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Teaching Reading and Writing Skills to Young Learners in English as a Foreign Language Using Blogs: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study focused on the development of reading and writing skills to a group of B1 level learners of English in a private language institute in Athens, Greece with the aid of blogs (a web tool), since Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) enhances foreign language learning. To this end, two groups of young learners were formed; the control group which was taught through the traditional coursebook and the experimental group which was taught through a differentiated approach to language teaching. The differentiated approach which was applied involved eight teaching sessions in a private language institute. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups in order to evaluate the use of CALL in the improvement of literacy skills. Pre- and post- semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the students of the experimental group to evaluate their attitudes and feelings before and after the instruction. The aim of using blogs, as a web tool, was to enhance collaborative learning and social interaction. This research attempted to prove that blogs create a social interaction between students, and between the students and the teacher. For the purposes of this research, students were involved in process writing by making drafts and writing their posts and in active reading when they read other posts and texts from other web sites.

Key words: computer assisted language learning, blogs, literacy skills, differentiated instruction, foreign language teaching

Introduction

In the heyday of technology, Second Language Teaching and Learning uses technological advances to help students expose themselves to a real and purposeful context. Computer-mediated collaborative learning is a way to promote interaction both between students and their teachers but also amongst students themselves using authentic input in real tasks (Warschauer, 2000).

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) requires new approaches which do not ignore the demands of the new technological era (Vlachos, 2014).

Blogs are online journals which motivate students to read texts as well as other students' posts. In addition, they can skim many texts and posts and find different or similar opinions with those of other authors before expressing their own views with a post. In other words, blogs are incentives for personal writing (Yang, 2009). Not only do they develop their literacy skills but also their e-literacies. Students learn to use the computer; they use search engines to browse the net and they use the word-processor to write a post (Paroussi, 2014).

The purpose of this research was to examine whether students of a B1 level are able to handle blogs easily and appropriately and whether, through the use of blogs, they could improve their reading and writing skills. Specific research questions were formulated to conduct this research.

1. Does the CEFR encourage the use of online communication with the use of blogs?
2. How can blogs enhance young learners' writing skills?
3. How can blogs enhance young learners' reading skills?
4. Does the teaching context in foreign language institutes encourage the use of CMC in English language teaching?
5. Can blogs develop a positive attitude towards reading and writing?

The teachers, who were also the researches, modified the curriculum and the teaching process, by integrating technology in the lessons, thus adapting and applying a differentiated form of instruction in the classroom. Two groups of students participated in this research. A control group which used a coursebook and an experimental group which was taught through differentiated instruction. The researchers applied the same tests, focusing on reading and writing skills to both groups. Pre- and post- semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the experimental group to find out about students' attitudes and feelings both before and after the differentiated instruction.

1 Theoretical background of the CEFR applied in a foreign language institute

It is common practice for schoolchildren in Greece to learn English as a foreign language in the private sector, also known as foreign language institutes. These institutes abide to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and use the textbooks which are designed according to its specifications. Not only does the CEFR provide a framework for designing curricula and teaching material, but it also gives guidelines as concerning the assessment of each level in language learning.

1.1 The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The CEFR was developed during the 1960's when the Council of Europe aimed at facilitating communication amongst its member states. Their purpose was to establish that all citizens learn both their native language as well as other languages of the member states. During the 1970's, the focus was on developing a positive stance towards language learning. Thus, learning objectives were developed in the form of 'can-do' statements in order to reinforce learners' autonomy, independence and motivation. It was imperative that objectives dictate what learners could do, even in the lowest levels (Council of Europe). By the 1990's, a full framework had been developed for language learning, teaching and assessment aiming at plurilingualism, positive enforcement in learning, design of textbooks and transparency in testing criteria. It divided language proficiency into six levels; two Basic A levels (A1, A2), two Independent B levels (B1, B2) and two Proficient C levels (C1, C2) (Council of Europe).

1.2 The CEFR and young learners

The CEFR was initially designed to cater for the communicative needs of adult speakers. However, there is a tendency to introduce English, as a foreign language, in different curricula both in primary schools and in foreign language institutes, under the influence of globalization, parental expectations and the support of policy makers (Benigno and Long, 2016). The notion underlying designing language descriptors for young learners was that language learning is a priority and there is a need to improve mastery of skills from an early age (Benigno and Long, 2016). Hence, language descriptors should be created for young learners between 6 to 15 years of age (A1 to B1 levels, according to the CEFR).

1.3 The CEFR and writing skills

As far as writing skills are concerned, the CEFR uses global scale criteria and defines an independent user (B1 level) using 'can-do' statements, as someone who "can produce a simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest and can describe experiences, events, hopes, dreams, ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5).

Writing is a production activity. Taking into consideration the overall written production, the CEFR defines a B1 level user as someone who "can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 8). That is to say, B1 level users should be able to write about topics that are within their interests, express their experiences or describe an event (Council of Europe, 2018). Grammatical correctness and the correct use of vocabulary are also of great importance. The linguistic aspect of

writing is taken into consideration when students produce written texts and when these texts are corrected, (Fasoglio, Beeker, & Keuning, 2014).

Both the linguistic aspect of writing and its contextual aspect are important. It is vital to understand the context of communication, the social status of writers-readers, the socio-cultural conventions, the purpose and the different genres of writing (Fasoglio et al, 2014). Considering the overall written interaction, learners of a B1 level must be able to write personal letters or notes, convey important information and attempt to get the message they want across to their readers. To be more specific, they must describe personal experiences/feelings, write e-mails of factual information (correspondence) and also write simple and relevant pieces of information to friends (notes, messages and forms).

1.4 The CEFR and reading skills

Reading can be viewed as a receptive skill. According to the CEFR's criterion of overall reading comprehension, a B1 level user can read factual information on texts concerning his/her interests with a satisfactory amount of comprehension. For example, he or she should be able to understand events and feelings when corresponding with a pen-pal (reading correspondence). He or she should also understand information on everyday topics (such as in advertisements or brochures) and understand if the information which they read is topic-relevant (reading for orientation*)*. In addition, if a B1 user has enough time to re-read, he/she can recognize the most significant and the main points of a text on a familiar topic (reading for information). He or she can also read for leisure purposes, understanding the description of places, events and feelings. Thus, learners develop critical reading skills (Newby, 2012). Reading as a leisure activity is a recent change in the CEFR descriptors, concerning reading as a receptive skill (Council of Europe, 2018) and it lowers learners' affective filter (Arikan, 2015).

1.5 The CEFR and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

Nowadays, with the advent of technology and the internet, young learners can interact online, by using their computer and an online application (e.g. blogs, emails, instant messages). Learners can communicate simultaneously with one or more interlocutors online, contribute to others' posts and use other media (audio-video-hyperlinks). The CEFR has taken this trend into consideration and has formed online interaction criteria for B1 level users, (Council of Europe, 2018). That is to say:

- B1 users can post their contribution online on a familiar topic if they have prepared the text beforehand and they can use online tools (such as online dictionaries/grammars) to check their language accuracy.
- They can post information about personal experiences and feelings and respond to others' comments. However, some lexical errors can occur.

- They can collaborate online by explaining or clarifying details and by asking questions. Online collaboration may increase their motivation and their engagement in the learning process (Hathorn & Ingram, 2002).
- Online collaboration can be made easier if there are visuals, such as images. Using animation and videos can support and encourage online learning and more specifically, online group collaboration (Hathorn & Ingram, 2002).

2 Literacy skills

2.1 Writing skills

Writing can be defined as the learners' output when they have received sufficient input. It is considered perhaps the most difficult skill since it involves handwriting, spelling, grammar, syntax and the organization of paragraphs and ideas (Ioannou & Pavlou, 2003). There are three approaches to writing; text-oriented, writer-oriented and reader-oriented. To begin with, the text-oriented approach considers texts as autonomous objects in which writers express their intended meaning by following grammatical rules, focusing on form, product and accuracy (Jones, 2006).

Next, the writer-oriented approach focuses on the writer; his/her creativity, cognitive processes and context (Flower and Hayes, 1981). Thinking before writing, the free expression of ideas and the writer's imagination are some of its features (Hyland, 2002). Finally, the reader-oriented approach views writing as a social interaction and a social construction. It became popular around the '80s and considers writing as a social process to construct knowledge and negotiate meaning.

2.2 Reading skills

Reading is the reader's struggle to understand what the text is about. In other words, it is a dialogue between the text and the reader (Hedge, 2000). Reading serves specific purposes (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p.6). For example:

- Reading to find specific information. This is called scanning. Readers try to find out about a specific word or piece of information.
- Reading to skim the text. This is done to get a general understanding of the text.
- Reading to learn from texts. It occurs in an academic context where the reader has to memorize information and details.
- Reading to integrate information. The reader decides on which information to use in order to write and critically analyze the contents.

2.3 Pre-reading stage

In the pre-reading phase, teachers should help learners activate their background knowledge and their cognitive schemata in order to become fully equipped when facing the new text. In a similar research carried out by Mahmood

and Nikoo (2013), Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension was improved by the activation of their background knowledge and the use of graphic organizers. As far as pre-reading activities are concerned, brainstorming, pre-teaching vocabulary, pre-reading questions, making predictions and the use of visual materials are some of the means which increase students' motivation (Vindy and Carla, 2015).Nowadays, due to the development of technology and the Internet, students can have access to visual aids when they brainstorm ideas and make predictions about a text by finding pictures and relevant information concerning a text (Mihara, 2011).

2.4 While-reading stage

At this stage, readers know that they have a reason to read, they recognize the structure of the text, identify the main ideas and relate their background knowledge to the text. They scan the text to find a piece of information or a word and they skim it to acquire a general understanding of it (Vrublevskis, 2015).

2.5 Post-reading stage

In this stage, learners can make use of the language they have learnt in the previous stages and produce it into another skill, such as writing or speaking (Karavas, 2015). Moreover, they must understand the author's intended meaning and develop critical thinking (Wallace, 2003). Post-reading activities include: retelling the meaning of the text, performing a role-play based on the text's story and characters, summarizing the text, filling in charts and tables with data from the text, writing a paragraph and being involved in a class discussion (Ibrakhimova, 2016).

3 Differentiated instruction

3.1 Definition of differentiated instruction

Differentiated Instruction is a teacher's proactive response to learners' needs (Tomlinson, 1999). The teacher prepares his/her teaching in a variety of ways to address to students' different needs and make adjustments-there is no single approach. It is also a student-centered approach, bearing in mind that not all students have the same needs, sociocultural and linguistic background, interests and abilities.

3.2 Differentiating through content

By the term 'content' we refer to what is to be taught, in which order and what level of knowledge our learners should achieve (Thousand & Tomlinson, 2018). There are several materials to support access to learning for students (Hall, 2002). Audiovisual materials appeal to many learning styles; aural (listening to audio files), visual (watching pictures/videos) and kinaesthetic (bodily sensations).

3.3 Differentiating through process

When talking about process, we mean the ways in which students understand the input (Blaz, 2016). Students can work individually, in pairs or as a small group. Flexible grouping is a way of grouping students according to their similarities or even differences (Willis and Mann, 2000). Teachers can also involve students working in a variety of groupings, changing both the social environment (co-teaching may occur) and the physical environment (e.g. providing a place in the classroom for students who become easily distracted) (Thousand & Villa, 2018).

3.4 Differentiating through product

Product has to do with how students show that they have learnt something and what they can do. Teachers need to scaffold students so that they are helped to participate more in tasks. Not only can the product be a written one (such as a report or an assignment) but it can also be an oral one (e.g. acting out) or something that entails action and movement (e.g. dancing).

In this way, students create a product based on their preferred learning style (Heacox, 2012).

3.5 Differentiating through the environment

The environment is the teaching and learning setting. It should be a place where everyone feels welcomed and it can be achieved by simple, everyday things, for example, by re-arranging seats or changing classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001). To illustrate this, students should be able to abandon their desks and sit on the floor or move around the classroom. In addition, teachers know that students need safety, shelter and a nourishing environment (Tomlinson, 1999).

4 The use of blogs

4.1 Blogs as a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) tool

A blog can be defined as an online journal that users can continuously update by writing posts. It is the first widely adopted tool of the Read/Write Web (Richardson, 2010). Its interface is simple, requiring no special skills to understand Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) scripting. In addition, there is a basic word doc., to use, to write your post with and to respond. Users can also add pictures, hyperlinks, audio files or videos (Yang, 2009). The language used is typed and written but it looks like informal and spoken language (hybrid language—talking in writing).

The usefulness of a blog is that it provides a common ground to share ideas and establish discussion between users, thus there is negotiation and communication. Therefore, it creates a sense of community; users of a specific blog usually share the same interests and the same objectives.

4.2 The use of blogs in ELT

Computer Assisted Language Learning has helped both teachers and learners by providing an alternative means of sharing their personal knowledge, communicating and negotiating with each other. A blog is a web-based technology which supports collaboration and increases students' performance (Yang, 2009).

Blogs can be used for a variety of pedagogical reasons in ELT. To start with, they create a sense of community; students can share their opinions, ask questions and collaborate with peers. Next, students can control their own learning by working at their own pace, surfing on the internet in order to collect information, taking initiative with no teacher intervention and using pictures, audio/video files and hyperlinks (Vlachos, 2009). In addition, self-publishing online encourages ownership and increases learner independence (Kennedy, 2003).

As far as communicative competence is concerned, blogs enhance language competence since learners try to write accurately in order to become comprehensible and to acquire pragmatic competence. Not to mention that their sociolinguistic competence is reinforced when learners communicate effectively by taking into account factors such as social class, age, context and educational level. Last but not least, intercultural competence is of great importance, too; students need to understand others' needs, ethnic origins and cultures (Vlachos, 2009).

Another important pedagogical influence is the development of e-literacies. Students become aware of using search engines to browse through information and select the appropriate one according to their interests and needs, interpreting multimodal texts, using the word-processor to write well-formed texts and to learn how to use the e-mail or post messages in blogs. Moreover, they learn how to participate in online discussions, assess other sources of information, such as online dictionaries, and evaluate the information they gather (Warschauer, 2000). When students use their computer and the internet, they can become high-achievers by using a range of tools and resources, such as selecting pictures and art work, creating graphics, downloading and posting photos, copying and pasting hyperlinks and finally, posting audio files or videos (Bell, 2010).

5 The research methodology

5.1 Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to examine if blogs can improve reading and writing skills by involving students in an online community and promoting collaborative learning. To be more specific, students will read other's posts, write their own by making comments, make suggestions and give feedback on mistakes, search the internet to find information and read various texts, thus developing critical thinking (Ward, 2004). By using technology in the classroom, the teacher will

modify the curriculum to adapt learners' different needs and interests and develop language skills (Tomlinson, 2014).

A similar research was conducted by Witte (2007) in Fort Riley Middle school in the USA. The teacher collaborated with a university professor and both created the Talkback Project in which the teacher's middle school students chatted with university students using a blog and discussed literary books. The results showed increased motivation and collaboration with peers as well as an enhancement of their writing skills.

5.2 Qualitative research

For this research, two groups of students were involved; the control group and the experimental group. Pre- and post- reading and writing tests which were of the same content were taken by both groups (Sagor, 2000). In addition, a pre- semi-structured interview was also conducted with the experimental group to identify their attitudes and feelings. There were also recordings of the lessons (Ferrance, 2000). The analysis of the data which was collected was the step which followed the post-test results between the control group and the experimental group to examine whether the applied teaching methods, techniques and tools brought about the desirable results. The final step was taking informed action; the researchers needed to take specific steps to avoid students' past mistakes, such as altering the teaching methods and techniques.

The analysis could also be communicated, in the sense that students took part in pre- semi-structured interviews which were all tape-recorded. In addition, the lessons which took place were also tape-recorded. Thus, the object of the content analysis was recorded communication (Mayring, 2000). Another important feature was the natural setting; students had lessons in a real context (a classroom) and they were the real participants working in small groups; the experimental group (four students) and the control group (six students).

Interviewing students before and after the instruction is a key point in qualitative analysis. In the case of this research, the interview was applied so as to elicit information on students' attitudes, beliefs and feelings on learning English as a foreign language in a language institute and the use of technology (in the case of this research the use of blogs). It should be noted that interviewing is basic to qualitative analysis. Ethical issues may nevertheless arise in this case. For example, both parental and student consent was asked for and the administration was also informed and asked to consent.

Observation is another focal point of qualitative analysis since in this case researchers also become observants. However, in the case of this research, if the students knew that they were observed, they might not have acted as they normally did during the lesson. Therefore, it was up to the researchers to observe and take notes in their journals discretely (Richards, 2003).

6 Blog-based lessons and differentiated instruction

The lessons which were conducted abided to the principles of differentiated instruction Students did not use their textbook at all. The material they used was audiovisual, not pencil-and-paper (Tomlinson, 2000). For example, they browsed through different websites attached to the researcher's initial post in the form of hyperlinks and watched pictures and videos posted in initial posts by the researchers. Students had access to learning (Hall, 2002) and explored various topics using their senses (Willis & Mann, 2000).

As far as the process is concerned, grouping was organized in a flexible manner, either individually or in pairs. Next, students developed e-literacy skills a bit more advanced to their cognitive level (Blaz, 2016). To illustrate this, they had to be members of a blog community something which they had not done before. Using the keyboard to write in English was something different, as well, since they were used to reading on the web, both in English as a foreign language and in Greek which is their mother tongue. The use of stations is also an example of differentiated instruction. The researchers (who were also the teachers) wanted to enable students to write autonomously by setting up different spots where students had to write at the same time on a different task (Tomlinson, 1999).

The product was differentiated, too. Students were supposed to write a post, by answering questions after having watched a video or a posted picture and after having read a short text. Posting in a blog created the sense of community (blogosphere). Students liked sharing ideas with others and were motivated since their product would not be corrected and graded, as in the case of conventional lessons. Last but not least, rearranging seats was motivating, too (Tomlinson, 1999). Unfortunately, it was not feasible to use the computer lab because of administrative reasons. Therefore, the same classroom was used. However, students sat where they wanted to sit and formed pairs at their own initiative. They preferred using their computers and the whiteboard instead of their textbooks.

6.1 The design of blogs in the specific teaching situation

The blogs which were used in this research were designed by the researchers. Their topics were based on the syllabus of the students' coursebook taught in the private language institute, for example, environment, health, teen stress and sports, to name just a few. Each blog had a main title. Titles were also given to each task, since clear instructions were needed (Daskalogiannaki, 2012). The arrangement of the tasks was in reverse chronological order, starting from the bottom and moving upwards with a date showing the archived information. The 'add comment' button enabled students to contribute their post by making a comment, thus giving feedback both to the teachers (who were also the researchers) and to other students (Blackstone & Wilkinson, 2010).

Blogs also used different plug-ins, such as visuals, hyperlinks, videos and texts (Fessakis, Tatsis, & Dimitracopoulou, 2008). Students could use the hyperlinks to browse other websites and find information resulting in self-directed exploration (Yang, 2009). The teachers used such media to warm-up students. Next, they had to respond to a blog-entry posted by the teachers by leaving a comment. After that, they could use ideas from the previous task and implement them in the second task, producing another post, helping and correcting each other.

7 Research results

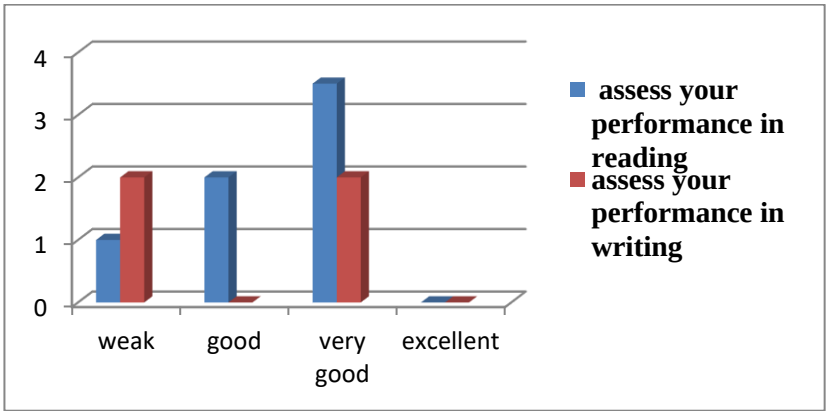
Specific research questions were formulated in order to carry out this research. More specifically:

1. Does the CEFR encourage the use of online communication with the use of blogs?
2. How can blogs enhance young learners' writing skills?
3. How can blogs enhance young learners' reading skills?
4. Does the teaching context in foreign language institutes encourage the use of CMC in English language teaching?
5. Can blogs develop a positive attitude towards reading and writing?

7.1 Results of the Pre- Semi-structured Interviews with the Experimental Group

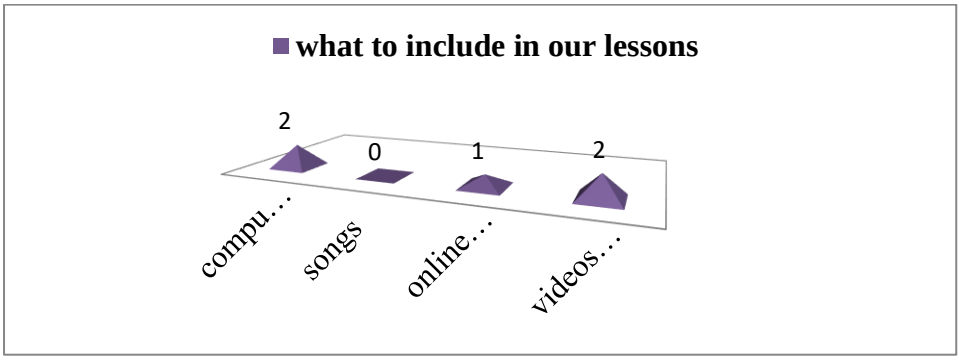
The experimental group was given a pre- semi-structured interview. First, it examined students' involvement with the English language; 50% of the students had a certificate in English and 3 out of 4 students believed that they were good at reading whereas only 2 out of 4 believed that they were good at writing (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Students' own assessment on reading and writing



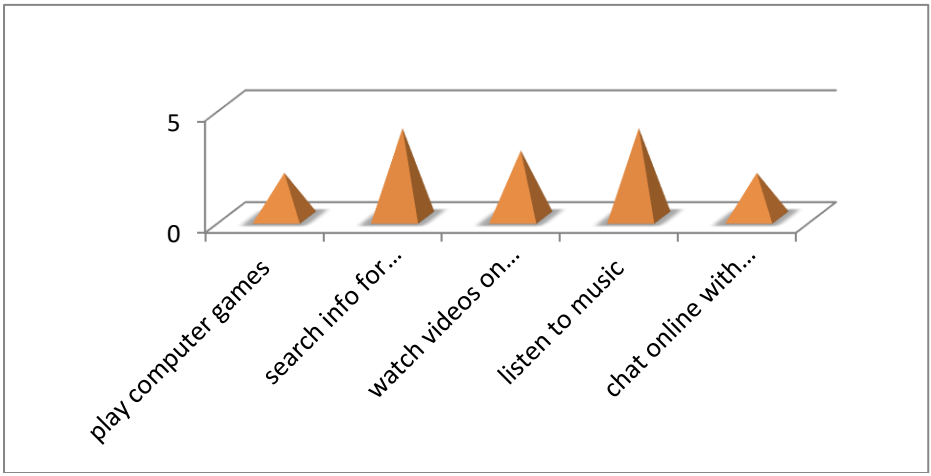
Next, it involved questions which concerned students' attitudes towards the lessons in the foreign language institute. All the students liked the lessons, but they would like to add technology to these lessons (Figure 2).

Figure 2: What students want to include in their lessons



To round off, questions concerning students and their relation to technology were also included. All of them used the internet for schoolwork, for watching videos and for playing games but none of them knew what a blog was or had ever written an email (Figure 3).

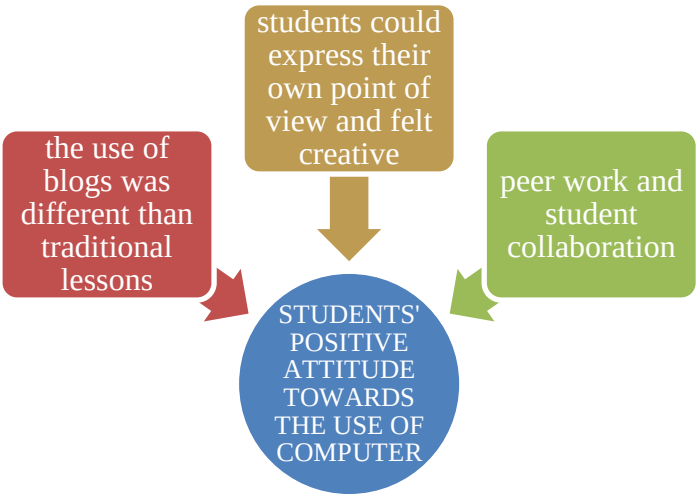
Figure 3: Students and the use of computer/internet



7.2 The Results of the Post- Semi-structured Interview with the Experimental Group

To start with, there were questions which concerned students' attitudes towards the use of blogs. All students liked using blogs because it was something new and different than the traditional use of a coursebook (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Reasons for students' positive stance towards the use of computers



Next, considering the improvement of literacy skills, all students stated that writing in a blog was easier than traditional writing tasks because they preferred writing on a computer so as to express their opinions and because they received no grade (Figure 5).

Finally, students answered questions which concerned the improvement of their e-literacies. Students stated that the use of computers facilitated the use of word-processing, browsing the internet and using the correct spelling with the use of the keyboard.

7.3 The Results of the Pre-Test in both groups

The same pre- test was administered to both groups before the differentiated instruction to examine students existing knowledge. The pre-test also performed a diagnostic role. It consisted of 10 tasks; a pre-reading task and a reading task, vocabulary exercises, a post reading task and finally a writing task. In the experimental group, the three female students scored 97%, 89% and 88% respectively whereas the male student scored 77% (Figure 6). In the writing part,

the female students scored 3/5, 4/5 and 1/5 whereas the boy did not score at all (the male student presented many grammatical, syntactical and lexical errors in the pre-test) (see Figure 7).

Figure 5: Literacy skills improvement

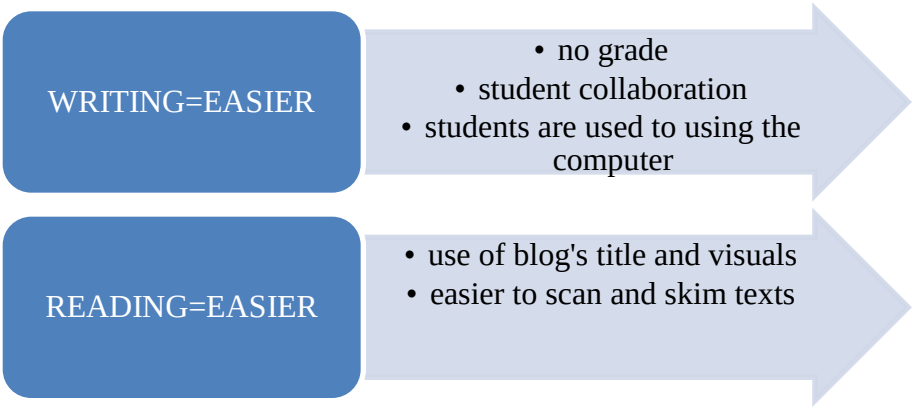


Figure 6: The pre-test total score of the experimental group

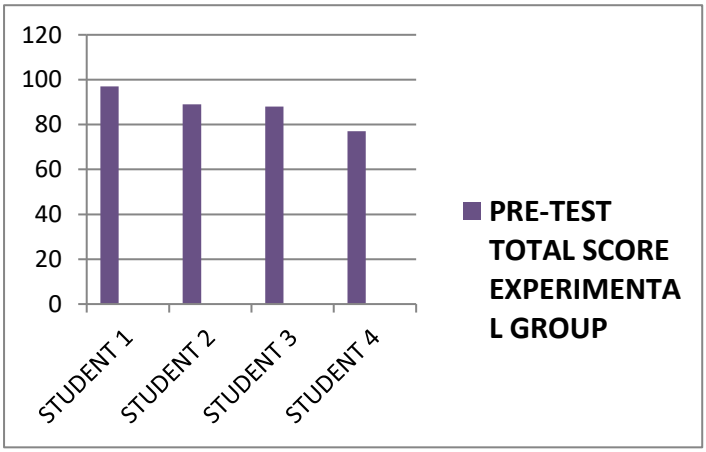
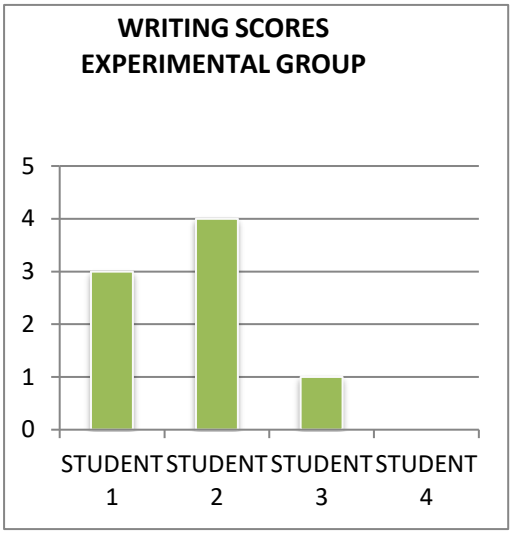


Figure 7: The writing scores in the experimental group



In the control group, students performed well in the test. They scored 96%, 92% and 76% and in the writing part 3/5, 2/5 and only one student scored 1/4. The student who scored ¼ has a cochlear implant and is hard of hearing. According to Dostal and Wolbers (2014), hard of hearing students experience difficulties in literacy skills because they do not have enough access to comprehensible input (Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8: The writing scores in the control group

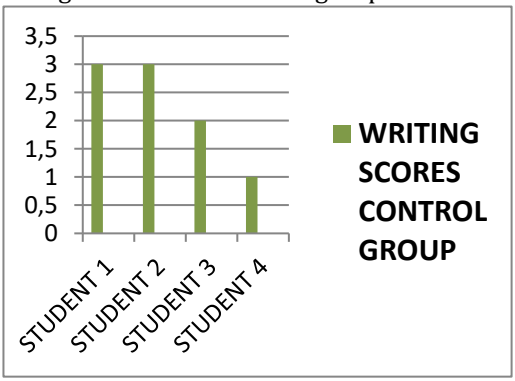
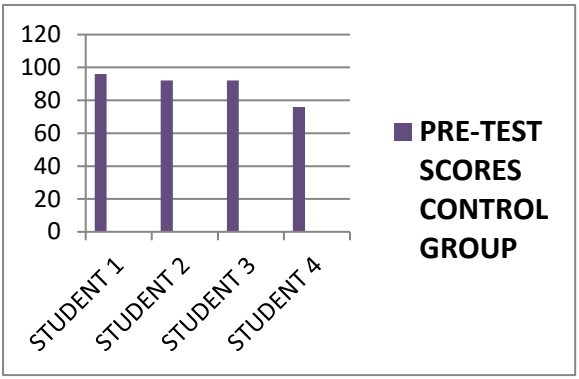


Figure 9: The pre-test scores of the control group



7.4 Results of the post-test in both groups

Students of the experimental group showed a slight improvement. However, 2 out of 4 students had a lower mark in the post-test. This can be attributed to fatigue. As concerning the writing part, they all scored a bit better than in the pre-test writing. As far as the control group was concerned, students performed the same as in the pre-test.

Overall, the findings indicate that all the students of the experimental group improved their writing skills after having been involved in differentiated instruction through the use of blogs. They all scored higher marks in the writing part of the post-test (Table 1). This finding answers the first research question which asked whether blogs improve students writing skills as they (blogs in other words) offer students an incentive to write (Jones, 2006).

Table 1: Pre-test and post-test performance of experimental group

STUDENT	GENDER	PRE-TEST SCORE	PRE-TEST WRITING	POST-TEST SCORE	POST-TEST WRITING
S1	**female**	**97%**	**3/5**	**98%**	**4/5**
S2	**female**	**89%**	**3/5**	**90%**	**3/5**
S3	**female**	**88%**	**2/5**	**85%**	**3/5**
S4	**male**	**77%**	**1/5**	**76%**	**2/5**

However, the post-test was administered some days before the final exams in the language institute, therefore two of the students admitted being anxious and

tired, thus discouraged. According to Ackerman and Kanfer (2009), cognitive fatigue and personal issues such as lack of motivation and anxiety may result in poor test results.

To conclude, the findings were like those of the literature review. Blogs motivate students to write in an online community, collaborate with peers and develop both a linguistic and a sociocultural competence (Vlachos, 2009). Students learn to write having a real audience in mind (Daskalogiannaki, 2012). In addition, they read topics which motivate them (Yang, 2009). A similar study carried out by Vurdien (2012) in an EFL language school in Spain, showed that the use of blogs as a computer-mediated tool improved the writing skills of the students who participated. These findings answer positively to the research question which asked whether blogs motivate students to read and write in English.

8 Limitations of this research

Some difficulties occurred before and during the differentiated instruction stage which was conducted in the foreign language institute. To start with, differentiated instruction with the experimental group was initially four hours per week but due to administrative reasons, it ended up being conducted for two hours per week. Another constraint was the inability to use the computer lab because other students used it to practice tests. Therefore, the students of the experimental group had to remain in the classroom using two computers only. This resulted in pair work most of the time. More time on blog lessons was necessary but parental pressure to cover most parts of the syllabus prevented more time being devoted to blogs. This is something which students had also wished for (in other words to practice on blogs) in their post- semi-structured interviews. Finally, it was a semi-scale research, reflecting only a specific group of students. It is advisable that more students be included, students from other classes in the same foreign language institute or even from other institutes and public schools, as well.

9 Conclusion

Young learners of English, as a foreign language, are exposed from their early years of learning to reading and writing in English through the textbooks they use. Concerning the students' reading skills, the texts in the coursebook are not authentic. As far as writing skills are concerned, students usually must read a model text and produce a similar piece of written language without having a real audience and purpose in mind.

This is where technology comes in, and to be more specific, Computer Assisted Language Learning. Nowadays, young learners are familiar with using the computer and the internet for various reasons, such as to play computer games and to find information on the internet for school projects.

In this research, students were familiar with technology and the internet. But the same does not occur with the use of blogs. None of the students knew what a blog was. After they had been involved in blog lessons, they were eager to express their own point of view by writing in English, by collaborating with their classmates and by helping each other. Finally, the affective factor is of equal importance. At the beginning the students who participated in this research were a bit anxious about using a blog. As time went by, they started becoming used to it and felt relaxed and creative while using it.

In conclusion, the use of blogs proved to be helpful in enhancing students' literacy skills. There were some obstacles in the process, yet blogs proved to encourage the learning of English, as a foreign language, in the specific language center in which they were applied.

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Chinese TESOL Students' Perception of Their Speaking Anxiety in Workshops

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Abstract

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is perceived as a negative factor influencing learners' language achievement. Targeting Chinese overseas students, this paper investigates whether communicative confidence, fear of negative evaluation, attitude towards using English in workshops and trait anxiety are related to Chinese students' speaking anxiety. The present study also aims to examine how students perceive their speaking anxiety and coping strategies both from teachers and students. The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were adopted for data collection. 80 TESOL students at the University of Edinburgh were invited to complete the questionnaires, with 6 students participating in the interviews to get deeper insights into Chinese students' perception of their speaking anxiety. Research findings revealed that communicative confidence, fear of negative evaluation, attitude towards using English in workshops and traits anxiety were strongly related to Chinese students' speaking anxiety. In the interviews, 6 respondents commented that instructors' characteristics, such as patience and humor, and their preparation before class can alleviate their speaking anxiety in workshops. It is hoped that the current study can contribute to a deeper understanding of Chinese students' speaking anxiety in UK universities.

Keywords: speaking anxiety; Chinese overseas students; instructors; communicative confidence; fear of negative evaluation; attitude towards using English; trait anxiety

Introduction

With the internationalization of higher education, an increasing number of Chinese students are pursuing their master's degree in the UK. Chinese students prefer UK educational institutions because of their academic reputation and the chance to improve their English proficiency. Therefore, Chinese students account for the largest proportion of the student population in the UK (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). According to the British Council (2004), the number of Chinese students in the UK is expected to reach 130,900 in 2020.

However, as the largest proportion of international students in the UK, a common observation about Chinese students' participation in oral-oriented

activities is their reticence (Liu, 2002). A large body of research attributed students' participation avoidance to their speaking anxiety. Horwitz *et al*. (1986, p.128) defined foreign language anxiety as 'a distinct complex of self-perceptions, belief, feeling and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.' FLA is an umbrella term incorporating four language skills (speaking, writing, listening and reading), yet students do not have an equal amount of anxiety in these four domains (Horwitz, 2016), with speaking being particularly anxiety-provoking (Bailey, 1983; Keramida, 2009; Kim, 2009).

Review of previous research

Three components of FLA

To analyze FLA in the educational setting, Horwitz *et al*, (1986) identified three components of language anxiety. They are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Communication apprehension refers to 'a type of shyness characterized by the fear of communicating with people' (Horwitz *et al*., 1986, p. 127). Students with communication apprehension feel unease to use the target language when being the focus of others, especially in the speaking context. Communication apprehension is more common in some countries than others. For example, Chinese students are used to being taught by drilling and manipulated activities in which they are likely to be non-vocal (Levinsohn, 2007). With respect to fear of negative evaluation, it refers to 'apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations and expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively' (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, p.128). Students with fear of negative evaluation regard mistakes and errors as a handicap of the good performance rather than a natural part of the language learning process. This belief impedes oral participation (Yalcin & Incecay, 2014). As to test anxiety, it is 'a type of performance anxiety stemming from the fear of failure' (Horwitz *et al*., 1986, p. 127). Students with test anxiety feel afraid to fail in a test situation, especially in the speaking output stage.

To measure the levels of language anxiety, Horwitz *et al*. (1986) devised the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS), which consisted of 33 questions indicating communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Learners' levels of language anxiety can be determined by calculating all the responses to the statements in FLCAS. Because of its reliability and validity, FLCAS was widely used in subsequent research regarding foreign language anxiety (Liu, 2006).

Trait anxiety

In educational research, Horwitz and Young (1991) proposed that FLA can be divided into trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety

and state anxiety are both related to innate emotional stability, so students with trait anxiety feel nervous in various conditions. However, situation-specific anxiety is evoked by a particular condition or event, such as presentations and exams (Spielberger, 1983). Distributing questionnaires to 100 students from two faculties, Rahimi and Quraishi (2019) found that introversion resulted in higher speaking anxiety. In an earlier study, Gkonou (2012) maintained that personality facet was an important predictor in language anxiety, while shyness is recognized as one of the typical characteristics of Chinese international students. Ruble and Zhang (2013) conducted a study to examine the stereotypes of Chinese overseas students held by Americans. 100 American students were invited to describe the typical traits of Chinese students, and shyness was the traits most rated by the participants. According to Olakitan (2011), introverts tended to be reticent in oral interaction, as they are apt to steer away from the negative evaluation. Over concern about classmates' and teacher's evaluation is not only the feature of anxious learners but that of perfectionists. This lends support to Ramirez's (1999) findings which claimed that perfectionism-oriented students were concerned about the opinions of others, and it was highly probable that they suffered more from FLA (Dewaele, 2017). In another study, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) investigated the relationship between language anxiety and perfectionism in the field of oral production, concluding that learners with perfectionism were more ambitious about their language performance. Such demands can foster language anxiety. Nevertheless, some studies indicated that perfectionism had positive effects on language learning (Starley, 2019). Another source of foreign language anxiety is competitiveness with classmates. Bailey (1983) analyzed the journals of eleven students and found that competitiveness was the main reason resulting in language anxiety. Students tend to compare themselves with peers or the ideal-self in terms of language proficiency when learning a foreign language.

Reasons why FLA occurs

A great many studies have probed into the factors contributing to learners' FLA, with communication apprehension being a significant predictor (Rassaei, 2015). It is reasonable to assume that students with communication apprehension feel uncertain in speaking English in public owing to their linguistic deficiency. According to Liu and Jackson (2008), learners experiencing communicative apprehension had difficulty in formulating their utterances in the target language and speaking English in front of others.

Besides, Mak (2011) identified fear of negative evaluation as the most obvious factor giving rise to speaking anxiety. Targeting 313 Chinese university students in Hong Kong, the study administrating the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) attempted to find out variables bringing about speaking-in-class anxiety. Findings attributed students' speaking anxiety to five influential factors,

namely fear of negative evaluation, nervousness when communicating with mother-tongue speakers, passive feeling towards the language class, lack of confidence, and fear of failing the exams. Among the 5 aspects, fear of negative evaluation was the most predictive in FLA. Students' speaking apprehension arises from the feeling of embarrassment when they are evaluated negatively by classmates. For example, they may assume that their spoken English would be judged to be accented and unauthentic (Jin & Dewaele, 2018). Similarly, Gkonou (2012) examined the causes of Greek learners' English anxiety by analyzing 64 entries through qualitative content analysis, finding that fear of negative evaluation was the most salient reason for anxiety.

Students with misguided belief show an inclination to have a higher level of speaking anxiety. Some learners hold that one ought to speak and write without errors, pronounce like a native speaker or learn a foreign language within two years (Ortega, 2009). Certain learners placed great emphasis on accuracy and standard accent, and they supported the notion that some language learners had a special gift to learn foreign languages. Furthermore, teachers' inappropriate instructions about language learning may also provoke anxiety. For example, unsuitable error correction, such as interrupting students in order to correct errors, may easily arouse students' anxiety. In interviews with foreign language specialists, Young (1992) further argued that some other factors having powerful effects on learner anxiety included specific teaching methodology and students' coping skills.

Previous suggestions to deal with anxiety

It is essential for teachers to be aware of the manifestation of FLA among students. They should not label students who remain quiet with 'lazy' and 'demotivated' when those students are suffering from language anxiety. Trang *et al*. (2013) surveyed 419 students and 8 English teachers in a Vietnamese university via questionnaires, interviews, as well as student autobiographies, yielding the result that around two-thirds of the students were experiencing FLA, but the teachers paid little attention to the phenomenon. Instead, teachers need to identify students with speaking anxiety and tailor appropriate classroom activities to dent anxiety (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). A host of studies recommended teachers to incorporate pair work or group work in that it can provide a non-threatening environment where students may be more motivated to break the silent habit (e.g., Lee, 2002; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Humphries *et al*., 2015). In the pair work context, students no longer feel their oral performance is assessed so that they are more engaged, paying more attention to fluency and communication instead of accuracy. This is in line with Matsuda and Gobel (2004) that underlined the importance of group work in their research, with a great number of informants reporting that they prefer fewer interlocutors in the

communication. Instructors' temperaments also have a role to play in reducing learners' speaking anxiety. Friendly, patient and humorous teachers are believed to help students alleviate speaking anxiety (Young, 1990; Humphries *et al*., 2015; Jin *et al*., 2017), because students have less concern over the negative evaluation and feel at ease to share their opinions in class.

In classroom discussion, starting with familiar topics is perceived to be helpful in an effort to build students' confidence before moving to more challenging topics. However, speaking English around familiar topics is not necessarily easier, because students may lack the relevant lexical resources. For example, it may be still challenging for a Chinese student majoring in medicine to talk about the function of a particular herbal medicine in English. Also, it is essential for students to be prepared, because having to speak in front of the class before fully prepared may multiply anxiety (He, 2013). This is congruent with the research results of Du (2009). Du (2009) reckoned that there was no point in pushing students to speak before they were ready. Instead, it may cause more anxiety. One way to get students prepared is to provide enough wait-time for them to construct their answers with more reasoning and details. Wait-time is of great importance for Chinese students, because 'face' is valued in Chinese culture (Mak, 2011). If they are under preparation, they would worry about losing face, which is likely to impose great influence on their performance. However, Tsui (2001) proposed that giving excessive wait-time had adverse impacts on speaking anxiety.

Providing positive reinforcement was another technique to help students overcome their anxiety (Kitano, 2001; He, 2013). Apart from verbal praise, Thompson (1997) suggested that non-verbal praise, such as positive gestures, nodding or smiling, was recommended. They treat mistakes as threats and the source of negative evaluation from fellow classmates and the teacher. Thus, instructors need to be cautious about direct error correction in speaking activities in an attempt to improve students' fluency, since instant error correction may damage students' self-confidence (He, 2013). Meanwhile, it is imperative for students to foster the belief that errors are inevitable during language learning (Dornyei, 2001).

The above practice and teaching intervention are drawn upon prior literature on language anxiety for the purpose of creating a comfortable and supportive learning community where students' FLA can be alleviated (Gregersen, 2003). To date, there is a limited amount of research investigating Chinese students' speaking anxiety in the ESL context. Therefore, this exploratory study aims to explore the speaking anxiety of Chinese students studying in the UK and what techniques the students come up with to resolve the difficulties. The following research questions are formulated:

1) What are the main causes of speaking anxiety among Chinese students in interactive activities in workshops?

2) What do students think instructors can do to help them overcome their speaking anxiety?
3) What do students think they themselves can do to overcome speaking anxiety?

Methodology

Participants

In this study, 80 Chinese students from the University of Edinburgh were invited to fill the questionnaires and 6 respondents who were most anxious towards speaking English were selected to proceed semi-structured interviews based on the results of the questionnaire. Participants' English proficiency is about upper-intermediate, as they need to meet the English language requirement of the University of Edinburgh, with at least an IELTS score of 7.0.

Instruments

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 80 TESOL students, while 71 questionnaires were valid and 9 questionnaires were deleted either because the time used to complete the questionnaire was less than 100 seconds or the same answer was selected throughout the whole questionnaire. Each participant's score was calculated and frequency of the choice for each statement was also computed. Questionnaire acted as a quantitative method to answer the first research question.

Semi-structured Interview. For exploring the deeper insider perception of speaking anxiety in workshops, 6 high-anxious students were invited to take part in the semi-structured interviews, with each no longer than 20 minutes. The interview recordings were systematically transcribed according to conversation analysis convention (Robson, 2011; Gray, 2014) and anonymized to protect participants' identities. Interview acted as a qualitative method to answer the last two research questions.

Data analysis

The quantitative result from the questionnaire was computed by means of SPSS with respect to correlation, mean and standard deviation to determine anxiety levels of participants. The qualitative data from interviews were transcribed; thematic analysis was adopted to identify themes, probing into students' perceptions of speaking anxiety in workshops.

Findings and discussion

Research question1: What are the main causes of speaking anxiety in interactive activities in workshops among Chinese students?

SPEARMAN correlation coefficients in SPSS were used to identify the relationship between anxiety and four constructs, namely, communication confidence, fear of negative evaluation, attitudes towards using English in class and trait anxiety, and the resulting correlation is shown in Table 1. It is clear that the four constructs are all significantly correlated with students' anxiety levels. Self-report anxiety appears to be able to predict communicative confidence; that is, if participants report low levels of anxiety in the questionnaires, they are likely to have more communicative confidence. By contrast, if participants' speaking anxiety appears to be high, fear of negative evaluation, passive attitude towards using English in class and anxious personality are inclined to be more evident.

Tab. 1: Correlation between speaking anxiety and four constructs

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 SPCC	25.50	6.29	1.000 71				
2 Fearneg	25.73	6.00	-.736** .000 71	1.000 71			
3 NegAttitud	23.28	5.71	-.670** .000 71	.760** .000 71	1.000 71		
4 TraitAnx	25.65	6.20	-.590** .000 71	.704** .000 71	.593** .000 71	1.000 71	
5 ANXIETY	24.00	5.06	-.607** .000 71	.499** .000 71	.432** .000 71	.480** .000 71	1.000 71

Notes:
SPCC: self-perceived communicative confidence
Fearneg: fear of negative evaluation
NegAttitud: negative attitude towards using English
TraitAnx: trait anxiety

Communicative confidence

The response showed that there was a negative correlation between communicative confidence and in-class speaking anxiety ($r = -.607$, $p < .001$). The median scores of the statements labeled communicative confidence were above the median 3.5, implying that this communicative confidence was an influential factor concerning speaking anxiety. According to Liu and Jackson (2008), learners experiencing communicative apprehension had difficulty in communicating with

others in the target language and speaking English in front of others. This is known as 'stage fright'. McCroskey (1978) maintained that communicative apprehension was more than stage fright and shyness. It is an unwillingness to interact verbally with peers or teachers. The result of the relationship between communicative confidence and speaking anxiety confirms the findings of Mak (2011) who commented that speech apprehension was the most significant factor contributing to speaking anxiety. Most of the interviewees in the current study expressed that speaking in public and communicating with native speakers increased their anxiety in interactive activities.

… if I speak in front of many people (…) I will feel embarrassed (…) maybe I say something wrong or something like that (…) I think it will make things funny (S3)
… because the way native speakers talk is kind of pushing you and they speak really fast and you just feel hard to keep up with them and because the way you present your opinion looks quite slow and more like juvenile in expression (…) so you will feel less confident to speak (S1)

Four participants in the interviews felt nervous when communicating with native speakers, explaining that the quick speed of native students can easily arouse their speaking anxiety. Aida's (1994) research concluded that uncomfortableness resulting from speaking with mother-tongue speakers was the most rated factor pertaining to speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, in the current study, S6 felt more confident when speaking with locals. The reason why this student felt less anxious seemed to be associated with opportunities to practice before speaking in public.

… when I sit with Chinese people (…) we discuss in Chinese (…) and then when it turns to the public speaking (…) you need to speak English (…) I start panic or anxious (…) however (…) when you firstly discuss with native speakers in English and report in English (…) you will be more confident (…) I don't think anxiety is related to when native speakers sit around you (S6)

Fear of negative evaluation

The quantitative results indicated that fear of negative evaluation can predict students' speaking anxiety in workshops (r=.499, p=<.001). To be more specific, if students thought highly of the evaluation from their classmates, they may have a higher level of speaking anxiety. The findings of this study seemed to corroborate Worde (2003) that adopted quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore participants in three language classrooms (French, German, and Spanish) with regard to their experience and feelings of FLA. Participants cited various sources for their anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation was one of the most

important factors. They were sensitive to the evaluation of fellow classmates and the teacher, worrying that they looked foolish due to their unsatisfactory performance. Similarly, in the interviews of the present study, students expressed that their concern about the negative evaluation hindered them from participating actively both in workshops and test situations. Oral presentation often acts as an assessment component of a course. In other words, their performance in the oral presentation is a crucial part in determining the final results. Hence, they were haunted by the idea that flawed grammar and poor English made the instructor have a negative evaluation on them.

> *… when I speak English (.) I care much about the grammar part and I am afraid that others will think my English is very poor (…) especially my grammar part which I am not confident (S2)*

> *I am afraid that other people will look down on me if I do not perform very well (S5)*

Research on learners' speaking anxiety showed that highly anxious students were prone to protect their good image by withdrawing from the classroom interaction (Mak, 2011; Gkonou, 2012; Yalcin & Incecay, 2014; Rahimi & Quraishi, 2019). However, their avoidance of participation is likely to form a 'vicious cycle' as they do not seize the opportunities to practice their speaking, which in turn contributes to their higher level of anxiety.

Trait anxiety

In accordance with the data, it is apparent that there was a significant correlation between trait anxiety and in-class speaking anxiety ($r = .480$, $p < .001$). Table 2 illustrates the frequency of the choice for three trait anxiety statements, including shyness, competitiveness, and perfectionism.

Tab. 2: A frequency count of the choice for three trait anxiety statements

Statements	Response	Count	Frequency	total
1. I see myself as someone who is sometimes shy and inhibited, so I am easily nervous when I have to speak in front of the class.	Strongly agree	11	15.49%	44 (61.97%)
	Moderately agree	15	21.13%	
	Slightly agree	18	25.35%	
2. Even if I am well-prepared for the class, I	Strongly agree	3	4.23%	35 (49.3%)

still feel anxious about it.	Moderately agree	13	18.31%	
	Slightly agree	19	26.76%	
3. If other group members' English is better than me, I will feel nervous when I speak English.	Strongly agree	3	4.23%	44 (61.97%)
	Moderately agree	17	23.94%	
	Slightly agree	24	33.8%	

In this research, 44 out of 71 participants deemed that their introverted personality was the major contributor to speaking anxiety in workshops. On the contrary, those considering themselves as the extroverted were more relaxed in the speaking session. Sociability, excitement, and optimism are the labels of extroverts, whereas introverts have the tendency to stay reticent (Olakitan, 2011), which explains why introverted students' engagement is less active in workshops. In the interview, all of the respondents perceived themselves as introverted. They remarked that shyness made them panic when speaking in front of the class.

> *I am very shy, so when I speak in front of the class (...) I would feel really anxious (...) while extroverted students feel very ease and they are always active in the class (S5*)

On the basis of the quantitative results, approximately 50% of participants noted that even if they were well-prepared for the class, they were still anxious in workshops. One of the explanations is that students with perfectionism may react strongly to mistakes they make, because they cared about the others' evaluation (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Dewaele, 2017; Rahimi & Quraishi, 2019). In contrast, those who felt sure and relaxed when they were well-prepared had less anxiety.

> *I am a detailed-oriented person (...) I know many people are perfectionists (...) for example (...) when I speak English (...) I care about the grammar (...) structure of the sentences and proper words used (S2)*

This interviewee contended that her detail-oriented behavior can be manifested from her over-concern about grammar, sentence structures and use of the words. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) had a similar research result. They undertook an interview study among 8 university students in Chile to clarify the relationship between perfectionism and FLA. The research results showed that language anxiety was likely to stem from perfectionism, concluding that anxious learners tended to strive to achieve accuracy and perfection. Perfectionists ought to develop a realistic expectation and take a more relaxing attitude towards the

mistakes in their spoken English. A word of caution is in order however. Only a few learning groups at a certain language learning stage were involved as participants in Gregersen and Horwitz's research, which can not generalize the findings among the wider population.

Apart from shyness and perfectionism, competitiveness is brought up in the questionnaire. The quantitative result showed that 44 out of 71 participants felt nervous when speaking English on condition that other group members' English was better. Bailey (1983) maintained that competitiveness may lead to anxiety when students compared themselves with classmates or an ideal self. In the interview of the present research, one of the respondents expressed that he was anxious and less confident when he compared himself with proficient English learners. As Bailey (1983) insisted, heavy ego-involvement was likely to engender language anxiety.

> *… sometimes (…) I think I am a person who tend to compete with others (…) so when there is a group member who is very competent (…) I will feel anxious because I am not the best one in the group (…) this makes me feel down (S5)*

Negative attitudes towards using English in class

The current study found that passive attitude towards using English in class was predictive in speaking anxiety ($r = .432$, $p < .001$), suggesting that anxious students were less likely to speak English in class. Put it differently, students' negative attitudes towards using English in class can exacerbate their speaking anxiety in workshops, because passive attitudes negatively affected oral performance when they were required to engage in a discussion.

> *… actually (…) I would never raise my hand to answer questions raised by teachers (…) because I think it is too awkward (…) I am afraid to give a wrong answer (…) and then I would feel very embarrassed (…) so I prefer to remain silent (…) and also (…) when I discuss a question with Chinese students in the workshops (…) I always use Mandarin (S5)*

In the interview, 3 students stated that they had a tendency to avoid speaking English in workshops. One of the reasons accounting for the negative attitude was the lack of confidence in self-perceived English proficiency. The finding of negative attitude towards using English in this study echoes Mak (2011) that explored causes of the speaking anxiety among 313 Chinese students in a Hong Kong university, with FLCAS used as the data collecting instrument. It turned out that negative attitude towards using English was identified as one of the explanations for speaking anxiety. Those who held a negative attitude towards using English in class assumed that others were better English speakers, so they applied speaking avoidance strategy.

Research question 2: What do students think instructors can do to help them overcome speaking anxiety?

During the interview, students were asked to comment on what instructors can do to alleviate their speaking anxiety. These six interviewees' discourse was grouped into three categories: classroom activities design, characteristics of instructors and facilitating role of instructors (Table 3).

Classroom activities design

Participants in the current study reported that working in a small group or not being called out to answer questions can largely decrease their speaking anxiety. Three interviewees pointed out that letting students answer questions voluntarily can effectively make speaking less-threatening.

> *… organizing some interesting games in class (…) and encouraging us to speak English in these activities instead of call on students and ask questions and ask him or her to answer (S4)*

From the response of the interviewees, when students were singled out by the instructor, their speaking anxiety would climb dramatically. However, organizing pair work and group work can create a supportive climate for students to discuss in workshops. This is consistent with Humphries *et al*., (2015) unveiling that the number of interlocutors appeared to influence learners' speaking anxiety, with most of the informants thinking that they had less anxiety when there were a few interlocutors in the communication. This is because they did not have to worry that their grammar mistakes would be judged by their classmates, and they were more comfortable to express their ideas without stammering (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

Reducing students' speaking anxiety by giving them opportunities to volunteer and organizing pair work and group work lends support to Young's (1990) research in which students acknowledged that instructors can alleviate their anxiety by letting them provide responses voluntarily rather than call the roll call. In addition, they further commented that working in a small group was anxiety-reducing. One respondent in Young's research reported that not being in an examination situation can mediate her speaking anxiety, which corresponds to one of the interviewees in current study.

> *… when I have the individual difference class (…) there is a part to deliver oral presentation on an article we find (…) generally (…) there are four or three people in a group, and they will be asked to give the oral presentation (…) but the instructor clearly states that it will not be evaluated or given marks (…) I think that alleviates my anxiety (S2)*

Test anxiety is a component of FLA, and it is associated with performance anxiety resulting from the fear of failing to perform satisfyingly (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Students put too much expectation on them and worry that they are not capable of achieving their targets (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). When students are in a test situation where their oral production is evaluated by the instructor, they would easily feel anxious, which inhibits them from achieving the expected results. Thus, to help students perform by decreasing the influence of test anxiety, teachers could avoid putting students in test-alike situations.

Characteristics of instructors

The following three extracts represent three characteristics of instructors: patient, friendly and humorous. In light of the interviewees, if the instructor was patient, students may suppose their spoken English and flawed grammar were understood. With teachers being friendly, students were more likely to share their opinions and were concerned less about negative evaluation. Humorous instructors can make the classroom atmosphere more active, thereby facilitating students' oral output.

… because English is not my first language (…) when I talk about it, the speed is not fluent when I speak (…) so if they are patient about it (…) I think that will comfort me a lot (S2)

… if the teacher is very friendly (…) I would like to share my opinion and I will feel less anxious (…) but if the teacher is very strict and I will feel very nervous (…) I will think she or he will judge my answers (S4)

… having a sense of humor is very important (…) if the instructor can make me laugh in class (…) I will not feel very stressful (S5)

The finding of instructors' characteristics of this study is in conformity with Jin *et al*.'s (2017) research where students praised instructors' certain characteristics, such as dedication, humor, amicability, and patience, which can help to create a supportive classroom atmosphere, encouraging students to express themselves regardless of speaking anxiety. Instructors should project themselves as workshop facilitators instead of powerful teachers assessing students' performance (GhorbanDordinejad & Nasab, 2013).

Facilitating role of instructors

Instructors can act as facilitating roles by giving praise, eye contact, and positive gestures to encourage and motivate students. According to interviewees, if instructors give positive reinforcement, it would boost students' confidence and mediate anxiety level.

Interviewer: what practices do your instructors engage in to help you alleviate speaking anxiety?
S3: … maybe just tell students that they are great and encourage students.

Students experiencing fear of negative evaluation prefer to stay silent and avoid taking part in speaking activities, because they regard the language errors as a threat of their good images as well as a source of negative evaluation. Therefore, positive reinforcement, such as positive comments and smiling, can act as an indication of encouragement, thereby strengthening students' confidence (He, 2013). Apart from positive reinforcement, S6 mentioned that if the instructors shared their experience of speaking anxiety with students, it could help to lower anxiety. This is because sharing a similar experience can make the students aware that speaking anxiety is prevalent among learners, so students would become less stressful when they need to speak in front of the class. Oxford (1990) also encouraged students to discuss anxiety with others and keep a journal to record their anxiety.

… there is one course called the individual difference (...) the teacher tries to let us understand everyone has the anxious moment (...) and we are not the only one (...) he kind of makes a common sense that everyone is anxious and do not think it is a big thing (...) try to accept that (S6)

Research question 3: What do students think themselves can do to overcome speaking anxiety?

In the interview, respondents were asked about the strategies they used to cope with speaking anxiety in workshops. The six interviewees' comments were grouped into three categories: preparation, positive thinking and relaxation techniques (Table 3).

Preparation

Emerging from the data, all the interviewees expressed that they would be more relaxed if they prepared the lesson beforehand, which is consistent with Du (2009) and He (2013). The reason is that they may have written some notes which can aid them in performing oral tasks. To encourage students to prepare in advance, teachers can come up with some tactics to reward those having prepared. For example, a short quiz before the class may motivate students to preview the reading materials.

… before the workshops (...) I will prepare for the lesson and the topic discussed in the workshop (...) in the class (...) there are some time leaving for *us to think about the questions (...) I will write some notes on the paper (...) so when I am speaking (...) I know exactly what I am talking about (S2)*

… maybe prepare before the workshop will help me to alleviate my anxiety (…) because I have something to share instead of preparing immediately in the workshop (S4)

If a question is posed during the class and students have not prepared for the question before the workshops, teachers are better off giving students appropriate wait-time to process the question and formulate their answers. Wait-time is culturally important for Chinese students in the English class owing to the 'face-saving mechanism' (Mak, 2011). Hence, Chinese students usually feel anxious when they become the focus of attention. If they are not fully prepared, their fear of losing face may give rise to debilitating anxiety. In this regard, instructors need to be aware of their students' psychological state and assist students instead of putting them on the spot before they were well-prepared (He, 2013; Ingram & Elliott, 2014), this stance being incongruent with Tsui (2001) who noticed that excessive wait-time may exacerbate students' anxiety.

Positive thinking

Positive thinking, such as self-talk, is an anxiety-coping strategy mentioned by all interviewees. Self-talk is particularly useful in evaluative situations. S5 gave an example of positive self-talk.

… before the presentation (…) I am really anxious (…) then I would talk to the person next to me and avoid thinking about the presentation (…) and I will tell myself that I have rehearsed so many times before (…) so I can handle it (S5)

In another study, Shi *et al*. (2014) investigated how self-talk was related to public speaking anxiety. The participants were 209 undergraduate students who chose public speaking as an optional course in an American university. Self-Talk Scale and McCroskey *et al.*'s (1985) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension were used as instruments to measure the frequency of self-talk as well as public speaking anxiety. Research results uncovered that reinforcing self-talk can help to regulate individuals' anxious emotion so as to improve speech performance, which mirrored the conclusions drawn by Fallah (2017) maintaining that self-talk had a positive impact on managing speaking anxiety.

Relaxation techniques

In addition to preparation and self-talk, relaxation techniques were also mentioned by interviewees. Relaxation techniques include deep breathing, a quick walk and listening to music. However, little previous literature has investigated the relaxation techniques used for coping with speaking anxiety. One exception is the study of Oxford (1990) claiming that anxiety reduction techniques, such as

deep breathing, music meditation, and physical movement, can help to alleviate anxiety, though Oxford (1990) grouped the relaxation techniques as one of the language learning strategies that learners can apply to enhance the learning process. The later research by Martirossian and Hartoonian (2015) uncovered that FLA related negatively with self-regulation. According to an interviewee in current research, moving around before workshops would effectively manage her anxiety. Similarly, oral presenters can take a deep breath before presenting, and music can be played before having classes.

> *… in the individual difference workshop (…) a teacher asks students to do physical movement before the class (…) like ask students to stand and make some physical movement and then students will feel less anxious (…) for me (…) if I try to move around instead of sitting still (…) I will feel less anxious (…) I think it works (S6)*

Another strategy used by one interviewee was to improve their spoken English. This interviewee felt it was crucial to keep practicing speaking English in an attempt to improve spoken English. Perseverance played a pivotal role in improving language proficiency. If students improve their English proficiency, they would be more confident in speaking English. Being in the UK gives students more opportunities to practice their spoken English.

> *I think keeping practicing spoken English is the best way to solve the speaking anxiety (…) actually (…) we are in the UK now (…) so we have advantages to practice our speaking with the native speaker (…) living in the UK is really a good chance (S5)*

Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that speaking anxiety commonly existed among Chinese international students, and pedagogical implications are discussed for lowering FLA among Chinese ESL learners. It is pivotal for instructors to be aware of the existence of students' speaking anxiety and equip themselves with knowledge about speaking anxiety, thereby creating a supportive and comfortable atmosphere in workshops. Appropriate speaking activities, such as group work and pair work, can help students to manage speaking anxiety since students are less concerned about their mistakes and negative evaluation in a less-threatening culture. Students' speaking anxiety may originate from the fear of negative evaluation, so providing positive reinforcement is another way to motivate students. In accordance with interviewees in the present study, they commented that instructors' characteristics, such as patience, friendliness, and humor, can create a supportive classroom atmosphere and encourage students to

express themselves in workshops. Students' sufficient preparation for course content may also reduce their speaking anxiety.

Tab. 3: Summary of the self-report details from interviews

Ss	Reasons for speaking anxiety	How can instructors help to alleviate speaking anxiety	How do students deal with speaking anxiety
S1	*Poor spoken English *Afraid of making mistakes *Shyness *Speak with native speakers *Not familiar with classmates	*Be patient and friendly *Let students answer questions voluntarily *Speak slowly	*Preparation *Write notes
S2	*Afraid of making mistakes *Perfectionism and shyness *Speak with native speakers	*Be patient and humorous *Avoid a test situation *Give task beforehand	*Preparation *Write notes
S3	*Poor spoken English *Speak in public *Afraid of making mistakes *Shyness *Speak with native speakers	*Be patient and outgoing *Give positive reinforcement *Give useful advice	*Preparation *Positive self-talk
S4	*Not familiar with classmates *Not well-prepared	*Be patient and friendly * Let students answer questions voluntarily *Organize group work	*Preparation *Discuss in group
S5	*Fear of negative evaluation *Poor spoken English *Speak in public *Speak with native speakers *Be shy and competitive	*Be patient and humorous *Organize group work *Share the same experience	*Preparation *Improve spoken English
S6	*Speak in public *Fear of negative evaluation *Anxious person	*Be patient and friendly *Share the same experience *Physical movement	*Preparation *Relaxation techniques

This research is limited by the methods adopted to answer the research questions. The self-report questionnaire may not be sufficient to examine Chinese students' speaking anxiety in workshops, even though the follow-up interviews were conducted to delve into more insights. The reason lies in the discrepancy between what participants think they would do and what they would actually do. In this case, structured observation is recommended as an additional approach to examine students' speaking anxiety. Furthermore, whether other variables, such as gender and English proficiency, would exert an influence on Chinese students' speaking anxiety has not been addressed in the current study. Further research considering factors which are not examined in the present study may contribute to a fuller understanding of speaking anxiety.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information Sheet - How anxious are you?

Introduction
I would like to invite you to participate in this study which is concerned with your language anxiety in workshops. I am also interested in the ways your instructors and you use to deal with the speaking anxiety.

Why am I doing the project?
It is hoped that the research could provide new insights for the speaking anxiety and the advice and techniques to overcome the anxiety.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?
1. You will be invited to complete an online questionnaire.
2. If you are selected to participate the interview, we will arrange a time to meet in your own accommodation if it is convenient for you. I will ask you questions about your speaking anxiety in workshops during the interview, and it will be recorded.

How much of your time will participation involve?
It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The interview lasts no more than twenty minutes.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?
If you agree to take part, you can be assured that you will remain anonymous.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?
You may feel uncomfortable talking about your speaking anxiety. If you are uncomfortable, you are welcome to stop the interview at any point.

Is participation voluntary?
Yes, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time during the project if you change your mind.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

How anxious are you?
Hi! I would like to invite you to participate in this questionnaire which is concerned with your speaking anxiety in workshops. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is questions regarding general perception of your speaking anxiety in workshops. The second part is to collect demographic information.

Participants:
The current research focuses on Chinese students studying in the UK.

Confidentiality:
If you agree to take part, you can be assured that you will remain anonymous.
If you are willing to participate the followed-up interview, please leave your email address at the end of the questionnaire.
Many thanks :)

Part 1
1. I get nervous and confused when speaking English in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

2. In my opinion, other students speak English better than I do.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

3. It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher and other students are saying in English.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

4. I see myself as someone who is shy, so speaking in front of the class makes me nervous.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

5. I feel at ease when speaking English with mother tongue speakers.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

6. Having my spoken English assessed by the teacher in class is fine.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

7. I feel ease when speaking English in the class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

8. I feel comfortable if other students in the group are competent.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

9. I feel uncertain when speaking English in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

10. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

11. it embarrasses me to volunteer answers in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

12. Even if I am well-prepared for class, I still feel anxious about it.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

13. I feel confident in speaking English in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

14. Actively taking part in classroom activities improves my English speaking.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

15. I am willing to volunteer to answer questions in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

16. I feel confident when I am well-prepared.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

17. I get nervous when I communicate with mother tongue speakers.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

18. Having my spoken English assessed in class frightens me.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

19. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

20. If other group members' English is better than mine, I feel nervous speaking English.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

21. I am willing to speak more English in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree

Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

22. I am willing to speak English with other students.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

23. I do not understand why some people get so upset over speaking English in class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

24. I see myself as someone who is outgoing, so I feel relaxed speaking in front of the class.
Strongly agree
Moderately agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Moderately disagree
Strongly disagree

Part 2: Background information
Are you male/ female? _____
How old are you? _____
What other languages do you know or use?
Is there anything else you want to add?
Your email address: _____

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Constructs

Communication confidence
1. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in class.
2. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in class.
3. I get nervous when I communicate with native speakers.
4. It would not bother me at all to speak more English in class.
5. I feel confident when I speak English in class.
6. I would not be nervous when speaking English with native speakers.

Fear of negative evaluation
1. I always feel that other students speak English better than I do.
2. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English.
3. It frightens me when I am assessed by speaking English in the class.
4. I am willing to speak English with other students.
5. I believe that my speaking will improve if I take part in classroom activities actively.
6. I do not worry about being assessed by the teacher in class.

Attitudes towards using English in class
1. It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher and other students are saying in English.
2. it embarrasses me to volunteer answers in class.
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in class.
4. I do not understand why some people get so upset over speaking English in class.
5. I am willing to volunteer to answer questions in class.
6. I feel ease when speaking English in the class.

Personality trait (perfectionist, competitive and shyness)
1. I see myself as someone who is sometimes shy and inhibited, so I am easily nervous when I have to speak in front of the class.
2. Even if I am well-prepared for the class, I still feel anxious about it.
3. If other group members' English if better than me, I will feel nervous when I speak English.
4. I see myself as someone who is outgoing and sociable, so I do not feel nervous when I have to speak in front of the class.
5. When I am on the way to class, I feel very sure and relaxed if I am well-prepared for the class.
6. I will not feel anxious if other students in the group are competent.

Appendix 4: Interview Questions

1. How frequently do you participate in speaking activities in workshops voluntarily?
2. How do you feel when you have to speak English in workshops? [If they do not mention anxiety] Do you ever feel anxious about speaking English in class?
3. What makes you feel anxious about speaking English in class?
4. What do you do to alleviate anxiety during speaking activities in workshops?
5. To what extent do you think personality affects your speaking anxiety? (self-perceived)
6. What factors influence your oral performance in class?
7. What do you do to deal with your speaking anxiety?
8. What characteristics or personalities of instructors help you to reduce speaking anxiety?
9. What practices do your instructors engage in to help you alleviate speaking anxiety?
10. What other practices could instructors do to help you with your speaking anxiety?
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about anxiety in language learning class?

Appendix 5: Interview Transcription

The interview transcription and thematic analysis are available from the author on request.

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Novice Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in the Czech Republic and their Drop-Out Intentions

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Abstract:
Problems with staffing play a crucial role among factors influencing the quality of English language teaching at Czech primary and lower secondary schools. Since 1990 the shortage of teachers of English as a foreign language has been repeatedly reported by the Czech School Inspectorate. The shortage is largely caused by the reluctance of English language teacher education study programme graduates to accept teaching positions at primary and lower secondary schools. A drop-out syndrome in the early stages of the teachers' career is another factor that may contribute to the lack of teachers of English. Unfortunately, it has not been researched in the Czech Republic and it has not been systematically monitored by the state. In the research study focusing on novice teacher drop-out, conducted in 2015–2017, we deal with the process of socialisation of novice teachers in schools and with external factors that influence the socialisation and that can be seen as predictors of novice teachers' decision to stay in their current school or leave either the school or the teaching profession. The current paper presents partial findings related to drop-out intentions of novice teachers of English as a foreign language in comparison with teachers of other subjects. Our findings indicate that drop-out intentions are more frequent in teachers of English as a foreign language than for other teachers and that teachers of English evaluate their cooperation with colleagues and leadership at their schools more critically than other teachers.

Key words: teaching English as a foreign language, novice teachers, drop-out

1 Introduction

Since 1990 the Czech Republic has been facing an insufficient number of teachers of English as a foreign language, especially at the primary and lower secondary school levels. The shortage has been reported by the Czech School Inspectorate repeatedly since the 1990s (Annual Report, 2016). In the survey carried out by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS, 2015), school head teachers reported a lack of teachers in several fields, including English.

There are several reasons for the lack of English teachers. During the Communist regime the first foreign language taught at all levels of schools in the

Czech Republic was Russian and therefore the educational system employed only a limited number of English teachers. The change in 1990 was so abrupt that many Russian teachers started teaching English and at the same time they began to study in English language teacher education study programmes at universities. Very quickly the English language became the first foreign language at all primary schools and, at the same time, the age of onset of English instruction was getting lower. Whereas in the early 1990s foreign language instruction started in grade 5, in 1995 it was shifted to grade 4, and in 2006 the Ministry of Education declared that all primary schools must introduce English as the first foreign language as of grade 3. Many primary schools decided to follow the ministerial recommendations and to comply with parents' demand and began to offer English instruction even earlier, often in grade 1.

A logical solution to the increasing need for qualified teachers in this situation was to offer more places for students in English language teacher education study programmes, which has happened since 1990. But even if these programmes are extremely popular among applicants, and universities offer a sufficient number of places, a high percentage of graduates look for teaching positions outside primary and lower secondary schools or for lucrative jobs outside the school sector.

We assume another factor that may contribute to the lack of teachers of English in public schools is a drop-out rate in the early stages of the teachers' careers. Unfortunately, teacher drop-out has not been researched in the Czech Republic yet and it has not been systematically monitored by the state either. In the study aiming at novice teacher drop-out that we conducted in 2015–2017, we focused on the intentions of early career teachers to stay in their current schools, change schools or leave the teaching profession. We were also interested in identifying which objective determinants (external factors) of novice teachers' socialisation can function as predictors of their drop-out intentions. The results of the study were presented in Hanušová et al. (2017). The current paper presents partial findings related to drop-out intentions of novice teachers of English as a foreign language in comparison with teachers of other subjects.

2 Teacher drop-out

Drop-out of qualified teachers belongs to the challenges in educational systems in many countries. The professional group considered most vulnerable in this respect are beginning teachers (Ingersoll, 2003). Whereas a drop-out rate around 5 % is considered natural and acceptable (Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift & Maulana, 2016), higher drop-out results in lowering the quality of education and an economic loss. Since the late 1950s, a high drop-out rate among beginning teachers has been observed in English speaking countries. Current studies report drop-out in the United States ranging from 39 % to 50 % (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2004; Smethem, 2007), in the United

Kingdom 35 % (Sturman, Cheramie & Cashen, 2005), in Canada 20 % (Martel, 2009), and in Australia with a range of 20–50 % (Buchanan et al., 2013). The attrition rates have gradually become a global problem, e.g. in the Netherlands where 25 % of novice teachers leave schools (CentERdata, 2013, in Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift & Maulana, 2016), or in Norway with 33 % drop-out among novice teachers (Tiplic et al., 2015). There are, however, countries with a low drop-out of novices in teaching, e.g. Japan (3 %), South Korea (3 %), Finland (7 %), and Taiwan (1.3 %) (OECD, 2005).

The above studies unfortunately do not deploy a unified conceptualisation and terminology of teacher drop-out (Ingersoll, 2001). In some studies, the distinction is not made between teachers who completely abandoned the educational sphere, and teachers who have just changed school but continue to work in education. In order to avoid this problem in this study we opted for the conceptualisation used in the reports by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES,, e.g. by Bobbitt et al., 1991), which differentiates between the so-called stayers - those who remain, the movers - the teachers who change the school, and the so-called leavers - those who leave the teaching profession.

Furthermore, the above studies tend to investigate teacher drop-out as a generic phenomenon, in other words, they do not always specify the research sample in terms of teacher subject specialisation (neither on lower nor higher secondary levels). Therefore, they cannot provide an answer to the question of why some areas of the curriculum suffer from a notorious lack of teachers, while others seem sufficiently staffed.

3 Foreign / English language teaching (further on ELT) subculture

The term subject subculture is linked to cultural analyses of organisations (e.g. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Educational research and theory (e.g. Sarason, 1982) focusing on change and reform attempts within schools from this perspective tended to view schools as monocultural places until the 1990s when the internal heterogeneity of school culture was acknowledged. School subcultures may reflect a number of variables – academic discipline, career stage, ideology, attitude towards change, etc. A number of studies focused on cultural specifics of the content-related professional groups, i.e. teachers of the same subjects (e.g. Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Siskin (1991) in her case study of an American high school found that, "teachers identified themselves as members of a professional network with strong ties outside the school; they speak as members of a community defined not by space but by subject […] they spoke distinct languages and used references in specialized ways, according to their subject specialty" (pp. 142, 143).

For the purpose of this study the subject subculture is defined in accordance with Goodson (1993, 1997). He perceives subjects as established bodies of

knowledge and social practices that are characterized by shared assumptions about 'important knowledge', 'effective teaching', or 'appropriate assessment'. The subcultures are socially constructed, usually institutionally located, and individually interpreted. They are rooted in complex traditions of organisational practices, collective experience, and, last but not least, personal biographies. Subject specific perspectives are in part also linked to the theoretical consensus emerging from a discipline and reflecting its epistemology. John (2005, p. 473) also suggested that "different kinds of personalities may be attracted to different subject matters; a process that may link personal beliefs, values and orientations to shared proclivities".

The subcultures possess different features and status that exert influence on teachers' work (Goodson, 1985; Stodolsky, 1993). Grossman and Stodolsky (1995) in their study focusing on the role of school subjects in secondary school teaching regard content as context, relying on Lave's (1988) view that distinguishes between arenas and settings. In her framework, arenas are defined as the larger institutions possessing a set of features that enable or constrain certain actions. A setting is an individually constructed representation of a specific arena. The construct of a setting provides explanation why people may experience the same arena in different ways.

Subject subcultures differ from each other in various ways. Grossman and Stodolsky (1995, p. 6) pointed out that there is divergence in terms of status and sequentiality as well as in terms of coherence and scope of the school subject which allows for different levels of teacher autonomy. As regards teachers of foreign languages, they argue that the subculture may be shaped e.g. by the fact that the subject "has a fairly rigid sequential curriculum … without having mastered the content of French I students may find it difficult to move on to the next level" (ibid., p. 6).

Research into the foreign language teaching subculture has since the 1970s adopted two main orientations. First, a number of studies used a comparative approach. For example, a British study by Hayes (1976) identified differences between foreign language and math teachers, who supported streaming or tracking, while teachers of English (as a mother tongue) favoured mixed-ability classes. These findings were later confirmed by studies by Wheelock (1992) and Gamoran and Weinstein (1995). Similarly, Ball (1981) in a study of a British secondary school found that the highest level of resistance to change (multi-ability grouping) was displayed by teachers of foreign languages and math. Other studies focused on the differences in attitudes towards academic knowledge (e.g. a survey of Israeli teachers by Yaakobi and Sharan,1985), in preferences between transmission and interpretation (Barnes & Shemilt, 1974), or in perceived levels of curricular autonomy and control (Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995).

Secondly, efforts have been invested into identification of the specifics of foreign language teaching / ELT subculture. The initial attempts resulted in detailed lists or catalogues of what a foreign language teacher should know and be able to practice (e.g. Vollmer, 1995). They were according to Freeman and Johnson (1998) based on tradition and opinion rather than on theory and research. The experience with the creation of such catalogues was also described by Bludau (2006, p. 339). The milestone in the search for the specifics of foreign language teachers was the creation and implementation of teachers' professional standards (Terhart, 2005) as it triggered deeper empirical research. The most influential studies include Dirks's biographical research (2000), the study by Caspari (2003) focusing on the professional self-concept of foreign language teachers, and Wipperfürth's study (2009) which defined three specific didactic competences of a foreign language teacher: teacher's language, multilingualism, and intercultural competence. In relation to language, the author points out that in the teaching of foreign languages the aim, content and means of teaching are identical.

Building on an older study by Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987), a complex large-scale research by Borg (2006) contributed to insight into the specifics of foreign language / ELT subculture in a substantial way. In addition to the aforementioned aspects (the nature of the subject matter, the content and the objectives), he identified the differences from teachers of other subjects in the following areas: a) work with error (incorrect production by pupils or students at certain stages of foreign language acquisition is more acceptable than in other subjects), b) target group (more adults study foreign languages in comparison with other subjects), c) FLT methodology / didactics (approaches, strategies and methods used in foreign language teaching are more diverse than it is for many other subjects), d) foreign language teachers are not usually native speakers. The latter area was intensively discussed with regard to the assessment of the professional qualities of foreign language teachers, and the issue of non-native speakers of the language was addressed in a number of studies (e.g. Medgyes, 1994).

Compared to other school subject, particular cultural, social and political aspects of teaching foreign languages exert immense influence on the professional group in charge (see Kramsch, 1997; Medgyes, 1994; Jenkins, 2007). It is obvious that a particular foreign language subculture is determined by the specific cultural context and the perception and experience of individuals in a specific educational environment, but also by the cultural and political aspects of foreign language teaching / learning. Many researchers have turned their attention to these aspects of foreign language tuition, whether in connection with the above mentioned issue of multilingualism (Wipperfurth, 2009), or in the ELT area with so called linguistic imperialism (Jenkins, 2007, Norton, 2000, etc.). The criticism of the British, American, or other English language dominance, and the promotion of English as

and Lingua Franca as a politically correct variety are social phenomena that are currently further delineating the content of teaching / learning, which has a direct impact on teachers and their professional performance. Therefore we conclude that the specificity of a foreign language teacher should be viewed as a socially constructed phenomenon that can be defined in various ways in different contexts (see also Pennycook, 2001).

4 Teacher socialisation

Lacey (1977), Zeichner and Gore (1990), Grossman and Stodolsky (1995) and others claim that subject subculture may play a strong role in the socialisation of beginning teachers. It follows that the subculture may play a role in their drop-out rate in the early years of their teaching career.

In our research we view socialisation in accordance with Zeichner and Gore (1990, p. 329), resp. with the older definition by Danzinger, as "the process whereby the individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers", and we account for the interpretive approach to the phenomenon. Rather than concentrating on social structures (i.e. functionalist paradigm), the interpretive approach attempts to explain the dynamic socialisation process "within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28), thus acknowledging the experiences, values and ideas of a beginning teacher.

Determinants in novice teacher socialisation processes

In the analysis of the factors that play a key role in novice teachers´ professional socialisation we build on Pařízek (1994, pp. 61-67) and Beltman and her colleagues (2011) and distinguish between subjective (i.e. internal) and objective (i.e. external) determinants of socialisation processes.

While recognizing the significance of subjective (or internal) determinants that include novice teacher´s personality traits, motivation, coping strategies, commitment, professional knowledge and beliefs, value system, self-efficacy, well-being, etc. (see also Eldar et al., 2003), in our research we focused predominantly on the objective (or external) determinants as this is the area that may be addressed by the measures of educational policy.

The framework for the analysis was provided by Pollard's (1982) conceptual model, which includes three levels of social contextualisation: interactive (pupils and classrooms), institutional (the recognised morals, procedures and rituals of the teaching profession) and cultural (local social community as well as broader economic, political and cultural environment). Regarding the institutional level of socialisation, its perception by novice teachers is necessarily limited, their lived experience is usually narrowed to a particular organisation, their first school.

Therefore, organisational aspects of the institutional level such as school culture / setting, leadership, staff relationships, collegiality etc. gain importance also in our research.

As a detailed discussion of the factors within the three levels and relevant reviews of literature were published elsewhere (Hanušová et al., 2017; Píšová, 2013), here we only briefly introduce the main findings that helped us operationalise the framework for research purposes.

Interactive level of socialisation

At the interactive level of socialisation contemporary studies seem to suggest that novices' positive perceptions are connected with success of the pupils, pupil involvement and good teacher – pupil relationships (e.g. Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007). Hong et al. (2012, p. 428) pointed out that the stayers and leavers differ in their attributions: stayers consider pupils to be responsible for their own learning, leavers consider themselves responsible, which in the case of pupils' failure leads to emotional burnout and the decision to leave school. Furthermore, good working relationships with the pupils contribute to the entrants' professional well-being (Claessens et al., 2016, p. 97; Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). On the other hand, novices' negative feelings, i.e. possible predictors of drop-out, are frequently associated with classroom discipline and with the heterogeneous pupil population (Kyriacou & Kunc; 2007, Hagger et al., 2011; Hong, 2012; Wolff et al., 2017, and others.). Research suggests that the pressure caused by a heterogeneous class may result in the teacher's gradual loss of motivation (Gaikhorst et al., 2017; McKay, 2016). In addition to that, there are numerous studies dealing with the influence of internal psychological constructs at the interactive level of socialisation such as teacher beliefs (Hong, 2012; McKay, 2016; Aus et al., 2017 and others), teacher expectations (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Gavish & Friedman, 2011), teacher self-efficacy (Aus et al., 2017), etc.

Institutional level of socialisation

Recently, attention has shifted from teachers' interaction with pupils towards novice teachers as organisational people, members of a community of practice (Gavish & Friedman, 2011; Eldar et al., 2003). Research from the USA indicates that novices leave the profession for reasons related to the institutional level rather than to interaction with pupils (Johnson et al., 2011; Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2011).

In one of the first large-scale studies Weiss (1999) proved that a key factor affecting beginning teachers' intention to stay or leave is the perceived culture of the school, including perceived support and affirmation (cf. Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Grosemans et al., 2015). Kardos et al. (2001) pointed out that while integrated professional culture is considered optimal for novice teachers'

socialisation, veteran culture (Kardos et al., 2001), individualistic culture (Williams et al., 2001), or collision of subcultures (Farrell, 2003) are not perceived favourably by novices and, thus, represent a drop-out risk factor. However, even in schools where the culture displays desirable qualities such as mutual trust, respect, openness and commitment (Johnson et al., 2011; Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2011), it is the degree of novices' "professional fit" that may play a crucial role (Pogodzinski et al., 2013b).

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggest that school leadership, or more precisely its perception by the teacher, is perhaps the strongest predictor of the intention to stay at school. Novices appreciate relational trust, the ability to purposefully create well-structured opportunities for collegiate cooperation at school (Fernet et al., 2016; Ladd, 2009) and "strong, open, organisationally sound leadership" (Beltman et al., 2011, p. 191).

Many studies focused on the impact of induction and mentoring programmes (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Eldar et al., 2003; Boyd et al., 2011, Glazerman et al., 2010, Wechsler et al., 2010 Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013a; Gaikhorst et al., 2014). Though they mostly reported a positive effect of the implementation programmes, it is worth noticing that two of the most thorough studies (Glazerman et al., 2010; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2016) did not find any significant relationship between induction and novices' drop-out intentions.

Last but not least, novice teachers often suffer from work overload, they seem to be burdened by the administrative rather than educational tasks. This is an important risk factor at the institutional level of socialisation (Beltman et al., 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Fernet et al., 2016).

Cultural level of socialisation

At the cultural level of socialisation, the specificity of subject subcultures gains importance, especially within the broader social context. The literature clearly identified the issue of financial rewards for the demands and social responsibility of teachers' work to be a key factor. For example, in the USA the salary is a statistically significant predictor of drop-out (e.g. Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008). In the Czech context there are no such data available, however, the percentage of missing teachers in general and English teachers in particular are a sufficiently serious indicator of the problem, especially in comparison with the number of graduates from initial teacher education programmes. It should be stressed that the role is played not only by the absolute salary: teacher migration in the USA is also affected by the relative salary (Imazeki, 2005) or the salary perspective (Grissom & Strunk, 2012).

Within the cultural level of socialisation, the local community has to be accounted for as well when discussing novice teacher drop-out. Research worldwide shows that a special role is played by parents. Teachers' job satisfaction

is strongly associated with smooth cooperation with parents and their respect, trust and emotional recognition (Li & Hung, 2012; Oplatka & Eizenberg, 2007; Evetts, 2006). Considering novice teachers' uncertainty and inexperience, it seems obvious that they are the 'endangered species' in the relationship with parents and a perceived lack of success may lead to their frustration (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 823). In other words, the parents can make a difference through a significant contribution to the teacher's sense of well-being (Li & Hung, 2012; Oplatka & Eizenberg, 2007), thus supporting a teacher's stay in the profession, or vice versa.

5 Research methods and sample

5.1 Research aim and research questions

The present study aimed at comparing the intentions of beginning teachers of English as a foreign language in Czech primary and lower secondary schools to stay in their current school, change schools or leave the teaching profession to the intentions of teachers in other subject areas.

We also wanted to identify the external factors that are perceived by beginning teachers of English as the main influence on their intentions, again in comparison with the results obtained in teachers of other subjects.

Our research questions were the following:

- What proportion of respondents, i.e. beginning teachers in Czech primary and lower secondary schools, plan to leave their current school or the teaching profession?
- Do beginning teachers of English as a foreign language differ from other teachers in their plans?
- Which of the external factors are perceived by beginning teachers as the reason to stay in their school, change schools or leave the teaching profession?
- Are the external factors perceived differently by beginning teachers of English as a foreign language?

5.2 Research instrument

To survey drop-out intentions of novice teachers at primary and lower secondary schools (i.e. basic schools) in the Czech Republic we developed and administered an original questionnaire.

Our questionnaire was inspired by similar instruments used in published studies (esp. Gavish & Friedman, 2011; Özturk & Yildirim, 2013; Johnson et al., 2011) After the introductory demographic questions (concerned with the respondents' gender, age, teaching specialisation, size of school and of town and the length of teaching experience in months) we structured the questions into sections corresponding with particular external factors of teacher socialisation at the interactive, institutional and cultural levels. The statements in the particular

sections were followed by 6-point Likert scales on which the respondents expressed their (dis)agreement. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about their intentions to stay in their current school, change schools or leave the teaching profession.[1]

5.3 Data collection

The data was collected online from two cohorts of teachers over two academic years: 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. We contacted all novice teachers from all basic schools in six regions in the Czech Republic (three regions for each cohort) and we sent them the link to our online questionnaire. Altogether we gained 213 filled questionnaires for the first cohort (with a return rate of 63%) and 192 for the second cohort (with a return rate of 56%). In both cohorts we contacted the teachers again at the end of the school year to see whether and how their opinions changed, which means that the data was collected twice from each cohort of teachers (both times with the same research instrument). Finally, the respondents' length of practice was checked: the questionnaires filled by teachers whose length of teaching experience during the first data collection exceeded 40 months were excluded.

5.4 Research sample

The research sample included 380 teachers at primary and lower secondary level (ISCED 1 and 2, corresponding to Czech 9-year basic school). We had 73 teachers of English as a foreign language in our sample (i.e. 19.2 %). The following tables present the descriptions of both cohorts of the sample.

Table 1: Novice teachers: first cohort

Data collection 1: N = 202 (October – December 2015)	
Gender	female 182 (90.1 %), male 20 (9.9 %)
Mean age	27. 4 (SD = 3.6; min. 22, max. 44)
Mean length of teaching experience	3.5 months (SD = 5.09; min. 0, max 30)
Teachers of English as a foreign language	43 (21 %)
Data collection 2: N = 120 (May – June 2016)	
Gender	female 110 (87.3 %), male 10 (8 %)
Mean age	28. 1 (SD = 4.2; min. 22, max. 44)
Teachers of English as a FL	32 (15.9 %)

[1] For the full version of the questionnaire and further information see Hanušová et al. (2017).

Table 2: Novice teachers: second cohort

Data collection 1: N = 178 (October – December 2016)	
Gender	female 145 (81.5 %), male 33 (18.5 %)
Mean age	27.4 (SD = 3.874; min. 21, max. 45)
Mean length of teaching experience	10.8 months (SD = 9. 7; min. 0, max 40)
Teachers of English as a Foreign Language	30 (16.9 %)
Data collection 2: N = 90 (May – June 2017)	
Gender	female 75 (83.3 %) male 15 (16.7 %)
Mean age	26. 9 (SD = 3.3; min. 21, max. 45)
Teachers of English as a Foreign Language	13 (14.5 %)

6 Results

The presentation of the results yielded by the analysis of questionnaire responses is structured in accordance with the above presented research questions.

Q1: What proportion of respondents, i.e. beginning teachers in Czech primary and lower secondary schools, plan to leave their current school or the teaching profession?

In the first data collection, 71.4 % of all the teachers in our sample were stayers. i.e. they intended to stay in their current school. There were 19.1 % movers (teachers who wanted to change schools) and 9.5 % leavers (teachers planning to leave the teaching profession). The remaining teachers did not indicate their intentions. No major changes were identified in the complete sample between the data collections 1 and 2. In the second data collection we identified 72 % stayers, 19.9 % movers, 8.1 % leavers.

Q2: Do beginning teachers of English as a foreign language differ from other teachers in their plans?

There were no significant differences between the teachers of English and the teachers of other subjects in the first data collection (Pearson chi square 0.303, p = 0.851). In the second data collection, we found differences (Pearson chi square 9.611, p = 0.008). We do not see more leavers among the English teachers, but the percentage of movers is significantly higher (standardized residual 2.4). Only 55 % of English teachers intended to stay in their current school, whereas 35 % of English teachers wanted to change schools (compared to 15 % of other teachers).

When searching for a possible explanation of the differences, we also checked whether the teachers of English differed from the other teachers in the number of schools they have already worked at. No differences were traced here.

Table 3: Frequencies*: My intentions concerning my professional career are best captured by the following statement:*

	Data collection 1				*Data collection 2*			
	English teachers	%	Others	%	English teachers	%	others	%
1 I would like to stay in my school.	46	68.7	201	72	25	55.6	109	77.3
2 I would like to continue as a teacher, but I think of changing a school.	14	20.9	52	18.6	16	35.6	21	14.8
3 I would like to leave the teaching profession.	7	10.4	26	9.3	4	8.9	11	7.8

Q3: Which of the external factors are perceived by beginning teachers as the reason to stay in their school, change schools or leave the teaching profession?

We used logistic regression models to establish the main predictors of the intention to stay in the current school. It was necessary to merge the groups of leavers and movers for the purpose of predictions as their frequencies were too low for separate analyses.

In both data collections the intention to stay is significantly predicted by the evaluation of the factors at the interactive level (pupils) and at the institutional level (summary of the evaluation of school, colleagues and leadership). The factors at the cultural level (cooperation with parents, sociocultural context) did not function as predictors, although the satisfaction at these levels was rather low. The model could successfully predict about 70 % of stayers (AUC = 0.78, max. combined sensitivity and specificity approximately 0.7). The prediction was more successful in the second data collection (AUC = 0.88, max. combined sensitivity and specificity between 0.75-0.80). In an attempt to add further factors to the baseline model we tested the effect of sociodemographic variables (age, sex), size of town and school, the order of the workplace in the professional history, type of teacher

education programme, and the total length of teaching experience. None of these increased the predictive power.

The only factor we identified as relevant for predictions was the teaching specialisation (the subjects the respondents teach). Though independently the teaching specialisations have almost no predictive value, when adding them to the model, the model successfully predicted 86% of stayers (AUC = 0.90, with a sensitivity of 0.89, the specificity is 0.81). Interestingly enough, we also obtained similar prediction values when using the evaluation of the school from data collection 1 together with teaching specialisations. Therefore, we can assume that during the year, the evaluation of the school also develops in line with the teaching specialisations and together they carry the same information.

It is obvious from our results that the intention to stay is influenced by teaching specialisation. There are fewer stayers in data collection 2 among teachers of English than among teachers without this specialisation (55 % vs. 75 %, chi square (N = 161) = 5.3, df = 1, p = 0.021). The situation among mathematics teachers is very similar and there are very few stayers among physical education teachers. On the other hand, primary teachers are more often stayers than lower secondary teachers.

Obviously, the teaching specialisation is influential especially if it allows the teacher to find another job relatively easily.

Q4: Are the external factors perceived differently by beginning teachers of English as a foreign language?

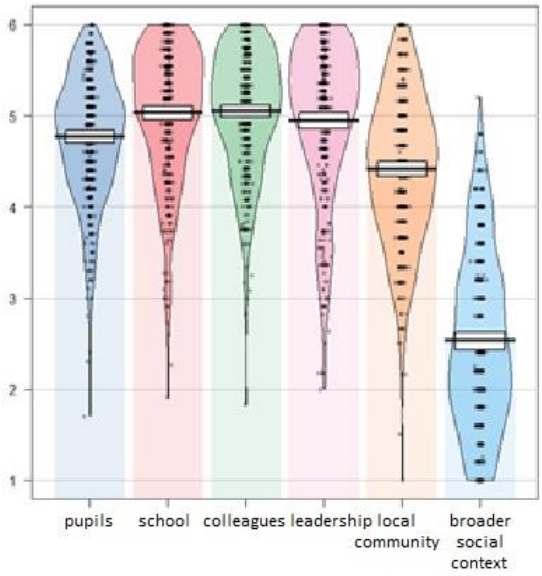
Having established that teaching specialisations increase the predictive value of the baseline model and that the teachers of English tend to change schools more often than other teachers, we decided to analyse the satisfaction at different levels of socialisation with regard to the differences between the teachers of English and teachers of other subjects.

First, we will present the results concerning the whole research sample. The violin plots in Graphs 1 and 2 present the kernel-smoothed distributions of satisfaction with the six areas of professional socialisation with means and their 95 % confidence interval. The consistency of the scales (Cronbach alpha) ranged from 0.80 to 0.93.

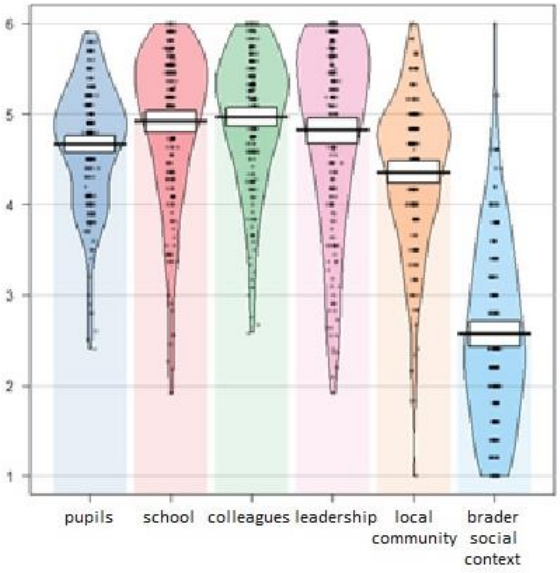
In both data collections the results are very similar, and in most areas the respondents appeared to be very satisfied. The highest level of satisfaction was achieved at the institutional level (cooperation with colleagues and leadership at school). The cooperation with pupils was also evaluated as rather positive, whereas the satisfaction with the contact with parents was somewhat lower. The level of satisfaction with the broader context (here reduced to the items of social recognition and adequate salaries) sharply contrasted with the evaluation in the other areas. It was very low and the number of the respondents who evaluated it

highly was extremely small (as illustrated by the upper end of the last violin, which is very thin).

Graph 1: Evaluation of areas of professional socialisation in Data collection 1



Graph 2: Evaluation of areas of professional socialisation in Data collection 2



The sufficient number of English teachers in the sample (n = 73) made it possible to compare their answers with those of the other teachers. We first compared the differences in the evaluation of the scales representing particular levels of novice teacher socialisation and then we also examined the differences in particular statements.

In the first data collection, the satisfaction of the English teachers did not differ significantly from those of the teachers of other subjects at the interactive level of socialisation (pupils) and in the interaction with parents and the school community. We identified significant differences in the evaluation of the cooperation with colleagues (English teachers perceived the cooperation with colleagues as more problematic than other teachers, $p < 0.05$) and in the evaluation of broader context ($p < 0.01$, English teachers' opinions were more critical of the broader context, see Table 4).

Table 4: Differences in the evaluations: English teachers

Data collection		Pupils	School	Colleagues	Leadership	Local community	Broader social context
1	Mann-Whitney U	9419	10237,5	***8074***	8295,5	8634,5	**7583**
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,221	0,982	***0,015***	0,059	0,255	**0,007**
2	Mann-Whitney U	3521	3286,5	**2675**	**2408**	3017,5	2870,5
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,242	0,216	**0,005**	**0,003**	0,5	0,154

In the second data collection the differences in the evaluation of the cooperation with colleagues became even more pronounced ($p < 0.01$). The difference in the evaluation of the broader context disappeared (probably as also the teachers of other subjects became less satisfied with it in the second data collection). A new significant difference appeared: English teachers were much less satisfied with the cooperation with the leadership than other teachers ($p < 0.01$, see Table 4).

From the above-mentioned differences at the level of scales we assumed that the teachers of English are for some reason more sensitive to the problems arising at the institutional level of their socialisation. A closer look at particular questionnaire items revealed what exactly made the teachers of English less satisfied at their workplace.

The most remarkable differences were identified for the following statements representing the institutional level of socialisation, where the significant differences appeared in both data collections:

When I talk about professional matters, my colleagues listen to me ($p < 0.01$in both data collections).

If I'm interested, I can ask my colleagues for feedback on my work ($p < 0.05$ in the first data collection, $p < 0.01$ in the second data collection).

School leadership clearly formulates the requirements for a high-quality professional performance they expect from teachers ($p < 0.01$ in both data collections).

School leadership continuously monitors the compliance with these requirements ($p < 0.01$ in both data collections).

School leadership provides teachers with constructive feedback ($p < 0.05$ in the first data collection, $p < 0.01$ in the second data collection).

At the other levels, only one item was identified as significant in both data collections:

The salary of a teacher corresponds to the intensity of the activities performed and the workload ($p < 0.05$ in the first data collection, $p < 0.01$ in the second data collection).

Other differences between English teachers and other teachers were less prominent, as they were identified only in one of the data collections. The most significant ($p < 0,01$) one was observed in the response to the following item:

The prestige of the teaching profession is high in the public eye. (differences only in the first data collection)

The remaining statements became highly significantly different in the second data collection where the English teachers became more disappointed with more aspects at the institutional level:

At school I will always find a colleague whom I can ask for help.
Teachers' co-operation is a matter of course at our school.
I meet my colleagues informally outside school (birthday parties, etc.).
School leadership can get teachers to achieve the goals they set.
There is an effective induction programme for beginning teachers at my school.

In all of the above-mentioned items, the answers of the teachers of English expressed a lower level of satisfaction compared to other teachers.

7 Discussion

Our results support the claim that subject subculture influences the process of socialisation of beginning teachers (cf. Zeichner and Gore, 1990; Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). The teachers of English as a foreign language in our sample differed from the teachers of other subjects in several ways. First, the percentage of English teachers who expressed their intention to stay at their school was lower than the percentage of other teachers. The difference was highly significant during the second data collection when we saw more movers among the English teachers. Movers, i.e. teachers who want to change schools but do not want to leave the teaching profession, may be motivated teachers who feel they cannot thrive in their current school but still consider staying in the profession and look for better conditions elsewhere.

English language teaching subculture in the Czech Republic is very specific from the point of view of opportunities of finding more prosperous jobs outside the educational sector. The fact that many graduates of English language teacher education study programmes do not start working as teachers and accept other job offers contributes to the shortage of English teachers at Czech basic schools. Consequently, for English teachers, changing schools is often easily done.

Having identified a relatively low percentage of stayers among our respondents, we were interested in the predictors of staying. As far as the overall results, i.e. for teachers of all specialisations, are concerned, they showed the key importance of the institutional level of professional socialisation of novice teachers. The institutional level involving school, colleagues and leadership was a consistent scale in our survey, although we originally created three separate scales for its individual components in the questionnaire. The satisfaction of beginning teachers with the culture and the environment of the school, colleagues and school leadership was generally very high and the common positive assessment of these areas was the most reliable predictor of the intention to remain in school (cf. Cherubini, 2009). Whereas the stayers in our sample expressed the highest level of satisfaction with the area of school, the evaluation by movers was the most negative one. Therefore, we assume the lack of satisfaction with a school can lead to a change of schools, even if not necessarily to leaving the teaching profession.

The predictive power of our baseline model was increased by adding teaching specialisations, which supports the claim that although all the teachers at a school share the same arena (possessing a set of features that enable or constrain certain actions), their individually constructed representation of the arena, described by Lave (1988) as setting, can be different. Setting, according to Lave (1988, p.151), is constituted dialectically in relation to activity. The fact, that for an individual

teacher it is „a repeatedly experienced, personally ordered and edited version of arena" (ibid.), may explain the differences in subject subcultures as their members share core curricular activities and further duties.

When analyzing the factors that contributed to the higher representation of movers among the English teachers in our sample during the second data collection, we identified differences in the satisfaction of English teachers at the institutional level. Already in the first data collection the English teachers perceived their cooperation with colleagues as significantly less positive than other teachers. This was confirmed during the second data collection and, moreover, the English teachers became more critical of the school leadership. For some reason, they came to their schools with higher expectations that were often unmet, during the beginning of the school year at more proximal level (everyday contacts with colleagues) and later also at the more distal one (perception of the school leadership).

The teachers of English also expected an effective induction programme at their school. Effective mentoring and induction programmes implemented in school were reported only by less than 10% of our respondents. They were missed especially by leavers. During the first data collection the perceptions of induction programmes were not different in English teachers but during the second data collection the difference between English teachers and other teachers was highly significant. It may be caused by the fact that the programme was originally offered but the implementation was disappointing in the end.

During the first data collection, differences between the teachers of English and other teachers existed also at the cultural level, where the English teachers were generally less satisfied that other teachers, especially as concerns salaries, influence of educational policy on teachers' work and the prestige of the teaching profession in the public eye. However, these differences were not noticeable during the second data collection when the evaluation of the factors at the cultural level by the teachers of other subjects became less positive.

Interestingly enough, the English teachers in our sample did not differ from other teachers in their perceptions of the interactive level, i.e. cooperation with pupils in the classroom. Our findings indicate that novice teachers in Czech basic schools are generally very satisfied with their cooperation with pupils. More than 90 % of our respondents (including the teachers of English) perceived their relationships with their pupils positively, felt good in the classroom and believed that pupils felt good as well, that pupils perceived them as good teachers and recognized their authority. Of course, the stayers in our sample were more positive in their perceptions than movers and leavers.

Every research is subject to certain limitations. Apart from the lower number of respondents in data collection 2 (including a limited number of teachers of English as a foreign language) we see the main limit of our study in the fact that

our research only identified the subjective perceptions of external factors of socialisation by beginning teachers themselves. On the other hand, novice teachers' subjective perceptions are crucial for their professional future, as according to them the decision, whether to stay or leave, is made. Last but not least, we were unable to determine whether those who intended to leave school really did it in the end.

Unfortunately, we were not able to compare the results of our study with similar studies either in the Czech Republic or internationally, as we have not found a single study aiming at the differences between teachers of English as a foreign language and other teachers with regard to drop-out intentions.

8 Conclusions

Our results indicate that the Czech Republic will probably rank among the countries with rather high drop-out rate of beginning teachers. As for the teachers of English as a foreign language, they seem to be more prone to drop-out than teachers of other subjects (apart from the teachers of mathematics and physical education who intend to stay in the current school even less than the teachers of English).

There is no doubt that the low prestige of the teaching profession and low salaries contribute to the teachers' intentions to change schools or leave the teaching profession. The stayers, leavers and movers did not differ much in their evaluation of the broader context, though. They were most probably aware of all the problems (esp. low prestige of the teaching profession and low salaries) when deciding about their studies and later when accepting the teaching positions at schools. Therefore, when they started teaching, these factors did not surprise them.

What distinguishes the stayers from the movers and leavers is the satisfaction with the pupils and especially the satisfaction with the school environment, including the cooperation with colleagues and the school leadership. The factors at the interactive and institutional level have been identified as the strongest predictors of the willingness to stay. The teachers of English as a foreign language seem to be even more sensitive to the factors at the institutional level than the teachers of other subjects. They are less satisfied with cooperation with colleagues and with the increasing length of their teaching practice as well as with the school leadership. They are willing to stay in schools with good collegial climate and inspirational leadership, provided that they are offered an effective induction programme. The reasons can be seen both in their higher expectations and in the opportunities available for employment elsewhere (at different schools, at language schools, but also outside the educational sector). A vicious circle involving shortage of English teachers that enables easier change of schools is

making English teachers in the Czech Republic an endangered species, regardless of the fact that universities educate large numbers of English teachers every year.

The question is what measures can be adopted for the prevention of drop-out in beginning teachers of English as a foreign language. It is obvious that as teacher educators we should aim at providing high-quality pre-service teacher education in close cooperation with schools. However, our results clearly point at the institutional level as a key to successful retention of novice teachers, which is even more prominent in teachers of English as a foreign language. To improve the factors at the institutional level, the support of beginning teachers (induction and mentoring, care for professional development) should not be left at the discretion of particular school headmasters and should be intensified and systematised by the state.

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Test Banking in English for Medical Purposes (Dentistry)

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Abstract

Activities and questions to assess knowledge in English for medical purposes were designed to incorporate terminology, academic vocabulary and grammar items in computer-based tests for bachelor students in Dentistry at Medical University - Varna. During the two-semester study course identification of key words, core lexical patterns, specific collocations and emphasis on their recurrent use were the selected strategies for student retention of specialized language and improved learning outcomes. Medical terms as single-word lexical units with straightforward definitions are easy to learn compared to collocations and multi-word terms including polysemous adjectives. In the present paper we concentrate on the process of formation of structures containing attributive adjectives which can be quite a problematic and error-generating area for second language learners. The aim of the on-going research study is to extract current lists of the sub-technical vocabulary and the terminological units in specialized medical domains as linguistic resources. The collection of assessment materials into a test bank for specific educational purposes is a customizable electronic resource, imported into the University platform to facilitate the process of compilation and creation of new tests.

By implementing corpus linguistic tools into test design, the instructor aims at providing an authentic e-assessment environment based on the idea of key words in context, concordances, and lexical patterns as per the contents of the selected textbooks and teaching materials during the course. The paper highlights some strategic issues about creating test resources in EMP such as the adherence to a set of selected linguistic items and grammatical structures based on their frequency in the domain.

Key words: key words in context, lexical patterns, specialized language assessment, computer-based tests

1 Introduction

In the present paper we aim to reveal the potential of corpus linguistic tools in the creation of computer-based tests and to demonstrate the importance of specific lexical patterns in teaching and testing medical English at tertiary level. The specific vocabulary in the domain of dentistry – verbs, nouns, attributive and predicative adjectives that take modification and complementation – is extracted from a self-compiled medical corpus and incorporated into assessment tasks. The

key word frequency profiles are calculated automatically per concordance lines and are dependent on the patterns they participate in. The contextual use of certain lexical patterns is identified for the purpose of creating test banks for the assessment of student knowledge of specialized vocabulary. The quantitative research investigates the pairings of form and meaning that are language specific in the field of medical English (the sublanguage of Dentistry) and reveals the complexity of the valency properties of the core structures in the field at an intermediate level of English language competence (B2). The contents of the textbook in English for Dental Medicine is representative of the syllabus in terms of reading topics, development of language skills and provision of language practice. Therefore, together with the respective materials, used in the teaching process during the semesters, it is selected as a corpus for the tasks included in the final students' assessment. Two lexical research tools (WordSmith Tool, version 6 and Sketch Engine) were used to perform a word list, key word (KWIC), cluster and pattern search in the textbook contents and allow for a comparison with a reference corpus (BNC), comparison of word profiles and extraction of sample sentences.

Thus, the aims and objectives of the final assessment align with the relevant syllabus and the specificity of the corpus collection. Any test bank is self-contained (uploaded on the university learning platform *Blackboard*) and sufficient to address effectively the learning targets of the curriculum. Besides specific nouns and verbs, adjectives used in medical texts, were not arbitrary. These core lexical and grammatical structures of the subject area were incorporated in assessment tasks. The effectiveness of every progress or final test was indicated by analyzing the test results and performing an end-of-year survey. This approach guaranteed relevant feedback and an accurate evaluation of students' progress. The level of difficulty of the test was consistent with the curriculum requirements as consideration was given to students' accumulated knowledge and progress during the language course. The approach allowed for no recurrent use of tests, stereotyping or random choice of test content.

2 Materials development

In accordance with the guiding principles for quality textbooks and teaching materials, interactive questions enhance the effectiveness of the assessment. Therefore, multimedia content (appropriate video clip) was included in the test to foster students' comprehension and successful test completion. Key terms and core phraseology from the textbook were also included as per the glossary of terms and the corpus keyword list (Table 1). Additionally, students were encouraged to perform further reading tasks, and related websites were added on Blackboard (including self-study materials) to practice listening and use of English skills.

Tab. 1: Key word extraction (Sketch Engine)

Term	Score	Freq	Ref freq
suture	1585.63	3920	37345
malocclusion	1252	1343	3349
maxillary	1008.21	1189	5944
mandibular	665.26	779	5753
occlusal	603.09	651	3533
caries	464.82	667	12181
denture	452.11	1518	58890
Orthod	425.15	398	67
incisor	394.59	509	8667
molar	388.89	683	19997

Identification of key words and lexical patterns

In the present paper the focus was on three functional groups: verbs, nouns and especially adjectives, frequent in medical texts as they provide precision by explaining an attribute of a noun, predicate a characterizing quality or modify the subject of the sentence. Adjectives are lexical units with a collocational potential (or valency properties) where one or more positions/slots around the head word are to be filled either with obligatory, optional or contextually optional elements. In the medical corpus predicative adjectives most often occur as complements to the verbs *be, become* and *make*. Complements can be single lexical units, phrases or clauses respectively. The number of valency complements for separate lexical items varies from zero-valency (or general use with no complements) to a maximum number (mono-, di-, tri-, etc.). Thus, adjectives can be a quite ambiguous and error-generating area as they do not correspond to objects, being states or qualities.

Monosemous lexemes with straightforward definitions in the medical domain may be accompanied by prepositions to form complex structures with an adjective head word. The sample sentences describing the Block's system of classification of caries demonstrate the obligatory attributive adjective use are as follows:

1. Another way of finding *mesial* and *distal* cavities at an *early* stage is transillumination.
2. Caries is located on the *proximal* surfaces of *central* and *lateral* incisors and cuspids.
3. Caries is located in pits and fissures of the *occlusal* two thirds of *posterior* teeth or on the *lingual* surface of *anterior* teeth.

4. Good *dental* care depends on *accurate* diagnosis, and *accurate* diagnosis is based on information.

The following attributive adjectives and their collocations were of highest frequency in the EMP corpus (Dentistry):

A. Key Word list of attributive adjectives (Dentistry):

maxillary, mandibular, nasal, lacrimal, parietal, temporal, frontal, occipital, ethmoidal, sphenoidal, zygomatic, lingual, lateral, distal, masticatory, salivary, parotid, submandibular, sublingual, labial, external, buccal, mesial, incisal, occlusal, apical, dorsal, internal, alveolar, pterygoid, temporal, squamous, mucous, superior, inferior, coronal, infraorbital, coronoid, condyloid, sagittal, lambdoid, metopic, horizontal, transverse, median, internal, pyramidal, palatine, irreversible, autogenous, advancing, acute, cranial, gingival, partial, etc.

Sentences with impersonal, non-agentive subjects and passive voice constructs were also incorporated in the tests as they constitute part of the obligatory medical English lexico-grammatical instrumentarium. Specific adjectives with an additional semantic component [dimension] and [duration] such as *parallel, central, distal*, *permanent* that are obligatory elements of terminological units and collocations are integrated in assessment tasks.

Example: Answer key for a drag and drop task (describing tooth surfaces):

Describing tooth surfaces. Match the adjectives with their definitions

toward the inside of the cheek	*buccal*
toward the lips	*labial*
toward the tongue	*lingual*
closest to the midline of the face	*mesial*
farthest from the midline of the face	*distal*
cutting edge of the anterior teeth	*incisal*
grinding or chewing surface of all posterior teeth	*occlusal*
relative to the root tip end of tooth	*apical*
facing away from the axis of an organ (back)	*dorsal*

B. Key Word list of predicative adjectives (Dentistry):

necessary, short, important, high, hard, similar, low, required, useful, complex, suitable, soft, accurate, strong, indirect, mild, rigid, horizontal, parallel, composite, flexible, brittle, durable, perpendicular, deformed, decayed, corrosive, painful, personal, significant, specific, acute, afraid, swollen, adjacent, infective, harmful,

healthy, untreated, inflamed, irregular, indirect, sterile, susceptible, in/convenient, responsible, etc.

The linking verbs that are found in the medical corpus (*be, become, make*) are among the most prototypical ones with an impersonal sentence subject. The prepositional phrase and the predicative adjective form a complex predicate. Such core propositions usually require further explanation to specify their meaning. Therefore, structures that contain extensions such as prepositional phrases which modify the predicate and describe in what way or under which condition the proposition is true are extremely frequent in medical English).

Predicative adjective patterns (Wordsmith Tool):

- Evidence on the cariogenicity of these foods *is sparse* and comes from animal studies. Plaque pH studies and studies in vitro suggest that maltodextrins and glucose syrups *are cariogenic*.
- Pain *becomes severe, spontaneous* and *persistent*, and is often poorly localized.
- Regional lymphadenopathy *is common*, and fever may *be present*.
- Plaque disclosing tablets are available at pharmacies and prescription is not necessary.
- The ADA recommends that consumers replace toothbrushes approximately every 3-4 months or sooner if the bristles *become frayed* with use.
- Dental caries *is becoming less common* in developing countries undergoing nutrition changes.

Combining polysemous adjectives with prepositions and adding complements results in specialization of the adjective meaning. The prepositions explicitly introduce a new participant role, thus making the originally rather general meaning of the predicative *be + adjective* phrase precise and specific. The prepositional noun phrase, marked as [PP], is the second frequent adjective pattern in the corpus. The core predicative adjectives with prepositional complements from the EMP corpus such as [Adj.] + [PP (to/in/for/of/on/as/about/from/over/against/than/as] are included in gap-fill tasks (Table 5).

Prepositional complements (Wordsmith Tool):

- In some European countries (e.g. Norway, Finland, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Gennany, Croatia or Denmark) orthodontic treatment *is available* without charge *to* patients under 18 as benefits for orthodontic treatment are provided under government-run health care systems.

- In fact, these water schemes were providing 'non-fluoride-safe' drinking water, which is harmful to the residents' health by inducing dental fluorosis and skeletal fluorosis.
- Milk teeth are more susceptible to caries, since the deciduous teeth enamel has a lower mineral content.
- It may also be *possible for* microorganisms that *are present* in the environment where the toothbrush is stored to establish themselves on the brush.
- Sealants are especially *beneficial for* children because their newly erupted, permanent teeth are most *susceptible to* cavities, however patients of all ages can benefit from dental sealants.

Other lexical patterns that are tested are complementation by a finite clause of the type [it] + [be] + [Adj. (*essential, necessary*) + [that-CL], and complementation by a non-finite clause of the type [it] + [be] + [Adj. (*convenient, easy, available*) + [to INF]. Complementation by a finite clause structure relates the adjective to a present or future fact or action that is introduced by a *that*-clause. Adjectives in this group are either modal or semantically neutral (*desirable, suitable, possible*), possess no degree of specificity and appear in habitual expressions with anticipatory *it*. Complementation by a non-finite clause is the most repeated type of complementation introducing processes. The sentences below are examples of extraposition.

Complementation by a clause (Wordsmith Tool)

- It is *interesting to* note that even the heart cannot survive without blood flowing through the vessels that bring nourishment to its muscular walls.
- In the most severe cases involving bone loss, it is frequently *necessary to* reshape the rough bone.
- It is *recommended that* national health authorities and decision-makers formulate country-specific and community-specific goals for reducing the amount of free sugars aiming towards the recommended maximum of no more than 10% of energy intake.
- We know that the oral cavity is home to hundreds of different types of microorganisms, therefore, it is not *surprising that* some of these microorganisms are transferred to a toothbrush during use.

Adjectives that are complemented by a [*that*-clause] relate the subject to a fact. The adjectives in this construction express evaluative attitude towards the content of the clause, but as the sentence has an anticipatory *it* as subject, the structure is more impersonal.

Concerning test content, priority is given to the predicative construction [be] + [Adj] + C] as it represents the predicator and functions as a main-verb with an extension, introducing various dimensions**,** describing situation types (dynamic or stative situations).

Further on, terminology and vocabulary retention of nouns as terminological units is incorporated in the design of the following types of tasks: accurate use of keywords and terminological units, identification of collocations (missing parts), use of linking devices and signal words for important information (gap-fill tasks), matching terms with their definitions, word formation tasks, use of reporting verbs, drag and drop activities related to key words (cloze tasks), labelling pictures, etc.

C. Use of key nouns and verbs

Example: Answer key for definitions (Dentistry corpus).

Match the definitions with the terms for the structures in the oral cavity.

• *Frenum, frena*	• a connecting fold of membrane serving to support or restrain any part
• *Palatine raphe*	• the white ridge between in the middle of the hard palate
• *Papillae*	• taste buds
• *Rugae*	• irregular folds or bumps on the surface
• *Tonsil*	• a mass of lymphatic tissue one on each side of the oral pharynx
• *Uvula*	• a small pendant fleshy lobe at the back of the soft palate
• *Vermillion border*	• area where the pink-red lip tissue meets facial skin

Key Word list of verbs (Dentistry):
chew, floss, discard, remove, extract, provide, treat, affect, contain, replace, rinse, spit, experience, produce, prevent, protect, erupt, crack, fill, expose, grind, restore, recommend, infect, occur, perform, administer, consume, identify, indicate, suffer, trigger, bleed, reduce, refer, *sedate, alleviate, emerge, bond,* etc.

Specific verbs in Dentistry (Wordsmith Tool)

- 20. About a third of dentists use nitrous oxide *to sedate* patients who are anxious.

- 21. The Vipeholm study *was conducted* shortly after the Second World War in Sweden between 1945 and 1953.
- 22. More often, one or more of these third molars *fails to emerge* in proper alignment or *fails to* fully *emerge* through the gum line and *becomes entrapped* or "*impacted*" between the jawbone and the gum tissue.
- 23. When conservative nonsurgical methods such as positive pressure air machines and dental splint appliances *fail to alleviate* this problem, surgery can be tried.
- 24. The examination can *be supplemented with* high-density stone study casts, intra-oral photographs, radiographs and salivary tests.
- 25. A tooth-colored adhesive filling material *is bonded* to the surface of the tooth, filling the cavity and protecting the tooth surface.

3 Results

The most challenging tasks (content-based) during the semester built the dynamic content of the test pools (Fig. 1).

A complete test version (Appendix1) was further adapted and uploaded on the university Blackboard platform for electronic assessment (Fig. 2). Minimum two progress test versions and two final test versions (4/year) were created by the instructor anew to expand the English for Dentistry test bank. All test questions/tasks were archived in a repository bank and could be used in a test by random selection to extend the available samples each time a student clicks on a test to take it. Further on the tasks were designed for two levels of language difficulty (B1 and B2) and the tests were graded (versions A and B) to suit the needs of all students in the mixed level groups in English for medical purposes.

4 Conclusions

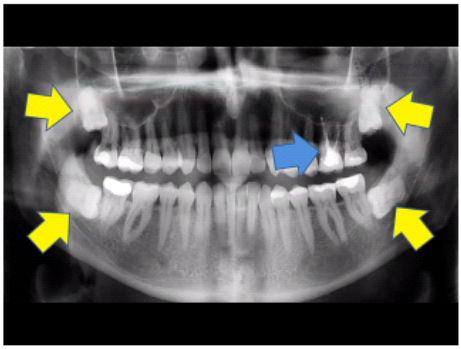
The corpus-based analysis of teaching resources and textbooks in English for Dentistry highlights a strategic approach to test content and design. The compilation of a corpus of specialized texts guarantees an adequate test content and adherence to a set of recurrent linguistic units and patterns for evaluation of learning outcomes. Emphasis on the characteristic features and the conventions of the academic language for medical purposes (EMP) makes the test relevant. Test banks based on the idea of clusters, collocations and lexical patterns extracted from textbook and teaching materials were organized into folders according to the examination programme (progress and final exams, language practice) and graded for two levels of language proficiency (version A and B for CEFR levels B1 and B2 respectively) with a variation of question types. By using corpus-data for test development, we bring authenticity, reliability, and improved quality of the items

in the test banks. Another possible advantage of the random compilation of test items from different pools in a bank is the reduced likelihood of cheating.

Fig.1. Final assessment test in English for Dentistry – language level B2: Listening task on Blackboard platform

QUESTION 2

Listening task 2: Listen about wisdom teeth extraction and choose the correct answer.
Wisdom Teeth Removal



1. Which procedure is required prior to taking the decision for wisdom teeth extraction?

   a. X-ray
   b. cyst removal
   c. none of the above

2. What is not a consequence of impacted wisdom teeth?

   a. decay
   b. cyst
   c. eruption

3. When is wisdom teeth removal recommended?

Fig. 2: Creating pools, Blackboard platform.

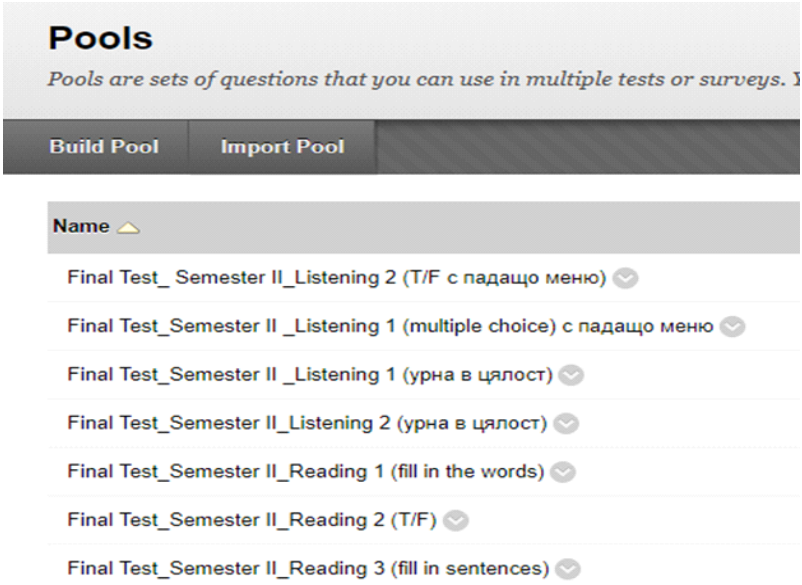
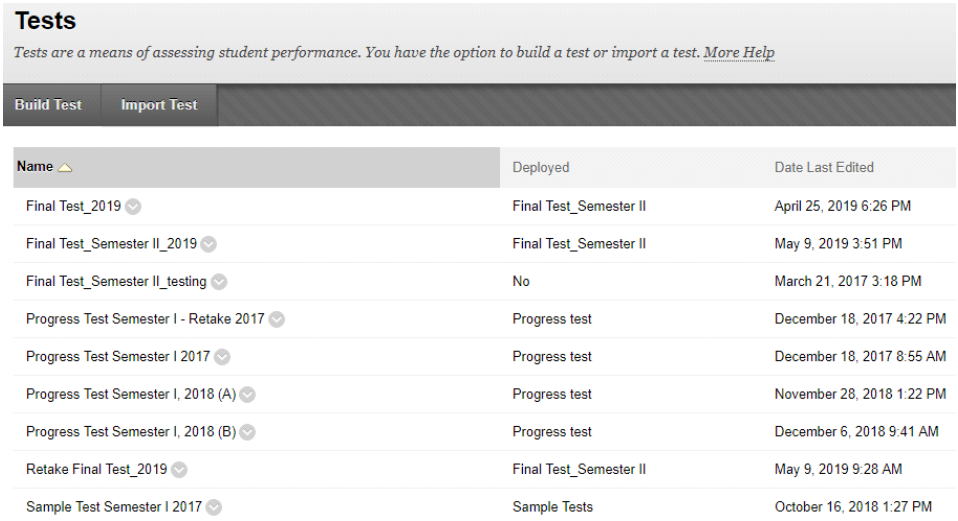


Fig. 3. E-assessment in English for Dentistry, MU-Varna



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APPENDIX

I. Listening comprehension.
Listen to the text on *New products for tooth decay management* and choose the correct answer:

1. What is the idea of minimally invasive (MI) dentistry?
   A) to assist the clinitians in the treatment of various diseases
   B) to treat the causes of oral diseases
   C) to focus on new products in dentistry
   D) to promote plaque removal

2. What is demineralization?
   A) less amount of calcium and phosphate in dental hard tissues
   B) the presence of calcium and phosphate in dental hard tissues
   C) prevention of tooth decay
   D) drilling and filling cavities

3. How does the *Tooth Mousse* work in the oral cavity?
   A) It eliminates bacteria in the mouth
   B) It restores the mineral balance within the dental hard tissues
   C) It treats sores in the oral cavity
   D) It contributes to an improved flow of saliva in the mouth

4. List some positive effects of *Oral B Pro-Expert*:
   A) It facilitates tooth desensitising
   B) It contributes to significantly minimize the presence of plaque
   C) It helps to preserve the balance in the oral cavity
   D) It encourages remineralization and improves the quality of the enamel crystals

5. The presence of fluoride in the plaque and saliva stimulates
   A) tooth sensitivity
   B) fluoride formulation
   C) the antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effect
   D) tooth whitening

6. Which compound is best suited for the demands of MI technique?

_____

A) Biodentine
B) Oral B Pro-Expert
C) GC Tooth Mousse
D) amalgam fillings

7. When did *Biodentine* first appear on the market?

_____

A) it is still not available for commercial use
B) five years ago
C) it is a promising brand new product
D) in 2010

8. What dosage forms is *Biodentine* available in?

_____

A) as a syrup
B) in capsules
C) in powder and liquid form
D) as lozenges

9. How do amalgam and composite-based silver fillings work?

_____ _____

A) They preserve the pulp vitality
B) They are used to replace the affected tooth tissue
C) They allow the healing of the tooth
D) The promote generation of new dentine

Total points: 18

II. Reading comprehension

Read the text and mark the statements below as True or False:

Pros and Cons of Taking Fluoride supplements

Some people think taking fluoride dietary supplements available in the form of tablets might help to prevent cavities and other oral conditions. However, these supplements, unlike other similar products, are available only by a doctor's prescription and may not be safe for everyone. Moreover, they should be used according to the suggested dosage, otherwise a condition known as fluorosis may

occur which is characterized by yellow or brown discoloration patches on permanent teeth due to too much fluoride intake.

Fluorosis can be mild to moderate and even severe with black patches on teeth. Dentists are now spreading awareness to decrease the risks of this treatment to prevent tooth decay. American Dental Association or ADA prescribes fluoride supplements for only those children who live in non-fluoridated areas. For these children, it is recommended that they use fluoride supplements until they reach the age of 16. It has been found that fluoride tablets cause dental fluorosis in 64% of the children. Moreover, if taken in larger amounts these tablets may even cause death. Instead of prescribing fluoride supplements to children, it is more appropriate to spread awareness about the benefits of breast milk. If infants are given adequate milk in their early months, chances of tooth decay decrease automatically and there is no need for additional dietary supplements or even fluoridated water.

At the same time, fluoride has been found to be useful for the teeth because it slows down the rate at which bacteria in the mouth produce acids and makes a tooth more resistant to the formation of cavities. However, dentists and common people are learning more and more about the dangers of fluoride the most prevalent of which is fluorosis. It is advisable to use fluoride only as a topical treatment, by using gels, toothpastes, or mouth rinses. Toothpastes only contain about 0.1% fluoride in the form of a compound.

Potential sources of fluoride is the use of too much fluoridated toothpaste at an early age, the inappropriate use of fluoride supplements, and some hidden sources of fluoride in the child's diet.

Two and three-year olds may not be able to expectorate (spit out) fluoride-containing toothpaste when brushing thus swallowing an excessive amount of fluoride during tooth brushing. Certain foods contain high levels of fluoride, especially powdered infant formula, infant dry cereals, creamed spinach and infant chicken products. Some beverages also contain high levels of fluoride, especially decaffeinated teas, white grape juices and juice drinks manufactured in fluoridated cities. Excess consumption of fluoride through fluoridated water or dietary supplements may cause dental as well as skeletal fluorosis, which is less common.

1. Consuming fluoride supplements exposes children and adults to many adverse health effects including kidney damage and bone fracture. **True/False**
2. Dentists recommend fluoride therapy for a number of reasons, including reduction of tooth sensitivity, protection of root surface, prevention of tooth decay, and treatment of white spots.
3. Fluoride drops and tablets, as well as fluoride fortified vitamins should not be given to infants younger than six months of age.

4. The dangers of fluoride therapy for the prevention of tooth decay are more than its benefits and therefore fluoride therapy is not a recommended treatment.
5. Fluoride supplements should only be given to children after all sources of ingested fluoride have been taken into account.
6. Too little or too much fluoride can be harmful to the teeth.
7. Swallowing toothpaste during the period of permanent tooth development is the risk factor in the development of fluorosis.
8. There is no evidence available to support the theory that fluoride tablets prevent tooth decay in children.

Total points: 16

III. Use of English

halitosis, further, reabsorbed, concluded, coatings, although, promotes, buds, crevices, thorough, rough, bristles, forward, bent, build-up

Tongue Cleaning Tools

You have three choices for cleaning your tongue. You can use a tongue scraper which is a long, thin, flat piece of metal that is **1**._____ in a "U" shape. Today, you can buy scrapers made from plastic or metal. Simply place the edge of the tool on the back of your tongue, and gently pull the scraper **2**._____.

Some people use a regular toothbrush to clean the tongue. The disadvantage of using a regular toothbrush on the tongue is that the **3**. _____ are designed to clean the smooth surfaces of your teeth. Your tongue is a **4**. _____ surface with many tiny crevices, and regular toothbrush bristles may not do a **5**. _____ cleaning job. A toothbrush reduces the production of volatile sulfur compounds by 45 percent while a tongue scraper reduces production by 75%.

Your third choice for tongue cleaning is a tongue brush with bristles designed to clean out the **6**._____ of the tongue. This relatively recent invention performs with about the same effectiveness as a traditional tongue scraper.

Dental research has **7**. _____ that a tongue scraper is more effective at removing toxins and bacteria from the tongue than a toothbrush. **8**._____ brushing and flossing will loosen and move debris around, they do not actually remove the bacteria. Almost half of our oral bacteria live on and in the deep crevices of our tongue; the scraping action of a tongue scraper collects these toxic tongue **9**. _____ (which can range in color from clear, white, yellow, or green) and removes them from the body. If you don't take steps to remove toxic mucus on the tongue, your taste **10**. _____ can become blocked. Removing **11**. _____ from the surface of your tongue will open up its pores and better expose your taste buds. **12**. _____ on, the tongue is part of the first line of defense in your immune system. Scraping your tongue prevents toxins from being **13**. _____ into your

body and boosts overall immune function. This oral hygiene practice **14**. _____ general tooth and gum health and removes bacteria and toxins responsible for periodontal problems, plaque build-up, tooth decay, loss of teeth, gum infections, gum recession, and **15**. _____.

Total points: 30

IV. Read the following definitions and identify the terms they describe:

1. _____ one of the 8 permanent grinding teeth, 2 in the upper and 2 in the lower jaw, located between the canines and the molars
2. _____ stoppage, preclusion
3. _____ the small piece of soft tissue at the back of the soft palate
4. _____ a tooth that is chisel-shaped and used for cutting
5. _____ the bony part of the roof of the mouth
6. _____ the emergence of a tooth through the gums
7. _____ a sharp and pointed tooth
8. _____ the tissue covering the jaws on the inside of the mouth
9. _____ pain that comes and goes rhythmically
10. _____mobile muscular tissue in the oral cavity
11. _____juice produced by the pancreas
12. _____bowel
13. _____ waste products of the process of digestion
14. _____ nourishment
15. _____ clotting
16. _____ milk teeth

Total points: 16

Audioscript:

Tooth decay management

Evidence-based dentistry has caused a shift from the "drill-and-fill" days to practicing minimally invasive (MI) dentistry. In the past, management of tooth decay involved either removal of the decay, by drilling and then filling the resultant cavity, or by extraction of the decayed tooth. The new MI approach accepts that the model of dental decay can be visualized as a balance between the pathological factors promoting (2) loss of calcium and phosphate from the dental hard tissues (demineralisation) and the protective factors promoting the process whereby calcium and phosphate enter the dental hard tissues (remineralisaton). The concept of MI dentistry focuses on (1) treating the causes of oral diseases instead of addressing their symptoms. The following new products are useful tools in the armoury to assist the clinicians advocating minimally invasive dentistry.

The GC Tooth Mousse is a water-based, sugar-free dental topical cream containing caesin phosphopeptide (amorphous calcium phosphate). This complex is an ideal deliverer of calcium and phosphsate ions to the oral cavity. When applied to the tooth surface, the mousse (3) restores the mineral balance within the dental hard tissues contributing to the reversal of non-cavitated tooth decay lesions and neutralising acid from bacteria found within plaque.

Fluoride-containing toothpastes like Oral B Pro-Expert interfere with the process of tooth decay by a number of ways. It is accepted that the presence of fluoride in the plaque and saliva (4) encourages remineralisation and ensures that the enamel crystals are of improved quality. Unlike traditional sodium fluoride formulation toothpastes, this low-water formulation has a proven effective (5) antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiplaque, anti-halitosis, tooth-desensitising and whitening effect. Unfortunately, not all decay carious lesions are treatable with topical remineralising products. Laboratory and *in vivo* studies have shown this technique to be a promising microinvasive approach to preserve demineralised enamel.

In the advanced stages of tooth decay, intervention necessitates drilling of a tooth to remove the affected hard dental tissues. However, new materials are emerging on the dental market catering for the demands of MI technique. The first of such materials is (6) Biodentine. Biodentine is the first all-in-one bioactive and biocompatible dentine substitute, based on a unique active biosilicate technology. Released in (7) 2010 after undergoing research in 300 patients over five years, Biodentine is seen as the future for tooth restorative materials. Biodentine is an inorganic, non-metallic compound presented in (8) a capsulated powder and liquid form. The powder phase consists of tricalcium silicate, calcium carbonate and zirconium dioxide and the liquid phase combines calcium chloride, water and a water reducing agent. Unlike amalgam or composite-based silver fillings, which (9) replace affected tooth tissue and may work to allow healing of the tooth pulp, Biodentine's bioactivity helps to preserve pulp vitality in deep cavities by promoting generation of new dentine. Its use in a range of endodontic scenarios for the treatment of dental nerve conditions is promising. /475 words/

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Teaching Medical English through Professional Captioning Videos

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Abstract

Since the Barcelona objective released on 16 March 2002, European Union met an ambitious goal: to promote learning of "at least two foreign languages from an early age" (European Commission 2019). Thus, bilingualism, multilingualism, and linguistic diversity became a part of European policy (Pokrivčáková 2013a; Pokrivčáková 2013b; Schunz 2012). Nevertheless, English language is still considered to be the global language, used as *lingua franca*. English is the language of international dialogue facilitating further educational and professional development, it is the language of international communication, science, academia, and the Internet (Dearden 2014). English is the first foreign language taught in Slovakia, and therefore majority of Slovak medical students chose the course of Medical English during their study. To develop communicative competence and performance in students, it is necessary to offer a very wide range of stimulating activities in English classes. Videos published on the Internet offer enormous potential for foreign or second language (L2) acquisition at every level according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in almost all learning phases, covering a significant variety of authentic topics (Barnau, Džuganová, Malinovská 2018). Our study is particularly aimed at watching of YouTube professional medical videos with/without captions and their effect on English language skills, especially listening comprehension in medical students at Jessenius Faculty of Medicine in Martin, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia (JFM UC).

Key words: medical English, captions, videos, listening comprehension, questionnaire, t-test

Introduction

Listening comprehension is the ability to listen effectively to spoken discourse in a foreign language, to understand it and gain necessary information from it. Improvement of listening skills belongs to the priorities in L2 teaching especially in teaching and learning English for special purposes (ESP). In medical science, it is necessary to understand the patients' complaints and description of their health states as well as the results of laboratory tests communicated via telephone. Many

mistakes come not only from the lack of lexical or grammatical knowledge but are made due to misunderstanding of speech produced by native speakers in an authentic situation. Moreover, a huge amount of new information in the field of Medicine requires active participation in the international conferences (Antić, 2009; Milosavljević, 2008; Mićić, 2013; Džuganová, 2019). Put in other words, good listening skills in English for Medical Purposes (EMP) improve understanding as well as increase communicative competence of every learner.

Krashen considers comprehensible input as one condition, which is related to other affective factors influencing language acquisition (Krashen, 2009; Rashtchi & Yousewfi, 2017). Oral speech, visual images such as people and their actions, objects, different setting, and written text are different kinds of input that may facilitate the L2 comprehension as well as learning of L2 vocabulary and content (Baltova, 1999). Videos with captions combine sound, picture and text and in this way, they are one of the unique possibilities to provide comprehensible input for L2 learners.

In this connection, Vanderplank suggests a model of "attentively watching", which means focusing on the extensive comprehensible input as offered by subtitled films or videos "consciously, systematically, and reflectively" (Vanderplank, 2016). Except for attention, Vanderplank argues for adaptation of foreign language intake. It means that advanced L2 learners are listening attentively as well as absorbing the content of the video in the foreign language. It is necessary to stress that watching the medical videos and reading the captions place medical English into a meaningful context, as for example medical presentation of illnesses, their symptoms, methods of examination and medication. Thus, specific input leads to attentive watching and appropriate production of spoken or written foreign language (Vanderplank, 2016).

Authentic situation presented in the audiovisual setting provides comprehensible input and, consequently, supports and activates L2 learning (Bérešová, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to use a variety of audiovisual materials in language acquisition (Džuganová & Barnau, 2017). One of the best audiovisual sources are the videos presented on the Internet that provide authentic language in the audio mode as well as the written text in the captions or subtitles as necessary input for effective comprehension (Džuganová & Balková, 2011).

Two general models of audiovisual perception, *bottom-up* and *top-down processing*, describe how the brain transforms aural and visual stimuli into meaningful patterns (Barnau, 2015). In the first mentioned processing strategy (*bottom-up*), the brain brings together specific shapes or features to form patterns that the recipient can compare with stored images or sounds she/he has noticed before. In the second mentioned *top-down* model, processing is based on acquired knowledge and experience (Barnau, 2018).

These two processing strategies are designed and valid for all proficiency levels. It means that even advanced L2 learners need to work on bottom-up aspects of language processing in a specific medical context when dealing with fast speech of a native speaker as well as on top-down strategies which presuppose a kind of prior or background knowledge in order to make predictions about the content of the incoming information.

It is necessary to stress that every learner percepts and interprets one and the same audiovisual material in a different way. An important role of audiovisual processing is therefore played by previously gained knowledge, which is influenced by situational aspects, psychological factors and interests of L2 learners (Barnau, 2014/2015).

According to the research carried out by Barnau and Džuganová, in a specialized medical video, often with a noisy background; the learners rely on their prior knowledge on the topic and context (Barnau & Džuganová, 2017). Thus, they rely on top-down strategy in order to deal with unreliability in the original sound, unfamiliar vocabulary or language structures, which can be an obstacle to bottom-up language processing. If the learners are unable to understand anything they hear, they will not be able to participate in discussion or answer the questions in the post-listening activities. It means that top-down processing is limited.

All the above-mentioned facts play an important role in designing good teaching plans and learning conditions for EMP students. Therefore, it is important to set up such learning situations, in which students can connect their background knowledge and expectations based on it, can ask themselves why they failed in their expectations and, finally, can begin to think something different from what they previously thought (Barnau, 2018). Such a new learning situation is offered in English language courses for medical students in the activities supported by audiovisual materials (Barnau & Džuganová, 2017; Almurashi, 2016).

Audiovisual material complemented with automatic generated captions, where the text is in the same language as the sound, is a possible tool that improves L2 listening comprehension skills in advanced learners. Captions or intra-lingual subtitles transfer oral language production into the written text. This method was originally used for deaf or hard-of-hearing people, but later was applied as a useful didactic tool for L2 acquisition which can "improve the effectiveness of audiovisual presentations and develop viewers' language skills" (Danan, 2004). Captioned professional videos are considered an outstanding pedagogical tool bringing authentic medical language and authentic situation into the classroom, which enhance second or foreign language acquisition (Barnau, 2014/2015). Audiovisual information combined with written text increases language acquisition in L2 students (Barnau & Džuganová, 2017).

Several studies have stress the decisive importance of cognitive processes which effect the ability of the learners to convert input into the intake (linguistic

information) that L2 listeners acquire as exposed to audiovisual modalities through attentive listening or watching, cognitive strategies of retention as well as through communicative interaction or feedback (Brown, 2000; Vanderplank, 2016; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koskinen, 1992). Thus, visual information complemented with written text increases language acquisition in L2 learners.

Tetyana Sydorenko in her research refers to several study results that deal with combination of captions or subtitles and videos (Sydorenko, 2010). Most scholars consider subtitled or captioned videos to be helping L2 learners to comprehend foreign or second language. Moreover, they have positive effects on vocabulary acquisition and retention as well as communicative performance (Baltova, 1999; Garza, 1991, Neuman & Koskinen, 1992; Vanderlplanck, 2016). The present study follows the results of this scientific research.

1. Methodology

1.1 Setting

Present English curriculum specially designed for medical students at JFM UC contains 24 lessons. In summer semester, 12 lessons are devoted to the following medical topics: Pediatrics, Neurology, Sleep, Mental Disorders, Infectious Diseases, Respiratory Diseases, Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Examination of the Patient, Communication with the Patient, Hospital Admission, and Surgery. Each lesson consists of four parts. Video watching activity follows *Lead in* activity and *Reading comprehension*, finally, the student take part in *Conversation* on a given medical topic. It means that didactically modified exercises and tasks enhance tested listening comprehension of the videos in the L2 learners.

1.2 Sample

Thirty-six English language students from JFM UC participated in the research study during their regular classes. Although all students are independent users of the language (B2) according to CEFR, there are slight differences in their abilities to understand text spoken fast by a native speaker or produce a clear, detailed text on the specific medical subjects with an explanation of their viewpoints on the topical issues. The students were divided into two groups, male and female, N_F was the sample size of group one and N_M was the sample size of group two ($N_F = 22$, $N_M = 14$).

1.3 Aim

The purpose of present study was to investigate whether comprehensible input in the form of medical videos with/without captions might affect the first-year students' medical English acquisition as well as to examine enhancement of their listening comprehension.

Learners' perception and preferences has been identified via a questionnaire administered at the end of the second semester and compared with the test results. The responses collected in the questionnaire expressed students' preferences to watch the videos either with or without subtitles.

The three proficiency tests (T1, T2, T3), an oral presentation of a given topic, and final exam (Exam) administered in two semesters, were intended to measure writing, listening and speaking skills in EMP acquired during two semesters. Thus, the tests assessed English language speaking and writing proficiency as well as listening comprehension and required test takers to have specialized knowledge of Medicine.

2. Procedure

2.1 Medical videos

In the present study, authentic Medical English videos were taken from YouTube channel. Each video, approximately 2 to 5 minutes in length, was devoted to one medical topic and related to a given subject. All participants watched each video twice. Some videos were watched first time without automatically generated captions and second time with captions, some of the videos were presented only with captions. An example of basic structure of the lesson plan is presented in Table 1.

Tab. 1: The lesson plan

Time	Phases	Forms	Materials
10 min.	Lead in activity	Dialogue	PC, Data projector
10 min.	Introduction of new topic	Dialogue, Brain-storming	PC, Data projector
25 min.	Reading comprehension	Whole-class discussion	Textbook
5 min.	New vocabulary review, Pre-watching activity	Work in pairs, Whole-class discussion	Textbook, Handout
30 min.	Video watching (with or without captions) Listening comprehension	Individual work, Work in pairs	Textbook, Handout
10 min.	Post-listening activity, Conversation	Work in pairs, Whole-class discussion	Handout, Textbook

The background knowledge was activated first, in pre-watching activities during the classroom discussion and, second, in activities aimed at reading comprehension (Bojović, 2017). The students tried to predict the content of the scheduled video using information about the topic and context, pictures, vocabulary and linguistic phrases. Thus, all activities focused on topic prediction and unknown vocabulary acquisition through studying the unfamiliar words in medical context.

2.2 Questionnaire

The influence of captions on listening comprehension as well as students' perception and preferences were investigated in the questionnaire given to the study participants at the end of the second semester (Dorney, 2003). The participants were asked to respond to the following statements:

1. I had seen the video with the same theme in English before its presentation in the class.
2. I was able to read the captions while watching the video.
3. Speaking skills of a lecturer/speaker in the video disturbed me
4. Known context helped me to understand the content of the video.
5. The presentation of medical topics in English was new for me.
6. It was hard for me to concentrate on the content of the video while reading the captions.
7. I was already familiar with more than 50% of English medical words while watching the video.
8. Subtitles in the video disturbed me.
9. Visible captions helped me to understand video content.
10. The captions contributed to my confidence in understanding spoken English.
11. I prefer to watch the video first time without captions, but second time with captions.
12. I can only concentrate on the content of the uncaptioned videos.
13. In order to understand the content, I had to watch the videos only with captions.

    What helped you most to understand the video content?

    What prevented you from better understanding?

The five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate all statements: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = No opinion, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree. As the students of JFM CU are obliged to pass demanding entrance exam, they are very well educated in natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry and physics. Thus, it was possible to presuppose that their scientific background knowledge would be serious with a very high level of proficiency.

2.3 Comprehension tests

First-year students at JFM UC are obliged to take three tests in two semesters as well as final exam at the end of the summer semester. The tests focusing on enhancement of listening comprehension and new medical vocabulary acquisition had been administered. In the comprehension tests, only a correct answer received 1 point.

In our statistical analyses, we compared two groups of students (Female, Male), and the three test results taken during the first and second semesters (T1, T2, T3) and the final exam taken at the end of the second semester. For data analyses we used a *paired sample t-test* comparing the test results in male and female students.

3. Results and discussion

The first item "I had seen the video with the same theme in English before its presentation in the class," was answered negatively, with an average rating of 1.92 points on the Likert scale. It means that the majority of students had not seen the medical videos before. Nevertheless, the known context helped the students understand the content of the video, as has been proved in evaluation of the fourth item (3.97 points) and a majority of the students was already familiar with more than 50% of English medical vocabulary (3.94 points). It means that familiar topic enhanced comprehension of a particular medical video. The fifth item "The presentation of medical topic in English was new for me" was rated with different scores ranging from 1 to 5 points with an average of 3.28 points.

The evaluation of the second statement "I was able to read the captions while watching the video" received an evaluation of 4.36 points on the Likert scale. It proved the fact that reading the written captions while watching and listening medical English videos was not disturbing. The third statement "Speaking skills of a lecturer/speaker disturbed me while watching the video," was answered negatively (1.56 points). Some students admitted, however, the speech of a native speaker had disturbed them while watching the video.

The sixth statement "It was hard for me to concentrate on the content of the video while reading the subtitles," was answered negatively, with an average rating of 2.00 points on the Likert scale. The evaluation of the eighth item (1.81 points) proved that captions did not disturb students while watching the videos. The tenth statement "The subtitles contributed to my confidence" received a rating of 3.47 points. The ninth item "Visible subtitles helped me to understand video content," was answered positively, with an average rating of 3.94 points on the Likert scale.

Concerning the statement "I prefer to watch the video first time without captions, but second time with captions," students did not express any significant preferences (3.06 points on the Likert scale). The thirteenth item "In order to understand the content, I had to watch the videos only with captions," was

answered negatively, with an average rating of 2.22 points. It means that the students at JFM CU considered captions as contributing to their confidence in understanding spoken English. However, they did not perceive them as ultimately decisive to comprehend the content of the viewed videos.

Two open questions in the questionnaire "What helped you most to understand the video content" and "What prevented you from better understanding of the video?" revealed that students considered captions used while viewing the video as well as watching the video more than once as both being of great help. Negative aspects listed included background noise, native speaker accent, fast speech of a speaker, or difficulties with concentration.

Paired sample t-test was used to test if the means of two paired measurements have been significantly different. In the present study, we compared the results of the first, second and the third tests (T1, T2, T3) with the final test (Exam) results. According to the paired sample t-test comparing the results of the first test (T1) taken at the beginning of the first semester and the final test, male participants achieved significantly higher score (p_{m1} = 0.040) proving enhancement of their listening comprehension in comparison to female students (p_{f1}= 0.401). Concerning the comparison of the T2, T3 results and Exam, there was not a statistically significant difference observed ($p > 0.05$).

Quantitative results are presented in Table 2 showing the number of participants as well as their mean scores (Mean), standard deviation (SD) and standard error of the mean (SEM).

Tab. 2: Quantitative results of the tests T1 and Exam

Listening comprehension tests				
Group	**Female**		**Male**	
	T1	Exam	T1	Exam
Mean	89.41	86.73	87.8	91.75
SD	7.29	17.42	7.53	10.38
SEM	1.56	3.71	2.01	2.77
N	22	22	14	14

Despite the above mentioned t-test results, it is necessary to say that the eleventh item of the administered questionnaire "I prefer to watch the video first time without captions, but second time with captions," was rated with different scores with an average of 3.06 points. Figure 1 presents the variety of rating in particular students. It shows the fact that the participants do not have any preference to watch the video first time without captions, but the second time with

captions. They consider, however, captions to be helpful in order to understand the content of the videos. Figure 2 shows rating of the tenth statement "The subtitles contributed to my confidence" (an average rating of 3.47 points), and figure 3 points to rating of the ninth item "Visible subtitles helped me to understand video content," an average rating of 3.94 points).

Fig. 1: The rating of the eleventh item

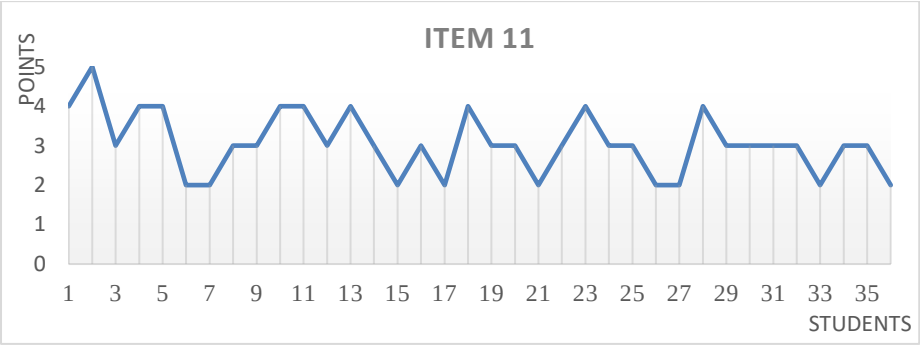


Fig. 2: The rating of the tenth item

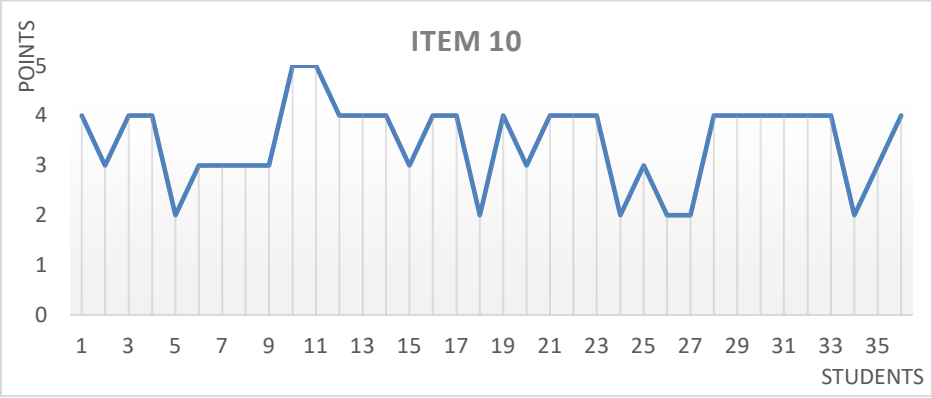
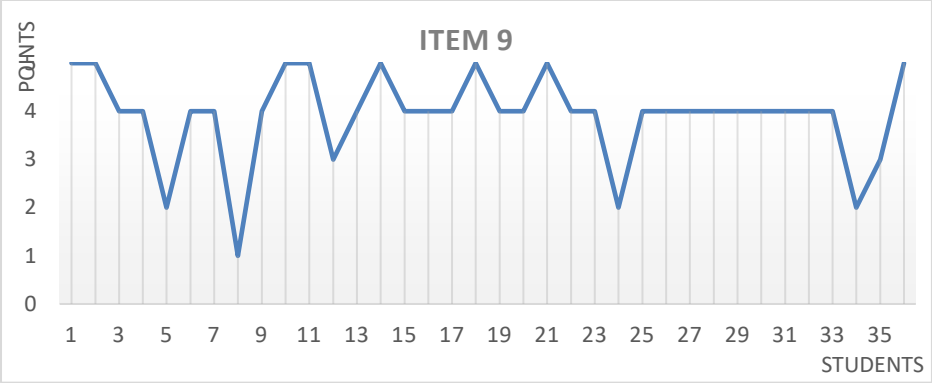


Fig. 3: The rating of the ninth item



Conclusion

Automatic speech recognition programs enable to use automatically generated captions even in the medical videos posted to a YouTube channel. Even in clean acoustic environment, however, speech recognition is limited. It is necessary to stress that automatic sound and words recognition expressed in captions is a great help for L2 students (Brooke & Scott, 2012). Captions improve language skills by helping students visualize what they hear, increase L2 comprehension and production as well as students' motivation.

We can conclude that captions contributed significantly to better listening comprehension of authentic medical videos. Data collected from the questionnaire revealed that students are able to read subtitles while video watching as well as concentrate on the content of the video. Some students complained that they had not been able to follow some of the videos watched because of the accents. Although fast speech of the native speaker and unfamiliar accent (American English or regional accent) is rather disturbing, the study participants consider captions as contributing to their confidence in understanding spoken English. Thus, captioned videos are an important tool for medical English students enhancing L2 learning and teaching.

Interestingly, the native speakers in the viewed authentic medical videos spoke mostly American English (AE), but the L2 students have been learning British English (BE) standard since the primary school. Therefore, the impact of AE on listening comprehension in advanced learners should be the subject of our further research in this area.

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Impact of Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching Phonetic Aspects: the Case of Czech as L1

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Abstract: Cultivated speech with correct pronunciation and adequate prosody is important from a social, communicative and also didactic point of view. It can be regarded a "universal quality" of one's self-presentation. Even though the Czech curriculum sets the development of phonetic aspects as one of the important elements of L1 teaching, various sources show that the educational reality in school differs. Based on a sample of 148 teachers of all educational levels from across the Czech Republic, the study analyses the teachers' stated beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge of teaching phonetic aspects of Czech, and attempts to give at least an assumption of the actual classroom practices of teaching phonetic aspects in Czech classes and through that the extent of the mismatch between the intended and implemented curriculum. The results show that phonetic aspects are not treated with as much attention as they ought to and that teachers' beliefs about the actual process of teaching and learning phonetic aspects seem to influence the implemented curriculum more than the intended curriculum and other formal requirements given by the government do.

Key words: teachers' beliefs; phonetics; phonetic aspects; L1 teaching; Czech

1 Introduction

Quality of teaching and learning has been one of the most important topics of educational research for many years (e.g. Harvey & Green, 1993; Janík et al., 2011, 2013; Slavík et al., 2017; Weinert, Schrader, & Helmke, 1989, etc.). In addition to structural (or systemic) determinants of the quality of education, increasing attention has been paid to the role of the teacher (Janík et al., 2013; Slavík et al., 2017, and others). As Janík, Lokajíčková, & Janko (2012) show, the components and characteristics of instructional quality can be recapped in four areas: (1) classroom organization and management, (2) dealing with goals and the subject matter, (3) design of learning tasks, and (4) supportive learning climate. All these factors are closely connected to the teacher's teaching style, his/her knowledge and skills, as well as his/her actions and thinking, which are also fundamental features of the culture of teaching and learning and the professional community (Groeben et al., 1988; Švec et al., 2014).

2 Background

2.1 The educational context: the phenomenon of teachers' beliefs

Understanding the teacher's role in learning has been at the heart of educational research for a long time. With the extension of the content-based approach to the quality of education it has become a core topic in Czech educational research as well, with a special focus on quality in specific field didactics (Janík et al., 2013; Slavík et al., 2017; Stuchlíková & Janík et al., 2015). Like many others, these authors also draw on Shulman (1987) and his conception of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge as one of the most important features in communicating the subject matter to pupils. However, as many researchers have suggested, there are also subjective theories and beliefs (e.g. Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2003, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Mareš et al., 1996) that play a vital role in this process (for summary on how influential teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are see e.g. Phipps & Borg, 2009).

The aim of our study is not to solve the problem of the rather fuzzy definitions and terminology in the area of teachers' beliefs (comp. Lin, 2013, or Pajares, 1992). We will rather limit ourselves to how we understand the phenomenon and what we find most important when discussing it in connection with the topic of teaching phonetic aspects of L1. Our understanding of teachers' beliefs is that they represent a complex structure integrating teachers' personal characteristics, convictions and attitudes which determine the teachers' decisions and classroom practices. It is more what teachers think they know (what they think is right to do in class) than what they really do know (what is right to do in class). It is teachers' beliefs that shape the teaching process – from the teacher's notion of teaching objectives and the subject matter, i.e. the content of teaching, to the methods, the teaching strategies and the resources he/she uses, the classroom practices he/she applies, how much time he/she devotes to individual parts of the subject matter, i.e., generally, the "form" of teaching (comp. Harcarik, 2009; Williams & Burden, 2002). Research has shown that teachers' beliefs have more impact on teaching than (a) changes to the curriculum and official governmental declarations (comp. Janík et al., 2010, 2011, 2018), or (b) a specific methodology or a coursebook teachers are told to follow (Williams & Burden, 2002, p. 57; for Czech context Šmejkalová, 2010), or (c) even findings of educational research and the development of modern (field) didactics (the chronic gap between educational research and practice – comp. e.g. Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010). In this respect, teachers' beliefs might represent a constraint on educational practice as they form a system that influences the teachers' understanding, judgement, and behaviour (Johnson, 1992; Kagan, 1992), and might limit the teacher's professional development, his/her classroom practices and openness to new ideas and procedures.

Teachers' beliefs are based on the teachers' experience as learners, their teaching experience so far, their personality and education-based or research-based principles (Johnson, 1994; Li, 2012; Richardson, 1996). A great deal of research has proved that teachers' beliefs are mainly formed on the basis of their experience as objects of teaching (Johnson, 1994). Even though future teachers are later trained in specific methodology, they often return to the practices they had experienced as pupils (Goodman, 1986; Šimoník, 1994; Williams & Burden, 2002). If the beliefs and subjective theories are not subjected to alteration, teachers' beliefs are stable and have the tendency to petrify (Peacock, 2001).

It is clear that the basic premise of our considerations in this study is that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are a vital indicator of the teacher's instructional practices.

2.2 The field context: the relevance of teaching phonetic aspects

In our study we focus on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and beliefs and attitudes in the area of teaching phonetic aspects of Czech as L1. With phonetic aspects (*zvuková stránka jazyka* – *zvuk* translates as *sound*) we understand those attributes of speech that are primarily connected to the phonetic layer of spoken communication. Our views on the issue are grounded in the Czech linguistic tradition, specifically orthoepy (in Czech *ortoepie*). Orthoepy is defined as the study of correct (literal, standard) pronunciation, and comprises both segmental and suprasegmental features of speech. The summary of rules for generating and articulating individual sounds, and how to use them in standard speech, is called the orthoepic norm (*ortoepická* or *výslovnostní norma* – Hůrková, 1995; Palková, 1994; Zeman, 2008, or Pokorná & Vránová, 2007). The orthoepic norm specifies which changes of sounds are or are not acceptable as a consequence of their mutual influence in a continuous utterance. Czech phonetics and phonology regards orthoepy as the normed articulation of vowels and consonants. It also comprises the quality of suprasegmental features (such as stress, intonation or speech rate), which can be evaluated on the basis of their adequacy to the syntactic arrangement and stylistic value in the particular communication situation.

Standard Czech carries national, representative and culture forming functions (CzechEncy, 2017). It is used dominantly in written expression, and its usage in oral expression is dependent on the level of formality, officiality and publicity of the communication situation. Research shows that Czech speakers are rather sensitive when professional speakers appearing in public disregard the standard prescription (e.g. Lefenda & Svobodová, 2016/17). In public speech, all professional speakers are expected to use only standard Czech – including pronunciation. This means that media presenters, government authorities and other administration workers, politicians, teachers, etc. must have mastered standard Czech and must fully comply with the orthoepic norm (comp. Daneš,

2009). Regional varieties are accepted in intrapersonal communication, but not in public speech. Complying with the orthoepic norm is considered a basic condition of the culture of speech.

"The culture and cultivation of speech is a precondition of its appeal and effectiveness. The degree of such cultivation might vary, but the unavoidable precondition in the effort for speech culture is the knowledge of normed standard pronunciation – orthoepy" (Hůrková, 1995, p. 8). Even though the pronunciation style might differ according to the type of the speech – distinguished (higher, explicit), neutral (basic) or common (lower, implicit; Krčmová, 2006, p. 212) – the articulation should always be clear and perfectly understandable.

In relation to the reported unsatisfactory quality of speech of L1 public speakers (e.g. Čmejrková & Hoffmannová, 2011; Daneš, 2009; Kuldanová, 2001; Macoun & Dvořáková, 2008; Palková, 2005, 2008/09, 2017/18), the question of L1 pronunciation and prosody of speech has been resonating not only in the Czech Republic, but also elsewhere (e.g. Čechová & Styblík, 1998, p. 217, or the British Library's *Evolving English* exhibition, etc.). Moreover, the number of school pupils with speech problems is rising (Palková, 1994; ÚZIS, 2014, etc.). As a result, the L1 teacher often remains one of the last people that can contribute to the rise of the culture of speech of their pupils. The language input children are exposed to plays a vital role in their language development (e.g. Clark, 2003; Gathercole & Hoff, 2007; Tomasello, 2003; Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2019, and many others).

Oral communication is the primary form of expression and has an important role in any kind of social interaction; speech is "the image of one's personality" (Krobotová, 2000, p. 5), an important part of self-image (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). In addition to the argumentative, textual and grammatical qualities of speech, this also includes phonetic aspects such as correct segmental pronunciation, adequate intonation, volume, natural stress distribution and rhythm, suitable speech rate, as well as stress and pause distribution (comp. Minchew, 1983). These features help to fulfil the speaker's communication intention and have an important social role (Crystal, 2003; pronunciation - and language in general - as a means of establishing a sense of community – comp. Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994, p. 7).

Correct pronunciation does not only have aesthetic value, it also, of course, serves a fundamental role in communication as it is crucial for the correct understanding of speech: for instance, compare the compulsory double pronunciation of two of the same consonant on the boundary of words in *Plzeň – město čtyř řek* vs. *Plzeň – město čtyřek* ['pl̩zɛɲ 'mɲɛstɔ 'ʧtɪř 'řɛk] vs. ['pl̩zɛɲ 'mɲɛstɔ 'ʧtɪřɛk], i.e. *Plzeň – city of four rivers* vs. *Plzeň – city of fours* (for other examples see Hůrková, 1995, or Štěpáník & Vlčková-Mejvaldová, 2018). Similarly, in English, the distribution of stress (compare *conflict* ['kɒn.flɪkt] vs. [kən'flɪkt] or *desert / dessert*

['dɛz.ət] vs. [dɪ'zɜːt]). And, of course, it is also prosody that inevitably affects meaning (e.g. Crystal, 2003).

Moreover, as Babušová (2014) states, faultless pronunciation has an important didactic role, esp. in primary education. The learner needs to connect a specific sound with a specific sign, i.e. a letter, and therefore it is necessary for them to adopt the correct form of the sound. This correspondence of the phonic and graphic plan of the language is a significant one in all stages of education (and in everyday life as well).

As all we have just said applies to any language – not only Czech – we generally regard high quality of speech as a "universal quality" which L1 teaching should aim for. In this respect, school has an important formational role. Unlike in some other curricular documents (e.g. for teaching English in England), the Czech L1 curriculum expresses the necessity to cultivate the phonetic aspects of speech clearly: "A good level of language culture is one of the major indicators of the general maturity of the elementary-school (in this paper lower-secondary school – author's note) graduate. Language instruction provides the pupil with such knowledge and skills that make it possible for him/her to perceive various kinds of messages, understand them, express himself/herself appropriately as well as utilise the results of his/her learning effectively" (FEP EE, 2007, p. 17). Adopting the orthoepic norm, i.e. Czech standard pronunciation, has been one of the fundamental requirements of the Czech school curriculum for decades for all levels of education: primary, lower- and also upper-secondary; the current curriculum is no exception (comp. FEP EE, 2007, p. 19, 22; FEP SGE, 2007, p. 14, or Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Sojka, 2016).

When starting school education, children readily master the spontaneously acquired sound means of their L1. It is the school's task to teach them how to cultivate their expression and differentiate the language means according to the communication situation and the communication aim. In comparison with the pupils, the teacher's code is quantitatively and qualitatively on a higher level. Therefore they should use it to influence and cultivate the code of their pupils. As Browne (2007, p. 34) summarises it, the teacher's role in developing pupils' speech is: (1) planning opportunities to talk, (2) providing models of different types of speaking and (3) responding to and developing pupils' contributions.

As we will see later, with regards to the teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical content knowledge, it is important to state that the curricular expected outcomes cover both the segmental and prosodic layer, and stress that the standard and non-standard varieties should be used depending on the communication situation and communication aim, i.e. practically.

2.3 The professional context

Despite the curriculum requirements, research up to now shows that phonetic aspects are one of the most underemphasised layers of the language system in Czech language teaching (Balkó, 2005/06, 2012/13; Bořek-Dohalská et al., 2016; Kraus, 1996/97; Málková, 2014/15; Štěpánová, 2013; Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2017/18, 2019). Not only Czech research shows that among other factors it is mainly teachers' beliefs that cause the central focus of L1 teaching in many countries to be traditional structural grammar (comp. Locke, 2010; Pieniążek & Štěpáník, 2016; Szymańska, 2016; van Rijt & Coppen, 2017; Watson, 2015a, 2015b, etc.).

Such neglect of phonetics results in a situation when upper-secondary-school graduates do not master the phonetic elements of Czech sufficiently neither theoretically, nor practically (e.g. Balkó, 2005/06; Bořek-Dohalská et al., 2016, p. 157).

Research suggests that this lack of mastery is also the case for Czech language teachers (e.g. Balkó, 2007/08; Málková, 2014/15; Svobodová, 2003; Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2019). The causes are examined in Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Sojka's paper (2016) in which the authors thoroughly analyse teacher training programmes for Czech language teachers at Czech schools. The main points of their study can be summarised as follows:

(i) The courses on phonetics and phonology are more linguistic-oriented than teaching-oriented, which results in problems with the didactic transposition of the phonetic topics in school.
(ii) The course on phonetics and phonology is usually placed in the first semester (only) of teacher training programmes and its lesson allocation does not exceed two lessons per week. This appears to be insufficient as students lack any preliminary knowledge (many of the students indicate that the teacher training programme is the first time they have heard about phonetics).

All in all, the authors state that teacher training programmes are unlikely to change the future teachers' knowledge of phonetic aspects of speech or their thinking about this content in their future teaching practice.

This might also be the cause of the fact that L1 teachers in the Czech Republic at all levels of education traditionally focus predominantly on the written mode and that orthography plays a much more important role than orthoepy (Svobodová, 2003, or Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Sojka, 2016). This, however, is in contrast with the status spoken communication has in everyday life (as a primary means of expression), the official requirements given by the curriculum (comp. FEP EE, 2007; FEP SGE, 2007) and the standardised examinations (comp. Cermat, 2016).

3 Methodology

It seems that in the area of teaching L1 phonetic aspects in Czech school we are witnessing a mismatch between the intended and the implemented curriculum (for clarification of the terms see e.g. Maňák, Janík, & Švec, 2008, or van den Akker, 2003). The extent and the causes of this problem have been neither researched, nor reflected in any study so far. Therefore, we have decided to carry out this study with the intention to answer at least some of the questions about how Czech L1 teachers reflect teaching phonetic aspects as part of speaking development.

There are two main aims for this study:

(1) to analyse the teachers' stated beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge of teaching phonetic aspects;
(2) to get at least an assumption of the actual classroom practices of teaching phonetic aspects in Czech L1 classes and through that the extent of the mismatch between the intended and implemented curriculum.

3.1 The sample

The research sample includes 148 randomly selected teachers from all over the Czech Republic: 56 primary school teachers, 66 lower-secondary school teachers, and 26 upper-secondary school teachers. The study was carried out in the period from March to June 2017. During this period, six meetings with teachers from all over the Czech Republic were held. Despite different locations of these meetings (Prague for regions in Bohemia, Olomouc and Brno for Moravia and Silesia), we can say the sample is ethnically, culturally and socially very homogenous as the Czech Republic is a typical example of a mono-ethnic Central European country (comp. *Key figures on Europe 2017 edition* or *Migrant integration 2017 edition)*. The figures on the respondents' teaching practice are available in Table 1. The numbers show that the sample comprised mostly highly experienced practitioners (comp. Podlahová, 2004; Šimoník, 1994). Since all the respondents came to the meetings as practicing teachers, we regard all of them as qualified, i.e. having a Master's degree (or pursuing a Master's degree programme) because, in the Czech Republic, a Master's degree is the official requirement for full teaching qualificiation. For concrete data on the respondents see Table 1.

3.2 Data collection

As the main research tool, we used a questionnaire that consisted of 11 questions, out of which 3 questions were multiple-choice questions and 8 questions were open questions offering the respondents enough space for their answers. With the multiple-choice questions, the respondents could choose more than one answer. Questionnaires can be considered one of the basic and most

effective methods for researching teachers' beliefs (comp. Maggioni, Alexander, & VanSledright, 2004, or Mareš et al., 1996).

Tab. 1: Numbers of respondents and their length of teaching practice (in years).

	primary	**lower-secondary**	**upper-secondary**	**total**
Prague, March 27th 2017	10	12	5	27
Prague, April 3rd 2017	16	8	5	29
Prague, June 8th 2017	6	10	1	17
Olomouc, May 11th 2017	14	12	4	30
Olomouc, June 5th 2017	7	13	2	22
Brno, April 20th 2017	3	11	9	23
Total	**56**	**66**	**26**	**148**

Length of teaching practice (in years)			
average	16.5	17	22.7
minimum	1	1	3
Q1	9	7	20
median	17	17	25
Q3	22.5	26	30
maximum	39	40	33

As a framework for designing the questionnaire and selecting the questions we used Calderhead's categories in which teachers are found to hold significant beliefs (comp. Calderhead, 1996, p. 719). The objective of the questionnaire was to cover all crucial characteristics of teaching the phonetic aspects of L1 in Czech schools.

The individual questions target at:

1) the years at which teachers include phonetic aspects in their teaching (question 1, 2, 3);
2) the amount of time which teachers devote to teaching phonetic aspects (question 7);
3) the methods which teachers use for teaching phonetic aspects (question 6);
4) the resources which teachers use for teaching phonetic aspects (question 8);
5) the objectives and ideal expected outcomes which teachers hold for teaching phonetic aspects (question 4);
6) the concrete subject matter which teachers cover in their lessons when teaching phonetic aspects (question 5);
7) the level of importance which teachers attribute phonetic aspects with in comparison with other linguistic disciplines taught (questions 9, 10);

8) the place of rhetoric exercises (see further) in the lessons and the form of feedback teachers offer to their pupils (question 11 + subquestions).

After the questionnaire was designed, it was piloted with three experienced teachers outside the final sample, and revised accordingly (comp. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 402).

The process of having the teachers fill out the questionnaire was administered by both researchers personally, the questionnaire was anonymous. First, the respondents were informed about the topic of the research, and then they were given 20–25 minutes to answer the questions.

After that the questionnaire forms were collected and the questions were shown on the screen so that everybody could see them. Through the method of a focus group the main author of this study went through the questions and answers together with the group while the second author of this study took notes. This allowed the participants to interact with each other and the researchers, and it offered an overall frame for the answers in the questionnaires and completed the data with more detail. We used the data from the focus groups to triangulate the data gathered from the questionnaires.

3.3 Data analysis

The study adopted a predominantly qualitative approach using a questionnaire and focus groups as the research tools. All data are categorical in nature and for analysis we used absolute and relative frequencies.

The initial stage of data analysis was carried out by the first author of this paper. The questionnaires were divided into three groups according to the level of education the respondents taught at: (i) primary school teachers, (ii) lower-secondary school teachers and (iii) upper-secondary school teachers. The answers from the closed questions were counted for all the respondents from the individual groups. The answers from the open questions were transcribed and sorted according to the question they were answering.

The data were analysed inductively with an initial stage of open coding. A frequency tally of the range of responses was generated and used as preliminary information for coding classification. Axial coding, which clustered the data into thematic groups, followed. This was then reviewed by the second author of this study. A further clarification of code labelling was undertaken. As a result, some of the codes, which were proving to overlap, were merged and a coding frame for each question was devised (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 559f.). For example, for question 4 (If you do target phonetic aspects, please specify what final knowledge and skills you expect from your learners.) the coding frame was organised under five axial codes:

- connection to reading or listening
- correct / understandable / clear / elaborated / cultivated communication
- standard Czech
- pronunciation (segmental features of speech)
- prosody of speech

The first author of this study then completed the coding of all the transcripts, and, in a final review by both authors, the codes were checked and agreed on.

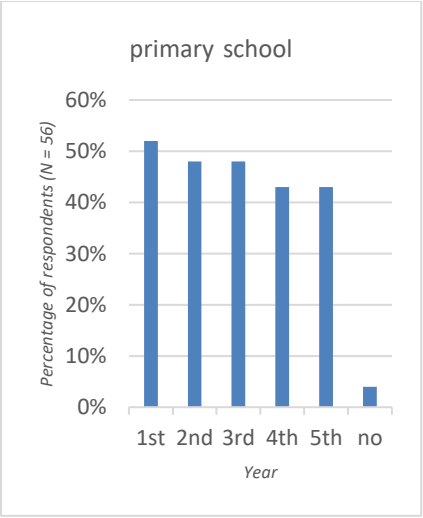
These data were then triangulated with the notes we gathered during the focus group interviews.

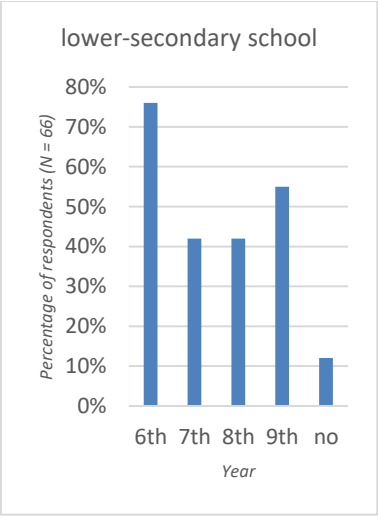
4 Findings

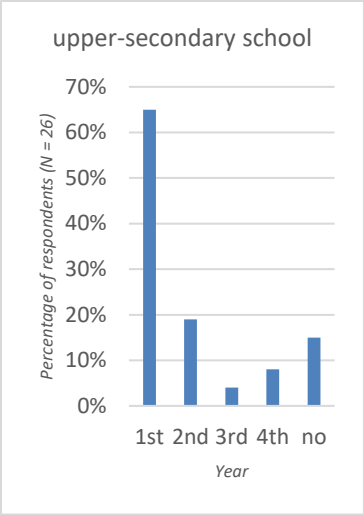
4.1 When teachers target phonetic aspects

The first set of questions was aimed at finding out when teachers target phonetic aspects, specifically which year(s) of the level of education they teach at.

Figures 1 - 3: The years at which teachers include the topic of phonetic aspects in their teaching (in percentages). Respondents could circle more answers with this question, therefore the percentages do not add up to 100 %.







At the primary level (Figure 1) we see that the distribution of results is quite similar in all years. As a result, we can assume that primary school teachers focus on phonetic aspects continuously during the entire stage of education they teach at. This is rather understandable as at the primary level fundamental speech habits are still being formed (comp. Brabcová et al., 1990, p. 86f.). Moreover, developing fundamental speech habits (correct pronunciation, proper breathing, adequate speech rate, intonation, stress, pause distribution, etc.) is also expected by the curriculum (FEP EE, 2007). Primary school also focuses on the connection between phonics and graphics. As such, proper pronunciation plays an important role in correct spelling.

From Figure 2 we deduce that in lower-secondary school, the approach to phonetics seems to change. There appears to be approximately a third of teachers who think about phonetic aspects as a rather continuous topic in language teaching (like their primary colleagues). Such an approach would reflect the cyclical curriculum design which has been part of the Czech teaching tradition for more than a hundred years (comp. Šmejkalová, 2010, or Šmejkalová & Štěpáník, 2016), and would also suggest that phonetic aspects are given enough attention throughout the whole cycle. However, our data also show that there is a good deal of teachers who treat phonetics more as a single unit, as a separate linguistic discipline, and detach it from the other language layers. The subject matter of phonetics and phonology is generally considered the least complicated and therefore is usually placed at the beginning of the study cycle (this concerns both lower- and upper-secondary school – comp. Kostečka, 1994 – and even philological

branches at university level – comp. Šmejkalová & Štěpáník, 2016). Our results also suggest this as the numbers in Figure 2 show the increase in the initial (6th) and final (9th) years of lower-secondary school (and also in the first year of upper-secondary school – Figure 3). In year 6, basic phonetic concepts are introduced, and in the final year (year 9) our respondents state that they include phonetics as part of final revision.

The alteration of teachers' thinking about phonetic content is even more apparent in Figure 3 which illustrates the situation in upper-secondary school. The subject matter at upper-secondary school is not organised in a cycle, but linearly (comp. Čechová & Styblík, 1998) – and this appears to be the case in upper-secondary school where phonetics is treated as an isolated discipline. This approach does not differ from other linguistic disciplines taught at Czech upper-secondary school (e.g. morphology, lexicology, word formation or syntax) and also rather clearly relates to the theoretical character of teaching which teachers declare they use (see further in chapters 4.5 and 4.6). In Figure 3 we can see that phonetics is placed dominantly at the beginning of the study cycle.

In all categories there is a small number of teachers who state that they do not target phonetic aspects at all – at primary and lower-secondary school this is a very low number, but the proportion among upper-secondary school teachers is worth noticing as it might be indicating a certain tendency. We presume that the cause of this might be that upper-secondary school teachers consider the development of (correct) pronunciation to be finished and focus on written language much more than spoken language. However, the sample is too small to confirm this.

4.2 Allocation of time

The preceding question is closely connected to how much teaching time teachers devote to phonetic aspects. What the data show is a division between the primary and lower- and upper-secondary school teachers. While primary teachers estimate the time continuously (e.g. "5–10 minutes every lesson", "every lesson", "a few minutes every lesson" etc.) or in numbers of lessons per week, lower- and upper-secondary school teachers estimate the time devoted to phonetic aspects in a certain period (e.g. a set number of classes) in the school year or even in the whole study cycle, i.e. four years; the last option being most obvious with upper-secondary school teachers.

We have already said that most primary school teachers state that they aim at phonetic aspects continuously / in every lesson. Correspondingly, there is quite a high number of respondents who were not able to make a close estimate and state that it "depends on the matter".

Lower-secondary school teachers seem to devote time to phonetic aspects mainly in literature classes or during rhetoric exercises in which a pupil speaks

uninterrupted for a certain interval in communication / style classes (for details on rhetoric exercises see subchapter 4.7). Only a few respondents stated that they pay attention to phonetic aspects in all pupils' speech in class. Generally, lower-secondary school teachers say they devote on average 8 45-minute lessons to phonetic aspects of the Czech language in the whole period of lower-secondary school (i.e. four years).

At upper-secondary school, the majority of teachers (20 out of 26) estimate the time in terms of the whole study period, specifically 6 45-minute lessons in the four years.

8 lower-secondary and 4 upper-secondary school teachers said that they do not teach phonetics at all or teach it only very little.

These results suggest that, except for primary school, phonetics lies on the periphery of teachers' interest.

4.3 Methods

Table 2 and Figure 4 show which methods at different education levels teachers use for teaching phonetic aspects.

Tab. 2: Usage of methods at different educational levels (percentages).

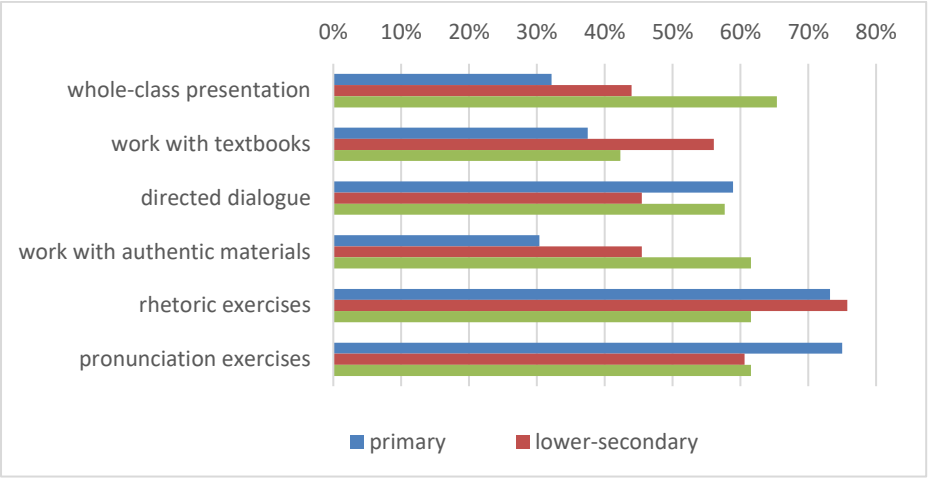
	primary	**lower-secondary**	**upper-secondary**
whole-class presentation	32 %	44 %	65 %
work with textbooks	38 %	56 %	42 %
directed dialogue	59 %	45 %	58 %
work with authentic materials	30 %	45 %	62 %
rhetoric exercises	73 %	76 %	62 %
pronunciation exercises	75 %	61 %	62 %

Considering whole-class presentation as the basic teacher-centred verbal method, we can notice that, throughout the educational levels, the level of teacher-centeredness increases. This result is closely connected to the expected outcomes and the content taught (theoretical knowledge – see subchapters 4.5 and 4.6). Instead of verbal monologue methods, primary school teachers seem to prefer directed dialogue. This method is also teacher-centred, but involves the pupils more.

While at upper-secondary school we can detect the highest tendency to prefer teacher-centred methods, at the same time it seems teachers want to be practical and true to life through work with authentic materials. These are rather contradictory tendencies: on the one hand, the pupils are more cognitively

developed and so usage of authentic materials seems to be perfectly appropriate. On the other hand, teachers reach for teacher-centred verbal monologue methods which might lead to students' being intellectually passive (comp. Čechová & Styblík, 1998, p. 14).

Fig. 4: Usage of methods at different educational levels in contrast.



Teachers at all levels mention that they use methods which enforce correct pronunciation and make their students do rhetoric exercises (one of the basic methods of teaching speaking in Czech schools). At all levels, at least a third of the respondents expressed that they use textbooks – as we will see later (subchapter 4.4), these do not, however, play a main role in the lessons.

Other methods used in teaching phonetic aspects are tongue twisters, riddles, rhymes, rhythmical exercises, recitation and dramatization, the first being used mainly in primary school, the latter at lower-secondary school.

4.4 Resources

Both international and Czech research suggests that the most common resource for teachers for lesson planning is textbooks (e.g. Mikk, 2000; Průcha, 2002, or Sikorová, 2010), and that textbooks or other published texts designed for educational purposes also play an important role during the lessons (e.g. Červenková, 2010, or Sikorová, 2010).

From our data we can deduce that textbooks are used mainly at lower-secondary school (more than half of the respondents – see also Figure 4). However,

from the data we assume that the usage of textbooks remains mainly in the stage of lesson preparation rather than teaching itself. Our respondents indicate that they find the textbooks either limited or impractical, especially when the textbook lacks recordings (and most of them do). That would also explain the increasing tendency of some teachers to use supplementary educational materials or other materials (e.g. audio recordings, videos, films and other authentic materials). Some respondents say that they prepare their own teaching materials, as is the case for about a third of the lower-secondary school teachers.

The most vivid descriptions of methods appear to be found at the primary level, which might be connected to the fact that rhetoric and pronunciation exercises dominate here (Figure 4). Teachers seem to look for various resources; they predominantly use audio or video recordings and educational technology – recorders, interactive boards, mobile phones, the internet, media archives, instructional multimedia programmes, recordings of songs, riddles, poems, fairy tales, recordings of recitation and texts for children. They also make use of the educational portal rvp.cz (the leading educational portal for teachers in the Czech Republic; The website offers a place for debates, discussions, exchanging experience and sharing materials, esp. through the so-called *DUM* (digital learning / teaching materials). However, the quality of the materials can be problematic; comp. Šmejkalová & Štěpáník, 2012). Primary teachers very often connect speech with reading aloud; therefore, readers and reading books serve as a very important educational aid. A good deal of our respondents say that they are the most important source because they consider themselves a model (e.g. through reading to the class).

4.5 Expected outcomes

The most important moment in a teacher's thinking is considering the teaching objectives. Teachers' beliefs in this area have a crucial position as they influence understanding of the subject, lesson planning and the overall scheme of work in the subject. The objectives (and teachers' thinking about them) determine the expected outcomes, the content and the methods used (comp. e.g. Skalková, 1999; Slavík et al., 2017).

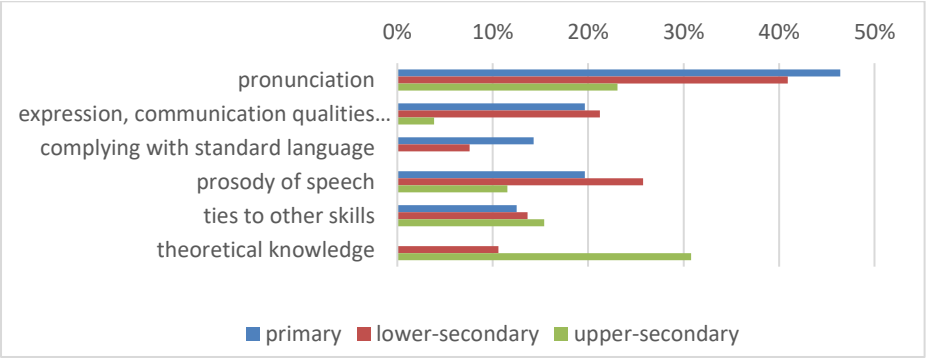
It is generally accepted that the main aim of modern L1 teaching is one of communication, i.e. developing the pupils' abilities to use language functionally. "However, below the surface of that apparently incontestable and transparent statement lie all sorts of conflicting opinions, ideologies, methodologies and philosophies" (Fleming & Stevens, 2010, p. 1). As a result, even though educational theory and official documents clearly state what L1 education ought to look like, actual implementation can have all sorts of forms (for the Central European context comp. Pieniążek & Štěpáník, 2016).

We asked our respondents what expected outcomes they anticipate in the field of phonetic aspects by the end of the level of education they teach at. The answers can be grouped into six categories: (1) pronunciation, (2) expression and communication qualities and characteristics of speech, (3) complying with standard Czech, (4) prosody of speech, (5) phonetics for other skills, and (6) theoretical knowledge. Table 3 and Figure 5 show the results.

Tab. 3: Expected outcomes (in other words, aims) of teaching phonetic aspects according to the teachers (percentages)

	primary	**lower-secondary**	**upper-secondary**
pronunciation	46 %	41 %	23 %
expression, communication qualities and characteristics	20 %	21 %	4 %
complying with standard language	14 %	8 %	0 %
prosody of speech	20 %	26 %	12 %
ties to other skills	13 %	14 %	15 %
theoretical knowledge	0 %	11 %	31 %

Fig. 5: Expected outcomes in contrast



As we can see from Table 3 and Figure 5, the expected outcomes of teaching phonetic aspects alter over time. Primary school teachers tend to put emphasis on correct pronunciation, and the pupils' ability to express themselves "clearly, comprehensibly, concisely, fluently, meaningfully, and in standard Czech". They say that they want their pupils to "speak in (elaborated) sentences", and without various fillers and padding. It is mainly primary teachers who require standard

Czech, esp. in morphology, and who tend to link the spoken and the written through connecting speaking to other skills – reading, listening, "reading with understanding", "work with text", the ability to reproduce a written or spoken text and also to "read distinctively" (we assume that means with clear pronunciation and adequate prosody). As there is a strong relation between pronunciation and orthography in Czech, this approach appears to be justifiable.

In lower-secondary school, clear pronunciation is enriched by a slightly higher focus on adequate prosody of speech (esp. intonation, stress, speech rate and pauses). Pupils' speech is expected to be coherent, understandable, rigorous, fluent, clear, brief, without fillers and stylistic mistakes. The requirement of standard Czech decreases. The connection to other skills is narrower, teachers mostly mention quality of speech for "nice" recitation. There appears to be a small number of lower-secondary school teachers who require their pupils to learn theoretical knowledge (e.g. to be able to distinguish voiced and voiceless consonants, to know something about the sound system, assimilation, etc.).

Finally, we can notice a distinctive shift at upper-secondary school: from practice to theory. About a third of upper-secondary school teachers consider theoretical knowledge of phonetics and phonology to be the most important educational outcome. This knowledge ranges from the system of Czech vowels and consonants over basic terminology of the field to phonetic transcription. The upper-secondary school teachers, of all the respondents, seem most relaxed about the necessity to adhere to standard Czech in all communication situations and seem to put very low emphasis on the communication and textual qualities of their pupils' speech. (Throughout the paper, by textual qualities we mean formulating thoughts (semantics, syntax), word order, sentence order, meaningfulness, fluency, cogency and coherence.) Some of them state that they connect phonetic aspects mainly to reading ("reading aloud" and "distinctive reading"), while prospering from the theoretical knowledge when expressing oneself is not visibly expected.

In each category, there is a number of respondents who say they do not teach phonetic aspects at all; the higher the educational level, the higher the number of such respondents. The reasons they state for not teaching phonetics are mainly lack of time, lack of appropriate teaching materials and low ability of acoustic discrimination of spontaneous speech (comp. Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2019).

4.6 Subject matter

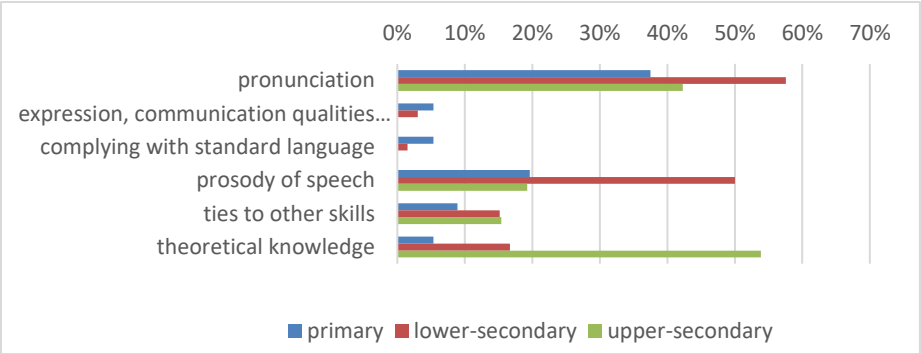
Teachers' beliefs and the designated teaching objectives, among other things, determine the content taught. Knowledge of the scientific field (in our case phonetics and phonology as part of the larger discipline of linguistics) is combined with the field of education and is ultimately transformed into the content taught at

school. When considering teachers' thinking about the content, we speak about pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). In this respect, it is interesting to look into the correspondence of the subject matter that teachers teach (Table 4, Figure 6) with the expected outcomes they declare (as described above).

Tab. 4: Subject matter (percentages)

	primary	**lower-secondary**	**upper-secondary**
pronunciation	38 %	58 %	42 %
expression, communication qualities and characteristics	5 %	3 %	0 %
complying with standard language	5 %	2 %	0 %
prosody of speech	20 %	50 %	19 %
ties to other skills	9 %	15 %	15 %
theoretical knowledge	5 %	17 %	54 %

Fig. 6: Subject matter in contrast



From our respondents' answers we may conclude that the content of the primary teaching of phonetic aspects is dominated mainly by quality of speech: pronunciation (connecting prepositions with words, correct vowel quantity, voicing or assimilation of voice) and prosody (intonation, rhythm, stress, phrasing, etc.). Especially the focus group interviews showed that what also appears to be important is the relation between the spoken and written form of the word, especially the area of orthographically hard and soft consonants (i.e. those that are followed by *y* as opposed to *i*) as this is crucial for Czech spelling. The other elements do not appear as important in the content as they were considered in the

expected outcomes. This might be caused by the fact that the teachers in our sample confused subject matter with methods or tasks: as subject matter they often stated tongue twisters, poems, riddles, speech exercises, independent work, presentations, narration, listening and retelling the recording or recitation of a poem. As a result, in practice, this might lead to inappropriate or even misleading assignment of tasks and/or objectives as these are only instruments for teaching the subject matter and through that reaching the expected outcomes.

In lower-secondary school, teachers seem to put very strong emphasis on proper pronunciation (however, different features than at primary school – assimilation of voice, vowel quantity, consonant combinations, connection of the word with a preposition, pronunciation of double consonants), and prosody (intonation (melody), stress, rhythm, pauses, loudness, etc.). As we can see, some of them start to include theory: e.g. place and manner of articulation of the individual vowels and consonants, basics of the Czech sound system, dialect variants and deviations from standard Czech, and language stratification with examples. Communication or textual qualities of speech again seem to be rather neglected.

From the answers of the upper-secondary school teachers we can deduce that the content at this level is highly theoretical: the Czech sound system, terminology of phonetics and phonology, phonetic transcription, differences among different layers of Czech. Upper-secondary students seem to be expected to possess quite a broad theoretical knowledge. If pronunciation is included, then it also seems to have the form of theoretical instruction. There were no respondents who would consider communication or textual qualities and complying with standard language at all relevant at this level.

All in all, we can see that teachers' thinking about the expected outcomes and the subject matter does not always correspond, even though the subject matter should be a tool for reaching the expected outcomes. We can see that in pronunciation and prosody of speech at lower- and upper-secondary school and in theoretical knowledge at upper-secondary school, the scores are notably higher in subchapter 4.6 (subject matter) than in subchapter 4.5 (expected outcomes). On the other hand, in expression, communication qualities and characteristics, the scores for primary and lower-secondary school are notably lower for subject matter (4.6) than the expected outcomes (4.5). This might imply that what really gets taught does not necessarily match the knowledge and skills the pupils are expected to have.

4.7 Rhetoric exercises

Rhetoric exercises *(mluvní cvičení)* are considered the basic method of teaching phonetic aspects in the Czech school (comp. Čechová, 1985, 1998; Čechová & Styblík, 1998). The pupil is given a topic or chooses one him/herself and delivers

a speech in front of the class. Our data show that the proportion of teachers who include rhetoric exercises into their lessons is high: 98 % at primary, 97 % at lower-secondary, and 72 % at upper-secondary level. The further we get in the educational system, the more we can detect the decrease, which again corresponds with the alterations in the expected outcomes (described above).

The main issue primary school teachers focus on when assessing rhetoric exercises seems to be correct pronunciation together with prosody of speech (mostly intonation, phrasing and loudness). To a certain extent they also focus on the abilities of expression or textual qualities and pupils' word stock, which, according to the respondents, is rather restricted. A topic for primary teachers also seems to be adhering to standard Czech. In contrast, an absolute minimum of the respondents pay attention to the content of the speech. These results are more or less in compliance with the expected outcomes described above.

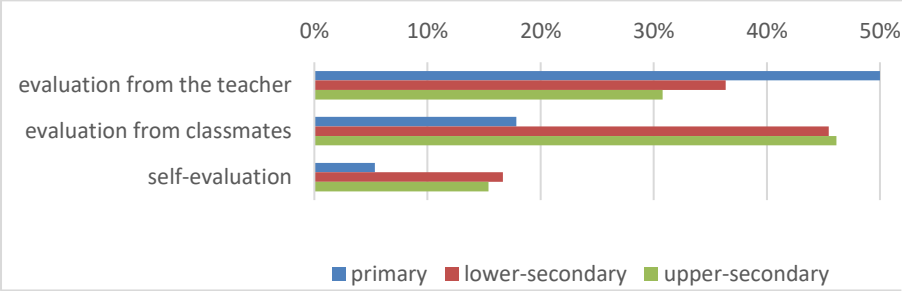
Lower-secondary school teachers declare they mostly focus on the pupil's expression abilities or textual qualities of the speech. They expect the speech to be fluent, comprehensible and functional; they check for stylistic qualities, correct syntax, promptness and for the ability to attract the listeners' attention. This, however, is not included in the declared subject matter (comp. subchapter 4.6), and therefore we might infer that teachers may be assessing something that they might not be teaching enough. Lower-secondary school teachers also seem to put quite high emphasis on "standard pronunciation" and "standard Czech"; however, here the results are difficult to distinguish, because the respondents mix them together. The problem is that, for some of the respondents, standard morphology equals standard pronunciation (comp. also Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2019; taking other findings into account, we would interpret the respondents' answer "standard pronunciation" more as the morphological standard; comp. e.g. Svobodová, 2003). Also padding, fillers and limited word stock appear to be a significant problem in pupils' speech. In contrast with primary school, lower-secondary school teachers seem to pay more attention to the content of the speech, its idea, and also to nonverbal communication, which none of the respondents at the primary level mentioned. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they teach it.

At the upper-secondary level we received a wide range of answers: the respondents say, in pupils' rhetoric exercises, they mostly concentrate on expression abilities and textual qualities (comprehensibility, coherence, stylistics, meaningfulness, fillers and padding, or adhering to the time limit), pronunciation and prosody and "language correctness" (instead of "standard"). This is in sharp contrast with the subject matter (subchapter 4.6). While the content seems to be dominated by theory and pronunciation, the criteria for pupils' speech are very practice and communication-oriented. In this respect, the complete lack of

communicational content at upper-secondary school (Table 4, Figure 6) appears to be incomprehensible.

From the data we can assume that feedback on rhetoric exercises basically comes in three forms: from the teacher, from the classmates, or the pupil is given space for self-evaluation; the proportion is shown in Figure 7.

Fig. 7: Feedback on rhetoric exercises



As we can see, feedback in primary school is dominantly given by the teacher. The respondents state that they correct the pupil, tell him/her the right version, simulate the mistake and correct it. This is in compliance with the primary teachers' conviction of being important models for their pupils (see above; comp. Browne, 2007, p. 34).

In lower-secondary school there appears to be a shift to a more analytical approach. After the speech, teachers seem to give more space to the pupil's peers, and all together they examine various aspects of the speech. The commentary from the class comes first, followed by the teacher's comments. In about 17 % of the cases, the pupil's self-assessment takes precedence. Unlike primary teachers, some lower-secondary teachers state they use criteria set with the class beforehand (an example can be seen in Štěpáník & Vlčková-Mejvaldová, 2018).

The most widely used form of feedback in upper-secondary school seems to be peer-assessment; the teacher usually adds what has not been mentioned by the pupil's classmates. There is also quite a small number of teachers who give their pupils space for self-assessment.

5 Discussion

Our understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' beliefs is based on the straightforward presupposition that the central point of a teacher's thinking is their considerations about the teaching objectives and expected outcomes. These personal theories and beliefs are later reflected in the methods and forms of work in class, selection of teaching materials, classroom management, time devoted to

certain phenomena, and the content taught, and have the power to overrule the official educational policies and requirements.

Well mastered phonetic aspects of L1 ease communication, learning (other subjects) and understanding how language works because phonetics is linked to syntax, stylistics, pragmatics and many other layers of the language system. They affect everyone's daily communication. Cultivated speech is also necessary in many professions, especially in connection with the accentuation of soft skills on the labour market.

Summarising our data, it seems that Czech primary school teachers treat phonetic aspects as subject matter that runs through the whole educational period and is closely connected to teaching the pupils to speak "properly" (reducing speech problems, mastering proper pronunciation etc.). It seems teachers understand their vital role in forming the fundamental speech habits of their pupils (comp. Brabcová et al., 1990).

In contrast, Czech lower- and upper-secondary school teachers seem to treat the matter rather as an individual linguistic discipline to "teach through". That it is a discipline integrated in all pupils' spoken expression and bound to many other language layers (e.g. syntax, stylistics, semantics or pragmatics) seems to be neglected. As answers to questions 9 and 10 from the questionnaire and the interviews in focus groups showed, this deduction also corresponds with the fact that, unlike primary school teachers who consider all language layers equally important, lower- and upper-secondary school teachers consider phonetic aspects least important for both school and life. This is in sharp contrast with morphology, stylistics, and especially orthography which is paid attention to in all pupils' written expression and which Czech teachers are (traditionally) very much concerned with (e.g. Čechová & Styblík, 1998, or Kraus, 1996/97).

The traditional focus of Czech language teaching on the written mode is also implied by the traditional aim of Czech L1 teaching to master standard Czech (Čechová & Styblík, 1998; Svoboda, 1977; the term for *standard language* in Czech is *spisovný jazyk* – from the German *Schriftsprache*; Havránek, 1969, p. 68). We recognise this aim but, in compliance with the curriculum and modern L1 didactics, stress that the main aim of L1 teaching should be mastering the ability of code switching, i.e. altering the code according to the communication situation, the speaker's communication aim and the communication partner (comp. e.g. Čechová & Styblík, 1998; Štěpáník & Šmejkalová, 2017). Our results suggest that the typical pressure on standard Czech (comp. e.g. Svobodová, 2003) might be weakening. This might mean a certain shift in teachers' beliefs about standard and non-standard varieties of the language, especially in connection with the change of communication patterns in the digital era. Of course, this assumption would need to be verified by further research. On the other hand, our data indicate that teachers might consider the form of speech, i.e. how pupils speak, more important

than the content and ideas the pupils present (see the lower scores for expression and communication qualities and characteristics as opposed to the high scores for pronunciation and prosody in subchapters 4.5 and 4.6).

Throughout the educational levels, the approach to conveying the subject matter alters. The shift from practice to theory is evidenced by the gradual increase in teacher-centred methods (e.g. whole-class presentation), decrease in pupil-centred methods (e.g. rhetoric exercises; subchapter 4.3) and the increased expectation of mastering theoretical knowledge (subchapter 4.5 and 4.6). While the curriculum sets the expected outcomes functionally and communicatively, according to our data, the upper-secondary teachers' main objective is to convey phonetic theory. Figure 4 would suggest that our upper-secondary respondents use a rather vivid inventory of methods and forms of work. Other open questions and the focus group interviews, however, revealed that the repertoire of methods and forms of work at upper-secondary school is rather restricted to serve the objective the teachers have assigned for themselves. (We assume that the discrepancy in the answers might have been caused by the form of the multiple-choice question about the methods, where the respondents chose what they thought was expected.) Thus, we can assume that, except for individual exceptions, the domination of linguistic theory (i.e. traditional knowledge about language) at the upper-secondary level, which has been described many times as a chronic problem in Czech school (comp. Čechová, 2017; Rysová, 2005/06; Zimová, 2005/06, 2015/16, and others) still prevails. This implies that the main method for teaching phonetic aspects in Czech upper-secondary school is teacher's exposition. This would explain why teachers mostly seem to expect their pupils to learn theoretical knowledge rather than the practical skill of clear and correct expression. As a result, especially at upper-secondary school, it seems we are witnessing a situation where the implemented curriculum is more influenced by teachers' beliefs than by the intended curriculum.

While other experts indicate that textbooks are used for both lesson planning and teaching (e.g. Červenková, 2010, or Sikorová, 2010), our data indicate that, in this respect, teaching phonetics might be atypical. The results suggest that, when it comes to teaching phonetics, teachers mostly rely on textbooks in the lesson planning phase and less in the actual lessons. This difference might be caused by several factors. First, teachers might realise that most textbooks are rather theoretical and do not lead to practical mastery of the phenomena taught, and therefore there is no real need to use them in lessons. Second, the case also might be that they recognise that the textbooks do not give phonetics much space or importance. It seems that while teaching phonetic aspects, teachers use textbooks mostly for orientation only. In other phases additional teaching materials play a vital role. This would also explain why teachers feel the need to prepare their own materials and do not rely on textbooks as much as when teaching other disciplines.

However, it is necessary to note that research up to now on textbook usage has focused on school subjects in general; there has not been any special research on teaching only phonetics. It appears that there is a certain group of teachers who have realised the potential of educational technology as a teaching aid, and authentic recordings as illustrations of real communication processes and current language. However, this group still seems to be rather limited.

We can detect the disputableness of the resources that teachers use both for planning and for teaching. Quite a significant number of the respondents' answers reveals the phenomenon of "my own materials" or "what I remember from university". Also textbooks that teachers usually use, esp. in upper-secondary school, might be of insufficient quality (e.g. *Český jazyk v kostce* [Czech in a Nutshell]), which corresponds with the results of earlier research (e.g. Machová, 2003/04).

Moreover, despite the fact that we can expect that most of our respondents possess a Master's degree in teaching Czech, we detected a certain degree of incompetence in some of the respondents' formulations: "pronunciation of all letters", "correct punctuation while reading", "talk in elaborated sentences", "correct reading of sentences (punctuation)", "not to swallow word endings". As we can see, many of these answers (e.g. recitation and reading aloud) show the teachers' perception of a strong link between speaking and reading development, i.e. the development of speaking skills in close relation to written texts. The respondents also tend to mix language layers: despite being asked about phonetics, some of the answers mention e.g. "correct declension and conjugation" or "correct usage of cases", which, however, concern morphology. Most often it is these two disciplines that get confused. Besides other factors, this might be explained by the long-established gap between theory and practice, the consequence of which is the overall undervaluation of both didactic and field metaknowledge in the teaching profession. These results support the critical conclusions made by Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Sojka (2016) concerning the rather insufficient preparation of future teachers in the area of phonetic aspects (see also e.g. Adam, 2018, or Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Štěpáník, 2017/18).

The study has certain limitations, which we offer for discussion:

1) The number of the respondents from upper-secondary school is rather small. As we used the method of simple random sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p. 153), we did not have direct impact on the selection of the sample. Therefore, we do not attempt to generalise our outcomes – we rather aim at analysing and demonstrating certain tendencies. However, while the sample might not be representative as far as the educational levels are concerned, we consider the sample regionally representative (see subchapter 3.1).

2) The respondents filled in the questionnaire while the researchers were present, which could lead to issues of social ability. However, we did not intervene in any way in the process of filling out the questionnaires, even the information about the whole research process was very limited as we did not want to influence the participants at all. As we are also teachers, we represented ourselves as being one of the participants, having similar problems.
3) This is also the reason why we only made notes during the focus group interviews instead of recording them. The data from the focus group interviews served only for the triangulation of the data from the questionnaires; we used them only as support of the validity and reliability of the research. This is also the reason why the data from the questionnaires and the focus group interviews are presented together without any indication of what comes from the questionnaires and what comes from the interviews.
4) We would like to stress that we do realise the main issue which still remains open: our study has researched teachers' beliefs which form the educational reality. However, these do not have to necessarily match with the actual classroom practices. The reflection of the teaching reality of phonetic aspects remains a topic for further research.

6 Conclusion

Our paper focused on teachers' beliefs in the area of the development of speaking skills in teaching L1 in the Czech Republic with a special focus on phonetic aspects. We consider this topic highly relevant as the development of speaking skills is one of the basic requirements of communicatively oriented L1 teaching. Orthoepy and other speech qualities can be viewed as "universal values" that pupils develop in school and transfer to their everyday lives. Our research has found that teaching phonetic aspects in Czech schools seems rather neglected, and faces certain problems, in close connection to the beliefs teachers hold about the field.

The main outcomes of our study can be summarised by the following points:

1) Czech language teachers seem not to treat phonetics with as much importance as other language layers, especially morphology and syntax. This applies to the spoken versus written word as well. As a result, phonetics appears to be given minimal time or sometimes might even be omitted altogether, and the focus on speaking development is rather peripheral.
2) At primary school, phonetic aspects seem to be treated continuously throughout the whole cycle. In contrast, at lower- and upper-secondary level phonetics seems to be treated as a separate unit. Teachers seem to fail to notice the complexity of the language system and the linkage between the individual

language layers – specifically the relation of phonetics to syntax, semantics, stylistics and pragmatics.

3) At primary school, phonetics seems to be constantly present. In contrast, at lower- and upper-secondary school after the phonetic subject matter is covered (presented first of all linguistic disciplines at the given educational level), it seems rarely to appear again. Taking into account the importance of speech skills in real-life communication and also the requirements of the final upper-secondary leaving examination (maturita), the upper-secondary approach to the subject matter is didactically indefensible.
4) Despite the official requirements given by the *Framework Education Programme* (the intended curriculum), especially upper-secondary school phonetics teaching seems to be more theoretical than practical. Overemphasising linguistic theory is a lingering problem in Czech L1 teaching, and teaching phonetics appears not to be an exception.
5) The results of our research show that teachers' content knowledge of the field might be insufficient despite the undergraduate training they had. This confirms the results of earlier studies (e.g. Málková, 2012, 2014/15; Svobodová, 2003; Vlčková-Mejvaldová & Sojka, 2016). There are two aspects this can result in:
   a) Teachers might arrive at the conclusion that phonetics does not contribute much to enhance the expressive and communicative abilities of their pupils. However, this is in contrast with the position phonetic aspects have in everyday communication, the position of the teacher as the role model for their pupils and the expectations of L1 speakers in terms of standard Czech, which also comprises standard realisation of phonetic aspects (comp. Lefenda & Svobodová, 2016/17; Palková, 2008/09, 2017/18).
   b) The limits in teachers' content knowledge might have a negative impact on their pedagogical content knowledge and can lead to inadequate didactic transformation of the phonetic content or even complete resignation to it.
6) Most importantly, teachers' beliefs about the actual process of teaching and learning phonetic aspects seem to influence the implemented curriculum more than the intended curriculum given by the government does.

To sum up, there are two primary recommendations based on our research – one matches the field context and one the professional context:

1) Phonetics should be considered a vital part of all L1 teaching, and should be bound to all other disciplines and communication activities in the class. Speaking development should advance the pupils' ability to use knowledge about the language system so that they express themselves more clearly, understandably and precisely; their ability to make deliberate choices about

which language elements best serve their communication purposes and so which they choose from the language system when expressing themselves.

2) The basic precondition for this shift is the thorough and functional training of teachers as they are the ones who actually change the educational reality. However, if we want to change teachers' beliefs and thinking, we need to (a) systemically research their subjective theories, opinions and the connection of these theories to their instructional practices, (b) based on these findings alter and individualise the teacher training programmes.

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Current Issues in Pronunciation Teaching to Non-Native Learners of English

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Abstract

Pronunciation plays an indisputable role in communication; even more so in communication between native and non-native speakers of English. The goals for pronunciation teaching have shifted from accent-free or native-like pronunciation to comprehensibility and teaching practices aimed at non-native English learners vary and are often based on teachers' opinions rather than research findings. The paper aims to present the current topics in twenty selected research papers dealing with pronunciation teaching (teaching practices in the English language classrooms, selected segmental and suprasegmental features). The analysed papers indicate that a teacher's good theoretical background can raise students' awareness and the overall performance of pronunciation phenomena, whether at the segmental or the suprasegmental level. Students may benefit from different strategies applied to pronunciation learning, but traditional teaching methods are still prevalent in the contemporary English language classroom.

The contribution presents partial results of the research project KEGA 001TTU-4/2019.

Key words: pronunciation, intelligibility, nativeness, research, teaching, non-native learners, pronunciation

Introduction

Language is a complex communication tool consisting of language layers analysed according to their respective linguistic disciplines; however, speakers use its entire range of means concurrently and appropriately for the particular act of communication. In the current period of globalization, speakers often communicate in foreign languages, the use of which brings new aspects to communication. Levis (2005) presents a draft of a Speaker-Listener Intelligibility Matrix for communication between native and non-native speakers. Communication between two native speakers presumes shared strategies and the successful transfer of information. In reality, the extent to which this communication succeeds depends on many factors such as the use of nativized varieties of English (e. g. India). When native speakers speak and non-native speakers listen, it resembles the typical non-native way of foreign language

learning. On the contrary, non-native speakers bear a higher degree of responsibility for successful communication when native speakers are listening. Two non-native speakers use a given foreign language as their lingua franca. Therefore, context is important for the outcome of this communication. Jenkins (2002) claims that currently English is spoken by a higher number of non-native speakers than native speakers, thus investigation into possible issues is required.

Pronunciation is one of the key aspects of speech, which is reflected in the recent growth in research into pronunciation teaching. At the beginning of the new millennium, Derwing and Munro (2005) commented on the lack of investigation into pronunciation teaching to non-native learners due to the study of pronunciation shifting to the field of applied linguistics. In approaches to non-native language teaching relevant to that period improved pronunciation was a result of exposure to the target language (Foote et al., 2016). Subsequently, teachers were given few guiding principles and some non-native teachers avoided teaching pronunciation (Munro & Derwing, 2005). Almost a decade later, Thomson and Derwing (2014) observed a clear growth in interest in pronunciation research and carried out an analysis of 75 studies focusing on how non-natives learned pronunciation, concluding that non-native learners benefit from the explicit explanation of pronunciation rules. Pronunciation is viewed as different from other aspects of language proficiency, as the ability to imitate sounds is not tied to language proficiency (Thomson & Derwing, 2014). However, Nair et al. (2017) suggest, some non-native language teachers believe that the ability to learn an accent is based on talent or exposure to the target language.

The specific pronunciation features non-native learners of English should command are determined by the listeners' ability to identify the meaning of words pronounced differently from the form presented as models. The difference in non-native pronunciation may be caused by an error as well as the use of an accent or a pronunciation variety. While native speakers are allowed to use their native accents (social, geographical), often with greater variation than non-native speakers; non-native speakers are taught to imitate Received Pronunciation or General American English accents (Jenkins, 2002). Levis (2005) argues that even though the majority of native speakers speak neither of these accents, a large part of instructional materials presents them as prestigious models and their use in actual communication may not be effective. She suggests including non-native accents to pronunciation teaching. Jenkins (2002) believes that pronunciation teaching makes the most compromises when compared to the teaching of other language layers and adds that "[t]he links between accent and identity on the one hand and accent and articulatory motor skills on the other are, it seems, so ingrained that traditional English pronunciation teaching is destined to fail for all but a small minority of L2 learners" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 86).

The position of pronunciation training has not been stable over the different periods of English language teaching. While the early approaches to language teaching (the Direct Method or Grammar Translation) either ignored pronunciation or taught it through drills and repetition to achieve native-like pronunciation, the Reform Movement or Audiolingual/Oral Method viewed pronunciation instruction as an important part of non-native language learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Today pronunciation teaching concentrates on those aspects of English pronunciation that constitute and carry meaning and aims to respect the natural accent of English learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Jenkins, 2002; Levis, 2005; Saito, 2012). Those theories (e. g. the Critical Period Hypothesis, Flege, 1987) that assume that learner's age may limit achieving accent-free pronunciation of non-native English learners in English were challenged soon after their presentation (e. g. Patkowski, 1990).

Regarding acceptance of the concept of comprehensible pronunciation with an accent among non-native learners of English, new goals to pronunciation teaching were formulated. Levis (2005) compares the terms nativeness and intelligibility. *The nativeness principle* is based on the assumption that native-like pronunciation and the ability to imitate target sounds by non-native learners of foreign languages can be achieved by motivation, exposure to the target language and pronunciation training. This principle has not been fully accepted due to a lack of evidence; however, this principle seems to be reflected in many textbooks on pronunciation practice. On the contrary, *the intelligibility principle* is based on the assumption that "learners simply need to be understandable" (Levis, 2005, p. 370) and deviations from model pronunciation compromise the comprehension to a different degree.

Intelligibility is a universally accepted term; however, there are different classifications and instruments used to measure it. In the past, intelligibility was evaluated using cloze tests, transcriptions or rating scales. Crowther et al. (2015) list the evaluation methods for both approaches – while nativeness is evaluated using accentedness ratings, comprehensibility (intelligibility) is rated via the listener's relative difficulty to understand an utterance. The data indicate that listeners take into account the speaker's native language as well as the type of utterance. A large role in the evaluation of speakers' performance and intelligibility is played by evaluator bias against the phenomena, accents, speakers as well as their experience with a particular accent or pronunciation feature (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

The concept of intelligibility has been variously subclassified (comfortable, functional, overall; for details, see Isaacs, 2008) with the same general conclusion – the listener should understand the speaker's message without the need for repetition or rephrasing the utterance. Derwing and Munro (2005) therefore

identified two main concerns in pronunciation teaching – intelligibility that allows the non-native learner to communicate successfully with different groups of native and non-native English speakers and secondly the non-native accent that has an impact on the social interactions between non-native speakers and their listeners. The needs of different learners from different linguistic backgrounds vary, as Wells (2008) pointed out. Pronunciation features challenging speakers of one language may be easy for speakers of another language and can be caused by a different set of phonemes in each language. Crowther et al. (2015) add that pronunciation of sounds in a foreign language contains elements traceable to native language and the non-native learners of English who share one native language display similar pronunciation features in the foreign language. The linguistic homogeneity or heterogeneity of a group of non-native learners and the instructor's native language are a major factor in pronunciation teaching (Foote et al, 2016). All these factors are accompanied by the individual ability of non-native learners to produce and recognize specific sounds.

Methods

The paper focuses on two main areas of interest: (1) pronunciation classroom practices and (2) segmental and suprasegmental level. The first area, classroom practices, should provide examples reflecting the presented concepts of the nativeness and intelligibility principles in practice. The second area, studies in segmental and suprasegmental phonology, follow the traditional view on the branches of phonology (Roach, 2009). There is no agreement on the superiority of either of the two branches in the ELT classroom (Hahn, 2004; Thomson & Derwing, 2014), so a new investigation into the current opinion may be insightful. The papers were selected from the World of Science database that collects peer-reviewed journals from multiple publishers and disciplines. The papers searched keywords "pronunciation", "teaching", "phoneme", "suprasegmentals", "approach" and their combinations and the selection only included papers published after the year 2000.

Four papers (in chronological order Jenkins, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2014) helped in the general overview of the current trends in pronunciation teaching. During the selection of papers for the study, the papers were identified as the most frequently cited in the relevant literature. Even though they are review papers and do not present actual results of pronunciation teaching research, they are used as a theoretical background for many study designs.

All selected studies concern non-native English teaching to adult and young adult learners, present results of original research and provided a detailed description of the methodology. After their selection, the studies were inspected

for the identification of the pronunciation issue, the methodology and the results. The articles were published in academic journals with an impact factor *(TESOL Quarterly, Research in Language, Language Awareness, The Modern Language Journal, Applied Linguistics, The Language Learning Journal, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, The English Teacher, Laboratory Phonology)* or conference proceedings.

Pronunciation classroom practices

As it has been already suggested, the role of pronunciation in non-native language teaching has been in a state of constant change. In the earlier approaches, foreign language pronunciation was either the result of exposure to the target language or approaches used complex sets of drills and repetitions. As suggested, "[t]o a large extent, pronunciation's importance has always been determined by ideology and intuition rather than research.[sic] Teachers have [sic] intuitively decided which features have the greatest effect on clarity and which are learnable in a classroom setting" (Levis, 2005, p. 369). Saito (2012) claims that while the morphological and syntactical levels of languages are taught in contextualized meaningful exercises, pronunciation practice is decontextualized due to the use of drills and repetition.

Pronunciation is one of the aspects of language both native and non-native teachers of English are not keen on teaching and a lack of adequate teacher training results in an intuitive use of available materials and techniques (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Setting pedagogical goals must be based on knowledge of pronunciation issues. Unqualified teachers may have misconceptions about phonological phenomena, cannot evaluate or use teaching materials accurately and do not set realistic goals when teaching pronunciation in compliance with the results of scientific research. Also, even the teaching materials do not reflect the current research results (Derwing & Munro, 2005), and can be perceived as boring; however, Baker (2013) argues that teachers completing a pronunciation course have and apply a wider range of pronunciation activities into their classrooms.

In a longitudinal study of teacher behaviour with non-native learners, Foote et al. (2016) calculated that only about 10% of classroom time was devoted to pronunciation, often in the form of corrective feedback and primarily concerning segmentals. In comparison, this was only about half of the time devoted to grammar and only about a seventh of the time devoted to vocabulary. The teachers in the study mostly presented pronunciation in the form of tongue twisters and practice lacked recasts with form-focused instruction. In addition, teachers also displayed discordance between pronunciation surveys and actual pedagogical practices. Nair et al. (2006) discussed the reasons why ESL teachers do not teach

pronunciation. Among other reasons, teachers prioritize other language layers in opposition to the acoustic one, which results in a lack of time for pronunciation practice. The participating teachers also preferred teaching comprehensible pronunciation to error correction. Accordingly, for pronunciation practice, teachers in Northern Cyprus apply traditional techniques (dictation, reading aloud and dialogues) and avoid using modern technologies. This could be caused by a lack of formal pronunciation instruction during teacher training; therefore, using traditional techniques imitates their own training in English (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010).

Baker (2013) collected opinions on the knowledge, beliefs and practices of five teachers about their teaching practices in pronunciation training. The teachers declared a lack of knowledge and preparation for pronunciation teaching and the techniques they used were predominantly based on non-communicative activities (listening text presentation, explanation and examples, production practice, kinaesthetic/tactile practice, checking, question-answer display-knowledge verification or exploration repetition drill, visual or audio identification, repetition drill-audio identification, visual or audio recognition, etc.); free open-ended techniques and student-led activities (a game with a set of rules and competition, a drama based on practice and performance of a play or a scene, presentation, discussion) were primarily used in the higher levels of English classes, while guided techniques that contain a blend of both types of techniques (question-answer referential, production—student feedback practice and production—audio identification or recognition, mutual exchange, preparation) were applied the least due to the teachers' limited knowledge of their incorporation into teaching. According to Baker (2013), the use of all the aforementioned techniques in combination can provide long-term results in pronunciation teaching and listening discrimination activities provide a basis for the further development of students – the ability to recognize a pronunciation feature aurally is important for its future production.

Teachers may spend the most time dealing with segmental errors because they do not have sufficient training with teaching suprasegmentals. Another reason is that teaching suprasegmental features requires reference to terminology (Foote et al., 2016). Couper (2011) tried to find out whether terminology created by teachers and students learning pronunciation (socially constructed metalanguage) and critical listening (listening and contrasting sounds to establish boundaries between pronunciation phenomena) improve learners' pronunciation. The comparison of results of four different groups taking part in the experiment sessions indicates that both aspects, socially constructed metalanguage, as well as critical listening, have an immediate effect on the students' performance and the initial signs of learning indicate that this approach can be an effective strategy for

pronunciation instruction. However, explicit instruction did not provide any significant differences in pronunciation before or after the course in the study by Algethami (2017).

Derwing et al. (2007) compared two adult immigrant groups of non-native English learners comparable in education level and language proficiency but differing in mother tongue who attended a language course that concentrated on grammar and receptive communication skills. The comparison revealed that important progress in fluency and comprehensibility was made by the group with slightly higher exposure to English outside class. Willingness to communicate was also important for mastering language and pronunciation. Finally, Trofimovich and Gatbonton (2006) identified that overall comprehensibility can be improved during a pronunciation course lasting one semester; however, this period is not sufficient to remove an accent. The mastery of English pronunciation by foreign learners requires systematic and persistent practice. Several pronunciation learning strategies proposals were developed. For instance, Oxford (1990) developed a taxonomy for pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) to help learners develop proper L2 pronunciation. Pronunciation learning strategies are divided into two classes (direct and indirect) and then further into six groups The six major strategies are enumerated as following: memory (e.g., using key words), cognitive (e.g., recognizing and using formulas), compensation (e.g., avoiding using unknown words, using mime and gesture), metacognitive (e.g., focusing on specific sounds, organizing), affective (e.g., rewarding yourself), social/cooperation (e.g., asking for correction). Direct strategies involve memory (representing sounds in memory and indirect strategies include affective pronunciation learning strategies. Two research studies used Oxford's taxonomy as a starting point in the investigation.

The first study by Akyol (2013) concentrated on the identification of students' pronunciation learning strategies. The researcher applied an updated version of the Pronunciation Strategies questionnaire with 52 items built on taxonomies of pronunciation learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and cooperation) by Oxford (1990). The results revealed that all respondents used all strategies for learning pronunciation, but the use of strategies differed. The most important was cooperation; the least frequently used was the cognitive strategy. The data also revealed that students who do not attend any pronunciation course follow the most professional user of English in the classroom as their model. The second study based on Oxford's (1990) classification is by Mirza (2015) who compared the phonetic competence of 22 Lebanese, all native Arabic speakers, students studying English with French (EFL) or English only (ESL) after pronunciation training (the use of transcription, repetitions, and minimal pair drilling). In a pre-test, the researcher identified 10

commonly mistaken phonemes. After a five-week course, the participants took a post-test, firstly to identify the improvement of the pronunciation of the two groups of learners, and secondly to identify whether the pronunciation learning strategies positively impacted their performance. After identifying the groups' common pronunciation mistakes, the researchers applied cognitive strategies (simplified phonetic transcription, minimal pair drills, sound codes/associations, reading aloud, pronunciation rules), social strategies (peer correction, reading aloud together). The data revealed that the strategies improved the pronunciation of both groups of learners. However, comparing the results of both groups of participants, there was no significant difference between the two groups of English learners.

In another study, Crowther et al. (2015) compared learners' results from two types of multifaceted speaking tasks. The analysis of the performances focused on segmentals, word stress, intonation, rhythm, speech rate, lexical appropriateness, lexical richness, grammatical accuracy, grammatical complexity, discourse richness, as language is a multifaceted and complex communication tool that provides the speaker a wide range of means to express various messages with an appropriate set of linguistic components for that specific utterance. The results indicate that comprehensibility does not depend only on pronunciation and the ability to imitate the target sounds but on the selection of other linguistic tools.

Saito (2012) claims that intelligibility is based on the fulfilment of "minimal phonological requirements" (p. 843) that allows successful communication between non-native speakers and native speakers, or non-native speakers and non-native speakers, and can be a basis for study into pronunciation teaching. The author also argues that teaching both, segmentals and suprasegmentals is relevant for comprehensibility. Ideally, pronunciation features should be taught alongside morphosyntactic features for the overall improvement in language proficiency.

Jenkins (2002) formulated a proposal of pronunciation features non-native learners of English should practice during pronunciation training, as the importance of intelligibility for non-native speakers is growing. Non-native language courses often comprise students of mixed linguistic backgrounds. As has already been mentioned, the traditional pronunciation models of Received Pronunciation and General American are now viewed as more prestigious rather than practical in everyday communication, and Jenkins (2002) suggests non-native models for pronunciation lessons. In her pronunciation curriculum (Lingua Franca Core, Jenkins, 2002) she included the following items:

- dental sounds are replaceable in some contexts
- rhotic accent recommended
- /t/ sound in words in word medial position,
- allophonic variations in words retaining their meaning

- aspiration of voiceless plosives in the word-initial position
- pre-fortis clipping
- word-initial clusters complete
- simplification of word-medial clusters only according to the phonotactic rules
- /nt/ in the word medial position
- additions to consonant clusters acceptable
- vowel quantity maintained
- regional vowel allophones allowed except for the sound /3:/
- nuclear stress to clarify sentence meaning.

These features are the most recognizable to most English speakers, native and non-native alike, and their negligent pronunciation may cause the highest degree of incomprehensibility. Jenkins also identified secondary, non-core pronunciation features that are desirable to teach, however, they compromise comprehensibility to a lower degree and they include the dentals /ð/ and /θ/, dark /l/, consistent vowel quality, weak form pronunciation, word-final consonant assimilation, grammatical and attitudinal functions of intonation, word stress and stress-timed rhythm.

Selected studies on segmental and suprasegmental level

Segmental phonology deals with individual sounds, their use and importance in communication. There are two types of scientific studies dealing with individual phonemes. The first type represents contrastive analyses of phonetic inventories of two languages. There are numerous contrastive studies for any two languages. Even if their purpose is primarily to summarize findings and are mostly theoretical or descriptive, they are very important for both pronunciation teachers and learners. These comparisons facilitate the understanding of the two pronunciation systems and highlight the key distinctive features of both, the mother tongue and English. Secondly, these papers try to propose effective methods for familiarization with acoustic systems. For illustration, two studies were selected. The second type of research paper deals with specific issues pronunciation mistakes caused due to incorrect selection of the appropriate phoneme.

From the first type of research paper, the study by Demircioglu (2013), for instance, concentrates on issues Turkish learners of English have when learning to make and use English diphthongs. The second study by Nuhiu (2013) deals with issues regarding difficulties Albanian EFL university students have in learning the English phonetic inventory. The author provides an overall comparison of Albanian and English phonetic inventories. Specifically, the author deals with features of individual vowels and diphthongs that require special attention in their training. Within consonants, the author concentrates on plosives, their voicing and

aspiration, as well as the incorrect pronunciation of words containing the velar nasal /ŋ/, voicing voiceless consonants (e. g. /z/ instead of /s/ in *small*), or aspiration in word-initial position. Analogically, Şimon et al. (2015) tried to find phonological differences and possible solutions for Romanian learners of English.

From the second type of paper, the study by Franklin and McDaniel (2016) compares two phonemic inventories to find a relation between the interference between the mother tongue and the target language (English). The time speaking English was a critical variable, and the researchers applied phonological process analysis. The study was based on the theory by Flege (SLM; Flege, 1981; Flege et al., 1995 in Franklin & McDaniel, 2016) according to which a learner's foreign accent stems from the decreasing ability to learn new sounds with increasing age, however, it can be supplemented by experience and time spent speaking the foreign language. They also emphasise the importance of knowing the phonetic inventories of the mother tongue and the target language to expect potentially problematic sounds. The participants of the study were two female native Japanese speakers who both mainly have experience with reading and writing in English, with little opportunity to speak English and different exposure to English. Their reading performances were compared using a contrastive analysis between Japanese and English phonetic inventories and developmental norms for English children. The differences between Japanese and English consonant inventories were also presented in the paper. In Japanese, voiceless plosives are pronounced without aspiration and it lacks labiodentals /f, v/ and dentals /θ, ð/ fricatives. Also, Japanese lacks the English /l/ sound. After that, phonological processes were identified, as well as vocalization, final consonant devoicing and cluster reduction. Phonological differences between Japanese and English were also taken into consideration. After this, researchers compared the speech of the participating adult learners of English with the speech of native English-speaking children and described in which stages of their language acquisition pronunciation appears or disappears (e.g. "Final consonant devoicing begins to decline at approximately 3 years of age and disappears by the age of 4 years, and cluster reduction can persist until the age of 5 years", Franklin and McDaniel, 2016, p. 179) to make predictions of interlanguage phonological processes.

Suprasegmental features (stress, intonation and rhythm) are such features of language that carry lexical information, i. e. they might change the meaning of words, which is why they are paid special attention to in pronunciation training. In the first paper, Jung et al. (2017) studied lexical stress production in target words in three collaborative conditions: priming with task repetition, priming with procedural repetition and control group with no priming. Priming is understood as exposing the learners to language features (pronunciation, grammar or syntax) to facilitate the production of the target feature in the learners' production

(Trofimovich et al., 2013). In this study, the target words consisted of three or four syllables with the primary stress on the second syllable (e. g. 3-2 existing, 4-2 environment, the numeric system by Murphy, 2004 in Jung et al., 2017). The communicative tasks contained target vocabulary and were based on a design by Trofimovich, McDonough and Foote (2014). In this study, Trofimovich et al. (2014) studied the importance of interactive alignment ("a sociocognitive phenomenon whereby speakers tend to converge in their language use during the conversation by reusing each other's expressions, structures, and pronunciation patterns") during the exchange of information. The participants were expected to pronounce the target word that was pronounced by the researcher as a model (prime condition), and one word without the model pronunciation (no-prime condition). The experiment took 4 weeks and each participant attended five sessions. Researchers noted that incorrect production of stress is multidimensional (e.g. misplaced stress, multiple stresses, no stress). The results of the post-test show that the control group that did not attend any of the priming sessions achieved approximately the same results as in the pre-test, while the two groups participating in priming sessions achieved better results than in pre-test, with slightly better results in the repetitive priming group.

The importance of lexical stress is based on theoretical background based on the theory of "stress-deafness" (Peperkamp & Dupoux, 2002) and its impact on the acquisition of lexical stress This term was coined on the basis of a study in which some native speakers of French could not recognize stress patterns of words due to the fact, that lexical stress in French does not distinguish lexical meaning of words, as opposed to Spanish, where stress carries lexical information. The stress patterns of trochee, iamb, dactyl and amphibrach were equally represented. The results showed that lexical stress as an intrinsic feature of all words is more likely to be recognized by proficient English speakers with pronunciation training and explicit theoretical instruction, rather than exposure to spoken English.

The study by Hahn (2004) identified the significance of word stress placement for native speakers when listening to non-native learners of English. The conclusion of the research indicates that speakers with correct word stress placement are rated more positively and their utterances are more memorable for listeners when compared to incorrect or absent word stress. In terms of interpretation of the utterances, the differences were not statistically significant implying that speech with incorrect stress placement is still comprehensible. Suprasegmental features matter in the sociolinguistic aspect of texts, stressing/destressing information according to its relative newness/oldness in discourse.

Field (2005) observed that two groups of native and non-native listeners had to transcribe speech acts with manipulated lexical stress and subsequently vowel

quality. Both groups displayed differences in recognition. Words stressed on a weak syllable are more incomprehensible than those stressed on a full vowel – manipulated due to the possibly higher degree of informativeness of full vowels and their higher prominence. In addition, right-shifted stress is more incomprehensible than left-shifted stress. The study also disproved the assumption that non-native listeners are more tolerant to incorrect stress placement than native listeners.

Discussion and conclusions

Pronunciation plays an important part in the ELT classroom, but its teaching practices and objectives display a great variety. The paper aimed to provide an overview of current trends in pronunciation teaching based on the analysis of twenty selected papers dealing with teaching practices and pronunciation features at segmental and suprasegmental levels. Four studies with high citation frequency (in chronological order Jenkins, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2014) provided the theoretical framework for the analysis. The aforementioned studies deal with the paradigmatic shift of pronunciation accuracy and imitation of native-like accent into the sphere of intelligibility that accepts the speaker's non-native accent.

Twenty studies analysed in the paper dealt with the English pronunciation of adult or young adult non-native learners of English. The only exception was the study by Peppercamp & Dupoux (2002) who compared the importance of word stress in French and Spanish (2002). All remaining studies contained an element of the native English pronunciation (a native model, a native listener or a speaker) contrary to Jenkins' suggestion to use non-native accents as pronunciation models. The studies assert that teachers prefer more traditional teaching methods and non-communicative activities to the communicative ones (Nair et al., 2006, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010) even though the combination of both types seem to be effective in pronunciation learning (Baker, 2013). Oxford's (1990) direct and indirect strategies for pronunciation learning are also efficient in language learning (Mirza, 2015) but non-native English learners use them differently (Akyol, 2013). Motivation is also an important element in pronunciation learning (Derwing et al., 2007). The theoretical knowledge of students about pronunciation issues (Couper, 2011) raised by creating metalanguage has also proven to be a successful tool in pronunciation mastering. Teachers are not keen pronunciation instructors and spend only a limited time dealing with pronunciation issues (Foote et al., 2016). Teachers with pronunciation training generally use a wider range of pronunciation training activities in their classes (ibid.), contrary to the untrained ones who usually prefer instruction in the form of error correction (Foote et al., 2016).

All non-native learners of English should command key pronunciation features at segmental and suprasegmental levels, even if the "minimal phonological requirements" (Saito, 2012) or the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2002) depart from the traditional prestigious models (RP or General American accents) for English non-native learners. Studies dealing with a comparison of two phonological systems (Demircioglu, 2013; Nahiu, 2013; Şimon et al., 2015) are still being carried out because non-native learners must know the pronunciation specifics of the language they learn. However, an in-depth analysis of phonological development may predict future progress in pronunciation training (Franklin and McDaniel, 2016). At the segmental level, word stress is one of the suprasegmental features the current research studies focus on. Hahn (2004) confirmed the importance of the correct word stress placement for native listeners of English. In addition, Field (2005) also confirmed the importance of word-stress placement for non-native listeners. Repetition and example are effective strategies to learn English stress placement (Jung et al., 2017; Trofimovich et al., 2014). Pronunciation is only one aspect of speech, but it must complement the utterance to elicit comprehensibility (Crowther et al., 2015).

As the overview of the research studies presented above shows, pronunciation research focuses on different aspects, from self-reflective studies dealing with teaching practices to their impact in the classroom, and typical mistakes non-native learners make in the process of foreign language learning. The focus of pronunciation teaching should shift from nativeness to comprehensibility or intelligibility, allowing students to keep their natural accent. The studies confirm to various degrees the effectiveness of pronunciation training but prove that learners of all ages are encouraged to practice pronunciation. Following the current paradigm in pronunciation training, none of the papers presented ideas supporting the complete erasure of accents coming from the mother tongue of learners; on the contrary, all research papers accepted the natural accent of the learners.

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Faithful Prodigals, Precarious Polity and Re-Jigging National Discourse: Readings from Two African Novels

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Abstract

This study is informed by the observation of some dangerous threats to faith's missionary and human developmental goals as well as Salvationist stance. The alarm has been sounded that fanaticism of any colour at all is not only inimical to the raison detre of faith's cardinal objectives but more tellingly, constitutes a serious endangerment of humanity, particularly the Nigerian enterprise. Deploying exemplifications from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) in an eclectic combination of a body of qualitative instances drawn from the Islamic and the Christian faiths the paper underscores the danger inherent in bigoted faith both to faith itself and to the society. The paper urges the painstaking reification/ inculcation of the principles of tolerance and patriotism in children in their formative years through literary creativity, the precepts of inter and intra religious tolerance respecting the West African sub-regional stance for secular imperatives and egalitarian . This is to enthrone lasting peace in the African sub continent and the world a piece.

Key words: faithful prodigals, precarious polity, re-jig, national discourse, formative years, religious (in)tolerance, christianity, islam, reification.

Introduction

This paper captures the intrinsic and extrinsic worth of Faith as well as its negative and positive dimensions in human development with regard to West Africa, particularly Nigeria. Although, Femi Ojo-Ade sees Christianity in Africa only as an instrument of colonialism, a source of political instability and a destroyer of African culture (2001, pp.126 – 7), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o observes that the African "cannot escape from the church and its influence," where Ekollo as cited by Ojo-Ade points to Christianity's central role in African affairs and concludes that "whether we consider it an inhibitory…force or … an expansive factor, it remains one of the factors that must be taken into consideration in what we call 'the politico-cultural revolution of black Africa'" (pp. 126 – 7).

Faith

The basis for the existence and fructification of the Christian and the Islamic religions is *faith*. To the Christian, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, the substance of hope" (Hebrews, 11:1). These things hoped for include the promises of everlasting life in the hereafter. Faith is also, "a conduct of work inspired by the complete surrender to mental acceptance." This means that faith necessitates work since "faith without work is dead." This particular configuration of faith is the safety verve as well as the driving force for the works of charity and the development of the human society by the Christian faithful such as missionaries, evangelists and educators. It is also, in a sense, the galvanizing element toward certain leanings demonstrated in anarchy, violence and stasis by errant prodigals of faith.

For the Islamic faithful, "faith is at once an affirmation of truth and surrender to the truth so affirmed" (Surat Al- Jathiya, 45:5). This truth in Islam is the belief in the unity of the *Tawheed* (God), as expressed in the primary *Kalimah* (word) of Islam, as "*Laa ilaaha ilallah,"* meaning: "There is no one worthy of worship but Allah(God). What necessitates belief in a supreme being is man's sense of inadequacy, of fear of the nebulous and initially his feeling and (later) conviction that some supernatural force is at the centre of control at both the celestial and the terrestrial planes of existence. So, faith has rewards which are the essential drivers of the faithful either to better or to batter and embitter mankind or sections of humanity.

Faith is the evidence that the rewards promised or encapsulated in the creed are real and serve as recompense to the faithful. Thus, aside promises of movement to a safer and surer plane with its attendant trappings of enjoyment and bliss, faith for the Islamist promises "unhindered progress and success in this world and in the hereafter; whereas failure and ignominy are the ultimate lot of those who refuse to believe it" (Quran, 8:32). The Christian basis for salvation and immortality is ingrained in God's grace through man's faith to Him (Ephesians 2:8). The exhortation "all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully" (Romans, 8:32) clinches the functionality of faith. This is what necessitates the practice of noble deeds which are perquisites for entry into the treasure troves of these promises. However, this functionality also impels the prodigals of faith to enforce their will not respecting the hallowed injunction of peace which their faith commands and commends.

Faith and Human Development

Faith is at the core of Homo sapiens' movement from crudity to sophistication, from animalistic tendencies to temperance, from ignorance to enlightenment and knowledge. Although, Phillip Sydney posits that poetry is th**e** "first light giver"

("Apology"), faith is probably the *actual* first giver of light: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis, 1:3). The Church has been at the centre of man's advancement. Roland H. Bainton has captured the Church and State symbiosis in the stabilization and advancement of Europe with the rebarbative effect this has on other continents, notably Africa (1954, p. 85). Bainton further notes that "Under the leading of the Church arose the universities for the study of theology which teaches about God and philosophy trying to understand the universe, law and medicine" (p. 100).

Furthermore, Dimgba Igwe asserts that the Japanese Shintoist ethic of hard work and honour promises on pain of death led to the work ethic that placed Japan dangerously close to American capital in the 1990s (2014, pp.32 –33). Of the Chinese, the writer ruminates:

> *Perhaps, one good thing that came out of Mao Zedong's Cultural (faith) Revolution in China is that despite all the evil unleashed on those who were unfortunate to be the targets, it inspired confidence in the Chinese in the belief in themselves and their products. Nearly fifty years down the line, China is now a globalized economic super power second only to the United States' economy* (pp. 33 –34).

On another score, Max Weber in *Capitalism and the Protestant Ethic* has argued that the success of American capitalism and the consequent de facto superpower status which she now enjoys is a direct result of protestant ethics: a study of the relationship between the ethics of ascetic Protestantism and the emergence of the spirit of modern capitalism (1967, p. 3). Churches have also contributed to the success of America by encouraging virtue; and various social science research reports have shown that churches provide direct economic and social benefits to communities (Monrose, 2014, pp.2–4).

But faith helps and hinders. Most wars fought by humanity arose and still arise because of misguided faith. Pope Urban whetted the nobles of Claremont, France, to fight the Mohammedan Turks who had broken into the holy land of Christ's nativity:

> *An accursed race (Turks) has invaded the lands of the East. Christians are enslaved, tortured, (and) killed. The swordsmen practice on them to see whether a neck can be cut in two with one blow. Churches are used as stables, or wrecked or turned into Mohammedan Mosques. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is in their hands. Who can take vengeance if not you who have won glory in arms? .... Come now to the defense of Christ* (Bainton, p. 94).

So, the defense of Christ or Allah (more appropriately, Mohammad) remains, erroneously, the bane and scourge of faith, the source of prodigality. But then, the Crusades and the early Jihads gave rise to explorations, expeditions, conquests, colonization and domination and exploitation which in turn led at least, marginally, to the civilization of the greater globe with Africa as the biggest victim and marginally, beneficiary. For instance, for Henry the Navigator of Portugal, exploration and expeditions of discovery "formed part of the never ending war between Christianity and Islam (*Readers Digest*, pp. 573–3). It is this quest to entrench faith that led to the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus an Italian explorer sponsored by the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella (p. 573).

Faith's Prodigality and the Imperatives of National Cohesion

Let us reiterate that faith is almost an indispensable ingredient of Nigeria's existence. Faith supports social norms and promotes culture. Adamolekun has noted that Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions "contain fundamental moral principles on which aspects of our society and culture are built" (2012, p. 5). Conversely, faith has been the agent of bitterness through killings in riots, terrorism, burning of churches and mosques, wanton destruction of lives and property, threat to public peace and the corporate existence of the nation. In all cases, this is normally caused by fundamentalism and religious intolerance. As Adamolekun observes, "fanaticism and fundamentalism in a country like Nigeria where religion is relevant will only lead to chaos, confusion and unrest**.** Social, political and economic activities of such a society would be seriously affected (p.1). It is in condemnation of extremist faith that the Catholic Church today rejects and regrets all forms of duress employed by her forebears in their fanatic zest to spread the faith in the Medieval era. Modest modern Christianity is guided by the strict examples of tolerance learnt from Christ, the founder of Christianity as He came "to seek out the lost, to save life not to destroy it" (Nwokora, 2014, p. 78).

Fundamentalist versions of Islam have maintained and even advanced some levels of fanaticism, intolerance and the consequent rebellion, violence and anarchy that task national unity and progress. Nwokora laments that while Christians seek to win over atheists, unbelievers and backsliders by preaching, persuasion, prayers, and above all, the example of their own lives, Islam has not got that patience with 'infidels: "Convert or perish seems to summaries(sic) the Islamic code of conduct"(p. 75).

However, Nwokora fails to see that the conversion of "unbelievers" may equally refer to Moslems the way Christians are ''infidels.'' And while fanaticism among Christians may appear as pockets of individual heaves demonstrated in the Eugene

example and alluded to in the Akaluka episode, we should not gloss over the nagging import of some "born again" Christians' dictum: "Repent or perish," or, "Accept Jesus Christ as your personal lord and saviour or you will never make heaven," or, "Jesus is the *only* way, the truth, and the life."

Thus, the Christian fanatic has merely eschewed physical violence, routing for psychological warfare, Muslims are daily urged to accept Jesus into their lives, in buses, in market places, sometimes in their homes; often in predominantly Muslim enclaves. And these are people already reified to have little or no tolerance for another's point of view. So, although the "born again" Christians are not violent in the conventional way , these fundamentalist Islamic Jihadists normally claim that the Christian method is a bad way of avoiding conflict (Adamolekun, 2012, p. 3).

Quite objectively, the Islamic fanatic poses the greater danger to national unity in Nigeria. Ibrahim Yaro has explored the danger which Islamic fundamentalism poses to the Nigerian nation and surmises that the concept of violence is in-built in Islam:

> *In Islam, there are evidences of deliberate preparedness for violence. A case in point is the Izalas which is a militant wing of Moslem students. Of all religions in the world, I have not yet known of any other which devotes part of its wealth and training for active violence* (quoted in Nwokora, p. 6).

Both Christianity and Islam struggle to win converts and control the Nigerian space. The way some of their adherents preach, teach and practice betrays intolerance, their false devotion, their make-believe zeal but uncompromising practices are contrary to the fundaments of faith as espoused by the founders.

Faith, the Nigerian Enterprise and the Nigerian Writer

Rather than evangelism and conversion, faith's greatest achievement and impact in West Africa, particularly Nigeria is its systematic education of the people. It has been observed that "the educated population is a productive population" (Okeke, 2014, pp. 15 –16). This lends weight to John Dewey's insight that "education should seek to develop the characteristic excellence of which humans are capable," since according to Epictetus, "only the educated are free" (1954, p. 112). F. Babalola reveals that the schools acted as agents of conversion because "a number of African children who find their way into (mission) schools…were instructed in the Christian faith and were baptized" (1961, p.25). Aside spreading the Christian faith the products of these schools boosted commerce as, "they became the middlemen between the Africans and European traders"(Babalola, 1983, p. 26).

Tertiary education gave rise to humanistic education. Humanistic education "… contributes immensely to human progress by fostering imagination," and it is "through imagination that man becomes aware of what the universe might be"

(Okeke, p. 23). Faith entrenched a culture of charity and stamped out barbaric practices like cannibalism, human sacrifice and the killing of twins in Nigeria and some other parts of West Africa. Now, the creativity of the Nigerian writer is often driven by nationalist ideology. Ideology is "a set of beliefs, systematic and delimited mental constructs which orientate the individual or group in term of action" (Ngara, 1990, p. 25).Education acquired through Faith based institutions gave rise to systematic and informed challenge, attack and dismantling of some logo centric portrayal of Africa as exemplified in such works as Edgar Wallace's *Sanders of the Rivers*, John Buchanan's *Prester John*, Joyce Cary's *The African Witch* and *Mr. Johnson*; and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*

The activation of cultural values is most pronounced in creative writing and literary engagements in Nigeria. Several scholars find faith complicit in the depletion of Africa through slavery. When the Portuguese Bishop of Sao Tome faced difficulty of funds, notes Babalola, he struck an agreement with his home government and got permission to trade in slaves (1983, p. 127). This kind of action is what led Ojo-Ade to surmise that "the Christian faith is a corpus of contradictions (Ojo-Ade, p. 127). Most problematically, faith fetes Africa, particularly the Nigerian nation with certain disquieting prodigality. This we find in various literary works of African writers like David Diop ("The Vultures"),Chinua Achebe(*Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart*), Mongo Beti (*The Poor Christ of Bomba*), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (*The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*), and T. M. Aluko (*One Man, One Wife*), etc.

This paper will present the extremities of faith that endanger the continued harmony, health and cohesion of the society in the West African sub-region through cross analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) along with a deliberate eclectic interrogation of discernible pitfalls and crudities of faith gleaned from some non-literary sources whether of the Christian or of the Islamic canvas.

Faithful Prodigals in Fact and Fiction: Engendering Destructive Models

One of Literature's goals is to enunciate and propagate the cultural values of people. It also mirrors society through realistic and plausible representation. It is germane to our understanding of tolerance. Another of Literature's cardinal goals is the promotion of unity among diverse groups, through advocacy, even if this renders it committed. Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie each capture the problem and danger inherent in religious bigotry and fanatic intolerance manifest in certain versions of particular faiths. Achebe details this danger using the old order, Adichie details the danger using the new.

In *Things Fall Apart,* Achebe depicts the dilemma, exasperation and tragedy of a gigantic warlord and hero who is fighting to defend an endangered but original

order – the traditional system – that would progressively be dismissed as archaic through manipulation and strong arm tactics of a stronger faith. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie represents the tyranny, extremities and ignominious destruction of a wealthy protagonist who practices fanatic and intolerant Christianity.

Each hero (of the old and the new order) dies with ignominy in a fanatical, unthoughtful defence of faith. Both are culprits as well as victims of the globalizing trends in the mastermind religion– Christianity. The one dies attacking Christianity, the other dies over-defending her. Each of them is a static character acting in error, failing to follow the trend of events like Obierika and Akunna in Achebe's and Aunty Ifeoma and the practical, egregious Father Marcel in Adichie's. Each character negates the principle of culture contact and acts on impulse buoyed by arrogant and impractical attempt to ram his faith down every throat that he encounters. In their fanatic zest, both negate the core tenets of their faith: peace and tolerance. While Things Fall Apart betrays a posture of inter-religious conflict, Purple Hibiscus exhibits the trappings of intra religious conflicts.

Both Okonkwo and Eugene fall because they are emotional and fanatical. This is the crux of the problem, the enervating imperatives of national and transnational dilemma and endangerment in the face of inexorable faith that fails to find a wedge, but rather fires on the engine of fanatic resolve like Fela Anikulapo Kuti's "Zombie"as though programmed and hypnotized; with the enchanting magnetism of prodigal faith they cause disharmony, unleash terror and havoc, and precipitate harm not only to the collective but also to them-specific-selves.

In *Things Fall Apart,* Okonkwo is the fierce force of an ethnocentric culture who pits himself against an emergent but more powerful Christian culture. His fanaticism is characterized by poverty of thought, lack of restraint, and incapacity to weigh the odds, decipher options and consider possible meeting points. He has come from the nadir of poverty to the pinnacle of reckoning as one of the lords of the clan, a custodian of an agrarian culture that sits snug in the old order. Okonkwo's alarm leads him to exasperation and this arguably, is driven by economic and spiritual considerations that call for the sustenance and maintenance of the status quo ante. Like all self-serving zealots, he is aware that not only the belief system is endangered but more alarmingly, the economic system where the king of yams which is ing of kings, is compromised. The problem, as Achebe in a measured authorial intrusion remarks, is that "The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm oil and kernels became things of great price, and much money flowed into umuofiaq" (Achebe, 1958, p. 142).

So, now that hitherto lazy ones may get into wealth and reckoning merely by selling kernels and palm oil, of late domains of women and children, now that king yam has gone to seed and reckons little, the new faith must be confronted with

fierce force and uncompromising vehemence. The near uselessness of tuberous crops in the white man's trade equation informed the strong opposition to the new dispensation as this often frustrated the 'natives' who regaled in their dexterity in this area of economy (Babalola, 1983, p. 4). This disparate economic interest between the lords of Umuofia and the evangelizing, mercantile Christian faith, probably more than a consideration for the religious, is what got Okonkwo to levels of stifling frenzy in his protection of the status quo.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus,* Eugene represents the extreme Christian who visits his excesses on whoever fails to 'buy his own,' ranging from Papa Nnukwu, his father to his wife and children, to his younger sister, Aunty Ifeoma down to the Igwe, to those who receive the holy meal wrongly and to just about anyone else who in Eugene's self-righteous estimation, does not measure up to the version of faith of which he fantasizes. Although Eugene's faith guarantees his economic state as it welds well with the global outlook of the Christian faith, yet he is driven by an excessive fear lest his children should fall short of his uncanny pronouncements on what constitutes true faith. And so, like Okonkwo, he ruled his household "with heavy hands."

In fact, Okonkwo and Eugene share a lot of traits respecting their bigoted view of, and disposition to faith. Both are like a dangerous pair of religious rough necks out to do harm where they think that they are striving to do good. Both are rabidly intolerant and suffer from the mastermind syndrome. Being impulsive, flat characters, they hold on to their injurious convictions without qualms.

Okonkwo, for instance, should have borrowed a cunning leaf from Akunna, Obierika or even the White missionary, Mr. Brown. Brown's patient interrogation and subsequent understanding of the Umuofia worldview enables him to apply the restraint and wisdom, that although he has power of force, he has to be careful as "a frontal attack (on the Umuofia tradition, culture and spirituality) would not succeed" (Achebe, 1958, p. 144). Achebe reports that the Umuofia people began to feel that the new faith had something to offer because of Mr. Brown's method; and the man thus earns the people's respect because "*he trod softly on faith and made friends with some of the greatest men of the clan*" (my emphasis; Achebe, 1958, p. 142).

This is in sharp contrast with Okonkwo's action both during his exile and on the return to Umuofia. While in Mbanta, he had fumed that whoever should defecate on his floor of fanatic faith and agrarian economy should expect a broken head in return, urging his uncles to "not reason like cowards"(Achebe, 1958, p. 127). It is therefore, not surprising that Okonkwo will not be tolerant enough to listen to the other's view like the pragmatic Akunna who entertains and engages Mr. Brown in arguments on each other's idea of the supreme God, sending one of his sons to find out about the new way. Instructive is the fact that although Akunna

is receptive and open-minded, he is nevertheless firm in his convictions on his faith just as Mr. Brown is of his.

Okonkwo has the opportunity to learn from the Christian faith about the White man and his motives. But, he chases the well meaning missionary out of his compound on the latter's auspicious if naïve visit to Okonkwo threatening that "if he came into his compound again, he would be carried out of it" (Achebe, 1958, p. 145).This is in spite of Obierika's candid warning through a dissection of the situation, against Okonkwo's suggestion of a fight against the new faith, that

> *It is already too late… Our own men and our boys have joined the rank of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government. If we should try to drive out the white man in Umuofia we should find it easy… But what of our own people who are following their way and have been give power?"(*Achebe, 1958, p. 141).

Again, Okonkwo is deaf to the warning that the bringer of the new religion is "the most powerful person in the world," and no one was free to mess with her faith and will in her "dominion" (Achebe, 1958, pp. 154 – 5). Okonkwo is not merely informed. He has seen and tasted this power so that this subtle threat should ticket home but he blindly regales in the past of his glory when power configurations were locally determined.

When one fanaticism and religious bigotry meets headlong with another, the stronger *god* often represented by the group with the greater capacity for violence, often prevails. This is how Okonkwo's fanaticism measures with Mr. Smith, the White missionary's fanatic intolerance and results in desecration through the unmasking of an Umuofia ancestral spirit, precipitating the burning of zealot Smith's church, the consequent detention and humiliation of the lords of Umuofia by the administrative and political arm of the stronger Christian faith, culminating in Okonkwo's impulsive killing of the white administrator's cheeky messenger, leading to Okonkwo's eventual self destruction borne of frustration and disappointment.

Smith's unmasking of the Umuofia ancestral spirit and Okonkwo's subsequent beheading of the white man's messenger are both reminiscent of the cruel beheading of the Christian zealot, Gideon Akaluka in Kano State, Nigeria by some abrasive Islamic fanatics, 1994, on the excuse that the victim desecrated an Islamic leaflet. This has continued to cause acrimony between the Southern (Igbo) guests whose kinsman was murdered with his head missing till date, and their northern (Hausa/Fulani) landlords whose *almajiri* are ever ready tinder for igniting the fanatic fire of the Islamic religion (Adamolekun, 2012, p.3).

Okonkwo's tragedy does not lie in his killing of the white man's messenger who rudely taunted and ordered him out of the way. His tragedy lies in the fact that at that telescopic moment of sober catharsis, "he discerned fright " in the people's

tumults, for the first time it dawns on him that he has taken his zealotry a scale too high. Rather than gain approbation, Okonkwo receives condemnation. People in apparent disapproval of his action and trepidation for consequences blame Okonkwo with "Why did he do it"(Achebe, 1958, p. 163). So, things actually fall apart because the foremost lord and protagonist of Umuofia could not wait soberly and cautiously to apprehend the poetics of the new faith in all its dynamics.

True, Okonkwo had led the clan in warand he had been an emissary of war or peace, successfully. But then, all Umuofia had given him commission. In this case, he could not gain, or wait to see if he could gain solidarity in this matter of faith to support a process that discriminates against, and ostracizes some of its ardent adherents. Faith is personal and works the best where it touches the individual core as well as the common essence.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus,* rather than starting to fall apart, things begin to come to a head when Chukwuka – God is supreme –, alias Jaja confronts and defies his father, Eugene's bigoted and tyrannical treatment of his family on the faulty premise of fastidious faith. Witness the self-righteous violence, mayhem and threat to national cohesion posed by the 'godly' aspiration of blood, of the Maitatsine fanatics in Kano (1980), the terrorism of the Shiite Moslems (1996 –19997 and since 2016 till today) ,and the current raging 'judgement in blood' and criminality of the rampaging Islamic sect, Boko Haram in Nigeria which has spread to Cameroun, Niger and Chad, respectively.

Jaja fails wittingly "to go to communion," with the excuse that "the wafer (host in catholic parlance) give bad breath" (Adichie, 2006, pp.11, 14).To call the 'host' wafers in a Catholic home is apostate, impudent and deplorable all right; but Jaja seems to indulge in this impudence not as a disavowal of faith, nor to denigrate or challenge God. It is probably to spite, to confront and to call his father's bluff on the latter's righteous excesses and intolerance. Eugene insists that all must live by the book as spelt out by him and the archaic and dogmatic Father Benedict. He did not reckon that some of the faithful, like Jaja and Kambili might be better attuned to the dynamism of Father Amadi and Aunty Ifeoma whose fluid and pliable but firm and humane Catholicism is more reasonable, more democratic and more enlightening to the young progressive minds and even to most other faithful.

Eugene's total domination and tyrannical stranglehold on everyone is a kind of power that calls to power. It is an unwitting but stifling violence that calls to the balancing of terror. It is the biggest form of violence in Eugene's estimation for anyone not to attend the holy mass for two consecutive Sundays; which is why after receiving the holy communion,

> *He sat back and watched the congregation walk to the altar and after Mass, reported to Father Benedict with concern, when a person missed communion for two successive Sundays… Nothing but mortal sin would*

keep a person away from communion two Sundays in a row (Adichie, 2006, p. 14).

Such is Eugene's fanaticism and intolerance that he orders his children, on pain of torture to spend only five minutes with Papa Nnukwu, his father during the once-in-a-year visit that the children are allowed to pay the old man. What is more, the children may not sit down, drink water let alone eat anything from the old man's hand "because he is a heathen."Such is Eugene's blind faith and hatred of his father that even when the old sage was on the point of death, Eugene is only worried that his children should share a roof with a heathen in Aunty Ifeoma's University apartment in Nsukka. So, he "went on and on about a heathen being in the same house as his children"(Adichie, 2006, p. 88).

Thus, for sleeping in the same house with a heathen without alerting their father, Eugene scalds his daughter Kambili's feet with steaming hot water, solemnizing the orgy with, "You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it."Kambili reports: " he poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he was conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen…The pain of the contact was so pure, so scalding (Adichie, p. 2006, 201).

To prove that he was completely possessed by the demon of fanaticism and an inconsiderate enforcement of a distorted version of faith, Adichie reports, "he was crying, tears streaming down his cheek," as he administered purgatory and torture of the innocent, helpless girl (Adichie, 2006, p. 201). It appears that while exacting the punishment on Kambili, Eugene is feeling rapturous at the prospect of dinning and winning with Christ thereafter or in the nearest future.

In this particular, as in his gnarling of Jaja's finger for a small offence, or on wife battery which causes Beatrice's miscarriage, or on his refusal to help cater for his father, or on tying acts of charity and familial obligation like buying a car for Aunty Ifeoma to the condition that her children join a league in the church, or on his refusal to honour the *Igwe*, presumably because the latter's faith is not deep enough; in all these and more, Eugene descends as low as the Islamic Maitatsine fanatics of the 1970s and early 1980s which most probably gave rise to the current decapitating and ruinous regional headache, the Boko Haram Islamic sect.

Thousands of the Maitatsines had blissfully embraced their death in the hands of the Nigerian State operatives. Their blind bliss, much like Eugene's, inheres in the urgent need to die and enter the gates of heaven before their leader, Mohammed Marwa should die and close the heavenly gate against late comers, as the charlatan had boastfully brainwashed the gullible followers. Only the killing of Mohammed Marwa and the public display of his corpse would eventually convince those faith geniuses that the gate of heaven was closed and any subsequent deaths would be in vain (Soyinka, 2000, p. 73; Adamolekun, 2012, p. 3). This is akin to the Guyana tragedy of group suicide orchestrated by the Reverend Jimmy Jones where

900 adherents died from cyanide poisoning and gun shot wounds (Deon Price, 2018, p. 2).Eugene's brand, or at least manner of execution of faith is in a sense, of akin to the Maitatsine's. It is step-brother to the Boko Haram fanatic criminality and lends a conspiratorial finger to the ongoing but ebbing dehumanizing activities of the ISIL or ISIS (Islamic State) in Syria and Iraq. What is more, Eugene's denigrating attitude to the *Igwe* and Papa Nnukwu is in a sense, akin to the fundamentalist posture of the Yantatshine – the Maitatsine warriors, and the Mallam Ibrahim El Zak Zaky founded Shiites' seeming intolerance of the moderate Sunni Muslims (El Rufai, 2019, Interviews).

Eugene works his fanaticism to the point where his hitherto pliant family could no longer absorb his excesses. What follows is defiance and occasion soon gives for its demonstration. Kambili has cherished her grandfather and has kept as relics, a painting of the grand old man made at Nsukka by kambili's cousin, Amaka to remind them of the dead patriarch. Eugene spies out this painting, considers it apostate, tries to wrest it off Kambili to destroy. This is too much for the poor girl who clings to the painting, Eugene goes berserk:

> *'Get up,' Papa said again. I still did not move. He started kicking me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked non-stop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English… 'Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hell fire.' The kicking increased in tempo… I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting, they were soft, feathery. They still had the metallic smell of Amaka's paint pallet. The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs… A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet* (Adichie, 2006, pp. 216 –7).

Beatrice, mother of the tortured girl is helpless and suffers in spite of herself and her children. True, they live in opulence. They are wealthy and want nothing material. But, what they want is bigger than silver and gold. They lack freedom, free conscience, freedom of association and free speech. They are in need of happiness. They are tethered by their fanatic husband and father. Eugene is wealthy, almost kind but mortally deformed by his misconception of essential catholic Christianity.

As power calls to power, so does tyranny call to violence. Jaja becomes resolute with a different kind of fanaticism: to end the suffering for himself, his mother and his younger sister, Kambili. Kill the fanatic. Kill this enemy of faith, of humanity, and of free conscience, Jaja decides and thus poisons his father. This action is a subliminal crusade, a clarion call to rise up and defend humanity against the prodigals of faith. It is more awesome than the call of Pope Urban to the nobles of Claremont. Since "the peace" and "the truce" of God could not avail, then face frontally, the enemy (ies) of the way. To him, Kambili's suffering is the last straw.

Although, Jaja's patricide is taboo in the Igbo setting of the novel, it nevertheless shows that fanaticism is a hindrance to the cause of propriety and faith. Perhaps, Beatrice would have committed this crime if Jaja had not. She sublimates this subconscious impulse by initially acquiescing to the guilt charge. In any case, Jaja was the first to revolt, followed by Kambili.

Jaja's action is similar to the Christians' retaliatory action in Kano, 1991 against their Moslem fanatics' assailants in what came to be called "The Reinhard Bonke Riots" where churches and mosques alike were torched, with thousands of lives lost, a demonstration that no one has a monopoly to violence (Adamolekun, 2012, p. 3). Sadly, in such situations, both national and regional peace and unity is dangerously threatened.

Eugene, almost more than his incarnate, Okonkwo is a faithful prodigal, a wastrel of the sanctity and chastity of faith, a spendthrift of the promises of Christ. He is a destroyer of the Christian precepts of tolerance, peace and good-neighbourliness: he forces Jaja to hate him and to sublimate his Oedipal tantrums to levels of patricide. Eugene is an anti Christian hero who forges the iron cuffs of impossible versions of faith to fetter and curtail the spread of *the good seed.*

True, Eugene performs religiously, all his obligations and acts of charity to the church. He pays much more tithes than anyone else and provides the wafers for the host. He donates generously for the uplift of the church and on occasions, feeds various church leaguse. Above all, he makes no noise about his philanthropy with the church. But then, Christ's salvation is for both the 'Jews and the gentiles.'

To this extent, Eugene typifies the character of whom Frank Edwards details in "Is Your Name in the Book of Life:" a man dies and finds himself at the gate of heaven but has to locate his name in the book of life to qualify to enter heaven. Agitated but confident, the man reels off:

> *Mr. Angel I am a stranger I don't know what's going on here…I am (sic)a pillar in my local church, I gave the offerings and paid my tithes, fed the poor and had myself a good name. So, is my name in this book of life? Is my name in this book of life? Is my name in this book of life yea…aah* (Edwards,2010, track 5).

Of course, the man's name was not in that Book because "only the pure at heart" will see Jesus" (Edwards, 5).

Aunty Ifeoma is a foil to her brother, Eugene. A university teacher and widow, she displays uncommon courage to tell the truth. No less devoted to God than Eugene, she is open-minded, tolerant and has a pure heart. She it is who fends for and takes proper care of her old father with her relatively paltry earnings. Relative to Eugene, she is poor but love, happiness and guided freedom are the lots of her children. Singing and laughter reigns in her home. For instance, Amaka is free to

watch television, wear her make-up at age 15, bring some of her friends home where they "talk about a Math teacher who did not know the answer to his own test," and "a girl who wore a miniskirt to evening lesson though she had fat yams on her legs, and a boy who was fine" (Adichie, 2006, p. 149).

It is this freedom by their cousins that exposes Jaja and Kambili to the fact that life can actually be less mechanical, less regimental, livelier and freer. This is what makes Jaja to challenge his father by refusing to wait for the Holy Communion, and leaving the table, when challenged. Kambili on her part freezes with wonder at Amaka's precocious pertinacity, at Aunty Ifeoma's audacity to call Papa 'Eugene,' to his face, of Father Amadi's marked difference from Father Benedict – Amadi allows for song in Igbo to punctuate the rosary, Benedict wants song strictly in Latin except, ironically, during offertory. Jaja and Kambili also find that grace could be said for less than thirty minutes and the lord of hosts will still accept and not punish anyone.

Eugene treats Beatrice like a primordial slave, beating her at will and causing her to miscarry twice. He loathes Papa Nnukwu because the old man could not follow the Christian faith. On this score, Eugene excommunicates his father and refuses to build him a befitting house; and in spite of his tremendous wealth, he abandons the old man to die almost destitute. This is why Papa Nnukwwu advises Father Amadi never to lie to his grandchildren and never to "teach them to disregard their fathers" (Adichie, 2006, p. 179), a time-honoured item of the 'Ten Commandments' of the Bible and of the Christian faith which Eugene flouts in his fanatic frenzy.

Now, on Okonkwo's part in *Things Fall Apart*, we could say that by dying through un-thoughtful actions guided by wooly headed fanaticism and blind defence of primordial interests, he sets the stage for the quick erosion and swift emasculation of the ethnocentric culture that he struggled to protect. Okonkwo, like most other defenders of faith fails to let Baal fight its war. He must do Baal's battles for Baal. This is the crux of the bane of faith, that men deem it their provenance to fight for the 'Almighty' powers as though their 'gods' were a helpless old weakling needing human protection.

Conclusion

It has been shown that without faith, human development may have been retarded. We established that faith has been of tremendous importance to the development of the world, Africa and the Nigerian nation. We scored the point that faith is a cardinal factor of our national life. It is noted that there are brands of faith which are inimical to the corporate cohesion and existence of not just Nigeria and Africa but the entire globe. Some religious charlatans and sometimes, the faithful, because of wooliness sometimes fail to grasp the language of tolerance. This is

bigoted faith which results in perennial religious heaves like the wanton destruction of lives and property and the ensuing endangerment of the total polity. This brand of faith is paraded in the main by Islamic fundamentalist; and this has been taking the centre stage of national concern since the early 1980s to the present.

The study contends that violence carried out against humanity in the guise of protecting or projecting the image of God is ridiculous and counter-productive since it is self-serving and hypocritical. It is at best, the handiwork of rough necks bent on making economic and political capital out of faith.

On the other hand, Christianity thrives on psychological violence which if vexatious, does not directly constitute danger to the nation except to the level that its preaching excites violence on the unbeliever, particularly the Muslim fanatic. But being that its essential method is psychological, this paper considers Fanatic Christianity dangerous based on the potential to ignite violence from bigots of especially the Islamic order. The study insists that moderation and tolerance are the best approach to curtail or even checkmate the high incidence of religious confrontation not just in Nigeria but the entire West African sub-region. Again, preaching that lays claim to exclusive right to the key of heaven promising wholesale damnation to non adherents is dangerous and patently unhealthy for the secular imperatives of the Nigerian nation and world peace. In a similar vein, any culture that pretends to superiority and plans to subsume others within its ambience is toeing the path of disaster. Nigeria is multicultural and her collective best bet to retain political indivisibility, economic growth and world respect is for all sections of the polity to recognize that verity.

True, all religions thrive on the promises of reward or punishment of the faithful and the profligate, respectively. Care must be taken to ensure that in doing the work of God, we may not be seen to be serving Mammon. This is what we demonstrated in the two creative works that engage our discursive adumbration. We analysed Okonkwo's and Eugene's levels of bigotry in an eclectic recourse to factual action of the Islamic hue, and found that fanaticism is often an item of intolerance which leads to responses which negate the essential qualities of quintessential faith such as peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness, acts of charity and a patriotic consideration for the preservation of national ethos.

Finally, the study affirms that faith built on the hatred of those who hold a different view with regard to religion is inimical to the peace of God. Faith urged on skeins of mechanical outlook, that is tyrannical and inconsiderate must be denounced and discountenanced. The kind of defence put up by Okonkwo for his ethnocentric culture which blinds him to the prospect of dialogue with representatives of the emergent religion, that makes him kill and get killed, is a

danger to essential faith and hinders rather than help the cause of faith and national constructive engagement.

The kind of faith which Eugene exhibits, where he forces a regimental life on his wife and children, that makes him to disown his father and deny him succour in his old age, that makes him scald Kambili's feet, gnarl Jaja's finger, beat his wife until she miscarries, beat Kambili into fainting fits, force his cherished ones to hate and kill him – such faith is steeped in prodigality. Such is the provenance of faithful prodigals. It is sure to render the political, economic and religious life of a given polity precarious.

Lastly, this paper posits that religious fanaticism has to be faced frontally and contained. The study therefore, insists on systematic, conscious reorientation and reification strategies that target the young of kindergarten age who are not yet tainted. One sure way to achieve fruitful result in this regard is the use of creative works deliberatively toned toward nationalism, patriotism and religious tolerance.

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Teaching Slovak Language and Literature in the 1st Grade of Grammar Schools: the Verification of the Development of Critical Thinking of Pupils

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Abstract

Slovak language and literature belongs to the leading subjects in the system of secondary education in the Slovak Republic. The persistent traditional teaching techniques (encyclopedic-memorization) and the absence of systematic development of critical thinking in the process of education has caused an identified below average state of critical thinking of students at secondary grammar schools. The aim of our half-year experiment was to verify the effectiveness of The Programme of Development of Critical Thinking of Pupils in the Subject of Slovak Language and Literature. To meet the set target we implemented an experiment (a single-factor technique of parallel groups). Out of 16 first-grade secondary grammar schools classes (N = 365) two equivalent groups were selected for the experiment – an experimental group (n = 32) and a control group (n = 30). The main measurement means was the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Test. The conclusions of the experiment pointed out the effectiveness of the intervention programme.

Keywords: critical thinking, research findings, the experimental verification of the development of critical thinking of pupils.

Introduction

The experts dealing with the quality of educational process have been, for a longer time, aware of the importance of the ability to think critically. Such an ability has been identified in 21th century as one of the learning and innovative skills necessary for life. Critical thinking is a part of the requirements of Dublin Descriptors, the European and National Qualifications Framework of the Slovak Republic, the Programme for International Student Assessment OECD PISA, but it is also one of the most required qualities defined by the World Economic Forum in Davos 2015.

Despite the prolong requirements the area of critical thinking has been at the periphery of the Slovak education system. The necessity to develop this ability has already been alerted by the analyses of OECD PISA international reviews, which Slovakia participated in for the first time in 2003. The experts notified that Slovak

15-year-old pupils had the biggest problems with the tasks which required the need to apply critical thinking assessment. Inspite of appropriate precautions made in advance and the development of critical thinking incorporated in the State Education Programme of the Slovak Republic (SEP SR) as one of the target requirements, the application in the educational process remained just as an effort of a few individuals.

The identified below average status of critical thinking of grammar school students from the eastern region of Slovakia (N = 365; M = 40.41 out of 80 points) was the reason to elaborate the programme of development of critical thinking in the subject of Slovak language and literature in 1st grade of four-year grammar schools. The presented study focuses on the task of the verification of the effectiveness of this programme which, in practice, lasted for 5 months. While conceiving the issue we used the findings of several foreign and domestic authors, who came to the conclusion that critical thinking is not inborn, but it appears and develops by the systematic impact and activation of the subject (Hill, 1959; Ennis, 1962; Glaser, 1963; Sternberg, 1987; Facione, 1990; Gavora, 1995; Watson & Glaser, 2000; Petrasová, 2008; Marin & Halpern, 2011).

Discussion of the concept of critical thinking

Since foreign sources offer a definition of critical thinking in three lines – philosophical, psychological and educational, the diversity of understanding of this term led to a sharp debate. Leading experts thus tried several times to find their common features and they finally succeeded at the end of 20th century after a constructive debate. Consequently the world's experts agreed on the cognitive areas that should be included in the definition of critical thinking. Lai (2011) outlines the following overview of the components of the definition of critical thinking:

- analyzing arguments, claims, or evidence (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Watson & Glaser, 1990; Paul, 1992; Halpern, 1998);
- judging or evaluating (Ennis, 1985; Lipman, 1988; Facione, 1990; Watson & Glaser, 1990; Case, 2005);
- making decisions or solving problems (Ennis, 1985; Halpern, 1998; Willingham, 2007);
- making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Watson & Glaser, 1990; Paul, 1992; Willingham, 2007).

There were also other capibilities identified and relevant to critical thinking: answering questions for clarification (Ennis, 1985); defining terms (Ennis, 1985); identifying assumptions (Ennis, 1985; Paul, 1992); interpreting and explaining (Facione, 1990); predicting (Tindal & Nolet, 1995); seeing both sides of an issue (Willingham, 2007) and others.

The majority of scientists believe that the definition of critical thinking should also contain some dispositions. Lai (2011) identified these:

- open-mindedness (Bailin et al., 1999; Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990, Halpern, 1998);
- propensity to seek reason (Bailin et al., 1999; Ennis, 1985; Paul, 1992);
- the desire to be well-informed (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990);
- flexibility (Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1998);
- respect for, and willingness to entertain, others' viewpoints (Bailin et al., 1999; Facione, 1990) and others.

All the mentioned components are results of several year interdisciplinary exploration, experimentation and searching for limits in the given area. In the conditions of Slovakia there does not exist a discussed comprehensive definition of critical thinking as a result of experimental verification of this ability in educational practice. The definitions we encounter in scientific literature in Slovakia come from well-known foreign experts, mostly without a critical analyses, opinions or inclinations to this definition. However, despite the absence of the comprehensive processing of critical thinking issues on the theoretical, methodological and application levels in the conditions of Slovakia, the development of this capability has become one of the fundamental challenges not only of SEP SR. There is also absence of specific guidelines saying how the issue should be processed nationwide – undergraduate studies, education in schools, continuing learning, etc. With the exception of studies of Petrasová (2003; 2008), Kosturková (2012; 2013a; 2016), Velmovská (2014) and those who cooperate directly with the Orava Association. The mentioned experts represent, unfortunately, only a few rare efforts.

Extensive analyses of several hundreds of foreign studies and selected models led to an attempt to create a programme of critical thinking development in the subject of Slovak language and literature. The entire process of critical thinking, from waking up the pupil's interest, through the contact with initial information, to the relevant argument of the decision taken, is perceived as very demanding and divided into several mental operations. It is also necessary to emphasize metacognition. In the context of critical thinking, Čavojová (2016) interpreted it rather clearly. According to the author metacognition (i.e. knowledge of own learning) is important as it allows people to monitor their own thinking processes.

Critical thinking thus appears to be a complex activity built from other skills that are easier. Van Gelder (2005) has given an example that if we want to respond to a newspaper article, we need to be able to understand the text, which assumes the ability to recognize its words, etc. If a knowledge base or skill is absent at lower levels, critical thinking will not happen. Even if the lower level skill has been mastered, it has to be combined in the right way.

From our point of view, critical thinking is a complex process of thought operations that is built on the knowledge base of a student; begins with his attitude to an idea / information and continues with an ability to work with the received information in broader contexts and comes to the conclusion by reasoning their decision with the ability to use elements of corrective and self-regulated thinking and learning. We believe that pupils can improve their critical thinking skills most effectively as long as they use their own activity to get involved in the critical thinking practice. If we want pupils to learn to think critically, critical thinking must be an explicit part of the school curriculum.

Critical thinking in educational practice in Slovakia – research findings

The encyclopedic model of teaching put the pupil in the role of a submissive performer of didactic instructions, which greatly suppressed his creativity and critical thinking. Germušková (2012) – the didactic expert of Slovak language and literature – states that the traditionally conceived teaching was dominated by stereotyped didactic methodology, where the area of critical thinking was absent. This is also reflected in the absence of empirical research in this area in Slovakia. Such a change occurred in the Slovak Republic in connection with the requirements of the learning society. Although the origin of critical thinking dates back to Socrates' times, in the Slovak educational field this capability was presented on theoretical level in 1994 through a grant of Kolláriková (1995) along with some experts from the University of Northern Iowa (Kurtis S. Meredith and Jeannie L. Steel). However, this type of thinking in the field of school practice in the Slovak Republic has not been dealt so far. We consider the OECD PISA International Testing Review to be a critical moment of interest in critical thinking. The analysis of the results pointed out that the biggest problems of Slovak 15-year-olds were caused by the need to apply their critical thinking. The other measurements in the three-year OECD PISA cycles 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 also showed a continuing trend in the monitored component (NUCEM, 2016). According to the PISA knowledge levels of reading literacy, students who can think critically are able to work at level 4–6. The results of PISA 2015 show that approximately 17.4 % of Slovak pupils reached this level. Level 6 requires pupils´ logically deduction, ability to perform a precise and detailed comparison; demonstrating a detailed understanding of one or more texts, etc. This level was reached by 0.2 % of Slovak pupils (NUCEM, 2016).

OECD PISA analyses show Slovak pupils´shortage in knowledge. It is also necessary to note how much attention is paid to the development of this potential in educational practice in Slovakia.

A new conception of teaching Slovak language and literature is based on new educational objectives: cognitive competence – the ability to think critically, formulate and solve problems; communication competence – ability to formulate

their own attitudes and to argue; social competence – ability to tolerate differences in views; intra-personal competence - the ability of self-regulation, their own value system (ŠPÚ, 2015a). These goals can not obviously be met by the classical encyclopedic model of teaching. While making a fundamental change of didactic concept of teaching target language the greatest emphasis is placed on the own creation of language performance, working with information, reading literacy, ability to argue, etc. From the point of view of the way of realization, a constructive approach is recommended, on the basis of which a pupil obtains his / her new knowledge, reconstructs, systematizes and generalizes. The reason for the development of critical thinking of secondary school students is also a new type of maturita examination (school-leaving examination) from Slovak language and literature, which expects the student´s critical thinking (ŠPÚ, 2015b).

The results of diagnosing the level of critical thinking of pupils in the selected grammar schools are far below the average comparing with London grammar school students of the same age (Kosturková, 2013a). A much more serious finding is that below average results in critical thinking are also shown by their teachers (Kosturková, 2016). As a result, the development of critical thinking has become a part of the educational strategy in Slovakia, but at the level of its application the teaching approaches remain largely unchanged. This was also highlighted by Petrasová (2008). Attitudes of secondary school teachers in Prešov region showed that the most common terms to task their students are: *list, characterize, identify, define.* The tasks expecting students´ higher cognitive abilities such as *observe and consider, create and argue* only occur occasionally in the practice of respondents (Kosturková, 2013b). Similar findings are found in older but also in recent researches (Mareš & Křivohlavý, 1989; Zelina & Zelinová, 1990; Gavora, 1990; Zelina, 1994; Fontana, 2003; Palenčárová, 2008; Zelina, 2016).

Methodology

The basic aim of the experiment is to investigate and compare the teaching process realized through the programme of development of critical thinking with traditionally conceived teaching process within the course of the Slovak language and literature in 1st grade of a four-year grammar school.

The Programme of the Development of Critical Thinking in the School Subject of Slovak Language and Literature (intervention variable) has been operationally defined as: *a deliberate, systematic and intentional 5-month - development of critical thinking of students performed by a specially trained teacher within the school subject of Slovak language and literature taught 3 lessons a week.*

Regarding the education, the emphasis has been placed on the changes of organization of forms and methods, the principles of active learning, teaching strategies and methods to develop critical thinking – reading comprehension, questioning and to answering in own words, thinking about a text, a picture and

an idea, seeking arguments to support own opinion, the ability to accept a different opinion, the ability to create own idea schemes, the corrective thinking ability, etc.

Teaching Slovak language and literature was based on a complex communication model of teaching and learning – on the E-R-R strategy (evocation, realization of meaning, reflection). Within the individual parts of E-R-R the following methods developing critical thinking were used: Buzz Groups, Cinquain, Cloze Test, Clustering, Cubing, INSERT, Know-Want-Learned, Method of Questioning, Writing Works, Writing Here and Now, Mind mapping, Graphic postorganizers, Situational method, Snowballing, Socratic Dialogue, Six Good Servants, Six Hats, Think-Work in Pairs-Exchange Opinions, Venn´s Diagram, Exchanging of Questions and Answers; Metacognitive Strategies (Reader Strategy 3-2-1, Strategy RAP – Read-Ask-Paraphrase, SQ3R – Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review); some lessons had a character of complex strategies: Cooperative Teaching, Problem Teaching and Project Teaching.

The Program of Development of Critical Thinking in the Subject of Slovak Language and Literature consisted of 20 literature lessons and 15 grammar lessons and contained 195 pages (teachers preparation and worksheets).

Critical thinking of a student (determined variable in position of dependent variable) was operationally defined as: *gross score in the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal test (W-GCTA).* The test consists of a series of five test areas (judgments, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation and evaluation of arguments) with 16 points for each subtest. The whole test contains 80 tasks (Watson & Glaser, 2000).

The available selection consisted of 16 classes of pupils of 1st grade of four-year grammar schools in the Prešov and Košice regions. On the basis of input measurements of the level of critical thinking, two balanced groups were selected (p = 0.567623). The experimental group *(*n = 32) and the control group *(*n = 30) were randomly assigned by experimental conditions.

Results and discussion

The basic condition for realizing the true experiment was the question of choosing the equal groups (Kerlinger, 1972). Experimental groups underwent input measurements checking the level of critical thinking through W-GCTA (Watson & Glaser, 2000). Table 1 presents an ante measurement result as well as a result showing the balance of both groups.

Based on the results of t-test comparing average (Table 1, p = 0.572) we can say that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and the control group in critical thinking in the ante situations *(*p > 0.05). The t-test showed the balance of both groups at the beginning of the experiment.

The intervention program of the development of critical thinking was applied via teaching three lessons a week during the second term of the school year 2012

(i.e. 5 months). A plan of experiment and preparation for language literature training based on a complex communication model of teaching and learning E-U-R was prepared in advance.

Tab. 1: Balance of the groups based on ante measurements

t-test; **EG – experimental group *(n* = 32)** **CG – control group *(n* = 30)**						
Gross score	EG Average *(M)*	EG *(SD)*	CG Average *(M)*	CG *(SD)*	*t*	*p*-value
	41.75	4.90	41.03	3.5	0.567623	0.572409

Key: n – number; SD – standard deviation; t – result of t-test

The choice of the E-U-R strategy was targeted as it respects the current knowledge of psychological research on how people usually learn. It is one of the specific approaches of pedagogical constructivism, i.e. a pupil does not obtain the ready knowledge, but has to create it based on his / her experience and the knowledge acquired earlier (Maňák & Švec, 2003). A great emphasis was placed on the ability to argue and ask questions. The development of critical thinking was only happening in the experimental group. The teaching of Slovak language and literature in the control group took place in the intentions of traditional teaching (encyclopedic-memorization approach). The results of the 5-month- experiment on the development of critical thinking are presented in Table 2.

Comparing the level of critical thinking in the experimental group at the beginning of the experiment *(M* = 41.75, *SD* = 4.90) and at the end of the experiment *(M* = 43.96, *SD* = 4.57) showed a significant difference at a level of significance 0,01. Based on the result of t-test *(p* = 0.001481) it can be concluded that the impact of the intervention programme of the development of critical thinking during the lessons of Slovak language and literature in the post-test has been reflected in an increased level of critical thinking of students. In the control group the one without the intervention programme, no increase in the level of critical thinking of students *(p* = 0.83) has been detected.

Statistical t-test (Table 3) confirmed our assumption that the application of the *Program of Development of Critical thinking in Teaching the Subject Slovak Language and Literature* causes an increase of the level of critical thinking of students in the experimental group comparing to the traditionally performed teaching method of the subject in the control group.

Tab. 2: T-test for dependent samples

EG – experimental group *(n* = 32) CG – control group *(n* = 30) Marked correlations are significant at the level *p* < 0.05						
	M	*SD*	difference	*SD* difference	t	*p – value*
Gross score ante CG	41.03	5.03	0.100000	2.66	0.205158	0.838882
Gross score post CG	40.93	5.29				
Gross score ante EG	41.75	4.90	-2.21875	3.59	-3.48769	0.001481
Gross score post EG	43.96	4.57				

Key: n – number; M – average; SD – standard deviation; t – result of t-test

Tab. 3: T-test comparing average figures of the W-GCTA posttest in EG and CG

t-test; EG – experimental group *(n* = 32) CG – control group *(n* = 30)						
	EG *(M)*	CG *(M)*	t	*p – value*	EG *(SD)*	CG *(SD)*
Critical Thinking Level – Posttest	43.96	40.93	2.419001	0.018613	4.57	5.29

Key: n – number; M – average; SD – standard deviation; t – result of t-test

Our findings from the experimental research coincide with a number of results by predominantly foreign authors who have come to the conclusion that critical thinking can be developed by targeted training (compare Hill, 1959; Ennis, 1962;

Glaser, 1963; Sternberg, 1987; Facione, 1990; Gavora, 1995; Petrasová, 2008; Marin & Halpern, 2011 and others).

The authors of W-GCTA define critical thinking as a combination of attitude, knowledge and ability (Watson & Glaser, 2000), with which we agree. Our experience with the application of the intervention programme helped us specify components that should not be underestimated. One of the most challenging tasks in developing of such a key competence, as Bean (1996) called it, was awakening pupils' awareness of a particular problem. We called it "be open to new knowledge". An important element in solving a given question or problem is a knowledge base (Kolláriková, 1995). In our case it is the learning content of Slovak language and literature in a grammar school type of study. Contact with a new idea or information is conditioned by the ability to think about it, to consider its credibility (i.e. to understand its meaning in broader contexts). It is necessary to include information reassessment activities - what I know about it, what I have learned, how I can put it in different contexts and how I can work on with it. When applying knowledge to solve the problem a pupil often encounters obstacles and limitations resulting from the lack of knowledge. Piaget (1970) calls this a cognitive conflict. It is possible for the pupil to overcome it through actions such as analysis, reviewing the information and arguments[1], search for new solutions, which we can name the corrective thinking (interpretation, analyzing, comparison, designing own criteria, evaluation, or other information). Using the Socrates Dialogue or Question Method are just a few methods we recommend to involve pupils in these complex thinking processes. This fact is confirmed by e.g. Marzano (1997), Tallent & Barnes (2015). Using *the Socratic Method* the pupils can learn how to find their own solutions using the quality critical thinking. The result of this process is the reconstruction and systematization of the newly acquired knowledge on a qualitatively higher level.

In our program, methods have been largely used to make pupils think about the problem deeper, put analytical, hypothetical and evaluative questions; look for arguments, reasons and evidence for their opinions; anticipate consequences, etc. At the beginning of the experiment the pupils of the experimental group had a big problem getting into the depths of the problem. Cimermanová (2014) also pointed out this issue when teaching foreign languages by reading pictures. The author recommends a method of reading pictures because it helps pupils get more involved, develops their imagination and forces them to think more deeply.

In the educational system of countries that have reached the first place in reading literacy (Shanghai-China, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea), a great emphasis is placed on the development of critical thinking and creativity

[1] The argument consists of three basic items: the claim that is supported by reasons and every reason is supported by evidence (Klooster, 2000).

through motivation and active involving pupils in various research tasks (Bagalová, Bizíková, & Fatulová, 2014), in sharp contrast with the Slovak education system, as evidenced by the above-mentioned OECD PISA analysis and the diagnosed level of critical thinking. According to Knapík (2013a, 2013b) the opportunity to develop pupils' critical thinking can be realized by removing passivity in teaching. Smetanová et al. (2014) mentions activities developing pupils´ argumentation skills, ability to evaluate situations and their own performance connected with feedback and self-reflection. The importance of self-reflection is preferred by several authors, e.g. Petríková (2015); Knapík (2014, 2015); Pavlov (2015); Petrasová (2016); Zelina (2016); Šuťáková & Ferencová (2017) and others. Černotová & Ištvan (2015) understand the effectiveness of development of critical thinking through cooperative education, which has also been confirmed by us.

The realized experiment is one of the first attempts to verify the development of critical thinking in the process of teaching Slovak language and literature in Slovak grammar schools. We recommend implementation of critical thinking in the curriculum, as the given competency has been identified by leading experts as one of the basic education and innovation skills required for life and practice in the 21st century.

Conclusion

One of the main goals of education, at any level, is to contribute to the development of the general thinking of pupils, including their ability to think critically. The starting point of elaborating and experimental verification of *The Programme of the Development of Critical Thinking in Teaching Slovak Language and Literature* was the absence of empirical knowledge about the development of this capability in conditions of Slovak secondary schools ,identified below average state of critical thinking of Slovak grammar school students and recurrent failure of Slovak 15-year-olds in international OECD PISA measurements in reading literacy (component – assessment and thinking about the text). The conclusions of the 5-month- intervention programme have produced positive results, although significant problems have been detected at the beginning of the experiment. Initially, pupils had a great difficulty in finding arguments supported by reasoning and evidence, since innovative way of teaching required new ways of their thinking. Therefore we recommend the following: begin with easier methods to develop critical thinking; leave the pupils a room to complete a task linked with feedback; to give the pupils a problem based on practical experience in accordance with a subject topic; make questions related to the level of higher thought processes and look for answers using the Socratic Method; to give pupils space to think, discuss and argue, etc.

Despite the fact that the development of critical thinking is included into the National Educational Programme of the Slovak Republic as one of its target requirements, in our conditions it is a unsystematic development of this capability in secondary schools.

By the findings resulting from the experimental verification of the critical thinking in the teaching process of Slovak language and literature we wanted to create a space for better support for the education of pupils to think critically. Taking into account the needs of the society, we recommend the elabotating of continuing education programmes for teachers as well as changing the system of pre-gradual training for the teaching profession.

At the conclusion we can state that empirical research of critical thinking in Slovak conditions is a difficult and unexplored issue - in other words, in our conditions a rather new phenomenon. The results of our experimental research open up space for an expert discussion. The fact is that critical thinking is considered the most desirable quality of the person of the future, so Slovak schools should become centers where the content of education is the starting point of thinking not its results.

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