustration (Bartholomew et al. 2011). Competence frustration has been described as a sense of failure or ineptitude and disbelief in one's abilities. Research shows that competence frustration often leads to negative results such as disengagement and undermined intrinsic motivation (Fang et al. 2018).

In their 2016 paper Korean researchers Yu, Chae and Chang stress that perfectionism has a negative impact on academic self-efficacy, leading to potential academic burn out. It may be beneficial to incorporate the work carried out by Stoeber, Hutchfield and Wood (2008) on the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of perfectionism in any further curriculum changes. They explain that when self-criticism is associated with low sense of competence, perfectionists have a lower level of confidence after experiencing failure. On the other hand, perfectionistic striving is associated with higher eagerness and ambition and means that perfectionists have higher aims after experiencing success.

Finally, this year, two major events impacted the research we intended to carry out: the strikes in the second semester of academic year 2019-20 and outbreak of Covid-19. All the research planned for the second semester (second survey, focus groups and collaborative workshop) had to be abandoned. We felt it would be too difficult to survey students online and thought this might have an impact on the research results. We also feared that the online teaching would potentially have skewed students' experience and therefore the results.

The priority for next academic year will be to re-apply for further funding or to see if it would be possible to extend the length of the research grant so that we can conduct a more thorough

investigation with the next intake of first year students. It is also important to recognize that there is a real need to mature this project. The full impact of a new curriculum can only be measured after a cohort or two have completed their entire degree. We will therefore start expanding the embedding of wellbeing into the curriculum of second, third and final year and we are planning to ask the students involved in this initial project to answer the same questionnaire at the end of each year of their degree, to evaluate if and how their perception evolves with time.

Burack & Schmidt (2014) show how wellbeing is heavily influenced by context and culture. There are several important aspects to consider here such as the possible impact the Covid-19 crisis and the move to blended learning could have on students' perceptions. The recent report published by Widnall et al. (2020) based on a large cohort of young people during lockdown highlights a surprising decrease in anxiety and improved wellbeing. This positive outcome gives us hope that despite the move to blended learning with online and on campus teaching in 2020-21, it may be possible for the new cohort of Year 1 French Language students to show positive wellbeing and a sense of belonging when they start university next academic year.

Conclusion

While there are clear limits on what conclusions can be drawn from such a small study, we appear to have created a positive learning environment, a strong sense of belonging and positive relationships within our Year 1 French Language cohort at the University of Bristol. This provided the context in which students should be able to thrive. Based on the work we have discussed here, the individual concerns of students about their competence and how to improve their motivation will clearly take more time and more work to be addressed. This will shape and inform our future research and teaching practice.

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The language of dissent - how school leaders adjust to policy change

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Abstract

Education has changed recently in the England and leadership of schools has changed with it. This paper examines the language of dissent, the political opposition of school leaders who meet the challenges of the educational system resulting from the government policies. They question whether these policies really serve the pupils and the community effectively. It is based on a wider piece of research involving interviews with head teachers and senior managers in a range of schools; it illustrates their frustrations at delivering a prescriptive curriculum. The research takes a grounded theory approach; throughout the interview process, themes emerged and were developed through layers of analysis. This led to the construction of a framework based on the ideas of power, ethics, resistance, and mistrust. This explains the views of school leader in conceptual terms, and it was found that they use of any form of control at their disposal, bring their own values to education, subvert where they see necessary, and at best tolerate policy.

Keywords: *discourse, new public management, grounded theory, resistance*

Introduction

The research question was ‘How do school leaders react to changes in educational policy?’ The aim of the research was to find out how professionals view to the introduction of private sector practices in delivery models of public services (Ferlie et al. 1996). These practices are now widespread in education and based on neo-liberal educational policy change (Ball, 2017). Changes in educational policy have emphasized a different direction in education philosophy, from a collective to a more individualistic approach, with the stated aim of improving educational standards. The emphasis of this research was policy, but also the values school leaders bring to their roles. A grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014, Glaser & Strauss 1967) was used; this method relies on as few preconceptions as possible and data to inform and provide increased focus throughout the course of the research. As such a literature review in the conventional sense was not necessary or desired; instead, the context of educational change is outlined, and ideas for starting the research were taken from this. As data was accumulated, and participant’s views began to emerge, themes were developed and a sharper direction to the research was formed. This provided a rich body of data which was analyzed on different levels, and a conceptual framework was developed to explain the responses. This article is part of a wider piece of research; one of the most striking aspects of the findings was the impulsive use of language by school leaders. Opinions and attitudes to educational policy, such as school inspections, league tables, and new forms of governance, were voluntarily expressed, and disdain for educational policy was openly voiced. This unvarnished use of language reflects Lipsky’s (1980) ideas on street level bureaucracy and Foucault’s (1973) concept of discourse and combines to produce a *language of dissent*.

Theoretical background

The grounded theory approach allows for the emerging data to affect the trajectory of the research as it progresses. As such, a literature review in a conventional sense has not been used, but the context of educational policy is outlined. Also, it was anticipated that the personal educational philosophies and leadership may be significant, and these topics are included in the theoretical background as well.

New Public Management

Neo-liberal thinking has changed the education system in the UK from a public service to a business (Ball 2017). Recent educational policy has de-constructed collectivism and re-invented a form of Victorian laissez-faire individualism (Ball 2017: 2); it has shifted education away from an issue of social welfare to a matter of political economy, and led to a 'destatization' of the political system (Jessop 2002: 199).

New public management refers to the modernization of public services by introducing market-oriented management processes in the expectation of more cost-effectiveness (Hood 1991), based on business practices (Ball 2017). It is about markets, managers and measurement, and profit, although more around efficiency than effectiveness (Ferlie et al. 1996). Public organizations emphasize equity (for staff and the customer) and universality of provision, but for private organizations, this is less significant, and questions are asked about the integrity of new public management (Kolthoff, Huberts & van den Heuvel 2006). With themes from economics, accounting, and private sector management (Ferlie et al. 1996), emphasis is on ideological reform. This has led to quasi markets and 'choice and competition' (Ball 2007: 24). Conscious decisions to further the public interest have given way to the consequences of self-interested decisions made by producers and consumers in a competitive market (Le Grand 2002). Amid this, the consumer is empowered to check the supply of public services under certain notions of quality (Apple 2016). Education has become a product where the individual customer (i.e. the parent or pupil) competes to get what they see as the best education from the system.

According to Syvertsen (1991) public service includes universal access, uniform rates, regulated profits, and high standards of quality, for the public good. New public management includes private sector principles such as performance management and measurement, performance indicators, and pressure on low performers to improve (Ferlie et al. 1996). Thus, paradoxes and dilemmas can be found; where consumers are not equal and competition is introduced for personal gain of the suppliers, universal provision can suffer. Private sector organizations exist to create value for their shareholders, but public organizations aim to generate public value (Wei 2008). As a result, the value of education can be difficult to identify (Wei, 2008). This becomes unreliable when considering aspects such as children's well-being, healthy behaviors, and attitudes (DfES 2005), and sociological and cultural capital factors (Bourdieu & Patterson 1990). Teachers have found conflict with performance indicators (Miller & Cable 2011), as performance indicators:

"Measure not what is necessary but what is measurable and therefore you very often end up with results which (simply) suit the government statisticians...." (Jackson 2006)

However, the methods of new public management are useful in controlling education professionals through power relationships (Hope 2010) where schools are subjected to surveillance (Bourdieu 1999). Transparency means that they are under constant scrutiny (Ferlie et al. 1996, Murphy 2013) of the trust-less panopticon, a disciplinary society of scrutiny designed to maximize the efficiency of the institution (Foucault 1977).

New public management can result in a different kind of moral mind-set (Earley & Greany 2017) which can change in public service ethical standards (Maesschalk 2004). Values can be defined as what is good and worthy to us (Williams 1970); they mold and inform behavior (MacCarthaigh 2008) and how we engage with the world (Rokeach 1979). However, there can be contradictions; value systems are personal (Kidder 2003), and those imposed by government can cause tension with obligation to implement policy (Bush 2008). School leaders regret a reduction of professional autonomy (Giles et al. 2005); teachers not supporting privatization are more interested in teaching and professional autonomy (Edmondson & D'Urso 2009), especially with disadvantaged groups (Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi 2002).

Quality is also an issue. A system of inspections has been introduced (Education Reform Act 1988) and results of the inspection are published and contribute to the school's position in league tables.

However, inspection regimes are not universally approved of; the intention is to drive up quality, but they can be unrealistic and punitive to the point of bullying, especially in failing schools (Combi 2013). League tables and rankings of schools, which do not focus on absolute performance levels, can have adverse consequences (Hood 2010). Such measures do not allow for the context of schools in terms of social deprivation or other indicators. In addition, schools have greater freedom to select the pupils; this can lead to higher positions in league tables by attracting parents with greater aspirations for their children (Garner 2011). Conversely, children whose parents place less emphasis on aspiration can find themselves grouped together in schools, the so-called sink schools (Ball 2017). These hit the most deprived children and lead to a 'spiral of decline' (Garner 2011: 1) in the educational experience for such children.

Philosophy of education

Legislation, starting with The Education Reform Act (1988), has brought major changes to the financing, organization, and management of state education (Ball 2017), but it has also affected philosophical ideas about education. Despite the 'facade of the rhetoric of "education for all"', the state has started to play a 'diminishing role' (Hill & Kumar 2012: 1); Giroux (2011) sees this as an encroachment on the social justice of education. The post-war period represented progressive reform and all-party consensus on education (Jeffreys 1984). This liberal model of education is a way of 'transmitting and conserving society's achievements' (Dewey, 1966: 20) to make for a better society, and for 'personal growth and democracy' (Bowles & Gintis 2016: 55). This model of education was aimed to develop children naturally with a teacher as a guide, not a task master; emotional and intellectual development were to hold equal importance, to take the 'lid off kids' (Bowles & Gintis 2016: 63) as a 'moral, ethical and democratic' process (Aubrey & Riley 2017: 48). However, education is now more testing based and geared to employment, a vocational model, but Down (2009) points out the danger of valuing education purely for economic growth.

School governance

School governance refers to the way that schools are funded and managed and has a significant effect on the leadership of the school.

Neo-liberal reforms have introduced a social market economy (Ball 2007) into education, the state was seen as wasteful and inefficient, and the free market as the engine of national economic competitiveness (Eagle 2003). State schools, from the 1980s onwards, were required to re-focus and re-design amid strict financial controls (Ball 2007), including pressure to generate more income; schools found themselves in competition with each other, local management of schools (i.e. outside of local authority control), parental choice, and new imperatives for school leaders (Ball 2007). The focus of schools became outcomes, whether through norm referencing (schools competing) or criterion referencing (targets and benchmarks) (Aubrey & Riley 2017). Legislation has also led to performance management of teachers (Middlewood & Abbott 2017), changes in the way teachers are employed. This is a departure from the traditional welfare state model (Hill & Kumar 2012; Powell 2007). Schools became individual organizations that could make their own financial and strategic decisions, whereas before, education was centrally controlled. However, there is some controversy over these developments; according to Dunt (2014), this does not necessarily lead to improved achievement, and the introduction of competition among colleagues, formal judgement of schools and chasing money, has been branded as insulting (Hill & Kumar 2012). Recent changes have resulted in new types of schools; *academies* are schools which have opted out of local authority control and are strategically and financially independent, and *free schools* are new schools set up to meet local needs but outside the control of local authorities. Much has changed with educational policy and the views of these changes were sought from the sample in the research.

Leadership

On one hand, writers refer to an ethical and contextual style of leadership related to the educational field, and on the other, a more managerialist approach that assumes management is a transferable skill that can be applied regardless of sector, based on outcomes. According to Leithwood, Steinbach and Jantzi (2002), it is important for school leaders to generate a caring value system for staff and students in a Maslovian sense (Aubrey & Riley 2017), as well as collective leadership, moral purpose, and collaboration (Lambert 1998); this can be considered 'moral confidence' in an 'ethical system' (West-Burnham 1997: 241). Decision-making and judgements (Earley & Greany 2017) can both drive an organization and guide tough decisions (Dean 2011); where staff share strong values and are led by example, principled decisions will generate respect from others and preserve self-worth and integrity (Dean 2011). Leadership at the heart of an organization is the most effective way to achieve the desired vision for staff and students (Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi 2002), and crucial for organizational effectiveness (Earley & Greany 2017). In education, concepts of leadership are transformational and distributive (Bush & Glover 2014); emphasis should be on authentic leadership (Simpkins 2005, Begley 2007) based on the leader's moral maturity (Gardner et al. 2005), values and reflective practice, as opposed to a fake ethical approach, or inauthenticity (Shamir & Eilam 2005). Spiritual leadership (Woods 2000), as such, is based on what is right or good (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 1999, Rokeach 1979).

MacDonald (1995) noted the shift away from leadership as a professional, to technician and manager, to a reductionist-based model that ignores larger leadership skills, a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to recognize dispositions, values, and identities (Cuban 1998). This is affected by *managerialism*, the general idea that better management will provide an effective solution to a wide range of social and economic ills (Pollitt 1993). Managerialism is based on functions, authority, and influence (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 1999) and can be more about control; Gray (2000) lamented the loss of a professional ethos and a sense of public service. Managers are now managing professionals (teachers) rather than professionals (teachers) managing their own work; this can lead to distractions from what they consider their real work (Conway 1993). Managers are encouraged to work to further their own interests, through results and target driven cultures (Mills & Friesen 2001). However, according to Simic (1995), effective managers are not usually successful in career progression, and those who work hard for their own careers are not effective managers. Even so, values affect leadership; the most effective school leaders show flexibility rather than dogmatism, based on core values of persistence, resilience, and optimism, even in the face of unhelpful educational policy (Hill et al, 2016). They have strong moral and ethical purpose and a strong sense of social justice (Hill et al. 2016, MacCarthaigh 2008). It is against this background that the school leaders in the sample were asked about leadership in their schools, and how they felt schools should be led.

Methodology

Grounded theory

With a varied sample of head teachers and other senior managers from a range of schools in different sectors, it was anticipated that responses would be dissimilar and unpredictable. That is the reason grounded theory was selected as a research approach, to provide 'substantive theory' (Glaser 2001) or 'a systematic process for the abstract conceptualization of latent patterns within a social reality' (Holton 2007: 268). It was not intended to verify theory through research (Glaser & Strauss 2008) or to feed back into and modify theory (Merton 1949). That would require there to be an existing theory and as Glaser and Strauss (2008) point out, that could limit the scope of the research. As such, a literature review was not used as the theory must fit the situation or be applicable and meaningfully relevant (Glaser & Strauss 2008). This focus and flexibility and interaction between data and analysis was found to be useful to get members 'taken for granted assumptions and rules' (Charmaz 2014: 35).

Provisional ideas were used for the first interviews to address what participants defined as interesting or problematic before re-evaluating the research process to focus on key analytic ideas (Charmaz 2014). The object was to clear the way for *developing* not freezing theory (Glaser & Strauss 2008). These ‘less specific’ ideas (Strauss & Corbin 1997: 65) led to an ‘intersection of multiple realities’ (Strauss & Corbin 1997: 65) that the participants experienced as leaders of schools.

The sample

The study included eleven leaders in education in the context of new public management. As the research population as such, was likely to be professionally and geographically diverse, relevant leaders in compulsory educational settings were selected from state and private primary schools (and middle schools where they exist), high schools, and recently developed hybrids offering the National Curriculum. Most of the sample were head teachers, with the balance being those in senior management, selected on their theoretical relevance (David & Sutton 2011). All eleven were selected on the basis that they had experience in strategic leadership in schools. The first participants were selected according to availability (or convenience sampling) (David & Sutton 2011), but as the research developed, a more targeted approach was used. For example, younger head teachers were included, to balance those who were older and had more experience.

Access was problematic, but gatekeeping straightforward. Securing interviews with school leaders proved to be more difficult than envisaged; choosing participants became more of a case of accidental or opportunistic sampling where ‘the researcher simply chooses a sample from those to whom (s)he has easy access’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011: 156). Gatekeeping, or being allowed or denied access (Holloway & Wheeler 2002) did not pose a major problem; as head teachers are (increasingly) autonomous, the permissions needed were basically from the head teachers themselves.

Categorical variables (Siegal 2013) about the participants were used as a tool to reflect on the data. These included characteristics such as gender and age, aspects such as length of service, seniority, role, educational setting. These characteristics were used to determine relationships to the data (Siegal 2013); for example, younger professionals could have had different views from those with more experience, which was in fact the case. When the concepts developed were reasonably able to describe the situation (David & Sutton 2011), interviewing was discontinued. In the event, it was not so much data saturation (i.e. when there is enough information... and when further coding is no longer feasible (Fuchs & Ness 2015), but diversity of data that called a halt to the data collection. An overview of the sample is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overview of the sample.

Code	Role	Years' in post	Years in sector	Age	Gender	Type of school	Number of Pupils	Governance
P1.1	Head Teacher	22	30	56	M	Primary	200	Local Authority
P1.2	Head Teacher	11	30	56	F	Primary	194	Local Authority
P1.3	Head teacher	14	27	49	M	Primary	302	Local Authority
P1.4	SEN Coordinator	6	10	40	F	Primary	240	Local Authority

P1.5	Head Teacher	1	15	53	F	High	1100	Academy
P1.6	Head of PE/enrichment	0	17	47	M	High	650	Free School
P1.7	Head Teacher	1	32	55	F	High	1100	Academy
P2.1	Head Teacher	7	7	66	M	Primary	160	Independent
P2.2	Head Teacher	3m	14	53	F	Primary	196	Local Authority
P2.3	Head Teacher	4	15	38	M	Primary	250	Local Authority
P2.4	Executive Head Teacher	21	27	50	F	2x Primary	286	Local Authority

The research instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used initially for their flexibility (Becker & Bryman 2004) to ask supplementary questions (Basit 2010), and to gain more focus as interviewing advanced (Charmaz 2014). Some pre-conceptions about the research were retained ‘around key areas of interest’ (Becker & Bryman 2004: 406), for example policy change and performance management. This was useful to decide if questions were redundant, or to change focus (Basit 2010), and it allowed certain questions to be dropped in the event of data saturation (Charmaz 2014) on some issues.

After seven interviews, key issues were defined (Brundrett & Rhodes 2014), to follow emerging lines of enquiry (Yin, 2009). The themes that emerged are shown in Figure 2 and range from leadership to financial issues, from policy to professional discretion. Figure 2 illustrates the original questions and how they were adjusted to fit the data emerging from the interviews. For the last four interviews, a hybrid was developed, more guided conversations rather than structured queries (Basit 2010). Part of this process was to explain or re-frame questions for the participant, but also to allow the participants the freedom to lead the direction (Kvale 1996). The interviews took place mainly at the participant’s place of work, were conducted by me, audio recorded and transcribed word for word. The first seven interviews were approximately one hour long, but as focus was achieved the last four were around 40 minutes. Participants were coded from P1.1-P1.7 and to P2.1-P2.4.

Figure 2: Interview questions.

First wave interview questions (Seven)
1 What do you see as your main role?
2 How would you characterize your preferred style of management/ leadership?
3 Can you tell me about commissioning of services and what role that has in your work?
4 What influences how you assess the performance of your staff?
5 How do you feel about local/national ‘measures of the school’s performance’?
6 How do you feel about educational policy initiatives from central government?
7 What is your approach to achieving ‘efficiencies’?

Second wave interviews (Four)	
Based upon themes emerging from data generated from first wave interviews	
Leadership	1 How would you characterize your leadership style?
Educational philosophy	2 What do you see as the purpose of education?
Professional discretion	3 To what extent do you 'follow' policy dictates?
Policy change	4 What are your views on recent/ current educational policies?
Finance and governance	5 How do you feel about the financial role Head Teachers have?
Human resource issues and teacher training	6 How do you performance manage your staff?

Method of data analysis

Grounded theory was used to build theory from data from the ground up (Greener 2011). Coding was used to 'draw out the particulars from within each empirical case or instance of data collection....', to translate events into 'units of meaning' (David & Sutton 2011: 198-9). A process of constant comparison took place to consider (existing or new) theory as coding progressed (Glaser & Strauss 2008). Without an hypothesis at the start, the technique of 'analytical induction' was used to evaluate the data generated for theoretical relevance. This involved a 'tentative hypothesis' to 'fit' the data (David & Sutton 2011: 340).

Three levels of coding were used (Hodgkinson 2008) - open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. First, tentative labels were created based on the meaning emerging from the data (Charmaz 2014). Second, patterns were identified across the data among the open codes. Third, key examples from the emerging patterns (David & Sutton 2011), were sought. Memos (Charmaz 2014) were attached to sections of data and emerging codes for constant comparison; this led to the generation of themes. How things are said became as important as what was said, and I made 'sense of the situation' in the light of my own 'concerns and goals' (Becker & Bryman 2014: 396-97).

Findings

Figure 3: Conceptual framework.

P	Power	Ethics	E
R	Resistance	Mistrust	M

The data presented in this article is part of a wider study not intended to research language, but as the language used was so significant, extracts of data are given here that illustrate the use of language.

During the first seven interviews, the process of coding and categorization of the data started using single words, paragraphs or pages of text (Soldana 2016) to remain open to the data and to see nuances in them (Charmaz 2014). From the data, some expected, and some unexpected themes emerged, but although it was not anticipated, the language used by most of the sample was striking. The vocabulary and expressions displayed a great deal of dissent and disdain for educational policy. Quotes show an open and unanticipated hostility for policy and it was clear that the sample had their own ideas about the education system and recent changes. However, it was the more experienced school leaders that had confidence to criticize policy and this was based upon their forcefulness. All the sample demonstrated high levels of empathy with children and their families and their communities and felt

that educational policy was not meeting the needs of those in areas of social and economic deprivation. Although policy is presented by the government as fixed and compulsory, it was not universally followed; some leaders made their own rules about how to educate their children in the context of their own schools. Finally, it became apparent that the sample had little faith in educational policy in terms of meeting the needs of the children in their schools; they simply did not think it would work. As a result, the conceptual framework of Power, Ethics, Resistance and Mistrust (see Figure 3) was developed to explain this lack of faith in policy and the language of dissent. Selected quotes are used below from the research to illustrate each of these concepts, with accompanying theoretical analysis to place the quotes in context.

Power

Power has been used as a concept to explain the data because it was found that the older and more experienced the participants were, the more power they had at their disposal to challenge policy, the older and more experienced of the sample, were philosophical about their plight:

These quotes from one a highly experienced Head Teacher illustrate the advantage of experience and belief:

P1.3 'Being a head, I think involves an inner strength which, yes, it is enhanced by experience and time to look back at experience, but it is about that inner conviction.'

P1.3 'It is bending the system I suppose.... you should have the courage to be the leader you need to be for the children in your care.'

... and the resilience that comes with it....

P1.3 'It is the thick-skinned approach to it and not taking everything personally rather than not caring any more-because I still care very passionately, but I am more able to put things in place and not worry about the negative consequences of those things.'

Depending on the authority available to the participants, they objected to policy in different ways. As stated above, most of the sample had reservations about policy in their own ways. However, some were more forthright than others. One experienced participant who claimed to know her children better than those making policy, flatly refused to deliver separate literacy and numeracy sessions for her children, even though this was prescribed by policy:

P2.4 'I refuse to do a literacy and numeracy hour; I embed literacy and numeracy in other subjects.'

She explained that during inspection, when she would be judged on this, she would contrive a situation to satisfy inspectors, but as a rule she would not implement a strategy that she felt was not right for her children. This conviction was replicated by another experienced Head Teacher when referring to leadership. However, the rate of conviction was proportionate to the perceived levels of unavailability participants perceived themselves to have:

P2.4 'It's alright for me, I have done 21 years, if they kick me out now, I have had a good innings, I can afford to leave...'

Measures of political intervention and quality in schools were questioned widely by participants. Another issue with inspections centered around socio-economic and cultural factors. At the time the inspection regime took little account of the background of the children and the communities they come from. Therefore, inspections were considered to be missing important factors:

P1.2 '....but there is a whole context around a school, so you can't judge it on one measure.'

The same participant took a much broader view of education and development than policy required:

P1.2 'I am looking at children as a whole rather than looking at them getting their SATS results in Year 6.'

This participant had his own views on the introduction of the National Curriculum and how it led to control and a loss of freedom

P1.2 *'... when the control of the National Curriculum came about and the real element of government involvement-their involvement is on a very management level....'*

Discussion

This sample uphold their own values and adjust their role around their own values, acting out a form of political leadership (Bush 2011). *Power* can be distinguished between personal and professional interests (Hoyle 1986). According to Weber, power is social action by actors to enforce their own will (Weber 1978). Rational target power concerns work in accordance with the expectations of the outside world to achieve objectives. Value rational power concerns conscious belief in ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other absolute value of a certain behavior (Weber 1978). Both forms of power were represented by the sample; first, what government and local authorities expect from school leaders, and second, the power school leaders exercise within and beyond their schools. Foucault claimed that 'power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' (Foucault 1998: 63). Power is not simply an institutional phenomenon; it is in a state of constant flux and negotiation. Foucault (1973) saw power as elusive, removed from agency and structure, and used this to explain why state power does not always lead to social change. Power lies in observation, punishment, and normalizing discourses through the concept of panopticism (Foucault 1977). This can explain power of policy makers and administrators of policy. All the participants felt as if they were being observed through the inspection agency, and judged on test results, inspection outcomes and league table positions, even those who had highly successful schools. However, most of the participants were unaffected by the normalizing of discourse and used their power to challenge it.

Power was derived either through success at the school, for example through Ofsted ratings, by perceived relative immunity to any sanctions, or through expert knowledge (Rodriguez & Craig 2007). Bourdieu's concepts of practice and habitus can explain the nature of the sample. Practice refers to the activities of the actors in relation to the wider society, in other words what is actually done (Murphy 2016); habitus concerns the disposition of the actors and how they 'make meaningful contributions to practice' (Murphy 2016: 123). These abstract mental habits (Bourdieu 1977) are schemes of perception, classification, appreciation, feeling, and action; they allow actors to find new solutions to new situations without calculated deliberation, based on their gut feelings and intuitions, and the sample exhibited this.

Discourse can be a site of power, but it can also evade and subvert strategies of power (Gaventa 2003); 'discourses can be a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault 1998: 100-101). The participants' preference for autonomy is based on ideas of professionalism and its perceived demise (Crow & Weindling 2010). They do not see the neo-liberal doxa (Bourdieu 1999) or policy technologies (Ball 2017) as inevitable and obvious (Rosamund 2002); almost all regret the pathologisation of public sector provision (Kenway 1990). They are motivated by autonomy, mastery and purpose (Pink 2009). The participants use agency and independent action to make their own free choices (Barker 2005), to create new discourses and dialogues of self-identity. Foucault (1998) saw power as elusive but the participants have re-constructed themselves using their power; we are not what we are, we are who we can become (Caldwell 2007). They are using disruptive innovation (Christensen & Overdorf 2000) to force their own change.

Ethics

The participants demonstrated high levels of empathy for children in their schools, and this was the main driver for most. Know their children and communities better than policy makers was seen as highly significant. One highly experienced Head Teacher said:

P1.2 *'The willingness to stand up for what they see as right for the children.... It is about the individual and the qualities that individual brings to that role.'*

.... and questioned policy in terms of the value for children:

P1.2 'Is that benefitting the children of this community?'

Sensitive to cultural factors, one was highly critical of Standard Assessment Tests for young children based on their ability to engage culturally with the format of testing. This participant, a newly qualified Head Teacher, said:

P2.3 'I watched 15 kids break down and cry because they couldn't access it. I thought to myself at that point "that is never happening again in my school...."'

He claimed that the socio-economic background of his children was a barrier:

P2.3 '... this new measure was not fit for purpose. If I was sat in a leafy suburb it's probably a little easier, but all schools?'

To another Head Teacher, at the end of a long career, the problem was obvious:

P1.1 'Common sense does seem to go out the window when pressure of exam results takes over. (Failing schools) focus purely on the exam results.'

He empathized with his children because he is from the same background as them:

P1.1 'I come from a council estate-I know what it feels like, I can feel what the kids and parents are going through. Should we be continuing that package within the rules that we have? That can't be right.'

On the topic of testing children, few felt that testing was the most effective method to judge children's abilities, at least not the children in their schools. An experienced Head Teacher said:

P1.2 'I would have loved to have opted out because I don't think the style of the tests suit this type of children.'

He considered tests to be narrow, not only in academic terms but also in the holistic development of children:

P1.2 '...it's much easier to have a test score or an Ofsted grade and use that as a key driver than it is to spend time looking at things that are less easily measured, like how high is a child's self-esteem.... that is much more difficult.'

These sentiments illustrate the derision over a curriculum that is perceived as too narrow and the loss of opportunity for their children. Another Head Teacher at the end of her career said:

P1.3 '... because ultimately, we are there to create as much opportunity for those children....It is about making sure they have self-esteem so they can be resilient so that if they take a knock, if things don't go as well, they can be effective learners.'

....and the wider impact on children:

P1.3 'It is all linked to their mental health, behaviour that is reflecting the issues that are underlying that and our system does not want to bend in order to accommodate.'

One of the sample, who was instrumental in setting up one of the new breed of Free Schools, felt that the curriculum is much more prescribed than it was in the past and there was a feeling that educational policy is narrow and limiting:

P1.6 'We believe.... that education is more than English, maths and science. If you want to know a good school, go and see their music department and their PE department. If they are good, I guarantee their exam results are good as well.'

Discussion

The sample's *ethics*, or strong opinions or beliefs (Cambridge Dictionary 2017) often came into conflict with policy. The dilemma for the sample is 'compassion and flexibility on the one hand and rigid rule application on the other' (Lipsky 1980: 15). Good leaders communicate clear sets of personal and educational values and moral purposes for the school (Day, Harris & Hadfield 2001). Usually these values are influenced by government (Bush 2008), however, most of the sample in this research have individualistic values. They demonstrate a caring principle and ideals such as modelling and collaboration, to provide a guiding force (Giles et al. 2005). Perception and reaction are prior conditions

for practice (Rawolle & Lingard 2013); most of the participants in this research debate and discuss and focus on values (Hill et al. 2016). These values form the habitus and are central to guiding their practice. They see education more as a passage to citizenship, and membership of a state (Bailey 2010) and preparation of children for social life. The hidden curriculum refers to education of the masses for economic needs (Bowles & Gintis 2016), but vocational training is not the universal panacea (Bailey, 2010). Education has the potential to supersede politics (Emerson 2016), school is a leveler in society offering more than employment opportunities, but also social mobility. This resistance to the distant control of policy technology (Ball 2017), and an attempt to break out of the Weber's iron cage of bureaucracy (Murphy 2013) to preserve freedom and creativity. Some were concerned at what they perceived as surveillance: inspections, lesson observations, publication of test results and league tables in an 'accountability trap' (Murphy 2013: 85) where reaching required outcomes for their children was considered unfeasible. This is meeting targets but 'not necessarily performing better in the real world' (Murphy 2013: 85). The participants' values reflect 'holistic learning' and 'authentic knowing' (Murphy 2013: 69). Few questioned the emphasis on literacy or numeracy, but considered it too narrow at the expense of more holistic aims, including transferable skills for their lives after education. Bureaucratic governance of education has led to a totally administered world (Murphy, 2013) and to the realization of Weber's iron cage where individuals in organizations based on efficiency and control (Murphy 2013), have reduced levels of professional freedoms, resulting in specialists without spirit and sensualists without heart (Weber 1958).

Pressures on freedom were perceived to compromise professional status. Professions require community rather than self-interest, public service rather than private gain and adherence to a code of ethics, as well as theoretical knowledge (Barber 1963) and service to public good (Millerson 1964). The participants all had strong convictions and individualistic approaches. Somewhere highly idiosyncratic and engage policy with charismatic authority and leadership (Langlois 1998). They are motivated by values and the pursuit of individual visions (Southworth 1993), which is a (tacit) rejection of managerialism (Simkins 2005), and reductionist competence-based models (Earley & Weindling 2004) of education. Entrepreneurialism now pervades in schools (Ball 2007), but the sample were unconvinced about the business of education (Ferlie, 1996), and they question the pathologisation of the welfare state model. Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (2002) found that teachers were interested in teaching not marketing. Edmondson & D'Urso (2009) claim that those supporting privatization of education were more extrinsically motivated by pay, but none of the sample were not motivated as such. For most of the sample, values were translated into actions for the benefit of pupils, staff, and community. Values transcend both contexts and experiences (Dean 2011), form the habitus (Bourdieu 1977), and are central to guiding their practice; the participants have the moral confidence (West-Burnham 1997) to say the unsayable (Ball 2007) on policy. Autonomous professionalism overrides the role of the compliant bureaucrat (Lipsky 1980).

Resistance

Most of the sample questioned policy, but some actively refused to accept it and worked against policy for the benefit of their children, as they perceived it.

One, the Head Teacher of a private (fee paying) school refused to enter children for exams they felt children would not benefit from:

P2.1 'We don't ask them to sit. So, if the government measures our performance by EBAC (English Baccalaureate) we will suffer. I say, for this child, a foreign language is inappropriate.'

The educational philosophies of the sample came through in their responses; recent developments in education have resulted in a mechanistic process that was rejected by most, including the Head Teacher of one of the new academies:

P1.7 *'Tick box culture: I think it stifles creativity and it makes staff, teachers feel that they, I suppose in a way, that they are working towards that tick list as opposed to working towards their specific skills.'*

This resulted in a great deal of discrimination about educational policy by some, including the Head Teacher of a private school, who was also a trained lawyer:

P2.1 *'I think you must exercise a discerning judgement on government policies. Some of them can be very well done and the fruit of a lot of good minds on committees and should be assessed and we get DfE circulars down, we do receive all of those.'*

On an increasingly standardized curriculum, one participant in a school serving an area of deprivation, said:

P2.4 *'Yes, it should be a personalised curriculum....'*

Many expressed sentiments that they rejected the role of manager to a centralised education system; one, an experienced Head teacher, claimed:

P1.2 *'Absolutely, I don't believe in management, I believe in leadership.'*

They continued to think that they had autonomy based on their local situation, and one challenged the (then) Secretary of State for Education. A highly experienced Head Teacher said:

P1.1 *'Where is there a forum to say, "Gove you haven't got a clue what you are talking about?"'*

On authority in their schools, all felt that they were leaders, and not the managers they felt policy was trying to make them become. One explained how the expectations changed:

P1.5 *'When the control of the National Curriculum came about and the real element of government involvement-their (head teachers in individual schools) involvement is on a very management level.'*

On being a 'manager' in an office rather than a leader who interacted with children, one said:

P1.3 *'I don't think that I am ever going to be able to just be in an office and kind of be divorced from the reality of what goes on in the school.'*

An experienced Head Teacher exercised great deals of discretion over whether they followed policy or not:

P1.1 *'...and that's not saying that I don't check, because you have to.... So where are we going to go with this? Yes, that's a good idea. But we have to have success criteria and we have to track them through because it's no good doing anything if you are not checking whether it makes an impact.'*

On the inspection regime for schools, there was little sympathy for its bluntness. An experienced Head Teacher said:

P1.3 *'I don't think it's an effective way. I don't mind it, I am not dead against it, but there is a whole context around a school, so you can't judge it on one measure.'*

.... and on increasingly qualitative methods to judge the quality of schools:

P1.3 *'It's much easier to have a test score or an Ofsted grade and use that as a key driver than it is to spend time looking at things that are less easily measured, like how high is a child's self-esteem.... that is much more difficult.'*

The sample had their own views on training for head teachers. One experienced Head Teacher felt it to be unnecessary:

P1.1 *'... probably did need to do the head teachers' qualification. I have had different experiences and probably didn't need to do that.'*

....and on evaluation of the quality of teaching for new teachers, he said:

P1.1 *'We cannot just keep banging them with a stick. We have to give them time to get it right. You can't just go in: 'Ah you're rubbish!''*

Discussion

The more experienced of the sample were prepared to question the 'necessities' of the 'economic perspective' (Ball 2017: 19). They were prepared to say the unsayable on, for example, the narrowness of the curriculum and the need to broaden it (Gardner 2006). There may have been *resistance* against the feasibility (Kubisch 1997) of policy in terms of meeting the needs of their children, but it was also an issue of social justice, about giving opportunities for all. Those confident enough, challenge official policy on a continuum (Bush & Glover 2014); this ranges from defy through to subvert, from ignore to wait and see. Some leaders have enough confidence to resist or even confound the system (Hoyle & Wallace 2005). Resistance was seen, at least partly, as a mechanism for survival, but also about personal interests (Hoyle 1986). However, these interests were not related to 'status, promotion and working conditions' (Hoyle 1986: 128); it was more a matter of negative reinforcement (Flora 2004), not seeking advancement but preventing undesirable consequences. Many of the sample spoke of sheltering themselves and their schools from what they considered to be adverse policy. Public officials can exercise *street level bureaucracy* (Lipsky 1980) and have two mind-sets: on one hand the bureaucratic mind-set, compliant with supervisor's directives, and on the other, the professional mind-set, involving discretion and autonomy. The sample exercised professional discretion. Although few expressed overt political views, there were reservations about the neo-liberal educational agenda (Joseph 1975) such as testing, league tables (Gove 2012), and the (economic) individualism (Ball 2017) wrapped up in the neo-liberal agenda. Despite this, most participants did not resist against the 'necessarian logic', the idea that the state must be remade to respond to international pressures from globalisation (Ball 2017, Watson & Hay 2003: 295). Reactions to policy were more about the level of discretion (Lipsky 1980) they were afforded, the space between adverse policy and how it is delivered under pressure, legal rules, and autonomy for decision-making (Loyens & Maesschalck 2010). This gives the opportunity to undermine support for the government in terms of advancing social welfare, equity, and justice (Brodkin 2012).

This may be reaction to change. Of the resisters to change outlined by Mullins (2005), threats to power and influence and loss of freedom may be factors, but selective perception is a more appropriate explanation. This selective perception is based on educational values; these fit more with liberal education and democracy (Dewey, 1966) and cultural capital (Peterson & Kern 1996). It also rejects neo-liberal doxa (Vernon, 1969), challenges to the welfare state (Kenway 1990) and questions rational-mechanistic approaches to management (Ball & Youdell 2008). They cherish the habitus (Bourdieu 1977) of their educational values. For most, discretion was used liberally to interpret adverse policy (Lipsky 1980) on the grounds of social justice and equality. This is where panoptic surveillance (Foucault 1977) through inspections was resented as it restricts creativity and freedom; the sample prized professional autonomy (Giles et al. 2005) highly. Some did defy, subvert, and ignore policy (Bottery 1998), and the value-based habitus created new discourses to shield children and staff from the vagaries of adverse policy.

Mistrust

P1.7 'I am not a great supporter of the present regime. So, I am cynical about their motives'

This quote from an experienced Head Teacher immediately demonstrates general discontent with policy, but also, they question the validity and authority of policy making....

P1.7 'I guess it comes back to not speaking to the educationalists or imposing your... experience on education.'

....but also the lack of consultation with educationalists in formulation of policy:

1.7 'It's not actually working alongside the educationalists themselves and coming up with a collaborative approach to the curriculum'

Recent changes seem to have brought a culture clash between educationalists and policy, a coordinator of Special Educational Needs said:

1.4 *'It's not their natural thing for people who have chosen to go into education.... SMT struggle with target culture.'*

Many of the sample felt that reform was an obstacle to a successful school rather than a formula for development. Most of the participants also felt that the curriculum in its present form is too narrow and limiting, including the Head Teacher of an independent school:

2.1 *'There are caveats to it that I don't agree with, because they decided which eight subjects will count.'*

On the issue of school inspections, hardly any of the sample were in favour of the present inspection regime, an experienced Head Teacher had a great deal of sympathy for their staff:

P1.1 *'Ofsted inspections are meaningless, new teachers should be observed by their peers.'*

Inspection includes observation of teachers in the classroom and all teachers are judged by the same criteria regardless of experience. He questioned:

P1.1 *'How can new teachers be expected to perform as well as experienced teachers?'*

Again, the question of validity arose; there was little faith in the ability of the inspectors doing teacher observations:

P1.1 *'Who is doing these observations? Quite often, it is people who cannot do it themselves.'*

As an experienced Head teacher expected to judge the performance of staff through payment by achieving targets, there was some reluctance to do this:

P1.2 *'You have targets, and you are performance managed about where you must lead the school to, you pass that down and it is very target orientated. I have got to do this, so I do this.'*

Discussion

There was evidence of *mistrust* and reluctance of participants to follow policy by most of the sample, especially those who remember greater freedoms from earlier times. This mistrust can be explained by the discourses (Bourdieu 1977) used by policy makers; policy is not viewed as inevitable and obvious (Rosamund 2002). According to Ball, 'authoritative readings of prevailing political and economic conditions' (Ball 2007: 2-3) presents policy as a done deal, and those with less experience are more likely to be uncritical of policy, the inevitability of policy becomes the unsayable (Ball 2007). These discourses revolve around derision that pathologises the welfare tradition of public sector provision (Kenway 1990). Ball claims that policy discourses need to develop trust to discourage the speaking of the 'otherwise' (Ball 2007: 2-3), but as Kenway (1990) pointed out, discourses of distrust can be the result. For many of the sample, education of children overrides the certainty of enterprise and dynamism (Ball 2017). This modernization includes competition with other schools for students and resources (Middlewood & Abbott 2017), benchmarks, testing, and examination outputs (Ball 2017). Central control for schools, using management approaches of the private sector (Middlewood & Abbott 2017), is also a source of contention. The participants prioritize the interests of pupils and their communities (Fielding 2003).

Conclusion

The education sector has changed significantly, and this research sought to find out how school leaders view recent policy. It used grounded theory to build a picture of their views from the interview data and constructed a conceptual framework to explain these views. As can be seen from the language used, the sample do not supportive recent changes. There is much resistance and individuality based on ethical practice, and this subverts the enactment of policy. This is where the current generation of school leaders at least, reject the taken for granted doxa; they will not accept the prevailing assumptions about education, uncritically. They create their own cultures to meet the -needs of their children, staff, and communities as they see fit. According to Beck (1992), modernity is characterized by manufactured

uncertainty and subjects take risks to deal with the resulting hazards and insecurities, and the participants have made their choices. Despite operating in a state funded system, the sample felt confident to voice their views about education in straightforward language. Language is a means of acknowledging human thinking, intentions, and social behavior (Hall 2002), and the sample have expressed this very clearly. The unfiltered comments they have made reveal courage and conviction as well as where their true interests lie. Questions can be asked about the suitability of education policy for all children; if school leaders can see problems with policy for many children, then there is much waste; of policy and of children's talent. Perhaps it would be useful for policy makers to acknowledge the views of the professionals on the ground if policy is to be implemented openly and successfully.

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Seamus Heaney's 'Hermit Songs': An education in the nexus of identity and language

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Abstract

In this paper I am going to explore the theme of this ERL issue – language and identity, by focusing upon a sequence of poems by the Irish writer, Seamus Heaney, 'Hermit Songs' (2010). I will argue that, by telling the story of his own identity formation through his encounter with reading, writing and the learning of languages, Heaney offers his own portrait of the artist as a young man. The story is a dynamic and dramatic one. Drawing upon close analysis of the poems based on literary critical models such as Practical Criticism and Intertextual criticism, I will demonstrate how Heaney's identity as a poet emerges out of a playful and painful agon about art and nature, about the private and the public, about art and reality.

Keywords: *Heaney, practical criticism, education and identity, language and identity, postcolonialism*

Introduction

'Hermit Songs' is a sequence of poems which appears in Seamus Heaney's last published volume, *Human Chain* (2010). I will suggest in this paper that Heaney's poetic sequence offers us a very interesting autobiography which is posited centrally on the 'story' of how his identity is formed by language(s) and of how he, in turn, forms language. There are a number of internal 'agons' or dramatized struggles within the poem, cruxes, which have to do with language and identity. There is also a subtle but salient tension between language as oral and language as written. As the personal 'coming of age' narrative unfolds, we begin to realize that identity and language are not just private matters, but, on the contrary, profoundly public and, indeed, political. The identity formed within the poem sequence also challenges the classical western literary dialectic between nature and art, proposing, implicitly, a different poetics, which has its origins in a much older, more telluric orientation in which nature and art form a nexus rather than an opposition.

Heaney (2010, p.74) prefaces the sequence with an epigraph:

Above the ruled quires of my book
I hear the wild birds jubilant.

What we have here is the association of a rigorous scholarship – conveyed by that phrase, 'ruled quires' and what seems – in a Classical Western habit of reading, opposite to this stringent literary endeavor – the jubilant song of the wild birds. The hermit is inside, 'at his books'; nature, free, joyful and glorious is outside, but the two are intimately connected. Indeed, it may be that Heaney is creating a pun here; the sound of 'quires' is the same as the sound of 'choirs' and, in a possible ironic intertextual reference to Shakespeare's famous lines from Sonnet 73; 'bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang' (1609; 1975: 1203). Shakespeare also puns on 'choirs'; meaning both the sound of harmonic music and the upper branches of a tree. The hermit *hears* the birds, attends to nature and is ruled by nature. He is, also in playful and rueful irony, ruled by the quires (rule lines) of his book. The epigraph can be read as a kind of annunciation (and, indeed an enunciation) of the kind of poet the speaker wishes to appear to be. Now, of course this poetic avatar as hermit closely connected with wild nature, has also an ironic aspect to it, because by the time this volume was published, Heaney has become 'Famous

Seamus' and a public man, a Nobel Laureate no less. So, a hermetic life is all but impossible. However, Heaney suffered a stroke, and many poems in this, his last volume, *Human Chain*, attest not just to his frailty ('Had I Been Awake', p. 3) and more broadly, to the theme of ageing and physical decline ('The Butts', p. 12; 'In the Attic, pp. 83-84) and, hence, the need to become, again, rather more withdrawn and secluded.

Theoretical background

This paper derives its theoretical positioning from New Criticism and Practical Criticism. This approach argues that each literary work needs to be viewed as an internal world – an arrangement of words that is self-contained and produces its own meanings from that specific arrangement of words. This approach stretches back to Aristotle, but in the twentieth century is associated with Practical Criticism, pioneered by the English critic, I. A. Richards (1929) and by the New Criticism of John Crowe Ransom (1941). More recently, Julia Kristeva (1980: 36), drawing upon Jacques Derrida, developed a related approach known as 'intertextuality, arguing that every literary text is a permutation of texts . . . where several utterances, taken from other texts intersect'. But, importantly, according to Raj (2015), intertextuality implies that any text is at once literary and social, creative and cultural.

Methodology

The paper will apply the theories outlined above and, thus, will involve a close reading of Heaney's poem sequence, 'Hermit Songs'. This close reading offers a methodology to enable the workings of language to be seen at very close range. The intertextual character of the poem will also be revealed.

Results and discussion

The sequence begins with, in grammatical terms, an inverted sentence:

With cut-offs of black calico,
Remnants of old blackout blinds
Ironed, tacked with criss-cross threads,
We jacketed the issued books. (Heaney 2010: 74).

Rhetorically, the stanza is one sentence – creating a fluidity, a conversational quality. Sonically, we have the brisk efficiency of the task registered in the predominance of bracing 't' and 'd' alliteration, balanced against the softer 'b' and 'l' sounds. And the poem begins *in medias res* (in the middle of things), dramatizing the scene where a family fashions covers for schoolbooks. This is a living process, not a still-life.

We are in a time just after World War 11. There is very little spare money in this rural community. The people recycle the stiff black material that had been used for blackout blinds during the war – which had a texture somewhere between thick paper and cloth. But there is nothing slapdash either; the jackets which are to encase and preserve the 'issued' books, are ironed and tacked with criss-cross threads. But why were they doing this anyhow? Well, the books are, we may note, 'issued' – a lovely pun for a poet who actually issues – brings forth, publishes, books. Now and again, the pupils or scholars as they were known, might get issued with a brand new book and, as the speaker says, at the end of the first poem, deploying the vocative 'you' to draw the reader into a world many would find unfamiliar, 'you' had to learn 'you were a keeper only'. You had to make a covert – a lair for the book in order to protect it. We may note the metaphor here – the book is like a precious animal, a little wild perhaps. It is part of Heaney's identity that nature is always contiguous to language; both reading and writing. The scholars have to be the keepers – gaolers of the wild book, but also, preservers of it. The speaker offers

a delightful little catalogue of the materials used to jacket books at this time, including wallpaper, brown paper, newsprint even:

Less durable if more desired
The mealy textured wallpaper:
Its brede of bosomed roses pressed
And flattened under smoothing irons. (Heaney 2010: 74).

How sensuous are the 'b' sounds and how intense are those hard edged 'd' sounds. And how accurate and sensuous is that description – for some wallpaper at that time did have a texture like the meal people used to feed cattle with or bake bread with. Its limitations are ruefully noted; its greater beauty acknowledged. But it is that word 'desired' that lifts the whole thing and allows Heaney to personify the paper as an attractive woman whose curves are pressed out, the better to make it bend to serviceability and away from young chaps and their adolescent fantasies. The pattern on the wallpaper – those 'bosomed roses' invokes roses that are fully blown, like the breasts of fantasy women. The lines hint, tenderly, ironically, at the drama of the speaker coming into his new sensual and sexual identity, but also, of course his sensory aesthetic awakening as a writer. We have intertextual echoes here of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916); alerting us to the self-conscious artifice of the *Künstlerroman* – the making of the identity of the young artist hero, romantically imbricated and frustrated with bosomed roses pressed flat, while also, comically undermining, mocking all this hot love with the irony of irons.

And that word 'brede' – embroidery, but something stronger, more 'raised' in very sense (embossed, aroused and in Ulster dialect, vexed). There is, I think, some intertextuality here too; a quite specific verbal echo from the opening passage of *A Portrait* (Joyce 1916, 1969: 7):

*O, the wild rose blossoms
On the little green place.*

He sang that song. That was his song.

Heaney may be alluding to that well known first paragraph of *A Portrait* to mock himself a little here – the adolescent fantasy here, as in Joyce is almost mawkishly Romantic. Significantly, though, for our topic, the lines from *A Portrait*, as Katherine Mullins (2016 unpagged), explains are, themselves, examples of subtly altered intertextuality:

The song he claims as 'his song', 'O, the wild rose blossoms / On the little green place' becomes changed to 'O, the green wothe botheth'. Significantly, the song Stephen sings has been altered from the original popular song, sung by a male mourner about his dead lover, 'poor lost Lilly Dale'. The chorus should be 'Oh, the wild rose blossoms / On the little green grave'. However, for a child, the song has been censored, the word 'grave' replaced with 'place'. This has the double effect of eliminating the song's 'unsuitable' topics of sexual desire, death and grief, and implying that the young artist is born into a culture where artistic expression will be repressed . . . Tellingly, Stephen changes 'wild rose' to 'green rose' – Ireland's national colour.

I cannot prove that Heaney was aware of all the elements here, but I think it is not improbable that he decides upon these full bosomed roses (among all the flowers available, golden daffodils included) because they echo that Dedalean nexus which seems to designate sexuality and nationalism as opposing yet ineluctably entangled forces. To follow the intertextual trail just a little further, when there is talk of roses, it is hard not to think of Yeats and also Blake. It would be easy and delightful to devote this entre paper to the word 'rose' but it is a symbol so very recursive that one would never manage to cover the vast constellations of intertextuality. Yet, I think Heaney deliberately chooses symbols which have this

sort of promise, but also he makes his choice because he is not a Naturalist, he is not interested in the rarity of a flower but rather, how common it is; how most people would know it and recognize it and also, concomitantly its symbolic propensities.

Thus, what the rose betokens here is both the tender sexual awakening of the young poet but also an awakening which is political, historical; an awakening of the poet's identity beyond the private sphere. As the last stanzas are to make clear, that call to a public, political identity is, to say the least, problematized. Identity in Ulster, in Ireland, is never allowed to be merely private. Identity is prescribed and proscribed within an historical and political nexus that can never escape being contentious. That is why, I think, he calls here, so obviously on Joyce in a kind of intertextual collaboration. Joyce is invoked to be both identified with as an authorial model who detached himself physically and, through some of his characters, detached himself from the nightmare of history. And Joyce's characters are often liminal, half inside, half outside their circumscribed world. As are certain Heaney avatars across his oeuvre, often eel-like, slippery, not quite reputable. That degree of self-criticism is not always commented upon but functioned, I think, as a necessary corrective to the increasing fame of the poet, as 'a smiling public man' as Yeats said of himself in 'Among Schoolchildren' (Yeats, 1928;1996, p.215). And, in a poem about the formation of literary and cultural identity, Yeats is not easily ignored. In deciding the rose as the motif of his book-wrapping wallpaper, Heaney perhaps pays homage to the rather overwrought symbolism of the young Yeats, and the ardency of his nationalism.

Yet Heaney, arguably, distances himself from both Yeats and Joyce in the coolness of his later years. As many of his poems indicate, he never really ceases to interrogate his identity. At times, he questions his own lack of adequacy to be public spokesman, bard for his own people. At other times, he repudiates any such constraining role. Furthermore, there may be a disquiet about being recruited by the Establishment in Northern Ireland and in England, as the gracious, soft spoken, twinkle-eyed, not too controversial 'voice' of the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. Here the urge towards asserting his freedom as a poet, private, hermitic, is strong. The drama of the last section of the poem sequence makes this abundantly clear.

Heaney courageously acknowledges that he cannot be a poet for whom identity is a simple and uncontroversial matter – as it might be for some English poets. His entire oeuvre is a kind of negotiation, an endless openness and gracious receptivity to what is publically expected, in balance with what he must, as a hermetic, quiet crafter of words, also strive for.

In *A Portrait*, the young Stephen is fascinated by language, including archaic, literary words. So here, we begin to see that the identity of the speaker is forming itself - or has retrospectively formed itself not just from the sensory and the sensuous, but also from language itself. 'Brede' is a marginal word, a dialect word, an archaic word, spoken by the subaltern. Yet, here it is, keeping alliterative company with a very literary, written sort of English.

But, as the poem makes clear, these scholars, might prefer the beauty of rose embossed wallpaper, but must make do with whatever is at hand and what can be affordable - 'brown parcel paper . . . 'newsprint even'. The point starts to become clear – the point is to preserve the books' 'to make a covert for the newness'. And that is because no pupil actually owns the books, they are to be passed down, re-used; different pupils become, in turn 'keepers of the books', as Parker (2012, p.341) notes. Yet, the effort is to 'make a cover for the newness', to somehow preserve the newness of knowledge itself.

It is a subtle point; the covering of the books to preserve them, because they are in such short supply, evokes a collective, public identity. This is, as it were, a community effort. Nobody owns the books, the people are merely keepers of books. That reflects a reality; in marginal worlds, people have not the money to buy books for their own house in the 1940s. But that state of affairs might have its compensations. In terms of identity, the idea that *educational* identity is formed not just individually, privately, but as part of a public, commonly understood *nostrum* is perhaps implied. There is the chain

back to that collective ‘backing’ of books (a terrific pun) Not everybody can have access to education, but there is a sense in which, at some communal level, there is backing, support for books, for education, though there may also be skepticism about it, as we will see. This is no simple *lumpen proletariat*, some undifferentiated subaltern group – but a glimpse into a world that is at the margin of a margin, a remote part of Ulster, itself a remote part of the UK, always trouble, well before ‘The Troubles’. The litotically named ‘Troubles’, were to erupt in the 1960s, as that oppressed minority began to campaign for Civil Rights.

In Heaney’s young days, there was, for someone from a Catholic background, a capacious and insidious system of discrimination. A name (we come back to language again) like ‘Seamus’ telegraphs Heaney’s religious identity as a Catholic, and since it is a conspicuously Irish Gaelic name, his identity as Irish, as Nationalist. In Northern Ireland, these markers of identity cast him as part of a minority, never quite to be trusted by the State. Yet, it is not a simple as this, because the artist scholar of the poem sequence has access to a grammar school education, unlike most of his contemporaries, whatever their allegiance.

I may note that the form of the poems complies with and challenges traditional English canonical forms. We have four-line stanzas, quatrains, common in English lyrical literary, written verse, but a form which harks back also to the oral ballad form. In addition, Heaney’s quatrains are worked in pararhyme rather than full rhyme. In terms of meter, he uses a rather unusual three beat (feet) line, known as *trimeter* – though some lines are cast in the more conventional four feet (tetrameter). So Heaney’s form is much looser and this is emphasized in the uneven distribution of accents or stresses; again rather more like conversational English than the marshalled regularity of canonical verse. As Tóibín (2010) comments, this adds a buoyancy, a refusal to close and conclude’ to the whole collection. Heaney also augments orthodox English alliterative patterning with a key feature which is also prominent in Gaelic Irish poetry, assonance (repetition of the same vowel sound, internal rhyme).

In the second poem, the locale moves out from the home to the school as the ‘scholars’ begin to develop their education from more books. ‘Scholars’ was the word used right up into the 1960s for anybody who got to school at all! Most people who did not come from privileged backgrounds, did not get beyond elementary education. Heaney benefited from the 1947 Education Act, by which scholarships were awarded to Grammar Schools on the basis of merit. As Walker (2017) argues, this legislation was transformative for ‘scholars’ from marginal backgrounds, Catholics and Protestants both. Heaney won a scholarship and progressed from elementary education to the prestigious St Columb’s College in Derry, named after St Colmcille, patron of the city and anchorite missionary.

Though the clever and fortunate young Seamus gets his place in St Columb’s, Heaney resists any temptation to present his younger self as a prodigy. The objective is not to set up his scholar as a hero, but as an ordinary boy who struggles with education and with the learning of languages. There is a keenness to connect with the reader not awe her/him. Yet, for all its difficulties, there is great excitement too in learning. Look how vivid and exhilarating Heaney makes this process of hesitant reading:

Open, settle, smell, begin. (Heaney 2010: 74).

Smell, for that is what you did and there was such a difference there was between the white smell of a new book and the musty flaccidity of an old, worn book. Learning is sensory as much as cerebral; a lesson Heaney may have learned from Joyce’s *Portrait*. The bounce of the repeating ‘e’ assonance beautifully conveys the scholar’s restlessness, fear and excitement.

And these scholars begin what is a time-honored journey and in their bookwork they are one with Fursa and Colmcille, ‘the riddle-solving anchorites’. They too are hermits, part of a Great Tradition, albeit one that was very nearly lost, due to the coming of the English with their very different language,

customs, laws and the subsequent extirpation of respect for the culture and the corpus of illuminated manuscripts which had been created over centuries by 'scholars – clerics and poets. The scholarly activity has religious, moral and philosophical dimensions. The answering of riddles is central. Scholarship is about understanding character – another lovely pun, when we consider we are literally in the medium of language, of a slow, novitiate where the scholars must spell out the words, must trace the word with their finger. Education, learning, is literally embodied.

Macóige of Lismore is the riddling anchorite most favored by the young Heaney – but, also, it seems, preserved, endorsed also by the older Heaney, the one he ranks most highly. There is a lovely interplay, a kind of mirroring between the young scholar and the older poet scholar – identity it seems, has a kind of continuum. Heaney might well be offering a sly wink to the reader here, invoking in our imaginations, the famous dictum of the English poet, William Wordsworth – 'The child is the father of the man':

Steadiness, for it is best
When a man has set his hand to tasks
To persevere. I have never heard
fault found with that. (Heaney 2010: 75)

But it is hard advice too, the task before them is daunting, their words are 'tongue-tied' – whether in English or Irish or the Classics, they have to read the teacher's lips to get the right sound, they must then compare that with what is written down, trace with their finger, re-trace. And what have we here? Something absolutely at the heart of Irish literature; the intimate and often parlous connection between the oral and the written, the tension between writing and speaking. But, as we will see, that distance is not just private but communal and again, revolves around tricky questions of identity.

Though Heaney does not mention it, his Ulster and Irish readers will take it as 'read' if I may proffer a pun', that people, especially from the less privileged classes and places, grew up speaking one language – a dialect, yet being taught to write in standard English. The spoken dialect is not the preserve of either Catholics or Protestant, it may be noted, but, it is, whether people wanted to acknowledge it or not, a mix of Gaelic (Irish and Scots), Elizabethan English and even some Norse words. This palimpsest reflects the history of 'settlement or invasion (depending on one's point of view), and contingently, it also reflects the co-existence of different linguistic identities. This dialect, then, is both a symbolic site of identity conflict and also a kind of resolution or hybridist synthesis of identities, borrowing here from Bhabha's concepts (1994).

This informal, unofficial spoken or oral form of language is then, if not in conflict with, at least in stark contrast to the written English taught through the National Schools (founded in the 1840s) and insisting on English as the medium, though many people in Island still spoke Irish – as well as dialect. Standard *written* English was considered by the policy makers and teachers, by and large, to be proper English, proper language and dialect was rather frowned upon. As Walsh (2016) points out, the culture and curriculum were essentially British and imperial.

In terms of identity, then, dialect is considered Irish or Northern Irish, whereas writing is English. This is a common state of affairs globally, acknowledged by terms like Englishes – Indian, African and other cultures inflect English, in its spoken form, with constructions and words from the native languages. Now Heaney does not concern himself with this at all, but rather, with typical obliqueness and delicacy, shifts the linguistic ground to the difficulty of learning languages, which are *not* English. But, of course, there is an irony here, because the young scholar is 'tongue-tied' trying to learn how to both speak and write what has become, because of this history of valorizing English, in effect, a foreign language, Irish. Historically, the language was outlawed by the English. Eventually, since here was evidently so little to be gained by holding on to what might be defined as 'the losing language'. And what Heaney is also eloquently silent about is that in 'State' Schools; that is the schools attended by people from Protestant

and Unionist majority, Irish language or history are not generally taught at all. After all, Northern Ireland was considered British by the ruling majority, so other forms of identity were not warmly encouraged. Yet, as Heaney suggests in another poem connecting language, identity and education, 'Alphabets' (Heaney 1987, 1998: 292-294) there is a paradox:

The new calligraphy [of Irish] felt like home (p. 293)
And there is also, the connection of this lost native language
with both cultivated and wild nature:
The letters of the alphabet were trees.
The capitals were orchards in full bloom,
The lines of script like briars coiled in ditches (p. 293).

But Heaney is also keen to stress that life at St Columb's is not altogether glamorous: The scholars, wrote their exercises with a pencil, and not everybody might have an eraser or a rubber as it was called then. However, people were resourceful and took a little bit off a piece of bread and removed their mistake by rubbing the ball of bread over the errant word. And that is why satchels, always lost their nice new leathery smell and got musty. Again, we are always made aware of the sensory, the ordinary, in this august process of learning:

This was the age of lessons to be learnt. (Heaney 2010: 75).

The speaker, playfully conscious of speaking to young readers as well as older readers, explains like a benign schoolmaster:

Reader, ours were 'reading books'
And we were 'scholars', our good luck
To get such schooling in the first place. (Heaney 2010: 75).

So, the herdsman by the roadside, the sibyls of the chimney corner pronounced that the scholar is privileged. Most of the ordinary people had very little schooling and were pulled out of education to work on farms or serve their time in the shipyard or the factory or at the carpentry or the plastering. But many were left behind. The herdsman and the sibyl warn the young scholar not to waste the privilege of education. And thus, here is another kind of tension in identity; the gap between the scholar, out of his own community, a boarder at the lofty college in Derry city and the community he comes from. And, as we all know from Heaney's perhaps most famous first poem, 'Digging' (1966), that gap grows as the scholar turns into a poet. His identity is increasingly that of the outsider.

While the rigor and drudgery of the reading books and the rote learning and the painful acquisition of knowledge may have rankled, there were wonders too. In addition to the rubbing bread (food for thought or at least correction, but a far away from Proust's little cakes) there were:

Birds and butterflies in 'transfers':
Like stamps from Eden on a flyleaf. (Heaney 2010: 75).

And oh, those bright, gorgeous colors among all the 'serviceable' navy blue and brown and black that constituted the narrow range available to ordinary people. We may note that Heaney's simile offers us nature as Prelapsarian, as paradisiac, but markedly, exotic. These colors, of course, belong to the world of art, including perhaps, the once lucent world of the mediaeval manuscripts. Transfers were little blocks or stamps bearing a pattern, which you could imprint upon the flyleaf or front pages of a book.

Often the 'transfers' depicted birds or insects or flowers gain their inspiration from places far away – the bright Middle East where Eden was, supposed to be, geographically speaking. And even if the transfers depicted species more European or British, they were rendered in a very lush, idealized fashion – quite at odds with the reality of most people's experience of nature.

The transfers are on books and they symbolize also how what is inside the book – language – is transformative – enabling the scholar to transfer from the confining and dull classroom and the sometimes oppressive political and social order of Northern Ireland to a gorgeous, bright, world; an otherworld in dramatic contrast to the laborious world of the classroom.. The butterfly is well chosen as the transfer – it can fly and it is also in some cultures, including early Christianity – the era of the saints and scholars - a symbol of the soul (Antonakou & Triarhou 2017).

And, in the fourth poem in the sequence, further treasure is discovered:

The master's store an otherwhere:
Penshafts sheathed in black tin – was it? -
A metal wrap at any rate,
A tight nib-holding cuticle -
And nibs in packets by the gross
Powdered ink, bunched cedar pencils,
Jotters, exercise books, rulers
Stacked like grave goods on the shelves. (Heaney 2010: 76).

This is a word of immense plenitude, a land of Cockaigne for the scholar. An otherwhere you might be sent to as a great privilege, where you would see wonders you never even dreamed of. Striking here is the trope of the voyage, the *immram* to a terra incognita; just like the journeys undertaken by Colmcille and St Brendan, those earlier 'scholars' and anchorites, the young scholar of the poem is sent on his mission.

But with a quite beautifully ironic inadvertence, what he is most impressed with is the sheer massing of quantity, the sense of the store as a kind of imperial warehouse, full to the throat of exotic goods; *copia rerum* (copious amounts of things) rather than *copia verborum* (copiousness in words). And, of course, the young scholar's wonder at an otherwhere that could hold such goods is poignantly appealing, for there was so little money in most homes for the stock of education – books, paper, pens. The voyage of discovery the boy makes is complex – both into art and into a kind of imperial otherworld – as if, beneath the surface there was some connection between them. Heaney may be hinting here at the marketization of art, the way the writer must become famous and a good 'dealer' of his own art; he must give up the solitary, anchorite life so crucial to producing art – a kind of paradox. But also, perhaps, Heaney is hinting that the appeal of *copia rerum* is hard to resist.

In poem five of the sequence, we are drawn into more riddles and offered another angle on identity:

There are three right ways to spell *tu*.
Can you tell me how you write that down?
The herdsman asks. And when we can't,
'Ask the master if *he* can.' (Heaney 2010: 76).

The young scholar's encounter with the herdsman is also an encounter of identity. As noted earlier, the boy who gets to become a scholar in a boarding school is, as a consequence, somewhat separated from his own community. Heaney makes this estrangement even more plangent by using the very formal and very English Pastoral term, 'herdsman'. And Heaney, in another ironic brace, dramatizes a situation which shows that the bookish scholar may not be a match for the ordinary farm laborer – he

might not be schooled but he is not without prowess in language. The riddle is, tellingly, linguistic and, indeed intralinguistic, crossing three languages at least. The riddle punningly ‘plays’ between oral, spoken language and written forms.

How would the herdsman’s riddle be solved? In English, of course there are three ways; ‘to’, ‘two’ and ‘tu’. They all sound the same, but are written differently and have different meanings. But ‘tu’ is also a word in Irish meaning ‘you’ and ‘tu’ also means ‘you’ in French and in Latin. The herdsman both respects and teases the scholar. Why? Because he is a herdsman. He is not, we may note, a farmer, but a man who likely works for a farmer. His chances of becoming a scholar are extremely remote. So, he both acknowledges the value of education and at the same time, cannot resist pulling down the scholar. The humiliation of this young fellow; the setting of a problem that he cannot solve is a ludic defense mechanism, for the herdsman is asserting, however nonsensically, that he still knows more than the clever boy or even the Master. There is a paradoxical mixture of pride and contempt in this rural world for the scholar – he is perhaps able to rise above his station, but in doing so, he is both admirable and to be scorned. This is a people conditioned for centuries to servility, to being, like so many peoples, considered inferior. They must be educated, civilized. But other knowledge will out too, and the herdsman, perhaps relying on oral memory, knows, maybe as much about language as the young scholarship boy. That is Heaney’s great humor and humility as a poet.

And then, Heaney turns, as he so often does, nimbly upon his heel. We have a little Latin tag, considerably translated for scholars of the contemporary age – Latin having largely disappeared from the curriculum in the United Kingdom:

Neque, Caesar says, fas esse

Existimant ea litteris

Mandare. ‘Nor do they think it right

To commit the things they know to writing’. (Heaney 2010: 76).

The chasm between voice and text, between oral and written knowledge opens again. The oral poets and their audience, then, did not think it right to write. The herdsman offers some sardonic contempt for writing also. Or is it just, also, that he has not been taught to, or does Heaney want us to weigh carefully the hegemonic concept that writing is always right, superior? Heaney is perhaps subtly asserting that voice, that oral, vernacular culture must be offered greater respect – it might not be ‘natural’ to the privileged people of central London, but it is natural in the rural margins of Ulster. And, indeed, the point is not a narrow one – considering the position (or lack of position) of oral cultures in the modern era. Heaney comments on this very issue in an interview with John Brown (2002, p.76):

The Anahorish [the Primary School Heaney attended] schoolboy was learning big art language and being set on track to become the A-level candidate and the First Arts student. Linguistically upwardly mobile . . . I’m conscious, all the same, that some of the recent work I’ve done in criticism and translation grows out of that old vernacular stuff that’s always there.’

Heaney is not the only writer to see the problematics of language and identity, the competing claims of oral and written. I am reminded of a novel by the contemporary Irish writer, Colm McCann, *Zoli*. The Romani elders encourage Zoli to learn the old songs and perform them but disapprove of her desire to learn to read and write. It is as if the sacral, the inner knowing of a people will become profaned by their exposure to a wider world through writing. The elders, to use a colloquialism, ‘make strange’ with literacy. For it is not just the business of reading and writing itself; it is the inevitable threat of being overwhelmed by outside culture, with its beliefs and ‘fashions’ so inimical to the traditions and faith systems of an oral people.

In Heaney’s version of Irish cultural history, the Latin tag holds true until one book transforms the situation. We may note the irony, for to be able to quote the Latin signals that Heaney is the scholar

who knows the written culture that came with the Clerics and their Latin, and of course, the irony behind that is the whole concern with physical books and the preservation of them and dissemination of 'scholarship' with which the poem begins.

So what is the book that causes a 'paradigm shift'?

The psalm book, called in Irish, *cathach*,
Meaning 'battler', meaning victory
When borne three times round an army. (Heaney 2010: 77).

We may glimpse the jut of ritual, of older ways, in that 'three times' is fused or juxtaposed with the Christian trope of the Trinity. There was a battle about the Battle Book, but beneath this is, of course a kind of epigrammatic history of Irish history, including the manner in which they who had once, in reforming zeal, banned the Irish language and culture came to present its remnants to their academies a couple of centuries later. Yet, as wise Heaney ruefully recognizes, battle is exciting. Exhilarating, and not just for schoolboys, for it summons the old heroic past. The particular book would have been much enshrined too in the hearts of the teachers at St Columb's College in Derry, given its connection with the school's patron saint. And, as Parker (2012: 342) points out, the masculinity of the language here – and elsewhere in Heaney, right back to 'Digging' conveys 'the idea of texts as means of ideological struggle'. Thus in the next poem we are ushered into the high drama of that other world of warriors:

Sparks the Ulster warriors struck
Off wielded shields made Bricriu's hall
Blaze like the sun, according to
The Dun Cow scribe; (Heaney 2010: 77).

We may note that Heaney does not let us forget that this is part of *a story*, and a story written by a scribe, perhaps a cleric, but one also invested with the heroic values of a pre-Christian culture. The story ('Bricriu's Feast'), ends in betrayal, the hall becomes a slaughterhouse. We may note also that the cleric is described as the Dun Cow scribe, bringing us right back to the first poem in the sequence. The Book of the Dun Cow is so called because its *jacket*, its cover was made from the hide of a brown (dun) cow.

And, in this glittering vision, or *aisling*, invoked by Heaney, Cuchulain, warrior of warriors:

Entertained the embroidery women
By flinging needles in the air
So as they fell the point of one
Partnered with the eye of the next
To form a glittering reeling chain – (Heaney 2010: 77).

Now, the reference to embroidery, calls back the colloquial and archaic 'brede' of the first poem, so that the different parts of the poem form a kind of invisible chain, connecting people across time and space. And then there is the fantastic metaphor of the glittering, reeling chain formed by the needles falling into connection.

But Heaney, turns this exquisite image up and out, while chaining it back to a previous poem in the sequence:

As in my dream a gross of nibs
Spills off the shelf, airlifts and links
Into a giddy gilt corona. (Heaney 2010: 77).

A corona – a circle of light, often a kind of nimbus around the sun or moon, formed by droplets of water. As Parker (2012: 343) points out, the astounding effect is replicated in the soundscape of the poem with its chain of assonance and alliteration.

And this summons the next poem in Heaney's Shakespearian chain of thought, his aising:

A vision of the school the school
Won't understand, nor I quite:
My hand in the cold of a running stream
Suspended, a glass beaker dipped
And filling in the flow. (Heaney 2010: 78).

This is both metaphor and observed reality. The water droplets, which have had to form the corona, now alchemically run together as the flow of water in a cold stream. So we are back down again, physically speaking, the young scholar is by a stream, collecting water in a beaker. He is in touch, quite literally, with nature, even though he is a scholar.

And then there is 'glass beaker' with its connotations of science on one hand and ancient Irish oral culture – there would have been beakers full of treacherous drink at Bricriu's Feast. And there is the extraordinarily paradoxical image of the beaker filling in the flow. Absolutely scientifically accurate, but yet mysterious; nature and science part of one another, yet separate. Why does the scholar fill his beaker? He has been sent for water; 'the privileged one' (a good scholar, and also, a country boy whose dream is to escape outside). And what is the water for? To turn ink powder into ink: the chain continues. But there is something else about getting outside:

Out in the open, the land and the sky
And playground silent, a singing class
I've been excused from going on,
Coming out through opened windows
Yet still and all a world away. (Heaney 2010: 78).

Silence and music. We cannot but think of late Yeats and that phrase, 'the singing masters of my soul' and of his poem, 'Among Schoolchildren' (1928). For here is Heaney, over 70 himself, back among the schoolchildren of his youth, but with a difference, there is no Yeatsian detachment and loftiness here. Heaney is both the child and the older man. And this double perspective of past and present, and of the change that has come into the world, is the 'turn' or *volta* in the next poem. And there is a faint Yeatsian echo here too, 'all changed, changed utterly' (1919), but for Heaney, no terrible beauty has been born. He challenges, intertextually, the attitude of Yeats. There is no scorn in his voice for the present, however adulterated and estranged the world has become. Indeed, Heaney simply refuses this dialectic, steering his poem back to the ancient past:

'Inkwell' now as robbed of sense
As 'inkhorn': a dun cow's perhaps,
Stuck upside down at dipping distance
In the floor of the cell. (Heaney 2010: 78).

Again, what is important is the intimacy of the association between the ordinary world and the scholar's world. The cleric dips his pen into a crude vessel, an inkhorn made from the horn of, maybe, a

dun cow. The very medium – the ink – is held by a thing out of nature and specifically out of a life of farming. We cannot but think back to the herdsman on the road.

The thought turns again:

Hence Colmcile's

Extempore when a loudmouth lands

Breaking the lona silence:

The harbour shouter, it roughly goes,

Staff in hand, he will come along

Inclined to kiss the kiss of peace,

He will blunder in,

His toe will catch and overturn

My little inkhorn, spill my ink. (Heaney 2010: 78-79).

It is clear that there is some sort of maybe even slightly Yeatsian rage here at those who do not admire the finer things, who disturb the writer, clumsily loudly. But what of that 'kiss of peace'? there could be a number of meanings- perhaps the harbor shouter is a kind of Judas figure, ready to betray the writer with his loudmouth blunderings. Maybe this is Heaney uncoupling himself from politicians and maybe also, popular culture– that famous moment on the stage where the popular rock musician. Bono, insists on raising the hands of David Trimble and John Hume, for succeeding in forging an agreement to end the 'heroics' of the violence of The Troubles. Heaney's quiet words from his play, *The Cure at Troy* (1990) about hope and history rhyming are megaphoned, sloganized; as if peace were so easy, especially in a warrior culture. Heaney makes very clear that the rhyming of hope and history is implausible – a once in a lifetime possibility. And, of course, a linguistic transgression, a rhyming miracle since ,even, for a poet so tuned as Heaney, 'the words 'hope' and history' do not rhyme, except, perhaps as an alliterative chime. Ó Séaghdha (2020) explains the historical context more fully. But certainly, Heaney's words were vatic, as well as sanguine. Significantly, Heaney, quoted, has become, as it were, the public voice. That he was ambiguous all his life about the role of the poet – torn between hermetic dedication to his craft, in tune with nature, an essentially private 'scribe' and his role as an increasingly public and famous figure, and, the expectation among some, that he would be the public Bard , representing his people, speaking for them and from them. But to speak only for his people was a sentence he often resisted, for it would have meant being conscripted to speaking for one side of the conflict only. And, in turn, that would have diminished his work to the local, the partisan even, where he wanted to be a poet of both district and circle – of the local and the universal, oral and literary.

We come to the final poem of the sequence. Here, it seems, the poet speaks, writes back to the world and, maybe specifically, to those who have interpreted his own work. In so doing, he offers us an insight into his own Poetic. Heaney dismisses the quest for meaning – so common and often anguished a search in the post-modern world. 'Meaning' come loose, as it were from its moorings, runs through space like a word screaming and protesting. It is altogether too shrill, too self-conscious even. Perhaps the great one here is T S Eliot or Yeats or Czeslaw Milosz? Or maybe, just the idea of poets being canonized, lionized?

Another great one puts faith in 'Poet's imaginings
And memories of love' (Heaney 2010: 79).

That, I suspect, would be Yeats. That too is renounced by Heaney as too grandiose and also too indulgent; harking back only to an unduly personal domain containing memories of love, and repudiating the world of nature itself.

The speaker, if not Heaney himself, puts his faith, 'for now' – a nice hedging of bets, but also a wonderful irony, for the reader knows that Heaney's 'for now' has meant 60 years effort, in 'steady-handedness'. He has taken his cue from Macóige (poem 2), and maybe too, from his own people, where steadiness was the prime farming virtue, and of course, steady-handedness chains back to his early efforts at copying, tracing and re-tracing, back at school. The steady-handedness is maintained in books against the vanishing of faith itself. And we may note the exquisite choice of 'maintained' here, with its subtle pun on the French 'hand' (main), emphasizing the idea of books issuing slowly and painstakingly from hand writing, the use of ink, and always, the link back to nature itself.

So, while Heaney does not define this 'faith' in any religious sense, indeed faith is transposed from religion to art in a gesture reminiscent of Joyce's Dedalus, or even the Yeatsian proclamation – 'words alone are certain good' (minus flounce). The books he cites, his authorities, as it were, the books he copies are the products of a glittering encounter between the oral and written, between Paganism and Christianity – whatever tensions between 'self' and other' between a culture nearly rubbed out under the power of another:

Books of Lismore, Kells, Armagh,
Of Lecan, its great Yellow Book, (Heaney 2010: 79).

The Yellow Book of Lecan was put together in the seventeenth century, not by an Irish man but by Edward Lhuyd, born on the English Welsh border and a scholar of Celtic literatures. We may note the incantation of place names ('me in the place, the place in me' – to borrow from another poem in this volume, 'A Herbal' (2010: 43). The place names are part of that oral culture, they form the palimpsest of histories on the island of Ireland.

In the final two lines, we return to the *Cathach*. I suspect, that here Heaney almost declares his hand, images himself as a poet who has had to be, for all his mildness of manner and steady-handedness, the battler. Any sense of a personal annunciation here is swiftly replaced by a shift towards books themselves. Modest, as always. But also, I think, suggesting that battles are not always glittering and heroes are not always warriors. Of course, the vertical take-off of the final section – the leap into imagination, the alchemical rise of the poem suggests, playfully, that there is quite another side to this poet. He has earned his flight of fancy.

Conclusion

Many might view Heaney's own oeuvre as 'berry browned' and enshrined. Though, doubtless, he would give a smudge of a smile at that, even though he knows his own work is now enshrined among the Great Ones, there on the School Curriculum of my grand-nephew, a scholar of this time, tracing and re-tracing his way through Heaney's own work. But, of course, his canonization, if I may so term it, does not, ironically do him justice. For how many people think beyond that apprentice poem, 'Digging'? 'Hermit Songs' offers a marvelously vivid and touching account of how a poet from a marginal background forms himself through language, slowly, hesitantly. By the end of the poem, this steady-handed craftsman scribe has become a soaring artist, a visionary, but, in the end, on his own terms. In that sense, the poem traces the trajectory of Heaney's own progression as a poet. As O'Brien (2018: 5) rightly notes; 'Perhaps the most overt break in style, to use Helen Vendler's term (Vendler 1995) is a movement from an artesian to an aerial imaginative structure.' He repudiates the attempt to conscript him into any role as Bard, commenting on the present, satirizing and cursing his enemies in the old propagandist tradition. He repudiates also any calling to become a poet of the privatized emotions like

so many poets of the twentieth century. He is devoted to language, he is a fan of Practical Criticism we might say, but he is also a fan of locating poetry within the historical conditions, which produced it. Acutely aware that he is now on the curriculum and thus embedded in education, he graciously chooses to suggest that a poem is itself an education, leading in to the self, but also, as the root of the word 'education' suggests, leading out. These are songs, which make us want to sing.

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Critical secrets: tensions between authoring texts and the readability of leveled books

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Abstract

In this inquiry an educational researcher and children's book author interrogated the process of the authorship of leveled readers, reconciling publishing protocols and readability formulae in order to encourage critical viewpoints for readers and educators. Data included publishers' guidelines, interviews, journaled field notes, readability scores, and draft samples of leveled book manuscripts. Qualitative analyses yielded three themes that offer a glimpse into the tensions that a leveled text author contemplates prior to and during the writing process. Issues of engagement, power, identity and agency are peppered throughout the author's process. Finally, there is a discussion of the impact of text readability calculations. This paper brings to light critical questions that educators and administrators might ask about leveled text readability in relation to their students' needs and considerations for educators to bring a critical literacy approach into the classroom during the use of leveled texts.

Keywords: readability, leveled readers, book authoring, publishing, critical literacy, engagement, identity, agency

Introduction

In this current educational climate, there are several priorities for elementary reading instruction and assessment including: multimodal approaches to literacy, traditional print-based methods, and critical literacies that actively engage readers with a text while analyzing aspects of power, identity, equity, and its messages (Clarke & Whitney 2009, Janks 2014). Among these methods is guided reading, a common instructional approach in elementary schools that emphasizes ongoing learning and assessment with students, alongside small group or individualized guidance and often in conjunction with leveled texts (Fountas & Pinnell 2016). Here, educators evaluate what students already know in order to design lessons, monitor how the students are progressing, and determine how students have grown. Focal areas of guided instruction might include (but are not limited to) decoding, encoding, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary building. The ultimate goal is to enable readers to work their way through a text independently, in order to read and understand it. As students progress from simple texts to more sophisticated texts, they become more efficient and discerning readers. Questions are offered, usually after the reading regarding literal and global comprehension. According to some researchers, guided reading "is the heart of an effective literacy program" (Fountas & Pinnell 2016: 13). This pedagogy has been a trend in language and literacy education for over a decade and continues to be practiced widely in North America and worldwide. As mentioned above, three aspects are highlighted in this practice: individualized instruction, ongoing assessment of students' literacy skills and use of leveled texts. This paper will focus on the veracity of the authoring and readability of leveled texts.

Despite being a common instructional practice, guided reading still holds potential for improvements and innovation, especially in today's social and political literacy climate (Fountas & Pinnell 2012, Swain 2010). For example, traditional guided reading practice tends to highlight the text, rather than contextualizing the socio-cultural and political frames that shape these texts, and hence the critical nuances that inform the reading practice. This is problematic because focusing primarily on inward approaches to reading (e.g., decoding skills, letters, word-work, literal comprehension questions) may

not give readers the range of critical skills they need (e.g., taking multiple perspectives, critiquing taken-for-granted assumptions) to be successful in this social and political climate. In addition to making guided practices broad (i.e., moving beyond the text) and encouraging analytical discussions, teachers need essential understandings about leveled texts. Teachers not only help students summarize and make conclusions while they read, but they need to encourage their students to question the authorship of these leveled texts to build understandings of how texts are part of a bigger context. Indeed, given the extensive use of these leveled texts in elementary guided reading programs, a close examination of how readability is considered during the authoring process is warranted.

This article aims to take a close, nuanced (and behind-the-scenes) look at the leveled readers educators are using for their students, the authorship of these leveled texts, and the readability of these texts in order to encourage broader and more critical perspectives. Additionally, this study explores some of the tensions between the expectations and assumptions that educators hold in relation to authors' and publishers' intentions. Indeed, concerns arise when educators use 'blind faith' when they adopt leveled texts in their guided reading practices, and do not consider the factors that contribute to the authorship of these texts and the calculated text readability.

Background literature on leveled reading and readability

Sets of leveled books, compiled into one resource, sometimes called literacy readers, are written in an attempt to correlate with learning outcomes from various curriculum or standards policy documents (Bainbridge & Heydon 2013). According to one commercial publisher (McGraw Hill, n.d.), leveled reading books have existed since the 1950s and been using in over 60 countries. These leveled books are different from trade books in that the purpose for writing trade books is to tell a compelling story or convey non-fiction information in an engaging way. During the authorship of trade books, authors often have their own agency when writing. In many cases, trade books might be given a readability level *after* the publishing process. Literacy readers, on the other hand, are constructed with guidelines for readability at the forefront of the creation process; the goal is to write and publish a particular readability level of fiction or nonfiction text. In this article we are focusing on the latter type of book, and specifically the authoring of leveled literacy readers.

Leveled texts themselves range from easy to more complex. For example, an easy text for an emergent reader from Fountas and Pinnell (2016) includes levels A, B, or C, and in Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver & Carter 2003) levels 1, 2, 3, or 4. These short texts, written for kindergarten and first grade level readers include repetitive phrases and simple sentence structures. More complex texts, for example at a third grade reading level, are Fountas and Pinnell (2016) levels N, O, or P or Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver & Carter 2003) levels 30-38. These longer texts have more sophisticated narratives and more complex sentence structures. For complete reading level conversions, there are tables and charts to summarize level correlations (e.g., see: Harcourt 2005)

Readability of these texts is determined by readability formulae. These formulae, such as the Spache (1953), Chall & Dale (1995), Gunning (1952), Fry (1977), Lexile (MetaMetrics 2015) and Flesch (1948) are, as mentioned, often used to determine the difficulty of these texts and to identify where readers are situated in regards to their instructional reading levels. But an intriguing question persists: Are readability measures a good estimate of text difficulty when often texts are used for classroom instruction to support students' reading development? Investigations have uncovered a lack of correlation among indices and teachers' estimates of readability qualities (Begeny & Greene 2014, Heydari 2012). For example, in a recent study of Canadian texts (literacy readers, trade books and online articles), there was a gross lack of correlation among readability measures for texts from Grades 2-6 (Gallagher, Fazio & Ciampa 2017). These indices appear to be inexact or improperly applied; perhaps this is because authors of leveled texts are often unfamiliar with fields of literacy assessment, instruction, and how leveled texts fit into classroom practice.

Over the past eight decades, over 200 readability indices have been proposed and utilized (DuBay 2004). Many use frequency lists and limited vocabulary (Spache 1953, Chall & Dale 1995, Gunning 1952). In addition, the Fry Readability (Fry 1977) and Flesch-Kincaid (Flesch 1948) factor in the number of sentences, words, and syllable counts. The Lexile Framework (MetaMetrics 2018) is a licensed formula that is available to publishers and libraries for use in calculating both published trade and educational texts. Although this formula is unavailable to the public as it is proprietary-protected, it is known that the Lexile text measures are based on semantic difficulty (word frequency) and syntactic complexity (sentence length) (MetaMetrics 2018). Interestingly, investigations into the reliability of readability formulae has uncovered the lack of correlation among the Lexile Framework and other indices as well (Ardoin et al. 2010, Heydari 2012).

What do leveled texts and readability have to do with critical classroom practice?

An important aspect of guided reading is finding appropriate books, in other words, the 'just-right leveled book' for a student's development in reading fluency and comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell 2012). Then, as that student continues to develop literacy skills, the teacher continues to find future 'just-right leveled books', ultimately scaffolding the student's learning and confidence, and giving the student opportunities to become a more proficient reader (Lipp & Helfrich 2016).

However, in practice, finding that 'just-right book' is challenging for teachers for three reasons. The first reason is the books themselves. Many leveled readers are packaged by publishers, usually containing a variety of reading levels or topics. Included in these packages are assessment tools for determining what constitutes an appropriate book at a particular level. Yet, some of the readers may not be motivated to read about the topics of the texts that are in a particular package; readers often prefer one text genre over another. In other words, even if teachers find that 'just-right book', chances are the level of the book may not be what students were engaged to read. And more importantly, as mentioned above, investigations have uncovered a lack of correlation among indices and teachers' readability estimates (Begeny & Greene 2014, Heydari 2012). The reality is that authors might be unfamiliar with the reading developmental levels of students as well as classroom practices of literacy instruction and assessment. Authors, like educators, are highly dependent on readability formulae and have 'blind faith,' that text levels are calculated properly and are exactly what readers at certain levels need. Consequently, if the calculated readability is slightly off and the 'just-right' leveled book isn't just-right, a reader may not perform well on a leveled reading assessment for miscue analyses and/or comprehension. In other words, a reader may not succeed simply because of the text chosen.

The second reason that finding that 'just-right book' is challenging for teachers, is that reading is a complex process requiring decoding, but also literal and inferential comprehension, as well as critical reflection (Fountas & Pinnell 2016). Reading needs to be internalized for readers, but at the same time, readers do not function as isolated beings within diverse communities. Rather, their ongoing social and critical experiences shape their beliefs, values, and preferences (Winters & Vratulis 2013). In this way, it is important for educators and students to think critically and holistically about the texts they are choosing. With both leveled literacy readers and trade books, educators and students might want to inquire, "Who wrote this book?" or "What perspective is the author taking?" or "How does this book relate to my life?" In fact, many leveled books are authored by non-educators and then designed and packaged by publishers. Pragmatically, because these leveled book packages are expensive to produce, access to diverse texts can become problematic with sets of leveled readers. For example, if a student attains a certain level of skill in reading and reaches a particular competency, a teacher may put a certain appropriately, leveled text in front of him/her. This text may not be motivating for the student or it may not even connect to his/her schema. Additionally, sometimes the author is unknown or not even listed on the book's cover. If this were the case, how might a reader relate to the authorship of the book or even be motivated to read it? For these reasons this reader may have challenges reading and

understanding a particular text. Moreover, what does this imply to the teacher for subsequent instruction?

Theoretical background: critical literacies and authorship

One solution is to approach literacy instruction with an awareness of these issues around text readability, as well as with an openness to building a student's critical literacy skills in order to facilitate reading development and build success. This approach is happening in unique ways in classrooms worldwide (Fisher 2008, Janks 2014, Jones & Clark 2007, Labadie, Wetzel & Rogers 2012, Lewison, Leland & Harste 2014). For instance, Kim and Cho (2016) have documented how a Korean preschool teacher fosters perspective taking and challenges dominant ideologies inherent in texts. Yiola Cleovoulou (2018), from Toronto, Canada demonstrates how a teacher uses inquiry as a way to promote critical dialogue and reflective practice in a first grade classroom. Additionally, Lewison et al. (2014) suggest four dimensions of critical literacy that develop reflection and aid in students' reading comprehension. These dimensions include: disrupting the commonplace; interrogating multiple perspectives; addressing social justice; and taking action. They suggest that students need opportunities to build empathy and practice critical literacy skills before, during and after interactions with text through careful selection of books, "You think so?" questions and "I wonder" prompts, and a willingness to let silence reign. Important aspects for teachers are to ensure the scaffolding is appropriate, purposeful prompts, and letting the student voices be heard. Clearly, appropriate and thought-provoking text choices are necessary for supporting the four dimensions of critical literacy.

Teachers might also focus on developing students' awareness of how different audiences perceive and interpret the text, discussing differing perspectives of both the characters and the authors of the text, and building an understanding of who produced the text (e.g., the publisher) and for what reasons. Although research has demonstrated that guided reading practices can be thoughtful and critical (e.g., Swain 2010), there are few articles that critically examine the leveled texts that educators use (Ford & Opitz 2008, Glasswell, Ford & Opitz 2010) and a dearth of articles that critically question the authorship and publishing process of these texts.

Traditionally, authorship has been viewed as a series of actions that were primarily print-based, linear, and overly focused on the writer's process. Yet, authors do not function as isolated and linear individuals, disconnected from their lived lives. "Rather authors move among different worlds, within different space/time structures, including the imaginary worlds they are forming, the ongoing social world within which they are acting, and the wider world of experiences that they are drawing upon" (Dyson 1997: 4).

More recent definitions of authorship include anyone who denotes meaning to a text (Winters 2019). Thus, authorship includes not only the writers, but also the illustrators, publishers, and packagers who, create, and promote the texts through words, artwork, fonts, art design, physical formatting, and marketing. Authorship, by this definition includes the publishing companies that determine readability criteria, as they also affect the production of the book. Currently, an expanded definition of authorship also incorporates the readers who, alongside the writers, contribute to the authorship of the book by constructing the text in their own minds. Indeed, authorship is an orchestration of multiple perspectives, modes, and positions (Winters & Vratulis 2013).

Reconceptualizing authorship in this expanded way with students in guided reading settings provides new opportunities to think critically about leveled books. For example, educators might ask questions about the books themselves: "Who authored or produced them and with what intent?" "Do the illustrations add to or distract from the meaning the text portrays?" "Do the books relate to their students' lives?" "How are the books created and marketed?". Ultimately, moving away from skills-based approaches to reading during guided reading practice towards an authorship approach embedded in personal histories and collective inquires where readers investigate important topics, broadens

notions of literacy. Critical awareness in guided reading circles, where students integrate inquiries such as these, have the potential to shape readers into nuanced and critical life-long learners, while still attending to their basic needs for decoding and understanding texts (Fisher 2008, Fountas & Pinnell 2016).

Given the extensive use of leveled texts in elementary classrooms, a close examination of the implications of readability formulae and the authoring process is warranted. The purpose of this paper was to identify the issues related to writing leveled texts that might provide insights into the process and inform educators' use of these texts. This prompted the following inquiry questions that were examined in this research paper:

What considerations and tensions should educators be aware of, especially in regards to the text readability and the authorship of leveled texts?

How might educators think more critically about leveled texts, as well as how might they apply this criticality within their classroom practices?

Methodology

This paper is the product of an inquiry, where the two authors interrogated the process of the authorship of leveled readers, reconciling publishing protocols and readability formulae in order to encourage critical viewpoints for readers and educators. Data included 12 documentations of publishers' guidelines, two interviews, 12 sets of journaled field notes, 18 screenshots of readability scores, and work samples of 148 drafts of the 10 leveled book manuscripts.

Tiffany's background is as a literacy researcher, professional learning facilitator and special education/remedial teacher. She has researched and written about the utility of readability formulae in contemporary texts including literacy readers, trade books, and digital texts. Kari-Lynn is a literacy and arts researcher, trade book author and presenter. Here, Kari-Lynn reflects on her identity and recent writing as both author of literacy readers and trade books. Both Tiffany and Kari-Lynn identify as professors of teacher education in language arts teaching methods. Given that Tiffany has been researching the application of readability formulae for some time and she was interested in Kari-Lynn's perspective as an author. This was the impetus for data collection that subsequently informed this study.

Tiffany asked Kari-Lynn to share documents such as publishers' guidelines, topic lists, and recommended learning outcomes. Kari-Lynn maintained a working document of the background information to include in her writing, as well as draft copies of the texts including their readability measures. During the drafting process, Kari-Lynn took screenshots of her drafts and journaled reflections as field notes. Tiffany interviewed her after she had completed twelve leveled texts for three different publishers. This interview interrogated Kari-Lynn's identity as an author, researcher and teacher educator with respect to how she thinks and feels about language as well as how she uses language in her craft of writing.

Qualitative data were first coded by Tiffany for themes using open-coding methods and then the themes were member-checked by Kari-Lynn (Creswell 2012). There were seven themes that were then collapsed into three of findings (Merriam 2009) that express the tensions of authoring under topical and readability guidelines. The three findings are elucidated as: (1) a glimpse into the considerations and tensions that a leveled text author contemplates prior to and during the writing process; (2) issues of engagement, power, identity and agency are peppered throughout the author's process; (3) a presentation of what is proposed as the 'secret sauce': the impact of text readability calculations.

Results

Following is a description of the three findings accompanied by a selection of representative quotes from the dialogue between the authors as well as artifacts that illuminate the text author's process.

These findings are discussed as deliberations for educators to think critically about when using leveled texts in their classrooms.

(1) Considerations and Tensions for Text Readability

Authors of leveled texts are given style guidelines and readability targets to work with as they create texts. The reality is that most authors of leveled texts are uninformed about the nuances of calculating and manipulating text readability and find this process nebulous. Tiffany asked Kari-Lynn to reflect on the process of writing to specific levels of text readability.

I do feel that the parameters of readability are constraining. To be honest, it makes the project seem so much bigger, insurmountable in some ways... Sometimes I worry about the end product too much (Kari-Lynn, Interview).

Typically, authors write with a narrative or a topic in mind and bring their unique style and personality to the writing. Leveled texts seem devoid of this distinction as competing priorities are what the author is considering first and foremost (e.g., Lexile Framework level or word count), and thus creativity can be stifled.

In order to meet the deadline (a huge priority in publishing) and write solid leveled readers that follow the guidelines (a huge priority in educational publishing and in this project), creativity has to come third (Kari-Lynn, Interview).

Kari-Lynn shared an example of these authoring guidelines as an artifact (see Figure 1). These guidelines are concise and straightforward, but also constraining at times.

Figure 1: Sample of author guidelines.

<p>ABOUT YOUR MANUSCRIPT:</p> <p>GRADE: 1</p> <p>GENERAL INFO: Social Studies / Connections / History / Making History</p> <p>ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why is the past important? *The book you are writing should address this essential question throughout.</p> <p>TITLE/TOPIC: Please submit a tentative title and summary for approval (for contract).</p> <p>READING LEVEL: H Please see attached documents (Word document and PDF) for specific criteria for this reading level. It is crucial that the guidelines in the Word document are followed. The PDF is a helpful resource with a visual representation of your level. If guidelines differ between documents, please follow the Word document guidelines.</p> <p>LEXILE LEVEL: 440L If you choose to check the reading level for your document, you can use the Lexile Analyzer found at https://lexile.com/analyzer/. (You will need to set up an account.)</p> <p>PAGE COUNT (Including title pages, TOC, etc.): 16 pages [15 pages of text]</p> <p>WORD COUNT: Approx. 400 words (320-500)</p> <p>GENRE: Fiction</p> <p>GENRE FOCUS (if applicable): N/A * If applicable, please see attached document for specific guidelines regarding required text features.</p> <p>TEXT TYPE/TEXT FORM: Please consider the Common Core State Standards when you are writing your manuscript. The link to the website is http://www.corestandards.org/.</p> <p>SENSITIVITY ISSUES: Please see document entitled "Sensitivity Guidelines" for content considerations. It is important to remember to be inclusive and diverse in terms of content.</p>
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Tiffany then commented during the interview about the guidelines and the perceived impact on the writing process; Kari-Lynn concurred with this judgement.

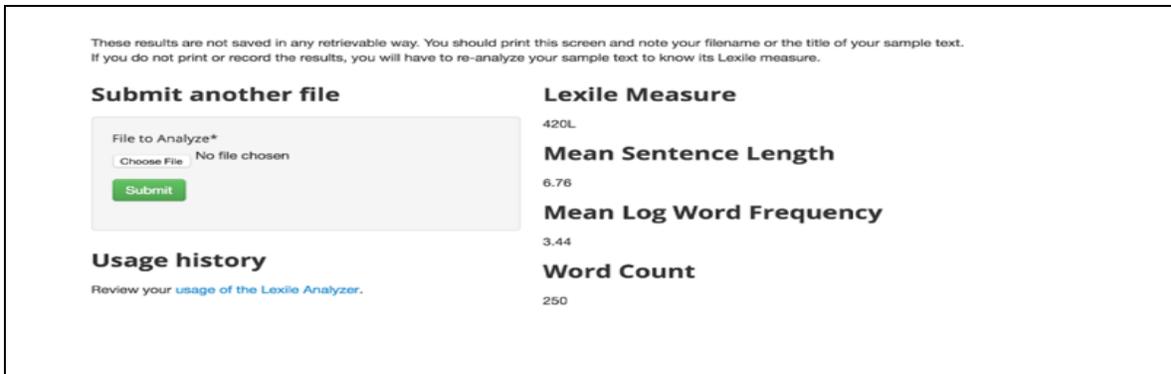
You are becoming almost mechanical about the writing process.... gone are all references to cadence and voice, much less humor or emotion. What happened to the aesthetic purposes of reading?
(Tiffany, Interview)

I agree. Though this puzzle-solving is kind of fun, gone are the joys of writing for pleasure—including creating unique characters and perspectives, dialogue, plot, and constructing voice (Kari-Lynn, Interview).

As illustration of how Kari-Lynn was compelled to write to the guidelines provided and the targeted text level, Kari-Lynn provided an initial draft of a story (see Figure 2) that demonstrates how the characters are devoid of personality, specifically demonstrating how the sibling characters are flat and how the dialogue lacks voice or compelling words.

Figure 2: Sample of an initial story draft.

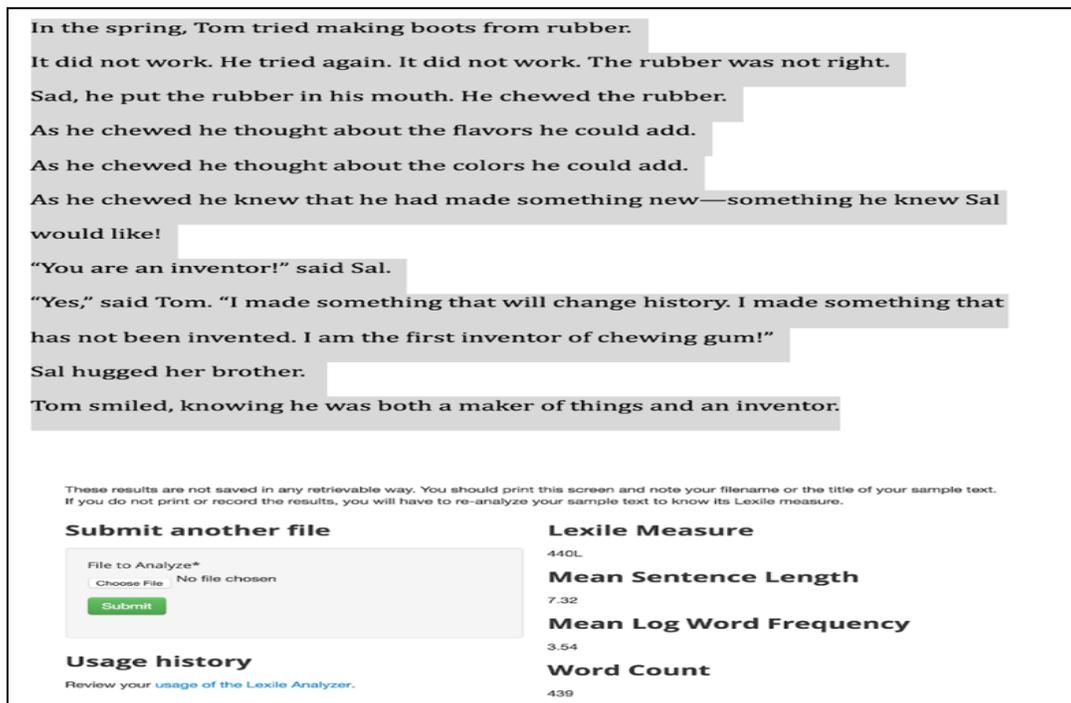
"You are an inventor!," said Sal.
"No," said Tom. "I told you what I am."
"That means the same thing," she said.
Tom shook his head. "An inventor changes history. I just make things. I am a maker of things."
"Oh," said Sal. "I see. Do you want to be an inventor?"
Tom nodded. "I do!"
"I see," said Sal. "Then do it! Just do it."
"I wish I could be." Tom lowered his head. "I told you that I am just a maker of things, not an inventor. An inventor is smart."
"You are smart," said Sal. "You make things from wood. You make things from cloth. You even make things from steel."
Tom nodded.
"Try making things from new things," said Sal. "Try making things in a new way."
Tom nodded.
"Try making things from rubber," said Sal.
"From rubber?" said Tom.
Sal nodded.
Tom liked making things from rubber.
He tried making boots. But it did not work. The rubber was not strong enough. It didn't work because the rubber was not right.
Sad, he put the rubber in his mouth.
As he chewed he knew that he had made something new for Sal.
"You are an inventor!" said Sal.
"Yes," said Tom. "I am the inventor of chewing gum!"
Sal nodded. "Yes! You are!"



Kari-Lynn noted that there are the linguistic properties that writers constantly consider: words that have rich meaning are often challenging to decode, multisyllabic, and therefore inflate text readability. *...authors are trained to be succinct and clear. At the same time, authors are invited to think about “juicy” or “delicious” words--those that evoke images or that sound interesting...[It would be too difficult to read for an emergent reader, if a word for example] contains three syllables and includes a “soft c” at the beginning and a “silent e” at the end. Even if the Lexile index said that I could use it, knowing what I know about literacy, that would be very unfair to a young reader. So I need to find another way to communicate my ideas (Kari-Lynn, Interview).*

This speaks to the reality that the readability formulae cannot capture all of the nuances of the English language, how words are contextualized in the book (e.g., shown in the illustrations) and readers’ language experiences. Figure 3 is a sample of the previous text (see Figure 2) illustrating how Kari-Lynn revised the work to convey the same ideas with different word choice to remain within the constraints of the readability measure.

Figure 3: Sample of second story draft.



Authors have a generalized sense of the vocabulary that their readers are capable of decoding and comprehending regardless of the readability indices. For example, an author might know that a word like “right” might be difficult for a young reader to decode because of the irregular vowel/consonant digraph pattern (i.e., igh). However, “right” on a readability measure contributes to a lower readability score because it is a short (one-syllable) word. Whereas, an author might know that a word like “experimented”, which could be shown in the illustrations and be easily contextualized, and therefore read by a young reader, would not be a good word choice as it contributes to a higher readability score because it contains four syllables and because it is a less commonly used word.

(2) Engagement, Power, Identity and Agency

Engaging readers comes naturally when the text evokes compelling ideas and extends their thinking beyond its boundaries. However, this engagement is harder to achieve with beginning readers because there is a “tension between children’s conceptual knowledge (e.g., in science, social studies) and their decoding skills” (Tiffany, Reflections on Author Guidelines from Publisher). Authoring at low levels of readability (for beginning readers) makes text engagement difficult as there is a gap between what readers are drawn to (e.g., interesting topics, vivid language) and what they can actually read.

Furthermore, there is also the issue of topical agency to engage readers. Teachers rely on texts to address social issues in contemporary and accurate ways. Authors of leveled texts are often bound by guidelines that,

...offer culturally and politically correct considerations for the topics and content of the texts.

Suggestions regarding characters’ gender roles, religion, race, disability, and ageism are offered.

There are topics to be avoided such as risk taking, death, sexual behavior, drug/alcohol use, betting, violence, terrorism, hunting, the supernatural, politics, and consequences for unethical behavior.

There are topics to be incorporated such as environmental stewardship, respect for authority, and healthy and active living. Some of these topics, such as gender roles, are contemporary instances

that are present in the lives of children (e.g., gender neutral restrooms) and worthy of critical inquiry.

As well, cultural stereotypes might be fodder for critical literacy discussions in classrooms (Kari-Lynn, Reflections on Author Guidelines from the Publisher).

It is understandable why these guidelines are put in place: to ensure that identities are honored, stereotypes are expounded and cultural contexts are considered, but this does, nonetheless limit an author’s creative freedom and voice.

Another underlying struggle that speaks about the topic of agency is that the text consumer (the student or the teacher) is being denied the power to choose the texts, because often these leveled texts come already packaged. Moreover, the publisher, who creates the guidelines for these books may not have knowledge about the variability among readability formulae and merely ascribes to a user license or adopts a formula. Finally, the authors’ power is thwarted by issues of control; this control is both implicit (e.g., in the application of a readability formula) and explicit (e.g., in the details of the writing contract).

It really is more than quality and creativity of writing. It is also about agency. Agency for these kids who are being asked to read these books. They are always in the forefront of my mind. I endure constant questioning as I write. Questions that I ask myself are:

Will kids at this level be able to read this?

Will this book, with its difficult vocabulary be enough to hold a child back from moving to a new reading level?

Am I being culturally sensitive?

Will kids find this book interesting?

How might this book motivate children reading it? (Kari-Lynn, Interview)

As experienced by the readers and their teachers, the power relationships in text consumption reside in the choices that they can and cannot make; this also impacts with the ability to align with their identities. Since leveled texts are compiled in sets and sold as units to school districts, there is little opportunity to customize a set for the demographic and/or interests of any one particular classroom.

(3) The ‘Secret Sauce’: Understanding the Impact of Readability Calculations

Readability formulae include different factors in the algorithm calculations. Different publishers adopt different readability formulae. As publishing is a competitive business, not all companies are transparent with their chosen algorithms. It is like a ‘secret sauce’ used by a restaurant: it tastes great and it adds value to the food, but no one really knows the ingredients. Different publishing companies are trying to create a unique product for consumers that is both sellable and lucrative.

Yet, authors and educators both use and must apply readability formulae in their work with texts. It is essential that authors and educators hold an understanding of the factors that influence text readability as well as how a formula impacts readability. Sometimes it is length that impacts readability and sometimes it is word choice. For example, for the formula being used by Kari-Lynn in the present study, the total number of words used in a text contributes to its readability in an inverse relationship: the greater the number of words, the lower the readability.

This readability formula writing goes against everything that I know about literacy. Emergent readers usually read shorter texts. How on earth can an author expect that in order to lower a Lexile reading score, he or she needs to add more words? (Kari-Lynn, Interview).

However, the ambiguities of applying readability tools with certain word choices may complicate the author’s pathway for writing. This is demonstrated below in Figure 4. where Kari-Lynn provides a side-by-side comparison of the same text. The later version has a lower readability.

Figure 4: Sample of texts written to lower readability.

<u>Early Version</u>	<u>Later Version</u>
<i>Without Art</i>	<i>Without Art</i>
Art can be beautiful. Art can be powerful. Art can be fun.	Imagine a world without imagination. Imagine a world without artists. Imagine a world without art?
People make art. People who make art are artists.	Visual art is art. Imagine a world without statues.
Imagine a world without creators? Imagine a world without art?	Imagine a world without paintings. Artists play with shapes and lines. No crayons. No clay. No paint.
Visual art is art. Imagine a world without statues. Imagine a world without drawings. Artists bring together shapes and lines in paintings. No crayons. No clay. No paint. What a colorless world it would be!	What a colorless world it would be!

Here, the later text is more repetitive as the word “imagine” was repeated numerous times in order to lower the overall Lexile Framework score. There is a tension that writing leveled texts causes for authors between the quality of the writing (e.g., using word variety and keeping a rhythm) and the text’s purpose or guidelines (e.g., Lexile Framework score and word count).

Perhaps, the frustration that authors might experience is that they are not informed about the intricacies of readability formulae despite the profound impact on their work as authors. Authors may not be given information about the use of different resources to create and then label a text’s readability. This contributes to a sense of secrecy and lack of understanding of what impacts text readability calculations.

This is not a good system. Not an exact science. The story’s content and flow doesn’t seem to matter (Tiffany, Interview).

Authors create texts and then insert them into readability programs often with a lack of understanding of the formulae. Then texts are labeled by publishers using commonly referenced text level gradients such as from Fountas and Pinnell (2016) with an arbitrary descriptor.

The cross referencing that is given (e.g., Reading Level D and Lexile Level 140L) is also debatable depending on the level conversion chart you are employing. In other words, there are differences among level conversion charts that are in circulation. This is not an exact science of converting text readability levels...this issue has a cumulative impact on the authoring process and the reader’s accessibility (Tiffany, Reflections on Author Guidelines from the Publisher).

It would seem that there is great potency in the ‘secret sauce’: the impact of text calculations.

Discussion: considerations and tensions when using leveled texts

The findings above elucidate some of the issues related to text readability and the authorship of leveled texts that educators should be made aware of. The influence of guidelines, restrictions, and standards that are given to authors before and during the writing process do play into the ways leveled texts are structured and rated. This is especially the case when the author is writing to a prescribed text level. Authors add words or delete them in order to target the right level; this can compromise the contents of the text, making the texts themselves more convoluted or more abstract.

Literacy researchers contend that no one knows students’ reading levels better than their teachers (Begeny & Greene 2014, Morris 2015). Instead of trusting the pre-packaged books and their levels ‘in blind faith,’ teachers might scan leveled texts applying qualitative criteria guidelines for each level to check the veracity of the assigned gradient. Teachers might also consider their students’ social and cultural backgrounds and their students’ interests and knowledge in order to determine the best fit for their emerging readers.

Additionally, if a student is struggling during a guided reading session, it is suggested that teachers might consider that it may not be the student who is not developing, but rather the choice of text itself. Teachers should be cautious when making instructional decisions based on purported text levels, using their own knowledge to determine if the difficulty of text is due to simply relying on readability formulae (Begeny & Greene 2014). Educators can be critical of both the contents and the process by which the text went through to get into the classroom. Thousands of decisions were made during its creation, by authors, editors, illustrators, designers, publishers, packagers and even companies that establish the standards for leveling these texts.

Many of authors know only part of the text leveling puzzle. For example, authors might know how to formulate the words so that the manuscript meets expectations set by the publisher, however they may not ever see their book in its final form and they may not understand how it will be used with students in classrooms worldwide. Future research should seek to interview and garner the perspectives of a cross section of different authors to gain an understanding of their varied experiences. Conversely,

publishers might be aware of meeting the readability criteria set by formulae, the guidelines for students in certain grades and how certain packages of texts might go well together (e.g., grouping them by themes), but publishers may have no idea how students might read their books. Reading is complex and reading development is shaped by the histories, experiences, identities, and social interactions of the students themselves. Each geographic region, each culture, and each student has his/her own needs and own reading development trajectory.

For this reason, it is important for educators to think critically about leveled texts, as well as how might they apply this criticality within their classroom practices. One way to do this, if possible, is to choose texts from a wide source of publishers. Different groupings of texts will offer unique writing styles, topics, and genres that have the potential to motivate students and encourage reading development.

Another option is to ask questions and encourage discussions with students about all types of books, including trade and leveled texts. Teachers might raise awareness that books are authored by numerous people. Encourage students to take on perspectives and to think critically about the intentions of the authors, the illustrators, the publishers, and even the packagers. Additionally, inquire into students' thoughts about the text itself. Do students like the topics? What connections can students make? What is cumbersome for students to read? What do students regard as fun about the book? Which characters do students perceive to hold power?

Conclusion

This paper exposes the tensions and secrets among text readability measures and the authoring process of leveled books. The aim is to build educators' critical awareness of leveled texts, specifically the authoring process of these books in both educational and trade publishing, in order to critique various books and text packages, modify individual texts, and provide informed and evidence-based literacy programming for students. It is essential that teachers adopt the role of being critical literacy educators thereby modelling for their own students what critical consumers of texts should do.

Educators rarely consider text readability, but use leveled books with students in their classrooms. These educators often work in isolation in their language arts classrooms, or perhaps in small school-based literacy programming groups; they don't often have the opportunity to engage in nation-wide or international discussions about the readability of leveled books. Becoming a critical thinker of leveled books and readability measures (i.e., not being blindly lead by educational and trade publishers) shapes a literacy educator's capacity to evaluate books, to build critical conversations into authentic literacy lessons, and to make informed choices or modifications to texts for their students (Morris 2015). These are all exemplary practices of critical literacy educators (Fountas & Pinnell 2016).

Research demonstrates that today's literacy educators need to not only be consumers, but also thoughtful and critical inquirers of educational practices (Clarke & Whitney 2014, Lewison et al. 2014). Learning how leveled books are authored gives educators the awareness to uncover the secrets behind educational and trade publishing programs. Educators need to be given opportunities to collaborate and co-construct an understanding of how they apply readability measures with classroom texts (Morris 2015). Teachers also need time to moderate the subjective nature of readability formulae applications. They might seek out programs that allow them to review or modify texts themselves in order to differentiate for their readers' needs and local curriculum contexts. In this context, teachers could collaborate using exemplars to determine text readability levels based on quantitative and qualitative factors and their students' characteristics and instructional tasks.

This paper has brought to light considerations and critical questions that educators and administrators might be asking related to leveled text readability in relation to their students' needs. As well, it highlights ways that educators can bring a critical literacy approach and critical thinking into the classroom during the use of leveled texts.

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Using podcasts to support learners` positive attitude to listening comprehension in TEFL

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to find out how the Internet-based resources (podcasts) affect listening comprehension of learners at a lower secondary school level. First, the concept of listening comprehension, listening strategies, approaches, and possible listening problems in English language learning are tackled. Further on, podcasts, their advantages, disadvantages as well as their appropriate use in English classroom is discussed. Based on relevant theories, application of chosen podcasts in the classroom at a lower secondary level through action research was carried out. The application of the action research showed that podcasts integrated in the classes at all listening stages help develop listening comprehension of learners. By designing suitable lesson plans and introducing challenging activities intensive listening in the classroom can be taught in a meaningful and motivating way.

Key words: TEFL, listening comprehension, intensive and extensive listening, podcasts, bottom-up and top-down strategies, action research

Introduction

Many researchers define listening as an essential, active, complex and even mostly used language skill in communication. One of the important factors for developing listening comprehension is the selection of listening materials and media as listening is a very difficult language skill to be developed in a foreign language. Information and communication technology, and the Internet sources can be the instruments which help to promote listening comprehension of foreign language learners.

One of the Internet-based sources of additional listening materials, which can be implemented in foreign language learning and teaching, and which have become very popular, is podcast. In relation to the phenomenon of podcast, which emerged in 2005, numerous research studies were conducted in the course of years 2007-2019, aimed at examining the podcast application in foreign language teaching and learning with the emphasis on listening skill. The outcomes are summarized in publications by Hasan and Hoon (2012, 2013), Ramli (2018) and Lio & Marafat (2019).

One of the most valuable metaanalyses conducted by Masudul and Hoon (2013) provides a review of twenty research articles to determine the effects of podcast on TEFL students' language skills and attitude levels of the participants. According to the authors, it was found that podcasts greatly support learning not just in speaking and listening, but also in other language skills and areas such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Overall findings of the analyzed studies suggest that learners generally enjoyed using podcasts, and liked to listen to the podcasts at home as well as outside the classroom using desktop computers or mobile devices.

However, the research in the analyzed studies was conducted only with university students as the use of podcasts in TEFL contexts has become popular mostly at tertiary level. The listening comprehension in English through the use of portable or mobile technology such as podcast should be fostered also among the learners at primary and lower secondary level. The learners could gain competences which would increase their academic achievement in English at higher levels of education.

Therefore, a research study needs to be carried out which investigates the use of podcasts at a lower secondary school level.

As a result of the analysis of the reviewed research studies it was also found to be questionable whether the improved listening comprehension and respondents' positive attitudes could be attributed merely to the use of podcasts. Therefore, the application of podcasts in TEFL should be supplemented by examination of appropriate approaches and strategies.

Theoretical background

Listening comprehension in TEFL

Listening comprehension is a complicated process that has been studied by many researchers, and in which listeners play important roles. According to Rost (2002: 42) and Hamouda (2013: 123) listening comprehension is an interactive process where the meaning is created by listeners. Listeners understand the spoken input through following stages: "sound recognition, former knowledge, grammatical structures, stress and intonation". Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) describe schema according to cognitive comprehension theory as abstract text formation that the listener uses to interpret the given text. The listener uses linguistic and actual cues about the new intake to raise schema. If the new information is matched with the schema, then the listener has understood the text.

For listening comprehension of the spoken information following aspects are essential: the previous knowledge, the context and listening strategies. For skillful listeners, it is necessary to involve cognitive strategies if they are to perform affectively and they control their comprehension and deduction of the meaning of new words from the context (Carrasquillo 2013).

Numerous exposures to spoken English result in deeper knowledge of intonation, stress, clusters and connected speech. The other reason for developing listening is to improve speaking skill. Hedge (2000) states also the importance of being part in social protocols, sharing information and emotions.

Approaches to develop listening comprehension in TEFL

There are two approaches necessary to master listening skill. These approaches are intensive and extensive listening.

Intensive listening often requires using taped materials and it is connected to the possibility of more repetitions of listening material. The number of times the listening material can be replayed presents a lasting problem (Harmer 2007). Field (2008) suggests that for learners a lot of listening is more useful than a long pre-listening phase followed by only one or two expositions to listening text. On the contrary, Ur (1997) indicates that in real situations, discourse is usually not repeated; therefore, she suggests that one of the tasks is to motivate learners to get as much information as possible from one listening. In intensive listening it is suggested to use more than one listening which is different from real communication. The main objective of learning foreign language through intensive listening is to teach the vocabulary and new grammar. Intensive listening is often connected to the need of choosing appropriate media to encourage learners to improve their comprehension of the foreign language and to prevent them from being demotivated.

Extensive listening is an approach which helps to create keen listeners outside the classroom. In extensive listening teacher motivates learners to select listening material for their pleasure. The material used in extensive listening can be obtained from sources such as audio books or recording of authentic materials such as songs, short videos, and films (Harmer 2007). Thus learners can learn foreign language outside of the class in the real environment (Chang & Lu 2013). Extensive listening represents the possibility for learners to be exposed to many sources of foreign language in their free time. Extensive listening offers also the opportunity for learners to choose the topic according to their interest. Listeners should rather achieve a general meaning, and be interested in the listening event (Saputra & Fatimah 2019). Ferrato and White (2009) define advantages of extensive listening as creating exposure to spoken

English, developing vocabulary and comprehension, improving pronunciation and increasing listening endurance. On the other hand, extensive listening has some shortcomings. Goh (2002) points out that most respondents miss guidance and concentration in their extensive listening practice, a result of lack of structure and direction in such practice.

Harmer (2007) indicates that learners can increase their listening skill by using combination of both extensive and intensive listening materials and procedures. Extensive listening can be used to improve fluency and intensive listening to improve accuracy. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) suggest that both listening approaches should be used for developing learners' basic skills and useful listening habits as well as the ability to comprehend the text. Therefore, learners should be encouraged by teachers in class not only to become acquainted with English phonetics, grammar and vocabulary, but also to comprehend the general meaning. On the other hand, in activities outside the class, learners should be involved in extensive listening to achieve more comprehension and general knowledge through TV programs, radio news and the Internet.

Strategies to develop listening comprehension in TEFL

For developing listening comprehension in language teaching and learning two different macro strategies exist: bottom-up strategies (listening for details) and top-down strategies (listening for general understanding).

A *bottom-up strategy* is activated by new information (Gilakjani & Ahmadi 2011). It concentrates on linguistic features and learners need to examine the individual words for their meaning or grammatical structures before gathering the meaning to create statements (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016). This strategy is activated by sounds, words and phrases which are heard by listeners. Listeners also try to decipher speech and meanings (Richards 2008). According to Wiyanah (2015) listening comprehension is the process of decoding. Learners need large vocabulary and correct knowledge of sentence forms to process listening text bottom-up.

A *top-down strategy* concentrates on the common meaning of phrases and sentences. This strategy enables learners to use real world knowledge and to develop assumption of meaning (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2016). This strategy refers to the use of background knowledge in comprehending the general meaning of the information (Richards 2008). It goes from meaning to language. The background knowledge may be prior knowledge about the subject of the discourse, or also situational and contextual knowledge (Wiyanah 2015).

Interactive strategy, which means combining bottom-up and top-down strategies, is the result of the cooperation between many information sources, which include spoken input, distinctive types of linguistic features, details of the context and common knowledge of the world (Gilakjani & Ahmadi 2011). Learners should be trained to be able to use all three types of the strategies mentioned above while listening.

Listening skill in English curriculum at a lower secondary school level

The contemporary English curriculum of a lower secondary school level is based on the communicative approach. Listening skill is also integrated in its content. The present educational law (Zákon o výchove a vzdelávaní č.245/2009 Z.z) in Slovakia expects that learners should achieve A2 level of the CEFR at the end of a lower secondary school level.

According to CEFR (2001) A2 learners are described as being able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions connected to familiar areas, for example personal and family information, shopping, local geography and the overall meaning of short, simple, clearly spoken messages. In listening comprehension, if a speech is clearly formulated, they are able to understand the general meaning, also the basic points of listening, to identify the topic of listening, to understand the simple instructions, sentences, phrases and words.

TEFL learners - teenagers

Learners of lower secondary school level are learners from 11 to 15 years old and they are known as teenagers. They go through a lot of physical, mental, social, emotional and moral changes. They are sometimes difficult to be managed. This age group is often self-centered and the teenagers concentrate their attention mostly to themselves. They are often known as disobedient and undisciplined (Lewis 2007).

Pokrivčáková (2010: 27) summarizes the basic characteristic of these learners in relation to foreign language teaching and learning. As their ability of abstraction is still developing, they need the suitable and sufficient sensory input (pictures, movies). They have longer attention span, but to keep their attention, it is necessary to use interesting topics, curious stories, and problem-solving activities. They are able to cooperate; consequently, they can work in pairs or groups. They are very sensitive and as a result, they should be treated with respect. For creating positive atmosphere in the classroom, it is required to use the indirect and postponed correction of mistakes.

Scrivener (2005: 94) recommends for this age group the following approaches: „group work, role-play, connection of the topic with learners' lives, present-day topic, technology, music, competition, discipline and also humor and enhancing positive approach“.

Problems in listening comprehension in TEFL

Teachers have to overcome many problems related to listening comprehension of their learners. The most frequent problems are mainly insufficient vocabulary, pronunciation deficiencies and lack of exposure to the authentic foreign language. Shelton (2008) points out the most frequent problems in learning listening skill such as distinguishing sounds. Yagang (2008) adds that other problems in listening comprehension are lack of learners' interest in the listening material, unfamiliarity with sounds, words, and sentences. Ramli (2018) also adds that the problems of the EFL learners are the speed of speech, connected speech, limited vocabulary and contextual knowledge, rigid focusing on listening itself, and wish to understand every word.

In spite of these problems, there are many suggestions that indicate how to improve listening comprehension. Instructions should be understandable for learners, and the material should consist of comprehensible vocabulary (Ramli 2018). Ur (1997) for example, suggests lot of exposure to spoken language and lot of practice in many listening situations to increase learners' listening abilities. According to Selvi and Cardoza (2017) learners should be more exposed to the foreign language through information and communication technology. Development of listening skill cannot be achieved only by listening to teachers' speaking and instructions or listening to CDs with adopted language. As a result, there is need to investigate the influence of Internet-based resources such as podcast on the improvement of listening comprehension within intensive listening.

Podcasts and their use in TEFL

One of the important factors to develop listening comprehension is the selection of listening materials and media. Krashen (1996) points out that the input is comprehensible when learners listen to the listening material for a sufficient period of time, listening is repeated, interesting topic is chosen, and the context is known. According to Peterson (2010) in language teaching, this means that teachers start to apply listening strategies and give listening practice in such situations, which are probable to be faced by learners outside the classroom.

One of the media to fulfil these advantages in foreign language teaching and learning is podcast. Podcasting is a technology for broadcasting audio files and programs on the Internet and was created in 2005 (Selingo 2006). Robinson (2009) defines the term podcast as a connection of two words Pod means

iPod (MP3 player) and cast means *Broadcasting*. Podcast is comparable to radio broadcast. Audio files which include visuals in the form of text, graphics, music or films are known as vodcasts or PodClips (Jitenda et al. 2004). Podcast can be produced on any topic and can be used as effective tool for both listening in the classroom and self-study. There have been developed EFL (English as a Foreign Language) podcast sites for numerous aims such as development of vocabulary, grammar, idioms, business English, news and events, songs, poetry (Peterson 2010). Ramli (2018: 197) states that podcast is „audio and video content on web in the form of the series of episodes with a known topic“. Using podcasts as language teaching tool brings new opportunities in language teaching and learning. Ramli (2018: 197) refers to the podcasts as „an attractive option to offer flexible learning resources for learners“. Giving learners flexibility of using podcasts according to individual needs, learners are more employed in the learning process.

Podcasts can be divided into three main types - *audio*, *audio and still images*, and *video* (Ramli 2018). Sze (2007) divides podcasts for English language teaching and learning into three other types: *authentic podcasts* - they are usually not designed for EFL learners, but can be a possible source for learners, *teacher-created podcasts*, and *student-created podcasts*. Yildirim and Hoffman (2010) divide podcasts into four categories according to their use as *public broadcasting*, *miscellaneous*, *podcasts for English language learners* and *podcasts directories*.

Podcasts are a valuable Internet-based resource of listening materials that can be implemented in teaching and learning foreign language according to the structure of listening practice. The lesson with podcast like any other listening practice should have three stages pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Learners should know what the goal of each activity is.

Kim and King (2011) investigated using podcasts in EFL context and found out that using podcasts in listening instruction has influenced the listening comprehension. Brown (2006) suggested that podcasts can be used based on the level of learners' proficiency, their interest, age group, grammar or vocabulary to be studied.

Millin (2016) recommends using podcasts to introduce new topic, or using part of it as a dictation. However, learners can listen to podcasts also at home. Patten and Craig (2007) refer to the utilization of podcasts, in which learners learn at a time suitable for them and control their learning and speed of their learning. According to Hasan and Hoon (2011) the integration of podcasts in learning can improve not only vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and speaking, but also increase academic performance, motivation and promote learning. Lio and Marafat (2019) say that podcast can be used in the classroom to motivate learners to choose listening material. Constantine (2007) states that podcast includes different topics and different level of speed of speaking.

Podcasts as a language learning material can be divided into two groups. The first group includes authentic materials created by native speakers usually not intended to teach language. This group consists of topics such as news or sports. The second group includes language courses or content intended for teaching and language learning. This group is divided into materials created for known learners or public podcasts for independent learners (Rosel-Aguilar 2007). Suitable podcasts have to be chosen to be appropriate listening materials for language learners. They should include up-to-date information and should be understandable for the given level of language proficiency and adapted to the curriculum content to prevent learners of demotivation. Ramli (2018) adds that podcasts can be used by young learners as well as adult learners, by beginners and advanced learners.

Advantages and disadvantages of podcasts

Podcasts are connected with many advantages for language learners, for example promotion of their language skills e.g. listening, pre-instructional strategy in word analysis or for examination of previously taught words (Jitenda et al. 2004). Secondly, they can be downloaded to a mobile device and used at any time and learners can be exposed to number of words (Lowman 2014). If transcripts of podcasts are

available, learners can read along and listen (Rallis & Shannon 2006). Podcasts can be provided with lot of instructions. The more diverse the podcasts are, the more different senses of learners can be activated (Ramli 2018). The use of suitable pedagogical methodologies with prepared plan and objectives can make different and positive changes in the EFL classroom (Azmi 2017). Using of podcasts in English language can be useful for both teachers and learners. By using podcast in the classroom learners may change their ways of practicing listening, improve their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Listening to different topics from podcasts, based on learners' interest, leads to storing many ideas that can be used by learners later. Podcast is effectively used when it helps to reach the educational goals and learning activities support these goals (Ramli 2018).

Podcasts, as many other Internet resources have also some disadvantages. Wald (2006) points out that downloaded podcasts can create difficulties, for example to identify an accurate phrase within a podcast. If learners want to find it, the only way to reach it would be repeated listening to the section of the podcast. Technology is not able to ensure interactive verbal communication with others. Commercial sources cannot be suitable for learners at some level of proficiency. Technical problems and lack of knowledge of technology on the side of both, teachers and learners can be a disadvantage.

Research

Research aims and research questions

The aims of the research are:

- to find out how podcasts affect listening comprehension within intensive listening at the lower secondary school level;
- to find out whether podcasts can influence listening skills of learners using bottom-up and top-down strategies.

Our research is aimed at finding out answers to these research questions:

- How do podcasts affect listening comprehension within intensive listening at the lower secondary school level?
- How can the use of podcasts influence the listening comprehension at lower secondary school level within top-down and bottom-up processing?

Methodology

Need for the study

We observed weak listening comprehension among the learners based on the results of previous listening tests and a non-standardized listening pre-test, which was carried out to test their listening comprehension, using a song and a story with follow-up activities "filling in missing words" and "comprehension questions". The test results in the form of a mean score achieved 14 out of 80.

It was also observed that the learners had problems with listening comprehension and they were less motivated to join the teaching and learning process with listening activities by using a recording on CD. The learners were not able to understand what they listened to in English and they did not understand the details or main ideas of the text, which resulted in their reluctance to participate actively in listening activities.

Possible solutions to these problems may be exposing learners to more English language by giving them more opportunities to listen to authentic English, using Internet-based resources with intensive approach and applying bottom-up and top-down listening strategies.

Research method and data collection instruments

The design of the study is an action research, which is the most appropriate method to be applied as it allows the researcher to re-evaluate and adapt the methodology at several points throughout the research process. It consists of four stages: planning, implementing, observing and reflecting the actions.

Within the presented action research, the planning stage consisted of preparing research instruments, lesson plans, and selecting a series of suitable podcasts. The implementation stage was conducted in two cycles in May and June 2019 and lasted six lessons per each cycle. Each cycle consisted of three phases: pre-test, intervention and post-test. In the end of the action research, a questionnaire with closed questions was administered and completed by the participants as a part of the reflection stage.

The pre-test, post-test and the questionnaire served as supporting instruments within the action research. A *non-standardized listening pre-test* was created to test the current level of the listening comprehension of learners. After the implementation, a *non-standardized listening post-test* was conducted using the same tasks as the pre-test. Worksheets were evaluated and results of pre- and post-tests were compared and analyzed. *The questionnaire* (see Table 3) included ten questions, which focused on investigating learners' opinions about using the podcasts and their effect on learners' listening comprehension. The questionnaire contained closed questions with three options a) yes, b) no, c) I do not know.

Participants

Nineteen learners of the eight grade at a lower secondary school level aged 14 participated in the action research. The English language proficiency of the learners corresponded to A2 level according to the CEFR. All of them participated in completing the pre- and post-test, worksheets and answering the questionnaire. The research started by receiving permission from the principal of the school to carry out the action research. The learners were informed that the research would be used for investigation only.

Intervention (cycle 1)

Pre-test: First, learners listened to an English song and completed the lyrics of the song with missing words. A lyrics of the song named „Thinking out loud“ by Ed Sheeren downloaded from the website isl-collective.com was administered to learners and they had to complete it while listening to the song. Then, the teacher read a short story named „The clever fox“ from the website English-for-student.com. The learners were supposed to fill in missing words and to answer comprehension questions. Then the tests were collected and analyzed. The pre-test score of the first cycle was 14.

Materials: For the action research podcasts and available worksheets, were used in order to develop learners' listening skills. Also the content of their textbook Motivate 3 (Howarth & Reilly 2013) which consists of topics such as free-time activities, environmental topic, special places and world of music, was considered. Podcast from website learnenglish.britishcouncil.com for pre-intermediate A2 level were used. The podcasts are designed for learning everyday English and are followed by interactive exercises, thus being appropriate for intensive listening. This website offers four series of podcasts, each series containing ten episodes. Each episode has an available transcript, interactive exercises and additional materials - worksheets. These materials are ready-made for teachers to be used. The worksheets consist of multiple choice questions, short answers, gap filling activities, vocabulary exercises, true or false sentences, matching exercises and listening comprehension questions based on the stories. These exercises encourage learners to listen for both general meaning (top-down processing) and for details (bottom-up processing). For the intervention six episodes were selected: „Talk about pets and weather“, „The January sales“, „The most emblematic forms of transport in London“, „How would you describe the British character“, „Tess and Ravi talk about typical English drink“, „Tess and Ravi talk about pop music“.

Planning: After the pre-test, the first cycle of intervention was carried out. First, podcasts were introduced to the learners and it was explained what a podcast is. The following lesson structure was suggested for all topics:

Warm-up activity: Teacher introduced the podcasts and the website learnenglish.britishcouncil.com.

Pre-listening stage: The teacher presented vocabulary related to the content of the podcast. The teacher showed a picture from podcasts and asked learners to make predictions about the content of the podcast. Learners' background knowledge about the listening text was activated by questions and answers. Then, learners were instructed that they would listen to the podcast and they read the worksheet activities.

While-listening stage: The teacher administered the worksheets. The learners first read the exercises and then listened to the podcast. While listening, the learners completed the worksheets individually and filled in the missing words. Then they listened to the podcast once again and they decided whether the sentences were true or false. They listened all over again and they put the words in right order and matched the words with their description. After listening, teacher checked the answers with the whole class.

Post-listening stage: The teacher asked the learners questions related to the podcast topic that were given at the end of the worksheet. The learners exchanged their opinions and ideas and found solutions to the given problem. After the discussion, the learners made a list of questions they would like to ask. They took roles such as in the podcast and asked and answered the questions. Finally, the teacher provided the transcript of the podcast to the learners and they could read it.

Observation: After first hesitations, the learners showed positive attitude towards application of podcasts and follow-up activities. The learners were active while completing the listening activities and their ability to concentrate on completing the listening tasks increased. Observing the learners' increased curiosity, the teacher recommended some web sites providing podcasts, for example VOA or BBC, so that the learners could download them individually according to their interest. The learners were encouraged to listen to more podcasts from this series at home to enhance extensive listening. One more observation was made by the teacher related to the attention span of the learners and the need to listen to the podcasts for several times. Therefore, a decision was made to apply podcasts from a different website in the second cycle of the action research.

Reflection: After applying the podcasts in the first cycle, a post-test was administered. It was evaluated and the progress of learners was analyzed in comparison with the pre-test. Even though there was some improvement evident in post-test score 44 compared to the initial result 14, the results were not sufficient and learners' listening comprehension was still not satisfactory. There was a need to conduct the second cycle of the action research to achieve better results.

Intervention (cycle 2)

Pre-test: In the second cycle lyrics of the song named „Your song“ by Elton John from the Isl-collective.com and a story „The foolish fish“ from the website English-for-students.com were used as a pre-test. The learners were supposed to fill in missing words and to answer comprehension questions. Then the tests were collected and analyzed. The pre-test score of the second cycle was 24.

Materials: For the second cycle of the action research, podcasts from the website podcastinenglish.com for level 1, pre-intermediate A2 were chosen. At this website free podcasts are provided, however the worksheets, vocabulary tasks and transcripts for learning and teaching English are available only to registered members. The website recommends their podcasts as listening activities for learners at all levels to improve their skills. Furthermore, they are valuable resource of English language lessons for teachers. These podcasts contain variety of up-to-date, entertaining and enjoyable topics. They are considered by the authors of this website to be a comprehensive way of improving learners' listening skills. The related worksheets contain exercises such as answer the questions, tick the mentioned topics, choose the correct answer (true or false, complete the sentence; match the words with description, multiple choice). Six podcasts were selected: „Who is Greta“, „New animals“, „Local beauty spots“, „Summer jobs“, „Nice holiday“ and „Fall“. These podcasts were used with the intention to improve the learners listening comprehension and develop their vocabulary.

Compared to the podcasts from the website British council used in the first cycle, the podcasts' episodes are much shorter, less than five minutes, so they are suitable for more frequent listening activities in the classroom.

Planning: The second cycle lasted six lessons and the learners were exposed to six podcasts. The following lesson structure was suggested for all topics:

Warm-up activity: Teacher introduced the podcasts and the websites podcastinenglish.com

Pre-listening stage: Teacher administered the worksheets. The learners looked at the picture in the podcast. The teacher asked the learners to predict what the speakers might talk about in the podcast. The learners first read the exercises, the teacher presented new vocabulary items related to the content of the podcast. Before listening, the learners answered the questions and compared the answers with their classmates.

While-listening stage: First the learners listened to the podcasts for general understanding, using top-down strategy and completed the worksheets with related questions. Then they listened again for more details and completed exercises which required detailed information using bottom-up strategy.

Post-listening stage: In post-listening activities, the learners did extra vocabulary worksheets and discussed the podcast topic. The teacher asked the learners questions related to the podcast topic that were given at the end of the worksheet and asked them to write about the topic discussed in the podcast. The learners exchanged their opinions and ideas with their classmates.

Observation: Related to the change of the length of the podcast episodes, the learners were provided with more opportunities to re-listen and to focus more on tasks and listening activities (listening for details). The teacher recommended more websites for listening to podcasts at home to broaden the possibilities of the learners to develop their listening competence through extensive listening. The extensive listening to podcasts at home was supposed to facilitate self-paced learning and provide even slower learners a platform for remediation. By applying the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies within the intensive in-class listening, the learners were equipped with skills that grant them more control on their competence and possession of their listening. It was observed that learners paid more attention during podcasts lessons than during the traditional listening lessons.

Reflection: In the end of the application of the podcasts, the post-test was administered to the learners. It was evaluated and the progress of learners was analyzed in comparison with the pre-test. The learners' post-test results showed a significant improvement with mean score 68. Finally, a questionnaire aimed at exploring learners' views and attitudes to listening comprehension classes using podcasts was administered.

Findings and discussion

1. Pre-tests and post-tests

Within the action research two tests (pre-test and post-test) in two cycles were conducted and one questionnaire was administered. The listening pre-test and post-test consisted of two parts. The first part was constituted by song lyrics and a gap filling activity. This part represented listening for details; therefore, the learners had to use bottom-up strategy. The second part of the listening tests contained a story with comprehension questions focused on general understanding; therefore, the learners had to use the top-down strategy and activate their background knowledge.

In the first cycle, pre-test results reached mean scores 14 out of 80 and the learners achieved worse results in the first part of pre-tests, listening for details in comparison with the second part, listening for general meaning. All learners made mistakes in two numbers which were the missing words in the song, *twenty-three* and *thousand*. As for other missing words, the most learners did not fill in gaps with correct words, or they missed and did not catch these words while listening to the song and therefore left these gaps blank. Sixteen learners made mistakes in words *evergreen* and *stirring*. The missing words were very often spelled in a wrong way (for example the word *mysterious* with *i*). The most

mistakes could be observed in three words - *crowds*, *beating* and *sweep* and they were found in tests of 18 learners. The reason can be that the most learners were not familiar with these words. The mistakes in comprehension questions were made because the learners did not catch the gist of the story. The gathered data from the first cycle were analyzed by using the mean scores of pre-test and post-test. Our criterion for the success of the podcasts application was that the learners had to achieve a mean test score higher than 55. The results are presented in the Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Cycle 1: Pre-test and post-test score.

	Mean of pre-test	Mean of post-test
Listening comprehension	14	44

Table 1 shows that in the first cycle the mean post-test score in listening comprehension increased from 14 to 44. The most mistakes were still in three words - *crowds*, *beating* and *sweep*. In spite of these mistakes, the overall results of the learners improved after the implementation of the podcasts. The most learners reached better post-test results in both parts of the test - in listening for details and listening for general meaning.

In the worksheets from the first series of podcasts, the most learners' mistakes were observed in the part of true or false sentences and in the gap filling activity. They made mistakes in listening for detail as well as in listening for comprehension. The multiple choice exercises and word order exercises were completed correctly in the most of the worksheets.

Table 2: Cycle 2: Pre-test and post-test score.

	Mean of pre-test	Mean of post-test
Listening comprehension	24	68

The second cycle of the action research was carried out to achieve better results. Table 2 shows that in the second cycle the mean post-test score in listening comprehension increased from 24 to 68. It can be seen that the performance of the learners improved considerably after the application of the podcasts in the second cycle. The learners made only few mistakes in the part listening for details. These mistakes were mainly related to the wrong spelling of words. It can be due to the lack of vocabulary knowledge. The mistakes in comprehension questions were rare.

In the worksheets from the second series of podcasts mistakes in listening for details were observed; on the other hand, learners completed answers to the questions for general understanding of podcasts correctly.

2. Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire was administered to investigate the influence of using podcasts on the learners' views and attitudes to listening comprehension classes. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 3: Results of the questionnaire survey.

Questions	Yes	No	I do not know/ I've heard before, but never use it
1. Is this the first time you are using podcasts?	19	0	0
2. Do you think these podcasts influenced your listening skills positively?	19	0	0
3. Do you think it will be good for your listening to listen to these podcasts repeatedly?	19	0	0
4. Do you think that the podcasts helped you to get exposed to correct pronunciation of English words?	16	3	0
5. Do you think the podcasts helped you to learn some new vocabulary?	17	2	0
6. Do you find the pronunciation of the podcasts comprehensible?	16	3	0
7. Do you think that the podcasts have made the content interesting?	19	0	0
8. Do you think that the podcasts are the main reason for making the classes different from traditional class?	19	0	0
9. Do you think that you can learn about pronunciation and vocabulary of English through podcasts?	19	0	0
10. While listening to the podcasts was it a problem for you to go with the speaker's pace and fluency?	10	9	0

The obtained data showed that all learners experienced the podcast for the first time and were not familiar with this format so far. All learners agreed that the podcasts influenced their listening skills positively and that it would be beneficial for their listening comprehension to listen to the podcasts repeatedly. We can consider this as a very encouraging attitude of the learners to the podcasts application in the classroom. Sixteen learners agreed that the podcasts helped them to get exposed to correct English pronunciation and seventeen learners confirmed that they acquired new vocabulary items. Sixteen learners agreed that the pronunciation of the podcasts was comprehensible. All learners agreed that the podcasts made the listening content interesting. All learners confirmed podcasts to be the reason for making the classes different to traditional ones. All learners agreed that they improved their pronunciation and enriched their vocabulary through podcasts. This can be a confirmation for podcasts being a useful tool not only for listening comprehension, but also for acquiring new vocabulary and improving the pronunciation. However, more than half of the learners (N=10) had a problem to go with the speaker's pace and fluency. This is the most noticeable negative result, which means that the learners still did not get used to the authentic English language. This outcome corresponds to Ramli's (2018) comment on problems of the EFL learners such as the speed of speech and connected speech. Based on this finding one more cycle, aimed at more intensive and focused listening training, would be advisable for the future.

Conclusion

The series of podcasts in teaching listening comprehension was applied and possibilities of using podcasts in the classroom at a lower secondary school level were investigated. The findings of the action research are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Based on the initial listening pre-test, we realized that the listening comprehension of the learners was very low - mean score equaled 14. The reason might be that even though the learners listened in their classes to adapted texts on CD and completed the course book listening exercises, they rarely listened to authentic texts and were not exposed to English spoken by native speakers. Further, they were not familiar with the vocabulary.

Then series of podcasts within intensive listening approach were applied in two cycles. The lessons focused on bottom-up and top-down processing of listening including pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities. The pre-listening stage prepared learners for processing the information using activities that stimulate previous knowledge, make predictions and review basic vocabulary. The while-listening stage concentrated on comprehension exercises requiring the listening for gist or sequencing. The post-listening stage included responding to comprehension questions and expressing attitudes about the topic.

Based on the obtained results from listening post-tests and the comparison with pre-test results, it was found out that learners' listening comprehension skills improved and developed after application of podcasts. There was a relevant improvement in the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests from 14 to 44 after the first cycle. The mean score increased even more significantly after the second cycle from 24 to 68. It was proved that podcasts helped to improve listening skills of learners within intensive approach.

Throughout both cycles of the action research the teacher applied consequently the interactive strategy, which means combining bottom-up and top-down strategies. Therefore, the tests focused on assessing listening for general meaning (gist) as well as listening for detail information. Based on the results of the listening podcasts' worksheets and post-tests, we found out that learners' listening skills have improved in both listening for gist with using top-down strategy and listening for detailed information with the using bottom-up strategy.

Even though the action research was conducted within intensive in-class teaching and learning, strategies for enhancing successful extensive listening outside of class were promoted by the teacher as well. Within the intensive listening the learners listened in the classroom to texts several times for more details, whereas within extensive listening they were exposed to various recommended listening sources to comprehend the general meaning. The podcasts have proved to be a helpful medium for combining the objectives of *intensive listening approach* (to understand the meaning of every word and sentence) and the objectives of *extensive listening approach* (to understand the content of the passage in order to improve complete listening ability).

In agreement with the outcomes of the presented action research we found out that podcasts used in English lessons represent a support to developing listening skills of learners in English and help improve listening comprehension when applied with intensive approach. It is important to mention that to develop or improve listening skills, the podcasts have to be used within the framework of a comprehensive lesson plan and supported by suitable activities and tasks. These research results can stimulate the consideration of the application of podcasts in listening materials in the English classroom as using this new type of media created a positive atmosphere among learners.

Considering the teacher's perspective while conducting the action research, several observations can be reported. It was a new and interesting experience to use podcasts in TEFL, and it enhanced teacher's creativity. Podcast application challenged the teacher's traditional teaching methods. Thus, for using podcasts in English language lessons, the teacher had to define appropriate teaching and learning aims,

approaches, techniques, activities and strategies. Moreover, using podcasts as supporting materials along with the course materials is quite time-consuming and demanding. It was necessary for the teacher to prepare more than for usual listening lessons. The teacher had to find websites with appropriate podcasts, expand the technical possibilities of the English class, and make sure everything worked correctly.

Important decisions had to be made by the teacher, who had a choice between two groups of podcasts: authentic podcasts, which can be a useful starting point, and podcasts containing ready-made listening lesson plans with prepared exercises and transcripts. When using the first group, there was a need for more work for teacher's preparation by creating lesson plans and appropriate listening comprehension exercises. When applying the second group, the teacher had to do very profound search for appropriate websites and consider the proficiency level of learners, their age, personal characteristics and possible interests.

One of the shortcomings of the present action research is the reliability of the reported data considering the number of participants (19) and the validity of the non-standardized listening comprehension tests. The questionnaire survey of learners' opinions on using podcasts for English learning in the classroom might not be generalized. The research should be understood as a pilot research which asks for more in-depth investigation and use of further qualitative research methods such as focus group or observation. In spite of these shortcomings, we can state that podcasts represent a valuable tool in foreign language teaching as they help to improve listening comprehension and raise the interest and motivation of learners. They also encourage the expansion of listening comprehension providing authentic and interesting materials and prepare the learners for real-life listening situations.

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Some techniques for teaching business English vocabulary

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Abstract

The paper focuses on some traditional techniques for vocabulary teaching in the untraditional context of English for specific purposes – business English vocabulary teaching. Those techniques are based on the selection and presentation of collocations, synonyms, antonyms and paronyms, of words whose specialized meaning differs from their general English one, as well as of specialized words with some similarity in meaning, but also with a significant difference. Moreover, attention should be paid to their translation equivalents because learners' general professional competence is based on the correct use of the respective specialized vocabulary both in the foreign language and the mother tongue.

Keywords: *English for specific purposes (ESP), business English, vocabulary teaching and acquisition*

Introduction

Teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) is directed towards learners' immediate professional and practical needs in accordance with their specialization. Its main goal is the development of specialized communicative competence in the respective field and its integration into learners' general professional competence, which is based on the correct use of the respective specialized vocabulary both in the foreign language and the mother tongue. Hence the necessity for a combination of some techniques for increasing the efficiency of its teaching and acquisition.

The object of this analysis is the economic vocabulary in business English teaching and the techniques for increasing the efficiency of its teaching and acquisition. The main goal of the paper is to present a combination of techniques for increasing the efficiency of economic vocabulary teaching and acquisition. For the achievement of that goal, the following tasks are set: making a brief overview of the differences between teaching ESP and teaching general English; paying attention to students' insufficient specialized vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of their business English courses at university; justifying the need for a combination of different techniques for specialized vocabulary teaching, examining each and every one of them separately; outlining the role of term extractors. The most suitable approach to teaching in the particular situation can be a combination of elements of different methods and/or personal decisions of the lecturer himself/herself in the particular environment of the particular workplace in accordance with the particular learners' needs (Dimitrova-Gyuzelva 2015: 553). Hence the necessity for a combination of suitable approaches to teaching business English vocabulary in an academic context.

Most of the presented techniques are used mainly in general English vocabulary teaching and acquisition, but so far they have very rarely been applied to specialized (economic) vocabulary. The aim of the paper is to make an attempt at compensating for exactly this deficit in the theory and practice of teaching ESP. The desired effect of their cumulative application to economic vocabulary is expected to be as synergistic as it is when it comes to general English vocabulary.

Theoretical background

Differences between teaching ESP and teaching general English

Teaching ESP differs from teaching English for general purposes in that the former is directed primarily towards learners' immediate professional or academic needs. For that reason, the language

used and taught for specific purposes is more real than abstract. Emphasis is laid mainly on communicative language skills, rather than on language forms. Teaching ESP includes teaching English for professional purposes, whose goal is to facilitate a professional's communication in an international context (Garcia Laborda & Litzler 2015).

One of the different varieties of ESP is Business English. Business English lecturers realize that it is a challenge to follow and explain the new business vocabulary. Nowadays it is expected of them to develop students of economics' "soft" skills necessary for performing tasks such as participation in business communication, negotiations, meetings, giving presentations, etc. Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva lays emphasis on the contemporary necessity for developing life skills in the process of foreign language teaching. To the fulfillment of that task contribute the following activities: preparing a CV or conducting a job interview in the foreign language, conducting a discussion on a topical issue or intended to solve a problem, role games and simulations, delivering presentations showing the results of an individual or a group project, critical reading of a text and expressing an opinion on a controversial issue, etc. (Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva 2018: 62).

Students' specialized vocabulary knowledge

Konstantakis pays attention to the fact that before starting studying economic disciplines at university, students usually have no or insufficient knowledge of business English as well as of English for academic purposes (Konstantakis 2007). Before starting studying economic disciplines at the University of National and World Economy – Sofia, Bulgaria, the newly-enrolled students of Economics and Management Taught in English usually have no or insufficient knowledge of business English as well as of English for academic purposes although they have already passed an entrance exam in general English at level B2 in accordance with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Judging by these and other similar observations, it can be concluded that lexical knowledge is the main factor in understanding a specialized text as well as in successful communication in a professional environment.

Therefore, the newly-enrolled students of economics need adequate lexical knowledge in the respective field. At the University of National and World Economy – Sofia, Bulgaria, the students of Economics and Management Taught in English sit a practical final exam in business English at level C1 after they have finished their second year of studies, i.e. for the two years of studying business English, they are expected to gradually become acquainted with specialized vocabulary and relevant professional skills and to acquire the respective vocabulary both in the foreign (English) language and in the mother (mostly Bulgarian) tongue.

Methodology

The recommended combination of techniques is based on the selection and presentation, both in isolation and in context, of specialized collocations, synonyms, antonyms and paronyms, of specialized and semi-specialized words, as well as words with some similarity in meaning, but also with a significant difference. Moreover, their translation equivalents should also be in the focus of attention.

The examples presented in the paper are excerpted from the periodical press – *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, as well as from the following coursebooks in business English: *English for Business Studies*, *English for Economics in Higher Education Studies*, *Intelligent Business – Intermediate Business English*, *Intelligent Business – Upper Intermediate Business English*, *Market Leader – Upper Intermediate Business English*, *PASS Cambridge BEC Higher*, *Success with BEC Higher: The New Business English Certificates Course*. The electronic monolingual *Cambridge Dictionary*, which includes a business English section, is used.

Results and discussion

CLIL

The main goal of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is to facilitate learners' acquisition of language, culture and cognitive skills, while they are gaining knowledge in the respective specialized field, through the meaningful and highly contextualized use of the language learned, which serves as a means of teaching and acquisition of the specialized content (Ersanlı 2019). Depending on whether emphasis is laid on language teaching or on specialized content teaching, the following two versions of CLIL exist – the hard or strong one and the soft or weak one. The choice is determined by the educational policy of the respective academic institution. Teaching ESP comes closer to the soft or weak version of CLIL, which provides a perfect environment for teaching and acquisition of specialized vocabulary in a natural context.

Combinations of techniques or strategies for the introduction of unfamiliar words or phrases

According to Pavlina Stefanova, the main combinations of techniques or strategies for the introduction of unfamiliar words or phrases in general are the following: 1) discussions involving visuals – objects, photos, pictures, drawings; 2) descriptions (of actions, processes, names, etc.), definitions, comments, enumerations; 3) the use of related words, antonyms, synonyms (attention should be paid to the fact that there are no totally overlapping synonyms; differences should be explained), a morphological and word building analysis; 4) context (in order to check the understanding); 5) translation; 6) using a dictionary (Stefanova 2015: 90).

It is recommendable that the unfamiliar words or phrases are presented in context through examples or demonstrations. Visual hint is most effective. The successful lesson should show and demonstrate. To the fulfillment of that task contribute body language, mimics, gestures, eye contact as well as common knowledge (Schlepppegrell & Bowman 1986: 79).

One of the best strategies for vocabulary teaching is guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context. The fulfillment of that task requires: first, the learners to determine what part of speech the respective unfamiliar word is; and second, to look around for hints in the context, which can help them to find out its meaning (Leonardi 2009).

In foreign language teaching, it is essential for learners to acquire the meaning of lexical units when there is not always a total overlap with the meaning of the respective lexical units in the mother tongue. This discrepancy often leads to mistakes in their use in the foreign language. It is necessary for learners to acquire the contextualized meaning of the new lexical unit, rather than all its dictionary meanings (Stefanova 2015: 88).

Selection and presentation of specialized collocations

Pavlina Stefanova points out that the development of the communicative skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing is impossible without certain lexical knowledge. She also emphasizes that memorizing isolated words is insufficient because learners need “to develop habits for automatic selection of lexical units during the speech act, for inclusion of those units into the syntagm and the phrase in accordance with the rules of concordance in the respective language” (Stefanova 2015: 87).

Lexical knowledge includes the acquisition of lexical units – words, expressions, collocations, phrases. The word as a fundamental lexical unit has a complex semantic and morphological structure. It comes into the structure of the sentence through the collocation, which reflects the lexico-semantic and grammatical links between words, realized by models typical of every single language. There is not a unanimous viewpoint in scientific literature about the level to which the collocation belongs because it combines categories of different levels – lexico-semantic, morphological and syntactic one (Stefanova 2015: 87, 88).

Here are some examples of specialized collocations:

allocate resources/money – “to give a particular amount of resources/money to someone or something, so that it can be used in a particular way”

blow the whistle – “to bring something to the attention of other people in order to stop something bad from happening”

delegate responsibilities/responsibility – “to give a particular responsibility to someone else so that they do it for you”

fiddle the accounts/books/finances – “to dishonestly change a company’s accounts or financial records”

foot the bill – “to pay a bill”

go bankrupt – “to become unable to pay what you owe, and to have control of your financial matters given, by a court of law, to a person who sells your property to pay your debts”

pay money up front – “If you give someone an amount of money up front, you pay them before they do something for you.”

raise money/capital/funds – “to manage to get money to invest in a business, project, property, etc.”

run a business / a company – “to be in control of or manage a business / a company”

taking the minutes – “writing down what is said at a meeting and by whom”

To increase the efficiency of specialized collocations acquisition, lecturers of business English should select from coursebooks and the periodical press and present to students pairs or sets of specialized words which usually go together. Attention should be paid to their meanings and translation equivalents.

Selection and presentation of specialized synonyms

Here are some examples:

competitor or rival (noun) – “a person, product, company, etc. that is trying to compete with others, for example, by trying to make bigger sales in a particular market; a person, company, product, etc. competing with others for the same thing or in the same area”

cutting red tape (collocation) or reducing bureaucracy – “reducing the number of official rules and processes that seem unnecessary and cause delays; reducing the quantity of complicated rules, processes, and written work that make it hard to get something done”

deceit or fraud or scam (noun) – “dishonest or illegal methods used by a person or organization in order to get something or to make people believe that something is true when it is not; the crime of getting money by tricking or deceiving people, or a crime of this type; an illegal way of making money, usually by tricking people”

fringe benefits or perks (noun, plural) – “extra things that are given to you by your employer in addition to your pay but are not in the form of money; advantages or extra things, such as money or goods, which you are given for doing your job”

labour union or trade union (noun) – “an organization that represents the people who work in a particular industry, protects their rights, and discusses their pay and working conditions with their employers”

middleman (Pl middlemen) or intermediary (noun) – “a person who communicates or makes arrangements between two people or groups who are unwilling or unable to meet or deal directly with each other; a person or organization that makes business or financial arrangements between companies or organizations that do not deal with each other directly”

nominal value or face value or par value (noun) – “the value of a share, bond, etc. when it is made available for sale for the first time; the value or price that is shown on something such as stamps, coins, or paper money”

oil rig or oil platform (*noun*) – “a large structure with equipment for getting oil from under the ground or the sea; a large structure that carries equipment that is used to get oil from under the sea”

social security benefits or welfare benefits (*noun, plural*) – “money paid by the government to people who are ill, poor, or have no job”

tycoon or mogul (*noun*) – “a very successful business person who is rich and powerful; an important person in business who is very rich or powerful”

To increase the efficiency of specialized synonyms acquisition, lecturers of business English should select from coursebooks and the periodical press and present to students specialized words with similar meanings. Attention should be paid to the meanings and to the translation equivalents.

Selection and presentation of specialized antonyms

Here are some examples:

assets (*noun, plural*) – “things that are owned by a person, company, or organization, such as money, property, or land” VS **liabilities** (*noun, plural*) – “the amount of money that a person or organization owes”

be in the black (*collocation*) – “If a bank account is in the black, it contains some money, and if a person or business is in the black, they have money in the bank and are not in debt.” VS **be in the red** (*collocation*) – “If you or your bank account are in the red, you owe money to the bank.”

bull market (*noun*) – “a period when the price of shares and other investments are higher than usual, and many people invest because they expect to earn large profits” VS **bear market** (*noun*) – “a period during which prices in a financial market are going down and a lot of people are selling shares”

creditor (*noun*) – “a person, organization, or government that is owed money” VS **debtor** (*noun*) – “a person, country, or organization that owes money”

deposit money (into a bank account) (*collocation*) – “to put money into a bank account, especially one that pays interest” VS **withdraw money (from a bank account)** (*collocation*) – “to take money out of an account”

durable goods (*noun, plural*) – “goods that can be used for a long time and that people do not buy very often, such as televisions and cars” VS **perishable goods or perishables** (*noun, plural*) – “food products that decay quickly”

hard sell (*noun*) – “a method of selling in which the person selling tries very hard to persuade the customer to buy something” VS **soft sell** (*noun*) – “a way of trying to sell something to someone by persuading them gently that they want or need it”

retailer (*noun*) – 1) “a company that sells goods to the public in stores and on the internet, rather than to stores, other businesses, etc.”; 2) “someone who owns or manages a store or website that sells goods to the public” VS **wholesaler** (*noun*) – “a person or company that sells goods to stores or other businesses, etc. rather than to the public”

stock exchange (stock market) (*noun*) – “a place where shares are bought and sold, and the people and organizations involved in this” VS **commodity exchange (commodity market)** (*noun*) – “a place where large quantities of substances or products such as oil, metals, grain, coffee, etc., are traded”

stocks (US) or **shares** (UK) or **equities** (*noun, plural*) – “the units that the ownership of a company, fund, etc. is divided into and which can be bought by members of the public” VS **bonds** (*noun, plural*) – “amounts of money that organizations or governments borrow and promise to pay back on agreed dates with agreed amounts of interest, or the documents that contain these agreements”

To increase the efficiency of specialized antonyms acquisition, lecturers of business English should select from coursebooks and the periodical press and present to students specialized words with opposite meanings. Attention should be paid to the difference in the meanings and to the translation equivalents.

Selection and presentation of specialized paronyms

Here are some examples:

brain drain (*noun*) – “a situation in which large numbers of educated and skilled people leave their own country or area to live and work in another one where they can earn more money or conditions are better” VS **brainwashing** (*noun*) – “the process of making someone believe something by repeatedly telling them that it is true and preventing any other information from reaching them”

insure (*verb*) – 1) “to protect yourself against risk by buying insurance from a company that will provide an agreed amount of money if a particular event happens, for example if you are killed or injured or if your possessions are damaged or stolen”; 2) “to provide insurance for someone or something” VS **ensure** (*verb*) – “to make something certain to happen”

liabilities (*noun, plural*) – “the amount of money that a person or organization owes” VS **liability** (*noun*) – “legal responsibility for something”

owe (*verb*) – “to need to pay or give something to someone because they have lent money to you” VS **own** (*verb*) – “to have something that legally belongs to you”

stockholders (US) or **shareholders** (UK) (*noun, plural*) – “people or organizations that own stocks/shares in a company” VS **stakeholders** (*noun, plural*) – “employees, investors, customers, etc. who are involved in or buy from a business and have an interest in its success”

subsidiary (*noun*) – “a company that is owned and controlled by a larger company” VS **subsidy** (*noun*) – “money given by a government or an organization to reduce the cost of producing food, a product, etc. and to help to keep prices low”

unanimous (*adjective*) – 1) “If a feeling, decision, action, etc. is unanimous, everyone in a group feels it or agrees to it.”; 2) “If a group of people is unanimous, everyone agrees to something.” VS **anonymous** (*adjective*) – “made or done by someone whose name is not known or not made public”

To increase the efficiency of specialized paronyms acquisition, lecturers of business English should select from coursebooks and the periodical press and present to students specialized words with similar pronunciations, but completely different meanings. Attention should be paid to the similarity of the pronunciations, to the difference in the meanings and to the translation equivalents.

Selection and presentation of specialized and semi-specialized vocabulary

According to some of the most prominent theoreticians (Robinson 1991, Hutchinson & Waters 1987, Dudley-Evans & St John 1998), the vocabulary of ESP can be divided into three categories:

1. *Specialized vocabulary*, in which words have one meaning and are used only in the respective specialized field;

2. *Semi-specialized vocabulary*, in which words have been taken from general English, but they have acquired a new or several new meanings in the respective specialized field. In this case, words have more than one meaning, retaining their initial one and simultaneously acquiring the new ones from the specialized field;

3. *General vocabulary with high frequency in the specialized field*, in which words come from general English and retain their meaning when used in the specialized field. They are not specialized terms, but are necessary for the overall understanding of the text.

One of the challenges in teaching ESP vocabulary is teaching semi-specialized words. The acquisition of their specialized meanings is hard for learners because they already know those words in a certain way – in their general meaning. For instance, in general English *minutes* means “some of the 60 parts that an hour is divided into, consisting of 60 seconds”, whereas in business English the meaning is completely different – “the written record of what was said at a meeting”. More examples of semi-specialized vocabulary are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Different meanings of the same words in general English and in business English.

Word	General English meaning	Business English meaning
appreciate (<i>verb</i>)	“to recognize how good someone or something is and to value him, her, or it”	“to increase in value”
customs (<i>noun, plural</i>)	“ways of behaving or doing something which have existed for a long time and are considered as the usual ways”	1) “the place at an airport, port, or border where goods that people bring into a country are examined to make sure they are legal and whether any tax should be paid on them”; 2) “taxes that are paid on goods that are brought into a country”; 3) “the government department that deals with taxes on goods coming into and leaving a country”
duty (<i>noun</i>)	1) “something that you have to do because it is part of your job”; 2) “a responsibility to do something because it is legally or morally right to do it”	“a tax paid on goods that are bought or imported”
goodwill (<i>noun</i>)	“a friendly attitude in which you wish that good things happen to people”	1) “the value to a company or organization of things that cannot be directly measured, for example, its good reputation or its customers’ loyalty”; 2) “the difference between the value of a company’s assets and what profit it is expected to make in the future, which is included in the price paid when it is bought or sold”
interest (<i>noun</i>)	1) “the feeling of wanting to give your attention to something or of wanting to be involved with and to discover more about something”; 2) “an activity that you enjoy doing or a subject that you like to spend time learning about”; 3) “something that brings someone advantages or that affects someone or something”	1) “money that is charged by a bank or other financial organization for lending money”; 2) “money that you earn from keeping your money in an account in a bank or other financial organization”
liquid (<i>adjective</i>)	“in the form of a liquid”	1) “in the form of money, rather than investments or property, or able to be changed into money easily”; 2) “If a market is liquid, it is easy to buy and sell in it, and a lot of buying and selling takes place.”
maturity (<i>noun</i>)	“the quality of being older or an adult, and behaving in a reasonable way like an adult”	1) “the time when an investment or insurance product becomes ready to be paid”; 2) “a stage in the development of a market or industry when it is not new and is not likely to grow quickly in the future”

principal (<i>noun</i>)	“the person in charge of a school”	1) “an amount of money lent or borrowed, rather than the interest paid on it”; 2) “a person who has legal responsibility for what a business or organization does”
royalties (<i>noun, plural</i>)	“the people who belong to the family of a king and queen”	“payments made to writers, musicians, inventors, etc. every time something they have created or invented is bought or used by others”
welfare (<i>noun</i>)	“the general state of health or degree of success of a person, business, country, etc.”	1) “help given, especially by the state or another organization, to people who need it, especially because they are poor”; 2) “a system of payments by the government to people who are ill, poor, or have no job”

To increase the efficiency of specialized and semi-specialized vocabulary acquisition, lecturers of business English should select from coursebooks and the periodical press and present to students words with one meaning, which are used only in the respective specialized field, as well as words whose specialized meaning differs from their general English one and which are used mainly in their specialized meaning. Attention should be paid to the difference in the meanings and to the translation equivalents.

Selection and presentation of specialized words with some similarity in meaning, but also with a significant difference

Here are some examples:

customer (*noun*) – “a person or an organization that buys a product or service” VS **client** (*noun*) – “someone who receives professional services from an organization”

economic (*adjective*) – 1) “relating to trade, industry, and money”; 2) “making a profit, or likely to make a profit”; 3) “not using a lot of money, fuel, etc.” VS **economical** (*adjective*) – “not using a lot of fuel, money, space, etc.”

lay off (*phrasal verb*) – “to stop employing a worker, esp. for reasons that have nothing to do with the worker’s performance” VS **dismiss or discharge** (*verb*) – “to remove someone from their job, especially because they have done something wrong”

tax evasion (*noun*) – “illegal methods used by people or companies to reduce the tax they pay, or a particular situation where this happens” VS **tax avoidance** (*noun*) – “a legal way of reducing the amount of tax a person or company would normally pay”

taxes (*noun, plural*) – “amounts paid to the government based on a person’s income, a company’s profits, the value of goods and services, etc., or this money considered together” VS **fees** (*noun, plural*) – “amounts of money paid for particular pieces of work or for particular rights or services”

wages (*noun, plural*) – “the money earned by an employee, esp. when paid for the hours worked” VS **salary** (*noun*) – “the total amount of money that an employee is paid every year to do their job, or one of the payments they receive each month as part of this”

white-collar worker (*noun*) – “A white-collar worker works in an office, doing work that needs mental rather than physical effort.” VS **blue-collar worker** (*noun*) – “A blue-collar worker does physical work rather than mental work, and usually does not work in an office.” VS **pink-collar worker** (*noun*) – “A pink-collar worker’s job is low-paying and is traditionally done by women.”

To increase the efficiency of the acquisition of specialized words with some similarity in meaning, but also with a significant difference, lecturers of business English should select such words from

coursebooks and the periodical press and present them to students. Attention should be paid to the difference in the meanings and to the translation equivalents.

Translation

Not long ago, methodological literature recommended that foreign language teaching should be completely monolingual, i.e. learners' mother tongue should not be used in class, because it can hinder their immersion in natural foreign language environment (Hall & Cook 2012). Tang however considers that the moderate use of the mother tongue can contribute to foreign language teaching and acquisition (Tang 2002). Nevertheless, this issue remains controversial, but it can be concluded that mother tongue use should be accepted in foreign language teaching for it saves time, enhances understanding, decreases anxiety, makes the atmosphere in class positive and increases the efficiency of teaching and learning grammar and vocabulary. Research confirms that the monolingual approach is not so strongly recommended since 2000, as it was before (Sarıçoban, Tunaz & Muyan 2019). Moreover, the use of the mother tongue for the purposes of teaching ESP is even desirable nowadays.

According to Leonardi, owing to translation exercises learners can improve their skills of finding lexical equivalents in the target language. Translation exercises provide the opportunity for students to acquire vocabulary at two stages: first, they learn to make a connection between the meaning and the form of the word, and then they learn when it can be used, in what collocations, with what nuances of meaning, etc. (Leonardi 2009).

Term extractors

There are computer instruments (e.g. *TermoStat Web*¹ and *Sketch Engine*²) for term extraction from specialized texts. Those tools can be useful to linguists, lexicographers, translators, as well as students and lecturers of ESP. The main disadvantage is that the process of automatic determination of key terms is entirely based on formal criteria. For that reason, the presented results can be perceived only as potential terms. Human judgement is inevitable in determining which ones are real terms. Potential terms are determined on the basis of their frequency of use in the respective text and on the basis of their form. It is assumed that high frequency words following the typical terminological word building models (e.g. *noun + adjective; noun + noun*) are potential terms ("TermoStat Web Tutorial, Level 1"³).

Conclusion

In the paper, a brief overview of the differences between teaching ESP and teaching general English was made, attention was paid to students' insufficient specialized vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of their business English courses at university, the need for a combination of different techniques for specialized vocabulary teaching was justified, each and every one of them was examined separately, the role of term extractors was outlined. A combination of techniques for increasing the efficiency of economic vocabulary teaching and acquisition was presented.

In the focus of the suggested combination of techniques are not only the similarities and differences in the meanings of words (which often lead to students' mistakes), but also their translation equivalents because learners' general professional competence is based on the correct use of the respective specialized vocabulary both in the foreign language and the mother tongue. The desired effect of the cumulative application of the techniques for general English vocabulary teaching and acquisition, which so far have very rarely been applied to specialized vocabulary, is expected to be as synergistic when it comes to economic vocabulary as it is when it comes to general English vocabulary. A suitable object of

¹ http://termostat.ling.umontreal.ca/index.php?lang=en_CA

² <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>

³ https://linguistech.ca/TermoStat_E_TUTCERTT_I_PartI

future research on the topic would be the testing of the suggested combination of techniques, whose aim will be to confirm or to reject its efficiency.

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The applicability of English language teaching methods to other subjects

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a pilot teacher training course being delivered to teachers and teacher educators of Islamic studies subject at British Council Afghanistan. The main aim of the training course was to find out to what extent the methodologies and approaches being used to teach English language are applicable in teaching other subjects. In this research fifteen teachers and educators participated in a four-day training course. The findings show that Test-Teach-Test, Task-based Learning, Jigsaw Reading, and many other teaching methods are easily applicable in teaching Islamic studies.

Keywords: *teaching methodology, English language, applicability, other contexts, test-teach-test, task-based learning, teaching listening, teaching reading, jigsaw reading*

Introduction

In Afghanistan, classic, traditional, and deductive methods and approaches of teaching have dominated most of the educational institutions in the country. However, in the last few years all the educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities have been instructed by the ministries of Education and Higher Education to implement student-centered curriculum. From my working experience in the field, this has caused many challenges as the teachers and teacher educators have limited practical knowledge of what a student-centered lesson is and how to deliver it. This article will firstly discuss the issues regarding teaching and learning in Afghanistan and finally reports the findings of a pilot teacher training course which was delivered to Islamic Studies Teachers and Teacher Educators at British Council Afghanistan.

Theoretical background

In Afghanistan, traditional, deductive and classical methods and approaches of teaching have dominated the teaching and learning. Most of the educational institutions in the country still deliver lessons through lectures and PowerPoint presentations. There is no time for students to interact and engage with the lesson. According to ÜNVER (2014), this is causing many challenges with transferring the knowledge into practice. To overcome this issue, the ministries of Education and Higher Education in the last few years have instructed all the educational institutions to change their approach and deliver student-centered lessons at their institutions so that the students are involved in the learning process.

From my experience ^[*] of working in the field of teaching and teacher training, the instructions for changing the approach from traditional and classical methods to student-centered approach has caused many problems as every teacher has his/her own interpretation about student-centered learning. For example, some teachers assign students to self-study a complete chapter of a book during a session and then share what they learned with their classmates, whereas, some other teachers assign students to explain the lesson to their peers or groupmates without giving them an input first.

This might be due to the limited number of experts at teacher education institutions having practical knowledge of modern teaching approaches and methods as well as practical knowledge about delivering a student-centered lesson in order to demonstrate to the novice or experienced teachers how a student-centered lesson is delivered. At Afghan teacher education institutions, from my observation, almost all teaching methodology courses are delivered through lectures and presentations and there are

* Due to limited research related to the context the author is referring to his background experience.

very limited opportunities for the trainee teachers to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. For example, in a four-year English teacher education degree, there are only six to eight hours of teaching practicum in the last year of their studies. Furthermore, micro-teaching is also neglected in most of the teacher education degrees.

Limited hours of teaching practicum, learning the teaching methods through lecture and presentation, and neglecting micro-teaching in a teacher education course have caused many problems. Firstly, delivering teaching method sessions through lectures and PowerPoint slides make the trainee teachers become “consumers of theories” (Hutner et al. 2011: 151) and learn teaching methods theoretically while lack practical knowledge and experience in applying teaching methods effectively in a lesson. Secondly, there would remain “a strong inequality between theory and practice” (Korthagen et al. 2001) and this would cause that novice teachers “meet many problematic situations for which they were not sufficiently prepared” (Korthagen et al. 2001).

This four-day pilot teacher training course was developed and designed at the British Council Afghanistan to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge the Islamic Studies teachers have about teaching methodology and student-centered learning with the practical knowledge and experience. Further detail about the course is provided in the course description section of this study.

Research Question:

To what extent the teaching methodologies and approaches being used to teach English language are applicable in teaching other subjects?

Methodology

In this study, fifteen Islamic Studies teachers and teacher educators of which seven were females and eight were males participated in a four-day pilot teacher training course at British Council Afghanistan. The participants teach Islamic Studies subjects as well as English at schools, universities, and teacher training colleges. In this section, firstly I will discuss why Islamic Studies teachers and teacher Educators were selected as course participants, and secondly, the course will be discussed in detail.

1. Why Islamic Studies teachers and educators are selected as course participants?

In this course, the Islamic Studies teachers and educators were selected for two main reasons. Firstly, they had a very good level of English language as they had previously taken English language courses with the British Council Afghanistan. The participants’ English level was ranging between A2 and B1 according to CEFR. Secondly, they were all interested in growing professionally in their field.

2. Course detail:

On the first day of the course, the course participants learned how to teach reading and jigsaw reading. Each session started with a demo lesson and analysis and ended with a discussion on how the teachers can apply the teaching methods and approaches in their context. In the demo lessons, they explored the teaching methodology practically and acted as real students. In the lesson analysis part, the British Council teacher trainer analyzed the demo lesson and in the final discussion part, the teacher trainer gave the course participants the awareness of how they can adapt and apply the teaching methods they learned in teaching Islamic Studies subject.

On the second day of the course, they learned how to teach listening and the test-teach-test approach. Each session, the same as the first day, started with a demo lesson, lesson analysis, and ended with a discussion on the application of the methods and approaches in their context. On the third day of the course, the course participants learned the task-based learning approach to teaching and learning and how to give clear instruction and ICQs (Instruction Checking Questions). The task-based learning approach was introduced through a demo lesson and the teacher trainer analyzed the lesson after that. The participants were also given the awareness of how they can apply task-based learning in their context. The instruction and ICQs session gave the participants the awareness of giving clear and

short instructions and how to develop ICQs. The participants were also helped to prepare and plan for their Teaching Practice on the third day of the course.

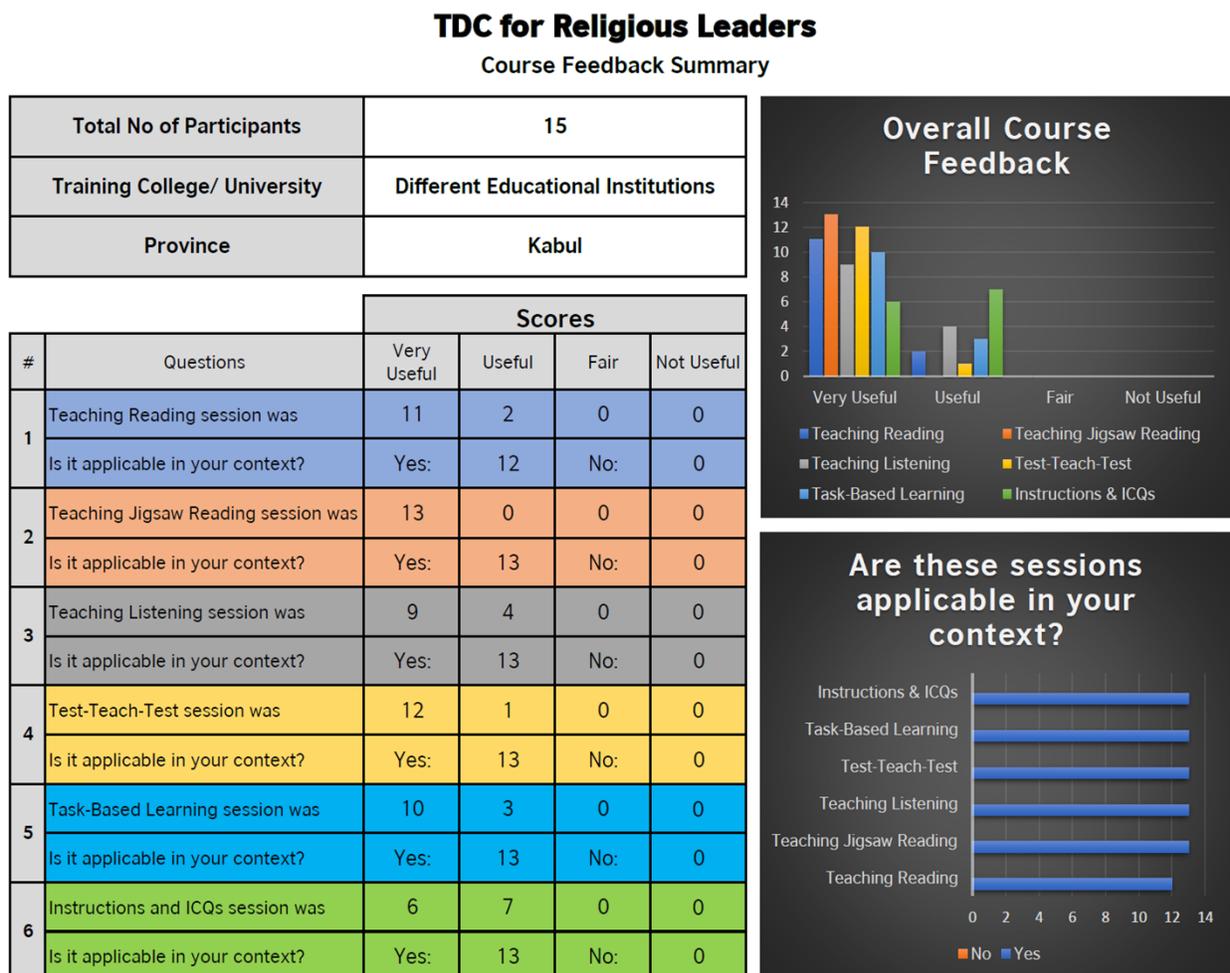
On the last day of the course, the course participants delivered demo lessons applying what they learned throughout the course in their teaching. The participants were divided in four groups and each group had to present a one complete lesson. The content of their demo lesson was Islamic Studies. By the end of the course the participants filled in a survey questionnaire in order to express their opinions to what extent the course was useful to them and applicable in their context. Three of the participants also wrote their reflections on the course which is discussed in detail in the next section of this study.

Results and discussion

The findings from the survey, observation reports of the participants’ teaching practice, and course reflections indicate that the pilot teacher training course for Islamic Studies subject teachers has been very successful.

Results of the survey questionnaire that thirteen course participants filled-in by the end of the course show that most of the teachers found the four-day pilot teacher training course very useful and a few of them useful. None of the course participants stated that the course was ‘Fair’ or ‘Not Useful’. Furthermore, all the course participants stated that the knowledge they learned throughout the course is applicable in their context (teaching Islamic studies subjects).

Figure 1: Result of the survey form by numbers and bar charts.



In addition to the survey form, the participants wrote written reflections about the course. Teacher A wrote:

I have learnt many things which I didn't have familiarity with. I think we can implement all of these methods in our teaching, and it is good for teaching in each subject like: Islamic, language, social science and another subjects.

Moreover, Teacher B stated that the "training was completely different" to him from other teacher training he has been. He also said that in the four days training he has gained "like four years of university" experience. Finally, Teacher C wrote that the training "has brought an evolution to our brains" (translated from Dari – official language of Afghanistan). He also said that "these methods having their specific stages all end to student-centered learning, making students brain active and include them in the learning process" (translated from Dari).

On the last day of the course, the participants delivered demo lessons. All the course participants were divided in three groups of four and one group of three. The first group delivered a demo lesson applying what they learned from the Teaching Reading session. The second group delivered a demo lesson applying the Jigsaw Reading lesson stages into their lesson. The third group delivered a demo lesson applying the stages of Test-Teach-Test and the last group applied Task-based Learning stages into their lessons. All demo lessons were 40 minutes and from each group two group members delivered the lesson, 20 minutes each.

All the groups displayed a high level of output and applied all the stages they learned from each session very successfully. According to the class observation notes all the lessons were very successful lessons. However, there were a few classroom management points that the teachers needed to consider. For example, the TBL group missed to confirm students' response, the teaching reading group missed to signpost the handouts, the Test-Teach-Test group was standing closer to the students who were responding to a question.

Conclusion

In Afghanistan, every teacher has his/her own perception and interpretation of student-centered learning. Some teachers ask students to stand up and explain the lesson without giving them an input first, whereas, some other teachers might assign students to self-study a complete unit/ chapter of the book and then explain for their peers or groupmates.

To familiarize Afghan teachers and teacher educators with student-centered learning, the four-days pilot teacher training course was designed and implemented at the British Council Afghanistan. The participants of this course were Islamic Studies subjects teachers and teacher educators. The pilot teacher training course helped the participants gain an awareness of how to teach a text, how to involve the learners when they give a lecture, test-teach-test, and task-based learning.

The result of the course feedback indicates that the course was very successful and useful to the participants. Almost all the participants indicated that the course was very useful to them and all of them reported that the knowledge they learned from the course is applicable in their context. Overall, the course helped the participants gain new knowledge of teaching methods.

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Part II

Facts and Opinions Concerning the Educational Role of Language

REVIEWS & REPORTS

Developing the potential of language and non-language courses, or on the significance of listening, speaking, reading and writing in education – a review of joint publication
Educational Role of Language Skills

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Having addressed the problem of language skills which, despite their importance in everyday communication, personal growth and cognitive development, are often neglected in instructed settings, the authors of the publication *Educational Role of Language Skills* (2018), Michał Daszkiewicz (University of Gdańsk), Ryszard Wenzel (University of Gdańsk) and Monika Kusiak-Pisowacka (Jagiellonian University), successfully demonstrate the fundamental role of listening, speaking, reading and writing in establishing the close connection between subjects from the curriculum as well as learners' cognition and worldview. The scholars participated in an annual international interdisciplinary conference *Educational Role of Language* organized annually since 2016 with an intention of underlining the significance of the quaternary approach to language skills, which resulted in the publication of the book under discussion. The seminal work is divided into two complementary parts. The first one consists of Introduction and two sections devoted to the presentation of recent trends in education. The second one, on the other hand, isolates four sections, each of which discusses one of four language skills in the light of Learning to (...) and (...) to Learn approaches. The book also successfully relates to two scopes of the *Educational Role of Language* (ERL) framework, Scope Major and Minor, in that it addresses the multidimensional nature of education as well as its complex socio-affective and contextual character.

In the ***Introductory section***, the authors stress the utility of axiological, psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains associated with language education in other non-language areas, arguing that inadequate language-related terminology may break the connection between language and world knowledge (Daszkiewicz et al. 2018: 21). The concept found central to the presentation of the educational role of language skills is the so-called glottodidactic paradigm, which as an interdisciplinary construct, draws from such disciplines as psychology, sociolinguistics and pedagogy (Daszkiewicz et al. 2018: 22). More importantly, however, the scholars explain that the process of diagnosing problems on the personal, or teacher- and student-related, and textual, that is language production- and reception-oriented, levels is facilitated provided that both lower and higher stages of education are organized around glottodidactic concepts.

In ***Part One***, the phenomena of learning to listen, read, speak and write are discussed from the perspective of genuine and artificial interaction. *Exempli gratia*, according to the authors, genuine reading is defined as a kind of information- and curiosity-driven performance in contrast to artificial reading, or a reading comprehension task, which, as a classroom activity, urges students to limit their interaction with a text to finding answers to comprehension questions. The introduction of the latter into classroom surroundings carries serious consequences since, firstly, the focus, for instance, on multiple choice or yes/ no questions directs readers' attention from appreciating the literary and aesthetic value of texts (Daszkiewicz et al. 2018: 55) and, secondly, any in-class activity providing learners with additional practice, owing to its artificiality, does not guarantee the acquisition of the skill in question.

Part Two, as already said, isolates four sections, each of which discusses one of four language skills. The first explores the relationship between listening and learning in the light of Learning to Listen and Listening to Learn approaches, at the same time presenting insights from sociolinguistic, cognitive and psychological perspectives. The authors point to the receptive and, therefore, misleading character of

the skill of listening which, according to many laypeople, does not entail any training. Furthermore, Daszkiewicz et al. (2018) follow an intercultural approach to listening, providing a distinction into low-context cultures, that is Western countries which emphasize the construction of clear and comprehensible messages, and high-context cultures, that is Asian and Middle East countries where speakers aim to make allowance for such aspects of communication as shared values and setting.

Section Two discusses the ability to read. Learning to Read and Reading to Learn present the skill as a part of language competence and a tool to learn content knowledge respectively. Another dimension of reading, the socio-cognitive model, is also provided, thanks to which reading is conceptualized as a cognitive ability. The scholars identify three types of knowledge, conceptual, domain and cultural, that can be activated with an objective of improving readers' comprehension of a text. They also investigate the effectiveness of such methodological approaches as CLIL and techniques as Krashen's idea of narrow reading that can be employed with a view to developing extensive and critical reading skills.

The oral productive language skill, speaking, is the subject of discussion in **Section Three**. Even though it is presented as a means of communication and learning, the authors point to the extra-curricular character of speaking practice procedures resulting from the belief that once the skill has been acquired, it does not have to be further worked on in instructed settings. Such a diminishing approach to speaking is questioned since 'learning is facilitated if subject matter is uttered by learners' (Daszkiewicz et al. 2018: 115). The authors rightly observe that the problem daunting the majority of classrooms concerns the so-called unuttered reflection, which means that learners remain silent when they face teachers' questions. They attribute their unwillingness to communicate to the cult of authorial self-expression under the influence of which not inventive or important enough utterances are not welcome (Daszkiewicz et al. 2018: 124).

In **Section Four** the presentation of the skill of writing takes place in the context of its two functions, descriptive-semantic and argumentative-poetic. This means that the two play an important role in broadening learners' knowledge and stimulating their creativity respectively so that writers can construct messages free of any paralinguistic or extra textual features. What is said to be the most effective way to measure learners' progress with respect to their skill of writing concerns precision of thinking, or, their ability to put in writing what is in their minds. Throughout the section, Daszkiewicz et al. (2018) provide ten examples of teaching points from such fields as science, civics, ethics and geology, investigating their usefulness in developing the skill of writing.

There are also two appendices attached to the publication. The first of them is of a more theoretical character since it gives an account of the ERL Association whose objective is to explore axiological, psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains in the light of the quaternary approach to language skills, society, culture and reality. Furthermore, the authors list the arguments for investigating language skills, offer solutions on how to achieve this and define the role of language in four educational domains. The second appendix, on the other hand, offers more practical insights into language skills. It provides a substantial number of research questions examining the four language skills from the perspective of a man, society, culture and reality, which demonstrates a wide applicability of the quaternary approach in various areas of human cognitive development.

Educational Role of Language Skills (2018) by Daszkiewicz, Wenzel and Kusiak-Pisowacka is a logically structured, truly comprehensive and potentially valuable seminal work accounting for the significance of the quaternary approach in education. The theoretical background to the concepts of education and language skills offered by the scholars in Introduction and **Part One** provides relevant information found central to the discussion of listening, reading, speaking and writing presented in four sections of **Part Two**. Extensive references to research studies and selected interdisciplinary investigations from the fields of didactics, sociolinguistics and socio-cultural studies not only ensure the reliability of the authors' analyses, but also show a true potential for increasing lay people's awareness of the educational role of language skills, which, as already said, have been very frequently taken for granted.

Given the apparent discrepancy between the simplistic approach towards language skills and their actual significance in education, the focus on language development, which in fact is possible via the practice of four skills and reliance on glottodidactic concepts, has not been sufficiently prioritized. Nevertheless, *Educational Role of Language Skills* stresses the significance of the quaternary approach, at the same time underlining the role of four language skills in identifying teachers' and learners' problems. Therefore, the stance towards listening, speaking, reading and writing adopted by Daszkiewicz, Wenzel and Kusiak-Pisowacka, in which they recommend the institutional treatment and systematic incorporation of language skills into syllabuses, teaching methods and assessment procedures, is fully justified given the fact that only education organized around language skills will help both learners and teachers achieve their objectives.

A virtual conference: the first of its kind for ERLA - a personal account

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ERLA Conference – Tuesday 5 May 2020

News of the fifth conference hosted by the *International Association for the Educational Role of Language* (ERLA) started filtering into my inbox in October 2019. The scope of the conference was to be ‘Learner and Teacher identity.’ This focus instantly appealed after grappling with my own issues of teacher identity following a change in role a few years ago, so I secured my place. Then the global health crisis hit. As the virus rampaged across the globe, countries went into lockdown, people were confined to home, and life went virtual.

Our movements may have been quietened by the pandemic, but our voices have certainly not; the ERLA conference was to go online. A significant date was chosen – 5 May to mark the significance of the fifth conference.

The work behind the scenes to set up a virtual conference appeared onerous, but the vision was clearly communicated – the online session was to be ‘everything which the ERL conference is not!’ That meant ideas focused, rather than research-based, short 15-minute presentations rather than long talks, and the mood to be informal. The goal was to promote the co-construction of knowledge; the reach was to be further than formal educational institutions. Clear guidelines were issued, not to be acknowledged as rules, but more as a framework for disseminating ideas. One of the key principles was to formulate the talk around two or three key ideas and ensure that the audience benefitted from a pedagogic takeaway. This slight shift in focus was exciting and empowering, allowing the move away from fixed schedules and long presentations, permitting a freer discussion and sharing of ideas. Beforehand, there was a trial run of the software to ensure connectivity and functionality. The sudden thrust into online teaching had been, for most, a steep learning curve, incorporating a multitude of different platforms and mediums; therefore, a trial run was certainly a welcome idea. A spreadsheet was emailed allowing presenters to provide a synopsis of their talk and a rough guide to the timeslot. As the conference was planned to last the entire day, this was a useful feature as, no doubt, busy academics were trying to plan around their teaching.

The day was divided into four blocks and the talks spanned a diverse portfolio of topics ranging from the more abstract (critical thinking, communication in the Covid-19 climate, gender and identity) to the more practical classroom-based (the role of language in assessing mathematics, making classes more engaging and business English vocabulary). Other talks showcased the ideas, projects and research of the presenters. The flexible format allowed participants to dip in and out to fit around other commitments.

There were several talks which aligned with my own research interests: I was delighted to listen to the Intercultural reflection on teaching, something which I focus on in my own classrooms with International learners and trainee Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) specialists. ‘Listening beyond the scope of the classroom’ appealed to my English for Academic Purposes (EAP) background.

The talk on mindfulness, cultivating calm and mindfulness in the chaos of an online environment, struck another chord with me; emotional education is an area in which I specialize and aligns strongly with my ethos of empowerment in the classroom.

Approaches to business English vocabulary teaching was a firm favorite and something which I could relate to, drawing from my own experience of the lexical issues that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) elicits. Another talk raised the idea of the multilingual classroom, particularly topical in the UK at present with an increased number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners in our schools. There has been a recent shift away from the rigid confines of the monolingual classroom, with its imperialistic overtones, and towards an appreciation of how other languages can enrich the learning environment. Multilingualism is starting to be regarded as an additive rather than a subtractive quality. Overall, the sessions were refreshing, thought-provoking and offered ample opportunity for discussion through the online chat or using the microphones.

The day ran seamlessly thanks to the organizers and culminated in a group picture showing attendees from across the globe. Social media reported that in excess of 40 participants had booked a place. In order to round off the event, feedback and evaluative comments were to be left for the contributors; this only added to the sense of collaborative learning. Praise for the format, organization and the opportunity to share so many 'fresh' ideas in a collegial environment were noted in the comments and I wholeheartedly agree. Opportunities to network and collaborate were also plentiful. Making ideas accessible and stimulating discussion seemed to have been a successful ethos which underpinned this first online event thanks to the dedication and commitment of the organizers, and the enthusiasm and passion of the participants.

I can only conclude that the virtual ERLA conference may well have been the first of its kind, but hopefully it will not be the last.

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ERL Journal – Scope Major

Key premise. **The educational role of language, reaching far beyond school(ing), is determined by multiple aspects relating to culture, methodology and/or personality.** To be suitably comprehensive, studies blending educational with linguistic studies need to comprise all these aspects.



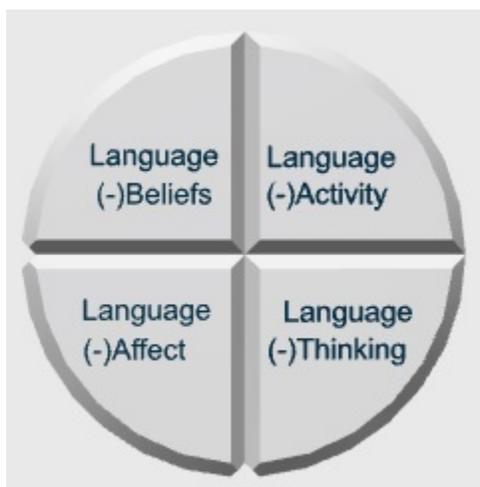
General rationale. Language lies at the heart of schooling, culture, (learning and teaching) methods, and personality – thus underlying education on the individual and on the social level. Its social existence determines its experiencing by an individual person and vice versa. Both these levels matter when it comes to learning and teaching methods as well as schooling as a whole. Socially determined and individually experienced, language shapes culture and education, and, from an individual perspective, it defines a person’s place in the world and defines the world in which a person is placed.

Specific issues. Accordingly, ERL Journal welcomes papers addressing issues such as: language of schooling, bilingual education, language identity, intercultural competence, discourse analysis, children narratives, personal constructs, language in special education, transversal skills, language mediation, academic language, elicitation, plurilingual teaching, CLIL, functions of language, etc.

Expected outcome. Systematization of knowledge concerning the educational position of language; aggregation of empirical findings pertaining to social and cultural determinants of how language serves education; development of interdisciplinary educational and linguistic studies; recognition of problems calling for research and discussion of ways of putting language theories into practice.

ERL Journal – Scope Minor

Key premise. A person's education is determined by how language operates on four levels – beliefs, activity, affect and thinking. To be maximally educational, the experiencing of language by a person comprises these four dimensions, which implies a need for their comprehensive studies.



General rationale. How language affects a person's education depends on multiple axiological, psychomotor, affective, and cognitive factors. For instance, what a person thinks of language (e.g. on whether it is worth speaking or not) and how much a person speaks determines that person's mental faculties. Conversely, how a person understands a given issue (as well as how s/he feels about it) impacts on how interesting utterances s/he produces. Hence, there exist relationships between language and all the aforementioned educational domains.

Specific issues. Accordingly, ERL Journal welcomes papers concerning issues falling within one or more of the four domains, such as: status of language in school curricula, language of textbooks, language activity of children or grown-ups, stages of language fossilization, argumentative skills, language learning styles, verbalization of knowledge, approaches to oracy, personal experiencing of language skills, language image of the world, cognitive discourse functions, language reflectivity, etc.

Expected outcome. Collection of theoretical proposals and empirical data supporting learner-oriented educational practice; exploration of the relationship between language and four educational domains; detection of factors determining learners' language identity/personality; accumulation of data providing assistance in construction of language-grounded educational systems.

ERL Journal is designated for papers on cross-disciplinary, educational and linguistic, issues. It is meant to address (I) the position of language and how it is put into practice across different schools, cultures, methods and personalities, and (II) the experiencing of language by learners in terms of their language beliefs, activity, affect and cognition. ERL Journal includes theoretical and empirical papers, presenting qualitative and quantitative approaches. Resting on the overarching premise of language shaping our reality and education (assignment of meanings to the world and subject matter learnt), it ultimately aims to unravel this process and to boost the position of language in education.

ERL Journal is international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, and double-blinded.

It is open access and follows free-of-charge policy for authors.

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