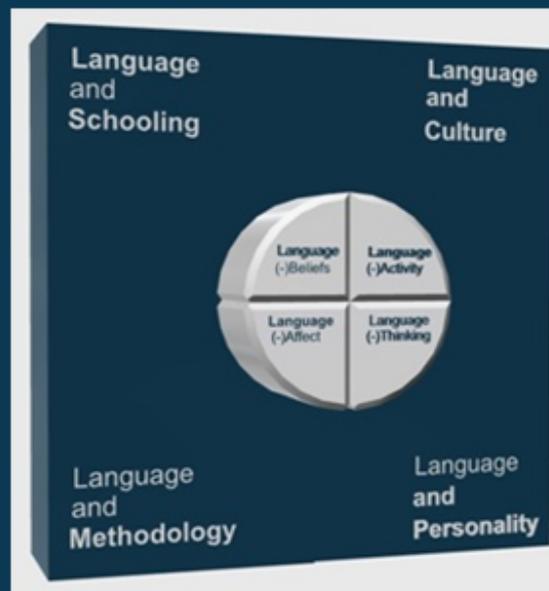


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COVID-19 – A SOURCE OF THREATS OR OPPORTUNITIES FOR LINGUISTIC EDUCATION?

Volume Editors: Michał Daszkiewicz, Dragana Božić Lenard



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INTRODUCTION

Has the pandemic been a blessing or a curse for linguistic education?

The pandemic has undoubtedly reshaped the way we now perceive education. It has imposed a need to pursue new ways of learning and teaching, novel (online) educational trajectories, and – maybe most significantly – radically different forms of how we now communicate “at schools” and use our language(s). What is particularly crucial to ERL Journal, though, it can be argued to have had its silver lining in that it **has brought closer the two “worlds” of linguistic and educational specialists**. The former have come to view their reality in pedagogical terms as they were forced to struggle for contact with their students online and to think of ways in which their interlocutors can best be prompted and turn on their cameras and actively participate in lessons kept remotely. The latter, on the other hand have been – consciously or not – caused to reflect on issues to do with language, be it the gap between language reception and production, elicitation techniques, intralanguage, etc. Hence, the educational world of the two groups in question has substantially changed and been enriched with conceptual and didactic categories which are bound to be of use following the pandemic.

Thinking of the impact of the pandemic even more specifically, we observe that it has generated a wide range of **questions intersecting pedagogy and linguistics**. Many of these questions which have been posed by students themselves and they prove to encompass all the educational (ERL) domains – be it their reflection along the lines *What’s the point of speaking (if I can just be quiet)* (language(-)beliefs), *How to present in words what my school friends cannot see offline?* (language(-)activity), *How do the others think about the way I say things online?* (language(-)affect), or *Can be learn all the subjects just by discussing them through the net?* (language(-)thinking). Reflection on these issues has possibly raised the students’ language awareness, especially if their teachers have happened to render such questions and the issues they address explicit in particular classroom contexts. This being the case, we can observe here room for inevitable emergence and amplification of interdisciplinary linguistic identity across and within all school subjects and disciplines. What follows is that the remote education triggered by COVID-19 can be viewed as an opportunity to develop and extend students’ awareness of their linguistic identity on the axiological, psychomotor, affective, and cognitive strata.

Having exerted far-reaching impact on the entire educational world, **the pandemic has taken its toll on the ERL Framework and ERL Journal itself** just as well. With the ERL (live) Conferences having been put on hold till international gatherings cease to pose any threat to the participants, ERL (online) Sessions have been held, which yielded in due course some of the papers included in this volume. Prior to its publication ERL Association has hosted four online sessions. the last two of them took place in spring 2021 and concerned, respectively, threats and opportunities generated by COVID-19 for linguistic education (the very same title as that of this very volume) and linguistic well-being (which, in turn, is going to constitute the essence of Volume 6 to be published later this year). Although all four ERL Sessions attracted participants from multiple places in the world (and to enable this, each session was scheduled for two days, with the first one being more convenient for European academics, and the other – for those joining from the other hemisphere), most of the attendees reported on their struggle with teaching dominated throughout the pandemic by long hours of online classes and excessive computer work, which has made them less willing or less able to do research and produce as many scholarly papers as they had done prior to the times of the pandemic.

And yet, we have managed to compile this volume, which, despite being shorter than all the four published earlier, partially reflects the course taken by ERL Framework. It strives, as the title implies, to **seek balance between the negative and positive effects of the pandemic** and reflects a host of issues that COVID-19 has caused us to face on the level of language in education. On the whole, all

the texts included in it jointly serve two functions: first, they emphasise the salience of the pedagogical component brought to the fore by the pandemic as noted above, and, second, they outline selected issues appearing relevant to linguistic education at the times when education comes to rest of modern technology and nearly solely online communication. At the same time, we view the set of papers and reports included here as a natural continuation of the eponymous issue of the previous ERL Journal's volume – *(Re-)Shaping One's Identity with Language*, with the pandemic imposing on all academics, teachers, linguists, and students a need to redefines themselves on the educational level and to start using the language(s) they know well in novel ways – through a channel they had not exploited earlier for these purposes, and by the form of Internet interaction which forces them to overcome various barriers they had had, not only technical, but also interpersonal, methodological, pedagogical, and/or linguistic.

M. Daszkiewicz

Pedagogical uses of writing to support well-being: lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Writing, as a technology for language, is an essential skill for learning at all levels of education. But research also reveals that the experience of writing-in-the-moment can have a significant impact on the writer's sense of self and well-being. Especially in view of the dramatic upheavals in schools caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, educators should examine the uses of writing as a means to foster well-being in students. Ungraded informal writing can support student learning at the same time that it can contribute to their well-being.

Keywords: *writing, language, pedagogy, well-being*

Introduction

In the United States, and in many other nations as well, fostering well-being is typically not an explicit goal of school-sponsored language instruction in general or, in particular, of instruction in written language. In nations where English is not the native language, the goals of English language learning generally focus on practical, economic, and cultural considerations and are informed by the widespread use of English as a “global” language (Aljohani 2016: 442). UNESCO (2019) promotes “multilingual education as a means to improve learning outcomes and give life to cultural diversity”; emphasizes “the importance of language of instruction for a quality and equitable education,” which places value on academic success and inclusiveness (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2021); and advocates the use of language instruction to support cultural awareness and diversity and to preserve indigenous languages and cultures (Robinson and Hogan-Brun 2013).

In the U.S., instruction in reading and writing English is generally understood to be essential for learning in general and for effective functioning in society, especially the workplace. In other words, the main purposes of English language instruction are to facilitate learning in other academic subjects and, ultimately, prepare students for employment. Similarly, in postsecondary education in the U.S., required introductory writing classes have long been seen as service courses whose primary purpose is to prepare students for success in the general academic curriculum and in their major programs of study. According to *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (2011: 2), “The ability to write well is basic to student success in college and beyond”; moreover, “teaching writing and learning to write are central to education and to the development of a literate citizenry.” Although well-being has become an important consideration among some educators in recent years (Harward 2016, Henning et al. 2019, Putwain 2019), it has not been widely emphasized as an explicit and central goal of schooling or language instruction.

However, the terrible disruptions to education that have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 have made it clear that well-being must be a primary consideration when it comes to formal schooling. The impact of the pandemic on students’ academic achievement, mental health, financial security, and physical health has been severe and alarming (Ihm et al. 2021, Son et al. 2020). Available evidence indicates that the pandemic’s toll on students’ overall well-being has adversely affected their learning and educational outcomes in general (Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021, Salmi 2020). In other words, the pandemic has dramatically illuminated what many educators already knew: that well-being and academic success go hand-in-hand.

In the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry at the State University of New York at Albany (USA), my colleagues and I have gained considerable insight during the pandemic into the importance of well-being in our efforts to teach writing effectively to undergraduate students. In March 2020, our

campus was closed because of the rapid spread of the coronavirus in New York, and our 14,000 undergraduate students were suddenly required to leave campus and continue their education remotely, using online technologies. Like students throughout the world, our students suffered significant emotional, financial, and physical hardships as a result of the pandemic, which adversely affected their overall academic achievement. In this context, our efforts to promote our students' learning increasingly focused on supporting their well-being.

In light of these circumstances and a growing body of research that highlights the importance of well-being in academic achievement (Collins 2018, Harvard 2016, Henning et al. 2019, Putwain 2019), I propose that school-sponsored writing instruction can and should be as much about fostering well-being as it is about developing communicative and literate competence. These goals are not mutually exclusive. Academic skill need not be sacrificed for well-being. In fact, there is evidence that fostering well-being can enhance academic achievement and, specifically, the development of writing competence (Adler 2016, Bücken et al. 2018, Gräbel 2017, Yu et al. 2018). The focus of this paper is on how educators can do both: support students' well-being and at the same time help students develop competence in written language.

To advance the proposition that writing instruction should focus on well-being, I will argue that the *experience* of writing-in-the-moment—that is, the writer's experience during an act of writing—has a significant and potentially transformative impact on the writer's sense of self and well-being. To support that claim, I will review relevant research on writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and writing therapy, which collectively illuminates the importance of the writer's experience at the moment of composing a text; this research also illuminates the potential benefits of writing without a rhetorical exigency—that is, writing in which the goal is *not* to produce a text to be shared. Identifying the implications of this research is essential to understanding why the *experience* of an act of writing—as distinct from the *text* that is produced as a result of that act—matters. It is this experience that is the key to fostering well-being through writing. On the basis of this analysis, I will describe several pedagogical strategies that can help foster student well-being at the same time that they support the development of writing competence.

Understanding the experience of writing

Writing is a technology for language (Ong 1982) that is typically understood as both a communicative act (Nystrand 1989) and a sociocognitive process (Flower 1994). In other words, writing as it is taught and practiced in mainstream schooling in the U.S. and elsewhere is understood primarily in cognitive, social, and linguistic terms. But it can also be understood in ontological terms. That is, because “language is implicated in our very sense of ourselves as beings in the world,” writing, as a technology for language, can be understood as an “act of being . . . [with] great power to shape our very experience of ourselves and the world around us” (Yagelski 2011: 144). This conception of writing illuminates the significance of the *experience* of an act of writing-in-the-moment and its capacity to shape the writer's sense of self in relation to the wider world. The potential impact of an act of writing on the writer's sense of self thus lies in the experience of writing-in-the-moment rather than in the text that is produced as a result of that act of writing.

In pursuing this line of inquiry, it is important to distinguish between writing as a process of producing a text and the experience of writing-in-the-moment (Yagelski 2009: 9). The focus of most conventional writing instruction is on the text. In other words, what matters about an act of writing in school is the nature and quality of the text that is produced as a result of that act. But as I will show in this paper, there is compelling empirical evidence that the *experience* of producing that text also matters. The findings of studies in three distinct but related areas of research provide insight into the importance of this experience of writing-in-the-moment: writing apprehension, writing self-efficacy, and therapeutic uses of writing. Here I review the main findings from these bodies of research and examine the implications of these findings for understanding the impact of the experience of writing on the writer's sense of self and well-being.

First, studies of writing anxiety, or writing apprehension, suggest that there is an important connection between a writer's perceptions of competence and the writer's self-esteem. In thirteen

separate studies of writing apprehension, Daly and Wilson (1983: 333) found, “There is a statistically meaningful and inverse association between writing apprehension and the way people feel about themselves.” In other words, people with lower self-esteem tend to have higher levels of anxiety about their writing. These findings were consistent across different groups of participants: college students, teachers, and government office workers. According to Daly and Wilson (1983: 329) the inverse relationship between writing apprehension and self-esteem has to do with the connection between writing and the writer’s sense of self, which can affect—and, in turn, be affected by—a specific writing performance: “Self-esteem may be conceived to be a function of the social responses of others to the individual’s presentation of self. The act of writing with its highly intentional nature and required effort is sometimes directly, and almost always indirectly, an exposure of self to others. In most cases, writing is accompanied by either actual or implied evaluations from others. This exposure and evaluation may be reflected, over time, in inferences by the writer of self-worth.” In a later study, Daly (1985) concludes, “How one writes—indeed, whether one writes—is dependent on more than just skill or competence. The individual must also want to write or, at the very least, must also find some value in the activity. An individual’s attitude about writing is just as basic to successful writing as are his or her writing skills.” More recent studies of writing apprehension reinforce these findings. For example, in a study of the “binge writing” habits of scholars, Hjortshoj (2001: 119) notes that writers “link the activity of writing with strong physical and even biochemical sensations rooted habitually in past experiences.”

What is noteworthy about these findings is the apparently significant relationships among the writer’s engagement in an act of writing, the writer’s emotional state, and the writer’s sense of self-worth or self-esteem. These studies provide evidence that the experience of writing-in-the-moment encompasses affective dimensions, including emotions associated with specific memories of past experiences, that might play a significant role in an act of writing.

The second body of research that helps illuminate the importance of the experience of writing is research on writing self-efficacy. A great deal of research in education has shown that self-efficacy is correlated with academic performance (Bandura 1997, Chemers et al. 2001, Pajares and Miller 1994, Zajacova et al. 2005). That correlation is especially strong when it comes to writing (Klassen 2002, Pajares 2003). In a review of sixteen studies of writing self-efficacy among adolescent students, Klassen (2002: 173) notes, “Self-perceptions of the capability to perform specific tasks strongly influence one’s engagement in and successful completion of a task. This is no truer than in the domain of written expression.” On the basis of this review, Klassen (2002: 185) concludes, “Of the motivational variables assessed [in these studies], perceived self-efficacy was usually found to be the strongest or among the strongest predictors of writing competence.” In reviewing research on self-efficacy and writing, Pajares (2007: 239) drew similar conclusions: “Research findings have consistently shown that writing self-efficacy beliefs and writing performances are related.” In an extensive review of research that includes studies of college and adult writers, Pajares (2003: 145) concludes, “In general, results reveal that writing self-efficacy makes an independent contribution to the prediction of writing outcomes and plays the mediational role that social cognitive theorists hypothesize. This is the case even when powerful covariates such as writing aptitude or previous writing performance are included in statistical models.” Significantly, Pajares (2003: 140) points specifically to the relationship between writing self-efficacy and the student’s broader sense of self-worth: “Confident students are . . . likely to feel less apprehensive and have stronger feelings of self-worth about their writing.” In other words, students’ perceptions of their competence as writers are connected to their overall sense of self-worth.

Studies of writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy provide strong evidence that writers’ perceptions of their own competence and general self-worth can influence their writing performances. We might reasonably hypothesize from these findings that a one’s feelings about and perceptions of one’s own competence as a writer and as a person might also play a significant role in one’s experience of writing-in-the-moment, which in turn might affect that person’s sense of self and well-being. In other words, these studies suggest broadly that a writer’s sense of self is integral to the experience of writing.

This claim is reinforced by the large body of research on the therapeutic uses of writing, which provides intriguing insight into the potentially powerful impact of the experience of writing without a rhetorical exigency—that is, writing without the goal of producing a text to be shared. In the 1980s, psychologist James Pennebaker and his team investigated the effects of writing about traumatic experiences and concluded that writing about such experiences was associated with “long-term decreases in health problems” (Pennebaker and Beall 1986: 280). These researchers added that in investigating the effects of writing about trauma, “we seem to have provided some subjects with a new strategy for coping with both traumatic and significant daily events. . . . [Some subjects] had begun writing about their experiences on their own after having participated in the experiment” (Pennebaker and Beall, 1986: 280). One participant in the original study later told the researchers, “It helped to write things out when I was tense, so now when I’m worried I sit and write it out . . . later I feel better” (Pennebaker and Beall, 1986: 279). In other words, the experience of writing contributed to the participants’ sense of well-being. Summing up this research on what is now termed “expressive writing,” Pennebaker and Evans (2014: 1) state, “Writing is a potentially effective method to deal with traumas or other emotional upheavals. . . . to bring about healing [and] . . . can positively affect one’s sleep habits, work efficiency, and connections to others.” Subsequently, numerous studies have reinforced Pennebaker and Beall’s (1986) original conclusions about the therapeutic impact of expressive writing in a wide range of contexts. For example, studies have found that expressive writing reduced depression in college students (Gortner, Rude, and Pennebaker, 2006), contributed to improved grade point averages among college students (Lumley and Provenzano, 2003), improved symptoms in patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Sloan and Marx 2004), and had a variety of medical and physiological benefits (Booth, Petrie, and Pennebaker 1997, Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, R. 1988, Petrie et al. 1995).

What is especially significant about these studies of “expressive writing” is that the writing that was done in these in various therapeutic settings did *not* involve the production of a text to be read by others. The participants in these studies were writing only for themselves and without regard to the nature or quality of the texts they were producing; as writers, they were essentially freed from rhetorical considerations. The texts they produced did not really matter. What mattered was the *experience* they had in writing those texts.

Recent neuroscience research seems to underscore the significance of the experience of writing-in-the-moment. Erhard et al. (2014) used sophisticated imagining equipment to map in real time the brain activity of writers engaged in various writing tasks. Their findings indicate that writing activates numerous areas of the brain associated with language, speech production, and motor control. Most intriguing is the finding that one of the tasks given to participants, “brainstorming” ideas for a story, activated an area of the brain known to be associated with “the integration of interoceptive information and emotional experience” (Erhard et al. 2014: 22). Interoception is a sensory process involving numerous neural pathways related to one’s bodily state and includes physiological sensations, such as hunger, as well as emotional states, such as anger or sadness. The researchers also noted that expert writers in their study seemed to experience a kind of “flow” while composing, “executing many decisions, strategies, relevant and well-learned skills (e.g., writing performance, language skills, sentence construction), and attaining domain-specific goals (e.g., characteristics of literary genres, engaging the readers’ interest) in an automatic, unconscious and intuitive way” (p. 21). Previous research on this phenomenon (Dietrich 2004: 746) suggests that “a necessary prerequisite to the experience of flow is a state of transient hypofrontality that enables the temporary suppression of the analytical and meta-conscious capacities of the explicit system.” Such a conclusion suggests that experienced writers temporarily ignore rhetorical considerations. It would seem, then, that removing the rhetorical exigency from an act of writing, even if only temporarily, might enable a writer to experience writing-in-the-moment without the anxiety that Daly (1985) described and perhaps engages the writer’s consciousness in a deeper, more profound way.

These bodies of research provide compelling evidence that an act of writing can have a powerful impact on the writer’s emotional, psychological, and even physical well-being. They suggest that the *experience* of writing-in-the-moment matters when it comes to how student writers perceive and

feel about themselves and their state of being. However, school-sponsored writing instruction is concerned primarily with the development of communicative competence, which tends to be defined in terms of the quality of the text produced. In other words, in conventional schooling, students are taught to produce certain kinds of texts; value is placed on the nature and quality of those texts. The *experience* of writing is essentially ignored. But as noted earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically reminded us that we should *not* ignore that experience.

Teaching college writing during a pandemic

Time and again during the pandemic, the students enrolled in first-year writing courses at the State University of New York at Albany revealed that writing helped them cope with the fears and anxieties they were experiencing. These pandemic-related fears and anxieties extended beyond the typical challenges facing first-year college students in the U.S., such as financial pressures (Britt et al. 2017), inadequate preparedness for college-level academic work (ACT 2017), and social adjustment problems (Bowman 2010). In addition, the undergraduate student population at the State University of New York at Albany includes significant percentages of students with characteristics that place them at greater risk of academic failure. For example, more than 40% of our undergraduate students come from households whose annual income is below the national medium, nearly a third are first-generation college students, and approximately 42% are under-represented minorities. All these characteristics have been shown to be risk factors for academic failure (DeAngelo et al. 2011). In many cases, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges.

In March of 2020, with approximately eight weeks remaining in the spring semester, all students at the State University of New York at Albany were required to leave the campus in accordance with the state's COVID-19 safety protocols. As a result, all classes were moved from the classroom to online for the remainder of the semester. Many students returned home to circumstances that made online learning difficult, if not impossible: lack of access to wi-fi, lack of appropriate technology for online learning (such as laptop computers), lack of private space for studying and attending classes online, increased anxiety about school. In addition, many students faced serious family crises, such as severe illness and sometimes death because of COVID-19, loss of employment, and even homelessness. For all undergraduates, most of whom had little or no prior experience with online instruction, these developments were difficult, but the challenges were especially daunting for first-year students, who were still adjusting to college academic work and social life. It is fair to say that for most of our students, the last few weeks of spring semester in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic worsened, were perhaps the most difficult and stressful weeks of their young lives.

Faculty in the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry at the State University of New York at Albany worked hard to support students as they confronted these unprecedented challenges. For example, faculty relaxed deadlines and revised the requirements in their writing courses to give students more time and flexibility to complete the required work; they adjusted their online presence (via Zoom and similar platforms) to accommodate students' schedules; and they provided personal mentoring and advice for individual students who faced serious psychological, financial, or health problems. Many faculty also made use of various writing activities to help students express their concerns, explore their anxieties, and share their feelings. In employing these activities, these faculty found that low-stakes, informal writing helped students make sense of their experiences and contributed to their sense of well-being, even as these activities gave students additional opportunities to strengthen their written language skills.

Under the circumstances, this function of writing—to support students' well-being—was arguably even more important than the specific academic and language skills that the students were expected to develop in their first-year writing classes. Our experiences in the spring of 2020 and during the following academic year (September 2020 through May 2021) suggest that conventional writing instruction can and should be configured to emphasize students' well-being as much as it emphasizes the development of writing competence. In other words, fostering well-being should be a primary goal of writing instruction.

Although this paper is not directly concerned with defining and analyzing well-being as a construct, it is necessary to note that well-being is a complex and multifaceted concept (NIRSA 2020), which has varied definitions within different academic disciplines, including public health (Marks and Shah 2004), anthropology (Mathews and Izquierdo 2010), economics (Graham 2011, OECD 2013) and psychology (Dodge et al. 2012). As Collins (2018: 4) points out, well-being encompasses mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions; it “is not a straightforward goal” but rather “a by-product of the pursuit of purpose and striving toward a meaningful life.” Collins (2018: 6) asserts that “well-being is about helping students to grow in their ability to lead socially meaningful and productive lives”; in particular, he argues that writing can be a “resource for well-being,” an analytical tool that students can use “to ground themselves in their worlds and an inventive strategy capable of reconfiguring their worlds.” In this formulation, writing becomes a form of inquiry used “to create and sustain identity and community through purpose and meaning” (Collins 2018: 6). Collins (2018: 6) advocates teaching writing as a way to help students “increas[e] the capacity for key elements of well-being, including curiosity, creativity, resilience, agency, and hope.” In this regard, Collins (2018) provides a rationale for identifying well-being as a central goal of writing instruction.

Our experience in the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry at the State University of New York at Albany reinforces Collins’s (2018) view of writing as a resource for well-being. As noted earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic had a variety of negative impacts on our students during the spring semester of 2020. These impacts continued into the fall semester 2020 (September through December), when more than 70% of our courses were taught online and the university implemented various safety measures, including closing many campus facilities and reducing the number of students living in campus dormitories. These measures meant that many students took most or all of their courses online, even if they were living on campus, which potentially increased their sense of isolation and anxiety. Results from a survey of undergraduate and graduate students conducted by the campus health services near the end of fall semester revealed that 48% of students reported feeling anxious “occasionally” or “most of the time” because of the pandemic; in addition, 42.3% reported feeling lonely occasionally or most of the time, 33.9% reported having trouble sleeping occasionally or most of the time, and 32.3% reported feeling depressed occasionally or most of the time (Center for Behavioral Health and Applied Research 2020: 11). Meanwhile, students were also confronting the effects of the pandemic in their lives outside of school. As of December 2020, 18.3% of students surveyed reported that a family member had contracted COVID-19, and 4.7% reported that a family member had died from the disease (Center for Behavioral Health and Applied Research 2020: 7). Responses to open-ended questions in the survey indicated that students perceived *family concerns* to be the greatest stressor in their lives as a result of the pandemic (Center for Behavioral Health and Applied Research 2020: 12).

These problems were clearly evident among the first-year students who were enrolled in the required first-year courses taught in the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry. The transition from secondary school to college is often difficult for first-year students, but the circumstances created by the pandemic meant that many of the informal and formal support systems that help these students succeed in making this transition were either unavailable or inconvenient. For example, students studying remotely from their homes did not have access to the informal mentoring by more experienced students with whom they might otherwise be living in their dormitories; similarly, faculty teaching remotely were not available in their offices for informal consultations with students who might be having difficulties in their classes or in adjusting to the social life of the university, which was itself adversely affected by the pandemic. Not surprisingly, data from fall semester 2020 indicate that high percentages of students enrolled in the required first-year writing course did not succeed in the course. 13.7% of the 994 students enrolled in the course did not earn a passing grade and thus did not fulfill the curriculum requirement; an additional 4.3% withdrew from the course, also without fulfilling the requirement. In other words, nearly one in five students enrolled in the course were unsuccessful in fall semester 2020. These figures represent the highest percentages in eight years of collecting such data in our program; previously, the percentage of students who failed

to earn a passing grade never exceeded 10.0%, and the percentage of students who withdrew from the course exceeded 4.0% only once.

Faculty in the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry reported that this high rate of failure in the required writing course could be blamed on factors related specifically to the pandemic. In an end-of-semester survey, which was completed by 18 of the 22 full-time faculty, the respondents reported that the main factor in their students' failure to earn a passing grade in the course was "mental health difficulties." One respondent commented, "I was struck by how many of my students who struggled to succeed were dealing with compounded issues—COVID, technology problems, family, work, etc." These survey results point to the link between student well-being and academic achievement. For the faculty in the Program in Writing and Critical Inquiry, these developments reinforced the view that teaching writing effectively involves much more than helping students develop skill with the written language. Indeed, the experience of teaching during the pandemic provides compelling evidence that writing instruction should emphasize the use of writing as what Collins (2018) terms "a resource for well-being."

Strategies for teaching writing for well-being and competence

What would that look like in pedagogical terms? The remainder of this paper is devoted to a description of two strategies designed explicitly to foster well-being and at the same time support the development of language fluency and writing competence. These strategies rely on the use of ungraded, informal writing to engage students in in-depth inquiry into their own experiences, ideas, feelings, and questions—inquiry that is consistent with Collins's (2018: 6) definition of writing as a form of inquiry "to create and sustain identity and community through purpose and meaning." These strategies were developed for college writing courses, but they could be adapted to any kind of course or subject matter. They rest on the principle that students can benefit from engaging in substantive writing activities about meaningful subjects *if they are temporarily relieved of the burden of earning a grade for their writing or having their writing evaluated for quality*. As Daly and Wilson (1983: 329) note, writing is "an exposure of self to others" that in most cases "is accompanied by either actual or implied evaluations from others." Temporarily removing evaluation from the process reduces the anxiety associated with this self-exposure and enables students to focus on exploring their ideas and feelings without worrying about language conventions, clarity of prose, or correctness. At the same time, freed from these worries about the quality of their prose, students can gain experience in using writing to explore complex and charged subject matter; as a result, they can develop greater fluency in the written expression of complicated ideas. Most important, this kind of ungraded writing can allow students to express their concerns, examine their emotions, and claim a sense of agency in the face of trying circumstances, such as what our students faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both strategies described here address these goals.

The first strategy is **impromptu, informal written responses** to specific questions, problems, or ideas that emerge in class. These written responses are intended to be exploratory and flexible; students respond to a prompt provided by the teacher, but they are also encouraged to write about related subjects and follow their own thinking where it leads them. For example, imagine an intense class discussion of a controversial topic such as freedom of speech, during which students exchange strong and sometimes opposing opinions. At a certain point in the discussion, the instructor might pause and ask the students to collect their thoughts in writing. The instructor might provide a specific question for students to respond to (for example, What ethical responsibilities does freedom of speech place on us?) or ask them to articulate their points of view about a particular issue or question that came up in the discussion; the instructor might also invite students simply to write about their feelings at that moment in the discussion or about their own experiences related to the subject. At that point, the students write silently for several minutes, focusing attention on whatever it is they are writing. They might write in a notebook, on a laptop or phone, or in any online interface, such as GoogleDocs or Blackboard. The writing they do for this exercise is not collected or graded, and it might not even be shared. The instructor might invite volunteers to read or talk about what they have just written, or the discussion might simply continue without the students necessarily

sharing what they wrote. Either way, the exercise enables students to focus attention on their ideas, opinions, questions, or feelings at that moment; moreover, through this informal writing the students can explore those ideas, opinions, questions, or feelings in depth without worrying about making mistakes in their prose or being evaluated on the basis of the quality of that prose. Freed from rhetorical exigency, they are able to become absorbed in the act of writing itself. Afterwards, they can reflect on what they have written to identify any insights they might have gained or to pose further questions about the subject of the discussion—or about themselves. Such reflection, which might be guided by the instructor, can lead to a stronger sense of agency and even self-esteem, because it can validate the students' thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism or evaluation. It is also a form of intellectual inquiry into the subject matter itself. In this way, this strategy not only provides an opportunity for students to strengthen their sense of self-efficacy as writers and learners, but also gives them practice in writing about complicated subjects in order to gain a greater understanding of those subjects.

The second strategy is called **reflective or mindful writing**. In this activity, students are invited to reflect, in writing, on their own experiences, examine their thoughts about an important question or idea, or explore feelings they might be having—about themselves, their academic work, happenings in the world around them, or anything else that is significant in their lives. For example, in my courses, I begin each class meeting with 5 or 6 minutes of this kind of reflective writing, and I often end class meetings the same way. Usually, I give the students a prompt to respond to (for example, What is the main challenge you are facing right now as a college student? Or, How is the pandemic affecting your studies?), but I also invite them to write about anything that is on their minds. The students do this writing silently in a digital interface (Blackboard), which enables me to verify that they have done the writing. But the writing itself is not graded, nor is it shared with anyone else. The students know that their writing for this activity is private, but they can share it with their classmates if they wish. The purpose of this reflective writing is to enable students to focus attention on important ideas or feelings and explore those ideas or feelings and what they might mean—without worrying about a grade and without worrying about the quality of the prose they are writing. Like impromptu response writing, reflective writing can contribute to students' sense of agency and thus strengthen their self-efficacy. But it can also lead to important insights about themselves and their lives.

For example, one student in my course, Camille, struggled to adjust to the rigors of college-level writing. Although she was a diligent student, she was also a first-generation college student from a low-income family whose single mother worked several jobs to support Camille and her two younger sisters. Throughout the semester that she was enrolled in my class, Camille wrestled with guilt about her mother and doubt about her ability to succeed in college. She often wrote about these feelings for the mindful writing exercises. Early in the semester, for example, she wrote, "I never saw myself as being a college dropout. [But] right now, I see myself doing less than I expected myself to and that really upsets me because I am really trying to be the best and do the very best, but I've learned that in college that could only get you so far." These doubts continued for much of the semester, and Camille used the mindful writing exercises to try to make sense of her feelings. As she wrote about her concerns, she began to develop a more nuanced understanding of her situation and a greater appreciation for her mother and for herself. Late in the semester, for example, she reflected on one of the formal essays she had written for the course, which was about the challenges facing students from single-parent households: "The essay I wrote for this class has a lot of meaning to me. I am trying my best to convey the feelings I've had towards my experience with my mom, but do words even exist to describe such a thing? When I am writing, I feel like I am not doing enough, or not giving the experience enough credit for the effect it has had on my life. Not only has this experience changed me as a person, but it changed how I saw the things around me as well." This excerpt illustrates the genuine, in-depth inquiry into her own experiences that Camille was engaged in through her writing. And at the end of the semester she wrote, "I think that the most valuable thing I learned in this course is to believe in myself." That belief in herself included a more sophisticated understanding of the challenges she faced in her young life and her own resiliency in trying to

overcome those challenges. In this sense, in addition to developing greater competence as a writer, she also gained genuine insight into herself as a human being.

Faculty in the writing program at the State University of New York at Albany have found that students appreciate these strategies as a way to make sense of the challenges that they are facing as students and as human beings at a moment of significant transition in their lives; moreover, these strategies have three main benefits with respect to the development of writing competence:

- 1) They promote fluency in writing through regular and sustained practice.
- 2) They reduce anxiety about writing by temporarily removing evaluation from the process, which can help them develop greater writing self-efficacy.
- 3) They help students gain insight into the uses of writing to support in-depth inquiry into important and meaningful subjects.

In this regard, incorporating ungraded informal writing into a course does not compromise the effort to achieve the conventional learning goals related to developing competence on written language. Quite the contrary: reducing students' anxiety and giving them experiences with writing that they themselves value can lead to enhanced skill development, as the research cited earlier suggests.

Most important, embracing well-being as an explicit goal of school-based writing instruction humanizes the classroom and helps make schooling more directly relevant to the complex challenges of living, whether in the context of an unprecedented crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic or less dramatic but nevertheless significant routine social, emotional, or financial challenges. I was reminded of this need to humanize education by a comment from a student that one of my colleagues shared with me at the end of the semester in May of 2020. When the pandemic forced the closing of our campus and required us to suddenly move all our classes online, this student, who was from Malaysia, was required to quarantine alone in the U.S. for several weeks, unable to be with his family or his classmates or friends. For an ungraded exercise in his writing course, the student wrote about being confined to his apartment and watching beautiful pink flowers outside his window as they budded, bloomed, and withered during the spring season, which he saw as a sign of the life he experienced while being in quarantine alone in America and taking all of his classes online. His writing class, he said, was the only synchronous class he had during the pandemic-induced shutdown, and it served as a reminder of the human connection he needed. He called it "a sign of life." When my colleague shared this anecdote with me, she did so to highlight how important our teaching had become to our students, who were facing such difficult challenges as human beings during a historic global health crisis. And that importance went far beyond our efforts to help our students become more effective writers. It was really about helping them meet the challenges of living in a complicated and sometimes dangerous world.

Language is central to how we make sense of and navigate the world. Writing, as a technology for language, has a unique capacity to affect our sense of self and well-being. Educators should take advantage of that capacity of writing.

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Is COVID-19 forcing ESL instructors to return to more traditional teaching in the second language acquisition methodology?

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Abstract

This paper is part of PhD research conducted by two experienced ESL instructors from the International University of Sarajevo. The aim was to see whether the instructors at the English Language School (ELS) at the International University of Sarajevo (IUS) were turning to some more traditional teaching methods and techniques due to the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency online instruction. Four experienced English Language School instructors were interviewed and special attention was paid to the following aspects of teaching: class activities, feedback, teacher talking time and student-instructor rapport. The results showed that despite being fully experienced with and knowledgeable about modern teaching methods and techniques, more traditional methods seemed to be preferred to modern teaching methods when it came to online instruction. However, to prove this even further, some large-scale and more empirical studies would have to be conducted in the future.

Keywords: *in-person instruction, online instructions, modern methodology, traditional methodology, class activities, feedback, teacher talking time, student-instructor rapport*

Introduction

The world was put to a stop in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it affected almost all aspects of our lives – work, education, shopping, travelling, to name just a few. Thanks to modern technology, education was able to resume its function online, which was crucially important to many students and teachers all around the world who would have lost their opportunity to study or do their jobs. However, the situation has generated a very important question whether all of us who have gotten used to modern teaching methodology and have been applying it in our classrooms for many years will have to go back and start applying some more traditional methods due to the fact that instruction has been moved online. Online and in-person instruction share many similarities in terms of applying both modern as well as traditional methods in our teaching. Nevertheless, it needs to be said here that they are not the same and cannot be treated fully equally simply due to the sole fact that the environment in which they are executed is not the same. That is why, it is believed that online instruction might be pushing us, educators, into some more traditional education in which we are starting to re-apply some more traditional techniques in our online classes. The authors of the paper decided to approach the issue from the angle of an English as a second language (ESL) instructor, so we interviewed four experienced ESL instructors in order to get their opinions and views on the issue at hand. This paper will examine whether online instruction makes certain aspects of second language teaching more traditional again including some major factors that might contribute to it.

Literature review

COVID 19, online education and traditional education

Due to COVID-19, defined as “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is a newly identified pathogen and it is assumed there is no pre-existing human immunity to the virus” (CDPC 2020), almost all education has been moved online. It is the type of education in which all

segments of education such as learning processes, communication between students and academicians, individual and collaborative work are all enabled by the Internet. Furthermore, it means that distance learning can be facilitated thanks to online delivery by making course material available and accessible at any given time and place (Volery and Lord 2000).

On the other hand, in-person learning is defined as:

(...) any form of instructional interaction that occurs “in person” and in real time between teachers and students or among colleagues and peers. Before the advent of audio, video, and internet technologies that allowed people to interact from different locations and at different times, all instructional interactions occurred, by necessity, in the same place and at the same time. (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members)

Although any foreign language teaching methodology focuses mainly on improving the foreign language ability and skills of the student, traditional methodology focuses on skills and abilities in isolation and is generally teacher-centered. As for modern methodology, it is much more student-centered with the student being the most active element of the teaching/learning process. Students are encouraged to experiment with the language instead of being asked or even forced to memorize grammatical rules and isolated vocabulary. Moreover, modern methodology includes a variety of techniques and activities in which students are exposed to real-life situations and are asked to use the language effectively in those specific simulated situations (Boumová 2008, Richards 1990).

Class activities (pair work, group work, project work)

We, as educators, are all well aware of the fact that pair work, group and project work are all an integral part of successful learning, especially in terms of acquiring a foreign language. They give our students a fantastic opportunity to practice the target language in a controlled or semi-controlled manner by using it in either pair work or group work or by working together on some projects. In an in-person ESL classroom, they are used to give students more exposure to the target language, but also to reduce the teacher talking time in class. Moreover, this builds the self-confidence of the learner since they know that they are talking to someone whose English is at the same or similar level of proficiency as theirs. It is definitely different from talking to your teacher, who can be both a native or non-native speaker of English (Ballard and Winke 2017), where your confidence is at a much lower level due to the fact that you know they can notice each and every mistake you make both in oral and written communication. It is definitely different from traditional in-person instruction where learners were (and still are) asked to translate from their native into the target language and where all kinds of language practice tasks were (and still are) strictly controlled by the instructor (Palmer 1921).

There are minimum five pedagogical benefits of group work that emphasize its potential “for increasing the quantity of language practice opportunities, for improving the quality of student talk, for individualizing instruction, for creating a positive affective climate in the classroom, and for increasing student motivation.” (Long and Porter 1985: 207-208). All of them strongly rely on naturalistic and humanistic approaches that make the learning as well as the teaching process more effective, purposeful and enjoyable (Asher 1977, Krashen 1985, Krashner and Terell 1983, Winitz 1981).

Feedback

Constructive and timely corrective feedback (CF) is seen as something inevitable in an ESL classroom. It is highly important and necessary and it is an essential part of the teaching/learning process, both in its oral and written form. ESL learners used to believe that only their instructors were supposed to be in charge of giving feedback on their performance. However, due to different classroom management techniques/activities, this view has changed and now peer corrective feedback (PCF) is definitely something that is appreciated by both educators and learners due to its effectiveness. Learners tend to hesitate less to communicate with their peers as well as with their instructors and seem to consider any constructive feedback being given to them as something positive. Needless to say, instructors use many

different feedback-giving techniques, both online and in-person, depending on the group of learners, their backgrounds and learning objectives.

“Although learner beliefs regarding CF are unanimously positive across contexts, some studies have shown that the extent to which they have a positive view of CF (defined under the framework of grammar instruction) varies depending on learners’ cultural backgrounds.” (Sato 2013: 612). There are two important factors to be taken into account as far as the effectiveness of the intervention on language development is concerned and they are as follows: a collaborative classroom environment and positive social relationships between learners (Sato 2013). Furthermore, if recasts and translations are used in the classroom by providing students with the correct model, they do not feel the necessity to respond. On the other hand, repetitions, clarification requests, elicitations and metalinguistic feedback generally lead to immediate repair of errors and can result in peer and self-correction (Panova and Lyster 2002). Finally, errors caused by the speaker’s L1 are no longer seen as interference, but as developmental. They could be contrastively analyzed and possibly provide evidence of systematic hypothesis (Corder 1967, 1973, Selinker 1972).

Teacher Talking Time (TTT)

Reducing teacher talking time (TTT) in an ESL classroom has been viewed as one of the most important segments of modern ESL methodology. Obviously, the point of reducing TTT in the classroom stems from the idea that learners should be given as many chances as possible to practice the target language in the classroom (Jarvis and Robinson 1997, McCormick and Donato 2000). This is exactly why all those modern methodological activities, such as pair work, group work, project work, peer corrective feedback and so on, have been introduced and applied in modern ESL classrooms. TTT should be controlled, limited and highly functional. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) advocates argue that the role of the teacher is to establish different situations in which the learner is the (key) communicator and interaction between learners is encouraged. “Students interact with others, they are actively engaged in negotiation of meaning, they have an opportunity to express themselves by sharing ideas and opinions, and they are responsible for their own learning.” (Antón 1999: 303, Brenn 1980 Larsen-Freeman 1986, Nunan, 1988, 1989 as cited in Antón 1999).

However, we are facing the situation in our online classes where we are forced to have monologues and talk to “account/profile” pictures of our students/learners. There are always a few students who are constantly active and participate, but most of them are just passive observers and we can only follow their progress through their graded assignments and exams and in individual feedback sessions. Despite the fact that we all try to make our online classes as similar as possible to those in-person ones, we are all aware of the fact that they are simply not the same.

Student-instructor rapport

Student-instructor rapport is, without a doubt, crucially important to the teaching/learning process, both in-person and online (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001, Ellis 2003, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). It is responsible for creating a positive atmosphere which aids learning and for boosting the motivation of both the instructor and his/her students. Online instruction makes instructors more available for consults and feedback, which additionally makes the learning process easier on students and enables them to acquire the necessary knowledge at a faster pace and more conveniently. However, the question that still needs to be addressed here is whether instructors and learners have the same perception of the class atmosphere online and in-person and whether it is possible to say that the same kind of atmosphere can be created in the two modes of instruction – namely, online and in-person.

Despite their wish to build connection and interpersonal relationships with their students, “instructors realize that they need to establish themselves as an authority figure in the classroom. Finding this balance may be a key to effective rapport building.” (Webb and Obrycki Barrett 2014: 20).

Furthermore, Webb and Obrycki Barrett (2014) claim that instructors understood that:

(...) student relationships are quite different depending on the age of the student, and adjusted their behavior to accommodate these changes. This finding illustrates a need to conduct research

on a various student age levels when examining a rapport–building variable. Findings from a study of rapport in an elementary school classroom likely will not always translate to a college setting. (20)

So, it is obvious that the instructor’s skills to find the right balance between establishing himself/herself as authority and building connections and interpersonal relationships with his/her students as well as the student’s age are immensely important if we want to build a positive classroom atmosphere.

Student preference between online and in-person education

In the spring of 2020, both students and educators all around the world found themselves in an unknown and unprecedented situation in modern times due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and had to do their best to tackle all sorts of problems that the new situation was presenting them with. All those factors such as their family status, financial situation, health condition and many more had to be taken into consideration and all of them, undoubtedly, impacted the teaching/learning process. Many students mentioned various causes of stress such as: familial, financial, health and other issues that had largely impacted the learning process (Kelly and Columbus 2020).

Overnight, we moved from in person instruction to online instruction, we finished the previous academic year online, tried to start the new one in-person again, but had to move it online due to the rising number of people who tested positive to the virus. However, students were generally not enthusiastic about the emergency online instruction.

An April survey of over 3,000 continuing college students by the education technology firm Top Hat found that most students felt the emergency online instruction was unengaging (78 percent) and inferior to their typical face-to-face experience (68 percent). Yet students were sympathetic to the circumstances their school faced, simultaneously reporting the crisis response of their institution (70 percent) and professors (66 percent) to be good or excellent. (Kelly and Columbus 2020: 3, Top Hat as cited in Kelly and Columbus 2020).

It is clear that the students appreciated the effort and reaction of their professors and institution but still found online instruction not to be engaging or challenging enough as its in-person counterpart. They were obviously aware of the necessity of the undertaken actions and activities but, at the same time, cannot fail to address some obvious drawbacks of the emergency online instruction.

Furthermore, Kelly and Columbus (2020) also make a reference to another survey of over 16,000 incoming and continuing students conducted by the education search platform Niche in which students were offered 10 different scenarios for instruction in the fall. According to the survey,

(...) returning to in-person instruction was by far the most popular choice, appealing to 79 percent of all respondents and a clear majority of continuing undergraduates at two- and four-year colleges. Remaining fully online in the fall was seen as the second-least appealing option (28 percent). Interestingly, 57 percent of continuing undergraduates at two-year colleges responded that remaining online in the fall was appealing, a striking difference from the 24 percent and 36 percent of students at private and public four-year colleges, respectively. (Niche survey as cited in Kelly and Columbus 2020).

This goes to show that in-person and online instruction are perceived differently by students depending on their year of study. However, in-person instruction still seems to be the most preferred mode of instruction.

Furthermore, there are certain steps that need to be taken before making any final decisions with regard to online vs. in-person instruction. Some of the main issues that have to be taken into account when schools get to resume their in-person instruction and how it affects both students and teachers/instructors. As for the regulatory flexibility, it was noticed that educational institutions were not fully ready for what happened in the spring of 2020 and that most of their rules and regulations were ill-suited for the challenges educational institutions faced back then (Bailey et al. 2020).

Research questions

In order to further investigate whether the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed us back into more traditional education, the following questions were designed to guide the data collection and analysis:

1. Do you organize the activities normally conducted in in-person instruction such as pair work, group work and project work in online instruction as well? If so, how often?
2. Are you mainly in charge of giving feedback in online instruction compared to in-person instruction or is it more learner-generated (peer corrective feedback)? Why?
3. Do you speak more (TTT) in online instruction compared to in-person instruction? Why? How do you feel about it?
4. What is the atmosphere like in online instruction compared to in-person instruction? How does it affect student-instructor rapport?
5. Based on your personal experience, do students prefer online instruction to in-person instruction or is it vice versa? Why?

Research methodology

Data collection

All the data needed for this research were collected in interviews with four ELT instructors who are both level coordinators and senior teachers at the International University of Sarajevo's (IUS's) English Language School (ELS). We wanted to hear their first-hand experience with COVID-19 and emergency online instruction as well as their opinions through their answers to the research questions (listed in 2.7.). Four interviews were conducted in total during the month of December 2020. Each interview was conducted online (on MS Teams) and recorded for future reference.

Participants and setting

The four ELS level coordinators and instructors (one male and three female) who took part in this research are all experienced ESL teachers with at least fifteen years of experience in teaching. Out of those fifteen years of teaching experience, the majority of them have spent at least ten years teaching at ELS. Since English is the official language of communication at the International University of Sarajevo, English Language School is a prep school at IUS where students who decide to study at IUS have to take a Placement exam, which determines their level of proficiency in English. If they obtain sufficient number of points in the Placement exam, they take a Proficiency exam, and if they pass it, they can start their studies at the faculty of their choice at IUS. If they do not obtain enough points in the Placement exam, and depending on their results, they have to take courses of English at ELS, ranging from levels A1 to B2 (according to CEFR) (CEFR website and ELS Guidelines for students). ELS was accredited by Eaquals in 2017. Eaquals is one of the world leaders in accreditation for language teaching organizations (see Eaquals website). The authors of this paper have been working at ELS both as instructors and level coordinators for almost 14 years now, so they have the first-hand knowledge of the principles, rules and procedures as well as the experience with the ways both online and in-person instruction is conducted at ELS.

Data analysis

The interviews were conducted in English and the participants' answers to the research questions have been analyzed and some parallel points as well as differences have been pointed out in terms of both progressive/modern approaches and traditional approaches. The aim of this research is for it to be a case study "as an approach that involves an in-depth exploration of a single case, for example, of the phenomenon under study. A case may be based on any number of units of analysis: an individual, a group of individuals, a classroom, a school, or even an event." (Mertens 2010: 233, McDuffie and Scruggs as cited in Mertens 2010). That is why, our research questions are specific open-ended questions because we wanted to focus our research on some specific segments of the teaching/learning process at ELS in terms of its execution in online and in-person instruction, but we

also wanted to give the participants enough space and freedom to share their experiences and views with us.

Results and discussion

Results analysis

Table 1: Progressive/modern themes vs. traditional themes with regard to class activities

Referenced Theme – Class activities	Number of References*
<i>Progressive/Modern approach</i>	
Pair work, group work and project work is done on a daily basis in online instruction as well.	1
Online instruction procedures should be the same as in-person instruction procedures.	4
Teaching online is easier because all the digital media (video files, audio files, etc.) are very easily accessible and the instructor likes the idea of online chat rooms or group rooms.	2
The preparation of online classes takes much more time if the teaching objectives and learning outcomes objectives are to be met.	2
<i>Traditional approach</i>	
Pair work or group work is not conducted in online classes.	3
Private chat rooms or group rooms are not used regularly in online instruction because the work does/will not get done.	2
It is difficult to organize pair work or group work online because students are not ready for it.	2
Online classes are mostly lecture-based.	1

*The number of references is the number of the interviewed instructors who mentioned or elaborated on the theme.

Table 2: Progressive/modern themes vs. traditional themes with regard to feedback

Referenced Theme – Feedback	Number of References*
<i>Progressive/Modern approach</i>	
Feedback is mostly learner-generated.	2
Lower level students (A1-A2) are usually prompted or helped while higher level students (B1-B2) should be more capable (of giving feedback).	2
Feedback is even more important in online lessons.	2
<i>Traditional approach</i>	
Feedback is mostly teacher-generated.	2
Individual feedback is given by the instructor through audio or video or directly in online classes.	2
Peer feedback (peer editing), the way it is done in in-person instruction, does not exist in online instruction.	1

*The number of references is the number of the interviewed instructors who mentioned or elaborated on the theme.

Table 3: Progressive/modern themes vs. traditional themes with regard to TTT (Teacher Talking Time)

Referenced Theme – TTT (Teacher Talking Time)	Number of References*
<i>Progressive/Modern approach</i>	
The instructor generally speaks less in online classes.	2
When the instructor speaks, it is mostly to give instructions, set the task or explain certain things.	2
Applying some physical activities in online classes/instruction or making students work on some projects is important to shorten the amount of TTT.	2
The instructor gives short instructions, and, also, concrete examples are given to support the instructions.	2
The instructor speaks less in online instruction in order to keep the students' attention for a longer period of time.	1
<i>Traditional approach</i>	
The instructor speaks much more in online classes.	2
The instructor speaks more because he/she cannot see their students' faces, so he/she tends to repeat his/her instructions or some answers and explanations, or even due to some technical difficulties.	2
The instructor speaks more and gets more tired in online classes, which does not happen in in-person classes.	1
The instructor speaks more because he/she does not have that sense of the students' presence and does not know how engaged they are.	2

*The number of references is the number of the interviewed instructors who mentioned or elaborated on the theme.

Table 4: Progressive/modern themes vs. traditional themes with regard to rapport

Referenced Theme – Atmosphere/Rapport	Number of References*
<i>Progressive/Modern approach</i>	
It depends on the dynamics of the group and on the students' level of proficiency in English.	2
Working with smaller groups is more effective.	2
There are not a lot of differences between online and in-person instruction in terms of the classroom atmosphere.	2
The instructor has to be much more hands-on in online classes.	4
<i>Traditional approach</i>	
If the instructor does not know what the students are doing, the atmosphere cannot be positive.	3

*The number of references is the number of the interviewed instructors who mentioned or elaborated on the theme.

Table 5: Student preference with regard to in-person and online instruction

Referenced Theme – Student preference	Number of References*
<i>In-person instruction</i>	
Students generally prefer in-person instruction.	4
The socializing aspect is missing in online instruction.	3
Students are more involved in in-person instruction and some of them think online classes are less important.	3
<i>Online instruction</i>	
Students get to understand the advantages of online instruction through time.	2

*The number of references is the number of the interviewed instructors who mentioned or elaborated on the theme.

Discussion

Class activities

As it can be noticed from the results provided in Table 1, the interviewed instructors understand the importance of applying different class activities and classroom management methods. So, it is clear that the interviewed instructors are all aware of the benefits and potential of group work (Asher 1977, Ballard and Winke 2017, Palmer 1921, Krashen 1985, Krashner and Terell 1983, Long and Porter 1985, Winitz 1981). Furthermore, they acknowledge the fact that all necessary teaching materials are more accessible and can be used easily online. Some of them also understand the possibilities of online chat or group rooms which, in their opinion, could be exploited more in the future. However, the majority of them stated that they had not done it in their online classes yet. Moreover, what can be understood from their comments and elaborations is that it might be more challenging and difficult to organize pair work, group work or project work and that the preparation for those activities in the online setting takes more time.

Comment (1): There is no reason to change the in-person instruction procedures when teaching online.

Comment (2): It seems like a really good idea, but I haven't managed to apply that (pair work, group work, project work) in my online classes yet. But I'm going to. It's one of my goals.

Comment (3): I'm not a big fan of those private kind of chat rooms or group rooms because, at instances, I feel that things won't be done.

Feedback

As for the results shown in Table 2, one important thing to be emphasized here is the fact that one half of the instructors stated that feedback was learner-generated and the other half stated that it was teacher-generated, even though they all understand the importance of peer corrective feedback (Corder 1967, 1973, Panova and Lyster 2002, Selinker 1972). The elaborations given by the instructors who stated that feedback was learner-generated give us an insight into the importance of delegating feedback as well as the level of proficiency of students in question. Lower level students (A1-A2) seem to need to be more controlled and guided while doing it, while higher level students (B1-B2) seem to be more independent and better at doing it (what is also expected of them as far as the CEFR levels are concerned). At the same time, the instructors who stated that feedback was teacher-generated in their online classes reported that feedback was mainly given by them – on paper (digitally) and/or via audio or video. This might be some further evidence for the statement given by Sato (2013) that the environment might be crucial for the way feedback is given, and that the online environment might be both good or not good enough for its execution depending on the level of proficiency of students in question, the types of activities being done and/or the individual approach of the teacher/instructor.

Comment (4): I like delegating the feedback moment to students. It all depends on the level – lower level students start with discussing certain questions and comparing their answers before discussing them together. As for higher levels – they should be more capable of doing it (giving feedback) but you still have to guide them. It's important for fostering their (learners') autonomy.

Comment (5): Now, it's basically me, only me doing all the feedback. As for in-person (individual) feedback, I do it via audio or video, not only on paper (digitally). I designate time to call the person or the persons up and actually have that one-on-one (feedback) through audio or at least through video where I would go step-by-step explaining the feedback to them in detail.

Teacher Talking Time (TTT)

Table 3 shows the results as far as the amount of TTT is concerned and whether and to what extent it changes depending on the mode of instruction (online or in-person). The instructors all acknowledge the importance of reduced TTT (Jarvis and Robinson 1997, McCormick and Donato

2000), despite the fact that one half of them report to have spoken more in online classes, while the other half report to have spoken less in online classes, but they all seem to be aware of the fact that the teacher/instructor is the facilitator of the communicative activities and the environment in which it takes place, while the role of the learner is that of a communicator as argued by Antón (1999) in which she refers to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) advocates. The instructors who stated that they spoke less in online classes said that they only spoke when giving instructions and when they needed to explain something in more detail. Another reason they mentioned (why) they spoke less was to make sure that they could keep their students focused on the lesson for as long as possible and that their increased TTT would definitely not make it possible. They also emphasized the importance of showing things and making sure their instructions were clear to their students. As for the instructors who spoke more in online classes, their main reason for doing it was that they could not see their students' faces at all or very rarely (due to their cameras and microphones being turned off) and consequently could not interpret their facial expressions and body language.

Comment (6): I speak less in online classes. The reason is really because I'm not quite sure that I can keep the students' attention for a longer period of time. That's easier to do in the (in-person) classroom setting.

Comment (7): I tend to keep the instructions short and I also don't expect longer answers from the students either, unless I ask them to prepare some kind of presentation or to answer some questions. If I give instructions, they are always followed by some kind of visual materials to make sure that they do understand. I'm a little bit more careful online, giving instructions online, basically.

Comment (8): I speak much more in online ... how do you call it? ... online instruction, online classes. I get more tired in online classes, which is not the case when I'm doing in-person teaching. Definitely, it's not the case.

Rapport/Atmosphere

It can be noticed from Table 4 that all the instructors believe that you have to be much more hands-on (prepared and ready for all sorts of circumstances that may occur) in online instruction in order to make the classroom atmosphere as positive and as effective as possible due to its importance for the learning/teaching process (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001, Ellis 2003, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). Some of them stated that the atmosphere depended on the number of students in a group/class and their level of English, and that it was more convenient and effective to work with smaller groups of students. It was also argued that it depended on the very dynamics of the group. Some of them also argued that there were not a lot of differences between online and in-person instruction. But what the majority of them seem to agree on is that if you cannot see your students (because their cameras and microphones are generally turned off during online instruction) or you do not know what they are doing, the class atmosphere cannot be positive. Moreover, all the students at ELS and IUS are older than 18, so, it is generally more challenging to influence them or "order" them to do something, compared to some younger students. This might go to prove the argument presented by Webb and Obrycki Barrett (2014) that the age of the student is a very important factor in building the positive atmosphere in class, both online and in-person.

Comment (9): It (atmosphere) depends on the level and it depends on the number of students in the group. Working with smaller groups, obviously, is very effective, in my opinion, and if they are higher level.

Comment (10): Applying some physical activity, even in online classes, is important for building the positive atmosphere.

Comment (11): The sense of presence is very important as well. In online classes, I don't have that sense of presence. The students are not there, I don't know what they are doing. Some are engaged but I feel that the majority is not that engaged, at least when it comes to teaching.

Student preference (online vs. in-person)

As it can be clearly seen in Table 5, in-person instruction is definitely preferred by students by far. This was also observed and shown by Kelly and Columbus (2020). The instructors reported different reasons why their students preferred in-person to online instruction, varying from the socializing aspect or not having enough opportunities to interact with their peers to not being able to ask certain questions and get direct answers from their teachers/instructors as in in-person instruction. However, some of them also reported their students' eventual understanding and acceptance of the advantages of online instruction as well. This might change even further bearing in mind that distance learning is increasing in popularity and that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. As for educational institutions around the world, for the time being, online instruction seems to be the only option if they intend to keep on running their businesses and earning any income in the present as well as in the foreseeable future.

Comment (12): I think number one is the social contact because they miss their friends, they miss sharing experiences and having a laugh, which you can't have online, or you can but to a certain extent. I think they would always go for the classroom setting, they would go for that.

Comment (13): Most of them are viewing it (online instruction) as the only option that they would never choose if they didn't have to.

Comment (14): Students have to realize, and teachers have to realize as well, that online instruction has to be the same as in-person instruction. It has to be ... with all its limits and all it has ... it has to be.

Conclusion and limitations

What can be concluded is that, although the interviewed instructors all acknowledge the importance of applying modern teaching methods (such as pair work, group work, project works, learner-generated feedback and reduced TTT) in both online and in-person instruction, they seem not to be doing it in online instruction as much as in-person instruction. Their reasons for not applying them as much vary from their personal preferences, the technical difficulties they have experienced while working online, the level of motivation (or lack of) shown by their students, and many more. This all might make us believe that teachers/instructors are relying more on traditional approaches in their online instruction compared to in-person instruction, which could be supported by the fact that three out of the four interviewed instructors (75%) reported that they had not done any pair work, group work or project work in their online classes, or that two of them (50%) reported that they spoke more in online instruction compared to in-person instruction.

Another important point to be mentioned here is the inability of online programs to fully meet the needs of our modern and ever-changing world because

(...) in large part, online programs suffer from talking an easy-to-program, grammar-and-vocabulary-driven approach to language pedagogy, sometimes even employing an online textbook. This one-size-fit-all, traditional approach cannot possibly yield results that learners seek and companies claim, such as the ability to speak fluently in a foreign language with coworkers in an international business (Doughty, 2015: 413).

Furthermore, Doughty (2015) argues that we do not have yet any large-scale empirical studies that would compare the outcomes of online and classroom language learning, since both online and classroom instruction offer practice outside the course in order for students to make progress, while brick-and-mortar classes are getting increasingly blended to provide students with the best of the both types of instruction.

However, we are aware that our results are based on limited data and that in order to prove this to a larger degree, more empirical studies, which would include a larger number of both students and teachers/instructors as well as the results of both types of instruction, would need to be conducted. Moreover, more time needs to be given to online instruction (the way it has been executed since the spring of 2020) and more results of this type of instruction need to be analyzed before we could make any solid conclusions in terms of its efficiency. Also, more feedback could be

obtained from both students and instructors in terms of what can and needs to be done to improve online instruction even further.

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Learning language online – interaction without interaction

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We live in a time where an (unknown) disease has spread across the globe and is making changes that affect every aspect of life, with that the educational system. Here are known facts: Language – shifting, something that is alive, used by the whole world, a thing that connects us; COVID-19 – shifting, something that destroys lives, spread all around the world, a thing that divides us. Meeting with people became a taboo topic. So, is studying, especially languages, lacking or is change imperceptible? Is a person capable of acquiring the same amount of knowledge when in solitude or a crowd?

It is said that genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration but neither is possible if a person sits “locked” in a room. Inspiration can come when a person is alone, but it mostly comes from observing other people, people that surround us. Without an idea or even an outline of it, no work can be done, so that 99% are, in a way, useless. Online classes did just that. All students, and teachers, are doing is sitting behind a screen. Motivate yourself! Easier said than done – it is hard to accomplish something if you do not have someone telling you “You have got this” or even “You will never be able to do this”. Those words, positive or negative, push us forward. Your room and you – only silence. With mathematics, one can put on some background music and spend hours alone solving a task, but with language, one needs to be surrounded by people; one needs to use it in real life to be able to reach the full potential. To return to music – yes, it can be used to acquire a foreign language, but it cannot be the primary or the only way of understanding the complexity behind it.

Studying a language should be fun, and, sadly, COVID-19 made it a nightmare. Imagine sitting in a classroom with your peers, absorbing new words said by the teacher. You are there, present, somewhat compelled to listen – Why? Because you are there, you are limited with actions. Whereas home, online, you can either mute the professor, read a book, or be on your phone messaging your friends how boring the lecture is. There is no one to see you, no one to warn you to listen. You are alone. English, German, Croatian and every other language is best learned when listened to and spoken. Who am I supposed to talk to at home? The best solution – stand in front of a mirror and make conversation. That is just silly, nothing can be learned. You can make one mistake after the other without even knowing it – language learned is broken, hours wasted. There is no doubt that the learners should make a lot of effort and not rely only on the teachers; both are equal. But if the lecture is monotonous and exhausting – which most online lectures are – then the will to learn dies. A lot has fallen on the lecturers’ shoulders, it is not an easy task to transfer something that should be an interactive discussion to an online chat room where using a microphone makes chaos. Because of COVID-19, public education feels like self-education. Something is not clear, you do not understand something? Consult the internet! There is an option of asking your professor, but they are buried in e-mails, and it is easier to google what you need. With that, online teaching can be extremely inefficient and unreliable.

The main difference between online and live lectures? Written and spoken language. It is possible to study a language by looking at it, by writing research papers, by observing phrases, clauses, and sentences. It is not, however, possible to learn a language that way. Leading discussions, hearing others talk and make mistakes, and then being able to correct those mistakes, that is what means to truly study and to learn the language properly. COVID-19 has taken that away. People learn a language by listening to it. Doing it online can be tricky. Why? Not everyone, and not always, has the best internet connection which leads to a lot of words, even sentences, being misheard and thus

learn incorrectly. Looking from the student's perspective there are two types – students who find it easier to talk to their computers/laptops and not seeing their teachers' reactions and students who get anxious by not seeing it. There is a way to incorporate spoken language more easily into the lectures; it too has a downside. Recorded speaking does not come from the heart, it can be learned and perfected, and re-recorded until it is without a mistake. All of it leads to more broad usage of written language. It is said, if you want it hard enough, you will do it no matter the circumstances. It is the truth. Where there is a will, there is a way – but how should a student find that will when even the teachers are unmotivated and burdened by the new situation?

As aforementioned, language is something that has the power to connect us, but COVID-19 is destroying its foundations. Live classes are more active, more people talk, more questions are asked, and more knowledge is shared. This ailment shattered it. People will always communicate, but is the written word of the same value as the spoken? No! Some people use grammar-correct language in messaging but, the newer the generation, the more illiterate it is. Online classes are a solution for the situation we are in but let us hope it is temporary. Online classes should never replace live classes and all they provide. Thus, COVID-19 has taken the interaction from the one thing that needs it to survive. Things are slowly getting back to as they were, but as much as the teachers try to convey the knowledge, part of it is lost in our generation – make up the lost knowledge yourself!

PhD data collection challenges due to the Covid-19 crisis – a report

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Introduction

The following report depicts the challenges I have faced in the process of collecting the necessary data for my PhD thesis titled *Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by university students in an ESP context* due to Covid-19 pandemics and switching to online teaching. In order to test the functionality of the VLSs qualitatively, and indicate which of them is responsible for acquisition of larger vocabulary quantities, my mentor (prof. Svetlana Dimitrova - Gyuzeleva) and I have designed an experiment which was originally intended to be fully implemented during the second semester of 2019/2020 (February to June). This experiment would provide a more detailed outline on the efficiency of different strategies use at the same time tackling maybe even a more important issue – raising learners' awareness about their importance for individual language development. The respondents were students of Law and Finance.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the implementation of the experiment in the middle (in March) because the government introduced special measures and we were forced to convert to online teaching. Even though the teaching process was not dramatically challenged, since we were able to smoothly transfer to teaching via the platform Microsoft Teams, the experiment, or rather the results that were to be obtained with it, were significantly affected.

Original experiment

The experiment consisted of three stages during which the respondents were to be asked to apply various VLSs (one cluster at a time) and tested afterwards for retention. Furthermore, they would have been interviewed about their experiences and asked to provide short comments and descriptions concerning the acquisition process in order to provide a qualitative aspect of VLSs use and vocabulary acquisition. The target vocabulary was intended to be introduced through series of texts for advanced language levels to ensure that the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary is sufficient to provide valid insights on the issue. The respondents received precise instructions on how to study the unfamiliar vocabulary after each text. The retention would have been tested by asking the respondents to translate simple sentences which did not provide the possibility of guessing from context.

Stage 1

The aim of the first stage was to provide a general overview of the independent learning process and learners' experiences by offering the students a text containing specific ESP vocabulary which they were supposed to study and learn without any instructions. They were tested for retention and also surveyed about the strategies they had used after two weeks.

Stage 2

During the second stage the VLSs were introduced one cluster at a time i.e., the respondents were presented with a text, asked to highlight the unfamiliar vocabulary, and after a brief explanation, instructed to use specific strategies. The retention was tested after two weeks and used as an indicator of strategy effectiveness. The process was to be repeated for each strategy type.

Stage 3

The final stage included a test containing the unfamiliar vocabulary from all texts used for the experiment, which would provide an overview of the entire acquisition process evading the short-

term memorization issues. The process was to be completed by a more detailed elaboration on strategy use as well as the full VLS list.

The results of each vocabulary test were to be processed statistically offering a quantitative representation of the functionality of each strategy. On the other hand, the necessary qualitative data for full comprehension of the particular VLS was to be obtained by oral interviews.

Problems caused with the interruption of the educational process due to the Covid-19

As stated previously, the interruption of the teaching process has caused some major problems in the implementation of the experiment.

The first issue was the absence of physical contact, or rather control over the implementation of specific strategies. Namely, when the students were in class, they were instructed to use them which allowed precise monitoring of their actions. Furthermore, the test for retention was done in class and the students were also tested for their ability to use the specific vocabulary, rather than just recognize it. The online classes did not provide such option, due to students' access to online dictionaries and other possibilities. They were eager to provide correct answers trying to please the teacher, while neglecting my advice to be honest in order not to impair the final results. This caused the need for other ways to obtain more accurate data.

The alteration of the stages necessitated additional preparation time until the end of the semester, which led yet to another issue. Namely, the following academic year, available for testing were completely different groups of students (students of design, architecture and IT), which meant selecting different texts to fit their curricula. The previously collected data could not be used and the experiment had to be repeated from the initial stage.

Overcoming the difficulties

A set of tasks and questions were designed in order for the implementation of specific strategies to be closely monitored and controlled, which guided the students into treating particular vocabulary in a specific manner. Each text was processed differently allowing the them to treat the lexical units following precise instructions. This ensured proper utilization of the strategies enabling the students to feel the benefit of such activities. Students' progress was closely monitored during the class due to the use of Microsoft Forms utility for these tasks, which enables immediate feedback and also ensures additional validity of the results.

Concluding remarks

The pandemics has certainly altered professional and personal lives of every individual. People were compelled to face significant setbacks and look for alternative ways of overcoming them rethinking everything they had previously taken for granted. Some more prepared and trained than others. Nevertheless, there was a lot to be learned and gained. Technology offers numerous advantages and previously unseen possibilities which enable effective overcoming of difficulties and reaching the desired results.

In the abovementioned case, the experiment results which were intended to be processed manually are now available in excel forms which allow easier and faster management. This somewhat compensates for the lost time due to the Covid-19 crisis as well as for the time anticipated for statistical analysis and cross tabulations.

Pros and cons of teaching dead languages to black screens

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Abstract

The discussion in this paper is based on the presentation “Teaching Old Norse on Zoom: The Black Death and black screens – the dark age of Covid” (Haugan 2021) held at the 3rd ERL Online Session in March 2021 where the overall topic was “Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?”. While most of the approaches to language teaching within the ERL context are concerned with “living” languages and maybe preferably English as a second language, I would like to draw the attention to the teaching of so-called dead languages, i.e. languages that are no longer used as a first language and that have no active, natural speech community. In a Western educational context, Latin and Ancient Greek would be the most prominent candidates for so-called dead languages that are still taught today. Even though the historical element has been constantly reduced within Norwegian as a school subject, basic knowledge of Old Norse (Medieval Norwegian) may still be a part of teacher education in Norway. Teaching a language as a second language or as a foreign language obviously faces challenges during a pandemic where most or all teaching is reduced to online teaching. However, maybe there are some positive aspects of teaching online, too. This paper will discuss some pros and cons of teaching Old Norse and Norwegian language history online.

Keywords: *language teaching, language learning, online teaching, online learning, Covid*

Introduction

Due to the challenges for the educational system (among other sectors of the society) as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/2021, the International Association for the Educational Role of Language (ERLA) decided to address the topic in two online sessions (ERL events 2021). ERLA has a broad perspective on language which can be summarized by quoting the “WHY” and “WHAT” from the ERLA website (ERLA Home 2021):

The **WHY** of ERL Association. **Language underlies and binds education.** It merits a special place in educational studies and, with its highly complex character, it calls for interdisciplinary cooperation across subjects, schools and cultures. As we know from the so-called ‘linguistic turn’, how we learn and how we see the world around us is strongly determined by language. The association aims to systematize theoretical and empirical studies undertaken at the wide intersection of educational science and linguistics.

The **WHAT** of ERL Association. **Our focus is deliberately broad and we study the educational role of language at the level of SCHOOL, CULTURE, METHODS and PERSONALITY.** Additionally, within this extensive field we apply a (narrower) language user-oriented perspective by studying language beliefs (what we THINK OF language), language activity (what we DO WITH language), language affect (how we FEEL ABOUT language), and language matrices of reality interpretation (how we UNDERSTAND THROUGH language), all of which complement and support one another.

The 3rd ERL Online Session in March 2021 had the overall topic “Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?”. Already implemented in the title of this online event, there is a dualism in the approach: *threats or opportunities?* Since a pandemic is a threat per se, one would expect that consequences of a pandemic are automatically “threats” in an overall perspective in one way or the other. The ERL approach, then, implicates a hypothesis that there might be both negative

and positive effects, and it is also an encouragement to educators and researchers to identify possible positive effects and share them with a broader audience.

My contribution to the 3rd ERL Online Session and the topic Covid-19 as a source of threats and opportunities for linguistic education was the presentation “Teaching Old Norse on Zoom: The Black Death and black screens – the dark age of Covid. The pros and cons of teaching Old Norse (Old Norwegian) language and history to black screens on Zoom” (Haugan 2021). While most of the approaches to language teaching within the ERL context are concerned with “living” languages and maybe preferably English as a second language, I would like to draw the attention to the teaching of so-called dead languages, i.e. languages that are no longer used as a first language and that have no active, natural speech community. In a Western educational context, Latin and Ancient Greek would be the most prominent candidates for so-called dead languages that are still taught today. In many countries, older varieties of the national language (or languages) may be studied and taught on different levels in the educational system.

Even though the historical element has been constantly and dramatically reduced within Norwegian as a school subject, basic knowledge of Old Norse (Medieval Norwegian) may still be a part of teacher education in Norway. Teaching a language as a second language or as a foreign language obviously faces challenges during a pandemic where most or all teaching is reduced to online teaching. However, as indicated by the dualism of the 3rd ERL Online Session “threats or opportunities”, there may perhaps also be some positive aspects or opportunities for teaching language subjects online. The object of this paper is to discuss some pros and cons of teaching Old Norse and Norwegian language history online as part of teacher education.

The default hypothesis would in many cases be that the practical consequences of Covid-19 for teaching languages and language-related topics are a “threat” in the sense that the quality and the results are expected to be poorer in one way or the other. Speaking and learning a language is a social practice and, hence, direct social contact is considered the best way of learning a language. Online teaching and a reluctance among students to use their cameras, thus, represents a challenge or a “threat” to language learning. However, the constructive and more positive hypothesis of the ERL approach is that the challenges also may represent certain opportunities. Teaching a dead language comes with the inherent pedagogical challenge that there is no natural speech community to relate to. In the quest for identifying positive opportunities in online language teaching, it may actually be the lack of a speech community and the invisibility of the peer group that may represent an opportunity. In the case of teaching Old Norse and Norwegian language history, the concrete hypothesis is, thus, that lectures on screen and the reduced visibility of the peer student group may represent a teaching opportunity or advantage to some degree. The aim of this paper is, then, to discuss some of the positive and negative aspects of teaching Old Norse and Norwegian language history to Norwegian student teachers who choose not to engage actively in the teaching/learning process by being visible behind their cameras/screens, but who are still assumed to follow the lectures. It must be emphasized that this paper is a single case study based on personal observations and reflections from the teacher’s perspective, i.e. there is no organized student survey or other student feedback to support the observations and reflections due to the practical fact that the semester/course was already more or less finished by the time I considered my language history course relevant in an ERL context. The contribution to the field of practice and the research community, therefore, lies first of all in an analytic discussion of “classroom” observations and reflections on teaching strategies and adaptations due to more focus on digital presentations and online resources provoked by the Covid-19 restrictions on physical face-to-face teaching.

Method and theoretical background

The approach in this paper is guided by the overall topic initiated by the Educational Role of Language Association (ERLA): *Covid – A source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?* Research conducted by ERLA and the ERL network is mainly based on four pillars (ERL research, 2021):

- (*PREMISES*) Considering the fact(s) that every school determines
- what students think OF language and - conversely - how language determines their views, i.e.; **LANGUAGE(-)BELIEFS** (incl. students' views on listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
 - how students feel ABOUT language and -conversely - how language determines their emotions, i.e.; **LANGUAGE(-)AFFECT** (incl. students' emotions concerning listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
 - what students do WITH language and - conversely - how language determines their actions i.e.; **LANGUAGE(-)ACTIVITY** (incl. students' actions consisting in listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
 - how students understand THROUGH language and - conversely - how language determines their thinking, i.e.; **LANGUAGE(-)THINKING** (incl. students' world image as shaped by listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
- on the level of an individual, society, culture and reality, (*ASPIRATIONS*) the point of this initiative consists in:
- **carrying out GLOBALLY COORDINATED STUDIES** within and across various countries and their educational systems (assumed to differ within and across the four areas shown above), and
 - **systematising research problems and methodologies** applied in pedagogically-linguistic studies, and
 - **engaging academics falling into the four areas** wishing to cooperate within and across them, and
 - **bringing the world of language and the world of educational science closer together.**

As mentioned before, Norwegian language history and basic knowledge of Old Norse (Medieval Norwegian) is not the same as learning a second language or a foreign language in the most common contexts. The students are, for instance, not expected to speak or write Old Norse. From an ERL framework perspective, then, it would be interesting to reflect on what the students *believe* about Old Norse, and in what way their beliefs might be positive or negative for learning. Modern Norwegian, despite being a more or less direct descendent of Old Norse, has changed dramatically from the time of the Viking age to the 16th century, and the language has also undergone some changes the last five hundred years. Does realizing and problematizing this change of the national language – the so-called mother tongue for most Norwegian citizens – *affect* the students in any way that is positive or negative for learning? Student tasks are mostly related to commenting on Old Norse words, inflections and structures compared to modern Norwegian. Is it possible to view this kind of language activity as positive or negative for the students' learning goals? The last pillar of the ERL premises deals with language thinking. This perspective may seem irrelevant when it comes to working with a dead language that is normally not going to be spoken or written at all by the students. However, from the perspective of the purpose of language history as a support for understanding and managing today's language, knowledge of older stages of the language and knowledge of the origin of certain words might determine the students' thinking about language. Hence, all four ERL perspectives may be relevant and interesting when trying to look at the pros and cons of teaching Old Norse and Norwegian language history in online classes with minimal direct, dialogical communication.

Teacher education in Norway has the target groups preschool (kindergarten), primary school (grades 1-7, age 6-13), lower secondary school (grades 8-10, age 13-16) and upper secondary school (grade 11-13, age 16-19). Norway has two official Norwegian written languages due to historic and political reasons (see e.g. Haugan 2017 and references there). Hence, language history is an important part in teacher education since both written languages have to be used and taught in school and the historical background for this situation is still playing a role in today's society.

My language history course was targeted at grade 8-13 teacher students, i.e. lower and upper secondary school. To learn about the relation between the two Norwegian written languages, Bokmål and Nynorsk, plays a more important role in lower and upper secondary school, among other things there are separate grades after 10th and 13th grade in Bokmål and Nynorsk. Hence, it is also more important for teachers to be able to explain and “legitimize” why the pupils have to learn both written languages in school. Some of these “explanations” lie in Norwegian language history and the fact that Norway had been a part of a union with Denmark for several hundred years where Danish was the only official written language also in Norway, whereas the original Norwegian written language more or less ceased to exist after the 15th century. Naturally, neither pupils nor student teachers are usually very interested in medieval Norwegian language and history, except from maybe the Vikings. To make it “worse”, my language history course starts with Ancient Nordic, i.e. the time before the Vikings (ca. 200-750 A.D.). Hence, from a motivational point of view, things are not necessarily going the teacher’s way.

As a consequence of Covid-19, teacher education is also recruiting a new segment of students. Several students reported that they either had lost their job or that they were afraid of losing their job during the pandemic. Therefore, they decided to invest in a “safer” profession, like, for instance, teaching. Norwegian as a school subject is taught from primary to lower to upper secondary school and is considered a rather “safe” choice within teacher education when it comes to the job market. However, choosing a subject because of practical considerations like, for instance, “safety”, does not necessarily mean that the students are interested in learning every part of the subject. Most students are not prepared for the fact that they would have to acquire some knowledge about language history from two thousand years back in time and their motivation may not be on top.

In its form and method, the reflections in this paper are based on a type of case study. “A critical question for all researchers employing cases as the basis for their research is, ‘What is this a case of?’ This question focuses researchers’ (and readers’) attention on distinguishing the phenomenon of interest from the studied unit or instance.” (Schwandt and Gates 2018: 342). Schwandt and Gates (ibid.) point out that defining a case may be problematic and that there is significant variation in the ways in which case study is understood. The overall topic/perspective was initiated by the ERL event *Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?* Within this topic, my case consists of the changed learning conditions for a group of 25 students “attending” classes in Norwegian languages history, which is a part of the one-year study programme in Norwegian language and literature at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. I put “attending” in quotes because it may not be clear to what extent all students that were logged on actually attended the classes. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all classes were changed from being physical lectures in an auditorium to being held via the digital platform Zoom, making it possible for teachers and students to sit at home or another convenient place other than the auditorium and communicate through their computers or mobile devices. According to privacy-protecting restrictions in Norway, the students could not be forced to use their camera during the lectures (the law is not clear in this respect, see e.g. Datatilsynet (The Norwegian Data Protection Authority 2021). As a result, the majority of students chose to have their camera off and, thus, the teacher could only see the students’ names on black squares instead of the students’ possible facial and bodily feedback during the lectures.

Going from classroom teaching to online teaching is, of course, a dramatical pedagogical change in many respects and the challenges associated with black screens during online teaching have been discussed in many different forums during the pandemic (some random references might be Colucci 2020, Heaton 2020, Pitts 2020). The lack of face-to-face communication is in many respects more severe in language teaching and learning than in many other disciplines. However, the Norwegian language history course deviates from ordinary language learning courses in the way that the students do not have to learn to speak or write Ancient Nordic or Old Norse. The learning goals of the course are restricted to acquiring knowledge about the alphabets, the sound systems and (assumed) pronunciation and the grammatical systems in comparison to Modern Norwegian. Hence, there are some interesting differences between typical foreign language learning or second language

learning and learning to compare a dead language to a living language. One important factor in language learning, as in all learning, is *motivation* (e.g. Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011). When it comes to second language learning and foreign language learning, the success rate in terms of reaching a high level of competence is according to sociocultural learning models like e.g. Dörnyei (2009) or Norton (2013) closely tied to motivation and the vision of a so-called future self or an imagined identity, i.e. the acquisition of another language will usually be easier if the learner is motivated and has a more or less concrete vision of him- or herself as a user of that language in a language community.

There may be some academic circles or individuals who would be able to speak or write Ancient Nordic or Old Norse to some degree. Speaking or writing Ancient Nordic would be very difficult in practise because the recorded vocabulary is way too limited to be able to have a normal conversation. Speaking and/or writing Old Norse would be much easier because of the comparably extensive text corpus of saga literature and other sources and the possible references to Modern Icelandic. However, under normal learning circumstances, an average student would not have an Old Norse speech community to relate to. Returning to the question “What is this a case of?”, one could say that the topic is a somewhat “amputated” case of language learning in that respect that it lacks typical aspects like active speaking, writing and social interaction in a language community. This may lead to motivational and learning challenges by itself. However, the concrete case under investigation and the research question is whether the change from classroom teaching to online teaching of a dead language like e.g. Old Norse may have positive or negative consequences.

The question of possible positive or negative impacts on the teaching and learning of, for instance, Old Norse arose through the 3rd ERL Online Session in March 2021 where the overall topic was “Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?” and the upcoming ERL Journal #5 that would be dedicated to the same topic. I did not initially plan to conduct a study related to this topic, and by March 2021, my language history course was almost finished. Hence, to be able to contribute to a broader discourse on linguistic education within the context of the Educational Role of Language framework, I had to see things in retrospect. Schwandt and Gates (2018: 342-343) list a variety of definitions and ways to conduct a case study. Several of the definitions or descriptions would fit my aim, e.g.:

- The study of the particularity and complexity of a single case. ... Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case. (Stake, 1995, pp. xi, 4)
- [...]
- The study of a social phenomenon:
[...]
- By monitoring the phenomenon during a certain period or, alternatively, by collecting information afterwards with respect to the development of the phenomenon. ...
[...]
- Where the researcher, guided by an initially broad research question, explores the data and only after some time formulates more precise research questions, keeping an open eye to unexpected aspects of the process by abstaining from pre-arranged procedures, and operationalisations

The overall, broad research question was “Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?”, initiated by the ERL Association. Since my language history course was almost over by the time I decided to contribute to the broader discourse, I had to collect information and formulate more precise research questions afterwards. “Covid – A Source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?” is, obviously, a very broad question. Relating this question to my case, the Norwegian language history course involving among other topics Ancient Nordic, Old Norse and Middle Norwegian, the more precise research question would, then, be whether the change in teaching and learning conditions from classroom lectures to online lectures yielded any pedagogical/didactic threats (cons) or opportunities (pros) in my class. But instead of questionnaires and organised student feedback, I had to base my reflections on my own observations from my side of the screen. In that respect, the current presentation is a descriptive case study (Schwandt and

Gates 2018: 346). Even though the question of a case being representative or generalisable is not necessarily relevant in descriptive case studies (cf. Schwandt and Gates 2018: 347), it would be only natural to try to see teaching and learning of dead languages in an online-learning context in comparison to foreign language learning and second language learning and the more general context of language learning. The overall question of threats and opportunities implies a hypothesis that the changed teaching and learning conditions, in fact, may have both negative and positive effects. In that respect, this case study is also a form of hypothesis testing (cf. Schwandt and Gates 2018: 349). Since the concrete question of threats and opportunities in linguistic education was a topic of the ERL Association and the topic of this ERL Journal issue, it is also natural to relate the topic to the overall perspectives of ERLA.

Discussion

Even though Covid-19 restrictions led to a sudden stop of most classroom activities at Norwegian universities and colleges in March 2020 (as everywhere else in the world), there was a certain optimism when the new academic year started in August that year. Therefore, most students were able to sit in the auditorium and attend the first semester of their one-year study of Norwegian language and literature. The obvious advantage for me as a teacher was the fact that I could see all the students at the same time while communicating with them. While talking and giving them important information, I could have eye contact with most students and I was able to see their faces and read their gestures, which was a great help when trying to determine whether I should repeat something or make it clearer, or whether I should continue. I could also use my own body language to invite the students to engage and ask questions (see e.g. Mey 2001: 223). Direct contact with single students or minor groups of students was easy and made dialogue possible. All these aspects are the well-known pros of classroom teaching, cf. e.g. Johnson (2009: 63):

Teaching as dialogic mediation involves contributions and discoveries by learners, as well as the assistance of an “expert” collaborator, or teacher. Instruction in such collaborative activity is contingent on teachers’ and learners’ activities and related to what they are trying to do. The assisting teacher provides information and guidance relevant to furthering learners’ current goal-directed activity. Both information and guidance need to be provided in a way that is immediately responsive and proportionate to the learners’ varying needs.

Classroom dynamics are an important aspect of teaching. As opposed to teaching in primary or secondary school where the teacher normally follows a class many hours a week over several years, teaching in higher education is most often limited to one or two semesters, and maybe even as little as just one or two hours during the week. Naturally, it is not equally easy to get to know your students compared to a school class. However, based on many years of experience, one might have developed a certain intuition that would help interpret the habits of some students. Often students choose to sit in the same seat (see e.g. Chandra 2018), and often the choice of placing yourself in the auditorium may say something about your personality and preferences (see e.g. Totusek and Staton-Spicer 2015 or Dortch 2015). Even though I do not know my students very well, the geography of the classroom helps me adapt my teaching. The group dynamics of the classroom also strengthen the “communication contract”, i.e. it is more difficult to not engage in a dialogue when everyone is in the same room looking directly at you. The “communication contract” associated with teaching would normally also dictate that one would try to pay attention and that one would not engage in other, non-academic, activities while being in this context, cf. e.g. Mey (2001: 71): “Communication, furthermore, requires people to cooperate; the bare ‘facts’ of conversation come alive only in mutually accepted, pragmatically determined context.” To some extent one might even speak of common courtesy and politeness (see e.g. Mey 2001: 79, 268). You just behave in accordance with the rules and conventions in the society. There are, of course, certain rules that follow with a teaching context (see e.g. Widdowson (1990: 181) on the roles of teacher and learner). Even though it might not be obligatory in all cases, normally it is expected that the students actually attend every lecture. Group dynamics might enhance this. It is much more visible when a student does not attend

a lecture, and normally all eyes would be on the one student being late for class. One could even risk to get a comment from the teacher in front of the entire group.

Even though the fall semester 2020 started with ordinary physical classroom lectures, there soon came group-size limits and eventually more or less all physical classroom teaching stopped, and the universities and colleges went over to online teaching for students and home office for teachers. “Luckily”, this was the second time in 2020 the universities shut down, so in the meantime, many teachers and students had had a chance to get acquainted with online platforms like, for instance, Zoom or Teams. Hence, the purely technical aspects did not represent a great challenge. In January 2021, then, the second semester with, among other courses, the language history course started for the same group of students that I had met in the auditorium once a week on Monday mornings from 8:15-10:00 in August 2020 and then on Zoom at the same time during the rest of the first semester.

Obviously, the whole Covid-19 situation had an impact on the psychology and motivation of students and people in general. Out of 25 students enrolled, only 10-13 (sometimes even fewer) chose to attend the lectures after they were held on Zoom, i.e. a drop of 50 %. It must be said that it is statistically normal that the student presence at lectures drops during the semester when it is not mandatory, especially in subjects that require a lot of reading and discussions are more difficult because of the nature of the subject. However, this was a rather dramatic and sudden drop. As a teacher, one immediately starts wondering whether there was something wrong with the physical lectures and whether the students just needed a reason to stay away. Clearly, this kind of sudden absence of students has a negative impact on the motivation of the teacher, cf. e.g. Mey (2001: 270):

When it comes to actual conversation, the assumption is again that people across cultures will obey certain rules of collaboration in order to make conversation happen and have the flow of talk to progress as smoothly as possible. This is the principle behind the well-known rules for turn-taking that conversation analysts must be given due credit for having formulated in much persuasive detail. Still, a lingering doubt remains. What if people decide not to be cooperative?

Not only did the attendance drop, after some lectures, more and more student cameras went black and at the end, there were only two or three students who chose to show themselves on camera. The black screens became a nationwide and worldwide topic when academics debated teaching online (cf. the method section above). With no students on screen, the teacher is deprived of the possibility to read their faces and body language and dialogue between teacher and students seems impossible. This brings the term “addressivity” to mind, cf. Mey (2001: 271):

The term ‘addressivity’ was originally coined by the Russian linguist and semiologist Mikhail M. Bakhtin. In his understanding, it denotes a constant quality of speech: namely, the fact that any utterance is addressed to somebody, every utterance is ‘dialogic’. Basically, addressivity is the “quality of turning to someone” (1994:99), a quality which Bakhtin then uses to develop his theory of ‘speech genres’. (See further Mey 1999: chs 4.3.3 and 6.2.3.)

One could equally well just have recorded the lecture beforehand and uploaded it so that the students could have streamed it whenever it suited them. Principally, not being able to see the students is a major con (threat) of online teaching. But that already seems to be the common opinion. Would it, then, be possible to detect some positive aspects (opportunities) of teaching language history on screen instead of in an auditorium, as indicated by the implicated hypothesis in the question of threats or opportunities?

At our university, there are many different auditoriums and lecture rooms in different sizes, and sometimes the class must switch rooms because of availability. Even with just ten or twenty students, one might sometimes have to use an auditorium that would take 50, 100 or even 200 students. And, as we all know as teachers, some students tend to sit in the back no matter how few students there are in the group or how large the auditorium is. That means that some students, theoretically, might be sitting ten or fifteen metres away from the teacher and the board or canvas in the room. Another physical challenge of the auditorium might be the size of the board or canvas. Smartboards, for instance, are usually smaller in size than the canvas of a projector that often may fill

half of the wall or more. Hence, not everything is that easy to read or view from the back row. Now that every student sat at home in front of a computer, the distance was 50 centimetres on average and the focus was more or less entirely on the screen, given that the students were not involved in other activities – which we are not able to see or control in any way. This, is of course, a pro of online teaching as long as the lecture is based on presentations and lecturing more than dialogue and discussion. For instance, when presenting an inscription of a rune stone, it is much easier to see the details of the inscription when sitting in front of a computer screen compared to sitting in the back row in an auditory. When trying to go into detail, all the focus would be on the topic on the screen instead of many other possible distractions. For instance, runic inscriptions on stones are often difficult to read after more than thousand years exposed to the forces of nature. Viewing a runic stone on a canvas ten or fifteen metres away is not necessarily optimal when trying to focus on the thin lines that are supposed to be runic letters. The students may possibly just see some kind of stone pillar which might not exactly trigger great interest and even fortify the perception of Ancient Nordic and Old Norse as “old-fashioned” and not relevant today (cf. ERL Language Beliefs and Language Affect). Having the stone right in front of oneself just half a metre away, on the other hand, makes the feeling of actually studying a real object much more realistic.

Runic inscriptions are written with the runic alphabet, i.e. letters that are unfamiliar to most of the students. When teaching in an auditorium, I usually let my students look at a short inscription with the help of a table with the runic alphabet and the corresponding Latin letters. The students can talk to each other and, naturally, they would also hear other students comment on the words in the inscription even though they for some reason do not choose to work together with another student. The oldest varieties of Norwegian are not supposed to be a big part of language history. I just want to let the students get an understanding of the runic alphabet and the challenges associated with interpreting inscriptions. So how do we deal with this in front of a group of students represented by black screens? I could, of course, ask the students to study the inscription for themselves for a few minutes before I continue with my lecture. However, with the black screens, I would have no way of telling whether they actually did this, or whether I just created a new “dead zone” in my lecture where I risk losing the students’ attention – given that I had it until that point. I could also use so-called breakout rooms and force the students to talk to each other in small groups for a couple of minutes. But that too does not seem to be an option when all the students hide behind black screens and you do not even know whether they actually follow your lecture or not. One way of handling this would be to announce beforehand that one would use breakout rooms in the next lecture – which would probably lead to a further drop in attendance, but those students who choose to attend would be prepared to collaborate. But, then again, the old Norwegian varieties are not supposed to take that much space in the curriculum, so one has to consider whether one wants to make a great effort for the smaller topics in a lecture.

One aspect of language teaching and learning is phonology. The students are not expected to learn to pronounce or speak Ancient Nordic or Old Norse. However, because of the limitations of the runic alphabet where one letter sometimes could represent two or more different sounds, trying to pronounce the sounds and “taste” them can be a great help in the understanding of the runic alphabet. Take, for instance, the first three words in one of the inscriptions I use in my lectures – transferred to Latin letters: *kunuur kirþi bru*. When trying to switch between voiced and unvoiced consonants and different vocal qualities, i.e. try and “taste” the sounds in the mouth, it might be possible for the students to detect a connection between the runic inscription and Old Norse standard writing: *Gunnvǫr gerði brú* and Modern Norwegian: *Gunnvor gjorde (ei) bru* (English: ‘Gunnvor built (a) bridge’). I find this kind of work much easier in a classroom than on Zoom. Speaking in ERL terms, this kind of *Language Activity* may be positive for the *Language Beliefs* and the *Language Affect* of the students. They may believe (understand) that also the older varieties of Norwegian were real languages, spoken by real people, and they may accept that it is useful to know something about these language stages and the development since then. Some students might even find these varieties “cool” and interesting which has an impact on their language affect. In my case, forty years ago, it led to further studies and a doctor’s degree in Old Norse grammar. So, everything

can happen. It may also be the case that the lack of the visible and audible peer-group motivates to pronounce the sounds and words while sitting in front of their screens. In that case the study situation may represent a pro. However, an attempt from my side as a teacher to compensate for the lack of physical experience was to elaborate my PowerPoint presentations in such a way that they might inspire to try this at home when the students (hopefully) download the lecture afterwards and work with the content on their own. Both the drop in student attendance and the lack of direct dialogue and collaboration led to more detailed PowerPoint presentations to compensate for that. Furthermore, I added repetition questions after every PowerPoint lecture to enhance the students' learning process. If the students were not able to answer a question immediately, he or she could just read and search through the PowerPoint again to find the answer. This kind of presentation enhancement may be seen as a positive result of the Covid-19 situation.

There may also be some other positive sides of "the Covid-19 way" of teaching. For the teaching of dead languages, the cons are naturally not that severe. The students are not expected to learn to speak the older varieties and there is no speech community to relate to or be a part of. From that perspective, it is mostly about theoretical skills and not practical language skills. In a language learning context, this means that we are, first of all, interested in declarative knowledge as opposed to procedural knowledge which "is an old distinction made in philosophy, between 'knowledge about' and 'knowledge how to' (Johnson 2001: 104). Within language teaching and learning, there is a debate about whether declarative knowledge is "necessary" since there is normally more focus on the procedural skills. Many language learners manage to master a second or foreign language rather well without being conscious about grammar and rules (see e.g. Johnson 1996: 104). But when the goal is not to learn to speak a language and be able to relate to another language community, the procedural knowledge is limited to being able to explain grammatical development and differences. From that perspective, this is grammar learning and not language learning. In the context of sociocultural learning theories, learning a dead language comes with some cons on its own. For instance, terms like *L2-self* and *identity* from approaches like Dörnyei (2009) and Norton (2013) would be more or less meaningless in this context. The students are not expected to develop or imagine another identity or alternative self-related to Ancient Nordic or Old Norse. The purpose of the course is rather to enhance the awareness about Modern Norwegian, i.e. the first language and identity. From that point of view, learning a dead language also lacks some of the motivating factors that come with learning a living language. There are no direct positive or negative social effects of not being able to communicate in a dead language since there is no-one to communicate with. That being said, especially when it comes to Greek and Latin, some students might, of course, try to master the languages to a certain degree and build their own small speech communities. But this almost never happens with Ancient Nordic (which has a way too small documented vocabulary) or Old Norse (which is also rather limited in vocabulary for modern times). At best, some students get inspired and wish to learn the closest relative to Old Norse, Modern Icelandic, where one can use most of the grammar and gets a modern vocabulary and, first of all, a living speech community. However, due to the very limited direct contact between the teacher and the students and between the students on Zoom, chances are minimised with respect to recruiting new future candidates for the study of dead languages. To some degree, one might say that Old Norse as a natural language died because of the great 14th century pandemic, the Black Death. In the same way, it may be possible to say that Old Norse and other dead languages will lose academic ground in today's society due to Covid-19. That remains to be overserved in the years to come.

Teaching and learning in an academic context also has an evaluation part in the form of tests or exams. Ordinarily, the students were supposed to have a six hours written exam with exam invigilators at the university without access to any other sources than a dictionary. The second language semester consists of the study of dialects and sociolects, the neighbouring languages Swedish and Danish, Norwegian as a second language and the language history course, covering the oldest times (years 200-1500) and the time after 1500 with a special focus on the 19th century when Norway tried to restore or reconstruct a Norwegian written language. Language history is, thus, just a part of the whole curriculum. Traditionally, the students would have to choose between three or

possibly four questions related to the whole curriculum and choose to answer two of them. Hence, it is often possible to avoid certain topics that the students feel less comfortable with. In order to avoid the fact that many students speculate in this opportunity, the teachers would try to design questions (a short and a long one) that combine two different topics. Due to Covid-19, all ordinary exams were changed to home exams, i.e. the students had six hours at home without any exam invigilators and with all possible sources at their hand, including the “omniscient” internet to write their exam paper. A challenge with older language history as a topic is that it is concerned with certain grammatical “facts”. Hence, it is not that easy to formulate questions that cannot be answered by just checking in the book or on the internet. This is, obviously, also a motivation factor in the students’ study behaviour. Many students just rely on the fact that they will have all the resources necessary available to write their exams at home. Therefore, they skip classes and they often skip reading their textbooks during the semester. This “threat” is not directly related to my case or language learning; it is a general challenge with home exams. However, it may be even more visible when it comes to fact-checking exams like language history compared to more reflecting and elaborating exams.

I have not conducted an organised study between earlier ordinary exams without external resources and home exams with all resources available. However, the overall impression is clear: During Covid-19 with home exams, most students tend to go directly to their textbooks and try to rephrase what they find relevant. The less they have read before or followed the online lecture, the more obvious is their lack of understanding and their ability to extract relevant information from the textbooks. Those students that only use the internet as their source seem to not have opened their textbooks at all during the semester. Most often their exams show a severe lack of source criticism (e.g. they use texts written for or even by lower secondary pupils), and they show a lack of knowledge and ability to determine what is relevant or not. With ordinary exams, we usually expect 15-30 % of the students to fail their exams. However, during this last semester, only one student failed the exam. This may be interpreted as a pro for home exams and the changed conditions, which it is not from a quality point of view. Having all possible sources available during an exam may lead to less reading and actual studying before the exam and, therefore, less knowledge. Furthermore, it is not obvious how one should design exams in grammar and language history related topics in order to make it impossible not to fail the exam with all the textbooks and the internet available.

Teaching and learning language history and grammatical features of dead languages has its challenges. To some degree online teaching and the advantages of computer technology may be a pro, but the limitations when it comes to dialogue and direct contact are still a frustrating aspect of teaching in the age of Covid-19. Most of the threats and opportunities discussed above are equally relevant in other disciplines than language history or language education in general. To draw the attention back to the ERL framework and its premises, the *language beliefs* of the students in the language history course are partly determined by the syllabus and the learning goals. Ancient Nordic and Old Norse are so-called dead languages that the students do not need to learn to speak or write. Consequently, most students believe that knowledge about the grammatical features of these languages are less “important” in the syllabus and in their future life. On the other hand, Old Norse as the language of the Vikings may have a certain status as a “cool” language and, therefore, have some *language affect*. Reading and possibly hearing Old Norse may trigger positive or curious emotions in some students. However, since popular culture and, for instance, the TV series *Vikings*, usually is presented in English, the status and language affect of Old Norse is limited. Still, those students who get interested in older varieties of Norwegian, may experiment with runes or even try to speak some Old Norse words for fun. Hence, the cultural and academic setting may trigger *language activity* related to the topic beyond the obligatory tests and exams. The educational goal of the language history course is a deeper understanding of Modern Norwegian, i.e. *language thinking*. Potentially, thus, if the students actually read their textbooks and study they would be able to develop a critical and investigating view on their own language and the ability to explain certain regularities and irregularities in today’s Norwegian, the development of Norwegian dialects and the still defining situation with two official written Norwegian languages. All these ERL perspectives are not necessarily dependent on the Covid-19 situation. However, the negative impact on the study and

learning behaviour of the students is obvious even though online teaching – potentially – could have enhanced some of these aspects.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to discuss some aspects of teaching and learning a dead language like Old Norse (and Ancient Nordic) during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic that forced lecturing out of the auditoriums to online platforms like e.g. Zoom. The discussion has been twofold: aspects of teaching and learning a dead language have been a topic on its own, while I have tried to identify positive and negative effects of the changed teaching and learning situation caused by Covid-19. Even though we talk about teaching and learning a language, the focus in the language history course is on the development of the Norwegian language from Ancient Nordic via Old Norse and Middle Norwegian to Modern Norwegian and grammatical features of older varieties. Hence, many aspects of traditional language teaching and learning are not necessarily relevant in this context. A crucial point is the fact that the students are not expected to learn to speak or write the language(s). The goal of language history is usually rather to develop language awareness and declarative knowledge regarding the modern variety of the language. With this come motivational challenges that are not necessarily connected to online teaching, but that may be fortified by the lack of dialogue and direct contact. Not necessarily related to language learning is the fact that exams are online and from home with textbooks and internet available as sources and without any exam invigilators. This represents another motivational factor in the way that many students rely on being able to write their exams based on their textbooks. Hence, they are not necessarily motivated to follow online lectures at all, and the quality of the learning and the exam results suffer from this situation.

Trying to answer the question and topic of the present ERL Journal “Covid – A source of threats or opportunities for linguistic education?”, I will conclude with a list of a few pros and cons. However, I will add some question marks to signalize that the claims might need more systematic research.

Pros:

- More elaborated presentations, easier to work with at home
- More comfortable study environment(?)
- More direct focus on teacher and presentation(?)
- Easier to listen and read from home
- Easier to contact teacher after the lecture (?)

Cons:

- Easy to skip lectures and wait for the presentation
- Monologue without (almost) any direct contact with the students
- Lack of facial and bodily feedback
- Limited possibilities for variation
- No way to know/control whether the students understand
- With home exams, it is too easy to rely on presentations, textbooks and other sources which leads to poorer study behaviour during the semester and poorer quality when it comes to exams and knowledge

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Intercultural communication in solving a current global problem: the COVID pandemic

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Abstract

Intercultural communication is a type of social interaction in a multicultural society, which can help to solve problems related to the coexistence of cultures, as well as global problems that affect all people on Earth, regardless of cultural affiliation. Currently, such a problem is the COVID pandemic. In an effort to find solutions that respect the rights and interests of members of all cultures, this paper first introduces the policy of multiculturalism, but it focuses mainly on the importance of intercultural communication in the multicultural society which, among other things, helps the members to realize that fighting against this pandemic and dealing with its consequences is a common good for all of them. They should work together for this good to respect the interests of all people and cultures in the world. At the same time, the COVID pandemic becomes a challenge for ethics to strengthen the cohesion and cooperation of cultures and, from its point of view, to predict a solution for the benefit of everyone.

Keywords: COVID pandemic, cultures, multiculturalism, intercultural communication, common good, ethics

Introduction

In today's multicultural world, globalization processes enable rapid communication between distant countries and continents and, among other things, help people from various cultural, religious or ethnic groups and communities to communicate on solving various issues. Also, with regard to the global problems that accompany phenomena of globalization, the undesirable consequences of these problems more or less affect all inhabitants of the Earth, regardless of culture to which they belong. Their solution should be based on mutual agreements on the values that unite people as participants of different cultures, as well as on the recognition of different values and peculiarities of individual cultures. Also, in respect of this, the attention is paid to the policy of multiculturalism and to intercultural communication. Thanks to this, mutual understanding can be achieved between members of different cultures, which in turn can allow the establishment of satisfactory social order in society and the implementation of cooperation in solving multiple problems, not only those related to their coexistence, but also such urgent issues as the COVID pandemic, which is a common threat to the whole world.

Theoretical background

Multiculturalism and the problem of cultural recognition

The concept of coexistence of people belonging to different cultures and religions in one territory within the legally consistent state, is most often referred to as multiculturalism. It is an approach that refers to culture, respectively to the variety of cultures and relies on the basis of pluralism, on the legitimization of the peculiarities of individual cultures¹, as well as on their members (Jakoubek

¹ The semantic field of the term culture derives from the Latin colere / cultio – machining, processing. Originally, the Latin “colere” connoted a higher quality attribute. It was associated with processes aimed at improving the natural (naturally existing) environment. “Colere” connotes the process and the result of the cultivation process; primarily agricultural crops and livestock. Later, it corresponded to the idea of the mission of human as a rational being capable of developing various

2005). Today's multicultural society is the result of globalization processes. It is the so-called multiculturalism of the global era, i.e. global age, while in democratic society two forms of multiculturalism are most often distinguished: liberal and communitarian.²

We often encounter the sign that multiculturalism is a concept of coexistence, but it needs to be noted that it is not always about peaceful "coexistence," but rather coexistence of members and groups in the multicultural society. Manifestations of intolerance, conflicts and commotions cannot be overlooked. We do not consider the definition of multiculturalism as the concept of coexistence as fully correct, even from the point of semantics view. The linguistic meaning of the word "coexistence" refers to the circumstantial modification of the story, while the above-mentioned characteristic of multiculturalism from a qualitative point of view evokes the idea of peaceful coexistence of cultures and their members in the multicultural society, which may not be applied to every multicultural society. Due to the many societal changes that accompany globalization, cultural diversity has been deepening in societies, and incidents in several countries confirm that it is not always about the peaceful coexistence of members of various cultures.

On the other hand, multiculturalism requires the recognition and protection of the cultural and racial diversity of society as a fundamental feature of its identity. We find the requirement of recognition of the equal value of different cultures in contemporary communitarianism, and as some of its representatives³ emphasize, the coexistence of different cultural units does not mean the loss of the authenticity of the given cultures. Multiculturalism advocates that individual cultures shall complement and intertwine together, not separate from each other. Public policy in the multicultural society also focuses on managing cultural diversity, ensuring mutual respect and recognizing cultural differences within a country. In particular, multiculturalism tries to provide the peaceful coexistence of cultures, while it is important that it will be based on solidary relations.

The policy of multiculturalism should be used to support the socialization of different groups of citizens. It requires the openness of one culture to another, and the assurance of a constructive dialogue which results in the discovery of common and different elements in various cultures. As Taylor stated, "all human cultures, which have filled the lives of society for a long time, are able to say something important to all people" (Taylor 2001: 83). He stresses the need to accept the equal value of different cultures, while noting that we should not only let them live, but we should also accept their value, because he believes that if one group in the multicultural society does not accept the value of another one, it can lead to the disintegration of such society.

Honneth (1997) deals with the problem of recognition in communitarianism. He not only demands legal recognition of the citizens of society, which shall ensure their protection against personal identity violations, but also considers the recognition of difference. This is based on solidarity, thanks to which individuals gain self-esteem in a "morally integrated community" with regard to commonly shared values. In his theory, Honneth pays attention to the mutual recognition of individuals in communities, which takes place in terms of how they can preserve and enhance common values there. He points out that the mutual respect and esteem of the members of community stems more from cultural self-understanding based on common values and common convictions than from the public recognition of the rights and freedoms of others (Cf. Honneth 1997).⁴

forms of the world; but also to improve oneself. Processing, improvement, cultivation in many European languages therefore develops and specifies the "impact" of the basic process of "cultio" (Slušná 2005).

² The genesis of forms of multiculturalism can be observed in the dispute between liberalism and communitarianism. One area where the dispute between liberalism and communitarianism still finds a breeding ground is multiculturalism (see more: Velek 1996). Socio-philosophical stream – communitarianism does not have a unified conception of its learning. It is often referred to as a communitarian critique of liberal theory. Its representatives reject the idea of society in which individuals are interested in creating a favourable cultural environment, can respect each other and can be recognized as dignified beings as well as unique individuals, while being able to participate together in a common culture.

³ See, for example, Taylor (2001), or Walzer (2002).

⁴ A. Adler believed that the basic need of every person is to belong to the human community and to feel that he has a place in it (see more in, Marková and Mandžáková 2014).

Taylor combines the demand for recognition with the policy of multiculturalism and reflects both on a *policy of equal dignity* and on a *policy of difference*. The policy of equal dignity is based on the identical set of rights and freedoms, on the basis of which respect, esteem and recognition belong to each citizen, and on the policy of difference, according to which the peculiarity of individuals or groups, their unique identity, shall be respected and recognized. He thinks that: "Just as all people, regardless of race or culture, must have equal civil rights and equal voting rights, everyone should enjoy from the assumption that their traditional culture has value" (Taylor 2001: 85). According to Taylor, the policy of equal dignity places a sign of equality between the identities of all individuals, so that what the public policy recognizes through equal rights is not the uniqueness of the identities of individuals. It reduces the unique individuals and uniqueness of their lives, goals, to the abstract identity of equality. Therefore, he seeks to complement the equal dignity with the policy of difference, where emphasizing the recognition that is not focused on the abstractly equal identities of human, but on the recognition of unique, authentic identities not only of individuals, and also on the recognition of cultural communities. Taylor advocates a policy of differentiated recognition, which should to some extent respect, albeit not a unique identity, but at least a special identity of certain communities. According to Taylor, such society, which is "blind"⁵ to the differences, can be marked not only as inhuman but also as highly discriminatory, and thus he demands to apply the policy of difference especially in society in which minority cultures exist. Along with these types of policies, he also outlines an ethics of multiculturalism, when requiring from the members of the multicultural society to respect established legal requirements as well as differences, and to prevent discrimination, which stems from the requirement of humanism. Such socialized members are able to communicate with each other about solving various problems. It is the intercultural communication, thanks to which they are able to participate together in solving many problems.

Intercultural communication as a prerequisite for solving problems in current world

We are of the opinion that: "We have many ways to communicate with each other. Sometimes it is not a question of whether we understand each other or know each other, whether we tolerate each other or not, but whether we can live together, acknowledge our perspectives and respect each other. According to this, we finally formulate our mutual dialogue, both at the level of cultures and rights, and between each other" (Solík 2010). Engaging in dialogue, which is the most typical representative of communication, is much more urgent but also more demanding in the community that consists of members of more cultures.

"The starting point for the study of intercultural communication should be mainly three related concepts: communication, culture and interculturality" (Moravčíková 2020: 94). Communication (from Latin *communicare*) can be defined as doing something in a common way, consulting, negotiating, communicating, announcing or exchanging information. The information that is transmitted by communication ceases to be only a private matter and becomes common, social (for more details see: Watzlawick, Bavelasová & Jackson 1999, Janoušek 1984). In general, communication is classified also as conjunctive interaction, it is treated as a basic tool for forming interpersonal relationships, but it also has other functions. Through this interaction, people socialize in groups, communities and societies.⁶ "Human is integrated into the community mainly through comprehensive interpersonal communication and individual communication of acts" (Lomnický et al. 2019: 53).

For example, Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey (1968) characterize communication as the exchange of meanings between people. Nakonečný (2009) characterizes it as a kind of social interaction in which it is a unilateral transfer or exchange of information. Mikulaščík (2010) understands communication as an exchange of meanings between people, using a common system

⁵ This is the so-called "cultural blindness". According to W. Kymlicka (1995), the approach is based on the effort not to discriminate and to ensure equal conditions for all without distinction.

⁶ Social communication, i.e. the communication among people becomes a specific type of communication. This process deals with mutual understanding of people, exchange of opinions, attitudes, information of inner perception of a certain situation to participants of communication.

of symbols. From the above mentioned and also from other definitions of communication, it is clear that communication is a social interaction in which there is the transmission of certain content with a certain meaning. Through communication social structures are interconnected; social management and other ties in society are formed.

Communication has two main aspects: contentual (denotative) and relational (connotative), while the contentual level is the carrier of information and the relational level determines how the information should be understood (Mikulaščík 2010). It is implemented through language, as a system of special character values / signals and symbols / and the rules for their connection. In this way, the meaning is transferred between people, based on the coding of the information by the communicator and the decoding of the information by the communicant which, however, requires the communicator to understand the given language in which the information was encoded. The basis of any successful communication is therefore the effective transmission of information through language and its correct understanding by the recipient. Except for the verbal communication dealing with the questions of effective use of language devices within the process of comprehension there is nonverbal communication. It is an essential complement of the verbal communication as it leans on the use of nonverbal signals (miming, gestures, proxemics, etc. At the same time, in order for the recipient to understand the given information correctly, it is not enough to have the same language in which the information is encoded and decoded. Mutual communication between the participants in communication (agents and percipient, or communicator and communicant) also depends on their value systems. Also for this reason, intercultural communication can be a much more demanding type of communication than the communication in a society composed of members of one common culture, intercultural communication is the type of communication that transcends the borders of the home State.

Intercultural communication⁷ is one of the relatively young fields of study in the world. The beginnings of its formal research date back to the 1940s, when it was a part of the linguistic and cultural training of American diplomats. Hall also drew from this environment of nonverbal signal use in his book "The Silent Language" (1959), which became the starting point for many other works in the field of intercultural communication. Gradually, experts began to deal more thoroughly with the study of communication in the context of culture, and at the same time the study of cultures in terms of the laws of communication. Intercultural communication is interdisciplinary, based on intercultural psychology, and many other disciplines are involved in its research.⁸ Methodologically, it approaches the overcoming of cultural differences. It is determined by the specifics of languages, cultures, mentalities and value systems of communicating partners. Its aim is to achieve mutual understanding between members of cultures in the private sphere, in public, and as pointed above, understanding in the multicultural society about rights and freedoms is considered particularly important. Based on them, the members of such societies develop policy which allows them free realization.

"Mutual pre-understanding – the assumption that people understand each other in a short period of time of their life story, it means, they will interconnect personal transgenerational experience⁹ – is related not only to the educational, but also to the socialization and enculturation process. Today's society is no longer limited by the borders of one State, or the continent, and we do not even talk about the virtual world" (Vadíková 2015: 50). Individuals from different cultural contexts enter into

⁷ Intercultural communication is also a scientific discipline that examines the connections between language and culture, interactions between people and / or groups with different cultural backgrounds, and thus the perception and understanding of the world in different ethnic, racial or religious communities. Its aim is to streamline communication between individuals or groups, increase intercultural awareness. It emphasizes perception in a dual perspective, by which it methodically approaches the overcoming of cultural differences (Moravčíková 2020).

⁸ In linguistics, rather a narrower definition of intercultural communication is treated: "When we are dealing with the interpersonal communication situation between participants of different cultural groups, we can mark this interaction as the intercultural communication" (Litters 1995).

⁹ Regarding the term transgeneration we suppose the life story of a particular person reflecting the message of the previous generations and living their own life stories as an input for current but also future generations (Cf. Vadíková 2015).

communication situations, interact, and their mental schemas are influenced by different ways of thinking, patterns of behavior, patterns of perception, different value orientations, etc. (Mikulášová & Mikuláš 2014). It brings many positive benefits, such as getting to know foreign cultures, cultural enrichment, education, democratization, cooperation, and also raising intercultural awareness. This allows us to understand ourselves by confronting our diversity. But this understanding first requires a dialogue in which “we all shall recognize the equal value of different cultures” (Taylor 2001: 80). At the same time, it is worth noting that intercultural communication can also bring negative phenomena – such as misunderstandings that can lead to military or terrorist attacks, or other kinds of conflicts.

Intercultural communication is based on pluralism, which refers to the state of existence of diverse worldview aspects interpreted on spiritual, cultural, as well as value levels. According to G. Sartori, such pluralism evokes the need for a discussion with diversity, through which we reach not only a true awareness of ourselves, but also an understanding of it. This pluralism, according to Sartori (2005), brings the discussion with the difference through which we get to true realization of us but also to the understanding. “From the point of view of pluralism, diversity and dissenting views are among the values that enrich the individual and his political community” (Sartori 2005: 16).

Similarly, J. S. Mill (1995) considers cultural diversity to be the source and basis of the wealth of the whole community. Although in his famous essay he primarily tried to defend the freedom of the human individual in society, he also indirectly defended the plurality of opinions, beliefs, or ways of life, while emphasizing that they require tolerance. He was thinking about the question as to what European nations actually do to belong to a perfective and not to a stagnant humanity. The answer is that although individuals, groups, and nations differ from each other and have taken different paths, each of these paths had led to something valuable. According to him, Europe as we know it exists due to its progress and versatility built from the plurality of paths. Mill notes that in each era, there were those who were intolerant to each other, but their efforts to confound the development of others had very rarely a lasting success. Also by this, he tried to indicate that the development and progress are possible thanks to the confrontation of diverse views and beliefs of members of cultures and mutual tolerance (Mill 1995). On behalf of dignified coexistence and mainly cooperation, mutual understanding is required in many areas of life, despite many differences. At the same time, according to him, this understanding leads to the solution of problems that concern the multicultural society. As we still have a lot of unsolved problems in multicultural society and a lot more appear, it means that mutual understanding of cultures and finding solutions means a difficult task that is essential in every period and historical time. We can achieve it on the basis of dialogue, which is at the same time intercultural, and which is based on the acceptance of the plurality of worldviews, customs, traditions or rituals in the communication of other cultures but also forms and expressions of culturally different but equal languages.

This is obviously evident also for the European Parliament, which declared 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (for more details: European Parliament 2008). It ran from January to December 2008, and the aim was to show that this enormous diversity across Europe can be to our advantage if we can manage it at a high civilizing level. Throughout that year, various activities were organized to encourage every European to take advantage of the huge cultural heritage, as well as of the opportunities to learn and draw on different cultural traditions. The European Parliament has thus shown considerable interest in strengthening intercultural communication aimed at improving relations between nations, ethnicities, religions and other cultural communities within the European Union. Intercultural dialogue is considered to be one of the main ways of preventing misunderstandings, conflicts, and disrespect in the area of freedom of religion and belief. In this context, Asma Jahangir¹⁰ expressed the belief that if intercultural dialogue is successful, it is possible that it will really strengthen tolerance, respect and understanding (Ibid).

On the basis of intercultural communication, it is possible to seek and find that what connects people or, on the contrary, to emphasize the differences between them.¹¹ In this process of mutual

¹⁰ United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

value activity, there is an interaction of values and value orientations of communication participants, while as mentioned above, the important prerequisite for successful intercultural communication of communication participants is the agreement on some common values, but also intercultural competencies¹² of participants, representatives of individual cultures, etc. Through intercultural communication, problems should be solved that relate not only to the coexistence of cultures and their members in society, but also in general – to the life in the globalized world. In this world, we encounter several types of global problems that affect practically all people on Earth. They appear in specific forms (State, regional, etc.) and are also referred to as global. They are accompanied by global and transnational threats, such as climate change or pandemic.

Průcha concisely characterizes intercultural communication as a reflection of a real existing phenomenon, which occurs daily and which significance is constantly growing due to the growing globalization tendencies in many spheres of human activity (Průcha 2010). An example of this is also the COVID pandemic, which in today's globalized society, affects people without distinction and regardless of their cultural affiliation or the territory in which they live.

Research methodology

The paper comes from the theoretical research and qualitative analysis of sources that are information sources from the fields of some social sciences and humanities (social philosophy, sociology, social pedagogy, etc. It is based on the definition of multiculturalism, and on the work of some representatives of the socio-philosophical direction – communitarianism. The attention is firstly paid to the policy of multiculturalism that is used for supporting socializing of various groups of people in multicultural society. It requires the openness of one culture towards another one and helps leading constructive dialogues of cohabitation and other challenges. Its establishment and implementation clearly presupposes, among other things, also intercultural communication.

In the next part of the paper, intercultural communication defined through theoretical sources, primarily as a type of social interaction, while at first the phenomenon of communication is explained through sociology and linguistics, and then intercultural communication.

We posit that the study of intercultural communication should be based on three related concepts: communication, culture, and interculturality, with the main focus on the social aspect of intercultural communication. Our main goal is to point out its importance in the socialization of members of the multicultural society, as well as in achieving cooperation in solving problems, including global problems. The main attention is focused on the importance of intercultural communication in solving a current global problem – the COVID pandemic. It is one of the ways of how to develop and support successful global cooperation on solving coronavirus pandemic and it needs to rely on common values.

Regarding the fact that the pandemic is afflicting people around the world, it is a problem that requires the cooperation of experts from various scientific disciplines and various parts of the world. The article points out the important place of intercultural communication in political discussions and in the discussions of some experts in international forums and in scientific communities. It is noted that the COVID pandemic is also a current problem for global bioethics, and its solution requires the implementation of intercultural dialogues between experts from this field, while on behalf of the

¹¹ In this respect, intercultural communication is about the combination of ethical universalism and particularism. Particularism is based on the experience of connection, through which we realize that we are connected with lives of others (Jurová 2013: 175). At the same time, it can be agreed that it is a universalist requirement, as it requires the recognition of all groups (Ibid). On the other side, particularism highlights relationships and stable ties to the community that help its members in moral and mental development. These are the benefits that shall be recognized and protected, even at the expense of universalist ideas.

¹² Intercultural competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) can be understood as: 1) the ability to interconnect the initial and target culture; 2) the sensitivity toward culture and the ability to identify and use various strategies needed to interact with members of other cultures; 3) the ability needed to fulfil the role of cultural mediator between own and foreign culture, and the ability to deal effectively with misunderstandings and conflicts of intercultural character; 4) the ability to overcome stereotyped relations (Council of Europe 2017).

common good – which is gaining the collective immunity – there is a call for the shift from particularism and for the adoption of the universally valid norm aimed at the benefit of everyone.

Results and discussion

Solving the current global problem: The COVID-19 pandemic through intercultural communication

There is no doubt about the negative effects of the globally spreading COVID-19 pandemic on human life in all parts of the world, and no doubt about the changes in global social dynamics. It is important to realize that this is global problem that requires global solutions. We agree with the opinion of prof. J. Bryson, that “The future of humanity requires the development of a new form of effective global governance that will develop and implement effective solutions of global problems” (Bryson 2021). Currently, according to him, the problem is that our management structures are based on the protection of a defined territory and people instead of the protection of humanity (Ibid.). It cannot be denied that States, politicians and other subjects around the world are starting to realize the need for cooperation in order to ensure a safer world for life. For example, the EU and its Member States are cooperating on strengthening national healthcare systems and are currently working to prevent the spreading of COVID-19. At the same time, they are adopting measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the disease and to support recovery. In this regard, the European Commission has presented a proposal for a transatlantic agenda, which includes areas: common work for a healthier world – while the priority is the mentioned pandemic; working together to protect the planet and prosperity; working together on technologies, trade and standards; and working together on a safer, more prosperous and more democratic world. At the same time, the EU wants the U.S. government to support global cooperation against the coronavirus pandemic, too. More specifically, this means cooperating in the global distribution of vaccines, tests and treatments, facilitating trade with basic sanitary goods, as well as reforming the World Health Organization (Euractiv 2020). The proposal concerns mainly political cooperation, which will involve people from various cultures. As in solving of other global challenges, as well as in solving the coronavirus pandemic, it is expected from people to work together in the world, regardless their cultural background. The question arises: What common values should cooperation of people as representatives of various cultures be based on? That is the question for politicians, politologists, sociologists but also economists and ethicians.

We consider intercultural communication based on common values to be one of the ways to develop and support successful global cooperation in addressing the coronavirus pandemic. The common values should guide the behaviour of individuals and groups as members of the global world, while with common shared values the ethical norms are creating on which the global ethics is based.¹³ Intercultural communication arises from the awareness of global belonging and co-responsibility, and encourages solidarity as well as commitment in the common good. Although the multicultural community is not based on a single philosophy, a single religion, a single moral, and therefore common values, this does not mean that its members shall not recognize some of the same values, moral norms, and common ideals. As H. Küng points out, today there is a general agreement that: “Without a minimum basic consensus on certain values, norms, and attitudes, human dignified coexistence cannot be possible in a small or large community” (Küng 1992: 3). Finally, the policy of equal dignity is based on this view too.

The former French president Giscard d'Estaing emphasized that: “Solidarity is the cornerstone of our Union and it must play even bigger role in the times of crisis in order to reaffirm its strength and the fact that these are not just empty words. As Europeans, we must understand that this is not a zero-sum game – we are winning or losing together” (Giscard d'Estaing 2020). At the same time, he calls for the defence of universal values in the world that is committed to the temptation of power struggles, and he emphasizes that: “Our European Union is a union of values based on human

¹³ Global ethics examines ethical issues and problems arising from global interconnection. On the basis of this ethics, the standards are being defined that should guide the behaviour of individuals and collective entities as members and participants on the global basis (Hutchings 2010).

dignity, freedom, democracy, legally consistent state and peace“ (Ibid). These values are the basis for the political integration of its members, as well as for the solution of common problems, and thus also for the current global problem – the COVID pandemic. However, this presupposes further discussions not only in the field of politics, but also in the field of medicine, epidemiology and also in the field of bioethics as well as other areas and scientific disciplines.

Solution for pandemic should rely on a mutual agreement that adjusts recognized values in current political talks among states but also cultures that result in such decisions as for example agreement of EU leaders on donation at least 100 million doses of vaccines in the countries in need. There is no mention on which cultures citizens identify with (Rada Európskej únie 2021a).

Similarly, the pandemic is perceived as a common problem, global problem that touches every person in a globalized world regardless of which culture they are.

The G7 Summit in June this year under the umbrella topic of „recovery for the better“ after the pandemic the communiqué “Our shared agenda for global action to build back better“ was agreed. The summit leaders regardless of cultural or country origin discussed provision of vaccines via COVAX¹⁴, that is a pillar of vaccines in terms of ACT – Accelerator, the instrument against COVID-19 to those who need it most. Apart from that they communicated the problems such as economic recovery, geopolitical challenges, business and development, support of open societies and democratic values, protection of environment (Rada Európskej únie 2021b).

Not all the countries have been involved in such talks and even if they do, it is not easy to consider all the results of such agreements in their home countries. As it is stated: “Despite pressure from religious groups, the government banned travel around these restricted areas to slow the spread of the disease. However, a group of religious people ignored the resolutions of the National Headquarters for Combating COVID-19 and spontaneously attended these shrines, and even licked the shrine, which is a very polluted place.“ (Jafari and Gharaghani 2020: 470). Use of religious leaders in limitations of spreads of epidemics and infectious diseases seems to be a very useful strategy. The leaders are able to articulate the agreed policies in their communities. It is one of the most useful strategies in the countries with low education. Via these leaders and religious organizations it can be reached that for example the citizens in Iran can understand how dangerous are religious gatherings in the times of pandemic (Ibid). It also points at the significance of communication in the cultural scope that is initiated by the authority – a religious leader. Thus, rather than intercultural communication or political talks, the fight against the pandemic relies more on interpretation of the COVID problem to the leaders and the solutions to the agreed solutions from the summit. At the same time it can be assume that the restrictions regarding the pandemic will be in Iran determined by cultural specifics.

Intercultural dialogues of bioethical experts on international forums

Solution of COVID pandemics assumes other discussions, not only in the field of politics but also medicine, epidemiology, but also other scientific fields. The social function of science and all scientific fields lies in the fact that the most general aim that we are thriving for is good life, quality life, sustainable life and sustainable development, happiness, health and justice. Therefore it is natural that the ethics tries to reflect on different sides and views of life through various social spheres and fields (Klimková 2017: 12).

Current global bioethics also offers moral alternatives for the creation of normative criteria for solving this problem, as well as other problems.¹⁵ Until now, however, in the multicultural world, it has only taken a stand on issues such as the auctioning of human kidneys, the sale of human embryos via the Internet, female circumcision, or biopiracy, as a few examples. We are of the opinion that it is also necessary to look for the basis for global bioethics through intercultural communication. As in the creation of norms in politics, it should be based on universal human rights,

¹⁴COVAX is a global initiative focused on a fair approach towards COVID-19 vaccines under the supervision of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, WHO and The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation (CEPI).

¹⁵ P. Sýkora drew attention to the acute need for global bioethics (see more in, for example, Sýkora 2007).

but at the same time on global “bioethical rights”, which reflect the contradiction between ethical universalism and particularism.¹⁶

It can be assumed that intercultural communication, with which we should reach a convention on the issue of solving the COVID pandemic, will bring certain solutions only in the countries of the West, respectively rich North, that look on the issue of human rights, including bioethical rights, conventionally. These countries more or less respect the key international bioethical documents¹⁷ which are not legally binding, but they have significant impact on the formation of bioethical standards in the world.

For global bioethics, the Covid pandemic is current problem the solution of which requires the implementation of several intercultural dialogues carried out by experts in international forums, but also in scientific communities, through the mass media and the like. Although global bioethics has so far focused mainly on the individual patient to protect his autonomy, today, in the context of the Covid pandemic, it should focus, for example, on advocating a new ethical tool – a collective immunity. Leading Slovak bioethicist P. Sýkora states in this context: “Collective immunity obtained by vaccination is the most effective, safest and fastest solution to return society to the normal order, from which everyone will benefit” (Sýkora 2021). In this respect, global bioethics should be based on the empirical results of biomedical research, on the basis of which it is possible to establish the common good for all people in the world, and thus the acquisition of collective immunity. It is an ethical universalism, a unified “law” or a universally valid norm that is for the benefit of everyone.

Through intercultural communication, it is possible to adopt some other compromises when dealing with the Covid pandemic and subsequently to set normative criteria. The aim of intercultural communication is to achieve the cooperation of States and cultures on the global level, and to find solutions which will not be really “natural” for every cultural or religious tradition, but which will be acceptable on the global scale. However, the question is how many people and from how many countries will engage in such talks within solving this pandemic. Of course, not only in the field of ethics and other humanities and social sciences, but especially in the field of medicine, natural sciences, and other fields of science and social life. We believe that, together with intercultural communication, terms such as discussion, discourse, scientific debate, political negotiation and the like, will be more often used in them. Given that this is a global problem, it will be beneficial to involve people from different cultures and from all parts of the world. The difference of the languages in which they will communicate with each other will probably not be the main problem.

The answer to the question of whether, in addition to vaccines which provide relatively effective protection against the pandemic, there is another, more effective solution to fight the pandemic and stop its spreading or to be effective in treatment, depends on many circumstances. Many people in modern societies seem to believe that the solution to this problem will come from experts of the rich North countries. As in this part of the world the advanced population lives, which is able to carry out demanding scientific research in the field of biomedicine, chemistry and other sciences with the help of modern technologies which, by the way, are quite expensive. When solutions come, we will be happy together. But providing that it will be a common solution, a “common medicine” for all. After all, the Covid pandemic is the common problem in our globalized world, and in accordance with the policy of equal dignity, all people should have the same right to such an invention. At the same time, however, there is a fear that the invention will be appropriated by its author, and thus it will become a valuable product or commodity for him, for which others will have to pay, if they want to live and survive. The question is whether these people, or these countries, will have sufficient means to

¹⁶ Universalism represents global morality. Its classic example is political and legal equality. It does not take into account origins or special relationships, but only objective and impersonal criteria. While particularism is an ethic of commitment, it is based on special and specific relationships, on blood relations and ties, religion, or on the local way of life (Selznick 2002).

¹⁷ It is the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (UNESCO 1997); Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine (Zbierka zákonov 2000); Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (UNESCO 2005) and others, while all of them knot on the internationally established conception of universal human rights.

ensure the sustainability of their own lives. They deserve basic human rights, but what if they fail to acquire the needed means to apply them.

Conclusion

The Covid pandemic has undoubtedly become one of the main topics in the multicultural world. Its solution requires adopting number of measures. The burden lies on the shoulders of politicians and especially experts. But respecting their recommendations concerns all of us. As the policy of equal dignity relying on respect and acknowledgment of every citizen are important in multicultural societies, the citizens of such societies are expected the same, respect, honour and acknowledgment of agreed solutions on international level that are accepted thanks to intercultural communication in politics or science.

So far, we rely only on some research results offered to us by the experts from several scientific fields, who continue to communicate about this problem and are trying to solve it. Politicians, local governments and other entities deal with this problem and discuss it intensively at the national and international level. In this case, we can mark intercultural communication particularly beneficial. It is an important conjunctive interaction between people from different cultures, it allows to gather and supplement knowledge, experience, opinions and beliefs, which can then be introduced to other people in individual countries. Not only in the developed countries of the world in which everybody is involved freely but also the societies in which the most citizens rely on their religion. Even if in these less developed countries there is knowledge, experience and accepted solutions on international levels mediated through their religious leader who is an authority for them, everyone has a possibility to engage in the communication in the abovementioned problem. The voluntariness and respect of decisions in developed and less developed countries are very important. People cannot be forced to agree or accept them unconditionally and implement them into their decisions and actions. They have “only” the moral obligation – to decide in favour of the common good, which is, on the basis of existing knowledge – the collective immunity. But for this, they will need only rational judgment and own conscience.

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The role of communication and collaboration in English language teaching during uncertain times – report

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Abstract

Language teaching in the new normal requires patience, creativity, flexibility, and reflection. Both teachers and students are having onerous and laborious situation in coping with all the predicaments and challenges brought about by the disruptive pandemic. This reflective-narrative paper narrates and describes how the author, being a seasoned language teacher, has been coping with the trials and complexities of the new normal. At the end of the anecdotal narration and report, new insights and tips are offered to readers and language teachers who are at the same boat. All struggles of learners and teachers have products and outcomes which are in the form of lessons and experiences making them better individuals despite the ever-changing and challenging dimensions of distance education and home learning.

Key words: *language teaching, communication, collaboration, flexible instruction, pandemic*

Language teaching in the new normal

The situation since last year until now is laborious and stressful. Both language teachers and their students find it difficult to meet using online platform due to some issues like equipment, materials, and connectivity. Communication is filled with complexity and challenge on today's teaching-learning situation. I would like to narrate my professional and personal experiences on language teaching during pandemic time.

The adjustment to handle courses in a new learning environment demands a lot of time. I did not only consider the digital skills but also the connectivity I am using in my class and the situation in which my students are into. Even if the teacher has all the skills and resources to teach the subject, if the students do not have means and resources then things are pointless.

In my school, we have tried modular distance learning and online distance instruction as choices of our students to engage in the process of learning. On its first implementation, we have had layers of glitches and flaws on the process but as time went on it became smooth although until now few challenges are still seen.

This paper aims to present, share, and narrate the personal and professional experiences of the author-researcher by identifying turning points during the time of pandemic. He describes how communication and collaboration played important role in making online teaching and learning inclusive and accessible to all students.

From my own encounter, collaboration and communication were very helpful in sustaining and protecting the social and emotional aspects of students. In developing the macro-skills, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills of students, collaboration and communication have useful and functional roles.

I am always trying to understand the different reasons and stories that my students tell in the class. Others cannot make it in the class due to difficulty in connectivity or insufficient funds to purchase data. As a language teacher and counselor of my own classes, I have to be flexible and reflective on their thoughts and words. I am trying to blend different approaches and strategies that will allow all learners to get access to my lessons and modules in a meaningful way.

I have this segment called "online forum" in which learners get the chance to express their ideas and share their thoughts regarding a particular lesson and experience they have had in the virtual sessions. They can also type their own stories of success and realization during the time of calamity

and pandemic just like what they are experiencing now. From this activity, they can communicate with their classmates, who are members of the community forum. All members can react and comment but of course decorum is strictly implemented. They can also collaborate on the activities, tasks, and projects.

Challenges

Having taken this opportunity to raise some issues on distance learning and language teaching, I would like to present some thoughts of my students regarding the current situation and their reactions. Not only the students are hugely devastated by the impact of pandemic but also their parents. Many companies and schools ceased operations due to decreased profit among others. Some parents do not even know how to start all over again.

Literature review

Marzano and Toth (2014) explain that the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy/approach has limitations. Rather than increasing student outcomes and independence, students may be spending the core of their time just listening. If learners spend most of their time at lower levels of thinking, students may find themselves unready for more challenging assessment tasks.

The significance of linking the part to the whole is a main point from Bailey and Pransky (2014) as they provide guidance in helping students collect information to long term memory. They say that when students are doubtful about the main idea or goal of what they are studying, their brains tend to either frantically search for meaning and connections, which covers precious active memory space, or zone out and give up on knowing what is happening. Simply state, seeing how the parts fit into the big piece helps learning more feasible.

Creating learning experiences that balance teacher explanation and student discovery requires reflection on what a lesson should contain and perhaps even the tasks of the teacher. The professional reward depends on the outcomes of seeing how students successfully carry out tasks and providing feedback to share in their learning and what caught their interests.

Malcolm Gladwell in *David and Goliath* (2013) also shares about a special capacity some people possess for overcoming tremendous adversity in order to achieve victory. A gleaming example of his finding includes a number of students who became successful in their chosen career despite issues on dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Even students graduating from prestigious business schools with MBAs are often lacking the skills employers are seeking for. This was a picture from the message of Bloomberg (Levy & Rodkin 2015). About 614 employers responded to a survey that asked not just about the traits they required from candidates but also their attributes that are most difficult to find. Their results were showcased in a dynamic online graphic called “the skills gap”. Moreover, the survey indicated that these skills which employers most desire among candidates but have most difficulty finding: creative problem-solving, strategic thinking, leadership, and communication skills.

An advance organizer which is a linkage to previous knowledge can provide a way to students for them to acquire information more effectively and demonstrate to students an image of success (Hattie and Yates 2014).

Learner engagement, autonomy, pedagogical tasks, increased opportunities to spend time with students learning through multiple perspectives are good start for a favorable list.

Stations are not only bridge to incorporate movement during sessions. Students can stand to exchange notes, work problems, or play a vocabulary enrichment game. At the very minimum, learners can take a swift stretch break during lesson breaks. Learning stations, by their nature and purpose, can infuse purposeful student movement. Also called centers, learning stations may have an elementary image, but they are an integral instructional device and technique for all ages.

Movitz and Holmes (2007) share their experiences in teaching high school where they incorporated learning stations while handling a medieval unit. One key point on their reflection is that learners don't outgrow their love of learning through hands-on and multisensory tasks. They witnessed increased student participation and more meaningful experiences through stations.

Cooperative learning, on the other hand, can be an effective mixture together and simply asking students to work together lacks the organization and same goals of effective cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is not just working in groups; rather, it is purposive, tactical, and structured instructional strategy that can promote healthy learning environment.

Fielder and Brent (2007) provide logical reasons as to why cooperative learning is attainable and effective. Students can learn better by performing something active, rather than simply sitting and listening. They also believe that cooperative learning benefits smarter students, who are put in the position of having to explain and summarize concepts to team members who contribute to success of the team.

Macmillan (2021) online course offers insight that says building relationships that are meaningful and not just transactional. The teacher has to allocate time in each lesson to learn about the lives of his students. The teacher should find out what inspires students and what they feel passionate about. They can also talk about themselves and value communication practice. With the chance provided by the teacher to understand his students and understand one another, this situation forges stronger bonds among members of the class leading to creating a more supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

It also suggests teachers to be transparent by offering full disclosure on why the teacher presents the lesson and how tasks and materials are designed to help students achieve progress. Explaining the purpose of the tasks, activities, and approaches to students provide them a roadmap for completion and motivation.

Challenges and issues on language teaching during pandemic

Having taken this opportunity to raise some issues on distance learning and language teaching, I would like to present some thoughts of my students regarding the current situation and their reactions. Not only the students are hugely devastated by the impact of pandemic but also their parents. Many companies and schools ceased operations due to decreased profit among others. Some parents do not even know how to start all over again.

Teaching in the time of pandemic has never been easy due to disruptions in connectivity and livelihood of people. A number of students are trying their best to attend online and modular classes because they do not want to be left in learning and interaction. It is the belief of many Filipino students that knowledge and ideas they can get from school will be their weapon for future battle.

As such, I being a language teacher try to provide flexible instruction that can reach learners despite distance and situation we are currently experiencing. I am using communication and collaboration to achieve my objectives for each module being tackled in my online and modular classes. It is pivotal that I am posting reminders and announcements using the google classroom and Facebook as my channels to communicate all thoughts and ideas. Students get the chance to interact and ask their questions while they are included or enrolled on the platform we are using. In addition, I am grouping the students with seven members each. They are allowed to brainstorm, interact, and consult one another. I am employing project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and task-based instruction while all of them are embarked on virtual instruction.

I am making sure that each session, my students are in good shape. This is why I am asking them "how are you" and "how is your day"? This is one way how I can feel their condition and reflection. If they have concerns, I provided a button and platform where they can communicate with me for consultation and guidance.

Despite global disruption of the pandemic, I believe quality education has to go on and continue. In varied ways, flexible teachers can do many things to ensure holistic development of learners. The power of communication and collaboration can help both teachers and students to do their best and unleash their potentials despite threat of the situation. I have this perspective that language teachers need to get more webinar-training session on online teaching and assessment because even after the uncertain time like this, flexible instruction and distance education will never be removed anymore. If all resources and approaches are available, then this kind of modality and instruction has to continue because it allows people from different parts of the globe to collaborate and communicate. learning

together and professional community learning have paved way to gigantic ideas, concepts, and opportunities making students become dynamic and reflective.

Conclusion and insights

This reflective-narrative paper aims to describe and share the experiences of the author as regards language teaching with the use of communication and collaboration. Teaching the macro-skills and vocabulary in the online ESL class may not be easy due to different challenges both teachers and students encounter. From the experiences and observations of the author, it can be said that communication and collaboration as 21st century skills are more than necessary to prepare learners on the present and future challenges of the worksite or workplace by giving them the opportunities to express, interact, share, and collaborate for the success of any lesson or project in the class.

Teachers can support the development of learning skills of students while they allow them with space to respond and evaluate what tasks and activities work best for them. Students can also carry out reflection tasks at the end of each lesson. Teachers can create tick-box evaluation forms to help learners identify what they discovered most engaging and which tasks helped them learn most effectively. Using varied strategies, teachers can offer students alternative routes through the learning jungle that will increase their chances of reaching their temples at the same time, allowing them pick up gold along the way.

In a positive learning environment, learners are engaged, safe, connected, and supported. Healthy and safety issues and efficient communication with both parents and teachers are also highly emphasized for a successful learning outcome. In this aspect, the role of collaboration plays a significant role. By incorporating collaborative and learner-centered strategies, teachers can make a difference in the lives of students hence, preparing them for the real world and the workplace.

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Fostering function of speaking talk as performance

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Abstract

The paper deals with the function of speaking Talk as Performance, which requires special teaching approaches. The theoretical part provides information about adolescent language learners and guidelines for teaching them. The age of the learners at this level, the basic characteristics, the proficiency level based on Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) and International Standard of Classification (ISCED) are discussed as well. Further on, attention is paid to the language skill speaking and basic methodological approaches to speaking are tackled. Finally, the function of speaking Talk as Performance and its implementation to in-class teaching is discussed. The research focuses on the application of three research methods content analysis, observation and interview, the purpose of which is to find which activities promote the function Talk as Performance in two different textbooks used by teenage language learners and to investigate how the function is taught in two different English classes by two different teachers. Subsequently, the research results are analysed within each method.

Key words: *adolescent language learner, speaking skill, functions of speaking, talk as performance, TEFL, content analysis, observation, interview*

Introduction

Teaching and learning speaking skill is a complex process. We speak for many reasons in various situations for different purposes. On one occasion we may want to talk to friends, another time we travel to a foreign country and want to buy a souvenir or ask someone for directions. And then, we might find ourselves at the wedding of our foreign friends and are asked to give a speech. The latter situation represents the function of speaking Talk as Performance. Being able to communicate for this purpose, the English teaching and learning process should involve specific activities for the development of this function. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore how the function Talk as Performance is taught to adolescent learners at lower secondary level.

According to International Standard of Classification ISCED (2011) the age of learners entering ISCED 2 level is usually 10 years. As lower secondary education in Slovakia lasts for five years, after completion of ISCED 2, learners are usually 14 up to 16 years old. The term adolescent or teenager can be applied for learners of lower and upper secondary school level, which means learners from 10 up to 18 years.

Harmer (2007) sees the potential of adolescents in their creative attitudes towards learning and their ability to use abstract ideas for expressing themselves. However, they are still depending on the teacher's guidance that produces intellectual activities in order to make them solve contrasting concepts (ibid). Dörnyei (2005) found out that adolescents are more likely exposed to analysing language when it comes to explaining rather the using memory components like pictures.

Some other characteristics of adolescent English learners are suggested by Scrivener (2011) describing them as enthusiastic learners who might start see themselves as important for the world. He also adds that they appreciate tasks to be well organized and to fulfil their interests. As Harmer (2007) says, with correct objectives during English language lessons, they are the most exciting learners to be taught. He can see positives in their understanding of why they are learning and at the

same time in their willingness to do what they are asked. However, Brown (2004) considers teaching adolescents to be a kind of mystery, especially for teachers of languages.

Theoretical background

Teaching English to adolescents

Although the learning capability of adolescents becomes greater than that of young learners', Ur (1996) sees difficulties in motivating and managing them. For many authors, adolescents are those who are difficult to be taught. Ur (1996) suggests making questionnaires about their expectations in order to prevent weak relationships between teachers and their learners. In order to keep them motivated, it is necessary for teachers to provoke their interests by using exciting materials and topics to be discussed (Harmer, 2007). Such topics are according to British council (n.d.) cars, music, sports, TV, movies, TV series, fashion and celebrities. Another way how to keep them motivated is to display situations in which English is needed (British council, [online] n.d.).

As the contagious topics of their interest have been already mentioned, there are many activities such as watching English videos including those interests or using their favourite TV shows to help them master their language skills (ibid). This is agreed also by another teacher of adolescents, Saumell (2014), who adds that although it might be impossible to cover all individual interests, there should be time to recognise a majority of them. Despite this fact, adolescents might pose a bunch of difficulties for a teacher who does not know how to handle this particular group of learners. Saumell (2014) suggests some more ideas on how to be successful in teaching them. First of all, she suggests building a positive in-class rapport otherwise they will be complaining about everything the teacher says. Once the objectives of the lesson are stated, learners will appreciate being given an option to choose the way how to use their ideas, e.g. using tools to make a presentation on a specific topic or choosing their own topic according their interest in order to enhance their fluency. Scrivener (2011) adds that it is better to ask them to bring their own materials they want to work with. As they are still very playful and competitive, Saumell (2014) suggests the idea to integrate challenges instead of stereotype classes, e.g. creating more difficult tasks, competitions or open-ended tasks that have multiple solutions. Lastly, adolescents suffer from short attention span, which leads to quick boredom; therefore, it might be intriguing to replace routines with new varieties of classroom management.

Budden (2019) alongside with Skeffington (2004) agree that authenticity is a tool to make teenagers talk. Skeffington (2004) pays attention to the different personalities of learners. She suggests that if learners have an opportunity to talk about authentic and personal topics they are motivated to express themselves in language that is not yet familiar to them. Budden (2019) sees teenagers as curious young people and therefore recommends using photos as an authentic means of expression. However, she is not talking only about learners' personal photos to be described, but suggests using teachers' ones. She states that personalizing increases their curiosity level, which generates plenty of words.

Scrivener (2011) proclaims that all materials dedicated for mastering language skills must be up-to-date sources corresponding to their age and proficiency level. Furthermore, as they are standing on the border between childhood and adulthood, it is better to avoid childish material that will be rejected (ibid). The Lower Secondary Teacher Guide (2006: 2-3) states that using a variety of teaching techniques contributes to encouraging learners' language learning. It suggests using strategies such as role play, drama, class discussion and debate, problem-solving activities, audio-visual activities, explanations, lectures, reading aloud, guest speakers, group works, etc. Last but not least Scrivener (2011: 326) recommends various individual activities and activities requiring active participation.

Proficiency level at lower secondary school level

According to Brown (2004) it is necessary for teachers to be familiar with learners' level of proficiency as it represents a base for creating curricula and textbooks. Two reference documents are

addressed in the subsequent paragraphs - Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) and International Standard of Classification (ISCED).

As the paper focuses on learners whose proficiency level is A2 according to CEFR, these specific criteria will be considered in the following lines. CEFR (2011: 58-60) provides four different illustrative scales available for A2 level including oral production, monologue describing experience, public announcements and addressing audience. The following descriptors are closely connected to the function of speaking called Talk as Performance, which is the focus of our research.

According to the oral production descriptor (CEFR 2011: 58) a learner "can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list." According to the public announcements descriptor (CEFR 2011: 60) a learner "can deliver very short, rehearsed announcements of predictable, learnt content which are intelligible to listeners who are prepared to concentrate."

According to the sustained monologue descriptor (CEFR 2011: 59) when describing experience, a learner can:

- tell a story or describe something in a simple list of points;
- describe everyday aspects of his environment e.g. people, places, a job or study experience;
- give short, basic descriptions of events and activities;
- describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities and personal experiences;
- use simple descriptive language to make brief statements about and compare objects and possessions;
- explain what he/she likes or dislikes about something;
- describe his/her family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job;
- describe people, places and possessions in simple terms.

According to the addressing audience descriptor (CEFR 2011: 60) a learner can:

- give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to his everyday life, briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions;
- cope with a limited number of straight forward follow up questions;
- give a short, rehearsed basic presentation on a familiar subject, answer straight forward follow up questions if he/she can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of his reply is possible.

In Slovakia, teachers are usually regulated by the already mentioned International Standard of Classification ISCED 2, a document which consists of educational areas with corresponding subjects. English language is part of the area called Language and Communication in ISCED 2. The common denominator of this area is a language that is seen as a source of personal and cultural enrichment, as a tool needed for thinking and communicating and as a means important for expressing emotions (ISCED 2, 2014). Furthermore, this document (2014: 2-3) defines the following aims applicable to the subject English language:

- using general competences which are not specific to language, but are necessary for different activities, including language activities;
- using communicative language competences in such a way that the communication intention is realized in a limited way;
- processing spoken or written text as a listener or reader in receptive language activities and strategies (listening comprehension, reading comprehension);
- producing oral or written texts in productive and interactive language activities and strategies (oral, written);
- using spoken and written texts in communication situations for specific functional goals.

As Lindstromberg (2004) states, teachers might think they know their class proficiency level, interests and background, but when it comes to choosing speaking activities special attention must be given to their appropriateness. Although many speaking topics and tasks can be adapted to

different proficiency levels, some of them might cause the learners difficulties to express themselves (Hadfield and Hadfield 2008).

Function of speaking talk as performance

Since researching speaking is a broad topic, it requires a particular focus, which is, in the case of our research, aimed at the functions of speaking. The authors, who have investigated functions of speaking and reasons for communication, are Brown and Yule (1983) and Richards (2008). Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish two types of communication, which are talk as Interaction and Talk as Transaction. However, Richards (2008) based on his workshops with teachers includes a third function which is Talk as Performance. As he points out, all three functions require a different teaching approach as they are distinct in their form.

Talk as Performance is the function, which focuses on preparing learners for “real-life” presentation (Thornbury 2005: 94). As he states, sooner or later, whether in school or job-related activities, learners might find themselves standing in front of an audience giving a speech. Richards (2008) states that this function works based on the principle of transferring the statement to listeners. Usually, it is done through monologue, which has a discernible format and is similar to written language (ibid). The task of that statement is then to inform, influence and sometimes even entertain the audience (Baumeyer 2019). Jones (1996 cited in Richards 2008: 27) claims that “spoken text of this kind have identifiable generic structures: the language is predictable, the speaker must include all necessary information in the text the emphasis focuses on form and accuracy.”

Gondová (2013: 44) and Richards (2008: 28) agree, that besides being able to speak, there are other skills involved in spoken performance such as creating a credible effect on the audience; maintaining audience engagement; presenting information in an appropriate sequence; and using an appropriate format, opening and closing and language system. Lightfoot (n.d.) also includes using appropriate body language, which is an inseparable part of performance and when used inappropriately, the impression on an audience might be unattractive.

Gondová (2013) uses different terminology compared to Richards’ term Talk as Performance and names this function a planned or unplanned monologue. However, the contents of both terms correspond. Planned monologue refers to speech, which might be prepared in written form that helps learners to plan their speech and afterwards practice their oral performance. The aim of the task is to gradually learn how to create a clear and comprehensible description and a presentation that is logically organized into a coherent text as well as to highlight the main ideas giving all the necessary details (Gondová 2013). Topics of the descriptions and presentations the learners create should be chosen by the learners themselves, reflecting their interests as this increase the communication value of their speech (ibid).

The second type which Gondová (2013) distinguishes is an unplanned or spontaneous monologue, the purpose of which is preparing the learners to produce a coherent speech describing their experiences accompanied with feelings and reactions. She proclaims that learners should be able to talk about a film or a book or describe their dreams, hopes and ambitions, various events, tell a story, etc. To make it more interesting she recommends group work, where each participant tells the story concerning the topic and afterwards one spokesperson presents the best story in front of the class. This approach might be attractive and comfortable for learners.

Learning how to speak in public is very important because learners might find it useful throughout their lives. However, it is very often accompanied with anxiety, stress and stage fright, which might lead to glossophobia defined as a fear of public speaking (Black 2019). Teaching and promoting Talk as Performance in an English lesson is considered the best practice. Black (2019) adds that speaking in front of audience contributes to confident use of English.

Once the English class focuses on developing Talk as Performance, teachers should firstly provide a model example of what it should look like. Richards (2008) recommends playing videos, records or even written examples. What Richards (2008: 35) mentions next, is answering the questions “who is the audience, what is the speakers’ purpose, what kind of information the audience expects.” Richards (2008: 27) suggests activities such as classroom presentations; giving a report about events;

giving a welcome speech; presentations of ideas; public announcements; retelling a story; speeches, and storytelling.

Research methodology

The research methodology consists of three steps that will provide three different perspectives on teaching the function of speaking Talk as Performance. First, content analysis of textbooks and a workbook used by 9th graders will reveal how many activities suggested by the textbook authors focus on this function of speaking. Second step will disclose how the activities developing Talk as Performance are taught in real English lessons. It will be achieved through fifteen non-participant observations. Last step, an interview, will provide teachers' points of view towards teaching speaking and its function Talk as Performance.

Research aims and research questions

In order to find out how the speaking function is taught, the following research aims and research questions were formulated:

- to find out what types of activities promote Talk as Performance;
- to find out whether teachers focus on the development of the function of speaking Talk as Performance and how they promote this function;
- Which activities found in the analysed textbooks and workbook promote Talk as Performance?
- Do the teachers implement activities focusing on the function of speaking Talk as Performance? If yes, how do they implement them? If not, why they do not implement them?

Research sample

The research was conducted with learners of lower secondary level, precisely 9th graders. The reason for this choice is that 9th graders should already have A2 proficiency level and their speaking skills should be on a higher level compared to lower grades. The research was conducted at two different schools. The research at school A and B was conducted in January and February 2020. Before conducting the research, both teachers and head masters approved the conditions of the research. Both of the qualified teachers of English, with teaching experience of 15 and 30 years, also agreed to participate in interviews conducted at the end of observation. The reason for choosing two different teachers instead of conducting 15 observations with one teacher, was to find out if there are any differences in teaching approaches towards the function of speaking Talk as Performance.

Besides the observation and interviews, English textbooks and workbooks, which are used by 9th graders at these two schools, were analysed. School A uses the textbook *Project 5*, 3rd edition written by Tom Hutchinson (2010, 2009) consisting of six units. The units are very extensive. Each unit consists of four different sections A, B, C, D and each section includes exercises aimed at practicing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative skills. After covering the four sections, pages focusing on culture, English across the curriculum, a revision page, project, and a song follow. School B uses a textbook and a workbook *More! 3* written by Herbert Puchta and Jeff Stranks (2014) consisting of 12 units. Each unit consists of the sections: introduction, dialogue work or text work (alternated in every second unit), vocabulary and grammar, which covers a double page in every single unit, communicative skills paying attention to reading, listening and speaking. Finally, sections on culture, Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and "Check your progress" can be found after every second unit.

Data collecting instruments

In order to guarantee triangulation of the data and methods, three different data collecting instruments were applied. The first one, content analysis, is characterized as a summary of "main contents of data and their message" (Cohen et al. 2007: 494). Content analysis might be applied to any kind of larger written texts. Cohen et al. (2007) provide a procedure for content analysis which

consists of several steps: first, finding the written material to be analysed, after reading the text, the researcher is supposed to create codes that emerge from the text; afterwards these codes must be placed into the prearranged categories. The content analysis was conducted with two textbooks and one workbook, since school A does not use a workbook during the lessons. Firstly, all speaking activities were analysed with a focus on the functions of speaking. Only those activities are classified, named and counted which belong to Talk as Performance activities. Under the category Talk as Performance, activities found in textbooks and workbooks which represent different codes were summarised in tables. After filling in the tables, qualitative analysis providing reasons for the division of activities followed. Furthermore, other codes – form of work and examples were described. By conducting the content analysis, the most common activities of the function Talk as Performance provided by English textbooks were identified.

The non-participant semi-structured observation was conducted after the content analysis of activities in order to find out what the reality of teaching speaking in English lessons is, with focus on the function of speaking Talk as Performance. The main aim was to observe whether teachers involve the textbook and workbook activities or whether they use their own activities promoting Talk as Performance. Furthermore, it was observed whether the English lessons provide some situations for potential development of Talk as Performance. All observed classes were regular ones. We did not ask teachers to implement any extra speaking activities as we wanted to capture the real lessons. During the observation, the main focus was given to speaking activities promoting Talk as Performance, however, short descriptions of the content of the English lessons are provided as well. Data collection was provided through filling in an observation sheet, consisting of basic information such as the date, name of school and class. The second part of the observation sheet focused on activities promoting the function of speaking Talk as Performance. Information included the type of activity, speaking as a main or extra activity, form of work, materials, examples, performance of learners, reactions of learners and potential situations for developing Talk as Performance. After conducting all observations, categories and codes resulting from the observation notes were processed for further analysis.

Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted, as it is based on asking prearranged questions which might vary depending on the respondent’s answers. The interview with both teachers was conducted after the completion of all observations at school A and B. The aim of the interview was to find out the teachers’ attitudes towards teaching speaking in general. But the main focus was mainly on the implementation of activities promoting the function of speaking Talk as Performance and situations in which they are applied. Moreover, we tried to find out what materials teachers use for teaching this function. With the permission of the teachers, interviews were recorded in order to keep all the answers as accurate as possible. There was no piloting of instruments being done prior to administering them to ensure their validity and reliability.

Research results

Before starting the content analysis, a table within the category Talk as Performance was created. All activities, which correspond to this function, were classified. Within the coding system, the type of activities and the number of their occurrence were distinguished. The first content analysis was conducted with the textbook *Project 5* and the second with the textbook and workbook *More! 3*. In both textbooks and workbook the same categories, but different codes, occur within the activity types.

Table 1: Summary of content analysis

Category: TALK AS PERFORMANCE			
	<i>Project 5</i>	<i>More! 3</i>	
Code and Activity	Textbook	Textbook	Workbook
1. PROJECT PRESENTATION	6	1	0

2. PRESENTATION OF IDEAS	7	1	0
3. STORYTELLING	2	0	0
4. CLASSROOM PRESENTATION	0	4	0
5. REVIEW	0	1	0
6. GIVING A SPEECH	0	0	1
TOTAL	15	7	1

Content analysis of textbook *Project 5*

The first code, project presentation, was found in each unit and since there are six units, there were six activities connected to creating a project. Although the textbook itself does not suggest the task saying present your project, Teacher's Book (2010) advises to let learners present their work and practise performance before an audience. Projects in the textbook had different topics such as pop music, our country's educational programme, different regions of your country, teenage life in your country, how do people spend their money and ordinary people changing history. What we found interesting was the fact that the project activity was intended for individual work instead of group work. Furthermore, all projects required a longer process as there were instructions such as to conduct an interview with some teenagers and use audio/video recording. In some cases, project work even required applying research methods such as interviews or surveys. In all cases, learners were asked to put some pictures or graphs in the project. In one project task, they had to follow a pattern such as: Set the scene. How did the situation come about? What happened? What happened after the incident? What was the result? This pattern might help them during the presentation process to keep fluent speech.

The second code, presentation of ideas, found in each unit as well was always introduced with the title "Tell the class your ideas." Usually, the presentation of ideas came after the discussion task, in which one spokesperson performs a monologue concluding the discussed ideas. Six out of seven tasks were found in sections "Speaking" which is good evidence that the textbook gives the opportunity to practise performance skill and fluency as well. The last task was part of "English across the curriculum" section. What can be considered a disadvantage was the fact that these tasks involve a presentation performance from a few learners only.

The third code, storytelling, was identified only twice. Although there were many reading tasks which are usually followed by retelling a story, this textbook suggested some questions, which can foster the activity retelling a story. Fortunately, two speaking tasks for storytelling, which gave learners total freedom in creating the story, were detected. One of them was connected to the picture. There were three different pictures and each student was asked to choose one and create a story of their own. The second task asked learners to imagine they were a banknote, which is old and dirty. Their task was to create a story including the following pattern: your early life, your experiences and what will happen next. Learners could also practise using past simple, the present perfect and the future tense with will. The code number six, giving a speech, was not found in the textbook *Project 5*.

Content analysis of textbook and workbook *More! 3*

The activity, classroom presentation, representing the first code was found four times. The first activity was part of the "Communication" section where learners were asked to work in pairs and talk about films including a description of the actors, the director, the story itself and the special effects used in the film. After the pair work, the Teacher's Book suggests asking some learners to present their film in front of the whole class. The second, third and fourth presentations represent a post-writing activity. Learners are firstly asked to write a description of a person they know using as many adjectives as possible and then they should perform their descriptions in front of the class. In the third classroom presentation learners write a paragraph about their hometown and then present it

out loud to the class. Furthermore, after the learners’ presentations they are asked to decide whose presentation was the most interesting. The last spoken presentation focused on the topic “my invention” and followed the same procedure as the previous ones.

The second code, presentation of ideas, was a part of the “Writing” section, precisely a post-writing activity. However, in this case learners were asked to suggest some tangible ideas for solving the problems of recycling. Firstly, they were asked to choose one out of three problems, write an article and then present it to the class. The purpose of this activity was performing a persuasive speech to make the audience want to take action. This activity is quite demanding, but as it was found in Unit 11, which is the penultimate one, learners’ proficiency might be challenged.

The third code, project presentation, was found only once as well. It was part of a “Culture” section introduced as a task called “Over to you!” The Purpose of the project was to enhance environmental awareness. Learners were asked to work in small groups, design a poster and a plan. After working on their projects, they were asked to present them to their class.

The fifth code, identified only once, was a review. As in the case of most performance tasks this one was found in the “Writing” section and was related to writing a film review. As the Teacher’s Book suggests, although this task is primarily focusing on writing, teachers can ask learners to perform their review in front of the class. Furthermore, a review as an activity type mentioned by Richards (2008) corresponds with Talk as Performance. Learners are asked to include information about the actors, set, why you like/dislike it and do you recommend it? Why/Why not? The code number six, giving a speech, was not found in the textbook *More! 3*.

For the workbook *More! 3* analysis the same coding system as in the textbooks was applied. Not many activities promoting speaking were expected in the workbook as they generally focus mainly on practising the writing skill. However, one activity type developing the function of speaking Talk as Performance was found in the workbook. The activity introduced as “Give a speech” was part of Speaking task found in section “Exam skill”. Learners were supposed to write their ideas first and once they have finished; they should give a speech in front of the class. There are three situations suggested: earthquake, hurricane, and lightning storm, for which the learners must perform what their classmates or people in general should or shouldn’t do. Additionally, some reasons must be provided by the learners.

Observation analysis

The second method, the purpose of which was to find out the reality of teaching speaking with a focus on the function of speaking Talk as Performance was an observation. In order to interpret the results of the observation, we created an observation sheet whose main category was function of speaking Talk as Performance. However, as the research progressed, we had to modify the original codes of the category, and we had to add a new category concerning any possible situations for developing the function of the speaking Talk as Performance. For better interpretation, Table 2, providing the system of categories and codes, inspired by Reid (2014), is applied for each school.

Table 2: Summary of observation analysis

	School A	School B
Total number of observed lessons:	6	9
Category 1: Presence of Talk as Performance		
Codes:	Results:	Results:
1. YES	-	-
2. NO		
3. Activity type	-	-
4. Materials	-	-
5. Speaking as main activity	-	-
6. Speaking as an extra	-	-

activity		
7. Form of work	-	-
Category 2: Potential Situations for Developing Function of Speaking Talk as Performance		
TALK AS PERFORMANCE	2 (review about school event) 2 (retelling the story)	-

We did not observe any situation referring to Talk as Performance, neither at school A nor at school B. From the table, it can be seen that neither of the teachers implemented activities promoting the function of speaking Talk as Performance during the observed English lessons.

As for the category Potential situations for developing the function of speaking Talk as Performance, we managed to recognize four situations at school A and none at school B. Two of the situations were related to retelling the story, which was read and watched, and another two situations were connected to activities in which learners would give a review about a school event they experienced.

Interview analysis

The interviews were conducted at the end of the observations at both schools. The main aim was to find out about the teachers' attitude toward teaching speaking in general and the function of speaking Talk as Performance in particular. First, we tried to find out where the teachers perceive the importance of speaking and whether they have some special procedure for developing this skill. We were interested in whether they use the speaking activities provided in the textbooks or their own speaking activities and materials. Within the category function of speaking Talk as Performance we were interested in what types of activities the teachers use, and what the learners' attitudes towards these activities are. The interviews were based on 15 questions and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Answers from both teachers are analysed within each category and the codes below in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of interview analysis

Category 1: Speaking in general		
Codes:	School A	School B
1. Speaking skill	ability to communicate	ability to speak and react in some concrete situation
2. Importance/reason	very important	
	speaking as a tool to get something done	speaking as an ability necessary for future life
3. Procedure of teaching speaking	following the order of tasks in textbook	
4. Speaking activities/techniques	pair dialogues, role plays, group, discussion	pair dialogues, role plays, pair discussion
5. Materials	textbook	textbook, picture
6. Sufficient/Insufficient occurrence of speaking activities in textbook from teachers' point of view	insufficient, monotonous activities	sufficient
Category 2: Talk as Performance		
Codes:	School A	School B
1. Activities	reading journals, project presentation, tell the class your ideas, retelling the read/listened story	project presentation
2. Learners' attitudes, problems and solutions	Attitude: negative Problem: lack of language skill and being ashamed	Attitude: depending on their personalities Problem: being ashamed,

	Solution: watching English TV series and movies	learning by heart Solution: creating positive atmosphere
3. Sufficient/Insufficient occurrence in textbook from teachers' point of view	Insufficient	

The first category focuses on the teachers' perception of teaching speaking in general. First code of this category reveals that teacher A sees speaking as an ability to communicate and teacher B as an ability to speak and react in some actual situation. Both teachers agree that the speaking skill is very important which is represented by code number two. Teacher A provides the reason that speaking is a tool for getting something done and teacher B perceives speaking as a practical skill necessary for future life. However, teacher B adds that the importance of speaking skill might differ depending on learners' ambitions, future job and personal interests. Code number three, referring to procedure of teaching speaking, provides information that both teachers usually follow the order of the textbooks' tasks providing an example how it should look like and then giving opportunities for practising and producing speaking by learners. Considering the code number four, activities which teachers use for speaking development, teacher A prefers work in pairs while practising dialogues and role plays activities. Moreover, she also uses group discussions with one speaker who concludes the discussed ideas. Teacher B prefers using dialogues, pair discussions and role plays. Both usually use only these types of activities and do not vary them. We were also interested in whether teachers use their own materials or the textbook only. Teacher A responded she mostly preferred using the textbook and only rarely tried something different and new. Teacher B confirmed using the textbook that she likes a lot, but she mentioned also using pictures in order to practise telling a picture story. However, at present she does not use it much. The code number six reveals that teacher A perceives an insufficient occurrence of speaking activities in the textbook she uses. The reason she provided was the monotonous character of the activities. On the other hand, teacher B considered speaking activities in the textbook sufficient.

The second category, Talk as Performance, refers to the purpose of the activities, which is to maintain a longer monologue or public speech. Activities representing code number one reveal that teacher A uses the activity "reading journals" which learners are asked to write. Two or three learners per month are asked to prepare a presentation about a book they read. They must present an author, main characters, short plot overview and what they liked about the book. Another similar activity is presenting the project about their favourite singer. Both of these activities are teacher A's own production. She also named activities such as telling the class your ideas, where one of the learners presents the group's ideas after a group discussion. The last activity she mentioned was retelling a read story. Teacher B named only one activity, project presentation, but she immediately added that the textbook they used did not provide many tasks for project production. However, she said that she includes project presentation after every second or third unit on the topic such as family, school, sports and hobbies. As for code number two, teacher A responded that learners do not like being asked to provide a longer speech. According to her the reasons are lack of language skills and the feeling of being embarrassed. On the other hand, she adds that some of the learners also attend after-school language classes and she can observe that they have fewer problems in monologue production. As possible solutions she suggests watching English TV series and movies in order to promote fluency. Teacher B responded that learners' attitudes toward spoken performance depend on their personalities. Some of them are extrovert and like to be the focus of other learners' attention, but most of them act rather nervous while presenting. She considers feelings of anxiety and embarrassment as well as the habit of learners to learn the sentences, which are necessary for the project presentation by heart to be the main problems. As a solution she suggested creating a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Code number three was agreed by both teachers to be an insufficient occurrence in the textbooks they use.

Findings and discussion

By applying the content analysis, we have found out whether the textbooks and the workbook used by 9th graders focus on promoting the function of speaking Talk as Performance. Furthermore, we tried to detect the type of these activities and the number of their occurrence. This way we could compare which textbook provides stronger representation of Talk as Performance. The content analysis revealed that *Project 5* promotes this function mostly through activities such as project presentation, presentation of ideas, storytelling and classroom presentation. The textbook *More! 3* includes activities such as presentation of ideas, projects and classroom presentation. We also found an activity “give a review activity”, but the most surprising was the presence of the performance activity, “give a speech”, in the workbook *More! 3*.

Moreover, by conducting the content analysis we are able to answer the first research question: Which activities in the analysed textbooks and workbook promote Talk as Performance? The function Talk as Performance was found in all three analysed materials with higher occurrence in *Project 5*. In total, 15 activities of three different types such as six project presentations, seven presentations of ideas and two storytelling activities were found. The textbook *More! 3* provides seven activities in total of four different types as well. They consist of one project presentations, one presentation of ideas, four classroom presentations and one review activity. Furthermore, the workbook contributes with one activity called “give a speech.”

The aim of interview was to find out the answer to the second research question: Do the teachers implement activities focusing on the function of speaking Talk as Performance? If yes, how do they implement them? If not, why they do not implement them? We were interested in which activities they use, what the learners’ attitudes towards these activities are and whether they think the textbooks they use provide sufficient or insufficient amount of activities focusing on the function. Interviews also included questions referring to speaking in general. Both teachers agreed that the function Talk as Performance is the least taught and they think there is an insufficient amount of activities provided in the textbooks they use. We might agree with them since activities they named were mostly of their own production rather than those provided in the analysed textbooks. Teacher A named three activities such as reading journals, presentation of project, retelling the read or listened story. Teacher B named only one activity, project presentation, which she uses on her own initiative. They both agreed about the negative attitude of learners towards these activities, which according to them is the result of a lack of language knowledge and feelings of embarrassment.

Conclusion

We did not manage to observe any of the activities provided in the analysed textbooks and a workbook in real. On the other hand, we managed to recognize potential situations for developing the function Talk as Performance at school A. Two of them were reviewing a school trip and the remaining two activities represented storytelling. As we were informed, learners had a 9th graders prom during the period of conducting the observations. Moreover, they visited the Museum of Holocaust. From theory we know that one of the activities developing Talk as Performance is a review about a school event. We would suggest asking the learners to prepare a review, which they would present in front of the class in such a way that a person who did not attend the trip would be able to imagine what the trip was about. Two other potential situations focusing on Talk as Performance could be the activities retelling the stories. We observed that learners were asked to read short stories about England and in the last lesson before Christmas holiday they watched the movie *A Christmas Carol*. In order to promote their fluent speech and Talk as Performance, we would suggest asking them to prepare a short speech presenting what the stories were about.

The outcomes of the action research conducted by Kamenická and Kováčiková (2019) support these suggestions. They implemented the techniques with the emphasis on learners’ engagement and emotional experience, when teaching EFL to teenagers and used stories in various contexts – personal story, story-retelling etc. Their findings confirmed the assumptions that emotional engagement makes learning more comprehensible, enjoyable and fun. Furthermore, they also showed that learners experienced positive emotions and felt strongly motivated.

To conclude the discussion of the research results, the limitations of the study have to be mentioned. At the beginning of the research, we expected to observe many activities promoting the function of speaking Talk as Performance as well as different ways of teaching them. However, after the first week of the observations we had to admit that these expectations would not be fulfilled for two reasons. The first one is that since the English learning and teaching process does not focus on speaking only and we did not explicitly ask the teachers to focus on speaking lessons, we observed them the least as both teachers followed the textbook in chronological order. Since the English teaching and learning process at primary school also includes developing the other three communicative skills as well as teaching grammar and vocabulary, which were arranged successively in the textbooks, we did not manage to observe a real speaking lesson at school A. Fortunately, we could observe a speaking lesson at school B. If we had explicitly asked the teachers to provide speaking lessons only, it would not be considered a natural choice of activities. The second reason, based on interviews with the teachers, is that many performance activities will be probably included at upper secondary school level.

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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.



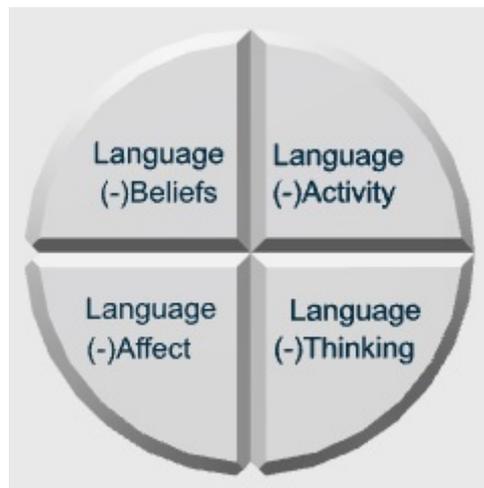
General rationale. Language lies at the heart of schooling, culture, (learning and teaching) methods, and personality – thus underlying education on the individual and on the social level. Its social existence determines its experiencing by an individual person and vice versa. Both these levels matter 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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