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## **Implementation of plurilingual approach into the foreign language teaching**

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### **Abstract**

Teaching foreign languages has adopted various approaches over the history. The last decades of dominance of the Communicative language teaching brought the tendency to insist on the target language use in the classroom in order to allow the immersion into the language. The European Union, however, started to support linguistic diversity more than two decades ago and it has left an imprint on the way foreign language teaching is approached today. Inclusion of plurilingualism in traditional school context requires the readiness of language teachers to use other languages as well as encourage learners to use their prior language experience. The present study presents the results of a questionnaire survey among student teachers measuring their attitudes and readiness to implement more than one additional language in their practice. The participants of the study ( $n = 118$ ) are all future teachers of English language at both undergraduate and graduate level. The results of the survey indicate a generally positive attitude towards plurilingualism and at the same time ability of the students to rely on more than one language while teaching. The results, however, raise quite a few questions and imperatives for the content of teacher training programmes as well as for the organisation of language education in general.

**Keywords:** plurilingual approach, foreign language teaching, language diversity, teacher training, attitude towards plurilingualism

### **Introduction**

Interaction in more than one language in various situations seems to be a reality of everyday life. The rapid technological development has enabled people to communicate different people in different parts of the world at the same time using a variety of languages. Globalisation as well as migration tendencies (whether a short-term, long-term or permanent) within or outside the European space influenced all aspects of living in a modern world. Therefore, the questions of promoting linguistic diversity seem to carry existential importance.

All these aspects have inevitably generated activity of the institutions which hold the language education policy of the European Union as their agenda.

Linguistic diversity has been clearly stated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in the Article 22 Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity: „The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity“ (EUR-Lex, 2012). The same principles have been declared by the Treaty on European Union in the Article 3: “It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced”(Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 2012).

One of the main pillars of the existence of the European Union is the protection of individual languages and at the same time the support of mutual understanding between nations through implementation of principles of plurilingualism. The advantages of being able to communicate in more than one language, as stated by the European Commission addressed several areas:

- better language skills enable more people to study and/or work abroad, and improve their job prospects
- speaking other languages helps people from different cultures understand one another - essential in a multilingual, multicultural Europe
- to trade effectively across Europe, businesses need multilingual staff
- the language industry – translation and interpretation, language teaching, language technologies, etc. – is among the fastest growing areas of the economy (European Union, online).

The support of the linguistic diversity has been declared by a large amount of the official documents of the European Union. For instance, the White Paper on Education (1995) defines the necessity for everyone within the EU “*to be able to acquire and to keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue*” (p. 47). This was later confirmed by the European Council meeting in Barcelona in 2002. The main arguments were promoting employability and using all the advantages that the European citizenship offered on one hand but at the same time highlighting the fact that by being able to speak more languages one can learn about the culture and diversity and thus develop understanding among European citizens. It was even suggested that foreign languages should be introduced into education at pre-primary level since the results of research documented the positive influence of foreign language development on the cognitive development (ibid.). That would further influence the success in the education in general.

The above mentioned can be seen as the prime stimulus for formulation of M+2 rule where M stands for the mother tongue and 2 means two language other than the mother tongue. At that time the term mother tongue was used as a synonym of the official language of a country, even though these did not have to be the same. The term mother tongue typically describes the first language which the child

acquires, however, as Sokolová (Jursová Zacharová & Sokolová, 2013) highlights, in situations in which a child is exposed to more languages, the term first language usually addresses the language that is considered the most relevant for the user as to the frequency of the use, the proficiency achieved, or an internal or external identification with the language.

Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council (2008) entitled *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment* states as the main aim „to raise awareness of the value and opportunities of the EU's linguistic diversity and encourage the removal of barriers to intercultural dialogue“ (Communication of the EU 566, 2008, p. 5). The importance of learning languages was repeatedly highlighted by the Council conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences (2014) where the Council recommends not only to promote multilingualism but also to focus on “the quality and efficiency of language learning and teaching, including by teaching at least two languages in addition to the main language(s) of instruction from an early age and by exploring the potential of innovative approaches to the development of language competences“ (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 27). It also declares the support to the cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages.

### **Literature review**

The Council of Europe defines multilingualism as a situation where more languages are being used within one geographic area not taking specific notice of the users themselves and not even expecting they would use all the languages present in that area. On the other hand, plurilingualism is viewed as the focus on the user and the ability to use more than one language (Beacco, et al. 2015). However, there is not absolute consistency in the use of these terms which varies according to the context and the specific conditions (e.g. Janíková, 2014).

Using more than one language should not be understood as the mastery of all languages at the same proficiency level but rather as the ability to use different languages in relation to what is expected or required by a specific communicative situation (Krumm, 2004). Coste, Moore and Zarate (2009) argue that the level of complexity within various languages used by individuals may vary; however, this does not necessarily have to influence the process of communication in general. They claim that the competence of one language of a plurilingual individual cannot be separated from other languages since the “possession of skills in more than one linguistic code means that one can switch from one language to another according to the situation” (ibid., p. 18). As they further explain plurilingual individuals can switch from one language to another during one communication act. Thus they view this use of the languages not as the result of

satisfaction with a limited competence in one language use; rather this is understood as “partial competence” in a particular language and as a part of a plurilingual competence (*ibid.*). In this sense some researchers (e.g. Cenoz & Genesee, 1998; Gunesh, 2003; Wilton, 2009) underline the difference between competence-based understanding of plurilingualism or the focus on using the language independently on the proficiency achieved in individual languages (e.g. Wei 2008; Lüdi, 2006). As can be seen plurilingualism is understood as an umbrella term and in this way it covers also bilingualism, which is by many viewed as a specific form of multilingualism (Tokuhama-Espinoza, 2008; Herdina & Jessner, 2002).

Research in the area of multilingualism has attracted attention especially in the last decades (Moore & Gajo, 2009) and has faced long-standing prejudice of bringing hazardous approach towards acquisition and learning of languages which should remain separate, balanced and inclining towards native-like competence (Dabène, 1993). Code-switching was considered problematic and inclusion of first language in the second language context as a flaw. Only later this monolingual understanding of bilingualism as well as multilingualism started to be perceived holistically: “The bilingual is not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration. The co-existence and constant interaction of the two languages in the bilingual has produced a different but complete language system” (Grosjean, 1985, p. 471).

This understanding urged the research to focus on the user of more languages and approaches they apply while using these languages (Cook, 1992; Gajo, 2007; Lüdi & Py, 2009; Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). This development, especially in the last two decades, has been reflected also in education where the focus is placed upon social, cultural and political dimensions of the language use in specific contexts with the aim to create principles for plurilingual education (e.g. Kramsch, 1993; Candelier, 2012; Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009; etc.). Plurilingualism thus becomes a key principle of language policies in Europe in line with the Council of Europe (Beacco, et al., 2010, Candelier, 2003; CEFR 2001, 2006;) and with clear distinction between plurilingual education and education for plurilingualism (Moore & Gajo, 2009, p. 145). In this sense the former builds upon the development of “plurilingual competence through a coherent, transversal and integrated approach that takes into account all the languages in learners’ plurilingual repertoire and their respective functions” (Council of Europe 2006, p. 5). The latter, on the other hand, supports awareness and mutual respect towards other languages and cultures in their variability and complexity as well as “a global integrated approach to language education in curriculum” (*ibid.*, p. 5). Language awareness can play an important role in language education also through raising awareness of similarities of various languages and activation of higher order

thinking skills of the learners. Deducing, comparing, and contrasting can lead towards more memorable conclusions and wider openness for hypothesising about other languages, which the learners would be otherwise unaware of.

### **Methodology**

The aim of the study was to identify the attitudes of trainees – future language teachers – towards plurilingualism and to find whether they are able to identify any benefits of plurilingual approach for language learning in general. The survey also intended to identify the level of readiness of future teachers to apply plurilingual approach in teaching and at the same time to identify the level of their language proficiency in multiple languages as one of the key factors for plurilingual approach.

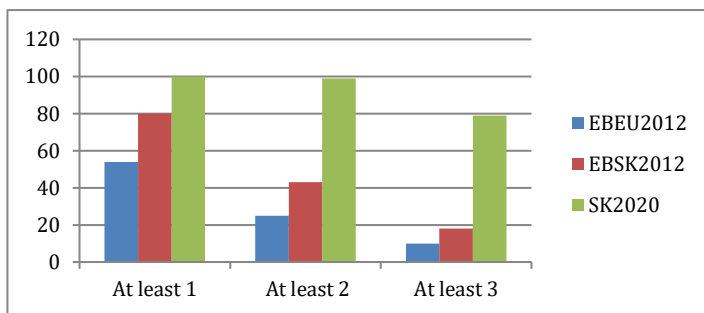
The study involved a group of university students ( $n = 118$ ) at both undergraduate and graduate levels in the study programme English language and literature for future language teachers in Slovakia. Research sample consisted of randomly selected students. The method used in the study was a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The questionnaire included questions which were inspired by the Special Eurobarometer (EB) 386 questionnaire conducted by EU in 2012 (European Commission, 2012). The reason for choosing this survey and developing the study based on the previous results was to compare the development in language awareness and language proficiency in multiple languages over the period of time since the language policy in Slovakia has changed since 2012 and the orientation of the language education was directed to one language (English) support only. That means, that while before 2012 the learners at primary level could choose which foreign language they wanted to start with as the foreign language, after 2012 the English language became compulsory. Thus, the intention of the survey was to identify any differences in the language competence development in Slovakia and at the same time to compare it with other European countries. The questionnaire consists of eight questions focusing on respondents' views on learning languages, their own ability to use multiple languages and their learning experience. The last question presents twelve statements asking the respondents to express their agreeing or disagreeing opinions. These statements were evaluated according to the Likert rating scale coded as follows: "totally agree/ tend to agree/ tend to disagree/ totally disagree". The response "don't know" was also included to provide students with a wider variety of options.

### **Findings and the discussion**

The findings of the present study were compared to the results of EB survey conducted in 2012 (ibid.) with the aim to see whether there is any change in

language awareness of Slovak respondents. Even though the respondents in the present study were a rather specific and limited group the results could cast the light on the development in language awareness and the attitudes towards learning and using foreign languages.

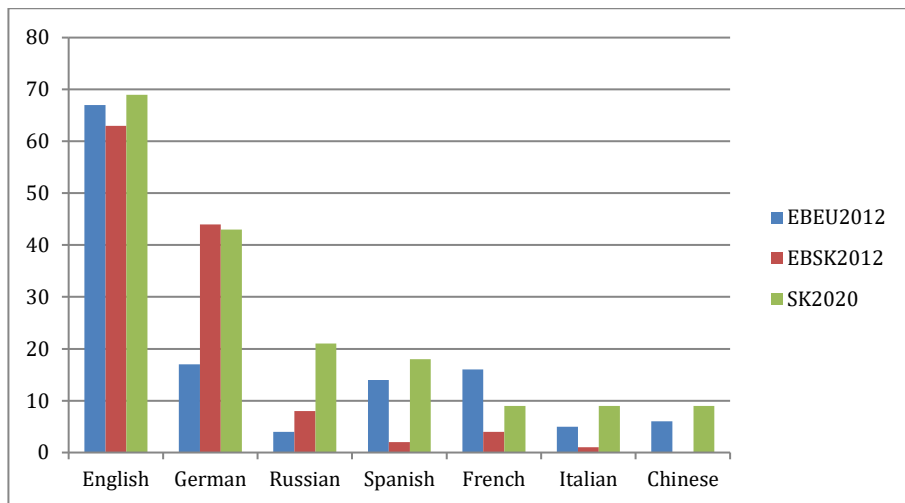
When looking at the number of languages other than their mother tongue (graph 1) that respondents speak well enough to carry out a conversation, the results are clearly influenced by the fact that the respondents are students of foreign languages in a teaching programme. Thus, the response to option 1 (at least 1 language) was 100%. However, what might be surprising in comparison with European results is the number of respondents who are able to use two languages other than their mother tongue. This is clear even from the EB where Slovak respondents scored higher than Europeans. The suggested answer might be that the Czech language (the choice for 95% of respondents in the present study) is very close to the Slovak language although that refers mainly to the receptive skills. The respondents in the present study scored high also in the ability to use at least three languages other than their mother tongue which can indicate that especially students of foreign languages are aware of the importance of ability to use various languages.



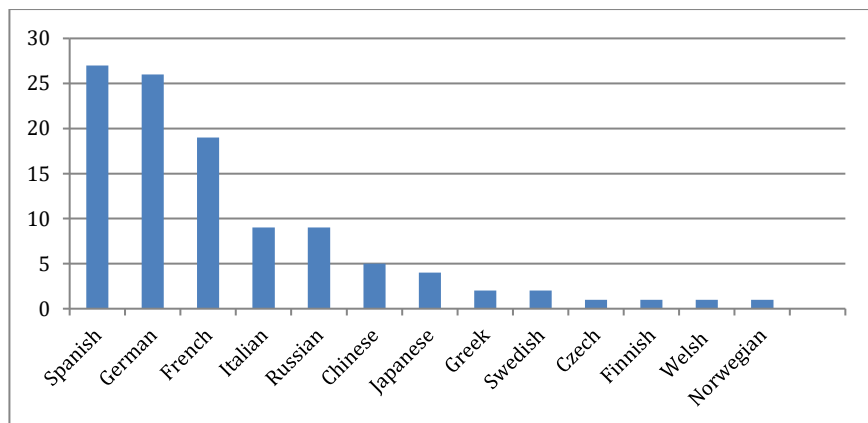
Graph 1: Languages (other than their mother tongue) that students speak well enough to have a conversation

This could be supported also by the fact which languages the respondents considered the most useful for personal development. The results show that the English and German languages as a preference were selected by the Slovak respondents similarly in both EB and the present study. However, the preferences for other languages such as Russian, Spanish, French, Italian or Chinese differ significantly. Chinese as an optional foreign language did not even appear as an outcome in the EB questionnaire in the Slovak responses. This also indicates that the situation in the global tendencies in the world is changing and this is reflected

in language awareness of their potential users. The same can be said about the Russian language which was an option for only 8% of respondents seven years ago; however, in the present study more than 20% respondents indicated usefulness of this language.



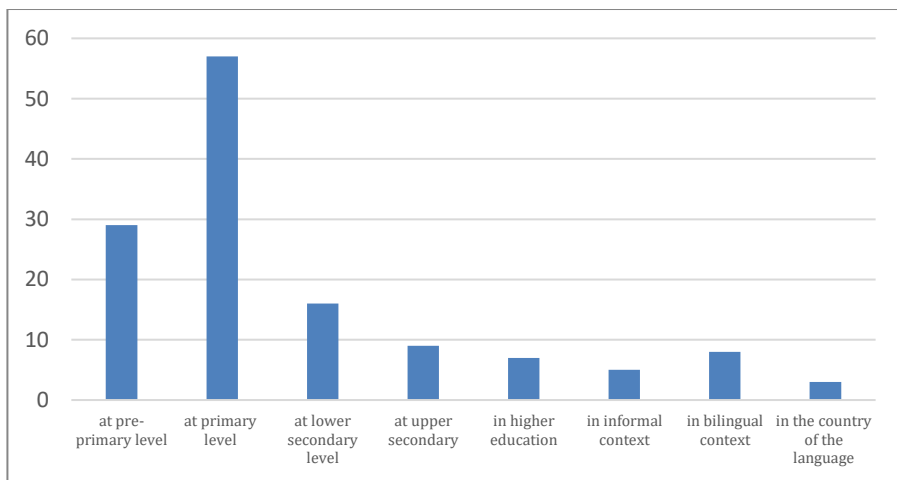
Graph 2: Two languages (other than the mother tongue) that are the most useful for personal development of respondents



Graph 3: Languages which respondents would like to learn in the future

Respondents were also asked if they consider learning new languages besides the ones, they are able to use now. Majority of participants (92%) responded positively with multiple language options, however, the selection of the languages represents a typical choice corresponding with their vision of useful languages (see graph 2).

As can be seen from the following graph 4 most respondents identified the beginning of their second language experience quite early – at pre-primary or primary level. That corresponds with the educational policy of the country although there are some respondents who started to learn their second language much later, e.g. at secondary level (9%) or in higher education (7%). That seems rather surprising due to the fact that the research sample consisted exclusively of students studying language programmes with the intention to become teachers of foreign languages which presupposes at least B2 level of at least one language at entering the higher education.



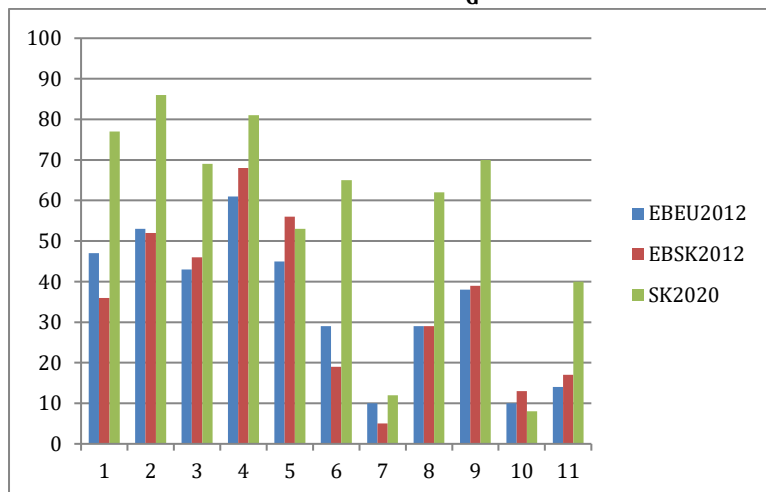
Graph 4: Beginning of learning (1<sup>st</sup> language other than their mother tongue)

EB questionnaire also gathered opinions of the respondents on advantages that learning foreign languages brings as well as the factors which may discourage some people from learning foreign languages (graph 5). The results indicate higher awareness of possible advantages among the Slovak respondents in the present study in comparison with the general inquiry in EB. This might be given by the attitude of students focusing on foreign languages in their study and thus a higher



awareness of benefits of using foreign languages in general. Nearly all reasons were considered with higher relevance in comparison to outcomes of EB, some significantly (e.g. items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 and 11). However, it is interesting to note that two items were marked as less important namely item 5 (getting a better job in Slovakia) and 10 (to feel more European). While the former could be quite easily explained by the fact that not every position in Slovakia necessarily requires a foreign language, the latter might be connected to the general attitude towards EU among citizens of Slovakia since while in 2012 this marked as relevant 13% of respondents, in year 2020 it was only 8% of respondents. This, however, is not much different from the results of EB results for all EU participants where the score of relevance was 10%.

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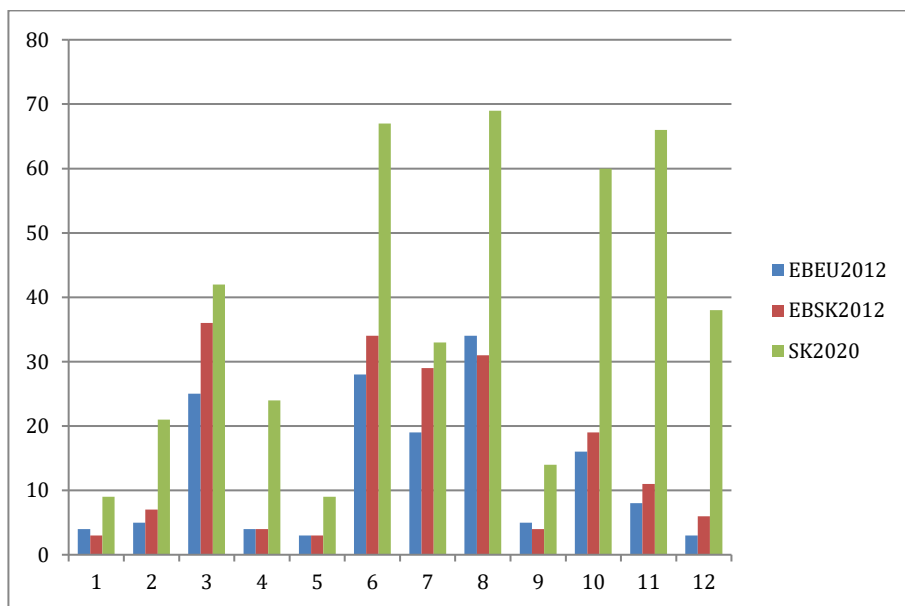
Graph 5: Main advantages of learning a new language  
Legend:

1. To use on holidays abroad
2. To use at work
3. To be able to study in another country
4. To be able to work in another country
5. To get a better job in Slovakia
6. For personal satisfaction
7. To keep up knowledge of a language spoken by your family
8. To meet people from other countries
9. To be able to understand people from other cultures

10.To feel more European
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11.To be able to use the Internet
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A quite distinct perspective can be spotted in the present study in comparison to EB survey in identifying the reasons for discouraging a person from learning languages. While the lack of motivation and time were among top three choices also for EB respondents, in the present study the respondents opted for these options in much higher number. The lack of motivation was selected as a factor discouraging people from learning language in nearly 70% and the lack of time in more than 65% in the present study while in the EB study the lack of motivation was indicated by 30% and the lack of time only by 34% of respondents. The biggest difference though, can be noticed in item 11 (graph 6) which might be connected to the fact that respondents are students of teaching programmes.



Graph 6: Reasons which may discourage people from learning another language  
Legend to graph 6

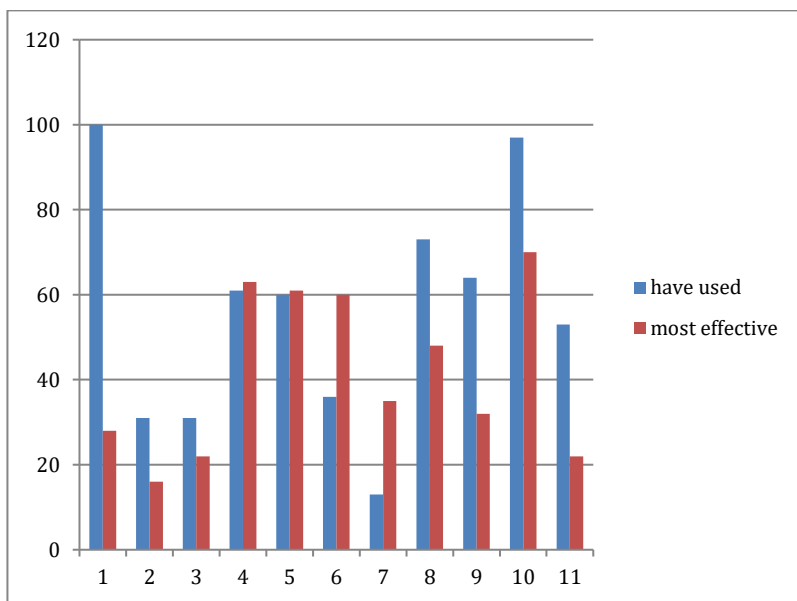
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| 1. It's hard to find information about what's available            |
| 2. The nearest place where you could learn the language is too far |
| 3. It is too expensive   |
| 4. There is no course available in the language you want to learn  |

5. There is no course available for your level of knowledge
6. You haven't time to study properly
7. You are not good at languages
8. You are not motivated enough
9. You don't get enough exposure to the language in TV, radio, newspaper, etc.
10. You don't have enough opportunities to use the language with people who speak it
11. Poor teaching / boring methods / inadequate learning materials
12. You have had negative experience in the past

Interesting data has been gathered in the area of learning experience of respondents and their consideration of its effectiveness. While 100 % of respondents acknowledged they have attended language lessons at school only 28% considered this experience as useful. This is rather discouraging; however, on the other hand if we take into consideration that the research sample consisted of future teachers of English there could be the hope for better since they already know what does not work. The best experience was - not surprisingly - identified as the moments of close connection with the authentic language users such as conversation lessons with a native speaker or talking informally to a native speaker and at the same time visits to the country where the language is spoken or taking language courses in that country. That can hardly be applied in a typical educational context; however, nowadays teachers can easily connect learners with authentic language through technological devices and they can even involve them in genuine communication with native speakers. That requires the change in the teaching methods as reflected in the previous graph 6 in item 11.

The last question of the questionnaire, the opinion poll, aimed at finding out the opinions of future teachers on plurilingualism and its applicability in the Slovak educational context. In general, it can be said (as seen in Graph 8) that the respondents as future teachers expressed quite positive attitude towards plurilingualism and they believe that if a person already possesses a second language proficiency all subsequent languages will be mastered with more ease (item 8, 80%). The participants also believe that learning strategies are transversal and can be used irrespective of the language being studied (item 10, 90%) and thus consider them helpful in learning subsequent languages. What is more is that the respondents agreed (item 11, 71%) that already their teacher training experience should incorporate this approach and prepare them for techniques including other languages in the main language learning. At the same time they would agree if language teachers were themselves equipped with the ability to use at least two languages other than their mother tongue (item 12, 73%). On the other hand what stands as a contrast to this positive attitude is quite a large group of

respondents (item 6, 31%) disagreeing with one of the key European principles in education and that is that the Europeans should speak more than one language other than their mother tongue. That may be explained by their response to item 2 (87%) stating that people in the EU should be able to speak a common language and they may understand the English language as the one additional language everyone should learn. That could have been supported also by the national policy adopted in the recent years where the focus was on English as the first compulsory language. The respondents also felt that the national language policy should support the development of language skills of the citizens (item 7, 78%).

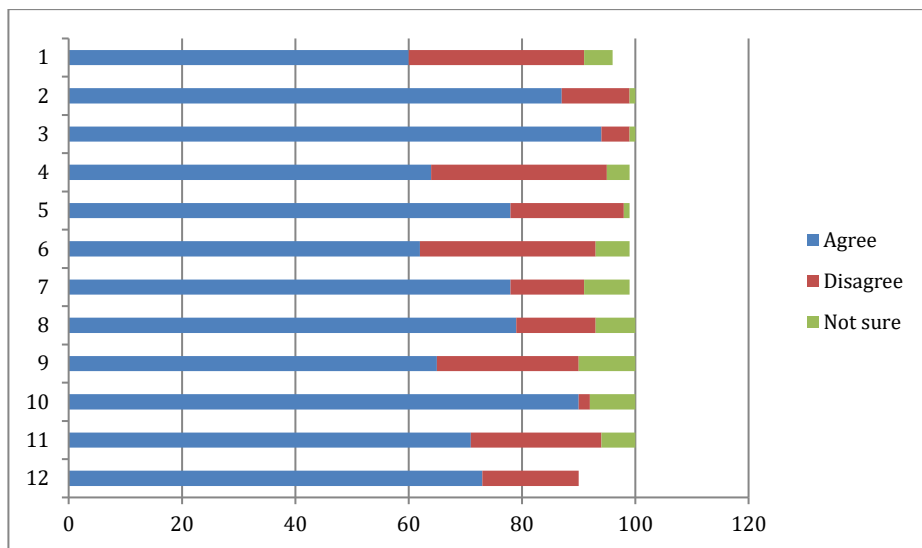


Graph 7: Ways of learning languages the respondents have used and ways they consider most effective

Legend to graph 7

1. Language lessons at school
2. Group language lessons with a teacher outside school
3. One to one lessons with a teacher
4. Conversation lessons with a native speaker
5. Talking informally to a native speaker

6. Long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken
7. Language course in a country where the language is spoken
8. Teaching yourself by reading books
9. Teaching yourself by using audio-visual material (CDs, DVDs)
10. Teaching yourself by watching TV, films, listening to radio
11. Teaching yourself online



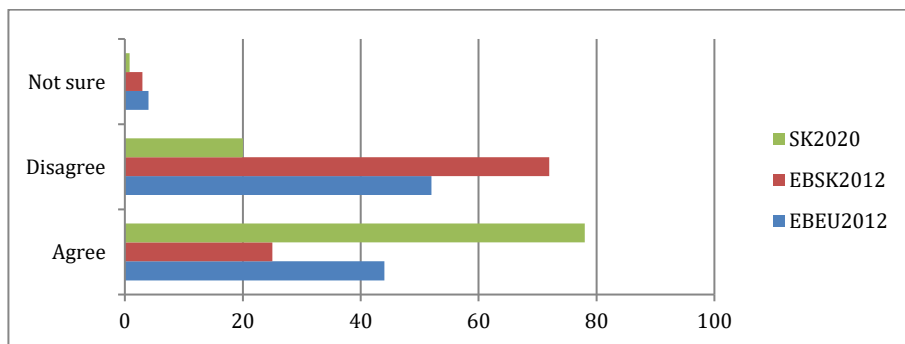
Graph 8: Opinion poll

Legend to graph 8

1	The European institutions should adopt one single language to communicate with European citizens
2	Everyone in the EU should be able to speak a common language
3	Everyone in the EU should be able to speak at least one language in addition to their mother tongue
4	Everyone in the EU should be able to speak more than one language in addition to their mother tongue
5	You prefer to watch foreign films and programmes with subtitles, rather than dubbed
6	All languages spoken within EU should be treated equally
7	Improving language skills should be a policy priority

8	The more languages you know, the easier it is to learn additional languages
9	Teachers should make comparisons between a new language and the languages students already speak
10	It helps to apply learning strategies from previously learnt languages into learning new languages
11	Initial teacher training should prepare future teachers for using other languages the students have learnt before
12	Language teachers should be encouraged to be proficient in at least two languages other than their mother tongue

An interesting finding can be seen in item 5 (legend to graph 8). Similar item appeared also in EB survey in 2012. The preference to watch foreign films and programmes with subtitles has changed significantly in Slovakia over past years. This could be the result of a tendency of young generation to watch movies and series on Internet TV rather than on regular TV broadcasting as well as the raise of awareness how much watching movies in the target language helps in language learning. This is further supported by the statement 10 in the question considering respondents' prior learning experience (graph 7) where 97% of participants expressed that they have used this approach in their own language learning and 70% of them consider it as an effective strategy.



Graph 10: Opinion poll – item 5

## Conclusions

The present study was aimed at mapping attitudes and readiness of future teachers of foreign languages to apply principles of plurilingual education in their future carriers. It seems as a key aspect that teachers who are expected to apply such principles are themselves multilingual (whether the ability is based on

multilingual background or is gained by language studies) and at the same time believe in the importance of raising language awareness of their students. The results of the study demonstrate the shift in the attitude towards multiple languages to be used in education especially on the level of awareness of usefulness of multilingual approach. Experience with the exposure to multiple languages and experience with the linguistic diversity around the globe seems to equip future teachers with more open approach towards supporting language learners with other languages they are able to use. This, however, requires the changes in EFL methodology and the selection of approach since the past experience of insisting on using English only in the classroom may still hinder the willingness of teachers to involve other languages in the classroom, including learner's mother tongue.

Limitations present in the current study, such as small group of respondents, very specific group, or limited teaching experience, can be the cause that the results may have rather limited validity. The respondents may have the tendency to overestimate their skills and potential and it would be useful to measure the outcomes with the ones of teachers in practice. Yet, the results cast some light on how their pregradual training needs to be changed and may suggest the higher level of inclusion of prior language learning experience of the trainees.

### Acknowledgement

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## **Establishing a zone of prioritized *curricularivity*: exploring a critical approach to negotiating multimodal discourses in EFL textbooks**

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### **Abstract**

University English as a foreign language (EFL) programs in expanding circle communities often pressure instructors and students to use globally published EFL textbooks for reasons more socio-political than pedagogical. While some critical studies underscore multimodal discourse to be an under-appreciated source of dominant social narratives in EFL textbooks, few have investigated their live negotiation in classrooms. To address the challenges negotiating potentially harmful social narratives in EFL textbooks, the present study proposes a two-step model for achieving a zone of prioritized curricularivity (ZPC). The model informs reflexive teaching practice in EFL instruction because it necessitates an understanding of a) the curricular commonplaces of a particular EFL program and b) the power and ideologies in the multimodal discourse of their textbooks, to mitigate perceived social injustices in the textbook lessons as they are negotiated “in situ.” Demonstrated in vignettes, featuring two EFL courses at Chung-Buk National University in Cheong Ju city, Korea, two instructors used the ZPC framework to inform their reconstruction of multimodal discourses in their EFL textbooks to inculcate student involvement and participation. A novel, multimodal interactional analysis of video recordings looked at proxemics, gaze, spoken language, head movement, auditory emphasis, and gesture and discovered that each instructor recontextualized, neutralized, or skipped much of the multimodal discourse in the lessons. The findings suggest that a ZPC is achieved when the efforts by instructors to recontextualize textbook lessons in situ is met with positive feedback from students in the classroom – noted as heightened attentiveness, happy or cheerful participation, and enthusiastic discussion. The implications suggest a ZPC can help instructors and students in EFL programs in any expanding circle culture because it can simultaneously improve student learning/acquisition in the classroom, diminish dominant, culturally marginalizing textbook content, while raising the value of student investment in EFL learning.

**Keywords:** EFL learning, EFL textbooks, multimodal discourse analysis, critical curriculum, critical pedagogy, Korean universities

## Introduction

University English as a foreign language (EFL) programs often pressure instructors and teachers to use generic, globally published EFL textbooks for reasons more socio-political than pedagogical (Chang, 2009). Considering instructors and students need to make the best of matters in EFL under those circumstances, the present study proposes a framework that echoes Fox (2004) arguments that a curriculum is a rhetorical accomplishment. The discursivity to which Fox (2004) refers can be conceptually amalgamated in a term: *curricularivity*. Curricularivity is additionally informed by arguments supporting critical approaches to EFL learning (i.e., Canagarajah, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 1999, 2006). The approach, aimed at finding a zone of prioritized *curricularivity* (ZPC), encourages reflexive praxis rooted in one's beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (BAK) about language teaching (Banes, Martínez, Athanases, & Wong, 2016; Meschede, Fiebranz, Möller & Steffensky, 2017; Pennycook, 2008; Woods, 1996) that any EFL instructor can use for their respective classes. The "zone" was inspired by Rogan's (2007) Zone of Feasible Innovation in curriculum and Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. In the context of Korean, university EFL courses, the ZPC establishes a "level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Instead of blindly plowing through textbook content, that often serves as the course curriculum in many EFL programs (Richards, 2001; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2011), without concern for one's students, who may feel culturally marginalized by lesson contents that can be counter-intuitive to their cultures (i.e., Song, 2013; Weninger & Kiss, 2013), instructors can recontextualize textbook content to raise the value of student language learning investment. However, as Fredricks (2007) notes in their application of culturally relevant alterations to EFL textbook content, a systemic framework would greatly improve the reflexive praxis that most instructors do internally when negotiating textbook content in EFL classes. This study endeavors to address that gap in EFL teaching practice.

## ***Textbooks and EFL education in Korean Contexts***

A Foucauldian perception of education argues that it is a "management of populations" (Ball, 2012, p. 6) that shapes social reality and enables "state" control wherever that education is received (Althusser, 1971). By extension, school textbooks are artifacts of that management because they are preceded by the adjective "school" (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015), which validates the social norms they project. In the context of the present study, the unquestioned use of EFL textbooks and the lack of critical attention to their multimodal contents is problematized because poorly considered classroom delivery of their lessons can present challenges for Korean university students, resonating with a complex web of issues revolving around EFL learning in Korean society (i.e., Adams &

Gottlieb, 2017; Ahn, 2011; Chun, Kim, Park, McDonald, Oh, Kim, & Lee, 2017; Song, 2013; Thompson & Lee, 2018).

Although the ZPC framework is designed to be suitable for any expanding circle culture with EFL programs, we will look closely at Korean post-secondary contexts because of the vignette that demonstrates the use of the framework “in situ.” For Korean students, much like EFL students elsewhere, learning English is a socio-economic investment and an attractive commitment to political stakeholders involved with post-secondary education policy at the national level (Ahn, 2011; Canagarajah, 2016; Song, 2013). However, some university EFL programs promote a language learning curriculum that 1) inhibit creative or spontaneous expression, 2) deny student involvement as informative to the syllabus, and 3) adhere to seemingly antiquated methodological or theoretically established principles that overlook any other language learning phenomenon (Paik, 2018; Stoller, 2015). Relatedly, the test-driven learning outcomes that Korean university programs expect their instructors to achieve do little to foster deeper learning and functioning knowledge to inform live communication in English (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Paik, 2018; Stoller, 2015). For Biggs and Tang (2007), declarative knowledge has been the traditional hallmark of university education, where students come to (literally) be indoctrinated with knowledge. While it may seem that this study implies a preference to functioning over declarative knowledge, the intention here is to note the latter outweighs the former in Korean university EFL curriculums to meet state-sanctioned evaluations, such as the secondary school “su-neung” or Korean SAT (Ahn, 2014; Haggerty & Fox, 2016). The result is a Korean graduate who knows, for example, what a subjunctive verb form is, but not be able to say “I wish I *were able* to speak better English” in a casual conversation. While some research addresses these challenges for EFL teaching practices, by integrating student needs (i.e.), program requirements and teacher expertise to nurture functional knowledge (Biggs & Tang, 2007), in Korean contexts, many stall under the weight of academic stakeholders, such as deskilled instructors following pre-set learning outcomes, the Korean Institution for Curriculum and Education (Haggerty & Fox, 2016), or other federal entities fiscally connected to post-secondary institutions (Ahn, 2011). To address these challenges, the ZPC proposed in the present study may initiate a cultural “fracturing” of fossilized pedagogical practices (i.e., Benson, 2017; Ellis, 2017) because it inspires the transformative refinement (Rabidge, 2017) of a curriculum, inclusive of teacher expertise (Banes, Martínez, Athanases & Wong, 2016) delivering textbook content, towards deeper learning in Korean university EFL classrooms.

Much like K-12 EFL instruction, native-English speaking university instructors are expected to speak only English during class and students are expected to use Korean only if necessary (Thomson & Lee, 2018). Additionally, the classes are expected to follow the syllabus of the chosen textbook and use the digital-

interactive supplemental activities for homework exercises. Most of the activities in *Top Notch 2* (Saslow & Ascher, 2011) decontextualize the English components into formulaic lists of expressions that are supposed to represent passable live speech and students are expected to negotiate those contents in class as instructed (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015). The innovation of practice featured here underscores the observed results of student activity, participation, and performance. The ZPC was applied to reconstruct presentation and negotiation of textbook lessons towards more culturally intuitive, multimodal contexts for Korean students.

As we will see in the description, the ZPC changed the way the instructor used the multimodal discourse in the textbook lessons so that any instances of racial othering, cultural marginalization, or Anglo-centric hegemonies were diminished under the preferred agency of Korean contexts without digressing from the linguistic challenges of the lessons. The premise that textbook content was not enjoyable was presented to the students, who heartily agreed, then altered *in situ* as the instructor moved from one activity to the next. The intention of this approach was meant to foster deeper learning in EFL by giving Korean students a stronger L2 English identity in the recontextualized content.

### ***Textbooks in Korean EFL contexts***

A school textbook, according to Dendrinos (2015), is afforded legitimacy because it follows the adjective school. That legitimacy, Dendrinos (2015) argues, gives a measure of value to content that helps construct realities to which the students anchor their own. In the contexts of language learning, those realities have the power to “other” economically disadvantaged students or portray non-English speaking global citizens as members of less important communities (Canagarajah, 2016; Dendrinos, 2015; Fitzgibbon, 2013; Song, 2013). In so doing, these publications fail to nurture an appreciation for cultural difference and foster a greater sense of otherness (Van Dijk, 2011) that may harm an L2 learner’s educational experience (Dendrinos, 2015; Pennycook, 2008).

As noted, instructors and students in Korean university EFL programs are pressured to used generic textbooks by their respective departments (Chang, 2009). EFL textbooks, despite now being sold as hybridized hard copies with digital, multimedia components of supplemental material (Bell & Gower, 2011), have changed little in terms of projecting certain innercircle<sup>1</sup> (Kachru, 1992) social realities against which all other cultures are judged (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015; Song, 2013). In an expanding circle nation, such as Korea, globally published EFL textbook packages are still a popular choice for post-secondary English courses but, in most cases, that choice was not made by the instructor or the student (Ahn, 2014; Paik, 2018). If one subscribes to Van Dijk (2011) insistence that, in textbooks, what passes for knowledge is often ideologically founded, then

it is surprising that few critical studies of EFL textbooks draw attention to the multimodal discourse because the images and text in the lessons become one in a *Gestaltian* field of meaning (Bateman, 2014; Machin & Mayr, 2012) that supports the social realities to which Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) refer. Considering some of the research that points to inner circle hegemonic narratives that marginalize the cultures of their intended audiences, this innovation of practice is meant to diminish those harmful narratives in the multimodal discourse of their EFL textbooks, while improving student interest, motivation, performance, and participation in their university programs.

### ***A Zone of Prioritized Curricularivity***

The procedure for establishing a ZPC is illustrated in the following two steps.

#### *Step 1: Establishing the curricular commonplaces*

Informed by Connely and Clandinin (1988) and Null (2016), the curricular commonplaces include *textbooks* because of their significance as pedagogical artifacts in Korean, post-secondary EFL programs (Fitzgibbon, 2013). Table 1 features a series of questions the instructor must answer to the best of their ability before moving on to Step 2.

Subject	In the context of the EFL culture, what are the most common learning outcomes or challenges during study? Why is the subject consequential to Korean society?
Milieu	Who are included in the academic milieu? What concerns do they have with the EFL culture and how do they affect it?
Students	What is the relationship between the students and the EFL culture? What is their level of competency? What motivations or demotivators do they have in the EFL culture?
Teachers	Who are you, in relation to the EFL culture? How are you trained to teach EFL? What are your BAK (Woods, 1996) about EFL learning in this culture?
Textbook	What textbook was chosen for the EFL course and by whom? Is it an effective choice for the subject? How do you, the milieu, and the students feel about using it? How much of it must be used to fulfill a prescribed syllabus?

Tab. 1: Step 1: Concerns of Curricular Commonplaces in Korean University EFL Programs

*Note.* Step 1 in achieving a zone of prioritized curricularivity.

Fairclough (2013) reminds us that context is key to unveiling insidious models of domination and social injustice. Hence, it is imperative that instructors achieve some measure of understanding about the curricular commonplaces in a course of study, such as English Communication at Chung-Buk National University, where the vignettes, detailed later in this study, take place. Having established some answers to those questions in Table 1, an instructor can turn their attention to the multimodal discourse of the lessons and find answers to the questions in Table 2.

*Step 2: Establishing power relations and ideologies in multimodal discourse*

The critical framework illustrated in the Table 2 were informed by multimodal critical discourse analysis frameworks from Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006), Machin and Mayr (2012), and Wodak and Meyer (2016). This framework encourages the instructor to look closer at the social realities that perpetuate instances of hegemony or dominant narratives in the multimodal discourse of their EFL textbook lessons.

What are the spatiotemporal and sociocultural contexts of the lesson?
Who is afforded agency in the multimodal discourses?
What is the purpose of the lesson? Could it be counter-intuitive to a Korean student?
What is denotated in the lesson? What does the denotation appear to teach?
Do any visual elements emphasize or de-emphasize any aspect of lesson?
What are the structures of social reality? Are they relative to Korean contexts?
What symbols, signs, or recurring patterns support the social narratives?
What are the connotations in lessons?
What are the multimodal silences? What appears to be missing from the lesson?
How is power supported, challenged or concealed?

Tab. 2: Step 2: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis for EFL Textbook Lessons

*Note.* Step 2 in achieving a zone of prioritized curricularivity.

The present study presumes a ZPC accomplishes two objectives: informing the instructor of the curricular commonplaces that are consequential to EFL learning for that particular discourse community (i.e. Scollon, Scollon, Jones, 2011) and encouraging the instructor to look critically at the textbook content for instances of racial or social marginalization, *othering* (i.e. Van Dijk, 2011), or diminished agency (to name only a few items) and how those instances of social injustice can be recontextualized, as per the curricular commonplaces of the target audience in a course of study. Hence, the present study asks: *Does an instructor's understanding of curricular commonplaces, on the one hand, and power relations and ideologies in*



*the multimodal discourse of their textbooks on the other, appear to help them achieve a ZPC in their classes? How do their students respond?*

## Methods

The ZPC framework, illustrated in the previous section, is an amalgam of two parts: 1) establishing the curricular commonplaces of the course of study and 2) establishing what features of the textbook either support or appear counter-intuitive to the commonplaces of that course of study. However, this section features a method for measuring how the instructor negotiates or reconstructs lessons from their textbook *in situ*. In other words, the framework featured in the Data Analysis encourages the instructor to consider: *in the context of “this” EFL classroom and given what I have learned by following the steps prescribed in the ZPC, how do I negotiate or recontextualize the lessons with my students to minimize any perceived social injustice in the lesson contents?* These considerations not only ask the instructor to consider “what is said” and “how it is said” (Gee, 2004) in their textbooks, but also “what is seen” and “how it is seen” (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Kress, 2010), so we need to include a brief note about multimodality and discourse analysis.

## Multimodal critical discourse analysis

From the early 1990’s research in methods of discourse analysis by Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, and Ruth Wodak, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was partially inspired by critical social inquiry and critical linguistics, aimed at underpinning ideological characteristics in linguistic processes of discourse (Fairclough, 2013; Sheyholislami, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Van Dijk, 1997). By bringing criticality to language analysis, CDA “merges a concentrated focus on discourse with social elements such as power relations and ideologies” (Fairclough, 2013, p.7). Considering that CDA is not a neatly contained method but a “problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda” (Van Dijk, 2011, p.357). Multimodal CDA, asks the same questions but acknowledges discourse as something beyond linguistic means to include visual semiotics, such as color, shape, composition, iconography and how those inventories emphasize or de-emphasize certain narratives in multimodal ensembles (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

## Results

### A vignette in Korea

The following observations highlight how Instructor A and B interpreted the ZPC framework and used it to inform their recontextualization of the multimodal discourse *in situ* as they negotiated the lesson activities of Top Notch 2 (Saslow & Ascher) (see Figure 1).

**UNIT 6**  
**Eating Well**

**TOPIC PREVIEW.** Look at the Healthy-Eating Pyramid that suggests daily eating habits to avoid heart disease. Is there anything in the pyramid that you never eat?

**UNIT GOALS**

1. Make an excuse to decline food
2. Talk about food passions
3. Discuss lifestyle changes
4. Doubtful unequal foods

**SOUND BITES.** Read along silently as you listen to a natural conversation.

**IRIS:** What in the world are you eating?  
**TERRI:** Chocolate cake. But don't tell anyone, OK?  
**IRIS:** But aren't you on a diet?  
**TERRI:** I used to be. Not anymore.  
**IRIS:** What happened?  
**TERRI:** To tell you the truth, it was just too much trouble.

**IRIS:** Want to try some?  
**TERRI:** Well, I would. But I'm on a diet.  
**TERRI:** You? I don't believe it! Don't you always have dessert?  
**IRIS:** I used to. Not anymore.  
**TERRI:** Are you sure? You only live once!

**Check the statements that are true, according to the conversation. Explain your answers.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Iris doesn't eat sweets now.	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Terri doesn't want any cake.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Terri doesn't eat sweets now.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Iris changed her eating habits.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Iris doesn't want any cake.	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Terri changed her eating habits.

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

Make a list of foods you can eat if ...

you're trying to lose weight.
you're trying to gain weight.

**DISCUSSION.** How is the Healthy-Eating Pyramid different from how you eat? Do you think the Healthy-Eating Pyramid gives good advice?

**Fill in the empty pyramid to show how you eat. Compare your pyramid with a partner's.**

**daily exercise and weight control**

**vegetable oils (at most meals)**

**fruits (2-3 portions / day)**

**nuts and legumes (1-3 portions / day)**

**seafood, poultry, and eggs (2-3 portions / day)**

**dairy (1-2 portions / day)**

**sweets, pasta, potatoes, white rice, white bread (rarely)**

**meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and tofu (2-3 portions / day)**

**vegetables (at least 5 portions / day)**

**whole-grain foods (at least 3 portions / day)**

**at most meals**

**1-3 portions a day**

**rarely**

**SOURCE:** Adapted from Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy, by Walter C. Willett, M.D.

Fig. 1: Unit 6, Top Notch 2 (pp. 62-62).

### Instructor A's Class

Instructor A presents the topic material in the exact progression of the textbook unit but does not include or focus on the visual discourse in the book or provide his own. Alternatively, he challenges the students to imagine situational or contextual metaphors. For example, he notes that while one glass of wine may be considered part of a healthy diet, 100 glasses of wine is not. Student response is positive to his exaggeration and they respond collectively with laughter at the notion. In this way, Instructor A chose to focus on meaning and introduce habits while avoiding specific multimodal reference in the textbook. The focus on habits, served both as an icebreaker and a segue into the textbook's lesson about food or

dietary habits. The students appeared fully engaged and eagerly joined what seemed to be an impromptu discussion about good habits and bad habits.

Instructor A diminishes the agency of some multimodal discourse in the textbook by pointing to the food pyramid (see Figure 1) and noting “I remember other Korean students teaching me that this is referred a *food pagoda*...is that correct?” Instructor emphasizes pagoda to which many students respond by nodding and saying yes in unison. They appear happy to disregard the agency of the food pyramid and enjoy a shared cultural experience with the instructor. Hence, while the textbook content appears to guide Instructor A’s linguistic topical choices, insofar as a peripheral reference, it does not aid the cultural relevance of the lesson.

Instructor A makes the visual content relevant to his students by presenting all lessons from a Korean perspective. At one point, Instructor A asks: “are you a big *sam-gyeop-sal* (Korean BBQ bacon lettuce wrap) eater?” to demonstrate how someone might use the expression “I’m a big...” to which they would attach something they like very much. In this case, while the textbook activity (see Figure 2) uses many dietary examples, all identifiable with inner-circle cultures, the students do not respond eagerly, and mumble amongst themselves quietly without much discussion. However, as soon as Instructor A says, “I’m a big *sam-gyeop-sal* eater”, the students immediately laugh and engage in happy discussion with each other, expression they are “big *something* eaters”, but without giving the textbook much attention. These are some examples of how the contents of the lesson were enhanced by the educator to include a Korean perspective but diminish to contextual agency of the multimodal discourse. The students, in all cases, appeared to be very attentive and receptive to those alternatives.

### ***Instructor B’s Class***

Overall, Instructor B followed the textbook syllabus and the lessons quite closely. However, in almost every situation, he provided alternative contexts for the lessons. For example, after carefully reviewing the food pyramid, featured in Figure 1, he asked if everyone was sufficiently rested and feeling healthy, then asked if that was due to a diet reflective of the food pyramid’s recommendations. Students respond with laughter because much of the food featured in the pyramid would be “foreign” to the students and in some cases unrecognizable. To the researcher, these subtle digressions inspired more classroom discussion and participation. In any of the cases where Instructor B was drawing attention to any of the visual discourse, it was only to draw considered attention to its connection to the linguistic components. For the most part, student response to the silencing of the visual discourse was attentive and engendered active participation

whenever Instructor B initiated discussion with supplemental lexical items he often wrote on the whiteboard.

**1 Make an Excuse to Decline Food**

**CONVERSATION MODEL** Read and listen.

A: Everything's ready. Why don't we sit down?  
B: This food looks great!  
C: It really smells delicious.

A: Please help yourself.  
C: Thanks. But I'll pass on the chicken.  
A: Don't you eat chicken?  
C: Actually, no. I'm a vegetarian.  
A: I'm sorry. I didn't know that.  
C: Don't worry about it. It's not a problem.

**Rhythm and intonation practice**

**VOCABULARY.** Excuses for not eating something. Listen and practice.

I don't care for broccoli. Coffee doesn't agree with me. I'm a vegetarian. I'm on a diet. / I'm trying to lose weight. I'm avoiding sugar. I'm allergic to chocolate.

**LISTENING COMPREHENSION.** Listen carefully to each conversation. Write the letter to complete each statement. Then listen again to check your work.

1. Cindy \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Frankie \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Marie \_\_\_\_\_  
4. Susan \_\_\_\_\_  
5. George \_\_\_\_\_

a. is a vegetarian.  
b. is avoiding salt and oil.  
c. is trying to lose weight.  
d. is allergic to strawberries.  
e. doesn't care for fish.

**GRAMMAR.** Negative yes / no questions and Why don't...?

Use negative yes / no questions ...

- to check information you think is true.  
Isn't Jane a vegetarian? Yes, she is.  
Don't they have two sons? No, they don't. They have three.
- when you want someone to agree with you.  
Don't you love Italian food? Yes, it's delicious.  
Wasn't that a terrible dinner? Actually, I disagree. I liked it.
- to express surprise.  
Aren't you going to have cake? I'm sorry. I'm on a diet.  
Hasn't he finished eating yet? I know. Kevin's a very slow eater.

Use statements with Why don't...? to make an offer or a suggestion.

Why don't we go out to eat? Thanks.  
Good idea.

**Complete each negative yes / no question.**

1. A: \_\_\_\_\_ you allergic to seafood?  
B: Me? No. You're thinking of my brother.

2. A: \_\_\_\_\_ you like your salad?  
B: Not really. It was too spicy for me.

3. A: \_\_\_\_\_ that dinner last night delicious?  
B: It was fantastic!

4. A: \_\_\_\_\_ you already made roast chicken this week?  
B: Yes. Don't you like it?

**CONVERSATION PAIR WORK**

Role-play a dinner with friends. Use the pictures and make excuses to decline food.

A: Why don't you help yourself?  
B: Thanks. But I'll pass on \_\_\_\_\_.  
A: Don't you \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_

Continue the conversation in your own way.

**DISCUSSION.** Are there any foods you won't eat? Why not?

chocolates, sardines, shellfish, steak, noodles, fries

Fig. 2: Unit 6, Top Notch 2 (pp. 64-65).

Instructor B underpins a cultural contradiction by noting that rice, a daily staple of Koreans, is listed in the same category of portion *control* as pasta or potatoes. Apparently anticipating the potential for social marginalization, considering rice is a Korean staple, Instructor B prioritized a Korean perspective noting an item on the food pyramid but using the Korean word “kong-na-meul” (soybean) to connect students to it. Student response was an audible and collective “ahhh!” and the cultural relevance of that label must have sufficiently connected the students to the lesson because the discussion that followed was the loudest point in the class.

By using the definite article (the) before a constructed form of social reality (food pyramid), it become a standard of measurement rather than an example of how some other people eat (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The endorsement of the medical physician, lower right, under the pyramid (see Figure 1) legitimizes that

forced agency. Hence, both instructors identified it as counter-intuitive to Korean culture.

In Korean culture, politeness manifests in many ways, such as in certain suffixes used when speaking with people of higher or lower social status in society (i.e., elderly or children). When addressing polite ways to refuse food, Instructor B uses a Korean cultural perspective to situate the lesson. He notes a common Korean misconception that English does not have honorifics, such as specific kinds of suffixes in Korean, used when speaking to those of higher social status. He says English may not have the same kinds of linguistic aspects to polite speech as Koreans have, but English speakers do have some version of that. He reminds the students: "...if you say, broccoli sucks! that's really strong...banmal!" (Korean, meaning friend speech). Here he uses the Korean word to emphasize the point that the notion of politeness is an accessible aspect of English to which they can apply their L1 contextual understanding. He continues: "...so you might want to say I don't care for broccoli ...it sounds nicer and is less harsh." Here, Instructor B has situated a portion of English dialogue in a Korean context and used specific words like *jon-daet-mal* (polite speech) and *ban-mal* (slang or friend speech) to delineate the English forms of politeness. Student response is very expressive at this point. There are audible gasps, heads nodding, and one female student echoes what many are collectively saying: "Aha! I see that now!" The atmosphere of the class became noticeably louder and students engaged in enthusiastic discussion when they realized how communicative politeness translates into English.

### **Analysis**

A series of high-inference questions (Dornyei, 2007), detailed in Table 3, underpinning the nature of the EFL textbook use in class served as key points of observation in the analysis of the video recordings. The questions listed in Table 3 were partially inspired by mediated discourse analysis (Scollon et al, 2011) and studies of action-oriented approaches to multimodal interactional analysis for classroom observations and examinations of video recorded transcriptions (Cortez, 2008; Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016; Norris, 2019; Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2011; Wohlwend, 2011).

By endeavoring to answer these questions (Wohlwend, 2011), the researcher notes "how actions are made meaningful and social in situ rather than in representation, looking at interaction...semiotic practices, and discourses in contexts" (Wohlwend, 2011, p. 3).

1. Does the instructor present the lesson to students as it is presented in TN2? How are the students responding?
2. Does the instructor provide alternative visual or metaphoric reference in lieu of the content? How did the students respond?
3. Does the instructor change any part of the lesson? How did the students respond?
4. How does the instructor present any of the visual aids or speak of any of the images in the lesson? How did the students respond?
5. Does the genre of the multimodal content in the textbook appear to represent and aid the linguistic and cultural relevance of the lesson? How are the students responding to this?
6. Does the multimodal content appear counter-intuitive to Korean culture? If so, is this manifesting in the discourse of instruction or in the student negotiation of the content?
7. Does the instructor make the linguistic and cultural references relevant in a Korean context during classroom discourse? Do the students appear confused or accepting of the content?
8. Are there any uncomfortable silences in the classroom discourse? Does this appear related to the content of the textbook or the negotiation of the content?
9. What were the physical or behavioral responses while negotiating the content? Did any auditory (i.e.: speech), visual (i.e.: gaze), action (i.e.: gesture, posture, movement, facial expression, or touch) or environmental (i.e.: proxemics) signifiers or peculiarities appear among the students or the instructor during the lesson?
10. How did the students and instructors relate to the visual components of the lesson in TN2? Does the multimodal content appear familiar, strange, or dismissed as unimportant to the lesson? How and why was this noticed?

Tab. 3: Multimodal Interactional Analysis for an EFL Classroom

### **Discussion**

Born from personal classroom observations of student resistance, transformation, appropriation, or neutralization (Cortez, 2008) of multimodal discourse in the researcher's own EFL courses, the ZPC serves as a preliminary aid for EFL instructors in expanding circle English language learning programs to use textbook content in their classes. The ZPC, used by both instructor's in the featured vignette unites frameworks of multimodal critical discourse analysis (i.e., Machin



& Mayr, 2012) and theoretical principles of curricular commonplaces (i.e., Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Null, 2016) to assist EFL instruction in courses that lean heavily on the use of a chosen textbook. In the context of Korean post-secondary EFL courses, the lessons presented by each instructor were informed by an established ZPC. Using that new foundation, lessons were built by recontextualizing, re-writing, or avoided certain multimodal contents to better serve the interests of Korean university students who may feel marginalized by the forced consumption of certain social realities in globally published EFL textbooks (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015; Chang, 2009; Song, 2013).

Overall, Instructor A and B have a similar approach to presenting the textbook content in class. Each transform the content by using comical allegory, cultural translation, personal engagement, or careful explanation of why particular linguistic highlights or omission of the multimodal discourse in Top Notch 2 (Saslow & Ascher, 2011) might be important to English speakers. Additionally, both instructors appear to make some effort to explain why the students should know those perspectives without pressuring them to abandon Korean cultural values or norms. These adjustments to textbook material and the manner that they were negotiated in class suggests that each instructor was informed by their understanding of the curricular commonplaces of Korean university EFL programs and the dominant social realities in the multimodal discourse of Top Notch 2 (Saslow & Ascher, 2011).

### **Negotiating the curricular commonplaces**

In their respective classrooms, Instructor A and B exhibited an understanding of the curricular commonplaces of Korean post-secondary EFL learning (see Table 1), such as the subject, milieu, students, teachers, and the textbook. Each managed time by ensuring a constant, unimpeded flow of classroom activity, especially when deviating from the textbook to draw attention to linguistic variation. In this way, they ensured the value of student investment in EFL learning while meeting the expectations of Korean institutional milieu of EFL programs, who want students to use globally published EFL textbooks (Chang, 2009; Fitzgibbon, 2013). Each instructor appears to use their BAK (Woods, 1996) to omit, change, recontextualize, or joke about the multimodal discourse in the lessons of Top Notch 2 (Saslow & Ascher, 2011), such as asking students if one glass of wine or 100 glasses of wine / day is healthy, holding the textbook and standing close to students to present co-engagement with the material (see Figure 3), omitting visual discourse of the lessons while concentrating on the linguistic challenges, presenting lesson content from student perspectives, inspiring students to be critical of EFL materials, and to accept that one's identity as a Korean university student should not be diminished in the process of consuming the multimodal discourse of a globally published EFL textbook.



Fig. 3: Instructor B co-engagement with textbook material

### **Negotiating dominant social narratives in the textbook**

Each instructor appeared to prepare for the use of Top Notch 2 in their classes by using Step 2 in the ZPC for critically analyzing the multimodal content. Their reconstruction of the lessons may have been inspired by the narrow or one-sided representation of certain social realities. For example, most of the students in each of the classes did not have much interest in examining the food pyramid (see Figure 1), likely because it does not reflect a Korean diet, even though it was emphasized in size, composition, and detail, with an endorsement from a published physician. That superior agency of a “Western” diet, presented as the standard against which all other cultures are measured, may have been noted by each instructor, who chose to transform the food pyramid into a “food pagoda,” to which students responded with laughter as they reconstructed the items in lively discussion.

Instructor B may have noticed that the food pyramid featured in Unit 6 overshadowed the smaller one that students needed to fill in (see Figure 1) because he gave a detailed explanation of the former’s contents as if to highlight that students were not expected to see that device as a standard against which Korean culture was to be measured. Instead, he pointed out the areas where legumes and rice were (two items important to Korean culture) and discussed with the students why they were important.

Each instructor skipped some sections and included the students in the decision, simultaneously avoiding multimodal content that he perceived as inhibitive to EFL learning or culturally marginalizing to Korean university students, while empowering them in the consumption of EFL learning materials.



### **A Zone of Prioritized Curricularivity**

It is important to remember that achieving a ZPC is partially informed by Fox (2004), who argued that a curriculum is a rhetorical accomplishment. In the context of the present study, that accomplishment is reflected in student reception, consumption, and perceived acceptance of the instructor's efforts to negotiate the multimodal discourse of their globally published EFL textbook. In other words, the present study underscores not only what is or is not taught, but how it is or is not taught. The term "curricularivity" underscores the discursivity of a curriculum and marks the benefits of considered, negotiated classroom discourse; in this case, the multimodal discourse of Top Notch 2 (Saslow & Ascher, 2011).

In most cases, students were often and initially confused about the lessons, as evidenced by their silence or their facial expressions as they quietly tried to understand the lessons but appeared relieved when the instructors transformed the content to appeal to students' sociocultural norms. That focus on recontextualization was met by students with heightened attentiveness and more robust classroom discussion.

Student response was fully attentive and amenable whenever an instance of personal reflection added to the classroom commentary. They appeared to enjoy sharing Korean experiences with each of the instructors. Student response and participation perceptibly rose whenever the instructors initiated Korean perspectives, such as talking about Korean alcohol or popular pub food. During these exchanges, students appeared more willing to exchange dialogue with neighbors at their tables and the atmospheric volume of the classroom increased. Overall, in each of the classes, there appeared to be many expressions of bemused curiosity about the Unit's topic of food, illustrated from a non-Korean perspective. Students did not engage any of the content outside of direct instruction.

In each of the classrooms, it is obvious that each professor had a profound knowledge of Korean contexts and the curricular commonplaces (Connely & Clandinin, 1988) of Korean university EFL. This is evident in their respective, effortless transformations of the multimodal content to suit the needs of their students. By following the content page by page, they are adhering to the restrictive curriculum most universities follow but doing so in a way that exercises reflexivity in the negotiation of the textbook content, while fostering a functional knowledge of the linguistic challenges (Stoller, 2015).

The present study asks if an understanding of curricular commonplaces, on the one hand, and the dominant social realities in the multimodal discourse of EFL textbook lessons, on the other, can help instructors achieve a ZPC. The findings suggest that student response to instructor's negotiation of the textbook was certainly more positive than using the lessons unchanged. By observing how students and instructors resist, transform, appropriate, or neutralize (Cortez, 2008) any of the multimodal content in classroom negotiation, it appears that the

instructor efforts, informed by the ZPC framework proposed in this study, inspires a more enjoyable delivery system for textbook content that may result in a deeper learning or functional knowledge of English (Stoller, 2015).

### **Caveats and Future Studies**

The data in the study may appear limited because the classes are quite short. Overall, the video recording lasted only one hour for each of the studies. It is possible that an ethnographic analysis or a longitudinal study might yield more salient results but there are complicated, logistical restrictions, enforced by administrative milieu, that deter such studies in Korean university EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, this study recommends such avenues of research need to be further explored. Additionally, the video recording did not yield as many facial expressions and body language as anticipated so some of the assertions in the discussion and the findings are sourced in the researcher's own observations and notes while watching the classrooms via video feed during the lessons.

### **Conclusions**

This study proposed that a ZPC in Korean university classrooms can be achieved by understanding the curricular commonplaces of Korean EFL learning and the power and ideologies in the multimodal discourse of the chosen textbook for those programs. However, whether students are Korean, Jamaican, or Chinese, (i.e., Kuck, 2007; Kutz, 2004; Cortazzi & Jin, 1993), fears of identity loss, feelings of awkward social positioning, or senses of "outsiderness" are very real challenges that some L2 learners face. Therefore, the framework for a ZPC could be used in any expanding circle culture (Kachru, 1992). A ZPC encourages instructors to use their BAK (Woods, 1996) of language learning to ask questions about the curricular commonplaces and dominant narrative in textbook content. The vignette demonstrated that in a restrictive curriculum, such as in Korean universities, where a large percentage of classroom activity should be based on textbook material, the instructors were able to manipulate the multimodal discourse in their textbook lessons using the ZPC framework by making lessons relevant to the curricular commonplaces of the university EFL program and finding social alignments to the lessons that diminished dominant narratives in Korean culture. In other words, the ZPC helped instructors increase the value of their students' investment in EFL learning. Moving forward, studies that use a ZPC in other expanding circle cultures might provide further evidence of its usefulness informing EFL instructional practices.

Textbooks in Korean EFL learning contexts are shown to be artifacts of the rhetorical accomplishment to which Fox (2004) implies as the discursivity of a curriculum. That discursivity is sourced in an instructor's fluency with the curricular commonplaces and dominant social narratives in the multimodal

discourse of their EFL textbooks. Hence, a ZPC informs the instructor how to transform textbook content for multiple curricular registries. Student response to instructor's efforts to re-purpose lesson contents was physically and emotionally perceptible, indicated in their engagement of robust discussion with neighbors, happy facial expressions, and active notetaking during lectures. For these reasons, we believe a ZPC contributed to the overall atmospheric sense of accomplishment at the end of each class.

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## **The French Language Olympiad: Promoting language and culture learning**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to shed light on promoting teaching and learning the French language and culture through the Olympiad, initiated by a group of practitioners in a community of practice. What makes this Olympiad rather unique is its main focus on cultural knowledge combining it with linguistic aspects. The Olympiad takes place in four different categories taking into account students' age and prior experience in learning French (e.g. first or second foreign language). In addition, the regional round is organised in Moodle enabling more participants to take part and the national one in situ, at the University of Tallinn. Since the first Olympiad in 2014, the number of competitors has increased and both, private and municipality funded (public) schools participate. The paper provides a detailed overview of the olympiad process: how it was initiated and how it is annually run as well as a description of challenges faced by the organisers.

**Keywords:** French language and culture, language olympiad, language competition, community of practice, action research

Presumably, it was the first Olympiad in Linguistics in 1965 at Moscow State University that inspired the followers to create olympiads in languages (Derzhanski & Payne, 2010). First, the East-European countries, followed several decades later by the Western world, initiated different olympiads adapting their own format and criteria (Hudson & Sheldon, 2013). However, in 1960 there was already a foreign language competition of spoken language at national level held in Estonia for students of English and German (Rannap, 2014).

The primary purpose of organising olympiads and subject competitions in almost all the subjects taught at school is to offer talented students a challenge to show their acquired deep and wide knowledge in a particular subject. Nevertheless, there is another and not less important goal, which is popularising and promoting awareness of and interest towards that particular subject to a larger audience of students. In addition, olympiads provide different alternatives from national or school exams which are mainly in line with the expected outcome of the national curriculum and tests, while olympiads, instead, suggest more

intellectual challenges (Hudson & Sheldon, 2013). The broader aim of olympiads is related to universities who search for outstanding students and provide the winners with a possibility for a smooth and direct enrolment (Estival et al., 2014). The French Language Olympiad (FLO) targets to cover all above mentioned aims.

### **Community of Practice**

Driven by well-established examples of other olympiads of languages in Estonia, a small group of enthusiasts from Tallinn University and from the Association of French Language Teachers, set a goal to create a similar olympiad in their field. Willingness and readiness to initiate, bring about and implement changes and innovative solutions into educational landscape is an evidence of teacher agency (MacLellan, 2017; Orland-Barak, 2017; Leijen et. al., 2019). Moreover, this kind of a bottom-up initiative fits well into the concept of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which is described by three key components: a shared domain of interest (promoting French language and culture); a practice (in the Estonian context a relatively small ensemble of practitioners, i.e. teachers and researchers of French); and a community (an active and systematic interaction between practitioners). The development of an olympiad assumes a cyclical approach during which several evaluation and correction phases are included in order to improve the final outcome (background information, planning, implementation, evaluation, correction, reflection). Therefore, a combination of the principles for cultivating a community of practice and action research design was considered appropriate to use (Drummond & Themessl-Huwer, 2007; Wenger et al., 2002). Although, the present case is not a typical action research where the focus is on finding a practical solution to an existing problem as the lack of an olympiad is not regarded as a true problem. However, as the methodology of action research enables to carry out activities to implement changes to improve not only teacher's own professional development, but also in a larger scale, organise collaboration (Levin & Greenwood, 2001; McAteer, 2013), the elements of action research combined with a 7-principles model <sup>1</sup>of the community of practice proposed by Wenger and her colleagues (2002) led us to the following design: Inviting the members of community to a dialogue; Planning with focusing on value; Implementation; Evaluation-Correction; Creating a stable rhythm for an olympiad; Reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Design for evolution. 2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives. 3. Invite different levels of participation. 4. Develop both public and private community spaces. 5. Focus on value. 6. Combine familiarity and excitement. 7. Create a rhythm for the community (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).



### Background information: Estonian context

Annually there are olympiads in about 20 school subjects, with more than 10,000 students participating in regional rounds and 1,000 in the national round (Teaduskool). The FLO is a relative newcomer to the scene of Estonian olympiads, having only officially started in the academic year 2014/2015, whilst the majority date back several decades to the period of the Soviet era: in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to olympiads there is a myriad of subject competitions, organised and held mostly regionally, which target students of all ages as olympiads may be available only for a certain age group (e.g. upper-secondary school). It is important to mention that olympiads in Estonia are supported by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and organised by universities or associations of school subjects.

The first olympiads in foreign languages in Estonia, such as English, German and Russian took place in the 1960 and have continued without interruption. However, the format of the olympiads of above mentioned languages differ from each other and has changed during the course of time. There are no fixed standards. Some enhance communicative skills, some linguistic aspects, and some promote research skills.

In Estonia, French as a foreign language (FL) has different statuses at school, such as FL1, FL2 or FL3. In total there are 4,144 learners<sup>2</sup> of French at all school levels, which is 2,2% compared to English (62,5%), Russian (27,5%), German (6%) and other languages (1,8%). Learning FL1 starts from the age of 8-9 years at elementary school, FL2 usually starts at basic school (age 11-12 years) and FL3 at upper-secondary school (age 16-17 years), but there are exceptions where FL3 starts at lower-secondary school (age 13-14 years). It is equally important to mention that in Estonia the school leader has a lot of autonomy to decide the school's curriculum – there is the national curriculum to follow but the school can add a certain number of classes of any subject per week and it is up to the school's priorities to decide which subjects are given additional classes, and many schools have chosen foreign languages. That explains why the number of French classes per week or the beginning of FL2 and/or FL3 tuition may vary according to the school. Below, a short description of different statuses of French at school is given as this information is relevant to understand the concept of FLO.

#### *French as the first foreign language*

French as FL1 is learned by 1,153 students, compared to English with 10,1214 students (95,8%), German 2,263 (2,1%) and Russian 1,057 (1%) students. There are 5 comprehensive schools in Estonia where French is taught as the first foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Here and further, the data regard academic school year 2019/2020 and are derived from statistical database Haridussilm.

language since the first or second year of the elementary school. In most schools FL1 is given 3 to 4 classes of 45 minutes duration per week. At the end of lower-secondary school (age 15-16 years) FL1 learners are expected to have reached B1 level (CEFR<sup>3</sup>) and at the end of upper-secondary school B2 level.

### *French as the second or third foreign language*

There are 2,991 students from approximately 40 comprehensive schools where French is FL2 or FL3. Classes of 45 minutes duration per week vary between 2 to 4. In addition, FL3 may be offered as an optional course at upper-secondary school or as a compulsory one with a choice between several foreign languages. At the end of lower-secondary school FL2/3 learners are expected to have reached A2/A1 level and at the end of upper-secondary school B1/A2 level.

Besides French taught at school, *Institut Français* and language schools offer French language courses, which according to the information on respective websites, are popular. That explains why every year there are certain participants at the FLO who do not study French at school (during the registration to the FLO that information is requested) but independently, meaning outside the classroom at language schools or with private teachers.

## **Planning with focusing on value: Initiation of FLO**

### *First phase*

In May 2014, 115 teachers of French (nearly the whole population, some contact email addresses were undetectable or erratic) were contacted through emails to invite them to participate in a roundtable discussion which aimed to answer 2 questions: Is there a need and an interest towards conducting a French language olympiad? What would be the format of the olympiad, based on teachers' expectations? 30 teachers responded expressing their support, welcoming the idea and encouraging further development.

In June 2014, 15 teachers eventually participated in the first roundtable, held at the premises of Tallinn University. The first question received quickly and unanimously a firm positive answer. The second question about conceptualising the format of the olympiad saw a lively discussion. Firstly, the formats of existing olympiads in different languages were analysed and the result revealed that in most cases those olympiads at regional level check participant's linguistic skills and at national level the participant has to express both linguistic and oral skills, quite often in a similar manner as exams do. Secondly, a clear goal was set before deciding about the format: to promote the French language and culture and not to

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<sup>3</sup> CEFR: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

replicate the format of exams as the French national language exam DELF<sup>4</sup> had already been successfully implemented and was popular among students (Innove). Thirdly, the first roundtable meeting decided that in order to promote the language and culture an online platform should be used at regional level to enable broad participation and facilitate the evaluation. Fourthly, organisational tasks were divided, a timetable was set, and the next meeting was fixed for August 2014. Finally, the roundtable decided on the format of the first Olympiad that is introduced in the following sub-chapter.

### **Format of FLO**

The first Olympiad in 2014/2015 as a pilot version would be organised only for lower-secondary school students (age13-16) in two categories: for students of FL1, corresponding to the level of B1 (CEFR) and for students of FL2/3 respectively to level A2/A1 (CEFR).

The topic would be a French speaking region of a French speaking country and the tasks would only be about cultural matters (traditions, history, geographical facts, monuments and sightseeing, architecture, celebrities, literature, regional gastronomy).

The selection of participants for the regional round would be decided by the schools during December 2014, the number of participants would not be limited for both categories of the regional round.

The regional round would take place in January 2015 and the tasks would include multiple choice questions. Moodle as a platform, that universities and schools are familiar with, was chosen for the regional round. Moodle would be open for participants during 60 minutes on a previously announced date and time and the schools of the participants must guarantee a space equipped with computers and the surveillance as no extraneous materials would be allowed to be used.

The national round would take place in February 2015 at Tallinn University and the participants (the best performers of the regional round) would show their oral skills: first they would have a lottery draw to find out their topic on a specific geographical place (village, town), then they would have 90 minutes to prepare for the presentation called "*Guide touristique*" about that particular geographical place; internet and all technical devices would be allowed (computers) during the preparation, and finally they would have 3-5 minutes for the oral presentation with visual (computer screen) help in front of 3 members of the jury.

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<sup>4</sup> DELF: *Diplôme d'études en langue française*

### *Second phase*

In August 2014, five people gathered for the next meeting to discuss the organisational details at the premises of the university (a representative from the university, a representative from the Association of French Language Teachers, a native teacher of French and two non-native teachers). The others withdrew claiming to have too many duties already at work.

The following was agreed upon. The topic of the first FLO would be 'Alsace-Lorraine'. The formulation of the Multiple Choice Questions should take into account the participants level of French, i.e. the formulation would be as simple as possible. A clear step-by-step 'Instructions' would be compiled and provided to schools where French is taught to invite their learners of French to take part in the new olympiad as well as to explain the procedure and the registration. Teachers who are teaching at schools with potential participants should not participate in the preparation and creation of the bank of questions in order to guarantee the confidentiality of questions. A fixed timetable together with detailed duties and people responsible for each duty was set. It was decided that the number of students shortlisted at the regional round to be invited to the national round remained to be decided after the regional round as it was unpredictable how many participants might take part. At the national round, the students with the first three best results of both categories would be awarded as well as their supervisors. All participants would receive an Honorary Certificate of participation and their supervisors would receive a Letter of Gratitude.

### **Implementation of the FLO**

In December 2014 the bank of questions for the first FLO was ready. Only one of the organisers had access to all the questions and that person eventually chose 28 questions for both categories. Table 1 displays examples of the questions of the first FLO according to the categories.

On January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 between 10-11am the regional round of FLO took place using Moodle. There were 115 participants altogether (90 in the 1<sup>st</sup> category and 25 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> category) from 5 different schools from three different towns in Estonia. No technical problems occurred, though the Moodle support team at the university were ready if needed.

On February 16<sup>th</sup> at 10am the national round was held at Tallinn University. The jury was composed of three people. Based on the results of the regional round eight students were invited to the national round in the 1<sup>st</sup> category and six in the 2<sup>nd</sup> category. Eventually six students from the 1<sup>st</sup> category and only two students from the 2<sup>nd</sup> category participated. After the oral presentations a closing ceremony took place where awards were given to the winners. It should also be mentioned that all the participants received a warm meal and refreshments were available all day long.

<b>Categories of the olympiad</b>	<b>School stage</b>	<b>FL status</b>	<b>CEFR</b>	<b>Examples of questions of regional round</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> category	Lower-secondary school (age 14-16 years)	FL1	B1	<p><b>- La bataille de Verdun fut une bataille de:</b>  a) Guerre de 1870-1871; b) Guerre de 1914-1918; c) Guerre de 1939-1945;</p> <p><b>- Quelle institution de l'UE siège à Strasbourg?</b>  a) Médiateur européen (ombudsman européen); b) Cour de Justice de l'UE; c) Banque centrale européenne; d) Europol;</p> <p><b>- Quel ingrédient n'appartient pas à la recette de fameuse «Quiche lorraine»?</b>  a) Lardon fumé; b) Fromage; c) Oeufs; d) Tomate;</p> <p><b>- Parmi les expressions suivantes laquelle signifie « Oui » en lorrain?</b>  a) Jo; b) Ui; c) Ja;</p> <p><b>- L'Alsace est la région d'origine de la dynastie:</b>  a) des Capétiens; b) des Bourbons; c) des Habsbourg</p>
2 <sup>nd</sup> category	Lower-secondary school (age 14-16 years)	FL2/3	A2/A1	<p><b>- Comment on appelle la brioche alsacienne?</b>  a) Gâche; b) Pogne; c) Kougelhoff; d) Panettone;</p> <p><b>- Quel est le sommet le plus haut de l'Alsace-Lorraine?</b>  a) Puy de Sancy; b) Crêt de la Neige; c) Grand Ballon; d) Vignemale;</p> <p><b>- La langue alsacienne est un dialecte de la langue:</b>  a) française; b) allemande; c) italienne; d) flamande;</p> <p><b>- Qu'est-ce qu'une «Mirabelle»?</b>  a) Un joli prénom alsacien; b) Un joli village en Lorraine; c) Une marque de biscuit; d) Une sorte de prune</p>

Tab. 1: Examples of the questions of the first FLO in 2014/15.

## Evaluation and corrections

In March 2015, the organising team had another meeting to evaluate the success of the first FLO and detect the areas that needed to be improved. Unanimously it was agreed that the first and pilot FLO had succeeded well and that the organisers would proceed with preparations for upper-secondary school level to be included in the future olympiads. To clarify the final categories, Table 2 displays the set of categories which is still used.

Categories of the Olympiad	School stage	FL status	CEFR correspondence
1 <sup>st</sup> category	Lower-secondary school (age 14-16)	FL1	B1
2 <sup>nd</sup> category	Lower-secondary school (age 14-16)	FL2/3	A2/A1
3 <sup>rd</sup> category	Upper-secondary school (age 16-19)	FL1	B2
4 <sup>th</sup> category	Upper-secondary school (age 16-19)	FL2/3	A2/A1

Tab. 2: The categories of the FLO.

We as organisers could not have predicted the number of participants and therefore hoped for the best. 115 students to our positive surprise from 5 different schools participated in the first FLO. Table 3 shows the dynamics in numbers of participants and schools from 2014/15 to the present.

Years Categories	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1 <sup>st</sup> category	90	13	18	19	24	30
2 <sup>nd</sup> category	25	8	33	32	37	26
3 <sup>rd</sup> category	-	19	23	18	26	22
4 <sup>th</sup> category	-	18	44	49	55	58
<b>Total N</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>136</b>
Schools	6	8	12	17	16	20

Tab. 3: The number of participants and schools across years.

During the meeting the following changes after deliberation were agreed upon. There was no limit for participants in the national round in Moodle. However, the analysis of the results showed that more than half of the participants received a success rate below 50% of correct answers. The feedback from the supervisors indicated that there were many who just wanted to try. We found that those who participated unprepared were not taking the Olympiad seriously and the aim of learning more deeply about French culture was not accomplished. Therefore, the

limit of 6 students per one category from each school was set in 2015/16. We had to correct the number of participants one more time after the second national round following the suggestions from the supervisors: we increased the limit of participants per category to 10 students and so it remains. Further analysis of the results after each Olympiad has confirmed that the average success rate has not fallen below 50%. The average success rate in all categories stays between 55-67%. No participant has ever reached a maximum score success, the best success rates reach between 78-85% and the lowest remain between 20-35%. The low number of participants of the first national round, i.e. the oral presentations, could be explained (based on the feedback of the supervisors) by the fear of the unknown and low self-confidence. However, the first pioneers spread their positive experience among their school fellows and this problem has not occurred since. All invitees have taken part in the national round unless they have fallen ill and have notified the organisers. In addition, our jury members are always very supportive no matter what the participant's level of oral expression might be. We consider the positive feeling and well-being of participants of utmost importance.

Questions regarding cultural and geographical matters were welcomed by students and supervisors. Especially the idea that every year one region of a French-speaking country is in focus. The different regions of France as topics of the FLO have been so far: *Alsace-Lorraine, Normandie, Bretagne, Pays de la Loire, Provence and Occitanie*. Future plans include *Quebec, Wallonie, Suisse romande and France d'outre-mer*. Although, both students and teachers admitted that it was hard to prepare for the Olympiad as so many areas had to be covered. We feel that this was exactly what we had targeted in the first place: to familiarise students with a broad spectrum of topics. Table 4 shows random examples of the questions of the regional round and the oral topics of the national round from different years. In addition, as an improvement after the first FLO, photos images were added to illustrate some questions and make the visual side more interesting. Some questions asked to recognise a certain object in the picture (e.g. the famous cathedral of Rouen) and the options were given verbatim; while another question asked to recognise a certain object and the options given were photos (e.g. the respondent had to recognise the famous aqueduct 'Pont du Gard' among 3 other bridges).

Another specification that we made after the first Olympiad was a strong recommendation for students, who come from a bilingual setting or have lived or studied in a French speaking country, to participate in the category of FL1, irrespective of the age group. This issue emerged among supervisors who did not know how to advise their students with a higher level of language, though officially belonging to the category of FL2/3. Those students themselves were ready for more challenging tasks than their category would have offered. Moreover, it

seemed unfair as they were in a more advantageous situation compared to FL2/3 students who had not been naturally exposed to French.

<i>Categories of FLO</i>	<i>Examples of questions of regional round</i>	<i>Examples of oral topics of national round</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> category	<b>Quel constructeur de transport européen a-t-il son siège en Occitanie?</b> a) Airbus; b) Air France; c) Renault; d) Peugeot.	Info touristique: Les sites préhistoriques en Provence Info touristique: L'été indien en Bretagne
2 <sup>nd</sup> category	<b>Sur quelle photo peut-on voir la ville de Carcassonne?</b> (the choice of 4 photos)	Info touristique: Que faire et que voir à Saint-Malo Info touristique: Que faire et que voir à Strasbourg
3 <sup>rd</sup> category	<b>Qui a fait construire le château de Chambord?</b> a) François 1 <sup>er</sup> ; b) Louis XI; c) Charles V; d) Henri II; <b>En quelle année a été construit le Pont du Gard?</b> a) environ 1000 ans avant J.-C.; b) environ 200 ans avant J.-C.; c) environ 50 ans après J.-C.; d) environ 1000 ans après J.-C.	Info touristique: Les jardins botaniques de l'Occitanie Info touristique : Le tourisme durable en Provence
4 <sup>th</sup> category	<b>Quel festival a lieu à Montpellier tous les ans?</b> a) Fête du Citron; b) La Fête de l'Eau; c) Le Festival de Danses Historiques; d) Le Festival International des Sports Extrêmes.	Info touristique: Que faire et que voir à Orléans Info touristique: Que faire et que voir à Nice

Tab. 4: Random examples of MCQ of the regional round and oral topics of the national round.

Based on the feedback from the teachers after the first FLO linguistic tasks were added. We maintained the emphasis on cultural aspects, yet 2-3 linguistic tasks were provided. Table 5 demonstrates the different types of linguistic tasks for each category used since the first FLO. As for the task to fill in the gaps of a text, the topic of the text has always been related to the general topic of that particular Olympiad, i.e. a region of France. The length of the texts varies between 80 (2<sup>nd</sup> category) to 200 words (3<sup>rd</sup> category). Although the linguistic tasks are answered in Moodle, marking them is by hand to ensure that all possible answers are individually assessed as, for example, filling in a cloze procedure may have too many correct



options to insert into Moodle for autocorrection. Marking is always conducted by a native language teacher and one teacher marks the whole category, again to guarantee an assessment of the same style, i.e. the teacher may give from 0.25 points to 1.0 point to a correct answer as long as the marking is consistent.

<b>Categories of FLO</b>	<b>Linguistic tasks</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> category	Writing a short text: <i>Donnez trois raisons de passer les vacances au Centre-Val de Loire!</i> Paraphrasing: <i>Il <u>a</u> toujours <u>la</u> tête dans les nuages.</i> Filling in the gaps: respondents have to guess missing words based on the context; the choice of words is given with 3 extra words.
2 <sup>nd</sup> category	Writing a short text: <i>Présentez-vous ! Essayez d'utiliser des verbes et des adjectifs différents. 60-100 mots</i> Paraphrasing the underlined part: <i>Il <u>faut</u> acheter du pain.</i> Filling in the gaps: respondents have to guess missing words based on the context; the choice of words is given with 2 extra words.
3 <sup>rd</sup> category	Paraphrasing: <i>Nous <u>ne savons rien faire</u> de nos dix doigts.</i> Choosing the correct form: <i>La vaccination des _____ est un sujet de discussion animée. a) nouveaux-né; b) nouveaux-nés; c) nouveau-nés.</i> Cloze procedure: respondents have to guess missing words based on the context; a choice of words is not provided.
4 <sup>th</sup> category	Filling in the gaps with a choice of 2-3 extras words is given; Paraphrasing: <i>Il tombe de la pluie.</i>

Tab. 5: Examples of linguistic tasks of FLO.

### Creating a stable rhythm for the Olympiad

The first FLO in 2014/15 encouraged us to continue. During the six years we have succeeded in creating a stable rhythm, i.e. the regional round takes place in January, leaving the schools enough time to select the participants in November-December, and the national round takes place in March. The next year's topic is announced as the last information at the closing and awarding ceremony of the national round. The exact dates of the following Olympiad are also announced on the website after the national round has taken place, allowing the students and supervisors to prepare at least eight months prior to the following national round.

### Reflection and conclusion

The successful experience of the first and pilot version of FLO was possible mostly thanks to the enthusiasm of the practitioners of the community of practice. The organisers were and still are motivated by the moral support provided by the schoolteachers. Moreover, during the 6 years of the existence of FLO it has been very encouraging to see the same students participating over several years: those

who have been successful in lower-secondary school categories are often to be met again in upper-secondary categories. However, the organisers still put a lot of effort into promoting the FLO. There are still many schools where French is taught, but whose students have not yet participated in an olympiad. So called Informative days have taken place in different towns for teachers and students who have been interested in the FLO but have not yet had the confidence to compete. Using PowerPoint slides and screenshot examples from Moodle all possible questions and nuances (linguistic concepts) have been discussed and explained.

The importance and value of FLO can be discussed at several levels. At local level: in most schools, teachers are encouraged to guide their students towards different competitions and olympiads. The FLO is no exception. Furthermore, many schools publish the FLO achievements of their students on their schools' websites. Some schools have featured in the local press after results of competitions have been published. In addition, Regional Departments of Education acknowledge and praise the best students in different ways. At community level: there is a lot of direct communication between the organisers and supervisors / potential future supervisors. At least we, as organisers have always endeavoured to minimise the barrier and promote collaboration within our community of practice by listening to the practitioners' voice and taking into account their input and recommendations. Besides the annual celebrations of *Francophonie* in March and Bastille Day on July 14<sup>th</sup> the FLO unites practitioners in its own competitive manner. At national level: the FLO enables the best students to excel and compare themselves to other competitors. We have initiated the French Language Olympiad of the Baltic Countries in collaboration with Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues and the first Olympiad took place in March 2019 in Tallinn allowing the best five students of each country (of the 3<sup>rd</sup> category as the only category comparable in all three countries) to take further challenges and hold a debate with each other on actual topics in the society.

The feedback from teachers shows clearly that there are those who systematically and methodologically prepare their students for FLO and we could not be happier as the first and foremost goal of the FLO is to promote the French language and culture. Namely cultural elements add value to the whole process and lead students beyond course books. The preparation of students does not usually take place individually because the time resources cannot allow it, but in the form of activities where the whole French learning group is engaged it is a beneficial situation for all students. One can neither call it a washback effect often related to drilling for exams, as the speaking competence which has been set in focus is universally important and is not associated only to the olympiads. We also have feedback from two Estonian universities (Tallinn and Tartu) where French is

taught as a major, that Olympiad winners have used the possibility to enrol smoothly.

Studying the phenomenon of olympiads offers a wide range of directions for future research. Starting from the statistical analyses of questions to the analyses of supervisors' and students' expectations and attitudes.

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## **Life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy related to emigration intentions for a long-term stay abroad of university students in five European countries**

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### **Abstract**

Life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy related to emigration intentions for a long-term stay abroad of university students in five European countries.

**Aim:** To explore the associations between emigration intentions of university students from five European countries in relation to several intrapersonal and emigration self-efficacy. The second aim is to explore the mediating role of self-efficacy in relation to internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.

**Sample and procedure:** The sample consisted of 1223 students (females N=812, 66.4%, males N=411, 33.6%. M=21.95, SD=3.62) from five European countries. The data collection was completed via an online questionnaire (University of Antwerp, Belgium, Sofia University, Bulgaria, University of Miskolc, Hungary, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic). The local ethics committee in every country approved the study

**Statistical analysis:** Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS 21. Differences in intrapersonal were analysed by ANOVA with a Scheffe Post hoc test. Binary logistic regression with the method enter controlling for country and age was used as a method of analysis. Mediation analyses were explored by using Hayes PROCESS tool.

**Findings:** The regression model explained between 29-38 percent of the variance. Those students with higher self-efficacy also with higher horizontal individualism were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and HI, and those with lower satisfaction and vertical collectivism were more likely to have long-term

emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and VC. Self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between horizontal dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.

**Keywords:** emigration intentions, university students, internalized cultural values, life satisfaction, self-efficacy

Migration is a complex phenomenon which has been used as an umbrella term for many different phenomena. It comprises both voluntary as well as forced migration of people of different age, education and background. Migration which deserves a specific interest of experts with various professional backgrounds (sociologists, politicians, economists, psychologists) is the migration of the young and highly educated generation. This is a specific group which significantly contributes to the level of quality of life in any country. This study will narrow its focus on the migration intentions among the young and highly educated generation in Europe. The main focus will be centred on life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy which have been linked to emigration intentions in previous empirical studies or theory (Fouarge, Özer, & Seegers, 2018; Ivlevs & Veliziotis, 2018; Knudsen, 2019; Lee & Young, 2018). However, their role in the given context has not proved consistent. As a result, the level of the individual contribution of these factors and mechanisms in which they are related to emigration intentions of young and educated people needs further exploration.

### **Intrapersonal factors and emigration intentions**

One of the important perspectives on emigration understands it mainly as a reaction to pertaining unsatisfactory circumstances or a more general dissatisfaction with life in one's country (Silventonen et al., 2008). A direct negative relationship has been found between emigration and life satisfaction as well as satisfaction within individual life domains (mental health or health related, social, ecological, economic, political or cultural) with the social domain representing social relationships being the most significant. For example, Clark and Lisowski (2017) found a negative association between the extent of social networks, family environment, strong ties with family members (children, partner, parents) and emigration intentions. While other authors suggest that satisfaction is directly linked with weaker emigration intentions. Ivlevs and Veliziotis (2018) based on a large survey gathering data from 35 European and Central Asian countries identified a U-shaped association between life satisfaction and emigration intentions. According to their findings, the least satisfied and the most satisfied are those who are likely to have emigration intentions regardless of the economic and political situation of their country. Their findings suggest that emigration based on dissatisfaction may not be linked to an increase in happiness.

Contrary, despite the fact that the country where one is moving is less developed individuals may, e.g. benefit from a higher social status due to their expertise. The World Happiness Report in relation to migration emphasizes the complexity of happiness and life satisfaction in relation to migration. This report concludes that it largely depends on happiness levels in the original country and goal country and its changes over time. Additional factors such as the general level of acceptance of emigrants in the goal countries in comparison with the original are also significant.

Another important concept relevant for studying emigration is the concept of individualism and collectivism which reflects cultural and social aspects. According to this concept the individualistically oriented countries put more emphasis on personality development, self-realization and personal freedom. On the other hand, collectivistically oriented countries value more common social values and communal or societal interests. However, the traditional division of the world on the East and the West has become more fluid due to the migration flows and merging of cultures (Yi, 2018). Individuals living in a country preferring individualistic or collectivistic values do not necessarily share these values on the individual level. Individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1984) as opposing dimensions have been due to their multidimensionality extended containing horizontal and vertical dimensions. For example, intrapersonal characteristics on the horizontal dimension represent cooperation on individual level and vertical line represents a preference of hierarchical structure and self-determination (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The horizontal and vertical levels of individualism and collectivism can be attributed with certain characteristics and motives. For example, horizontal individualism can be characterized by uniqueness and self-reliance while vertical individualism by a strong focus on achievement, power and status. Horizontal collectivism can be characterized by cooperativeness, helping other people and confidence while vertical collectivism can be characterized by dutifulness and a strong in-group obligation. In the context of emigration intentions, this concept is useful particularly in making the distinction between the intrapersonal line which may be important for decision-making process about leaving and cultural aspect which may be more relevant for the actual choice of the destination country. Recent studies (Arpaci, Baloghu, & Kesici, 2018; Knudsen, 2019), underline the relevance of this concept showing that positive associations exist between emigration intentions with the dimensions of individualism and negative with collectivism, but further research is needed.

Self-efficacy as a belief about one's ability to have his/her life under control, coping with challenges in life and as a self-regulation mechanism determines the quality and quantity of effort manifested in behaviour. Self-efficacy is based on the socio-cognitive theory which defines it within the interaction between the behaviour of a person, environment and self as an internal factor. It comprises

volitional, motivational and behavioural components which are related to both the actual as well as future behaviour. People with high self-efficacy tend to approach new and difficult tasks as challenges. Self-efficacy can be conceptualized as situation specific or in terms of a more general potential of an individual (Bandura, 1986; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The significance of specific emigration self-efficacy has been shown in various phases of migration process (Hoppe & Fujishiro, 2015). The Kley's three-phase model focusing on different motivational stages of migration showed that self-efficacy was most strongly related to the pre-actional phase where intentions are formed but also to the stages of gathering information about the target country and the actional phase when concrete steps are carried out. Similarly, Hao et al. (2016), Weerasinghe and Kumar, (2014) found predictive value of self-efficacy in relation to workplace abroad. They found that for those with a lower level of self-efficacy other variables were more significant such as financial benefits while in those with higher emigration self-efficacy the main predictors were their aspirations. Lee and Young (2018) provided further evidence that self-efficacy is one of the factors which significantly contributes to understanding of both migration intentions and migration plans. Furthermore, Van Dalen and Henkens (2012) pointed out that self-efficacy is important in relation to emigration intentions and a key factor in actual migration process. Self-efficacy has been particularly studied within the process of behaviour change where its relevance is well documented in the processes regarding stopping, terminating or persistence of specific behaviours. However, this has not been extensively explored in the area of intentions of moving abroad among university students.

Overall, life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy are the key variables which will be explored in relation to emigration intentions due to their unclear relationship. Furthermore, the mediation function of self-efficacy will be addressed.

### **Aim of the study**

The main aim of the present study was to explore the associations between emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and address several factors (life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values of vertical collectivism, horizontal collectivism, vertical individualism, horizontal individualism and emigration self-efficacy). A further aim was to explore the universality of the mediator self – efficacy in the relationship between dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.

### **Sample and settings**

Our sample consisted of 1223 students (females N=812, 66.4%, males N=411, 33.6%, Mean age=21.95, SD=3.62) from five European counties. 214 students were



from Belgium ( $M=21.83$ ,  $SD=3.31$ ), 412 students from Bulgaria ( $M=21.82$ ,  $SD=3.83$ ), 121 students from Hungary ( $M=24.34$ ,  $SD=5.51$ ), 162 students from Lithuania ( $M=20.0$ ,  $SD=2.10$ ), 314 students were from Slovakia ( $M=22.3$ ,  $SD=2.49$ ). The data collection was completed via an online questionnaire in cooperation with the partners (University of Antwerp, Belgium, Sofia University, Bulgaria, University of Miskolc, Hungary, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic). An electronic link of the questionnaire was advertised on official websites of participating universities and institutions of individual partners and promoted in various ways among students within each university or institution. The questionnaire was available for completion during the second semester 2016/2017. The local ethics committee in every country approved the study.

## Methods

Emigration intentions were explored by the question: "Are you planning to leave your country after completing university?" with possible answers: (1) No, I am not planning to leave; (2) I don't know, I have not thought about it; (3) I don't know, I have not decided; (4) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period up to 6 months; (5) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period from 6 to 12 months; (6) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than a year; (7) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than 5 years; (8) Yes, I am planning to leave permanently. For the purposes of binary logistic regression, the answers were dichotomized into two categories: 0 - not planning to leave (answer 1), 1- planning to leave for a year or longer (answers 6, 7, 8).

Life satisfaction was measured by the SWLS - Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). In this measure, respondents evaluate five items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree. Internal consistency in the sample was 0.855.

The shortened version of the C-I scale (Individualism/Collectivism Scale) (Triandis, Gelfand, 1998, Singelis et al., 1995) was used and consisted of horizontal (H) and vertical (V) individualism (I) and collectivism (C) and each subscale consisted of 4 items. Respondents answered all items on a 9-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 9 (always). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in AMOS to verify the factor structure of the measurement for Slovak students (Bacikova-Sleskova, 2018). This version with three items in each subscale was used for every country. Reliability was calculated for all subscales; for horizontal individualism reliability  $\alpha = 0.533$ ; for vertical individualism  $\alpha = 0.685$ ; for horizontal collectivism  $\alpha = 0.569$ ; for vertical collectivism  $\alpha = 0.728$ .

Self-efficacy was measured by items: „I believe that I can manage the process of leaving“, „I believe that I can manage living abroad“, „If I wanted, I could easily leave abroad “. Respondents answered these items on a 5-point scale from 1-

completely disagree to 5-completely agree. For the purposes of this study these items were combined into a single score. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.773.

### **Statistical analyses**

Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS 21. The exploration of differences in intrapersonal variables in the five countries was carried out by ANOVA followed by the Scheffe Post hoc test. Binary logistic regression with the enter method controlling for country and gender was used. Mediation analysis was performed according to the recommendations of Baron, Kenny (1986). The significance of mediation effect was analyzed by bootstrapping (1000 resamples) 95% BC CI. Mediation analyses were explored using the Hayes Process tool in SPSS.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive analyses**

Descriptive statistics regarding emigration intentions of university students from five countries with a detailed distribution of responses to the emigration question are shown in Table 1. This overview shows that in the total sample 317 students (25.9%) was not planning to emigrate and 451 (36.9%) students were not decided. For the purposes of further analysis (binary logistic regression) the answers were dichotomized into two groups consisting of 563 students: 0- not planning to leave (answer 1), 1- planning to leave for longer than a year, longer than five years or permanently (i.e. answers 6, 7, 8). A total of 317 (69.7% women, 30.3% men) students were in the group 0 and the second group consisted of 246 students (63.8% women, 36.2% men). There were no statistically significant differences between men and women. Emigration intentions to leave for the period of one year or longer (answers 6,7,8) were reported by 20.1% of all 1223 students from five countries. The highest percentage was reported by the students from Hungary (28.9%), followed by Lithuanian students (25.3%), Slovakia (20.45%), Bulgaria (19.2%), the lowest by students from Belgium (12.6%). Statistically significant differences between countries for independent variables are shown in Table 2. In only one factor, life satisfaction STF, we did not find statistically significant differences between countries.

Horizontal individualism was the highest among Hungarian students and lowest among Belgian students. Regarding the vertical individualism Bulgarian students showed the highest score and lowest was found for Belgian students. This particular factor showed the strongest differences between countries (power and status seeking). Horizontal collectivism was highest among Lithuanian students and lowest among Bulgarian students and vertical collectivism was highest among Lithuanian students and lowest among Belgian students. The highest score of emigration self-efficacy was reported by Lithuanian students the lowest by Belgian students.

<b>Emigration intentions:</b>	
Are you planning to leave your country after you finish your university study?	
Total sample	1223(100.0%)
1. 0 - Not planning to emigrate	317 (25.9%)
2. I don't know, I have not thought about it	84 (6.9%)
3. I don't know, I have not decided	451 (36.9%)
4. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period up to 6 months	49(4.0%)
5. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period from 6 to 12 months	76(6.2%)
6. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than a year	112(9.2%)
7. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than 5 years	36(2.9%)
8. Yes, I am planning to leave permanently	98 (8.4%)

Tab. 1: Descriptive characteristics of emigration intentions

<b>Dichotomized emigration intentions:</b>		
	0 not planning to leave	1 planning to leave for the period of one year or longer
Total sample	317 (25.9%)	246 (43.7 %)
Belgium	51 (23.8%)	27 (12.6%)
Bulgaria	141(34.2%)	79 (19.2%)
Hungary	35 (28.9%)	35 (28.9%)
Lithuania	15 (9.3%)	41 (25.3%)
Slovakia	75 (23.9%)	64 (20.4%)

Tab. 2: Descriptive characteristics and ANOVA of the explored variables for the five countries

	country	N	Mean	SD	F	Post hoc test
STF	BE	76	16.61	4.50	0.61	
	BG	220	15.91	5.20		
	HU	70	15.72	4.63		
	LT	56	16.41	4.69		
	SK	139	16.44	4.34		
HI	BE	78	19.53	3.50	3.84**	BE -HU* HU -LI*
	BG	220	20.51	5.42		
	HU	70	22.17	3.63		
	LT	56	19.54	4.45		
	SK	139	20.55	4.11		

VI	BE	78	13.80	5.33	38.23***	SK –BE*
	BG	220	20.80	5.31		SK –BU***
	HU	70	17.07	5.24		BE –BU***
	LT	56	16.48	3.89		BE –HU**
	SK	139	16.11	4.51		BE –LI*
HC	BE	78	18.85	3.69	21.12***	BU –U***
	BG	220	17.77	5.11		BU –LI***
	HU	70	20.70	4.80		SK –BE*
	LT	56	22.79	3.47		SK –BU***
	SK	139	20.81	3.60		BE –LI***
VC	BE	78	14.73	5.32	17.78***	BU –U***
	BG	220	19.79	5.69		BU –LI***
	HU	70	18.34	5.69		SK –BE***
	LT	56	21.84	4.76		BE –BU***
	SK	139	19.62	5.12		BE –HU**
SEF	BE	78	6.64	2.41	8.62***	BE –LI ***
	BG	220	7.15	2.23		HU –LI*
	HU	70	7.23	2.21		SK –BE**
	LT	56	8.41	1.82		SK –BU*
	SK	139	8.01	2.22		BE –LI***
						BU –LI*

### Regression analyses

To study the hypothesis about the associations between long-term emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and several intrapersonal factors, binary logistic regression (Table 3) with the enter method for the emigration intentions with the independent variables: life satisfaction (SWL), horizontal individualism (HI), horizontal collectivism (HC), vertical individualism (VI), vertical collectivism (VC) dimensions and emigration self – efficacy (SEF) controlling for the countries and gender has been conducted (Table 3). The regression model explained between 29-38 percent of the variance. Those students with higher self–efficacy (OR 1.44; 95% CI 1.33-1.56) also with higher HI (OR 1.05; 95% CI 1.00-1.11) were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and HI, and those with lower satisfaction (OR 0.85; 95% CI 0.80-0.89) and vertical collectivism VC (OR 0.95; 95% CI 0.91-0.998) were more likely to have long-term emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and vertical collectivism.

				95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
SWL	.169	.000	.845	.804	.887
HI	.052	.049	1.054	1.000	1.110
VI	.005	.802	.995	.954	1.037
HC	.041	.097	1.042	.993	1.095
VC	.048	.026	.953	.914	.994
SEF	.362	.000	1.436	1.324	1.557

Tab. 3: Binary logistic regression on emigration intentions

Note:  $R^2 = 0.285$  (Cox & Schnell),  $R^2 = 0.383$  (Nagelkerke), Chi-square = 188,554 (df=8,  $p < 0.001$ ), analysis was controlled for country and gender

### Mediational analyses

Based on the existing contradictory findings regarding the relationship between emigration intentions and internalized cultural values a mediational role of self-efficacy has been hypothesized in this relationship. The results of this mediation analysis with a dichotomized emigration intentions variable and controlling for gender and country is presented in Figure 1.

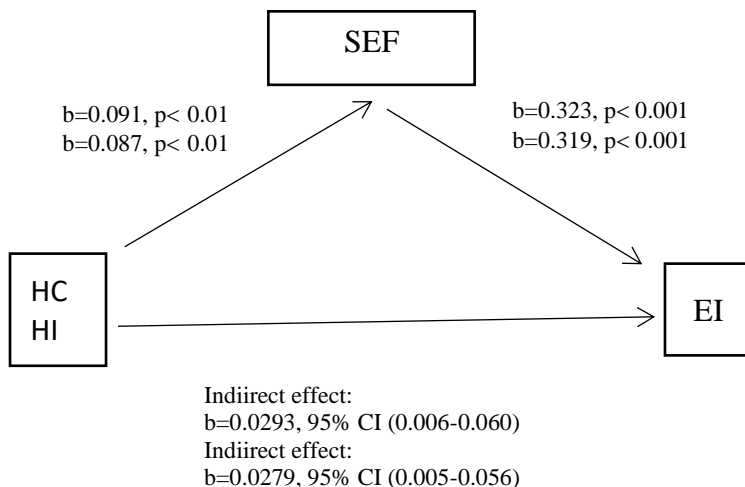


Fig. 1: Self-efficacy (SEF) as a moderator between internalized cultural values (HC, HI) and emigration intentions (EI) controlling for gender and country

The results of the mediation analyses confirm the hypothesis that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between HC and long-term emigration intentions and

also between HI and long-term emigration intentions. As can be seen in Figure 1, HC and also HI have positive associations with emigration self-efficacy and self-efficacy has also significant positive associations with emigration. HC and HI have nonsignificant direct effect on emigration intentions. The mediating role of emigration self-efficacy in the relationship between HC and also HI and emigration intentions was found to be significant. Mediation analyzes were conducted while controlling for gender and country.

## Discussion

The first aim of the present study was to explore the associations between long-term emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and several factors (life satisfaction, vertical collectivism, horizontal collectivism, vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, emigration self-efficacy).

Descriptive data for emigration intentions for university students of five countries provided and overview of emigration intentions of students from the five selected countries. An intention to leave for a period longer than a year, five years or permanently was reported by 20.1% of students in the five studied countries. This corresponds with the European trend of students leaving abroad after finishing their university study (van Mol & de Valk, 2016; Wilken & Dalbert, 2017; Williams et al., 2017). The highest percentage was reported by students from Hungary (28.9%), Lithuania (25.3%), the lowest by student from Belgium (12.6%). Interestingly, this reflects the order of the countries with respect to reported happiness of young people (Glatzer, 2019).

Logistic regression controlled for country and gender confirmed that students with higher self-efficacy and horizontal individualism were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and horizontal individualism and those with lower satisfaction and vertical collectivism were more likely to have long-term emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and vertical collectivism. The regression model explained 28.5% -38.3% of variance.

The results regarding the importance of life satisfaction as a factor which is negatively related to the intention to migrate abroad was confirmed. These results are in line with the extensive research conducted by Diener et al. (2017) and Steel, Dunlavy, Harding et al. (2017) with a special attention to affluence history of migration, education and gender of emigrants. The authors have found support for the finding that lower migration intentions, aspirations, desires and emigration plans were associated with high level of life satisfaction. This was present regardless of the level of affluence of countries, diversity of the continents, states and regions and cultural differences between countries. Similar findings were

obtained in Latin America by Graham and Markowitz (2011), Chindarkar (2014) and in central and Eastern Europe by Otrachshenko and Popova (2014).

A further aim was to address the cultural aspects and explore associations between horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism and emigration intentions of university students. Vertical collectivism was associated with long-term emigration intentions negatively and horizontal individualism was associated with long-term emigration intentions positively. Vertical collectivism is associated with a strong group identity. Individuals high in vertical collectivism are often willing to give up their own personal goals in the interest of the goals of a group which may be often reflected in strong ties with the family background. This was shown in the association between home satisfaction which was negatively associated with emigration intentions. Furthermore, the findings based on the Push-Pull model inspired by migration theory have shown that the pull factors of independence, autonomy, taking advantage of opportunities, government support, attitudes and self-reliance pose a significant influence of the future and career plans of young people (Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, & Nwaizugbo, 2018). Empirical support for the importance of the individualistic orientation has been provided by a number of studies which clearly shows positive associations of migration intentions with individualism and negative associations with collectivism (Arapaci, Baloghu, & Kesici, 2018; Krassner et al., 2017; Bačíková, 2017).

This research study provides further support for the findings of other authors regarding the dominant role of self-efficacy in the migration process (Hao et al. 2016; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2012). In particular, it is related to intentions directly as has been reported previously (Weerasinghe & Kumar, 2014) and this has been further supported by the finding that migrants show higher levels of self-efficacy in comparison with normal population.

Another aim of this study was to analyze the mediating role or self-efficacy in the relationship between dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions. Results of the mediation analyses confirmed the significance of emigration self-efficacy in the role of a mediator in this relationship but only for horizontal dimensions. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between HC and long-term emigration intentions and also between HI and long-term emigration. On a horizontal dimension, individuals tend to emphasize equality, cooperation (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) no matter whether they incline to individualistic or collectivistic values. On the other hand, self-sufficiency, self-confidence and independence are also factors as a part of the horizontal dimensions that help move towards emigration intentions and self-efficiency as a mediator supports them. This probably is important factor in the decision process about emigration intentions. Mediation role of self-efficacy was confirmed

between employee's psychological empowerment and proactive behaviors Huang et al. (2017), between intrapersonal factors and self-control (Zhang et al., 2019). Finally, self-efficacy is considered to be one of the main resources for coping with stress with respect to various types of behavior (Golestan, Hamsan, & Abdullah, 2015). Specifically, regarding migration self-efficacy, it has been found to be an important source of coping with stress resulting from moving to a different country. The importance of emigration self-efficacy for emigration intentions has been reported by Gajdošová and Orosová (2019), Lee and Young (2018).

Mediation analysis in this study were carried out with controlling for gender, country so self-efficacy has proved be a universal factor (direct and also non direct) in our study.

An important limitation of this study is the sample. Particularly, university students are a specific group of young people and the findings cannot be generalized on the whole population. Participation in the research might have been influenced by actually having emigration intentions and so online data collection might have been more attractive for this part of the population posing thus selection bias. Variables used in the analysis measured intentions to leave permanently and not the actual behavior and even though intentions might have a considerable predictive value regarding actual migration this remains a considerable shortcoming (Tjaden, Auer, & Laczko, 2019). The model used in this study focused exclusively on intrapersonal variables and other variables such as economic factors could have increased the predictive value of the model. This study used a cross-sectional design and further research could apply a longitudinal design and focus more on the process of changes in the intentions of an individual during the studies and analyzed the factors which influence this process.

## **Conclusions**

The selected intrapersonal factors life satisfaction, internalized cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, emigration self-efficacy, and internal mechanisms addressed via mediation role offer further explanations of emigration intentions of emigration of university students. The importance of self-efficacy and horizontal individualism has been shown in regard to emigration intentions. Life satisfaction and vertical collectivism are related to emigration intentions negatively. A key role of self-efficacy has been shown in relation to long-term emigration. The understanding of the direct role of self-efficacy and its mediating role between horizontal dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions shed light on its previously reported ambivalent role in relation to long-term emigration intentions. This study also contributes to the literature by its international design incorporating countries from the former communist block (Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania) and one of country with



a higher satisfaction of citizens (Belgium) from the point of view emigration of highly educated young population. This study has confirmed the complexity of migration and showed the relevance of factors such as life satisfaction, cultural values, self-efficacy and has contributed to the knowledge of their mechanisms.

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## **The perspectives of parents in relation to the concepts of the quality of pre-school education. Analysis of research discourse**

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### **Abstract**

This theoretical study analyses interpretation of quality in pre-school education with regard to the position of the children's parents. This text is supported by research papers, mostly from the last two decades, and is based on three main sub-topics. The importance and benefits of systematic pre-school education for the child and the economic development of society is initially discussed. High-quality pre-school education for children gives them a strong start in their educational career and investment into effective education during the pre-school age provides a social and economic return to the whole of society. The following section defines the term quality and its interpretation in relation to education. Quality is interpreted through structure and process, the multi-dimensionality of quality and the objectiveness and subjectiveness of the interpretation of the quality of pre-school education are reflected. The interesting but undervalued position of parents, the perspectives of which are elaborated on in subsequent passages, appear in these concepts. This paper comes to two main conclusions. The first is that the quality of education is a multi-dimensional, variable and difficult to define concept. The second is that, although the status of parents in relation to pre-school education is strong, it is not adequately taken into consideration during definition of quality. When evaluating quality the perspective of the parents is only utilised to a limited degree, because it usually has different semantics to evaluation by experts.

**Keywords:** quality of education, perspective of parents, pre-school education, conceptualisation

### **Introduction**

The basis of this paper is clarification and interpretation of relations originating at the intersection of three phenomena: quality in education, pre-school education and parents of children as consumers of this education. We share opinions supporting the importance of pre-school education, which have resonated in pedagogic discourse during the last decades. The increasingly stronger voices of all those who are involved in education of children before they

start primary school are based on a growing amount of empiric evidence that systematic institutional education of children of pre-school age is effective for both society in its more distant perspectives and also for the further development of each individual child. The parents of the children always appear in context concerning any analyses in relation to pre-school education, but they are only minimally considered important actors on a declarative level.

Of-often-repeated statements of the high rate of return on pre-school education do not always contain the adjective “high-quality”. We consider it important to mention that the benefits of pre-school education must be clearly linked to its quality, which means clarification of this concept and its overlap into practice. Regardless of whether we mean a high-quality educational system, quality in pre-school education, high-quality pre-school education, a high-quality nursery school or other pre-school facility. The objective of this paper is to seek answers to the question of what status the perspectives of parents have in these concepts on the background of a discussion of the concepts of quality of pre-school education.

For this, we utilise the synergy originating from a combination of analysis of existing discourse about the quality of pre-school education and the parents’ position in this and subsequent synthesis resulting in conclusions about how this parental voice can be defined. Within the terms of analysis, we therefore reveal the interpretation of quality in pre-school education, and we endeavour to reflect various properties of phenomena and elements, which represent it. This particularly includes parent culture (parent cultures are perceived here in the broader context as the life styles of parents with children of pre-school age, which includes their convictions, attitude, shared values, preferences and the nature of the family’s social-cultural background, which they create. We also interpret it as a structure of values in which they move, which they utilise and mediate to their children). We do not consider synthesis here to be simple assembly of partial elements into a whole, this is an operation based on revealing new relations and rules in regard to the issue in question. Combination of the outputs of this analytical approach leads to the conclusion that the voice and status of parents is strong, but is only utilised to a limited degree in the reality of education when evaluating quality. The final synthesis should form a basis for correct decisions, of which one could also more or less purposefully focus on the perspectives of parents and their children in relation to the actual quality of education.

### **1 The importance of pre-school education**

Pre-school education is the first experience many children have with other children of a similar age and adults who are not family members. There are not only numerous benefits to this social experience, but children can also play, learn new things, develop and acquire a number of skills and abilities (OECD, 2019) at

nursery school at a time when brain development accelerates. The experience acquired during this period is beneficial in various areas of their further development (Herschkowitz et al., 2002). Attention devoted to pre-school education should also be based on the fact that, apart from experience that pre-school education is the first important phase in the development of every child, it is also a very critical phase with regard to overall development and lifelong learning, which is also very closely linked to its quality (Ugaste et al., 2013). The reflected criticality of this child development phase is therefore interlinked with the child's opportunity to develop and potentialities with regard to requirements for the quality of the provided care and education.

High-quality pre-school education provides children with a strong start on the path leading to better results in learning and in their further educational career. This is the perspective of economists who were the first to process this scheme. It states that investment into early childhood education is a cohesive strategy for supporting economic growth, because the economic future depends on establishment of an educated and qualified workforce (Heckman, 2013). It even considers when it is necessary to begin this education so that this support is as effective as possible. According to economic analyses, the highest rate of return on early education is generated from investments that are made as soon as possible, ideally from birth to five years of age. To achieve the biggest possible effect, the start of early education at the age of three or four appears too late (Heckman, 2013).

These facts are also reflected by the EU or OECD. According to the European Union Commission (2006, p. 3) pre-school education "has the highest rate of return out of the entire continuum of lifelong education, particularly for children from disadvantaged environments, furthermore, the results of this investment increase over time." The effort to identify children who deviate from the mainstream is wholly evident, and crucial according to some authors, in discussions of the importance and quality of pre-school education. According to Ball (1994), good pre-school education leads to immediate and permanent social and educational advantages for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged environments. This is why investments into high-quality and effective education provide a useful social and economic return to individuals and all of society.

It would be naive to believe that pre-school education is an indisputable guarantee of the optimum development of every child. The educational reality of pre-school facilities does not always contain elements of a high-quality educational environment. In addition, the intention to individualise approaches to each child, depending on its dispositions, possibilities and the social-cultural conditions within the families from which the child come to pre-school education seems to be extremely demanding. Many variables enter here, such as the general



context of the educational system and the specific conditions in which the pre-school educational programme is to be realized (Pianta et al., 2009)

Even though economists repeatedly state that all the factors that contribute to a child's personal success cannot be balanced, it is possible to make smart investments into remedying the differences that cause major and persisting issues endangering the success of individuals (Heckman, 2011). Again, we work with a clear equation here – fixing problems is more expensive than preventing them. Gaps in skills that play an important role when achieving results in adult age, appear very soon across social-economic groups. It seems that these occur before the beginning of formal education and persist until adult age.

It is the interpreted quality of pre-school education, its programme or the school in which it is realised, which may qualify the discussed positive effects. For example, Danish children from disadvantaged environments later had better educational outcomes thanks to pre-school support programmes, in the USA<sup>1</sup> these successes were not always registered (Epsing-Andersen et al., 2012). There are also arguments that effects of intensive support for the development of pre-school children may soon disappear (Claessens, & Garrett, 2014).

The findings of many studies demonstrate the benefits of high-quality pre-school education for the child's further education and learning. (Kaiser, & Bauer, 2017; Gordon et al., 2015; Barnett et al., 2012). However, we repeat that the positive impact of pre-school education depends on its quality (Janta et al., 2016; Melhuish et al. 2015; Slot, 2017; Sylva et al., 2014). Although discussions consider

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<sup>1</sup> There is a great tradition of supporting education during pre-school age in the direction of children and families from disadvantaged environments in the USA. In addition to the well-known Head Start programmes, this also includes for example *Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention* (Masse et al., 2002). *The High Scope Perry Preschool Program*, which originated as a research study focusing on the issue of whether access to high-quality education can have a positive impact on children of pre-school age and which reflects the issues of the quality of education, is worth a special mention. It is also useful that the programme has its own quality indicators (<https://highscope.org/our-practice/child-assessment/pqa/>) and currently contributes to establishment of capacity for permanently positive results and assurance of support for each teacher and the results each child. The programme supports local, state and national policies in the field of pre-school education. According to this programme children to whom high-quality pre-school education was provided are better prepared for primary school, will be more emotionally mature and more independent, they have a higher study success rate, more stable employment and higher wages, create a more stable home environment for their children and are more involved civically (High Scope, 2020). The project also documents a high rate of return on investment into pre-school education.



pre-school education for the child's development to be the most important, (Heckman, 2011; Litjens, & Taguma, 2010; Knudsen et al., 2006), it is the "pre-school education sector, which we know least about", and what probably disrupts this harmony most is that the provision of pre-school education is often fragmented, poorly regulated and non-unified (OECD, 2019, s. 3), therefore lower quality.

## 2 Quality in education – definition of the issue

In general, quality concerning education can be viewed as "the level of production created by an individual school, set of schools of a specific level, or type or the entire educational system of a country" (Průcha, Walterová, & Mareš, 2009, p. 111).

Discussions concerning the quality of education are often confusing, due to a lack of comprehensibility or common understanding of what the term *quality* actually means (Tawil et al., 2014). The term *quality* evokes a seemingly intuitive understanding. However, there is no single definition or approach, but rather a diverse conceptualisation and substantially varied approaches, of which each is based on different assumptions. Various evaluators (students, parents, teacher, employers, auditors) perceive quality from different perspectives, but uniformly anchored on the platform that "high-quality is positive". This is understandable if we base our knowledge on the meaning of the Latin *qualitas*, which identifies a property or quality. The concept of quality is framed in ordinary communication using adjectives, or more precisely identification of something as high-quality, or good, optimal, suitable, fulfilling several requirements.<sup>2</sup>

On one hand, quality in education is essential (Jirečková, 2011), on the other hand, it requires courage to open this topic (Janík, 2010). It is in the interests of the whole of society, not only the providers or consumers of education. It also concerns a relative concept in relation to services provided by schools. In general, high-quality educational programmes are based on standards in several areas – academic, social-emotional and physical. Quality in education is subsequently diversified into interpretations anchored in relative concepts – quality of education or quality of (nursery) schools, subsequent quality of education, quality of teachers, etc. Quality (of educational processes, educational institutions, educational systems), or quality in education "is considered the desirable (optimum) level of functioning or production of these processes or institutions, which may be prescribed by specific requirements (e.g. educational standards) and may therefore be objectively measured and evaluated" (Průcha, 1996, p. 27).

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<sup>2</sup> A very good analysis of the meanings and methods of using the concept of quality in education in the Czech interpretation, is available from Janíka et al. (2013).

Quality in education leads into the quality of schools. Some authors perceive the quality of a school more from a managerial perspective, when the quality of operation of the organisation, which is assured especially by effective management within the meaning of the school's philosophy, is pursued. For instance, Spílková (2005) includes a high-quality system of school management, a high-quality teaching staff, a predominating progressive didactic concept and the school's authenticity, among the criteria for the quality of a school. Other definitions emphasise consideration of the individual needs of children and inspection and assessment of the school's steps to fulfil its vision. The aforementioned authenticity of the school resonates more in the next interpretation, according to which a high-quality school "regularly establishes, takes into consideration and endeavours to fulfil various expectations (and to a specific degree also the wishes and needs) of its customers and endeavours, within the terms of its potential, to keep the matter in a good state and make overall improvements by regularly fulfilling the goals it has set, however, everything is managed using common sense: a high-quality school therefore meaningfully realises auto-evaluation processes, it is a learning school" (Vašátková, 2006, p. 25).

Just as parents interpret the quality of a school and education differently, the teachers and the heads of schools are also not unified in their opinions. The heads themselves state that quality is a fairly broad term and on what level of the school's quality its definition and evaluation ranges on must be minimally qualified. Some heads consider this to be the children's and pupils' outputs, level of mediated motivation for performance by children, others how current the educational content is in regard to the needs of society, the ability to arrange equal opportunities etc. (Štefflová, 2011). The term quality is difficult to uniformly grasp from both the aspect of practice and theory, however this is helped by definition of the areas in which quality is to be evaluated. Quality is often defined through the perspective of standards, which are determined by experts, potentially other involved parties. Experts endeavour to interpret the criteria for the quality of education and educational institutions consistently, problems appear in the case of others who are involved in the education process.

Research by Dahlberg, & Moss (2007) resulted in the following important findings in regard to the aspects from which quality is viewed:

- a) the process of definition of quality eliminated a wide range of involved parties and is based mainly on a small group of experts,
- b) quality is a subjective, value-orientated, relative and dynamic concept, which is why various perspectives must be taken into consideration during its definition.

### 3 Interpretation of the quality of pre-school education

On the basis of arguments, according to which interpretation of quality is polymorphous, difficult to define and interpret by various involved parties, it was proposed that the quality of education should be evaluated from various perspectives, particularly with regard to the goal of creating a global picture about pre-school education programmes (Rentzou, & Sakellariou, 2013).

#### *Interpretation of quality through structure and process*

The question of what is measured and reported as quality in education is asked by many experts. For instance Slot et al (Slot et al., 2015) refers to popular classification based on a concept through *structure* and *process*. Diagram 1 shows the relationship between structural quality, process quality and the child's development and learning in pre-school education, (Slot, 2017). Both layers of quality overlap, conditioning the child's development and learning.

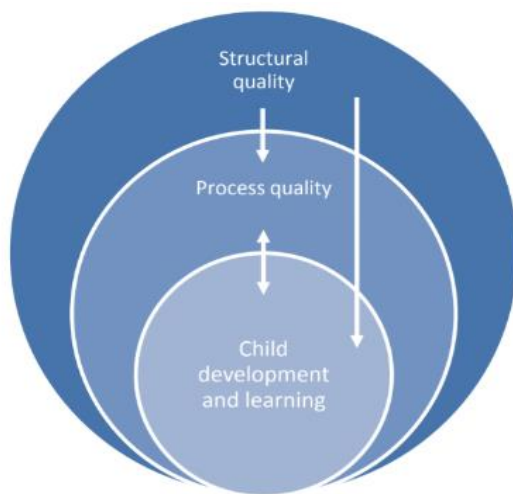


Fig. 1: Relationship between structural quality, process quality and child learning and development in pre-school education (Slot, 2017, in OECD, 2018, p. 26).

Structural elements independently integrate variables, which indirectly influence child experience during pre-school age, for instance the number of children in a class, the ratio of teachers to children and the education of the teachers. The structural standards based on these are fairly easy to configure and observe by both inspections and parents (for instance sufficient space for children, the quantity and nature of didactic equipment, etc.). Authors Litjens and Taguma (2010) describe structural quality as inputs into process characteristics, which create a framework for the processes that children experience. An environment

considered structurally high-quality has a small group, a teacher with high qualifications, meets hygienic standards and adheres to the curriculum. This quality is usually measured by human, financial and time resources (Janta et al., 2016).

The quality of the *process* concerns dependent variables related to child experience within the terms of education. It refers to aspects of the environment in the class, which the children experience – their interactions with teachers and peers, the materials and activities they have available (Harrist et al., 2007). These aspects affect child experience, comfort and development (Litjens & Taguma, 2010). This type of quality is therefore measured by processes, which focus on relations between employees and children, communication with families and broader community support services. An environment considered high-quality in the field of the process is distinguished by frequent interactions between the child and employees, a stimulating curriculum and effective pedagogic procedures (Janta et al., 2016). The relationship between structural quality indicators, process quality indicators and the results of pre-school education is shown in Figure 2.

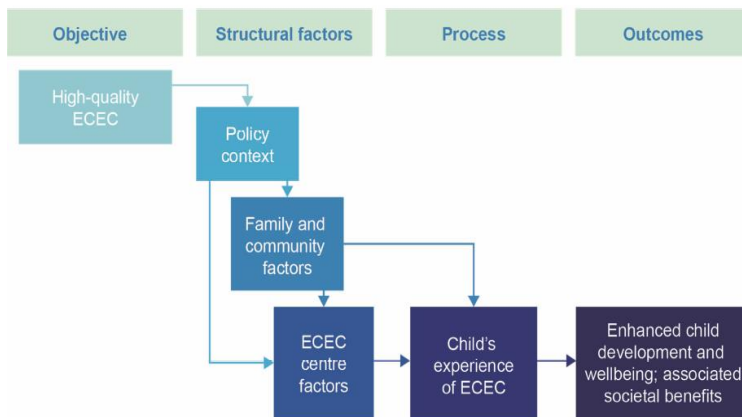


Fig. 2: Quality in relation to structural indicators – process indicators – results of education (Janta, 2016)

Basically, the structure and the process are important in relation to quality. They are mutually interconnected, which is why seeking ways to make the ideal high-quality preschool education into reality emphasises the importance of both. According to research, the process aspects, or the quality of interactions into which they enter with employees and other children in pre-schools on a daily basis (OECD, 2019), are the main contributors to the learning, development and good

life perspectives of children. On the other hand, several factors are identified in the results that may affect the quality of these interactions, from preschool employees and the extent to which they are educated, trained and motivated to work with children, through elements of the class, playrooms environment, such as the number of children and staff, to mechanisms for monitoring configuration of pre-school education (OECD, 2019). However, the results are not completely consistent with regard to which structure and process properties are determinative or crucial for quality.

Relations between structure and process quality in pre-school education have been examined, but with fairly inconsistent findings (Pianta et al, 2005). One potential explanation is that structural characteristics may be more indirectly linked to children's results because they provide a basis for the quality of the process as a primary mechanism for child learning and development. However, studies directly focusing on the indirect impact of structural quality on child learning and development are limiting and demonstrate a mixed formula of associations (Anders, 2015).

This phenomenon is also demonstrated by research carried out in Sweden, Austria and Bulgaria, where preschool teachers were asked about their viewpoint of quality. Researchers Brodin et al. (2015) emphasise interesting findings with regard to the varying concept of quality, despite the limited research sample (3 countries). They state the teacher's approach and pedagogic planning, which depend significantly on the teacher, while class size or the number of teachers, is outside their competence. In general, this study indicates that the teachers consider both structural and process elements to be important for high-quality pre-school education, but to different levels.

Despite these findings, structural factors were preferred as a crucial strategy for improving the quality of early education programmes and, ultimately, for child learning and development. For instance, in many countries increasing the qualification requirements placed on employees is a chosen quality strategy (Early et al., 2007).<sup>3</sup> Another example is the situation in the USA, where quality criteria, which also fulfil the character of the aforementioned structural elements, are generated. The authors (Lewis, & Burd-Sharps, 2011) give unified standards for education, bachelor's education for teachers, a maximum number of children in a class – 20 (ratio between staff and children 1:10), one nutritional meal a day,

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<sup>3</sup> In the Czech Republic for instance, there is emphasis on increasing the qualification of teachers to a university level, on the level of a declaration in strategic documents, specifically in the *Strategy of the educational policy of the Czech Republic until 2020* and its supplementary document *Long-term plan for education and development of the educational system in the Czech Republic for the 2015-2020 period*.

guaranteed healthcare, teacher's visits to the child's family, further education of teachers in the scope of at least 15 hours a year, etc. as criteria.

### *Quality as a multi-dimensional construct*

Research of the quality of education is not a new topic; on the contrary, since the 1960s, this topic of research has drawn the attention of many scientists and has undergone various phases (Ceglowski, 2004; Melhuish, 2001). However, its concept differs. In this early research quality was perceived more as a luxury than a necessity according to Kagana et al. (1996). Today quality is much more important. In addition, although research of issues concerning the quality of care and education of children of pre-school age quickly spread, it also developed in many other aspects. Awareness of its context, measurement, complexity, plurality and subjectivity has increased (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

It is evident from just a few of the already discussed definitions that authors differ in the depth and also in the breadth of their view of quality. Some of them (Iruka, & Forry, 2018; Pianta et al., 2002, tc.) therefore call quality as a multi-dimensional construct.

Description of quality, as a multi-dimensional complex construct, which includes the structure of pre-school education, processes and practice in setting of pre-school education and its results, can be found in the approaches of the European Commission (2014). This conceptualisation covers global aspects (such as a pleasant climate or the appropriate approach to children) and specific stimulation from the domain aspect in areas such as literary, mathematical and natural science pre-literacy (Anders, 2015).

Definition of the dimensions of quality (as a multi-dimensional construct) is therefore considered crucial for revealing the basis of quality. These dimensions can be specific for each kindergarten and usually also exceed the framework of the determined quality criteria, particularly when here, in the Czech Republic, nursery schools participate in determining the content of education when creating school educational programmes for example.

The dimension of quality includes the relationship between the teacher and the child, the activities and materials related to educational activities, organisation and management of childcare and the relationship between the family and teacher. Evaluation of the dimensions of quality can differ depending on the type of programme or the characteristics of the providers (Iruka, & Forry, 2018). Several studies investigated relations between the dimensions of quality and the children's results (Burchinal, 2018; Early et al. 2007; Pianta et al., 2002). However, studies focusing on the investigation of the multi-dimensionality of quality pattern are however unique. Understanding qualitative patterns across various dimensions

helps during professional development of teachers and during initiatives focusing on increasing quality.

The basis for a multi-dimensional understanding of quality is the educational environment, in which children are involved in developmentally suitable, stimulating and language-enriching activities, which offer opportunity for play and discovery, use of language, problem-solving and social interaction (European Commission, 2014; OECD, 2018). Definition of the dimensions of quality and its key indicators, which exceed those that are usually regulated, seems to be unavoidable for improvement of quality.

### *Objectivity and subjectivity in the interpretation of quality*

As already mentioned, quality in education is a very complicated construct, the concepts of which are very diverse and in relation to which development can also be recognised. Alasuutari (2014) states that re-conceptualisation of the term quality must be considered, because, according to him, quality is a constantly changing process leading to a specific state. Moss (2016) considers whether quality is essential or an option. Various studies conceive quality in different ways. Even the word *quality* is highly disputable, it can be said that it is a subjective concept, which depends on context and enables various perspectives and modifications over time.

Definition of quality depends on the philosophy and strategy of the national curriculum, social-political priorities, cultural aspects and qualitative elements, such as pedagogic, financial or physical decisions. There is therefore no single concept or method for determining quality. Quality as a concept is not defined in the field of education and is problematic. In education, quality is linked to subjective evaluation, the individual concepts of quality by its participants are expressed in it. This interpretation of quality is understood to mean the participants' achieved degree of satisfaction with the school's activity. Quality can also be evaluated from the objective aspect. According to this aspect, quality is determined without the context of variables. An objective perspective of quality is constructed through experts and their objectivity (Parrila, 2002). In the case of pre-school education, the subjective evaluation model takes into consideration the experience of teachers, parents and children and their satisfaction with pre-school education. The objective model does not take into consideration the opinions of participants of pre-school education, but rather verifies, uses indicators to measure, quality from the viewpoint of experts.

Quality is also assessed from the inter-subjective aspect, which means that quality is normally focused on all participants and is also part of the character of mutual relations between individuals. The inter-subjective viewpoint of quality is

described by teachers', parents' and children's subjective concepts of pre-school education.

Both the objective and subjective approach is emphasised for complex interpretation of quality. Quality of education is an important factor for improving child learning, particularly in the field of literacy, mathematics, scientific thinking and social development (Sylva et al., 2006).

Katz (1999), who acknowledges that various people can define quality variously, proposed five perspectives for evaluating quality, which reflect this. This concerns:

1. "top-down perspective", which is also called the perspective of research workers – professionals, and which evaluates the characteristics of the programme, how it is viewed "from above" by persons responsible for the programme;
2. "bottom-up perspective", which endeavours to determine how the programme is actually experienced by the involved children;
3. "outside-inside perspective", which assesses how the programme is experienced by families;
4. "inside perspective", which considers how the programme is experienced by its employees;
5. "outside perspective", which takes into consideration how the programme serves the community and broader society.

Although Katz (1999) proposed this concept for evaluating quality 20 years ago, it remains inspirational. New information sources show that research focuses on the "perspective from above" in most cases, the remaining four perspectives are studied quite rarely and the child perspective absolutely minimally (Rentzou, 2011). Katz's third perspective, which takes into consideration how parents perceive the quality of education, is also neglected. We will focus on this below.

#### **4 Parents in relation to definition of the quality of pre-school education**

Quality in pre-school education is indisputably interlinked with parent culture. The status of parents appears in every approach or concept of quality. We perceive parents in the process aspect of quality, they provide a subjective viewpoint during assessment and therefore also during definition of quality, they are indisputably protagonists of some dimensions of quality as a multi-dimensional construct, the parental perspective ("outside-inside" according to Katz, 1999) also helps significantly during efforts to clarify it more complexly. Whatever the diversity in interpreting the concept of quality in pre-school education, parents of children always appear in it in some context. Findings from investigation of quality from a perspective other than from the viewpoint of experts contribute to establishment



of the meanings that are related to important and complex interpretation of quality in education.

Definition of the interpretation of quality depends on the expectations of the members of the social group (parents, children/pupils and teachers) who are involved in education. Various groups of respondents often present factors that determine quality ambivalently, because these respondents usually link them to various, often subjectively oriented needs and expectations.

Parents also have various expectations of pre-school facilities, which include provision of a high-quality education (Sevinc, 2006). One definition of a high-quality school is understood through establishment, consideration and fulfilment of the various expectations and needs of children and parents (e.g. Vašátková, 2006; Krnjaja, & Pavlović-Breneselović, 2013).

Parents who expect the highest-quality education provided by qualified pedagogues are identified as “client parents” (Rabušicová, et al., 2004). However, these expectations are not always unified (Barkauskaitė et al., 2013) and often differ depending on the level of achieved education, social-economic status and different demographic data concerning the parents (Bayrak, & Koksall, 2017; Jacobson, & Engelbrecht, 2000). These are different cultures, which parents create and endeavour to transfer to the kindergarten through their requirements.<sup>4</sup> Although these expectations or requirements may differ from the school itself, they are connected by a single vision, this being to ensure optimum development of the children (Rabušicová et al., 2004). If the parents do not find the relevant response to their visions, requirements or expectations in the school, they seek other suitable schools or “abandon the system” and establish their own parental schools, or choose to educate their children at home.

Parents are key factors during selection of schools, including kindergartens. Their subjective viewpoint of the quality of a school is crucial during selection of the school, across all levels of education. The subjective criteria of the quality of schools also depends on the types of schools that the children attend or will attend. For parents, the quality of a school is usually reflected during its selection in their expectations, which reflect their varied perspectives and personal preferences,

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<sup>4</sup> We have experience with the academic parent culture, parents whose children attend the University kindergarten. The kindergarten is established by a public university and operates as a corporate private school. One of the authors is in the School Board and has also executed research in it. According to the results of this research the parents mirror not only their social-economic status, but also the environment in which they are professionally active, in their expectations to a specific degree. They are capable of very clearly declaring their requirements for the professionalism of its teachers, the offer of above-standard school activities, the stimulation and diversity of educational activities, etc. (Majerčíková, 2019).

closely linked to the prosperity of their child, support of its potential, maximization of its development, registration of potential problems concerning the child, etc.<sup>5</sup> The group of researchers around Glenn-Applegate (et al., 2016) examined the factors that play a role when parents select a nursery school. These factors were also compared to the quality of education in individual classes. Findings showed that when selecting a kindergarten, parents preferred the interpersonal characteristics of the teacher and the safety of the kindergarten. Parents also preferred process elements of quality over structural elements. No link was found between the factors for selection of kindergartens and the quality of the classes in which the children were enrolled.

This means that, for parents, quality is more personality orientated – linked to the teaching staff, their education, their positive relationship with the children and their experience with them. In relation to the school, quality is interpreted in relation to an age-appropriate programme, the quality of the physical and social environment or the overall cleanliness of the environment.

As interpreted by the parents, quality is formed on the basis of their expectations (Krnjaja, & Pavlović-Breneselović, 2013). Various social values are reflected during contextualisation of quality in education. This is why it is initially important to ask questions about how we understand the nature of childhood, what attitudes and skills we want to promote in the children or who is actually responsible for the upbringing of children, etc. The answers to these questions may be culturally or politically qualified (Malovic et al., 2017). Research by authors around Brodin et al. (2015) found a difference in the understanding of quality of kindergartens by parents, in relation to social, cultural and financial questions, depending on the social situation in individual countries. Quality is therefore determined by the society in which the parents live and their personal experience and concepts of education and can be differentiated from the perspectives of experts in the field of education (Malovic et al., 2017).

A comparison of these perspectives is suggested. Interesting research executed by Rentzou, & Sakellariou (2013), when evaluation of the quality of pre-school education from the perspective of parents and researchers is compared, provides a specific depiction of this issue. A correlation analysis showed that parents assessed the quality of care and education as higher-quality compared to researchers. It was also found that the age and level of education of the parents correlates with their assessment. In this case the results of research again confirm that the quality of pre-school education is a relative concept. They also emphasise

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<sup>5</sup> We consider the testimonies of parents, available at <https://www.parenthub.co.uk/what-do-parents-expect-from-schools/>, inspirational.

the need to take into consideration the perspectives of all the involved parties (parents, children and teachers) during attempts to define and evaluate quality.

Parrila (2002) presents a finding regarding the different perspectives of parents and staff of kindergartens in fields such as the personality and professionalism of employees, the function and functionality, the goals of the kindergartens and the impact of pre-school education.

Tauriainen (2000) analysed the concept of the quality of kindergartens of employees, parents and even the children. The results showed that the common principal of good quality is a small group of children and employees, an emotionally pleasant environment and improvement of self-motivating behaviour in children. The results also confirmed that employees, parents and children perceive quality in their own ways. Employees had a very general concept of quality, which concentrated on managing activities and the smooth progress of the daily routine, for parents the individual needs of their children and social interaction within the group played a role and for the children themselves the aspects of cooperation with adults and freedom in planning their activities were important aspects (Tauriainen, 2000).

The ambitious plan to take into consideration various perspectives of the quality of pre-school education should be preceded by clarification of what its actors derive the quality of education from. A study by researchers Navarro-Cruz, & Luschei (2020) examined the factors that mothers of children found represented the quality of kindergartens. Mothers most often chose pre-school facilities on the basis of recommendations on social networks, access to the school and financial accessibility. They then concentrated on facilities that were safe, have trustworthy staff with a loving attitude to the children, cooperated with parents, whose educational programme suited the needs of the family and finally had a low teacher to child ratio. The analysis also demonstrated, or more precisely confirmed, that the preferences of mothers are based on their past and current experience.

Studies usually encourage a new definition of quality, which emphasises the importance of appreciation of the parent culture and the context and uniqueness of the parents' wishes for their children. When understanding the conditions that families seek for their children in pre-school facilities, teachers are able to better integrate these preferences and thereby appreciate the benefit of family.

## **5 Summary and discussion**

Quality is generally interpreted as a relative but not random concept (Woodhead, 1998) and also as multi-faceted and problematic (Giota, 1995). Quality can be constantly redefined depending on how its individual components are operationalized (Fontaine et al., 2006). This is not objective reality, but a relative value depending on the person who provides the information about

quality and which can be variously perceived by the parent, the teacher or even the child itself (Barnes, 2001).

Involvement of parents in pre-school education allows them to actively participate in the school and out-of-school life of the school, and also contributes to the successes of the pre-school educational programme (Dogrul, & Akay, 2019). This is naturally to the benefit of the child of each parent. Their participation in the processes of conceptualisation of quality seems justified.

When defining quality, this does not have to be a “gold standard”, which applies to all situations and contexts (Dahlberg et al., 2013). We believe that we must accept the conclusion that quality depends on a number of functions of pre-school education, which may differ in various settings. These traits may combine various levels, for instance interaction between the child and the teacher, the class, the school climate, policy or view of pre-school education in various countries or even districts (Hujala et al., 2012).

Children who acquire solid foundations for learning in pre-school age, also thanks to a high-quality and systematic institutional education, should have better educational and life perspectives in the future (Melhuish et al., 2015). This vision should be fulfilled with the significant involvement, support and participation of the parents of children, potentially by compensation when parents fail. According to Bayrak and Koksall (2017) parents are important actors in pre-school education and also valuable sources during research in this field of education.

Involvement of parents in pre-school education is most intensive when compared to other levels of education. Pre-school facilities often declare that cooperation with parents is problematic, teachers complain about the difficulty of meeting their requirements and expectations. During pre-school education parents must cooperate more with regard to the age of the children, they must clearly declare their specific expectations related to fulfilment of their requirements. Despite a common vision of close cooperation between the school and the family, parents do not have an easy position in the field of education. The reason for this may be that they act individually and not as an organisation, as a group with unified attitudes and intentions, when dealing with specific situations. However, this method of participation is not supported in the educational process (Kalous, & Veselý, 2006). Even though it must be mentioned that pre-school education provides the best conditions and psycho-social conditions for this, an individual approach to the child is most often utilised in nursery school. Furthermore, parents are also neglected creators of educational policies (Bell, & Stevenson, 2006; Dahlberg, & Moss, 2007), which indicates their problematic position when determining what we can consider high-quality in pre-school education.

Even though the voice of parents is examined, identified and appreciated in pre-school education, according to our analysis the concept of quality does not take parents into consideration. Many proposals are directed towards reconceptualization of quality in education. However, we have not yet discovered an explicitly formulated conclusion that parents should be heard more in these new concepts. It seems that parents are considered amateurs, pedagogic laymen, who over-rate the situation and have no awareness of what is actually happening at the kindergarten, and are therefore unable to assess what quality means (Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Furthermore, according to experts, parents do not even have the tools to evaluate quality (Malik et al., 2016), they are incapable of assessing which are the relevant indicators of quality. Their evaluation is based on feedback from their children (of pre-school age), who are not yet able to provide a real description of what is happening at pre-school and how education is taking place.

To reflect this situation, there are also interesting suggestions from Rosenthal and Vandell (2013), who claim that parents evaluate the quality of primary school better, because they have more experience with these educational institutions, compared to kindergarten, which is at the beginning of the child's education journey. They also dispute the actual expectations of parents, which have a different content and a more or less real basis and the actual lack of real experience is considered a disqualification point for "pre-school" parents. The crucial result that they are nearly always satisfied, that education is nearly always high-quality in their opinion and better, compared to assessments by experts, is probably the weakest point of these parents (Rentzou & Sakellariou, 2013).

Our analyses lead us to the conclusion that despite the fact that the importance of the role of parents is utilised intensively in pre-school education and in many aspects, their voice is not adequately listened to when defining its qualities. We endeavoured to reflect the place of parents in how quality itself can be defined, specified and conceptualised, and what we should consider high-quality in education. For the time being, experts have the mandate to clarify the issue. But we can also find ourselves in a situation where what seems to be high-quality in pre-school education for parents, may not necessarily correspond to expert opinion and vice versa. If parents did not declare their interests and opinions, or took their children to kindergartens without complaints, the continuity of the influence of both environments, school and family, could be preserved. However, imbalances can be expected in situations when a parent does not agree or has other visions and declares these. The child itself gets the worst of this situation, discord or unresolved animosity between both parties can be an obstacle to its expected development and prosperity.

Different perspectives and attitudes in evaluation of quality are not a problem. But what is a real problem according to Dahlberg, & Moss (2007), is when others assume the attitude that there are no other involved parties and their viewpoint is the only viewpoint. Although the right to accept various perspectives is defended, this is only with the major reservation that “everyone involved in the institution of pre-school education understands the existence of various perspectives and that the work that the parents, the creators of policies or research workers carry out, always provides a specific viewpoint, on which decisions or appreciation of values are based, from which consequences are derived in theory and practice” (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 119). However, mutual respect and reflection of each other’s opinions and needs can be discussed further.

### **Conclusion**

Parents therefore have much to say when defining quality in education, even though the plan to conceptualize quality in pre-school education is especially complicated. Determination of specific quality criteria is usually the work of experts, ideally the result of social accord. The question is whether this should take place only on the level of professionals, as it has to date.

Quality is neither natural nor neutral and it can therefore not be considered a matter of course. How can quality take into consideration context and values, subjectivity and plurality? How can it satisfy various perspectives, when various groups in various places have different viewpoint of what quality should be or interpret its criteria differently? This problem became more urgent when the importance of the process of determination of quality and also how it should be accepted by all involved parties, not just academic experts, but also children, parents and teachers, began to be discussed (Dahlberg & Moss, 2007). Although converting the viewpoint of parents into indicators of quality is a difficult task, it can certainly be reflected. Whether these can be interconnected with the perspectives and survival of the children themselves, who are not only omitted from this topic and who, as we stated previously, also have a contribution to make in relation to definition of quality, could also be considered. Especially when children today are considered actors in their own education and in their own lives and create a social group, which has its own place in the social structure and in inter-generational relations. Childhood is a distinctive, socially constructed phase of life. From this aspect, children, as actors in education, are entitled to enter processes related to assessment of its quality. This could be another challenge in relation to the topic of quality in pre-school education.

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## **Teachers' use of Bloom's higher order questions in class to augment EFL learners' listening comprehension and critical thinking ability**

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### **Abstract**

The current emphasis on questioning techniques has inspired many EFL teachers to explore the impact of applying different pedagogical teaching strategies on the enhancement of thinking skills. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the influence of using higher order questioning technique on the listening comprehension achievement and critical thinking ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To reach this end, 40 participants in 4 intact classes in Kish Air Language institute in Mashhad were selected and divided in two groups to be assigned into experimental and control group. The experimental group received higher order questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy classification for 12 sessions. A pretest and a posttest of English listening comprehension test of TOEFL (TOEFL PBT) and California Critical Thinking Skill Test (CCTST) were administrated in both groups. 2 Independent sample t-tests were utilized to examine the data. Sample t-tests were run to compare the experimental and the control group means on the pretest and posttest of listening comprehension and critical thinking tests. The results surmised that there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores regarding listening comprehension and critical thinking in the experimental group. The results imply that using higher order questions as an instructional technique can enhance learners' listening comprehension achievement and critical thinking ability.

**Keywords:** Bloom's taxonomy, critical thinking, higher order questioning technique, listening comprehension ability

### **Introduction**

One of the significant 21st century skills is critical thinking (CT), which is a term defined by many educators and researchers. Ennis (1985) gave a simple and intangible definition of CT as "reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 45). Facione (1998) defined CT in a slightly more complex way and stated that critical thinking includes purposeful thinking while doing some tasks, for examples, when someone is proving a fact or idea,

interpreting what something means or solving a problem. However, Halpern (2007) substantiates the belief that CT is further than one's own thinking or making conclusions and solving problems by pointing out that it refers to the use of skills and strategies that will make desirable outcomes. Halpern (2007) considered critical thinking skills the same as higher order thinking skills.

That critical thinking regulates the learning process is not a new issue in language learning and skills. In fact, it has extensively been addressed by old theorists and educators. For example, Piaget (1971) and Vygotsky (1962) confirmed there are close associations between language and thinking skills (as cited in Faravani & Atai, 2015a). CT has been noticed for some decades, and more recently, it has reached a high position in foreign language teaching (FLT) settings (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; Faravani, & Atai, 2015a; Faravani, A., & Atai, M. R. 2015b). In fact, educators have pondered the weight of critical thinking skills as an outcome of student learning (Ennis, 2011). Consequently, developing students' critical thinking has become a noteworthy notice in language education and educators from all over the world have regarded them as an essential part of learning (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; Ennis, 2011). Consequently, by teaching students how to judge better or solve problems by reasoning, teachers can support students' promotion of skills and strategies, which in due course result in superior achievements (Faravani, & Atai, 2015a). Hence, critical thinking has influential effects on enhancing four language learning skills (Gaskaree, Mashhady, & Dousti, 2010). The results of some recent studies have unfolded a strong positive connection between critical thinking and listening comprehension ability (Nour Mohammadi, & Zare, 2015; Zare, Behjat, Abdollahimzadeh, & Izadi, 2013). Therefore, it seems that learners' critical thinking ability can be enhanced by improving listening comprehension ability (Birjandi & Rahimi, 2012).

Listening comprehension can be regarded as a basic ability in first language acquisition and important language skill to develop (Rost, 2002). Listening is also considered to have an important role when a learner is learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Regarding the vitality of listening in EFL classes, Nation and Newton (2008) stated that more than 50 percent of the students' time spend on functioning in a foreign language is dedicated to listening comprehension. Chastain (1988) highlighted the importance of this skill in second language learning by defining listening as the ability to understand the spoken second language which governs the use and learning of the second language. Listening also considerably regulates our daily communication and ushers in second/foreign language learning (Nunan, 2002). As Rost (2002) spotlighted, listening provides students with input in the classroom, which facilitates language learning.

Consequently, more notice has been on this skill recently, and it has gained more FL teachers' and researchers' attention. In view of the fact that listening



significantly inhibits the second language learning (Chastain, 1988; Richards, 2005), language teachers should make more effort to improve their students' listening comprehension to help them have more confidence and participation. According to Browne and Keeley (2007), listening critically, which is reacting with logical evaluation to what you have heard, requires a set of skills which are assembled around a series of relevant critical questions. As Browne and Keeley (2007) stated, critical questions asked by the teacher enhance motivation and provide direction for critical thinking; they make students advance towards a continuing progress for better opinions, decisions, or conclusions. Consequently, the role of the teacher's questions to meliorate the students' listening and thinking should be highlighted in language teaching courses and programs.

As Cotton (2001) pointed out, learners' critical thinking skills can be developed by teacher's questions in class. Teacher's questions are defined as instructional stimuli which express the content to be learned to students, and they provide instructions for what they should do as well as how they should do it (Cotton, 2001). In fact, one of the main purposes of teacher's questions is to eulogize students to be actively engaged in lessons (Cotton, 2001). Cotton (2001) declared that teachers' use of higher-level questions into the classroom may considerably and effectively develop students' critical thinking skills. Similarly, according to Wilen (1991), asking higher level of cognitive questions motivates students to use higher order thinking skills while low cognitive level questions entails understanding factual information to be memorized through rote learning (as cited in Shen & Yodkhumlue, 2012).

Employing higher cognitive levels of questions based on Blooms Taxonomy (BT) is one of the most common hierarchies which could be applied in the class. It was introduced by Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) as a model of relegating thinking pursuant to six cognitive levels of complexity. The three lowermost levels are nominated knowledge, comprehension, and application and the three supreme levels are called analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, respectively (Forehand, 2010). Kennedy, Fisher and Ennis (1991) claimed that the questions of higher order levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) represent critical thinking (as cited in Lai, 2011). Hence, if the teacher focuses to help students develop their critical thinking ability, he/she should mostly ask the higher-order levels questions.

To address the objectives of this study, following research questions are posed:

1. Does teacher's employing higher order questioning technique have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?
2. Does teacher's employing higher order questioning technique have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking ability?



## 2. Methodology

Participants and setting, instrumentation, instructional materials, procedure and study design and analysis are discussed.

### 2.1 Participants and setting

The study was conducted on a total of 40 Iranian intermediate EFL learners selected from Kish Air, an English Language Institute in Mashhad, Iran. The participants, who had enrolled for a general English course, were only female and aged 18- 42. They were university students in different majors or university graduates having different university degrees. Four intact classes served as experimental and control groups (2 classes for each group). The classes of participants in the experimental group classes were held on Saturdays and Wednesdays at 4-6 and 6-8 while the control group classes were held on Mondays and Thursdays at 4-6 and 6-8. Totally, the number of learners in both control and experimental group classes were the same. All the participants' first language was Persian, and English was their foreign language. In this institute, each term lasts about 2 months and consists of 15 sessions. The classes are held twice a week and each session lasts for 110 minutes.

### 2.2 Instrumentation

To conduct the study, 2 instruments including a listening comprehension test of TOEFL (TOEFL PBT) and California critical thinking skill test by Facione (1990) were employed.

#### 2.2.1 Listening Comprehension Test

An English listening comprehension test of TOEFL (TOEFL PBT) consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions was administered twice, as pre-test and post-test. The test, which took the participants 45 minutes, was selected from a book named TOEFL Actual Tests administrated in the past by ETS (educational testing service) (2005). The book includes the answer key as well as the CD. The book has 7 tests including 3 sections each test (part A, B, C). Test 5 was selected in this study and 3 sections were played in the class. The mentioned book was selected for 2 main reasons. First, TOFEL tests are considered as standard tests and have been used in various studies. The second reason is that the researcher assumed the learners could not have had easy access to the test.

The reliability coefficient of this test was calculated after piloting it in 2 classes of intermediate level in the morning classes of Kish Air Institute in Mashhad.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.807	50

Tab. 1: Reliability Statistics; Piloting Pretest of listening comprehension

The Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the pretest piloted on a group of 27 participants as displayed in Table 3.1 was 0.80.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.827	50

Tab. 2: Reliability Statistics; Piloting Posttest of listening comprehension

As it is shown in Table 3.2, the Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the posttest piloted on the same participants was 0.82 (Table 3.2).

### 2.2.2 California Critical Thinking Skill Test (CCTST)

The CCTST- form B is used to measure students' critical thinking ability. According to Facione (1990), for testing critical thinking of adults at levels above high school, form B of CCTST is appropriate. CCTST includes five areas of evaluation, inference, analysis, inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. The reliability of CCTST after applying as stated by Facione (1990) was equal to 0.78 to 0.80. The CCTST- form B was translated into Persian and was edited by Persian and English language experts and was back translated to ensure the validity of the translation (Soodmand Afshar, & Rahimi, 2014). In 2003, the translated CCTST Form B (Persian version) was given to 405 BSN nursing students of Nursing Faculties of Shahid Beheshti University located in Tehran, Iran (Khalili, & Hosseinzadeh, 2003). Khalili and Hossein Zadeh (2003) found this test and its subscales enjoyed acceptable reliability (calculated through KR-20), validity (measured through factor analysis and KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity), and normality indices in Iranian context (as cited in Soodmand Afshar, Rahimi & Rahimi, 2014).

In order for all participants (both good and poor learners) to have an easier understanding of the questionnaire, the Persian version was administered as pre-test and post-test. The test contains 34 multiple choice questions, each with one correct answer. The highest score of this test is 34 (1 score for each correct answer), and the time for taking the test is 45 minutes.

### 2.3 Procedure

On May, 2017, 40 Iranian intermediate learners who had enrolled in an English course in Kish language institute were chosen for this study. The participants, who were in 4 different classes, were assigned to 2 groups of experimental and control with a total of 20 subjects in each group. The data collection procedure lasted the Institute term, which usually runs for 2 months including 15 sessions. The classes were held twice a week and each session lasted 110 minutes. Before starting the procedure, all the participants were called, informed about the importance of

being present from the beginning of the term to the end, and asked not to be absent during the term.

On the first stage, which started in the first session, 2 groups were given the English listening test of TOEFL (TOFEL PBT), consisting of 50 multiple choice questions selected from the book named TOEFL to measure their listening proficiency. The CD of listening comprehension test was played once in the class. The estimated time for taking the test was 40 minutes but actually it took more, about 45 minutes. Before administrating the test, it had been piloted with 27 students who had participated in 2 morning intermediate classes in the same institute twice to calculate the acceptable reliability. The reliability coefficient of the test calculated was .80, which was considered acceptable for the study. Next, it was given to 2 groups in the afternoon to answer the test at the beginning of each class. In the second session, the teacher introduced and clarified the Persian version of CCTST- form B to the all students. Then, the test including 34 items was administered to measure students' critical thinking skills as pre-test in both experimental and control groups at the beginning of the classes. The time allocated for answering to the test questions was 45 minutes. Cronbach' alpha showed the reliability of 0.62 (Khalili, & Hossein, 2003) . The second stage was applying the treatment in the experimental group, which was asking the students higher order thinking questions based on Blooms Cognitive Taxonomy. The employing of the treatment started in the second session. The book named Basic Tactics for listening, the second edition (2011), was worked on in both groups. The determined time for working on the book was 20 minutes for 12 sessions in both groups, and the textbook named Insight Out was worked on as the suggested book by the institute in the rest of the classes. The same determined parts of 12 units selected from the listening book were played in all classes (each unit in one session). First, the teacher introduced the topic and asked students same questions related to the topic as a warm-up in both groups. Then, the audio was played twice for all participants in both groups, and the questions were asked by the teacher after the second time of playing. The participants were not given the book because the book includes a mixture of different levels of questions. However, they were allowed to take their own notes. The number of questions asked by the teacher was the same both groups but the levels of questions were different based on Bloom's taxonomy. In the control group, those questions were in low order levels of Bloom' cognitive Taxonomy including knowledge, comprehension and application. In the experimental group, the students were asked some questions of high order levels of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy classified as analysis, synthesis and evaluation based on sample verbs listed by Huitt (2004), (see Appendix I). The final stage included giving the post-tests in both groups. In session 14, students of both groups were given the listening comprehension test of TOEFL test, (TOFEL

PBT). The time allocated was 45 minutes. Then, the Persian version of CCTST- form B again was given as post-test.

### **3.4 Instructional materials**

The material used during the course was a book named *Tactics for listening*, second edition (2011) by Jack C. Richards. It is a comprehensive, three-level listening series classified in basic, developing and expanding levels. For this research, *Basic Tactics for Listening* (the first volume) was selected because it matched the level of intermediate English learners.

### **3.5 Study design and analysis**

This study followed cause and effect research and the selected design quantitative. The data gathered from the two tests was quantitatively analyzed through SPSS 25 (2018) software. A factor analysis was run to probe the construct validity of the pretest and post-test of LC and CT. Two independent T-Tests were run to compare the two groups' means on the pre and post-tests of LC and CT to see if there was any effectiveness of the treatment in learners' LC and CT.

In this research, the independent variable is higher order questioning techniques and the dependent variables are listening comprehension and critical thinking ability. The study aimed to investigate the significant effect of higher order questioning technique on enhancing students' listening comprehension and critical thinking ability to see if there was any significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

## **4. Results**

In this part, the data is analyzed and the hypotheses are discussed statistically.

### **4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Data**

The mentioned research questions in this study were analyzed using independent-samples t-test which has two main assumptions; normality of the data and homogeneity of variances of the groups. A normality test was run to determine if the data set was well-modeled by a normal distribution and to compute how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed. Table 4 shows the skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios over the standard errors.

Field (2013) clearly stated that the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors should be computed and compared against the value of 1.96 (Field, 2013). Since the absolute values of the computed ratios were lower than 1.96, it can be concluded that the present data met the normality assumption.

Group		N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Experimental	Pre-LC	20	.260	.512	0.51	-.756	.992	-0.76
	Post-LC	20	-.578	.512	-1.13	-.480	.992	-0.48
	Pre-CT	20	-.648	.512	-1.27	1.013	.992	1.02
	Post-CT	20	.364	.512	0.71	-.568	.992	-0.57
Control	Pre-LC	20	.567	.512	1.11	-.543	.992	-0.55
	Post-LC	20	-.074	.512	-0.14	-.915	.992	-0.92
	Pre-CT	20	-.180	.512	-0.35	-.003	.992	0.00
	Post-CT	20	-.978	.512	-1.91	.858	.992	0.86

Tab. 4: Descriptive Statistics; Testing Normality Assumption

An independent-sample t-test was also run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the pretest of listening comprehension in order to prove that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their listening ability prior to the administration of the treatments.

Table 5 presents the means of the experimental and control group on the pretest of listening comprehension.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	Experimental	20	22.90	7.643	1.709
Listening	Control	20	20.20	6.879	1.538

Tab. 5: Descriptive Statistics; Pretest of Listening Comprehension by Groups

As displayed in Table 5, the experimental ( $M = 22.90$ ,  $SD = 7.64$ ) and the control ( $M = 20.20$ ,  $SD = 6.78$ ) groups had fairly close means on the pretest of listening comprehension. The results of the independent-samples t-test; Pretest of listening comprehension by Groups is displayed in Table 6.

As it is shown in Table 6, ( $t(38) = 1.17$ ,  $p = .248$ , 95 % CI [-1.95, 7.35],  $r = .216$  represents a weak effect size) indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two groups' means on the pretest of listening comprehension (Field, 2013). Thus it can be claimed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their listening ability prior to the main study.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.502	.483	1.174	38	.248	2.700	2.299	-1.955	7.355
Equal variances not assumed			1.174	37.587	.248	2.700	2.299	-1.956	7.356

Tab. 6: Independent-Samples t-test; Pretest of Listening Comprehension by Groups

Another independent-samples t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the pretest of critical thinking in order to prove that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their critical thinking ability prior to the administration of the treatments. Table 7 presents the control and the experimental means on pretest of critical thinking.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest Critical Thinking	Experimental	20	11.85	3.031	.678
	Control	20	12.20	2.783	.622

Tab. 7: Descriptive Statistics; Pretest of Critical Thinking by Groups

As displayed in Table 7, the experimental ( $M = 11.85$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ) and the control ( $M = 12.20$ ,  $SD = 2.78$ ) groups had fairly close means on the pretest of critical thinking. The results of the independent-samples t-test, as displayed in Table 4.5, ( $t(38) = .380$ ,  $p = .706$ , 95 % CI [-1.51, 2.21],  $r = .062$  representing a weak effect size) indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two groups' means on the pretest of critical thinking (Field, 2013). Thus it can be claimed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their critical thinking ability prior to the main study.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.072	.790	.380	38	.706	.350	.920	-1.513	2.213
Equal variances not assumed			.380	37.727	.706	.350	.920	-1.513	2.213

Tab. 8: Independent-Samples t-test; Pretest of Critical Thinking by Groups

It should also be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained. The results of the Levene's test ( $F = .072$ ,  $p = .790$ ) were non-significant. That is why the first row of Table 8, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" was reported

#### 4.2 Results and discussion for the first research question

An independent-samples t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the posttest of listening comprehension in order to probe the first null-hypothesis.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest Listening	Experimental	20	29.25	5.476	1.224
	Control	20	20.70	4.473	1.000

Tab. 9: Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Listening Comprehension by Groups

As displayed in Table 4.6, the experimental ( $M = 29.25$ ,  $SD = 5.47$ ) had higher mean than the control group ( $M = 20.70$ ,  $SD = 4.47$ ) on the posttest of listening comprehension.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.916	.345	5.408	38	.000	8.550	1.581	5.349	11.751
Equal variances not assumed			5.408	36.545	.000	8.550	1.581	5.345	11.755

Tab. 10: Independent-Samples t-test; Posttest of Listening Comprehension by Groups

The results of the independent-samples t-test, as displayed in Table 10, ( $t(38) = 5.40$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95 % CI [5.34, 11.75],  $r = .659$ ) representing a large effect size) indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest of listening comprehension (Field, 2013). Thus the first null-hypothesis was rejected.

As the results of data analysis showed, there was a statistically significant difference between students' performance in listening comprehension in pretest and posttest. Therefore, we concluded teachers questioning techniques and types of questions could play a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. The result of this study can be a support to the study done by Birjandi and Rahimi (2012) in this regard. They examined the effect of metacognitive strategy instructions on the listening performance of EFL university students. The experimental group received the strategy training, while the control group received no instruction. The results revealed that experimental group significantly performed better on the posttest measure. Therefore, it could be confirmed that listening could be enhanced in different strategies employed in the class by the teacher. One of these strategies could be posing types of questions to encourage students think deeply and analyze the audio. Employing higher order cognitive questions in the class help students understand the speakers' feelings, attitudes from the context. The result of this study is also similar to what Coskun (2010) did in a similar way to prove the role of teacher's instructions and



questions. He investigated the effect of metacognitive listening strategy training on the listening performance of a group of beginners at a university in Turkey. The experimental group received metacognitive strategy training embedded into a listening course book during 5 weeks, while the other group did not no strategy training. At the end of the training, a listening test from the teacher's manual of the same course book was taken to both groups. The analysis of the test scores revealed that the experimental group did statistically better in the test.

#### 4.3. Results and discussion for the second research question

An independent-samples t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on the posttest of critical thinking in order to probe the second null-hypothesis as "employing higher order questions did not have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking". As displayed in Table 11, the experimental ( $M = 18.30$ ,  $SD = 3.31$ ) group had a higher mean on the posttest of critical thinking than the control group ( $M = 13.15$ ,  $SD = 3.18$ ).

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest Critical Thinking	Experimental	20	18.30	3.310	.740
	Control	20	13.15	3.183	.712

Tab. 11: Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Critical Thinking by Groups

The results of the independent-samples t-test, as displayed in Table 12 ( $t(38) = 5.01$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95 % CI [3.07, 7.22],  $r = .631$  representing a large effect size) indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest of critical thinking (Field, 2013). Thus the second null-hypothesis was rejected.

It should also be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained. The results of the Levene's test ( $F = .248$ ,  $p = .621$ ) were non-significant. That is why the first row of Table 12, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" was reported. Research question number one attempted to answer the question of whether there is any significant effect of teacher's employing higher order questions on learners' listening comprehension ability.

Research question number two aimed to answer the question of whether there is any significant effect of teacher's employing higher order questions on learners' critical thinking ability. Similarly, the learners' critical thinking was influenced by the treatment, and students' performance showed that the experimental group had a higher mean on the posttest of critical thinking than the control group. It indicates that listeners should be able to scrutinize the speaker and the setting in order to discern the interlocutor's meaning. Hence, as some researchers have

claimed that there is a positive correlation between critical thinking and listening comprehension ability (Nour Mohammadi, & Zare, 2015; Zare, Behjat, Abdollahimzadeh, & Izadi, 2013), it seems that improving listening comprehension (LC) could result in learners' enhancement of critical thinking ability.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.248	.621	5.015	38	.000	5.150	1.027	3.071	7.229
Equal variances not assumed			5.015	37.942	.000	5.150	1.027	3.071	7.229

Tab. 12: Independent-Samples t-test; Posttest of Critical Thinking by Groups

According to Browne and Keeley (2007), listening critically, which is reacting with logical evaluation to what you have heard, requires a set of skills. These skills are assembled around a series of relevant critical questions.

As Browne and Keeley (2007) pointed out, critical questions asked by the teacher provide motivation and direction for critical thinking; they make students advance toward a persistent, continuing progress for better opinions, decisions, or conclusions. Consequently, this study confirmed the role of teacher's questions to promote students' critical thinking. Discussions regarding the importance of fostering higher-order thinking skills and its positive effect on learners' achievement in EFL Iranian contexts have dominated research in recent years. For example, Fahim and Saeepor's (2011), inspected the impact of teaching critical thinking skills on reading comprehension skill of 60 Iranian EFL learners. The analysis of the collected data revealed that teaching critical thinking skills in EFL context can improve reading comprehension.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

The analysis of the gathered data led to the following conclusions: First, the teacher's employing higher order questions has a positive impact on learners' listening comprehension ability. Second, there is also a positive effect of teacher's employing higher order questions on learners' critical thinking. The important difference in mean scores of pre-tests and post-tests in both control and experimental groups provides the evidence.

In this study, lower cognitive level questions were employed in the control group. Interestingly enough, students used lower levels of cognition because they were not required to reflect profoundly to find the answers to the questions. Consequently, those types of questions did not encourage students' critical thinking ability. On the other hand, asking higher order questions not only makes students remember factual knowledge but also gives confidence to students to use their knowledge to solve the problems and analyze the audio they receive. Based on the yielded results, it can be admitted that the level of cognitive growth in students is low when low cognitive level questions are asked. On the other hand, Bloom (1956) purported that students develop their cognition when practicing high cognitive questions and making connections between their previous knowledge and new unfamiliar information. Therefore, knowledge construction occurs through the process of thinking in learning (as cited in Dumteeb, 2009). Furthermore, the results unveiled the significant outperformance of students in the experimental group regarding critical thinking ability and their listening comprehension. That is, learners with better listening comprehension ability can develop their critical thinking. Moreover, the obtained results can vouch the results of numerous prior studies that investigated the connection between critical thinking and language learning achievement.

Therefore, findings of the study recommend teachers to use higher order questions more than lower order questions in classes. As a result, if the academic community extensively explores the content and focus of the lessons in textbooks and modify them or trains teachers to ask different high cognitive levels of questions, students may considerably advance in thinking and language learning. Training future teachers with awareness of various cognitive levels of questions seems to be necessary in TTC programs. Teacher trainers should make the future teachers aware of the necessity of classes which provide chances for students to go beyond textbook-knowledge absorption. In addition, asking high level questions possibly help students to have a better understanding of speakers' intentions as they can have more successful communication in the target language. In other words, this will also prepare them to be life-long critical thinkers in their society. As Ku (2009) believes, the purpose of modern education is teaching the elements of critical thinking since it enables the students to deal quickly and effectively with changes of the new world. In addition, critical thinking is essential

for students to perform well in school, future workplaces, and social and interpersonal contexts, (as cited in Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010)

Finally, this study might encourage syllabus designers to apply various cognitive types of questions for listening activities in textbooks as such valuable activities in textbooks enable students not only remember factual knowledge but also think critically and expands their knowledge to solve problems, to analyze, and to evaluate. As a result, the findings of the study play a positive role in inhibiting educational settings regarding the cognitive levels of questions the teachers utilize in classes. To encapsulate, syllabus designers and material developers are advocated to prepare educated citizens with analytical abilities through making course books that mull over critical thinking as one of the efficient elements for learners' success.

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## Appendix I: Sample Verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy

Citation: Huitt, W. (2004). Bloom et al.'s taxonomy of the cognitive domain. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date], from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html>.

### Bloom et al.'s: Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain

LEVEL	DEFINITION	SAMPLE VERBS	SAMPLE BEHAVIORS
KNOWLEDGE	Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.	Write List Label Name State Define	The student will define the 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain.
COMPREHENSION	Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.	Explain Summarize Paraphrase Describe Illustrate	The student will explain the purpose of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain.
APPLICATION	Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction.	Use Compute Solve Demonstrate Apply Construct	The student will write an instructional objective for each level of Bloom's taxonomy.
ANALYSIS	Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.	Analyze Categorize Compare Contrast Separate	The student will compare and contrast the cognitive and affective domains.
SYNTHESIS	Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her.	Create Design Hypothesize Invent Develop	The student will design a classification scheme for writing educational objectives that combines the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
EVALUATION	Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria.	Judge Recommend Critique Justify	The student will judge the effectiveness of writing objectives using Bloom's taxonomy.

Text book: Tactics for Listening      page: 44      Topic: prices  
Level: Intermediate  
Number of Participants: 21      Date: 9.6.2017      Approximate Time: 20 mins

Time	Teacher's activities	Learners' activities
5 minutes	Pre listening (warm-up): asking questions about prices of different issues in Iran like cars, clothes air travel ticket, etc.	Answering teachers questions
15 minutes	While and post listening activities : playing the audio twice and asking students 2 lower order questions about each numbers	Listening to the audio twice for each numbers and then answering the teacher's questions after listening to the audio
	Questions for number 1: why do people of speaker's country have problems buying a new car? In which country, people can afford a new car easier? Questions for number 2: how much does renting an apartment cost in speaker's country? What problems does the speaker mention about living in the U.S.A Questions for umber 3: in which country can he get cheaper clothes? Did people tell him the right fact about prices of clothes in the U.S.A? Questions for number 4: where does he come from? Why the are the prices of travel low in the U.S.A? Questions for number 5: do people spend a lot of money for public in speaker's country? Questions for number 6: do you need to have health insurance in the U.S.A? Does it cost to see a doctor a lot in his speaker?	Answering the teacher's questions







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## **Teacher beliefs and their manifestation in teaching from the perspective of pre-service teacher trainees**

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### **Abstract**

Teacher beliefs play an important role in addressing the issue of teacher training. Teaching philosophy has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields in teacher education. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of what teacher trainees or teachers in general think, believe and do in teaching. Studies over the past two decades have provided important information on the possible factors that may impact the formation of teacher beliefs. The paper attempts to explore the relationship between previous school experience and the formation of teacher beliefs among teacher trainees who can provide viewpoints of a teacher and a student at the same time. Moreover, the paper examines teaching methods and techniques that the trainees apply in their teaching as a result of what they believe in as teachers. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with pre-service teacher trainees as a part of feedback sessions during teaching practice. By employing qualitative approach, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the formation and manifestation of teacher beliefs in teaching.

**Keywords:** method, teacher beliefs, teaching philosophy, teacher trainee

### **Introduction**

Teacher beliefs are an important component of a teacher's personality and play a key role in how teachers teach. Scholars have long debated the impact of teacher beliefs on teacher's behaviour and classroom decisions. Thus, a considerable literature has grown up around this topic which has been studied by researchers using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and various methods. There are several factors which can play an important role in addressing the issue of teacher beliefs formation. Several attempts have been made to examine these factors. Studies on this topic show the importance of these factors in the process of formation of teacher beliefs (Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Borg, 2011). The main challenge; therefore, faced by many researchers is the investigation of how these

factors contribute in the formation of teacher beliefs and how these beliefs are then reflected in the teaching process. Investigation these factors can help us understand what lies beyond teaching practices. Debate continues about other factors which play their role in the process; however, a full discussion of teacher beliefs lies beyond the scope of this study.

This paper aims to unravel some of the aspects surrounding the issue of teacher beliefs formation among pre-service teacher trainees. One of the aims of this study is to investigate the previous school experience as one of the factors affecting the teacher beliefs formation. Exploration of the relationship between previous school experience and teacher beliefs may help to understand the reasons behind teachers' teaching habits and behaviour. Secondly, the paper seeks to explore the pre-service teacher trainees' beliefs about teaching and lastly the emphasis will be put on the specific methods and techniques used by the teacher trainees in order to make the learning process in the classroom effective. Thus, this study is exploratory and interpretative in nature and uses a qualitative approach to illuminate this field of research. This work will generate fresh insight into the problematics as well as contribute to this growing area of research. As to the overall structure, this paper first gives a brief overview of the literature and research on the topic, then it continues with data collection and research sample description, data analysis and research findings.

### **1 Beliefs as a part of teacher formation**

In the past few decades, a considerable amount of literature has evolved around teacher beliefs and their role in the classroom behaviour of teachers (Fang, Z., 1996; Borg, 2011; Farrell & Ives, 2014; Fives & Gill, 2015; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). According to Zheng (2016), since the mid 70ties the topic of language teachers' beliefs has caught the attention of investigators, "no encompassing theory has yet emerged to describe all these features of teacher beliefs" (p. 20). As the author continues, from the mid 90ties, the field of language teachers' beliefs has evolved.

Before discussing the issue further, it is essential to understand the theoretical concept of teacher beliefs, their typology and factors which greatly contribute in the process of their formation. According to Borg (2003), „teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p. 81). As Zheng (2016) claims, the term "belief" is used in a variety of research fields and, therefore, can have a number of explicit meanings. This term can be generally understood as "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour" (Borg, 2001, p. 186). Since the teacher beliefs guide and

may affect the behaviour of a teacher, it is important to investigate those beliefs and closely inspect the factors affecting them.

When it comes to understanding the various layers of teacher beliefs, it can be trickier than one might think. "Defining beliefs is at best a game of player's choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias - attitudes, values, judgements, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few to be found in the literature" (Pajares, 1992, p. 309). Thus, the nature of the concept as such should be taken into consideration alongside with its possible "disguises".

When studying the thinking processes of teachers, the following questions are to be addressed: "What do teachers believe about teaching and learning? How is their knowledge organised? What are the sources of teachers' beliefs? How do teachers' beliefs influence their teaching?" (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 30). These and other possible questions might give us an answer to why the concrete decisions are being made by teachers in the classroom.

There are a number of factors which may affect the formation of teacher beliefs, these factors are as follows: "own experience as language learners, experience of what works best, established practice, personality factors, educationally based or research-based principles, principles derived from an approach or method" (Richards and Lockhart, 1996, pp. 30-31). For the purpose of the study, the emphasis will be put on the first two factors, i.e.: previous school experience and teaching experience. Apart from the factors mentioned above, Borg (2011) conducted a study in which he confirmed the considerable, if variable impact of in-service teacher education on the formation of language teacher beliefs. Therefore, the quality of teacher education is essential and, thus, should be emphasised.

Calderhead (1996) recognises five types of teacher beliefs, which are the following: "beliefs about learners and learning, teaching, curriculum, learning to teach, and about the self and the nature of teaching" (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017, p. 79). According to Devine et. al (2013), "an understanding of (dis)congruence between teacher beliefs and teacher practices is critical in researching teacher effectiveness as it underscores the multifaceted and often messy relationship between what teachers do and what they believe, in contrasting cultural and social contexts" (p. 85). It is thought that in order to direct educators towards proper cooperation with teachers on their way to professional development, knowing what guides teachers when teaching, i.e. their beliefs, is considered essential (Fives & Gill, 2015).

As Holt-Reynolds (2000) claims, the position of a teacher has changed, i.e. teachers are no longer only a source of information, but are required to actively

cooperate with students and enhance their participation in the process which is then enriched with teachers teaching.

Teachers' beliefs may influence teachers' behaviour, development of learners being taught, the process of making decisions as well as the interaction between teachers and their learners (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2017). Moreover, according to Vries et al. (2013), being aware of these beliefs plays a key role in the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers. "Because teachers are crucial to education, and their participation in CPD is an important way to increase their quality, as well as the quality of schools and student learning, knowledge about how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning is of great importance" (p. 353). Therefore, it may be assumed that the investigation of teacher beliefs can play an important role in improving the quality of teachers as professionals in the field of education alongside with the learning process itself. The following section of the study presents the research methodology and the findings based on the data analysis.

## **2 Data collection**

The study uses qualitative research approach in order to gain insights into the topic presented. One of the most well-known research methods in qualitative research approach is interview. This method was adopted to help understand how teacher beliefs are reflected in teaching, and to allow a deeper insight into the factors affecting the formation of teacher beliefs. Moreover, as it helped us obtain in-depth information, it captures the complex nature of the phenomenon.

For the purpose of obtaining data, semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of the feedback session during teaching practice. This stage of the study comprised semi-structured interviews conducted on the sample of ten pre-service teacher trainees of a teacher training programme - English language and literature (in combination) at master's degree at the University of Prešov. All the trainees had experienced teaching practice and were aged approximately between 21-23.

To investigate their teacher beliefs, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. Have your experience of being a student at primary/(upper-)secondary school had an impact on the formation of your teacher beliefs? If yes, then how?
2. What are your teacher beliefs, i.e. what is it that you believe in as a teacher and try to reflect it in your teaching?
3. What methods/techniques are you trying to implement into your teaching to make the learning process effective?

The first question was designed to investigate the impact of previous school experience of the trainees on the formation of their teacher beliefs. Moreover, if the response was positive, the trainees were asked to specify in what way those

experiences affected their perception of teaching. The second question helped to provide the personal viewpoints of the trainees on teaching, i.e. what the trainees believe in as future teachers and what beliefs they intend to reflect in their teaching. The third question focused on the specific methods and techniques the trainees are already implementing and are planning to use as future teachers in order to increase the effectivity of the learning process of the pupils. However, further data collection is required to determine exactly to what extent teacher beliefs influence the actual teaching process itself. Based on the questions asked, the following three categories were recognised: Previous student experience – What we think, Teacher beliefs – What we believe in and Effective teaching – What we do. These categories are discussed further in the data analysis and research findings section.

### **3 Data analysis and research findings**

Once the data were collected and recorded, they were transcribed and analysed. Based on the questions asked alongside with the data analysis, the following categories were recognised: Previous Student Experience – What we think (the influence of school experience on the formation of teacher beliefs), Teacher beliefs – What we believe in (reflection of teacher beliefs in teaching), Effective Teaching – What we do (methods and techniques for increased effectiveness). The following analysis is supported by selected excerpts in which the participants are marked as S1, S2, S3 ... S10.

#### **3.1 Previous student experience – What we think**

A variety of perspectives were expressed when asked about the previous school experience and the trainees' point of view on teaching. A common view amongst the participants was that being a student is a completely different position than being a teacher. The behaviours they once perceived as positive are now being looked at with providence. When comparing their opinions, the trainees now understand what it means to be a teacher, i.e. appreciate the profession more than before, as the comments below illustrate:

S1: "... from the student's point of view we looked at it as if it was nothing, just come to class and teach. And now I can see what it is all about ... I really appreciate them more and also what they were doing."

S10: "... I used to have teachers who were phlegmatic, just came to the class, discussed how we were and what news we had, and so on and did not teach us anything. I was happy that we had a free lesson, didn't have to prepare, but it definitely has had an impact now when I am older ... when I look back, I am upset how a teacher like that can even teach. And I would not want that."

A recurrent theme in the interviews was that of teachers acting friendly towards the students without being afraid of losing their respect and authority. When the participants had an experience with such a teacher, they considered it as a positive personality trait and intended to continue in doing so in their future classroom, as two participants stated in the comments below:

S2: "I liked it when teachers were friendly and did not boost their ego on pupils ... so I am also trying to do it that way ... What I appreciated about my teacher was her being friendly."

This view was echoed by another participant who reported:

S6: "I would like to teach the same way I was being taught... we had a lot to be covered, the teachers were strict, but friendly ... when we started we were divided into "stronger" and "weaker", but we finished all the same... I would like to teach at that school."

One participant argued that having two perspectives, i.e. student's and teacher's perspective, helped her adjust the teaching behaviour taking into consideration students' personalities and their impact on how they respond to a teacher during a lesson. That a student does not wish to involve in classroom activities does not mean they have no idea what is going on. Moreover, the participant showed concerns over forcing students to speak and its impact on their overall motivation, as the comment below suggests:

S3: "As a student I am aware of the fact that sometimes I have something to say and yet I stay silent ... I have been focusing on students who were more active because I have a feeling that not everyone wants to talk. Not everyone wants to share their opinion, some are shy ... forcing to speak ... I think they may lose motivation..."

Some issues were identified with regards to a discrepancy between a participants' previous school experience and their teaching practice experience, where one of the participants showed dissatisfaction with the situation in the classroom. When comparing the students' behaviour in the past from own experience and the behaviour of today's students, the trainee expressed great concerns, as explained in the comment below:

S4: "I used to attend a grammar school where all of us wanted to learn. When we were supposed to do something, we did it and when I got here it was a complete opposite, almost everyone was doing what they wanted to and I was not taken as much seriously as their teacher ... that was the biggest shock for me which I had to cope with."

Commenting on this question, one of the participants reported that even though the school experience had not affected his teacher beliefs to a great extent, but rather it had helped him realise his own teaching preferences. He came to a conclusion that teaching older students would suit him more than teaching younger students, as the comment below shows:

S7: "I just confirmed myself that I would like to work with older students. I am not saying I don't want to work at primary school / lower-secondary level, but if I were to choose, I would go for upper-secondary level."

There were some suggestions that school experience with former teachers – role models – has played a key role in the career decision process, i.e. having positive experience with teachers has pushed the participants towards the teaching career, as explained in the comment below:

S5: "At upper-secondary school I liked our Slovak and English language teacher and because of her I have decided to study what I am studying. So, I can say that because of some role models. I think this has had a great impact on me."

This result is somewhat counterintuitive. Not only positive, but also a negative role model helped the trainees realise what they want to avoid doing as future teachers. The comment below demonstrates the impact of a negative student experience towards a positive change in one's behaviour.

S9: "... a teacher who was truly trying to engage, talk to us and trying to do so in English only has given us most. And when I was thinking about becoming a teacher, I wanted to be ... to have as interesting lessons as she did. On the other hand, the former teacher we used to have, we did not like her, and I even told myself that because of her I did not want to be a teacher ...."

S8: "... I started to realise during my master's degree studies that the teacher was sticking to the textbook all the time ... but I think that it is not so good to stick to the textbook because it can quickly turn into a routine, and I am trying to avoid that".

As can be seen from the excerpts above, previous teaching experience plays an important role in how trainees perceive teaching in general. Moreover, not only positive but also negative experience pushed the trainees in the right direction, i.e. helped them realise what they want to do differently compared to their previous teachers.

### **3.2 Teacher beliefs – what we believe in**

If we now turn to the part when the trainees were asked to share their teacher beliefs which they wish to be reflected in their teaching, the trainees were unanimous in the view that teaching does not involve the process of giving and receiving knowledge only, but the emphasis ought to be put on the whole-person learning and raising students, helping them on their way to become full-fledged professionals in the field, as the two of the participants reported in the comments below:

S1: "... be sure not to focus just on the pupil gaining the knowledge, but also to affect them ... to raise them ... we should not be focusing only on covering as much content as possible ... better to cover less and do it well than to cover a lot without understanding ... "



S9: "I believe that what I am teaching is important and I want to transfer it to students so they also realise that what I want to tell them and teach them, or what they are to learn will be applicable in the future because that's the problem they have. They think that it is useless."

Moreover, as the participants continued, the issues might arise when students, in general, do not consider the content they are learning applicable in real-life and everyday situations. Therefore, the practical application of knowledge was emphasised in the interviews, i.e. showing the students meaningfulness of the content they are learning, which plays a key role in the learning process itself.

Some participants believe that learning equals fun, e.g. a language can be learnt without realising it. This way students can learn the language not only consciously, but also unconsciously. Moreover, teaching students how to express themselves in a proper way was considered as one of the essential parts of learning, which can also be influenced by teacher's qualification. Talking about this issue, two participants reported:

S4: "Maybe the fact that they do not have to memorise some things, but I am trying make it more about fun, for instance a competition, to make learning fun and maybe also teaching English without them realising that they are learning."

S3: "Maybe a better behaviour of pupils, verbalisation predominantly, I am trying to teach them that it is important to express themselves in a right way, since I am also studying Slovak language, and to have an opinion and provide arguments to support it ..."

The majority of participants agreed with the statement that trust between a student and a teacher is necessary for creating a pleasant learning environment without fear. Moreover, a friendly attitude of a teacher was highlighted among the trainees as it can enhance the learning experience of students without losing any authority or respect, as the comments bellow illustrate:

S5: *"I would like to get the respect, that is the key, but also to be friendly to the extent that they know if they have some kind of personal or family issue, they can come to me with no fear ... this is going to be challenging, in my opinion."*

S2: "I choose friendliness ... not to seem hostile ... and not to look lofty ... to make learning English fun ..."

S5: *"I would like to become a teacher like those I liked at upper-secondary school. On one hand they had authority and respect, on the other hand they did not spread fear..."*

It was suggested that teachers should not forget that they had been students once. Also, the relevance of reference questions, i.e. to which there is not only one right answer, was pointed out. One of the participants highlighted the importance of tackling students' curiosity since people had always been naturally curious regardless of their age. These viewpoints are reflected in the following comments:

S6: *"I am trying to remember that I also was a student ... I was trying to ask them questions to which there is no wrong answer... to tell me their experience ... every answer is a good answer."*

S7: *"I believe that a man is curious by their nature and can be interested in anything. So, I believe that if something is presented in an interesting way, it may catch attention..."*

"Halo effect" is one of the classroom situations that can happen. According to Forgas and Laham (p. 276), "... a tendency of judges to assume that once a person possesses some known good (or bad) characteristics, their other, unrelated and unknown characteristics are also likely to be consistent...". Talking about this issue, one of the participants pointed out the fact that teachers should not let themselves believe that bad behaviour must go hand in hand with student's performance and achievements. Furthermore, one of the teacher beliefs was the belief in ones' capacity to teach, i.e. teacher's self-efficacy. The comments below give a detailed explanation on the matter:

S8: *"even though they can have some kind of behaviour, I will not let it influence my evaluation of their achievement or my expectations about their performance. I am trying to avoid that ... And also, to give space for everybody to make mistakes, and to express their knowledge."*

S10: *"First of all, you need to believe in yourself ... I think self-confidence is very important. When I believe in myself that I know something, I can also explain it to pupils."*

As to the previously mentioned concept of self-efficacy, it can be understood as "... a motivational construct based on self perception of competence rather than actual level of competence" (Ghasemholanda & Hashim 2013, p. 891). Teachers who believe in their teaching competence and skills may also serve as a positive motivational factor for their students.

### **3.3 Effective teaching – What we do**

Talking about this issue, the participants agreed with the statement that visual aids, practical application, discovery processes and personalisation are crucial on the way towards effective teaching. Other responses to this question also included showing "the human side" of a teacher, i.e. revealing something from teacher's life as well as discussing topics that are current and up to date. The following excerpts confirm what was previously mentioned:

S1: *"So I try to give them as much help as possible, such as visual aids, so that it is not only that we say something, write it, but they can also try it themselves and I also like when they can come up with something on their own and I don't have to say anything, but they deduce it somehow."*

S3: *"Well, especially a discussion. I am trying to catch their attention by revealing something about my life or saying how I perceive it ... so that they could*

also express their opinions ... so it is especially personalisation and also topicality ... to have current topics."

Similarly to what has been discussed, practical application, everyday use, finding the connection between knowledge received at school and its application in real life situations were echoed by a number of participants. It is widely known that practical application of knowledge can reinforce the learning process (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009) and the participants were fully aware of that fact, as the following comments indicate:

S6: "I am asking or providing some examples from their life, when I am teaching something. That way they can remember it better, if they connect it with situations from their lives."

S2: "I am trying to provide everyday examples ... for them to see the connection between school ... with reality behind the school gate ..."

In the learning process, group work can be beneficial in many aspects, such as: "students get more practice, higher quality of practice, more speaking time for students, individual interaction, collaboration – students can be supported by their partners, comforting for shy students, higher motivation and autonomy in decision-making, varied contributions" (Straková, 2013, p. 114). On the other hand, it may have certain disadvantages, such as students "hiding" in the group and letting more extrovert students "do the work". Giving students space to talk goes hand in hand with creating appropriate conditions that would ease the whole process and erase the language barriers. This can be done through dialogues, asking about opinions, etc. If there are language barriers, it may be more appropriate to start with dialogues, groups and after that frontal discussion. This pyramid discussion "gives students time to practice speaking in smaller groups before facing the whole class" (Esfandiari & Knight, 2013, p. 22). The comments below provide the participants' points of view on the issue discussed:

S4: "I am trying to engage them in the first place, so that there is not only one student speaking for the others ... through group work ... more activities and exercises."

S7: "I am trying to engage the students as much as possible. So that it is not just me speaking and them taking notes and memorising at home, but I am trying to engage them in the process itself, to make them learn during the lesson. So it is more like dialogues, discussions, asking about opinions ... in the language class I am trying to give them space to talk ..."

As to the fixation part of the learning process, repetition was highlighted and emphasised by the participants. Repetition as such plays an important role in the learning process, according to Larsen-Freeman (2012). What is more, repetition does not necessarily have to take place during the lesson, but a teacher can ask students to repeat what has been discussed on the whole at the end of the lesson, as one of the participants reported:

S5: "... maybe repetition ... for the lesson content fixation ... to recall it when needed."

S8: "... now I tried for the first time to ask them at the end what they managed to remember from the lesson ... maybe that's also a kind of efficiency test, but I am not sure about it".

Finally, feedback is an inseparable part of the effective teaching and learning. It is crucial that teachers get feedback from their students and, thus, can adjust the teaching methods, techniques and activities during the learning process itself. Moreover, oral feedback can be enriched by observation of the classroom. This way teachers can notice students' behaviour in order to evaluate teaching processes. In addition, the fun element should not be omitted regardless of students' age, as one of the following comments confirm:

S9: "After every activity I am trying to get some feedback. I mean, I would like to do it after every activity, to find out if they were satisfied with the activity, whether it was helpful in some way, but that is more time-consuming."

S10: *"Maybe to innovate it somehow. For example, yesterday, when I used the song, I could see that the students were impressed ... they were having fun, it was definitely more interesting for them."*

The participants on the whole demonstrated that they were fully aware of their own teacher beliefs. Even though the trainees have only begun the journey of becoming the professionals in the field of education, (in accordance with their assumptions, beliefs and opinions), it is important to investigate this initial period for it can guide and direct their teaching path followingly.

## Conclusion

In this investigation, the aim was to explore the formation and reflection of teacher beliefs in teaching on a sample of teacher trainees. The data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted as a part of the feedback sessions during teaching practice. The qualitative approach helped us collect in-depth data suitable for the following analysis.

The relevance of previous school experience (both positive and negative) and the teaching experience of the trainees (as possible factors affecting the teacher beliefs formation mentioned by Richards & Lockhart, 1996, pp. 30-31) has been supported by the study.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the participants are aware of what being a (good) teacher means to them. The findings also suggest that trust and positive learning environment play an essential role in the learning process alongside with feedback, repetition, meaningfulness, real-life situations, group work, open-ended questions, personalisation, activation of discovery processes, practical application of knowledge learnt, tackling students' curiosity and whole-person learning. The data reported here appear to support the

assumption that authoritative perception of a teacher is becoming overshadowed with a more of a partner-like role of a teacher. Rather than creating a barrier and emphasising the two distinctive roles – a teacher and a student – there is a tendency towards blending those roles and thus perceiving them on the level of a partnership. As Straková (2013) claims, “the teacher – facilitator suggests rather than directs, encourages rather than asks and advises and prompts students into mutual interaction rather than a one-way communication” (p. 37). Based on the data obtained, it may be assumed that the trainees perceive themselves as facilitators rather than controllers.

Since the study was limited to its sample, these findings can be less generalisable and, thus, caution must be applied to interpret these data. In addition, further investigation of the topic is recommended, especially with the use of quantitative research approach. A possible area of future research could be the investigation of other factors which contribute in the process of teacher beliefs formation or comparison of the beliefs of in-service teachers and senior teachers, since the teaching period naturally extends as it continues.

It is believed that the findings will make an important contribution to the field of English language teaching methodology as they have a number of important implications for future practice, e.g. for the understanding of how teachers think, i.e. what lies behind their teaching decisions.

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## **Investigating cultural contents in English language teaching materials through textbook evaluation**

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### **Abstract**

The shift in the status of English as a lingua franca has challenged native-speaker culture in English language teaching and learning. That is why it is not enough to expose language learners through monoculture language teaching. Rather being communicatively competent, learners may require inter-cultural understanding. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the representation of cultures through different senses in Oxford Progressive English (OPE), Level-10 (Rachel Redford, 2016). As OPE caters the needs of Pakistani language learners, it is hypothesized that learners' source culture prevails more than other two cultures (i.e. international, and target). To confirm this hypothesis, a detailed content analysis of cultural senses (prevailed in OPE) is carried out through Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990). The results show that the frequency of reading texts in OPE is highly imbued with learners' target culture that is followed by the international culture, and least by learners' source culture. Moreover, culturally neutral texts lack in inter-cultural understanding, and appear to be disseminated to marginalize L2 learners from target and international cultures.

**Keywords:** cultural senses; EFL contents; intercultural competence; local culture; target culture

### **1. Introduction**

The relation between language and culture is bidirectional in nature, and language is considered as essential and central element in any culture (Brooks, 1964). Undoubtedly, it is an indispensable part of ESL and EFL teaching and learning (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004) and it has always been a hot debate in language education (Kramsch, 2013). Research (Gu, 2005; Premier & Miller, 2010) focused the nature of cultural representation in language education but it does not decline cultural debate in English language learning/teaching. For, research (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Pennycook, 2007) has highlighted the importance of culture in applied linguistics. The crucial role of culture in language education is to

empower L2 cultural meaning in an appropriate way (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015).

ELT textbooks play a vital role in language education; therefore, they have been under investigation due their content, and also at discorsal level (Nguyen, 2011; Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015; Rashidi & Ghaedsharafi, 2015). Ndura (2004) states that the content of instructional material significantly affects learners' disposition towards other people, society and even themselves. Therefore, English language teaching textbooks are needed to address different cultural perspectives and cultural voices that enable the learners to figure out different cultural perspectives and values (Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011).

English language teaching textbooks are considered as "the visible heart of any ELT program" (Sheldon, 1988, p. 327) however, they are not the mere mirror of the included content. Giroux (1988) calls it *hidden curriculum* that is instilled in the form of beliefs, values and norms into the mind of the learners. Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) believe that ELT textbooks are imbued with hidden curriculum, which convey different messages about different cultures. The term hidden curriculum accentuates voices and values of a specific culture that leads L2 learners to a specific set of beliefs and values.

In 1960s, the field of language education stressed on incorporating culture in textbooks as it directed daily lifestyle (Bateman & Mattos, 2006) and cross-cultural communication and understanding (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). With the advent of communicative approach, culture and language became a pivotal a factor in language education (Canale & Swain, 1980). However, culture is both linguistically and pedagogically traceable (McKay, 2003) in language teaching. Linguistically, culture has impacts on discourse, meaning and pragmatics. By means of language, one can adapt different cultures and use it as a tool to understand perceptions that control lifestyle (Moran & Lu, 2001).

Wandel (2003) takes into consideration the view of World Englishes as a world language i.e., he maintains that English language learners must be made interculturally sensitive by using English as a lingua franca. Kramsch (2002) defined intercultural speaker as one who can interact with the speakers of other countries and also having endurance about other cultures. Moreover, a competent intercultural speaker is one who can interpret behaviors, values of their own and speakers of the other cultures having different linguistic and cultural background (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993).

Numerous studies (e.g. Abdullah & Kumari, 2009; Adaskou, et al., 1990; Aliakbari, 2004; Alpay, 2009; Baleghizadeh & Jamali Motahed, 2010; Hamiloğlu & Mendi, 2010; Kang-Young, 2009; McKay, 2003; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014) have analysed culture in ELT textbooks from different perspectives. Some researchers (Ahmed & Shah, 2013; Hermawan & Lia, 2012; Rajabi & Ketabi, 2012; Santosa, 2015; Susanto & Harjanto, 2014) have explored specifically cultural



senses in localized or global ELT textbooks according to the framework proposed by Adaskou et al. (1990). Drawing the gap from the previous studies, this study aims to investigate different types of: culture; their senses; and the input provided for cultural representation in the content of OPE. In this regard, following questions have been raised:

- How many types of culture are portrayed and which type of cultural content is predominant in OPE?
- Which cultural senses are predominant in each cultural text and what type of input is used for cultural representation in OPE?

## **2. Literature review**

There is a large body of literature to investigate the extent of cultural content portrayed in ELT/EFL textbooks. Some studies (García, 2005; Ndura, 2004) used qualitative approach, whereas the other (Ghasemi & Pasand, 2018; Hermawan & Lia, 2012; Rajabi & Ketabi, 2012; Tajeddin & Teimournezdah, 2014) adopted qualitative and quantitative approach, and recently some studies (Kiss & Weninger, 2013; Weninger & Kiss, 2013) introduced semiotic approach to study cultural content in ELT textbooks. However, not all the researches consider ELT textbook evaluation as an adequate source of cultural content representation (Yuen, 2011).

Past studies criticized English textbooks due to the lack in providing authentic language learning content in language classrooms because most of the textbooks were designed according to native speakers' (NS) intuitions about language use (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). That is why Nguyen (2011) stated that English language textbooks failed to develop intercultural competence among L2 learners. Alptekin (1993) suggests that it is not a laborious task for the material designers to add cultural content of L2 learners to ELT textbooks. He suggests that by focusing on target language culture schema, a well-paid package may be offered to writers and publishers for designing ESL and EFL textbooks.

Some researchers found that ELT textbooks were culturally biased (García, 2005) and favoured target language culture norms and values that hampered learning and perceptions of learners about the others and themselves (Ndura, 2004). Though, L2 learners trust instructional material (Ndura, 2004) yet, the content of English textbooks has the power to influence the perceptions of immigrant learners positively or negatively about their new culture and to acculturate. Banks (2001) also raised the issues of cultural biasness and Ndura (2004) listed seven types of biasness (i.e., linguistic bias, invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance, unreality, cosmetic bias and fragmentation) as found in the US textbooks. Magogwe (2009) investigated cultural biasness in ELT textbooks and explored the attitudes of Khoe students about ELT textbooks. The findings showed

that there was no variation in the cultural and it did affect the attitudes towards learning English of Khoe students.

Yuen (2011) investigated the cultural content of ELT textbooks taught in Hong Kong secondary schools. Findings revealed that textbooks represented the cultural content of US i.e., US culture was prominent while African cultures were under-represented. García (2005) investigated intercultural and international content in ELT textbooks. Results revealed that there were no international and intercultural elements in the ELT textbook taught in Spain and there was not even a single text to represent cross-culture content. Taki (2008) stressed the inclusion of ideological beliefs of local and international ELT textbooks of Iran from CDA perspective i.e., social relations between characters, content of the text and the subject positions. Results revealed that international ELT content portrayed Western economy and its consumer society and Local textbooks suffered from developing cross-culture awareness to EFL learners.

Some researchers investigated ELT textbooks applying different theoretical frameworks designed by the experts. Zakaria and Hashim (2010) conducted a research to investigate local cultural aspects in KBSM English language content using a checklist from Bank (2001). The findings revealed that there was not enough incorporation of L1 cultural elements and suggested that ELT textbooks should include content from learners' own culture. Shah, Afsar, Haq and Khan (2012) evaluated the course content of *Advance with English 5*. Findings showed that the writer was entirely unaware of social, geographical and educational needs of the learners. The EFL textbook presented unfamiliar world to the learners. Therefore, findings suggested to include local material to aid L2 learning. Another comparative analysis conducted by Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014). Their findings revealed that most of the content in the corpus of localised textbooks were culturally neutral and did not refer to any particular culture. Though, only a few cultural contents were based on target language or other cultures. Furthermore, in localised textbooks sociological aspects were more highlighted than aesthetic aspects of the culture. Contrastively in international textbooks, the main focus was on intercultural elements and two-third of the content covered aesthetic aspect. Faris (2014) also showed the textbook being loaded by target culture by means of aesthetic sense of the culture. The results are aligned with the findings of the present study.

Shah, Ahmed and Mahmood (2014) evaluated OEP through sociological sense of the culture. The findings revealed that cultural, social, religious and pedagogical needs of the learners did not match with the cultural and pedagogical values and objectives set for Pakistani ESL learners and target culture was higher than learners' source culture. Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) carried out a research in Spain to investigate the cultural content in six B1 and B2 textbooks used to teach English to the adults. By conducting a comparative study, it was reported that the

frequency counts of Big 'C' i.e., literature and art, is equally present in B1 and B2 levels. Some dissimilarities were found in other cultural senses such as the element of subjectivity in both levels. The findings revealed that B1 level textbooks dealt more with culture and B2 level textbooks paid more attention to the cultural content related to small 'c' i.e., culture deals with everyday life.

Arslan (2016) explored that textbook of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade contained more cultural aspects than 4<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. The study found uneven distribution of cultural items. It indicates that the textbooks have more cultural items from target and international culture than native culture. Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) conducted a research to investigate the representation of Big 'C' and small 'c' in three common EFL textbooks. The frequency analysis showed that *Top Notch* series indicated Big 'C' cultural themes i.e., geography and small 'c' indicated cultural themes of food, daily life, customs and norms. In *Summit* and *Passage*, small 'C' was frequent having cultural themes of beliefs and values.

Fauza (2018) explored cultural content of two ELT textbooks entitled "Bahasa Inggris 2017 revised edition" for Grades X and XI by using Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Adaskou et al. (1990) frameworks. The findings revealed that Grade-X textbook is predominant with source culture as compared to two other cultures. Whereas, Grade-XI textbook is predominant with target culture as compared to the source and international cultures that were represented by pragmatic senses than other three senses of the culture.

Arshad and Mahmood (2019) evaluated an English language textbook for Grade-11 (taught in Punjab, Pakistan) through Coyle's (2005) 4Cs (content, cognition, communication, and culture) framework. The results (obtained through a checklist, and corpus methodology) revealed non-alignment between 4Cs and the textbook. The results also showed the textbook lacking particularly in the incorporation of situations reflecting target, and learners' own cultures (i.e., most important need of ESL/ESL learners). For these reasons, the textbook was considered inappropriate for EFL/ESL settings.

By above literature, the researchers found that up till now no research has been carried out to investigate the types of culture and cultural aspects employed in OPE 10 using the cultural model by Adaskou et al. (1990). Therefore, the present study aims to highlight whether the textbook fulfills the cultural, social, religious and pedagogical needs of the Pakistani learners or not and which culture and cultural senses are disseminated to increase intercultural awareness.

### 3. Methodology

This study used qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. The content analysis is carried out of OPE in order to explore the type of cultural representation and categories of cultural content. Content analysis is a widely used research instrument to analyze the written texts' content regarding the inclusion of words

and its related concepts and the relationship between them (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). The present research employed content analysis to evaluate the OPE to investigate its cultural relevance. The quantitative research method was used to record the frequency and percentage of cultural categories found in the identified types of culture. The researchers selected OPE written by Rachel Redford (Third Edition, 2016) as a sample for content analysis to identify and analyze the types of culture and their senses according to Cortazzi and Jin (1999) to distinguish different types of culture according to the cultural content i.e., learners' source culture, learner target culture and international culture. The researchers limited the analysis to reading texts only by classifying it according to the type of culture and different senses of cultural content by examining the reading content of OPE. For the categorization of cultural senses, this research used cultural model (Adaskou et al., 1990) to categorize cultural content based on four senses i.e., (1) Aesthetic sense (*media, cinema, literature, and art*), (2) Sociological sense (*home life, interpersonal relationships, and custom, work and leisure, nature of family, material conditions*), (3) Semantic sense (*food, cloth, institution*), and (4) Pragmatic sense (*speech acts, paralinguistic features, social skills, speech acts, background*). After classifying the identified cultural senses from the reading text, in order to investigate the predominant type of culture and cultural senses to see how it raises inter-cultural awareness among L2 learners. Up till now, no research has been conducted in Pakistani context to investigate the representation of cultures through cultural senses and intercultural awareness for L2 learners, and therefore the present study is filling this research gap.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Cultural Category	The Aesthetic Sense	The Sociological Sense	The Semantic Sense	The Pragmatic Sense	**Total/Percentage
The Source Culture	6	2	2	0	10 / 28.6
The Target Culture	9	3	0	1	13 / 37.1
The International Culture	9	3	0	0	12 / 34.3
*Total/Percentage	24 / 68>	8 / 22>	2 / 5>	1 / 2>	35 / 100

Tab. 1: Frequency of Cultural Senses and Distinctive Occurrences in OEP

\*Presents total frequencies and percentages of cultural senses

\*\*Presents total frequencies and percentages of cultural categories

The first research question of this research was to know about the representation of different cultures, and dissemination of cultural contents in OEP. The results revealed three types of cultural treatments with significant differences i.e., learners' source culture reading text, target culture reading texts, and international culture reading texts. The identified number of learners' target culture reading texts is 13 i.e., 37.1% of the total reading texts. The number of international cultures reading texts are 12 and ranked on second number i.e., 34.3% of the total reading texts whereas learners' source reading texts are ranked on third number i.e., 28.6% of the total reading texts. These findings are in line with Arshad and Mahmood (2019), Binahnia (2012), Hamiloğlu and Mendi (2010), Yamanaka (2006), Zu and Kong (2009). Zu and Kong (2009) found out that the units in secondary English textbook of China included topics that were concerned with learners' target culture and textbook covered topics like *leisure, everyday life, family relationships, holidays and social customs*. Similarly, Yamanaka (2006) reported the findings of in-use Japanese English textbooks that there was a lack of emphasis on the texts chosen from outer circles as compared to texts chosen from inner circle countries.

Hamiloğlu and Mendi's (2010) analysed a textbook *New Streetwise* and revealed that the book did not have any text that contained intercultural elements rather focused on USA and UK cultures. Similarly, the findings are in agreement with Herman and Noerkhasnah (2012), and Mahmood, Asghar and Hussain. (2012) which highlight the fact that EFL textbooks promote non-native culture. It means that the distinctive occurrences of learners' target culture reading texts cover wide range of themes that do not necessarily represent L2 cultural elements in the textbook which ran encounter to the researchers' expectations. Therefore, the textbook provides less diverse experiences about L2 culture. In OPE, the detailed target reading content is written either by British and American authors, or their unit themes are subjected under UK and USA settings. The inclusion of adequate L2 cultural content incorporates those elements of the target language that provide an insight to L2 learners regarding intercultural understanding. Many English textbooks are dominant with target culture content that motivate non-native L2 learners who wish to be competent like natives in their proficiency (Mckay, 2006). The identified reading texts of L2 culture are mainly related to news, journals, and single instance of fiction or classic fiction. The highest frequency of the target culture reading text recorded in OPE is beneficial for the students to follow safe traditions of the target culture while facing native culture.

But the inclusion of culturally neutral texts cannot promote optimal intercultural communication. In OPE textbook, some of the L2 cultural elements (i.e., opposite to their religious and cultural norms) are also found in reading texts that might have negative influence on the Pakistani learners. '*Early Days*' presents the conflict between Western and Pakistani cultures. The story inculcates the

Western culture which may breed certain undesirable behavioural patterns among Pakistani learners like 'playing cards' that do not have compatibility with religious and culture values. It may develop a habit of gaming among learners at young age or snatching others' property through false means. Similarly, another instance from the Western culture is presented in the reading text '*The Kingdom*'. *After the day's work had been done, cards would be played in the kitchen, and then stories would be told.* The setting of the story is Ireland where playing cards is considered as a source of amusement. The writer has incorporated Western ideology, social values and worldviews despite of the claim that OEP is designed according to the local social and cultural values of the local learners. The writer imbued Western ideology in the content of the textbook as hidden curriculum to westernize the minds of the learners (Shah et al., 2013). Dominance of the target culture has been found in the studies conducted by Arslan (2016) and Faris (2014) in Cianjur, West Java.

Richards (2001) states that commercialized textbooks do not cater the needs and interest of the learners in a particular country and area where the high selling is the ultimate motive. With this ideology, commercialized textbooks are fully embedded with target culture and presenting international culture possibly in a good way but it is not possible to represent pure learners' source culture in the designed textbook for one country. The results of this study show that 12 out of 14 target culture reading texts are presented in a neutral way, although the setting of the reading content is UK, USA, Ireland and Australia but it does not include culture specific items. Benahnia (2012) states that source language culture gives confidence to beginner EFL learners but when they move to next processes of language learning, the learners should be exposed to target language culture which facilitates learners to experience broader range of cultural elements in target language. In this way, inclusion of target culture brings motivation. Adaskou et al. (1990) and Gardner and Lambert (1972), integrating cultural components in teaching language content, motivates the learners. Pennycook (2010) also favours foreign language teaching in the local settings and considers it as a central organizing factor that shapes social life to act in specific places. It is extremely important that the writer should add such components to teach target language as are appropriate to learners' needs. Moreover, social and cultural knowledge facilitates acquisition and raises cultural awareness of target language in a positive way.

The findings of the present study are congruent with results of Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2013) content analysis of English textbooks in which learners' source and international culture was less as compared to learners' target culture. Despite the importance of learners' source culture, the OPE writer included only 10 out of 35 reading texts from learners' source culture. As OPE is designed for commercial purposes without considering local needs of the learners it dominates the nation's

inner culture. Richards (2001) states that commercialized textbooks do not cater the needs and interests of the learners in a particular country and area where the high selling is the ultimate motive. With this ideology, commercialize textbooks are fully embedded with target culture and presenting international culture possibly in a good way but it is not possible to represent pure learners' source culture in the designed textbook for one country. Contrary to the findings of the present study, some studies investigated the types of cultures prevailed in ELT textbooks and findings showed that the textbook writers focus on Euro-centric and mono-cultural approach regarding contents of the book by making certain changes to highlight their Saudi culture (Ahmad & Shah, 2014).

There are only a few instances from three reading texts which impart learners' source cultural, social and religious beliefs. The reading text *'Storm in the desert'* is about a poor family living in *Cholistan* desert dealing with the difficulties of life alongwith their camels in Pakistan. The author highlights the miseries of the people living in the desert. The expression *'Allah, Allah'* shows the gratitude of the character after finding water for some days that will be enough for their survival. These words familiarize learners with their own culture like *'Chaddar'* and such a text appeals learners and makes them comfortable. Another reading text *'Kaleidoscope on Wheels'* is about the truck art in Pakistan. The text represents rich heritage of the art and painting on trucks in Central Asia. The author used cultural words like *'Parandas'* (braids made of cotton and silk yarn), *'Payal'* (ankle bells worn on a chain), and *'Taj'* (crown).

Similarly, reading text *'The culinary delights of Lahore'* exposes the learners to their traditional Lahori dishes like *'Asli ghee, Naan, Daal, Raita, Thaka-thak, Thaka teen, Karahi, Balti ghost, Paayey or Siri-payey, Rahu fish'*. The learners become familiarize with their traditional cultural food items in the modern times where the children are more interested to have Western branded food which is not as healthy as Pakistani food. The interview of *'Amir Khan'* is not significantly cultural. The interviewee is living in England and uses colloquial expressions like *'You are dead lean and muscular', 'I'm one of those guys who always have to keep wining', 'I did this by being normal, not cocky'*. This reading text represents the national hero (World Champion Boxer) of Pakistan to the learners. One reading text from a unit *'Sports: text on Polo'* highlights the tribal sports in Pakistan. Polo is a festival celebrated by the tribes of Chitral in the Northern areas in KPK, Pakistan. Different texts selected from different provinces of Pakistan i.e., Sindh, and KPK give awareness to the learners about their tribal, geographical sports sports.

In Pakistan, learners are more aware of cricket rather than their cultural festivals. These reading texts represent cultural artifacts of Pakistan as Gray (2010) considers EFL textbooks as cultural artifact. Therefore, inclusion of source culture materials in ELT textbooks help the learners (with different cultural backgrounds) to become confident about their own culture and provide them an



opportunity to learn about to explain their cultural elements in English language, which must be done by interaction with native speakers. The observed number of reading text that represent international culture are 12 out of 35 of the total reading texts. The findings revealed that international culture reading texts are selected from South Korea, Nepal, Scotland, Africa, German, Malaysia and China. It has been observed that the reading text selected from China, Nepal highlights their culture and other countries did not show their cultural significance (culturally neutral). The findings revealed that the three out of two internationally embedded reading texts selected from Chinese culture.

To second research question was raised to answer that which cultural sense is highly prevailed in OPE and which type of input is used for cultural representation? Three cultural senses (i.e., aesthetic, sociological and semantic) have been predominantly found in 35 reading texts of OEP textbook and only 1 pragmatic sense has been found in target culture reading texts. Two major aspects of aesthetic sense are focused i.e., media and literature in the reading texts of all three cultures. Kraidy (2002) also states that media is one of the main sources to globalize culture and acts as a conceptual magnet that attracts different theorists and researchers from a variety of interdisciplinary formations like communication and media studies, cultural studies, sociology and geography. In the present research findings, the reading text which comes under media is particularly about mountain climbing and is having references to "*Climbing on Naga Parbat Mountain*", sports "*Interview of Amir Khan Boxer Champion*" and the game of Polo which highlights cultural festival celebrated in northern areas of Pakistan. *Early Child Days* negatively portrayed the negative picture of a Muslim family residing in England in a difficult situation due to poverty and clash of Western and Pakistani cultures and when they come to Pakistan, the circumstances became even more difficult and finally they decided to leave Pakistan and try their luck in England. The writer displayed a pathetic situation of Pakistani government offices. The writer implicitly portrayed that in spite of a clash of cultures and poverty in the West, Pakistani people prefer to live in England.

The story is not completely elaborated and in *Great Grandfather Bridge*, the texts are not so well elaborated and most of the reading texts taken from news reports or news articles are culturally neutral. They are not sufficiently representing aesthetic sense. One of the possible reasons of cultural neutrality is that the writer of the book may not be sufficiently aware of Pakistani culture due to which the inclusion of culturally loaded texts are less and implicitly portray negative image of Pakistan. Culturally neutral text contradicts the belief that teaching content cannot be neutral. The poem written by a Muslim poet represents the grandfather as one of the strong pillars of the family who takes care of its children and tries to protect them from every difficult situation. The poet spreads the positive values and realizes the audience to respect them. The results also



showed two occurrences for both sociological and semantic senses in reading texts. The reading texts are selected from fiction and non-fiction. Sociological sense tends to be more prominent in learners' source culture and embraced different aspects like a reading text *Kaleidoscope on Wheels* depicts traditional art, and truck painting culture. While the reading text *Storm in the Desert* showed the nature of the family (*Mama, sister, Auntie, Baba, grandfather*) from the reading text '*Storm in the Desert*'. This text shows the difficulties of life faced by the people living in desert areas. This seems closer to the learners' culture and geography where people work out for their survival.

Sociological contents provide real life context that is relevant and motivates the learner to learn the language. Similarly, reading text of *Early Days* represents real-life situation of Pakistani women identity. Inclusion of native literature and poems is a priceless act as it strengthens learner's cultural identity. The text represents Asian culture where a house-wife does all the home chores. McKay (2002) states that the living routine of daily life is the main issue in which ordinary people are interested to talk in their daily routine.

The semantic sense has the references to specific items related to learners' culture. The cultural items represent learners' source culture food items and clothing. Pakistani food items typically highlight the Lahori cultural dishes like '*Asli Ghee, Naan, Daal, Raita, Thaka-thak, Thaka Teen, Karahi, Balti Ghost, Paayey or Siri-Paye, Rahu fish*', *Chadar* (traditional garment of Muslim women that cover whole body), *Toba* (Water whole beneath the sand), *Mama skirt* (a loose piece of cloth wrapped around the waist to cover lower body worn by men and women in South Asia). Thus, learners' source culture reading texts are loaded with aesthetic sense because aesthetic sense is loaded with learners' own cultural elements. On the other side, some reading texts are neutral. However, sociological sense covered a broad range of learners' cultural aspects that holds learners' familiarity with their own culture. However, semantic senses are embodied with such items that represent rich learner's source culture that can be interesting for them. There is only one instance of pragmatic sense although interview is added in the reading text but it does not have culture specific element rather the interviewee uses colloquial language that cannot teach the learner to communicate appropriately.

The highest occurrence of cultural sense explored from learners' target culture reading texts is of aesthetic sense followed by sociological and pragmatic senses and having no semantic sense. The occurrences of aesthetic sense are found in four literary texts and three from media (news articles). The literary text included one poem and three other reading texts which did not necessarily represent target culture. These reading texts do not depict any L2 cultural item and these types of reading texts deprive L2 learners of getting an insight into an L2 culture. It means that the inclusion of culturally neutral target texts do not provide learners the 'new experience' and show how people of other cultures live. This creates social and

psychological distance among L2 learners and there is no practicality whereas practicality always leads to target culture context (Cunningsworth, 1995). The reading texts, that show sociological senses of the target culture, are represented through work i.e., interpersonal relationships and material conditions. In *'The Kingdom'* sociological elements related to work and interpersonal relations are found in target culture reading text that depict the pure interpersonal relation and material condition of livelihood among grandson and grandmother and setting of the story is pure village life. Similarly, *River Boy* shows the strong interpersonal relation between granddaughter and grandfather. Such as:

*But how are you really?' 'Fine.' He glanced at her, then gave a wink.  
'So long as you are around.' She looked away, trying not to show how  
much it hurt her to see him as frail as this.*

The reading texts of both learner source and target cultures lie under the same theme i.e., grandparents. In this way, the learners will be able to talk in L2 and perhaps communicate their cultural norms to other language speakers. No such work and leisure activity are included as it is one of the cultural aspects to promote culture. Olajide (2010) believed that such exposure of work and leisure activity might increase sense of identity among learners. The reading texts like *'The Hound of the Baskervilles'*, *'Special Teaching'*, *'The Tables Turned'* are also culturally neutral texts. Table 1 shows the frequency occurrences of cultural sense in learners' target culture texts in which aesthetic sense is predominant with total nine reading texts out of which seven are related to media (news articles, reports, reading for information and opinion) of different countries of the world and two literary texts were found from Malaysia and Germany. The selected readings categorized in the media are having themes of *Taking Risks*, *Desert*, *Sports*, *Trees*, *School*, *Wild Life*. No cultural instance has been identified except in the reading texts of *'Sports'* in which *'Elephant Polo'* that is played in Nepal and Scotland as a sports festival. But in all the mentioned readings, all are culturally neutral.

In international target reading texts, aesthetic sense is significantly followed by sociological sense. Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) stated that the aesthetic and sociological senses are culturally laden and culture is presented in a conceptualized way in these both senses. The literary texts represent international culture through their cultural festival and promote Chinese beliefs and values, customs and traditions, in this way, the writer of the textbook imparted religious beliefs and attitudes about the god of other religions. References from Chinese cultural items are found in *"cymbals and bells, tumblers and jugglers came first in the procession but the dragon would soon be in view.... The gigantic statue of the Budha dominated a whole wall of the temple... just by the entrance, a fortune-teller sat behind a small table of ornate ivory....* Lexical words like *Budha* and *Fortune teller* depict inclusion of Chinese religion in the textbook which is taught to Muslim

students. The writer of the textbook has inculcated intentionally non-Muslim cultural beliefs as a hidden curriculum to the textbook which is designed for a Muslim country. Similarly, the Muslims do not believe on fortune tellers, they have a firm faith in Allah and no other person can foresight future. The learning process can be hindered if learners feel alienate from the target culture (Faris, 2014). For intercultural awareness, the writer should add certain content which impart cultural beliefs and voices to the L2 learners. Another positive influence of integration of a different culture is that it aids learning process and inter-cultural understanding so that one can behave according to that sociocultural situation. Chapelle (2009) indicates that ELT textbooks are not for teaching language but conveying different hidden agendas. The existence of culturally neutral reading text should be decreased of international or target culture as Tajeddin and Teimournezhad's (2014) state that such an agenda may alienate learners from the authentic, real-life cultural context and work against their awareness of culture specific features. Moreover, weak type of cultural content may hinder the process of language learning (Abdullah & Kumari, 2009). The reading texts '*The Beijing Childhood*' and '*German Folk Tale*' highlight the sociological sense. It can be identified through customs, nature of family and home life/interpersonal relationships. The reading text '*The Beijing Childhood*', highlights the nature of family and the story shows the universality of mother's love and affection for her children. Another reading text '*German Folk Tale*', significantly represents the love of a grandson for his grandfather over the cunning behaviour of his mother towards his grandfather. The message of love and affection between the family members are relatable in every culture of the world. These two reading texts have positive moral lesson to spread among different cultures of the world. Evans (2009) states that folklore has an impact on our society e.g. it teaches us values. The pragmatic sense in international target reading texts has no occurrence in reading texts. Thus, OEP provides insufficient information regarding speech acts and its appropriate use in a particular situation (meta-pragmatic information) and previous studies also have highlighted such issues in ELT textbooks (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004). The L2 or international pragmatic sense raises learners' intercultural awareness and becomes familiar with various socio-cultural contexts.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the types of cultures reflected in the content of OPE, Level-10 and to highlight the cultural senses imbued in the input reading texts. The results showed that the OPE is not serving the intercultural communicative competence to L2 learners. Most of the reading texts are culturally neutral. Moreover, the textbook seems to include the hidden agenda of curriculum in the form of religious beliefs and values of other culture which may hinder the

understanding of the Pakistani learners. The results also indicate that OEP does not provide adequate and accurate L2 pragmatic input for the development of pragmatic competence in target language. Furthermore, the reading texts do not promote the intercultural communicative aspect in the forms of a dialogue to present language in real-life context. The instructional content should be enriched in students' own culture so that they can use language in a unique way as someone functions appropriately in other cultures.

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