Issues in Promoting Multilingualism
Teaching – Learning – Assessment

Edited by Hanna Komorowska

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NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

We are pleased to present the publication entitled *Issues in Multilingualism. Teaching, Learning, Assessment* devoted to language teaching. We are thrilled that the book is published at the time of the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union, whose top priorities in the field of education embrace the promotion of language learning, including less frequently used languages. Ensuring quality education at any level would not be possible if not for the command of foreign languages, modern and efficient language teaching methods, and the opportunities for exchange of experiences by partners coming from different countries of the European Union. Modern teacher training, raising the attractiveness of in-service training and grasping the opportunities resulting from educational mobility would also hardly be possible if not for the active use of foreign languages.

For many years, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System has been committed to the implementation of European educational programmes, such as Socrates, Youth and the Lifelong Learning Programme. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the European Language Label programme, which we have successfully implemented from its very onset. The programme has greatly contributed to the promotion of high quality and interesting methods in language teaching.

Over the years, in our everyday work with beneficiaries implementing international educational projects we have observed many examples of how language knowledge provides various opportunities for personal development as well as strategic development of many organisations, transfer of state-of-the-art solutions, better information management, and enables language users to enter European cooperation networks. We have seen young children, including preschoolers and children coming from communities which require special support, developing their competences in various fields and their teachers opening up to new ideas, adding variety to their classes, and to a growing extent using the latest information and communication technologies.
It is with great satisfaction that we note that vocational education and training to a considerable degree has benefited from the implementation of European projects, especially these involving mobilities, where developing language skills focused on the performance of a specific work-related task comes naturally. Labour market requirements pertaining to language skills are explicit; persons entering the market who display good command of several languages and experience gained during placements and training abroad stand a much greater chance of finding employment and of swift professional advancement. Therefore, the importance of language education, also as a precondition for a good start in a career, should be emphasised and efforts should be made to ensure that the educational offer meets the requirements of employers. One of the strategies for achieving this goal is the promotion of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as an instrument preparing for profession-related mobility.

All these goals are feasible only if we ensure adequate language training for teachers, both those teaching languages and those teaching general and vocational subjects. The Lifelong Learning Programme provides for broad activities aimed at raising the qualifications of teachers in various spheres.

We hope that this publication will inspire reflection and encourage you to take an active part in initiatives that promote modern methods of teaching languages, including those spoken in neighbouring countries and used by migrant persons. It is thanks to such initiatives that the idea of multilingualism can be translated into specific actions and benefits resulting from European cooperation.

Anna Atlas

Director of the Lifelong Learning Programme
Foundation for the Development of the Education System
Note From The Editor

*Issues in Multilingualism. Teaching – Learning – Assessment* is a collection of articles reflecting Polish approaches to the promotion of high quality second and foreign language education. In the transformation period Poland undertook a great effort to promote language learning in schools of all levels as well as in lifelong education. The speed of implementing language teaching and teacher education reforms was not surprising – a country whose language is rarely spoken outside its borders has no difficulty understanding the role of languages in international communication.

Today, more than twenty years after the fall of communism, quantitative problems have already been solved; a large number of qualified teachers have been trained, two foreign languages have been introduced in the school curriculum, the early start has been successfully promoted and language schools flourish.

Language education, however, faces new challenges. New communicative needs spring from new contexts created by educational and professional mobility. In consequence more stress is put on face to face / oral and business communication, language for specific purposes, issues of language and culture as well as the development of intercultural competence.

New teaching methods and techniques result from a growing knowledge of psychological and sociological processes. Innovative educational approaches aim at supporting language learning in a variety of ways, by means of promoting learner autonomy and self-reflection, focusing on transversal and transferable skills such as reading comprehension or critical reading skills and integrating language and content (CLIL).

Quality language education calls for developing learning to learn skills through strategy training, for adjusting methodology to new learning environments as well as for introducing new forms of assessment and self-assessment. More and more attention is given to computer assisted language learning, multimedia, self-instruction and guided learning in a corporate environment.
Benefits springing from multilingualism are numerous, therefore helping students to develop their plurilingual competence and creating learning opportunities is crucial and calls for a modern system of teacher education.

Examples of the way Poland approaches these issues are presented in the texts included in the present volume.

_Hanna Komorowska_

_Editor_
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Part I
TEACHING
1. Language teacher education in Europe – past and present

Teacher education was first noticed as an important language policy issue in the 1970s – surprisingly late, considering that more or less formal language teaching started in ancient Rome. Yet for many centuries expectations related to language teaching were easy to formulate because of the methods used – private teachers used direct, conversational methods and native-speaker status was considered a sufficient qualification. In the Grammar Translation Method the ability to translate texts into the learners’ mother tongue was all that could be expected. Audiolingualism postulated that the teacher should no more than pedantically follow materials designed for the language course. Its offspring, such as The Callan Method, maintain that expectation even today. The Natural Approach and many other unconventional methods based on near native-speaker conversational competence require no more than language proficiency and interactive skills.

The situation changed after 1970 with the advent of The Communicative Approach. Its eclectic nature combined the best of audiolingualism and cognitivism. The contribution of audiolingualism called for course planning, syllabus design and testing skills combined with the ability to employ context-based interactive procedures supported by technical aids. The contribution of cognitivism required the teacher to skilfully provide meaningful input, adopt new approaches to error as a learning step, as well as promote creativity, learner autonomy and free practice displaying the knowledge of a variety of classroom techniques such as role play, simulation,
discussion, games, debates, pair work, group work or project work. Native-speaker competence was no longer sufficient nor could any single set of materials precisely target an idiosyncratic combination of factors in a given group of learners. For the first time in the history of language teaching true professionalism was needed on the part of the classroom teacher.

2. The structure of language teacher education

Interest in teacher education started with the debates at national and international levels on processes and procedures leading to a formal teaching qualification. Attention was given to the length of the teacher training course, the status of the training institution and the role of the so-called induction phase in schools – issues presented in detail in Eurydice publications from 2002 and 2008.

The length of the preparation for the teaching profession was in many countries considered insufficient and was extended as early as the 1970s e.g. in Germany, Iceland and Malta. In the following decade similar decisions were taken in Belgium, Sweden and Slovenia, while in the 1990s the length of study was extended in France, Norway and Latvia. Many countries in which future teachers were trained at non-university teacher training institutions decided to start training teachers at universities. Together with academic education, prospective teachers were now offered more contact hours within the professional component of their study. This process was started relatively early, i.e. in the 1970s, in Denmark and Malta. In later years it also reached Sweden, France and the Netherlands as well as countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Eurydice 2002: 8–21).

Countries where the pedagogical component was not part of the academic curriculum or which offered amounts of contact hours considered insufficient for professional education opted for a final on-the-job qualifying phase of study. Such a phase was usually school-based and functioned as induction into the teaching profession. This kind of solution has, for instance, been adopted in England, Cyprus, France, Holland, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and Luxembourg. Some countries, like Poland, introduced a system of promoting qualified teachers in which the first stage was at the same time the induction stage. In some countries, e.g. Germany, Slovenia, Luxembourg or Cyprus, the final on-the-job qualifying phase in schools is treated as part of university education, therefore students have to pass
a final or even a state examination to complete this phase, be granted a university diploma and have their teaching qualification recognized (Eurydice 2002: 18–19, 77–82; Wilkomirska 2005: 48–50). Both the final on-the-job qualifying phase and the induction phases in schools call for the so-called mentor, a qualified and experienced teacher whose task is to offer support and guidance to the trainee in his/her first months in school. Mentor training is often part of postgraduate university study.

Decisions related to the final on-the-job qualifying phase and/or the induction phase are strongly determined by the structure of teacher education. Two basic structural models can be distinguished in the process of teacher training: a sequential (consecutive) model and a parallel (concurrent) one. In the sequential model the teacher education component is provided after the general period of study, as it is done in England, Scotland or Ireland. In the parallel model pedagogical preparation forms a built-in component of academic education, a solution adopted in Germany, Denmark as well as in most of the new member countries of the European Union. In some countries, e.g. in Finland, Norway and Sweden, both models coexist. Teachers for primary schools are usually trained in the concurrent model and consecutive models are often used in training teachers for lower secondary schools. In half of the European countries in the training of teachers for secondary schools both models coexist (Eurydice 2008: 81).

Irrespective of the structural model heated discussions focused on the ratio of academic and professional education and training. Debates on the subject referred, however indirectly, to sequential and parallel models of teacher education discussed above, because the dominance of the academic component often resulted in the choice of the sequential model, while stress on professional training led to parallel or mixed models.

In sequential models academic studies preceded professional training. Parallel models opened an even more fierce fight over time given to both aspects of teacher preparation. Whatever the final decision, the academic component comprises courses leading to language proficiency, linguistics, literature as well as life and culture of a given language community. In teacher training institutions this component, frequently reduced to a minimum, was often referred to as background studies. The academic component is strengthened in countries opting for university education for all the teachers in the school system. This tendency can be seen in Luxembourg, Holland or Spain to mention just a few examples (Zawadzka 2004: 52). In the 1970s and 1980s the strengthening of the academic
component was usually achieved at the cost of teacher training. This changed in the early 1990s. Now not only countries with widely used languages such as France or Spain, but also countries with languages less widely used (at least in the European context), such as Portugal, tend to strengthen both components, e.g. by means of introducing compulsory practice periods in schools or extending the length of the teaching practicum.

Extending the length of studies, a tendency mentioned earlier in this section, is often the effect of these changes. The most common minimum period of teacher training in Europe is four years, with the duration of minimum three years in Austria, Belgium, Poland and Romania, and of six years in Italy and Luxembourg (Eurydice 2008: 81). Decisions as to the amount of time needed for particular components are often made centrally in the form of minimum requirements for the teaching qualification in a given country. Sometimes, however, they are delegated to particular universities or teacher training institutions which are thus allowed a relatively large margin of freedom in designing curricula and teaching plans. Today the total participation of the teacher education component in overall academic studies ranges from 10% in Spain to 50% in Germany or Malta (Eurydice 2005: 194). A great variety as to the obligatory or optional status of particular courses can also be noted with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) being in more and more countries awarded the obligatory status, although with a largely varying number of contact hours, e.g. only 28 in Cyprus and as many as 200 in Sweden (Wiłkomirska 2005: 46–47).

In a given national context all the above decisions are usually determined by the job description of the teacher. If the teacher is expected to function as a subject-specialist teaching one or two school subjects, the level of expectations as to the professional competence is very high, while the level of expectations related to pastoral care, interpersonal relations or special educational needs is relatively low. Conversely, if the teacher is expected to teach all the subjects and spend most or all of the school time with the same group of learners, expectations related to his/her pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills are very high, while those related to expert knowledge are kept at a relatively low level. Since the 1970s a growing tendency has been noticed to keep integrative teaching at the primary level and provide specialist teaching in lower and upper secondary education. Nowadays, however, it is more and more difficult to keep those
two kinds of knowledge apart and specialist teachers are often employed in primary education as well.

3. The content of language teacher education

Structural models of the so-called initial teacher education discussed above outline main directions in pre-service training, but do not determine the teaching content to be included in the curricula of teacher training institutions. Pre-service teacher training curriculum has been developed with little support of theory. When it arrived, most of the practical solutions were already in place with seemingly little need for fundamental changes.

First attempts to identify what should be taught were based on conclusions drawn from research projects on teachers’ knowledge and skills, undertaken in the field of general education. Early publications from the 1980s pointed to the need for three types of knowledge: a) subject matter knowledge, b) curricular knowledge and c) pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1986). This list was extended in the following decade by Grossman (1995) to cover:

- the knowledge of content;
- the knowledge of learners and learning;
- the knowledge of general pedagogy;
- the knowledge of the curriculum;
- the knowledge of the context and
- the knowledge of self.

Towards the end of the same decade a detailed model was worked out for language teacher education by J.T. Roberts (1998). The following components were identified:

- content knowledge (e.g. knowledge of the target language system);
- pedagogical content knowledge (e.g. content restructured for pedagogical purposes);
- general pedagogic knowledge (e.g. evaluation or classroom management);
- curricular knowledge (e.g. knowledge of exams, resources);
- contextual knowledge (e.g. schools, community);
- process knowledge (e.g. classroom inquiry skills, team skills).

Extending the list of knowledge types proved to be no more than an academic exercise and has by no means helped teacher trainers to identify the teaching content needed. For that reason teacher educators turned to
behaviour-oriented lists of skills in the form of early ‘Can Do’ statements. Richards, for instance, pointed out the need to develop two types of skills, i.e. general skills such as the skill to select learning activities, present them, ask appropriate questions or check understanding, and language teaching skills such as the skill to balance fluency and accuracy or to appropriately treat language errors (Richards 1998).

The skills-based content proved to be relatively easy to incorporate in in-service teacher training, but much more difficult to be translated into subject areas for pre-service teacher education.

A model which nearly satisfied the curricular needs of teacher training institutions was developed relatively late, i.e. in 2000, when P. James prepared a list of skills which lent itself relatively easily to be divided into subject areas. It comprised:

- subject matter skills;
- methodological skills;
- decision-making skills;
- social and interactive skills and
- enabling skills (such as presentation skills, study skills, etc.).

Initially knowledge and skills, thus outlined, formed part of only two crudely divided areas:

- the teaching methodology and
- the teaching practicum.

National teacher education systems have from the beginning vastly differed in the perception of the role of these two components. Time offered to cover them still ranges from no more than 40–65 hours of language teaching methodology in Holland and Iceland to 150–180 in Spain and Luxembourg. Even bigger differences can be found in the amount of time spent on the teaching practice in schools: from 60 hours in Norway to 700 hours in Belgium (Eurydice 2001: 145–147; Komorowska 2007).

In the 1990s teacher education became one of the focal points in the work of the Council of Europe in a series of workshops called New Style Workshops / Ateliers Nouveau Style, where two countries held one international workshop each with a period of 3-year project work conducted by international groups of teachers in-between the two sessions. A serious debate was restarted on the type of knowledge and skills to be developed in prospective teachers and on the structure of pre-service education curriculum which would lead to a qualification. Teacher training institutions were recommended to implement the so-called ‘four-cornerstone curriculum’ with the main subject,
methodology of teaching the subject, pedagogy and psychology. In the case of modern languages this meant the introduction of practical language teaching, FLT methodology, psychology and pedagogy with a set amount of teaching practice in schools (Council of Europe, Report no. 16, 1996).

As a result, in the last decade the professional component started to be perceived as a broader spectrum of knowledge and skills. Apart from methodology and the teaching practicum, most of the EU member countries have now introduced two more subject areas – psychology and pedagogy.

The introduction of psychology and pedagogy into the teacher education curriculum was not a result of administrative decisions only. The awareness of individual differences and their role in language acquisition, the early start in kindergartens and in the early primary as well as the promotion of Modern Languages for Specific Purposes taught to adult professionals were all factors pointing to the need for the psychological education of language teachers. The need to introduce content from the field of educational sciences, on the other hand, was related to the necessity of functioning in the class-lesson-oriented school system and responding to requirements formulated by school administration. Managing large groups of learners proved impossible without the awareness of group dynamics and other group processes, while the successful integration of students with special educational needs in mainstream education is possible only for teachers with specific pedagogical knowledge and skills. Since the beginning of the new century new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has also been considered an indispensable part of any teacher’s preparation for the profession (Eurydice 2002: 49–50).

The nature of the national context often determines other specific curricular requirements. Multilingual countries, such as Luxembourg or Belgium, want their teachers to be able to function in bi- or trilingual educational contexts. Countries with large numbers of immigrants see the need for knowledge and skills to work in multicultural contexts and for that reason clear goals are postulated vis-á-vis their teacher training institutions. Yet certain aspects seem to be lacking, whatever the need. Several years ago the European Union noticed for the first time that no country offers prospective teachers sufficient know-how related to stress management (Eurydice 2002: 53–65).

One might think that each country has managed to work out a practical system of its own for the training of modern language teachers, that useful solutions have been found, no more than small adjustments will now be
made to meet the recommendations of the European Union and the debate is over. The debate, however, is not over and it soon turned out that content-oriented teacher education does not guarantee skills and competences needed in the workplace. Reasons for this were traced back to the way teacher education was organized. The problem is that, whatever the final breakdown of content into subject areas in the curricula and syllabi of particular teacher training institutions, teacher education can take several possible courses depending on the paradigm adopted.


It is interesting to note that none of the paradigms functioning in language teacher education had its origins in the field of linguistics or language teaching.

From the birth of audiolingualism, often labelled ‘the scientific method’, till the 1990s language teaching methodology was treated as part of linguistics that had nothing in common with general pedagogy. Only after 1990 did educational research projects attract some attention in the FLT field and start to be perceived as sources which can contribute to the teaching of modern languages.

In the field of teacher education parallels were relatively easy to detect, considering the fact that in a given national context language teachers face the same type of qualification requirements as teachers of other subjects, work according to the same job description and cope with similar types of difficulties. That is why studies on teacher training published in the field of general pedagogy finally attracted the attention of linguists.

Educational scientists have actively been dealing with issues in teacher education since the early 1980s when the value of John Dewey’s contribution from the 1930s was rediscovered. Dewey’s approach to child learning called for specific skills on the part of educators, hence the interest in how to educate future teachers.

Paradigms in teacher education were first presented in K.M. Zeichner’s seminal article (Zeichner 1983), where four basic options were critically discussed, i.e. behaviouristic, personalistic, traditional craft and inquiry-oriented.

The now famous reflective paradigm for teacher education was postulated in Schoen’s book entitled The Reflective Practitioner published
in 1983 as a result of numerous earlier discussions in the field, though
new ideas were first put forth by J. Schwabb in 1969. It was his article
entitled ‘The Practical: A Language for Curriculum’ published in no. 78 of
The School Review that for the first time introduced the notion of ‘practical
deliberation’, later known as ‘reflective practice’ (Schwabb 1969).

The notion of paradigms found its way into linguistics and language
teaching through language teaching departments attached to colleges of
Foreign Language Teachers, Michael Wallace introduced three teacher
training models: the craft model, the applied science model and the
reflective model clearly pointing to advantages of the reflective paradigm

The craft model was easily identified with Zeichner’s behaviouristic
paradigm and strongly criticized as close to the audiolingual tradition
which at that time had recently been overcome. Wallace maintained that
the craft model calls for instances of good practice to be imitated, while
new methodological approaches result in a situation where young graduates
from teacher training colleges know more about communicative syllabus
design and skills development than many experienced teachers trained in
grammar-translation or audiolingual traditions. Moreover, he pointed out
that a technique useful in one context might not prove useful in a different
one (Wallace 1991). Other opponents of the craft model pointed to the fact
that it is only easily observable classroom behaviour that is taken into
consideration in this type of training, while more important issues, which
are however not directly measurable, tend to be forgotten. Opponents also
stressed the danger of prescriptive teacher appraisal and the lack of interest
in individual differences (Roberts 1998).

The applied science model did not receive enough attention at the time,
probably due to the fact that it was identified with one of the options in
the structure of training rather than with any of Zeichner’s paradigms.
The discussion on the value of simultaneous or consecutive academic and
teacher training resulted in the debate on sequential vs. parallel models
of teacher education. The applied science model was soon identified with
the sequential model and thus relegated to the realm of discussions on the
reform of higher education.

The reflective model combined Zeichner’s personalistic paradigm
with his inquiry-oriented model. Teacher educators were not enthusiastic
about the inquiry-oriented model as most of them realized the danger
of unskilful experimenting on language learners and saw the need for imparting basic knowledge before allowing the trainee in the classroom (Pennington 1990). The personalistic paradigm on the other hand, though highly valued, was considered insufficient due to the social context of the teacher’s work. Integrating the two models to form the reflective one was believed to help avoid dangers and make it possible to benefit from the advantages of both options (Richards & Nunan 1990). The most important features of the reflective model listed for teachers of various subject areas in Schoen (1983) as well as in Boud, Koegh and Walker (1985) and for modern language teachers in Wallace (1991) and in Richards and Lockhart (1994) include:

- awareness of the teaching goals;
- awareness of the context of teaching;
- awareness of values brought into this context by the teacher and the students;
- awareness of reasons for decisions actually taken;
- awareness of the possible consequences or side-effects of selected procedures;
- awareness of alternative ways of achieving goals;
- openness to change and development.

The need for responsibility, empathy and non-evaluative approaches is also stressed (Gebhard & Oprandy 1999).

What proved to be the main attraction of the reflective paradigm was its stress on planning, implementation and critical reflection about action with a view to future improvement.

Till now the reflective model is considered the most suitable of all and practically every teacher education institution claims to follow it. In consequence, this paradigm has been stretched to the point of becoming almost meaningless. Roberts quotes research which discovered no common characteristics in several teacher education programmes, all claiming to function within the frames of the reflective model. This led to strong criticism of the reflective rhetoric expressed by K. Zeichner, one of the main specialists in the field of teacher education (Zeichner 1998). Yet the reflective model survives. Although new constructivist and social constructivist models are also available (Roberts 1998), they do not seem to be precise enough to enter the curricula of teacher training institutions.
5. Approaches and methods – trainee-centred pre-service teacher education

Even a precisely selected structural model with a clearly defined teacher training paradigm and a detailed curriculum does not determine methods and approaches used in the educational process leading to a teaching qualification. Within the same organizational framework a radical change took place in the 1990s when learner-centred language teaching was developed. If this approach was to be transferred into teacher education, it seemed indispensable to:
– modify teaching methods so as to take into account beliefs trainees bring into the learning process and
– incorporate experiential teaching in institutional teacher training.

5.1. Individualizing teacher education – trainees’ beliefs

The importance of trainees’ beliefs was first understood when results of academic research on teachers and teaching reached teacher training institutions.

The first serious research on teachers’ beliefs was initiated by Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984). The researchers investigated the role of beliefs and their influence on the way decisions to use particular methods and techniques in the classroom are taken by student teachers. The role of the pedagogical practice in the process of changing those beliefs was also examined. Yet ‘student teaching did not significantly alter the student teachers’ views about teaching’ (Zeichner & Liston 1987).

When cognitivism paved the way for qualitative research methods as well as the use of introspection, in-depth interviews and self-observation protocols, research projects could reach beyond classroom observation. In the 1970s D. Lortie formulated a hypothesis that teachers’ judgments about what constitutes good teaching remain stable from their early school days experienced as children through the time of apprenticeship to late phases of experienced teaching (Lortie 1975). Soon, however, it became evident that verification or falsification of this hypothesis is highly unlikely as it is virtually impossible to separate the knowledge which trainees acquire in the course of studies from their beliefs, especially those rooted in their earlier school experience as pupils (Pajares 1992). Yet this, instead of bringing
about a degree of healthy caution, only confirmed most of the educators’ surprising certainty that teachers’ beliefs, formed in their childhood days, are strong, stable and inflexible (Nespor 1987; Kagan 1992). This conviction naturally resulted in plenty of doubts as far as the impact of both pre-service (Johnson 1994; Freeman 1994) and in-service language teacher education is concerned (Lamb 1995; Gorsuch 2000) and made teacher educators reflect on the earlier results published by Zeichner and Liston (1984).

Fear of conservatism and routine on the part of the teacher caused a certain shift of focus in the research activity. Some research projects examined the impact of language teachers’ beliefs about learning on the types of choices they made in the classroom. It was, for example, demonstrated that the choice of student-based or curriculum-based type of teaching (Woods 1991), the choice of accuracy or fluency as the main teaching focus (Smith 1996) and the choice of the inductive or the deductive approach to the teaching of grammar (Borg 1998) were all made in harmony with the teacher’s belief in the value of a particular learning approach. It should, however, be noted that over decades research has also revealed the lack of consistency between student teachers’ educational experience at college and their declared beliefs on the one hand and their actual classroom practice on the other. This was first demonstrated by Zeichner and Liston as early as 1987 (Zeichner & Liston 1987) and confirmed by Potocka almost twenty years later in the Polish context (Potocka 2006).

Researchers nowadays tend to build on this knowledge and broaden their perspective. Beliefs are no longer treated as a source of conservatism or routine, but as a frame of reference helping the teacher ‘relate to the theory of language, the nature of language teaching, the role of the teacher, effective teaching practices and teacher-student relations’ (Richards 1998: 51). More and more often, beliefs, combined with knowledge and experience as well as actual classroom behaviour, are looked at within a broader concept of the teaching style. The teaching style is defined in terms of beliefs and behaviour (Katz 1996), in terms of knowledge, ways of decision-making and social skills (Wysocka 2003), or else, in terms of beliefs, attitudes and preferred ways of behaviour (Wright 1987).

Careful analysis of what trainees bring into the process as well as research on how teachers understand events in context (Woods 1996) help individualize instruction, encourage teacher trainers to build-in on-going evaluation into the training process and promote reflective techniques during the teaching practice and the induction phase in schools.
5.2. The impact of experiential teaching on pre-service language teacher education

The learner-centred approach called for a careful analysis of individual learner factors. Considering a great variety of age groups, learning styles and professional needs of learners, teachers had to use a huge tool kit of methods and techniques and design a great variety of courses. For that reason in the late 1990s The Communicative Approach grew even more eclectic incorporating techniques typical of various conventional and unconventional language teaching methods. Tailor-made courses, targeting learners from particular age groups and professional circles, satisfied various types of needs and employed a variety of methods, each of them appearing useful for a particular type of context. For that reason this period received the label of the post-method era (Kumaravadivelu 2001, 2003).

In the new situation it seemed pointless to continue prioritising methods from the point of view of their general educational value. The turn of the century, therefore, brought a new distinction in the analysis of teaching expertise. In 1996 D.B. Smith pointed to the difference between transmission and interactive teaching (Smith 1996). This was soon followed by M.C. Pennington’s description of transmission and interpretation teaching (Pennington 1996) and Nunan’s presentation of traditional and experiential teaching models (Nunan 1999).

Although language teaching publications discussed the experiential model as if it had never existed before, this was not so. In 1984 the American general educator D. Kolb proposed a new model of experiential learning also called learning by doing. Kolb suggested that learners need four types of abilities:

- concrete experience abilities which will help them to become involved in new experiences without bias;
- reflective observation abilities which will help them observe these experiences and reflect on them;
- abstract conceptualization abilities which will make it possible for them to create and integrate concepts and
- active experimentation abilities which will make it possible for them to solve problems (Kolb 1984).

Kolb’s model was, however, treated as appropriate for problem-solving tasks only and, therefore, never managed to make its way into the teaching of skills-oriented subject areas.
The beginning of the new century saw a firm dichotomy of the transmission and experiential paradigm in language teaching without any references to the earlier educational studies (Kohonen et al. 2001). Some confusion can be noted here caused by the fact that the dichotomy in question is often presented in strongly evaluative terms of what is considered ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ in language teaching. Transmission teaching is defined as based on limited, graded input, focused on form and stressing early production and error correction (Lightbown & Spada 1999), while experiential teaching – as focused on meaning and non-corrective approaches, based on varied input, experience and reflection, at the same time involving the whole person of the learner (Kohonen et al. 2001).

It is, however, often forgotten that foreign language learning in a limited number of contact hours with no direct contact with native speakers and taking place in large-sized classes does not actually invite procedures possible in second language acquisition contexts where ample time is provided for learning and students are constantly exposed to varied input in natural, everyday situations. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that teachers working in foreign language rather than second language teaching contexts do not always do their best to improve the quality of their teaching and blame the context. It is, therefore, useful to carefully analyse the experiential model in order to plan steps that can be taken with the aim to raise the teaching standard in foreign language classes.

The most important aspect of the experiential model, which can be transferred to any foreign language teaching context, is input. Even in difficult educational circumstances it is not impossible to offer more time for receptive skills, thus increasing the amount of input. Student-generated topics and a variety of themes and situations presented via authentic materials open the way for the students to get acquainted with a large number of discourse types. It is also possible to ensure that the input is varied calling for a number of listening and reading strategies. Input can be simplified and made comprehensible and for that reason does not need to be precisely graded.

Another aspect that lends itself to be transferred into foreign language teaching contexts is the approach stressing meaning over form. Focus on accuracy, predominant in school systems, results from centuries of educational tradition rather than from the nature of language learning in the school context. Evaluative approaches are definitely part of the
educational ethos in many countries, hence stress on error correction, high levels of accuracy and the knowledge of language elements rather than on the development of skills and competences. It is not at all impossible to present and practice grammar in a situational context, even in large classrooms, and in this way to ensure message focus in class-lesson teaching.

Methods, techniques and task types typical of second language acquisition approaches are also relatively easy to employ in foreign language teaching. Pair work and group work helps introduce natural student-student interaction increasing the time for free practice, especially in large-sized, mixed ability classes. In this task format students can develop communication strategies and use feedback from their peers. Collaborative modes of learning, based on projects, promote autonomy in topic choice, information search and presentation techniques. They also encourage students to identify their preferred strategies, integrate new information with their background knowledge and reflect on their own learning. Home assignments and work in self-access centres invite more input, e.g. in the form of extensive reading or extra listening. All those forms of work get students used to self-assessment and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Although theoretical foundations of the approaches outlined above are usually incorporated in pre-service teacher education courses of FLT methodology, some teacher training institutions delegate these issues to be covered during the teaching practice in schools. Yet, school teachers supervising the teaching practice, the so-called mentors, do not feel qualified to discuss theoretical issues (Hake 1993) and find it difficult to justify their suggestions, however appropriate these suggestions might be. Moreover, mentors often lack skills of critical feedback (Aspinwall 1994). Trainees’ role is therefore reduced to imitate mentors’ behaviour, which automatically shifts the teacher education paradigm from the reflective to the craft model (Wallace 1991). Even though mentor training is more and more often organized by teacher training colleges and universities, basic teacher formation with respect to the experiential model ought to take place in teacher training institutions. Only then should practice be delegated to the school context and, even then, a rational division of duties between teacher education institutions and mentors is indispensable.
6. Trends in in-service teacher education

Two main tasks usually face in-service teacher education irrespective of the national context. Firstly, it has to respond to the needs of graduates from teacher training institutions and guide them through natural stages of their life-long career. Secondly, it has to promote innovative solutions and help teachers accommodate change. Let us look at how these tasks have so far been fulfilled.

6.1. Stages in the professional development of language teachers

In-service teacher training received little attention till the 1980s but flourished a decade later. First attempts at establishing institutional forms of INSETT were dominated by the discussion on the value of three approaches differing in the way the type and scope of change were identified: a) personal development approach, b) professionalization approach and c) socialization approach. Proponents of the personalistic approach stressed the need to develop the teacher’s personality as well as to promote tolerance, empathy and openness to experience. Proponents of the professionalization approach criticized personalistic models on the grounds of their psychotherapeutic ambitions and lack of tangible, let alone measurable results in the classroom behaviour of the teacher or in the educational attainment of the students. Proponents of the socialization approach pointed to the necessity of adjusting to the requirements of school administration and responding to the needs of the community while functioning in the local context of the classroom and the staff room (Potocka 2006).

It soon turned out that the final decision had to be taken on the basis of a needs analysis conducted in a given context and no preconceived choice would prove helpful.

What could be generalized across national and regional contexts is the way teachers of various subjects, working in a variety of contexts, tend to move through stages of their professional career.

Empirical research projects on teachers’ professional development were launched in the field of the educational sciences in the 1980s. Their aim is to identify and describe stages in the career of school teachers. It has been demonstrated that three variables help differentiate stages in a teacher’s life-long career. These are:
• the teacher’s ability to analyse the context of activity;
• his/her ability to prioritise elements of classroom situations with a view
to outcomes and
• the degree of automatization in the teacher’s reactions.

On the basis of this set of criteria Dreyfus and Dreyfus (cf. Anderson
1995) presented a series of stages in teacher development: a) the novice
teacher concentrated on his/her own activity, b) an advanced beginner
taking the context of activity into consideration, c) a competent teacher
able to prioritise and concentrate on the results achieved, d) a proficient
teacher able to quickly assess the situation holistically and e) the expert
teacher with automatized reactions leading to desired results. The type of
criteria used favour a behavioural approach to professional development.
Teachers’ behaviour is described in stimulus-reaction categories and the
degree of automatization in their reactions is treated as one of the basic
symptoms of development. Automatization comes with practice and time,
which leads proponents of this approach to believe that experience leads
to expertise.

A whole different methodology was used in the times of cognitivism
and later with the advent of social constructivism when attention moved to
individual differences between learners and the need to cater for a variety
of needs in a variety of contexts. The view that experienced teachers are
more competent and proficient was strongly undermined and the term
‘experienced nonexperts’ was coined by proponents of the reflective
paradigm (Tsui 2003).

New attempts at distinguishing stages centred on how teachers feel
rather than on what they do. Huberman classified stages in the teacher’s
life-long career using the criteria of security and stability. Indirectly,
considering the psychological impact of security on behaviour, the degree
of exploration, experimentation and inquiry-learning on the part of the
teacher is also taken into consideration. Stages distinguished by Huberman
include survival, discovery, stabilization, experimentation, reassessment,
serenity and disengagement, but attention is at the same time drawn to
individual differences among teachers and to the non-linear character
of these stages (Huberman 1989). This line of thinking continues to be
considered quite fruitful (Tsui 2003).

Recent research on novice and experienced teachers tends to combine
research on classroom behaviour of both groups of teachers and their
beliefs with a view to identifying differences, understanding development
processes and building on this knowledge in planning pre- and in-service teacher education courses. Novice teachers have been found to rigidly follow their lesson plan irrespective of students’ comments and questions, to work from the textbook and to concentrate on students’ behaviour rather than on the course or results of their learning. They also seem to concentrate on teaching language elements – grammar and vocabulary – in line with their view of teaching as transmitting knowledge. Motivation and students’ enjoyment as well as teachers’ personal qualities are factors they consider of utmost importance. Expert teachers, on the other hand, are able to improvise, make use of materials without blindly following them, use students’ questions as a springboard to enrich their lesson without forgetting its main aim, and focus on students’ tasks and their outcomes rather than on their behaviour. Neither the attractiveness of teachers’ lesson presentation nor the enjoyment aspects of the lesson seem to be their priority (Roberts 1998; Berliner 2001; Musiał 2003; Tsui 2003).

Research on teachers’ expertise at first proved very helpful in planning and supervising the teaching practice for pre-service teacher education. Lists of expert teachers’ skills contributed to the development of lesson evaluation grids and helped channel feedback from the tutor and the mentor. Now they are also highly valued in the planning of in-service teacher development courses, designed to guide teachers through natural stages of their life-long career. They also form the basis for the construction of self-assessment tools both for trainees and for practicing teachers (Kelly & Grenfell 2004; Newby et al. 2007).

6.2. Managing change – the experiential model in in-service teacher education

Helping practicing teachers incorporate innovative solutions and accommodate change is another line of in-service teacher training activity. The most important example of this task is an attempt to promote experiential teaching discussed in section 5.2. above.

Re-training active teachers, taught in their student days to use the transmission model, to switch to more experiential modes of action called for a systematic procedure. Basing on the natural sequence of stages in teachers’ life-long career, as described in 6.1. above, was insufficient for this purpose – methods and techniques in managing change were now needed.
Language teacher educators decided again to look back to earlier developments in the field of the educational sciences and rediscovered Kolb’s classical paradigm, not often mentioned as a source when the transmission/experiential dichotomy had been introduced. The model proved extremely useful in promoting innovation in the teaching process and was immediately linked to models in more general training procedures employed by human resources.

Kolb’s model comprising four stages (stage 1 of directing experience, stage 2 of reflecting on experience, stage 3 of generalizing about experience and stage 4 of implementing new ideas) called for four distinctive types of teacher trainers’ activity, i.e. planning and structuring the direct experience of the trainee, asking questions to provoke reflection, guiding the concept formation process and functioning as a coach in the implementation process (Prior 1994). This sequence was often referred to as Feeding – Leading – Showing – Throwing and soon became part of not only in-service teacher education, but also of trainer training (McGrath 1997).

Procedure of this kind calls for a specific set of competences and characteristics of the educator responsible for the success of the retraining process. The trainer should be able to motivate teachers in the retraining process, to clearly present information, communicate it in a meaningful way, relate training to the practical context of the trainees and to manage the training situation using appropriate leadership skills. Yet the procedure can prove successful only if the trainer is seen by his/her trainees as credible, tolerant, approachable and sensitive to their needs (Prior 1994).

Today more and more trainer training programmes are being launched, often based on the best HRD (human resources development) models such as that worked out by the Manchester Institute for Development Policy and Management. Again the basic 1984 Kolb model formed the framework of the process. Its four stages were now correlated with skills and abilities needed in order to form the psychological and social context favourable for a given type of innovation. The direct experience stage was supposed to develop emotional resilience, the reflection stage was designed to develop analytic competence, the generalization stage aimed at increasing intellectual capability and the implementation stage was meant to develop behavioural adaptability. Stage 1 basing on involvement comprised practical tasks, solving group problems, role plays and professional attachments at various institutions or workplaces. Stage 2 employed videos, group-on-group observation, diaries and logs and was based on feedback and counselling.
Stage 3 included lectures, seminars, workshops and project. Finally, stage 4 stressed controlled skills practice (Mann 1989). The model proves of great use in implementing educational innovation and is considered useful in promoting change in the field of language teaching.

An important role in managing change is also played by promoting teacher-made research.

Earlier developments in the field of the educational sciences proved useful once again. It dawned on linguists and language methodologists that many decades ago personalistic and inquiry-oriented models, which later merged into the reflective paradigm, paved the way for a new form of small scale research, so-called action research. The first attempts at involving teachers in practical classroom research were encouraged in 1953 by Stephan Corey in his study on improving school practices. Corey was at that time working for the Teachers College, Columbia University, which soon became the main institution encouraging small scale teacher-made research, supported by famous educators such as Hilda Taba or Abraham Shumsky (Kemmis 1993: 180). Large scale Research and Development activity of the 1960s reduced interest in small scale teacher-made research for some time. Its revival in the 1970s can be traced back to the innovative Ford Teaching Project initiated in Great Britain, whose aim was to engage teachers in research on the value of discovery-based learning techniques in the classroom. Further development of action research was supported by Cambridge Institute of Education where John Elliott, having left Ford Teaching Project, started his research on classroom interaction. Soon action research attracted attention in the United States, Australia and Europe and helped teachers to raise the level of educational attainment in their schools, to understand short- and long-term consequences of their classroom decisions as well as to appropriately respond to the institutional context of their work. The popularity of action research in schools kept growing due to a high degree of disappointment with academic research, far too abstract to promise practical conclusions for teachers. It kept growing also in academic circles due to the shift of focus from quantitative to qualitative research paradigms which would offer insight into contexts and meanings. In the 1970s researchers working within new qualitative paradigms of phenomenological research started postulating triangulation based on a comparison of teachers’, parents’ and learners’ perspectives on education. This type of investigation lent itself easily to be conducted in the form of teacher-made action research (Kemmis 1993: 177; Komorowska
1992). It also helped include action research in broader paradigms such as those used e.g. in the research on the Common European Framework of Reference (Komorowska 2004).

In linguistics and language teaching the value of action research was noticed extremely late and widely promoted in the United Kingdom only in the 1990s (Wallace 1991; Wallace 1998). The idea was immediately taken up in many countries, including Poland (Michońska-Stadnik & Szulc-Kurpaska 1997).

Today case studies and action research are methods considered to be of the highest importance in in-service teacher education, professional development and especially in the process of managing change such as the shift from experiential to transmission teaching. They also play an important part in evaluating language programmes (Kiely 2009) and in documenting achievement for institutional promotion in the teaching profession in many countries.

7. Conclusion

Language teacher education – just like language pedagogy – was developing independently of and with practically no contact with the educational or social sciences till the last decade of the twentieth century. It was only at the turn of the century that the value of course structure, content, approaches and paradigms born in the field of general education and sociology was noticed and practical conclusions from research done several decades earlier were drawn to reshape pre- and in-service teacher training. Yet till now educational sources of new FLT ideas are rarely mentioned and the field remains isolated from recent trends in those disciplines. It seems to be high time to bridge this gap, considering that recent macrostrategies for experiential teaching in the so-called ‘postmethod era’ include skills common to teachers of all school subjects, such as maximizing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, promoting learner autonomy, contextualizing input, integrating skills, ensuring social relevance and raising cultural consciousness (Kumaravadivelu 2003).

What also needs to be reconsidered is the approach to language teacher education across developmental stages. The old craft model has readily given way to reflective models, but reflection calls for at least some degree of prior knowledge and prior experience, or else there is not much to reflect
Young trainees preparing for the teaching profession within parallel or sequential models of teacher education usually lack experience that would give them enough food for thought. More balance should, therefore, be sought with a broader use of the applied science model in the early stages of initial teacher education, stronger elements of the craft model during the preliminary observation stage of the teaching practice and a shift toward the full use of the reflective model later on in the course of in-service teacher education. Teacher-made action research can then prove helpful in dealing with difficult contexts as well as in the promotion of educational innovation.

Whatever has proven valuable and useful in teacher education so far has to be integrated with new models and new ideas as hitherto unknown challenges face the teaching profession. Individualization and learner autonomy as well as the growing autonomy of schools (Eurydice 2008a) call for even more competence, responsibility and individual decision-making. Teacher education has to flexibly accommodate all these changes.

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1. Introduction

Modern institutions differ from the organizations which were present on the economic market many years ago. Our companies, with offices located even in very distant places of the globe, employ workers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Nowadays, production and consumption do not have to take place simultaneously and, consequently, many companies search for places where expert workers (Du-Babcock 2006) and cheaper labour (Richardson 1999) can be found. Not only corporate workers are diversified as far as language, culture or gender are concerned, but their environment also consists of people representing different cultures. Since stakeholders, such as shareholders, customers or the general public, may come from culturally varied environments, diversified communicative strategies have to be exercised. As Hogan (2008: 207) states, ‘multinational companies regularly provide training and education to employees who travel to different countries, especially if those employees will be actually living in a different country’. However, such coaching is needed even if workers are not relocated, since international contacts take place where we work or live by means of e-mails, telephones or regular correspondence. Taking the business aspect into consideration, many companies stress the necessity of offering foreign language training to their workers. For example, in countries like Slovakia and the Czech Republic almost 90% of companies are interested in working on linguistic performance (ELAN) since learning foreign languages belongs to the most important intercultural skills. Thus, the aim of this paper will be to discuss in greater detail the linguistic
guidance conducted for company workers. Since English is the lingua franca of modern economics, stress will be put solely on teaching Business English in a corporate setting.

2. English as a lingua franca

When we discuss modern companies, we should take into consideration language as such since it is the most effective tool of internal and external communication. To ensure quick, economical and successful interactions, it is popular to choose one leading language. As has already been mentioned, English is the lingua franca of modern times. As Canada (2002: 57–58) states, it ‘facilitates sales coordination, customer service efficiency and employee transfers’. Due to internalisation and globalisation, English belongs to the group of Languages of Wider Communication (Cobarrubias 1983; Haarmann 1989; Conrad 1996; Reagan 2002; Phillipson 1992). Other terms used to denote English can be World English(es), Global English and English as an International Language (van Gelderen 2006). We can also come across the concept of language as a bridge (Antos 2002). From the point of view of EU communication, English can be called Euro-English (McArthur 2003; Modiano 2001), which stresses its specific EU vocabulary and Euro-jargon or its simplified form allowing for quick and effective interactions among non-native users. Another feature of English connected with the United Europe is the fact that, together with French and German, it belongs to the relay/pivot languages of the EU (de Swaan 2007). All EU correspondence documents are translated into the core languages (English, German and French), which speeds up the translation process and reduces costs related to translating and interpreting.

3. English and companies

The influence of English is especially visible in such areas as new technologies, tourism, entertainment and business (Ibarz 1999), since ‘the need for a global language is particularly appreciated by the international academic and business communities’ (Crystal 2003: 13). Let us discuss very briefly why English is so important in modern business. First of all, nowadays, economics is more important than politics in international
relations (Master 1997). Secondly, companies have to expand their activities, also in a geographical sense, if they want to be competitive on the market. (Im)proper linguistic skills, together with other factors, influence the financial situation of a given company (ELAN). This is obviously connected with operating in multicultural and multilingual environments (Ibarz 1999). It is not enough just to know the language; strong and effective linguistic competence is required (Bordyuk & Lee 2004). Since ‘language is the storehouse of our knowledge’ (Gregory 2008: 55), also corporate expertise is accumulated in corporate languages. Talk is as important in achieving aims as every other physical action (Mercer 1984), and thus we cannot imagine a company operating on the market without discussing and negotiating all matters with workers and stakeholders. What is more, language is one of the ten factors, called global drivers, determining the state of a global marketplace (Marquardt & Berger 2000). People want to use one language in business for different reasons. Reducing translation costs is one of them (Jablin & Putman 2001). A single language policy also stresses the global uniformity of a given company (Bielenia 2008), since ‘language identifies a group, a community, a people, a profession’ (Natale, O’Neill & Neher 1998: 2). What is more, many companies opt for a language strategy which makes communication easier (ELAN). We should not forget, however, that some authors also stress the negative aspects of English dominance in the corporate world since companies from non-English speaking countries have to cover the costs related to translation services or even limit their business contacts owing to the lack of linguistic skills of their personnel (Grin in Nickerson 2000: 1). Language is responsible for including and excluding people ‘from an environment, from goods and services’ (Natale, O’Neill & Neher 1998: 3), or even leading to linguistic deprivation (Burchfield in Spring 2009: 22). In a corporate setting, language determines employment possibilities, since linguistic skills can ‘constrain the possibilities for subsidiary staff to engage in building horizontal relationships with other units and headquarters’ (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 1999: 427). Considering the importance of language in business communication, we cannot forget that general English is not enough if one wants to understand the nuances of economic language. Thus, the importance of Business English, with its specialized terminology and communicative strategies, should be highlighted. Since it is mainly managers and other corporate workers who are interested in learning Business English, attention will be focused on teaching and learning BE in a corporate setting.
4. Business English

English for Specific Purposes has several sub-categories (Orwenjo 2009), Business English being one of them. Business English is only one term used for denoting teaching English for business purposes and other names can be found in professional literature on ergolects (Pickett in Alexander 1998). Some of them are: English for Professional Purpose, Business English, Workplace ESL and English Teaching for Business and Industry (Master 1997). We can also subcategorise Business English into English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) (Dudley-Evans 2001). Apart from language specificity, also the learner criterion can be taken into consideration. Thus, we can teach Business English to students who are not acquainted with business or to professionals already working within this field (Donna 2000). A different approach stresses the learner’s place within the corporate hierarchy, with professional ESP, aimed at ‘managers, executives and other corporate personnel’, and vocational ESP, targeted at ‘the labour end of the business spectrum’ (Master 1997: 25).

When we analyse Business English, we should take into consideration the general features of ESP since some elements, such as needs analysis, syllabus design, course design and material selection, are important for all specialized languages (Ellis & Johnson 1994; Orwenjo 2009). As with other ESPs, Business English is focused on communication, thus information takes supremacy over form and content. Consequently, we should avoid idioms, acronyms, abbreviations and slang (Hurn 1998). Since ESPs are characteristic of simplified English forms which make international communication possible, the same can be applied to Business English. As English is the language of international contacts, the most common corporate communication involves interaction between non-native speakers (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998). The above-mentioned feature leads to the variety of forms within this type of English since users adapt language to their needs (Mikułowski Pomorski 2007) and their level of linguistic proficiency (House 2003). Consequently, Business English is called International English (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998), near or fractured English (Lesznyák 2004) and off-shore English (Hurn 1998), and what is more, it ‘may become even more pidginized than it already is’ (Preisler 1999: 265). We should remember that the perspective adopted here is of
a teaching/learning character, thus the organizational and management aspect is of secondary importance. Just to digress, it is worth stating that those researching corporate discourse use such terms as economic rhetoric, organizational discourse, business English and corporate lingo.

An important feature of all ESPs is job-related motivation (Rosenberg 2004 in Netikdienë 2006: 80). As far as Business English is concerned, those using this language for specific purposes need it to be more competitive on the job market (Ellis & Johnson 1994).

What is more, ESPs mirror in a way the important notions of the domain they represent. We should also remember that business communication reflects its environment, since effective Business English ‘is closely connected with good business policy. One who has the ideal of service in his conduct is likely to have the idea of impressing it to his writing and speaking’ (Hotchkiss & Drew 2008: 5). Moreover, ‘business English also borrows ideas from management training – e.g. problem-solving, decision-making, and team-building tasks’ (Ellis & Johnson 1994: 12).

5. Issues connected with teaching Business English

We should remember that there are different approaches to teaching Business English. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, stress was put on terminology. Now, attention is being shifted towards communicating in English in a business environment (Ellis & Johnson 1994). Thus, rules important for business communication, including the ABC rule (Accurate Brief Clear) and KISS (Keep It Short and Simple) (Taylor 2000), are also significant for BE teaching. Since ‘every business, and every transaction of every business, has its own peculiarities’ (Hotchkiss & Drew 2008: 3) and not every word or phrase can have ‘international currency’ (Ferguson 2006: 173), there is no one Business English course which will meet the needs of all companies. These notions will be discussed in the forthcoming sections. We will start with the intercultural aspect.

5.1. Intercultural communication and teaching Business English

Since teaching is not only connected with learning new words and phrases but is mainly an ‘acclimatization process’ (Coulby 2000 in Zambeta 2005: 76), our discussion on teaching BE should commence with the cultural aspect of
learners’ mother tongues. Languages have their own filters and blind spots which prevent the communication of a concept with the same precision as is done in other languages (Morden 1998). The cultural aspect is also very significant in teacher-learner relations since intercultural knowledge is important not only for those taking part in large cross-national projects, but also for those working in small organizations (Gibson 2002) or even for themselves, since they encounter people representing different cultures on an everyday basis. The learner who was taught intercultural skills in the language class will use the acquired knowledge also outside the learning scene, being exposed to multicultural environments, for both professional and private reasons (Ibarz 1999). Depending on the culture they represent, some students can be silent in the class, while others may tend to interrupt very often (Gross Davis 2009). Taking learning needs into consideration, one needs to realize that e.g. ‘German employees tend to favour written communication’ (Stuart & Sarow 2007: 55) and, consequently, German students will opt for more written skills. Let us discuss this intercultural aspect in teaching by taking into account some typologies of organizational cultures.

5.1.1. Different cultures and their implications for corporate teaching

As Hogan (2008: 206) states, ‘the business world has long been an arena where body language and nonverbal behaviours created all sorts of interesting situations’. Although this paper is rather focused on the verbal aspect of teaching English in a business setting, we should remember that nonverbal communication is also important in corporate teaching. As Gregory (2008: 57) states, ‘words are not the only medium through which mind speaks to mind. The thinker has a hundred ways to express his thoughts. The eye talks with a various eloquence; and the skilled orator finds in lip and brow, in head and hand, in the shrugging shoulder and the stamping foot, organs for most intelligible speech’. However, owing to the limitations of this paper, an attempt will be made to discuss only the cultural implications in teaching related to languages.

5.1.2. Different typologies of organizational cultures and their implications for teaching in companies

To discuss the differences in teaching in a corporate setting resulting from the cultural background, selected typologies will be presented.
Hofstede and Hofstede’s value orientations

Hofstede and Hofstede (2007) take into account such notions as power distance, collectivism and individualism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance and femininity versus masculinity. All the above-mentioned features determine language learning. For instance, persons representing the uncertainty avoidance culture may be reluctant to accept novel teaching methods.

Solomon and Schell’s culture classification

Similar factors are discussed by Solomon and Schell (2009): hierarchy and egalitarianism, group orientation, relations, communication styles, time orientation, change tolerance and the balance between work and home life.

Baumer’s culture types

Baumer (in Kreyenberg 2008: 171) divides cultures into linear-active cultures, which favour planning, adequate organization and data-orientation, multi-active-cultures, which deal with many issues at the same time, and reactive cultures, praising such values as respect, empathy and courtesy being of top priority. As we can suspect, those from multi-active cultures will perform several tasks at the same time, which can make the teacher, unaware of this cultural aspect, nervous.

Gesteland’s culture typology

Gesteland (2000) proposes the division into transactional and partnership cultures, expressive and non-expressive cultures, polychromic and monochromic cultures, as well as ceremonial and non-ceremonial cultures. Anyone teaching a representative of a polychromic culture should not be angry when the student is fifteen minutes late.

Cameron and Quinn’s culture types

A different typology of organizational cultures is offered by Cameron and Quinn (2003), who discuss such cultures as clan (with cooperation and engagement being very important), adhocracy (innovation and vision), hierarchy and market (competition and task orientation). As far as teaching is concerned, we can estimate that those belonging to the adhocracy culture will favour innovative teaching methods, whereas representatives of the hierarchy culture can find role-plays (which treat participants equally) quite problematic.
Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s culture classification

A similar typology is offered by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002). They discuss the following cultures: the family, the Eiffel Tower, the guided missile and the incubator. In the family type, the leader is very important. A student representing this type of culture is not very willing to discuss his or her preferences and talk about difficulties. The Eiffel Tower denotes such features as hierarchy and place in the organization. As the guided missile is an organizational culture aimed at realizing aims, those students want to learn very quickly. The culture of incubator favours individualism and initiative, so workers representing it are more likely to accept new learning styles.

Concluding this part, we should state that there are different approaches to cross-cultural issues in a corporate setting, ‘providing training that is either culture-specific or general’ (Brislin 1976 in Natale, Hoffman & Hayward 1998: 17). Taking into account the diversity of cultural notions, ‘a preference should be given to a more comprehensive approach which is three-pronged: individual, general and then specific’ (Eastwood 1998: 17).

5.2. Other issues connected with teaching Business English in a corporate environment

As has been discussed in the introductory part on Business English, BE can be taught to different types of learners, considering different linguistic needs of both companies and their workers. As far as the corporate environment is concerned, this can be understood in two ways. It can either be a company itself, with on-site training, or a language school. The former is the most popular one. There are of course both advantages and disadvantages strictly related to the setting. This on-site method is chosen by companies, as workers do not waste time travelling to the language school. What is more, they do not skip classes since their boss is always around. On the other hand, lessons are very often interrupted by phone calls, important unplanned internal meetings and other corporate incidents. Another problematic aspect related to corporate teaching is the level of students. Due to financial reasons, language courses are often offered either for top management or for those who need it for business purposes. Thus, there are not many levels offered within the company and we may have people with quite different linguistic skills in the same group. In such a case, a good solution is to offer students the so-called ‘cafeteria menu’ of assignments.
Learners can prepare more assignments not demanding high linguistic skills, or choose just a few linguistically difficult tasks if their language skills are very high (Gross Davis 2009). The lack of linguistic coherence in a corporate language group is also connected with false ambitions and pride. It happens that a top manager is allocated to a higher group than he or she should be in because this manager is ashamed of studying with beginners. The other problem may be connected with the methods used by the teacher. Students who were exposed to different teaching styles in the past may treat novel teaching techniques with a lack of trust and, consequently, may have problems with learning according to this method (McKay 1992).

As far as tutoring itself is concerned, there are crucial aspects which determine teaching business English in a corporate setting. Let us enumerate some of them. Firstly, the programme should be of an interdisciplinary/cross-curricular/transversal character. Secondly, the active learning approach should be a priority. Thirdly, the links between employer and education should be highlighted. Fourthly, the programme should correspond to the Vocational Education and Training Qualification. And, finally, the teaching schema should be of a modular character (Komorowska 2000).

In terms of content, a Business English syllabus should include items closely related to real-life business situations, such as meetings, presentations or report writing. Consequently, such activities as discussing current economic trends and strategies should be taken into consideration when preparing a teaching programme. As far as their linguistic aspects are concerned, these should include such language skills as comparing, contrasting, recommending and expressing cause or effect (Ellis & Johnson 1994). Not every single grammar or vocabulary item has to be discussed in greater detail. Slight differences in tense meaning are not as important as conditionals for negotiations or modality when asking for something or expressing apologies (Ellis & Johnson 1994).

A different issue which is very important in teaching Business English in a corporate setting is the use of materials. Since ‘the key defining feature of ESP is that its teaching and materials are founded on the results of need analysis’ (Dudley-Evans 2001: 131), there are different needs represented by companies and ‘it may be necessary to develop materials for a specific course’ (Ellis & Johnson 1994: 12). Sometimes, a company has its own organizational jargon, thus using in-company materials is more than appreciated since language ‘determines not only national cultures but the organizational culture of every company as well’ (Bielenia 2008: 700). Newby et al. (2007: 30)
state that not only ready-made materials, texts and activities, but also those produced by teachers and learners, find their place in the learning process. Thus, text as a vehicle of information (TAVI), rather than text as linguistic object (TALO), should be applied in business teaching. In the TAVI approach, stress is put on choosing texts according to learners’ needs and on the use of authentic materials (Nabielska 2003). Teaching materials are also related to the type of learners. Taking the intercultural aspect into consideration, materials should reflect the characteristics of the learners’ culture, which helps us to understand the nuances of intercultural communication (DeVoss et al. 2002). Job-experienced learners are more pragmatic than students of Business or Management and the choice of materials is often negotiated with the learner or the company paying for the course (Ellis & Johnson 1994). Nonetheless, these materials should reflect the modern tendency to internationalise education programmes (Stone 2006).

When choosing materials to be used in a Business English course, we should remember about finding a balance between business and general issues. It is obvious that ‘business students are not to become experts in literature, but they need to be knowledgeable about the world, various cultures, interpersonal relations, and human experience. There is no point in educating a businessperson who is nothing but a businessperson’ (Bordyuk & Lee 2004: 125). To stress this point more strongly, we should state that even the Harvard Business School uses literature to teach leadership skills (Head 2005). Knowledge of literature, especially the crucial characters, metaphors and quotations, helps us to look at a business problem from a different perspective (Bordyuk & Lee 2004). As Velasco Sacristan (2009) states, metaphors are an interesting tool in teaching Business English. They help us to understand reality (Lakoff & Turner 1989) since they use well-known domains to explain unknown concepts (Brown 1994; Mladenov 2006). What is more, we use metaphors when other linguistic means tend not to be effective (McCormac 1998; Tilley 1999). However, they are important not only from the teaching perspective but also from the discursive point of view since they constitute an important element of organizational discourse. They are especially important in discussing changes in a company, such as crises or takeovers (Bielenia-Grajewska 2009a; Bielenia-Grajewska 2009b). A metaphor coming from the animal world or a fairytale can calm down a tense situation or explain a difficult issue in a friendly manner. To sum up the discussion on the teaching materials, we can state that ‘the course is successful to the extent that it provides the learners with the restricted
competence they need to meet the requirements’ (Orwenjo 2009: 2). There are of course other important aspects indispensable in the teaching process – namely the teacher and the learner.

5.3. Teacher- and learner-related issues connected with teaching Business English in a corporate environment

Let us discuss very briefly the key competencies of language teachers, such as linguistic proficiency, knowledge about the target language, and the skills to choose aspects which are useful in learning (Seidlhofer 2001). The above-mentioned features should be examined in relation to teaching Business English. Linguistic proficiency in the target language requires not only knowledge of general English, but also expertise in business terminology and communicative business strategies. A good teacher should know two languages (L1 and L2) and two economic systems. It is also the task of the teacher to choose those elements which may be potentially difficult for learners who represent different economic and linguistic realities. What is also important is that managers and business staff often dictate what they want to do in class. They tend to be more demanding than other students, thus a ‘teacher will have to establish his credibility and professionalism so as to discuss with learners the structure and principles of the course’ (Nabielska 2003: 110). He or she should be like a ‘bricoleur’ who can use different tools, not only professional ones (Lévi-Strauss 1969) in teaching BE.

Another important feature is related to the teachers’ attitude toward the performed job. As Origgi and Sperber (2000 in Kurcz 2001: 30) state, human beings not only communicate messages, but also intentions. Thus, teachers’ negative attitudes may demotivate students and, consequently, influence their learning tempo.

Taking the group perspective into consideration, an effective teacher working in a corporate setting should try to make the members of his or her team effective, at both an individual and a societal level. His or her task, apart from pure teaching, is to create a friendly teaching environment. In order to do so, he or she should spend some time ‘trying to develop a sense of community and deciding how to use experience and the interaction of students for maximum learning’ (Sims 2002: 170). It is important to know ‘that there is a gap and to make genuine attempts to bridge it’ (Carté & Fox 2008: 20), since students are different and their learning goals and styles also vary (Sims 2002). As Griffiths (2003: 92) states, ‘appreciation of how groups
function, openness of spirit, accommodation of different views, receptivity to new ideas and maturity to manage a group of students without dominating them, are all necessary for effective small group teaching’. Business English teachers should be able to ‘identify which microskills from a general pool of skills used across a range of environments are important for a particular group of ESP learners’ (Basturkmen 2006: 27). All in all, the teacher’s role is to guide students through the complicated process of learning, organize their work and help them whenever they encounter difficulties (Wysocka 1997). However, this diversified working environment requires performing many functions at the same time. A good teacher is ‘a gatekeeper (“Makayla, you’ve been quiet. Do you have anything to add?”), a mirror (“the group seems to be focusing on...”), an observer (“Why do we drift into tangents whenever... comes up?”), a validator (“Great point!”), a negotiator (“Can we come to a consensus on this?”), and a reality tester (“Do you realize how our comments can be interpreted?”)’ (Forsyth 2003 in Gross Davis 2009: 98). Other tasks include being a mediator (Newby 2006), catalyst, organizer, adviser, co-ordinator and friend (Nelson 1980 in McDonough 1984: 129). Teachers should be skilled communicators ‘who continuously analyse and regulate their own behaviour in relation to the response of others’ (Hargie, Dickson & Tourish 2004: 24). As Moscovici (2001: 25) states, ‘if people want to communicate, they have to adjust to one another’. In the case of teaching, the fact that our students are different ‘has the potential to transform the perspectives and capabilities of both ourselves and our students’ (Killick 2008: 37). As Jokikokko (2009) states, every job requires specific competencies and skills. In the case of teachers, their intercultural practise should include the incorporation of students’ beliefs, language and culture into teaching, since ‘intercultural encounters become more complex because they take place in specific institutional contexts’ (Otten 2003: 16).

As many of the issues which are related to the learner aspect in teaching Business English have already been presented in the above-elaborated sections, only some, not previously discussed questions, will be taken into account in connection with learners. The first is the concept of learner autonomy, which is the responsibility of the learner for his or her learning process (Holec 1981). It does not of course imply that teachers are redundant in this process. It rather stresses the active participation of students in teaching since ‘language teaching is more training than teaching’ (Eoyang 2003: 5). But we should remember that autonomy does not mean that the student can do what he or she wants. The user of a language is like a chess player – he or
she cannot change the rules of the game, but has to accept them (Rasiński 2007). Learner autonomy has two important aspects: ‘one of learning the foreign language and one of learning how to learn’ (Fenner 2003: 29). These issues are important especially in learning in a corporate environment since courses are often quite short and require the learners’ own input afterwards. The second important aspect related to learners is the issue of the affective filter (Krashen 1985) which is ‘an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from acquiring language from the available input’. This is connected with such factors ‘as motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states’ (Lightbown & Spada 1999: 39). It is the task of every learner to try to eliminate the aspects which block the learning process. Also the intercultural aspect may be treated as a barrier since students think that working in a multicultural group, consisting of people coming from different cultures and speaking different languages, makes it a more difficult environment for study (Otten 2003).

6. Conclusion

English is the lingua franca of many domains, such as technology and business. Thus, those wanting to pursue their careers in them have to be fluent English users. To narrow the scope of research, the attempt of this paper was to discuss the most important notions connected with teaching English in a corporate setting. As has been highlighted, owing to the multifactorality of the discussed teaching environment, the teacher has to take different notions into consideration during the preparation and implementation of an adequate teaching strategy. Since modern companies operate on multilingual and multicultural markets, the issue of intercultural communication seems to be very valid in teaching. Thus, intercultural notions on both the individual (worker) and societal (company) level have to be taken into account when one wants to teach Business English effectively.

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1. Internationalisation of higher education in Poland

After the accession of Poland to the European Union new opportunities opened up for Polish students and university graduates. At present student mobility constitutes the main channel of internationalisation of tertiary education in Poland. Every year thousands of students can participate in international exchange programmes offered by LLP-ERASMUS, study tours, and apprenticeship or internship schemes. The number of students who take advantage of these offers is growing each year. More and more students are also considering the possibility of working in the structures of the European Union after graduation or relocating and embarking on their careers within multinational corporations or international law firms.

The young people who are currently students were born, brought up and educated in the new post-1989 Polish reality. They are free of complexes and inhibitions which older generations used to have when confronted with Western Europe. Europe without borders and education across borders is a natural thing which young people want to benefit from; and many of them do. This is possible as they also perform better than older generations as far as the knowledge of foreign languages is concerned.

However, the internationalisation of Polish tertiary education ‘cannot yet be said to have reached a high level’, as the 2007 ‘Review of Tertiary Education in Poland’, a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), stated (2007: 41).

The report proves that in Poland the main problem of internationalisation is the lack of coherent national strategy, since the most significant work of
internationalisation takes place not at the ministerial level, but rather is the result of the activities of individual tertiary education institutions.

At the ministerial level, article 168 point 1 of the 2005 Polish Law on Higher Education for the first time acknowledged internationalisation as an area of interest in tertiary education and set forth: ‘Degree programmes may be provided jointly by various, including foreign, higher education institutions and other academic or research institutions on the basis of an agreement concluded between them’.

In order to reinforce internationalisation the Study in Poland programme was started in May 2005 by the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland and the Perspektywy Education Foundation. Forty best Polish universities created a consortium interested in internationalisation. The programme is aimed at organising conferences and professional workshops, publishing handbooks and studies of important education markets as well as promoting Polish higher education in the world. Since the start of the programme, the number of foreign students in Polish higher education institutions has risen by 30 percent.

However, the situation still needs improvement. In the Quarterly Publication of the Boston College CIHE on International Higher Education Bianka Siwińska, editor in chief of the Perspektywy monthly, wrote:

*The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland has affirmed that, to become truly international, Polish higher education institutions will need to activate the field of transnational education, enact policies to attract international students and academic staff, and develop international curricula. Without greater understanding of the international higher education landscape, the process of marginalization of Polish schools will continue. Because of the centralized nature of the public system, funding will be needed to ensure internationalization.* (no. 55, Spring 2009)

According to the OECD Review of Tertiary Education in Poland (2007: 80), Polish tertiary education institutions have increased their international links since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the authors of the report still notice and stress the barriers which stop Polish students from taking part in the process of internationalisation. These include:

1. lack of financial resources (the cost of living in some EU countries may be much higher than in Poland and some students are deterred from even trying to apply for a student exchange for such mundane reasons);
2. low interest in mobility (many students are not aware of the possibility of going on an exchange, universities do not advertise such possibilities efficiently enough, students do not show their own interest or initiative);
3. issues of credit recognition (students may have doubts whether the credits they will earn abroad will be recognised by their native university; they may know from the experience of their elder friends that this has not been so in some cases);

4. language problems (students do not feel confident enough to study in a foreign language);

5. lack of encouragement on the part of institutions for their students to go abroad.

There are also several obstacles which discourage foreign students from coming to Poland:

1. limited number of study courses provided in foreign languages;

2. language difficulties;

3. the absence of incentives to undertake an academic career in Poland;

4. the perception of poor prospects in the wider Polish labour market;

5. the inward-looking nature of tertiary education in Poland.

(OECD Review of Tertiary Education in Poland 2007: 80)

The above conclusions indicate that language difficulties might be one of the main problems which deter Polish students from participating in student exchange programmes. That may seem surprising, as, according to the research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS), in November 2006 89 percent of young Poles declared that they were able to communicate in a foreign language. However, tertiary foreign language educators must cope with various constraints which include the lowest number of foreign language instruction in the EU, the relatively late age at which children start learning foreign languages, as well as difficulties with continuity in foreign language learning at subsequent stages of education in Poland (Eurydice Report 2008).

2. Tertiary language courses

Higher schools and universities understand the need of foreign language instruction and offer their students specialist language courses which correspond with the scope of their studies and in the long term give them an advantage over other university graduates on the job market.

However, English language courses at universities are very specific. On the one hand, they fall into the category of English for Specific Purposes, but on the other hand the design process does not follow the classic
procedures recommended for ESP courses whose stages were listed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 73).

The stages of the ESP course design process (Hutchinson & Waters 1987: 73)

A more appropriate option for the tertiary language course development process seems to be the model proposed by Kathleen Graves (2000: 3) in which she changed the framework into a more flexible flow chart,
which gave course designers more freedom. Graves suggested that course designers may begin their job anywhere in the framework, depending on their beliefs, understandings and what they know about their students. Defining the context and articulating beliefs serve as the foundation for the process and, therefore, are placed at the bottom of the chart.

2.1. Selecting and grading content – dilemmas in tertiary language course design

Students who enrol at a university are not only unaware of their language needs, but very often do not have a vision of what they would like to do in their future jobs, where they see themselves in 5 or 10 years’ time and what opportunities studying at a university in the European Union member state opens for them. Therefore, it seems necessary to shift the heaviest burden of responsibility for structuring the language courses at universities onto the shoulders of the educators, but also to arouse in students the interest in learning foreign languages, to make them aware of the opportunities for developing language skills at and outside school, for mobility, and for career planning.

A problem which university language teachers often face is low student motivation to learn foreign languages. Freshmen usually understand the need of learning a foreign language for prospective professional purposes, they are interested in sitting international language exams and graduating from the university with a certificate that is recognised worldwide, or attending lectures, trainings and workshops delivered in a foreign language. Yet, in the language classroom most students seek an escape from other more career-oriented subjects and wish for more relaxing and fun activities. This can lead to a conflict of interests between them and the school authorities.

2.1.1. General English aspects in the ESP syllabus

Designing an ideal university foreign language course creates many problems for course designers and educators, since such courses fall into a separate category and are not identical with standard ESP courses for adult professionals.

First of all, at university students usually do not participate in the selection of content of the foreign language syllabus which they follow
during the course. They take English for Specific Purposes courses from the very beginning of their studies, though deep down they feel the need for developing their General English skills. They are aware of their deficiencies and wishes, but it is not often that course content is consulted with them. From the students’ perspective studying ESP may seem boring and unattractive, especially at the beginning of their studies when the course content is too specialist and complicated.

A strictly specialist language course does not seem to be the best option for first year students due to their lack of work experience and often too low level of proficiency in English. Specialist business topics which are discussed in Business English textbooks may prove too difficult and distant for students and therefore may demotivate them and reduce their enthusiasm for language learning. Much better results could probably be achieved by combining Special English courses with General English – at least in the first semester. During this time students would get a chance to settle down at university, level off deficiencies, and get a better idea of university requirements.

The role of the university language teacher should not be underestimated here. Many experienced ESP teachers, who have taught different groups of learners at a range of institutions, have never been trained at business or law before the beginning of their teaching careers and had to gain the knowledge of the subject matter themselves. For that reason they have a good understanding of the needs of students at initial stages of their business or law studies and eventually become successful course designers. They are also good advisors on what teaching materials to select as they have an overview of various textbooks which are currently available on the market and have an idea which of them will work with pre-experienced students, with students who are shy, with students who like discussions or with students who need more practice in writing or grammar. In the case of new publications it is, however, advisable to pilot test materials before adopting them as leading coursebooks.

2.1.2. Towards Content and Language Integrated Learning

ESP courses at universities, by definition, evolve towards not only language, but also content teaching. Therefore, the overall studies curriculum which the students participating in an English course have to follow must form the basis of the ESP course syllabus. Teachers responsible for course
design have to get acquainted with the details of the curricula of the study programmes which students in the language groups in question will pursue, information of this kind being easily obtained from the university website where studies curricula are uploaded.

Combining the content of the foreign language course with the content the students will study during classes and lectures in other subjects is vital. Students will be able to base on the knowledge they acquired earlier in the course of their studies and it will help avoid situations when they hear about some business or legal concepts for the first time during their English classes. It will help language teachers feel less intimidated, as – at later stages of the language course – they can treat students as experts who can explain the intricacies of some specialist terms. The teachers will then fulfil the role of foreign language experts, while the students will use this language to deal with doubts concerning the subject matter. Otherwise, the ELP course will evolve into Introduction to Law classes during which the teacher’s role will be to teach law in English and not English for Law.

The above element of the course design process is especially important in the case of English for Legal Purposes (ELP) courses. Offering the students a strictly ELP course from the very beginning seems problematic. Secondary school graduates who start studying law usually have a very limited knowledge of legal concepts. It would be extremely difficult to talk to them in a foreign language about legal systems, the nature or sources of law when they have not gone through these topics in their native language yet. The situation may dramatically change for the better after the first few months of their Roman Law course which is always offered at the beginning of law studies. Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to spend the first semester of a university ELP course discussing general business topics related to law, e.g. employment, types of business organisations, ethics or finance, before exposing students to specialist legal English. The early stage of an ELP course should also be devoted to communication skills, i.e. interpersonal skills, conversation, discussion, presentation, negotiation, persuasion or summarising, which every student will need in his/her professional career after graduation.

At later stages of the course, specific legal topics and the language of law can be introduced, such as the language of company, as at that time students will not only have sufficient communication skills, but will also have already earned their credits for respective legal subjects in their native language.
Therefore, course designers should always keep in mind that ESP/ELP courses at universities cannot function in isolation from the curricula of other subjects the students learn.

2.1.3. Study skills (EAP) aspects in the ESP syllabus

One of the needs that some of the students will be happy to satisfy, but may not realise at the beginning of their studies, is developing foreign language study skills which would help them successfully apply for and participate in student exchange programmes. A dictionary definition of ‘study skills’ quoted by Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) explains the idea in a nutshell:

*abilities, techniques, and strategies which are used when reading, writing or listening for study purposes. For example, study skills needed by university students studying from English-language textbooks include: adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using a dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams and symbols, note-taking and summarising.*

It needs to be noticed that study skills will overlap in many aspects with professional (business or legal) skills, so that offering a more academic-oriented syllabus at the beginning of a university language course is fully justified. For example, reading is a very important skill for future lawyers, interpreting graphs and diagrams is often a problem area when teaching students presentation skills, while developing writing techniques will always pay off, no matter what purposes our students will be writing for: business, academic or legal ones. The skills of paragraphing, linking ideas or summarising are a must of any tertiary level foreign language course.

A comprehensive list of study skills and activities may be long and detailed (Jordan 1997; Wallace 2004). In practice, teachers and course designers should select the skills and activities which their students will most likely need during the course of studies either in their native country or abroad. Due to time constraints, a selection of study skills has to be made and only the most significant can be woven into the syllabus. These might include:
## 3. Needs analysis

University foreign language course design is a huge challenge for foreign language teachers and course designers, since it is generally based on their experience, observation, detailed knowledge of the system of tertiary education and awareness of what students might need in the future.
Tertiary language courses are usually modelled to fit into the university’s or faculty’s profile. Business schools will usually offer their students Business English courses, while law schools will propose English for Legal Purposes courses. However, these courses are very rarely designed pursuant to the results of the needs analysis which is the key element of ESP course design process.

Identifying actual language needs of the first year students which theoretically helps design more attractive syllabuses for the tertiary language classroom in practice rarely provides any meaningful information. Namely, first year students are hardly ever aware of their future language needs. Most of them have never attended an ESP course before. They may be aware of what they do not know and what their weaknesses are, what activities they like participating in or what they dislike learning. They may be conscious of some effective learning strategies which they adopt when learning the language, but – even though they can profile their predispositions, strengths and weaknesses – most of them will not be able to list their specific linguistic needs related to their future profession.

Therefore, a needs analysis conducted at the beginning of a language course at university should concentrate on the present and the learning needs of the learners. It should be designed to help the course designers gather some information about the learners themselves: their likes and dislikes, learning strategies, general English deficiencies and wishes, learning motivators and demotivators. This kind of analysis will concentrate on identifying factors which will affect the learning process.

At this stage of the course design process course designers may identify that what learners need is General English or English for Academic Purposes rather than a strictly ESP course. However, learners are not the only source of information at this stage of the needs analysis process. Another, sometimes more influential, source are the school authorities with their beliefs, objectives and vision, all of which must be taken into consideration. School authorities may insist on providing a strictly ESP or ELP course, or they may insist on preparing students to sit international certificate exams, which will require the teachers to run ‘exam classes’. A present needs analysis will also concentrate on identifying technical constraints such as the large size of groups, the small amount of time available, the lack of appropriate teaching materials or the teachers’ lack of specialist training (Macalister & Nation 2009: 4).
Macalister and Nation postulate that during a needs analysis the nature of the learners, the teachers and the teaching situation should be taken into consideration.

A positive consequence of carrying out a needs analysis will be the fact of involving learners in the syllabus negotiation process and letting them feel responsible for it. On the other hand, the question of more specific target needs, which will constitute the basis for the course content, will remain open and other techniques and sources will have to be used in order to identify them.

Some aspects of the present needs analysis which are significant in the case of ESP courses at universities, such as the identification of students’ likes and dislikes concerning their present situation in the classroom and the learning process itself, can be successfully researched during the course by means of short questionnaires carried out at the end of the class.
with a few ‘True / False’ statements such as: I like working in groups; I like role-plays/acting out scenes/simulations; learning grammar is easy; I have been active today, etc. Such mini-questionnaires will provide the teacher with immediate feedback and are probably more reliable than the results on one big questionnaire administered before the beginning of the course when the students may not be aware of what the activities they are asked about look like.

Apart from the learning needs analysis, there should also be carried out a target needs analysis which concentrates on defining the skills that the learners should obtain by the end of the course.

Target needs analysis is the best known type of needs analysis and was first described in 1978 by John Munby who presented a communication needs processor (CNP) that consisted of a number of questions concerning the main variables in the process of communication between people, e.g. topics, interlocutors, setting, interaction, dialect, target level, communicative event, communicative key, etc. These variables can be used to identify target language needs of any group of learners by analysing the following points:

• reasons for learning the language;
• type of language that will be used;
• kind of language that will be used (e.g. spoken language);
• level of language;
• content, interlocutors, recipients;
• physical aspects of the target situation;
• time and frequency of the language use.

The advantage of Munby’s model consisted in combining two operations – needs analysis and course design – into one. A very constructive criticism, however, was presented by R.R. Jordan (1997: 24) with a postulate ‘that the language items chosen for practice in ESP/EAP should reflect those used in the real world (Munby’s classifications of language were derived from social English)’.

Keeping this in mind the postulate for conducting a needs analysis among practitioners and not university students should be stressed. In the case of ESP courses course designers can try and reach their university graduates, track and analyse their professional careers and identify how they use foreign languages at work. Universities often create databases in which they store information about their graduates, so in some cases carrying out this kind of research may not be difficult. Another possibility
is using as the sample part-time students who follow extramural courses at the university, since they are often young professionals who have already got some work experience, have a clearer vision of their future careers than full-time students, know their job responsibilities and duties, and realise how foreign languages might be or are used in the office environment. A very good sample might also be formed by young managers working in companies which are oriented at employing university graduates or final year students. Very useful research which will provide information on the use of foreign languages among junior management employees can be conducted on such a sample. The research will concentrate on answering the following questions:

- What foreign language is used at work?
- How often is the foreign language used at work?
- How proficient are the research subjects in a given language?
- What language skills are necessary in a workplace?
- In what situations is the foreign language used at work (telephoning, face to face contacts, negotiating, taking part in meetings, listening to/ making presentations, reading specialist texts; writing e-mails/reports/ letters)?
- What topics are discussed (travel, selling, politics, entertainment, finance, etc.)?
- Who are the interlocutors (native speakers, people using the language as a foreign language, supervisors, superiors, co-workers, etc.)?
- Where is the foreign language used (in the workplace, abroad, during trainings/conferences, on the phone, in writing/correspondence, when travelling)?

4. ELP course design – an example of procedures

An example of procedures undertaken to identify target needs of lawyers is a Leonardo da Vinci project, CEF Professional. The project was carried out in 2005/2006 by eleven partners from Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland and aimed to describe ‘language needs of seven professional groups of secondary school, vocational college and university graduates, employed in the areas of health care, business, engineering and law’ (www.cefpro.org, The Teacher, no. 4, 2007: 37).
The research in the area of law was conducted among ten young law professionals who worked for international law firms in Warsaw, Poland, and who described their knowledge of English as good or very good, which by observation of the researchers was classified as Level B2(+) CEFR. The research allowed for producing a list of areas of law within which young lawyers communicate in English. The list encompassed:

1. commercial law;
2. company law;
3. competition law;
4. banking law;
5. tax law;
6. employment law;
7. real property law;
8. capital law;
9. civil law.

The project aimed at unveiling what professional skills need to be practised with university law students and managed to produce a very detailed list of the skills divided into competences which can be summarised under five question-headings or downloaded in a full version from the project website:

1. What do lawyers **read**?
   a. correspondence (e-mails, letters, briefs, reports, memos);
   b. Memoranda;
   c. Articles of Association;
   d. contracts, contract clauses and agreements;
   e. statutes and case law;
   f. directives;
   g. law related articles;
   h. corporate documentation (e.g. financial statements).

2. What do lawyers **write**?
   a. case-related letters/e-mails;
   b. formal letters of advice;
   c. Memoranda;
   d. contracts, contract clauses and agreements (lease, trade, sale, loan);
   e. legal opinions;
   f. court filings (writs);
   g. case briefs and reports for supervisors;
   h. corporate documentation.
3. When do lawyers **speak**?  
   a. during firm meetings (discussing legal issues, chairing meetings);  
   b. during meetings with clients (expressing opinions, explaining legal concepts, advising clients);  
   c. in seminars and conferences;  
   d. during negotiations;  
   e. when summarizing written texts;  
   f. when networking;  
   g. on the phone.  

4. What do lawyers **listen** to?  
   a. face to face professional interaction (formal and semi-formal);  
   b. presentations;  
   c. TV and radio programmes;  
   d. lectures and seminars;  
   e. telephone conversations.  

5. What **else** can lawyers **do**?  
   a. translate:  
      • parts of legal documents;  
      • parts of contracts;  
      • talks and negotiations;  
      • correspondence;  
   b. summarise:  
      • various legal texts;  
      • spoken language (presentations, negotiations);  
   c. switch codes:  
      • formal;  
      • informal.  

The conclusions that can be drawn from the guidelines provided by the CEF Professional project confirm the belief expressed above that teaching legal vocabulary is definitely not enough, even though it is probably the easiest part of an ELP course. What Legal English students need is communicative competence and language specific skills which they might encounter in their legal work in the future when they embark on careers in an international environment. Legal English teachers should allow their students to practise complex, highly interactive and, therefore, highly demanding professional skills which will help the future law graduates hold face-to-face meetings, negotiate trade agreements, accompany clients to court or arbitration hearings, etc.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

The above solution can work with learners who have already acquired at least Level B1(+) of English. In less advanced groups such highly interactive activities may simply prove too difficult and in the end may demotivate learners. These learners will first need to improve their interpersonal and communication skills that can be practised in slightly less specialised contexts of general business. Student motivation is one of the most important issues. Therefore, as has been postulated earlier, ELP courses at universities should be synchronised with curricula of other subjects and should evolve into Legal English courses as soon as students gain some knowledge of law at lectures and classes in their native language.

Another highly motivating factor may be an examination which all students are required to sit at the end of the ESP/ELP course. Students generally approve of the idea of graduating from a university with an international certificate confirming their knowledge of professional English at a given level of proficiency. In the case of legal skills, there are two Legal English certificates which seem to be most popular at present: ILEC (International Legal English Certificate) offered by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/professional-english/ilec.html) and TOLES (Test of Legal English Skills) developed by Global Legal English (http://toles.tricycle-media.com/exec/sam/view/id=195/node=198/).

While ILEC assesses the language ability at Levels B2 and C1 CEFR, the TOLES examination at Foundation Level can be taken by learners whose level of English is as low as Level A2 CEFR and, therefore, seems to be more accessible and realistic for pre-experienced law students at university level. Providing students with such an opportunity by, for example, setting an examination centre at a university, and encouraging them to sit certificate examinations will certainly benefit them not only in the form of an international certificate which can supplement their diplomas and CVs, but also as a huge motivator to learn.

OECD conclusions should constitute the guidelines for ESP/ELP course designers at universities. The internationalisation process opens new perspectives and stresses the need for developing not only students’ professional skills, but also academic ones. This seems especially important
as academic skills are very often either ignored in academic syllabuses of foreign language courses or considered as secondary.

Apart from offering regular classes in foreign languages for special purposes, universities can undertake other projects which will help increase their students’ exposure to foreign languages. Such projects may help make students aware of the constant need to learn foreign languages, to seek out-of-class contacts with the language they study, and to show their own initiative to ‘get things done’ in a foreign language.

Modern language materials can be of great assistance here. Nowadays universities can run foreign language classes with the use of materials accompanied by CD ROMs with interactive workbooks, listening materials in mp3 format, vocabulary games and quizzes, films, etc. Students should be encouraged to learn individually as they usually have access to computer laboratories where they can practise foreign languages on companion websites designed specially to support the textbooks used in the classroom.

New technologies should not be ignored either. Most universities offer their teaching staff and students the possibility to include elements of e-learning in the process of teaching and learning. Such opportunities cannot be wasted. E-learning components or blended courses (Maciaszczyk 2009) give the students a possibility to systematise their knowledge by, for example, making notes from their classes in electronic form and uploading them to the online component of the course, expand their knowledge by offering them extra practice in the language studied during classes, and allowing them to publish their own work, such as presentations, online. By means of e-learning teachers can recommend to their students successful websites on which they can develop their knowledge of the language they study using the attractive form of games, quizzes, podcasts, films, online lectures, Wiki, blogs, etc. Foreign language teachers can also motivate their students to tandem learning by paring them off with students in other countries interested in learning the same foreign language or Polish and encouraging them to exchange e-mails or chat on Internet communicators or discussion forums.

Another motivating strategy is to establish a foreign language Special Interest Group (pol. Koło Naukowe). Such SIGs can organise various events, e.g. conferences, lectures, workshops, film showings, theatre outings or website designing, during which students will not only experience extra exposure to a foreign language, but will also develop their organisational,
negotiating or presentation skills. SIGs can undertake various initiatives which might promote the idea of student exchange programmes, for example by organising meetings with students who have already participated in such programmes, publishing a guidebook for students who wish to participate in an exchange programme, or inviting ERASMUS students from other countries who study at their university to talk about their countries, cultural differences they encounter and benefits they gain from their participation in the programme.

Universities can also widen their offer of lectures in foreign languages for their students. OECD Review Report (2007: 42) states that there are a relatively limited number of study courses provided in foreign languages although there have been some positive developments in this area recently in Polish tertiary institutions. According to KRASP, in 2005–06 68 Polish tertiary education institutions offered 1400 courses and 150 full degree programmes in English, even if not all were actually delivered.

Such courses would definitely attract many more foreigners to study in Poland, but could also give Polish students extra opportunities of exposure to foreign languages at the academic level at their native universities.

To sum up, language educators and foreign language course designers should help students develop learner autonomy and aim at satisfying not only their possible target professional needs, but also at developing academic skills which will boost their linguistic confidence, make them believe in themselves and respond to the challenges of the European market.

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This chapter aims to review the literature relating to the intercultural dimension in language education. More precisely, it focuses on developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in foreign language learners. The following aspects are considered: current educational policy in Europe, the concept of ICC, procedures in developing ICC, assessment of ICC, materials for developing ICC and developing ICC in Poland.

1. Educational policy in Europe

In its White Paper on education and training, Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society, the European Commission claims that the way our societies function has been substantially and radically transformed by the impacts of internationalization involving ‘unprecedented freedom of movement’, information society fomenting ‘a new industrial revolution’ as well as scientific and technological knowledge combining ‘extreme specialisation and cross-disciplinary creativeness’ (1995: 8). It is rightly argued that this scale of transformation brings Europeans closer together than ever before, which undoubtedly has far-reaching implications for education and training.

With regard to language education, the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe follows three fundamental principles, defined in the preamble to Recommendation R(82)18 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and stating:

- that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational
effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;

- that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination;

- that member states, when adopting or developing national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching, may achieve greater convergence at the European level by means of appropriate arrangements for ongoing co-operation and co-ordination of policies. (Council of Europe 2001: 2)

In addition, the preamble to R(98)6 specifies the following objectives:

- to equip all Europeans for the challenges of intensified international mobility and closer co-operation not only in education, culture and science but also in trade and industry.

- to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication.

- to maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely taught.

- to meet the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe by appreciably developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries, which requires a sustained, lifelong effort to be encouraged, put on an organised footing and financed at all levels of education by the competent bodies.

- to avert the dangers that might result from the marginalisation of those lacking the skills necessary to communicate in an interactive Europe. (Council of Europe 2001: 3–4)

This language policy corresponds with the Council of Europe’s policy on intercultural education, which promotes democratic standards, i.e. ‘the right to be different and equal rights to participate’ (Batelaan 2003: 2), as they have been laid down in international agreements and conventions. Intercultural education encompasses two themes that are ‘appropriate in democratic multicultural societies’: (i) ‘inclusion and participation’ which refer to dealing with diversity and providing equity and (ii) ‘learning to live together’ which applies to developing coping strategies ‘based on mutual respect and a shared belief that “dialogue” is indispensable’ (Batelaan 2003: 3). In their declaration on intercultural education in the new European context, the European ministers of education call on the Council of Europe
Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Education

‘to focus its work programme on enhancing the quality of education as a response to the challenges posed by the diversity of our societies by making learning about democracy and intercultural education key components of educational reform’ (Council of Europe 2003: 4). Some of the recommended strategies include:

- helping to build understanding of the European dimension of education in the context of globalisation, by introducing respect for human rights and diversity, foundations for managing diversity, openness to other cultures (...);
- stepping up efforts in the area of the content of learning methods and teaching aids, in order to provide the member states with examples of educational tools making it possible to take the intercultural dimension of curricula into account; (...)
- developing programmes aimed at communication and mutual understanding, particularly through language learning and by encouraging awareness-raising for the importance of linguistic diversity in multicultural societies.

(Council of Europe 2003: 5)

Bearing this educational policy in mind, the Committee of Ministers has recently emphasized the importance of promoting plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in Europe. A plurilingual competence refers to ‘a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact’ (Council of Europe 2001: 4). The same applies to an individual’s cultural competence: ‘the various cultures (...) to which that person has gained access do not simply co-exist side by side; they are compared, contrasted and actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence’ (Council of Europe 2001: 6). In this light, the aim of language and culture teaching is no longer to master a number of languages ‘with the “ideal native speaker” as the ultimate model’ (Council of Europe 2001: 5). Instead, the idea is to develop plurilingual and pluricultural competences.

In the seminal book entitled Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEF), the Council of Europe lists four general competences which language users and learners draw upon in communicative situations, i.e. declarative knowledge (savoirs), skills and know-how (savoir-faire), existential competence (savoir-être) and ability to learn (savoir-apprendre), the development of which relates in some way to the enrichment of plurilingual and pluricultural competences.

Declarative knowledge includes: (i) sociocultural knowledge, defined as ‘knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities
in which a language is spoken’ (2001: 102), for example everyday living (food, drink, public holidays, working practices, leisure activities), living conditions (living standards, housing conditions, welfare arrangements), interpersonal relations (class structure, relations between sexes, family relations, relations in work situations), values, beliefs and attitudes (in relation to history, minorities, national identity, arts, religion), body language, social conventions and ritual behaviour as well as (ii) intercultural awareness referring to ‘knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the “world of origin” and the “world of the target community”’ (2001: 103).

Skills and know-how encompass: (i) practical skills (social skills, living skills, vocational skills and leisure skills) as well as (ii) intercultural skills understood as ‘the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other’, ‘cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures’, ‘the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations’ as well as ‘the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships’ (2001: 104–105).

Existential competence refers to: (i) attitudes such as ‘openness towards, and interest in, new experiences, other persons, ideas, peoples, societies and cultures’, ‘willingness to relativise one’s own cultural viewpoint and cultural value-system’ and ‘willingness and ability to distance oneself from conventional attitudes to cultural difference’ (2001: 105) as well as (ii) motivations, (iii) values, (iv) beliefs, (v) cognitive styles and (vi) personality factors.

Ability to learn includes: (i) language and communication awareness, (ii) general phonetic awareness and skills, (iii) study skills and (iv) heuristic skills (ability to come to terms with new experience, find new information, use new technologies).

As Komorowska points out, since ‘aspects of knowledge, attitudes and skills are spread across a variety of categories in the Common European Framework, it is more than difficult to use the document in order to design a satisfactory FLT syllabus. (…) A new, skills-oriented approach was, therefore, needed’ (2006a: 66). Consequently, soon after the publication of the first draft of the CEF in 1996, a new notion of intercultural communicative competence was introduced.
2. Intercultural communicative competence

The best known discussion of interculturalism in language pedagogy stems from the work of Byram (1997b), who describes intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a reformulated and extended version of the widely accepted concept of communicative competence (Canale & Swain 1980; Hymes 1972; van Ek 1986).

The notion of communicative competence has lately been criticized, as it implies that the native speaker should function as a model for foreign language learners. As Kramsch (1998) remarks, although the idea of the native speaker as a model seemed fairly straightforward about thirty years ago, it has recently become quite controversial. She points out that scholars have questioned the ‘identity’ of the native speaker (e.g. Davis 1991; Paikeday 1985; Widdowson 1994) as well as his/her seemingly ‘unquestioned authority’ (Byram & Zarate 1994; Phillipson 1992) and even the ‘appropriateness of the one native speaker norm in a time of large-scale migrations, cross-national and cross-cultural encounters, and increasing linguistic and pragmatic differences among speakers of the same language’ (Kramsch 1998: 16). Similarly, Byram argues that the native speaker model is inappropriate because it creates an ‘impossible target and consequently inevitable failure’ (1997b: 11). He adds that this model implies a ‘schizophrenic’ kind of competence:

*It would imply that a learner should be linguistically schizophrenic, abandoning one language in order to blend into another linguistic environment, becoming accepted as a native speaker by other native speakers. This linguistic schizophrenia also suggests separation from one’s own culture and the acquisition of a native sociocultural competence, and a new sociocultural identity.*

(Byram 1997b: 11–12)

Thus, Byram (1997b) rejects the native speaker model. Instead, he suggests replacing it with the intercultural speaker model, which assumes that successful intercultural communication depends on the ability ‘to interact with “others”, to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives [and] to be conscious of their evaluations of difference’ (Byram et al. 2001: 5). Similarly, Kramsch proposes it is the intercultural speaker that language learners should aspire to, not the ‘untroubled mythical’ native speaker (1998: 27).

Byram defines ICC as an ability ‘to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language’ (1997b: 71). He argues that
ICC consists of four competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural. The first three are based on van Ek’s (1986) model of communicative ability; however, they have been reformulated to account for replacing the native speaker with the intercultural speaker:

**Linguistic competence:** the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language;

**Sociolinguistic competence:** the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor;

**Discourse competence:** the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes. (Byram 1997b: 48)

Thus, linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse components share their main characteristics with the concept of communicative competence. What makes them different is the idea of the intercultural speaker which they imply and an additional component which Byram (1997b) refers to as intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence (IC) encompasses several interdependent *savoirs*, i.e. attitudes, knowledge and skills connected with intercultural communication. Attitudes (*savoir-être*) form the foundation of IC. Byram claims that successful intercultural communication depends on attitudes of curiosity, openness and readiness to discover different perspectives on familiar and unfamiliar phenomena (1997b: 50). This involves readiness to ‘decenter’ (Kohlberg *et al.* 1983, after Byram 1997b: 34) and to relativize one’s own values, beliefs and behaviours (Byram *et al.* 2001).

Another important factor is knowledge (*savoirs*) of one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s social groups, their products and practices, and of ‘the general processes of societal and individual interaction’ (Byram 1997b: 51). Thus, such knowledge consists of two major categories: (i) knowledge about groups, products and processes, which is always partially present as a result of socialization, and (ii) knowledge of the processes of interaction, which is crucial in successful intercultural communication but ‘not acquired automatically’ (Byram 1997b: 35).

Apart from appropriate attitudes and knowledge, there are also important skills that intercultural speakers need to possess. These are skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), and skills of discovery
and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire). The former refer to the ability to interpret phenomena from another culture and relate them to one’s own culture, whereas the latter describe the ability to acquire knowledge of a culture and use it in real-life interaction. By comparing, interpreting, relating and discovering values and beliefs in ideas, events, documents and real-time interaction, intercultural speakers are able to identify ethnocentric perspectives, and as a consequence, they are able to see how misunderstandings can arise and how they might possibly resolve them (Byram 1997b: 52).

Byram claims that developing these four aspects of IC in an educational context should be enriched with developing critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager), i.e. ‘an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries’ (1997b: 53). This implies the ability to identify either explicit or implicit values inherent in one’s own and other cultures. Such critical cultural awareness, along with knowledge, skills and attitudes, enables the intercultural speaker to act as a cultural mediator, border-crosser or negotiator of meaning (cf. Byram 2003: 60; Council of Europe 2001: 105; Roberts et al. 2001: 3; Zarate et al. 2004).

As shown in Table 1, Byram (1997b: 50–53) specifies each of the above components of IC in terms of objectives, which ‘paved way to seeing intercultural competence as a combination of five elements: attitudes, knowledge, skills, learning to learn abilities as well as critical awareness’ (Komorowska 2006a: 68). This combination is reflected in the widely accepted aims of intercultural education, which sets, among others, the following goals:

- to provide the learner with socio-cultural knowledge of other cultures, i.e. norms, values, life and communication styles,
- to raise the learner’s awareness of the influence of his/her own culture on his/her perceptions of self and others,
- to raise the awareness of differences and of stereotypes,
- to develop skills to observe, interpret, sustain judgment and cooperate with others in spite of a possible lack of acceptance,
- to train strategies of behaviour and communication appropriate in a given context.

(Komorowska 2006a: 68)
Table 1: IC described in terms of objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes (savoir-être)</th>
<th>Objectives:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality; this should be distinguished from attitudes of seeking out the exotic or of seeking to profit from others;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one’s own and in other cultures and cultural practices;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one’s own environment;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge (savoirs)</th>
<th>Objectives (knowledge about/of):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) historical and contemporary relationships between one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) the means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (at a distance or in proximity), of travel to and from and the institutions which facilitate contact or help resolve problems;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) the types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) the national memory of one’s own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of one’s interlocutor’s country;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) the national memory of one’s interlocutor’s country and the perception on it from one’s own;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f) the national definitions of geographical space in one’s own country and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(g) the national definitions of geographical space in one’s interlocutor’s country and the perspective on them from one’s own;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(h) the processes and institutions of socialisation in one’s own country and one’s interlocutor’s country;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(i) social distinctions and their principal markers, in one’s own country and one’s interlocutor’s;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(j) institutions, and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country and which conduct and influence relationships between them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(k) the processes of social interaction in one’s interlocutor’s country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Skills of interpreting and relating  
(savoir comprendre) | Objectives (ability to):  
(a) identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins;  
(b) identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present;  
(c) mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena. |
|---|---|
| Skills of discovery and interaction  
(savoir apprendre/foire) | Objectives (ability to):  
(a) elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and to develop an explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena;  
(b) identify significant references within and across cultures and elicit their significance and connotations;  
(c) identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances;  
(d) use in real-time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country and culture, taking into consideration the degree of one’s existing familiarity with the country and culture and the extent of difference between one’s own and the other;  
(e) identify contemporary and past relationships between one’s own and the other culture and country;  
(f) identify and make use of public and private institutions which facilitate contact with other countries and cultures;  
(g) use in real-time knowledge, skills and attitudes for mediation between interlocutors of one’s own and a foreign culture. |
| Critical cultural awareness  
(savoir s’engager) | Objectives (ability to):  
(a) identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one’s own and other cultures;  
(b) make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which refers to an explicit perspective and criteria;  
(c) interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of them by drawing upon one’s knowledge, skills and attitudes. |

Reaching these aims is challenging, since even providing learners with knowledge about norms, values, life and communication styles, which may seem quite simple at first, tends to pose problems due to numerous subgroups present within a single country (cf. Jandt 1998). Also, raising learners’ awareness concerning identity is truly complicated if ‘we use an understanding of cultural identity which is not delimited by race, ethnicity or nation but as a figure which holds different kinds of identity such as gender, work, hobby’ (Jensen 2004: 13) and if we assume that ‘[w]ithin us are contradictory identities pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about’ (Hall et al. 1992: 277). Nonetheless, as Komorowska puts it, ‘[a]ims, thus formulated, eliminate the tendency to perceive other cultures through similarities only and block early exposure to national stereotypes, thus removing two main barriers in the process of developing intercultural competence’ (Jandt 2001, after Komorowska 2006a: 68).

3. Procedures in developing ICC

As mentioned previously, the concept of ICC is a reformulated and extended version of the widely accepted notion of communicative competences (Byram 1997b; Corbett 2003). Although these competences are associated with different aims and objectives, they are developed with the help of the same teaching techniques (Bandura 2007: 55; Bandura 2009: 183). The interest in cultural education over the last forty years has given rise to a wide variety of culture teaching techniques. For the sake of clarity, Stern (1992: 224–232) suggests dividing them into the following ‘approaches’ to culture teaching: creating an authentic classroom environment, providing cultural information, cultural problem solving, behavioural and affective aspects, cognitive approaches, approaches based on literature, real-life exposure to the C2 and making use of cultural community resources. Below, there is a sampling of ideas representing the most common techniques that have been suggested since the early 1970s and that are associated with the above approaches.

An authentic classroom environment refers to the so-called culture island, i.e. classroom decorations, displays of posters, pictures, maps, newspaper clippings as well as expositions of realia such as schedules, tickets, menus, questionnaires or programmes. Such authentic objects from the target culture are intended to provide students with ‘a dose of reality’
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(Lund 1992) and in this way increase the comprehensibility of linguistic and cultural input (cf. Hughes 1984; Chastain 1988). They help students relate classroom teaching to the real world through facilitating ‘the simulation of experience in the target culture’ (Berwald 1987).

Providing cultural information encompasses such techniques as culture asides, cultural connotations, culture capsules and culture clusters. *Culture asides* are pieces of cultural information or ‘slices of life’ (Taylor 1970), such as a recording of a popular song or a news item, the main purpose of which is to ‘help the learner to create a network of mental associations similar to those which the items evoke in the native speaker’ (Stern 1992: 224). Similarly, through the use of visual aids and/or word-association activities, techniques which aim at deriving *cultural connotations* make students aware that words and phrases both in the L1 and in the L2 are associated with culture-specific images (Omaggio 1986; Seelye 1984). *Culture capsules*, which represent one of the earliest techniques of culture teaching, are brief descriptions of one difference between a native and a foreign custom, accompanied by photos, slides and realia, and followed by a series of related questions and activities (Taylor & Sorenson 1961). *Culture clusters*, also a fairly early technique, consist of three or more capsules concerning similar topics and one thirty-minute simulation that integrates the information in the capsule and dramatizes it through a role-play or skit (Meade & Morain 1973).

*Culture assimilators* epitomize cultural problem solving. They do not simply present learners with information, but make them face a culturally troublesome situation. Typically they consist of three parts: (i) an act of miscommunication between a member of the C1 and a member of the C2, presented in a narrative or dramatic form, (ii) one or more multiple-choice question(s) dealing with the explanation of the conflict and (iii) feedback paragraphs related to the multiple-choice options, explaining whether the choice is likely and, if necessary, providing additional cultural information (Hendon 1980; Lafayette 1978; Omaggio 1986). Another example of cultural problem solving is *hypothesis refinement*, consisting of research-oriented activities the main function of which is to refine learners’ initial perceptions of an aspect of the target culture (Jorstad 1981, after Omaggio 1986; cf. Camilleri 2002).

Behavioural and affective approaches include the auto-motor unit, dramatization, mini-drama, role-play and simulation. *The auto-motor unit* contains a series of oral commands which are based on a cultural theme and to which students are supposed to react physically. Learners observe as the
teacher pantomimes actions, for example culture-specific nonverbal messages, and then follow the commands themselves (cf. Chastain 1988; Lafayette 1978). Dramatization, role-play and simulation involve learners in observing and/or improvising verbal and nonverbal exchanges and actions that illustrate culture-specific issues (Byram & Fleming 1998; Camilleri 2002; Stern 1992). The culture mini-drama includes between three and five skits or episodes, which are read, acted out or watched on video, and which present one or more examples of miscommunication. After each episode learners discuss the scenes and obtain additional information until they are able to identify the precise reason of the miscommunication (cf. Chastain 1988; Omaggio 1986).

In contrast to most of the above techniques which are fairly experiential, cognitive approaches represent activities which are ‘academic or systematic in nature’ (Stern 1992: 228). They include: lectures, readings, discussions and debates as well as research techniques encouraging learner autonomy (ibid.). Their focus may be on areas such as daily life, work and study in connection with their social underpinnings (Buttjes & Byram 1991; Sercu 1995; van Ek & Trim 1991). Readings may include, for instance, literary works. Some scholars have advocated an integration of the above approaches, which to a large extent have been influenced by social sciences, with the humanistic approaches, which regard literature as a source of culture teaching (Burwitz-Melzer 2001; Byram & Planet 1999; Fenner 2001; Kramsch 1993; Sroka 2009).

The remaining two approaches, which make use of cultural community resources and real-life exposure to the C2, combine communicative language teaching with cultural awareness (Stern 1992). The former refers to language and culture teaching in the target-language milieu where ‘the everyday environment constitutes a vast resource (...) for culture teaching’ (Stern 1992: 231–232). The latter additionally applies to the foreign language situation, in which real-life contacts may include the following forms: pen-pals, tape-pals, computer-mediated encounters (Carel 2001; Morgan 2001; Ware 2003; Whittaker 2001), interviews with native informants or tandem partners (Woodin 2001), audiotaped interviews, videotaped interviews/films (Burnett & Thomson 1985, after Omaggio 1986) and visits to other countries (Glaser et al. 2007; Jurasek 1995; Parker & Rouxerville 1995; Roberts 1997), which may be connected to ethnographic projects (Barro & Jordan 1995; Byram & Fleming 1998; Byram & Morgan 1994; Huber-Kriegler et al. 2003; Roberts 1995; Roberts et al. 2001).

In general, the main underlying principles on which teaching toward ICC is based include: developing skills, experiential learning as well as using
Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Education


As already mentioned, skills which are considered useful in intercultural communication encompass skills of interpreting and relating as well as skills of discovery and interaction (Byram 1997b). If possible, these should be transferable (Byram & Zarate 1997: 13). Special attention seems to be given to acquiring ethnographic skills (cf. Bandura 2009; Maciejewska-Stępień 2007; Roberts et al. 2001). Language learners as ethnographers use both experiential and analytic methods to learn how to communicate appropriately and to develop an understanding of other groups’ meanings (Byram & Fleming 1998; Roberts et al. 2001). Ideally, this involves extended participation in the everyday lives of a group; a detailed description of some aspects of these lives [“thick” description in Geertz’s (1975) terms] and an analysis and interpretation of them through the eyes and ears of the “outsider” (Roberts et al. 2001: 30). Thus, language learners as ethnographers play the double role of participants and observers, which enables them to be close and, at the same time, to keep a distance. As Roberts et al. suggest, “[t]his experience of closeness and distance, of being oneself and yet part of another group, defines the new identity of the language learner – liberated (or condemned) to be forever in-between’ (2001: 30). However, as mentioned above, apart from being in-between, language learners additionally learn how to become ‘go-betweens’ (ibid.), i.e. intercultural speakers or mediators in intercultural interaction.

In order to enable and/or enhance the experience of closeness and distance associated with the ethnographic approach, it is important to build a bridge between the foreign language classroom and the outside world. Typically, doing ethnography involves a combination of the following stages: (i) a preparation phase, i.e. acquiring background knowledge in the classroom, (ii) a fieldwork phase with time for observation and data collection and (iii) a presentation phase with time for reflection as well as analysing and presenting data from a newly acquired perspective (cf. Parsons & Junge 2001: 205). These stages are in line with Kolb’s (1984) idea of ‘experiential learning’, which he refers to as a ‘learning cycle’ consisting of experience, reflection and learning. As a recurring cycle, these three elements reinforce one another, and thus enhance the learning process (cf. Roberts et al. 2001: 39–40). In the case of language learners as ethnographers, fieldwork corresponds to direct experience, while preparation and presentation represent a combination of reflection and learning.
Both experiential learning and the ethnographic approach have the potential to reinforce the process of ‘deep learning’, which is characterized by:

- an intention to understand material for oneself;
- interacting vigorously and critically with the content;
- relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience;
- using organising principles to integrate ideas;
- relating evidence to conclusions; and
- examining the logic of the argument.  

(Gipps 1994, after Byram 1997b: 90)

Byram (1997b) considers such learning to be a sine qua non for achieving many of the objectives of his *savoirs*. For instance, *savoir s’engager* requires interacting vigorously and critically with the content in question; *savoir apprendre* calls for relating new information to previous knowledge and experience; and *savoir comprendre* involves the use of organizing principles to integrate conflicting viewpoints on phenomena (Byram 1997b: 90).

As Byram and Planet explain, ‘the essence of the comparative approach is to provide a double perspective but not to evaluate to see which is better. A double perspective comes from juxtaposing phenomena from the learners’ own environment with those from another society and culture’ (1999: 189). Consequently, learners know how to distinguish between “natural” (i.e. the only possible way) [and] “cultural” (i.e. a way which they have learned from those around them without realizing that it is learned)’ (*ibid.*). Comparison is supposed to make the strange (i.e. the other) familiar and the familiar (i.e. the self) strange, which relates to learner-centeredness ensuring ‘that the focus is not just on the learners’ own society and culture in some abstract way but on their own involvement in it’ (Byram & Planet 1999: 190).

4. ICC assessment

Evaluating the IC component of ICC is generally perceived as challenging for a number of reasons. Learners’ knowledge and understanding, which comprise only a small part of what is involved, can be assessed in tests of facts or in essays where learners discuss events, but the difficulty comes in deciding which facts and events are important (Byram *et al.* 2002: 23). What is even more difficult to assess is the ability to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, to ‘decenter’ (Kohlberg *et al.* 1983, after Byram 1997b: 34) and to act on the basis of new perspectives (Byram
Most challenging of all is to evaluate ‘whether learners have changed their attitudes, become more tolerant of difference and the unfamiliar’ (ibid.; cf. Bandura 2009). Consequently, Byram (1997b) argues that assessing IC requires a multidimensional approach which takes into account a variety of modes and locations for IC evaluation. Table 2 presents possible kinds of evidence and assessment techniques that, according to Byram (1997b), match the objectives of IC, as specified in Table 1. Byram (1997b) relies on Gipps’ (1994, after Byram 1997b) suggestion that there should be a ‘paradigm shift’ in which a psychometric model is replaced by an educational model. The main characteristics of Gipps’ ‘educational assessment’ include the following:

- educational assessment recognizes the multidimensional and complex nature of constructs such as IC;
- it sets clear standards for learners’ performance; evaluation standards are shared with learners; learners are encouraged to monitor and assess their own progress;
- educational assessment favours holistic criteria to evaluate complex skills; it replaces a single score with other forms of describing achievement such as ‘thick’ description (Geertz 1975) and profiles of performance, which may be included in learners’ portfolios (Gipps 1994, after Byram 1997b: 110–111).

In line with these ideas, a combination of formative and summative assessment, including projects, essays, logs, portfolios, self-assessment checklists, surveys and tests, is usually recommended (e.g. Bandura 2007: 91–95; Bandura 2009; Facciol & Kjartansson 2003; Hasselgreen 2003; Komorowska 2006a: 75–76). Certain steps have already been undertaken to produce materials for assessing IC. For example, the participants of the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project, whose purpose was to produce materials for systematic classroom assessment/portfolio assessment in lower secondary school, present a list of topics relating to daily life activities, social conventions, values, beliefs, attitudes and non-verbal language as well as a self-assessment tool for IC for 15-year-old learners and an example of an exercise for working further on their ideas (Hasselgreen 2003). The project aimed to ‘exploit the potential’ of the *European Language Portfolio* by ‘adapting and supplementing it (...) while keeping within the spirit and essential parameters’ of the document (Hasselgreen 2003: 10). Apart from that, a collection of sample tests for assessing IC among teachers and teacher trainees was devised within the framework of the ‘Intercultural
Communicative Competence in Teacher Education’ project (Facciol & Kjartansson 2003). The tests vary from ‘highly objective, quantitative and numerically measurable (...) of, for example, the multiple choice type’ to ‘essay questions of a more qualitative nature, where there is a greater need to be alert to the possibility of a subjective element influencing the process of assessment’ (Facciol & Kjartansson 2003: 74–75). Also, the Council of Europe (2009) has recently published a collection of documents entitled *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* to help learners analyse their own specific intercultural encounters by answering a set of questions about various aspects of those experiences. Generally, as Komorowska remarks, more ‘clear criteria for the evaluation of intercultural competence [are] (...) needed as educational aims tend to be vague and difficult to operationalize’ (2006a: 76).

Table 2: Summary of modes and locations for IC assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Kind of evidence</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes (savoir-être)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) ‘equality’</td>
<td>choice of representations of ‘daily life’</td>
<td>test and/or portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) ‘other perspectives’</td>
<td>choice of analysis from a ‘better fit’ perspective</td>
<td>test and/or portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) ‘question own values’</td>
<td>choice of other evaluations of phenomena in own society</td>
<td>test and/or portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) ‘culture shock’</td>
<td>self-analysis, simultaneous or retrospective, of affective responses at different points</td>
<td>portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) ‘conventions of interaction’</td>
<td>self-analysis of processes of adaptation</td>
<td>portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge (savoirs)</strong></td>
<td>[same for all aspects (a) to (f)]</td>
<td>[same for all aspects (a) to (f)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) historical and contemporary relationships</td>
<td>(i) factual knowledge elicited by question and answer; (ii) deep learning knowledge elicited by techniques requiring comment and analysis</td>
<td>(i) test (ii) continuous assessment (not self-assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) national memories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) definitions of geographical space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) socialisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) social distinctions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*)

| (a) identify ethnocentric perspectives | part of evidence from assessment of *savoirs* [above] | test and/or continuous assessment as for assessment of *saviors* |
| (b) identify misunderstanding and dysfunction | ditto | ditto |
| (c) mediate between interpretations | part of assessment of interaction (see below) | |

### Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*)

| (a) questioning a native speaker | use of interviewing techniques | test simulation |
| (b) identify significant reference | ditto | portfolio |
| (c) use sources to understand relationships | use of reference books, etc. to illuminate specific documents | test and/or coursework |
| (d) agree conventions | retrospective analysis and documentation by self and others | portfolio |
| (e) respond to distance/proximity of other culture | ditto | ditto |
| (f) institutions for contacts | ditto | ditto |
| (g) mediate between interlocutors | ditto | ditto |

### Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*)

| (a) identify values | part of evidence from assessment of *savoirs* and *savoir comprendre* (see above) | (see *savoirs* and *savoir comprendre*, above) |
| (b) evaluate by criteria | ditto | ditto |
| (c) interact and mediate | part of evidence of *savoir faire* (see above) | (see *savoir faire*, above) |

5. Materials for developing ICC

With regard to their approach to developing ICC, materials designed for general and specific purposes differ quite significantly (Komorowska 2006a). Most of general English textbooks contain closed texts presenting facts about cultural issues and very few open texts encouraging interpretation and discussion of these issues (Fenner 2001). Thus, their cultural content focuses on developing receptive skills such as reading and listening comprehension. Speaking and writing tasks refer to culture only infrequently (Frankowska 2004, after Komorowska 2006a: 72). It follows that ‘most of the coursebooks create a context in which cultural information can be read or listened to, but not much time is devoted to activities inviting discussions, debates, analyses of L1 and L2 cultures, predictions, comparisons or interpretations’ (Komorowska 2006a: 72). Thus, they are not designed to develop IC as such. In this respect, however, local and global textbooks tend to differ, with the former being more likely to aim at improving learners’ intercultural skills (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2007; Bandura 2007; Komorowska 2006a; Komorowska 2006b). Both local and global materials tend to overemphasize elements of mass culture (Davcheva & Sercu 2005) and to present culture of the L2 exclusively in positive terms, which may be the result of a ‘hidden curriculum’ (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2003). The situation is significantly different in business English textbooks, which pay close attention to intercultural matters to prevent potential misunderstandings and conflicts in business-related interaction (Frankowska 2004, after Komorowska 2006b: 39).

Some supplementary materials designed to integrate language and culture teaching focus specifically on developing ICC. They include: global textbooks, such as Młodzież wobec różnic (Byram & Zarate 1996), Mirrors and Windows (Huber-Kriegler et al. 2003), Cultural Awareness (Tomalin & Stempleski 1998), global materials available online, such as the PICTURE modules (Maciejewska & Grigg 2007) and local textbooks, such as Branching out (British Council 1998), Crossing Cultures (Cichirdan et al. 1998), British Studies Materials for Polish Teachers of English (British Council 2000) and Zoom in on Britain and Hungary (Andrews et al. 2001). All of them address important aspects of intercultural training, which include: showing connections between language and culture, encouraging critical analysis of stereotypes and viewpoints, requiring comparisons
between L1 and L2 cultures, developing learner autonomy, making use of authentic sources and providing suggestions for interdisciplinary projects (cf. Bandura 2007).

6. Developing ICC in Poland

Current research suggests that language teachers in Poland generally accept the principles of intercultural education discussed above and are, therefore, willing to develop ICC in language learners (Bandura 2007). Unfortunately, their positive attitudes toward developing ICC are not in line with their everyday practice of language teaching due to time constraints, necessity to focus on language skills and pressure to prepare learners for exams which are not designed to assess IC as such (Bandura & Sercu 2005). In addition, Polish teachers tend to follow the principles of communicative language teaching, which prevailed in their own language education, and to choose global textbooks, which, as already mentioned, are likely to neglect the intercultural dimension (Bandura 2007: 303). Also, they seem to believe that introducing elements of culture requires advanced language skills on the part of their learners and, as a result, instructors often choose not to discuss cultural issues with less advanced students to avoid using Polish (Komorowska 2006b: 41–42). Thus, quite frequently teachers provide learners with facts about the geography and the history of a given country instead of developing different aspects of IC (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2005, after Komorowska 2006b: 42). However, the situation seems to be improving, since an increasing number of Polish teachers is participating in educational projects which aim at promoting the intercultural dimension in language education (e.g. Kułaczkowska 2005; Maciejewska-Świępień 2007; Masiakowska 2005).

7. Conclusion

It has been argued that, in light of the radical changes our societies face, the European educational policy promotes the intercultural dimension, which is reflected in the principles, objectives and strategies advocated by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Language education may play a special role in this respect by developing ICC in language learners.
The concept of ICC relates to the so-called intercultural speaker/cultural mediator model, as opposed to the native speaker model. ICC consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and intercultural competence understood as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, critical awareness and skills connected with intercultural communication.

Although based on a different set of objectives, techniques for developing ICC are the same as those used in communicative language teaching. Special attention is given to acquiring skills, learning through experience as well as using the so-called comparative approach and the learner-centered approach.

Due to the complex objectives ascribed to the notion of IC, a multidimensional approach to evaluating IC is recommended, i.e. a combination of formative and summative assessment together with self-assessment, including projects, essays, logs, portfolios, checklists, surveys and tests.

The quality of available teaching materials differs quite significantly with respect to their approach to developing ICC. Supplementary materials integrating language and culture teaching seem to be most successful as regards their potential to develop intercultural skills in language learners.

On the basis of the above descriptions of ICC in language education it can be concluded that, in order to support intercultural learning, language teachers need knowledge, attitudes and skills additional to the ones regarded as both necessary and sufficient for developing communicative competence in language learners, which, as pointed out by Sercu, clearly requires ‘a revision of professionalism in foreign language teaching’ (2005: 5).

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1. Introduction

Contrary to the well-documented integration policy in old immigration countries such as Germany or France, Irish approaches to integration have yet to be translated into an effective official approach. The ongoing debate on integration of the newly formed migrant communities in Ireland has so far indicated a balanced approach between *multiculturalism*, understood as presence and state of both cultural and ethnic diversity within the demographics of a particular social space (Parekh 2006: 3), and *assimilation*, i.e. the process by which the characteristics of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another (cf. Alba & Nee 2003: 23–27; Mac Cormaic 2007). It also seems to be inching towards *interculturalism*, an approach which perceives the different cultures and ethnic groups as a valuable economic and cultural resource that should be made use of in the social and economic environments.

The Polish community, the most numerous and vibrant ethnic minority group in the Republic of Ireland, has inspired considerable interest among members of Irish society. Much scholarly and media attention has been given to Poland-related sociopolitical issues, while Polish and Irish cultures are often discussed from a comparative perspective. With a view to fostering opportunities for intercultural dialogue between the Polish community and Irish society, since the EU enlargement various cultural events have been organised by the Polish Embassy and by various Polish social and cultural organisations operating in Ireland. The Polish language is currently the largest community language in Ireland and increased enrolments in Polish
language courses observed following the arrival of large numbers of Polish immigrants in 2004 are indicative of its strong position.

This paper will discuss the increasing levels of interest in the Polish language within a broader context of intercultural understanding, exchange, and mobility between Ireland and Poland. It will also provide an overview of Polish language and cultural programmes available to third level students in Ireland. In its final sections, preliminary results of an exploratory attitudinal survey undertaken among participants in Polish language and culture programmes at Trinity College Dublin will be presented.

The data drawn upon in this paper have been collected within the framework of the IRCHSS-funded project ‘Second Language Acquisition and Native Language Maintenance in the Polish Diaspora in Ireland and France’ (see Appendix).

2. Ireland as a new immigration country

As a peripheral European country with strong and sustained emigration, limited employment and no traditional colonial ties, in the past 300 years Ireland has not received any significant immigration flows. With the exception of the 1970s, when, for the first time in Irish history, net migration was positive, outflows continued to exceed inflows until the early 1990s. In 1996, Ireland reached its migration 'turning point', making it the last EU Member State to become a country of net immigration. The main reason for this change was rapid economic growth created by an unprecedented demand for labour (Aronin & Singleton 2008; Inglis 2008; Ruhs 2007; Singleton 2007). It is estimated that there are people from more than 160 countries living in the Republic (Inglis 2008: 108). Immigrants currently represent 12% of the population of Ireland, 15% of the workforce and 10% of the primary school population (Summary of Some Statistic as at End October 2008 – Ministry for Integration Report). This rapid increase in racial, ethnic and religious diversity poses new challenges to policy makers in terms of developing efficient strategies concerning employment, social inclusion, and healthcare. It also poses new challenges to those involved in language and educational policy (cf. Singleton et al. 2009).

The term which is most frequently used in the ongoing Irish debate on integration is interculturalism, which seeks to avoid the problems associated with earlier approaches to integration, such as criticism of some
conceptualisations of multiculturalism on the grounds that it constructs minority communities as homogenous entities with no internal divisions. As characterized by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI):

*Interculturalism suggests the acceptance not only of the principles of equality of rights, values and abilities but also the development of policies to promote interaction, collaboration and exchange with people of different cultures, ethnicity or religion living in the same territory. Furthermore, interculturalism is an approach that sees difference as something positive that can enrich a society and recognises racism as an issue that needs to be tackled in order to create a more inclusive society.*

(Submission to the All-Party Oireachtas (Parliament of Ireland) Committee on the Constitution. The Family. 2005: 6)

In accordance with the principles of interculturalism, integration is generally regarded as a two-way process between minority ethnic groups and the majority populations. ‘Integration means the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity’ (NCCRI, Submission to the Working Group on the Integration of Refugees. 1999).

### 3. Polish language and culture in Ireland

Five years since the arrival of Polish nationals in Ireland, one can say that the integration path followed so far by the Polish community in Ireland has reflected much of the principles of interculturalism being put into practice. The following points provide an illustration of this tendency.

- The Polish contribution to the mainstream culture in Ireland is reflected in a strong presence of the Polish language in the public space, well-developed Polish infrastructure, Polish media operating in Ireland, particular attention paid to the Polish community in the Irish media, and rising interest in the Polish language and culture on the part of large sections of Irish society.
- Professional and business ties between Poland and Ireland have recently become more dynamic. An increase can be observed in the number of Irish citizens travelling to Poland, either as tourists or residents. There is also a growing number of intermarriages between Polish and Irish citizens. These circumstances are fostering intercultural dialogue,
influencing mutual perceptions as well as generating more interest in Poland and in the Polish language.

- There are a significant number of features shared by Irish and Polish culture, such as traditions of emigration, a history of oppression or the role of religion and family values. These circumstances may be expected to contribute to a better understanding and to foster intercultural dialogue between the two countries/cultures.

Since 2004 the Polish community has established its strong position in the host society and greatly enriched the cultural scene in Ireland. Polish cultural events, held on a regular basis, not only make it easier for the Irish to come in contact with Polish culture, but also contribute to promoting it amongst them. Polish events which have taken place in Dublin over the last five years (e.g. the IFI Polish Film Festival or the Polish Art exhibition in the National Gallery in Dublin) were met with strong interest on the part of the host community. Results of analyses of Irish media coverage conducted since January 2007 are indicative of this interest. Among areas concerning the Polish Diaspora covered in the Irish press the most pertinent were: estimates of the number of Polish community members, declared length of stay, employment sectors occupied by Polish migrants, Polish infrastructure, and Polish contribution to the newly developing multicultural Irish society (cf. Debaene 2008).

As regards the situation of the Polish language, some estimates indicate that there are already more speakers of Polish in Ireland than there are native speakers of Irish (e.g. Inglis 2008: 106). A wide and elaborate linguistic infrastructure has developed over the last five years around the Polish community in Ireland, with more than 15 Polish-language publications or websites and a network of schools, shops, bars and religious groups. The medium of Polish now occupies a sizeable share of radio and TV broadcast time and of advertisements. State exams can be sat in Polish, both at the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels; Polish is one of 15 mother-tongue languages examined at Leaving Certificate level (cf. Debaene 2008; Mac Cormaic 2007). There is a number of explanations for the vast popularity of Polish language and culture in Ireland. First of all, the Polish community constitutes around 8% of the local workforce. It therefore becomes a potentially profitable target for service providers (e.g. in publishing and advertising). Increased numbers of enrolments of Irish people in Polish language courses are proof of the rising interest in Polish language and culture among the general public (cf. Debaene & Kopečková in press).
What follows is a description of Polish language programmes held at the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies at Trinity College Dublin, which at present is the only academic unit in Ireland where Polish can be studied to a degree level.

4. Polish-language and culture programmes at the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies, Trinity College Dublin

Polish language programmes

Polish has been taught continuously in the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies of Trinity College Dublin since the academic year 1989–1990 and had also been taught before that on an ad hoc basis. As established by the bilateral agreement between TCD and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (2004), a continuous supply of specialists in teaching Polish as a second language has been provided by the Polish side. Since the academic year 2004–2005, Polish language programmes have been offered by the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies as part of the European Studies degree and, more recently, also as part of the Business Studies degree (cf. Debaene & Kopečková in press; Debaene & Singleton in press). The first graduates in Polish received their degrees in 2008.

The majority of students enrolled in the Polish language and culture programmes so far have been motivated by their interest in various aspects of Polish culture and by their willingness to master a language which is considered ‘small’ in the international context. Professional and business links between Ireland and Poland, which have become more dynamic in the last few years, provide an additional incentive, especially for students wishing to combine Polish with business-related subjects. As an integral part of their studies, students enrolled in Polish language programmes spend a year at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow within the framework of the Erasmus exchange. Furthermore, all students of Polish are eligible to apply for scholarships to attend summer courses in Poland. These scholarships are part of the support for the provision and maintenance of Polish language skills in Ireland offered by the Polish Ministry of Education and coordinated by the Polish Embassy in Dublin. In the academic year 2008–2009 seventeen students availed of these scholarships and attended four-week summer courses at the universities of Warsaw, Lublin and Toruń.
(15 scholarships were funded by the Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange programme and 2 within the Polish for the Best programme). In 2009, the above described daytime programmes in Polish language and culture are still niche and at a developing stage in Ireland.

**Polish Area Studies programmes**

In addition to the language programmes, students enrolled on Polish courses are introduced to selected aspects of Polish contemporary culture and society addressed within the so-called **Polish Area Studies** programmes. Polish Area Studies programmes taught by the author between the academic years 2005–2006 and 2007–2008 were catered for second year (senior freshman) students. The course is designed for students who, in their majority, are preparing for their year abroad programme at a Polish university, part of the Erasmus exchange. It aims to equip students in language skills needed to fully participate in academic lectures and seminars conducted in Polish, i.e. listening comprehension, note-taking, delivering short oral presentations relevant to the programme of their studies, and use of primary and secondary sources in Polish. The course comprises a series of lectures delivered in three-week modules and dealing with an aspect of contemporary Polish society. Each lecture is followed by a seminar at which students discuss issues raised in the lecture and in the suggested reading. To enhance their compositional skills, students are required to submit a short piece of writing, e.g. summary of or response to a lecture or text. Students are also required to produce two dossiers on two different three-week blocks covered during the year which consist of a Polish-English vocabulary list for the topic, a list of relevant idioms/collocations/set phrases for that topic, and a Polish-language summary of the lectures. To successfully complete the course, students must write a 3,000 word paper on either a topic covered in the Area Studies course or on a Poland-related European-studies topic. The Project is assessed for quality of research, including the use of secondary sources, structure and quality of discourse.

The lecture topics in the academic years between 2005–2006 and 2007–2008 focused on selected aspects of Polish literature, theatre, fine arts, Polish Nobel Prize winners, and Polish cinema. An attempt was made to incorporate comparisons between Polish and Irish culture with an emphasis on such commonalities as traditions of emigration, the role of the Catholic Church, national identity, and a history of oppression. Topics
selected by students for their language dossiers, essays and presentations included *inter alia* Polish-Jewish relations, Polish art, Polish migration to Ireland, the concept of Polish identity and Polish theatre.

In the following section of this paper, insights from an interview-based survey conducted among participants in Polish language and culture programmes at Trinity College Dublin will be presented.

5. Exploring attitudes towards the Polish language among participants in Polish language and culture programmes at Trinity College Dublin

This exploratory study investigates attitudes towards Polish language and culture among participants in Polish language and culture day-time programmes at the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies of Trinity College Dublin. It also focuses on the contribution made by the Polish community to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Ireland in terms of promoting intercultural dialogue and mobility between Ireland and Poland. The preliminary data presented here were collected by means of attitudinal semi-structured interviews conducted in May 2009 among both the fourth year (senior sophister) students and the first graduates of Polish language and cultural programmes offered as part of European Studies degree.

5.1. Sample

A sample of seven advanced day-time students of Polish who were either enrolled (at the time when this survey was undertaken) in the fourth year of their undergraduate studies or had already completed it participated in this exploratory study. They commenced learning Polish in October 2006 or in October 2007 at the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies at Trinity College Dublin as part of their European Studies degree. In the second year of their studies, all the participants attended the course in Polish Area Studies and all availed of at least one scholarship for a summer language course in Poland. Most of the participants spent their third year of studies on an Erasmus exchange at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. They have a strong interest in Polish sociocultural issues and in the interlinks between Ireland and Poland. They are now entering/about to
enter the labour market (or aspire to pursue their studies at a postgraduate level) and therefore are in a position to gauge the practical value of Polish in their professional CV.

5.2. Aims and instrumentation

The study was aimed at finding out to what extent – as felt by the participants – command of the Polish language can facilitate mobility and contribute to a better understanding of Polish society and culture. The interview questions inquired into attitudes and perceptions of Polish language and culture and into the opportunities and chances which the command of Polish created in terms of personal and professional development. The survey took the form of a semi-structured individual interview in the course of which the interviewees were asked the following questions:

1. In hindsight, would you say it was a good decision to choose Polish as the subject of your studies?
2. Would you say that your command of the Polish language has made/makes it easier for you to meet Polish people and/or to find out about Polish society and culture?
3. What are the advantages of being able to speak a ‘non-standard’ European language?
4. Has your command of the Polish language and knowledge about Polish culture changed your outlook on life or enriched you as a person? In what way?
5. Can you think of any experience/area of knowledge that you have gained thanks to Polish (or that would otherwise be denied to you)?
6. Where do you use Polish now (outside your Polish classes, e.g. in conversations with Polish friends, in mail correspondence, etc.)?
7. Would you say that a command of the Polish language is seen as an asset in one’s CV which facilitates employment?
8. Would you say that the ability to speak the Polish language facilitates mobility between Ireland and Poland and further afield?

All the students interviewed for the purpose of this study unanimously agreed that their decision to choose Polish as a subject of their studies was very positive on a number of counts and it is all the more interesting to look at its various advantages. In the subsequent parts of this paper selected issues raised in answer to the above questions will be discussed.
5.3. Preliminary results

5.3.1. Polish language as a key to understanding Polish society and culture

A command of the Polish language, as seen by the interviewees, helps understand Polish culture and society by way of engaging in meaningful conversations and interacting in daily life with native users of Polish. Many students stress the friendly attitude of Polish people they have met in Poland and the positive surprise of their Polish interlocutors on encountering a foreigner who can speak Polish. As reported by the interviewees, because Polish has never been a widely chosen language to study, the very fact that only few foreigners can speak it evokes positive responses and attitudes towards them.

Learning a language that not too many other people are learning definitely has its advantages. First of all Poles react very warmly to the fact that you have made the effort to learn their language. You are often the first foreigner they have actually heard speaking Polish! (Female, first graduate, European Studies)

Speaking Polish [...] creates an instant bond between interlocutors, due to the novelty of an Irish person speaking Polish. (Male, senior sophister, European Studies)

Another aspect often emphasised by students is that their command of Polish enables them to understand films and literature in Polish and therefore to better understand Polish social norms and to explore and develop a better understanding of a culture and history that has remained largely unexplored outside of Poland. They also derive a positive feeling from being able to fully participate in Polish society by means of, for example, engaging in student clubs and organisations operating in Poland and/or through the medium of Polish. Among other advantages enumerated by the interviewees is access to scholarships, summer language courses and numerous opportunities to participate in cultural events and to maintain close links with Polish social and cultural organisations operating in Ireland.

In Poland on Erasmus I often knew about events before other (non-Polish speaking) students and was much more comfortable at social occasions meeting Polish people. To give one example, I was able to find out about, join, and train with a Polish fencing club solely because I could speak Polish. This wouldn't have been possible for a non-Polish speaker, as the website with all the necessary information on it didn't have an English translation at the time, and the level of English spoken in the club was quite basic. (Male, senior sophister, European Studies)
Because there is a smaller number of students you are in a privileged position and more opportunities are presented to you. For example, as a student of Polish in my second year of university I was able to attend a reception in the residence of the Polish Ambassador at which Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney read his translations of Polish poetry. I think my colleagues studying French or Spanish could only have dreamed of such an honour! (Female, first graduate, European Studies)

It is furthermore remarked by the interviewees that knowledge of the Polish language makes it easier for them to understand other Slavonic languages. Last but not least, in the light of the recent arrival of Polish nationals to Ireland, being able to speak Polish may be perceived as an asset in various types of employment in social and public sectors.

5.3.2. Polish language and a year abroad programme as part of students’ personal development

Inquired into the extent to which Polish has influenced their outlook on life and contributed to a better understanding of intercultural communication, the participants contended that their continued commitment to Polish language learning has broadened their horizons and changed their approach to many issues which are core to a better communication between various EU Member States. It has also influenced their choice of postgraduate studies they now aspire to complete. Due to the difficulties encountered in the initial stages of expressing themselves in Polish, they have also significantly developed their non-verbal communication skills.

Even if a knowledge of Polish is not directly relevant to the job having learnt such an unusual and difficult language is a sign that the candidate is capable of hard work and is not afraid to choose a path that may be different from the norm. (Female, senior sophister, European Studies)

It is something which has undoubtedly changed the course of my life. Obviously it meant that I did a lot of things and met a lot of people I wouldn’t have otherwise. The cultural exchange involved in getting to know another language is deeply rewarding – I am sure that wars would not happen if more people travelled and got to know about other peoples’ viewpoints. I’m also sure that studying Polish contributed to the Masters course I will do next year and will probably affect the decisions I make and opportunities that present themselves to me well into the future. (Female, first graduate, European Studies)

Summer scholarships and year abroad programmes in Poland have created opportunities for the students interviewed to gain more independence
and self-reliance. Topical areas which constituted the programme of their studies in Poland and sociopolitical issues they had a chance to familiarise themselves with during their visit to the country inspired their academic interest in areas which later on formed the subject of their end-of-term/year papers and dissertations. Last but not least, Polish opened up opportunities to develop friendships with Polish nationals, which are seen as lasting and enriching on many levels.

*In terms of Polish culture, my studies at UJ in Krakow aroused an interest in memory and identity issues, and I went on to write my dissertation on this subject. The area of memory and identity studies hugely interests me and this interest was sparked by [...] the rich stock of working examples (or potential case studies) on these issues that can be drawn from Polish history.*

(Female, senior sophister, European studies)

### 5.3.3. Polish in multicultural Ireland

All the interviewees see the link between knowledge about Poland and Polish culture and a better understanding of current affairs in Europe. Their command of Polish has increased their awareness of many faces of multiculturalism and multilingualism which at present are the key issues for Irish policy-makers to address. Their Polish studies have furthermore prepared them for the role of mediators of an efficient intercultural dialogue between Ireland and Poland.

*Learning Polish has opened my eyes not just to Poland and Polish culture and society but also to the rest of Eastern Europe. In the rest of Europe there remains a huge information gap about our Eastern neighbours and I think that this cultural deficit needs to be bridged if a stronger sense of European identity is to be forged.*

(Female, first graduate, European Studies)

*[M]*y knowledge of Polish has made me more aware of the myriad languages being spoken around me, and the changing make-up of Ireland as it becomes increasingly more multi-cultural.*

(Female, senior sophister, European Studies)

Most of the undergraduate students interviewed in the course of this study had around three contact hours in the course of their fourth year of study. They were also expected to work, as part of their self-study, on their weekly assignments and end-of-term/year papers drawing upon various primary and secondary sources available to them in Polish. In the light of the substantial size of the Polish community in Ireland, one may expect there to be increasing opportunities to use Polish outside the classroom, e.g. by engaging in conversation with native speakers, or by frequenting events
hosted by Polish cultural organisations in Ireland. Over the space of the last four years, students have participated in various Polish cultural events such as the Polish film festival, meetings with Polish writers and poets, and they have also made friends with fellow Polish students at Irish universities. Even though they mainly use Polish for the purpose of their programmes and to communicate (e.g. by e-mail) with their friends in Poland, some also explore the newly-emerged opportunities to use it in Ireland in naturalistic contexts. 

*I try to use Polish as often as possible, and find Poles hugely receptive at my attempts to make conversation! I meet regularly with two Polish friends I have made this year, this is for a language exchange to try to improve my Polish. I exchange magazines with one of these friends and so I would try to read these as well. Aside from these organised meetings, whenever I recognise a Polish person in a shop/bar/restaurant, I try to make conversation or at least say thank you in Polish, and I find that on nights out in particular I always meet Polish people who invariably give me their phone numbers and urge me to call them with any questions I might have!*

(Female, senior sophister, European Studies)

A command of the Polish language offers competitive advantages on the labour market deriving from the unique area of expertise and experience. As remarked by the students interviewed, contrary to mainstream languages, Polish makes one ‘stand out from the crowd’. In the times of economic slow-down and growing unemployment, Polish may help one obtain a job in Poland and other European countries. With many multinational companies setting up offices in Poland, such as Google and Dell, it may be expected that the ability to communicate in Polish would be an advantage when applying to work in such a company. Even though the interviewees are well aware of the fact that most of their Polish peers have a good command of English, they believe themselves to be more attractive employees for Irish companies. This, however, is purely anecdotal and definitely worthy of further investigation. The interviewees are themselves divided upon this issue, as illustrated in the comments cited below.

*I think for jobs in Ireland and also in the EU Polish would most definitely be seen as an asset when looking for a job, as, unlike other very common languages such as French and German, there are only a limited number of Irish Polish speakers. I sometimes wonder however, if in reality it is an asset, as most Poles speak almost perfect English and (obviously) also Polish.*

(Female, senior sophister, European Studies)

*Poland has a major role to play in the enlarged EU and perhaps even as a local player, i.e. judging by its attempt at mediation in the Georgia-Russian war. Competent*
speakers of Polish and English should be in high demand. As well, it could prove that Irish employers in Poland (e.g. AIB bank) would prefer an Irish employee with good Polish language skills than a Polish employee with good English skills, although this would be difficult to prove. (Male, senior sophister, European Studies)

5.3.4. The Polish language as a means of facilitating mobility between Ireland and Poland

All the students interviewed agreed that their command of the Polish language has created many opportunities for them to travel and to find out more about Poland. Apart from summer stays and Erasmus exchange, they have availed of good flight connections between the two countries to visit their friends in Poland. As mentioned in the preceding section, they are also aware of the fact that many Irish companies and employees are now relocating to Poland and, in these circumstances, see a command of Polish as a great asset which may facilitate such a career move. They also draw attention to the fact that a command of the Polish language makes it easier to get to know other central European countries where Slavonic languages are spoken.

[Polish] definitely facilitates movement to Poland (which may be an increasingly desirable goal)! While travelling in neighbouring countries and in the Balkans I found that Polish did facilitate communication with locals who spoke no foreign languages. Having spent time in Poland and gotten to know its culture I would imagine would facilitate me doing the same in another EU country or even further afield.

(Female, first graduate, European Studies)

5.3.5. Polish migrants’ contribution to the popularity of the Polish language

As the results of a questionnaire conducted by the author in December 2007 among 100 Dublin-based Irish citizens indicate, the arrival of Polish nationals has significantly contributed to the increased awareness of Polish current affairs and knowledge about Polish history (for a detailed discussion of this study see: Debaene 2008). Media attention given to Poland and to the Polish community as well as the positive opinion enjoyed by Polish nationals in the Republic has undoubtedly played a major role in arousing such interest. The increased number of professional and personal contacts between members of the two societies has encouraged many Irish
citizens to learn Polish, as indicated by the increased number of enrolments in Polish evening courses in the academic years between 2005 and 2008 (cf. Debaene & Kopečková in press). Polish media and infrastructure are particularly visible in Ireland and have already become a staple part of the public space. Students interviewed for the purpose of this study in their majority agreed that Polish migrants have brought more people into contact with the Polish language. They are not certain, however, as to what extent this may be a direct inspiration to study the language.

*More Irish and British people definitely are aware of [the Polish language], but it is difficult to say if knowing a few Polish curse-words is an indicator of the popularity of the language. It is probably easier to say that more Irish/British people would recognise it in adverts as Polish, whereas a few years ago this would perhaps not have been the case.*

(Male, senior sophister, European Studies)

*I would definitely say there is an increased knowledge of the Polish language, and whenever I mention that I am studying Polish, most Irish people respond with ‘polski sklep’, ‘jak sie masz’ or ‘czesc’ (although this may also have something to do with the popularity of the Borat movies and not necessarily the presence of Polish migrants). I am not sure, however, if this translates into popularity of the language, or a desire to learn it.*

(Female, senior sophister, European Studies)

### 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the increased levels of inward migration observed in the Republic of Ireland over the past five years have created a very promising potential for multicultural and multilingual contact. Participants in Polish language and culture programmes at Trinity College Dublin are well aware of numerous advantages to be derived from a good command of the Polish language, or indeed any language of limited diffusion. They emphasize in particular the uniqueness of their expertise and the fact it makes them ‘stand out from the crowd’. They are also appreciative of the financial support they can avail from to participate in Polish language summer courses and of the opportunity to become fully engaged in the life of Polish cultural and diplomatic circles in Ireland. A command of the Polish language is seen as particularly valuable in terms of both personal and professional development. In the light of intensified business ties between Ireland and Poland, it may also be expected to offer competitive advantages on the labour market.
As regards future research directions, it would be valuable to examine, in the course of a follow-up study, to what extent (if at all) the attitudes towards the Polish community in Ireland have been affected by the recent economic crises and rising unemployment. Also, references to the increased levels of return migrations and the reduced size of the Polish community, repeatedly made by the Irish media, may be expected to influence public perceptions and to lead to a gradual flagging of interest in Poland and Polish nationals. This situation should inspire further investigation into the many open problems facing the intercultural dialogue between Polish migrants and Irish society members.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


October 2008 report, a report obtained from the Office of the Minister for Integration in Ireland.


Appendix

*Second Language Acquisition and Native Language Maintenance in the Polish Diaspora in Ireland and France (Polish Diaspora Project)*

The Polish Diaspora Project is a collaborative research initiative between Trinity College and University College Dublin, funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Project addresses itself to the issues involved in acquisition and use of the languages of the host community and to the transmission of the first language of the migrants to their children. It is designed in such a way as to yield findings which are of both a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic nature and in addition to incorporate sociocultural and educational dimensions.

This cross-national study seeks to compare the experience of Polish post-accession migrants in Ireland with the experience of a well-established Polish community in France. The point of this comparison is that Polish people have been migrating to France over a very long period. Notwithstanding the divergences between circumstances under which the two groups migrated, the language behaviour patterns of Poles who settled
in France are expected to provide indicators regarding the linguistic future of Poles in Ireland.

The project scrutinizes the following aspects of the profile of the Polish community in Ireland.

1. Second language acquisition and integration into the majority culture of the host community, with particular reference to:
   a) sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects:
      – reasons for emigrating; age, gender, social background and marital status of migrants; regions of origin in Poland; declared length of intended stay in Ireland;
      – attitudes towards the host community and its languages;
      – degree of continued immersion in the minority culture;
      – contexts in which the languages of the host community (English and Irish) are used and the degree of exposure;
      – support/lack of support offered by the host community to Poles in their language learning endeavours;
      – relationships in general between the host community and the immigrant community;
      – negotiation of identities (self-perceptions);
      – external factors contributing to or impeding the acquisition of the languages of the host community;
   b) psycholinguistic aspects:
      – quantity and quality of acquisition of the host community languages;
      – individual variation;
      – learners’ contribution to the learning process by way of learning strategies;
      – *savoir-apprendre*;
      – *savoir-être*;
      – affordances;
      – internal factors contributing to or impeding majority language acquisition;
   c) practical aspects:
      – general possibilities for encouraging and facilitating the Polish community’s acquisition of the languages of the host community;
      – possibilities for providing better institutional support for such acquisition;
– possibilities for improving the range, availability and appropriacy (to the learners’ Polish background and to the Irish context) of second language learning materials relative to English and Irish.

2. Polish language maintenance and transmission, with particular reference to:
   a) political, social, demographic, and linguistic dimensions:
      – accessibility and ease of travel to Poland;
      – frequency of contact with the Polish language community in Ireland;
      – attitude of Irish society to the Polish community, language and culture (as reflected in e.g. media coverage);
      – desire/lack of desire to return home;
      – desire/lack of desire to retain ethnic identity;
      – degree of economic and occupational stability;
      – patterns of Polish language use;
      – language transmission to children;
   b) cultural dimensions:
      – Polish-medium institutions and activities (educational, religious, cultural, etc.);
      – the relationship between self-identity and the Polish language;
      – the importance of family ties and community cohesion;
      – perceived degree of resemblance between the culture of the host community and Polish culture.

The foci of the investigation of the Polish Diaspora in France are, mutatis mutandis, those outlined above in respect of the Polish community in Ireland. The profiles of the two communities will be analysed separately, although also from a comparative perspective. We are hoping to be able to draw clues from this comparison as to the factors which contribute to the maintenance or erosion of the language and culture of an immigrant community and to determine what kinds of support mechanisms are likely to contribute to its maintenance.

**Research team:**
Principle Investigator: David Singleton
Associate Investigators: Vera Regan, Ewelina Debaene
Research Students: Romana Kopečková, Niamh Nestor, Agnieszka Skrzypek
1. Computer-Assisted Language Learning as a field

The first attempts at learning and teaching languages with the aid of the computer began in the 1960s, when the computer was first invented; however, the decision to use the term Computer-Assisted Language Learning to denote the very field of study was taken much later, as Chapelle reports, in 1983, at the TESOL convention in Toronto, Canada (2005: 743). Since then, CALL has been developing extensively. Its definitions vary, for example, one coming from a key figure in the field says that CALL is: ‘the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning’ (Levy 1997: 1). The 1999 Joint Policy Statement of CALICO, EuroCALL AND IALLT, the three biggest professional associations, defines CALL as ‘an academic field that explores the role of information and communication technologies in language learning and teaching’.

Historically, CALL researchers have always been interested in the potential that technological inventions could have for language students. As early as the 1960s mainframe (which was a computer taking up an entire room rather than just a desk) was constructed, its use in language learning was tested in systems such as PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations) – designed at the University of Illinois and used to deliver self-study courses, or ‘learning packages’, in Chinese, English, Esperanto, French, German, Hindi, Latin, Modern Hebrew, Modern Greek, Norwegian, Russian and Swedish (Ahmad et al. 1985: 31). Most of the tasks were drills in grammar and vocabulary. The system allowed tutors to include graphics in the course, it could display text in different alphabets
on the same screen or give a dictation to students (ibid.: 31). PLATO did allow for, albeit limited, communication between learners and the tutor (and among learners) and it included tracking facilities allowing tutors to see their students’ progress (Delcloque 2000: 85). Being a mainframe, PLATO could deliver learning to many students sitting at the same time in the laboratory.

From a vast array of technologies which have been developed since the mainframe, a few are indeed revolutionary on a large scale. The microcomputer, invented in 1973 and known later as the Personal Computer (PC), brought about the possibility for students to work with technologies from home (Levy 1997: 22). The CD-ROM allowed for skills integration, as it could deliver sound, text and graphics at the same time. The Internet and the World Wide Web eventually allowed learners to collaborate in online networks. First the e-mail and then the e-learning platform made this collaboration relatively easy. Not surprisingly, research into network-based language teaching, i.e. NBLT (Warschauer 1997) which was initiated in the 1990s, in 2009 is still very valid and growing. More recently, mobile phones and Virtual Worlds (such as Second Life) have also become the focus in CALL.

Since their beginning, Internet technologies have been constantly changing. In 2003, Godwin-Jones made a distinction between what he called the First Generation Web tools (e-mail or discussion forums) and the Second Generation Web tools (blogs or Wikis). A similar, and better-known, distinction is that of Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0 tools, which was first used by Tim O’Reilly in 2004. Although there is no single definition, there is general understanding that Web 2.0 signifies a very democratic use of the Web, in which an average user contributes to Web resources and functions in Web-based communities or social networking sites. In other words, Web 2.0 is about ‘collaboration, sharing and interaction’ (Walker et al. 2007). Wikipedia is a typical example of such collaborative endeavour on the Web.

2. Historical accounts of pedagogical trends in CALL

Warschauer (1996, 2000), Warschauer and Healey (1998), and Kern and Warschauer (2000) came up with one of the most frequently quoted attempts at analysing pedagogical trends and approaches within Computer Assisted
Language Learning. To begin with, Warschauer (1996) distinguishes the following three phases of CALL:

- Behaviouristic (in Warschauer 2000, and onwards called ‘Structural’);
- Communicative;
- Integrative.

Behaviouristic CALL was conceived in the 1950s and implemented in the 1960s and 1970s. It reflected the then-dominant behaviourist theories of learning and mainly offered learners language drills. Warschauer quotes PLATO as an example of tutoring systems available at that time and, while acknowledging their obvious pedagogical limits, he summarises the following advantages of drill-and-practice programs:

- repeated exposure to the same material is beneficial or even essential to learning;
- a computer is ideal for carrying out repeated drills, since the machine does not get bored with presenting the same material and since it can provide immediate non-judgmental feedback;
- a computer can present such material on an individualized basis, allowing students to proceed at their own pace and freeing up class time for other activities.

(Warschauer 2000: 2)

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, behaviouristic/structural CALL lost impetus due to two important factors: firstly, behaviouristic approaches to language learning had been rejected, and secondly, the arrival of the microcomputer brought about new possibilities in CALL pedagogy (ibid.: 2).

Communicative CALL was the development of the 1970s. It was inspired, just as the communicative approach to language teaching, by cognitive/constructivist views on learning (Kern & Warschauer 2000: 4). The main goal in communicative CALL was to provide learners with opportunities for communication and learner-computer/learner-learner interaction (Warschauer 1996: 5). Other aims were ‘to teach grammar implicitly, not explicitly, encourage learners to generate original utterances rather than just manipulate prefabricated language and use the target language predominantly or even exclusively’ (Jones & Fortescue 1987; Phillips 1987; Underwood 1984 in Warschauer & Healey 1998: 57). Therefore, within communicative CALL learners worked with the following:

- programs for paced reading, text reconstruction, and language games for individual or pair work (students rearranged words and texts to discover patterns of language and meaning);
programs (such as SimCity) which were not originally designed for language learners but were used as a springboard for students’ discussion, writing, or critical thinking;

- word processors, spelling and grammar checkers, desk-top publishing programs and concordances (after Warschauer 1996 and Warschauer & Healey 1998).

It is worth noting, however, that within communicative CALL, ‘the focus was not so much on what students did with the machine, but rather what they did with each other while working at the computer’ (Warschauer & Healey 1998: 57).

Towards the end of the 1980s communicative CALL was reassessed and ‘integrative CALL’ is the label used by Warschauer to name CALL developments in the 1990s. The main criticism of communicative CALL was that it provided fragmentary contribution to teaching and that computers were used in an ad hoc manner rather than on a regular basis (Warschauer & Healey 1998: 58). At about the same time, many ELT teachers started using task- or project-based approaches with the aim of integrating skills and integrative CALL, therefore, had two ambitions: to allow integrated skills practice and to allow for greater integration of computers into classrooms (ibid.: 59). On the technological side, integrative CALL took advantage of two developments: multimedia (on the CD-ROM) and the Internet. Firstly, multimedia technology gave learners access to a variety of media (text, graphics, sound, animation, and video) on a single computer, and, secondly, by pointing and clicking learners could navigate their own path of learning. Most importantly, however, the Internet provided learners with opportunities for authentic communication, collaborative work and publishing, as well as with easy access to information. An essential concept in integrative CALL is that of ‘Agency’, understood as ‘the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices’ (Murray 1997 in Warschauer 2000: 66). How Agency contributes to integrative CALL is illustrated by Warschauer in the following way:

*Think, for example, of the difference between authoring a paper (i.e. writing a text for the teacher), and authoring a multimedia document (i.e. creatively bringing together several media to share with a wide international audience), and even helping to author the very rules by which multimedia is created (as people have the chance to do right now in this time of creative explosion of new forms of online expression). By allowing and helping our students to carry out all these types of authoring toward fulfilling a meaningful purpose for a real audience we are helping them exercise their*
The purpose of studying English is thus not just to ‘know it’ as an internal system, but to be able to use it to have a real impact on the world. (Warschauer 2000: 66)

In a thorough analysis of Warschauer’s account, Bax questions the very validity of the two labels: communicative and integrative CALL. He suggests that it is, in the first place, very unhelpful and confusing to say that communicative CALL belongs to the past while the communicative approach in ELT is still very popular in classrooms (Bax 2003: 16). Moreover, he continues, the mainstream CALL of the 1980s had very little in common with the assumptions of Communicative Language Teaching which he quotes in the following way: ‘That learners learn in order to communicate and that they probably learn best through the process of communication itself’ (Littlewood 1981 in Bax 2003: 16). The communicative CALL programs, as listed by Warschauer, were not, according to Bax, created for the purpose of communication, nor did they always support authentic communication.

The heaviest criticism falls upon the third category: integrative CALL. Firstly, Bax criticises Warschauer for suggesting that task-based, project-based and content-based approaches are ‘integrative’ and thus ‘post-communicative’. Instead, he says, they are part of CLT and thus all CALL programs which support tasks, projects and content-based teaching should be called communicative, rather than integrative, if the choice were between these two names only (Bax 2003: 19). Bax admits, however, that if technology were to be fully integrated into every-day classroom practice (as has been mentioned above) it would indeed be justified to talk about integrative CALL. However, Bax points out that such an integration in many educational settings remained, in 2002, just an ambition and it is thus unwarranted to describe the current CALL as integrative. Indeed, Warschauer extended the timeline in his later writing.

Bax offers an alternative examination of the history of CALL and argues for the following, chronological, ‘approaches’ (and not ‘phases’ as in Warschauer, Bax points out):

- Restricted CALL;
- Open CALL and
- Integrated CALL.

Restricted CALL is similar to Warschauer’s Behaviourist CALL in terms of its historical period and underlying theory of learning. The term ‘restricted’ is chosen for its applicability to many aspects of CALL at that time. Types of
tasks and activities, types of automated feedback offered to students, the role of the teacher or even the attitude of teachers towards technology, and finally the position of technology in curricula and individual lessons as much as the place where computers were stored – all of these were, in a sense, restricted even though not all could be described as behaviourist. Therefore, Bax says, the term is more comprehensive and thus ‘more satisfactory as a descriptor’ (2003: 20). The present author feels the term is also, in a way, liberating. ‘Behaviourist’ is so clearly laden with negative connotations that it might hinder any appreciation of programs of that era. That adjective may also be discouraging for present developers of any kind of automated language learning tasks, such as interactive quizzes.

Open CALL, according to Bax, emerged around 1980 and is the current model. At the very beginning ‘openness’ referred to the readiness of CALL proponents for new technologies that would allow communicative teaching via the computer. These technologies, soon to arrive, were ‘effective CMC, the web, widely available e-mail’ (Bax 2003: 23). They do allow for genuine communication and are thus called ‘open’. Less openness, Bax admits, can be observed in teachers’ attitudes to CALL or in the way school administrators accommodate, or rather do not accommodate, computers to classrooms.

In 2003, Integrated CALL on a large scale was the future, and it still is in 2009 if we compare it to Bax’s description. According to that, Integrated CALL is an approach where technology is seamlessly, as if, merged with everyday teaching and learning. Technology is essential to learning but it is so well integrated, so taken for granted, that it does not attract any attention (just as pens or coursebooks, to use Bax’s examples). In Integrated CALL, students use computers and other technologies ‘without fear or inhibition, and equally without an exaggerated respect for what they can do’ (Bax 2003: 24). When that happens on a larger scale, we shall reach the stage of ‘normalisation’ in the sense of technology becoming invisible, embedded in everyday practice and hence ‘normalised’ (ibid.: 24).

3. Current pedagogical trends in CALL

When Warschauer and Bax talk about Integrative CALL and Integrated CALL, they do not fully explain how such integration will be, or should be, achieved on the pedagogical level. However, examining pedagogical
theories currently used in CALL might help to better understand what kind of integration of ICTs in language learning and teaching is at the moment viable. In 2006, Levy and Stockwell (2006: 110–134) observed that the main theories informing decisions taken at the time by CALL practitioners and designers are the Interaction Account of Second Language Acquisition, Sociocultural Theory, Activity Theory and Constructivism. Three of those theories will be discussed below.

3.1. The Interaction Account of Second Language Acquisition

The IA of SLA originated from the work of Krashen (1977, 1985), who proposed a model of SLA called the Monitor Model consisting of five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. The Interaction Account, otherwise called the interactionist perspective on second language acquisition, tries to explain language acquisition with the following hypotheses: the Interaction Hypothesis, the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis and the Noticing Hypothesis, as Lightbown & Spada summarise (2006: 43–45).

The most comprehensive account of how SLA can contribute to CALL is provided by Chapelle (1998) in the form of a model of second language acquisition. This model assumes that L2 acquisition begins with INPUT, that is the language to which a learner is exposed. However, a lot of input may be not noticed by the learner, and only that input which is apperceived has the potential to be acquired. In other words, for the input to be apperceived, the learner needs to notice it. Once the input has been noticed, it then can be comprehended either only semantically or both semantically and syntactically. Semantic comprehension has only limited value for developing the learner’s L2. When comprehension happens at both levels – of the meaning and of the syntax of the message – then the linguistic characteristics of the input can become INTAKE, that is ‘comprehended language that holds the potential for developing the learner’s linguistic system’ (Chapelle 1998: 23). During the next phase in the L2 acquisition process, i.e. INTEGRATION, intake is held and processed in the short term memory so that it can influence the development of the learner’s linguistic system. The process of L2 acquisition still continues while the learner himself/herself produces the target language, in other words OUTPUT. Producing output advances the learner in his/her L2 ability in two ways.
Firstly, the learner is forced to use the L2 syntax, which in itself is deemed beneficial practice. Secondly, while the learner uses L2, he/she can receive more input from interlocutors. That input, apart from holding more potential for intake (as discussed above), can signal problems in communication (as in: ‘Sorry, I didn't get your message. What did you mean?’). Communication breakdowns of that type prompt the learner to focus on the syntax of his/her output and perhaps to modify it so that the message is understood by the interlocutor. This process of ‘negotiation of meaning’ is, therefore, crucial for L2 development (ibid.: 23).

Based on the model above and on SLA empirical studies, Chapelle further formulated seven hypotheses relevant for CALL:

1. The linguistic characteristics of target language input need to be made salient.
2. Learners should receive help in comprehending semantic and syntactic aspects of linguistic input.
3. Learners need to have opportunities to produce target language output.
4. Learners need to notice errors in their own output.
5. Learners need to correct their linguistic output.
6. Learners need to engage in target language interaction whose structure can be modified for negotiation of meaning.
7. Learners should engage in L2 tasks designed to maximize opportunities for good interaction.

(Chapelle 1998: 23–25)

In writing, linguistic features of the target language can be made salient when they appear on the screen highlighted in a different colour. When part of aural input, important linguistic elements can be first transcribed and then highlighted on the screen. The decision about which language elements are crucial and should thus be highlighted can be made by the CALL designer or the teacher. Moreover, software can be designed in a way that allows the student to decide to see language elements either highlighted or without any marking (Chapelle 1998: 27). The highlighting, Chapelle argues, will help students to notice important aspects of the language input and will thus facilitate apperception of that input (ibid.: 23).

Chapelle’s second hypothesis states that learners should be offered help, in the form of modifications, when they attempt to comprehend language input. Modifications comprise instances of ‘repetition, simplification through restatement, non-verbal cues, decreased speed, reference materials, and change of input mode’ (Chapelle 1998: 27). For example, students reading a text in a multimedia program can be offered glosses (definitions
of words they do not know). Students decide either to see or hide the definitions. This kind of modification, Chapelle further argues, turns input into ‘comprehensible input’ thus improving conditions for language acquisition (ibid.: 27).

Chapelle further elaborates on her third hypothesis and states that learners should be put under conditions where they need to produce ‘comprehensible output’ (rather than just ‘output’), meaning ‘learner language that is intended to convey meaning to an interlocutor while stretching the learner’s linguistic resources’ (Chapelle 1998: 24). Chapelle attempts to illustrate how it is possible for a multimedia package to be a student’s interlocutor, with whom the student is supposed to interact; however, for this design to work, technology would have to be very advanced in terms of speech recognition (ibid.: 27). Admittedly, such designs would require software to have artificial intelligence in order to understand student output and react so as to encourage the student to modify it.

Chapelle’s next two hypotheses concern error noticing and correction. When working with multimedia CALL, learners should be given an opportunity to notice and correct their errors. One way of ensuring this is to give students time to reflect on what they have written before they actually submit their output for the computer to analyse it. In other words, there should be time for self-monitoring. Moreover, students should have a technical possibility to correct what they have written (Chapelle 1998: 28). It is, therefore, desirable that after the students decide to submit the output the computer first only highlights the errors or otherwise helps the students notice the problem areas, and only later offers more extensive feedback containing an explanation of the error and a corrected version.

Admittedly, Chapelle originally presented the hypotheses as applicable to multimedia CALL. However, the hypotheses and criteria for developing CALL based upon them can be applied to other interactive technologies as well.

3.2. Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory, next to the SLA interactionist approach, provides a framework for the research and design of CALL. The theory itself originated from the work of a Russian psychologist Lew Vygotsky (1896–1934), and it describes the way children learn and develop. There are several key elements of Vygotsky’s thought that have had an influence on
CALL research and practice. Vygotsky stressed the importance of social interaction in the process of learning. In fact, all learning, Vygotsky said, is the result of a child’s interaction with others:

*Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.*

(Vygotsky 1978: 57, emphasis in original)

A key concept in the process of social learning is the ‘zone of proximal development’. That is an abstract area within which a child may potentially develop, again only in the process of interaction with others:

*We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development: that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalised, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement.*

(Vygotsky 1978: 90)

In CALL, Vygotsky’s theory has been mainly applied to studies in language learning via computer-mediated communication (CMC) carried out e.g. with the use of e-mail, chat or an electronic forum. It has informed research in collaborative, peer-to-peer teaching and learning on the one hand and on the role of teachers as facilitators of those collaborative learning experiences on the other hand. For example, Warschauer (1999) looked at how students learn their target language (phrases and collocations) from other students in a CMC environment. Thorne (2003) investigated a cross-cultural e-mail project realized by American and French students and observed how the home culture of students influenced their attitude to the e-mail exchange and also how the electronic communication contributed to the learning of grammatical forms. Gutierrez (2003) attempted to determine firstly, which CALL tasks actually support, or ensure, collaborative work and secondly, what the specificity of the computer as a mediational tool is.

Moreover, Vygotsky’s theory has helped CALL researchers conceptualise ways in which technologies change both society and objectives of language education. For example, Vygotsky’s concept of *mediation*, that is the notion that all human activity is mediated by tools, and that those very tools fundamentally transform human action, is transferred to the CALL context as a realisation that modern technologies have changed the language itself
and the way we use it to communicate in technology-enhanced contexts (Warschauer 2007: 41–42). As Warschauer further argues, ‘we do not now have a traditional form of writing plus the computer, but rather we have entirely new forms of writing that need to be taught in their own right’ (ibid.: 42). For example, English for chat is a distinct genre with its own structures, symbols and social rules. Therefore, it has been suggested that language educators not only need to be aware of those genres, but also should consider them for inclusion in language curricula (Thorne & Reinhardt 2008: 560).

Researchers working in the sociocultural framework agree that the computer and the Internet as *mediational means* have changed both the notion of literacy and, potentially, the aims of the language classroom. In 1999, Warschauer introduced the notion of ‘electronic literacies’, comprising:

– information literacy (being able to navigate the Internet to find information, critically analyse it and make use of it);
– computer-mediated communication literacy (being able to use the Internet as an information tool to send an e-mail message that has an impact on and is appropriate for the circumstances);
– multimedia literacy (knowing how to create texts on the Internet combining different multimedia, as well as how to read and interpret media to make a message)

(Warschauer 1999; Ancker 2002: 3).

Thorne admits that the new literacies, especially those inherent in Web 2.0 communication, are in fact an concept difficult to define, mainly because they can appear and disappear quickly, just as a fashion for a particular technology first grows and then dies (Thorne 2009: 562). Therefore, it is indeed very challenging to address those literacies in a language course. However, Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) propose a pedagogical technique meant for advanced-level learners called ‘Bridging Activities’, in which Vygotskian influence is very visible and clearly stated (Thorne & Reinhardt 2008: 564). Very broadly, ‘Bridging Activities’ require students to find and bring to class instances of communication (e.g. print-outs of chat talk) which they see as relevant for their own current or future social or professional needs. The teacher is then expected to help students notice the key linguistic features of those communicative events and identify differences between those and more traditional forms of written expression usually taught in class (ibid.: 561–565). In that design, the student and the
teacher work together, each contributing his/her own expertise. In this respect, the teacher acts as a guide, helping students to advance through their zone of proximal development (ibid.: 564).

3.3. Constructivism

Constructivism is another approach that many practitioners and researchers refer to when talking about effective computer-assisted or technology-enhanced learning. Inevitably, therefore, constructivism has become an umbrella term for a number of approaches, several of which will be outlined below. A good starting point for understanding constructivism is Dalgarno’s useful analysis (2001) entitled ‘Interpretations of Constructivism and Consequences for Computer Assisted Learning’. Dalgarno identifies three broad principles common to all constructivist approaches:

- Each person forms their own representation of knowledge, building on their individual experiences. (...) Consequently, there is no single ‘correct’ representation of knowledge.
- Learning occurs when the learner’s exploration uncovers an inconsistency between their current knowledge representation and their experience.
- Learning occurs within a social context, and (...) interaction between learners and their peers is a necessary part of the learning process.

(Dalgarno 2001: 184)

Dalgarno sees the first principle as a tenet taken from Kant and later adopted by Dewey, the second principle as attributed to Piaget and the third to Vygotsky (Dalgarno 2001: 184). Although these theoretical principles are agreed upon by most proponents of constructivism in education, the ways they are applied in teaching contexts can be very different. Dalgarno, quoting after Moshman (1982), talks about three interpretations of constructivism: endogenous constructivism, exogenous constructivism and dialectical constructivism, and further looks at how these three interpretations can be used to understand different applications of constructivism to Computer-Assisted Learning.

Firstly, endogenous constructivism ‘emphasises the individual nature of each learner’s knowledge construction process, and suggests that the role of the teacher should be to act as a facilitator in providing experiences which are likely to result in challenges to learner’s existing models’ (Dalgarno 2001: 185). Understood that way, endogenous constructivism is applied to virtual learning environments where the learner himself/herself decides
about the path of his/her knowledge discovery. Such environments are possible thanks to hypertext and hypermedia, both of which allow the learner to quickly move between chunks of information and in that way build his/her own knowledge (ibid.: 187).

Secondly, *exogenous constructivism* is ‘the view that formal instruction, in conjunction with exercises requiring learners to be cognitively active, can help learners to form knowledge representations which they can later apply to realistic tasks’ (Dalgarno 2001: 185). This constructivist approach, unlike the former, recognises the value of direct instruction, which should not, however, be equated with transfer of information or teacher-centred classes. Within this view, students actively construct their own knowledge by discovery, and they are monitored by an expert – a teacher who acts as a guide. In this approach stress is also put on giving students a lot of opportunity to apply and test the knowledge they have constructed for themselves. Therefore, such learning environments (tutorials with learner control and guided hypermedia) are supported here with concept mapping tools, quizzes or problem-solving exercises (ibid.: 188).

The last group of constructivist approaches, termed *dialectical*, emphasise the role of social interaction in the learner’s knowledge construction process. Consequently, great emphasis is put on cooperative and collaborative learning, while certain importance is also ascribed to the teacher-facilitator who can provide support (scaffolding). These – social – approaches of constructivism have been used in learning/teaching with CMC tools (such as e-mail) or tools designed for Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW). The latter are more complex and advanced than the former, as they actually contain CMC tools for communication and, additionally, shared workspaces for collaborative work, scheduling tools and workflow organisers (Dalgarno 2001: 191).

Dalgarno’s analysis is useful as it reveals a variety of constructivist approaches present in CAL practice in education in general. In CALL literature specifically, Felix (2005) makes an interesting distinction, in which she juxtaposes *cognitive constructivism* with *social constructivism*. The former is reminiscent of Dalgarno’s first two categories, while the latter seems to denote what Dalgarno meant by the third category. Very broadly, cognitive constructivist tasks are those in which students work with the computer on automated activities, such as online interactive quizzes, whereas social constructivist tasks are those in which students collaborate with one another via a computer network, such as the Internet
(Felix 2005). Interestingly, Felix’s dichotomy is parallel to the distinction between the CMC-based CALL and tutorial CALL, as discussed elsewhere in CALL literature. More to the point, however, Felix argues that it is social constructivism, not cognitive constructivism, which should inform pedagogical models in online CALL. Nonetheless, she does acknowledge that the approach imposes certain challenges:

- social (e.g. conflicts, which require the teacher to spend much more time and effort to solve online than in a traditional face-to-face classroom;
- conceptual (most teachers have themselves experienced very little, or no, constructivist learning; neither do they have the time to study in-depth what constructivism really means – both these factors may potentially result in poor, superficial or ‘patchy’ constructivist approach in their teaching);
- political (expectations of students/peers/administrators/parents/authorities AND the need to adhere to ‘standards’ frequently hamper teachers’ ability to function as social constructivist facilitators);
- pedagogical:
  a) learner vs. instructor control;
  b) authentic assessment (both time-consuming and difficult to implement);
  c) linguistic accuracy (not the focus in social constructivist ventures).

(Felix 2005: 88–92)

Felix further argues that considering the above challenges in combination with time constraints (an inherent feature in the life of most teachers) it would be unrealistic, if not unfair, to expect teachers to use social constructivism as their only pedagogical approach. Therefore, Felix states, cognitive constructivist activities need to be reassessed and appreciated. A similar argument is put forward by Hubbard and Siskin (2004), who make a case for contemporary tutorial programs by saying that these are not behaviourist (as they are frequently thought of) but rather ‘cognitive/constructivist in nature’ (Hubbard & Siskin 2004: 450). Many of the tutorials ‘(1) involve conscious manipulation of language forms based on abstract rules, which is not within the behaviourist tradition, and (2) many are based on reading and listening comprehension and even allow, through the request for meaning aids such as glossed words or transcripts, a form of meaning negotiation (albeit a programmed one)’ *(ibid.*: 450).
4. Conclusions

The three theories considered above reveal the variety of approaches within the field of CALL. These approaches differ not only in their theoretical underpinnings, but also in their scope. SLA theory mainly focuses on the language and the learner, while sociocultural theory and, sometimes, constructivism look at a broader, social context of communication and learning. Therefore, SLA theory is most often applied to automated activities in CALL programs, whereas the latter two theories inform research very much focusing on social aspects of learning a language. Those three perspectives visibly present in CALL studies will inevitably influence the pedagogical models of CALL integration into the mainstream MFL as discussed earlier. Quite interestingly, the approaches are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary: they can be seen as complementary and sometimes are indeed combined in a single learning environment (Hampel 2003; Hampel & Hauck 2004). Such a plural approach is becoming more frequent and very much appreciated (Levy 2006: 133). Therefore, it seems that the Integrated CALL or Integrative CALL will be multifaceted and diverse not only in terms of technologies, but also of the pedagogies used.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Part II
LEARNING
1. Introduction

Efficient learning, and language learning, seem to be conditioned by certain learner life-skills which characterize autonomous learners who know how to self-regulate and take responsibility for their own learning (Cotterall and Crabbe 1999). Such skills are related to the learners’ ability to make strategic learning decisions, that is, set personal goals and objectives, and then organize, control, and evaluate their own learning independently or self-reliantly. However, for various reasons, many learners do not succeed in developing sufficiently differentiated sets of effective strategies for language learning and use, and many do not even get a chance to know about such strategies. As a result, many people, feeling unable to self-direct their own learning, cease to learn foreign languages once formal education has been completed. Simultaneously, experts tend to agree that learning strategies can be taught, learned, and modified, and thus they may become subject to purposeful and explicit training. Therefore, the idea of helping learners learn how to learn (more) effectively and become gradually more autonomous by developing abilities to flexibly activate and apply varied learning strategies, and do so in varying learning contexts, seems of key importance if life-long learning is to be ensured and multilingualism promoted.
2. Interest in learning and learner strategies

Learning to learn, or helping learners learn how to learn (more) effectively, is undoubtedly one of the most prominent methodological messages in contemporary, constantly and dynamically changing, multicultural and plurilingual Europe. The idea seems particularly relevant for the present and future generations of second/foreign language learners and constitutes one of the most crucial tasks for language teachers of the 21st century. In November 2005, the Commission of the European Communities in Brussels began to promote its new policy area by issuing *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*. Since, as the document proclaims, the European Union is ‘founded on “unity in diversity”: diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs – and of languages’ (2005: 2), the main long-term goal of the strategy is to maintain linguistic diversity by promoting language learning and developing individual multilingualism (cf. *A Rewarding Challenge* 2008). Thus, as was agreed in March 2002 in Barcelona, all EU citizens should be able to acquire practical skills needed to use at least two other languages, apart from their mother tongue.

*A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (2005: 3) defines the term ‘multilingualism’ as ‘a person’s ability to use several languages and the co-existence of different language communities in one geographical area’. As a cornerstone of the language education policy in the EU, the idea implies the necessity to create and cherish ‘a climate (...) in which the teaching and learning of a variety of languages can flourish’ (*ibid.*). Undoubtedly, nowadays, the ability to comprehend and communicate in more than one language constitutes a basic human skill (*Action Plan* 2003: 3). This skill helps learners become more sensitive and open towards others’ cultures and views, enhances their cognitive and mother tongue skills, and allows them to study and work in other EU countries (*A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* 2005: 3). Thus, it is indispensable if effective interlingual and intercultural communication is to take place with the use of not only major, or global, world languages, but also regional, migrant or minority ones.

Hence, multilingualism is closely related to the idea of life-long learning. In fact, the ability to communicate in foreign languages constitutes one of the eight key competences for life-long learning presented in December 2006 by the European Parliament and the Council as necessary for personal satisfaction, social unity, active citizenship, mobility and successful
functioning in a knowledge society (High Level Group on Multilingualism 2008: 2). These ideas can contribute to the well-being of society by bearing promises of benefits to all the different learners across age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds. Successful realization of what Benson (1997: 19, 25) calls a ‘technical version of autonomy’, or the technical ability to learn on one’s own, implies empowering learners, characterized by unique combinations of individual traits and learning preferences, to take control of their own learning. Experts emphasize that, to be able to do so effectively, learners need to develop their metacognitive knowledge, get to know more about learning, language learning, and themselves as language learners (see, for example, Ellis & Sinclair 1989, Oxford 1990, O’Malley & Chamot 1990, Cohen 1998, Chamot et al. 1999).

Interest in understanding learning processes, individual learners and their learning strategies began, in fact, in the early 1970s when it became obvious that teaching did not have to generate learning, and that learning could take place independently of the traditional language teaching methodologies; thus, it might also not occur at all despite careful application of recommended methods (Wenden 1991; Brown 1994, 2000). Traditional, teacher-centered, instruction assumed that didactic processes, teaching objectives, techniques, means, and procedures constituted the key factors determining ultimate success in language learning and highlighted the importance of good mastery of formal language systems. Within largely authoritarian methods (e.g. the Grammar-Translation Method) learners were treated mainly as passive recipients of knowledge. However, not all language learners could succeed in this way. Actually, it was observed that under supposedly the same teaching conditions some learners were able to achieve considerably better results than others, and some failed to accomplish this complex task (Rubin 1987).

Cognitive science developments of the 1960s and 1970s, their focus on human cognitive abilities and the conviction that learners are actively engaged in the process of learning accentuated the role of individual mental processes and triggered research into cognitive processing of new information. A growing interest amongst psychologists and linguists oriented mainly toward the cognitive strategies that people generally use to think, learn, and solve problems stimulated the study of how learners cope with the task of second language learning in and out of the classroom (Wenden 1987a; O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Wenden 1991). Moreover, spreading humanistic concerns about individual thoughts,
feelings, emotions, qualities, needs and interests contributed to a better understanding of learning processes, especially in pedagogical contexts. The resulting popularity of a new type of approach to second/foreign language teaching, known as ‘learner-oriented instruction’, meant that the focus was shifted from the teacher to the learner, and from teaching to learning. Simultaneously, the issue of a ‘good’ or successful and, subsequently, autonomous or self-directed language learner, his/her characteristics and behaviours surfaced in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature, triggering interest in learner strategies.

Thus, language learner strategies began to attract researchers’ attention about four decades ago. The fields of linguistics, applied linguistics, and SLA studies have concentrated on the language learner and his/her learning strategies since this information could provide further insights into the factors and processes which steer, and/or condition, second language learning. Such factors, therefore, could either be thought of as limiting or enhancing learner chances to ultimately succeed in the language learning venture (see, for example, Wenden & Rubin 1987; O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990; Ellis 1994; McDonough 1995; Cohen 1998; Chamot et al. 1999; a series of articles by Ehrman, Oxford & Leaver, e.g. 1989, 1995, 2003). In fact, research on the ‘good language learner’ (GLL), his/her features and strategies, sought to identify those behaviours that might be thought of as contributing to the learner’s ultimate success, since, as Rubin (1987) hopefully assumed, such strategies could be taught to less successful students.

3. Learner strategies: a functional definition and classification

Research of the ‘good language learner’ issue has produced a number of overlapping sets of learner characteristics and strategic behaviours, which demonstrate and confirm that learners are by no means passive in the learning process. However, the literature on the subject has often provided confusing, or even conflicting, opinions not only on more conceptually complex issues, but even on key terms which are necessary to explain what learners are doing when they are learning a language. Thus, concepts such as ‘strategy’, ‘technique’, ‘tactics’, ‘plan’, ‘operation’, ‘process’, or even ‘skill’ and ‘principle’ have not been used consistently. In fact, ‘strategies’ have been
referred to as ‘learning skills, basic skills, functional skills’, ‘potentially conscious plans’, ‘consciously employed operations’, ‘cognitive abilities’, ‘cognitive activities’, ‘language processing strategies’, ‘techniques’, ‘tactics’ or ‘problem-solving procedures’ (Wenden 1987a: 7). As a result, the task of arriving at one functional definition and typology of learner strategies still seems complicated due to their complex nature and imperfect research methods, as well as the fact that researchers have not yet proposed a unified set of strategy defining criteria.

Central to the focus of many strategy-oriented studies, as well as to the author’s own work, is the definition provided by Rebecca Oxford (1990). As the researcher explains, the term, derived from the ancient Greek word ‘strategia’, means generalship, or the art of war, and ‘involves the optimal management of troops, ships, or aircraft in a planned campaign’ (Oxford 1990: 7). When applied to learning situations, the concept implies plans, steps, or conscious activity aimed at accomplishing one’s goals. Thus, Oxford (1990: 8) defines ‘learning strategies’ as ‘operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information (…)’ and emphasizes that they constitute ‘specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations’. As a result of strategy use, learners not only build up their language systems, but also participate in communication, which leads to further development of their communicative competence and facilitates interaction with others. This practical explanation is also reflected in the claim that ‘strategies are the L2 learner’s tool kit for active, conscious, purposeful, and attentive learning, and they pave the way toward greater proficiency, learner autonomy, and self-regulation’ (Hsiao & Oxford 2002: 372). However, it must be remembered that each individual learner develops his/her own set of processing strategies which may lead to learning success, and that he/she must know which strategy to use, and when and how to do this (Anderson 2003: 76).

Oxford (1990) has also developed her own functional typology of language learning strategies. It differs from earlier categorizations (see, for example, Bialystok 1978, Rubin 1981, O’Malley & Chamot 1985, 1990) in that it is detailed, more comprehensive and systematic. What is of special importance to teachers is the fact that her system is less complicated terminologically; moreover, like Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Oxford relates particular strategy types and strategy groups to each of the four language
skills. Furthermore, like Rubin (1981), she divides strategies into two main classes: direct and indirect; however, she proposes different further subdivisions into six strategy groups. The first major class of direct strategies includes memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. The second class covers metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Direct strategies, like O’Malley et al.’s (1985, 1990) cognitive strategies, involve the target language directly since they facilitate its mental processing. Indirect strategies support the process of learning indirectly through centering, planning, organizing, controlling, evaluating, seeking opportunities, lowering anxiety, increasing cooperation, or empathizing with others. Thus, they correspond to O’Malley et al.’s metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. However, Oxford sometimes assigns particular strategy types to strategy groups differently (e.g. elaboration, which is a cognitive strategy for O’Malley et al., is classified as a memory strategy by Oxford). Nevertheless, the essential value of her system, which she stresses, lies in the fact that it offers a structure for a better understanding of the relations between strategies, since direct and indirect strategies, as well as the six strategy groups, can support and assist one another.

Each of the strategy groups performs specific functions in the process of language learning:

- **memory strategies** help learners remember, store, and retrieve information via, for example, grouping, associating/elaborating, semantic mapping, using imagery, using keywords, using physical response or sensation and/or mechanical techniques, or structured reviewing;

- **cognitive strategies** facilitate language comprehension and production through repeating, practising formally with sounds and writing systems, practising naturalistically, using formulas and patterns, using resources for receiving and sending messages, getting the idea quickly, analyzing contrastively, analyzing expressions, reasoning deductively, translating, transferring, note-taking, summarizing, or highlighting;

- **compensation strategies** enable learners to cope with L2 knowledge gaps and continue using the L2 via intelligent guessing (using linguistic and other clues) and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing (e.g. selecting the topic, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym, switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture);

- **metacognitive strategies** assist learners with coordinating the process of language learning and allow them to control their cognition through overviewing and linking new material with what is already known,
paying attention, finding out about language learning, setting goals and objectives, organizing, seeking practice possibilities, self-monitoring, or self-evaluating;

- **affective strategies** help to regulate emotions and motivations via progressive relaxation, deep breathing, using music or laughter, making positive statements, taking risks wisely, self-rewarding, listening to one’s body, writing a language learning diary, sharing feelings;

- **social strategies** allow for the intensification of contacts and learning with others via, for example, asking questions for clarification, verification, or correction; cooperating with peers and proficient users of the target language, developing cultural understanding as well as awareness of others’ thoughts and feelings (for details, see Oxford 1990; cf. Oxford 1989).

It must be noted, however, that Oxford does not separate learner ‘communication strategies’, or strategies of language use, from ‘learning strategies’, which Ellis (1994) and Cohen (1998) in particular indicate as a shortcoming. Instead, she provides an extended taxonomy of all identified learner strategies and includes her own, reduced list of behaviours that other researchers would call ‘communication strategies’. She locates them in the group of compensation strategies. Oxford (1990) and, later, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) justify this fact by claiming that, firstly, separating language learning from its use is difficult; secondly, learning and use may take place at the same time; and thirdly, these two strategy categories overlap to a great extent. Nonetheless, the researchers do not refrain from admitting that future research should reconsider Ellis’s and Cohen’s differentiation between ‘language learning strategies’ and ‘language use strategies’.

Still, what is crucial to practitioners is the fact that Oxford goes beyond other researchers’ focus on cognitive and metacognitive processes and enriches the concept of learning strategies considerably. She highlights the interrelatedness and interdependence of human cognition and emotional self and introduces two separate groups of varied affective and social strategies. In her later work, Oxford (2002: 128) stresses that the learner is not merely ‘a cognitive/metacognitive information-processing machine’; the learner must be seen as a ‘whole person’ – an intellectual, social, emotional, and physical being. Additionally, language teachers interested in diagnosing their students’ current patterns of strategy use can reach for a practical paper-and-pencil questionnaire *The Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL)* (see Oxford 1990: 283–300).
4. Strategies of ‘good’ and less successful language learners

Research of the ‘good language learner’ issue (e.g. Rubin 1975; Stern 1975, 1983; Naiman et al. 1978) resulted in numerous lists of strategies and behaviours of successful language learners. As, for instance, Rubin and Thompson (1982; cited in Brown, 1994: 191–192) report, ‘good’ learners:

1. find their own way, taking charge of their learning;
2. organize information about language;
3. are creative, developing a ‘feel’ for the language by experimenting with its grammar and words;
4. make their own opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom;
5. learn to live with uncertainty by not getting flustered and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word;
6. use mnemonics and other memory strategies to recall what has been learned;
7. make errors work for them and not against them;
8. use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language, in learning a second language;
9. use contextual cues to help them in comprehension;
10. learn to make intelligent guesses;
11. learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform ‘beyond their competence’;
12. learn certain tricks that help to keep conversations going;
13. learn certain production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence;
14. learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

Stern (1983: 411–412), on the other hand, proposes four sets of the good language learner’s strategies whose use is determined by factors such as the learner’s age, maturity, education, and cultural background:

- **an active planning strategy**, or the ability to set goals and subgoals, and actively participate in all stages and developmental sequences of the learning process;
- **an ‘academic’ (explicit) learning strategy**, which expresses itself in the learner’s readiness and willingness to study and practise; to attend to,
analyze, and revise the language as a formal system; to use practice and memory strategies, and monitor one’s own performance;

- **a social learning strategy** that activates the use of communication strategies, makes learners seek contacts with target language users and participate in authentic language use; and

- **an affective strategy**, which is associated with one’s personality traits and entails the ability to face and deal with emotional and motivational obstacles involved in language learning.

The lists presented above demonstrate that ‘good’ learners are active and effective users of different types of strategies. In fact, all descriptive studies conducted so far confirm that both ‘good’ and less successful learners employ certain strategies for language learning and use; however, patterns of strategy activation by less competent students seem different and prove less effective (Abraham & Vann 1987, Vann & Abraham 1990). Less successful learners appear to lack appropriately developed higher-order, metacognitive, or self-regulatory, strategies that are needed to properly manipulate other strategies in response to the nature of the task in hand, which good learners use with success. Thus, good language learners tend to be better at assessing learning activities, identifying task-related objectives and aims, and diagnosing their own learning problems. Consequently, they resort to more effective strategies that enable them to complete their tasks successfully and/or overcome difficulties. Their patterns of strategy use are characterized by more adequate selection and skilful use of learning strategies. Moreover, good language learners appear to utilize more varied strategies and employ them more frequently (O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Cohen 1998; Chamot et al. 1999). In fact, experts today (see, for example, Leaver et al. 2005) stress that self-direction, which can be thought of as a feature of successful and autonomous learners, is not possible without well developed metacognitive skills.

5. **Language learner strategy training**

All these insights gained from the research on learner strategies stimulated the development of strategy training ideas, carried out first in content-based classes and learners’ native languages. Subsequently, they extended to the field of second language acquisition (for a detailed overview with examples of research studies in each area, see Chamot et
The findings of numerous studies confirmed earlier assumptions that directed and purposeful training might help learners enhance their performance. Thus, theorists and practitioners began to search for ways which could help learners expand their repertoires of effective language learning strategies.

5.1. The rationale behind learner training

The idea of learner training, also known as learning-to-learn, strategy training, learner education, learner development, or learner methodology, originates from the ‘good language learner’ studies, learner-centered approaches to teaching, and strategy research based on the assumption that learners themselves are at the heart of the learning process. These indicate that learners can become better able to take control of their own learning and find individual ways to ultimate success in learning. As Holec (1980: 31) states, ‘to teach the learner to learn, that is to enable him to carry out the various steps which make up the learning process, is considered the best way of ensuring that learning takes place’. Dickinson (1987: 34) further explains that the idea of learning how to learn is ‘a matter first of developing knowledge about learning processes – and about oneself as a learner, secondly of planning learning, and thirdly of discovering and then using appropriate and preferred strategies to achieve the objectives specified by the plans’. Ellis and Sinclair (1989) also stress that learners can take responsibility for and regulate their learning provided they get to know more about language, learning, and themselves as learners.

Chamot et al. (1999) further clarify that strategy instruction is to help learners develop awareness of their own metacognition and, in this way, take control of their own learning; it assists them in learning how, what and when to learn, and how to become more independent of the teacher, gradually developing learning autonomy. The rationale behind this idea is that learners who have come to know themselves, their learning processes, strategies, and preferences can direct their learning and become increasingly self-regulated. This in turn implies the ability to use appropriate strategies to develop one’s communicative competence and communicate in social settings, build and use academic knowledge in content subjects, and develop cultural and sociolinguistic competence necessary to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways.
5.2. Models of learning in support of strategy training

In order to better understand how learning strategies can help learners become (more) self-directed, it is advisable to briefly review models of learning which constitute two main domains of current learning theory and research. As Chamot et al. (1999: 157–161) emphasize, it is essential to consider both cognitive learning models, which focus on the learner’s mental processes, and social-cognitive models, which stress the role of interaction and group processes in learning. Together, the models provide a rationale for purposefully varied strategy training.

Let us begin with cognitive models. In search of a theory that could offer insights into the nature of language learning, O’Malley & Chamot (1990) refer to Anderson’s 1983, 1985 information processing theory and present language learning and learning strategies as complex cognitive skills. Essential to a good understanding of the theory is the fact that Anderson differentiates between two knowledge types in long-term memory: ‘declarative’ and ‘procedural’. Declarative knowledge means ‘knowing that’, or ‘static’ information in memory (e.g. word definitions, facts, or rules that one can verbalize). Procedural knowledge is ‘knowing how to do’, or ‘dynamic’ information in memory, which covers those complex cognitive skills and processes that we know how to carry out (e.g. reading). The former can be learned quickly, but builds best upon the learner’s prior knowledge; the latter grows gradually and only with abundant practice opportunities.

Anderson explains the process of complex cognitive skill acquisition proposing a three-stage model, which illustrates learners’ route from rule-dependent conscious declarative knowledge, through practice, to a more automatic, or proceduralized stage. Thus, skill learning begins with the cognitive stage, in which learners receive instructions, watch experts, and consciously build declarative knowledge of how to do a task. In language learning, this may imply studying formal aspects of an L2, memorizing words or grammar rules, or attending to L2 functional use of memorized chunks. During the associative stage learners relate skill elements more strongly to one another, spot and gradually reduce the number of errors in their declarative stores. As a result, their performance becomes more fluent, though not without errors, and grammar rules are still remembered. The autonomous stage automatizes the performance of a skill, makes it effortless, and requires less conscious monitoring of, or appeal to, underlying rules.
As performance improves, errors cease to appear, and learners can easily understand and generate utterances.

Information processing theory deals with the thinking processes that underlie both learning and remembering. These processes help to transfer information from short-term to long-term memory by subsuming new data under an existing hierarchy of knowledge structures and employing cognitive strategies such as summarizing, inferencing, or predicting (Anderson 1983, 1985). It must be noted that Anderson’s theory accommodates not only cognitive strategies, but also metacognitive strategies; the latter execute control over thinking processes. Metacognition, as Chamot et al. (1999: 158) explain, refers not only to declarative knowledge concerning individual thinking processes and strategies for learning, but also to procedural knowledge of how one can monitor and manage both learning and thinking. Research proves that skilful combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategy training can maximize learning strategy training transfer to new tasks (O’Malley & Chamot 1990). Moreover, it also shows that learners explicitly trained when, why, and how they can use strategies do gain in metacognitive control (Wenden 1998). These facts support the idea of facilitating language learning via intentional strategy training.

Furthermore, schema theory, which reflects on human attempts at comprehending and organizing all experiences in relation to one’s prior knowledge, clarifies how concept maps, or schemata, into which this pre-existing knowledge is organized, help us ‘make predictions, visualize events, draw inferences, monitor comprehension, and create summaries’ (Chamot et al. 1999: 158). Thus, it refers to strategies that are crucial for all language learners who try to comprehend new information. Moreover, it explains that first language (L1) schemata can be transferred to second language (L2) learning situations and influence their overall understanding, as well as effective L2 learning, to differing degrees. Therefore, training learners in the use of those strategies which activate their prior knowledge seems to be of critical value for learning processes, acquisition of new information and cultural knowledge, as well as for language teaching (ibid.: 158–159).

Additionally, constructivism shows a more interactive nature of the learning process and sees learners as active constructors of personal meanings drawn from individual experiences. The theory explains that initially learners use their prior knowledge of the world, and then activate cognitive strategies which constitute basic tools necessary to derive meanings both from one’s background knowledge and from newly
encountered information. In the process, learners also activate and, therefore, need (further) training in the use of metacognitive strategies in order to accommodate new interpretations (Chamot et al. 1999: 159; cf. Williams & Burden 1997).

While cognitive models justify the need for cognitive and metacognitive strategy training, social-cognitive models demonstrate that learning processes are affected not only by the learner’s thoughts; in fact, they stress strong influences of combined sets of learner cognitive and affective factors, as well as the social nature of learning. Thus, they assert the significance of social and affective strategies that should not be separated from cognition in training learners how to learn.

First, Bandura’s Social-Cognitive Theory (1986) focuses on the role of individual motivation and indicates that the learning process depends on a complex interplay of the learner’s personal factors, inner cognitive structures, behaviour, and environment. It occurs in social contexts as a result of cognitive learning as well as observation, imitation and modelling. Since motivation, as a crucial factor which either increases or decreases one’s sense of self-efficacy in learning, may determine learner willingness to take risks, learning perseverance, and ultimate success, there exist possibilities of enhancing learning effects by building a better self-image and a stronger sense of self-worth through skilful application of selected learning strategies. Therefore, training learners in how to properly employ social-affective strategies like, for example, self-talk, may strengthen their direct motivation and lead to more successful completion of different learning tasks. In fact, as research shows, language learners with more positive self-images report employing a wider range of strategies for second language learning (Chamot et al. 1999: 159–160).

Second, Self-Regulated Learning theories clarify how strategies of a cognitive, metacognitive and motivational nature are interrelated in enhancing the learning process. They explain that successful learners are those who are motivated and self-regulated and can combine and make the best use of cognitive strategies (e.g. predicting, visualizing, summarizing), metacognitive strategies (e.g. planning, monitoring, and evaluating), and affective strategies (e.g. self-talk). Such self-regulated learners know when, where, and how to use all these varied strategies in new learning situations. Moreover, this kind of knowledge, practical skills to activate the learnt strategies, and the conviction that one can succeed, constitute crucial sources of extra motivation for the learner (Chamot et al. 1999). Thus, as
Wenden (1998) confirms, self-regulated learners know how to manage their own learning, which is essential for progress and success, and which suggests that combining all strategy groups within strategy training schemes is an advisable idea.

Third, Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) Social-Cognitive Theory stresses that learners mature in their thinking by observing how teachers and experts deal with learning tasks, and by participating in guided practice activities. In other words, they learn how to solve problems via social interaction, instruction, structuring and modelling provided by skilled others. Gradually, less and less aided by their teachers, learners finally internalize the desired thought processes (e.g. strategies) and, in consequence, become (more) autonomous. Thus, the theory illustrates the importance of the teacher’s modelling how to apply particular strategies in specific situations, and of providing scaffolding guidance while learners practise varied types of strategies (cf. Chamot et al. 1999: 160–161).

To conclude, the models discussed above show why the use of strategies is essential in learning. They confirm that training learners how to appropriately use a variety of strategies for language learning through explicit instruction, as well as purposeful development of one’s metacognitive awareness of learning, seems practical and desirable. Moreover, these models highlight the significance of building the learner’s personal strategy experience, also by relating it to his/her already used strategies, and underscore the need for individual construction of understanding when, why, and how particular strategies operate. This, as research confirms, can be taught through explicit modelling and extensive strategy application in practice tasks. In fact, research on learning strategies and studies of the effects of strategy training schemes conducted so far in both first language contexts and second language learning also support these observations (see, for example, Chamot et al.’s 1999 thorough overview of intervention studies of learning strategies instruction with vocabulary learning, listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks, as well as instruction in content-based strategies, integrative language tasks, and teacher training).

5.3. Paradigms of learner strategy training

‘Strategic’ teachers who wish to implement strategy training ideas and facilitate their learners’ strategy learning processes can reach for hints proposed so far within various, though conceptually overlapping, strategy
training paradigms. O’Malley & Chamot (1990), for example, mention Hosenfeld et al.’s 1981 sequence for improving L2 reading comprehension; Pearson and Dole’s 1987 training in reading comprehension strategies; or Graham, Harris, and Sawyer’s 1987 strategy training with written compositions for students with learning difficulties. One can also apply The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (O’Malley and his associates 1988; cf. O’Malley & Chamot 1990), Ellis and Sinclair’s 1989 Learning to Learn English instruction, Willing’s 1989 model and materials prepared for the Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP), or Oxford’s 1990 strategy training model presented below. (Additionally, an overview of different strategy training schemes and information about their technical organization provided by Macaro 2001 and Harris 2003 can be found in Dörnyei 2005).

Oxford (1990), like other researchers mentioned above, advocates moving from a limited focus on what students learn, or the product or outcome of language learning, to a broader theme of how they learn – the process by which learning takes place. Her strategy training model focuses on the teaching of learning strategies themselves, but it is also closely related to regular language study. Preferably, it should be used for long-term training, but can be employed for one-time training based on relevant units as well. It is flexible and the steps suggested do not have to be followed in any prescribed order. In fact, in approaches that integrate strategy training with language learning, learners are not expected to master strategies they had been exposed to only once. The recursive nature of such approaches implies no strict sequential order of learning events, which allows for changes and flexible progression from one step to another in a cycle and, if necessary, ensures repeated practice (cf. O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Chamot et al. 1999). Oxford (1990) proposes eight steps which come after diagnosing the learners’ current use of strategies. The first five concern planning and general preparation, and the last three focus on conducting, evaluating, and revising the training scheme itself:

- **Step 1: Determine the Learners’ Needs and the Time Available.** This means considering who the learners are, what they need, which strategies they have been using so far and which they still need to learn, how they perceive their roles as language learners, what attitudes they bring to the process of L2 learning, and how much time can be devoted to the training.

- **Step 2: Select Strategies Well.** This implies choosing appropriate strategies on the basis of the learners’ individual characteristics and needs assessment,
and thinking of teaching mutually supporting strategies, rather than just one kind of strategy. The range of strategies selected for the training should: cover both those easy and more difficult to learn, prove useful for most learners in the group, and be transferable to other tasks and situations. What seems most important to Oxford’s proposal is the fact that these strategies should not be limited to the cognitive and metacognitive strategies typically taught within different training schemes, but should involve memory, compensation, affective and social strategies as well.

➢ **Step 3: Consider Integration of Strategy Training.** To make strategy training significant and meaningful to the learners, and to make strategies easier to learn and apply with varied tasks, strategy training can be integrated with the goals of a regular language course, its materials and tasks. However, a detached training related to a language course can also be carried out.

➢ **Step 4: Consider Motivational Issues.** This step requires thinking of the kind of motivation one intends to promote via the training process, and calls for increasing learner motivation through an appropriate selection of learning activities and relevant learning strategies. It also necessitates respecting learner pre-existing cultural, learning, and strategy preferences.

➢ **Step 5: Prepare Materials and Activities.** It is most advisable to integrate strategy training materials with actual language learning materials, as well as develop and distribute extra handouts on the application of particular strategies to be used in class and at home.

➢ **Step 6: Conduct ‘Completely Informed Training’.** This implies thoroughly informing learners about the selected strategies (i.e. why the strategies are essential and how to use, control, and transfer them to new tasks), providing relevant practical tasks, and asking learners to assess their strategic moves and strategy usefulness. This training, considered most effective, is also known as strategy-plus-control training or self-control training and may take the form of: (a) students doing a given task without any training and then discussing the strategies just used, (b) the teacher clarifying and modelling a new strategy for the task (referring to the preceding stage), (c) students using the strategy with the same or a similar task, and (d) strategy evaluation.

➢ **Step 7: Evaluate the Strategy Training.** This self-assessment component offers learners practice in using the strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluating; it also enables the teacher to assess the strategy training
with reference to the initially selected criteria (e.g. task refinement, general skill development, continuation of the use of a new strategy over time, appropriate strategy transfer to other tasks and areas, or change of the learners’ attitudes).

- **Step 8: Revise the Strategy Training.** As a logical outcome of Step 7, the last step involves the possibility to revise the initial decisions, training materials, and/or procedures applied, and to reconsider each step in the light of what has been achieved (Oxford 1990: 204–208).

In addition to the paradigm and the tool for strategy assessment (*SILL*), Oxford (1990) presents a wide choice of training activities, including thorough explanations and rich clues which direct a practitioner in how to implement strategy training in the language classroom. Obviously, the course of action in strategy training may take different forms, all helping learners acquire new strategies, extend personal strategy repertoires, and advance language learning autonomy. So far, several options have been implemented successfully around the world:

- **General study-skills courses.** These are organized mainly by universities, separately from language courses, and develop learners’ abilities to set and/or clarify learning goals and objectives, understand their value, detect individual learning preferences, and further advance general academic skills and study habits. Such courses can be recommended to students with high motivational drives and abilities to transfer skills across class subjects, though they may not prepare learners to cope with the specific demands of language learning (Cohen 1998).

- **Awareness training: lectures and discussion.** Known as consciousness-raising courses, or familiarization training, these are usually not incorporated into classroom L2 learning. They allow learners to develop a general idea of strategies and their role in L2 learning, but do not offer practical problem-solving tasks (Oxford 1990). Thus, such programmes can be carried out to raise learner language learning awareness, and have some value as strategy training. However, learners need extensive practice in meaningful, contextualized strategy use with L2 tasks if they are to become self-directed in language learning (cf. Brown 1994, Cohen 1998).

- **Awareness training: strategy workshops.** These are intensive workshops combining lectures, hands-on activities, and discussions. Participants are given more practice via consciousness-raising and strategy assessment tasks which involve, for example, focused work on how to improve
selected skills. Each workshop may deal with specific topics or skills (Cohen 1998).

- **Videotaped mini-courses.** Rubin’s 1996 *Language Learning Disc*, for example, is an individualized, needs-adaptable, interactive instructional programme prepared to increase adult learners’ familiarity with L2 learning strategies, help them to transfer strategies to new learning situations, and take responsibility for their own progress (Cohen 1998).

- **‘Learning to learn’ textbook-embedded training.** In this option students are regularly taught and practise varied L2 learning strategies, working with textbooks in which ‘the content itself is the study and utilization of learning strategies’ (Brown 1994: 209). It can be best illustrated with Ellis and Sinclair’s (1989) course, which systematically trains students in strategy use with grammar, vocabulary, and the four language skills. Oxford’s (1990) *Language Learning Strategies* materials could also be successfully used for the same purpose.

- **Strategies-based instruction.** SBI is non-prescriptive learner-centered L2 teaching with explicit and implicit strategy training. It aims at helping learners to develop their strategy awareness and abilities to manage language learning and communication through systematic use of strategies with classroom activities, acquisition of new learning habits with course exercises, sharing experiences, and learning from one another. Thus, strategies are described, modelled, discussed, integrated, or contextualized, and practised with class materials. It is the latter component of contextualized explicit and implicit strategy practice with L2 tasks that makes it ‘strategies-based instruction’. Thus, SBI teachers may follow course materials and pre-plan how to insert the needed strategies or select the strategies to be practised first and build classroom activities around them. They can also introduce and practise strategies opportunistically (i.e. when students encounter learning problems) (Cohen 1998).

- **Strategies inserted into language textbooks.** This idea has been implemented for several years by textbook writers and materials designers who have been offering learners elements of strategy training embedded within textbook-based L2 learning tasks (cf. Cohen 1998).

- **Peer tutoring, or tandem programmes.** Within this option, students speaking different native languages are paired for regular tutoring sessions. Thus, they change roles acting as teacher and learner, practise the two languages separately, and share experiences concerning their
strategic learning choices. Learners who study the same language may also regularly meet in study groups or tutoring sessions (Cohen 1998). In fact, in the era of the Internet, opportunities for tandem learning, systematic cooperation and learners’ comprehensive strategic development have been greatly enhanced by new e-learning possibilities. These enable learners all over the world to build strong learning communities via the use of various free community-based interactive tools (*Language Learning with Livemocha)*.

- **Adjunct self-help guides.** These are ‘pre-packed’ ways of leading learners toward self-directed learning with ‘how to’ guidebooks that can be recommended for use with regular course assignments (e.g. Brown’s 1989 *A Practical Guide to Language Learning*; Rubin and Thompson’s 1982 *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner*) (Brown 1994).

- **Learning centres, self-access centres, or open learning centres.** These offer learners a range of materials helpful in developing academic study skills, pronunciation, reading, writing, or oral production. Learners may also be tested for areas of difficulty, strategy use, personality traits, learning styles, motivation, time management, or abilities to cope with stress, and offered help in the form of tutorials, workshops, or self-instructional schemes (Brown 1994).

6. **Strategy training for future teachers of English: an empirical study**

The study the author presents below constituted the second part of a larger, two-stage project. The first stage (diagnostic) aimed at exploring the nature of relations that might exist between: (1) selected individual factors (i.e. personality traits and cognitive styles) and (2) these individual factors and learner strategy preferences. The second stage (experimental) was designed to examine the impact and effects of purposeful, long-term, and fully-informed strategy training upon: (1) adult language learners’ patterns of strategy use and (2) their opinions and attitudes towards the target language, language learning, and themselves as language learners. The two stages were not entirely independent modules, since the results obtained in the first stage were intended to support the planning and implementation of strategy training within the second stage. Thus, the research was designed to examine the issue of adult language learners’ strategic trainability
and explore possibilities of conscious strategy development in pre-service teacher education.

The experiment was carried out as part of English teacher trainees' methodological preparation. A long-term intensive strategy training scheme was integrated with the second-year Methodology and Lesson Observation courses run till the academic year 2004/2005 in the Higher Vocational State School in Biała Podlaska, Poland. The control group in the experiment received traditional instruction, while the instruction in the experimental group was enriched with strategy training ideas. The dependent variables were changes in the frequency of use of Oxford’s (1990) six strategy categories and alterations of learner beliefs and opinions, operationalized in terms of declarations made by the subjects in a series of questionnaires. The independent variable was strategy training, operationalized in the form of the Learning to Learn instruction, based primarily on Ellis and Sinclair’s (1989) and Oxford’s (1990) training suggestions and tasks. It was supposed to develop the students’ knowledge of and skills in using those strategies which were diagnosed as unknown and/or inadequately used at the beginning of the experiment. The scheme was divided into four parts, each devoted to strategy training with a different language skill (i.e. listening, reading, writing, speaking), and related to the students’ Practical English work. There were 22 upper-intermediate/advanced (B2/C1) Polish students of English in the experimental group and 20 Polish students of English at the same proficiency level in the control group. The study lasted one academic year (September/October 2003 – May/June 2004).

The experimental research design envisaged: (a) pre-, (in the experimental group also while-), and post-experiment examinations of patterns of strategy use by the students and (b) pre- and post-experiment surveys of student beliefs and opinions. During the experiment, and the strategy training itself, the author used data collected within a series of formal, paper-and-pencil questionnaires and checklists: (1) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford 1990: 293–300), (2) Instruments Used for Assessing Background Factors (Abraham & Vann 1987: 99–102) accompanied by Background Factors Questionnaire (self-prepared), (3) The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz 1987: 127–128), (4) self-prepared, structured tools based on Oxford’s (1990) original instruments: What Types of Learning Strategies Do You Use with (the skill named: Listening / Reading / Speaking / Writing) Tasks? (5) Taking Your Emotional Temperature and Stress Checklists (Oxford 1990: 188–190) applied
separately to each language skill, and (6) guided Language Learning Diaries. Other forms of verbal reports (e.g. semi-structured informal interviews, regular group discussions, student self-revelatory techniques), and teacher-trainer observation were used to support the data and help the subjects raise self-awareness, language learning and strategy use awareness. The data collected within each phase of the experiment were analysed with qualitative and quantitative procedures.

The results of the research indicated that the differences found in the pre-experiment patterns of strategy activation by the two student groups were not statistically significant. The SILL survey produced a slightly higher mean frequency of strategy use (3.18) in the group nominated later as the control group in the experiment and a lower mean (3.13) in the group selected on this basis for subsequent strategy training. Thus, members of both groups were classified as medium frequency strategy users, who activated learning strategies sometimes, according to Oxford’s 1990 interpretation scale. It must be stressed that both groups tended to underestimate the role that social and affective strategies could play in their learning and, consequently, did not resort to varied social and affective strategies; in fact, they activated these two strategy types least often, with either low or lower medium frequency.

The results of the post-experiment investigation showed that all the adult advanced (B2/C1) language learners who received strategy training extended their individual repertoires of learning strategies and intensified the frequencies of strategy use. In fact, the overall average frequency of strategy employment by the control group remained at almost the same level (3.17), while the experimental group’s mean increased significantly (3.72). Additionally, the experimental group began to use all of Oxford’s six strategy categories more frequently. The most conspicuous growth occurred in the frequency of activation of the initially most underestimated and thus rarely used social strategies (1.25) and affective strategies (0.69). The group entered the upper medium frequency level of affective strategy use, while all other strategy categories were now utilized with high frequencies. Moreover, the subjects enriched their range of social and affective strategy types. These common upward tendencies were also reflected in the fact that all of the experimental group students increased their overall mean scores of strategy use. Since the alterations that occurred in the traditionally instructed group were negligible, the changes in the experimental group could be ascribed to the impact of conscious and long-term strategy training.
Analyses of the pre- and post-experiment data concerning the students’ beliefs and attitudes did not reveal noticeable opinion changes in the control group, while several noteworthy alterations were found in the experimental group. In fact, the latter allowed the author to conclude that under the impact of the training, and especially due to its recursive nature, the majority of the experimental group learners began re-evaluating their initial views. For example, they came strongly to believe that structured reviewing and frequent practice were essential in language learning and learnt how to assess the difficulty of language tasks more realistically. Also, their awareness of the role of cultural knowledge in communication increased, they reported feeling more sensitive to others’ emotional states, and started to believe that everyone could learn other languages provided they were given adequate strategic preparation. They were more optimistic in thinking of themselves as language learners and their initial, often unjustified, self-criticism faded. Furthermore, their self-confidence seemed strengthened, their self-esteem improved, and they began to express more positive opinions on and more favourable attitudes toward the idea of incorporating elements of strategy training into language teaching/learning. In fact, such observations surfaced frequently during classroom discussions and in student diaries. Finally, the experimental group admitted to becoming less teacher-dependent and more willing to take responsibility for their own learning. Still, the changes were not statistically significant.

All in all, the results of the study indicated that more advanced (B2/C1) adult learners’ strategic patterns might be relatively well-established and their frequencies of strategy activation might be consolidated at certain, rather stable levels, which was evident in the negligible changes in strategy use by the control group. It appears that adults’ individual sets of strategic learning behaviours may not alter spontaneously or significantly within a further course of language learning, unless students receive conscious strategy training. Hence, reaching tertiary levels of education does not have to mean strategic fossilization. The study also demonstrated that adult learners’ beliefs and opinions about learning, language learning and themselves as language learners might be already well-established and firm, and therefore they altered neither easily nor quickly. Even in the course of long-term and fully-informed strategy training, carried out in the experimental group, the process was slow and, most probably, continued mainly due to the recursive nature of the four training modules. Thus, it seems that if strategy training is to be effective and if it is to influence
adults’ strategies, beliefs and attitudes, it should be focused, long-term, and recursive; the task constitutes a tremendous, though not unfeasible, challenge.

7. Conclusions

The issues discussed in this article, concerned with learning, language learning, and strategy training, are becoming increasingly important in language education across the European Union. They are related to possibilities of finding practical solutions which could allow the successful accomplishment of the crucial goal of ensuring learner self-directed, or autonomous, learning, and language learning in particular. Learner training seems to be an advisable and promising solution. Both theory and research confirm that, given opportunities to get to know about and practise the use of varied strategies for language learning and use, language learners can become more effective users of strategies for continued, or life-long, learning. This, in turn, can help preserve the multilingual environment of the EU with all its cultural and linguistic diversity.

However, as Tudor (1997) rightly stresses, strategy training is a pedagogical task and, like the whole teaching venture, it requires the teacher to make several decisions concerning the content, form, and structure of instruction. As specified above, there are various options for how to conduct the training. These may differ in the degree of instructional explicitness in learner awareness-raising and may be either separate from or integrated into a language teaching programme to differing degrees. Obviously, if learners are to become more autonomous and able to act strategically in response to the requirements and challenges posed by the complex task of language learning, many of them will need guidance and scaffolding provided by ‘strategic’ teachers. To become strategic, teachers also need training; they need opportunities to experience the effectiveness of varied strategy use, that is, understand and appreciate the value of not only cognitive and metacognitive, but also motivational, social and affective strategies.

Researchers do not always agree on strategy training issues; nevertheless, Wenden’s 1991 practical and well-tested guidelines for effective training still seem worth recommending. Thus, firstly, strategy training should be informed. Through blind training learners can become better able to
perform selected tasks more efficiently, but even with extensive practice they usually remain unable to use the required strategies on their own and transfer them effectively to other contexts. Secondly, it should include training in self-regulation, or self-control, which implies management of one’s own learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning outcomes. Thirdly, preferably, strategies should be presented and practised in the context of subject matter content or skill for which they are applicable; thus, they should be contextualized, oriented towards particular language learning problems, and relatable to the learner’s personal experience. Fourthly, strategy training should be interactive. Therefore, the teacher’s job does not finish with telling learners what to do and leaving them on their own. Teacher-learner interaction must continue until learners become able to self-regulate the appropriate use of learning strategies. Last but not least, training courses should be designed and conducted in response to a diagnosis of learners’ current use of strategies, proficiency levels, and real needs. Let us add to this set, and emphasize the importance of, one more, crucial recommendation. Namely, strategy training should guarantee language learners numerous opportunities to learn about and experiment with the most varied types of learning strategies of all categories.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


1. Introduction

The debates on the methodology of teaching reading and the role of this skill in teaching programmes are often very passionate. They concern both scientists and practitioners from various fields. This is not surprising, since this skill is absolutely fundamental in contemporary society. Hence, one observes an increasing number of institutions that carry out research in the field of teaching reading and a growing number of institutions and programmes in various countries that assess the reading skill among different age groups. The results of this research are of major importance for educators as well as for politicians. However, not only is the skill of reading vital in the mother tongue, but it is also central in the context of foreign language teaching since modern societies are multicultural and multilingual.

People have translocated for a long time, they may even have always done so. They change their places of residence – they migrate. It has become obvious that the rate of migrations accelerated about a hundred years ago. International migrations have reached a mass scale, a tendency that has continued until today, though additionally enriched by transnationality, a phenomenon noticed by sociologists at the beginning of the 1990s. Transnationality means that migrants function in several countries at the same time. They move freely in a number of cultural spaces – have more than one passport, come from mixed marriages, speak a few languages fluently and work in multicultural companies. Languages have become an essential working tool for transnational migrants. They need it in order to facilitate the acquisition of new culture codes.
In this paper I will discuss the necessity to develop the reading skill in a foreign language as soon as young learners are confronted with reading in the acquisition process of L1. Even if children have the opportunity to participate in foreign language classes from the first year of schooling, as it is the case in Poland, this simultaneous acquisition seems to be neglected in actual curricula. On their way to mastering the difficult art of L1 reading children also want to read in L2. Research reveals that learning a new language by young learners means not only developing skills of listening comprehension and speaking, but it is also successfully realised through the development of reading and writing skills (Brisk & Harrington 2007: 24). Therefore, it is important to introduce writing and reading to young learners by employing modern teaching methods which not only take into consideration intuitive learning conceptions, but are also founded on new studies in the fields of neurology and other cognitive sciences. Additionally, it is worth considering whether global teaching methods, eagerly applied by some language teachers, are efficient and adapted to the human brain structure. Perhaps we should foster the integration of teaching methods and contents, as well as combine the methods of teaching reading in L1 and L2, taking into account the characteristics of the two language systems.

2. Reading in second language learning

2.1. Reading in the European educational policy and in research

In the European setting foreign language teaching has gained priority and is a central element of the European educational policy. Many documents published by the Council of Europe (Language Policy Division) highlight that multilingualism and multiculturalism have to become a major advantage in European competitiveness. Major European documents concerning this issue are:

- *European Cultural Convention* (Council of Europe 1955) and
- different policy recommendations and resolutions, for instance:
  - *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 7E* (Council of Europe 2008) to member states on the use of the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) and the promotion of plurilingualism;

Support for the development of language competence in many language systems is necessary. The aim of such education is the development of communicating skills, which encompass both spoken and written form.

Reading is part of the communication process and is a form of communicating. The reading skill determines, to a large extent, the learners’ rate of success and influences the way their education proceeds. Reading requirements increase because modern society, which applies new communication and information technologies, demands a good mastering of this skill. New forms of communication claim specific competence not only in the mother tongue, but also in other languages. European societies are becoming more multicultural and multilingual. The mastery of English is becoming a standard, and the knowledge of each subsequent foreign language appears to be an added value, on the labour market as well as in the whole process of career pursuit, because modern society educates people during their whole life. Snow (1998: 478) emphasises that it is monolingualism that is a non-standard phenomenon. Monolingual societies are a minority and one deals with multilingual people more often. Nowadays, the number of people learning more than one language is increasing tremendously due to the increase of the number of migrants. Hence, societies become multilingual and what is stressed is not the limited ability to read in one’s mother tongue, but also in other languages. Since reading is the key skill in contemporary reality, intensive research has been carried out in the field of reading in L1 and L2 in order to make the process of teaching more efficient. The number of comparative studies which examine the specific differences is increasing (Genesee et al. 2008; Koda 2005; Schwartz et al. 2007) along with the number of teaching and learning programmes, e.g. those drawn up by the Council of Europe, such as Socrates, Leonardo and Lifelong Learning programmes; UNESCO programmes promoting mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual approaches in education; Deutsch plus – A Program for Multilingualism in Teaching and Research promoting German as a language of science and giving a stronger emphasis to research results obtained in German;
programmes of The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) one of whose central aims is to instigate research at the intersection of language acquisition and multilingualism.

Despite the common belief that the quality of the reading skill is dropping, research provides evidence to the contrary. Polish pupils, in the opinion of PISA expert Ewa Bartnik (after gazeta.pl 2007), read better and the requirements they have to deal with are becoming more demanding. Students are expected to read functional texts whose meaning is often harder to grasp than that of literary texts. This requirement is obvious because the ability to read with understanding is an essential condition in many professions basing on language, e.g. in the case of teachers, journalists or company image analysts. However, other professions, cf. sportsmen, drivers, plumbers or mechanics, also require highly qualified employees and the ability to read specialised and functional texts with understanding is to a certain extent a necessity. For this reason the aforementioned abilities are tested by international comparative studies like PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) assessing the reading skill of 15-year-old pupils, and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) measuring fourth graders’ competences in reading. The results of these studies are published and broadly discussed both by reading specialists and by authorities in the field of education policy and media. This serves to underline the social importance of these skills.

Studies such as PIRLS and PISA measure the literacy in one language, the language of schooling, although both surveys contain questions about other languages that condition the context of the learner. Institutions observing and evaluating reading that can be found in many countries are designed, above all, to analyse the reading skill in L1. Comparative studies in the foreign languages realm conducted on such large scale are insufficient. There are many reasons for this – first and foremost, the contexts for foreign language teaching are immensely diverse, hence the results of such research are difficult to compare.

As Multilingualism is a core value in Europe according to the Framework for the European Survey on Language Competences, it is also important to assess competencies in language learning. The Council of Europe proposed to create The European Indicator of Language Competence, the result of the meeting of Heads of State and Government in Barcelona in March 2002 where the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator was called for. The Expert Working Groups on Languages and on Indicators and
Benchmarks began working on it. They have to prepare a sample of tests of competences, based on the six levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The aim of the indicator is to measure foreign language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) in each country. For practical reasons oral skills would not be tested in the first edition. As in the PISA survey, the experts propose that the target group be 15-year-olds, which in most countries means adolescents at the end of compulsory education. Tests will be accompanied by questionnaires in order to collect information about the learning context. First tests will assess the five languages most frequently taught in the EU: English, French, German, Spanish and Italian. Each country will establish a group of experts to implement the indicator. The European Commission will set up an Advisory Board consisting of representatives of the Member States (the ‘EILC Advisory Board’). Their task will be to advise on the data collection in the Member States, supervise the quality of the implementation process in the Member States and evaluate the results.

It is obvious that literature on L2 reading is less abundant than the numerous studies on the L1 reading skill because interest in this field is relatively new and researchers encounter many methodological and organisational obstacles. Long-term studies are scarce (Koda & Zehler 2008) since cohorts are difficult to control and research is carried out in contexts hard to compare as they differ in culture and organisation. Part of the research is performed in multilingual surroundings where the students speak one language at home and are taught the other one at school, and where the use of their mother tongue in the school context becomes uncontrollable. In the USA The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth was founded to gather information on the reading skill, learning and instruction of non-native English speaking children. Many American and Canadian expert researchers joined the project (August & Shanahan 2008: 9–10). In monolingual surroundings where the students learn L2 at school, as it is the case in Poland, other research is conducted, cf. Bogdanowicz (2004), Karpińska-Szaj (2005), Pisasecka (2008) or Wieszczeczyńska (2007).

Although research on reading has been intensified since the 1980s, despite many years devoted to studying this topic, numerous questions still remain unanswered. This is because the multiple stages preceding text understanding have not been studied sufficiently – ‘in the course of learning
to read all the components of the process of learning to read have to be taken into consideration’ (Nyssen et al. 2001).

2.2. Definitions of reading

In the literature on the subject many definitions of the concept reading can be found. This is so because reading is complex, vital in the process of learning and, as mentioned above, socially important. In attempting to define reading, scientists focus on its various aspects, e.g. cognitive (attention, associative learning, transfer, information processing, memory types, etc.), psycholinguistic and sociocultural. Let us, therefore, take a closer look at some definitions of reading proposed by psychologists, linguists and educators.

For some linguists the activity of reading is predominantly based on constructing the phonetic layer of words without paying any attention to the process of word understanding. Basically, reading consists in decoding words and text uttering. Krasowicz-Kupis (1999: 10) draws attention to the fact that reading is an outstandingly metalinguistic activity which demands the full embedding of consciousness on many levels (phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic).

Other scientists believe that reading is inextricably connected with giving meaning to the text (Chauveau et al. 1994, 1997). Gaonac’h (2000: 381) follows this idea and states that reading is at the same time decoding, understanding and the capacity for dealing with the aims presented in the task. He also emphasises that the reading skill is interconnected with the writing skill. To read means the same as to make hypotheses regarding the text and verify them on the basis of the linguistic prompts found inside it (Gaonac’h 2000). Such a versatile model is also presented by Giasson (2003). She ascribes importance to the reader, who shapes the meaning of a text with his/her knowledge and intentions. The relations between the components of the process (the reader and the context) are decisive when it comes to the level of text understanding. The better adjusted the components, the better the understanding of the text.

We cannot disregard the role of the context in this process – psychological, social and physical – since it is significant in building the model of written text understanding (Giasson 2003: 3). Furthermore, Chauveau (2001: 5, 9) emphasises that reading does not exist outside the reader’s intention and the text (cultural object) which remain the carriers of the written message
and that each act of reading triggers linguistic and cultural procedures characteristic for reading and learning to read. According to Malmquist (quoted in Kamińska 1999: 12), reading should be understood as a string of common mental activities dependant on the age and maturity of the reader, type of text, its level of difficulty and the purpose of reading. The act of reading is a complex process as the meaning is shaped not only by the author of the text, but also, and maybe even predominantly, by the reader, his/her personality and experience. The meaning of the text rises from the interaction between what readers ‘have in their heads’ and what is before their eyes (Goiroux 2001: 76).

Recent studies highlight the cultural element which influences the reading act and the theoretical models in process. The representatives of this approach, among others Bernardin (1997, 2001) and Chauveau (2001), stress the fact that reading is a cultural activity (activité culturelle) and in order to analyse the reading act what has to be taken into consideration is the cultural and linguistic point of view in respect of the reading activity and learning to read (Bernardin 2001: 5). Accordingly, Armand (2000: 469–491), in analysing the components of the learning to read process, puts forward sensitization to the cultural element of a written text, which he considers even more important than oral expression and awareness of language structure in the foreign language. This perspective is of particular importance for studies on reading in the second language.

When discussing the problem of reading in the bilingual context, Brisk and Harrington (2007: 2) point to the fact that the ability to read (literacy) is a complex psycholinguistic process comprising skills like letter recognition, decoding, recognising words, sentence understanding and text comprehension. Moreover, they stress that learners developing the reading skill in two languages need to master the psycholinguistic process in just one language. On the other hand, they are required to become familiar with a new system of signs, words, grammar and text structure in both languages. Reading constitutes a process, i.e. its perfecting takes time and depends on the training and gained experience. Authors, eg. Chauveau (2001), stress that the process is not solely cognitive and psycholinguistic, but also sociocultural and this last feature is often the subject of scientists’ analyses.

We could cite many other definitions, abundant in publications written not exclusively by linguists or psychologists, but also by literati involved in the topic. De Man (2004), a literary critic and theorist, thinks that ‘pure reading’ is not simple understanding of senses and meanings, but a
rhetorical mystification. Pennac (1992), who authored a book about reading, reading pleasure and reading instruction, believes that every reading is an ‘act of resistance’, and well conducted reading protects one not only from the surrounding world, but also from oneself.

Owing to the fact that this paper refers to learning to read in L2 by Polish children, it cannot pass over works of Polish scientists, e.g. Bogdanowicz (2004), Cieszyńska (2001) and Krasowicz-Kupis (1999, 2004). Their research has significantly influenced the didactics of teaching to read in L1 and solved problems connected with acquiring the reading skill in the second language by Polish learners. Their work meets the requirement of putting the analysis of the reading skill in a specific context, as well as of realising the analysis within the framework of language doublets since language systems converge and influence both the speed of mastering L2 reading and its quality.

2.3. Development of the reading skill

Reading is, as we have already stated, a complex and non-homogenous process. It takes many forms and, depending on its purpose, is performed in order to attain various goals: to search for simple information, to skim quickly, to learn from the texts, to integrate information, to write, to critique or analyse texts, or for general comprehension (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 13). Morais (1997) points to the many pleasures coming from reading activities. According to him, we read in order to get to know or understand something or think it over. We read to admire the beauty of a language, to be emotionally moved, to be saddened. But there can also be other reasons for reading, namely to be able to share what we have just read with others, to dream, to learn to dream or even to forget. We may read critically and try to unveil the meanings hidden in the text – after all the activity of reading cannot take place without the reader giving meaning to what he is reading.

As Krasowicz-Kupis (2004: 59) stresses, reading is a language activity based on the conscious perception of a written word form, the conscious phone-letter relation and the consciousness of language devices essential for the realisation of utterance. According to her, reading appears to be a metacognitive activity. In order to read, it is necessary to apply metaphonological, metalexical, metasyntactic and metasemantic skills. Let us, therefore, have a closer look at some of the metalinguistic aspects which are vital in the development of the reading skill.
Apparently, the literature on the subject includes much more research published on L1 because, as previously mentioned, the reading skill determines efficient functioning in society and being successful, and it is a vital tool in the process of broadly understood communication. Research reveals that the level of the L1 reading skill affects the L2 reading skill, i.e. students who are good readers in L1 are also good readers in L2 (Koda 2008: 71). As stated above, the research is conducted in different surroundings, which significantly influences the outcomes. Metalinguistic skills and, especially, phonological awareness are most frequently researched when it comes to L2 reading.

2.3.1. Metaphonological skills

Reading in alphabetic languages requires the skill of combining both the phonological recognition of heard phonemes and their graphic counterparts called graphs. The level of metalinguistic development directly influences the reading skill. It mainly affects the ability of phoneme segmentation, e.g. determining the number of phonemes in a given word or distinguishing alliterations, matching a rhyming word (Gombert 1992; Maurer 1997; Krasowicz-Kupis 1999; Pamuła 2000; Koda 2008). It should be stressed, however, that this process works both ways – reading influences the development of metaphonological skills.

Numerous studies confirm a strong correlation between the development of the phonological awareness in children and their level of reading and orthographic writing (Maurer 1997; Lipowska 2001). This correlation occurs also in L2 reading processes. Interlanguage studies reveal that phonological awareness within the framework of one language may constitute a predicate of the reading skill in another language (Gholmain & Geva 1999; Geva & Siegel 2000; Koda 2008; Verhoeven 2000). The experiments and observations by Morais and his collaborators (1991, 1994) confirm that handling phonological elements constitutes a good practice influencing in a positive manner the following aspects: the ability to decode words as well as recognising and memorising the spelling of words both in L1 and L2. Therefore, to facilitate reading in L2 teachers should develop learners’ abilities to:

- distinguish between prosodic features and rhythm of a language;
- isolate specific phonemes and distinctive features (phonemic hearing);
- divide words into phonemes (phonemic segmentation);
- divide words into syllables;
- alliterate and rhyme.
Insight into phonological competence is particularly well-grounded when the reading process occurs in an alphabetic language, though Koda (2008) points to its significance also in the case of logographic (ideographic) languages. It allows discovery of the very first mechanisms involved in the process of reading, yet it is dependent on the method chosen for teaching to read. Whenever the method is more analytical, the importance of phonological competence will increase, whereas in other approaches it may be marginalised. The latter phenomenon is especially visible within the learning of foreign languages that often neglect the phonological competence. Gombert (1992), who came up with his own model of children’s metalinguistic development, stresses that the competence is made up of two elements: epilinguistic skills (semi-unconscious) and metalinguistic (conscious and intentional). Phonological competence is realised within four developmental stages. The first two (acquisition of the first language skills and control over epilinguistic skills) are observed in all learners, whereas the other two (acquisition of the metalinguistic awareness and automating the processes) are optional. Gombert’s model provides empirical references to the Polish language, as was noticed by Lipowska (2001: 38–41).

Research conducted in Poland in the 1990s by myself and the postgraduate students attending the MA seminar at the Neophilological Institute of the Pedagogical University in Krakow revealed that the development of the phonological competence is significant in the process of foreign language learning by early-school age children (Pamuła 2002).

2.3.2. Development of the metalexical competence in the process of reading with understanding

Many studies show a direct link between text understanding and vocabulary range, e.g. Giasson (2003: 199) states that on the one hand, the vocabulary range influences text comprehension, while on the other hand, reading exercises enrich vocabulary. At primary-school level one can observe children’s development resulting not just from interaction with the surroundings (parents, other learners, school staff), but mainly from the children’s extensive exposure to the written language and their active contact with written texts.

A similar situation takes place in the case of foreign language learning – students learn new vocabulary and language structures through texts they are provided with (both listened to and read). In order for the text
to be ‘available’ to the reader, it should not be too long because this may discourage him/her from reading. Wygotski (1971), in describing the ‘zone of proximal development’, stated that stimulation is necessary for development to occur. Still, the task can be neither too difficult nor too simple as both situations are demotivating. Walter (2004) suggested that the knowledge of 95% of the text’s vocabulary is necessary to read the text without effort. Yet, what needs to be stressed is the fact that everything depends on the purpose of the reading and the strategies applied. This issue will be discussed later on.

Speaking of vocabulary one cannot pass over another important ability, decisive when it comes to the quality and speed of reading, namely the ability to promptly access the mental dictionary. Gombert (2000: 21) defines it as a way of organising information in our memory allowing the proper storage of words in a known language. According to him, access to the mental dictionary can be achieved in two ways:

a) through orthography – the reader knows the word and has the traces of its orthographic transcript in his/her memory. While reading, visual analysis of the word takes place followed by the search for its graphic form in the memory. This process aims at finding the semantic equivalent and understanding the information.

b) through phonology (characteristic for less experienced readers) – the reader does not have visual prompt at his/her disposal and does not know the spelling of the word. In such a case the reader searches for the auditory pattern: tries to decode the word, comes up with a graphophonological conversion and arrives at the meaning.

When one learns to read in a foreign language, the limited mental dictionary is of particular importance because it slows down the process. This is the case for many learners, especially as many students have little exposure to reading activities outside the classroom. Reading in L2 poses many difficulties to learners. This results largely from too little language experience (too little exposure to the written language), poor vocabulary range and problems with syntax.

### 2.3.3. Reading strategies

The reading process is complex and the reader employs various strategies to understand a text. Advanced readers will probably use different strategies than beginners, while adults will use different ones than
children, who are barely introduced to the art of learning. Nonetheless, it is certain that teaching to consciously apply learning strategies is beneficial to learners.

What are reading strategies? According to Giasson (2000: 32), a reading strategy is a device or a set of devices consciously used by the reader to understand a text. Hence, abecedarians will employ strategies connected with text recognition, its division into phonemes and syllables, or focusing on whole words (depending on what method they were taught), they can also refer to information from outside the text, e.g. a picture. An advanced-level reader will adopt different strategies which allow faster reading and better understanding of the text. These strategies will be suited to a given reading. Typical strategies of advanced readers are skimming, scanning, in-depth reading, key words spotting and many others which support the process of reading. As noticed by Grabe and Stoller (2002: 13) and Cornaire (1999), most people reading in a foreign language employ mainly two strategies: guessing from the context and translation. This poor set of strategies often leads to discouragement and hampers the progress in mastering the L2 reading skill. Equipping children with a variety of reading strategies may prevent those negative and inhibiting phenomena, especially when coupled with the awareness of reading purposes, e.g. finding specific information or performing a task on the basis of the text. It is also essential to increase the learners’ exposure to the written text. Examples of how this can be done might be: establishing a reading circle, facilitating access to a library where one can borrow foreign language books and magazines, and instructing learners on how to use the Internet to develop the reading skill.

It is the teacher’s task to equip learners with efficient reading strategies. However, it must be remembered that in the course of teaching to read the teacher can also introduce a few effective strategies to help learners master the demanding art of reading. The following applications are useful in the teaching of reading:

- working on phonemic awareness;
- working on the decoding aspect: apply letter sound correspondences and use the syllabic approach;
- using high-frequency words (easy to read);
- reading word by word (children do not know where the end of one word is and where the next one starts);
- frequently repeating new vocabulary;
- initiating and prompting discussion on the topic of the text (also in the mother tongue);
- the need to find stories with repetitive sentence patterns;
- choosing stories with good illustrations;
- reading aloud and asking the children to read aloud;
- retelling stories;
- finding stories with surprise endings and
- finding stories that show realistic situations.

Reading is a complex process and cannot be described neatly in simple and unambiguous terms. It remains a key competence both in L1 and L2 and it should be effectively fostered since the very first years of schooling. Developments in the fields of cognitive and neurological sciences often use simple definitions of reading and suggest new didactic solutions. Increasing numbers of researches concerned with language doublets provide much new information. Therefore, in order to make their pedagogical endeavours more efficient, teachers can only trace the research and not get caught up in routine procedures.

3. Reading in the second language in elementary school in the Polish context

The definitions of L1 reading are similar to those involving L2. As presented above, in L1 one deals mainly with ‘double’ definitions. On the one hand, reading is treated as recognising the written language aided by grapho-phonological skills. On the other hand, it is the process of written text comprehension. It is crucial to state the ratios of those elements which affect reading quality. Grabe (2002: 50) proposes a very clear definition of second language reading. For him ‘L2 reading can best be understood as a combination of skills and abilities that individuals bring to bear as they begin to read. The following five abilities should be seen as definitional, though others can be added under a finer specification of reading: a rapid and automatic process, an interacting process, a flexible and strategic process, a proposal process, and a linguistic process’.

In an analysis of texts regarding reading in a foreign language, e.g. Polish programmes designed for foreign language teaching, the former aspect suddenly vanishes and only the latter – reading with understanding – remains. This suggests that the authors of these programmes assume
that a learner who reads in a first language can easily read in a second language, or can recognise the written language with the aid of graphophonological skills. Still, new word recognition should be facilitated for learners and they should be taught how to decode words. Obviously, this is easier in the case of certain languages, like Italian or Spanish, and more difficult in the case of less transparent ones, like English or French, yet all studies show that global reading is not an efficient method, so it is worth facing the systematic approach to learning to read in a foreign language.

Students beginning to learn a foreign language are characterised as Basic Users of the language (placed on the basic A level) according to the descriptors of language fluency devised by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (abbr.: CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001). Those indicators specify the language skills in operating categories. In order to facilitate the description, the A level comprises two sub-levels: A1 and A2. Let us first look at the communicating competence at the A1 level of the CEFR and then analyse the learners’ general reading skill, descriptions of language skills and, finally, the aims of foreign language teaching for the first stage of education as proposed by the Polish National Curriculum.

3.1. The description of communication competence at the A1 level of CEFR

LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE: the learner ‘has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type’ (CEFR: 110).

Lexical: the learner ‘has a basic vocabulary range of isolated words and phrases related to the specific situations’ (CEFR: 112), there is no descriptor available for the lexical accuracy at the A1 level, and at the A2 level the learner ‘can use a narrow range of vocabulary related to the concrete everyday needs’ (CEFR: 112).

Grammatical: the learner ‘shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertoire’ (CEFR: 114). It is the teacher/programme that determines which grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, mechanisms and relations should be learnt by the learners. The same pertains to morphological elements and processes.

Semantic: the teacher/programme determines which kinds of semantic relations the learners should learn, master and apply (CEFR: 116).
**Phonological**: ‘pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by native speakers used to dealing with speakers of his/her language group’ (CEFR: 117). Surely, in the case of young learners’ groups the capacity for imitating language patterns is greater than with adults.

**Orthographic**: the learner ‘can copy familiar words and short phrases, e.g. simple signs or instructions, names of everyday objects, names of shops and set phrases used regularly. The learner can spell his/her address, nationality and other personal details’ (CEFR: 117).

**Orthoepic**: the teacher/programme determines the learners’ needs in respect of the ability of applying the spoken and written variant of a language, as well as rendition of one form into the other. In this case the Core Curriculum will be referred to in order to check the requirements (CEFR: 117).

**SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE**: the learner ‘can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of: greetings and farewells; introductions; saying please, thank you, sorry, etc.’ (CEFR: 122).

**PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**: there is no descriptor available for discourse competence at the A1 level. As for functional competence involving spoken fluency, the learner ‘can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication’ (CEFR: 129). There is no descriptor available for the A1 level also in the case of propositional precision. It is suggested that the learner choose for him-/herself what discourse features and schemas he or she wants to learn as this depends on the context in which the education takes place and on the aims set for the particular group of learners. In the event of learning a foreign language as part of integrated education, this issue shall be governed by the teaching programme.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE** is a sociocultural knowledge, i.e. ‘[the] knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities in which a language is spoken’ (CEFR: 102). The document provides information about the necessity of developing learners’ intercultural awareness defined as ‘knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the “world of origin” and the “world of the target community”’ (CEFR: 103). Intercultural awareness is something more than just awareness – it is the readiness to accept differences that we know about.
According to CEFR, Polish National Curriculum (Ministry of Education 2009) provides that the learner in the first stage of learning (A1) should possess the following reading abilities:

- Understands short and easy texts containing the most frequently used phrases and so-called ‘international’ words which function within many languages.
- Understands very short and easy texts, and occasionally isolated phrases, by detecting familiar names, words and basic expressions, if necessary by reading again some excerpts.

The CEFR is a very general document. Its application must be determined by its users. Summarising tables and competence descriptions lack information on the teaching context and the learners’ age, which are vital factors. That is why it is worth referring to the European Language Portfolio (EPL) only when discussing language skills and their descriptors. Polish versions of EPL have been adapted to the Polish educational context and contain descriptions of language skills in reference to the age factor. The Polish edition of *The European Language Portfolio for Learners Aged 6–10* includes a section devoted to the self-evaluation of language skills. In it, the following elements of the reading skill were specified:

I can evaluate my skills in different languages.
Underline the skills that you have acquired.
When I read, I can:
- read aloud and understand some words which I have learnt;
- read names and link them with pictures;
- read and understand short captions under pictures;
- read and understand the short sentences which I have previously learnt;
- understand the written instruction which I know from the lesson, e.g. ‘Draw a circle. Listen and mark the correct picture. Jump!’.
If you can do all those things in the language you have chosen, it means you are at the A1 level.

*Self-evaluation card*


Conducting reading research with far-reaching coverage among early-school children would allow more precise data.

The Curriculum for the first stage of education (Ministry of Education 2009) divides this stage into two clear parts. The first is the initial year of education, whereas the second constitutes the subsequent two years. The authors prepared the teaching contents and specified the detailed requirements for both parts. During the first year of education, development of the reading skill is not expected. The requirements are limited to basic abilities.
A pupil completing the first grade:
1. understands simple instructions and reacts to them properly;
2. names objects in the nearest surroundings;
3. recites rhymes and sings songs from the children’s repertoire;
4. understands the meaning of stories when they are prompted with pictures, gestures, objects.

Not until the third grade do the requirements include some aspects of the reading skill.

A pupil completing the third grade:
1. knows that people use different languages and that in order to communicate with them he/she needs to learn their language (motivation to learn a foreign language);
2. reacts verbally and nonverbally to simple instructions from the teacher;
3. understands spoken utterances:
   a. differentiates between words with a similar phonological pattern;
   b. recognises phrases used in everyday life and is able to use them;
   c. understands the general meaning of short stories and fairy tales presented with the addition of pictures, gestures, etc.;
   d. understands the meaning of simple dialogues in picture stories (including audio and video recordings);
4. reads words and simple sentences with understanding;
5. asks questions and provides answers within the framework of learnt phrases, recites rhymes and sings songs, names and describes objects in his/her surroundings, participates in mini-theatrical plays;
6. copies words and sentences;
7. can use picture dictionaries, books and multimedia resources while learning a foreign language;
8. co-operates with peers while learning.

It appears evident that simultaneous development of speaking and comprehension abilities, indispensable when developing the reading skill, is a fundamental factor. After all, written language is based on spoken language and reading quality is highly dependent on the speaking ability as well as on the learner’s vocabulary range. Furthermore, it is a pity that so little notice of this skill is taken throughout the Curriculum. The same pertains to the associated skills: phonological awareness and competence, metalinguistic skills and especially metaphonological abilities. It is worth stressing that the early school age is the period when children are especially predisposed to development in the aforementioned aspects.
Obviously, learning to read is a slow process in which progress is difficult to notice. What kind of problems may appear in the course of learning to read in L2? What is the cause of such problems? One appears when the learners develop simultaneously the reading skill in L1 and L2. This can stem from the fact that spoken language is not yet satisfactorily mastered and the student’s range of vocabulary is very limited, which prevents him/her from using contextual prompts properly. It can also be caused by poorly developed metaphonologic competence and linguistic awareness. As was stated above, research points to a strong correlation between the development of the metaphonologic and phonologic competence and the reading skill. Although substantial convergences between L1 and L2 take place language systems are different, they have unrelated orthographic rules and problems with phonological mediation occur, mainly regarding the recognition of links between a graph and a phone. Additionally, learners recognise words in L2 at a slower pace than in L1. Moreover, students have little contact with the written language, which to a certain degree influences the development of the reading skill. This list is not closed. It only indicates specific problems which the teacher, the learner and the researcher must face during the process of education.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said the purpose of this article was to synthesize the knowledge which has been acquired in the scope of the reading skill in order to provide ideas for research and teaching reading in the second language. I have also discussed the necessity to develop the reading skill and reading strategies in foreign language as soon as young learners are confronted with reading in the acquisition process of L1.

Skilled reading requires the integration of several skills and abilities: phoneme awareness, phonics, reading fluency and comprehension skills. In teaching, they have to be integrated because each of these skills is necessary and none is sufficient in its own right. As learning to read is not a natural process, teachers must question pupils about their reading and reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension and to lead them to read effectively.

At present, knowledge of processes is incomplete and more research is needed not only in pedagogy and psychology, but also in the neuroscience
of language, because there are many questions that remain unanswered regarding the reading skill. There is a need for more information and in-depth discussions regarding the universal challenge of teaching and learning to read. Systematic, longitudinal, field-based investigations as well as cross-language studies and experiments can help explain how children develop the reading skill, why some children struggle to learn to read, and what can be done to help all young readers reach this proficiency.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


1. Introduction

The ability to read critically is believed to be one of the transferable competences essential to explore the world through written texts. It should be the goal of both first and foreign language teaching to foster the development of inquisitive and questioning readers. Once introduced to the habit of critical investigation, students will hopefully make use of it at all levels of their education in any foreign language. The need to focus on highly transferable skills is connected with the European Union’s multilingualism policy recommending that every pupil be taught at least two foreign languages from a very early age (European Commission 2005: 4).

Prior to any further discussion one needs to consider the following sociocultural phenomena and their implications for the condition of contemporary education.

- Accessibility of information, the result of a multiplicity of electronic and printed sources, and of the relative ease with which all members of society can gain access to them, is a prerequisite to acquiring knowledge. This demands, however, new skills to select and evaluate information in order to benefit from it, such as electronic or media literacies.
- Globalisation, which increases the number and variety of contacts in a multicultural and multilingual environment, requires learning more than one foreign language. It becomes a right and necessity for everyone, and can be facilitated by acquiring certain transferable competences, which are useful in other areas of knowledge as well as in the workplace.
• Mass education and the ensuing debate about the cultural and social crisis. The problems to be faced include the changing goals of higher education, the shift towards a focus on quantity rather than quality, and traditional university values giving way to the pursuit of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Ritzer 2003: 30).

The following discussion concerns primarily, but not exclusively, the development of foreign language reading skills in tertiary education. Focusing in my study on Teacher Training College students meant investigating critical skills of recent secondary school graduates preparing to be future language teachers. This context should be of interest not only to teacher trainers, but also to native and foreign language teachers in all types of schools.

2. Critical enquiry in education

Today more than ever universities as well as other institutions of tertiary education seem hard-pressed to meet the various demands of changing societies. The phenomenon of ‘McDonaldization’, diagnosed by G. Ritzer in the 1980s, has affected most aspects of society, including higher education (Ritzer 2003). Inevitable changes in universities have been the subject of debate throughout the 1990s (e.g. Parker & Jary, The McUniversity, 1995). According to one of its most prominent participants, Ronald Barnett, the spirit of critical enquiry, an essential value associated with higher education, is endangered, as the culture of higher education has become ‘a potent manifestation of free market ideology’ (Hanson 2004: 3). Although initiated in academic circles, the discussion concerning the relinquishment of criticality has by no means been restricted to tertiary education. The roots of the problem are often traced to earlier stages of learners’ academic development. School education is accused of failing to prepare critical observers of and participants in cultural or academic life. Therefore, alongside the university debate on criticality, the critical approaches in education, with their belief in the transformative power of language learning, have been receiving more attention and have been affecting all levels and types of instruction.
2.1. Academic roots of criticality as an educational goal

Criticality as an expression of independent thinking has been considered one of the traditional university values and purposes, much discussed by philosophers of education. As recently as twenty years ago Barnett claimed confidently, ‘The kinds of overarching aims that can be detected in everyday perceptions about higher education seem, if anything, to include the development of the student’s intellectual skills or academic competences’. The western concept of higher education was defined through a list of attributes, such as: ‘critical abilities, especially the propensity to be self-critical; the ability to analyse and evaluate an argument; the capacity to relate what is learnt to a broad context and to make relevant connections’. The development of the student’s ‘autonomy as a self-sufficient rational enquirer’ was seen not so much as one of the aims of higher education, as ‘essential conditions of it’ (Barnett 1988: 245).

In his more recent publications, Barnett does not keep the same assumptions, arguing instead for redefining the concept of criticality and saving its status in higher education. Major changes observed in university education concern the fact that knowledge which ‘brings personal understanding, even knowledge which offers truth’, is less valued than that ‘which is going to improve economic competitiveness and which is going to enhance personal effectiveness’ (Barnett 1997: 29, 35), and that the notion of academic competence has been replaced by ‘more operational, pragmatic and action-oriented forms of knowing’ (Barnett 1997: 27, 30). Does this mean the end of university’s creating an environment for personal and cultural growth, and the development of general intellectual skills, not solely specific ones, directly usable in employment? Barnett answers with his new conception of education that would handle challenges and uncertainties of the new age. It is characterised by reflective knowing, focus on dialogue and argument, as it ‘allows for the continuing examination and construction of self, society and culture, including our ways of knowing and of understanding the world about us and of acting in it’ (Barnett 1997: 42–43). Central to Barnett’s idea is his notion of ‘critical being’ as an approach to life, thinking and criticality that a university educated person should aspire to. The theoretical model of criticality proposed by Barnett incorporates ‘critical reason’ (critical thinking) and two further dimensions: ‘critical self-reflection’, as well as ‘critical action’ in the world (Hilsdon 1997).
2.2. Developing criticality in Modern Languages students

Educationalists discussing the future in the field of Modern Languages share Barnett’s concern connected with the dominance of a market-driven and skills-based approach to higher education, which has resulted in ‘the marginalisation’ of modern languages. Further, this has been considered ‘a way of discarding critical self-reflection as the object of education’ (Crosbie 2005: 299). The situation could be improved by teaching and learning with ‘a committed, reflective engagement – a willingness to continually pause, reflect, listen and evaluate’ (Crosbie 2005: 298). Foreign language education should aspire to be more than ‘training for a job market’; it ought to provide opportunity to acquire transferable critical competences, which will enable students to become active, critical and autonomous citizens of a multilingual world (Crosbie 2005: 296, 299).

Theoretical debates about the purposes, needs and possibilities of developing criticality in higher education have been followed by two large-scale projects investigating the practice of learning critical skills by Modern Languages students. Their outcomes, briefly presented below, give insights into the British and Irish context, as well as inspire reflection on the Polish reality.

The Development of Criticality among Undergraduates in Two Academic Disciplines: Social Work and Modern Languages. This project, carried out at the University of Southampton (2002–2004), sought to explain the process of the development of criticality among undergraduate students, and more generally the contribution of Modern Languages curriculum university education to the development of the individual and of society (www.critical.soton.ac.uk). The research showed that students of Modern Languages are expected to develop transferable competences, particularly a critical approach (Brumfit et al. 2005: 146), where criticality is:

- the motivation to persuade, engage and act on the world and self;
- through the operation of the mindful, analytical, evaluative, interpretive, reflective understanding of a body of relevant knowledge;
- mediated by assimilated experience of how the social and physical environment is structured;
- combined with a willingness and capacity to question and problematize shared perceptions of relevance and experience.

(Brumfit et al. 2005: 149).

Although skills-centred foreign language programmes are supposed to foster gradual critical development, it is difficult to determine the extent to
which language classes as such contribute to the development of criticality. First, it is in the ‘content’ classes that more systematic attention is paid to critical thinking, interpreting, and engaging with the world (Brumfit et al. 2005: 159–160). Second, thanks to their year abroad programmes British modern languages students have an opportunity to establish cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contacts, which help to experience otherness and develop a critical perspective (Brumfit et al. 2005: 165). As for language learning programmes, it is believed that an explicit focus on criticality helps to reflect on ‘the mechanisms through which we both understand and communicate’ (Brumfit et al. 2005: 166).

Transferable Skills in Third-Level Modern Languages Curricula. This project, conducted in three Irish Modern Languages departments (2003–2006), focused on the development of transferable skills, that is ‘skills developed in one situation which can be transferred to another situation’, within undergraduate programmes (www.skillsproject.ie). It aimed to raise language students’ awareness of their transferable skills by explicitly integrating them into the regular teaching curriculum for their subject. It was believed that as we move towards a European Higher Education Area, it is necessary to enable students to see the relevance of the extra skills and competences they were learning whilst studying a language, in order to ‘raise their prospects of employability and competitiveness in the global marketplace’ (Curry & Sherry 2004: vii).

The project report provided evidence that transferable skills are thought to be a valuable part of the higher education experience and are ‘considered an important factor in shaping graduates’ employability and in enhancing their personal development’. It was recommended to write transferable skills explicitly into the learning outcomes of all the language programmes, so as to highlight the fact that ‘language learning is not simply about learning to speak a language, but that it is a far richer and deeper experience that gives graduates the tools for a successful and fulfilling career and life’ (Curry & Sherry 2004: 4).

In the survey all respondents were asked which skills are most highly developed through undergraduate academic programmes. They rated ‘academic’ skills, such as critical thinking and analytical ability, just above average, as compared to e.g. oral communication, time management and team work, and at the same time considered them of below average importance to a graduate’s career. Moreover, ‘academic’ skills were regarded as less important by employers than by either academic staff or
students. This may be explained by the fact that ‘recent graduates tend not to start their working lives in positions of responsibility which may require such skills, and that perhaps these skills only become more important for a graduate as his/her career progresses’ (Curry & Sherry 2004: 12, 13).

3. Developing criticality through foreign language and culture education

The need to develop criticality is not only considered in the context of market-oriented higher education policies. The issue has also entered into the discussion concerning a foreign language user’s competences enabling him/her to become a contributor and beneficiary active in a multilingual and multicultural environment. More content-oriented approaches to language education such as, for example, an intercultural approach to foreign language learning, make it an explicit goal to develop students’ critical skills. It is based on the assumption that mediating between cultures involves taking a critical distance.

3.1. Critical cultural awareness in foreign language education

M. Byram’s idea of teaching Intercultural Competence for intercultural communication includes the development of a learner’s critical cultural awareness, that is ‘an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries’ (Byram 1997: 63). In other words, an interculturally competent language user should be able to make an evaluative analysis of written texts on the basis of explicit criteria, placing them in context, uncovering ideologies, and identifying explicit and implicit values in them. An intercultural speaker gives priority to analytical thought and can relativise his/her own cultural values (Byram 1997: 63–64). Critical cultural awareness is indispensable for active participation in social and cultural life. Byram made Intercultural Competence central to his model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, which is the aim of integrated language and culture teaching (Byram 1997). Intercultural Competence is a transferable component of Intercultural Communicative Competence, developed in the course of learning a particular language, but not restricted to it.
The critical dimension in foreign language and culture education is emphasised by those who want to see foreign language teaching realise the goals of political or citizenship education. M. Guilherme advocates this view drawing her inspiration from Byram’s ideas and, more importantly, from critical pedagogy (Guilherme 2002: 168). In her radical approach foreign language and culture teaching is a political issue, and critical cultural awareness becomes the most desirable goal of foreign language education. A foreign language curriculum should be ‘active, political and transformative in nature’ in order to help create ‘the critical intercultural speakers’, i.e. critically and socially responsible citizens for the future (Guilherme 2002: ix, 15). This approach makes use of a stronger sense of the word critical, concerned with issues of power and ideology, as distinguished by C. Wallace (2005: 27) from a weak usage of the word, associated with an ability to see inconsistencies and lack of clarity in texts and arguments.

3.2. Critical literacy in foreign language education

In a similar way Wallace explains the relationship between notions of critical literacy and critical reading; the former renders the idea of reading and writing as social practices, while the latter refers to a more individual understanding and critique of a specific text (Wallace 2005: 35). In fact, it is ‘a pedagogy of multiliteracies’, which takes into account both ‘our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies’, and ‘the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies’, which could be more adequate to prepare students for their roles of ‘engaged world citizens’ (Pegrum 2008: 137–138).

There are many similarities between the goals of Intercultural Competence, which prepares learners to mediate between cultures, and multiliteracies, which enable learners to ‘read’ and ‘understand’ texts from a variety of media, linguistic and cultural sources. Drawing on Byram’s idea of Intercultural Competence and on critical approaches, M. Pegrum calls for changes in language pedagogy, and proposes the model of ‘critical intercultural literacies’, defined as the skills necessary to ‘read’ cultures in a variety of sources and languages, as well as to reflect on them and oneself critically in light of one’s own previous knowledge, experiences and perspectives (Pegrum 2008: 137). This view, alongside other ideas to teach ‘global literacy skills’ (Pegrum 2008: 139) or ‘reading both the word and
the world’ (Guilherme 2002: 159), reflects the need to develop transferable skills for understanding world cultures.

In 2006 the critical potential in language education inspired a Brazilian initiative, *The Critical Literacy in ELT Project: Global Issues and Citizenship Education*. Critical Literacy is understood here as ‘an educational perspective that focuses on the relationship between languages and social, historical, economic and political contexts’. It involves the analysis of the relationships between texts, language, knowledge and society, and leads us to question texts, assess the assumptions, values and beliefs that construct texts in a certain way, and also to question our readings of the texts and the world. In this view, language ‘generates ideas and values that are never neutral or transparent but always culturally biased’ (Lima 2008a: 4). It is assumed that the materials developed in this project by ELT teachers will help us see that ‘each different language brings in itself a different set of values and unique historical, literary, social and economic views of the world’ (Lima 2008a: 5).

The difference between critical reading and critical literacy perspectives may be illustrated by the types of questions they use for text analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Reading</th>
<th>Critical Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What is the context?</td>
<td>• What are the assumptions behind the statements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the intention of the author?</td>
<td>• What view of the world is the text presenting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is the author trying to convince/ manipulate the reader?</td>
<td>• How would the text be different if it were told in another time, place or culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who would most likely be the readers of this text and why?</td>
<td>• What/who is missing from the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why have you chosen to read this text?</td>
<td>• In whose interest was the text written?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What messages/ideas the composer of this text is trying to pass on?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Examples adapted and expanded from: Cervetti *et al.* 2001, after Lima 2008b: 7)

Although a clearly ideological slant in critical literacy may be resisted by many foreign language teachers, some of its goals and elements of (con)textual analysis will be congruent with those of critical reading classes. For example, the purpose of both is to help students:

- *see things from different perspectives*;
- *examine the origins and implications of worldviews, values, beliefs and attitudes*;
- *question what is presented as universally true*;
- *analyse the construction of knowledge, cultures, identities and relationships*;
• make connections between global and local contexts;
• ask questions about the world, themselves and others;
• think more independently

(Lima 2008b: 3).

Especially in advanced foreign language courses space may be given for ‘a poststructuralist / deconstructive practice’, which involves posing ‘open-ended questions to our students about the perceptions and assumptions texts make about the reality and how these perceptions and assumptions would be interpreted in different contexts and by different people’ (Lima 2008a: 6).

4. Critical reading in foreign language education

4.1. Critical reading in the foreign language syllabus

The dominant version of communicative language teaching is often accused of artificiality in focusing on language skills whilst offering an insufficient treatment of content. Recently, its claim to avoid provocative or offensive texts in foreign language teaching has been challenged (Wallace 2005: 67), while enhancing critical reading is suggested to improve the communicative approach. What is more, the global dominance of English makes critical reading particularly desirable in learning English as a foreign language. Whether representing a particular national culture or functioning as lingua franca, English cannot be used by teachers ‘as a neutral medium for the exercising of foreign language reading abilities’ (Wallace 2005: 47).

In fact, foreign language teachers are advised to encourage their students to examine various (con)textual factors, as well as to interact with the text, whilst learning to read. Aebersold and Field’s suggestions of ideal post-reading activities include:
• reviewing the effectiveness of the arguments supporting the main idea;
• discussing the information the text implies but does not state (making inferences);
• analysing the structure of the text


The final stage of ‘evaluative reading’ requires the reader to identify the author’s purpose, recognize persuasion, distinguish fact from opinion,
establish the assumptions underlying the text, recognize the influence of the author’s personal beliefs and attitudes, and assess the value of the information in the text compared with their own prior experience or knowledge of the topic (Aebersold & Field 1997: 130). The authors admit that a ‘mature’ response to a text incorporates ‘a healthy scepticism into one’s reading’ (Dagostino & Carifio, after Aebersold & Field 1997: 131). Similarly, M. Dakowska encourages language teachers to consider reading as ‘a genuinely communicative endeavour of reconstructing the communicative intention of the author’ (Dakowska 2005: 200), that is, an interaction between the text, its author and the reader. An analysis of the text for its communicative potential should include: the situational context, the writer, the addressee, the source of the text, its genre and its purpose (Dakowska 2005: 196).

Foreign language reading classes with more intellectually and linguistically mature learners may resemble a sociolinguistic evaluation of texts in the mother tongue. The fact that texts are constructed in particular social contexts and that to understand them readers have to consider factors that influenced their production, reception and use is central to the socio-cultural model of reading, as developed by Johns (1997). Critical textual analysis in a foreign language would require students to consider the same aspects, but also from the perspective of a different language and cultural context.

The fact that foreign language readers do not share the same language and contextual socio-cultural schemata with the author of the text may pose a great challenge when it comes to analysing the subtleties of context, or the variety of interpretations to be recognised by the intended reader. Therefore, a foreign language reader is often expected to take the role of ‘mere overhearer’ rather than ‘participant in the interaction’ (Wallace 2005: 17). However, non-native speakers do not have to be seen as disadvantaged in their reading of authentic texts. According to Wallace, since they are not the primary addressees of the texts, they may be ‘more aware of the way in which texts position readers’ and they are ‘in a stronger position both to perceive and to resist’ the text’s ideology (Wallace 2005: 42). Raising students’ awareness of the power of context is an important aspect of developing their autonomy as foreign language users.

Foreign language learning should be an opportunity for students to acquire the tools for a critical understanding of any culture and to practice them in critical reading (Kramsch 2000a: 44, 182). This can be done through a range of activities such as:
• writing anticipation questions or statements to be verified or falsified while reading (Wallace 1993: 115);
• comparing texts which deal with the same topic, but differ in terms of discourse and intended reader (Wallace 1993: 120; Wallace 2004: 35);
• reconstructing the original socio-cultural context of production and reception of the text

(Kramsch 2000a: 211; Wallace 1993: 122).

In order to ‘reconstitute’ for themselves an understanding of the text, and in this way to establish their own position, the readers should consider the following aspects of the situational and cultural dimensions of context:

• the intended audience’s values and knowledge assumed by the text;
• the text’s purpose, i.e. its cognitive and emotional effects on the readers;
• the text’s register, the narrator’s tone and ideological point of view;
• what the text is responding to or against.

(Kramsch 2000b: 60–61)

4.2. Critical reading and the development of academic skills

The reason for teaching Modern Languages students to read critically is twofold: firstly, they need skills to become competent foreign language users and, secondly, they need a tool to help them study content subjects. In an implicit way, critical reading may be taught across the curriculum as a transversal skill. It may be introduced in the form of incidental activities or occasional comments to make the students notice the impact of various textual and contextual aspects of the text on their comprehension and reflect on them. Explicit teaching of critical textual evaluation may be incorporated into various subject syllabi as described below.

Elements of critical reading appear naturally both in content classes such as literature or translation, as well as in language development classes. The analysis of culturally loaded texts or contemporary media in advanced reading classes would require an approach and techniques similar to those suggested by Johns (1997) in her socio-cultural model of reading, already mentioned above. The author, who taught academic reading skills to American students, argues for developing the students’ contextual socio-cultural schemata, by which she means ‘knowledge about context, about readers’ and writers’ roles, and about the values and registers of cultures and communities’ (Johns 1997: 15). Johns postulated for literacy classes to become ‘laboratories for the study of texts, roles, and contexts’ (1997: 19).
The students acquiring reading competence in their native language need practice in developing abilities to research and evaluate critically texts, roles, and contexts, that is text features, genres, expressed values, types of argumentation, etc. (Johns 1997: 128). Foreign language students need practice in recognising and analysing these aspects in the target language and culture texts.

Critical reading becomes an explicit goal of classes devoted to developing academic research skills. In an academic setting critical reading, as well as critical writing, is assumed to be a ‘highly transferable’ skill and an essential component of ‘generic professional training’ for academics (Wallace & Wray 2006: vii). In such courses students are encouraged not so much to develop a suspicious attitude of ‘looking for a hidden agenda, the author’s real purpose’ or simply questioning facts, but rather to dialogue with the writer ‘thinking about the extent to which the claims and supporting evidence in the text, which presumably satisfy the author, satisfy us, who confront our experience with the author’s experience’. A critical reader of an academic text is expected to notice when, for example:

- the author has developed a line of reasoning that contains a flaw;
- the author has incorporated some assumptions that the reader does not share;
- the author unintentionally has been misled by the evidence into saying something that the reader considers untrue.

(Wallace & Wray 2006: 4)

It is assumed that being critical is a requirement of academic study. In reading academic articles it is important to develop a frame of mind, which may be described as constructive criticism or ‘reasonable scepticism’, and means ‘being open-minded and willing to be convinced, but only if authors can adequately back up their claims’. If untrained, the students usually find it difficult to ‘achieve a happy balance between extremes – uncritical acceptance and overcritical rejection of author’s claims’ (Wallace & Wray 2006: 5).

For developing critical reader awareness and skills students need to understand the principles of the critical approach and acquire metalanguage for the critical evaluation of the text. Various study skills websites designed for students of British, Australian or American universities may provide essential guidelines for critical reading in advanced foreign language classes (cf. A Miniguide for Writing a Critical Text Evaluation in the subsequent part of the text).

The most controversial and demanding tasks of critical reading are connected with the critique of the ideological assumptions underpinning
texts and the metacritique of the reader’s own interpretations (Wallace 2005: 42). Assessing the extent to which our identity and worldview predispose us to read texts in a certain way poses a difficulty, not only for beginners. At an introductory stage, critical reading would invite us to answer questions that require us to draw on our textual, contextual, and schematic knowledge (Wallace 1993: 123). A more advanced level of critical awareness would allow students to deal with the following less tangible questions:

- Why are you reading this text? What is your purpose?
- How does the text affect you?
- Are you persuaded? Why?
- How else could the text have been written?
- What has been left out and is this significant?

Although primarily designed to facilitate critical reading of academic texts, the study skills guidelines mentioned above can be used to facilitate reading other types of argumentative texts.

5. Students’ perspective on developing critical reading in pre-service teacher education

My small-scale classroom study was carried out with third year students of the Foreign Language Teacher Training College at the Jagiellonian University of Kraków. Its aim was to investigate the process and effect of explicitly learning critical reading in an advanced foreign language reading class. For one semester (2008/2009) the students were gradually introduced to the theory and practice of critical reading. Selected activities from the textbooks used in the course included:

- analysing text organization, main points and logic of argumentation;
- distinguishing between facts, opinions, and propaganda;
- assessing the impact of linguistic choices on readers’ comprehension (Greenall & Swan 1986; Tomlinson & Ellis 1988; Wallace 2004).

Selected university websites in English devoted to improving study skills were recommended to the students to make them acquainted with the notion of critical reader and with the checklists for critical text analysis. Internet sources were used to compile the following guidelines presented to the students:
A Miniguide for Writing a Critical Text Evaluation

What is critical reading? What makes a critical reader?

Critical reading is not simply close and careful reading. To read critically, you must recognize and analyse evidence upon the page, i.e. content, language, and structure of the text, and consider their effect on the meaning, as well as infer from the text its purpose and bias, and the author’s background and assumptions. Only when you understand the author’s viewpoint, purpose, and methods of support are you ready to critique the piece effectively. A critical reader is aware of how a particular perspective on the events and a particular selection of facts can lead to a particular understanding. A critical reader is an active constructor of meaning. When you think critically you are being active; you are not passively accepting everything you read and hear, but questioning, evaluating, making judgements, finding connections, categorising, and challenging the author’s position, having done a careful analysis of the text. This means being open to other points of view and not being blinded by your own biases. It also means being aware of your opinions and assumptions (positive and negative) concerning the text you are reading so you can evaluate it honestly. A critical reader has the following characteristics:

• awareness of a set of interrelated critical questions;
• ability to ask and answer critical questions at appropriate times;
• desire to actively use the critical questions.


What is critical analysis? How to evaluate critically?

Checklists of questions provide useful language and help to structure critical evaluation.

In order to analyse textual features you may ask:

• What kinds of evidence does the author use (personal experience, descriptions, statistics, other authorities, analytical reasoning, or other)?
• Are the ideas developed logically and convincingly?
• What is the author’s overall purpose (to enquire, to convince, to persuade, to negotiate)?
• Is the language free of emotion-arousing words? Is it ambiguous?
• What is the author’s tone (casual, humorous, ironic, angry, preachy, distant, academic)?
  In order to analyse contextual features you may ask:
• What are the author’s credentials?
• Does the article come from a reputable source? Is it current? Out-of-date?
• What type of audience is the author addressing? Are you part of the intended audience?
• How do the conclusions relate to other similar research?
• What assumptions does the author make about the reader’s knowledge or beliefs?


The end-of-semester assignment consisted in writing a critical evaluation of a chosen argumentative text referring to selected criteria from the guidelines. The students were asked to include their individual comments on whether the text was convincing, worth reading, or influenced their way of thinking and behaving.

My analysis of twenty written evaluations revealed that the majority of students successfully followed the guidelines and commented on: the author, source, target audience, text organisation, difficulty of vocabulary, main theme, choice of argument, and quality of evidence. Some of them gave further proof of their critical reading in inferring, assessing, or questioning the text:

– the authors’ names were unavailable, as if there were no authors of the articles, [however,] one could assume that the website may be run by people writing many articles in their area of expertise;
– the text is a complex interaction with the reader;
– the reliability or credibility of the authors of the quoted sources are disputable;
– the author refers to one of the stereotypes, which makes the text reliable because this kind of argument appeals to generally accepted opinions;
– the author’s attitude is not revealed because there are no emotional arguments or emphatic words in the text;
– being the party in the conflict, the author’s view may be biased;
– the article would be more exhaustive and objective if the author referred to other sources of information;
– one can taunt the text for being shallow;
– between the lines the author shows his deep empathy, and his matter-of-fact style hides his true attitude to war.

Rarely did the students share opinions concerning the impact of the text on their personal views or actions:
– one gets an irresistible impression that the writer attempts to get us to stop for a while and think about the things that are taken for granted;
– we find the text convincing, it appealed to us – the future teachers;
– the text makes the reader think and might influence his opinion;
– it doesn't change our previous opinions, but it perfectly summarizes our knowledge concerning the topic.

Most of the evaluated texts were articles found in online versions of newspapers and magazines. The students seemed to be satisfied with ‘expert’ opinions quoted and factual information reported in order to illustrate or support the authors’ arguments. At the same time, no one seemed concerned with the possibility of manipulating quotes in a journalistic text, or expressed the need to consult other sources about any of the controversial issues discussed in the texts. The very affiliation of the author to a popular weekly, such as ‘Time’ or ‘Newsweek’, was regarded as the best proof of the article’s reliability. The students appeared unfamiliar with the idea of investigating or questioning the logic of argumentation in a published British or American text. Similar conclusions were reported by my colleague, dr M. Kusiak, who used think aloud methodology to compare college students’ reading in English and in Polish. Kusiak observed that the students employed ‘emotional strategies more often and dialogued more with the text’ while reading in Polish, which she interpreted as indications of critical reading (Kusiak 2009: 94). This finding was confirmed when the interviewed students admitted that they were less critical and more focused on difficult vocabulary while reading an English text (Kusiak, personal communication, 5.09.2009).

Three months after finishing my course in critical reading the students were asked to self-assess their learning experience and answer two questions in writing.

1. ‘What did you find most difficult or least useful about learning to read critically and writing a critical evaluation?’

The problems mentioned by the students concerned almost all aspects of critical evaluation: using the questions in the guidelines, searching for too many details in a relatively short text (which may ‘lead to over-interpretation’), difficulty with understanding the idea of critical reading,
finding information about the author and assessing his/her credibility, identifying the intended reader, purpose of the text, intention of the author or logic of argumentation, or describing the structure of the text. Individual students expressed reservations about the usefulness of critical reading since, as they claimed, answering the questions they had never asked themselves hindered, rather than fostered, their understanding, or they found it easier to express their own ideas and impressions than try to identify the author’s point of view.

2. ‘What did you find most interesting or useful about learning to read critically and writing a critical evaluation?’

The benefits of gaining new experiences included: understanding the idea of context, becoming aware of the fact that more than one interpretation is possible, as well as learning to approach reading in a new way, to see what lies behind the text, to notice details, which enables one to understand deeply and thoroughly, to pay attention to hidden meanings and way of writing, to look for logic, and to be critical and objective. Individual students appreciated the opportunity to learn to state and justify their point of view, to look at their own writing in a different way, and to confront their own ‘intuitive’ evaluation of a text with more formal criteria. Two students admitted that they did not know how to answer this question.

The results of my study revealed the students’ unfamiliarity with the procedure of critical evaluation of a published text, which may be attributed either to the younger generation’s lack of sociolinguistic awareness, including their native language context, or to the fact that they do not recognise critical reading as an obvious element of the foreign language reading programme. This may be viewed as the consequence of their previous learning experience based on communicative coursebooks or the matura exam-oriented syllabus, which do not seem to draw enough attention to or provide satisfying practice in critical reading.

6. Conclusions

Critical reading requires an analytical, questioning, and interactive approach to the text. It calls for a personal response by placing oneself and the text in a wider context. An argument against taking so much effort to practice critical analysis with foreign language students assumes that people are critical readers already, as long as they are experienced readers in their
mother tongue and proficient in the language of the text (Wallace 2005: 27). This view is denied by Johns (1997) who argues for the need to develop readers’ native speaker sociolinguistic awareness, and by other authors like Kramsch and Byram who are concerned with intercultural communication in a foreign language. Approaching the text critically seems to be as important for its comprehension as understanding linguistic nuances or establishing the ‘cultural coherence of the discourse’ (Kramsch 2000b: 59). A challenge and potential for foreign language teaching lies in the fact that by learning to read critically students prepare to engage with the world as critical human beings in any language, including their mother tongue.

Still, my students, used to exam-oriented classes, where reading practice is limited to standardised UCLES-type tasks, reacted with suspicion regarding the extent to which critical reading is related to what they traditionally associate with reading comprehension. Considering the backwash effect, I decided to use a written critical evaluation as a motivational factor. The study showed that the students gradually overcame initial doubts, and not only managed to write satisfactory papers, but also appreciated their new learning experience. Data analysis has helped to identify the students’ strengths and weaknesses in order to plan a proper course tailored to their needs and abilities.

Foreign language students and teachers need to develop their critical competences as members of the academic community, as participants of the political and cultural life of their society, and as citizens of an increasingly multicultural and multilingual world. Through critical reading foreign language teaching can contribute to the acquisition of highly transferable skills, which can be perceived as components of media and electronic literacies, in both native and foreign language contexts.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


1. Introduction

The teaching of literature combines the teaching of language, literacy and culture. Given this combination, the role ascribed to literature has changed over time and the position of literature in any curriculum, L1 or L2, seems to have always been problematic. Reading has been used for aesthetic or moral education, for humanistic inspiration or political and social information (Kramsch & Kramsch 2000: iv). Thus, the debates concerning the use of literature in the classroom are numerous, including whether to focus on literary analysis of the text or on the efferent (aesthetic) experience which the text brings, to what extent an act of reading is socially-situated practice, and to what extent language development activities are needed and appropriate for a literary experience.

In the second language classroom, literature can be viewed through one of four main sets of lenses, i.e. as:

- a vehicle for the training of thinking skills,
- a vehicle for mastering language skills,
- a vehicle for social and moral development,
- a vehicle for personal growth.

Possibly Literature could receive the fair treatment it deserves if it was seen as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) curriculum. CLIL implies an integration of language and content learning, and represents a departure from traditional foreign language teaching methods, in that language proficiency is achieved by shifting the focus of instruction from direct grammar and vocabulary learning to the learning
of language through the subject matter study (Stryker & Leaver 1997: 5). There is a variety of definitions of content, however, which go beyond ‘subject matter’. For example, Met proposes that content is ‘any material that is cognitively engaging or demanding for the learner, and extends beyond the target language’ (Met 2007: 2). Literature seems to offer an array of engaging material, and exploring its content may lead to the development of various transversal skills in readers, alongside intellectual, moral, aesthetic, emotional and pragmatic dimensions.

2. Literature as a vehicle for training thinking skills

A good thinker is characterized by (cf. Kirby & Kuykendall 1991: 72):
• cognitive independence – he or she is able to put new information in his or her own terms,
• cognitive openness – he or she can imaginatively consider different points of view,
• cognitive flexibility – he or she can learn from errors, use past knowledge and experience, and transfer knowledge and skills to new situations,
• cognitive patience – he or she can tolerate ambiguity, look for alternatives and persevere,
• cognitive motivation – he or she is willing to exercise initiative and self-direction, to search intensively, deliberately and reflectively,
• cognitive effectiveness – he or she can make independent decisions and take risk to solve problems,
• cognitive meta-awareness – he or she is able to explain what is being learned, why and how, and understands his or her own best ways of learning and working.

Two major types of higher-order thinking have been distinguished – constructive (creative, generative, productive) and critical (analytical, evaluative). Constructive thinking aims at building alternative interpretative perspectives; it is flexible, original and insightful. Critical thinking is about non-judgmental questioning: it examines motivations, asks relevant questions, and gains awareness of one’s own perceptions. For example, critical readers tend to question the writer’s claimed knowledge, to reason, predict, evaluate and advocate (Manzo, Manzo & Estes 2001: 194–215). A further distinction can be drawn between critical reading and critical literacy, the latter having an ideological angle, including questioning the
assumptions and the worldview of the text and the interests behind it (cf. Bandura in this volume).

Literature can play an important role in fostering creative thinking, because it casts language into original forms. Literary texts are inherently ambiguous: full of metaphors and intertextual relations to texts to which the readers may have no access. Using vivid imagery and relying on multiple connotations of words and images, writers of imaginative literature may stretch the language to its limits. As Widdowson (1978: 14) wrote: ‘In literary writing, one constantly comes across sentences which would not be generated by an English grammar but are nevertheless interpretable’. To enhance creative thinking skills development, students are encouraged to switch from the mode of sloppy, extensive reading for information, into either the intensive aesthetic reading mode (Rosenblatt 1995: 277), sometimes referred to as story-driven, or subjective reading modes. Aesthetic reading is moderated by the reader’s good mood. In a negative mood, individuals are likely to adopt a critical, intellectual style of information processing; by contrast, a positive mood fosters more global processing strategies and enhances creative experiences (Łukaszewski 2003: 147).

Secondly, literature opens up an arena for criticism, analysis and evaluation – of characters, plots, authors’ agendas, personal reactions to texts, etc. To enhance critical thinking skills development, it is important that students try to understand the effects a text has on them, what literary conventions define such effects, what the text comes to mean in terms of their own personal identities and real-world experiences, and how it reflects the values, norms and expectations of particular classrooms and cultures (Hynds 1991: 122). At the same time, criteria for the validity of interpretations should be discussed, and evidence should be requested for what they claim the text says. To encourage such spirit, reader-based strategies (e.g. response logs) can be used, working in small groups should be attempted, and a task-based approach should be adopted. Finally, in order to create classrooms of multiple perspectives, students should be given more responsibility, with the teacher relinquishing the traditional authority of a pedagogue for that of a counsellor; the relationship between the teacher and the pupil should be active and reciprocal (Miklitsch 1994: 57).
3. Literature as a vehicle for mastering language skills

Literature helps convey important linguistic lessons to its readers. The linguistic structural richness in literature can be manifested at the following levels (Carter 1986: 216–218):

- phonological (e.g. dense phono-aesthetic effects or phonetically inventive neologisms),
- lexical (philological change, Latinate origins, regionalisms, lexical mixing, general infrequency),
- syntactic (sentence length, dependencies, embedding, subordinations),
- beyond-the-sentence level (deliberate suspension or even absence of intersentential cohesion, incoherence, breaking of rules for turn-taking),
- narrative structure level (e.g. Hemingway’s short stories regularly lack conventional orientation, evaluation and coda).

While teaching the language, literature extends language creativity, which can be seen in poetry and beyond. Writers can use interruptions in information flow (interrupting ideas by inserting other ideas inside them, which hinders the easy flow of ideas). Literary texts can deliberately create problems with reference presenting people and events as if they were already familiar to the reader, use negation and double negation, and use detachment, i.e. shifting attention away from an agent, manifestations of which are the use of passive voice and nominalization. Literary language can be described as marked for period, region or social class; a text can be remote in terms of history, geography or life experience, e.g. concepts of humour or chastity (Chafe 1991: 12–21).

Linguistic lessons aside, literature can impart important writing lessons to its readers, too. The connection between reading and writing can be seen as twofold; first, as the write-to-read relationship and, second, as the read-to-write relationship. The first one sees writing prior to reading as a path to activating background knowledge and prompting expectations about the possible content of the text. The second approach explains that the skill of writing can be acquired because it is modelled by the texts that one reads, which mirrors the theory of incidental learning of vocabulary while reading (Hudson 2007: 269–277). Thus, through reading, students sensitise themselves to various styles of writing – one of the most prominent and unique features of a text to which the reader is incessantly exposed.
Literature readers are exposed to **high quality language and style**. High quality writing in literature manifests itself in how the author depicts the characters and the setting. Particularly telling in judging the former are: the extent to which a writer uses visual images or metaphors in creating a character, the uniqueness of dialogues, and the development of background characters. The quality of the setting depends on the writer’s ability to capture the social and cultural qualities of a certain region, country or a historical period, its symbolic forces, as well as its relationship to the lives of the characters in the text. In works of lesser quality, writers let the themes or ideas dictate the development of the story, and so events or characters become didactically manipulated for the sake of the issue, making the story devoid of human complexity and uniqueness (Beach & Marshall 1991: 162).

The views of the reading-writing relationship have inspired **pedagogic movements**, e.g. the reader response movement, the process writing movement, the whole language movement, and the comprehension-as-construction movement. These movements share the convictions that reading and writing should be combined to contribute to learner growth, experience and self-expression. To achieve these goals, not all student writing needs to be read with an emphasis on assessment. For example, such assignments as annotating passages, focused free-writes, writing pauses, note taking, generating questions to the text, reading journals, writing in the margins or on-line newsgroups do not need to be graded for language. It is also important that ample time is allowed for writing, especially pre-writing, when topics are modified and students have the time to explore and define concepts. The stages of revising and editing should be clearly separated. Finally, the students should be put in charge of the process as much as possible, at the same time obtaining as much guidance and information as they need.

**Reading-related writing techniques** include creative and expository types of writing. An incomplete list of creative assignments includes:

- text extensions (e.g. writing an alternative ending, writing a character’s obituary, writing a letter from one character to another, writing entries from the character’s diary at different times during his or her life, writing a prequel to the story, writing a story in which the characters are ten years older, writing a scene of dialogue which is not in the story, describing a group therapy session for the characters, writing a page of stream of consciousness for one character from the story, describing a character’s dream),
• paraphrase (e.g. rewriting a story as a newspaper article, a fairy tale, a haiku, a poem or a film scenario, rewriting a story from another character’s point of view, drawing the story, rewriting the ending of a story according to how the student thinks different characters would like the story to end),
• personal response (e.g. while reading recording expectations or thoughts about the plot or a character, writing a letter to the author of the story, writing about one’s associations with one chosen word from the story, writing about a point in life similar to that which a character is in),
• own literature (e.g. writing a poem inspired by the poem read, or a short story structured like the model).
An incomplete list of expository assignments includes:
• argumentative essay (e.g. tracing the role of music in the development of the theme, comparing the story with another work dealing with the same theme, explaining a particular quotation from the story, examining the stereotypes in the story in terms of their relevance nowadays, tracing a given motif across stories, explaining why a particular image in the story is significant, or interpreting the story from the psychoanalytic, biographical or feminist perspective),
• persuasive essay (e.g. writing a letter to the character persuading him or her to do or not to do something),
• research report (e.g. writing a report on the social situation at the time, examining how modern technology affects storytelling, researching life in a given place at a given time, writing on the economic situation at a given time),
• summary of the text,
• description (e.g. writing a description of a character).

4. Literature as a vehicle for social and political development

Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) show the diminishing role literature has come to play in second language classes, but advocate a reversal of that trend. It is literature that is credited with the ability to convey personal, social, political, class and gender attitudes. In multicultural settings, literature can be empowering by letting students safely articulate concerns, and express their thoughts and opinions on issues that affect their lives. In more
homogenous settings, in turn, learners obtain tools to communicate with people of possibly all cultural backgrounds and in a variety of contexts. At the same time, it is vital that students should be protected from the so-called food-and-festival approach, from ‘superficially liberal yet difference-blind or exoticizing the Other and Eurocentric discourses that perpetuate racial and linguistic hierarchies’ (Kubota 2004: 32).

Enhanced interest in the role of culture gave rise to the concept of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is a combination of five elements: attitudes, knowledge, skills, learning to learn abilities and critical awareness (Byram 1997: 50–63). However, contemporary understanding of culture has been marked by several significant shifts, from culture as a product to culture as a process, from culture as a set of rituals and traditions to culture as beliefs, attitudes and ideologies, from a body of knowledge to a set of skills, from the purely cognitive to the behavioural and the affective. Also, the focus of language teaching, traditionally ‘outward-looking’ in that learners have studied foreign language traditions, came to include general awareness of their own language and the way language works in general. Thus understood, culture, including foreign culture, has become an important element in social and individual identity formation.

The introduction of the cultural context into reading has led many to consider the relationship between literacy and power. There is growing awareness in the humanities that preference for any standard literacy is evaluative: it is a covert demand to accept a certain viewpoint, usually of the literate majority in a culture. The antidote to this undesirable aspect of literacy seems critical literacy, which signifies a shift away from analytic decoding of texts seen as merely themes in literature towards critical reading, which focuses more on how views shape ideas, and how these ideas are expressed by stylistic differences in texts. In this approach, not only is the text decoded and its meaning processed, but using the text for the reader’s purposes is considered, the text’s presuppositions are analysed, and its effect on the readers is scrutinized. Within this approach, literacy is an emancipatory practice and one of the vehicles by which ‘oppressed people are able to participate in the socio-historical transformation of their oppressed society’ (Freire & Macedo 1987: 157).

As literature reading is increasingly viewed as the study of culture, and as the question of what is taught and how becomes a ‘battleground over whose forms of knowledge, history, visions, language and culture, and authority will prevail as a legitimate object of learning and analysis’, in
some environments ‘all dead white men’ are being deleted from the canons and replaced with alternative African American texts, Asian American texts, Latino texts or Native American texts, as well as texts written by women (Carey-Webb 2001: 37). Besides, the scope of topics about which the students are willing to read and talk has shifted. Some posit that most typical classroom conversations have lost life; questions of historical continuity, of the relationship between meaning and form in a text, or of the moral values conveyed by the author have lost their power to stimulate a real debate. They may need to be replaced by such unresolved yet important issues as the roles of gender, race and ethnicity in life and culture.

It is, in fact, commonly recommended that closer attention in class be paid to relations of power predicated on gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and linguistic and cultural background. Postmodern psychoanalytical theories, lesbian theories and feminist theories all encourage the reader to reframe interpretative standpoints. Students should be encouraged to shed preconceptions of their time and place, and recreate alien world-views of different times and cultures. For example, students can be asked to interpret texts from the perspectives of different social groups, especially those normally marginalized, or from various intellectual perspectives, e.g. Freudian psychology, language analysis, ethics, family dynamics, maternal role analysis or study of adolescent psychology (Blau 2003: 142).

5. Literature as a vehicle for personal growth

Literature can be psychologically transforming, which is connected to the fact that the combination of language and images may evoke emotions, while literary dialogues may imply interconnectedness, cooperation, bonding and relationships. Moreover, literature is not simply a collection of separate texts, but a vast composite body, constituted of basic underlying narrative patterns, character types and motifs. Just as myths traditionally helped societies explain phenomena, readers have used literary prototypes to shape perceptions of experiences so that they perceive patterns in their own lives, for example defining events as tragic, comic or ironic (Hogan 2003). Moghaddam (2004) explores an interesting proposition of literature as a source of psychological knowledge, only to next revert the relationship, claiming that literature can be seen as a source of insights for psychology. At the highest level of abstraction, one could actually see literature and
psychology as the same entity, the former being the idiographic, culture-bound representation of objective, culture-free psychology.

It has often been argued that many of the social plagues, including intolerance, as well as psychological disorders, are rooted in the inability to embrace differences. Thus, one of the tasks of the language teacher can be to help young learners to understand how people perceive one another and themselves. It is reading, especially reading literature, that helps imagine how others feel in an unfamiliar situation; i.e. it exercises compassion and decentration skills. The ability to de-centre – to empathize with the emotional states of the characters – may be one of the abilities distinguishing a sophisticated reader of literature, and possibly a sophisticated human being, from a novice. De-centring is a central principle in growth; as the learner develops, he or she is more capable of moving beyond an immediate experience of self towards experiencing what others feel, and of generalizing this experience and talking about it (Newkirk 2003: 397). At the same time, such insights can be psychologically disturbing to readers.

As picturesquely put by M. Greene back in 1972 (pp. 72–73), teachers should ‘dare to chance the dark woods and the open sea and the void’ for the reading students to be able to move beyond themselves, to project their futures, to constitute meaningful worlds, to become ‘visible humans’. Reading, especially reading stories, does have life-informing and life-transforming possibilities. It helps to re-narrate one’s life by perceiving it from the outside perspective – or to attain Bakhtinian transgressions (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2000: 174–175). This is achieved because the vicissitudes of a story and the lives of its characters can become one’s own; one can identify with the characters, finding parallels between their and one’s own life. The process of personal transformation is enhanced by an aesthetic mode of reading (Rosenblatt 1995).

Authors of multicultural literature with engaging stories can positively affect the literary experiences of young minority adolescents. Students who share the author’s cultural identity may gain insights into themselves, their families and their communities, and discover the value of their own experiences. For example, research confirms that a positive racial identity in black students is associated with academic aspirations, achievement, and pro-school attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, since stories include women, while, for example, history books rarely do, literature can be a cure against the hidden gender-biased agenda in schools (Boston & Baxley 2007: 566–567). Finally, Sadownick (2007) explores the possibility of a
'homosexual hermeneutic' by which the great literary works of the Western canon can be taught to those who struggle with finding and acknowledging their own identities. The key technique suggested is in-depth analysis of the death-and-rebirth motif, or the motif of transformation, as ubiquitously present in literature.

Reader Response is a method which seems suitable for the promotion of personal growth in readers. It shifts away from re-discovering predetermined meanings and fixed ‘stock responses’ towards the highly personalized exploration of individual responses to texts. This approach uses interactive methods, such as:

- group discussion,
- literary circles,
- creative writing,
- dramatic and artistic activities,
- free written response statements,
- think-aloud tasks,
- ‘reading’ journals\(^1\),
- conferencing,
- role play,
- response-based questions, etc.

The Reader Response method does not aid in the attempts to objectively respond to texts, however. Meeting the criticism, Langer proposed to improve the Reader Response format within the concept of envisionment, which she defined as ‘the world of understanding’ which a person has at any given point in time (Langer 1995: 9). Envisionment is a product of changing interpretations, which Langer calls stances of the text. The process of envisionment starts with Reader Response, only to progress as the understandings shift. Langer identified four reader stances: (1) being out and stepping into an envisionment (gathering ideas to gain a sense of what

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\(^1\) From the above, ‘reading’ journals seem a very attractive technique, although not widely popularized in Poland. In their ‘reading’ journals, students are encouraged to go beyond the stilted norms, expressing any ideas that come to their minds in relation to the text which they read. Journals can serve a multitude of purposes: they can be used for taking notes while reading, for post-reading reflection, as well as for jotting down ideas on a given topic, title, or something else taken from the text prior to reading. Such pre-reading writing sessions may start the class, lasting from 5 to 10 minutes, and should be followed by a class discussion. Apart from serving pedagogic functions, the journals may play a therapeutic role – they enable the teacher to know the students better, and consequently help them if needed.
a text will be about); (2) being ‘in’ and building complex understandings (asking about motives, feelings, causes, interrelationships and implications); (3) stepping back and rethinking what one knows; (4) stepping out and objectifying experience (distancing oneself from the envisionment and reflecting back on it, analysing, judging and relating to other works). Langer’s ideas suggest a pattern for how to help students think about their experiences with the text and verbalize it (Langer 1995: 15–25).

6. Motivating students to become more effective readers

6.1. Added value of reading literature in collectives

To paraphrase Hutchison (2003: 39), reading is not only an activity that takes place in groups: it is a group activity. It can be argued that shared reading provides a unique opportunity for effective and meaningful group work. Post-reading group-based speaking techniques include:

- discussions,
- debates,
- answering questions orally,
- presentations,
- enactment and reenactment techniques (e.g. role play, character mime, character interviews, talking statues, scenes from daily lives of characters, alternative endings scenes, missing scenes, talk shows, quiz shows, TV coverage, telling tales, adding a narrator).

A correlation between English language classrooms characterized by open-ended, dialogic discussions and high student achievement growth has been firmly established; discussions about books make a difference for engagement, learning, and achievement in the English language. The students become more intellectually productive: the talk among students

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2 Discussion can be modelled, e.g. teachers can encourage conversation by suggesting the following framework on an overhead: Personally, I am reminded of... / Locally, I am reminded of... / Globally, I am reminded of... Alternatively, the following ‘couching comments’ can be prompted: What do you make of that? / I wonder... / Could it be...? / Do you think that?, so that participants in the discussion feel free to enter the discourse even with comments that may oppose majority opinions (Killingsworth Roberts 1998: 368). Moreover, every discussion is greatly enriched if the students are asked to write before speaking (Beach & Marshall 1991: 16).
stimulates and serves as a scaffold for a personal response (Juzwik et al. 2008: 1116). Additionally, there exist grounds for thinking that group-reading and group-discussion more effectively contribute to the comprehension and interpretation of a text. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, thinkers from the Bakhtin circle proposed that all discourse is inherently ‘dialogic’ in the sense that each utterance is socially and dynamically linked in a ‘chain of communication’ as it ‘refracts’ previous voices while simultaneously anticipating the response of others, a process which Bakhtin referred to as addressivity (Bakhtin 1981). Dialogic pedagogy celebrates questioning conflicted meanings by opening viewpoints to challenge, resistance and critique from others. In dialogue, there is no closure, only ‘the inter-illumination of meanings for mutual enrichment and transformation’ (Marchenkova 2005: 173).

**Dialogic classrooms** are characterized by (Juzwik et al. 2008: 1115):

- authorizing competing voices,
- the teacher asking follow-up questions,
- welcoming evolution (rather than final determination) of interpretations,
- other students’ up-take on a previous speaker’s words,
- welcoming student-generated questions, interruptions, speaker overlap and co-telling,
- the teacher asking authentic questions (those without a pre-specified answer),
- thematic and topical linking of discussions across time,
- the teacher asking questions probing students’ experience.

This remains in stark contrast to a monologic IRE-based (initiation – response – evaluation) classroom, where teachers prescribe all the questions they ask and the answers they accept. However, to the extent that teachers evaluate student answers rather than respond to and build upon them, they effectively thwart dialogue. This is how they perpetuate the authoritative or, to use Freirean terminology, ‘banking’ method of instruction.

One way to put collective reading into practice is by organizing **literary circles / study clubs**, which may have many forms, but are essentially small, temporary discussion groups composed of students who are reading the same story, poem, article or book. A literary circle is typically composed of four to six students, but conversations about literature can take place with as few as two readers or with the whole class. In each case, getting to hear a variety of perspectives during circle discussions gives students immediate reinforcement and confirmation of their own reading, and
helps them clarify areas that may have been unclear beforehand. Books which are suitable for the purpose of collaborative reading should engender conversation, contain many connections to reality, address controversial issues, allow the reader an emotional connection to the characters, have a story to tell, add context, and possess some tension to contribute to ‘the drama of the turning page’ (Killingsworth Roberts 1998: 366–367).

Readers may **get ready for a literary circle discussion** by: (1) assuming different roles assigned to them in advance, e.g. leader, vocabulary enricher, illustrator, connector, (2) completing an assignment work-sheet, or (3) writing down their own questions or ideas as they read. Next, the students move on to the discussion phase (Blum *et al.* 2002: 100). The **project work** on a given selection may follow a series of discussions and culminate in a free yet meaningful extension of experiential or academic nature, e.g. dramatic readings, posters, skits, poems, songs or some artistic or research endeavour (Killingsworth Roberts 1998: 368). Junkieles (2009: 162) gives numerous examples of extensions derived from the experiential learning methodology, e.g.:

- drawing the relationships between characters,
- designing interiors, props and costumes for staging particular scenes,
- writing letters to characters or authors,
- adding chapters,
- writing scripts.

A student involved in such a project may also, independently or in a group, investigate a section of reality. The process may involve observation, interviews, library search, field trips, etc., followed by critical and non-judgmental data analysis, with view to obtaining and demonstrating results of a particular search (Bandura 2009: 187).

It seems, though, that reading in company **may both help and hurt**, and the effect of the class on a particular student is moderated by the composition of the class; it is more difficult for students to make progress in some classes than others (Hutchison 2003: 39). On the one hand, the others call attention to various readings, offer a variety of insights and responses, as well as stimulate and become a forum for one’s thoughts. On the other hand, they may pose a threat of disruptive intrusion into private meditation, of feeling lost in the crowd in which good ideas are subject to process loss, or can give one the feeling of being less sensitive to literature than the others, who seem more ‘profound’. Moreover, different cultures create different types of communities. In the Western classroom, when
one student starts to speak, the other students assume the role of listeners. In the Chinese classroom, on the other hand, students begin to engage in byplay, often acting like bystanders who are ordinarily obliged to withdraw and manifest disinterest (Scollon 1999: 17).

6.2. Added value of reading literature for pleasure

Those who read recreationally show superior literacy development, and general intellectual and moral development. Reading with pleasure results in the expansion of background knowledge (building experiential and content schemas), development of automaticity in using reading strategies, and development of meaningful vocabulary (Morrow 2003: 859). Some attribute truly magical properties to literature. As early as in 1967, James E. Miller, Jr. wrote that ‘imagination shapes or extends language, and literature shapes or liberates imagination’. And further: A dramatic teacher, engaging his students immediately in the dramatic spectacle of literature, including direct participation in the living drama of it, will find his students involved in spite of themselves. And as their appetites for the imaginative life of literature mount, the creative teacher will encourage the production and sharing of the students’ own works – poems, stories, or plays. Stultifying criteria of correctness or form will be banned from the classroom; students will be emboldened to follow the lead of their liberated imaginations, to write honestly out of the depths of inner experience and out of the perplexities of outer entanglements. By moving easily and naturally between their own lively imaginative productions and the literary experiences of classroom, library, and paperback bookstore, students should reduce that formidable distance between their everyday lives and the printed page, rendering the literary encounter as natural and necessary as other staples of life such as food and drink. In such a free and fluid environment, the imagination of each student will ideally develop to its full potential. (Miller 1967: 33–34)

On a more empirical note, the expected pleasure derived from reading is connected to the motivation experienced. Moreover, reading comprehension scores become more correlated to motivation as students get older; at the age of 16 the motivation to read has a major impact on reading comprehension (Snow 2002: 42). To be motivating, texts should not be too difficult in terms of lexis, grammar and structure for a particular task. Research shows that students are more willing to attempt interpretative statements with the texts they read independently (at the level where materials are easy to read), resorting to description with more difficult texts (Probst 2003: 816). Texts should not
present excessively difficult cultural content, either. Admittedly, cultural
difficulty of the text is a complex variable; it may add to the text’s face validity,
which depends on the social identity of readers, their beliefs, behaviours,
institutions, national history and geography, stereotypes, ideologies, etc.

Content can also be difficult to handle for emotional reasons. Emotional
maturity is a problematic criterion, considering that emotionally difficult
topics tend to be those that young readers find interesting and, possibly,
useful for their development. Topics normally regarded as interesting for
students may include: work, love, hate, death, relations with age-mates,
proper masculine or feminine social roles, physical changes, emotional
independence, economic career, the value system and social responsibility.
Potentially objectionable or dangerous, yet interesting, topics may include:
suicide, politics, war and peace, religion, sociology and race, language,
drugs and inappropriate adolescent behaviour. Undeniably, the text should
be interesting to the reader and students should, at least at times, be able to
relate to what they read. Last but not least, when asked what strategies would
most help them to become more enthusiastic readers themselves, students
listed teacher enthusiastic recommendations as one of the top motivators
(Worthy 2002). Besides, the same studies show that already intermediate
students find teachers’ attitudes about reading to be ‘transparent’.

6.3. Added value of using cybertext

The number of pupils not reading traditionally printed literature is still
growing. At the same time, the number of those reading cyber-literature is
in which there will be four types of readers: those well equipped with both
literacy and the so-called electracy skills, those doing better in the world of
literacy, those doing better in the world of electracy, and, finally, those left
out of both words. This has pedagogic implications, since print-based texts
are very different from hyper-texts; they ‘tell’ their content with the use of
visual and possibly tactile senses, and reading such texts is mostly linear and
sequential. Multimodal texts ‘show’ their content, using visual and tactile
as well as auditory and kinaesthetic senses. New types of texts are likely
to require different conceptualizations and a different way of thinking; the
logic of space, image and screen is replacing the logic of speech.

There is no established canon of digitalized literature yet, although
a few works are already recognized as classics, as specified in the ELO
(Electronic Literature Organization) Directory. The huge market of
digital publishing aside (e.g. ebooks, Print On Demand, AudioBooks made
available as MP3 files), a totally new kind of literature has emerged out of
the digital environment – the so-called cyber-text or techno-text. This may
involve application of various visualization methods of literary structures
on the computer screen, e.g. the use of hypertextual linking to make various
intertextual allusions visible, or the TextArc.

With reference to the language classroom, the question arises how to
cope with the challenge and benefit of hypertextuality, interactivity and
programmability, which the medium brings. The first challenge of teaching
literature now could be described as a need for ‘media-specific analysis’
of literary works, e.g. understanding how narrative plots are affected by
the introduction of mobile phones and other such devices, which make it
increasingly hard to base suspense on the assumption of lack of knowledge
or difficulty in getting access to information in critical situations. Another
challenge is how to come to grips with and take advantage of a work which
can never be read exhaustively.

One of the Internet exploiting teaching techniques is a role-based online
discussion for teaching literary history – each student is appointed a certain
character from the historical period under scrutiny and then seeks information
about that character, as well as the historical period in general. Thus equipped,
students should be able to conduct online discussions impersonating their
assigned characters. This is especially effective for those well versed in online
chat. Apart from that, students can be encouraged to exploit the new field
of literary discussion in the online world, e.g. online chats and discussion
forums on literature, web journals with literary criticism, literary web logs
(blogs), etc. In some of them, almost real-time commenting and discussion
are possible. What is more, they may allow students to engage in discussion
with the authors whose works they are studying, as well as specialists in and
enthusiasts for certain literary topics, and also to receive a kind of informal

7. Conclusions

There is a long tradition of seeing appreciation of literature as the pinnacle
of language achievement. Literature is credited with the ability to transform
readers, offering a chance for insightful and catharsis-like psychological,
social, literary and aesthetic understanding. For example, Langer claims that pedagogical concerns disappear as ‘literary language and concepts creep into almost every discussion in which individuals are creating and exploring their own understandings in response to a literary experience’ (Langer 1995: 120). Sceptics claim that, among others, literature may do nothing toward promoting students’ academic or occupational goals, while premature attempts to tackle literary texts may result in a high level of frustration and laborious word-by-word deciphering. Moreover, since literature is not written to teach, using it implicates lecture mode, furthermore in the case of literature the possibility of sequencing difficulty is very low.

Whether working with literary texts effectively serves language development or not is one of the most heated debates in literature on developing reading comprehension skills, although most research does confirm that literature-based reading can improve the creativity, attitude and reading skills of students (cf. Biakolo & Afemikhe 2002: 23). Since these skills are a necessity for success in academic endeavor, the literature-based approach can be expected to serve as a good preparation for school work. Overall, more and more researchers admit that all texts, from academic prose through literature to idiomatic conversation, are a legitimate source, especially for an advanced classroom. Additionally, the Content and Language Learning (CLIL) methodology has opened up new possibilities of seeing language both in the language and non-language classroom. Still further options appear with the acceptance of literature as a carrier of content for the classroom.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


1. Introduction

Using several languages, i.e. being multilingual or plurilingual, has become indispensable for work and educational purposes within the European Union. However, it is also a challenge for language teaching. The present paper first attempts to clarify the notions of plurilingualism and multilingualism, then discusses the idea of intercomprehension and factors affecting noticing cross-linguistic similarities. It also shows how cognate vocabulary and cross-linguistic similarities can be used in teaching typologically related languages. Further on the paper discusses what can be done to raise plurilingual competence in the case of European learners whose native languages are distant typologically and psychotypologically from their second languages. It reports on examining and raising language awareness of cognate vocabulary of Polish advanced learners of English, focusing on the fact that awareness raising may trigger positive transfer from Polish and affect the learners’ plurilingual competence. Finally, the paper presents implications for language pedagogy.

2. Multilingualism, plurilingualism and multilingual Europe

The diversity of the European Union manifests itself, among others, in linguistic richness. However, European citizens can benefit from that diversity only when they are able to communicate with one another, get to know other cultures and build mutual respect between nations. The knowledge of more
than one language (or at least of one European *lingua franca*), is indispensable in education, culture and social life, and it often becomes the condition for finding employment (Grin 2002; Klein 2007). The ultimate goal for European citizens would be to become multilingual or plurilingual, as shown in various documents (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/lb-en.pdf, 1995: 51; Recommendation R (98) 6 ‘Linguistic diversification’, 1998; Recommendation 1539, 2001) and guidelines (Beacco & Byram 2002).

Sociologically, multilingualism can be understood as using more than one language or several variations of one language in a particular geographical region. Linguistically, it is strongly connected with the notion of bilingualism and plurilingualism, and may mean the knowledge of more than one language by one person. However, there is still a lot of confusion concerning the notions of bilingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism due to their various uses in documents and research papers. To begin with Bloomfield’s classic definition (1933), a bilingual person possesses native or near native Knowledge, or control, of two languages. This structuralist definition for decades influenced the way of looking at bilingualism, with language learners being ‘punished’ for not achieving near-nativeness in their L2, although they can use the second language quite efficiently and effectively. However, as Cook (1997) points out, ‘[...] the one thing that the L2 learner cannot be by definition is a native speaker’. Ringbom (2007: 102) states that ‘[i]f a learner is too native-like in his production, inevitable pragmatic errors involve a risk that he will be regarded as a stupid native rather than as an intelligent foreigner’. According to some later well-known definitions, any learner or user of a language can be called bilingual. Haugen (1953) defines a bilingual person as someone who can produce complete and meaningful utterances in L2, whereas Macnamara (1967) goes even further, stating that a bilingual person possesses at least minimal competence in one of the four skills of L2. Under this definition, even beginning L2 learners may be called bilingual.

The term multilingualism covers a range of meanings. Traditionally, it was viewed as a version of bilingualism. To account for the knowledge of more languages Haugen (1953) suggested that some bilinguals may be plurilingual or polyglot. Recently, it is rather bilingualism which has been viewed as a specific case of multilingualism (e.g. Cook 2002; Herdina & Jessner 2002). According to Herdina and Jessner’s Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (2002), there are constant dynamic interactions between languages, the environment and cognitive processes in the multilingual’s
mind. When discussing his notion of multicompetence, Cook (2002) talks of simultaneous knowledge of two or more languages in one mind. He states that L1, L2... Ln systems are not separate, but the level of their integration depends on the typological similarity of the languages involved. Thus, being multilingual means not only learning, or using more than two languages, but the very state of the co-existence of the languages in the user’s mind (cf. Gabryś-Barker 2005).

Therefore, under the current definitions, being multilingual means having a bulk of linguistic and cultural experience which adds up to overall communicative competence. Such a way of looking at multilingualism is strongly connected with the notion of plurilingualism, widely recognized in European documents (cf. Komorowska 2004, 2007a). The very word plurilingualism is new to the English language. Whereas both French and German use different words for referring, on the one hand, to an individual’s ability to use several languages (plurilinguisme / Mehrsprachigkeit, respectively) and, on the other, to the multilingual nature of a given society (multilinguisme / Vielsprachigkeit, respectively), in English the same term of multilingualism can be used for both phenomena. The Council of Europe has quite simply translated the French terms literally into English, using the terms plurilingualism and multilingualism respectively, the EU uses the term multilingualism when referring to the individual, and linguistic diversity when referring to European society (Mackiewicz 2002). In the present paper both multilingualism and plurilingualism will be used with reference to individuals, rather than to societies. In the light of the current definitions, an individual’s multi- or plurilingualism does not mean knowing several languages perfectly, but being able and trying to use this knowledge and competence in communicating with other people in various situations. In practice, it manifests itself in the ability to function in a multinational and multicultural society, and thus implies an increased linguistic, metalinguistic and cultural awareness, as well as sensitivity to similarities and differences between languages.

3. The idea of intercomprehension and the role of English

The idea of an individual’s multi- or plurilingualism has been fundamental for proponents of intercomprehension programs. According to Doyé (2005: 7), the concept which originated from didactic discussions in the early 1990s can be defined as ‘a form of communication in which each person uses his
or her own language and understands that of the other’. Such an approach has obvious advantages: it is politically relevant as it promotes diversity and equality of languages, it is psychologically well-founded and educationally reasonable, while at the same time it is motivating for learners, involves awareness-raising and intercultural understanding, and promotes learner autonomy (Doyé 2005: 7–9). Intercomprehension in practice works for speakers of typologically close languages, such as Swedish and Norwegian, Polish and Slovak or Spanish and Italian, for common everyday issues. However, it is important to stress that intercomprehension does not imply being productive in the language of your interlocutor, but being able to understand his or her speech and/or writing.

The idea of intercomprehension gave rise to EuroCom programs. According to Klein et al.

*EuroCom stands for EuroComprehension, an acronym for European intercomprehension in the three main European language groups: Romance, Slavic and Germanic. Almost all Europeans speak a language from one of these groups as either their first or at least second language. For example, some 800 million people around the world communicate in a Romance language.*

(http://www.eurocomresearch.net/lit/ECengl-Innsbruck.htm)

The project aims at creating teaching methods and tools for intercomprehension within Romance, Slavic and Germanic language groups. The methods rely on teaching receptive competence via interlingual transfer, and research into how the relations between languages in the same group can be utilized in language teaching practice. Another aim of EuroCom is to enable Europeans to achieve multilingualism through the acquisition of receptive competence in one language group (e.g. interlingual reading competence in all the languages of a group). It is meant to show learners that

*knowledge of their mother tongue and just one other foreign language they have learned arm them with an unexpectedly high level of advance knowledge, allowing them for instance to be able to rapidly understand the news or technical texts in all other related (but not yet learned) languages.*

(http://www.eurocomresearch.net/lit/ECengl-Innsbruck.htm)

As the proponents of the method suggest, it seems more reasonable to strive for the achievement of partial competences in several related languages and develop receptive skills, rather than to try to achieve full communicative competence, which may seem unattainable to many language learners. EuroCom starts by using a network of transfer correspondences, called the
Seven Sieves, to make written language transparent (www.eurocomcerner.de). The First Sieve extracts words from the International Vocabulary from the text. This vocabulary, present in most modern European languages, is largely derived from Latin. As the method proponents suggest ‘[a]dults normally have about 5000 of these easily recognisable words in their vocabulary. [...] These words provide that part of a newspaper article on, say, international politics that can be immediately understood: this vocabulary usually forms the larger part of such articles’. The Second Sieve then extracts out the words belonging to the pan-Romance, pan-Germanic, or pan-Slavonic vocabulary, while the Third Sieve deals with sound correspondences and the Fourth Sieve with spelling and pronunciation. The next two Sieves are concerned with syntactic structures and morphosyntactic elements, providing the basic formulae for recognising grammatical elements in a particular group of languages. Finally the Seventh Sieve enables the learner to work out the meaning of compound words by separating affixed elements from the root words.

According to EuroCom researchers, at the end of this process the learner becomes aware of a bulk of familiar knowledge she or he already had subconsciously, and not just for one language, but for several languages within a given group (cf. Hufeisen & Marx 2007; Meiner et al. 2004; Zybatow & Zybatow 2002). In the second phase of the EuroCom strategy the learner can concentrate on areas of personal interest within the language family, while EuroCom provides him or her with Miniportraits of the languages, which systematise and expand the linguistic knowledge gained with the help of the Sieves. It is claimed that EuroCom enables multilingual receptive competence among Europeans by making optimum usage of the limited time available for learning languages and helps to avoid limitation to one language. However, what is important about EuroCom is its psycholinguistic value (Hufeisen & Marx 2007: 16–17). It leads the learner from simple language input to creating a mental model by influencing the mental lexicon and helping to build mental schemata. The quote below can itself serve as a good example of what intercomprehension means even for those readers who do not speak German.

Der Anfang des sprachlichen Verstehens scheint klar: Eine Cue, ein Signal, der Input, eine schriftliche oder mündliche sprachliche Manifestation. Bevor wir den Weg des Inputs weiter verfolgen, nehmen wir vorweg, was das Produkt von sprachlichem Verstehen ist: Ein mentales Modell.

(Hufeisen & Marx 2007: 16, original spelling and emphasis retained)
However, intercomprehension does not always suffice. No matter how much has been said about the dominant role of English and linguistic imperialism, it is still the most widely taught and used language in Europe (cf. Eurydice 2008), which has numerous consequences for the new member states, such as Poland. In order to benefit from participation in educational opportunities and the labour market, Poles, as well as Slovaks, Czechs or Bulgarians, need to start using English, after decades of learning Russian (cf. Komorowska 2007b). Breidbach (2003) addresses the delicate question of the role of English within a framework of plurilingualism, with reference to participation in various public fora. Whereas on the national level the national and minority languages suffice, on the European forum it is English that is the predominant means of communication and comprehension between participants of communication. Breidbach (2003: 20) states that ‘English has already become the very linguistic means to give speakers, especially of lesser-used languages, their voice within a European public discourse’. He also says that plurilingualism in Europe should entail a very good knowledge of English.

The teaching of English with the aim of high proficiency can and should be welcomed as long as the individual and collective language rights of the learners are being protected. The lack of plurilingualism, which includes deficient competence in English, might do as much harm as the devaluation of linguistic diversity in terms of democratic participation.  

Breidbach (2003: 19)

This remains in accordance with Aronin (2006), and Singleton and Aronin (2007: 16–18) who see contemporary multilingualism and plurilingualism in terms of constellations of languages rather than individual languages known to the speaker. Dominant Language Constellations, which they discuss, would either consist of a global language, an official language and a locally important language, or of an international language, the state language and the immigrant language, where English often remains of major importance. Breidbach (2003) sees the role of English and plurilingualism in the following way:

The point made here is that in policies for language education, linguistic diversity and the teaching of English are not a matter of priorities. Any policy which treats plurilingualism as an ‘either – or’ decision runs the risk of creating social exclusion either through cultural or political exclusion. To put the same thought in a positive way: sustainable cultural and political inclusion, which can lead to opportunities of participation in multilingual Europe, requires a holistic language education policy inclusive of English and linguistic diversity.  

Breidbach (2003: 22)
Assuming that English language teaching is still of major importance in Europe, it may be reasonable to propose training students to recognize and make conscious use of cross-linguistic similarities between their L1 and English in order to trigger positive transfer. Such training should be preceded by producing more L1-specific teaching materials and providing teachers with additional instruction on how to use them. If awareness raising and interacting with samples of cross-linguistic similarities indeed results in creating a mental model for intercomprehension (Hufeisen & Marx 2007), then raising awareness of cognates in English may result in the learners’ enhanced noticing of cross-linguistic similarities with other languages (cf. Hufeisen & Neuner 2004). As Nation and Meara (2002: 49) point out, ‘almost all the basic Anglo-Saxon words have parallel forms based on Latin and Greek, which are used in particular, specialist discourse’. It is not difficult to notice that Latin- and Greek-based words are also quite common in formal styles and registers used by educated European speakers in their L1. This, in turn, entails that English may not only serve as a lingua franca, but also as a mediation tool between the native language and other European languages.

### 4. Cognate vocabulary and language learning across typological boundaries

The idea behind the first three Sieves in the EuroCom program, i.e. the use of similarities in word forms and meanings to increase the speed of learning a particular foreign language, has been recognized for at least a century. Already in 1899 Sweet observed that

> [m]astering the vocabulary of most European languages means simply learning to recognize a number of old friends under slight disguises [...]. The higher vocabulary of science, art, and abstract thought hardly requires to be learnt at all; for it so consists either of Latin and Greek terms common to most European languages or of translations of them.

(Sweet 1899, after Odlin 1989: 77–78)

Contrary to the focus of EuroCom, cognates may be found in most European languages, also across typological boundaries (e.g. English – optimism, Polish – optymizm, German – Optimismus, Spanish – optimismo, etc.). Additionally, there will be words borrowed from one language to another (e.g. computer, hamburger, etc.) or borrowed independently by some languages (e.g. robot, etc.) (cf. Otwinowska-Kasztelanic 2001a; Rusiecki
As for Polish and English cognate vocabulary, pioneering studies of English borrowings into Polish were carried out by Fisiak (e.g. 1970). Rusiecki (1980) coined the term of *interlingual synonyms*, which he defined as a group comprising international vocabulary, words borrowed from one language to another, or borrowed independently by two languages. Rusiecki (2002: 73) used the term *internal analogues* defined as ‘a class of words in any language (Lx) that sound and/or look familiar to speakers of another language (Ly)’ and thus comprising both interlingual synonyms and false friends. Unfortunately, there has been little research concerning the actual effects of teaching or activating cognates on Polish learners of English. Rusiecki (1980: 88–96) compiled a list of 200 core cognate items and suggested that those core words could be used in teaching English to speakers of Polish in order to expand their active vocabulary and enhance their motivation to learn English. This idea has been strongly criticised even quite recently by Mańczak-Wohlfeld (2006: 35), who claims that introducing anglicisms (i.e. English borrowings into Polish) to the process of teaching beginners ‘might lead students to the false conclusion that only anglicisms and English words they happen to be familiar with constitute the English lexicon’. As she suggests, this might result in later disappointment on the students’ part. She also stresses the fact that due to the distance between languages ‘even advanced students who attend the linguistic seminar at the Institute of English Philology, Jagiellonian University, when asked to enumerate English borrowings present in Polish were able to mention very few anglicisms’ (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2006: 53), but she does not provide any survey data to support the claim. On the other hand, Otwinowska-Kasztelanic (2001b, 2009) reported that cognate activation may result in the increased vocabulary acquisition for total beginners of English, as well as advanced learners of English. She also pointed out that for Polish and English the number of cognates (internationalisms and borrowings) exceeds two and a half thousand items.

According to Odlin, (1989: 77) the existence of cognate words in the learner’s L1, L2 ... Ln should enhance the process of language learning. He states that ‘similarities and dissimilarities in word forms, along with similarities and dissimilarities in word meanings, play a major role in how quickly a particular foreign language may be learned by speakers of another language’. However, as Swan (1997: 161) points out, not all dissimilarities cause learning problems, whereas lexical similarity and the existence of cognates do not always lead to the enhanced mastery of L2
vocabulary. According to Schmitt (1997: 209), cognates can be ‘an excellent resource for both guessing the meaning and remembering new words. Of course, learners do not automatically accept cognates as equivalent’. The students’ willingness to accept that L1 can be useful in L2 learning depends on several factors, including typological relationships between languages. Cross-linguistic influence is stronger between languages which are typologically close, such as Polish and Slovak, Czech and Russian or Swedish and English (Duškova 1984; Ringbom 2007), for instance. Thus, in the case of European languages, positive transfer (cognates) as well as negative transfer (false friends) will be strongest within each of the major typological groups: Germanic, Slavonic or Romance.

However, there are also individual factors influencing the noticing of cross-linguistic relationships. According to Kellerman (1977, 1983), psychotypology may play a role in noticing language similarity. If learners believe that L2 is significantly different or distant from their L1, they may not be aware of or may not notice certain formal similarities between the two (Kellermann 1983; Ringbom 1986; Singleton 2006). Ringbom (2006: 38) even talks about ‘perceived and assumed similarity’ as opposed to ‘objective’ similarity of language items and forms. Singleton (2006) described the case of English learners of Greek and their failure to make the connection between native words and their Greek equivalents even when formal and semantic relationships between the words were obvious. As Odlin (1989: 79) suggested, ‘more and more research on contrastive lexical semantics shows that recognition of cognates is often a problem. Learners may not always note the formal similarities that mark a cognate relation, and they may not always believe that there is a real cognate relationship’.

In their discussion of individual learning differences Dörnyei and Skehan (2003: 597) point to the fact that, contrary to Schmidt’s (1990) original hypothesis, even noticing abilities may differ from learner to learner. This may be due to a variety of reasons such as abilities to segment the input stream, qualities of the working memory or field-independence. Another factor influencing the noticing of cognates is the number of languages known or used by the learner. There are numerous accounts of how bilinguals differ from monolinguals and how the former differ form multilinguals in terms of general language awareness, facilitated language learning, language learning strategies or metalinguistic awareness (e.g. Cenoz et al. 2001; Cenoz & Genesse 1998; Herdina & Jessner 2002; Hoffmann 2001; Jessner 1999, 2008). Multilinguals have more ‘experience’ in language
learning and using, more linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge and awareness, and more chances of interacting with the environment.

5. Raising awareness of cognate vocabulary in Polish advanced learners of English

5.1. Investigating language awareness

Formal similarities of cognate forms can easily trigger positive transfer even across typological boundaries if the learner is aware of the existence of cognates. The awareness of cross-linguistic lexical similarities in the case of bilingual and multilingual Polish learners of English, with respect to the definitions of bilingualism and multilingualism mentioned above, was subject to a questionnaire study carried out between 2006 and 2008. The aim of the research on Polish students of English was to find out whether they recognized opportunities for positive transfer in the area of lexis. The research, which involved 462 students, took place in Warsaw and consisted of four subsequent studies. The first three focused on bilingual learners, who were then compared with multilinguals in the fourth study.

Study 1 involved 200 students of the Institute of English Studies at Warsaw University. They were all advanced learners of English (level C1/ C2 of the CEFR), aged 19 to 22. Their awareness of cognates was tested right after they had taken an intensive one-semester course in vocabulary study. Study 2 involved 100 students of Warsaw University and a non-public college of information technology, aged 19 to 24 who learned English at the intermediate level (B1/B2). Study 3 involved 86 students of a renowned private language school in Warsaw, aged between 19 and 35, who were beginning or elementary learners of English (A1/A2). Finally, Study 4 involved 81 multilingual students aged 19 to 25, at least trilingual. Their native language was Polish and they were all advanced learners of English as L2 (C1/C2). Most of them were advanced in L3 languages (C1 or C2 in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, Russian or German). Additionally, most studied various L4 or L5 languages (A1 to B2 in Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, German, French or Italian). In this way all the multilingual respondents to the questionnaire were proficient users of at least three European languages and had at least elementary knowledge of other European languages.
Students in all four studies were asked to respond to a Polish language version of a questionnaire which consisted of 7 basic questions concerning their perceptions of the distance between English and Polish and the existence of cognates (Otwinowska-Kasztelanic 2007, 2009). The present paper reports only on the findings concerning the awareness of cognates. Table 1 and Figure 1 present the respondents’ answers to the question How many words are there whose form and meaning are similar in English and Polish?

**Table 1: Percentages of students’ answers to the question How many words are there whose form and meaning are similar in English and Polish?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>20–50</th>
<th>50–150</th>
<th>150–500</th>
<th>500–1000</th>
<th>1000–5000</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilinguals</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: Percentages of students’ answers to the question How many words are there whose form and meaning are similar in English and Polish?**
It can be noticed that about one quarter of all the respondents at each level opted for the existence of 150 to 500 English-Polish cognates. Moreover, over half of the elementary students examined believed in the existence of up to 150 cognate words, and as many as 15% of them could not answer this question at all. None of the elementary students believed in the existence of more than 1000 cognates. As for the intermediate group, the percentages are only slightly different: only 6% of the respondents believed in the existence of more than 1000 cognate items, and nearly 60% opted for 50 to 500 such items. Of all the students examined, only multilinguals proved to possess a much higher awareness of the cognates available. Over half of them opted for the existence of 500 to 5000 English-Polish cognates.

Lack of awareness was even more evident in the case of the question about the number of cognates the respondents believed to know themselves. 64% of the elementary students, 43% of the intermediate students and over one quarter of the advanced students believed they knew only about 10 such items! Nearly half the intermediate and the advanced students believed to know about 100 Polish-English cognates, and no advanced student claimed to know over a thousand of them. Nearly 50% of all the bilingual students examined did not respond to the question. The detailed results are presented in Table 2 and in Figure 2.

While it is quite clear that even advanced bilingual students were not fully aware of the potential of the cognate vocabulary they possessed, the multilingual respondents proved to have a much higher awareness of cross linguistic similarities. The answers of the multilingual students clearly stood out from the answers of the remaining groups. However, even in the multilingual group only 11% of the students believed to know more than 1000 cognate words, which is rather surprising considering their level of proficiency in several languages.

5.2. Raising awareness of cognate vocabulary – a study with advanced learners

The survey has revealed considerable differences between the advanced bilingual and the advanced multilingual students of the Institute of English Studies at Warsaw University. Thus, it was assumed that advanced-level bilingual philology students (C1) should benefit from raising awareness of cognate vocabulary. The awareness of cognates should enhance their plurilingual competence and help them understand literature and formal texts.
Moreover, the conscious reliance on cognate words of Latin and Greek origin should improve their fluency and style in productive tasks. The research was meant to determine whether exposure to and activation of English-Polish cognate vocabulary would help students recognize cognates while reading an English text and use cognates more often in productive tasks, as compared to the control groups. As Swan (1997: 178) points out, ‘the more aware learners are of the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the target language, the easier they will find it to adopt effective learning and production strategies’. On the other hand, Jessner (1999: 207) states that ‘metalinguistic awareness can be increased through teaching similarities between languages’.

### Table 2: Percentages of students’ answers to the question *How many cognate words do YOU know?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Cognates</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Multilinguals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca 10</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 50</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 100</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 500</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca 1000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 2: Percentages of students’ answers to the question *How many cognate words do YOU know?*
The research took place in 2006 and 2007 on a sample of 82 students (not the ones who took part in the survey). The participants were 6 groups of students from the Institute of English Studies at Warsaw University, from now on called Experimental Groups 1, 2 and 3 and Control Groups 1, 2 and 3. The groups of 12 to 14 students, all at an advanced level of English (post FCE/C1) underwent an integrated skills course with an additional intensive vocabulary study component, which lasted for one semester (30 hours of instruction). During the course the students in both the Experimental and the Control groups were informed about various vocabulary learning strategies, including cognate recognition, as enumerated by Chamot (1987: 77). Both group types were presented with cognate vocabulary gathered into thematic groups and took part in short tasks activating the cognates, such as word mapping, listing, grouping, matching, contextualization, recombination and communicative activities. However, only the Experimental Groups were constantly sensitized to the existence of cognates, whereas in the Control Groups the tasks were treated as unimportant warm-ups and time fillers. The recognition and production of cognates was measured in stages: after one third of the course (recognition in reading), in the middle of the course (production in writing) and at the end of the course (production in speaking).

The students’ recognition of cognates was assessed on the basis of a reading task. The students were given a text of 830 words, which included 70 cognates. Their task was to scan the text and underline the cognates within the time limit of 6 minutes. Although there was a lot of individual variation between the students in all the groups, in the recognition task Experimental Groups proved more effective than their respective Control Groups. It can be easily noticed that Experimental Groups 1 and 3 turned out to be much better at recognizing cognates in text than their respective Control Groups. There was not much difference between Experimental Group 2 and Control Group 2. This might be due to the fact that Control Group 2 proved to achieve much better results than Experimental Group 2 in all vocabulary tests during the course. The results for all the groups are presented in Table 3.

The students’ production of cognates was measured by a writing task and a speaking task. The writing task took place in the middle of the course during a class on describing personality. It involved producing a short paragraph comparing two people and it was the final step of a series of vocabulary study and communicative activities involving the use of personality adjectives (which included numerous cognate adjectives originating from Latin).
The students from the Experimental Groups had been sensitized to cognates during the communicative activities and vocabulary study, whereas Control Groups had been exposed to the same vocabulary, but not sensitized to cognates. The number of cognate adjectives, as well as the number of all cognates used in the writing was counted and compared for both groups. Percentages of cognates used were calculated for the number of the running words of text (the number of all the word forms) produced by each of the groups. The results for both groups were strikingly different. The students from the Experimental Groups used cognate adjectives and other cognate words systematically more often than the students from the Control Groups, as presented in Table 4.

As for the speaking task, it was a formal oral test performed in pairs in front of the interviewer. The task was a role-play and the topics involved

### Table 3: Cognates out of 70 recognized in the text of 830 words within a time limit of 6 minutes by the Experimental Groups and the Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage of cognates recognized</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group 1</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group 2</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group 2</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group 3</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group 3</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Number of cognates used in the writing task by the students from Experimental Groups and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
<th>Total number of running words</th>
<th>Number of cognate adjectives used</th>
<th>Percentage of the total running words</th>
<th>Total number of cognates used</th>
<th>Cognates as percentage of the running words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment 2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiment 3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
describing personality, clothes, interior design, and travel and holidays. A non-surreptitious microphone was used and the speakers were always informed that they are being recorded. These circumstances, together with the fact that the grade for the oral task added to the final grade for the course, created highly anxiety-provoking conditions. The interviews were later transcribed, and the number of running words and cognates used was counted. The calculation included the number of types (word-forms) of cognates, as well as the number of tokens (occurrences of word-forms). Table 5 below shows the results for all the groups.

Table 5: Number of cognates used in the speaking task by students from Experimental Groups and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total number of running words</th>
<th>Average percentage of cognates</th>
<th>Number of cognates used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tokens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental 1</td>
<td>3506</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 1</td>
<td>4647</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental 2</td>
<td>4322</td>
<td>3.63%</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 2</td>
<td>4343</td>
<td>2.76%</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental 3</td>
<td>4052</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control 3</td>
<td>3170</td>
<td>3.88%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a lot of individual variation in the length of the utterances, the type of vocabulary used and the use of cognates, probably due to the students’ language level, anxiety, and beliefs concerning the task difficulty. However, on average when speaking the Experimental Group students used cognates (tokens) more often than the corresponding Control Group students. They also used considerably more types of cognates than the students in their respective Control Groups. Clearly, those students who were more aware of cognates consciously tried to rely on them when speaking in a stressful situation. One may conclude that the Experimental Group students used cognate vocabulary as a strategy for coping with anxiety and task difficulty.
6. Conclusions

This paper has discussed the issues of plurilingualism and multilingualism in connection with the idea of intercomprehension and the role of cross-linguistic similarities in enhancing language learning. It pointed to the fact that cognate vocabulary, which exists not only in typologically close languages, but also across typological boundaries, may be important for the speed of language acquisition. However, in order to make use of cognates the student has to be aware of their existence; otherwise, the process of positive transfer from L1 may not take place. Further on, the paper briefly discussed factors influencing the acknowledgement of cognates, such as language typology and psychotypology, as well as individual differences in noticing, learner beliefs and the number of languages known by the learner.

As shown in the present paper, even learners of languages perceived to be typologically distant, such as English and Polish, could benefit from cognate vocabulary training. Although Polish learners of English do not easily notice cognate vocabulary, awareness raising helps to recognize similarities between Polish and English words and use them in speech and writing, both in the case of beginners and advanced students (Otwinowska-Kasztelanic 2001b, 2009). Proficiency in English – the current European and international lingua franca – is still of major importance to European citizenship. Thus, it seems reasonable to postulate that teachers at various levels should try to make their students aware of similarities between the cognate vocabularies found not only in languages typologically close, but also between various languages and English. In this way learners may obtain quick access to numerous lexical items, very similar to their L1 equivalents. Raising awareness of cross-linguistic similarities may help learners to be more confident when using English, which may influence their motivation to learn this and other European languages. Since Latin- and Greek-based words are common in formal styles and registers used by educated European speakers in their L1, English may not only serve as a lingua franca, but also as a mediation tool between the native language and other European languages.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Promoting Plurilingual Competence in Polish Learners of English


Promoting Plurilingual Competence in Polish Learners of English


Part III
ASSESSMENT
1. Difficulties in oral assessment

Spoken language assessment, and the testing of communicative skills in particular, poses enormous challenges of both a practical and theoretical nature. Communicative speaking tests are often characterized by low rater-reliability and low content- and construct-validity. The need to test students on a one-to-one basis or in a paired format results in huge administrative costs and logistical problems (Shohamy et al. 1986: 212). Additional time and money resources are necessary for examiner/interlocutor training (Brindley 2001: 141). A more deep-rooted problem identified by language testing experts lies in their inability to clearly define the complex construct of oral proficiency in a communicative situation (Shohamy 1983: 529). It is generally recognized nowadays that in a speaking test much more than simply a test-taker’s ability is being assessed (McNamara 1996: 86; Upshur & Turner 1999: 85). However, numerous research studies into the specific variables which might interact in the communicative process (i.e. discourse qualities, rater/examiner/interlocutor characteristics, examinee characteristics, task attributes and rating scales) have yielded inconsistent and sometimes contradictory results. Furthermore, the research findings and theoretical advances in the field are not easily applicable to classroom language testing. All these factors make oral assessment a daunting and challenging task for both language testing experts and teachers, who describe speaking as ‘fleeting, temporal and ephemeral’ (Fulcher 2003: xv) and consider it the most difficult language skill to assess (Harris 1969: 81).
In the past, the problems inherent in testing spoken language often resulted in the neglect of oral testing and a wide discrepancy between instruction and assessment. As Shohamy (1983: 527) observes, ‘while the goal of language teaching was the development of practical communication, most language tests stressed mastery of discrete linguistic skills’. However, over the last thirty years oral testing has received careful attention and a considerable amount of work has taken place in the language testing field to further understanding of the dimensions of spoken language assessment.

2. The design and development of oral tests

Having decided what specific components of oral proficiency are to be tested in a particular assessment context, the test constructor needs to make decisions regarding the mode of test delivery, design suitable oral tasks and develop appropriate rating procedures.

2.1. Mode of test delivery

Three major sub-categories have been distinguished to describe a variety of techniques for measuring speaking ability: direct, semi-direct and indirect speaking tests (Clark 1979: 36).

2.1.1. Direct speaking tests

According to Clark (1979: 36), direct speaking tests are ‘... procedures in which the examinee is asked to engage in a face-to-face communicative exchange with one or more human interlocutor(s)’. In this respect such tests claim ‘to measure ability directly by eliciting a performance approximating authentic language behaviour’ (Davies et al. 1999: 47).

The first direct tests of speaking ability date back to the early 1950s, with the development of an oral test by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the U.S. Department of State (Clark & Clifford 1988: 129). The test, originally designed to measure general proficiency in the speaking of diplomats and foreign service officers, was later adopted by other government agencies (the Defence Language Institute, the Language School of the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Peace Corps). The resulting FSI Oral Interview and its accompanying rating scale were further modified to
suit academic settings by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and more recently (in the 1980s) by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In turn, the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is ‘a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability, or oral proficiency’ (Byrnes, Thompson & Buck 1989: 1–1). It is a criterion-referenced proficiency test employing five general assessment criteria: global tasks / functions, content, context, accuracy features and oral text type (Byrnes, Thompson & Buck 1989: 3–9). Proponents of the OPI claim that it is a reliable measure of overall speaking ability in a foreign language when administered and rated by experienced ACTFL trained and certified testers. Their task is to elicit a ratable speech sample by conducting a face-to-face unstructured oral interview in a principled manner and decide on an interviewee’s rating by comparing their performance to a set of level descriptors. The revised version of ACTFL Guidelines for the assessment of speaking ability (1999) includes ten levels – Superior, Advanced High, Advanced Mid, Advanced Low, Intermediate High, Intermediate Mid, Intermediate Low, Novice High, Novice Mid and Novice Low – presented in descending order (Breiner-Sanders et al. 2000: 13–18).

The original Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Oral Interview is considered ‘the generic ancestor of today’s generation of oral tests’ (Fulcher 1997: 78) since it has served as the point of departure for many other attempts at designing oral proficiency tests (e.g. the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings oral interview developed by Ingram and Wylie in 1984). Recently, however, in response to some criticisms concerning the validity and reliability of the original Oral Proficiency Interview (Lantolf & Frawley 1985: 339, 341; Savignon 1985: 129; Bachman & Savignon 1986: 385–387; Kramsch 1986: 366; Pienemann et al. 1988: 219; Valdman 1988: 121; Raffaldini 1988: 197; Bachman 1988: 163; Matthews 1990: 117; Shohamy 1990: 391; Salaberry 2000: 289), there has been a growing trend towards greater standardisation of the interview procedure. As a result, a more structured, task-based approach to the direct testing of speaking is gaining in popularity among the biggest examination boards all over the world. Typical examples of this kind of testing model are the speaking components of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Ingram & Wylie 1993: 220) and other tests developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (e.g. Preliminary English Test, Cambridge First Certificate in English, and Certificate of Proficiency in English). Such tests are structured in that they use a range of specified tasks varying in terms of topic, stimulus, participant
roles and functional demands. Moreover, the interlocutors often need to adhere very closely to the rubrics/interlocutor frame.

Recently, various technological advances have enabled practical developments of the existing format of a direct oral test. Screen-to-screen, or more officially VTT-based (video teletraining technology) testing (Clark & Hooshmand 1992: 293) makes use of modern media techniques for language proficiency assessment on a distance basis. The testing may be conducted with the examinee and interlocutor placed in two geographically remote locations and interacting with each other via audio and video transmissions. This alternative to face-to-face oral proficiency testing attempts to preserve the interactional character of the encounter (Clark & Hooshmand 1992: 293).

2.1.2. Semi-direct speaking tests

The term semi-direct has been adopted to describe ‘those tests which, although eliciting active speech by the examinee, do so by means of tape recordings, printed test booklets, or other “nonhuman” elicitation procedures, rather than through face-to-face conversation with a live interlocutor’ (Clark 1979: 36). Semi-direct tests of speaking are thus nonreciprocal since ‘there is no interaction between language users’, and consequently, ‘there is no feedback, and the language used does not affect subsequent language use’ (Bachman 1990: 149). This test format is considered an example of a ‘constrained test’ (Hughes 2002: 79, 86).

The first semi-direct speaking tests were developed in the 1970s as an attempt to standardise spoken assessment while retaining the communicative aspects of oral proficiency interviews (Shohamy 1994: 101). Over the last 30 years, the semi-direct format has enjoyed a growing popularity with testing experts because of certain practical and psychometrical advantages it offers over a face-to-face interview. Its main practical benefit is the possibility of testing large groups of examinees simultaneously (in a language laboratory) by a single administrator. The psychometric advantages include ensuring a standardized testing procedure (each examinee is presented with exactly the same tasks), rating by the most experienced and reliable raters under controlled conditions, and obtaining a longer sample of examinee speech (Stansfield 1991: 202–206).

Examples of semi-direct speaking tests include the General English Proficiency Test Intermediate Speaking Test (GEPTS-I) used in Taiwan (Weir & Wu 2006), as well as the Test in English for Educational Purposes
(TEEP) (James 1988) and the Oxford-ARELS Examinations (ARELS Examinations Trust 1989) developed in Britain. Among the most popular semi-direct tests designed and used in the USA are the Test of Spoken English (TSE) (Clark & Swinton 1980), the Recorded Oral Proficiency Examination (ROPE) (Lowe & Clifford 1980), and the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) (Stansfield et al. 1990).

The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), created first for Chinese, Hebrew, Portuguese and Indonesian, is modelled very closely on the already existing face-to-face direct format. The SOPI, then, is ‘a tape-mediated test designed to be a surrogate for the OPI in situations where a face-to-face interview is not possible or desirable’ (Stansfield & Kenyon 1992: 347). The test elicits speech by means of a tape recording and a printed test booklet. It consists of three components: a Master Tape (with test instructions and questions), a Test Booklet (with test instructions and pictorial / textual prompts) and an Examinee Response Tape (for recording the test-taker’s responses) (Stansfield & Kenyon 1992a: 130). Three different types of elicitation tasks (picture-based, topic-based and situation-based) are designed to assess the test-taker’s ability to perform various language functions. The response tapes are scored by trained raters who apply the same criteria as with direct Oral Proficiency Interviews.

Recently, various technological advances have enabled the computer adaptation of the tape-mediated semi-direct tests in the form of the Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument (COPI) (Kenyon & Malabonga 2001; Malabonga et al. 2005). This test, created for Spanish, Arabic and Chinese, is an adaptive, computer-administered oral proficiency assessment. It can be considered a modification of the tape-mediated SOPI in that it is aimed ‘to enhance the SOPI by giving examinees more control over various aspects of the testing situation and by increasing raters’ efficiency’ (Kenyon & Malabonga 2001: 60). The characteristic feature of the COPI is its large pool of tasks at different levels of proficiency coded for speaking functions and content area. The examinees feel in control of the test because they can choose the difficulty of some tasks presented to them according to their self-perceived level of language proficiency. They also have some choice over the topic of the tasks, the language of test instructions and the length of time necessary for planning and response. Obviously, the computer program’s underlying algorithm sets the maximum time limit and ensures that the testees are exposed to tasks at differing levels and on a wide variety of topics. However, within these limits, test-takers still exhibit control over many features of the
test (Kenyon & Malabonga 2001: 63). The adaptive form of the test also allows for its considerable shortening in comparison to the SOPI. While taking the COPI, the examinee is presented with pictures accompanying some tasks, as well as with audio and written directions on the computer screen. Responses to tasks are recorded for later assessment by qualified raters. Each task is assessed separately and the global rating is calculated by the specially-designed computer program (Kenyon & Malabonga 2001: 64).

Another example of the use of IT in a semi-direct test is the automatic assessment of spoken English administered by telephone in the PhonePass test (www.ordinate.com). The test-taker is asked by a computer system to perform a set of tasks (e.g. read texts aloud, repeat heard sentences, say words opposite in meaning to words heard, answer questions). The spoken responses are rated by a specially designed speech recognition system which compares the test-taker’s performance to statistical models of native and non-native performance on the tasks. The obtained rating indicates the test-taker’s ability to understand and respond appropriately to decontextualized spoken input (Alderson & Banerjee 2001: 225, 226).

2.1.3. Indirect speaking tests

Indirect speaking tests are characterized as ‘those tests which do not require any active speech production on the examinee’s part’ (Clark 1979: 36). The test taker is thus not asked ‘to perform tasks that directly reflect the kind of language use that is the target of assessment; rather, an inference is made from performance on more artificial tasks’ (Davies et al. 1999: 81).

One of the earliest examples of indirect speaking tests are paper-and-pencil tests of pronunciation (Lado 1961: 247) in which the test-taker is asked to indicate which of a series of printed words is pronounced differently from the others. Instead of pronouncing words, test-takers are supposed to check correct responses in items of three different types: rhyme words, word stress and phrase stress. Multiple-choice format is also sometimes used as an indirect measure of spoken situational language: the test taker’s task is to choose the most appropriate option (a phrase or an utterance) for a particular situation (Davies et al. 1999: 81; Akiyama 2003: 120). Another indirect way of evaluating English oral skills is the elicitation of responses written-as-if-spoken (WAIS) (Norris 1991: 203). In WAIS dialogues, test-takers are required to write down what they might say to complete the exchanges provided. Dialogues can be vertical – ‘when all the speeches of one interlocutor are furnished’ (Norris
1991: 208) or horizontal – when they ‘begin with several complete exchanges at the desired level of informality, and students complete them by creating more exchanges – both initiating and responding’ (Norris 1991: 209).

In comparison to other formats, indirect speaking tests are generally considered the least valid measure of the ability to speak a language exactly because the test-taker is not required to talk at all in the course of the test. Another serious drawback of the indirect procedure is a potential detrimental washback effect on the teaching and learning of spoken language in the classroom. Knowing that speaking will be tested only through paper-and-pencil techniques might reduce students’ and teachers’ motivation to practise it (Clark 1979: 36, 37).

2.2. Oral test tasks

2.2.1. Defining tasks

In second language acquisition and pedagogy tasks have been defined in many ways (Candlin 1987; Nunan 1993; Bachman & Palmer 1996; Skehan 1998; Willis 1996; Van den Branden 2006; Willis & Willis 2007), some of which differ quite markedly from one another. Nunan, for example, defines a communicative task as:

*a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form... Minimally, a task will consist of some input data and one or more related activities and procedures. Input refers to the data that learners are to work on: it may be linguistic (e.g. a radio broadcast), non-linguistic (e.g. a set of photographs), or 'hybrid' (e.g. a road map). In addition, tasks will have, either explicitly or implicitly (and in most cases these are implicit), goals, roles of teachers and learners and a setting.* (Nunan 1993: 59)

According to Candlin, a task can be characterized as:

*one of a set of differentiated, sequencable, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and persuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu.* (Candlin 1987: 10)

Following other researchers, Skehan proposes that a task is an activity in which:

– meaning is primary;
– there is some communication problem to solve;
– there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities;
– task completion has some priority;
– the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

(Skehan 1998a: 95)

Similarly, Bachman and Palmer (1996: 44) have defined a task for use in the language testing field as ‘an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation’. Following Luoma, Bachman and Palmer’s definition can be slightly modified for the specific context of speaking and therefore: ‘speaking tasks’ can be seen as activities that involve speakers in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular speaking situation’ (Luoma 2004: 31).

2.2.2. Classification of speaking tasks

There have been many attempts to describe and categorize tasks which are of interest to three different groups of people: researchers, teachers and testers (Bygate et al. 2001: 4).

• Tasks involving a different number of participants

Depending on the number of people involved in the task performance, speaking test tasks can be divided into individual, pair and group tasks. The traditional one-to-one format of an oral interview has recently started to be replaced by paired or group oral tests which have been used since the 1980s (Ikeda 1998: 71). The paired or group variations of the oral proficiency interview, in which test-takers perform both the role of interviewer and interviewee (i.e. they interact among themselves rather than with an examiner) and are observed by one or more assessors, have gained both strong proponents (Fulcher 1996; Hildson 1991; Saville & Hargreaves 1999; Egyud & Glover 2001) and ardent opponents (Foot 1999, 1999b). Such tests introduce additional aspects of the interlocutor variable (O’Sullivan 2002; Galaczi 2008; Lazaraton & Davis 2008; Davis 2009), which may affect their validity.

• Tasks characterized by the different relationship between input and response

The classification of these tests into reciprocal, non-reciprocal and adaptive tasks is based on reactivity – one of the characteristics of the relationship between input and response (Bachman & Palmer 1996: 54, 55).

Reciprocal tasks are those in which ‘the test taker or language user engages in language use with another interlocutor’ (Bachman & Palmer
Two distinguishing features of reciprocal tasks are 1) interaction with at least one interlocutor; and 2) the presence of instantaneous feedback affecting subsequent language use. An example of a reciprocal speaking task is a face-to-face oral interview.

In **non-reciprocal tasks**, both interaction and feedback are missing. Typical examples of non-reciprocal tasks are cloze, dictation and tape-mediated tests of speaking (Bachman 1990: 150).

In **adaptive tasks**, ‘the input is influenced by the response, but without the feedback that characterizes a reciprocal relationship’ (Bachman 1990: 151). Each new item or task is selected on the basis of the response given to the previous item. An example of an adaptive speaking test is the Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument (Kenyon & Malabonga 2001: 60).

- **Tasks eliciting different kinds of discourse**

  Bygate (1987) distinguished between different kinds of speaking tasks based on what speakers need to do with language while involved in performing the task. He thus clearly differentiated between:
  - **factually oriented talk** (description, narration, instruction and comparison) and
  - **evaluative talk** (explanation, justification, prediction and decision).

  Narrative tasks dealing with a series of pictures, describing and comparing pictures or giving directions based on a map are all examples of factually oriented talk, whereas problem-solving and discussion tasks involve explaining, justifying and decision-making typical of evaluative talk.

- **Tasks providing a different amount of structure for elicited discourse**

  According to the amount of structure built into the task, and consequently, to varying degrees of freedom in task performance, speaking tasks are often described as either open-ended or structured. **Open-ended speaking tasks** ‘guide the discussion but allow room for different ways of fulfilling the task requirements’, whereas **structured speaking tasks** ‘specify quite precisely what the examinees should say’ (Luoma 2004: 48). Open-ended speaking tasks are thus designed to elicit a stretch of talk (a number of turns or a single long turn), while limited production is usually called for in structured speaking tasks (e.g. reading aloud or sentence repetition).

  A similar but finer distinction among speaking test tasks was made by Fulcher:
  - **open tasks** with ‘outcomes dependent upon speakers’;
  - **guided tasks** where ‘outcomes are guided by the rubrics, but there is a degree of flexibility in how the test taker reacts to the input’;
- **Closed tasks** with the ‘outcome dictated by input or rubrics’ (Fulcher 2003: 57).

Typical examples of open tasks are oral presentations and verbal essays where the theme is provided but the speakers may develop the topic in any way they wish. Oral presentations differ from the verbal essay (speaking for three minutes on one or more specified general topics) in that the respondent is allowed to prepare for the task (Weir 1990: 74, 75). Narrative tasks, picture prompt items, information gap tasks, most role-plays and a face-to-face oral proficiency interview are all guided speaking tasks. Repetition tasks (e.g. repeat the sentence) and reading aloud belong to a group of closed tasks, also called **limited-response items** (Madsen 1983: 148).

- **Tasks with a different kind of expected outcome**

  Depending on their goal orientation, speaking tasks can be divided into convergent and divergent. **Convergent tasks** require learners to come to an agreement in the process of fulfilling the task requirements. A typical example here is an information gap activity in which two participants have to communicate, i.e. give and take the information they need to complete the task. **Divergent tasks** are those in which learners do not have to reach a consensus. Some role-plays may be structured in such a way as to encourage participants to disagree on the outcomes of the interaction.

- **Tasks of a different degree of authenticity**

  Although the concept of **authenticity** is differentially perceived and interpreted by different testing experts and test-takers (Fulcher 2003: 54), speaking tasks are sometimes categorized into **pedagogic** or **language-focused tasks** and **real-life** or **target tasks** (Nunan 1989; Willis 1996). Pedagogic tasks are designed specifically for certain types of language use with the purpose of teaching or evaluating it. In contrast, target tasks are supposed to simulate non-test language use outside the classroom. The replication of real-life language use is often achieved through simulation and role-play tasks, which are examples of performance tests. **Performance** or **authentic tests** ‘use “real-life” performance as a criterion’ and attempt ‘to characterise measurement procedures in such a way as to approximate non-test language performance’ (Davies *et al.* 1999: 144). McNamara (1996: 8) has drawn a distinction between strong and weak performance tests. In a weak performance test, the assessment focuses only on the linguistic aspects, whereas strong performance testing ‘employs real-world criteria for judging task success’ (Luoma 2004: 40).
2.2.3. Test tasks characteristics

Several second language acquisition and language testing experts have focused on providing a systematic approach to describing task types which could be useful in designing tasks for teaching and assessment. Nunan (1989: 10, 11) and Candlin (1987: 11, 12) enumerated the key features of any type of task, which were later incorporated into the framework for describing tasks developed by Ellis (2003: 21) with the goal, input, conditions, procedures and predicted outcomes as its design features. Bachman (1990: 119) proposed a framework of test method facets, later expanded and re-named into task characteristics (Bachman & Palmer 1996: 49, 50). The Bachman and Palmer model was designed to be applicable to all types of language tests. In contrast, Weir’s (1993: 39) performance conditions (processing under normal time constraints, degree of reciprocity, purpose, interlocutors, setting, role, topic, channel and input dimensions) are discussed in relation specifically to the testing of speaking. Having observed that ‘each descriptive system has unique features, many overlap’, Fulcher (2003: 57) proposed the characteristics ‘which are generically useful in characterising tasks for speaking tests’.

Figure 1: A Framework for Describing Tasks (Fulcher 2003: 57).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task orientation:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open: outcomes dependent upon speakers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided: outcomes are guided by the rubrics, but there is a degree of flexibility in how the test taker reacts to the input;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed: outcomes dictated by input or rubrics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional relationship:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-interactional;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional (One-way, Two-way or Multi-way).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal orientation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergent;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlocutor status and familiarity:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No interlocutor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher status;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower status;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same status;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of familiarity with interlocutor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situations</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Applying the above framework, a reading aloud task on the PhonePass SET-10 Demo Test (http://www.ordinate.com/ppass/ppuser/sampletest.jsp) can be described in the following way:

- **Task orientation**: closed (the outcome dictated by the rubric and the input);
- **Interactional Relationship**: non-interactional (no communication);
- **Goal Orientation**: none;
- **Interlocutor Status and Familiarity**: no interlocutor;
- **Topics**: home, travel, food;
- **Situations**: variable.

(Fulcher 2003: 58).

When developing speaking tasks, test designers can choose categories for task description which are relevant and salient to their own teaching and testing context (Fulcher 2003: 57).

### 3. Rating process

There are two important aspects of the rating process: rating scales / marking schemes against which spoken performance is judged, and interlocutor / rater training aimed to ensure the consistency of rating procedures.

Many terms are used in language testing and teaching literature for rating scales. Alderson (1991: 71) enumerates the following names: ‘band scores, band scales, profile bands, proficiency levels, proficiency scales, proficiency ratings’, whereas De Jong (1992: 43, reported in North 1993: 72) calls them ‘guidelines, standards, levels, yardsticks, stages, scales or grades’. Numerous scales of proficiency have been developed to date to the extent that ‘it is difficult to orientate oneself in the great variety of scales that are in use today’ (Sigott 1996: 11). In the light of what Pollitt calls ‘a good deal of muddle and confusion in the use of rating scales in language testing’ (1991: 87), several researchers have made some efforts to classify the existing scales into groups.

### 3.1. Dichotomies in language proficiency scales

In one of the attempts to classify scales of language proficiency, they are presented as a series of dichotomies. North (1993: 83) reordered and glossed dichotomies in language proficiency scales previously developed
by Ingram and Wylie (1989). Although, as North points out, there is some overlap in this classification, it gives ‘a rough-and-ready overview of the range of different approaches’.

**Table 1: Dichotomies in Language Proficiency Scales developed by Ingram and Wylie (1989) and reordered, glossed and given examples by North (1993: 83).**

| 1. Whole range of proficiency (from zero to native-speaker or ‘near-native’ proficiency) | Partial, relevant range (from zero to the maximum relevant level) |
| Ex: FSI (Foreign Service Institute); ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable) | Ex: English National Curriculum, which covers the range of proficiency of English school-children in 10 levels |

| 2. General proficiency | Language for specific purposes |
| Ex: ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages); Eurocentres | Ex: ELTDU (English Language Development Unit) and IBM France, which are each a grid of subscales for specific language activities |

| 3. Four skill (with sub-scales for four skills) | Overall (one scale for global language proficiency) |
| Ex: all the above except ELTDU and IBM | Ex: Finnish Foreign Language Diploma for Professional Purposes |

| 4. Serial (a continuous scale) | Threshold (like a set of exams which by covering all the relevant levels give a series of pass/fail thresholds) |
| Ex: ILR/ACTFL; ASLPR (Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings); Eurocentres | Ex: RSA (Royal Society of Arts)/Cambridge Certificates in Communicative Skills in English; RSA Modern Languages |

| 5. Global, holistic (a synthetic judgement which level is most applicable) | Absolute/noncompensatory (if you don’t pass specified points, you fail the level) |
| Ex: ASLPR; Eurocentres | Ex: ILR/ACTFL and exam/threshold models |

| 6. Total behaviour (quantitative and qualitative: focused on the degree of skill in the performance as well as the tasks) | Tasks only (quantitative: a list of stringing together tasks the person can complete) |
| Ex: FSI | Ex: ASLPR; RSA; Eurocentres |

| 7. Proficiency (a holistic concept; development along a continuum) | Graded objectives (mastery of a specified list of tasks; not scales of proficiency due to the lack of holistic definitions of performance expected at the different levels) |
| Ex: all the above | Ex: SCOTVEC (Scottish Vocational Educational Council; GOML (English Graded Objectives for Modern Languages) schemes |
Most of the above scales refer to measuring both productive and receptive skills, although nowadays it is the direct testing of the productive skills of speaking and writing that is mostly associated with assessment instruments of this kind. Some language testing experts consider such a division undesirable:

*In language testing we have perhaps suffered from the too easy division of activities into receptive and productive modes, and the concomitant assumption that a different strategy is necessary for each. It may be possible, however, to develop quite sensible tests in writing or speaking that count up discrete items scores and equally sensible tests of the quality of someone’s comprehension of a heard or read text.*

(Pollitt 1991: 51)

### 3.2. Holistic vs. analytic scoring

Marking procedures have traditionally been divided into two distinct kinds: holistic and analytic. **Holistic or global scoring** is defined as a type of marking procedure in which ‘raters judge a stretch of discourse (spoken or written) impressionistically according to its overall properties’ (Davies *et al.* 1999: 75), whereas in **analytic assessment** ‘a separate score is awarded for each of a number of features of a task’ (Davies *et al.* 1999: 7). According to Hamp-Lyons (1991: 243), holistic assessment can be further subdivided into ‘holistic scoring’, ‘primary-trait scoring’ and ‘multiple-trait scoring’.

The holistic approach was used in the development of the very influential ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) proficiency scale (with its predecessors) and ELTS (English Language Testing Service) tests. In order to assign a global rating, the assessor matches the test-taker’s performance with one of the verbal bands / descriptors provided by the scale.

The origin of holistic scales can be traced back to the notion of language proficiency defined as a single unitary ability (Oller 1976). Bachman and Palmer observe that ‘many such scales contain multiple “hidden” components of language ability’ (1996: 208) and identify several difficulties in using them: problems of inference, difficulties in assigning levels and differential weighting of components (1996: 209, 210). It is hard to interpret a test-taker’s score obtained on a holistic scale due to the fact that the inferences made from a rating are not very precise. The bands describe multiple areas of language proficiency and tend to reflect what Bachman and Palmer (1996: 210) call ‘a profile of a particular type of test taker’.
The very act of assigning levels poses another problem. Raters are often faced with test-takers’ performances displaying configurations of criteria different from those included in the description of particular bands. This is a common problem because it seems impossible ‘to assume that students progress equally in all criteria as they move up the band scale’ (Weir 1993: 45). A further drawback of using global scales observed by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 210) refers to differential weighting of components. Due to the multiple nature of band scales, raters might either consciously or unconsciously attach different importance to particular ‘hidden’ components constituting each descriptor. This might occur both when different raters assess the same performance and when one rater assesses performance on two different occasions.

An issue which has to be considered in holistic scoring is the number of bands. Most testing experts opt for between 5 and 9, or even between 4 and 6 levels (Luoma 2004: 80), to be included in the scale. Too few bands make the system too coarse, whereas too many become too fine-tuned and prevent raters from making consistent distinctions. Carroll and Hall (1985: 78) also point to the ‘shrinkage factor’ (raters’ reluctance to use extreme categories of a scale) as one of the considerations in the decision on how many bands to use.

**Figure 2:** Two band descriptors (out of ten) from a global scale for ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (Breiner Sanders et al. 1999: 13–18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOVICE MID</th>
<th></th>
<th>NOVICE LOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor’s words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Holistic assessment is practical for decision-making because it provides only a single score. It also offers another undeniable advantage, especially in the assessment of writing, namely this kind of scoring is very quick (Hughes 1989: 86). The economy of time in the holistic approach usually allows for multiple scoring of the same piece of writing, which in turn leads to greater reliability (Davies et al. 1999: 75). From an oral rater’s perspective, global rating scales can be read and remembered much faster than analytic grids with many criteria. However, in light of the problems discussed above, some experts (Weir 1993; Bachman & Palmer 1996) are strong proponents of analytic scoring in which the test-taker’s performance is assessed separately in relation to several pre-determined criteria.

Analytic scoring has many advantages. It is claimed to offer more exact diagnostic information (Davies et al. 1999: 7) in that it provides ‘a “profile” of the areas of language ability that are rated’ (Bachman & Palmer 1996: 211). Moreover, it forces all raters to concentrate on the same aspects of a language sample in a very explicit way. It also ‘disposes of the very problem of uneven development of subskills in individuals’ (Hughes 1989: 94). In this respect, it is in accordance with currently accepted theoretical developments describing language proficiency as a general factor plus a few separate factors (Bachman 1991), rather than a single unitary ability (Oller 1976). Analytic scoring offers also some psychometric advantages – the very fact of assigning several different scores to one performance leads to greater reliability of rating (Davies et al. 1999: 7). Bachman and Palmer (1996: 211) observe that this type of scoring is in line with what raters actually do in the process of rating. Even when they are asked to assess language samples impressionistically, they tend to do so on the basis of some criteria which they find salient in their own understanding of proficiency.

One of the criticisms commonly made of analytic scoring is that while focusing on different aspects of performance, raters may ignore its overall effect (Hughes 1989: 94). This problem is sometimes solved by assigning an overall impression score in addition to the analytic ratings, and checking for discrepancies between them. Analytic ratings may be affected by the ‘halo effect’ defined as ‘the distorting influence of early impressions on subsequent judgements of a subject’s attributes or performance’ (Davies et al. 1999: 72). The main practical disadvantage of the analytic method is the time it takes in comparison with the holistic approach. A further problem with analytic scoring relates to the choice of criteria and their weighting.
Assessing Oral Production

Some experts (Matthews 1990: 118) openly criticize the selected criteria as ‘at times arbitrary and inconsistent’. Others (Hughes 1989: 94; Underhill 1987: 97) highlight the flexibility of the system in which it is possible to vary the criteria and their importance depending on the language aspects being tested. In terms of the number of criteria, the Common European Framework (2001: 193) suggests that four or five categories begin to cause a cognitive overload for raters, whereas seven is the psychological upper limit.

For many testing experts, the key question in using proficiency scales is whether to ‘treat criteria separately in an analytic scheme (lots of separate impressions) or try to collapse them into some form of global impression banding’ (Weir 1993: 42). Both SLA and LT research studies show language performance as very complex and multidimensional, and ‘to assume that all this complexity can usefully and meaningfully be squeezed into a single number or a single point on a unidimensional scale is (…) absurd’ (Spolsky 1995: 358). However, as Sigott observes, in many contexts it is a

**Figure 3:** An extract (three out of six criteria) from TEEP (Test in English for Educational Purposes) analytical scale for speaking (Weir 1990: 13–18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriateness</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – Unable to function in the spoken language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Able to operate only in a very limited capacity; responses characterised by socio-cultural inappropriateness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Signs of developing attempts at response to role, setting, etc. but misunderstandings may occasionally arise through inappropriateness, particularly of socio-cultural convention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Almost no errors in the socio-cultural conventions of language; errors not significant enough to be likely to cause social misunderstanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – Unable to function in the spoken language; almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate, except for a few stock phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Syntax is fragmented and there are frequent grammatical inaccuracies; some patterns may be mastered but speech may be characterised by a telegraphic style and/or confusion of structural elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Some grammatical inaccuracies; developing a control of major patterns, but sometimes unable to sustain coherence in longer utterances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Almost no grammatical inaccuracies; occasional imperfect control of a few patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance and adequacy of content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – Response irrelevant to the task set; totally inadequate response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Response of limited relevance to the task set; possibly major gaps and/or pointless repetition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Response for the most part relevant to the task set, though there may be some gaps or redundancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Relevant and adequate response to the task set.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
single score that is required of a test, rather than a detailed profile of test-takers’ abilities. These ‘practical considerations may override theoretical concerns’ (Sigott 1996: 11) and call for the use of holistic scales. Some testing systems combine the use of both types of scales in their assessment procedures. This is the case in the speaking part of the ESOL-administered Cambridge tests, where an interlocutor gives a global achievement rating, and an assessor provides five scores using an analytic rating scheme with the following criteria: Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, Interactive Communication (UCLES EFL Upper Main Suite Speaking Tests, Instructions to Oral Examiners, 2000; Macqueen & Harding 2009). In Common Reference Levels (Common European Framework 2001), both global and analytic approaches are adopted depending on the purpose of assessment. The common reference points might be presented in single holistic paragraphs if the aim is ‘to make it easier to communicate the system to non-specialist users’ or ‘to provide teachers and curriculum planners with orientation points’ (CEF 2001: 24). Alternatively, if the purpose of assessment is to provide detailed diagnostic information to learners and teachers in particular areas of language proficiency, a grid-like analytic scale might be of better use. The Common Reference Levels thus present a very flexible system allowing for the selection of different marking procedures and scale types depending on the particular circumstances in which a test is to be used.

3.3. Interlocutor and rater training

In a one-to-one oral test format, the interviewer performs the functions of both an interlocutor and assessor / rater, whereas in some other tests of speaking proficiency these two tasks are separated. The interlocutor’s conduct and elicitation strategies as well as the rater’s interpretation of scoring criteria have been documented to considerably influence the interviewee performance and score on the speaking test.

The interlocutor’s behaviour during the interaction process has been examined from a number of perspectives. Some researchers (Ross 1992; Ross & Berwick 1992; Young 1995; Lazaraton 1996; Richards & Malvern 2000; Malvern & Richards 2002) investigated the accommodative practices employed by interviewers and their effect on test-takers’ discourse and scores. Others (Brown & Lumley 1997; Brown 2003; Brown & Hill 1998; Lumley & Brown 1996) focused on variability in interviewing style. In
yet another line of research, Lazaraton (1996b) explored the interviewer’s adherence to script in a guided oral interview.

The variability in interlocutors’ conduct observed in many studies led the testing experts to emphasize the need for thorough initial and extensive continuous interlocutor training. Such training is seen as the way to ensure greater uniformity in interlocutors’ behaviour and, consequently, more consistent ratings:

*In fact, the achievement of consistent ratings is highly dependent on the achievement of consistent examiner conduct during the procedure, since we cannot ensure that all candidates are given the same number and kinds of opportunities to display their abilities unless oral examiners conduct themselves in similar, prescribed ways.*

(Lazaraton 1996b: 19)

Initial **interlocutor training** focuses mainly on questioning / elicitation techniques and consistent conduct during the speaking test. Its length depends largely on the structure of the test. More guided, highly-structured formats providing a script or ‘interlocutor frame’ (Luoma 2004: 54) usually require a shorter training time than relatively unstructured oral interviews. Therefore initial training periods may vary from several hours (as in the case of ESOL FCE where interlocutors need to adhere to the interview script very closely) to several days (as in the case of an unstructured ACTFL OPI). In large-scale formal tests, after the training interlocutors are examined and need to be certified before being admitted to conduct official oral interviews. Their further work is monitored through the supervision of senior examiners and/or the requirement of undergoing the re-certification process.

**Rater training** is a common procedure aiming to ensure the reliability of scoring. The process of training ‘is designed to “socialise” raters into a common understanding of the scale descriptors, and train them to apply these consistently in operational speaking tests’ (Fulcher 2003: 145). The prospective raters are introduced to the system by being exposed to different levels on the scale through taped or live spoken performances. The first stage of rater training typically consists in illustrating the scale by clear exemplars of each level on the *benchmark tape* (Luoma 2004: 178). Each scale level is usually typified by several taped performances to show the possible variation. In the next stages of the training, the participants practise scoring in the system’s terms by viewing more taped performances and discussing the reasons for their ratings. The certification procedure requires the trainees to prove that they have internalised the system – they
demonstrate this through independent scoring of some taped performances and their ratings need to be consistent with those of other qualified raters in the system (Luoma 2004: 177). For high-stakes speaking tests, raters need to go through the re-certification process at one- or two-year intervals.

Some researchers (Lazaraton 1996: 166, 1996b: 27; Brown 2003: 19; McNamara & Lumley 1997: 154; Ross & Berwick 1992: 170; McNamara 1997: 458) have stressed the neglect of interlocutor training in current oral proficiency testing practices, which is paralleled with the large amount of time and effort devoted to training raters.

3.4. Exploring interlocutor / rater perceptions

One study (Szmerdt-Chandler 2005) examined the attitudes of Polish teachers of English towards spoken language assessment and the current practice of oral skills testing in the EFL classroom. To maximise illumination of the research issues, a variety of methods of data collection were used, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The design of the study alternated the two kinds of data collection over several years. It started with exploratory fieldwork – participant observation during the testing and assessment training carried out by the researcher, which led to the development of quantitative instrumentation in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was later filled in by 300 Polish teachers of English in the second stage of the study. The questionnaire findings were further deepened and tested systematically in the next round of qualitative work with a sample of fifteen informants (Miles & Huberman 1994: 41, 42). This last stage of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews and verbal reports (immediate retrospection with teachers marking speaking from video tapes). Verbal reports were used to give insight into the subjects’ rating processes in order to determine the extent to which teachers actually rely on the criteria they identify as salient in oral assessment for the determination of a student’s score.

The findings of the study (Szmerdt-Chandler 2005) revealed that oral assessment in the classroom poses significant problems for Polish teachers of English, related both to the nature of this kind of assessment and the limitations of the classroom setting. The speaking skill appears for many the hardest skill to assess. Some teachers admit to being totally overwhelmed by the challenge involved in oral testing. The subjectivity inherent in spoken language assessment is perceived as its central problem. It is followed by not
enough class time, logistical problems, lack of methodological knowledge, and the students’ reluctance towards this kind of assessment.

Polish EFL teachers are keenly aware that in a speaking test more than just a test-taker’s ability is assessed. They enumerate various interviewee characteristics (stress, personality, age, different disabilities, content knowledge), interlocutor factors (amount of help offered, elicitation skills, friendliness, formality of behaviour, familiarity with the interviewee) and task attributes (relevance of task to testee’s age, interests, knowledge, cognitive development, amount of preparation, register) as variables affecting students’ performance on tests of speaking ability. Most teachers adopt a very humane attitude claiming that interviewee characteristics should be taken into account during the assessment process.

Most commonly used oral test tasks include: class / group discussions, speeches and presentations based on texts / articles, role-plays, simulations, spontaneous and prepared dialogues, group orals, individual interviews with a teacher, anecdotes with a grammar focus, creating stories based on picture prompts, information gap activities and presentations of projects.

Oral assessment criteria are derived by English teachers in Poland from a variety of sources: predominantly from their own intuition and experience, but also from methodological workshops / conferences and literature, assessment schemes used by large examination boards, teacher training college methodological classes, co-operation with other teachers and the Internet. Testing and assessment training shapes teachers’ assessment schemes in that they often declare it as their source of oral assessment criteria (combined with their intuition and experience). The reported analytic criteria, however, are often used for arriving intuitively at one global / holistic mark. A truly analytic oral assessment scale with comprehensive descriptors for each criterion is rarely used by English teachers. Interestingly, despite the proclaimed communicative orientation of teaching and testing nowadays, grammatical accuracy still appears to be given a special prominence in oral assessment schemes. Polish teachers of English recognize the importance of interactive communication in speaking but have problems with defining and applying this criterion in the testing of their students’ oral skills.

The researcher concludes that Polish EFL teachers need to receive more thorough practical and theoretical pre-service and in-service assessment training since the institutional training currently offered often proves inadequate for their needs. Language testing and assessment courses should
be given more prominence in the teachers’ methodological preparation for their work. They should particularly focus on the notion of interactive communication and aim to maintain consistency of its interpretation. At the same time, the role of grammar/grammatical accuracy in spoken language testing needs to be reconsidered and explicitly addressed. EFL teachers should also be familiarized with different types of assessment schemes (impressionistic, holistic, analytic; locally developed, empirically-derived) as well as their functions and applications in different contexts.

4. Conclusions

The design and development of tasks for oral assessment is closely connected with the needs of a particular assessment context. Once the kind of speaking to be tested has been defined (construct-related information), specific tasks and rating criteria can be developed and assessment procedures implemented. Testing spoken language is generally considered difficult because ‘we expect test scores to be accurate, just and appropriate for our purpose’ (Luoma 2004: 1), i.e. we want the test to be valid and reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Elżbieta Gajek

LEARNER-ORIENTED TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT THROUGH DIGITAL VIDEO PROJECTS

Young people grow up in an omnipresent environment of audiovisual texts. They can watch nearly a hundred channels on TV, use the Internet, or watch messages on screens placed in public spaces such as streets, the underground, etc. This huge input encourages them to attempt their own production of videos. This desire to make films is manageable because digital tools for audio and video recording and editing have become available for personal use and, as such, can also be used in education. Every digital camera and most mobile phones can be used to record a video. Although not every piece of equipment provides the users with good picture and sound quality, the quality of simple devices is usually acceptable if it is the content that is emphasized. This is the case in educational video projects. It can be predicted that audiovisual didactic aids may change language teaching methodology in the future. Project work allows the integration and assessment of many linguistic and general competences (Komorowska 2002: 156). What is more, the curriculum for modern languages in Poland, as in many European countries, requires the teacher to introduce project work, allow learners to use information and communication technologies, and to encourage students’ self-assessment (Rozporządzenie Ministra 2009). The description of a video project presented below is an attempt to show how these three elements can be combined. In this article only some aspects of applying home-made video project work as a tool of assessment in language learning and teaching are presented. To provide a context for assessment, some key issues of digital project work should also be described.
1. Digital video projects

Projects with ready-made videos, found e.g. on YouTube, or home-made videos are very productive in language education. They can be used for different purposes, e.g. for learning language elements and skills, stimulating discussions, consolidation, strategy and cultural awareness building, as well as intercultural and international communication (Willis 1983; Allan 1985; Lonergan 1984, 1995; Altman 1989; Stempleski & Tomalin 1990, 2001; Harmer 2002; Hill 2000; Sherman 2003). Projects which include the students’ making a video encourage various skills and competences essential for the future and described in detail in the next part of this text. Digital video project work can be initiated and organized by one subject teacher, e.g. a language, information technology or art teacher. The teachers of different subjects may also start a cross-curricular project which they can collaboratively supervise and assess.

2. The educational value of video projects

2.1. Learners’ creativity and self-expression in projects

A project is a very productive method of teaching as its framework empowers learners. They are allowed to negotiate the content, the methods of learning, the outcomes, and the way the results will be presented. Project work enhances creative, collaborative work with the support of an experienced teacher. This changes education from reproductive to productive. In the former the aim is to perform the task in a way (sometimes even in ‘the’ way) the teacher knows and expects. In the latter the aim is to learn what the teacher expects, but embracing the learner’s individual style, pace, and engagement. What is more, project work opens doors for what exceeds the teacher’s expectations. In project work the teacher’s role is to facilitate the learners’ work, and to help and guide them to targets (to some extent) unknown to the teacher. The teacher may assess the current performance or the learners’ ability to change and learn. Students’ responsibilities and tasks also change. They need to use various skills and competences – such as first language, foreign languages, innovation and enterprise, social skills, digital skills and cultural expression. Thus, a video
project provides opportunities for integrating Key Competences for Lifelong Learning as they are defined in the European document (*Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* 2006).

### 2.2. Integrating skills and competences

Project work contributes to the holistic approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Students have a chance to integrate skills and knowledge gained in various subjects in formal education, they may also use their talents and competences developed outside the school. Some of these competences may go far beyond the requirements of the school curriculum. Thus, students may contribute to further curriculum developments. Project work can also contribute to social cohesion as different students may use various talents and benefit from them.

In any type of video project work students need to work on the language. They develop various **language skills**, such as reading, taking notes, writing, editing, speaking and listening. What is more, they select information, mediate between languages and genres, and translate from the first language and other languages if they use website sources in other languages they know. They also mediate the language of written and spoken genres.

The project also creates an environment for the introduction of terminology related to film production such as:

- **Shot** – ceaseless film picture started at the moment of turning on the camera and finished at the moment of turning it off. It is like a ‘look’ of the camera lasting normally about 10–20 seconds. There are various types of shots, e.g.:
  - *long shot* (LS) – a large shot where the character or a group of characters is located in a certain environment;
  - *full shot* – shows the human figure, or several figures, from head to foot; it can also show relations between characters;
  - *close-up* – a shot in which the actor’s face is tightly framed, so the audience can guess what he/she is thinking and feeling; this shot shows emotions.
- **Camera perspectives**:
  - *normal perspective* – the camera is positioned at the eye level of a standing person;
  - *bird’s eye perspective* – the camera is directed downwards; it makes objects appear smaller, minimises them;
- **forced perspective** – the camera is directed upwards, it makes the objects appear larger, emphasizes awe and exposes domination.

- **Scene** – several shots showing what is happening in one place at a given moment.

More English film terminology is available on the *Film Terms* website.

Verbal **communications skills** perceived as social and linguistic skills in various genres are developed in the native language and in the language of the project. Students negotiate the project with the teacher and with their peers informally, in and outside class. They share the outcomes with their peers, or with the school community, in a structured, formal way. They reflect on comments and instructions and respond to them. In international projects within e.g. eTwinning (Gajek 2007a, 2007b; Gileran 2006), Socrates-Comenius or globalgateway programmes students experience intercultural communication as they need to negotiate the content of the project with foreign partners. They also negotiate the meaning of words and expressions. As non-native speakers of a foreign language they *learn in using* communication strategies indispensable in intercultural dialogue. The school’s non-threatening environment provides safe opportunities for developing intercultural skills. A video helps to transfer cultural information that is so obvious that it is usually taken for granted by the author of the video.

A **video project** is the perfect way to raise students’ awareness of **nonverbal and paralinguistic** aspects of **communication**. The gestures, face expressions, ways of looking and breathing, body posture, body distance, dress code, etc. of the interlocutor are very important in comfortable intercultural communication as they consciously and subconsciously affect the emotions of the participants. For example, if misunderstood, face expressions or body posture may be perceived as frightening or offensive. The skill of interpreting nonverbal messages belongs to a broader cognitive ability – visual literacy.

**Visual literacy** is the ability to understand and interpret information conveyed in an image. On the level of reception, this literacy becomes crucial for developing intercultural skills, for properly understanding cultural

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1 To give a personal example: the way British ladies raise their eyebrows, opening their eyes wide and showing wrinkled foreheads, has frightened the author for years, even though she knows this expression shows interest and kind, deep involvement in the conversation. ☺
messages and the media. On the level of production, visual literacy helps to create visual messages to convey meaning for cultural, intercultural and media purposes. Working on a video project and editing films help to better understand media manipulation, e.g. what and how objects and people are shown, the role of the position of the camera and of cutting the picture.

Students also have a chance to develop cultural awareness. Video projects help to sensitise learners to their own culture, as they often need to present it. For example, either they prepare information to be published on local servers or in Wikipedia, or they prepare materials for foreign partners which they need to present in an attractive way. Either way they need to look at their culture from somebody else’s point of view. This helps to develop intercultural skills and critical thinking. In international projects, when students receive video materials from partners, their cultural awareness rises.

Intercultural communication tends to be perceived as the main goal of language teaching (Knapp & Knapp-Potthoff 1990: 83; Müller 1994: 156; Torenc 2007: 155). Thus intercultural competence becomes crucial in language learning and teaching. International collaborative project work on a video, its content and production, which involves a lot of negotiations and interpretation of messages, contributes to developing intercultural competence. While working on such a project, students face an unknown, unpredictable cultural otherness in communication and have to deal with it to reach the shared goal.

In language-oriented video projects, media competence develops as a side effect, because digital media are used as tools for linguistic and intercultural educational purposes. A video project is an occasion to read and talk, and to discuss with students this competence which is essential in our world. Media education materials prepared for educational use in other countries, such as Media Education Wales websites, would be of much help.

A competent2 person (Strykowski & Skrzydlewski 2004):

- knows the grounds and roots of the contemporary media;
- understands the language of the media, including e.g. visual content, nonverbal messages;
- can receive the media messages in a controlled and critical way;
- can evaluate and use different media for his or her purposes;
- can create media messages.

2 This refers to media competence.
Thus, media competence includes both receptive and productive skills, as well as critical thinking. In school students sometimes produce textual media messages, such as advertisements and newspaper articles. A video project provides opportunities to create visual media messages.

**Cognitive competence** integrates the competences presented above with thinking skills – such as selection of relevant information, differentiation of facts and opinions, interpretation of data, coherent presentation of the results in a verbal and visual way (Komorowska 2002: 156).

As technology in video projects is also used as a tool for learning and communication in a meaningful way, technical skills are acquired spontaneously. There is a need for the use of technology, which can be motivating for students.

### 3. Types of digital video projects

The root of video is photography. Thus, it is worth mentioning at least some types of educational projects that constitute the link between photography and video, e.g. a photo essay, pecha-kucha (see below), digital storytelling and home-made video.

Photo essays can be easily prepared with a sequence of still photos, optionally accompanied by a few commentaries. The idea is to present a narrative in which a picture constitutes the main means of conveying the message. Photo essays can be easily presented with the use of PowerPoint, Photostory, website or blog.

A pecha-kucha is a PowerPoint-like presentation consisting of 20 slides, each of which is presented for 6 seconds. As pecha-kucha should be audience-friendly, it needs to be entertaining even if it deals with serious topics. A slide can be a still picture or a video, it can also present a written text.

Digital storytelling is an interesting educational idea which combines narratives rooted in ancient bard stories, fairy tales and literary works with digital technology. A digital story can be the final product of a video project.

Home-made video projects can combine still photos, presentation slides or moving pictures. They can be divided into two groups: internal and external. In internal projects the audience consists of school community members – students, teachers, and parents. External projects are prepared
in cooperation with a group of learners from a distant community (country). Sometimes in an external project a video is prepared to present to these foreign partners some elements of the students’ culture. In the case of international cooperation, the two projects – internal and external – are undertaken simultaneously.

An interesting but time consuming type of video project is a collaborative video story. To create it, students in two groups (if possible from different countries), having agreed on the general topic, prepare episodes of a story. One group prepares the first episode and sends it to the partners. They in turn prepare the continuation of the story in the next episode, then send the two parts back and so on. This approach is very creative but requires much more effort to keep the story coherent, both in regard to style and technology (Rubin 2007).

4. Stages in video project work

A good start for making a film is to refer to the Internet. *Making the Film – Quick Start Guide to Filmmaking, Co-operative Young Film-Makers* and *First Light Make a Film* websites are a good reading matter and can serve as an introduction to a video project in English.

The well-known stages of preparing a project should be combined with unique steps of video production which need to be included in the process of project work.

- **Stage 1 – Pre-production, planning.** At this stage the plot, screenplay, storyboard and individual participants’ share of work should be carefully planned and prepared.
- **Stage 2 – Production, film recording.** At this stage focus should be on the quality of the picture, light, sound and background. Safety of filming needs to be provided in terms of social, moral and technical aspects.
- **Stage 3 – Post-production, film editing.** Copying on the editing workstation and saving backup copies of the recorded material should be ensured. Editing, adding special effects, subtitles (if needed) and credits are time consuming but can be a lot of fun.
- **Stage 4 – Distribution, final work.** Revisions and final corrections are introduced at this stage. Finally, the video is ready for presentation and distribution.
A video prepared for educational purposes should be short, not longer than 5 minutes. In most cases a one-minute film is enough to convey the meaning and message.

5. Technology for digital video projects

The number of technical applications for video and sound editing is growing. Some popular examples are presented below.

- **Photostory** is an Internet downloadable application which helps to create dynamic pictures made of still photos or drawings prepared by students. Music or a soundtrack can be added.
- **Windows Movie Maker**, an application for video editing, is available in any Windows package. It is user-friendly and makes it possible to cut a video recorded in popular formats (except quick time *.mov formats), adding an extra soundtrack, title page and subtitles.
- **i-movie** for Mac is a very effective video-editing application available for Apple computers.
- **Adobe Premiere** is a commercial video-editing package which offers more functionalities and a better quality than Windows Movie Maker.
- Linux users may try Internet downloadable **Cinelerra** to edit videos.
- For sound editing, **Audacity** can be applied. It is available for Linux, Mac, and Windows users.

The functions of each application depend on its version. As by the time this article is published the current versions of the programmes will most likely have been upgraded, so it is pointless to present here their technical data in detail. Thus, it is recommended to refer to the latest versions available on the Internet or in shops.

Some students at level A and A+ may also benefit from using a text-to-speech Internet system called **ivona**, which reads aloud a written English text. The soundtrack can then be added to a video edited in another application.

For technological high-flyers, video conferencing systems such as ooVoo, dimdim and zoho are also recommended. At this stage of technology development it is necessary to constantly search for new applications. However, there is a tendency for some of the popular non-commercial programs to either become commercial or overloaded with advertisements. With the development of social Internet software called either Web 2.0 or
social networking, some of the applications, such as Wiki or blog, can be used at the preparation stage of a video project. A blog can also be the result of a project.

6. Ethics and safety issues with video

Creating a video project can be a good occasion to remind students about ethical issues in connection with digital media. This relates to copyright – they can use only their own still pictures and videos. If they use a picture from the net, they MUST give a reference to the website. If they use a text from the Internet, they need to paraphrase it or put it in quotation marks to avoid plagiarism. Ethical issues also include respecting personal and human rights. If the students record people’s faces, they have to explain to them what the aim of the recording is, ask for permission to use the images for the project and, if possible, show them the finished project. They mustn’t upload onto the Internet anything that may be embarrassing or offensive to the person presented. In all circumstances the topics have to promote universal human values – they may not promote violence, crime or harassment. Safety also relates to being cautious in contacts undertaken via the net (Barta & Markiewicz 2008).

7. Varieties of assessment

As mentioned above, a video as an outcome of the project can rarely reach the technical quality of a production prepared by a professional studio. Therefore the assessment of video project work should be learner-oriented rather than product-oriented. In the theoretical approaches to assessment presented below – democratic assessment, dynamic assessment and assessment for learning – the focus is on the student and the educational results including all skills and competences applied in the video project work.

7.1. Approaches to assessment

Although the theory and practice of testing and evaluation have in recent years greatly developed (Bachman 1990; O’Malley, Valdez & Pierce 1996; Bachman & Palmer 1997; McNamara 2000; Komorowska (ed.) 2002;
Brown 2003; Johnston 2003; Shohamy & Hornberger 2008), the search for various methods of assessment that serve different purposes in specific educational contexts continues.

On the one hand, it is obvious that in education what is taught should be assessed. On the other hand, if the methods of teaching empower learners, give them autonomy and embrace their individual potential, the methods of assessment should also protect their rights. Thus, the use of digital didactic aids, international communication between students and the need for skills other than simple literacy used in language learning all require a greater flexibility of the assessment framework.

The dialogue between the teacher and the learners in project work needs to continue throughout its final stage, i.e. assessment. If students’ individual preferences are respected during the project work, principles of democratic assessment may be applied at that final stage. The democratic approach to collaborative activities helps to integrate all stages (planning, process and outcome) of work and better understand its results (Agger & Löfgren 2008).

Although in presenting democratic assessment principles Shohamy (2001) refers to testing, the principles can be well applied to video project work assessment.

Applying democratic assessment practices implies the following:

1) The need to apply critical language testing (CLT) to monitor the uses of tests as instruments of power, to challenge their assumptions and to examine their consequences;
2) The need to conduct and administer testing in collaboration and in cooperation with those tested;
3) The need for those involved in the testing act to assume responsibility for the tests and their uses;
4) The need to consider and include the knowledge of different groups in designing tests;
5) The need to protect the rights of test-takers.

(Shohamy 2001: 376)

Teachers who approach the assessment of video project work may consider empowering students, protecting their rights and collaborating with them in the preparation of assessment tools.

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3 There is a long discussion on terminology and many attempts to define testing, assessment and evaluation, as well as establish differences between them. In this article the meaning of assessment is close to evaluation.
Another theoretical approach that may be considered is the concept of **dynamic assessment**, usually discussed within the broader field of formative assessment. The concept is built on Vygotsky’s work concerned with the Zone of Proximal Development. Dynamic Assessment attempts to answer the question: ‘to what extent does a score on a test reflect what a person can do, given the opportunities he or she has had, and to what extent does it reflect what the person could do, given the ideal; or nearly ideal opportunities in life?’ (Sternberg & Grigorenko 2002: 22). What is more, it provides opportunities to further learning as learning means the ability to change. ‘Dynamic Assessment is a form of assistance designed to influence performance and hence reveal students’ “potential for change”’ (Campione 1989: 151). The principles of Dynamic Assessment are characterised as follows:

- **The assessor actively intervenes during the course of the assessment with the learner, with the goal of intentionally inducing changes in the learner’s current level of independent functioning.**
- **The assessment focuses on the learner’s processes of problem solving, including those that promote as well as obstruct successful learning.**
- **The most unique information from the assessment is information about the learner’s responsiveness to intervention.**
- **The assessment also provides information about what interventions successfully promote change in the learner (connecting assessment with intervention).**

(Dynamic Assessment)

The dialogue between the teacher and the students may modify human abilities through making available constant instruction and support (Feuerstein *et al.* 1988; Leung 2007: 263). That is why the dialogue concerning the project plan and procedures should be continued at the assessment stage of the project work. On the one hand, Kozulin (undated) stresses the dissatisfaction with static assessment procedures based on current performance of a learner. On the other hand, he emphasized the importance of a direct assessment of the person’s learning ability taking into consideration the following:

- **Cognitive processes are highly modifiable. The task of assessment is to ascertain the degree of modifiability rather than the manifest level of functioning;**
- **DA which includes a learning phase provides better insight into the person’s learning capacity than unaided performance;**
- **The goal of assessment is to reveal the person’s learning potential and to suggest training intervention aimed at enhancing and realizing this potential.**

(Kozulin undated)
Creativity and innovation involved in the work on a video project allow the teacher to better understand the learners’ potential in a technology-enriched environment. Observing how a student responds to instructions and support helps to assess his or her ability to learn how to use digital tools in meaningful tasks.

Another concept that can help to approach assessment is **Assessment for Learning (AfL)**, which is widely recognized both in assessment literature (e.g. Black & Wiliam 1998; Leung 2004, 2005, 2007; Rea-Dickins 2001, 2006) and in educational policies (e.g. Daugherty Assessment Review Group 2004; Hutchinson & Hayward 2005).

The (seven out of ten) principles of AfL are as follows:

- **Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning**
  A teacher’s planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to initial and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.

- **Assessment for learning should focus on how students learn**
  The process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when assessment is planned and when the evidence is interpreted. Learners should become as aware of the ‘how’ of their learning as they are of the ‘what’.

- **Assessment for learning should be recognised as central to classroom practice**
  Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. That is, tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted, and judgments are made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making.

- **Assessment for learning should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed**
  For effective learning to take place learners need to understand what it is they are trying to achieve – and want to achieve it. Understanding and commitment follows when learners have some part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. Communicating assessment criteria involves discussing them
with learners using terms that they can understand, providing examples of how the criteria can be met in practice and engaging learners in peer and self-assessment.

- Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve

  Learners need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning.

  Teachers should:
  - pinpoint the learner’s strengths and advise on how to develop them
  - be clear and constructive about any weaknesses and how they might be addressed
  - provide opportunities for learners to improve upon their work.

- Assessment for learning develops learners’ capacity for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing

  Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

- Assessment for learning should recognise the full range of achievements of all learners

  Assessment for learning should be used to enhance all learners’ opportunities to learn in all areas of educational activity. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognised.

  (Assessment Reform Group 2002, Assessment for learning 10 principles)

Although the approaches presented above have much in common, the main difference is that A/L is focused on a student’s performance during the specific task, while Dynamic Assessment investigates the long-term development of the student (Leung 2007: 267).

The three approaches presented attempt to empower the learner, emphasise his or her potential, variety of skills and competences, ability to learn, responsibility and rights. Thus, they are well suited to the varied needs of assessment of the video project work. As all the elements of video project work can be assessed, it is the teacher’s and the students’ choice what to assess in a given project. The common practice in projects is to establish the assessment criteria at the beginning of the project plan in order to focus the participants’ attention on specific skills. The language teacher tends to choose linguistic, cultural and intercultural factors as the primary goal. However, other factors – such as technology, art or music – can also be included, as they strongly influence the affective, emotional reactions
enhancing or hindering language learning. It is the teacher’s and students’ shared decision what assessment criteria will be applied in a particular project. In the case of a cross-curricular project teachers of information technology or art may assess non-linguistic parts of the work.

7.2. Assessment tools

Assessment may only rely on the observations and reflections of the teacher and of the students, but it can be organised in more structured ways, such as portfolios (Delett et al. 2001); the theoretical approaches presented above may also refer to tests (cf. Shohamy 2001). A portfolio is a useful tool of assessing the cultural content of a project (Komorowska 2002: 158). A video can constitute only one part of the materials collected at the end of a project. These may include the original plan of the project, the contract between the students and the teacher, and materials that document the stages of the project’s development, such as storyboard or justifications for a particular choice of technology. The portfolio can be collected by an individual student or by a group. Self-assessment can be supported by reflections on progress, obstacles and changes to the original plan. In the case of international projects, samples of letters to foreign peers or printouts of chat discussions with them may be included as examples of linguistic real life production. Although a portfolio is not a popular tool for enhancing learning, its open and learner-centered framework allows for numerous benefits.

Benefits of portfolios

Portfolios provide:

- A continuous, cumulative record of language development
- A holistic view of student learning
- Insights about progress of individual students
- Opportunities for collaborative assessment and goal setting with students
- Tangible evidence of student learning to be shared with parents, other educators, and other students
- Opportunities to use metalanguage to talk about language

Portfolios promote:

- Student involvement in assessment
- Responsibility for self-assessment
- Interaction with teachers, parents, and students about learning
- Student ownership of and responsibility for their own learning
• **Excitement about learning**
• **Students’ ability to think critically about schoolwork**
• **Collaborative, sharing classrooms**

(Genesee & Upshur 1996: 100)

### 8. Variety of shared assessment instruments

Within the learner-oriented approaches to assessment presented above various assessment instruments can be applied:

- the **can-do** form uses statements beginning with *I can*…;
- a **three column table** describes achievements in three stages: approaching standard, standard and exceeding standard;
- a **five column table** contains a description of the achievements and behaviour which are being graded as very good, good, satisfactory, not satisfactory or failed;
- a **reflective essay** with some guiding clues contains specific elements that should be the focus of attention in the essay.

While planning and negotiating the assessment criteria and instruments the teacher and the students may decide to what extent the various skills and competences interrelate in the various instruments. For example, the assessment of the linguistic and cultural part of the video may be shared by the teacher and students, but the technical, artistic or media aspects of the project may be self- or peer assessed only – the language teacher cannot assess them. In cross-curricular video projects the technical or artistic values may be evaluated with the use of instruments developed by the students together with either information technology or art teachers.

### 9. The role of the participants of the assessment

At the end it is worth presenting the advantages and disadvantages of assessment by various participants of project work, i.e. self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment.

- **Self-assessment.** Self assessment leads to students’ greater maturity and responsibility for learning. It can also increase the teacher’s concern if it does not match his or her assessment. However, it is time-consuming, and students who are not familiar with this technique may
feel uncomfortable. Within the adopted approach to assessment the instruments should be negotiated with learners.

- **Peer assessment.** On the one hand, students learn how to learn from each other, how to provide feedback, give and receive critical appraisals and support in cooperation with peers. On the other hand, peer assessment encourages self-assessment, as making judgments about one’s own and others’ work is a necessary skill for study and professional life (Brown, Rust & Gibbs 1994). Peer assessment may improve motivation, develop autonomy and evaluation skills, and encourage deep rather than surface learning (Zariski 1996; Race 1998).

- **Teacher assessment.** The teacher may use any of the approaches, tools and instruments of assessment presented above, but the criteria need to be clear and accepted by the students. The share of each type of assessment in the final mark can be equal, that is one third each for self-, peer and teacher assessment, or the modifying coefficient needs to be negotiated.

### 10. Conclusions

A video project is an engaging, motivating and attractive way of learning various skills and competences. It provides opportunities for audiovisual communication including intercultural messages and nonverbal clues. Project work in a technologically rich learning environment can be combined with a variety of student assessment techniques using learner-centered perspective to allow for better insight into the learners’ learning abilities and potential. The learners become more engaged in assessment as a means of enhancing learning if they understand its goals, as well as realize its democratic character and respect for their rights. The flexible framework of a project helps to introduce into education a dialogue to empower the learner to take responsibility for learning under the teacher’s control and with his or her guidance and support. Thus, the combination of technology-enhanced learning and teaching with alternative forms of assessment enriches the educational environment and leads to a better preparation of the students for life outside of school. The example presented above shows how to merge the approaches to information and communication technologies, project work and learner-oriented assessment in language education, which may reflect both the needs of learners and the requirements of the curriculum.
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1. Introduction

From classroom tests to international exams and purpose-built assessment systems, computer technology has made its entry into language assessment and is undeniably part of it at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Since the advent of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the 1960s (Warschauer 1996), language teachers have harnessed computers to design classroom materials, deliver teaching content and assess the learning process. In fact, computer-aided language assessment was a twin to CALL, because it was right at the latter’s inception that the potential of computer technology for language assessment was recognised.

It is vital at this point to explain the difference between assessment and testing. Both are frequently used interchangeably, e.g. in Chapelle & Douglas (2006), but as Chapelle (2001) indicates, testing is normally conducted in order to yield scores which are further processed for ‘institutional decision-making’ (Chapelle 2001: 95) or administrative purposes. In contrast, assessment can be perceived as a set of testing routines which are aimed at facilitating the learning process: guide the learners with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, help them develop appropriate learning strategies or stimulate self-correction. Although language assessment seems to be broader in scope than testing, and it is the term preferred in current professional literature (Chapelle 2001), it is very frequently discussed from the perspective of Computer Assisted Language Testing (CALT).
This chapter begins with the history of computerised language testing in a nutshell. Subsequently, a basic content- and technology-related typology of CALT tests is presented, as well as an overview of CALT advantages and constraints. For the more practically-minded, procedures in CALT test design are analysed, along with the tools that test designers currently have at their disposal. Finally, the chapter is concluded by a look into the future of computer assisted language testing.

2. A historical overview of CALT

2.1. CALT in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s saw the initiation of computer-aided language education in general. Yet it so happened that the use to which the then-brand-new technology was originally put was informal assessment. On the one hand, this was motivated by the dominant behaviourist methodology of the 1950s and 1960s based on the idea of intensive, test-like drilling activities which relied on systematic provision of feedback and were to help learners develop correct target language habits; on the other hand, it was a consequence of the limited capacity of the large mainframe computer. Although the hardware was bulky in size by today’s standards, it could not run sophisticated software, due to reduced data-processing power. Thus, the equipment was best suited for activities where learners were provided with on-screen language stimuli, e.g. a gapped sentence, followed by a set of multiple-choice responses and immediate, albeit scarce, feedback on the quality of the response selected. Computer-based language drills focused mostly on grammar and vocabulary and they were developed as part of larger programs, such as the legendary PLATO system (Godwin-Jones 2001; Warschauer 1996), courseware developed and implemented at the University of Illinois in order to provide language instruction, practice and testing on a French course. Since both the system itself and the hardware which it required were very costly, similar solutions were very few and far between and they were mostly limited to academic institutions across the USA. It is worth adding that the mainframe computer could also be used to store test item banks or to process and return test results (Alderson & Bachman 2007).
2.2. CALT in the 1970s and 1980s

The introduction of the personal computer (PC) changed the situation at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. Although behaviourist theory had already crumbled under the pressure of criticism, drilling software persisted to exist and became even more widely available to schools and individual learners. Grammar and vocabulary testing with more sophisticated feedback but also recognition of partially correct responses was made available within packages such as the PC-dedicated Calis, written at Duke University, or Dasher, designed by the University of Iowa and addressed to Mac users (Godwin-Jones 2001).

Along with the emergence of Communicative Methodology, technology-enhanced skills practice was supposed to engage the learner in deeper interaction with language samples, which was made possible within programs for text reconstruction, such as Gapmaster or SuperCloze, or paced reading, e.g. MacReader or Reading Adventure.

The PC marked another important change in computer-based testing practices, which became evident in the 1980s, when word-processing software, e.g. WordPerfect, WordStar or Wang, empowered teachers to become involved in test design. What is more, PC-powered word processors also benefited language learners, who could assess their own errors with the use of in-built grammar- and spell-checking utilities.

2.3. CALT in the 1990s and after 2000

The late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s brought about even more dramatic developments, both in terms of computer technology and language teaching methodology. Theory-wise, it was fully realised that communicative practice should not involve activities whereby individual language skills could be practiced only in isolation, but it should rather integrate skills (Warschauer 1996) in a manner in which they merged in real communication. Therefore, a need appeared for new software which would help teachers and learners assess language skills holistically, ideally through tasks fostering genuine communication. To a degree, computer technology lived up to the expectations of the teaching profession, as it evolved in a number of revolutionary ways.

Firstly, the computer became a multimedia device, capable of displaying images, playing back audio / video files, and voice recording, which permitted testing language skills in more realistic contexts. Secondly, the CD-ROM increased the PC’s storage capacity, which helped create more
varied and elaborate language learning packages, with a set of assessment / testing options, e.g. *Tell Me More, English+*, or *Euro Plus+. Additionally, both innovations led to the development of a number of advanced authoring suites, e.g. *Toolbook* for the PC, *HyperCard* for the Mac and *Macromind Director*, eventually cross-platform. Simultaneously, word-processing substantially advanced.

The most dramatic change in computer assessment, however, was brought about in the 1990s by the introduction of the Internet (Alderson & Bachman 2007), which made it possible to administer tests on a whenever / wherever basis, independently of the operating system, the software installed or the hardware used. What is more, the Internet has stimulated the invention of new tools which can now be utilized in language testing, e.g. e-mail, web forms, virtual learning platforms or online authoring services.

Since then, computer assisted language assessment has not only developed, but also entered new areas. Recent software is even more sophisticated and delivers more overall capacity, e.g. word-processors (*Microsoft Word* or *Open Office Writer*) feature text review tools, more accurate grammar- or spell-checkers, and annotation options, which can be used for delivering extensive feedback on the quality of the testee’s writing (Atkinson & Davies 2008). Speech recognition systems and natural language processing have made it possible, at least to a degree, for the computer to test all the four major language skills, including oral responses and constructed response tasks (Alderson & Bachman 2007). Tests can now be delivered off- or online, and test content can be automatically adapted to the test taker’s language level in real time (Chapelle & Douglas 2006).

3. **Content-related CALT test types**

A basic classification of CALT tests with regard to factors that affect test content at large is based on three criteria: test objective, test function and test format.

3.1. **Test objective: testing language skills**

Test objective denotes the area of language to be tested, which essentially is either ‘content or observed behaviour’ (Noijons 2001: 50). While the former is relatively straightforward to assess, language behaviour, which is
made up mostly of language skills, poses so many problems that despite the concerted attempts of techno-savvy instructors to enhance the process of skills assessment by the use of computer technology, the question remains of the extent to which the computer can really assess skills. An answer comes from Atkinson and Davies (2001), who review computer-based skills tests and discuss their feasibility.

**Listening tests.** Computers do their job well as a replacement for traditional pen-and-paper listening comprehension tests. In fact, in multiple-choice, true / false or gap-filling tasks, computer technology lives up to teachers’ expectations, and even exceeds them, because the testing program does not only deliver and evaluate the test itself, but also plays back quality audio content, provided that the hardware meets a high standard.

Sophisticated listening tests which require constructed responses are more problematic. While short-sentence answers can be assessed, at least to a certain extent, more elaborate ones are beyond the capacity of today’s computers. Thus, the only alternative for the time being is to deliver such tests on the computer and leave assessment to a human rater.

In addition, Atkinson and Davies (2001) observe that the computer can be used to enrich listening material in a test by combining audio with other media, e.g. images or video clips. However, this suggestion must be approached with caution, as the extra cues might undermine the construct validity of the test and exert influence on its scores; in effect, apart from the testee’s listening skills, lip reading ability might be unintentionally tested in such a mode. Although Coniam (Chapelle & Douglas 2006) conducted a comparative research study of audio-only versus audio-and-video listening tests, and found no significant differences between them with regard to mode effect, Ockey’s (2007) findings indicated the opposite. Thus, Chapelle and Douglas (2006) insist that further research is desirable.

**Speaking tests.** Even comprehensive testing systems, e.g. WebLAS or custom-designed Gao and Liu’s (2003) web-based assessment and profiling system, steer clear of testing oral skills. What superficially looks like an omission is in reality a well-thought-out policy adopted by test developers which stems from the fact that fully computerised assessment of natural spoken language is today unattainable. Confirmation of this fact can be found in Enright’s (Jamieson 2005) statement that automated speech scoring is currently not planned for the computerised version of the TOEFL exam, which already covers all the other language skills.
The greatest difficulty boils down to speech recognition technology (Kirriemuir 2003), also known as voice recognition (Ley 2007) or automatic speech recognition (Atkinson & Davies 2001), which is necessary for the computer to sufficiently understand and correctly rate oral performance. Unfortunately, voice recognition only relatively recently enabled computers to interpret continuous human speech (Kirriemuir 2003), and it remains one of a range of ‘(...) niche technologies, prevented from becoming more widely used due to usability issues or the fact that they don’t necessarily improve productivity’ (Ley 2007: 72). Effectively, the technology is still too unreliable for automated assessment purposes, unless it is not natural speech that is evaluated, as is the case with SET-10, formerly known as PhonePass SET-10 (Chapelle & Douglas 2006), a human-independent test of spoken English for non-native speakers, whose speech samples are recorded over the telephone and computer-scored. It must be stressed that the test involves strictly controlled spoken tasks, not free speech, and focuses on word pronunciation, sentence reading or sentence repetition.

What most computerised speech assessment programs / systems do nowadays is limited to recording speech samples for assessment. CARLA (Computer-Assisted Recorded Language Assessment), an oral assessment system developed at the University of Windsor (Flewelling & Snider 2001), is perfectly illustrative of the trend. Although it delivers test instructions and audio-video prompts, records speech, and permits appending students’ recordings with audio comments and corrections, when it comes to actual assessment, the system does not offer much automaticity.

The middle ground between human versus computerised assessment is occupied by applications, e.g. COPI (Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument), whose evaluation mechanisms additionally take the test taker’s self-assessment into account (Norris 2001). In this way, the overall test score is better weighed, thus more reliable.

**Reading tests.** The kinds of testing assignments that basic computer-aided reading tests contain largely overlap with those of listening tests, e.g. multiple-choice, gap-filling or short-answer tasks. However, similarly to listening tasks, although these activities can be easily computer-checked and the resulting evaluation and feedback are immediate, they only partly reveal the testee’s reading comprehension skills. For more thorough testing, open-ended tasks are required, but they in turn cannot be fully assessed by the computer alone, unless they consist in single-word or short sentence responses. Additionally, the computer itself generates a host of other
problems, both interface- and mode-induced, which can impair reading. For example, students may find it hard to scroll through lengthy texts or they may be fatigued by reading extensively from the screen. Finally, the construct validity of such tests is questionable when one takes into account that reading from the computer screen is 25% slower than reading from paper (Nielsen 1997).

What can be assessed, however, is what Atkinson and Davies (2001) express as information-gathering skills, which are a reading-related aspect of media awareness. As hypertext permits linking various kinds of media, it perfectly suits tasks which evaluate the testee’s ability to find, verify and relate information from an array of sources.

Examples of computerised reading tests are the web-based IELTS Reading Practice Test or the reading component of the computer-based TOEFL iBT Test, whose samples are available on the Exam English website at http://www.examenglish.com/index.php.

Writing tests. Automated writing evaluation, also known as computerised writing evaluation (Warschauer & Grimes 2008) or automated essay scoring (Warschauer & Ware 2006), implies the use of computer technology in order to evaluate writing and provide feedback.

A barrier to reliable automated writing evaluation is the limited functionality of artificial intelligence, which, whilst expected to perform assessment with human-like accuracy, is frequently criticised for focusing too much on formal language aspects, e.g. spelling or grammar. It is too little content-driven, it ignores text aesthetics, and very importantly, it might be tricked. As research by Chodorow and Burstein or Elliot and Mikulas (Warschauer & Grimes 2008) indicates, computerised writing assessment applications are thus better applicable to large-scale standardised tests, whereas their use is limited in the classroom, where content is often more appreciated.

Despite all its shortcomings, computerised writing evaluation technology has been developing rapidly and modern essay scoring algorithms which are incorporated into comprehensive assessment systems can analyse texts against a wide range of criteria. For example, e-rater is an evaluation system based on a corpus of human-rated essays which can produce individualised scores in seven categories: grammar, text mechanics, language usage, style, lexical complexity, text organisation and word choice (Monaghan & Bridgeman 2005). Criterion, a commercial product running on e-rater, parses text syntactically and analyses discourse structure as well as grammar
and content vocabulary. *My Access!* also delivers holistic assessment, although its individualised feedback is limited (Ware & Warschauer 2006). *Intelligent Essay Assessor*, whose in-built natural language processing is meant to provide reliable scores, comparable with those of human raters, scores continuous writing for ideas and content, word choice, text organisation, sentence fluency, conventions and voice. However, the technology should be approached with caution for at least two reasons: a) it is only in its infancy (Chapelle & Douglas 2006); b) much research suggesting high correlations between computer- and human-rated essay scores is sponsored by software vendors, and is therefore not fully credible (Warschauer & Ware 2006). That is why Monaghan & Bridgeman (2005) suggest that in examination contexts a human rater should co-evaluate written work with the computer, and another person should ultimately resolve discrepancies.

Apart from software for standardised large-scale testing, other applications can be used for writing assessment in or out of the classroom. For instance, word processors are equipped with functions such as spell-, grammar, and style checkers; text-reviewing options for tracking and annotating changes; and marking tools. Teachers can also use purpose-prepared software, e.g. *Markin*, which does not generate feedback itself, but mediates the provision of human feedback through elaborate marking facilities.

### 3.2. Test function

Computer assisted tests have been mostly applied to contexts where traditional pen-and-paper tests have been administered. As a consequence, they can perform the same functions, and fall into the canonical types: a) aptitude tests, b) placement tests, c) diagnostic tests, d) progress tests, e) achievement tests, f) proficiency tests (Atkinson & Davies 2008), as well as g) classification tests and h) selections tests (Noijons 2001).

a) Aptitude tests are carried out in order to assess the testee’s potential for language learning in terms of the anticipated time that they might need to master a set of skills or develop a body of knowledge. Classically, the abilities measured by an aptitude test are: phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, rote learning ability and inductive learning ability.

b) Similarly to aptitude tests, placement tests are conducted prior to a language course and their function is to establish the language level of the testee, so that they can be allocated to a study group at roughly the same starting level.
c) Diagnostic tests aim to discover the weaknesses and strengths of the testee, with a view to improving their performance through appropriate level-patching or other forms of remedial teaching.

d) Progress tests serve the purpose of assessing the testee’s language learning progress within a set period of time. Thus, what is under measurement here is not particular language content exclusively, but rather the rate at which the testee has reached a number of short-term objectives.

e) Achievement tests are broader in scope than progress tests and they examine the test taker’s understanding of language content with reference to a given study course / programme and specific learning materials. They embrace both skills and knowledge and they are typically held at the end of a semester or year.

f) Proficiency tests are complex in that they measure overall language achievement on the basis of tasks that the testee is supposed to perform. Assessment here is carried out without any reference to particular study materials, and it covers the testee’s ability to use whatever competence they possess in order to perform successfully.

g) Classification tests might be viewed as a kind of placement tests, as they are also held prior to a period of instruction and they are aimed at grouping students with reference to their ability. Yet, unlike placement tests, they determine not only the path that will be taken by an individual learner within a language course, but also the learning goals that will be best suited for them.

h) Finally, selection tests are used to verify the suitability of a prospective language learner for a given course type. Such tests, at least ideally, help course coordinators ensure that the best candidates are admitted, i.e. those who display the desired knowledge and abilities.

3.3. Test format

Before implementing computer assisted language assessment, apart from setting test objectives and functions, test designers also have to make didactically informed choices concerning the format of the test in question, i.e. the kinds of tasks, or item types (Chapelle & Douglas 2006), the test will contain. In brief, the most common formats testers can choose between are: a) receptive response and b) productive response tests.
a) Receptive response tests are exemplified by multiple-choice, true-false or item matching tasks (Silye & Wiwczaroski 2002), where the testee responds to test prompts with minimal or no language production, hence the name selected-response tests (Chapelle & Douglas 2006), which is also in use. This test format is familiar to teachers, because it is often utilised within pen-and-paper tests, and computers are particularly effective in mimicking it electronically. Following Richards et al. (1992), the item types that receptive tests involve can be sub-divided into: alternate response and fixed response. Alternate response items present the learner with only two items to choose from, e.g. True / False, Yes / No, or A / B responses, whereas fixed response items contain more alternatives, as in multiple-choice tests.

b) Productive response tests consist of tasks where test takers are required to respond to test items through language production; that is why they are also known as constructed-response tests (Silye & Wiwczaroski 2002). However, since the degree to which language performance is required may vary between tasks, these tests fall into two sub-types: limited productive response tests, e.g. gap-filling or cloze tests, with only little language production involved; and open-ended response tests, e.g. role plays or compositions, where more elaborate performance is necessary. Richards et al. (1992) refer to the former as structured response items, and they call the latter free response items, as the testee’s answer is unrestricted in format and involves free production.

4. Technology-related CALT test types

Due to the technology they involve, computerised tests can be classified as: Computer-Based Tests, Web-Based Tests and Computer Adaptive Tests.

4.1. Computer-Based Tests

Computer-Based Tests are delivered on ‘an individual computer or a closed network’ (Roever 2001: 84). Although this definition seems to be too reductionist when one takes into account what the term computer-based implies – after all, tests delivered online are also undeniably computer-based – Roever proposed it to simply stress the distinctive character of web
tests and computer adaptive tests, when compared to ‘traditional computer-based tests’ (Roever 2008: 84).

A major advantage of computerised tests lies in the fact that they can provide instant group / individual test results and feedback. They also help the tester collect data with which to investigate learning and test-taking processes as well as test validation issues (Roever 2001). Additionally, computer-based tests guarantee consistent administration, e.g. when it comes to instructions, timing and time keeping. Besides, modern data-storage technologies, CDs or DVDs, enable testees to replicate test conditions in pre-test practice. Advances in technology have also enriched computer-based tests with multimedia, which contextualizes and authenticates the test tasks while also adding to the repertoire of input / response types that the tester can use (Chapelle & Douglas 2006). Finally, elaborate scoring algorithms permit partial scoring and enhance test adaptivity; natural language processing partly allows analyzing constructed response tasks, and artificial intelligence helps test oral communicative skills in a more interactive and authentic fashion.

The shortcomings of computerised tests related to the technology they deploy are: the need for computer literacy on the part of the tester and the testee; the cost of hardware and software; program design issues, such as limitations of technology or compromised security; and technical glitches, which may completely ruin a testing session. Another drawback is the limited extent to which such tests are applicable to particular circumstances: low-stakes / high-stakes contexts, knowledge / skills testing or close- / open-ended tasks. Roever (2001) remarks that computer-based tests can be administered without the numerous logistic problems that accompany pen-and-paper tests, such as the need to print and distribute test papers. Yet in reality, while solving many PPT-related problems, computers create a number of others, which are technology-induced, e.g. dependence on electricity, hardware and software maintenance issues or the need for well equipped and costly testing centres.

### 4.2. Web-Based Tests

Web-Based Tests could be perceived as added-value computer tests, whose strength derives from the medium they involve, i.e. the web (Roever 2001). It should be noticed that not all web-based tests need to be delivered online, as web technology can just as well be used on a local area network
or even a stand-alone computer. Despite its simplicity, present day web technology allows extended flexibility through user-defined interactive features, including: embedded multimedia, online forms, rapid feedback, input processing and response scoring.

Roever (2001) makes a distinction between low- and high-tech web-based tests. Low-tech web-based tests involve clientside programming, which means that they can be prepared and delivered on an individual computer. This makes them relatively easy to prepare and straightforward to use. Yet they are also insecure, as the test answers are easy to access through the source code of the test file. Depending on the expertise of the test designer, the file may or may not contain any automated evaluation mechanisms, and the responses often need to be posted to a human rater for examination.

High-tech tests involve serverside programming, which is more complicated, but allows data to be stored on the server, thus increasing test security. Consequently, test evaluation is more advanced and can be fully automated. However, as serverside authoring requires more programming skills, such tests are more difficult to create, and when they are targeted at testing institutions, which require tight security standards in data processing, the expertise, effort and time such tests take to develop may be very expensive.

The greatest value of web-based tests is the whenever / wherever mode in which they can be taken (Chapelle & Douglas 2006). As Roever (2001) claims, the web frees the tester and testee from the testing room: on the one hand, it allows the test taker to be tested individually, even within the comfort of home; on the other hand, the tester can automate the delivery process simply by uploading relevant material onto a web server. Test responses can be collected and processed automatically and the results can be accessed anywhere. In contrast to conventional computer tests, basic web tests are far easier to create due to the unsophisticated software they require and the user-friendliness of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), the dominant scripting code of web design. Even if the tester is not familiar with HTML at all, web editors, e.g. HTML Studio, will help them prepare HTML-based tests in visual mode. Interestingly enough, web editing functions are also available within modern word processors, which enable the user to save interactive documents as ready-made web pages. Finally, basic web tests are cheap to produce, which applies not only to the software used for creating and uploading them onto a server, the cost of server space
necessary to store the tests online, but also access. As testees do not need to travel to a testing centre anymore, and most of them use high-speed broadband connections, taking online tests does not require them to incur any extra costs.

Web tests lend themselves best to the testing of web-based language skills, e.g. writing e-mail messages, filling out online forms (Roever 2001) or editing online articles. They can also be put to use in discrete-point tests, where they can automatically score dichotomous (correct / incorrect) items. Like traditional computer tests, web tests can be enriched with audio-visual content, but it is important to exercise some restraint in design, as excessive audio-visuals will extend the upload / download time, which may affect the test's practicality at both ends, that of the tester and that of the testee.

On a less positive note, Roever (2001) cites a few potential problems encountered by those involved in web-based testing. For example, if an online test is unsupervised, it is impossible to verify a particular test taker’s identity. It is also a challenge to maintain item confidentiality (Silye & Wiwczarowski 2002), as test items accessible online can be easily shared between test participants through the very medium of the Internet. The testee’s responses can be retrieved by others, as Internet browsers temporarily cache web files on the local hard drive. Another issue relates to the use of clientside scripts, such as Javascript, for response analysis and scoring. As the scripts work locally, they already contain all the test answers against which the testee’s responses are compared. An averagely knowledgeable test taker can, therefore, view the test’s source code and find the full answer key.

Other problems relate to data storage and data transfer from the test to other formats, e.g. e-mail or spreadsheet, browser compatibility, and server failure. To put it briefly, data gathered during the testing session may be lost when the computer or the test website crashes. Learner responses may need to be transferred to an analyzable format, which can affect data quality, and some data may require manual editing prior to evaluation. What is more, if tests are not browser-compatible, the test content will be displayed improperly, and if the web server fails, the web test becomes totally inaccessible, which may result in the cancellation of a testing session, unless a mirror server with a back up copy is used.

Web-Based Tests can be used in low-, medium- and high-stakes assessment. In low-stakes testing, e.g. for feedback on learners’ progress, where students are less tempted to cheat, such tests provide privacy,
learner-centred procedures and individualized feedback. In medium-stakes assessment, e.g. on distance education courses, only a supervised web test will fulfil its role. The least advisable is the application of web tests to high-stakes contexts, where the web seems to compromise the security of the testing session too much. It must be stressed that high-stakes assessment affects the testee’s future career and life prospects and, as such, must be fraud-proof (Roever 2001).

4.3. Computer-Adaptive Tests

Computer-Adaptive Tests can be delivered on networked, personal computers (Silye & Wiwczarowski 2002) or online, in which case Roever (2001) refers to them as Web-Adaptive Tests. Adaptive tests are normally used as diagnostic or placement tests aimed to identify the testee’s language level. What makes them distinctly different from all other computer tests is their full interactivity consisting in the fact that they are not preset. Instead, they contain data banks out of which test items are automatically selected depending on the testee’s previous responses, i.e. if the previous question was answered wrongly, the testing program selects an item at a level below that of the last question, and if the previous response was correct, the test generates a more difficult item (Noijons 2001). What must be added is that the determiner of any forthcoming test item is not only the language form, but also ‘the character of the testee’s response. The test may therefore be content driven’ (Noijons 2001: 45) as well.

Silye and Wiwczarowski (2002) cite three main features of computer-adaptive tests: (1) test items are selected on an individual basis, with regard to the testee’s performance, (2) the test terminates when the testee’s language level is established, and (3) the test is normally shorter than a traditional diagnostic test. To enhance the diagnostic procedure, adaptive tests are frequently preceded by a pre-test to rough-tune the test proper to the testee’s ability in advance (Noijons 2001).

According to Larson and Alderson (Noijons 2001), the virtues of adaptive tests consist in: reducing the time necessary to properly estimate the test taker’s language level; lowering the testee’s stress levels through the provision of adapted items; immediate feedback; greater test security, as the test is generated in real time and is therefore different for every single testee; and easy editing, whereby new items can be added to or removed from the data base.
Some of the major concerns with adaptive tests are encapsulated by Chapelle and Douglas (2006), who point out that in order to design a reliable adaptive test a large item bank has to be compiled and pretested, and in order to ensure that the target construct will truly be measured a wide range of test tasks has to be designed.

They further observe that the construction of an appropriate item selection algorithm is a challenge and requires a proper understanding of Item Response Theory (IRT), on which the mechanics of an adaptive test should be based. In addition, certain language abilities, such as communicative language ability, cannot as yet be tested through adaptive tests, and it may be decades before adequate technology appears.

Finally, Chapelle and Douglas (2006) question the arguments of test security and reduced learner stress, put forward by the advocates of adaptive testing. They claim that test security may be compromised by testees memorising critical items and sharing them with others, and add that testees may feel depressed by the number of difficult items they are exposed to in the course of an adaptive test before their ability is diagnosed. Although web-based authoring / delivery systems dedicated to adaptive testing, e.g. SIETTE (Guzmán et al. 2005), have already been created, they do not eliminate the above-mentioned issues.

An example of a web adaptive test is The Business Language Testing Service, which ‘allows on-demand assessment of all levels of language ability in English, French, Spanish and German’ (BULATS). It tests reading and listening skills, and its sample is available on the BULATS website at https://bulatsdt.bulatsonline.org/appAdmin/dummyTest.html?method=language Selection.

5. CALT advantages and constraints

CALT cannot be treated as the ultimate assessment mode as, despite the benefits it brings, it has numerous limitations. Lists of both were proposed by e.g. Silye and Wiwczaroski, who had reviewed the considerations of Brown, Bock and Mislevy, Stevenson and Gross, and Henning (Silye & Wiwczaroski 2002), as well as Chapelle and Douglas (2006). However, dividing the characteristics of CALT dichotomously into advantages and disadvantages is an oversimplification, because what seems advantageous in computerised assessment is potentially constrained either by the very
technology or the human factor it involves. After all, even the most elaborate computer applications are only created by humans, whose tendency to err is fully recognised. Hence, the features of CALT more aptly fall into constraints and potential advantages.

5.1. Potential advantages

One of the benefits CALT offers to language testers is scoring accuracy. Although computers seem to have been created especially for scoring select-response test tasks, which they can handle well, they are much less effective at evaluating open-ended assignments. In addition, every computer program is only as accurate as its authors, thus even computerised close-ended tests may be subject to error. Noijons (2001) subscribes to this point of view and claims that many CALT developers lack proper expertise in generic test design, thus ‘little CALT [is] of good quality’ (Noijons 2001: 42).

Another advantage of CALT is immediate feedback, which can be delivered either in the course of or after the testing session, depending on the context. While both modes are potentially applicable to low-stakes situations, e.g. in-class assessment, only end-of-session feedback is suitable for high-stakes contexts, e.g. examinations. However, in CALT forms in which the computer is used only for data-accumulation, learner responses have to be human-rated, and feedback is far from immediate.

Computers also individualise the testing procedure. In some cases this may mean that the testee receives a set of tailor-made tasks targeted at them exclusively. In others, what is individualised is the pace at which the testee progresses through a test. Yet it must be added that individualisation is rather unlikely in standardised, norm-based exams, where tasks are produced for a general audience and timing is strictly limited.

Computerised tests also appear to generate less anxiety on the part of the learner due to the content, interface or mode of delivery they involve. For example, tests may contain items which are better adjusted to the testee’s language ability, although this is true only of selected types of assessment, e.g. computer adaptive tests. A clear interface, with conveniently positioned toolbars or instruction windows, can reduce uncertainty levels, but decisions on its optimal functionality will always be very arbitrary. Finally, the testee may also appreciate it when particular items are displayed on the screen consecutively rather than all at once. This may not only reduce stress, but also help the test taker focus on one
item at a time, but again, the degree to which this satisfies the test user is a matter of individual preferences.

In addition, technology may have a motivating impact on those testees who enjoy working with the computer per se. On the other hand, bearing in mind the accessibility of computer technology today in all kinds of social settings, this effect is likely to quickly wear off, if this has not already happened. Besides, in many language courses technology may have been used so frequently that students will either take it for granted, like they do the blackboard, or they will even feel weary of it.

Chapelle and Douglas contribute another two upsides of CALT: (1) uniformity of instructions and input within a test, which result in its ‘enhanced fairness’ (Chapelle & Douglas 2006: 23), and (2) varied types of input and responses, promoted by the use of multimedia. Simultaneously, the authors concede that uniformity may be compromised by voluntary help options within a program, or the clarity of test rubric. Input and response types may be limited by technological challenges.

### 5.2. Constraints on CALT

From the above it is clear that a critical examination of the potential advantages of CALT is already indicative of its limitations. Other constraints stem from the nature of computer-aided instruction in general. To cite but a few examples, instructors may find it hard to book a lesson in a computer suite, and even if they do, they may discover that the computers they can use are out of date or in poor working order. As Silye and Wiwczaroski (2002) suggest, limited computer capacity may mean dated display functionality or small screen size. In effect, it is not only that it will be possible to do less, but also that the principles of test validity and reliability may be violated, in which case computerised testing will have to be counted out, unless it occurs in a low-stakes context.

Henning (Silye & Wiwczaroski 2002) lists computer literacy and computer anxiety as other shortcomings. Both are strictly interrelated, as the lower the computer literacy of an individual testee, the more anxiety they are likely to experience during a testing session. Obviously, anxiety can also be evoked by other factors, such as the dehumanisation of the testing task, which some testees may find distressing.

Last but not least, Chapelle and Douglas (2006) are concerned about test security, as they observe that although web tests can supposedly be taken on
a whenever / wherever basis, they raise too many security questions in high-stakes situations, e.g. the verification of the actual test taker’s identity.

### 6. Procedures in CALT design

According to Noijons, CALT, within which ‘language performance is elicited and assessed with the help of a computer’ (Noijons 2001: 38) involves three processes: (1) test generation, (2) interaction with the testee, and (3) response evaluation. However, these could also be easily viewed as procedures in CALT design, where test generation, despite its primary position on the original list, is actually the culmination of work performed on the other two elements. This is so because before a test is generated, i.e. produced in a format in which it will finally be used, its interaction procedures, or delivery mode, and response evaluation must be decided upon and set up. Proper test planning must, therefore, take into account the content- and technology-related characteristics of computerised tests discussed so far, as well as aspects of test delivery, e.g. item types, response collection procedures, or test length, and elements of response evaluation, such as: response analysis mechanisms or feedback options.

#### 6.1. Delivery mode

The manner in which a test is administered comprises: a) test taker-computer interaction (Noijons 2001), b) test functionalities and c) user interface, along with d) item type, e) time management and f) registration of learner responses (Noijons *ibid.*).

a) As far as interaction goes, a test designer has two basic alternatives at hand: preparing a test with limited testee-computer interaction, where the computer will primarily score the test taker’s input, or designing a fully interactive test, with much more in-test interaction. Which of the two to choose is the decision of the test author and depends on the testing context, the hardware and software available, the authoring tools used and the cost-effectiveness of either solution. Apart from the amount of interaction, its nature needs to be established, and that will be reflected in the remainder of test delivery components described below.

b) Test designers have to be aware of the degree to which the final test scores may be a consequence of the test functionalities they make
available to the testee, such as test instructions, hint buttons, help options or instant / delayed feedback. These choices will have a serious impact on test usability and practicality, let alone validity and reliability, and they should be thoroughly analysed before a test is administered. This is particularly pertinent to high-stakes tests, which need to adhere to a set standard.

c) Graphic User Interface is another test component whose influence on test practicability should not be overlooked. Modern technology makes it possible to design tests with an advanced interface which will contain e.g. text, images, audio and video, written instructions, audio-video tutorials, images or screenshots. It must be realised that their appeal to users may differ from person to person, and many of them will require specific skills related to human-computer interaction, e.g. double-clicking, scrolling or dragging-and-dropping. Additionally, what is also important is interface lay-out, as the on-screen position and accessibility of certain program functionalities influence test clarity.

d) Test item type constitutes a criterion which is central to delivery mode. As was discussed above, multiple-choice or true / false items can be most easily computer-scored. However, the response method may have an effect on the answers the test taker selects. For instance, in true / false tasks, learners are more likely to select ‘the truth’ when in doubt’ (Noijons 2001: 52). In multiple-choice items, the testee’s answer may be conditioned by the quality of distracters. It should also be borne in mind that, while select response tasks are by and large limited in their capacity to measure the testee’s language knowledge, and skills in particular, constructed response items, which seem to be the more effective alternative, pose problems related to data processing. Optimally, a combination of both select and constructed responses could be used – however, this is only a compromise between an option limited in its testing capacity yet relatively easy to score and one which is more open-ended but difficult to assess.

e) Time management in any kind of testing is pivotal to delivery procedures, as it affects how a test taker progresses through the tasks assigned. It also determines the overall doability of a test and the degree of stress the test generates. In CALT, time seems to matter even more, as it is usually kept by a soulless machine, which will stringently observe the timing set at the point of test design, irrespective of the while-testing circumstances. Sufficient time should be allocated to a computer assisted test, so that
the testee can follow the instructions, make use of all the interface functionalities available and answer all the test questions. It may be difficult to arbitrarily decide how much time will suffice. On the one hand, a test should last long enough to do away with the pressure of time, which may have a detrimental impact on test takers, particularly those with limited computer literacy. On the other hand, certain language micro-skills, e.g. those of reading, may require a time limit on relevant assignments. Also, testees should not be kept at the computer screen for too long because it leads to fatigue and eye strain (Noijons 2001).

f) Registering learner responses is necessary in order to collect language data for subsequent assessment, but such data might also reveal vital information about specific test aspects: the suitability of individual items for a given item bank, the calculation of group scores or test quality evaluation (Noijons 2001). What might be added is the establishment of individual learners’ test-taking strategies or, in the long term, a data-driven study of language acquisition processes (Chapelle 2001). The test developer must determine how much information should be gathered, in what mode the data should be collected and stored, and whether, or to what extent, to reveal the data collection process to the testee.

### 6.2. Response evaluation

This CALT procedure refers to the processing of the afore-elicited language performance on the basis of the data collected throughout the test, and it covers: a) the purpose and scope of evaluation, b) the timing of response processing, c) the type of response processing, d) the purpose and nature of feedback, and e) feedback timing.

a) In CALT, response evaluation may go beyond the obvious calculation of the final score. For instance, depending on its purpose, evaluation may require an interpretation of test-related information, such as the number of questions answered, the time taken by the testee to do so or the test taker’s route through the questions. These data can yield information whose value exceeds the test in question, and can be used to establish learner / group profiles, including learners’ progress across a series of testing events within a language course. If the test results are to play a diagnostic function, the scope of data accumulated in the course of evaluation will need to be wider and the data itself will be more important than a single numerical score.
b) The purpose of evaluation will directly affect the timing of response processing, and the evaluation mechanism will be programmed to analyse data subsequently, or in real time, which is the case in computer-adaptive tests, where test items are generated on the basis of the testee’s answers to the preceding questions.

c) Also, Chapelle and Douglas (2006) raise the issue of the type of response processing that a computer assisted test is to handle. Depending on the test function, the application may either be expected to analyze answers on a simple correct / incorrect basis or to examine them linguistically, which might involve partial scoring, and thus increase the reliability of the test per se. The latter type of evaluation would be particularly desirable in constructed response tests, with the caveat that even modern computers have limited power to evaluate open-ended tasks.

d) Response evaluation is commonly related to the provision of feedback, whose purpose and nature will be determined by the computer-assisted assessment / testing choice. Within the former, feedback will aim at guiding the learner through their own language development. It will, therefore, be vital that it reveal more task level information about the test taker’s performance, based on individual response processing (Almond et al. 2002). Summary feedback may be necessary when a number of language performance qualities in a test are to reveal, e.g. the testee’s general reading proficiency (ibid.).

In contrast, in computer-assisted tests, which are frequently used to discriminate between strong and weak learners, process-oriented information will be less vital than a summative score.

Almond et al. (2002) perceive another dimension of the nature of feedback as focus on either a particular language area, e.g. spelling, a number of areas, or the overall quality of language performance.

e) Just as important is the issue of when to reveal the results to the test taker. Automated evaluation and scoring will frequently occur on test delivery, and the question arises of whether to present this information to the testee immediately or delay it until after the test has terminated. In assessment it may be advisable to provide immediate feedback in order to sensitise the learner to specific aspects of their language performance, or raise their meta-cognitive awareness. In testing feedback is normally delayed until the very end of the test, as otherwise it would affect the testee’s performance and cast a shadow on the test’s validity. After all, what matters in testing is that the test method does not exert influence on the results obtained.
7. CALT tools

Here is a brief review of computer-based tools which, to a varying degree, support the CALT test designer in generating, delivering and evaluating computerised tests.

7.1. Word processors

A simple, computer-generated test can be designed using a word processor, e.g. *Microsoft Word* or *Open Office Writer*. However, the actual procedure may be time-consuming, as the document prepared has to be laid out and typed by the test author alone, with little design-dedicated automaticity on offer. A better solution is a word processor with an installed, purpose-built plug-in application, such as *Zarb* for *Microsoft Word*, which seamlessly integrates with the word processor as a set of toolbars and menus featuring automated test editing functions. The application permits the creation of crosswords, word search puzzles, gapped exercises, matching, multiple-choice and error correction tests, as well as sentence or word manipulation tasks, e.g. shuffled sentences. It also adds extra functionality to *MS Word* by offering language-related options, such as replacing selected words with their synonyms / antonyms, gapping particular parts of speech or transforming verb forms into infinitives.

It should be borne in mind that when a test is a word-processed text document, it will have to be administered in pen-and-paper format. Even if it is dealt with electronically, delivery will not be automatised and evaluation will have to be carried out by the teacher alone, perhaps with the help of the computer in highlighting, annotating or correcting errors.

7.2. Authoring software

A more sophisticated option is test authoring software, available free of charge or bought commercially. An example is *Hot Potatoes* from Half-baked Software, a program that comes free of charge on condition that it is used for non-commercial, educational purposes and the tests designed with it are made available online with unrestricted access. The program is modular and offers applications which can be used to create interactive multiple-choice, short answer, matching, crossword, cloze reading and
mixed-type tests, including hybrid or multi-select questions. The tests can be supplemented with audio-video content and come complete with on-screen instructions, hint buttons, instant scoring and feedback; they can also be grouped into test sets. An interesting option is the possibility of the program automatically sending a record of learner responses to the teacher’s inbox. A host of similar programs is either downloadable from the Internet, e.g. Alan Pearson’s Testmaster, or can be used online, e.g. WebAuthor from the University of Pennsylvania or the Discovery School Quiz Centre from the Discovery School. Others have to be bought commercially, e.g. Testmaker or Respondus. The latter is a comprehensive tool which helps instructors create professional language tests with the use of advanced editing options or wizards, i.e. guided editing procedures. The materials prepared can be archived within the program and published online. In addition, the software offers complex test score analysis and custom report functions, which enable the tester to receive statistical information on the testees’ scores or test-taking practices (Chapelle & Douglas 2006).

Authoring software will allow a degree of computer-based evaluation but its scope will be limited by the capacity of the program in use. Apart from the final score, additional feedback may be provided, but if it is to go beyond the traditional ‘Yes, that’s right’ and ‘No, that’s wrong’, it needs to be entered manually by the test developer at the point of test generation. At the same time, some authored tests may not retain the response data they accumulate, which means that e.g. the score, the errors made and the student’s test route become irretrievable on test termination.

Whatever the tool and however convenient it may be to use, it ought to be remembered that authoring programs confine the test developer to only the formats placed within them by manufacturers. The end product, i.e. a test, is only a combination of prefabricated layouts, interaction patterns, response processing and score reporting options.

7.3. In-house authoring

While authoring applications may fully satisfy an individual teacher working in low-stakes testing contexts, they may not suffice to meet the expectations of professional test developers, who are in need of custom-designed tools, tailored to specific circumstances. In such a situation, the challenging option of so-called ‘in-house authoring’ (Chapelle & Douglas 2006: 78) can be followed, as has happened at various institutions. For
instance, the University of California, Los Angeles, has been working on the Web-based Language Assessment System (WebLAS), whose purpose is to create, administer and assess language tests as well as process, analyse and report assessment data (UCLA 2001) on students’ weaknesses and strengths or language learning progress. Significantly, the institutional implementation of custom-made authoring systems indicates that they require extensive expertise and a considerable amount of time and effort, and that they involve huge costs. Thus, only large institutions select this option, after they have weighed the potential gains against the necessary investment.

7.4. Internet-based resources (websites and VLEs)

Another option for test designers is the Internet, which provides a platform for web-based testing, but can also be utilised to support other forms of assessment. As Atkinson and Davies (2008) suggest, websites can play the role of an examination-related resource, featuring examination information; downloadable materials: revision guides and exemplary exam questions; links to pre-exam practice activities; and model answers. Password-protected web pages can also be used by testees for uploading completed assessment tasks and downloading works evaluated by the teacher.

Web-based testing itself can be managed with multi-purpose and multi-functionality computer systems, referred to as Virtual Learning Platforms (VLEs) or Learning Management Systems (LMSs) (Brandl 2005), which are educational platforms designed for online course delivery, including test authoring and delivery utilities. VLEs permit the creation of a language course environment, including tools for the presentation of teaching content; virtual interaction with the materials, the course instructor and other students; testing; automated / human evaluation and feedback; and course administration.

The most widely used commercial VLEs are WebCT and Questionmark. Their popular open source counterpart, Moodle, has also gained worldwide recognition, despite limitations in functionality.

To take an example, WebCT can be used to create and deliver online or local network-based courses, classwork assignments and tests (Chapelle & Douglas 2006). In terms of test delivery utilities, the program offers a number of functionalities: (a) it displays instructions on the test lay-out, item presentation procedures, and troubleshooting hints; (b) it keeps track of the user’s navigation through the test; finally (c), it gives the testee the
power to begin and terminate the test at the push of an appropriate button, which triggers off automated scoring (Chapelle & Douglas 2006). WebCT is often coupled with Respondus, a test authoring program, which expands the testing potential of the VLE platform. Due to their high cost, however, VLEs are the domain of tertiary education, while primary and secondary level teachers will rather have to rely on cheaper programs, such as Hot Potatoes or Testmaker, which may be limited in capacity but serve their purposes.

7.5. Custom-made testing systems

The most sophistication with regard to data accumulation and scoring can be obtained in tailor-made testing systems, such as the one described by Gao and Liu (2003), which is used for generating, delivering and evaluating tests. It produces both item and summary score reports, instant feedback, and test data analyses. Qualitative and quantitative assessment within the program is supplemented with student profiling functionalities, which enable the tester to track the most common errors for groups or individual testees, and reveal the testees’ learning processes or even learning styles. Unfortunately, as is often the case with technology, the more elaborate functions the testing system permits, the more effort it takes to develop.

8. Conclusions

Although certain issues pertaining to computerised assessment, e.g. test validity or reliability, have been left out of the discussion as they are beyond the scope of this chapter, it is already clear that effective computer assisted language assessment is a challenge, both technologically and didactically. Nevertheless, computers have not only entered language assessment, but also spawned a great deal of research in the area, which has helped the field establish itself in current language teaching pedagogy.

Looking into the future of CALT, it must be emphasised that despite the steady growth of dedicated technologies to date, current assessment procedures are far from perfect and require further development. At the same time, due to the sophistication level of modern CALT, the progress required may take relatively longer than the advances made so far, which is demonstrable by looking at what was proposed as future directions in CALT almost a decade ago and has still not been resolved. For instance,
Roever (2001) called for more effective improvements in web-based oral testing, or the use of virtual reality for authenticated performance-based testing. Chalhoub-Deville (2001) proposed that completely new test types be developed to break away from the traditional pen-and-paper formats. Silye and Wiwczaroski (2002) suggested developing intelligent testing systems, and better mechanisms for constructed response analysis. Almond et al. (2002) envisaged deeper-level test adaptivity, the delivery of varied feedback and collection of extensive performance data. Finally, Chapelle (Chapelle & Douglas 2006) called for more elaborate authoring tools, open to multi-tier modification and allowing the creation of better purpose-designed tests.

However much research has been devoted to these developments, the issues still stand, and only if/when they are eventually resolved, will CALT merit full recognition at all levels of language instruction. Simultaneously, new challenges appear before the old visions materialise, e.g. more recent goals include: more effective natural language processing, near-human voice recognition or artificial intelligence which would bear more resemblance to its human model. Thus, a reasonable expectation towards future CALT is a balance between systematic development leading to the resolution of long-standing problems and generation of innovative ideas which would meet the demands of the teaching profession at large with even greater efficacy.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


1. Introduction

It is no accident that a significant portion of all developmental research has been devoted to issues of language acquisition and linguistic performance (Bialystok 2007: 393). Nor that a sizeable share of the K-12 curriculum is being dedicated to language arts. On the one hand, language is ‘a cognitive instrument [which] provides access to concepts and meanings, the logical system for problem solving, and creates the organizational basis for knowledge’ (ibid.). On the other, it is ‘a social tool [whereby] human interactions occur, social position is determined, and educational opportunities are defined’. It is not only a system of symbols registering categorisation of the world and human creation, but also an instrument used to alter reality – suffice it to recall the newspeak of propaganda employed by totalitarian systems on the one hand, and recommendations to use the ‘language of benefits’ and ‘positive thinking’ in theories of marketing and psychology on the other. Words – created, used, supplanted with new ones – lie at the foundations of ideologies, religions, legal systems and cultural markets (Paradowski et al. 2009).

In countries such as Poland, marked by very high linguistic homogeneity, with only very few geographically isolated ethnolinguistic ‘attractions’ such as the Kashubians, Lemkos, Silesians or Górale, we got used to the uniform linguistic landscape. Many of us take it for granted, oblivious of the fact that in much of the world schools may be cauldrons of regional dialects, vernaculars can be used with family and friends, while bureaucratic exchanges may be carried out in yet another, ‘official’ language – a situation
that the locals will accept without batting an eyelid. Multilingualism is
the natural potential available to every normal human being rather than
an unusual exception; monolingual speakers are but the consequence of
environmental factors which have failed to provide the opportunity to learn
another language:

*A theory purporting to account for universal language learnability cannot be
considered adequate if it excludes the non-monolingual speakers of this world.*

(Satterfield 1999: 137)

Multilingualism need not even require the ability to speak unrelated
languages; a user of e.g. the ‘literary’ and a vernacular / dialectal variety
is already multicompetent. At the same time, it does not require *perfect*
fluency in all the languages at one’s command; setting the boundary would
probably be a mission impossible. We might quote here Byram (1997),
according to whose theory of intercultural competence fully mastering
a TL is not advisable, as this causes the speaker to lose his/her original
perspective.

Ironically and paradoxically, it has been in largely monolingual
environments that researchers seemed most concerned with bilingualism
and that exhibited the most fervent discussion about the consequences of a
multilingual experience (Bialystok 2007: 394).

2. Educational ramifications of bilingualism
– the shifts in approaches

Bilingualism has enjoyed a marked surge in research concentration
over the past decade, but it first attracted the attention of psychologists in
the 1920s, when underlying the interest was the desire to understand why
bilinguals perform poorer at school than their monolingual peers (May *et
al.* 2004). Because in many countries, particularly English-speaking ones,
bilingualism typically ‘affected’ immigrants or inhabitants of economically
backward rural regions (such as Welshmen in Great Britain or Francophones
in Canada; Wodniecka 2007), poor, deprived of rigorous education, and
plying the simplest of trades – while their monolingual peers were typically
raised in families of higher socioeconomic status – it came as no surprise
that incipient research, which completely ignored these socioeconomic
factors, would most of the time work out to the disadvantage of the former,
not extending beyond corroborating the prevalent pernicious stereotypes
that being bilingual equalled being a second-class citizen. To make matters worse, the intelligence tests used in these studies were primarily phrased in the language that was more convenient for the researchers, which did not necessarily accommodate the testees (Wodniecka op. cit.).

It was only with Elizabeth Peal and Wallace Lambert’s seminal 1962 study that this prevailing unfavourable outlook on the mental abilities of bilinguals was reversed. Surprisingly at the time, in a comparison of two carefully selected groups of children, the bilingual ones significantly outperformed monolinguals on the majority of both verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests. In the boom of studies that followed, bilinguals have been found to outscore individuals speaking more than only one language on a variety of tasks measuring flexibility in thinking and effectiveness of attention, and focusing on one thing while ignoring others.

3. Bilingual speakers’ verbal abilities

One difference between the child who grew up bilingual and the post-pubescent acquirer of another language is the lag time in switching between languages, which implies differences in the speed of access of the relevant linguistic representations. Some researchers (e.g. Kuhl 2004) also believe that children who have not been exposed to more than one language by the age of one, lose the ability to distinguish between the phonemes of their vernacular and other languages, hypothesising that from then on the brain hones in on sounds of the mother tongue and battles against alien pronunciations. Barring these considerations, many of the findings from studies on ‘naturalistic’ bilinguals have been confirmed by research focusing on learners in the foreign language classroom context. Just as ‘it is through comparison that one becomes aware of one’s own culture, much of which is unconscious and taken-for-granted’ (Byram 1997: 113), children and older persons learning foreign languages have been demonstrated to have enhanced metalingual abilities (Galambos & Goldin-Meadow 1990; Ewert 2006, 2008), that is, a keener awareness of the language’s meaning and structure (manifested for instance in the detection of anomalous sentences (Bialystok 2001) or judging how many words there are in a sentence, whatever the practical utility of this skill). Foreign language learning ‘enhances children’s understanding of how language itself works and their ability to manipulate language in the
service of thinking and problem solving’ (Cummins 1981), for instance, they
develop more grammatical awareness (Kemp 2001) and are more capable
of separating meaning from form (Ben Zeev 1977; Bialystok 1986). They
exhibit a markedly better sensitivity to, and perception and understanding
of, their mother tongue, tending to use new vocabulary more accurately
because – knowing that there exists more than one word for everything
they know – they pay more attention to word meanings (Baker 2000). They
thus give credence to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1821) conviction that
‘Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen’ [‘Those
who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own’].
Bilinguals also display demonstrably better proficiency and accuracy (e.g.
Bastian 1980; Dumas 1999; Van de Craen et al. 2006; Ewert 2008), an
increase in expressive L1 oral productivity (Nespor 1969) and stylistically
more complex writing (Kecskes & Papp 2000), ostensibly regardless of race,
gender, or academic level. One speculative explanation is that multilingual
children receive more linguistic input, which requires them to undertake a
greater amount of language analysis.

Foreign language study, use and proficiency have also been shown to
significantly positively correlate with faster acquisition of reading (Yelland
et al. 1993) and improved reading scores (for children of both average
and below average intelligence, see e.g. Horstmann 1980; Garfinkel
& Tabor 1991; Hong & Leavell 2006). This linear correlation (though a note
should be made at this point that mere correlation need not always imply
causation) has been explained by bilinguals’ increased ability to effectively
apply more reading strategies due to their greater experience in language
learning (and reading in different languages; Nayak et al. 1990).

Also, contrary to the fear that bilingual children may be ‘late talkers’,
some studies (cf. Johnson et al. 1963; Kosmidis 2006) have shown that they
develop a greater vocabulary size over age, including their L1 (particularly
when the language studied had Latinate roots; Masciantonio 1977; but see
Oller & Eilers (2002) for a disparate view).

More complex linguistic knowledge and higher language awareness
of bilinguals translate into better-developed language-learning capacities,
including use of significantly more grammar learning strategies (Kemp
2007). Foreign language practice both reinforces the L1 content of the
general classroom (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004) and makes learning further
languages quicker and more efficient than for hitherto monolingual peers
(Cummins 1981), particularly in institutionalised learning contexts (Wolff
2006). Additionally, participants with knowledge of more than two languages report lower levels of communicative anxiety and foreign language anxiety from L1 to L4 (Dewaele et al. 2008; but see Dewaele (2007) for a different result). One possible explanation why tri- and quadrilinguals are generally less anxious than bilinguals when speaking is that as a consequence of their multilingualism, they have become better communicators (cf. Baker 2000) and their self-confidence – as well as self-perceived competence – has grown accordingly (Dewaele 2007: 404).

4. Bilinguals’ nonverbal skills

Charlemagne (c. 742–814 A.D.), King of the Franks, is known to have claimed that ‘to have another language is to possess a second soul’. And, indeed, the advantages that multilinguals exhibit over monolinguals are not restricted exclusively to the linguistic domain, but extend outside the area of language, and the substantial long-lived cognitive, social, personal, academic, and professional benefits of enrichment bilingual contexts have been well documented (Thomas & Collier 1998).

Language processing and cognitive development proceed differently in monolinguals and bilinguals in a number of ways. Psycholinguistic research has shown that in bilinguals, all known languages (and lemmas) are always active to some degree. It seems that, preparing an utterance in one language, a bilingual never ‘switches off’ the others. The phenomena of code mixing and code switching (e.g. Muysken 2000) further imply that languages are by no means stored as clearly delineated, isolated entities, but are permeable and interconnected.

A bilingual is not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; s/he rather has a specific linguistic configuration characterised by the constant interaction and co-existence of the two languages involved. (Herdina & Jessner 2002: 59)

Learning another language is not just adding a separate annex to an already existing construct, but it affects different aspects of the user’s cognitive structure in subtle ways.

Once, Latin used to be taught as an academic exercise or mental gymnastics with the aim of cognitive training. Over the past five decades, a growing body of research has demonstrated that owing to the continual mental exercise involved in speaking two or more languages, bilinguals more precociously than monolinguals develop several cognitive abilities, ranging
from creativity, cognitive flexibility, better reasoning and problem solving skills to perceptual disembedding. Peal and Lambert (1962), accounting for the observed advantage in bilingual children, posited that they are better at concept formation, find it easier to break free of well-trodden patterns of thought and to offer non-standard solutions to problems. Learning multiple languages early on leads children to realise that there exists more than one way of expressing something, and – consequently – more than one way to look at a problem, eventually training them in ‘scan[ning] rapidly a host of possible solutions’ (Lambert 1977: 15).

The advantage of speaking another language has been proven not only in naturalistic bilinguals, but also in foreign language learners, who display consistent improved performance over their monoglot schoolmates in core subject areas on standardised verbal and nonverbal tests (for an overview see Paradowski 2008), particularly in problem-solving and math exercises (Rafferty 1986; Andrade et al. 1989; Greene 1997; Van de Craen et al. 2006). In one experiment (Armstrong & Rogers 1997), after one term of 90-minute weekly language study, one experimental group actually received 1.5 fewer hours of math instruction per week and still outperformed controls. Bilingual speakers also develop better spatial abilities (Diaz 1983).

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that learners who make the greatest proportional gains owing to participation in foreign language programmes are students of average intelligence, who may have been struggling in other subjects, and who thanks to extended FL study gain ‘a kind of enrichment they may not be getting from other studies or experiences’ (Garfinkel & Tabor 1991). Thus, when pupils not accustomed to success in school excel in language study, it results in their developing a significantly higher self-concept and self-esteem (Masciantonio 1977; Andrade et al. 1989; Saunders 1998), which helps them reverse underachievement and may motivate to alter the performance trajectory also in other subjects.

Enhanced cognitive flexibility also means moderated perseveration, i.e. reduced difficulty in quickly switching between perspectives, tasks or different task criteria (e.g. from matching objects by colour to matching by shape or location in the Simon task, where reaction times increase when the location of the stimulus is incongruous with that of the button to be pressed) and ignoring distractions (Bialystok 2001; Bialystok & Shapero 2005; Bialystok et al. 2004, 2005; Mezzacappa 2004; Yang 2004; Kovács 2009). This beneficial effect of more agile attentional efficiency and inhibitory control has been observed for all age groups
• helping preschoolers and young children develop task control precociously (Bialystok & Martin 2004; Bialystok 2010; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok 2008; Carlson & Meltzoff 2008; Feng et al. 2007),
• enhancing performance of 20-year-olds (Green 1998; Costa et al. 2008),
• preserving the success rate in persons advanced in years at nearly that of 30-year-olds (where monoglots were slower and less accurate; Bialystok et al. 2004, 2006; but see Morton & Harper 2007 for lack of such a language-based performance difference),
• delaying deterioration of attentional control mechanisms associated with cognitive decline (cf. Craik & Bialystok 2006) and ‘demonstrating that the bilingual advantage extends well beyond childhood’ (Wodniecka & Cepeda 2007: 4).

Multilinguals’ enhanced performance is accounted for either by their ability to hold two languages in the mind concurrently without allowing words and grammar to leak from one into the other, or by superior memories for information storage and processing (Bialystok et al. 2004). An alternative interpretation (Colzato et al. 2008) is that bilinguals do not differ from monolinguals in terms of active inhibition (whose aim is to exclude particular information from processing), but have acquired a better ability to build up and maintain action goals in working memory: learning to keep two or more languages separate leads to a general improvement in selecting goal-relevant information from competing, goal-irrelevant stimuli). Bilinguals are also better at resolving conflicting information (Costa et al. 2008), an asset due to bilingualism helping to ignore information irrelevant for the task at hand, to take more advantage of cues when giving a response, or to reach and/or maintain a state of alertness allowing them to prepare for monitoring and conflict resolution (Costa et al., op. cit.). It is believed that bilinguals should have fewer problems with concentration, the capability to effectively monitor their actions, or multitask (Wodniecka 2007).

Individuals speaking more than one language also have a better ear for listening and sharper memories (at least in the case of immersion programmes; Ratte 1968; Lapkin et al. 1990). Recent evidence saw bilinguals outscore monolinguals on controlled recall tests; for instance, they proved more accurate at remembering episodic information (the context in which they have come across a fact; Wodniecka, Craik & Bialystok 2007; Wodniecka et al. 2010), showing similar levels of recollection to younger monolinguals, ‘suggesting that bilingualism may help offset age-related
memory decline [and] that individuals can benefit from becoming bilingual and actively using both languages, even if they learn a second language later in life’ (Wodniecka & Cepeda 2007: 5). There is also evidence that bilingualism may help significantly boost working memory (Bialystok et al. 2004), on tasks requiring mere maintenance of information in the mind, re-sequencing of visual-spatial information held in the mind, and temporal order memory (Feng et al. 2007). Working memory is crucial to all aspects of cognitive development and academic achievement – to hold in mind the facts already read and to relate them to the current reading, to mentally manipulate numbers and update the result after each operation, or to translate instructions into action plans (Feng et al., op. cit.).

Early FL study also results in substantial and long-lived neurological benefits to the developing brain: ‘[t]he learning experiences of a child determine which [neural] connections are developed and which no longer function’ (Dr. Michael E. Phelps, Chairman of the Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology, UCLA School of Medicine, quoted in NNELL 1996).

Language helps characterise and evaluate objects and phenomena from a given perspective (Potter & Wetherell 1987). In different languages, the relation between words and the concepts they signify may follow different patterns; sometimes requiring focusing the concept, sometimes leading to its diffusion (Pavlenko 1999). Two different languages not only differently describe ‘the same reality’ due to the lexical and semantic differences, but also contain manifold discourses related to diverse contexts (Pavlenko 2005). Therefore, mastering a second language and using multiple languages in parallel involves the assimilation of new perspectives and a conceptual restructuring and rearrangement of knowledge (Whorf 1956; Caramazza 1999), extending the available categorisation of objects and concepts (Kronenfeld 1996; Malt et al. 1999). Wierzbicka (1996), Paradis (1997), and Athanasopoulos (2001) showed that bilinguals parcel up and categorise meanings (e.g. colours1) in their respective languages.

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1 For instance, Latin lacked generic gray and brown, Navajo collapses blue and green, Shona speakers split green between blue and yellow (Pinker 2000: 51), French has a word to name a hue that is not brown yet no longer grey (taupe), Polish and Russian make a distinction between sky blue and navy blue, while the phrase ‘to give someone the green light’ may be meaningless in Japan where the traffic light for right of way is blue. From another kettle of fish, Japanese has different verbs for putting on garments, headwear, and other pieces of attire, and two lexemes denoting ‘water’ depending on whether it is hot or
in different ways. Krupińska (2008) conjectures that bilinguals prove better at providing definitions of abstract concepts, and argues for a greater richness of their conceptual representations: bilinguals perceive objects and phenomena whose interpretation requires a creative input in a broader light, more clearly, or in a richer and more diversified way. The higher results obtained in intelligence tests and problem solving by bilinguals compared with monolinguals may also be a consequence of this ability to acquire two cognitive perspectives (Pavlenko 1999). Owing to this available array of perspectives, multilinguals are quicker to realise that the words we use are arbitrary and that thought is independent of language (Ackerman 2004: 8), which is a vital step towards the development of abstract thinking (Wodniecka 2007). They find it easier to ignore the absurdity of a presented sentence or to temporarily forget the set meaning of a word and assigning a new one (e.g. Bialystok 2001). Bilingualism not only enriches the subjects’ linguistic repertoires, but also offers alternative conceptualisations invaluable for flexible and critical thinking (Pavlenko 2005). Able to gain multiple perspectives on an issue, multilinguals are also better problem-solvers (Kennedy 1994).

As they expand their personal horizons, being simultaneously insiders and outsiders, they begin to see their own culture from a new perspective not available to monoglots, enabling them the comparison, contrast, and understanding of cultural concepts. As the learning of a new language usually brings with it a revelation of a new culture, it also leads to a better understanding and appreciation of people of other nationalities, thereby lessening racism, xenophobia, and intolerance (Carpenter & Torney 1974). FL study offers unique insight into other cultures and promotes intercultural competence – especially as ‘[t]he positive impact of cultural information is significantly enhanced when that information is experienced through foreign language’ (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004), which is becoming increasingly sought after in the age of global interdependence and increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic societies. It has also been shown that children who know more than one language are better at picking up social cues, better respond to being corrected, and are more ready to take others’ advice.

not, Chinese has separate words for going to the cinema, theatre, or doctor, while Swahili has an assortment of greetings depending on the gender, age, and status of the person encountered.
Maintaining use of multiple languages has been shown to accelerate cognitive development with respect to social skills also in another domain. Bialystok and Senman (2004) demonstrated that bilingual children do better than their peers in the false beliefs test and that they develop theory of mind, i.e. the ability to put themselves in somebody else’s situation, at an earlier age. They are quicker to realise that the knowledge they have access to owing to the experimenter’s tip-offs need not be available to others who see the object for the first time.

Last but not least, there are obvious social and employment advantages of being bilingual – the extension of one’s opportunities to express oneself and communicate with people one would otherwise not have the chance to interact with, and increasing job opportunities in many careers.

Increased foreign language proficiency is also believed to reduce the risk of developing ADHD or help children already diagnosed with the disorder moderate its severity through developing increased ability to control their actions (Toppelberg et al. 2002). To boot, Paradis (2006), Roeper (2009), Armon-Lotem et al. (2009), Chilla (2008) and Chilla et al. (2009) demonstrated the facilitative effect and instructive value of the organisation of a dual linguistic system in children diagnosed with Specific Language Impairment, as reliance on the knowledge of their L1 promotes their language awareness and helps bootstrap the acquisition of a second language. The studies have shown that bilingual SLI children make significantly fewer errors in certain areas of both their L1 and L2 compared to age-matched monolingual SLI peers. The consistently better ability of multilingual speakers to deal with distractions may, in turn, also help offset age-related declines in mental dexterity (Bialystok et al. 2004). One of the most spectacular consequences of bilingualism has to do with long-term health benefits. Although bilingualism cannot act as a remedy against senile dementia or slow down its progression, preliminary findings reveal that individuals who make use of multiple languages on a daily basis exhibit a delay of 4.1 years in the incidence of the first symptoms of the disease in comparison to monolinguals. According to the researchers, ‘there are currently no pharmacological interventions that have shown comparable effects’ (Bialystok, Craik & Freedman 2007: 462). The speculative conclusion (following Fratiglioni et al. 2004; Scarmeas & Stern 2003; Staff et al. 2004; Valenzuela & Sachdev 2006a, 2006b) is that extra sustained complex mental effort expended in speaking another language, which means upkeep and exercise of different areas of the brain owing to boosted blood supply, may lead to biological changes, such as
increased generation of healthy neurons, synapses and dendrites, or a more efficient functional reorganisation of neural networks (Valenzuela & Sachdev 2006a), which can more easily take over functions previously carried out by the cerebral regions already affected by the disease, thereby enabling the brain to better tolerate accumulated pathologies (Bialystok, Craik & Freedman 2007; Cepeda & Munakata 2007).

5. The price of bilingualism

Despite bilingualism’s numerous benefits, there are skills where individuals speaking more than one language lag behind their peers. A recent series of studies showed a disadvantage in their vocabulary, both receptive (e.g. Oller & Eilers 2002) and productive (e.g. Gollan et al. 2002, 2005). Bilinguals may have greater difficulty recalling words in each of the languages at their command (in a task requiring enumeration of words from a given category, they achieved lower scores than monolinguals in terms of quantity and speed), which could potentially mean statistically lower speech fluency. In addition, they have been found to more frequently experience the ‘tip-of-the-tongue’ phenomenon, i.e. forget the word they wanted to use in conversation (Gollan & Acenas 2004). This deficit may be caused by a disturbance connected with the necessity to hold back other languages (hence the negative consequence of a slower access to the lexis), or the rarer use of each language individually (hence a lower frequency and accessibility of each word; Wodniecka 2007). Nonetheless, this deficit may be overcome and is usually imperceptible for the interlocutors – great orators had bilinguals in their ranks: Cicero spoke Latin and Greek, Pope John Paul II proved himself a skilled polyglot (Wodniecka op. cit.), while celebrated bilingual writers, such as John Milton, Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Barclay Beckett, or Iosif Brodsky, attest that knowing a second language enhances the use of the first (Paradowski 2008).

6. Coda and implications

Currently, few need convincing about the utility of foreign language learning. But is it worthwhile to develop and cultivate the knowledge of minority languages in mixed couples, despite meagre practical profits?
Should migrants who want their offspring to integrate with their new community as fast as possible insist on preserving the mother tongue at home? (Wodniecka 2007). Should children be encouraged to learn and speak the regional dialects of their grandparents, even if they will use the national ‘standard’ in the street and at school? Hopefully, the readers of this chapter will respond in the affirmative. We have seen that learning (and regularly using) another language not only enhances linguistic and cultural knowledge, but also has a beneficial effect on the development of the three core components of executive functioning (Diamond 2006):

– inhibitory control (withstanding a strong inclination to do one thing in order to see to what is most appropriate or critical, including the exercise of focused, selective attention despite distraction);

– cognitive flexibility (‘the ability to nimbly adjust to changed demands or priorities, being able to change perspectives, or think outside the box’; Feng et al. 2007);

– working memory (as in mentally manipulating ideas, doing mental arithmetic, or relating new information to the already familiar);

and exerts widespread salutary effects on other general cognitive abilities throughout the life of an individual, including longer preservation of intellectual efficiency and delay of cognitive decline related to ageing. Some further research is needed to determine to what extent the results of research on the benefits of early bilingualism can be extrapolated to later (especially post-pubescent) learners of a foreign language.

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