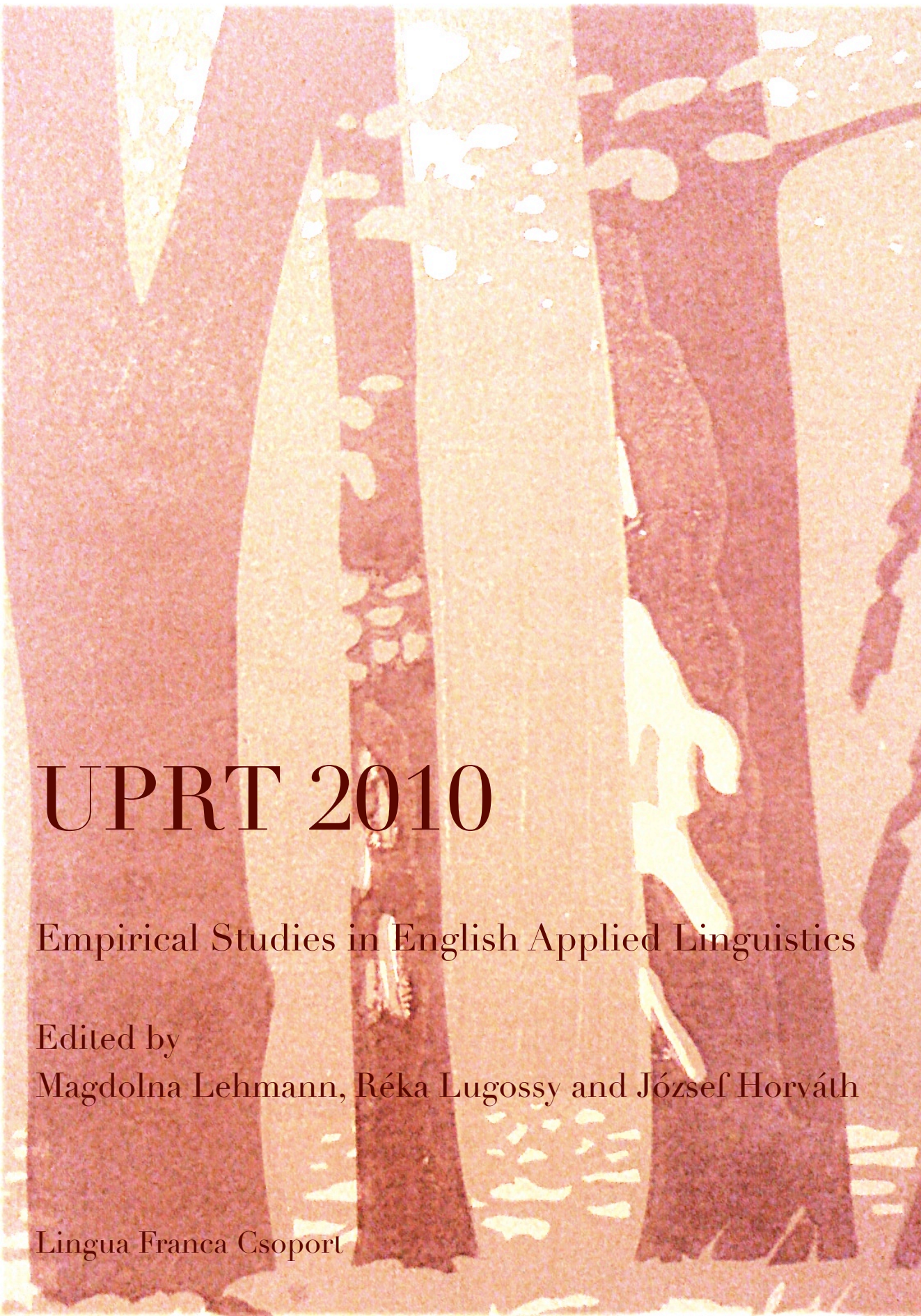

UPRT 2010

Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics

Edited by
Magdolna Lehmann, Réka Lugossy and József Horváth

Lingua Franca Csoport

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Contents

Introduction

Like our earlier volumes, *UPRT 2010*, too, brings together papers focusing on various aspects of research on language and language education. The fourteen chapters present empirical studies written by sixteen authors, discussing a wide range of questions related to language acquisition at a young age, high-school and university program evaluations, and intercultural communication. We are always pleased to be able to share an international perspective. In the current edition, we again can publish the findings of Croatian and Italian colleagues' projects, next to reports by Hungarian professionals. And we can assure you that we will continue to do so in *UPRT 2011* and beyond.

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Wherever you are from, we would like you to know how pleased we are that you have discovered the work of the authors who appear in this collection.

Very.

The editors

The Function of Code-Switching

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Introduction

The paper is based on a qualitative inquiry into my own child's, Sarah's, language development. The study spans over nine years, between her ages of one and ten. She has been raised in a dual language environment, Hungarian and English, and she has used two languages. At present she is eleven years old, and we, her parents, speak to her alternately in English and Hungarian. The community language is Hungarian, the parents are non-native speakers of English. There is a carefully established language boundary pattern. The language boundary system has been agreed upon the family members' approval and willingness and is adjusted to the family routine. This means that the use of English and Hungarian is systematically related to certain situations, places, people and to the involved people's language competence.

Background to study

The initial reason for including English in child raising is that in our neighbourhood there is a family of mixed nationality: the husband American, the wife Hungarian. Their youngest son, Brendon, is of the same age as Sarah. Due to our frequent encounters, mutual sympathy, shared background and family responsibilities, even before our youngest children's birth we had developed a good relationship with the family, especially with the wife, Kati. Later

our children were in the same group in the kindergarten, and now they go to the same school in the same year but not in the same class.

These coincidences led us to the decision to include English as a second language in Sarah's socialization. During the years the circle of our friends has expanded with other English-speaking families and foreigners who also speak English as a second language. Some are associates at one of the multinational companies in Székesfehérvár and the region. In addition, being an English teacher I also have a chance to teach at some of those companies, and my and my husband's personal contact with foreign people, as well as our experiences in multicultural settings, encouraged us to take advantage of the situation. The fact that my husband and my older daughters, aged 19 and 23, have a good language proficiency in English has also created a favourable prerequisite. Also, this situation encouraged me to do my research on child second-language acquisition.

Although we have a number of friends who speak English, we soon realised that our occasional encounters with them did not provide sufficient input for Sarah to acquire the language. Therefore, to maintain a dual language environment, we had to establish a labour division between Hungarian and English. Hungarian is dominant because it is our mother language, whereas English is used only at home or in informal settings, mostly in child-mother interactions during daily activities or free-time activities (reading and playing). Also, we speak English in the presence of certain friends and foreigners. We try to keep up the established language use pattern to make Sarah feel comfortable in L2 settings. We have formed our language use pattern considering Sarah's and our two older daughters's attitude and willing-ness for cooperation, so Sarah generally accommodates herself to this practice.

As a result of the unbalanced exposure to her two languages, where exposure to Hungarian dominates, Sarah's English production is limited but she has developed very good competence in listening comprehension. Her utterances also give evidence of successful operation of the dual linguistic code. As I will show in the research findings, I have found that the dual language environment provides my participant with a wider range of linguistic resources and means extra potential to convey shades of meanings and extends her linguistic repertoire in communication.

Justification of the research

A great number of scholarly literature in the field of language acquisition deals with the diversity of language use and investigates the relationship between language and their users. Researchers in the field conclude that it is impossible to cover all situations and admit that there will always be unknown areas inviting further research (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 2). This fact seems to validate qualitative studies which provide in-depth interpretations of single cases (Duff, 2002; Creswell, 2003), thus giving better insights into individual differences. Single case studies explore new, so far unknown contexts and profiles. By being familiar with these new scenarios we can identify new factors affecting the language learning process, which will finally lead us to a better understanding of the topic and, consequently, will change language socialization and language teaching into a more successful endeavour. Marginal or extreme cases are instructive and invaluable in this respect because, due to their specificity, they shed light on phenomena considered as unimportant earlier, and help us to see things holistically.

Theoretical background

In my study I analyse the function of L1-L2 code-switches, from three different perspectives: sociolinguistic, pragmatic and strategic. Since communication is inseparable from the social environment where it takes place, my research has sociolinguistic aspects and societal concerns. I focus on the specific context in which my participant lives and learns her two languages and I reveal the background that shapes her interpretation and her positioning herself in that background. My research is aimed to reveal how a particular abstract linguistic phenomenon, that is code-switching (CS), manifests itself in naturally occurring talks, and the findings of my investigation are based on empirically collected data.

The study has its origin in linguistics as I use my data set for linguistic analysis. The theoretical frame of my linguistic investigation is pragmatics as I look into the social aspect of language use and the linguistic behavior of an individual language user.

While uncovering the function of particular code-switches at different levels of language proficiency I put a special emphasis on strategic code-switches. I present a sample set of utterances taken from my child's talks and self-report to give evidence of her strategic language use.

Defining strategies

There are different taxonomies to classify and identify communication strategies used by language learners. Faerch and Kasper (1983) identify the term "strategy" with a systematic technique used by L2 learners to cope with communication difficulties in an imperfectly known second language. They claim that language learners have basically two approaches to overcome a problem. One approach is when they try to escape and avoid a linguistic obstacle or challenge, and operate a type of avoidance strategies. A typical type of avoidance strategy is when the learner reduces his communicative goal to avoid a problem, or simply abandons the topic. The other approach is when they operate achievement strategies. This refers to resourceful behavior when language learners try to conquer and control the problem instead of fleeing from it. The authors above consider the element of choice as central in strategic behavior.

Oxford (1990), Bialystok (1991), Cohen (1998) and Dörnyei (2005) identify the construct in terms of intentionality. Bialystok (1991) uses the terms "control of the language learning process," and "conscious analysis of language knowledge" to refer to strategic behavior. In her conceptualization, a manifestation of strategic behavior is when the learner is able to turn selective attention towards a linguistic phenomenon. Bialystok suggests that it is intentionality that makes the learning process an effortful activity, therefore intentionality is a prerequisite of strategic language use. Consequently, more directed attention facilitates a more strategic approach to linguistic challenges.

Dörnyei (2005) recommends using "self-regulation" instead of "strategy" as it better describes the dynamic nature of communication and that of the learning process. In line with Oxford (1990) and Cohen (1998) he underscores that self-regulation is an inevitable element of strategic learning and communication. They all make the important point that the ultimate outcome of language learning depends on the learner's self-regulation, which refers to their ability to participate as responsible actors in the learning process. According to their conceptualization strategic behavior is an effortful, proactive and goal-oriented process, where language users constantly regulate themselves and adapt to the given situation.

Emotionality and language choice

In the analysis of my child's interactions I categorize the samples according to different communicative intentions. In my category system I rely on Pavlenko's (2006) research findings, who has come to the conclusion that the multilingual speakers she interviewed appeal to CS in order to convey different affective stances. I have selected some samples of such stances in my data set and examined if Sarah's language behavior shows any similarities with those cases.

Pavlenko (2006) researches emotionality of language emphasizing that with two distinct linguistic codes the speakers' CS behavior de-picts a kind of divergence from the conventionalised language use, for the simple reason that they have two systems to satisfy their communicative needs. She studies how emotions influence language choice and what affective functions code-switches carry (p.131). She has found that her interviewees' language choice is purposeful, and it is used to convey affective meanings. The author categorizes the speakers' code-switches and interactions according to the communicative intentions they serve. Her data illustrate that code-switches indicate different emotions, e.g. distress, endearment, fear, sympathy and admiration. She also claims that speakers show different emotional attachment to their languages due to their different socialization patterns and personality traits. Finally, she has found that speakers who learned L2 later in life rarely use L2 in the affective function, while those who acquired their L2 in childhood use L2 forms to convey emotions more often (p. 113).

The aim of the study

In this study I analyse a sample set of material based on Sarah's talk from the sociolinguistic perspective, with a special focus on the relationship between language and the social context. I examine child-mother interactions in home settings. I am mostly concerned with how Sarah's code-switches take shape depending on the situation and how pragmatic functions are realized in the dual linguistic system. Analysing Sarah's interactions I intend to reveal a pattern in her CS behavior. I look into the strategic use of language in specific interactions paying attention to the communicative intentions mediated with L1-L2 code-switches.

Research question

The question addressed in my research aimed to find out what communicative intentions and affective meanings Sarah conveys with L1-L2 code-switches.

The method

My study falls into the category of qualitative research and involves one person, my own child, Sarah. In order to explore the complexity of subtleties related to Sarah's CS behavior, the case study approach is considered the most appropriate for this inquiry (Creswell, 2003). The research has been conducted longitudinally with a time-span of nine years with the aim of understanding a bounded phenomenon (Duff, 2002), that is Sarah's motives of language shift. As I explore the details of a given phenomenon, and do not intend to test hypotheses, I have research questions and I attempt to identify language use patterns in the data in order to contribute to the growth of knowledge in the field (Creswell, 2003, p. 29) and make my findings valid by giving sufficient amount of details and rich contextualization to give a persuasive description of the case.

My case is an extreme, atypical and convenience case (Duff, 2002). It is extreme and atypical as L2 acquisition takes place in an irregular context with the parents being non-native speakers of English having no community support regarding L2. Convenience comes from the fact that the participant is my own child, which situation is advantageous in terms of data collection and makes it possible to examine the phenomenon in a holistic manner. The study has been conducted at home and other informal settings, in the circle of close friends and family members, where the child feels comfortable and has an open rapport with the interlocutors. Emotional bonding and cohabitation has provided me with the opportunity to look into Sarah's private interactions in the context of her natural environment over an extended period of time.

Participants and sampling

Although the study is based on one person, and the focus of the investigation is on the child's second language acquisition, a number of other participants are also included. They are considered interlocutors in the child's interper-

sonal communication. In most cases, it is the mother, the child's siblings and peers who are included in the interactions observed by me.

The fact that I am the mother of my participant justifies my case selection and sampling procedures. Cohabitation and joint activities provided an easy and permanent access to child discourse and narratives, which enabled me to do observations longitudinally without the risk of attrition.

Data collection instrument

I used participant observation in data collection. The interactions were tape-recorded at home and some other informal settings where Sarah felt comfortable in the presence of her friends and family members. In order to get a better understanding of the conversations and to make these findings more valid, I also appealed to my field notes over the years. In addition, I taped my daughter's narratives and conducted retrospective interviews with her. I recorded the interactions on a monthly basis in a nine-year timespan. I added the child's age after each utterance and conversation in brackets with the first number indicating the year, the second number indicating the month (for example, 3;6).

Discussion

Pragmatic analysis of CS

In this section I analyse code-switches from the pragmatic point of view. As I am concerned with the relationship between language and context I find pragmatics a relevant theoretical frame for my inquiry. I start the discussion with Grice's assumption that communication is a joint activity of the speaker and hearer, which involves the exchange of communicative intentions (1975, p. 50). According to the pragmatic approach, words do not have a one-to-one relationship to the ideas a speaker wants to express. A single utterance can convey a range of meanings depending on to whom it is directed and in what context. In this section I show how my participant can convey situated meanings with the help of L1-L2 code-switches.

When I refer to code-switches, I use Meisel's (1994) terminology, who defines the construct as a specific skill relating to the bilingual's pragmatic

competence, the ability to select the language according to the interlocutor, the context and the topic of conversation (p. 414).

I have recorded a lot of L1-L2 code-switches that can be described as speech acts. Searle (1969, p. 21) views speech acts as the basic units of communication and proposes that speech-act analysis can be a possible approach to study individual language use. In speech acts there are several linguistic connections that we have to take into consideration: (1) what the speaker means; (2) what the uttered sentence means; (3) what the hearer understands from what is meant. In his principle of expressibility (pp. 18-21) Searle claims that if the speaker can say what they mean, and if they can find the appropriate linguistic tool and the necessary conditions to express themselves, the hearer will understand what is meant. In other words, performing a speech act means saying something in a concrete situation in an attempt to get the listener to behave and react as the speaker wants them to react. Speech acts exemplify that a linguistic utterance, besides its conventional or context-free meaning, as soon as embedded in a concrete situation, will get a context-based or situation-related meaning. When the listener understands the situated meaning of an utterance and responds to it as it is expected, it means that the speaker could do what the speaker wanted to do with words, that is the speaker's speech-act is successfully performed.

The code-switches in this section give evidence that Sarah operates affective strategies in her L1-L2 CS. Affective strategies are a subset of indirect language learning and language use strategies in Oxford's (1990) and Cohen's (1998) taxonomies, and are employed to regulate and gain control over emotions, attitudes and motivation about learning (Oxford, 1990, p.135). The samples taken from mother-child interactions illuminate how Sarah seeks and finds opportunities to practise L2 in natural situations, and how she gets encouragement and reward from involving L2 in interpersonal communication. The excerpts below represent different pragmatic functions and communicative intentions that Sarah conveys with L1-L2 CS.

Astonishment - Preserving the established language use norms

Excerpt 1
Sarah: Brendy speaks English in the kindergarten (3;4)

Once talking about kindergarten things Sarah brought up an instance she found surprising: she was astonished at Brendy's using English in the kindergarten. Brendon is her groupmate at nursery, he is an English-Hunga-

rian bilingual, whose first language is English. Sarah was astonished by Brendy's use of English at an irregular place. For Sarah it was unacceptable that someone uses English outside home without the mother, as it was very different from the language use pattern she has been raised in. Brendon's language behavior represented a deviation from Sarah's cultural norms. She resisted English in the kindergarten in spite of the fact that Brendon and his family belong to the circle of family friends and in their company she and her family use L2. The proof of her pragmatic competence is that she has definite expectations and knowledge on who, when, where and why speaks one or another language. From the example it can be concluded how deviations from the locally established language use pattern confuse her. We can see how she redefines her conception about language use and how she accommodates to the new situation.

Persuasion through tricking Changing the co-speaker's mood

Excerpt 2
Sarah: Cinderella is nicer in English (5,2)

Once as I was preparing to read a bedtime tale for her she told me the utterance above. The message behind the sentence was: *Please, read something in English instead of Hungarian*. This indirect message served two goals. First, she hoped that I would reward her wish to read in English and, second, she hoped I would be less rigorous about the bedtime agenda and I would put her to bed a bit later. Concluding from earlier practices she knows that reading in English takes longer time. She has learnt that when we read in English I give a lot of comments and explanations to help understanding, and I try to simplify the words of the printed tale book, moreover, sometimes when I stumble in an unknown word and I look it up in the dictionary, which is even more time-consuming. This case shows a very tactful application of L2, where the child is conscious of the fact that she benefits from switching to English.

Disciplining - Identifying the interlocutor's mood Conciliating the interlocutor

Excerpt 3
Sarah: Your voice is nicer in English, but ugly in Hungarian (4;5)

The situation above exemplifies that language choice can serve as an indicator of the child's co-speakers' mood or emotional state and infers that the child uses up this information and turns it to her own advantage. Once I was really enraged because she hadn't cleared away in her room after asking her to do so several times. I shouted in Hungarian, because when I lose temper I am unable to control my language use and I speak in Hungarian. Sarah, relying on earlier practices, was aware of the fact that her speaking in English will soften me. She appealed to an unexpected code-switch to evoke a chilling effect on my part. The speech-act, besides the above mentioned, infers that she relates L2 as the context of communication to a relaxed atmosphere as, according to the established language boundary pattern, we normally use English in such cases. L2 is the context of communication during playtime, mealtimes, bedtime readings, bath time or friendly gatherings. These are joyful and peaceful activities, when we have a good time together and I am also unstressed and display more patience towards her. Her reference to L2 as the manifestation of positive and appealing things suggests that she has a positive emotional attachment to L2. My empirical data show that Sarah attaches positive meanings to L2.

Request Preserving the established rules

Excerpt 4
Sarah: This is not Kata here, it is Eszter! (4;2)

When playing a board game in Eszter's presence, a girl in the neighbourhood, I started talking to her in English, she remarked in a low voice: *This is not Kata here*. The message of the speech-act here is: *Don't speak English when Eszter is around*. It has the underlying meaning that although the place and the situation fit in the language boundary pattern the family established, Eszter stands out. The function of this speech-act is a request and a reproach at the same time. She asks me to keep to our language use practices, and makes me understand that when Kata, the girl living next door is around, we speak English, when Eszter is around, we do not. The function of CS here is to preserve the established rules.

Sarah's sensitivity to her peers' communicative needs is suggestive of the way she conceives her relationship to the community members. When playing with her close friends she accepts English and translates what I say in English with pleasure, because she does not want to exclude them from communication. Her behavior in excerpt 4 shows how she identifies and

regulates herself in the group. She is ready to use English with close friends, but resists it in the presence of outsiders.

Apologizing - Injecting humour

Excerpt 5
1 Mother: You will never lie, promise?
2 Sarah: I not lying, I sitting. (6;8)

One evening Sarah was already lying in bed and I asked her if she knew the poem she had promised to learn, as in turn 1. She said yes, but it turned out to be a lie. I reproached her for not telling the truth, to which she replicated in turn 2, and hurriedly sat up in her bed. Obviously, she used humour to avoid an embarrassing situation. The linguistic tool was *"lie"*, a homonym, that is a word spelt and pronounced like another one, but having a different meaning. Benefitting from humour realized by CS, Sarah could change my mood and my behavior. She perceived that I was angry with her, therefore she tried to find a way to soften me. Her linguistic solution, a well-placed speech act, was successful. As a sign of accepting her apology I couldn't help laughing and I was not furious any more. I calmed down and we got things right quickly. Sarah's using L2 gives evidence that she is aware of certain conversational norms too. She assumed that I align with her, understand and reward the humour behind her utterance. She expected me not only to interpret a specific discourse event, in this case the joke, but also expected me to display the appropriate behavioral response, in this case, laughter. In addition, being able to control the situation lent her internal satisfaction and authority. The utterance below calls attention to the way she wields power and takes advantage of an embarrassing situation from involving L2 in her talk.

Taking a revenge - Redefining power relations

Excerpt 6
Sarah: Mekkora {tiger}! {What a big tiger.} (3,6)

Her elder sisters used to keep pulling her leg because she had difficulty in pronouncing the sound "s", which often raised laughter among the bigger ones. Sarah expressed her fascination at seeing a big tiger in the zoo by saying the sentence above. The fact that she pronounced "s" improperly saying "sz"

instead, encouraged her sisters to make her repeat the word again. When her sisters asked her to say *tigris* once more, she uttered its English equivalent to avoid the embarrassing situation, as the word *tiger* does not contain the sound she had not mastered by that time. CS here proved to be a strategic tool and a valuable linguistic resource at the same time. Due to her tactful behavior she won her sisters' appreciation, and felt more in control. By outwitting her sisters, Sarah could change power relations among siblings.

Conclusion

My aim with introducing my child's CS behavior has been to reveal a particular case in the myriad of strategic behaviors produced by language learners. For Sarah CS appears to be a supplementary linguistic resource to get the intended meaning across. Pragmatics proved to be a relevant frame-work for my inquiry as I am interested in how Sarah organizes her speech in a given context, how she makes a situational meaning understandable for her co-speaker.

The data are suggestive of Sarah's appeal to L2 with the purpose of indexing a variety of emotional meanings and communicative intentions. She applies CS to control either her emotions or those of her co-speakers. There are cases when the co-speaker's language shift helps her identify and understand a concrete situation. The indicator of her pragmatic competence, the knowledge of using relevant linguistic solutions in concrete situations, is that she has definite expectations and knowledge on who, where, when speaks one or another language. Analysing the data I can witness her constant self-regulation and self-identification in the social context. Sarah's CS behavior underpins that her interpretation of a communicative event reflects local norms.

With her progression towards a higher level of pragmatic competence, Sarah appeals to L2 to control the situation. Her CS shows that she has developed a positive attachment to L2. She prides herself for knowing English, expects emotional gain and returns from using it, and reaching her goal encourages her to further use of L2. By using code-switches she is able to control her own emotions, attitude, motivation and at the same time that of her interlocutors.

The fact that the participant is my own child brings up ethical concerns. First, it can be considered rude to interfere in her natural flow of life and privacy. My second concern is if it is ethically acceptable to let her utterances publicly known. In order to disperse my doubts and concerns as to whether I am doing the right thing or not, I informed my child about my

study, explained what I was doing as early as I could, and also asked for her approval. She knew about recording her talks, and whenever she found it embarrassing I respected her request and did not insist on recording. Later, from the age of four she assured me that those talks were very funny and asked me to replay them plenty of times. At her later age, after starting school, she was so enthusiastic about the recordings that she listened to them repeatedly, she recommended to discuss them and added her own comments and remarks without asking her to do so. Often, even if I was not around, she herself made recordings of her talks with or without interlocutors. Learning that she and her talks attracted so much attention, and her L2 knowledge evoked other people's appreciation and interest, she began to use the situation to her own advantage. She has stated several times that she is proud of playing such an important role in my work and wants to read what I write about our talks. These circumstances positively affected her participation and cooperation in my research.

It is important to state that the data presented in this study are not suitable for generalizations, but rather, they should be handled as manifestations of individual language use. I must also emphasize that the terms used in the literature for a concrete feature of a phenomenon are not wholly applicable in my case. This single case is supposed to raise attention to individual differences and to show how the outcome of the language learning process reflects the learner's personal interpretation of her learning environment and conception of identity.

Further research is needed to find out to what extent the findings are relevant for other young learners in a similar context. It is also recommended to reveal how my child's CS changes with maturing, as she realizes that L2 brings about academic successes and gives her authority at school among peers. Further data taken from her talks and interviews should be analysed to find out to what extent early exposure to L2 and her actual level of L2 proficiency affect her academic and literacy development. Further research can also be conducted on what is going on emotionally in Sarah when she resorts to L2.

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Role of Language Exposure in Early Foreign-Language Learning

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Introduction

Input has long been considered the *sine qua non* of language learning (Gass, 1997). Some of the more recent theories that try to explain SLA stress that languages are acquired through processing input and producing output during interaction (Tomasello, 2003) and that frequency of input plays an important role in the language learning process (Ellis, 2002).

The issue of language exposure as a source of input started to be considered more closely when SLA researchers tried to measure effectiveness of L2 instruction in adult SLA. Long (1983) reviewed findings of studies whose aim was to test Krashen's (1983) acquisition/learning hypothesis. His conclusion was that formal instruction did contribute to language development. Long's (1988) more elaborate consideration of effects of instruction with respect to SLA processes, route, rate and ultimate attainment stressed the key role of formal exposure to L2.

Informal, unsheltered language exposure has mostly been of interest in studies where learners were acquiring a second language in the target language setting. Extracurricular, informal language exposure in foreign language (FL) settings has generally been considered too insignificant, compared to formal exposure in the classroom, to contribute to the language learning process in any essential way. However, this has been recently questioned for at

least two reasons. On the one hand, there is enough empirical evidence by now that not all classroom language activities are a good source of learner intake. On the other, with the growing availability of languages through digital media and personal contacts, nowadays the amount of exposure to FLs in many learning contexts has significantly increased, so much so that perhaps we should look again at the role of informal language exposure in FL settings as well.

The role of input is considered to be essential in early language learning too (Muñoz, 2009). Most studies of input offered to young FL learners, however, also focus on input obtained exclusively through formal exposure. Still, we know that young FL learners bring to their language learning the knowledge they obtained out of school as well. It is very likely that young learners could make use of opportunities they get out of school of meaningful language embedded within content that is appealing to them as well as relevant in terms of potential intake. In-depth investigations of the amount, type and quality of unsheltered informal input that young FL learners may be exposed to are practically non-existent. Insights from such studies could contribute a great deal to understanding early FL learning processes.

Context of the study

The study described below was carried out as part of the *Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE)* project (www.ellieresearch.eu)*. It was carried out in two country contexts: Croatia and Italy. In general terms, FL teaching and learning in these two contexts are quite similar. The primary curriculum and tradition in FL learning are two of the common features. In Croatia the FL was compulsory from the age of 10-11 years for decades, and the FL was compulsory in Italy from the age of 8 years. Recent innovations in FL learning policies in both countries include a mandatory start of the FL from grade 1 of primary education (age 6-7 years). However, while in Croatia the languages taught from grade one are English, French, German and Italian, in Italy the mandatory FL children start with in grade one is English.

The major difference between the two contexts is the amount of out of school exposure to English. It is very high in Croatia. In Italy, on the other hand,

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there is a limited exposure to English out of school. Another major difference lies in the type of training and in the language competence of primary teachers. In Italy most primary teachers were trained to become language teachers later in their career, thus causing lower linguistic self-confidence. In Croatia most teachers are specialist English teachers with a university teaching degree in English.

A study of language exposure in early learning of EFL

Aim of the study

In this study we wanted to look into the relationship between out of school exposure to English of young EFL learners and their linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. There is a conspicuous lack of such studies. We believe that, with the increasing role of English as an international language in many contexts of the world, the informal exposure to English is turning into an extremely relevant factor, one that cannot be bypassed in any attempt to explain the language learning process. By looking into two contexts, Italian and Croatian, that share a lot of common aspects relevant for early FL learning but seem to differ primarily in out of school exposure we hoped to get valuable insights into the relationship of achievement and language exposure.

Participants

Two types of samples were used in the study. The total sample comprised 361 young learners: 198 learners in Italy and 172 learners in Croatia. Subsamples of 'focal learners' from each country sample were selected for more intensive investigation. These refer to a total of 91 young participants comprising 49 Italian and 42 Croatian EFL young learners. Participants were selected from eight first grade classes in Italy and seven such classes in Croatia. In both cases the schools they were drawn from were located in big cities, in small towns and in the countryside. The selection criterion for the subsamples of focal learners was based on young learners' language learning ability and gender. The language learning ability was determined on the basis of teacher reports. The intensive study samples, thus, included two low-ability, two average-ability and two high-ability learners from each class that took part in

the project. In terms of gender the sample comprised the same number of male and female participants.

Instruments and procedure

Information about out of class language exposure was gathered through oral interviews with the young participants and through parents' questionnaires. In the interviews, which were carried out individually with each learner, the participants were asked whether:

- their family helped them with English homework
- they had books, picture-books, CD-s or DVD-s in English at home and how they used them
- they heard English at home on the radio or TV
- they had ever met anyone who did not speak their mother tongue and communicated with in English.

Parents were asked about their child's:

- overall exposure to English outside school
- exposure to English through cartoons, children's programmes, children's books and magazines, computer games, the Internet, private lessons in English, commercials, posters and the like
- exposure to English during summer
- the child's EFL-related behaviour at home.

Linguistic outcomes were measured by means of multiple-choice listening comprehension tasks. These were administered at the end of each grade. Non-linguistic outcomes were measured by means of smiley questionnaires, oral interviews and the parents' questionnaire. These were used to elicit information about young learners' motivation for learning English and their linguistic self-confidence. Motivation was operationalised as liking to learn English. Information on young learners' linguistic self-confidence was collected on the basis of young learners' perception of their achievement when compared to their classmates and on their perception of language difficulty.

The described measures were designed by the ELLiE team and were used throughout the four years of the study. Some of the items were reworded in later grades to make them more age-appropriate and some were introduced only from grade 2.

Results

Differences in exposure to English of Italian and Croatian young learners

We first compared the various forms of out-of-class English language exposure that Croatian and Italian young learners in our study had. Testing of significance of differences in the amount and frequency of exposure as reported by participants' parents provided a number of interesting findings.

Types of exposure

While the amount of time spent weekly on playing games in English, or listening and reading in English did not differ significantly in the two groups of participants, significant differences were found in the amount of time they spent watching TV programmes in English ($t=13.207$, $p= .001$) and in speaking English to foreigners ($t=2.038$, $p= .043$). Croatian young learners spent significantly more time per week watching films, cartoons and series on TV in English than Italian young learners. On the other hand, Italian participants spent more time per week speaking with foreigners than Croatian participants. Findings are presented in Figure 1.

A greater exposure to English through TV in Croatia is the result of a large number of foreign programmes, mostly in English, shown on national TV channels and the fact that foreign programmes are not dubbed but subtitles are used. Apart from that children watch cable TV a lot too. It is possible that through watching programmes that they find interesting and appealing children get useful exposure because they focus on content and acquire language forms implicitly. A study on incidental learning of English vocabulary through informal exposure in everyday life (Mihaljević Djigunović & Geld, 2002/2003) has provided evidence that in the Croatian context the amount of exposure can be conducive to incidental acquisition of English. Also, seeing English used in films and cartoons probably raises motivation of young learners: they can see that they are learning something that exists in real life and that surrounds them on a daily basis. In Italy, on the other hand, all TV programmes and films are dubbed. People can watch original programmes only on private TV channels (e.g., SKY TV) where one can have the option of having subtitles either in the original version or in Italian. Dubbing is based upon a long-standing tradition by which famous Italian actors were hired to dub films thus

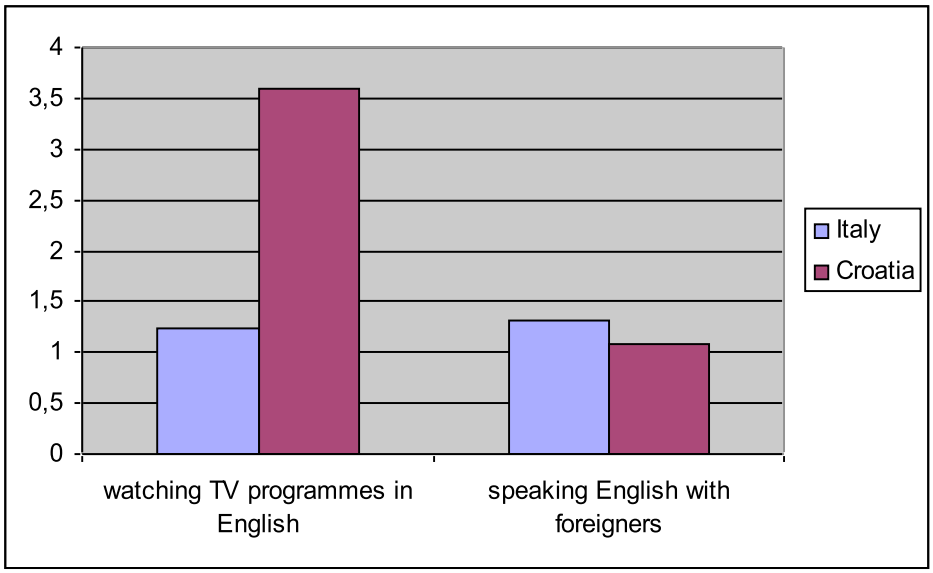

Figure 1: Amount of time Italian and Croatian young learners were exposed to English every week through watching TV programmes and speaking to foreigners

creating a 'school of dubbing' that has in the years created a habit for the Italians to watch films in their dubbed version only. The state television channels (RAI 1, 2, 3) never show original versions, except for a few cases when, late at night, some old films are being shown or when they use a delayed 'voice over' translating the original voice when interviewing people. This means that children are rarely exposed to films in their original version.

Exposure through the internet

A comparison of participants' involvement in the same activities when using the internet showed that Croatian young learners used the internet significantly more often than their Italian counterparts. The same was true about the activities in English that they engaged in through the internet: Italian participants used the Internet significantly less often in order to watch, play, listen, read or write in English (Figure 2).

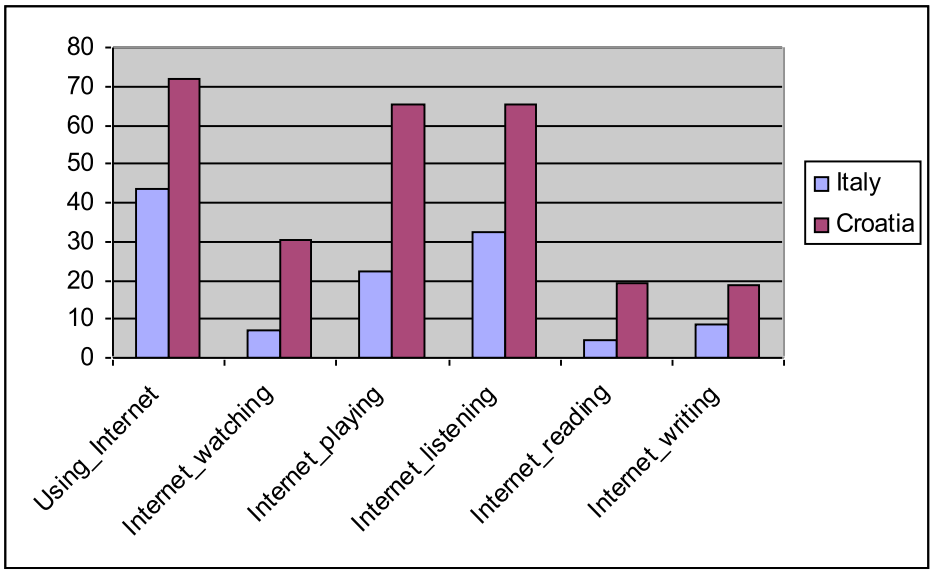

Figure 2: Differences in using the internet

The internet is undeniably an important source of contact with English, as well as a great source of motivation for learning English. There are two ways in which input in English is available to young learners when using the computer: through the software and through information on the internet. It is rather recently that software with instructions in Croatian appeared but a lot of software is still in English. While schools are not yet equipped with such numbers of computers that they could regularly be used in English classes, many children have access to a computer at home. In Italy, almost every family with children has got a computer, but not all of those families use it regularly and children under ten years of age are not always allowed to use it on their own. When asked whether they would play specific games in English on the computer, only part of the children participating in the study answered positively. More and more primary schools are equipped with a computer almost in each class, but it is being used mostly for research work or projects, seldom for doing English activities.

Computer games can be a great source of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981) for children, just like listening to popular music over the Internet. It is very likely that by being part of their out of school life through motivating activities they use it in, English learned in school becomes more meaningful.

Contact with English speaking foreigners

We next looked into participants' contacts with English speaking people. Results (see Figure 3) showed that a little over ten percent of Italian participants had some contact with English speaking people, compared to over 35% of Croats. In terms of where the contacts took place, the only case where the differences were not significant was the home: in both groups of participants the contact with English speaking people in the home was similarly low. Croatian children had more contact with foreigners than Italian children during holidays abroad, during visits of friends or family (either in the home country or abroad) and in other situations such as meeting foreign tourists in the home country.

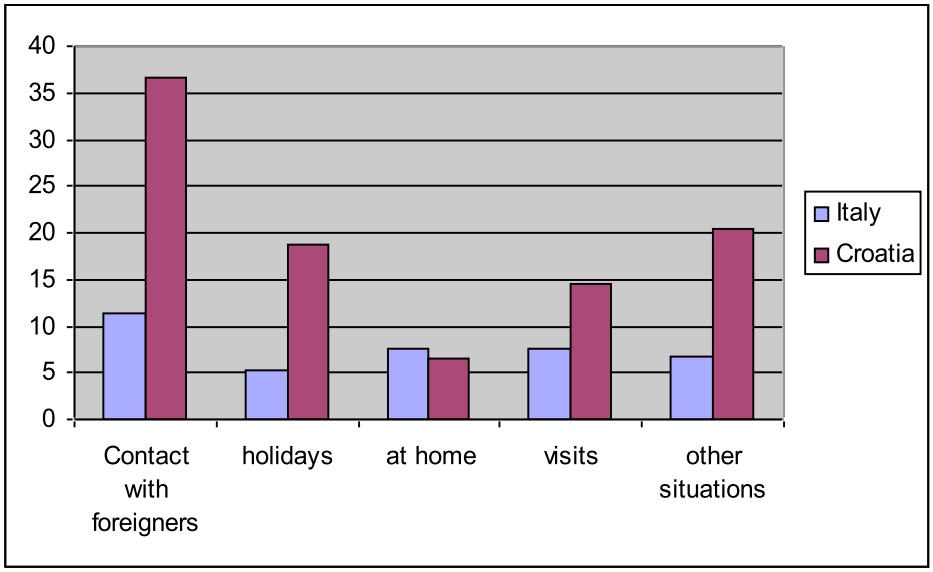

Figure 3: Opportunities to speak English through contact with foreigners

Having an opportunity to use English in real life communication situations can be very important for learners. It can make children aware that English is an important means of communication, not just a school subject. Also, it allows learners opportunities for both input and output (Swain, 1983). Such opportunities make it possible for young learners to test their hypotheses on how English works, which can contribute in important ways to the development of their emerging competence. These experiences can also boost learner motivation and linguistic self-confidence.

Contact with English in the home

The next form of exposure referred to discussing with family what went on in the EFL class, practising English at home and asking members of the family for help. Results are presented in Figure 4.

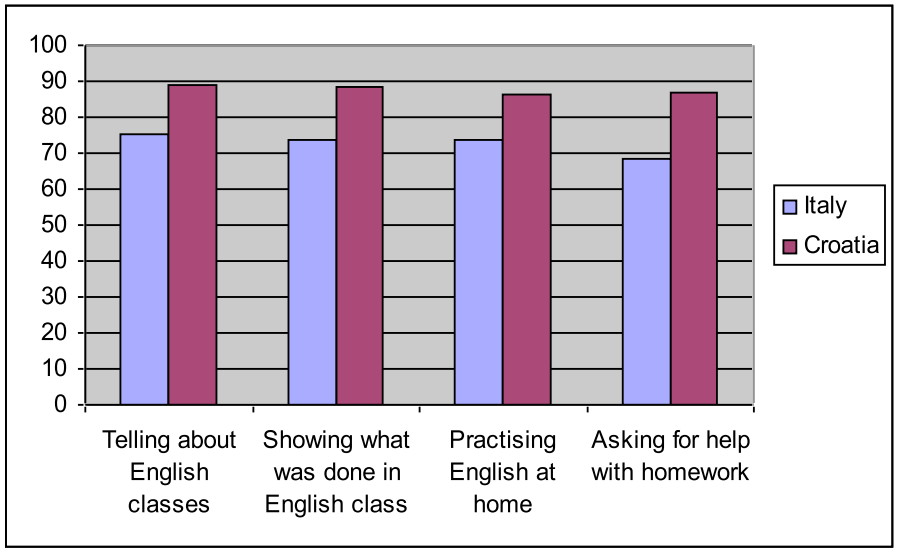

Figure 4: School-related exposure to English at home

The considered types of exposure proved to be significantly different in the two groups of young EFL learners. Significantly fewer Italian EFL learners participated in the listed activities at home than Croatian learners.

Family support can play an important role in early FL learning. Children probably form their first attitudes to the FL and to FL learning through parents and other people close to them. Through showing interest in what children did in English classes at school and through paying attention to what children do with English at home parents pass on a message about how important it is to learn English. Gardner (1985) claims that parents can play an active and a passive role in children's FL learning and that the passive role (showing interest, paying attention) can sometimes be even more important for the development of children's attitudes.

Overall exposure to English

As results presented in Figures 1-4 clearly show, Croatian young EFL learners had significantly more English language exposure outside school. The possible relevance of the amount of language exposure in early FL learning can be assessed only if it is considered in relation to learning outcomes both linguistic and non-linguistic.

Differences in linguistic outcomes

In terms of linguistic achievement, scores on listening comprehension tasks at the end of each grade were compared. Significance of differences was tested using the independent sample t-test. The results are presented below.

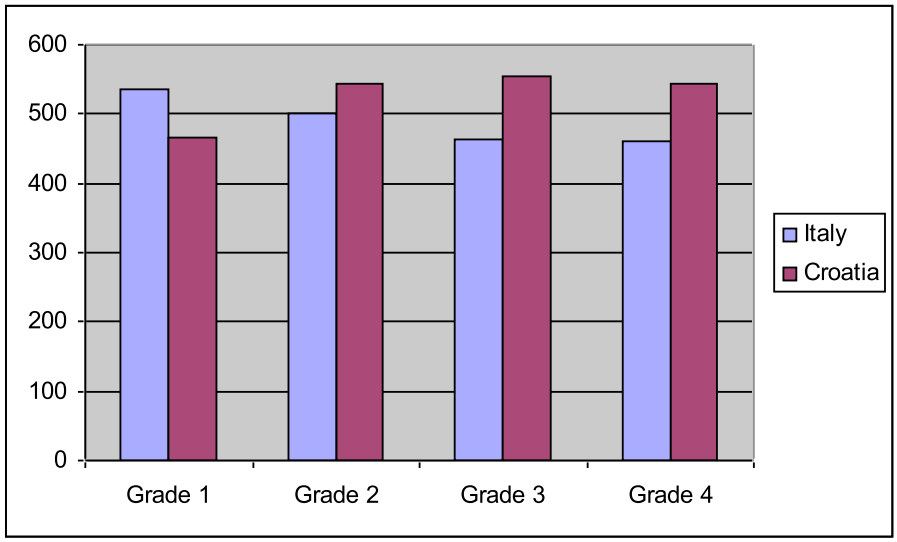

Figure 5: Comparison of listening comprehension scores in the four years

All the established differences were significant. In grade 1, Italian YLs scored significantly better than Croatian learners (t=6.479, p< .001). In the following grades the situation changed. Croatian learners started scoring significantly higher (grade 2: t=-4.966, p< .001; grade 3: t=-10,592, p< .001; grade 4: t= -10,114, p< .001).

It is possible to assume that at the very beginning of early FL learning out of school exposure does not impact linguistic achievement in essential

ways. In-class formal language exposure probably takes the decisive role because the amount of the language material taught is highly limited and can be successfully reinforced through classroom teaching. With increasing amounts of language material to be mastered individual differences become important and informal language exposure may appear as an important factor.

Differences in non-linguistic outcomes

We looked into differences in motivation to learn English, perception of how easy or difficult English is to learn and into how young learners felt when using English. Scores on smiley questionnaires administered each year and parents' questionnaire were compared between the two groups. Differences in motivation are presented in Figure 6.

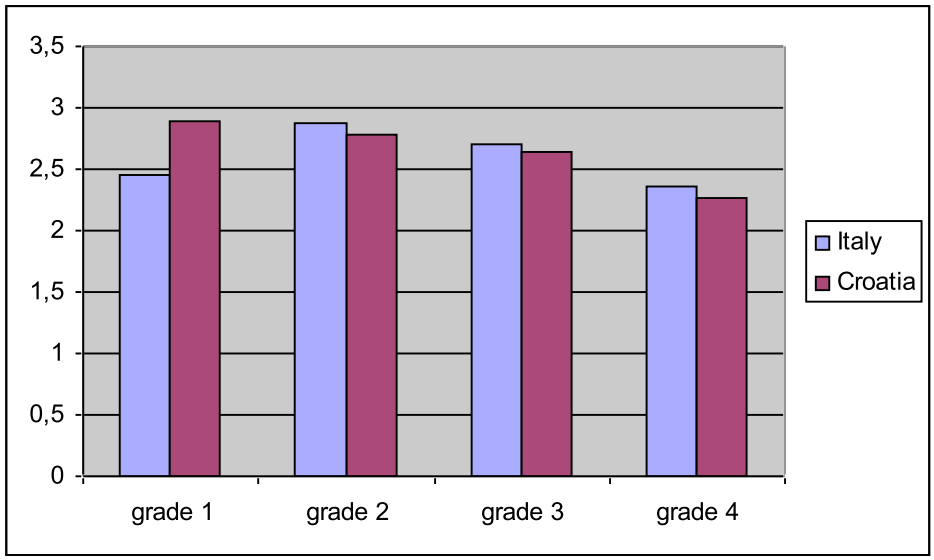

Figure 6: Liking to learn English

A significant difference (t=-6,692, p< .001) was found only in grade 1: Italian young learners liked learning English less than their Croatian peers. Although the differences in the following years were not statistically significant there seemed to be a trend for Italian learners to be more motivated for learning English than Croatians learners.

Since the question asked referred to learning English at school, this finding can perhaps be interpreted taking into account differences in the exposure to English outside school. It is possible that Croatian learners, having

more experience in out of class exposure and use of English, developed a more critical attitude to what and how they were taught in class. In an earlier study on Croatian learners' motivation for learning English, Mihaljević Djigunović (1998) found that learners who developed various forms of instrumental motivation or attended extra English lessons in private language schools became more critical of the way English was taught in school. On the other hand, it is possible that this finding reflects the fact that, due to significantly lower exposure, learning became more difficult for Italian learners. This is in harmony with our findings referring to perception of language difficulty.

From grade two on, participants were asked to compare what they thought about English: whether that particular year it was easier, the same as the previous year or more difficult than before. The comparative results are presented in Figure 7.

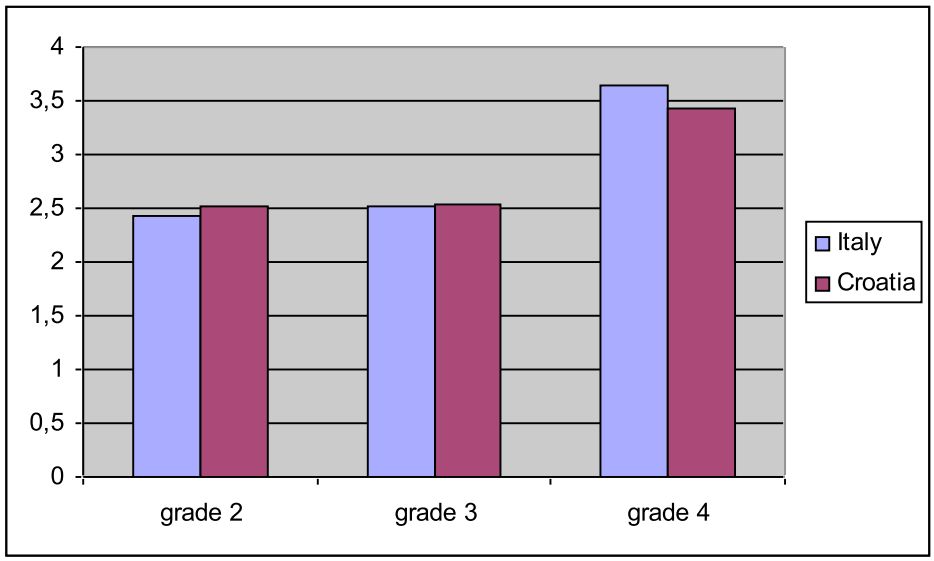

Figure 7: Perception of how easy English is to learn

There were no significant differences in grades two and three, but they turned significant in grade four (t=1.844, p= .066). We assume that by grade four individual differences among young learners started to make impact and, at the same time, the amount of language material taught in school was large enough for the effect of exposure to influence the perception of language difficulty.

Young learners' self-confidence as EFL users was assessed through an item in parents' questionnaire. Parents were asked to report on whether their child felt confident when using English. Comparative results for Italian and Croatian learners are presented in Figure 8.

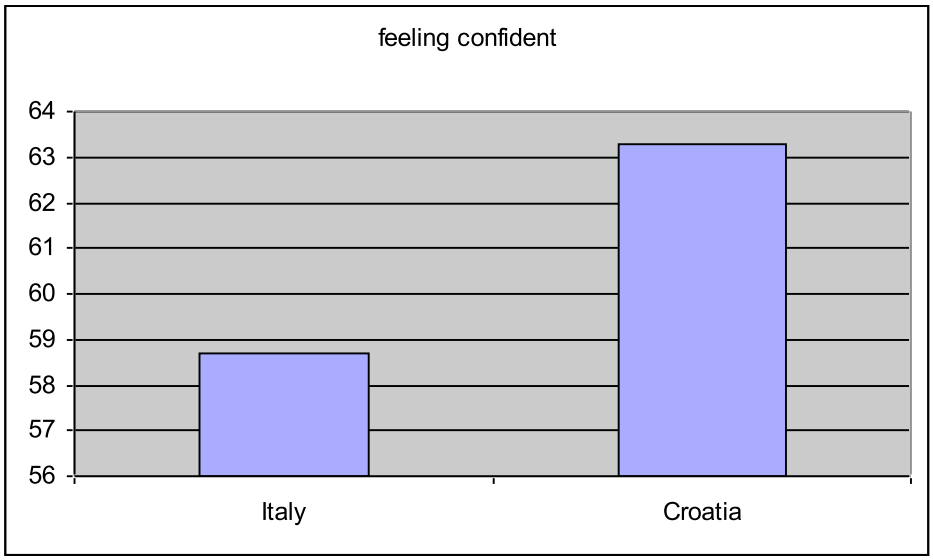

Figure 8: Feeling confident when using English

As the results indicate, Croatian young learners were reported to be more confident when using English than Italian learners. Taking into account all the results presented above, this finding is not unexpectable. A combination of higher exposure, higher linguistic achievements, higher motivation and perceiving English as easy to learn logically resulted in higher linguistic self-confidence. We do not imply that the relationships necessarily follow the direction we listed. It is quite possible that, for example, once learners reach a certain level of linguistic self-confidence they may look for informal exposure opportunities themselves, which may in turn trigger an interplay of other relevant factors. It is our belief that these relationships are very complex and it is their interactions that can help us understand the language learning process at an early age.

Interaction of exposure and learning outcomes

Since our quantitative results showed consistent trends in some but not all variables we decided to look into interactions of exposure and learning outcomes by adopting the qualitative research paradigm. An analysis of a number of focal learners allowed us to draw up profiles of young learners that can perhaps reveal more than can be seen from quantitative data alone. Below we present as illustration six of the profiles that emerged in our analyses. They are

grouped according to exposure to English, and the learners' linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes are listed.

Table 1: Profiles of young learners interaction of exposure with learning outcome

High exposure	Low exposure
Ivan (Croatian boy)	Giovanni (Italian boy)
high in listening comprehension in all grades low motivation in all grades high confidence in grades 1 & 2 in grade 3 he thinks he learns at the same rate as others, then in grade 4 his confidence increases again.	high in listening comprehension in grade 1, turns into average in grade 2, then becomes low in grades 3 & 4 low motivation in first two grades increases consistently changes in self-perception: n grades 1 & 2 he believes he is slower than others, in grades 3 & 4 he thinks he is faster than his classmates he finds English increasingly easier through the four grades.
Alida (Italian girl)	Damir (Croatian boy)
listening comprehension deteriorates through the grades motivation varies from high to low to high again finds English less easy in later grades her self-confidence increases through the years.	average in listening comprehension motivation varies from high to low to high again in grade 1 he thinks he learns faster than others, in grades 2, 3 & 4 he thinks he's slower than others finds English easier in grades 3 & 4.

Dunja (Croatian girl)	Maria (Italian girl)
increasingly better at listening comprehension	average listening comprehension
high motivation in first 3 grades, then decreases a bit	consistently high motivation in the four years
high self-perception in grades 1 & 2; in grades 3 & 4 thinks she learns at the same rate as others	in grades 1-3 she thinks she learns faster than others, but in grade 4 she starts to think she's slower than others
starts perceiving English less easy in grade 4.	finds English difficult in grade 1, easy in grades 2 & 3, then difficult in grade 4.

As the examples of individual learners in Table 1 show, interaction of FL exposure with learning outcomes is not linear but takes many different forms and directions. We can see that high exposure by itself does not necessarily guarantee high linguistic or non-linguistic achievement. Some changes that occur during the first four years of language learning are shared by high- and low-exposure learners. It may not be the amount of exposure that is crucial at the individual level but the type and quality of input. What may also be highly relevant is whether there is any integration of what young learners acquire through informal exposure into classroom teaching. Such integration would perhaps make even low exposure useful and would be beneficial not only for the high exposure learners, but also for their peers in class.

There are obviously intervening factors that interact, probably both directly and indirectly, with individual learner characteristics. Research on this topic in the area of young FL learners is still scarce but, based on the existing studies to date (e.g. Lopriore, 2009; Mihaljević Djigunović & Letica Krevelj 2010; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2010; Mihaljević Djigunović & Szpotowicz, 2008), we would like to suggest that impact of factors such as the broader socio-educational policy as well as immediate learning environment needs to be thoroughly investigated. Perhaps valuable insights could be obtained by investigating such learner characteristics as language learning ability and its interaction with language exposure.

Conclusion

This study showed that the relationship of informal, unsheltered FL exposure and learning achievements is very complex. It does not seem possible to predict achievement on the basis of language exposure alone. The complexity in question can be seen at two levels at least. First, there are probably a number of factors that intervene in the relationship and determine the impact of exposure on learning outcomes. Second, the temporal dimension contributes to the complexity as well: the interplay of exposure and achievement changes over time, with length of learning and changes in language competence. Our findings suggest that language exposure is not linearly connected with achievement. Rather, it might be more useful to think of this relationship as part of a dynamic system of interplays of a whole host of factors whose role and importance are yet to be discovered.

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An Exploratory Study on Children's Preferences on Tales in an EFL Class

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Introduction

Early foreign language (FL) programs have to be age-appropriate both in methods and context. Thus, adopting authentic tales in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms can make language learning motivating, effective and entertaining. This paper presents findings of the third phase of a study into the most effective and motivating ways of teaching English in an early FL program. The setting is a first-year class in a primary school in Budapest. Besides the two compulsory English lessons, children can choose an optional weekly English lesson. These extra lessons are based on authentic tales, which are chosen by the children from a list of stories recommended by their teacher. A semi-structured group interview was conducted with the pupils and discussions were recorded during the lessons to reveal children's preferences when choosing a tale to read. The recorded interviews and the discussions were transcribed and complemented by detailed notes taken during the lessons from September, 2009 until May, 2010. The study will focus on findings concerning children's preferences when deciding on tales to read.

The study aims to provide insights into children's preferences on tales in an EFL class. The inquiry compares and contrasts their views on different tales.

Background to study

As there has been growing competition among primary schools for pupils in the last couple of years, schools must offer programs which are attractive to children and their parents alike. Thus, early EFL programs are increasingly popular among those parents who are eager to give the best education to their children.

Although empirical research reveals that methods employed in EFL classrooms are diverse, children are rarely involved in decision-making on the processes they take part in. When Breen and Littlejohn (2000) give an overview of the significance of classroom negotiation, they argue that children are capable of making decisions about different aspects of their learning if they are encouraged to do so. Nikolov (2000) does not only comment on how effective classroom negotiation can be, but also gives an account of her first hand experience of classroom practices with children's active participation in constructing the syllabus. Positive effects of employing process syllabus were detectable not only in children's achievement in English but also in their attitude towards learning and their teacher. Serrano-Sampedro (2000) also involved her students in developing the FL syllabus and class norms in her first years as a teacher and identified similar outcomes to Nikolov (2000). Serrano-Sampedro's findings reveal that her students' self-esteem increased while they became autonomous and conscious learners, who were capable of self-evaluation as a result of classroom negotiation.

When focusing on classroom negotiation concerning content, Nikolov (2000) emphasises the importance of employing age-appropriate authentic stories with children in the early EFL classroom. Cameron (2001) claims that using authentic stories in the EFL classroom requires children's active participation and thus they can direct teaching. Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) also find teaching through stories useful and enjoyable if they are supported with visual aids and students' creative involvement.

Cameron (2001) claims that a good story involves a clear plot, detailed description of the setting and characters, formulation of a problem, resolution of the problem and a twist in the end. It should also broaden children's knowledge and give up-to-date values. Zaro and Salaberri (1995) also argue that stories are essential if teachers want to make their lessons enjoyable. They categorise stories and comment on the features which make each type suitable for teaching purposes. Thus, they identify traditional European tales, new fairy tales and fairy stories. Traditional European tales involve folk tales, which are usually well-known in L1 and are attractive to children. Their only disadvantage is that they have to be translated to English, thus they lose their

authenticity. New fairy tales intend to break with traditional stereotypes and often create new characters and setting in a world of fantasy, while traditional magic characters such as witches and fairies appear in fairy stories. Each category can contain stories which are suitable for teaching purposes as long as they develop children's imagination, increase their motivation and use children's language. Lugossy (2007) also reveals that reading authentic picture books not only adds to children's language and literacy development, but also makes them open and capable to deal with different cultures. When deciding on the story to employ, Zaro and Salaberri (1995) render it to the topic of the syllabus as opposed to the story-based syllabus described by Nikolov (2000). Zaro and Salaberri believe that the story should not be longer then ten minutes and the language should be adapted to the students' level of proficiency. Ellis and Brewster (2002) on the other hand warn that by adapting a story it can easily lose its magic. Similarly to Zaro and Salaberri (1995) they find that stories do not only exercise imagination but motivate children to FL learning to a great extent.

After exploring the benefits of classroom negotiation and the complex outcomes of employing authentic stories, I introduce the setting and the respondents of my research.

The setting

The setting is a private primary school in Budapest. This school offers children FL classes from the beginning of their studies. EFL is taught in small and integrated classes where teachers pay special attention to pupils' individual differences. English teachers have a free choice of the course books and methods they use. The school library contains a wide range of children literature both in Hungarian and English, and students are constantly encouraged by their teachers to browse among them. In first and second grade children have two 45-minute-long EFL lessons a week. One additional EFL lesson can be chosen where authentic stories are introduced to the children.

Research questions

1. On what basis do children decide on choosing tales to read in an EFL program?
2. How do their preferences change during the program?

Participants

Ten children, six boys and four girls from the first and second grade, joined the optional EFL lessons where the study was conducted. All pupils had FL learning experience prior to the first grade, and there was no considerable difference between the levels of proficiency among them. Seven of them have private lessons in the afternoons. Their parents rank English as a priority, thus children are expected to show progress. All the children were actively involved in the study. The teacher of the group, the author of this article, has eleven years of teaching experience.

Data-collection instrument and procedure

The optional EFL lessons were digitally recorded over September, 2009 to gain insights into the process of negotiation between the teacher and her pupils about the choice of tales to work with. Follow-up face-to face interviews were also conducted and digitally recorded with each pupil to gain deeper insight into their beliefs. Although the participants were encouraged to use English during the interviews, sometimes they used Hungarian. In these cases the answers are translated into English and they are included in the article in both languages. Pupils' preferences concerning certain tales were investigated with the help of the transcribed records. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted in May, 2010 to reveal how pupils' preferences change during the term. Prior to the face-to-face interviews a group interview was accomplished with the same aim. As three pupils did not have the courage to give their opinion in front of the others, face-to-face interviews became inevitable. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The two sets of data were matched by a questionnaire in which parents were asked to rank the tales according to their children's accounts at home.

Results and discussion

The aim of the optional EFL lessons

Children and their parents are required to choose an optional subject in September every year. These optional lessons, which are meant to support children's talent, are part of the school's Talent Program. In September, 2009 Maths, Arts and Sciences lessons were offered besides EFL. Teachers usually help parents to choose what they believe to be the best option for their children. Besides enlarging pupils' knowledge in the chosen field, teachers of the optional lessons are determined to teach children how to learn and how to make decisions about their learning. Children do not get grades at these lessons, but their progress is evaluated four times a year. The atmosphere of the classes is usually friendly and joyful. Although the lessons are held on Friday, when young children are often very tired, all the pupils are eager to take part.

Organization and negotiation

The optional EFL lessons are always very popular among those parents who rank FL learning high priority. Using authentic tales as teaching material made my classes even more accepted, as parents seemed to appreciate the variety of approaches used in their children's EFL teaching. Their fondness decreased and they became hesitant when children told them that they decided about the tales we would use and they were allowed to reject my ideas concerning some activities. In September, 2009 I received three phone calls from two parents complaining and worrying about the effectiveness and seriousness of my lessons.

During the first three lessons I asked my pupils to talk about their favorite cartoon films, cartoon characters and books they read at home. They drew and painted the pictures of theses characters, designed their passports and introduced them to their peers as foreign friends. By the end of September I collected enough data about the types of stories the majority was interested in. Thus I introduced them nine story-books; (1) *The Foolish Tortoise* (Buckely, 1998) (FT), (2) *Mog the Forgetful Cat* (Kerr, 2006) (MFC), (3) *Monkey Mayhem* (Randall, 2000) (MM), (4) *The Greedy Python* (Buckley, 1995) (GP), (5) *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin, 1996) (BB), (6) *The Elephant and the Bad Baby* (Vipont and Briggs, 1986) (EBB), (7) *The Three Little Pigs* (8)

(TLP) *Goodbye, Bramble* (Blathwayt, 1990) (GB) and (9) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1994) (VHC).

Categorizing pupils' beliefs on story books in September

Pupils' discussion about the tales was digitally recorded and data were categorized in the case of each child. Children were asked to look at the books and choose five out of the nine. Although they were encouraged to talk about them and to argue for their favorites preferably in English, they mostly argued against certain books, by saying: "No way! I don't want this!" On the basis of children's comments, three categories were established concerning the negative features of the books and the tales.

"This is for babies"

A recurring comment considered the lack of age-appropriateness in the case of VHC: "Not the butterfly! Baby-book!" Three participants were familiar with the story and argued that the layout was designed for kindergarten children. One of them mentioned that even the content was too simple and contained unscientific facts: "A hülyék is tudják, hogy a kukac nem eszik muffint" [Even dummies know that worms don't eat cup cakes]. Or: "Ezt már tanultuk. Először hernyó aztán pillangó. Unalmas lesz" [We have already studied this. First a caterpillar then a butterfly. It will be boring]. Three additional books, (1) FT, (2) GP and (3) BB were also criticised on the basis of their layout. All of these books are illustrated by Eric Carle. Two pupils found the illustrations too colourful thus too childish: "Nagyon színes, olyan gyerekes" [Too colourful, so childish]. Five children thought that board books are not appropriate for school children: "Ezek a kemény könyvek nem iskolásoknak valók" [These board books are not for school children].

"Ugly drawing"

The layout of the books was a focal point of pupils' argument. Two pupils found the illustrations by Eric Carle unattractive ("Ugly drawing"). As opposed to the criticism concerning too many colours, MFC was considered too grey and frightening: "Grey and frightening, I don't want it." GB and EBB were

excluded by four participants as being too gloomy for children: "Ez meg túl komor gyerekeknek" [This one is too gloomy for children].

"Too long with lots of words"

Although only one pupil considered the length of the tales crucial, he was so determined to exclude MFC and TLP on this basis that he convinced two other children to share his opinion: "Ilyen hosszút lehetetlen elovasni!" [It is impossible to read such a long one]. He also claimed that "the Piggy is too long and boring and baby" and "I don't care the fat cat, too long."

Making a decision

After the discussion the books were numbered, and every pupil was asked to write the number of the five chosen books on a piece of paper. The pieces were collected and the votes were added up. One child strongly suggested the use of a traditional course book, but later she also gave her votes on the tales. In spite of the strong criticism (1) MM, (2) VHC, (3) EBB, (4) TLP and (5) BB were the most popular tales. Thus from October, 2009 until April, 2010 the activities and tasks of the lessons were based on these tales.

Categories established on the basis of the face-to-face interviews

After deciding on the tales I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each participant to get a better understanding of their choices. I asked them to focus on the features which made them choose a certain story book. Although they tended to emphasise the negative features which made them decide against some tales, I could establish eight categories according to their preferences.

Animals

Eight pupils mentioned that good and interesting tales had animal characters. They also emphasized that tales with animals are usually funny and they had happy endings: "I like animals;" "Az állatos könyvek viccesek" [Books with

animals are funny]. “Semmilyen rossz dolog nem szokott az állatos mesékben történni” [Nothing bad usually happens in tales with animals].

Funny illustrations

As illustration was the major source of criticism during the classroom discussion, it also had a crucial role when positive features were listed. Seven children found attractive illustrations inevitable to enjoy reading tales. “This TLP is a nice book. I like it.” “Vicces ez a nagy elefánt, meg a gyerek is.” [This big elephant is funny, and the small boy too]. Referring to the illustrations of Eric Carle one child praised colours. “Ezeket a könyveket szeretem. Színesek” [I like these books. They are colourful].

Length

Seven participants considered length a determining aspect when choosing the most attractive tales. In accordance with their rejection concerning longish books, children emphasised that the shorter a tale was the more interesting it could be: “Ha rövid, gyorsan kiderül a vége” [It it is short, the end soon turns out].

Familiar vocabulary

Five children found it important to be familiar with the vocabulary of certain tales. Thus they voted for those books whose vocabulary they had already acquired: “I know fruits, caterpillar story is OK.” “Shops are easy. I can read it.” BB was also highly attractive to the pupils as it contained the names of different animals: “Ezek csak állatok. Az menni fog nekem” [These are only animals. I will manage!].

Familiar and unfamiliar tales

Familiar tales were popular among those four children who tended to be on the safe side. They emphasised that it was easier to follow the English tale if they knew it in Hungarian. “Tudom mire figyeljek, ha ismerem magyarul.” [I know what to pay attention to, if I’m familiar with it in Hungarian]. On the

other hand three pupils voted for unfamiliar tales as they considered them more challenging: "Nem akarom tudni a végét előre [I don't want to know the end of the story in advance].

Exciting tales and cows

Two participants aimed to find exciting tales from the list. Even if they had already read certain tales in Hungarian, they voted for those ones which contained a twist or some frightening scenes: "A majmosban van egy félelmetes krokodil. Az jó lesz" [There is a frightening crocodile in the one with the monkeys. That will be good].

One girl claimed that she was interested in any tales if there were cows in it: "Nekem mindegy melyiket fogjuk olvasni, ha van benne tehén. A tehén a kedvenc állatom. Mindent szeretek, amiben tehén van" [I don't really care which one we will read as long as there are cows in it. Cows are my favourite animals. I like everything with cows].

Investigating how children's preferences change during the year

In May, 2010 pupils were interviewed about the tales they had read during the optional English lessons. They ranked the tales, the adjoining activities and vocabulary items retrospectively according to their preferences. Compared to their initial views, the order of the tales preferred by children changed to a great extent: (1) EBB, (2) TLP, and (3) VHC, MM and BB did get any votes.

The Elephant and the Bad Baby

Four children claimed EBB to be their favourite. It was the last tale the participants dealt with during lessons., which may explain its impressive position: "Az elefántos volt a legviccesebb. Ebből tanultuk a legtöbb szót" [The one with the elephant was the most interesting one. We have learnt the most words from this]. Two children referred to the performance based on the story, which was put on stage with pupils' active participation: "A lopós jelenet volt a legjobb egész évben" [The stealing scene was the best during the whole year].

The Three Little Pigs

Although TLP was the first tale of the year, three pupils found it to be the most entertaining. Participants could recall nearly all the new words learnt while dealing with TLP: "Emlékszem, hogy house of straw, és, hogy valami huff and puff." [I remember house of straw, and something like huff and puff]. They also remembered many details of the final performance: "Emlékszem, hogy az előadás alatt leesett a fülem." [I remember that my ear fell off during the performance]. One participant even suggested that the tale could be put on stage again with some restrictions: "No pig again, that's for sure."

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

The popularity of VHC is mostly due to a board game which was used during the lessons. The game follows the topic of the tale and offers opportunities to practice the new vocabulary. Children enjoyed playing it. When talking about VHC during the interviews this board game was referred to: "A társas jó volt" [The board game was good]. Another comment claimed that: "The caterpillar story was easy but funny, and the game too."

Parents' knowledge about their children's preferences

Eight parents out of the ten filled in the questionnaire. One did not reply to my email to which I attached my questions. One mother responded to my letter, but did not fill in the questionnaire, claiming that she did not know what she should write about: "Milyen meséről kellene írnom?" [What tale should I write about?]. Four parents claimed that their children like TLP the most. Three parents referred to a poem, "To the Farm," in their answers. This poem was also dealt with during the lessons. According to the parents' summary, children practiced it with great enthusiasm at home. Contrary to children's opinions, only one parent wrote about VHC.

Conclusion

This study aimed to provide insights into beliefs and preferences of first and second graders concerning tales read during EFL lessons. Data gained from classroom observation confirm that children are able to take active part in the negotiation about their learning. Pupils' answers reflect that children have a clear view about the tales they like to read and the ones they are not interested in. They can also name those features which make tales attractive to them. However, the study also reveals that with performances in which children can actively use the acquired language, even the less admired tales can be made popular. Further research should explore to what extent different kind of activities can motivate children to read authentic texts both in foreign languages and in their mother tongue.

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Teachers' Views on Tasks that Work with Primary-School EFL Learners

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Introduction

The aim of the paper is to provide insights into what tasks teachers of English as a foreign language use to assess their learners' progress in the classroom in grades 1 to 6 (ages 6 to 13). The study was implemented as an exploratory inquiry into Hungarian teachers' practices and views on what tasks best tap into young language learners' development in English. It was the first phase of a larger project (TÁMOP 3.1.9) aiming to develop diagnostic tests for classroom teachers in Hungarian state schools. We intended to establish a baseline in order to build on good practice and integrate relevant task types into a range of new diagnostic tests.

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are outlined in the literature on teaching English to young learners (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004), research into its various aspects (Nikolov, 2009a, b, c), language testing in general (Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995; Bachmann & Palmer, 1996), testing young language learners (Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009; Jungné Font, in press; McKay, 2006; Pizorn, 2009), diagnostic testing (Alderson, 2005; Csapó, 2010; Csapó & Zsolnai, 2011; Nikolov & Szabó, 2011), and the situation of early foreign language learning and teaching in Hungary (Nikolov, 2009d,e), in particular. A different line of research concerns the relationship between teachers' actions and beliefs (Borg, 2006, 2009; Nikolov, 2008). In the Hungarian context early language programs can be launched as early as parents demand and schools can offer (Nikolov, 2009d); however, no official curricula guide teachers implementing such programs and often continuity means a challenge for teachers.

Therefore, it is important to develop diagnostic tests for teachers to find out where their learners are in their English development.

Research questions

- What tests do teachers use to assess their learners' progress in their English classes?
- How can teachers' classroom testing practice be characterized?

Participants

A convenience sample of 26 teachers of English agreed to participate in the study at various primary schools in Hungary; the majority had been involved in previous projects. Finally, 12 teachers managed to return the tasks.

Data collection instrument

Teachers were asked to choose and characterize ten tasks they used successfully with their students for testing their knowledge of English as a foreign language. They were invited to scan or xerox a copy of printed tasks and also to attach listening tasks as files, tapes or CDs. They were asked to provide the following data for all tasks: a title, exact source (they could choose from a list of information to provide), what the teacher needs to prepare and what students need to use, what the task involves, what level and age range they thought the task was appropriate for (chosen from options), what skills and subskills the tasks measured (options were provided, e.g., listening for gist (overall meaning) or for specific information; asking and answering yes/no, or wh-questions; intonation and pronunciation; retelling a rhyme, guessing meaning from context; fluency or accuracy, reading aloud, reading for gist, reading for specific information, spelling, memorization), how learners were assessed on the task (Describe how you give learners feedback when you assess task accomplishment. Indicate what a top achiever can do, what you accept as adequate, and what you consider inadequate performance. If you score them or grade them, explain how). We asked teachers to send sample performances and to add their comments on them. Finally, they were to finish a statement on each task: Best students can..... and to rate how popular the task

was with their students (1 = unpopular 4 = extremely popular). As the length of our paper is limited, we focus on some of the items.

Procedure

First, several circular email messages were sent to as many teachers as we could reach in early February 2010 and by the deadline 26 teachers volunteered to participate. However, after getting the detailed description of their task, only 12 sent back all the required data in April despite the fact that we paid participants for their contributions. A total of 138 tasks were returned, most of them in electronic format, but some in printed form and on tapes and CDs. Out of these, we analyzed 119 (some tasks were unclear and thus, excluded). Not all respondents filled in all data, whereas some sent more than required. The files were saved with codes and then all tasks were analyzed along the focal points of the data collection instrument. The dataset was analyzed according to content and frequencies of emerging patterns.

Results

Sources of test tasks

The first question inquired about the source of the tasks. Respondents were to choose from a list of possible sources. Out of the 119 tasks we received, in five cases the respondent only provided us with a copy of the tasks with no additional details. A total of 114 answers were then grouped into eight categories that are shown in Figure 1. Most of the tasks came from English course books; whereas 24 tasks were reported to be devised by the teachers themselves. Hungarian course books (19) were the third most often mentioned category of source. Thirteen tasks were taken from the internet. In the case of nine tasks the teachers borrowed the idea from their colleagues. The last three categories included six authentic board or card games, five tasks from teachers' resource books and three from other sources, such as television, a workshop and a competition. One of the teachers did not know the source of a task.

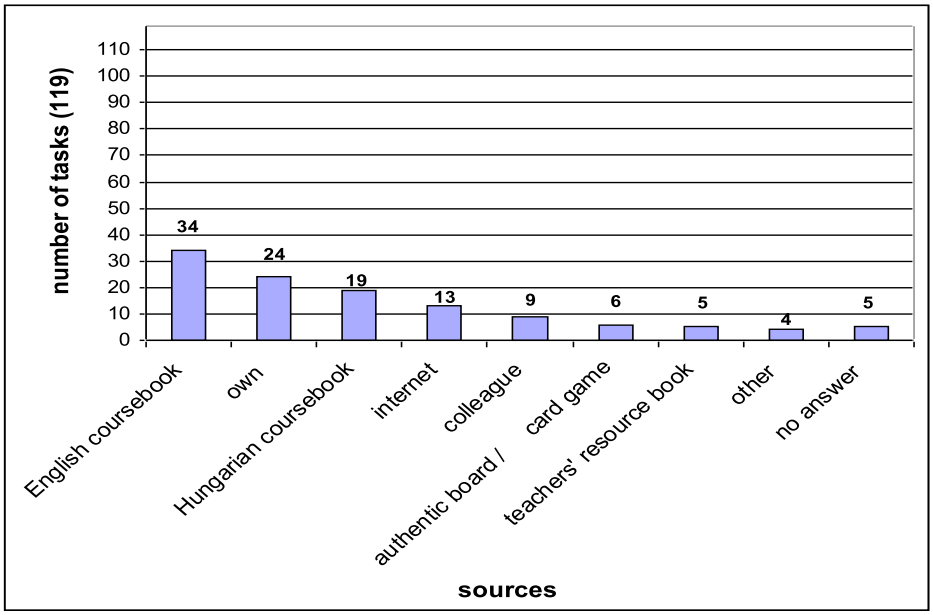

Figure 1: Frequency of sources

Difficulty of tasks

The fourth question elicited information on what level of proficiency the tasks were suitable for. Again the teachers could select from a list with descriptions of the various levels (beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate described in terms of length of study in years and frequency of English classes). Similarly to the previous question, in the case of five tasks no response was given. Therefore, we specified the proficiency level that these tasks were suitable for. A total of 119 answers were received. They were grouped into seven categories that are visualized in Figure 2. The most frequent tasks are suitable for beginners, according to the teachers. Thirty tasks were considered to be good for pre-intermediate students, whereas 20 for elementary, and eight for intermediate level. Three of the categories are combinations of two different proficiency levels. Nine tasks were labeled as appropriate for both beginner and elementary, five for elementary and pre-intermediate, and two for pre-intermediate and intermediate students. In the case of three tasks other combinations were indicated, such as beginner / elementary / pre-intermediate, beginner / advanced, and any level depending on the topic. These results indicate that teachers have a loose perception of what task difficulty

means. As it is an empirical question, we would need to actually pilot the tasks to find out how learners with various backgrounds would perform on them.

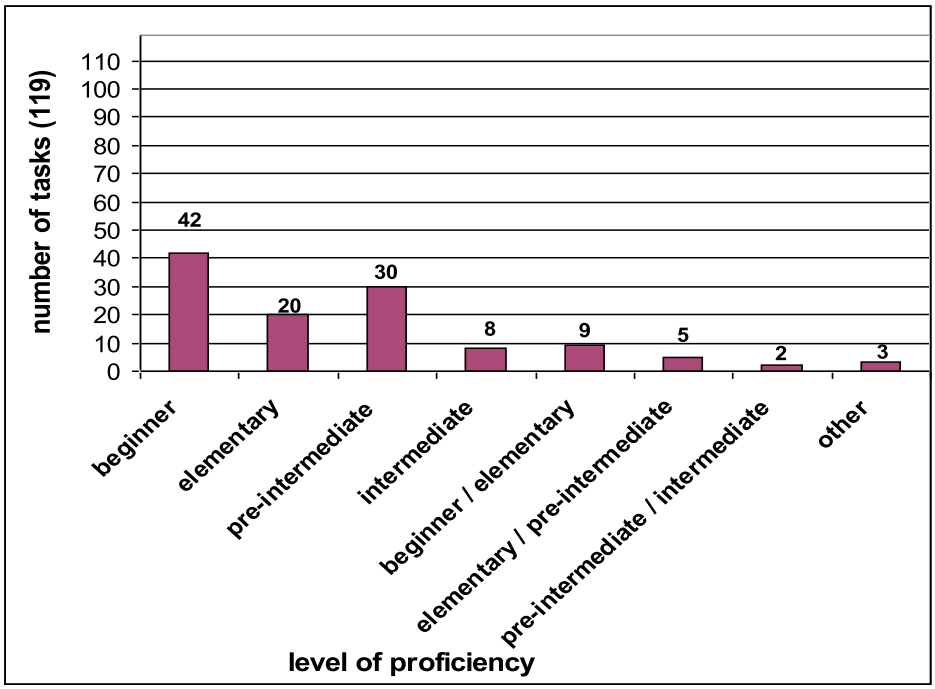

Figure 2: Distribution of tasks according to level

The skill tasks develop and assess

Respondents were to specify the skills they wanted to develop with the tasks; they could choose from a list of skills (listening / speaking / reading / writing). In the case of five tasks teachers did not answer this question, so we specified the skills. A total of 119 answers are placed in a relatively wide range of categories (see Figure 3). The largest category of answers comprises tasks that develop both reading and writing skills. The second main category includes tasks that improve both listening and speaking skills. The third most frequent tasks integrate three skills, according to the teachers. Five of these tasks were reported to develop listening, speaking and writing; four reading, writing and speaking; two listening, reading and speaking; and one listening, reading and writing. Two of these tasks contain new skills: reading comprehension, practice of punctuation and negative forms; listening, lip reading, and speaking. Twelve tasks develop and assess speaking exclusively. The fifth category comprises e-

leven tasks that integrate reading and speaking. Eleven tasks were claimed to develop writing and nine listening skills. The last three categories comprise seven speaking and writing tasks, seven reading and two other tasks (listening reading and reading vocabulary building).

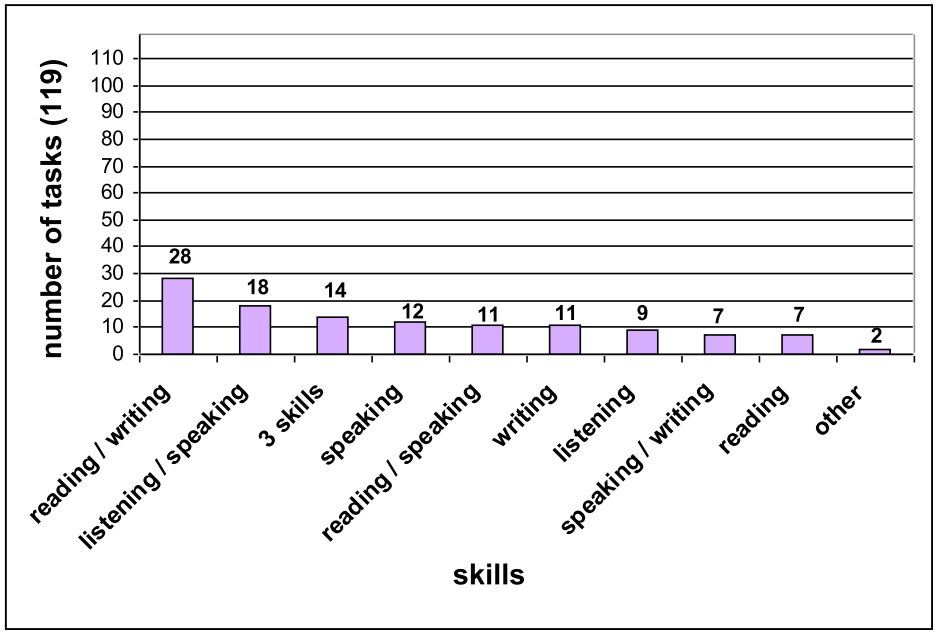

Figure 3: Distribution of language skills tasks develop and asses

How teachers give feedback to learners and what various levels mean in achievement

In the next section teachers were asked to (1) describe how they gave learners feedback when they assessed task accomplishment, (2) indicate what a top achiever could do, what they accepted as adequate, and what they considered inadequate performance, and 3) explain how they scored or graded their students if they did so. Due to space limitation, we present findings on the first and the third questions. In the case of seven tasks the respondents did not give an answer. As for the first and third questions, the teachers provided 166 responses that were then grouped into nine categories (see Table 1).

The largest category comprises references to rewarding the best students without mentioning others (see Table 1). This category is further divided into five secondary categories according to the type of rewards. The most popular types were smileys, red points or plus signs (24); whereas stickers (12)

were also frequently applied rewards. The number of answers referring to students getting a mark 5 or an opportunity to make a decision or a choice instead of the teacher is the same (6), respectively. Congratulating or praising the best students were the least frequently mentioned forms of reward (4).

Table 1: How learners are assessed on tasks

Primary categories	Secondary categories	Frequency of secondary categories
1. rewarding best students	smiley / red point / +	24
	stickers	12
	mark 5 (top grade)	6
	opportunity to make a choice or decision	6
	congratulation / praise	4
2. correcting/checking task	the students alone	22
	the teacher	12
	the class together	2
3. quantifying results	grading	12
	percent	8
	scores	5
	number of mistakes	4
4. motivating irrespective of performance	appreciate	6
	praise	6
5. feedback		12
6. no reference to assessment		11
7. competition	with rewards	5
	without rewards	2
8. group / self-assessment	group-assessment	3
	self-assessment	2
9. further practice		2

When it comes to the assessment of learners the second most often mentioned procedure was checking or correcting the tasks (36), which took place individually, by the teacher or in a whole class. The third largest category includes references to the quantification of the results (29). This is carried out in the form of grading, determining a percentage, or a score, or counting the mistakes. Giving students feedback and motivating them irrespective of their

performance were both mentioned twelve times. In eleven cases the respondents' answers were more task descriptions or how students managed on the task, or we could not interpret them. The last three categories include references to competitions with or without a reward (7), group- or self-assessment (5), and further practice (2).

Best students' performances on tasks

As a next step, respondents were required to finish the statement on how their best learners can perform on the task. In the case of 19 tasks no answer was given. A total of 132 responses were grouped into seven categories (Table 2). One of the two equally large categories comprises statements that are concerned with the number of students' errors or correct answers (29). This category was further divided into four secondary categories. As Table 3 shows, in 13 cases the best learners could do the task without mistakes, whereas in seven cases all or almost all of their answers were correct; in five they carried out the tasks with few mistakes. In four responses the emphasis was on the number of the correct answers.

The second large category includes 29 statements on the best students' ability to complete the task without further specification. The third most frequent group of responses is related to aptitude. Out of the 28 answers, 25 describe the best students as those who could do the task easily or quickly; whereas in three cases good memory is emphasized. In the next category 28 answers describe the best students as the ones who could go beyond the task: (a) they could either carry out another task, or (b) were creative, or (c) enjoyed the task. In the fifth category teachers referred to the amount of support the best students required. Out of the 14 cases, in six the best students needed no help, in another six tasks they could carry it out without a prompt, and on two others learners needed little help. In the last two categories appropriate social behavior, such as the ability to help others and be cooperative, and the quality of language use, such as complexity, accuracy and fluency, were considered to be the indicator of the best students (see Table 2).

Table 2: How could the best learners perform on the task?

Primary categories	Secondary categories	Frequency of secondary categories
1. number of mistakes / correct answers	without mistakes	13
	all / almost all correct	7
	few mistakes	5
	number of correct answers	4
2. able to carry out the task		29
3. aptitude	do it easily / quickly	25
	reference to memory	3
4. perform beyond task	do another task	10
	creative	8
	enjoy the task	3
5. support	without help / on their own	6
	without prompt	6
	with little help	2
6.social behaviour	help the others	4
	cooperative	3
7. language use	complexity	3
	accuracy	1
	fluency	1

Discussion

Sources of tasks

It is intriguing to discuss where the test tasks come from and what their sources imply. The results show that almost half of the tasks (53) sent in came from various course books, mainly international publications. As McKay (2006, p. 47) claims, young learners can show their language skills best through tasks that are familiar, raise their interests and motivate them to express themselves in the foreign language. Also, she points out that it is not necessary for assessment tasks to imitate real-world situations if they "are authentic for the language learning classroom" (p. 130). As in most Hungarian classroom usually syllabi are based on course books, this should reflect good practice: learners can be expected to be familiar with their tasks. Therefore, with these tasks they have a better chance of feeling confident during assessment. However, in order

to maintain young learners' attention and motivation teachers should refrain from overusing them and making them boring.

The second most frequently mentioned source of the tasks was the teachers themselves. As typically there is a wide range of variance in young learners' cognitive, emotional, maturational, and language development, the teacher who has the necessary information to cater for their individual needs is the most suitable person to carry out the assessment (McKay, 2006, p. 57). By devising the task she can further increase the chance of providing students with tasks in which they can show their best, which is fundamental in young learners' assessment (McKay, 2006, p. 110). Considering how widely available and how abundant in relevant information the internet is it is surprising that out of 119 tasks only 13 were downloaded from various websites.

Since assessment should be based on the curriculum (McKay, 2006, p. 47), when it comes to choosing an appropriate assessment task, teachers' handiest references are their colleagues who are similarly familiar with the goals and objectives of the curriculum, and, in addition, may be fully aware of the specificity of the given learning environment. In view of this, it is a remarkable finding that only three of our respondents borrowed their colleagues' ideas in the case of six tasks.

By bringing authentic games into the foreign language classroom teachers can break the monotony of using the course book all the time. Games are effective ways of raising young learners' attention, motivating them to take part in activities, and allowing them to do their best in meaning-focused tasks. In our study only six tasks are authentic card or board games all were sent by the same teacher. Teachers' resources books are probably the most essential readings of an elementary school teacher. The fact that out of 119 tasks only five were taken from resource books might indicate that our participants do not often rely on this type of literature.

Skills and subskills

Since at the age of 6-12 years learners are not confident in their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, oral activities should constitute the core of their foreign language teaching (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 85-86). Consequently, during assessment listening and speaking tasks should also be favored (Jungné, in press). In our study the ratio of skills does not reflect this idea. From among the 119 tasks, 76 were reading and/or writing tasks and 57 tapped into listening and/or speaking. In addition to this, in 78 cases the respondents claimed that a task assessed two or three skills, and they often

mixed skills with inappropriate subskills, thus indicating two problems. On the one hand, teachers found it difficult to identify which skills and subskills tasks tapped into. This problem is similar to what was found on task difficulty. On the other hand, such tasks used for diagnostic assessment will not provide insights into learners' strengths and weaknesses, as teachers will not be able to find out in what specific areas their students' face problems, and consequently in what domains they need further improvement.

Assessment of learners' performances

There is unanimous agreement in the literature that young learners are extremely sensitive to criticism, they need encouragement and positive feedback during learning and assessment, and it is essential to provide them with a feeling of success and progress (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; McKay, 2006). The younger the learners are the more attention should be paid to these principles, as young learners develop at a very slow pace compared to older school children (Krashen, 1985), thus, their motivation must be maintained more often over a longer period of time. The results indicate an important issue: in the most frequently occurring answers to how teachers assess their learners, our respondents indicated how they rewarded best performances on tasks. This practice of rewarding only highest achievements fails to take into account that by giving various rewards to the best students, lower achievers get negative feedback and evaluation. Rewards mean extrinsic motivation to fast learners; however, their lack is discouraging to all other learners: their performance is not worth noting. In addition to this, teachers leave weaker students without any specific clue as to how they performed on the task and how they could improve.

The second most frequent category of answers (36) comprises references to checking and correcting tasks. Out of these references, only one mentions feedback and two others further practice. This implies that assessment is not followed by detailed feedback to provide students with information about the strong and weak points of their performance, and consequently they do not know how to improve and may also lose interest. Likewise, if after receiving feedback young learners are not given the opportunity to practice and develop, they are quite likely not to experience progress in the given skill or subskill, which may also lead to demotivation. Diagnostic assessment integrates assessment and development. Therefore, it is important to involve learners in the process of checking and correcting their tests. This can be implemented in frontal class work, but students should be encouraged to

assess themselves, as the aim is to develop learners' autonomy. If tests are marked by teachers and error correction is not part of the learning process, learners do not benefit from seeing their tests with errors corrected.

As McKay (2006, p. 266) claims, "in order to evaluate children's performance in the most appropriate way possible, a scoring method is needed". Out of the 166 answers describing the assessment procedure only 29 referred to the quantification of the results. In twelve instances this meant grading, which does not provide learners with detailed diagnostic assessment (Noss, Goldstein & Hoyles, 1989). Appreciating and praising participation irrespective of the quality of the performance, giving feedback and providing the opportunity to practice further are all crucial elements of diagnostic assessment in the classroom of young language learners. However, in our study they are referred to only in few answers of the respondents. Although self- and peer-assessment are worthwhile strategies, because they encourage young learners to be conscious of and responsible for their own learning (McKay, 2006), they are mentioned in five answers only.

What students can do

To do their best and feel good about themselves young language learners need a safe and supporting environment (McKay, 2006), where making mistakes is considered a natural component of the learning process. Therefore, while assessing their performance teachers should always emphasize what students can do and not how many mistakes they have made. When teachers described what their best students could do they often framed their answers in terms of the number of errors and correct answers. This fact indicates that teachers are focused on errors and they place students on the scale of good and poor performance by counting mistakes instead of applying other criteria.

Twenty-nine answers comprised no specification as to what distinguishes the best performance from less successful ones. Teachers simply stated that the best students managed to do the task or certain elements of the task. In the case of an additional 21 tasks, best students went beyond the original task: they either solved an additional test, or their solution reflected creativity or enjoyment. On the one hand, the latter finding may be an indication of good practice of managing individual differences: teachers gave fast learners extra tasks to solve. As young learners' maturational and emotional development is diverse (McKay, 2006), these techniques are crucial to ensure that all students' needs are meet. On the other hand, in 28 cases teachers implicitly referred to learners' higher aptitude: better aptitude was manifested in faster

work and better memory. Interestingly, besides memory (mentioned three times) no other component of aptitude was hinted at.

In a few (7) cases teachers reported to enable learners' helpful social behavior, but helping others gives little valuable information in terms of the assessment criteria. It simply means that the best students were seen as being able to help their peers. Nevertheless, peer support is indeed an effective element of early childhood learning, although it also raises the question of whose performance teachers assessed in these cases.

In early childhood education it is important for the teacher to guarantee that students feel good about themselves and experience success in the classroom (McKay, 2006). Therefore, during assessment if the need arises teachers should always give young language learners additional support to help them do their best. Among the answers only 14 refer to teacher support. This either means that in most cases learners did not need help or they did not get any. It is also worth mentioning that out of the total of 119 tasks in the case of 19 the respondents did not or could not describe how the best students would solve them.

Conclusion

The aim of our study was to find out what tasks teachers of English use to carry out diagnostic assessment, how they apply them and what information they gain by using them in the first six grades of primary school. Only 12 teachers participated in the study, therefore, this is an exploratory study aiming to find out what the main issues and challenges are in young learners' diagnostic assessment. The respondents selected and characterized tasks they had found to be useful to tap into their learners' English skills. As has been shown, the 119 tasks teachers have used for testing their students' proficiency vary to a great extent in their sources, levels of perceived difficulty, skill area and other respect. The main findings indicate that (1) teachers find it difficult to apply categories we assume they are familiar with to their chosen classroom tasks and practice; (2) they apply loose and fuzzy terms for assessing learners' performances instead of clear criteria; (3) they are focused on errors and accuracy rather than fluency and vocabulary, and what students cannot do, as opposed to what they can; (4) feedback is often provided in the form of rewards for top performance only and no reward for less good performance indicating that only top achievers get feedback. This practice may easily lead to a decrease in less able learners' motivation.

Definitely more research is necessary to find out more about how teachers assess their learners, what tasks they apply in the classroom and how testing contributes to learning over time. It would be useful to observe teachers using tests of all four skills with their learners and to examine how they apply assessment criteria, how they actually provide feedback to learners, how they recycle the information they gain from tests in their teaching, and how they scaffold their learners' development from the level they have diagnosed they are at. In the long run it would be useful to provide teachers with validated tasks to use for assessing their learners – the aim of the larger project this study is part of.

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In the Eye of the Beholder: Establishing the Hungarian Cultural Value Orientation Profile for Further Use in Foreign-Language Education

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Introduction

It is 31 years since Hofstede published his paradigm-setting work on the dimensions of cultures that help us understand why there are conflicts, miscommunication and lack of understanding even among people with the best intentions towards each other (1980). This study approaches cultural value orientation studies (CVOS) from the perspective of the connection between cultural value orientations and verbal behavior, to make recommendations for foreign-language education (FLE) in Hungary. After a brief overview of the theoretical background, the existing literature is examined with relevance to Hungary, and the cultural value orientation profile (CVOP) is established based on the data from current international and Hungarian studies. Semi-structured interviews with foreigners and Hungarians working together on a regular basis seek to answer the research question what constitutes the composite CVOP of Hungary.

The paper aims to contribute to the application of the concept of CVOS and CVOPs in FLE to make language learners' past and future experiences related to other cultures more comprehensible, so that their attitude towards foreigners and other cultures is positively influenced, and their motivation for language learning is maintained (Holló, 2008).

Theoretical background

Although there are many definitions for the construct of 'culture' in different fields of research (Kramsch, 1998; Chick, 1996; Brown, 1986), this paper will use Hofstede's (1991) definition for its clarity, according to which, culture is "the thinking, feeling and acting of a group" (p. 4).

In the first part of the 20th century, the early anthropological thinkers researched cultural values (David Hume and Lévi-Strauss cited in Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 45); Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951; Inkeles & Levinson, 1954) in an exploratory and descriptive manner. The dominant questions were how humans relate to nature and other people (Buckley, 2000). Later, empirical work procured a clearer understanding of the nature and type of values and their variations. Hofstede studied IBM employees' work attitude in more than 100 countries, which turned into a major work of statistical comparative cultural value survey (1980). From this massive database he was able to define the construct of the 'cultural dimension' which is "an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 23), and to compare the participating countries on five cultural dimensions.

Other large-scale surveys employing similar dimensions followed and rendered additional data that was analyzed statistically: the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004); Schwartz's Theory of Value (1994); Inglehart's World Value Survey (1997); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's work (1998), and most recently the European Social Survey (ESS) (2008). At the same time, some researchers used the data collected in these surveys and proposed new dimension frameworks from these after diverse statistical procedures (Minkov, 2007), while others use their own, mostly qualitative data collection methods to ascertain cultural value orientations from such information (Triandis, 2002; Csath, 2008; Falkné, 2008). The field is currently characterized by the effort of collecting data with either quantitative (Hofstede, 1981; Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 1994; ESS, 2008) or qualitative (Trompenaars & Hampden-Tuner, 1998; Triandis, 2002) methods in quantity so that statistical analysis becomes possible in order to gain objective, representative and generalizable results on a world-wide scale.

The need for proper sampling and an appropriate level of analysis to obtain a dimension reflected in the data cannot be emphasized enough. In addition, the cultural dimension is a construct that enables the scientist to measure and compare cultures, thus CVOS results must always be interpreted in a comparative manner, as they are never absolute, but are valid only with reference to the characteristics of another group, country or subculture.

Data collection methods have been either quantitative (Hofstede, Inglehart, Schwartz, ESS) or qualitative (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Csath, 2008; Falkné, 2001; Triandis, 2002). The samples have been matched (Hofstede, 1981; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998) or representative (Inglehart, 1997; ESS, 2008) with participants mainly from the business world at different levels of management (Hofstede, 1981; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), students (Schwartz, 1994), and other walks of life (Inglehart, 1997; ESS, 2008). The methods of data analysis by and large applied statistical procedures (factor analysis, ANOVA and correlations), or descriptive measures. It is only natural that the resulting frameworks proposed by the researchers are very diverse, too. They sometimes correlate, sometimes overlap, and sometimes complement each other. For instance, Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension covers the same issue as Trompenaars' individualism-communitarianism; Inglehart's survival-self-expression dimension deals with the same question as that of Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance/tolerance index, namely, the attitude towards ambiguity; the gender egalitarianism dimension of the GLOBE study identifies roughly the same ideas as the masculinity vs. femininity dimension of Hofstede; and the long-term orientation vs. short term orientation dimension of Hofstede covers the indulgence-restraint dimension of Minkov (2007), just to name a few.

The review of the work of international researchers/research projects resulted in a twelve-item dimension framework that includes all the major issues currently addressed in the literature. The literature has proved that it is indeed possible to reduce the complexity of the cultural variables of behavior at play from a certain perspective to a restricted number of dimensions for academic purposes. As the aim of the present study is to provide a comprehensive picture of the cultural value orientation of Hungary for further use in FLE, the twelve dimensions addressing the major issues presently dealt with in the literature – hierarchy, identity, gender, privacy, status, context, rules v. relationship, emotions, nature and motivation, virtue, truth/anxiety and time – will be addressed when collecting the characteristics of the Hungarian cultural value orientation from the literature review and the interviews.

Methods

This study is an analysis (1) of CVOS in the form of a literature review, and (2) of 16 semi-structured interviews carried out with seven foreigners who work with Hungarians on a regular basis as well as nine Hungarians who work with foreigners on a regular basis.

CVOP from the literature review

For the literature review, studies were selected in order to achieve saturation of the field of CVOS (Dörnyei, 2005), and to include a representation of both international and Hungarian research attempts. International research data were taken either directly from the authors (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Minkov, 2007; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000; Inglehart 1997; ESS 2008), or from other studies citing their work (Trompenaars cited in Csath, 2008; Hall cited in Falkné, 2006; the GLOBE results cited in Borgulya, 2006; Csath 2008; Triandis cited in Gelfand, Raver, Nishii, Leslie, Lun, Lim, … Yau, 2011). A similar approach was taken concerning the Hungarian studies, where direct sources (Csath 2008; Falkné, 2006, 2008; Kovács, 2006; Berger, 2005; Borgulya, 2006; Jarjabka, 2003) and in-direct sources (Varga, Bakacsi & Takács, Heidrich & Primecz, cited in Jarjabka, 2003) were both included. Their research findings were examined with relevance to Hungary. The studies used scores (from 0-100), descriptions ("worried about pensioner incomes"), or a degree of a labeling with a description ("high communitarianism very high emphasis on social networks") to describe their findings. These different types of results were categorized into the 12-dimension framework based on the definition of the dimensions.

To bring the various types of results to a common platform, the scores, descriptions and the degrees of the labels were transformed to a 5-level verbal scale (low, rather low, medium, fairly high, high) with low being one pole of a dimension, and high being the other. The decision of which pole of a dimension to make the 'low' or 'high' end was based on either the practice of the researcher of the dimension in question, or the positive/negative connotation of the dimension's poles. Thus, on the hierarchy dimension the low power distance index (PDI) pole was treated as 'low', and high PDI was 'high', whereas in case of a dimension like emotions, the neutral end of the pole was termed 'low', and the affective pole 'high'. This was done because the term 'affective' is felt to be 'loaded', whereas the term 'neutral' denotes a state "of having no distinct or positive qualities" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 1989).

The scores were divided into five levels as 0-20 (low), 21-40 (rather low), 41-60 (medium), 61-80 (fairly high), and 81-100 (high). A description was judged 'low' if 'low' or other synonymous adjectives were used by the researcher. The label 'rather low' was given when a description used 'weak', 'strongly/more towards' the 'negative' end of the dimension ('rather collectivist' is taken for 'rather low IDV'). The category of medium was used for 'medium', or, in case of conflicting data when one study had data on one end

of the dimension, and the other on the opposite. 'Strongly/more towards' the 'positive' end of the dimension was labelled 'fairly high' (strongly towards IDV means fairly high IDV). Finally, the tag 'high' was given when the adjectives 'high', 'big', or 'strong' were used as descriptions. The next step was to convert the 5-level verbal scale into a numerical scale (1-5), one marking 'low' and five denoting 'high'. When a study did not include results on a particular dimension, it was indicated with 'no data' and excluded from further calculations. In the final step of the analysis, the mean of each dimension was calculated to provide an average picture for Hungary from the literature.

CVOP from the interviews

For the semi-structured interviews, participants were chosen with convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Dörnyei, 2005) from among Hungarians who work with foreigners and foreigners who work with Hungarians on a regular basis. A 22-item open-ended interview schedule was designed to tap into the dimensions of the literature review. The first few items asked the interviewees about their professional experience and background, language knowledge, if their company employed special policy in selecting them for working with foreigners/Hungarians on a regular basis, and how regular their contact was with foreigners/Hungarians. The remaining questions targeted the dimensions and were phrased so that information on cultural values could be gained without influencing the answers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed by two coders separately.

The analysis consisted of identifying statements and anecdotes that reflected underlying values of Hungarians, which then were categorized into the dimensions. These designations were first transformed into a 5-level verbal scale from 'low' to 'high', and then into a numerical scale from 1-5, where one meant 'low' and five meant 'high'. The next step was to calculate the mean for each dimension for each coder, and then to calculate the mean from the mean of coder one and the mean of coder two. Thus, it is the 'mean of the mean of coder one and coder two results' that offers an average picture for Hungary from the interviews.

Collating the CVOPs

Finally, the mean scores of the literature review were averaged with the mean scores of the interviews providing the final results for the Hungarian cultural value orientation. When discussing the results, the term cultural value orientation profile will be used for describing the central tendencies of a certain country/nation on a certain number of cultural dimensions describing their cultural characteristics. This is a similar approach to Hofstede's dimensional model, but a profile is felt to be a more flexible tool that enables combining statistical results with qualitative ones in the conceptualization process of cultural differences. In addition, as neither the statistical scores, nor the more qualitative data denote absolute characteristics, a profile (just like Hofstede's model) focuses on the relativity of the characteristics of countries. As the intention is to make communication breakdown among cultures and culture clashes more comprehensible to language learners, such a working tool may make the conceptualization of cultural differences easier for the researcher, the reader, the teachers and the learners alike.

Results

The literature of CVOS contains some, but not a satisfying amount of data on Hungary. The international literature lacks data on the EMOTIONS dimension of the 12-dimension framework except for Hall. When Hungarian research is included in the examination, the results give a fuller, yet incomplete picture, as most Hungarian studies have chosen to examine only some dimensions (mainly Hofstede's) and not all the 12 that appear in the literature. When the results of the interviews are analyzed together with the literature review results, the outcome is more satisfactory. Nevertheless, the present data set is only enough to see whether researchers so far have identified a realistic view of Hungarian CVOP or a completely new course of research has to be undertaken.

Table 1 summarizes the findings of the final step of the analysis. It contains the 12-dimension names with the 'positive' pole of the dimension in brackets, and lists the mean scores for the twelve dimensions from the literature review, the mean scores of coder one and coder two from the interviews, and finally the mean of the previous two means, which provides the composite scores for the dimensions from the literature review and the inter-view data.

Table 1: Mean scores of (1) the literature review, (2) of the means of coder 1 and coder 2 of the interviews, and (3) the literature review mean and the interview mean for 12 dimensions for Hungary.

	Literature review mean	Interview mean	Mean of literature review mean and interview mean
Hierarchy (PDI high)	3.42	4.34	3.87
Identity (IDV)	3.25	3.21	3.23
Gender (MAS)	3.13	3.23	3.18
Privacy (DIFF)	3.57	3.87	3.72
Status (ASCR)	4.5	1.74	3.12
Context (High)	3	4.7	3.87
Rules vs. relationships (PART)	3.57	4.09	3.83
Emotions (AFFECT)	2.5	4.33	3.41
Nature & motivation (OUTER)	3.33	4.35	3.84
Virtue (LTO)	2.6	1.52	2
Truth/anxiety (UAI)	3.86	4.65	4.25
Time (POLY)	3.5	4.26	3.88

The above composite results of the literature review and the interviews depict Hungarians to prefer to have hierarchy between interactants, and to choose the interest of the individual over that of the group, if they have a choice. They are very competitive, and take their personal problems to work and their work-related issues influence their personal life as well. Hungarians seem to favor what background someone comes from as opposed to what they have achieved with their work; they make lots of decisions based on information that can be found from "reading between the lines-" If choice must be made, rules will be broken in order to save someone they know, and they express their feelings freely. Outer causes, such as financial benefits and social privileges, motivate them mostly, and not personal development. Finally, they tend to keep deadlines, their performance does not reduce from its effectiveness even if they have to do two or more things at a time, and are a bit worried about the future.

To illustrate the numerical profile, a polar coordinate system can be applied to the data (Jarjabka, 2003). Figure 1 depicts the items of Table 1, using this system in a polar coordinate chart. It presents (i) a CVOP for Hungary from the data of the literature review, (ii) one from the interviews with Hungarians who work with foreigners on a regular basis and foreigners who work with Hungarians on a regular basis, and (iii) the composite profile from the former two, all within the framework of the 12 dimensions.

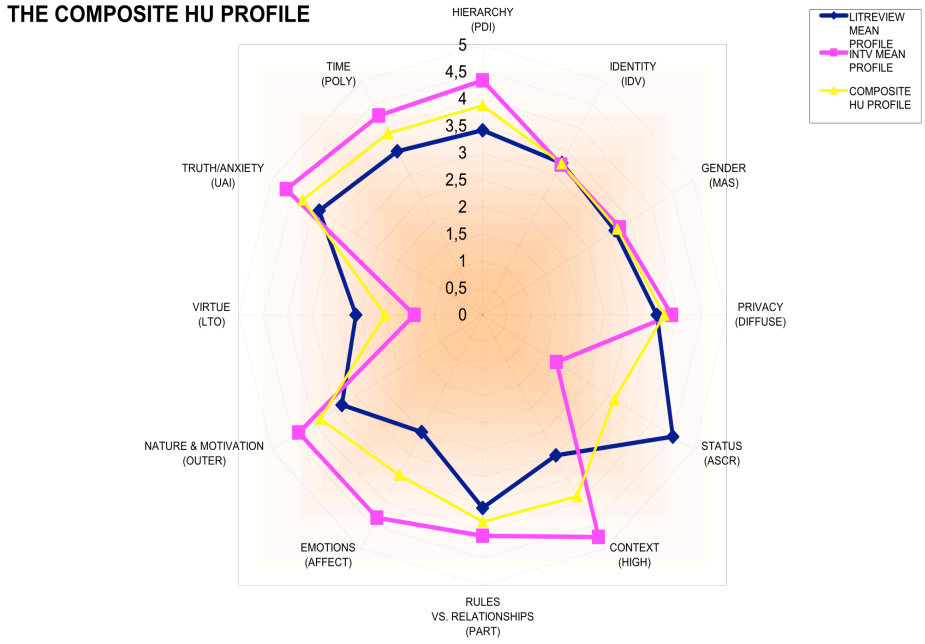

Figure 1: The composite Hungarian CVOP in comparison with the profile form the literature review (means) and the profile from the interviews (means).

The diagram shows that results for the literature review and the interviews are close for the dimensions of identity, gender and privacy, that there is a certain level of difference for rules v. relationships (0.51), and time (0.76), truth/anxiety (0.78), and that there is a significant difference in the data set concerning the dimensions of hierarchy (0.92), nature and motivation (1.02), virtue (1.07), context (1.75), emotions (1.83), and especially status (2.75).

Discussion

In light of the results a Hungarian cultural profile can be proposed to illustrate the reasons of misunderstandings between cultures in FLE. The CVOP for Hungary is characterized by a tendency for accepting power distance relations, putting the individual in the forefront, dividing gender roles, mixing personal and public life, depending on the context, favoring relationships over rules, showing emotions, keeping deadlines, having ability for multitasking, and finally ascribing status instead of awarding it as a result of achievement. In addition, there is a strong tendency for avoiding uncertainty, and a weak tendency for long term orientation.

The 'working' Hungarian CVOP contributes to the attempt of informing Hungarian language learners of their cultural value orientation background and how these might affect verbal and non-verbal behavior so that the differences between Hungarian and the target culture can be grasped more easily. This way the reciprocity of learning about cultures (Nemetz-Robinson, 1985) in a foreign language environment (as opposed to a situation when the learner is in the target culture itself) is achieved by learning about the cultural features of the home culture. Making language learners aware of the existence of the fundamental differences between cultures – how these differences manifest themselves in verbal and non-verbal behavior – prepares them for handling most international and intercultural situations effectively. Utilizing CVOS and CVOPs may infuse language education with cultural awareness, knowledge and skills without which successful intercultural communication is not possible (Holló, 2008; Byram & Fleming, 1998). The lack of this preparation might make them reject their new homes and workplaces – or old workplaces with new owners, values and working style – and they will not want to, or be able to, operate in the acceptable way in the given culture/situation. It is the language teacher's responsibility as mediator (Holló, 2008) to prepare the language learner to function successfully in the target culture by teaching a language with those cultural characteristics that are reflected in verbal and non-verbal behavior. This was represented in the attitude of the interviewees and their job hunting experience as well.

What is more, foreign language teaching can be fraught with cultural differences even if the culture of the teacher and the students is the same. For example, in teaching English as a foreign language, it is a common exercise for the learners to make a sentence from given words. In Hungarian cultural practice, trying and not succeeding is generally considered a failure, which has a negative value considering the dimension of unambiguity tolerance. If the teacher does not provide extra support for the learner after a failure, the lear-

ner may lose the drive to learn. However, in English speaking cultures a failure is seen as an opportunity to learn something positive. Thus, Hungarian learners first need to realize that making a mistake is good because they can learn from it. Another example of cultural differences infusing the everyday practice of English language teaching methodology is that the teacher is a facilitator, a partner in learning (tendency for IDV, and low PDI), as opposed to being the source of all information (tendency for high PDI). During socialization, Hungarian students in primary schools become accustomed to teachers who provide all the necessary information for their learning. This is the expected behavior of teachers (tendency for high PDI). When the language learner enters into the Anglo-Saxon culture of learning English, she needs time to adjust to the new roles and behaviors of the situation.

Limitations

It is a limitation of the present study that qualitative and quantitative data have been used to create a common dimension framework from the existing literature without weighing in the fact that some of them are statistically representative, whereas other data focused more on the details and depth of the issues. To dissolve this shortcoming, one option is future longitudinal data collection with a representative sample based on a common framework such as the one suggested, and treating the presently suggested CVOP for Hungary as a working profile. It represents the average Hungarian, but it should be noted that an average person does not exist in real life, as the average is always added up from the individuals. However, to be able to summarize what has been done in CVOS so far, a common platform and framework cannot be avoided.

Conclusion

The present study analyzed the literature of CVOS parallel to freshly conducted semi-structured interviews in order to establish a Hungarian cultural a profile to help Hungarian foreign language teaching and learning. As a result, a 'working' Hungarian cultural profile was proposed according to which Hungarians tend to accept power distance relations, put the individual in the forefront, divide gender roles, mix personal and public life, depend on the context, favor relationships over rules, show emotions, prefer outer motivation,

keep deadlines and multitasking, and used ascribed status instead of awarding it as a result of achievement to a medium level. However, they strongly prefer avoiding uncertainty, but have a weak tendency for long term orientation. These results are helpful in FLE as they present the construct of culture in a digestible format to language learners, providing clarification for cultural differences and helping teachers effectively in their role as mediators.

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Appendix

The 22-item open-ended interview schedule

Item	Question
Q1	Would you say a few words about your company?
Q2	How long have you been working here?
Q3	Does the staff work with Hungarians or foreigners?
Q4	Is there explicit company policy in selecting staff to work with foreigners?
Q5	Is there a trend in what values are important for employees and employers at the firm?
Q6	Can you tell me some typical problematic situations involving people from different cultures and how the employees solve it?
Q7	How many foreigners work at higher level positions?
Q8	Are there any misunderstandings with foreigners especially with direct colleagues?
Q9	Is language skill enough or is there communication breakdown between cultures nevertheless?
Q10	Is staff on friendly terms (tegezés-magázás)?
Q11	Is there a tendency for individual interest over group interest?
Q12	How big is power distance between boss and subordinate? The boss is the boss; the subordinate is the subordinate, like teacher and student in old times…?
Q13	Does the worker should guess/know the boss's thoughts in advance?
Q14	Are there a lot of changes? and how can staff handle it?
Q15	Performance, results, toughness or quality, modesty and support is more important?
Q16	Which one is important: if somebody takes risks or if they stick to tradition?
Q17	Are there any deadlines? Do they have to be kept strictly?
Q18	Does staff have to do many things at the same time?
Q19	How good are Hungarians in tolerating multi-tasking?
Q20	Is there a difference between Hungarians and Foreigners?
Q21	There is a saying: easterners work to live and westerners live to work…-can you see this within the company?
Q22	Are the rules relevant to everybody or just a few special ones?

"YILL class, YILL problems" Teachers' and Students' Views on the Year of Intensive Language Learning

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Introduction

A number of studies and national surveys underline the problem that today, two decades after the changes in 1989, it is still only a minority of the Hungarian population that speaks foreign languages (Medgyes, 2005; Medgyes & Miklósy, 2005). As this bears serious consequences for the competitiveness of the country in the European arena, the Hungarian Ministry of Education launched the World-Language (WL) foreign language program to initiate a new national strategy regarding foreign language education (Medgyes, 2005). As an integral part of the WL framework, 407 Hungarian secondary schools, both grammar and vocational, launched the Year of Intensive Language Learning (YILL) program in 2004. Students taking part in this program commence their studies in secondary school with a preliminary year of language learning, and thus finish a year later than their peers. The purpose of this intensive year is to provide students with the opportunity to attain a high level of knowledge of a foreign language. Other main aims of the YILL initiative include the following: creating a favourable attitude and motivation toward learning languages in students; bridging the ever-widening gap between those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and other students; preparing students for the advanced-level school-leaving exam; and developing students' learning strategies so that they would be able to sustain and develop their foreign language skills even after leaving school (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009).

The present paper reports on the findings of a qualitative inquiry into how students and teachers relate to the YILL program in a secondary school

in Budapest, five years after the launch of the first YILL classes. It discusses the specific benefits and problems related to YILL as voiced by both stakeholders and reflects on their beliefs about language learning and language teaching in this particular context.

Background to the study

Two studies have examined the pilot year 2004/2005 in 64 schools, in an effort to give an account of the initial experiences of the YILL (Nikolov & Ottó, 2005a, 2005b; Nikolov & Ottó, 2006). The results revealed development in students' command of languages, although individual differences were found to be alarmingly great. In the spring of 2009, a final comprehensive study was conducted, assessing the extent to which the original aims of YILL have been realized in the five-year process (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009). The research consisted of two phases. In the first, the directorate of 267 secondary institutions filled in an internet-based questionnaire; in the second involving 62 schools, language teachers, students and parents were asked to share their reflections on the intensive year and the following four years.

The findings confirmed that most students who took part in the program were more motivated regarding language learning, and achieved better results on various foreign language examinations compared to other pupils. However, a number of secondary institutions described their YILL students as less able and less motivated than others. While some students and teachers defined the program as a 'fast lane', others referred to it as a 'pit stop'. Bridging the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and others, as well as differentiated instruction proved to be great problems in several schools, as numerous teachers voiced their concerns about the difficulty of coping with pupils of different abilities and backgrounds in the same classroom. Many parents and students reported that the intensive year fulfilled their expectations, but regarded the following four years considerably more difficult in terms of re-adjustment to the traditional system after a whole year of learning languages almost exclusively. Of all students from senior classes, 51% maintained that if they could decide at present, they would not choose to enter the YILL program. Results also revealed that, for the most part, schools only offered instruction in one foreign language, whereas the majority of student respondents claimed they would have liked to learn two or more languages. Finally, according to the findings, YILL students most typically opted for the intermediate-level school-leaving examination supplemented by a language examination, instead of aiming for the advanced level, as this stra-

tegy typically earned them more points for university entrance. Their performance on the intermediate-level school-leaving exam exceeded others' performance by 3-13%, but they had no advantage on the advanced level (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009, pp. 156-161).

The present study is part of a set of similar qualitative inquiries into students' and teachers' views on the YILL program in their schools. It is based on the findings of the comprehensive study on the first 5 years of the YILL (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009) and aims at providing a more in-depth understanding of YILL students' and teachers' points of view about the status of the intensive language program in their own school. I conducted the study in a vocational school offering specialized training in telecommunications and IT. The school was involved in the study in late November 2009 because it was one of those secondary institutions that took part in the comprehensive study and were willing to participate in subsequent research.

The study

Research questions

- To what extent are the findings of the 2009 report on the YILL reflected in the context of the observed school in Budapest?
- What specific benefits and problems do students and teachers perceive in relation to the YILL and how do they explain them?
- What suggestions do they have concerning the improvement of the program?
- What beliefs do students and teachers hold about language learning and language teaching in general?

Participants

There were two teachers of English (one female and one male; hereafter referred to as T1 and T2), and eight students (seven males and one female) in the study. Of the two teachers one was a form teacher in a YILL class, and the other participant was teaching in a YILL class at the time of the study. Three of the student participants I interviewed were doing their intensive year at the time of the study, whereas five students were in higher grades.

Data collection instruments and procedures

In collecting data I relied on an interview with teachers, and two think-aloud activities as well as a subsequent focus group interview with students. The two groups of participants were interviewed separately. The interviews and think-aloud activities were conducted in Hungarian and were tape-recorded. The English translation of both teachers' and students' interview questions can be found in the Appendix.

The interview conducted with teachers lasted approximately 25 minutes and consisted of 8 questions, the majority of which enquired into teachers' opinion about some key aspects of the 2009 report on the YILL program, in terms of how the findings did, or did not reflect their own views, experiences and practices. Teachers were also invited to raise further topics they found important, which had previously not been touched upon. Both participants answered all questions readily, although some issues appeared to elicit considerably more passionate, as well as more detailed responses than others. The last question in particular brought forth topics that teachers seemed especially keen on sharing with me.

Students were asked to do two think-aloud activities, to which I devoted 10 minutes each. The idea behind this data collection method was to gather information about students' views as well as needs in relation to the YILL program, and at the same time, to gain insights into how they come up with their ideas together. The instructions for the two tasks were worded as follows:

> Students' think-aloud activity 1: Please form two groups. 9th graders should be in one group, and 13th graders in the other. Please plan a leaflet together on the sheet of paper that I have handed out. Suppose that the student council of your school will send it to primary schools, so that many 8th graders choose the YILL in your school. List 5-6 reasons why they should choose your school. You can take notes. You have 10 minutes to complete the leaflet.
>
> Students' think-aloud activity 2: Suppose that the ministry is launching a website, where they would like to receive questions and suggestions from secondary school students in the YILL program. They promise that they will take everybody's opinion into consideration. Please write at least 6-8 ideas on the new sheet of paper, which you would send on behalf of your class. It should include questions as well as suggestions.

As a final means of data collection, I conducted a focus group interview with students in the remaining 25 minutes. The five interview questions were very similar to the questions raised to teachers. Similarly to teachers, students were

also cooperative throughout the interview, yet some, especially the 9th graders, appeared to be more timid than others in expressing their opinion.

Findings

After transcribing the recorded data, I analyzed the similarities and differences between teachers' and students' views and experiences along the lines of the 6 main areas presented below. Several patterns of participants' beliefs about language teaching and language learning also emerged, which are all included in the following discussion. Note that passages of quotations from teachers and students, as well as data derived from students' leaflets, questions and suggestions are all presented in English, but were originally articulated and written down in Hungarian.

The YILL program in general terms

Teachers and students taking part in the study pointed out that they found the intensive year beneficial in terms of students' rapid development of their foreign language skills. One student, for instance, claimed *It's really worth it in the respect that in the first year it's intensive, and then that knowledge is preserved*. Both groups of participants repeatedly referred to the exceptionally high number of foreign language lessons throughout the intensive year as the explanation to many advantages of the program. For instance, *high number of English lessons* appeared as the very first benefit of the YILL program on the prepared leaflets of both groups of students. This is in line with the findings of the comprehensive study of the YILL program, in which several teachers began their positive statements about the program with the phrase *there is enough time for…* (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009, p. 52). Yet, drawing on Medgyes (2005), the belief shared by many teachers in Hungary that foreign language development is essentially determined by the number of lessons tends to overlook the importance of quality assurance.

Whereas one of the interviewed teachers asserted he found the program positive, and thought neither 'fast lane', nor 'pit stop' was an appropriate term to describe the complexity of the intensive year, the other teacher expressed some concerns right from the beginning of the interview. She explained that, according to her experiences, YILL students do not know exactly what to do and in many cases do not make as much use of the intensive year as they should.

In the interview and in their assignments, students clearly expressed that they thought one of the biggest drawbacks of the YILL program was the difficulty of re-adjusting to the traditional system after the intensive year. This problem was voiced by 22% of students, and 27% of parents in the comprehensive study of the YILL program (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009). In their project for the second think-aloud task, for instance, older students put down the following question: *Why was the teaching of history excluded in grade 0? (Even in English)*; and the following suggestion: *Incorporating humanities into the syllabus in grade 0 (not just review of previous material and maintenance of knowledge)*. All students agreed that the YILL program could be described with the term 'fast lane' as well as 'pit stop': the first because they felt they had made progress in English, and the second because *the rest is like, divided up, and then you can hardly learn anything from it*.

Explaining the difficulties

Both teachers claimed that, based on feedback from most students and their parents, the finding of the comprehensive study that YILL students would choose not to take part in the program again does not reflect the experiences in their own school. T1 added: *On the other hand,* [...] *what respondents said, it's probably the basic attitude of the student, that one has to study much more here than in a normal language program. So it's probably their own laziness that hinders them in really exploiting this opportunity*. In relation to the issue that the first YILL graduates only had a slight advantage over others on the school-leaving examination, teachers agreed that the benefits of the intensive program may only come forth years after the students had graduated. They supported their point of view by describing language learning as a long process, and suggested that 14-15 year-olds were still very young to understand its importance.

I received a number of different answers to the question what reasons students thought lay behind the finding that many of the first YILL graduates would not opt for the program again. Whereas some students claimed it was because of laziness, others felt that the reason was the extra year spent at secondary school and starting work or college a year later than other pupils. Two students stressed the difficulty encountered after the intensive year, while others asserted it depended on teachers:

> S1: A lot depends on getting a good teacher [...] for example we have a teacher who is really decent, and after all (s)he is our form teacher, so

> I'm sure that's also part of it, but... (S)he also teaches Anna's [pseudonym] group and I think (s)he's also quite decent with them...
>
> S2 [Anna]: So it's this same activeness... like how informed (s)he is [...] about cultural things. How active they are. Perhaps new slangs, because, of course, the language also changes, to what extent (s)he is aware of all these is very important.

It is already apparent at this stage that participants explain some of the difficulties encountered in the program with students' negative attitudes and laziness. Additionally, there appear to be indications that not all students are pleased with the quality of the material they are exposed to. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the section entitled 'Motivation'. Teachers also seem to share the belief that secondary school students are too young to value what the intensive year has to offer. As will be seen in the next section, this presumption is not supported by data derived from the interview conducted with students.

IT studies in English?

When I asked teachers whether they supported the suggestion that students should study a school subject in a foreign language, their first reaction was that they did not find it a good idea in the intensive year. They claimed they could not imagine how they could provide students with sufficient knowledge of a school subject in a language 9th graders do not know well enough when they arrive at secondary school. T1 also pointed out that it would be difficult to find teachers who have a high command of a foreign language and at the same time teach a different school subject. T2, however, responded that he thought it could perhaps work with the subject of IT studies, as *everything is in English in this subject anyway, so maybe this would not be such a big problem*.

Some students expressed doubts about studying such school subjects as history in a foreign language. However, in the form of a question in the second think-aloud activity, students specifically pointed out their need for IT studies, their area of specialization, to be taught in English: *Is the teaching of professional English in the informatics and electronics specialization possible in grade 0?* This corresponds with the findings of classroom observations carried out in Hungarian vocational schools, which revealed that students would be particularly motivated to learn about their vocation on foreign language lessons, but their teachers have doubts (Dombi, Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009). Stu-

dents also emphasized in the interview that the opportunity to learn professional English would be most important for them, as this way, they could find jobs abroad more easily. This finding demonstrates that, contrary to teachers' assumption, students are in fact conscious of their language needs, and are aware of the possibility that the program could facilitate them in reaching their aims.

Differentiated instruction and bridging the gap

In articulating her opinion about bridging the gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and others as part of the YILL program in her school, T1 explained: *I don't think it differs in any way from bridging the gap in a normal school program [...] It's ability-dependent and diligence-dependent and it makes absolutely no difference whether he is attending the YILL or not. So if a disadvantaged student wants to learn, then he will learn: he will also learn in the normal classes [...] If he doesn't, then it certainly doesn't matter how many hundreds of lessons we give him*. Here once more, the success of the teaching process is portrayed as determined by quantitative measures, while students' abilities and diligence are described as static variables. T1's words also imply that the endeavour of bridging the gap between students is not seen as a practice that receives special attention within the YILL program in her school, compared to the traditional 4-year program.

T2, on the other hand, maintained that there would always be differences within a group, but he felt weaker students in his school did make progress if they were exposed to more diverse language material in a higher number of lessons. As regards differentiated instruction, teachers agreed that the YILL program was ideal in providing grounds for it. T2 stressed that the intensive program allowed time for stronger pupils to help the weaker ones, and for students to form small groups and learn from one another.

When I asked students about how they thought the weakest ones could catch up with others in foreign language classes, they described that students at their school were divided into two groups based on a test at the beginning of the intensive year. They were all of the opinion that this was a good solution, and both groups included this detail on their leaflets popularizing the program.

Advanced-level school-leaving examination and language exams

The question on what needed to be changed in order that more YILL students would opt for the advanced-level school-leaving examination elicited eager and elaborate responses from both teachers and students. After declaring that they could talk about this issue for hours, teachers claimed many things were determined by the type of secondary school. What T1 stated she meant by this was that students were of lower abilities in vocational schools, such as the one she was a teacher in. She also emphasized the role that students' social backgrounds played in their development. T2 added that the students in his school did not aim for the advanced-level as most of them did not plan to apply to universities: *Only taking the advanced-level school-leaving examination... out of prestige, and at the same time the child does not want to carry on with his studies, I think there is no point in that*.

Instead of abilities, students referred to *attitudes*, m*ore practice* and *willpower* as factors leading to the advanced level. When I asked them where they stood in developing their foreign language skills in these terms, one student said, *It's difficult to bring ourselves to do it* [studying]. *That's a fact.* Again, this points to students' lack of motivation. Students also revealed that taking the intermediate level was a safer choice, as a successful intermediate-level school-leaving exam complemented by a language exam could earn them more points compared to an unsuccessful advanced-level one. As one student pointed out: *I might settle for the intermediate level* [school-leaving exam], *but for the language exam, definitely as high a level as possible*.

Interestingly, it became apparent throughout different phases of data collection that it is language exams that get primary attention at the school I visited. The list of questions and suggestions written by 9th graders were filled with allusions to the language exam, while the following could be heard from the group of older students as they were completing their leaflet: *The school provides the possibility of language examination to every student in the 11th grade*; *Active preparation for the language exam*. This is in line with the finding of the comprehensive study that most institutions determine the success of their YILL program in terms of the number and level of language exams taken by students (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009, p. 29).

Motivation

Throughout the interviews, the words *laziness*, *abilities*, and *attitudes* were repeatedly articulated by both groups of participants, yet the concept of motivation was never mentioned explicitly. However, in talking about additional topics that they found important, teachers implicitly remarked on students' lack of motivation, and set forth suggestions as to how the situation could be improved. Consider the following passage:

> T1: They sink back, and there's the "ah, we have to study again" and "ah, there's so much vocabulary again" [...] "wow, for how long are there going to be so many lessons?" [...] So I don't really know what should be changed so that this would be much more playful, that they would not feel the weight of this and still make progress.

Teachers stressed that while they fully understood the importance of the intensive year, students were not quite as aware of this great opportunity. They agreed that the situation could be resolved if an informative propaganda was launched by the Ministry of Education, the Educational Authority, or other institutions. They proposed that large-scale events, presentations, or exhibitions could be organized, where students could be made aware of what the YILL program was about. Yet neither of them mentioned their own roles within this process. What they phrased as students' 'lack of understanding' as regards the benefits of the intensive year appeared to refer typically to pupils' lack of motivation. Although it was never specifically stated, the concept of motivation appeared in teachers' answers either as a static attribute of students, or as a variable that could only be influenced by something or someone other than teachers themselves. Most teachers' responses reflected a very similar approach to motivation in the comprehensive study (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009).

Apart from articulating in the interview that they preferred *activeness* on the part of the teacher, students made numerous implications in the think-aloud activities to what truly motivates them. The suggestions they had written down for the second task included the following: *Cultural programs in English (e.g. visiting museums)*; *Translating English texts (music), watching films in English with subtitles (interactive sessions)*"; "*more current English texts*; *Field trip to England at the end of the year*. Additionally, while they were working on the task with the rest of the group, two students discussed recent films they had watched entirely in English, and expressed their pride in understanding them without subtitles.

Conclusion

The findings of the study bear similarities with the findings of the comprehensive study on the first 5 years of the YILL (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009) in many respects. Both groups of participants expressed that YILL students in the observed school have made progress regarding their foreign language knowledge. Yet while they claimed the program was beneficial, they also talked about a number of problems and challenges. Students pointed out that after the intensive year they found it difficult to re-adjust to the traditional system, and suggested that humanities should be included among school subjects in the first year. However, while some raised the idea that these subjects could be taught in English, others expressed concerns as to how this would affect their knowledge of the related topics in Hungarian. Teachers perceived that their students did not take advantage of the program as much as they could have, and explained this with students' laziness, low abilities, negative attitudes, age, social backgrounds, as well as their lack of understanding about the importance of the YILL.

Teachers initially opposed the idea of offering students a school subject in the target language, and mentioned the shortage of suitable teachers for this enterprise. Yet after a short discussion they concluded that teaching IT studies in English could be feasible at their school. As it turned out, studying informatics in English is a particularly important need on the part of students, as this is their main area of specialization.

Students told me that, as regards foreign language classes, they had been divided into two groups at the beginning of their secondary school studies, and stressed that they found this a good solution in order that the weakest students could catch up with others. While T1 made clear that she did not consider bridging the gap between students in the YILL program any different to doing so in a traditional program, T2 made allusions to aspects of differentiated instruction as yielded by the exceptionally high number of foreign language lessons in the intensive year.

Teachers' and students' focus on external proficiency exams instead of the school-leaving exam in foreign languages was evident. Teachers asserted that the advanced-level school-leaving examination was difficult to attain for vocational school students, and was not among their aims. On the other hand, most students gave strategic reasons for only planning to take the intermediate-level school-leaving exam, and emphasized that they found preparing for language exams significantly more important and worthwhile.

As they expressed their opinion on several matters related to the YILL program, participants also articulated many of their beliefs about language

teaching and learning in general. Both teachers and students seemed to assume that success in acquiring a foreign language was dependent on the number of contact hours in which the language was taught, as well as on students' ability to 'fight' their laziness. The concept of motivation was never mentioned, but students clearly indicated their need for more current, more appropriate and intrinsically motivating language material. Yet teachers appeared to regard motivation as static, or as a variable that they had no way of influencing. Therefore, they suggested that large-scale events should be organized in order to raise students' awareness about the importance of the YILL program, but did not see themselves as key actors in this process.

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Appendix

Teachers' interview questions

1. Some students and teachers of the YILL program that was launched in the autumn of 2004 described the program as a 'fast lane', others referred to it as a 'pit stop'. Which one do you think is true and why?
2. If they were to decide today, half of the YILL graduates would choose not to take part in the YILL program. Why do you think this is? What can the proportion be in this school?
3. Results of the school-leaving exam present that, on national average, YILL students have a mere 3-13% advantage at intermediate level, and have no advantage at advanced level over others. What is your opinion about this?
4. To what extent do you support the suggestion that students should study a school subject in a foreign language? What benefits and drawbacks would this have?
5. According to the survey, bridging the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and others is successful in only a small number of schools. What is the situation in this school and why?
6. Differentiated instruction in foreign language classes is a serious problem in many schools. What are the experiences in this school?
7. In your opinion what needs to be changed and how, so that more students would take the advanced-level school-leaving examination? What do you consider a good solution?
8. Apart from the issues we have already discussed, what other topics do you find important?

Students' focus group interview questions

1. Many students in the first YILL classes described the program as a 'fast lane', others referred to it as a 'pit stop'. Which one do you think is true and why?
2. If they were to decide today, half of the YILL students would choose not to take part in the YILL program. Why do you think this is?
3. Would you like to study a school subject in the foreign language that you are best at? In your opinion what benefits and drawbacks would this have?
4. In your opinion how can the weakest students catch up with the others?
5. What needs to be changed and how, so that more students would take the advanced-level school-leaving examination in the foreign language they studied?

Research on the YILL Programme in the 2009/2010 School Year

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Introduction

In this paper I intend to present the findings of research on the year of intensive language learning (YILL) classes at Hungarian secondary schools. This qualitative study is part of a larger project launched in the school year of 2004, embracing five years of the first intensive language learning classes accomplished in a longitudinal research project. The aims of the present study followed the framework of the earlier research as it meant to investigate issues focusing on the success, efficiency and possible stumbling blocks of the programme by providing an opportunity for teachers and students in the YILL programme to give voice to their opinion at one particular institution.

The YILL and former research

The YILL programme is an innovative project aiming to help secondary-school students to master a foreign language (FL) in five years, of which the first is a year of intensive language learning, followed by four regular years of secondary-school studies. The main goal of the programme is to provide quality FL education to secondary school students in Hungary, to create a welcoming attitude towards FLs and cultures, to motivate students to study FLs,

to enhance learner autonomy, and to encourage them to take their school-leaving exam in the chosen language at advanced level (Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium [OKM], 2004). The programme started in 2004/2005 with 407 secondary schools joining in. The number of participant schools in 2008/2009 was 398, due to some changes in structures of institutions. In order to monitor the programme and to evaluate the proposed aims, the Ministry of Culture and Education launched more surveys. Two studies were conducted on the preparatory year of the YILL programme in 2004 and 2005 to examine the students' FL learning experience in primary school, their attitudes towards the YILL programme, their motivation for studying a FL, their abilities to master a FL, the frequency of classroom practices and their relationship to each other (Nikolov, Ottó & Öveges, 2009). The study by Nikolov and Ottó (2006) summarized the two case studies conducted in the fall and spring of 2004/2005. Results showed that students at a disadvantage were mostly successful in catching up with advanced students but the programme did not live up to their expectations. Another finding was that although having the capacity and the ministry of education also setting it as a goal, the school did not provide the opportunity for the students to study a second FL, although it was proved that studying two FLs would not mean any disadvantages for the students to develop in both languages. The study also found that in smaller groups (13-18 students) the conditions of effective language teaching were given, but in groups with more than 18 members, students could easily get into a disadvantageous position.

Research questions

The purpose of the study was to better understand the YILL programme, how it works, how students and teachers relate to it and whether there are any areas that need improvement or change. The following research questions were in focus of the study:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the YILL programme?
- What can be done to enhance the efficiency of the YILL programme?
- What can be done in order to encourage students to take the advanced school-leaving exam?
- How could the problem of students at a disadvantage be solved?

Method

Participants

The study was conducted in a vocational school of economics with six students, three students in their YILL year working together throughout the session in one group and three students in their final year in the other. In each group there were two boys and one girl.

Two teachers of English were interviewed, one male and one female. Both of them are teaching in YILL classes at present, the woman has been teaching English in YILL classes since the programme was launched, the man came to the school in 2006 and he is the English teacher and the headmaster in one of the YILL classes.

Data collection instruments

With the students a 45-minute session was conducted including three tasks: designing a leaflet for primary-school students applying to their school, putting together a list of recommendations and questions about the YILL and a focus-group interview. The tasks with the students' answers can be found in Appendices A and B. With the teachers a semi-structured interview was conducted in 45 minutes. All questions (Appendixes C and D) were designed to tap into the main research questions of the study.

Procedures

The students' first task was to design a leaflet to be sent to primary schools as a form of advertising the YILL classes. They were asked to list five or six reasons why primary school students in their eighth grade should choose their school and especially the YILL class (Appendix A). The second task was to write comments in the name of their classes for a website started by the government about YILL classes where they expected comments, questions or any kind of remark about the YILL programme. They were asked to include some questions and recommendations as well (Appendix B). In the final part of the session students were asked questions about the YILL programme in the form of a focus group interview. All the questions were meant to broaden our knowledge of the students' opinion about the YILL programme, and were based on

the findings of the former research conducted by Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2004, 2005 & 2009).

I had the opportunity to talk to two teachers of English in YILL classes. The structure of the interview was based on seven questions, a few nearly identical to the questions asked from the students. The semi-structured interview provided space for related topics emerging from the conversation to be discussed and to elaborate on sections where interviewees felt that more emphasis should be dedicated to that certain question. Data collection took place in November 2009, with students were interviewed on a Friday morning during their first lesson, and the following lesson was dedicated to the teachers. Anonymity was guaranteed in both sessions.

Findings

In general, students and teachers considered the YILL programme an outstanding opportunity for learning a FL, although form both sides numerous recommendations have arisen for improving the efficiency and for eliminating the shortcomings of the programme.

Strengths and weaknesses of the YILL

Students in their first year mentioned the opportunity to study English from the basics first, adding that the high number of classes appealed to them as well as the opportunity for taking part in an exchange programme or having a native speaker teacher. Interestingly, they did not focus on the benefits connected to language only but also on IT and new subjects such as learning methodology. They were clearly positive about their future prospects, mentioning an advanced-level language exam certificate as a goal. On the other hand, students in their final year had a good laugh during designing the leaflet, which is reflected in their answers which are more laid-back and humorous ('you can go home earlier' referring to the lower number of classes altogether in the YILL, 'an additional class trip' referring to the extra year). There were two comments seriously dealing with the programme: they found it positive that the students attending YILL could concentrate on their FL studies and they stated that it was easy to get in the programme, giving a hint on the school not having an entrance exam for the YILL students. Students agreed that those who mastered the studied FL better than the others might have considered

the YILL a parking zone, those who started the language might have considered that year an accelerating lane.

Students' positive opinion on the YILL programme was not reflected in their teachers' accounts. Both teachers saw the first year of the programme as a bit of a parking zone, though they expressed that it could have been an accelerating lane from the point of view of learning a FL but the other subjects were just stagnating. They also mentioned that the reason might be that there is nothing at stake during this year and this can also be seen in the attitude of the students: 'O.K., so we are talking about the YILL year right? Unfortunately, I also see that this is a parking zone, which is a good intended idea, but I see it as well that without anything being at stake there are no results or nothing what we want. 'As we refer to year 0 solely, unfortunately I see it as a parking lane, which is a good-willed thought, but without stakes, real stakes there is no result or anything we would like.'

Making the right choice when choosing the YILL?

As the study of Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2009) revealed, 51% of students would not choose to attend the YILL class again. They reported dissatisfaction when stating that the programme did not meet their expectations and they had doubts about whether they were provided with the kind of education they were looking for when they applied.

In the present study one student said the reason for former YILL students not even considering starting the same programme again could be that they might have found the intensive language learning too difficult. Another student said they might have not been able to concentrate on other subjects besides the intensive FL learning.

> It might be possible that they cannot concentrate on the other subjects that much, language takes up all their time. Maybe that is the reason.

Another student commented that after the first year it is difficult to catch up with the other subjects, one student agreed, she said they got used to not studying other than English.

> And they stop studying for a bit because they concentrate on language and then comes the 9th grade and they stand there: I haven't studied Maths, what do I do now?

Concerning the same issue the first teacher said that she did not usually see children choosing this programme because they wanted to; often the case was that they were pressed by parents or it happened that they did not have a better option to come up with. The second teacher while talking to students claimed that he experienced that students would not choose the programme again. But he saw the reason for this not in intensive language learning but the special curriculum of the class at their school. As being a vocational school providing education in economics students go there to study subjects connected to economics. If someone decides to apply to the YILL class at this school, then they are not provided with the usual basic economics education and their subjects only touch upon fundamental economics.

> Students in the YILL classes are specialized in business data processing which compared to the basic economics education is not so marketable, it provides students less good or useful education as they say.

School-leaving exams at intermediate or advanced level

"What should be changed and how should it be changed so as more students would take their school-leaving exams from the learnt language at an advanced level?" This interview question was answered by a boy who said that combination of keeping the number of language classes at a high level throughout the five years and studying subjects in a FL would be the solution. "The thirteen classes weekly should not only happen in the YILL; it would be better to have a bit less but throughout the five years. And also studying subjects in a foreign language, which you have mentioned, would be good." Another student, a girl, said that a communicative language teaching approach would be necessary because there are a few students who are not brave enough to speak English and they do not dare to take the school-leaving exam at an advanced level, they feel they lack some abilities that would make them successful in passing the exam.

As for the YILL students who did not perform conspicuously better at the school-leaving exams, the second teacher said that the problem might lie in the process of selection. He considered 14-year-old children not immature to be sure about their future. Obviously, the selection of students, exactly at 14 is a bit of a gamble. The other reason might be the students themselves, according to him. He also experienced that the YILL students lost the advantage they possessed in their first year: their attitude seems to change and they seem to lack motivation. Another reason behind might be the change in staff:

teachers coming and going might confuse some students. As the second teacher commented, the lack of differentiating among students and not putting them in separate groups might cause problems. The other cause of trouble might be the size of groups, as English language groups could have 18 to 20 students; German language groups usually have six or seven.

The first teacher said the reason for a small number of students taking the school-leaving exam in a FL at the advanced level might be that students are not motivated enough to go for it as they do not see any benefits of taking the advanced exam. She saw the solution in cooperation with higher education institutions. The other teacher added that colleges and universities should list an advanced-level school-leaving exam as a criterion for admission, if the points are at such a low level then the student has no motivation for taking the advanced exam.

Studying subjects in a foreign language

Four students agreed that studying a subject in a FL might have good effects; one mentioned an easier way of language acquisition, one found studying History in English interesting, one claimed that studying rare words in English or German would be easier this way and one pointed out that studying IT in English would help in getting a job with an English company. On the other hand, one boy was happy with everything the way it was. The second teacher felt that teaching subjects in a FL would be possible with a 'different kind of student material'. Those with learning difficulties for instance are not able to understand concepts of History in Hungarian, so a FL would be out of question. The first teacher agreed with the second.

Helping students at a disadvantage

The first teacher said that they have both handicapped children and children with learning difficulties at school. As she said these two did not come together very often. Both claimed that they tried to differentiate during classes instead of giving extra lessons for those left behind.

Problems with differentiating during classes rooted in the huge size of language groups according to the first teacher, as for the second teacher, he mentioned the undifferentiated groups (beginner and advanced) as the main source of problem. For undifferentiated groups he mentioned the example that

> even after the YILL there were students who were struggling with grammar even after the 28th time of explanation, on the other hand that group contained students being in the first three in national language contests.

As for how to help students catch up with the others, a boy's answer was that teachers give them extra lessons, according to a girl better performing students help the students and this also builds a community feeling.

Areas in need of improvement

The students' recommendation lists of the present research revealed possible solutions for problems in the YILL programme: it is clear that they considered the necessity of differentiating between beginner and advanced students important. They also gave voice to their opinion that more varied teaching methods would be needed during classes: the application of pair and group work, communicative and more interesting language teaching and the inclusion of native English speaking teachers. The need of keeping a high number of classes in the years following the YILL and the topic of learning certain subjects in English were also considered important.

As for the teachers, after analyzing the interview it is obvious that they were not contented with the effectiveness of the YILL: they claimed that undifferentiated and oversized groups lie in the background on the one hand, these reasons as being source of inefficiency also appeared in the study of Nikolov, Ottó and Öveges (2009), undifferentiated classes ranking at first place. On the other hand, they stated that children choosing the YILL class are not always the suitable candidates for the programme. They even found the mode of selection inefficient and the construct of the YILL year (no evaluation of students with grades) inadequate. The teachers felt that a change in the entrance examination system to higher education would be necessary to motivate students to choose the advanced school-leaving exams.

Conclusion

The overall picture shows that students are contented with the education they are provided with, but their list of recommendation highlights the areas in need of improvement. Students claimed that studying subjects in a FL would be beneficial and would not mean any difficulties in their studies. They also reflected on teaching methods, which they did not consider varied enough for sustainable development, pointing out that group work, pair work and communication-based tasks would help them to leap forward (Appendix B). In addition, they felt that keeping the high number of language classes throughout the five years would enable them to master the language at a higher level and maybe go for the advanced-level school-leaving exam.

According to the teachers, the basic principles of the programme are suitable to fulfil its goals; however, without some essential changes in the programme, students will not opt for taking the advanced-level school-leaving exam, students at a disadvantage will not be able to catch up, and continuous development will meet some obstacles. Teachers would change the entrance exam system in order to filter out students not suitable for the programme; they would also split the class into intermediate and advanced language learners in order to be able to differentiate. Giving grades in the YILL year was seen as an important tool for motivating students and providing a firm basis for the following four years from their point of view. Finally, one of the teachers pointed out that being a vocational school of economics also defines the status of the YILL programme. The goals of the applicant students might not be in accordance with the goals of the YILL programme this particular school provides as the YILL classes have a curriculum designed at a lower level in economics to be able to make space for a high level FL teaching.

When I visited the school to conduct my interviews and research tasks I felt clear enthusiasm on part of the students and teachers as well. They were making the most of the programme they could, the above highlighted changes might help them to go further and aim at goals at a higher level such as taking an advanced-level school-leaving exam or studying subjects in a FL.

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Appendix A

Students' first task: Sections included on the leaflet for advertising the YILL programme

1st-year students

- Studying a language from scratch
- Foreign teachers
- 13 language classes a week
- Advanced-level language exam
- Having 'keep-up' classes from other subjects
- Student exchange programmes
- Opportunity for language competitions
- New subjects such as: self-recognition and learning methodology
- Strong IT education
- Opportunity for taking an ECDL exam

Students in their final year

Why is it good for you?

- You can only concentrate on language
- You can go home earlier, food is more delicious at home
- Good company
- You get to know the teachers better
- An additional class trip
- Cheaper than going to 9th grade
- Easier to get in

Appendix B

Students' second task: List of recommendations and questions
1st-year students

- Is it possible to start a beginner and advanced group?
- More foreign teachers in order to acquire foreign accent
- More opportunities for group work in groups with different sizes
- Extending number of language classes in order to improve faster
- Is it possible for the students in their YILL year to get to know their economics related subjects?
- Broadening the opportunities for tenders (e.g.: school development)

Students in their final year

- More situation games
- Communicative approach, developing vocabulary
- Group work
- More presentations
- Not so strict teachers, more humanitarian teachers
- Teachers should make studying more interesting and should not only teach the 'dry' material
- More detailed cultural background of the studied language
- Could the school-leaving exam be substituted by a language exam?
- Could entrance exam point margins be lowered?
- Could there be more films?

Appendix C

Students' focus group interview questions

1. Some of the first students of the YILL programme called the year of intensive learning an 'fast lane' some called it a 'parking zone'. Which one do you think is true and why?
2. If they had to choose today half of the students of the YILL classes would not go for the programme again. What do you think about the reasons?
3. Would you be interested in learning a subject in a language that you are good at? What advantages or disadvantages would it have?
4. How are the less well-performing students able to catch up with the others?
5. What should be changed and how should it be changed so as more students would take their school-leaving exams at an advanced level?

Appendix D

Teachers semi-structured interview questions

1. Some students and teachers taking part in the YILL programme started in 2004 called it an 'accelerating lane' or a 'parking zone'. Which one do you consider to be true and why?
2. If they had to choose today half of the students of the YILL classes (already completed their school-leaving exams) would not go for the programme again. What do you think why is that? What do you think what is the rate at your school?
3. The results of the school-leaving exams show that the advantage of the YILL students compared to the non-YILL students is only 3-13 percent at intermediate level. At advanced level they do not have any advantage. What is your opinion about it?
4. To what extent would you support the idea of the YILL students studying a subject in their foreign language? What advantages or disadvantages would it have?
5. Helping children at a disadvantage to catch up with the others may present difficulties in several cases. What is the case at your school?
6. At lots of schools differentiation in language classes is a serious problem. What experience do you have on this?
7. What should be changed and how should it be changed so as more students would take their school-leaving exams from the learnt language at advanced level? What do you consider to be a good solution?

Student Beliefs and Attitudes About Foreign Language Use, First Language Use and Foreign Language Anxiety

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Introduction

Foreign language (FL) teachers usually develop their own individualized approach to classroom FL and first language (L1) use (Levine, 2003). This approach can be influenced by beliefs about FL and L1 use, pedagogical training, governmental or institutional policy, teachers' or students' FL knowledge, and teacher's knowledge of FL literature (Macaro, 2001). However, the extent of teacher's FL use and how much instructors expect students to use it is inextricably linked to all other classroom practices (Levine, 2003).

Modern 20th century methods and communicative approaches dictated maximal or even exclusive FL use. Krashen and Terrell (1983) claimed that their natural approach is based on the use of FL in communicative situations without recourse to L1 use. Teachers and students try to avoid it, but despite their effort, they both appeal to code-switching for a number of reasons and very often they are unaware of how, when, and the extent to which they actually use L1 (Polio & Duff, 1994). A switch to L1 appears very often for the sake of efficiency and expediency, or to impose discipline or keep control of the group (Macaro, 2001). Many teachers are reluctant to teach grammar or engage in classroom management in FL (Polio & Duff, 1994).

Through collaborative dialogue, L1 use provides, according to Antón and DiCamilla (1999), an opportunity for FL acquisition to take place. Cook (2001) believes that L1 could be used for the following purposes: to check meanings of words, explain grammar, organize tasks and give directions, maintain discipline, administer tests and carry out classroom group activities.

Turnball and Arnett (2002) pointed out that there is little empirical evidence as to the amount or nature of FL versus L1 use upon which to make sound pedagogical and policy decisions. It is also interesting to note that there is a great degree of variability in the amounts and purposes of FL and L1 use by the same instructors in the same institution (Guthrie, 1984). The use of both FL and L1 by teachers and students can vary in a very broad range from 10% -100% (Duff & Polio, 1990). According to Guthrie (1984), teachers show a higher percentage of FL use.

FL anxiety is associated with FL use and has mainly debilitating effect (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). As Young (1990) found that students generally become anxious when they have to use FL in front of others, and as switching to L1 use is considered a shortcoming or lapse of appropriate behaviour, it is advisable to see the relationship between the amount of FL use and FL anxiety.

The study

Aims

The aim of the study was to

- find how much FL and L1 are used in FL classes (students' estimations in percentages and not actual recordings). The emphasis was on analyzing the difference in FL use for different interlocutors (teachers with students, students with teachers and students with students) and in different contexts (topic/theme, grammar, tests)
- identify what students believe goes on with FL and what with L1 (with a focus on their perceptions and experiences)
- get information about students' perception of FL anxiety in different communicative contexts
- see the relationship between reported amounts of FL language use and FL anxiety (items in the questionnaire dealing with FL anxiety included general anxiety and anxiety in particular communicative contexts)
- examine if there are any differences in the amounts of reported L1 and FL use, beliefs and perceived anxiety between students taking English and students taking German as a FL.

In our research we considered the following two hypotheses:

1. The amount of FL use will vary according to constellation of interlocutors, communicative contexts and settings.
2. There will be a negative relationship between the amount of FL use and anxiety.

We grounded hypothesis 1 on Duff and Polio (1990) and Polio and Duff (1994), whereas hypothesis 2 was based on Levine (2003), where higher amounts of FL use led to lower FL anxiety.

Participants

Research was carried out among 18-year old students (average 18.08) from the County of Međimurje (Croatia) in their last year of secondary school taking English or German in their final state school leaving exam and planning to continue their education at university or college. The researcher distributed 200 questionnaires and the students filled out 180 of them.

There were 88 male and 92 female students and they were from the following five secondary schools in Čakovec: Grammar School (39 students), Commercial School (39), Technical School (37), Secondary School of Crafts and Building (39) and Economic School (26). 93 students had registered English and 87 German as their first FL in their school documents. A vast majority of the respondents (85.5%) had started taking English or German in Grade 4 of primary school when they were between 9 and 10 years old and had been learning it for 9 years at the time of data collection. 14.5% had started learning English or German outside school before Grade 4. One student had had a maximum of 15 years of tuition of English as a FL.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of grades in English or German of the respondents in this study. English students had slightly higher grades, but even in German group the mean grade was above 3.5 – the lower margin for grade B, so both groups can be regarded as successful learners of FLs.

Table 1: Distribution of grades in English and in German

Croatian grades	American equivalents	Percentage of respondents		
		English	German	Total
excellent (5)	A	25.8	18.7	14.4
very good (4)	B	32.6	28.6	32.8
average (3)	C	25.8	39.6	30.6
sufficient (2)	D	15.7	13.2	22.2
mean		3.69=B	3.53=B	3.61=B

Instruments

The author used an adapted Levine (2003) questionnaire. It was produced in Croatian, so that participants could complete it in their native language and to ensure that they would understand all the questions. It contained 50 items. The first ten items included general questions about demographic data like length of FL learning, grades in FL, plans and intentions about FL use after they graduate from secondary school and personal opinion about their own motivation. The second group (14 items) dealt with students' estimations about the amount of FL use. They distinguished between personal use of FL, peer use of FL, teacher use of FL, understanding of teacher's talk in FL, code switching from FL into L1. The following 20 items concentrated on students' beliefs and attitudes about appropriateness of L1 and FL use in FL classroom, teacher's clarification of her/his expectations about FL use, student's personal interest in seeking opportunity for FL use, the importance of various types of communication for achieving a better grade in FL and for acquisition of FL. The final 6 items targeted FL anxiety.

Procedures

In all five schools the data were collected in March 2010. The researcher acquainted the students with the aim of the research and distributed the questionnaires to students who voluntarily participated in the study. They were given 10 days to fill in the questionnaires at home.

Analysis of results and discussion

Apart from getting general information about participants (age, sex, years of FL learning and their grades) and supplying data to answer the research questions, the questionnaire used in this study also aimed at describing students' plans and intentions about FL use after secondary school, investigated their motivation and understanding of what the teacher is saying in FL.

Plans and intentions about FL use after secondary school

Items 5-9 dealt with the issue of students' plans and intentions about FL use after they graduate from secondary school. Students had to answer the following questions: Do you intend to continue learning English/German after you graduate from secondary school? (item 5.) Do you intend to study English/German after you graduate from secondary school? (item 6). Do you intend to study at a university abroad or in Croatia where language of tuition is English or German? (item 7). Do you intend to work abroad? (item 8). Do you intend to work where English/German will be used at the working place? (item 9).

In items 5, 7, and 9 (see Table 2) students learning EFL have given more positive answers. Item 5 shows that two thirds of the students who have been learning English and one third of those learning German would like to continue it after finishing this level of education. The two times higher figure for English students can be explained with their higher motivation, because they see practical benefits and advantage if they refresh their knowledge of English or if they continue with courses for special purposes. A four per cent higher proportion of German students would like to work abroad (item 8). The Međimurje County has had a long tradition of having a high percentage of population who have been working in German-speaking countries (in the 1970s it was one fifth of the entire county population), so the current generation of secondary school leavers still see them as being very attractive countries to earn for living especially because of the current economic situation in this region of Croatia. Item 9 shows again an almost twice as high percentage of English students (the same as on item 5). The reason for that might lie in the fact that a much higher percentage of domestic employers require the knowledge of English than German, besides, international companies in Croatia (even the German ones) use English as a means of internal communication. A satisfactory 10.1 (English) and 8.8% (German) of the students intend to study at a university abroad or in Croatia where the language of tuition is

English or German (item 7). A three times higher percentage of German students would like to study German than would English students like to study English at a university. Students learning English probably see English as an essential tool for achieving something else, whereas German students do not see so many practical advantages from German. Those who have been successful in learning it at school probably want to graduate in German with a university degree. If they are all successful in passing the entrance exam and in bringing their studies to a close, then there will be no lack of German teachers and translators in the region.

The researcher's general impression is that a satisfactory percentage of secondary school leavers in the study want to continue learning English or German as well as that they have useful and practical plans and intentions with those two FLs.

Table 2: Student answers to questions on their plans and intentions about FL use after they graduate from secondary school (in percentages)

Item	Answer							
	Yes		Maybe		I don't know		No	
	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Engl.	Ger.
5	66.3	35.2	7.9	5.5	0	1.1	25.8	58.2
6	2.2	6.6	2.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	94.4	91.1
7	10.1	8.8	7.9	5.5	1.1	2.2	80.9	83.5
8	19.1	23.1	29.2	28.6	6.7	9.9	44.9	38.5
9	39.3	23.1	23.6	17.6	6.7	5.5	30.3	53.8

Motivation to learn FLs

Item 10 asked students to rate their overall motivation to learn FLs and the results are presented in Table 3. Although the share of the moderately motivated students is equal (more than half of the students in both groups) and despite the fact that the percentage of extremely highly motivated students is twice as high in the German group (8.8%) than in the English one (4.5%), because of a much higher percentage of highly motivated students (English 28.1; German 14.3) and a much lower figure for the extremely low motivated students (English 1.1%; German 13.2%), students learning English seem to be more motivated. Taken together, the German group is well-motivated, but knowing that motivation is one of the key elements for success,

something should be done to lower the percentage of extremely low motivated students learning German.

Table 3: Students' ratings of their overall motivation to learn FLs (in percentages)

Extremely low		Low		Moderate		High		Extremely high	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
1.1	13.2	13.5	11	52.8	52.7	28.1	14.3	4.5	8.8

Understanding the teacher's FL use

Item 22 asked students to estimate the percentage of time they can understand what their teacher is saying in English or German. According to their own estimations (see Table 4), the comprehension of the surveyed students is quite satisfactory. Only 6.7% of the students learning English and 19.8 of the German students understand less than 40% of what their teacher is saying in FL. More than half of the English students (55.1%) and over four tenths of the German students (41.8%) understand 80-100% of their FL teacher's talk.

Table 4: Students' estimation of the percentage of time they understand what their teacher is saying in FL (in percentages)

0-20%		20-40%		40-60%		60-80%		80-100%	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
4.5	8.8	2.2	11	22.5	20.9	15.7	17.6	55.1	41.8

Amounts of L1 and FL use

First we analyzed students' estimations in percentages of how much FLs are used by different interlocutors in different contexts and settings (items 11-24).

Classroom communication Different interlocutors

Items 11-15 looked at personal classroom communication. They included statements like "My teacher uses English/German to communicate with

students about _____% of the time in the classroom". They could select one of the five different percentage ranges: 0-20%, 20-40%, 40-60%, 60-80% or 80-100%. It was indicated that time included time spent on activities and time spent in between activities. In all three types of communication English is more used in classroom than German: close to half of the English students estimate that their teachers use English 80-100% of the time, whereas less than 20% of the German students estimate their teachers to use German that often; close to 35% of English students use English 60-80 or 80-100% of the time, whereas little more than 14% of German students use German the same amount of time when talking to their FL teacher; about three quarters of German students use German 0-20% of the time, whereas only about a half of English students estimate that their fellow students use English that little in classroom communication. A similar picture is given by estimations of personal use. Higher percentages of German students estimate they use German less than 20% or 40% of time when talking to their teachers (German 58%; English 41%) or fellow students (German 87%; English 74%) and higher percentages of English students estimate they use English more than 60% of the time when talking to their teachers (English 36.3%; German 24%) or fellow students (English 12%, German 3%).

Classroom FL use Various contexts and situations

Items 16-18 examined student estimations of amount of personal FL use in three different class contexts: communicating about a) topic-based activities, b) grammar and usage, and c) tests and assignments. Items 23 and 24 examined the percentage of time students ask for clarification in FL whenever they do not understand something. They included a) asking teachers, and b) asking fellow students. These presentations of results clearly show higher percentages in the 0-20% and 20-40% ranges for German and higher ranges in the 60-80% and 80-100% ranges for English in all five different contexts and situations (e.g. topic-based activities: German 24.2% and English 12.4% in the 0-20% range, English 13.5% and German 7.7% in the 80-100% range; student asking teachers for clarification: German 48.4% and English 36% in the 0-20% range, English 20.2% and German 15.4%). The results again indicate that German is less used than English in FL classes.

The only exception in this section is item 21. It examined the percentage of time students personally switch from FL to Croatian whenever they are through with a particular classroom activity (see Table 5). There is not a big difference between the two groups on this item. About 60% of the students

tend to use their mother tongue if they are not given an assignment to do in the FL.

Table 4: Student estimation of the percentage of time they personally switch from FL to Croatian whenever they are through with a particular classroom activity

0-20%		20-40%		40-60%		60-80%		80-100%	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
6.7	12.1	7.9	5.5	18	4.4	9	14.3	58.4	63.7

Out-of-class communication in the FL

Items 19 and 20 looked at FL use outside classroom. They referred to communication with teachers and communication with fellow students. As expected, the results have shown that FLs are rarely used in communication outside classroom. There were practically no differences between the two language groups. A vast majority of students use English or German in less than 20% of the time to communicate with their FL teachers or classmates.

English is more often used than German in FL classrooms by students in their final year of secondary school in the Međimurje County. FL teachers speak in English and German more than students do. However, according to student estimations less than half of teachers teaching English speak in English and less than one fifth of teachers teaching German 80-100% of the time. Both their pedagogical training and the official education policy are in favour of a higher percentage of FL use. Teachers are probably influenced by either their students' knowledge of the FL or their classroom experience.

Estimations of classroom experience in this study show that students tend to switch to L1 whenever they are not involved in a FL class activity. If they do not understand something, they ask for clarification mostly in L1, regardless of whether they are communicating with their teacher or with fellow students. Students use FL more often to talk to their teachers than to communicate with their fellow students during a lesson. No big differences were noted in communication in different types of classroom context. A vast majority of students do not communicate in a FL outside classroom. The results confirmed the first hypothesis. The exception is classroom context, where no big differences were noted.

Beliefs and attitudes about L1 and FL use

Students were asked to mark the degree of their agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. "I believe that I must use English/German a great deal in the classroom in order to master it.") On items 35-39 students had to rate the degree of importance of each type of communication in terms of its role in their success in the course for getting a good grade on a 1 to 5 scale. On items 40-44 they had to rate the same things for acquisition of English/ German.

Seeking opportunities to use FL outside the classroom

Item 25 dealt with this issue and the results presented in Table 5 reveal that students learning English are more interested in seeking out these opportunities (strongly disagree: German 27.5%, English 5.6%; agree: English 25.8%, German 14.3%), but students in both groups are not aware enough of the importance of using FL outside of FL class.

Table 5: Students' views on seeking opportunities to use FL outside of FL class (in percentages)

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
5.6	27.5	32.6	24.2	27.0	23.1	25.8	14.3	9	11

Teacher's explanations

In item 26 we were curious to learn whether the surveyed students think their teacher has made explicit explanations regarding FL use in the classroom. Some three quarters agreed with the statements and there were no big differences between the two language groups. We can only speculate about the fourth quarter. They might have heard explanations and forgotten or the teacher might have neglected this duty.

Table 6: Students' views on teacher's explicit explanations regarding FL use in classroom (in percentages)

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
20.2	16.5	51.7	49.5	18.0	23.1	7.9	9.9	2.2	1.1

In item 27 students were asked about teacher's explanations of communicative strategies. According to the surveyed students (Table 7), teachers of German might have spent a little more time working through or discussing them (strongly agree: German 42.7%, English 27%).

Table 7: Students' views on teacher's explanations of communicative strategies (in percentages)

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.	Eng.	Ger.
27	42,7	31,5	30,3	23,6	18	10,1	11	7,9	4,4

L1 and FL use

In items 28-34 students were asked about their beliefs about L1 and FL use. About 70% of the students in both groups believe that FL use in the FL classroom is important for enabling students to communicate in the FL as well as for mastering the language. Some students (English 23.6%, German 13.2%) believe that there are no situations in which L1 should be used in FL classroom. Students learning German are more in favour of L1 use.

Items 31-33 examined FL use in different contexts. Less than one quarter of the students believe that teachers and students should use only the FL to discuss grammar and usage. However, close to half of the students learning English and more than one third of those learning German agree that teachers should give directions for class activities in FL. A vast majority of students in both groups are against discussing attendance and giving administrative information in the FL. The German group is even stronger against it.

About half of the students in both groups think that the teacher should use only the FL regardless of how much students choose to use it.

Ratings of importance of different types of communication

In items 35-39, students were asked to rate the degree of importance of different types of communication (vocabulary lessons, grammar, details about quizzes, assignments, instructions for classroom activities and administrative information) in terms of its role in students' success for getting a good grade on a 1 to 5 scale. In items 40-44, the ratings had to be done for acquisition of a FL. Communication about grammar is rated as most important, followed by vocabulary lessons and instructions for class activities are seen as least important for getting a good grade. All types of communication are a little higher rated by students learning English.

The results of second ratings show that FL vocabulary lessons are seen as more important than FL grammar and usage by students learning German. Grammar is again rated as most important by students learning English. Instructions for class activities are again regarded as least important.

FL anxiety

Items 45 and 46 targeted FL anxiety in general and items 47-50 FL anxiety in various classroom contexts. Generally, both groups feel practically equally anxious when using English/German, but more students learning English strongly agree with the statement that they feel like trying to communicate in the FL than students learning German. However, it can be seen that students learning German experience stronger anxiety in particular contexts. Discussions about tests are the only exception. Otherwise, students learning German feel more anxious using German during activities about FL topics, they feel more uncomfortable using it to discuss grammar and usage and they are more anxious when discussing administrative information in the FL. Good news about FL anxiety in the sample is that when we added up all the points and applied the same percentages for high, medium and low anxiety, as were used by Horwitz in FLCAS (1983), half of the students ended up in the low intensity range, 38% experienced medium and only 12% high anxiety.

Relationship between FL use and FL anxiety

We examined correlations between FL use and FL anxiety. There is a negative relationship between the two variables, but it is only statistically significant for the German group, meaning that experience helps German students more to

diminish the detrimental effect of anxiety. Our second hypothesis was thus only partially confirmed.

Table 8: Correlations between FL use and FL anxiety

	FL anxiety	
	English	German
FL use	-123	-234*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Conclusion

The results of our study have shown that English is more used than German in secondary schools in the Međimurje County and that teachers use FL more than students. Students tend to switch to L1 as soon as they have finished their FL assignment. They use FLs more when talking to their teachers than fellow students. The results have confirmed a statistically significant relationship between the amount of FL use and anxiety only for the German group. The following pedagogical implications can be given:

- All the teachers have to clearly explain their expectations about L1 and FL use in classroom and have to explain communication strategies to their students
- The amount of FL use by secondary school students in communication with their teachers in the FL classroom should be increased to reach the amount similar to that of teachers
- The majority of students in both groups are against discussing attendance and giving administrative information in FL
- Much more effort should be made to motivate students to use the FL more often in communication with their fellow students in FL classes and in communication within topic-based activities
- Students should be made aware of the necessity of FL use for the acquisition of FL
- As a FL cannot only be learned in FL classes, students should be more encouraged to seek out opportunities to use and hear FL outside classroom
- As motivation is the key element for success, teachers should do their best to increase it and keep it at the highest possible level

- Although the anxiety levels of the students in our sample were considerably low, teachers should detect FL anxiety and continue with their efforts to reduce the detrimental effect of it through activities suggested in the literature.

In a future study, these reported amounts of L1 and FL could be compared with classroom recordings.

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The Need to Facilitate Pre-Service Teachers in TEFL

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Introduction

Pre-service education in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is extensively discussed (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Jackson, 1992; Kagan, 1992; Kennedy, 1993; Nunan, 1996; Reynolds & Conroy, 2006; Roberts, 2006; Vieira & Marques, 2002) and there is evidence that interest is increasing. At the same time, pre-service education in TEFL seems to be an ongoing challenge. Following on from this, it appears that to broaden the scope of understanding of how to improve professional performance of trainees, it is useful to carry out further investigation.

This paper reports on a small-scale study in Hungary, exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions of practice as an essential part of their studies. Referring to this topic was justified by the recent radical changes of initial teacher training in the country. The aim of the study was to gain deeper insights into the period of teaching practice and search for areas in which pre-service teachers could be facilitated.

Theoretical perspectives

Over the years, pre-service education in TEFL has been explored by various writers (Kagan, 1992; Widdowson, 1997; Yates & Muchisky, 2003) who hold a number of terms and notions when discussing the period of professional training of student teachers. For instance, Widdowson (1997) elaborates on

differences between "teacher education," which refers to academic learning, and "training," which relates to the practical teaching experiences of student teachers. Furthermore, he assumes that "teacher formation" is regarded as a term that covers both teacher training and teacher education. According to Widdowson "all three terms can apply to the pre-service preparation of teachers" (1997, p. 121).

As far as terminology is concerned, it seems plausible to follow Widdowson's (1997) view and use the terms interchangeably. The preference in the language of this study is to address pre-service education as a training period taking place before employment. When reviewing the literature (Barócsi, 2008), it appears that initial training is apparently driven by a desire to produce competent teachers. This ultimate goal is achieved through many different programmes spanning over a period of time.

As research (Banegas, 2009; Barócsi, 2008; Reynolds & Conroy, 2006) suggests, it is important to take into consideration two main aspects of pre-service foreign language teacher education. The first is related to the broad knowledge base or the information about the teaching profession provided for graduates in courses on specific content area. The second aspect refers to the process of gaining skills as a result of classroom experience. For instance, Yates and Muchisky (2003) claim that teacher learners need to receive knowledge of the core of teaching and learning languages; however, they also need to know how to go beyond this knowledge and apply it in particular settings. This raises the question of received knowledge and experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991), and underlines a philosophy of relating theory and practice. The conclusion can be connected with the discussion (Copland, Ma & Mann, 2009; Farrell, 2007; 2008; Gürbüz, 2006; Yates & Muchisky, 2003) of the importance and challenges of reflection in teacher education contexts. In the main, reflective practice is considered as a way of assisting trainees to become more effective teachers.

In terms of the major issues associated with pre-service education, there is evidence to suggest that language teacher education has two basic educating strategies: training and development (Freeman, 1989; Kennedy, 1993). In their comparison of the concepts, Arnold and Sarhan (1994) claim that while training implies receiving knowledge and transmission of skills, development relates to consequent improvements and changes over a longer period of time. What is agreed upon (Reynolds & Conroy, 2006; Smith, n.d.; Swan, 1993) is that development is a constantly evolving process of growth and change in terms of expansion of appropriate skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes for oneself as a teacher and others.

It is widely accepted (Arnold & Sarhan, 1994; Copland, Ma & Mann, 2009; Kennedy, 1993) that training and development belong to a greater whole, concerned with ultimate autonomy and independence. The view (Lier, 2007; Little, 2007) is that development of autonomy is desirable in the sense that trainees not only become responsible for their learning but they also gain the ability to address learner autonomy in classroom settings. Another consideration (Kagan, 1992; Smith, n.d.) is that promoting learner autonomy leads to framing teacher autonomy which seems to be closely bound up with professional growth.

Literature in the field of education (Barócsi, 2008; Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994, 1996, 1997; Daloglu, 2006; Gürbüz, 2006) also offers investigations and information about individuals who bring their own experiences and consequently improve their professional performance. Apparently, there are many different individuals who work together in the teaching practice environment. The proposal is to narrow the scope of relationships and look at the two main individuals: the trainee and trainer.

Studies (Freeman, 1989; Gürbüz, 2006; Kagan, 1992) show that the trainee is the learner in foreign language teacher education. It should be remembered that the terms used to demonstrate this are many: 'trainee teacher', 'student teacher', 'teacher-learner', 'pre-service teacher' or 'prospective teachers'. Recent researchers have examined the trainee from different perspectives. Wallace (1991) lists seven important characteristics of trainees, such as previous knowledge, intellectual skills, types and levels of motivation, interests, level of anxiety, preferred learning style and expectations about learning to teach and teaching. Kagan (1992) describes the requisites of student teachers necessary for their professional development as proceeding through the stages of prior personal beliefs, working through a pre-service programme, sharing simplified and optimistic views of pupils and classroom procedures, experiencing disillusionment overwhelmed by classroom management, as well as reflecting and focusing on the self. An important fact is that all characteristic stages mentioned above, relate to the process of learning. Freeman and Johnson (1998) recognize that learning can be organized around four essential foci. These involve considerations of prior knowledge and beliefs, development over time, the role of context as well as the role of intervention and instruction in these particular areas (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Gürbüz, 2006; Reynolds & Conroy, 2006).

The focus is thus shifted to the trainer who has the responsibility to enhance the professional development of student teachers. Views in the field (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994; 1996; 1997; Daloglu, 2006; Gürbüz, 2006) suggest that the trainer is a person who provides mental ease and guiding toward

patterns of behaviour to be consistently performed in the future. The trainer who provides supervision and guidance in teaching practice is a school teacher, often referred to as a 'co-trainer', 'school-based trainer', 'mentor' (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994; 1996; 1997; Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999) or 'cooperating teacher' (Reynolds & Conroy, 2006). Similarly, Wilkin and Sankey (1994) state that teacher trainers are not merely supervisors, and note three points concerning their role: mentors are responsible for student teachers' learning, ensure the integration of theory and practice and support trainees' skills acquisition. In order to achieve results, the trainer should also be able to recognize the images of teaching that the beginning teachers bring to the learning/teaching process. Authors (Copland, Ma & Mann, 2009; Wilkin & Sankey 1994) also suggest that trainers should possess knowledge about the diversity of teaching styles and should know how to use the most appropriate ones in particular situations. As a matter of fact, trainers are expected to handle each situation in order to allow pre-service teachers to take a step closer to acquiring the knowledge and skills needed in a teaching career in the field. In this respect, the period of teaching practice has long been seen as one fundamental component in the context of professional training of student teachers.

Rationale for the study

Teaching practice schemes have become a familiar part of the educational scene around us. When referring to this period in pre-service education, the reference is to a broad spectrum of activities in which professional teachers assist student teachers through guiding and providing support. Under the umbrella concept of teaching practices, the period tends to differ with respect to a variety of parameters such as duration, focus, structure, supervision and participant distinguishing characteristics.

The period of teaching experience in Hungary is no exception. There are various models (Barócsi, 2007; 2008), and they are all affected by political, social and educational innovations and requirements. The challenge of the specific situation is in recent radical changes of initial teacher training (Barócsi, 2007; 2008; *Report of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Hungary*, 2005). The objective here is to focus on one particular scheme for teaching practice at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. This teaching practice arrangement concentrates on practical learning in the classroom, involves one trainee to a group relationship and takes place over a short period of fifteen lessons to teach and fifteen lessons to observe. A significant

amount of time is devoted to lesson planning as well as pre-and-post lesson discussions. Most crucially for pre-service teachers is to develop further understanding of the teaching/learning process and gain practical experience in the classroom. With regard to this process, developing a professional relationship with peers, school teachers and students can be largely beneficial. However, the point which is being stressed is that the responsibility to enhance the professional development of student teachers lies with the trainer. Thus, the concern for how to facilitate pre-service teachers to achieve better outcomes becomes relevant. So does efficiency, as the practice component last for a short time.

Another central issue is my work of a school-based teacher trainer. Within a long career in education, I have had the privilege of being involved in pre-service teacher education in TEFL. I have worked with 73 student teachers who attended Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. In this respect, my experience has developed year after year around a collaborative working environment with beginner teachers during their teaching practice (Barócsi, 2007; 2008). The bulk of my experience stems from involvement in a special programme with an extended period of teaching practice (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1994; 1996; 1997; Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999; Medgyes & Malderez, 1996) which required a cooperative approach: a pair of trainees had full responsibility for a class in the course of a whole school year (between 100 and 200 hours) and consequently one school term (about 60 lessons).

In contrast, in the academic year 2009/2010, I faced the teaching practice component of a programme following a traditional approach to teacher education (Bárdos, 2001; Major, 2003). One trainee was supposed to teach a group of learners under the heavy supervision of a school-based trainer. The emerging key issue was that student teachers were to gain professional experience in two ways: first, by observing fifteen lessons and second, by teaching fifteen isolated lessons. This meant that support and assistance to trainees were provided within the limits of an approximately two-month teaching practice.

Methodological orientations

Research questions and method

Taking advantage of the opportunities provided in this context, it seemed relevant to explore the environment in which I worked. My attention was directed towards several global goals. First, it was important to find areas in which student teachers needed additional support. Second, it was necessary to

search for areas in which trainers had an increasingly important role. Third, the aim was to discover which aspects of initial training required further development. Fourth, the intention was to generate knowledge about how to increase the efficiency of work. There was also an additional and very important reason for exploring: it was useful to look at different perceptions of student teachers in relation to a) the meaning they attributed to the concept of teaching practice and b) the link between the stages in teacher preparation. On the whole, engagement in investigation in the topic of interest meant tremendous stimulus and formulated a purpose to gain more professional experience. In line with my reflections, the following three research questions were addressed:

- What is the extent of preparation for the period of teaching practice in pre-service teacher education?
- What provides a meaningful environment for acquiring professional competence in teaching practice?
- How can efficiency be achieved in order to gain the most in the course of teaching practice?

In order to collect and analyse data for the study, I adopted a qualitative approach. The choice of method was centred around the following considerations: first, the complex nature of the circumstances of teaching practice; second, the low number of participants; third, the interest in participants' detailed experiences and personal impressions about teaching practice; fourth, the main aim to achieve increased understanding of issues concerned; finally, the interest in studies carried out in a qualitative manner.

Participants

The core of data for the research was obtained from five pre-service teachers at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. The investigations were related to their studies and particularly their teaching practice at the school where I was employed. The project was carried in the academic year of 2009/2010 and involved four female and one male participants. They were at the age of 24, double-major students in their final year of a five-year programme. The teaching practice component required the students to observe 15 lessons and conduct 15 lessons individually. The bulk of their work in the teaching practice was related to lesson planning as well as pre-and post-lesson dis-

cussions. Taking all this into account, the pre-service teachers presented a homogeneous group.

As far as work experience in TEFL was concerned, all pre-service teachers were involved in one-to-one tuition and one trainee had a part-time job in a language school. Apparently, in the light of work experience, the five participants did not present a homogeneous group. As the focus of my research was on the period of teaching practice, this difference was perceived of less importance. Selection was considered random, as the trainees could have been any student teacher sent to the particular school. Furthermore, the study included data from 25 students who attended the pre-service teachers' classes. The students were regarded as additional participants; however, the responses received were considered of significant value.

Data collection

Data were collected mainly through oral semi-structured interviews. The research method followed McCracken's (1988) four-step model for carrying out a long qualitative interview: the study of literature; the cultural context of the study; the construction of the questions, creating the prompts and the interview procedure; and the analysis of qualitative data. As this was a small-scale study, an attempt was made to carry out value-bound research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Lazaraton, 2003). In order to support the research findings triangulation, particularly data triangulation was used (Lazaraton, 2003; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997). The transcripts of the interviews were triangulated with other sources of data: observational field notes taken during classroom observation and students' feedback to the pre-service teachers.

Procedures

To collect personal data about the complex area of teaching practice, ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were held with the pre-service teachers before and after their practice. As these were similar contexts, the questions were similar. The interview schedules for carrying out long interviews involved two sets of questions: the first inquired about participants' personal details, whereas the second contained questions on the actual period and guided to evaluation of it.

Data collection was conducted in four phases: two interviews with one pre-service teacher before and after teaching practice, in the first semester;

eight interviews with four pre-service teachers before and after teaching practice, in the second semester. The purpose of the interviews was presented before the start. Permission to record the interviews was asked from the participants and confidentiality of data was assured. The participants were given the opportunity to read the questions prior the interviews and in some cases clarifications were made. The interviews were recorded on separate tapes. The duration of the interviews ranged from thirty-five to seventy minutes.

Data analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis was applied. Hypotheses were not generated prior to data analysis. The data were analysed using the constant comparative method described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The raw data were transferred into readable form, namely the audio-taped interviews (ten) were transcribed. This was followed by coding, refinement of categories, relationships and patterns across categories, integration of data and writing up the research. In addition, qualitative analysis and thematic analysis of the text were also applied (Cumming, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

Research question 1: What is the extent of preparation for the period of teaching practice in pre-service teacher education?

In this regard, the findings of the study were around five major issues. First, participants reported that they had received profound knowledge base of teaching. For instance, all participants confirmed that the important areas of TEFL were covered in lectures, seminars and methodology classes. Gaining knowledge about teaching language skills, methods and classroom management was claimed to be necessary and extremely beneficial. Importantly, all participants also made a clear distinction between theory and practice. On the whole, inherent in the remarks was a need for bringing theory and practice closer. The following are typical quotes from the interviews:

> I think language wise and methodology wise, we were quite prepared, so we had a lot of knowledge to turn to in this area.

> We have learnt theory, a lot of theory and nothing practical.
>
> I am still not confident about all the theory we learnt. I still have to put it into practice...build it into practice....so, I do not feel that confident about it yet.
>
> I think theory is only one thing which exists in the brain but practice is completely different and it also has to be learnt during the years, I think.

Second, all student teachers reported that the main sources for preparation for teaching practice were observation, micro teaching and presentations. Most worrying seemed the fact that for some participants the bulk of information had come from video films, the Internet and peers. As for observation, it was found useful; however, trainees were given the opportunity to observe experienced teachers on only few lessons in schools. They had to observe various aspects and write reports, but this was found insufficient. Arguments also came against micro teaching, as lessons lasted only 15 minutes, trainees had to teach their peers who had no difficulties understanding instructions or carrying out tasks, and lessons were based on one exercise or a page of a unit. For example:

> Well, not very prepared actually. I have to say we weren't given too much information about what the teaching practice basically means... what the practicalities are. There was a very theoretical description on the university's website which I read but the most information I got was from fellow students who had already completed their teaching practice.
>
> Yes, basically in the methodology classes. There were some video films or some students have done their teaching practice and their experience… but nothing tangible.

Third, although there was no sign of negative feeling, on the whole, the distinct impression was that the practical knowledge provided prior teaching practice was inadequate. Trainees reported feeling unprepared or lacking real knowledge or experience. All responses showed that the idea of teaching practice was vague and obscure. The following accounts from the interviews explain this conclusion:

> You attend the university and all of a sudden you start teaching a group.

> I think and that is why what I would lack in this course is more practice in real life….you read a lot about it but it is not something you can do by only reading about it.
>
> You can get to know it only when you are working with a class.

Finally, the reflections pointed at an existing division between academic learning and practical teaching experiences. Furthermore, evidence suggested that there was a need for a transitional stage in pre-service education and developing a greater awareness among pre-service teachers of the actual period of teaching practice:

> I think that another seminar would be necessary to prepare us for the teaching practice so that it could be a smoother movement because I think that there was a gap between the methodology classes and what we actually are expected to do when we give lessons and when we plan lessons.
>
> Had there been an introduction, I think it would have been very useful.

Research question 2: What provides a meaningful environment for acquiring professional competence in teaching practice?

The data from the interviews as well as the students' feedback given to the pre-service teachers, and the researcher's observation field notes offered useful insights into this dimension of the research. In the main, professional learning in the period of teaching practice was related to inside and outside the classroom. In many cases, there was recognition of the complexity of the period. The findings revealed the main areas in which pre-service teachers need to develop. It is essential to note that all areas were considered equally important. Perceptions raised awareness on key issues such as: lesson planning: a) lesson stages and transitions; b) effective classroom management: timing and pace, teaching and learning roles; c) learner: learners' needs; motivation; d) course materials and resources; e) material design; f) problem solving; g) decision making; h) pre-and-post lesson discussions; i) opportunities for observation and reflection; j) attention to feedback and awareness; k) knowledge about methods and techniques; l) language improvement and m) trainer's support.

Research question 3: How can efficiency be achieved in order to gain the most in the course of teaching practice?

Gradually, the findings moved towards the formulation of an answer to the third research question. In this respect the outcomes suggested that within a short period of time efficiency can be gained in several ways. First, good preparation and gaining experience were mentioned:

> What I mean is that a lot of preparation is needed to be confident, actually.

> I think practice, first of all and above all.

Second, the findings underlined the importance of ensuring a large number of opportunities for discussions and reflection as well as focusing on details.

> I mean, reflection can help us, can help student teachers to become more and more effective.

> This is a short period of time. You have to call our attention to different details because we only have 15 lessons to conduct and to discuss.

The pre-service-teachers acknowledged that they were determined to develop. This meant that they should get insights into all major areas of TEFL as well as various methods and approaches:

> I don't know. All areas, I mean I cannot take one as the most important.

> I think it is a very good way of developing professionally to see other teachers teach.

Additionally, references were made to the benefits of cooperation in pre-service education. Cooperation was regarded especially important as it provided a supportive context. While student teachers viewed collaboration in a positive way, they demonstrated a shift from being individual-oriented to team-oriented. This brings us to consider the emotional aspect an integral part of teaching and learning.

> I think we formed a group. I didn't have a teaching partner teaching the same class but we somehow cooperated with the others. Actually, we

shared some materials which we used during the classes and we also exchanged ideas how to make our lesson more effective and we gave tips to the others, what to do and what not to do, what was efficient and what not really.

You cannot be a teacher without really loving it.

I think I will miss this whole period of time.

Conclusion

Based on the reflections and interpretations, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a demand for adequate preparation before the teaching practice. In this regard, pre-service teachers expect to receive more practical experience prior the actual period of teaching practice. They also expect a period of transition to their teaching experience in schools.

As all participants recognized the complexity and broadness of teaching practice and emphasized that it spans over a short period of time, it appears that efficiency becomes crucial for development. Apparently, the discussion shifts to the importance of facilitating student teachers in the language teacher training context. The significant outcome is that participants' accounts increase awareness towards the boundaries of effective learning in teaching practice. The most positive aspect of the study is that considerations emerge from the trainees' own experiences and needs and suggest how to use time and effort in order to benefit more.

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Attitudes Towards English and FL Motivation Among Croatian University Business Students: Results of a Pilot Study

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Introduction

The traditional belief that attitudes towards native speakers and cultures play a critical role in the language learning process (Gardner, 1985) has been undermined by the status of English as a language for international communication. Recent empirical research confirms the prevailing importance of values associated with English itself (Dörnyei, 1990; Mihaljević-Djigunović, 1998; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Lamb, 2004; Yashima, 2000, 2002; Erling, 2004; Ushioda, 2006; Sinno, 2008). Consequently, this pilot study of EFL motivation structure and the underlying attitudes combines sociolinguistic and socio-psychological approaches. Due to our specific interest in the impact of globalization on EFL motivation and the fact that tertiary education is a major international domain of English (Graddol, 1997), this study involves university students. The relationships between language globalization, attitudes towards English and EFL motivation of Croatian students in non-language programmes have not been studied and we hope that the insights from this study will enable us to construct a valid and reliable instrument for measuring these ID factors.

The role of attitudes

Attitudes have been regarded as the affective basis of L2 motivation for decades, since Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasized the significance of learner's attitudes towards native speakers of the target language. Still, the focus on attitudes towards native speakers and the concept of integrativeness have raised considerable criticism (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Nikolov, 1999; Noels et al., 2000; McClelland, 2000; Yashima, 2000; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006). Early research into FL learning in formal settings shows that individual differences in success cannot be related to attitudes towards L2 speakers (Green, 1975), which is particularly true for an international language (Dörnyei, 1990; Dörnyei, 1994; Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998; Lamb, 2004; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). McClelland (2000) stresses learners' desire to integrate into the global community, while Yashima's (2000) concept of international posture implies the global community of English language users. Finally, since globalization processes give rise to bicultural identities (Arnett, 2002) and English functions as the language of global identity, it is reasonable to presume that the "external" reference group of English language users disappears as the learners develop the concept of themselves as members of the global community of English speakers (Ushioda, 2006). Consequently, our understanding of the attitude basis of motivation to learn English may be enhanced by research into the attitudes of non-native speakers towards English itself.

Regardless of whether research is conducted in a country where English is the first (Tardy, 2004), second (Yang & Lau, 2003; Sinno, 2008) or foreign language (Nielsen, 2003; Preisler, 2003; Ciscel, 2002; Erling, 2004; Bergroth, 2008; Kabalin Borenić, 2010), non-native speakers consider it to be a means of global communication used primarily for economic reasons. Furthermore, different social groups (general population, non-language students, English majors, workers) hold very similar opinions about English. The opinion that English enables global access to information, improves one's chances of employment and gives social prestige is universal. The majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards English and regard it as important for themselves and their country. Some non-native speakers see English as a threat to their language and culture, and those less proficient express feelings of social inequality and frustration over the invested learning effort. Nevertheless, it seems that the utilitarian value of English for connecting with the world overrides most of the negative attitudinal effects (Kaylani, 1996; Erling, 2004; Bergroth, 2008; Sinno, 2008).

EFL motivation in the globalizing world

FL motivation research in EFL contexts reveals a decreasing interest in native speakers and target cultures (Dörnyei, 1990; Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998; Erling 2004, 2008; Yashima, 2000; Irie, 2003; Lamb, 2004). Indeed, a recently proposed model of the internal structure of L2 motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005) involves no direct link between integrativeness and cultural interest. Meanwhile, positive attitudes towards native speakers and a desire to travel to English-speaking countries do not imply a desire to integrate into the community of native speakers (Johnson, 1996; McClelland, 2000; McGuire, 2000; Yashima, 2000). In the case of English, traditionally conceived integrativeness is replaced by interest in communication with foreigners, willingness to learn about other cultures and the desire to access information globally.

Furthermore, EFL motivation is characterized by an overlap of traditional integrative and instrumental motives (Dörnyei, 1990). The internal structure of L2 motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005) reveals that integrativeness involves utilitarian goals, which lead to the reinterpretation of integrativeness as the Ideal L2 Self, a motivational component that combines traditional integrative and internalised instrumental motives (Dörnyei, 2005). In Gardner's terms, the individual whose Ideal Self includes the mastery of a FL is integratively disposed. The intriguing overlap of integrativeness and instrumentality in the context of globalization is reflected in the terms used to describe the learner's wish to take part in global developments: pragmatic-communicative motivation (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998), personal communication (Miyahara et al., 1997, according to Irie, 2003), intrinsic-instrumental-integrative motive (Kimura et al., 2001) and international posture (Yashima, 2000). Lamb (2004) argues that this type of motivation may be related to the development of a bicultural identity (Arnett, 2002) as a consequence of globalization. He finds that his respondents want to develop both their ethnic identity and "an (Indonesian) world citizen identity" (Lamb, 2004, p. 15), which is similar to findings from other parts of the world (LoCastro, 2001; Syed, 2001; Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2003; Erling, 2004). Role models need not be native English speakers, or westerners in general, but rather members of one's own culture who have developed their global identity.

The study

Aims of the pilot study

Our pilot study aims to investigate: (1) Croatian university business students' (CUBSs) attitudes towards English as a global language, (2) the structure of CUBSs' EFL motivation, (3) correlations among attitudes towards English and types of motivation, and (4) differences in attitudes and motivation in groups determined by gender, language achievement, language of instruction and intended effort.

Participants

The study involved 390 (58.9% female) students of economics and business at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb. Ages ranged from 19 to 33 (average 21.5). The sample was chosen as it represents a poorly-investigated population increasingly involved in international communication in English in tertiary education, scientific publication, international trade, banking and economic affairs (Graddol, 1997). According to the program entry requirements, all participants should have acquired the B1/B2 level of English language competence, as defined by the CEFR. The average length of time spent learning English was 11.5 years. Ninety-five participants (24.2%) attended a selection of core courses in English.

Instrument

A pilot questionnaire in Croatian was designed to investigate attitudes towards global English (33 statements) and EFL motivation structure (50 statements). The section on attitudes was adapted from Erling (2004). In order to enable factor and correlation analysis of motivation and attitudes subscales, the original attitude questions were reworded for assessment on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The structure of EFL motivation was investigated using the applicable items from the questionnaire designed by Mihaljević Djigunović (1998) for the Croatian context. Additional items were adapted from Erling (2004) and Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh (2006). Three items were written by the author. The questionnaire also collected biographical information and data on the intent of CUBSs to enrol in English-medium courses.

Analyses

Metric properties of the pilot questionnaire on attitudes and EFL motivation were tested (factor structure and reliability). Intercorrelations between motivation and attitude subscales and their correlations with English grades and time spent learning English were examined. Participants' EFL motivation and attitudes to English were compared with respect to gender, language of instruction (Croatian vs. English) and the stated intention to attend English-medium courses.

Results and discussion

Attitudinal dimensions

Following Erling (2004), attitudes towards English were conceptualized in terms of the effects of language globalization on one's own language and culture, the presence of English in daily life, the presence of English in national educational contexts, attitudes towards code-switching, preference for models of English (national and neutral varieties), causes of the spread of English, and adherence to national linguistic norms.

Principal component analysis (PCA) of attitude items revealed five distinct factors that explain 44.28% of the total variance. Six items had acceptable loadings (≥ 0.4) on Factor 1 (AF1): *The presence of English in everyday life is a threat to my culture.* Since all these items concern negative feelings about English as a threat, AF1 is labelled *Threat to linguistic and cultural identity*. Seven items had acceptable loadings on Factor 2 (AF2): *More English than Croatian lessons should be taught in Croatian schools*; *All adult Europeans should speak and understand English*. The composition of AF2 reflects the belief that everyone should have some English skills, therefore AF2 is labelled *English as a must for all Europeans*. Seven items had acceptable loadings on Factor 3 (AF3): *The presence of English in daily life is useful because it helps improve one's cultural horizons*; *Croatian speakers should not mix English and Croatian.* Since the items suggest that English is useful but that it should not encroach on Croatian, AF3 is labelled *English useful - Croatian cherished*. The three items loading onto Factor 4 (AF4) depict English as a language easy to learn: *It is acceptable to mix British and American English*; *English is easier to learn than other foreign languages I have studied*. AF4 is referred to as *Easy to learn, national norms irrelevant*. Finally, the five items loading onto Factor 5 (AF5) concern the desirability of neutral variants of English: *It is better to speak a*

neutral variety of English that does not represent one culture or country; *English is a tool for communication and I don't identify with any English-speaking culture*. As such, AF5 is termed *Desirability of neutral variants*. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients show good reliability for all factors except AF5 (Table 1), which was thus eliminated from subsequent calculations.

Levels of endorsement of attitudinal and motivational subscales (Tables 1 and 2) are cited alongside levels of endorsement of significant items to facilitate interpretation. To allow for comparison with results from Germany and Denmark, we interpreted 1 and 2 as disagreement, 3 as a neutral attitude and 4 and 5 as agreement. Levels of endorsement of each item were also subsequently expressed in percentages.

Mean scores for attitudinal dimensions in Table 1 reveal that the participants in our pilot research study seem not to consider English as a threat to their cultural and linguistic identity. Only 10% of our respondents consider English a threat to their language, and less than 8% consider it a threat to their culture. Although lower, our results are comparable to the findings from Denmark (Preisler, 1999) and Germany (Freie Universität Berlin; Erling, 2004).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the five attitudinal dimensions

Attitudinal subscales	Min	Max	M	SD	α
AF1: Threat to linguistic and cultural identity	1.00	5.00	1.85	.77	.78
AF2: English as a must for all Europeans	1.00	5.00	2.57	.78	.74
AF3: English useful - Croatian cherished	1.00	5.00	3.55	.61	.63
AF4: Easy to learn, national norms irrelevant	1.00	5.00	3.39	.99	.73
AF5: Desirability of neutral variants	1.00	5.00	3.23	.60	.45

Surprisingly, respondents did not share the opinion that English is a must for all Europeans. However, the composition of items on AF2 reveals that the moderately strong opinion that all adult Europeans should be able to speak, comprehend (M=3.70, SD=1.129), read and write English (M=3.42 SD=1.174) is

coupled with distinctly negative attitudes towards more English than Croatian in schools (M=1.68, SD=1.002). A comparison of endorsement levels with those of Erling (2004) reveals that a lower percentage of Croatian students (60% vs. 69%) believe that all adult Europeans should be proficient in spoken English. The results for required writing and reading skills are also lower (40% vs. 53%). Opposition to the equal status of English and the national language in schools (22% vs. 39%) or the advantageous treatment of English (5% vs. 3%) is comparable. Erling (2004) interprets her findings in terms of the respondents' desire to preserve the social status of German, at least in the sphere of education, and our findings seem to fit her interpretation. Our investigation revealed a moderately strong opinion that English and Croatian have distinct roles to play (AF3), which may reflect the respondents' bicultural identities.

CUBSs' endorsement levels of AF4 reveal a moderately strong disregard for national linguistic norms and a moderately strong positive attitude toward neutral variants (AF5). Interestingly, the lack of regard for national linguistic norms goes hand in hand with the belief that English is easy to learn. It is revealing to compare CUBSs' attitudes towards varieties of English and their overlap with the attitudes of English majors in Berlin (Erling, 2004). Although the respondents in Erling's study consider English to be a means of international communication, the majority (56%) express a strong preference for a national variety of English, which is understandable for English majors. On the other hand, only 23.5% of CUBSs object to learning a neutral variant, 38.5% would like to learn a neutral variant and 38% have no opinion on this. Moreover, the mixing of national variants in speech and writing is acceptable to 42% of our respondents, 33% are undecided, and 25% find mixing unacceptable. Since 69% believe that successful communication hinges primarily on the message itself, it is apparent that they see English as a mere tool for communication.

Regarding the intercorrelations of attitude components, seeing English as a must has significant low positive correlations with the opinion that English is useful for global communication and that it "mixes" well.

Motivational dimensions

Following the lead of Dörnyei (2005) and Mihaljević Djigunović (1998), EFL motivation was conceptualised in terms of seven components: affective motives concerning the language itself, traditional integrativeness, vitality of the L2 community, cultural interest, milieu, self-confidence and instrumentality.

Principal component analysis of motivation items yielded a four-factor solution, explaining 42.26% of the total variance. Thirteen items with acceptable loadings (≥ 0.4) on Factor 1 (AF1) belong to the generalised concepts of traditionally defined integrativeness (*I like people from English speaking countries very much*), cultural interest (*I like the magazines produced in English speaking countries*), affective motives (*I like English words*), and linguistic vitality of the L2 community (*English speaking countries play an important role in the world*). Consequently, MF1 is labelled *Affective-Integrative Motives*. Unlike Mihaljević Djigunović (1998), we did not establish the existence of an independent affective type of EFL motivation. This could be explained by the older age of our respondents. Furthermore, since our data were collected a decade later, the weakening of the affective component may reflect the fact that English is perceived as a near-universal basic skill (Graddol, 2006). Eleven items that were derived from the generalised concepts of instrumentality (utilitarian value for one's career/education: *English will help me in my future job,* and for global communication: *English helps you to communicate with people globally*) and milieu (*Being able to speak English will earn you respect*) had acceptable loadings on Factor 2 (MF2). MF2 is consequently labelled *Instrumental-Communicative Motives*. Six items loading on Factor 3 (MF3) concern negative opinions about English in general (*English is a stupid language*) and the negative cost-benefit ratio of learning English in formal settings (*I prefer studying something more useful than English*). It is rather difficult to interpret the composition of items on MF3, as it seems that they are drawn together by the negative wording of the items. Namely, items of similar meaning, only positively worded, load on MF1 and MF 2. Finally, as MF3 also comprises motives derived from language learning in formal settings, it is labelled *(Negative) Formal Learning Experiences*. Factor 4 (MF4) comprises five items reflecting self-confidence as related to the perceived proficiency of the mother and the role of English in the respondent's life. The item *I am sure I can learn English well* has the highest loading and is followed immediately by the items *My mother speaks English well* and *I frequently use English to speak with foreigners.* Since this factor brings together beliefs about one's ability to learn and the role of English in the respondent's life, it seems to reflect learning in informal settings or learning

by doing. Consequently, MF4 could also be related to EFL learning experience and is thus labelled *Self-Confidence and EFL Experience*.

The mean scores for the motivational dimensions are presented in Table 2. Affective-integrative motives obtained the lowest scores, which merits a closer look. MF1 is composed of items reflecting pleasure in meeting people from English-speaking countries (*M*=3.79, *SD*=1.04) and the belief that English-speaking countries play a significant role in international relations (*M*=3.80, *SD*=.98). The combined score for affective-integrative motivation was effectively lowered by the scores of items *I want to become similar to the English, Americans, etc.* (*M*=1.68, *SD*=.99), *I want to marry a person from the USA, UK.* (*M*=1.60, *SD*=1.09) and *I want to learn English so that I can live in the USA, UK* (*M*=2.29, *SD*=1.30). Moreover, in the commentaries section of the pilot questionnaire, respondents singled the three items out as hilarious or revolting, thus, confirming the findings of other researchers about the pronounced lack of desire to integrate into native L2 communities (Dörnyei, 1990; Yashima, 2000; Lamb, 2004) and a sense of strong national pride (Lamb, 2004; Erling, 2004; Seidlhofer and Widdowson, 2003; Mihaljević, 1998).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the four motivational dimensions

Motivational subscales	Min	Max	M	SD	α
MF1: affective-integrative motives	1.00	4.86	2.99	.64	.86
MF2: instrumental-communicative motives	1.73	5.00	4.23	.55	.85
MF3: (neg.) formal language learning experiences	1.00	5.00	1.96	.73	.74
MF4: self-confidence and EFL experience	1.17	5.00	3.28	.75	.67

The high score for the instrumental-communicative subscale is computed from scores consistently higher than 3.44 (*SD* 1.13): *English is an important language* (*M*=4.78, *SD*=.55), *English is important for my future career* (*M*=4.64, *SD*=.64), *With English I can travel all over the world* (*M*=4.47, *SD*=.74) and *If you speak English you can communicate with people from the whole world* (*M*=4.43, *SD*=.76). MF2 comprises both instrumental and integrative motives, but they refer to integration into the global community. The composition and scores for

the instrumental-communicative subscale confirm findings from Croatian (Mihaljević-Djigunović, 1998) and other EFL contexts (Yashima, 2000; Dörnyei, 1990; Lamb, 2004; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). This type of motivation can be related to the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005), though the present study provides no data on the level of internalization of instrumental motives and we cannot speculate as to whether MF2 reflects the Ideal L2 Self.

The moderately high score for Self-confidence and experience with EFL is the result of high scores of *I am sure I can learn English well* (*M*=4.50, *SD*=.75) and *I frequently use English to speak with foreigners* (*M*=4.14, *SD*=1.04). Finally, the low score for the (negative) formal learning experience subscale confirms the positive motivational impact of milieu and the characteristics of the language itself.

Intercorrelations of motivational dimensions show a moderate positive correlation between affective-integrative motives and self-confidence/experience with EFL.

Correlations between attitudes to English and EFL motivation

Correlations among motivational and attitudinal subscales testify to the relationship between socio-cultural circumstances and EFL motivation (Table 3). We established the existence of five underlying attitudinal dimensions, though moderate positive correlations with motivational dimensions are found only for AF1 and AF2. The AF3 subscale is related to affective-integrative and instrumental-communicative motivation, though the correlations are low.

Table 3: Correlations between attitudes to English and FL motivation

Variable	MF1: affective-integrative motives	MF2: instrumental-communicative motives	MF3: (neg.) formal learning experience	MF4: self-confidence & EFL experience
Attitudes				
AF1: threat to linguistic and cultural identity	-.327**	-.312**	.643**	-.213**
AF2: English as a must for all Europeans	.581**	.488**	-.167**	.316**
AF3: English useful - Croatian cherished	.297**	.299**	.009	.159*
AF4: easy to learn, national norms irrelevant	.110	.050	-.050	.069
AF5: desirability of neutral variants	-.019	.076	-.040	.033

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Comparison of attitudes and motivation according to gender

A comparison of attitudes and motivation by gender reveals a significantly higher score for attitudes to English as a threat in male participants (t=4.125; df=367; $p < .01$), who also have a significantly weaker regard for the national linguistic norms of English (t=2.570; df=368; $p < .05$). The difference in attitudes to English and Croatian as markers of a bicultural identity is not significant (t=1.043; df=361; $p > .05$). In addition to their greater respect for native-speaker norms, female participants have a significantly higher score for English as a must (t=2.526; df=362; $p < .05$). When it comes to motivational dimensions, female students have significantly higher scores for affective-integrative motives (t=3.487; df=267; $p < .01$), instrumental motives (t=3.934; df=363; $p < .01$) and motives related to formal learning experience (t=3.291; df =364; $p < .01$). The one motivational dimension where scores for males and females show no significant difference is self-confidence (t=.382; df=359; $p > .05$).

Table 4a: Comparison of attitudes and motivation according to intention to medium of instruction

	Croatian-medium courses			English-medium courses					
Variable	N	M	I	N	M	SD	t	df	p
AF1: English as a threat	291	1.90	.79	92	1.72	.68	1.926	381	.05
AF2: English as a must	284	2.49	.76	93	2.84	.81	-3.782	375	.00
AF3: E. useful C. cherished	286	3.48	.61	91	3.78	.54	-4.217	375	.00
AF4: easy, national norms irrelevant	291	3.34	1.01	92	3.55	.90	-1.837	381	.06
MF2: instrum.-communicative m.	292	4.15	.56	89	4.49	.41	-5.456	379	.00
MF3: (neg.) formal learning experience	290	2.02	.77	92	1.80	.55	2.473	380	.01
MF4: self-confidence & EFL experience	284	3.13	.74	93	3.76	.59	-7.593	375	.00

Comparison of attitudes and motivation according to medium of instruction

Students in English-medium courses (Table 4a) and those intending to enrol in such courses (Table 4b) have significantly higher scores for all attitudinal and motivational dimensions but one: students in Croatian-medium courses have a statistically higher score for English as a threat. The differences are more significant when comparisons are made by the intent to enrol in English-medium courses.

Table 4b: Comparison of attitudes and motivation according to intent to enrol in English-medium courses

	No intention			Intention declared					
Variable	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	t	df	p
AF1: English as a threat	271	1.92	.79	108	1.65	.67	3.120	377	.00
AF2: English as a must	266	2.47	.76	108	2.82	.80	-3.984	372	.00
AF3: E. useful C. cherished	264	3.50	.63	108	3.69	.53	-2.867	370	.00
AF4: easy, national norms irrelevant	271	3.34	1.02	109	3.49	.91	-1.318	378	.18
MF1: affective-integrative m.	240	2.95	.63	37	3.28	.68	-2.969	275	.00
MF2: instrum.-communicative m.	268	4.11	.56	106	4.53	.36	-7.014	372	.00
MF3: (neg.) formal learning experience	270	2.05	.75	106	1.70	.59	4.362	374	.00
MF4: self-confidence & EFL experience	262	3.11	.71	109	3.71	.68	-7.513	369	.00

Correlations of attitudes and motivation with English grades and the length of time spent learning EFL

Negative formal learning experience and self confidence/EFL experience have higher correlations with English grades than other attitudinal and motivational dimensions (Table 5). English grades have low positive correlations with self confidence/EFL experience and affective-integrative motives, which supports the classic belief that only integratively motivated learners can achieve near-native proficiency (Lambert and Gardner, 1972; Dörnyei, 1990). Self confidence is the only dimension positively correlated with the length of time spent learning EFL. English as a threat is more significantly correlated (-.285**) with English grades than any other attitudinal dimension. Finally, although attitudes to English correlate with some motivational dimensions (Table 3), correlations between attitudes towards English and BE grades are mostly weak (Table 5).

Table 5: Correlation of attitudes and motivation with English grade (N=189) and the length of time spent learning EFL

Variables	English grade	Time spent learning
Motivational dimensions		
MF1: affective-integrative motives	.317**	.029
MF2: instrumental-communicative motives	.186*	-.047
MF3: (neg.) formal learning experience	-.389**	-.100
MF4: self-confidence/experience with EFL	.398**	.290**
Attitudinal dimensions		
AF1: threat to linguistic and cultural identity	-.285**	-.021
AF2: English as a must for all Europeans	.184*	.006
AF3: English useful - Croatian cherished	.156*	.013
AF4: easy to learn-national norms irrelevant	.026	-.001

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Conclusion

Although our findings indicate that CUBSs do not see English as a threat to their language and culture, we discern a certain sense of caution lest English should encroach on Croatian, especially in the sphere of education. Croatian is proudly upheld as the language of local identity, whereas English is acknowledged as the required language of global communication. The perception of English as a must is accompanied by a permissive attitude towards the mixing of national varieties of English and a positive attitude towards culturally unmarked varieties. Moreover, the lack of regard for national linguistic norms is related to the belief that English is easy to learn. All in all, CUBSs' attitudes towards English reveal that they have given little thought to language globalization and its impact on English. While CUBSs appreciate L2 cultural products and the vitality of the L2 community, they are not motivated by the desire to integrate into a community of native speakers. English is instru-

mental to their integration with the global community of English language users and this seems to be the most prominent component of their EFL motivation. The remaining two motivational components stem from CUBSs' negative formal and positive informal experiences with English. Only attitudes towards English as a must or a threat correlate moderately with motivational dimensions, though correlations between attitudes towards English and English grades are weak. Finally, English grades as a measure of achievement has the highest correlation with motives stemming from learning experience, both formal and informal.

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The BA in English Studies Programmes in Hungary After Bologna: Issues in Research Design

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Background and rationale

The status and role of modern philology programmes have been constantly changing throughout Europe during the previous decades. As a result, the attractiveness and popularity of such programmes as well as the number of enrolling students has been decreasing in the EHEA. It appears that students no longer find the traditional literary content of language-related programmes useful. As a result, approximately half of the modern philology departments in the UK were closed in the course of the past two decades due to the lack of students' demand for such courses (Kelly & Jones, 2003). Similar tendencies have been reported from other countries of the EU as well (Mackiewicz, 2005). In Hungary, where higher education is regarded as a public good, state control is very strong, and a large proportion of students do not pay fees, Modern Philology Departments have not been closed despite the fact that the number of students attracted to modern language studies, including English, has declined here too (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number of first year students in Hungary (source: www.felvi.hu)

Year	BA in English	BA in German	BA in French
2006	1428	790	438
2007	1091	481	366
2008	1009	433	345
2009	1240	478	334

The decline of interest in language degree programmes coincided in time with the birth, development and implementation of the Bologna Process throughout Europe, including Hungary. It is therefore necessary to consider the impacts of the Bologna Process on the characteristic features of first-degree programmes in Modern Languages. Throughout the paper, focused attention will be given to English Studies programmes. A reason for this is that English has a unique status in Hungary, being the most frequently used and learned L2 in the country (Eurydice, 2008, pp. 62, 70). As such, it stands the best chance of all languages to be regarded as useful by students.

The Bologna Process has been launched in order to enhance the comparability, compatibility and attractiveness of European higher education institutions and the degree programmes they offer. While the implementation of the process has been slower than expected and many weaknesses are apparent, the goals and objectives set in 1999 are still valid today, and member countries are prepared to put their efforts into the further development and implementation of the process (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010).

The aims, structure and content of BA English studies programmes, as defined in relevant decrees (289/2005. Korm. rendelet; 15/2006. OM rendelet), relate to the goals and principles of this far-reaching process. While the comparability of the degree has been enhanced, there are doubts regarding the enhancement of its compatibility. Also, the employability of a large number of graduates can be questioned because the degree does not give them a profession, and it is not possible for students to combine English with another field of studies in the form of a joint degree either. As a consequence, language students need to continue their studies at a master's level if they wish to lay the foundations of their careers.

The aims, structure and content of the degree programme also indicate that the decrees intend to keep students in higher education for as long as possible. In the first cycle, the content strongly focuses on issues of modern philology, while language-related professions, such as teaching, translating, interpreting, can be studied at a postgraduate level only. This regulation goes against the principles of the Bologna process relating to flexible learning routes and life long learning, probably disregards the needs of the labour market and puts an extra financial burden on the students and their families.

Taking these problems into consideration, I suggest that the issue of language-related degrees should be given focused attention again in Hungary. By re-opening this agenda, it would be possible to carry out needs analyses of stakeholder groups, to evaluate and compare the results with the present situation and to take well-informed decisions on the basis of a consensus between the actors of the process. This would make it possible for higher

education institutions to define how the aims, content and learning outcomes of BA programmes relate to those at a master's level, and what knowledge, skills and competences should be developed at each level. Also, more attention could be given to methodological issues in order to facilitate the cognitive and personal development of a large number of students in a new system.

What follows is a discussion of the design of a proposed research project investigating the issues I have mentioned above. I will look at the following areas in detail: aims, hypothesis, research question formulation, participants and research methods. I will also outline the role 'needs' and needs analysis can play in curriculum development.

Aims of research

The broad aim of my research is to investigate whether and how the BA in English Studies programmes can be useful and effective in terms of developing the competences and knowledge needed in the European labour market. In order to do this, the investigation focuses on the following: (1) the influence of the Bologna process on the curriculum development of the BA in English Studies programmes; (2) the aims and expected learning outcomes of existing English Studies programmes; and (3) the needs of the stakeholder groups.

To establish the research questions, it is necessary to define what is meant by needs within the framework of the research project and why it is useful to carry out needs analyses within the framework of curriculum development. I will discuss these issues below.

The role of needs analysis in curriculum development

The importance and usefulness of needs analysis for course design purposes have been emphasised by many scholars and the terms 'language needs' and 'needs analysis' have been strongly associated with English for Specific Purposes (ESP, for an overview see West, 1994). It has also been emphasised, however, that each learner group, regardless of the specific interest area of the learners, has its own needs. "What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 53). Following this line of thought, I would argue strongly that the BA in English Studies programmes should fall

into the category of ESP. By the term 'needs analysis' I refer to activities whereby one (researchers, course designers, teachers) collects information that will serve as the basis of curriculum development and/or course design that will meet the needs of a particular group of learners. Justifications for using needs analysis when designing a course or a programme can be formed along three lines. The first argument is that needs analysis can ensure that the design and implementation of a course is valid and relevant from the point of view of the learners (Johns, 1991) and, I would also add, other stakeholder groups such as employers. The second argument relates to the cost effectiveness of language programmes. A needs-based course can make it possible for those who pay for the course (e.g. learners, parents, companies or the state) to receive 'value for money' because the programme aims to provide what it is expected to provide by those who finance it. The third argument concerns the enhancement of motivation. It stresses the importance of needs identification when designing a language programme along the lines that learner involvement in the teaching/learning procedures and more specifically in goal setting can increase motivation which, in turn, can lead to successful learning (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 48, 64).

It is apparent that the task of defining what is meant by 'needs' is not as straightforward as it might seem. According to Richterich, "the very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous" (1980, p. 2). This is because needs cannot be defined as objective reality but will depend on the conceptual proposition of the individuals who carry out the needs analysis. "Needs are for the educator to define against a background of normative concepts of almost infinite range and variety…What is finally established as a 'need' is a matter for agreement and judgement not discovery" (Lawson, 1979, p. 37).

For my research purposes, I follow the suggestion that 'needs' should be regarded as an umbrella term (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 55). Needs can be categories of language, such as discourse, genre, register, etc., but they can also refer to teaching and learning strategies and means. It is possible to take a product or a process-oriented approach to needs analysis where product-orientation refers to what the language learners will need to use in particular situations, whereas process-orientation focuses on the learners as individuals and takes into account cognitive and affective factors such as learning styles, motivation and attitudes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp.55-64) refer to the two categories as target needs and learning needs. They further divide target needs into 'necessities', 'wants' and 'lacks', and learning needs into learning strategies and constraints. The main focus of my research will be on target needs and their characteristics are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of target needs (based on Hutchinson & Waters, 1987)

Target needs categories	Questions asked	Types of analysis
Necessities	What do learners need to know in order to cope with the target situations? What are these situations?	Needs
Wants	What do the learners feel they need? In what situations?	Needs
Lacks	What do the learners know already? What and how are they taught at present? What are the learning outcomes at present?	Present situation

Research design

Since the paper reports on work in progress, I will not be able to touch on issues relating to research instruments, administration and data processing here.

Hypothesis

> There is a discrepancy between the competences and knowledge language graduates need in the (European) labour market and the objectives and expected outcomes of BA in English Studies programmes in Hungary.

Research questions

I developed my research questions taking into account constituents of curriculum development as well as the types of target needs I listed in Section 3. There are normally five broad issues in curriculum development: aims, content, methodology, materials and evaluation (Sárdi, 2002, pp. 26-7). These are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Constituents of curriculum development

Areas of curriculum development	Question asked
Aims and objectives	Why?
Content (proficiency, knowledge and skills)	What?
Methodology (teaching and learning strategies)	How?
Teaching materials	With what?
Evaluation (learning outcomes)	How well?

In order to test the hypothesis, I have formed my research questions along the lines of four areas of curriculum development: aims, content, methodology and learning outcomes. The research project does not focus on materials (i.e. with what?), therefore, it does not have a means analysis element. Choosing the right materials is a very important criterion for the success of a programme. However, including this aspect into the research is not possible due to constraints of time and resources.

The research focuses on three types of needs: necessities, wants and lacks. For my purposes, I will use the term 'present situation' instead of 'lacks' because it indicates more clearly that there is a strong comparison element in the research. What exists at present (present situation) will be compared to what is needed (necessities and wants). Below is the first draft of my research questions. They are grouped according to the type of need they relate to.

Necessities

1. What are the professions that require language-related degrees / proficiency in English?
2. What is the level of proficiency that is required for these professions?
3. What skills are required for these professions?
4. What content knowledge is required for these professions?
5. What language-related content knowledge (declarative knowledge) is required for these professions?

Wants

1. What career plans do students studying for a language degree have?
2. What level of proficiency do they perceive they need for this?
3. What skills do they perceive they need for this?
4. What content do they feel they need for this?
5. What teaching and learning strategies do they perceive as useful in order to achieve their aims?

Present situation

1. What career opportunities does the programme offer? What are the aims of the programme?
2. What is the targeted level of proficiency?
3. What skills does the programme aim to develop?
4. What content knowledge does the programme aim to develop?
5. What learning strategies are enhanced?
6. What teaching strategies are used?
7. What proficiency level do first year students have when they enter the study programme?
8. What skills do they already have?
9. What content knowledge do they already have?
10. What learning strategies are they familiar with?

In order to be able to compare what is needed and what is offered at present, it seems useful to reformulate my research questions. Below is the final list of six questions:

Career / Aims (Why?)

1. What is the relationship between the professions that require language-related degrees / language proficiency and the aims of the BA in English Studies programmes?

Proficiency (What?)

2. What is the relationship between the level of proficiency that is needed for career purposes and that targeted by the BA in English Studies programmes?

Skills (What?)

3. What is the relationship between the skills that are needed for career purposes and developed during the BA in English Studies programmes?

Content (What?)

4. What is the relationship between the content knowledge that is needed for career purposes and that is developed during the BA in English Studies programmes?

Methodology (How?)

5. What is the relationship between the extent to which certain teaching methods and techniques are used by faculty members, wanted by students, and the skills that are needed for career purposes?

Evaluation (How well?)

6. What is the relationship between the learning outcomes of the BA in English Studies programmes and the requirements of the labour market?

Participants

Although the issue is European, the primary research will focus on Hungary only, due to constraints of time and resources. In order to establish the context, however, I will also survey the literature and look at the situation in other parts of Europe. Also, official documents of and research findings into the results of the Bologna process will be given attention. Participants of the primary research will be stakeholder groups (students, graduates and employers), universities and the ministry. Within the universities, programme directors and members of the faculty will be asked. In order to find out about the standpoint of the ministry, official documents (decrees, declarations, official letters etc.) will be examined and formal representatives of the ministry will be approached.

Research methods

The research follows a mixed methods approach. The data collection instruments of the survey include questionnaires (mainly quantitative data), interviews (quantitative data) and archival research (mainly qualitative data). The reason for combining qualitative and quantitative methods is that it makes it possible to triangulate results and provide complex answers to the research

questions (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 43). Table 4 gives an outline of the research design. It summarises the six research questions and indicates how the target needs will be compared to the present situation. Furthermore, the table shows the participants and the research techniques in the case of each research question.

Table 4: Outline of research design

Research questions	Needs (necessities and wants)		Present situation	
	Target group	Research techniques	Target group	Research techniques
Career opportunities	Employers, graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers, ministry	Interview, archival research
Proficiency level	Employers, graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers, ministry	Interview, archival research
Skills priorities	Employers, graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers, ministry	Interview, archival research
Content priorities	Employers, graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers, ministry	Interview, archival research
Learning strategies	Graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers	Interview, archival research
Expected outcomes	Employers, graduates, students	Questionnaire, interview	Programme directors, teachers, ministry	Interview, archival research

Conclusion and a way forward

In this paper, I have argued that it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of BA in English Studies programmes by taking the needs of stakeholder groups into consideration. This is because I assume that there is a discrepancy between the competences and knowledge language graduates need in the labour market and the objectives and expected outcomes of BA in English Studies programmes in Hungary. In order to test this hypothesis, I established 6 research questions, and distinguished target needs and the present situation. This way it will become possible to collect a wide range of data, and thoroughly analyse and compare the findings by using both qualitative and quantitative methods during the investigation. The participants will be three stakeholder groups: students, graduates and employers, as well as representatives of the ministry, directors of English Studies programmes and faculty members. On the basis of the above decisions, it is now possible to develop and pilot the research instruments. In order to administer the instruments, it is necessary to define exactly who the participants will be, how they will be approached, who will approach them, what financial resources are available for administration and data processing. It is also necessary to decide on the time schedule of the primary research.

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English Articles Revisited

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Introduction

Articles are prototypical markers of the semantic, logical, and pragmatic categories of definiteness and indefiniteness (Lyons 1999, p. 48). Definiteness and indefiniteness are considered to be language universals (Guillaume, 1919; Christophersen, 1939; Kramsky, 1972; Silić, 2000). However, in some languages they are not grammaticalized. This is very obvious in Slavic languages, in which, according to Mathesius (in Kramsky, 1972, p. 17) these categories are marginalized. Kaluza (1963) was among the first who pointed out the problem of teaching the English article to speakers of Slavic in general. According to a study by Zergollern-Miletić (2008), most speakers of Croatian, a Slavic language, are not aware of the existence of the categories definiteness and indefiniteness in their language, and do not recognize markers of these categories in Croatian. According to the author, this lack of awareness increases the problem of acquiring the system of the English articles by Croatian learners. This view is in line with the notion of the importance of language awareness (Hawkins 1994).

The problem of acquiring the English articles by non-native speakers is considered to be one of the major problems in L2 English. A great deal of literature has been dedicated to that problem (Grannis, 1972; Huebner, 1983; Master, 1990; Tarone & Parrish, 1989; Trenkić, 2000; Humphrey, 2007; Zergollern-Miletić, 2008). It has been accepted by scholars that the lowest stage of language acquisition is marked by omission, whereas substitution errors appear at an advanced stage. Substitution primarily implies overusing the definite article. Some authors suggest (for example, Trenkić, 2002) that using 'the' is a 'safe or safer bet' than using the indefinite article.

The study

This article presents the analysis of the results of a study conducted among university students of English. The study focuses on the students' perception of their own problems in understanding and using the article system in English, and their ideas about enhancing their understanding and better use of it. It also tests their perception of the problems Croatian L2 English learners face in general.

The study is based on students' answers to the following questions:

- Do you think you have problems using the English articles? If yes, when, where and how exactly?
- What are generally, in your opinion, the most common difficulties in using articles encountered by Croatian learners of English? Give examples.
- What do you think could enhance your understanding and better use of the English articles?

The respondents were two groups of students. The first is a group of 30 fourth-year students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. They belong to the last "pre-Bologna" cohort (academic year 2007/2008), studying to be teachers of English or translators. According to their proficiency, those students were divided into three groups. This division was based on their third-year results on language exams, and two translations into English that they had done during their fourth year. Ten students were classified as high proficiency, ten as average, and ten as lower proficiency students. In the four years of studies of English these students had courses covering various fields of linguistics. In addition, in the first three years they had practical language courses, and in the last two they had translation courses. In Translation from English into Croatian, they gained some insight into the problem of definiteness and indefiniteness and the ways these two categories are expressed in English and Croatian.

The second group comprises 26 first-year students of English at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb (future primary school teachers of English – the cohort of 2009/2010). Before enrolling at the university, they had learned English for nine years on average. The questionnaire was given to them in mid-April, the second term of studies, in the course Communicational Grammar 2, five weeks after they started work on the articles. That work comprised a theoretical approach, as well as a number of exercises. According to their results in the course Communicational Grammar 1, the re-

sults in the course English Exercises 1, and the first continual assessment test in the second semester, they were divided into high proficiency (7), average (12) and lower proficiency (7) groups. In their first year they did not have any theoretical course in linguistics. They took a practical language course and a course in grammar in each term. In the latter, when the articles were addressed, the teacher tried to give them some insight into the problem of definiteness and indefiniteness in English and Croatian, and the way these two categories are expressed in the two languages.

Results and discussion

Answers by the fourth-year students

Answers to question number one

The respondents seem to have taken the task very seriously, and tried to give as detailed answers as possible. We can say that the high proficiency students gave rather thorough analyses of their problems, and three of them linked the problem of using the articles with the phenomenon of definiteness and indefiniteness, which is expressed in Croatian in a very limited number of contexts. The most frequent answer to question number one (11 occurrences) was abstract nouns.

The rest of the answers were: geographical names, the use of the zero article, the use of the indefinite article, the use of articles with countable as opposed to uncountable nouns, with plural nouns, with nouns pre-modified by adjectives, with of-phrases, with the generic use, and with exceptions to the rules.

One high proficiency student claimed that she had problems remembering rules, and that she relied too much on her intuition. The same person wrote down as her answer to question number 3 that she thought university students should not be cramming rules by heart. They should analyse texts, and teachers should explain certain usages of the articles to them. So we can state that this student's intuition might be the product of trying to remember the rules combined with analysing certain usages of the articles.

Another problem stated by students (all three groups) was overusing the definite article. Substitution errors such as this one, according to studies carried out to date, mark an advanced stage of the acquisition of the English articles. As stated in the Introduction, Trenkić (2002) suggests that using 'the' is a 'safe or safer bet' than using the indefinite article. This seems to be com-

patible with one of the respondents' answer (in the high proficiency group) to question number 2, and that is: "For non-native speakers articles are 'empty words' which they have to use to sound more like native speakers."

Only two students out of the thirty, one high proficiency and one average, claimed that for them articles were not really a problem.

One average proficiency student said that when the rules are clear, she has no problems. As examples for clear rules she mentions abstract nouns and of-phrases. Just like her peers who mentioned abstract nouns and of-phrases as problems, I also consider the usages of the articles with abstract nouns and of-phrases problematic. These usages depend very much on particular contexts, and sometimes on the extralinguistic context, which may not be completely clear (for example, He drove at *a* speed of 50 mph).

Answers to question number two

The fact that Croatian has no articles was mentioned as the major problem by five respondents (4 high proficiency and 1 average proficiency student). Four respondents (2 high proficiency and 2 average proficiency) suggested that non-native speakers of English often do not understand that the use of the articles depends on the context.

This statement is compatible with the previously mentioned suggestion by another respondent that for non-native speakers articles are 'empty words' which they use to sound more like native speakers. One average proficiency respondent said that non-native speakers use articles where they think they "sound okay."

The other problems mentioned by the respondents are as follows:

- there are too many exceptions to the rules
- the problem with the concept of countable and uncountable
- abstract nouns pre-modified by adjectives
- omission and substitution (three advanced proficiency students and two average proficiency students used these terms, and the others expressed themselves differently, e.g.: "non-native speakers tend not to use articles or use wrong articles in wrong places")
- the generic use
- geographical names

One respondent belonging to the group of average proficiency students mentioned that non-native speakers did not understand the difference between specificity and non-specificity. This answer is rather surprising, since the notion of specificity and non-specificity is somewhat neglected in teaching the articles, even to advanced learners. Some modern grammars for advanced learners include these categories (e.g., Eastwood, 2005; Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2002), which I find to be a very important improvement.

One high proficiency student mentioned that Croatian learners of English had problems acquiring the system of English articles because the notion of definiteness and indefiniteness is not as stressed in Croatian as it is in English.

The respondents' position is that the problems Croatian learners of English encounter using the English articles are basically the same as those they encounter themselves.

Answers to question number three

On the whole, lower proficiency students suggested either a mechanical way of learning articles ("Exercises, exercises!"), or exposure to the language (TV, reading, going to English-speaking countries), with a hope that better perception and better use of the articles will come eventually.

None of the high and average proficiency students mentioned grammar exercises or learning rules without mentioning how important it is to analyse various texts and explain the usage of the articles. I find this very important, because these respondents suggested that students should take an active role in the learning process. Some high proficiency and average students also mentioned that students should learn about various theoretical approaches to definiteness and definiteness. My position is that theoretical approach to the problem of definiteness and indefiniteness is necessary when advanced learners are concerned.

Answers by the first-year students

Answers to question number one

All students think they do have problems using articles. Only three high proficiency students provided explanations regarding these problems. The same high proficiency students and an average proficiency one mentioned

context as an important factor in choosing the right article. This answer shows at least some understanding of the interconnection between the articles and the context.

Answers to question number two

Nine students wrote down that they did not know the answer. Seven commented on the general misuse or lack of use of the articles, and two mentioned that people do not take context into consideration. Eight students wrote down that for speakers of languages without articles it is very hard to learn how to use the English articles. In these answers we cannot detect any difference in the quality of answers and understanding of the matter between the groups formed according to students' proficiency.

Answers to question number three

The answers were as follows: studying, doing exercises, reading in English and being exposed to English.

Just like with the answers to the previous question, it is impossible to find a discernible difference between the groups formed according to students' proficiency.

Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that fourth-year university students of English have better understanding of the problems they encounter acquiring the English articles than do first year students. These more advanced students have also shown better understanding of the problems faced by Croatian learners of English in general. High and average proficiency fourth-year students provided answers that reflect their theoretical knowledge of linguistics, and their awareness of the existence of definiteness and definiteness in Croatian. The group of lower proficiency fourth-year students have shown some uncertainties regarding the problem of acquiring English articles. They also suggest that learning rules and doing exercises is the best way of acquiring the system of the English articles. Unlike them, the high and average proficiency students suggest students' active and analytical approach to learning.

We may conclude that, when university students of English are concerned, there is a correlation between theoretical linguistic knowledge and linguistic proficiency.

The first-year students participating in the study have shown a general lack of theoretical linguistic background, and, consequently, of analytical approach to the problem of acquiring the English articles. Still, three high proficiency students gave explanations regarding these problems. The same high proficiency students and an average proficiency one mentioned context as an important factor in choosing the right article. This answer shows some understanding of the interconnection between articles and context, which reflects some analytical thinking.

To avoid constant frustration by the English articles, I believe that Croatian university students should acquire good theoretical knowledge about definiteness and indefiniteness, not only as grammatical categories, but primarily as semantic and pragmatic categories. They should become aware of the fact that definiteness and indefiniteness do exist in Croatian, but are expressed in a limited number of cases.

Only when they have understood definiteness and indefiniteness as pragmatic and semantic categories, will they, in my view, be able to understand the meaning and the use of the English articles. My intention is to conduct a similar study with the students who are currently in their first year of studies in four years' time, when they are fifth-year students. They will be given the same questionnaire, and some exercises testing their knowledge of the articles. I also plan to conduct an interview. I intend to apply the same procedure to the first-year cohort of 2010/ 2011.

My expectations are that in their final year the students will both show better use of the articles and better theoretical knowledge about the problems of their acquisition. I also expect that particular students' results in the practical part will directly correspond to the quality of their answers to the questionnaire.

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English Language Proficiency and the Prediction of Academic Success of First-Year Students of English

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Introduction

This paper arises from my intent to explore English language proficiency as an indicator of future academic performance of first-year English majors at a Hungarian university. This issue is discussed from a practical point of view of teaching a changing and diverse student population and the need to respond to their academic success and failure. I also aim to overview the key issues from a more theoretical aspect, including educational policy planning, curriculum design, language testing, academic assessment and retention in higher education. I begin by identifying changes in the Hungarian higher education system that had a direct impact on the student population that are the focus of this paper, mainly English majors, and by identifying and discussing the academic literacy demands of the study program they go through. Then I discuss the complex notion of academic retention in higher education and the situation at the University of Szeged. From here I move to analyze data gained from two English language tests taken at the beginning of the first semester and the grades students received at the end of the same semester.

Academic requirements: An example of English majors in Szeged

The Hungarian education system has been characterized by constant changes in terms of degree programs, prerequisites, number of students accepted, and funding. This is not a unique Hungarian situation, but rather reflects European and world-wide tendencies (Coleman, 2006). What is, however, very much characteristic to Hungary is the lack of a systematic assessment of the impact that the changes have or would have on the higher education institutes, the students and the job market. When taking a closer look at the Faculties of Arts at major Hungarian universities, we see, for example, that the recent turn to the Bologna system and the change in the entrance requirements, combined with the drop in funding, have had a dramatic effect on both smaller and larger institutions. Most of them are struggling for survival, and, therefore, are forced to accept even the less prepared students. Moreover, college-level and university-level degrees have been merged into 3+2-year bachelor and master degree programs. From this comes that all students in a chosen field of studies enter the same BA program, regardless of their level of preparation or intention to continue their studies in a specific MA program or not.

Foreign language BA programs are now suffering the consequences of the above mentioned changes. They can be considered bilingual programs in which a large proportion of the students' academic life is conducted in or spent with the target language. A lack in the readiness for tertiary education of incoming student populations affects all programs, but those which are conducted in a foreign language suffer the most. To illustrate, starting from the first semester, English majors at the University of Szeged take the majority of their courses in English, therefore, are required to follow lectures and seminar discussions, be active participants in classes, do readings and other homework tasks mainly in English. It seems plausible to assume that, at least in some areas of their studies, less prepared students face disadvantages. If we accept the premise that English majors need to use the L2 on a daily basis, those who are not at an advanced proficiency level are behind their peers. One of the major challenges of the English studies program is that proficiency practice in general and academic English is offered parallel with the content classes in which students should already understand their instructors and peers, and use English. It comes as no surprise then that those who have no experience with target language medium education (and the majority do not) and have difficulty navigating through different forms of oral and written texts in English, feel lost already in the first weeks of their studies.

The results of previous studies conducted among first-year English majors, however, suggest that many start their undergraduate studies without a vision or understanding of the structure and demands of the chosen degree program (Doró, 2009c; 2010). They tend to overestimate their level of preparedness, even though many of them feel they have problems with the language and with the course requirements. English majors in Hungary have reported similar problems as international and immigrant students studying in English-speaking courtiers, where the medium of instruction and the course content are often foreign to them (Curry, 2004; Leki, 2007; Ramsay, Barker & Jones, 1999; Rosenthal, 2000). To illustrate the higher degree of challenge that academically and linguistically less prepared students face, Ramsay Barker and Jones (1999) explored the experiences of first-year international and local students at an Australian university. Their study found that non-local students had problems following lecturers and tutors, the main reason being the lack of vocabulary knowledge and the speed of the instructors' speech. These factors have also been reported by Hungarian students (Doró, 2009a; 2009b, 2010; Lehmann, 2006).

It is certainly true that a large proportion of incoming students lack the academic preparation required to be active participants of the academic discourse community (Doró, 2009b; 2009c; 2010). I concluded these studies by claiming that there is an immediate need for awareness raising among students about the requirements of the program and their own responsibility and role in success or failure. For this purpose good assessment tools and methods are to be used that provide instructors and students with feedback on how well each student is progressing.

Measures of academic preparedness and academic performance

Entrance exams have been replaced by a higher level school leaving examination that students need to take if they wish to continue their studies at a tertiary level. To illustrate, future English majors must take a higher level exam in English. These exams, however, have proven to be inadequate in screening the students in terms of readiness for English studies. First, to get access to higher education, it is enough to show a medium or low level language performance at this exam, which language proficiency then does not equal to a strong B2 C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference. Second, students do not meet future instructors, and therefore are not asked

on content knowledge, interests or motivation equally important for future success. They often start their studies thinking that the mere fact of having been good students in secondary school and having passed this language exam guarantees them good grades at the university or, if not, they will have plenty of time to improve. What they do not take into consideration is the fact that the English program is neither a general language course nor a slow-pace language learning program that many of them used to have at the secondary school.

In lack of a common assessment tool that would compare students' language performance to that of other students or to previous student groups, other measures had to be found. At the University of Szeged first-year students undergo a language screening process in the first weeks. This is done to receive information on how students perform as a group compared to previous years and to what extent students' preparedness is similar to that of their peers.

As both advanced language proficiency and good vocabulary knowledge have been found to be key elements of engagement in foreign-language medium studies, two tests are administered: the Oxford placement test, use of English part (OPT) and the vocabulary levels test (VLT). The first requires students to read short texts in which each line contains a multiple choice grammar element. The second one is a test of receptive vocabulary size that measures students' knowledge at five different levels of difficulty, including academic vocabulary often met in academic texts. Both tests are done in a pen-and-paper format, independent of classroom work and are administered in large groups. For both tests students receive a maximum of 30 minutes, which has been found to be sufficient for most. Non-completion is also an indicator of students' lack of preparedness. Both tests have been used for years, so data is available for comparison purposes. Every year the results are made public for students, with tests scores discussed in class or with individual instructors upon request. Although most of these test data have remained for internal use only, they have proven to be good forms of feedback for students and instructors.

Other types of measurement tools of language and, in general, academic performance, are course grades. We need to take into consideration, however, that the grading system may change from course to course or instructor to instructor. There could be many reasons why a student receives a failing grade, including non-attendance, insufficient course work, problems with preparedness, and problems with the instructor. Nevertheless, it is informative whether a student is given all excellent grades, has sufficient grades or fails all courses.

For the purpose of this study, the results of the OPT and the VLT of an incoming undergraduate group and their first-year seminar grades will be explored.

Retention rates at universities

Student retention has been a major assessment factor in many higher education institutes throughout the word, however, with a considerable amount of variability and inconsistence in the use of terminology related to the student drop-out phenomenon (Dreaver, 2003). There is a large body of literature on student attrition in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, just to mention some of the English-speaking countries. These countries have long realized that student retention is both an economic and an educational factor, and should be considered a form of outcome measure of a program or university similarly to enrolment numbers, the academic qualifications of instructors and research achievements.

In Hungarian higher education institutes much less attention has been given to the complex nature of the student attrition issue. At least this is the case at institutional levels. Nevertheless, on a daily basis, faculty members face the challenge that comes with the under-preparedness, the lacking motivation and the drop-in and drop-out patters of some students. There is often pressure from above to keep in the program the non-fitting students for the economic and job survival of departments, often by lowering the requirements, and, therefore, the academic standards. Even where this is not the case, instructors need to adjust the syllabi and offer individual counseling to students in order to help them survive. This can best be done if attrition rates, student performances and staff experiences are explored. Universities and specific programs need to determine the nature of their own students' performance and the extent of their own attrition problem, so that they can design retention programs for specific student populations. The present paper emerges from this need of understanding what language skills students come with, and how they perform academically in the first semester.

Attrition can often have interrelated causes. These can include personal factors, lack of support, financial issues, problems with integration into the new social and academic communities, non-matching expectations and requirements, inadequate pre-course information, lack of guidance, and various types of academic difficulties (Crosling, Thomas & Heagneyto, 2007). Hungarian students often have vague expectations about the programs they apply for, the requirement or their own level of preparedness (Doró, 2009c; Édes,

2008). Of course not all the above mentioned factors are visible to or under the control of the university. Some of the attrition literature differentiates between various types of attrition recognizing the fact that there could be several reasons and consequences of the drop-out phenomenon. Thompson (2005) and Polinsky (2003), for instance, talks about positive and negative attrition, taking into account whether the dropouts have completed personal goals or not. Sheldon (1982, cited in Dempsey 2009, p. 58) differentiates between three categories of attrition, namely positive, neutral and negative attrition. In his study those students fell in the positive attrition group who left college to transfer to another one or who had achieved their short-term academic and personal goals. Students in the neutral category had problems with scheduling and not with the academic programs or requirements. These students neither completed the degree program in question nor achieved personal goals. Those in the negative attrition group, however, showed lack of preparedness or motivation. Sheldon rightly claims that only students in the last group could be directly helped by the institution.

In order to pinpoint risk groups who are more prone to failure and drop-out, it is, therefore, of crucial importance to know how much students are prepared and motivated for their studies. Research has identified the first year, and within this time the first few weeks, as being the most critical period for students to withdraw from or slow down with their studies in higher education (see, e.g., Cuseo 2003, Moxey et al., 2001). Students should be given warning signs right from the beginning if major academic performance problems are seen by the instructors. However, course work does not always give early enough warning for students, as many are unwilling to admit that they are unlikely to meet the requirements (see Doró, 2009c). End-of-semester grades often come too late for future dropouts as they have little time left of the first year to start working extra hard and compensate for their failure. Test scores at the beginning of the first semester could be better used to give an early warning sign to students and instructors.

A large body of literature has evaluated the predictive nature of specific test scores, including language exams and entrance exams in various fields of studies (Yen & Kuzma, 2009; Al-Musari & Al-Ansari, 1999; Sandow, Jones, Peek, Courts & Watson, 2002). These studies have shown different degrees of prediction for the different measurement tools. These could be explained by the test choice, the way academic success is understood and the fact that academic success or failure may have a number of interrelated causes.

Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what degree the Oxford Placement Test and the Vocabulary Levels Test can predict academic success of first-year undergraduate English majors at the University of Szeged. Success was understood as completing all courses with a passing grade. Passing grades are often the only short-term goals of students and are also prerequisites for further studies (see Newman, 2001). Within this broad aim, the first purpose was to explore the relationship between beginning-of-the-semester language test scores and the number of failed courses. The second purpose was to investigate whether it was possible to identify a threshold level for test scores in order to determine which students can be considered members of a risk group and given early warning.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. Do early language test results demonstrate a strong correlation with (un)successful academic performance?
2. Do failing students have significantly lower test results in September than successful students?
3. To what extent can test results predict early academic success or failure?
4. Is it possible to find cut-off scores in order to identify risk groups?

Research methods

The study population consisted of 115 first-year incoming students enrolled in the English studies program at the University of Szeged. Part-time students, English minors and remedial students with failed courses in their records were excluded as they had slightly different academic schedules, fewer courses and would have probably shown different results. Students' academic progress was monitored through departmental records and the electronic system of the university. For each student, scores of the OPT and the VLT were retrieved, indicating 96 students who took the OPT and 108 who took the VLT in September 2009. Those who did not take the tests in early September were excluded from the analysis. Class performance was limited to failure or non-failure regardless of the type of passing grade students received at the end of the first semester. This means that students with a 1 as a final grade failed the

course in question and were treated as non-successful, whereas those with a 2, 3, 4 or 5 passed the course and were treated as successful.

In terms of academic performance, the language seminar grades of the participating students were monitored. Each student took an average of three language seminars in the first semester, one of them being a mandatory introductory course in English grammar, more precisely sentence and phrase structures with both theoretical and practical orientation. The other two seminars were students' choices from communication skills, reading skill, writing skills and use of English. All these seminars have the purpose of helping students in improving their general and academic English and in preparing them for the end-of-the-year comprehensive exam. Seminar grades were chosen over lecture grades, as they provide better assessment of students' progress. Seminars require them to do continuous work, and the final grade is given based on tests, homework assignments and classroom participation. Lectures, on contrary, are given in large groups and assessment is based on one written exam. The specific reasons for failing the classes were not investigated. These could range from insufficient class work to attendance problems.

The two tests administered in September were chosen for a number of reasons. First: because they had been used for years with similar student populations at this university and had proven to work well. The OPT had been designed and piloted to be used with large groups of non-English speaking students as a placement test. It consists of a hundred multiple-choice grammar questions embedded in sentences, some of which are part of longer texts, others are single sentences. It is also easy to administer and score, therefore, it is time and cost efficient (for validity issues, see Harrison, 1994; Wistner Sakai & Abe, 2009).

The VLT is considered one of the best and most widely used tests of receptive vocabulary size (Schmitt, 2010, pp. 197 198). This test had been found to give a good profile of students' receptive vocabulary for diagnostic, placement or achievement purposes. It gives scores on five different bands, including the academic vocabulary. For the pen-and-paper version of the two tests the students received a maximum of 30 minutes each.

Group means and standard deviations for both tests were calculated. The predictive validity of the test scores was expressed as a bivariate correlation coefficient of test scores and class grades. Predictive validity refers to the efficiency of placement test scores in forecasting any measure of academic performance. The higher the correlation coefficient, the more confident we can be that the placement test is a valid predictor of academic success. Statistical analyses were done using SPSS 11.0.

Results and discussion

1. Do these test results demonstrate a strong correlation with (un)successful academic performance?

The mean for the 96 students who took the OPT is 72.43 (SD=11.16) with the lowest score being 41 and the highest 96. The mean for the 108 students who took the VLT is 72.69 (SD=14.68), scores ranging between 34 and 97. The bivariate correlation coefficients of the two tests with course failure are of high magnitude ($p<0.01$). The OPT with the seminar grades shows $r=-0.36$, whereas the VLT has $r=-0.55$. This means that the higher the scores obtained on the test indicate, the less likelihood there is that students fail their seminars. The VLT seems to have a stronger predictive nature in this respect than the OPT.

2. Do failing students have significantly lower test results in September than successful students?

Students who failed at least one seminar in the first semester had a group mean of 68.22 on the OPT (n=45, SD=10.91) and a group mean of 64.37 on the VLT (n=51, SD=13.72). The same analyses done for non-failing students indicate a mean of 76.14 on the OPT (n=51, SD=10.09) and 80.12 on the VLT (n=57, SD=11.41). Independent samples t-tests show significant difference between the mean scores of failing and non-failing students ($p<0.01$). It could be argued that an approximately 16 or 18 mean point difference is not very high, therefore something else other than language proficiency should also have a role in student failure. This will be further discussed when treating research question number three.

3. To what extent can test results predict early academic success or failure?

Ordinary least regression models were used to consider the effect of test scores on class grades. VLT scores explained more of the variation in the number of failed seminars than the OPT scores ($r^2=.28$ and .12, respectively). This is moderate to low prediction. The F-statistic was significant in each instance (F=42.39 and 13.64, respectively). Results suggest that test scores accounted for around one-third and one-sixth of the variation in the seminar grades, respectively. This indicates that even though language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge in particular are not the only indicators of or prerequisite for good achievement in higher education, they can be considered as leading aspects. In other words, excellent language proficiency in itself does not guarantee success, as many other factors such as low motivation, lack of

commitment, wrong academic choice, social or economic problems can push students to leave the program or fall behind with their studies. Nevertheless, good motivation, commitment and support from the outside world cannot compensate enough for the above factors if a student lacks the language proficiency skills that are a major prerequisite for survival in a bilingual education program.

4. Is it possible to find cut-off scores in order to identify risk groups?

Test results show variability within groups of failing and non-failing students. The test scores in themselves can only be interpreted as signs of possible success or failure. Based on the test data we can state that lower scores predict more likelihood of academic failure. Although high scores are no guarantee for academic success and students with lower scores can still work hard and achieve passing grades, very low scores require students extra dedication on the students' part or indicate that they are fit to drop out early.

Nevertheless, a 70% cut-off point can be suggested for both tests as a threshold below which test takers can expect to face much more difficulty in doing coursework and be at great risk of failure in the first semester, and, most probably, in their entire course of studies. When comparing the academic performance of students who scored above 70% with those who did not, we find statistically significant differences.

Conclusion

While the findings of this study confirm the significant connection between early test scores and academic performance, there are other factors that could be used to predict students' academic success, such as the individual's adaptability to a new academic environment, study demands, speed of acculturation and their personal goals and ambition. However, while language proficiency can be quickly checked at entrance, the other factors are usually out of the control of the institution. Language proficiency was found to be a partial predicting factor in and a prerequisite for undergraduate studies conducted mainly in English as a foreign language.

It would be useful for any higher education institution to be able to pinpoint at the beginning which students are more likely to fail courses, drop out or withdraw from their studies. Although high test scores should not be viewed as guarantee for successful academic career, lower test scores should be indicators to both students and instructors that a student is likely to have

more difficulty in following courses. An early feedback given to students is hoped to serve as a form of encouragement or warning to students who should reflect on their readiness for their chosen field of studies and reaffirm their commitment to achieve good results.

The observation that language proficiency plays a crucial role in the achievement in foreign language medium educational settings is not a new one. However, this paper has grounded this observation in data, and I hope that it will inspire participants of similar programs to reflect on their own situation. A follow-up on students' overall academic performance should be carried out to see the predictive degree of the two tests concerning student achieve over time. Moreover, it was beyond the scope of this paper to investigate other factors that could influence students' success or failure in classes, but future research is recommended to identify other predictive factors that may still be under the control of the university and could be modified or influenced by instructors and curriculum designers.

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The Construct of Intercultural Communication in University Syllabi

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Introduction

Effective communication is vital, and the need for it has never been more emphasized than these days when people from different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact in the course of their daily lives. Although it is of greater importance for European citizens, not only the rapid expansion of the European Union needs to be mentioned here, but the relative liberalization of the People's Republic of China also opened up ways for people from entirely different cultures to cooperate. Nonetheless, the concept of intercultural communication (IC) is not new at all: it has been detectable throughout human history ever since people realized the necessity of building relations with one another.

In present days, however, the amplified interest in more successful communication across cultures has led to the mushrooming of programmes that offer theoretical and practical knowledge on this subject. The field rapidly entered academia as well and became center of attention. Due to the relatively novice nature of this concept it is rather difficult to define what actually is taking shape under this umbrella term.

This paper presents the findings of an empirical study that attempts to get an insight into how intercultural communication as a construct is being established in different countries with a special focus on Hungary.

Theoretical background

This section serves to give a brief theoretical background to IC, first focusing on how IC is defined and what subfields it comprises, then elaborating on a key concept within IC, namely intercultural communication competence (ICC). As the study examined university syllabi, the third section provides an overview of theory concerning syllabus-research.

Theorizing IC

Bakic-Miric gives a broad working definition of intercultural communication as 'a multi disciplinary academic field of research and study that seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world by creating a cultural synergy' (2008). Theoretically, the field encompasses five subfields dealing with (1) effective outcomes, (2) accommodation or adaptation, (3) identity negotiation (4) communication networks, and (5) acculturation or adjustment (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 164).

Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida and Ogawa describe the differentiation between objectivist and subjectivist approaches to theory within the field of IC, with objectivists 'viewing the real word external to individuals, look[ing] for regularities in behavior and see[ing] communication as "determined" by situations and environments' (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida & Ogawa, 2005, p. 4). In contrast, subjectivists 'contend that there is no "real world" external to individuals, try to understand the individual communicators' perspective and view communication as a function of "free will"' (p. 4). However, the authors also mention that the vast majority of theories within the field of IC are objectivistic in nature and that 'there is a need for more subjectivistic theorizing and for integrating subjectivistic and objectivistic theories' (p. 25).

As Barnett and Lee note, previously scholars have limited the study of intercultural communication to individual level (2003, p. 260), but today it is acknowledged that IC works on different levels involving not only individuals but groups. Since culture is a socially acquired and shared knowledge it is more reasonable to view IC as the 'exchange of symbolic information between well-defined groups with significantly different cultures' (2003, p. 264).

Lin Ma points out that the different definitions of IC do not make evident what the concept actually denotes: although 'the expression 'intercultural communication' frequently appears in a wide range of scholarly writings, its meaning remains either vacuous or inscrutable' (2004). She also

adds that definitions targeting to describe this construct are mostly circular and offer no additional meaning apart from what the name implies, arguing that most definitions are based on this equivalence: 'intercultural communication' = communication between cultures (2004).

Practical considerations: Intercultural communicative competence

A fundamental concept in IC is intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Using Byram's definition, ICC is 'a person's ability to relate to and communicate with people who speak different language and live in a different cultural context' (1997, p. 1).

Byram argues that apart from requiring linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence, ICC is based on certain attitudes, knowledge and skills. These attitudes include curiosity, openness and unjudgemental view of other cultures compared to one's own. The knowledge essential to ICC is 'of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction' (1997, p. 51). The skills listed by Byram include skills of interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction as well as critical cultural awareness/political education (1997, pp. 51-54).

ICC can be viewed as a term coined from two: intercultural competence, and communicative competence. In linguistics, this latter one is of earlier origin: in 1966 American sociolinguist Dell Hymes challenged Chomsky's abstract notion of linguistic competence, arguing that 'such a theory of competence posits ideal objects in an abstraction from sociocultural features that might enter into their description' (Hymes, 2001, p. 55). Thus, according to Hymes, in order to understand language acquisition, attention must be paid to the way in which the ability to use language appropriately is acquired.

Intercultural competence, on the other hand, comprises 'knowledge of one, or, preferably, more cultures and social identities and has the capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly' (Byram & Flemming, 1998, p. 9). According to Anderson (no date), intercultural competence has a special role in foreign language teaching. As he puts it, for 'foreign language educators *intercultural competence* has given an essential additional pedagogic goal that offers a solution to the miscommunication that learners face in intercultural encounters' (p. 1). Kramsch differentiates between these two competences claiming that 'while communicative competence is characterized by the negotiation of intended meanings in authentic contexts of language use, intercultural competence has

to do with far less negotiable discourse worlds' (2010, p. 1). The 'discourse worlds' Kramsch mentions are based on the 'circulation of values and identities across cultures, the inversions, even inventions of meaning, often hidden behind a common illusion of effective communication' (Kramsch, Levy & Zarate, 2008, p. 15).

Syllabi

One way of better understanding what is actually covered by 'intercultural communication', this 'buzz word' (Bakic-Miric, 2003), is having a look at academia: examining university syllabi might help us to get closer to this construct.

At this point the question of why analyzing syllabi may arise. Bawarshi claims that the syllabus – apart from the assignment prompts and students essays – is the most obvious example of academic genres, which 'constitute[s] typified and situated topoi within which students and teacher recognize and enact their situated practices, relations, and subjectivities' (2003, p. 119). According to Afros and Schryer, syllabi perform multiple functions in academia, as they mediate

> the interaction both between students and instructors and between instructors and their colleagues. Therefore, the syllabus has to be balanced so that it can appeal to students, motivate and structure their learning, while, at the same time, can convince (senior) colleagues and external evaluators of the instructor's professionalism and the course quality. (2009, p. 25)

As Alvstad and Castro point out, syllabi 'have a strong influence on how both students and teachers conceive of the learning goals of the courses in which they are engaged' (2009, p. 172). Apart from this, these documents show 'deep-rooted views of the subject(s) they aim to illuminate' (2009, p. 172).

In order to provide structural and content analysis a common framework was needed on the basis of which diverse syllabi may be compared and contrasted. Grunert introduced seventeen syllabus subsection labels as recommended components of the syllabus (1997, cited in Afros & Schryers, 2009, pp. 226-227). In the course of the analysis I relied on his terminology when identifying and comparing the subcomponents.

Background to study

This study aims to map, and thus better understand the multi-faced construct developing in academia under the term 'intercultural communication'. To accomplish this aim, ten university syllabi were collected and these documents form the basis of analysis.

Method

This exploratory study employs a descriptive analytical framework for scrutinizing the contents of collected syllabi. As part of the study, both theoretical and practical/formal factors are taken into consideration. The study follows the qualitative research paradigm as it gives detailed examples to underline assumptions, and tries to gain an in-depth understanding (Duff, 2007) of the phenomenon: what courses cover as their content.

Research questions

In this study I aim to find answers to the following research questions:

1: What is the construct of IC as defined in university syllabi?
2: In what ways do the syllabi under study differ from one another?

Data collection and procedures

Data collection took place in October, 2009. First, instructors at Hungarian institutions teaching a course on ICC were identified. This was done by studying university curricula on the Internet using a search engine, and by relying on personal contacts. Then, teachers of courses on ICC were asked to send their ICC syllabi as email attachments. As a result seven syllabi were collected: S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and S7.

Second, after a careful internet search on courses of prominent European universities, ten instructors teaching ICC were identified. Then they were asked to attach their syllabi and send them via email. This step was less fruitful than the first: although ten emails were sent, five instructors were willing to

help, but only two enclosed their documents on time. Thus, I received a syllabus from Germany (S8) and one from Sweden (S9). Through personal contact I also got hold of a syllabus from China (S10).

Table 1 provides information on the countries and languages of the collected syllabi, and presents the title of the courses.

Table 1: Countries, titles and languages of the ten syllabi

Code	Title of the course	Country	Language
S1	S1 Kultúrák-közi kommunikáció [Intercultural Communication]	Hungary	Hungarian
S2	S2 Interkulturális kommunikáció [Intercultural Communication]	Hungary	Hungarian
S3	S3 Intercultural Communication	Hungary	English
S4	S4 Intercultural Communication 1	Hungary	English
S5	S5 Introduction to Intercultural Communication	Hungary	English
S6	S6 Introduction to Intercultural Communication	Hungary	English
S7	S7 Introduction to Intercultural Communication	Hungary	English
S8	S8 Intercultural Communication : Cultural Narratives in Europe and Beyond	Germany	English
S9	S9 Estudios culturales y communicación intercultural [Cultural Studies and ICC]	Sweden	Spanish
S10	S10 Intercultural Communication	China	English

Findings

This section presents findings of quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, similarities and differences between certain formal characteristics of the syllabi are discussed. Then a qualitative content analysis is presented in order to find out how university syllabi define the construct of IC.

Structural analysis of the syllabi

There is no consistency in the length of the documents, as they vary between 1-7 pages. The length of the syllabi depends on how detailed description of the course they present. I use the terminology recommended by Grunert (1997 cited in Afros & Schryers, 2009, pp. 226-227) introduced in the Theoretical Background part to refer to the different syllabus subsections. These are: (1) title , (2) table of contents, (3) instructor information, (4) letter to the students, (5) purpose of the course, (6) course description, (7) course and unit objectives, (8) resources, (9) readings, (10) course calendar, (11) course requirements, (12) evaluation, (13) grading procedures, (14) instructions on how to use the syllabus and on (15) how to study for the course, (16) content information, and (17) learning tools.

Table 2 provides an overview of which of these sections the ten syllabi contain. The different subconstituents are referred to by their respective numbers, with asterisks indicating whether the syllabus contains them. The table shows that none of the ten syllabi comprises all the seventeen sections identified by Grunert (1997). Two syllabi, S1 and S9 are the most detailed in that they include the most subconstituents, ten. Two other syllabi, S4 and S8, only comprise four parts, indicating that they are less detailed and informative than the others. However, S8 has a unique feature: apart from contact information on the instructor, his photograph is also presented.

All syllabi include information on the title of the course and the instructor, eight present readings and nine include a course description; seven syllabi introduce details of evaluation, and six take account of course requirements. Syllabi also differ in the way they sequence the constituents and in how detailed information they present under the subheadings.

Table 2: Subconstituents of the syllabi

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
S1	*		*			*	*		*	*	*	*			*		*
S2	*		*		*	*	*		*		*	*					
S3	*		*		*	*			*	*		*	*				
S4	*		*			*			*								
S5	*		*						*	*		*					
S6	*		*			*			*	*	*						
S7	*		*		*	*			*	*	*	*	*				
S8	*		*			*						*					
S9	*		*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*			*		
S10	*		*		*	*				*	*		*				

None of the syllabi comprise a table of contents, letter to the students or mention resources, instructions on how to use the syllabus or content information.

Qualitative content analysis

As I intend to answer the question what is actually taught under the title intercultural communication, I will center the discussion on two major subconstituents: (1) course description/the aims of the course and (2) readings.

Course descriptions and aims of the courses

Apart from two rather sketch-like documents, all syllabi include a course description section, in three cases partly covering the aims of the courses as well. The following two sections present findings related to the content of the course, the first focusing on the aims of the courses as set by the syllabi, the second elaborating on thematic differences.

General aims

From the description of the courses it is evident that (1) four of them intend to give students both theoretical and practical knowledge, whereas others exclusively focus on either the (2) practical (two syllabi) or the (3) theoretical (two syllabi). The examples apparently show that the type of knowledge these courses intend to transfer differ from one another to a great extent. The following examples illustrate how courses aim at incorporating theoretical and practical considerations:

> A tárgy célja, hogy a kultúrák közötti különbözőségeket, illetve e kulturális eltérésekből fakadó félreértések és konfliktusok megismerését, megértését és kezelését segítő elméleti és módszertani eszközöket nyújtson. [The aim of the course is to provide both theoretical and methodological means facilitating the understanding and handling of intercultural differences, misunderstandings and conflicts that spring from these differences.] (S1)

> By investigating its forms, conditions and strategies, the course explores the field of intercultural communication as well as its spoken and written manifestations.… Your individual and team projects will complement the theoretical background. (S3)

S1 explicitly states that it aims at providing students both theoretical and methodological knowledge in order to better understand intercultural differences that may lead to communication breakdown. S3 is less explicit, as it primarily intends to investigate and explore the field of IC; however, students are expected to carry out individual and team projects that help them effectuate the theoretical background.

Two syllabi (S2 and S10) target to familiarize students with intercultural situations and help them to develop strategies and skills enabling them to function as intercultural individuals:

> A tantárgy oktatása során a hallgatók gyakorolják azokat a legfontosabb szempontrendszerket, amelyek mentén a kulturális különbségek értékelhetők. Olyan általános készségeket sajátítanak el, amelyek megfelelően alkalmazhatók bármilyen interkulturális szituációban. [While studying the subjects students practice the most important viewpoints along which cultural

> differences can be appreciated. Students will acquire general skills that can be appropriately applied in any intercultural situation.] (S2)

> Intercultural Communication aims to develop students' intercultural communication capability through teaching them basic concepts and theories with typical cases.... It tries to enhance students intercultural awareness and help them develop a global psychology with equality, respect, tolerance and objectiveness and global thinking patterns and behavior. (S10)

Terminology seems to be important in the case of these two syllabi: S2 uses the term 'skill' when speaking about what students need to acquire in order to be able to handle intercultural situations. S10, on the other hand, speaks about 'intercultural communication capability' that students will develop as a result of the course. I believe both syllabi in fact intend to teach students what Byram calls 'intercultural communication competence'. In the case of S10 it is rather evident, as competence and capability can be used synonymously (Oxford Paperback Thesaurus, p. 151), nonetheless, 'general skills' mentioned in S2 echo Byram's 'skills' in his model of ICC (1997, pp. 51-54). It is not evident why neither of the syllabi fails to use the accepted terminology regarding ICC.

Two of the courses are exclusively theoretical in nature and target to familiarize students with basic concepts of different academic fields contributing to the development of IC.

> The aim of the course is to define the concepts of language, culture and communication and discuss how they are related. (S7)

> The aim of the course is to provide a theoretical background to Intercultural Communication. (S10)

These two, rather short extracts illustrate that these courses do not teach practical intercultural knowledge to students, instead, they aim at providing theoretical background and to expand their knowledge about basic concepts such as language, culture and communication, and their interrelatedness.

Thematic differences

Thematically, the syllabi turned out to center around seven main concepts, to a different extent, though. Demonstrating what the documents have in common and at the same time presenting how they differ in their understandings of these issues, here I provide an overview of the general concepts and some examples of thematic points listed in the syllabi. These include: (1) culture, (2) identity, (3) representation, (4) social interactions, (5) language(s), (6) communication, (7) globalization. These concepts can be linked to Gudykunst's categorization (2003) mentioned afore, emphasizing that IC in academia tends to center around the academic fields of Cultural Studies, Communication Theory and Linguistics. The following examples show that syllabi significantly vary in their considerations of the above mentioned concepts.

Culture

- Különféle kultúrák.... Alternatív, szub- és ellenkultúrák [Different cultures. Alternative, sub- and counter-cultures]. (S2)
- Comparing cultural values.... Cultural phenomena and factors in IC (S10)
- Cultura e identidad, algunos conceptos teoricós [Culture and identity, general theoretical concepts]. (S9)
- A kultúrákról, a kulturális sokszínűségről, a kultúrák fejlődéséről.... Hogyan nézzünk a kultúrára? [About cultures, cultural diversity and the development of cultures.... How to view culture?] (S1)

Culture is the most frequently mentioned concept in the syllabi. Apart from the fact that all syllabi mention diversity and differences of cultures and the problems arising from these differences, some syllabi are more specific in determining what cultural aspects instructors intend to emphasize in the course. S2 sheds light to the importance of 'intracultural-intercultural' differences, pointing out existing conflicts between alternative- sub- and counter-cultures within the 'same culture'. S10 focuses more on the comparison of cultures, their values and different cultural factors. General theoretical concepts of culture and identity are highlighted by S9 suggesting that this course has a broader spectrum than the previously mentioned two. The same generality can be observed in the case of S1 which intends to give information on cultures and cultural diversity, and also poses a rhetorical question on how to view culture generally.

Identity

- Kik vagyunk mi? Hol lakik a magyarok istene? [Who are we? Where does the God of Hungarians live?] (S1)
- Hungary and Hungarian people in cross-cultural perspective.... Hungarian pessimism. (S4)
- Cultura e identidad sueca.... Cultura e identidad hispanica. [Swedish culture and identity.... Hispanic culture and identity]. (S9)
- Multiculturalism and multiple identities' (S8)
- Identity: how people construct their own.... Cultural identity and multiplicity. (S7)

In the syllabi identity is represented in a diverse sense: S7 focuses on the general concept of identity and identity constructions; S1, S4 and S9 are more specific in discussing national or ethnic identities, whereas S8 concentrate on gender- or cultural identity and multiple identities.

Representation

- A Másik reprezentálása [The representation of the Other](S1)
- Foreigners about Hungarians and vice versa (S4)
- Supra-national, national, regional and local representations (S8)
- Representation how society constructs the foreign Other (S7)

Six syllabi are concerned with representation: S1 and S7 are concerned with the construction and representation of the cultural 'other', S4 to some extent also touches upon how a society views foreigners, however, it also gives an insight on how the particular society is represented by others. Different dimensions of representation are emphasized in S8 highlighting the possible intra-cultural differences regarding representation.

Social interactions

- Interacting with other people (S3)
- Interacting with other individuals (S8)
- Interactions with the Other (S10)

Social interactions as focus of study are mentioned in eight syllabi, but none of these do further specify what is actually meant by this thematic unit. Six syllabi use the word 'other' referring to the second party of interaction, however, apart from one case this word appears in collocations like 'other people' and 'other individuals'. Only S10 mentions 'the Other' capitalized, implying that the cultural 'Other' is involved in the interaction.

Languages

- The linguistic competence. … Language in use (S8)
- Egy kis nyelvészet.… Nyelvében él a nemzet [A little linguistics.… The nation lives within its language.] (S1)
- Linguistic meaning and pragmatic meaning: A cross-cultural approach (S6)
- Successful oral communication in L1&L2: It's more than just language. (S3)
- Culturally bounded features of the Hungarian language (S4)

The understanding and representation of language is different in the syllabi: some courses aim at giving a general overview of linguistic trends (S1), others are more specialized and focus on pragmatics (S6, S8), and three syllabi discuss language and communication simultaneously (S3, S2, S7). Apart from emphasizing the geographical aspects of the 'communication landscape' S8 discusses the linguistic perspective in detail, aiming to familiarize students with the productive, semi-productive and non-productive elements of the language system as well as with speech acts, scripts and narratives. A unique feature of S4 is that it focuses on characteristics of the Hungarian language, although it is not the language of instruction but the mother tongue of the participants.

Communication

- Verbal and non-verbal communication (S10)
- A kommunikáció gyakorlata [the practice of communication] (S1)
- Conversation habits: North America and Hungary compared (S4)
- Nemzetközi kommunikáció [International communication] (S2)

Besides offering a basic introduction to cultural theories, S10 devotes much time to study diverse theories on communication. S3 discusses in detail different types of oral and written communication including telephone conversations and communication via email. S1 intends to acquaint students with the practice of communication, while S2 explores possible problems and difficulties inherent in international communication. S4 discusses different conversation habits contrasting Hungarian and North American characteristics of conversation.

Globalization

- Globalization: growing number of intercultural encounters. (S4)
- Asia and Africa: new partnerships for Europe. (S8)
- In our globalized world it is essential to overcome difficulties caused by cultural differences (S2)

Globalization turned out to be frequently associated with intercultural communication. Syllabi either listed them as a thematic point the course targets to cover (S1, S4, S5, S8, S10) or referred to globalization in their course description section emphasizing that effective communication across cultures is vital.

There were minor topics arising in syllabi but showing no trend whatsoever: humor (S1), eating habits (S7), music (S2), sexuality (S5), religion (S2), media and business (S10). Two presented social-psychological issues as well: individual and social cognition, social adaptation and social empowerment (S8); social and emotional intelligence (S3).

Required readings

Apart from two documents (S8 and S10) all syllabi presented a reading list. The analysis shows that there is no 'ultimate' course book of IC. The courses considerably differ in the readings they require, ranging from monographs and textbooks to journal articles and websites. Three syllabi list articles from the *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, five require parts or chapters of special monographs of communication theory, linguistics or psychology, four asked for specific IC resource books or course books, and five also included internet links and Wikipedia entries. Six of the syllabi asked exclusively

reading material that is available online, either as links, on-line publications or e-books. Table 3 shows some examples of the most common types of readings:

Table 3: Types of readings required

Articles from JIC	Pallotti, G., & Varcasia, C. (2008). Service telephone call openings: A comparative study on five European languages. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 17. Viswat, L., & Kobayashi, J. (2008). Cultural differences in conversational strategies: Japanese and American university students. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 18. Yukiko, I. (2007). Cultural Fluency as a Guide to Effective Intercultural Communication: The Case of Japan and the U.S.: *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 15. In case of one syllabus the website of the JIC is given and students are asked to read three articles of their choice.
Chapters from books	Löfgren, O. (1987). Deconstructing Swedishness: culture and class in modern Sweden. In: A. Jackson (Ed.) *Anthropology at Home*. (74-93). ASA Monograph 25. London and New York: Tavistock Connell, R.W. (1996). A társadalmi nem elmélete In Tóth László (Ed) *A szex-szociológia és társadalomtörténet*, (46-59) Budapest: Új Mandátum. Goleman, D. (2004). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ & Working with emotional intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury.
ICC resource book/course book	Huber-Kriegler, M., Lázár, I., and Strange, G. (2003). Mirrors and windows. An intercultural communication textbook. Holliday, A., Hyde, M. and Kullman, J. (2004). Intercultural communication: An Advanced Resourse Book. Routledge Applied Linguistics. Hidasi, Judit. (2004) Interkulturális kommunikáció. Budapest: Scolar
Internet links	www.wideweb.hu en.wikipedia.org/wiki sisu.it.su.se/pdf_creator/cached/8850/10708

There are two trends regarding the courses: tutors either ask students to read different articles/chapters week after week and build their discussions on that material (S1, S3, S5, S9), or they present the course schedule with topics and present the reading list at the end of the syllabus (S2, S4, S6, S7).

The languages of the required readings are English, Hungarian, Swedish and Spanish. Table 4 shows that regarding students' mother tongue and the language of the readings required in most cases command of a foreign language was essential for completing the reading list. Speaking foreign languages is a key factor in successful communication across cultures, so it is not surprising that students have to practice reading in a foreign language. However, it must be noted that IC has a far more extensive literature in English than in any other languages.

Table 4: Languages

Code	Mother tongue of students	Language of the syllabus	Language of instruction	Language(s) of readings
S1	Hungarian	Hungarian	Hungarian	Hungarian, English
S2	Hungarian	Hungarian	Hungarian	Hungarian
S3	Hungarian	English	English	English
S4	Hungarian	English	English	English
S5	Hungarian	English	English	English
S6	Hungarian	English	English	English
S7	Hungarian	English	English	English
S8	German	English	English	-
S9	Swedish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish, Swedish
S10	Chinese	English	English	-

Conclusion

This study aimed to find answer to the question what is taught under the course title 'Intercultural Communication'. Analyses of ten syllabi from different academic institutions reveal that the main concepts around which instructors organize their courses are

(1) culture, (2) identity, (3) representation, (4) social interactions, (5) languages, (6) communication and (7) globalization.

These key concepts draw on three academic fields: cultural studies, communication studies and linguistics. Syllabi significantly differed in the extent to which they presented these concepts: some focus more on different aspects cultural and communication studies, whereas others center around various subfields of linguistics.

As this study aimed to define what in fact takes shape under the title Intercultural Communication, the qualitative content analysis focused on the Course Description and Aims of the course and the Readings sections. Nevertheless, it would be also worth focusing on the Requirements and Evaluation parts in a different, more methodological study, to find out what students need to do in order to pass the course for us to get a more practical picture.

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