

University of Žilina
Faculty of Humanities



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**Changes and Challenges
of Increasing the Quality
of Preparation of Prospective Teachers
in European Countries**

Žilina 2022

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Changes and Challenges of Increasing the Quality of Preparation of Prospective Teachers in European Countries

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Obsah

The importance of pedagogical communication in the prevention of risky behaviour of pupils	5
Sociodrama’s opportunities in the social competence formation of future English teachers: Resilience Approach	14
Smartphone English Language Learning Apps: Challenges and Perspectives.....	21
Challenges of Distance Education in Language Teaching.....	27
Using art therapy methods to form inclusive and emotional-ethical competencies of future primary school teachers.....	37
Exploring Punctuation Practices in EFL Classroom: Slovak/Ukrainian University Classroom Experience	41
Online learning: advantages and disadvantages.....	48
Literature as a tool for the development of critical thinking.....	59
Enlarging Students’ Vocabulary with the Help of Corpus-Driven Data.....	67
Implementation of the Teaching Program “Education in English” at Technical Universities (based on the experience of the National Aviation University).....	76
Sustainability in Teacher Preparation: Shifting from Paper to Electronic Portfolios in Slovak Higher Education.....	86
Emergency Distance Language Learning in the Conditions of the COVID-19 Pandemic and War in Ukraine	102
Integration of Displaced Students into the Education System: Glimpses from Turkey and Slovakia .	110
Classroom Projects and eTwinning	118

Dear reader,

it is my pleasure to present this collection of papers from the conference Changes and Challenges of Increasing the Quality of Preparation of Prospective Teachers in European Countries. The conference was held in June 2022 and it was one of the outcomes of the PEDAX project (Pedagogical Practice as a Determining Factor concerning Modern Teacher Adaptation in the Context of Knowledge Society, ITMS code 312011AFW8 – Pedagogická prax ako determinujúci faktor adaptácie moderného učiteľa v kontexte vedomostnej spoločnosti). This project is focused on improving the preparation of prospective teachers of the study programme English Language and Literature and at the same time, the project aims at refining the already existing model of teaching practice whose objective is to enhance students' competencies and skills. As a result, the innovation of the already existing model of training schools for the teaching practice will create an optimal methodological basis for the preparation of prospective teachers.

The papers in the proceedings include topics that deal with a broad range of approaches in the field of teaching and education – readers will find papers from the fields of distance education and online learning, pedagogical communication, teaching preparation and there are also papers that offer a symbiosis of various disciplines, such as linguistics and education or art and teaching.

As a member of the PEDAX project team, I would like to express my gratitude to the authors, reviewers, proofreaders, editors, and to the members of the scientific board and organizing committee of the conference Changes and Challenges of Increasing the Quality of Preparation of Prospective Teachers in European Countries.

Marek Hampel

The importance of pedagogical communication in the prevention of risky behaviour of pupils

Význam pedagogickej komunikácie v prevencii rizikového správania žiakov

Elena Diechová, Jana Dzuriaková

Abstract

The risky behaviour of students in the environment of primary and secondary schools is a negative phenomenon with an increasing tendency. It is therefore necessary to provide sufficient space for the issue of prevention and solution, either from the view of pedagogical or professional staff working in the school environment. Following the results of research (Diechová, 2021) the article characterizes selected forms of risky behaviour that are most common in the school environment. One of the preventive tools that a teacher or a professional employee can use is appropriately chosen pedagogical communication. It is important to educate future teachers within undergraduate study so that they know the appropriate tools and can implement them in order to prevent pupil's risky behaviour. It is also desirable that future teachers develop adequate communication strategies as part of their undergraduate training. The article also describes selected types of pedagogical documentation, where educational reprimands and other records are documented. Teacher trainees encounter such documentation during their pedagogical practices.

Keywords: communication, risky behaviour, prevention, pupil, pedagogical practice

Úvod

Pod rizikovým správaním rozumieme také správanie, ktoré je v rozpore so sociálnymi normami a jeho realizácia prebieha opakovane. Sledovať teda musíme jeho frekvenciu, intenzitu a vážnosť. Nejedná sa o jednorázové prečiny, ktorým je však tiež nesporne dôležité pripisovať význam.

J. Grác (2009, s. 49) pomenúva nežiaduce správanie ako výchovne problémové správanie a pod týmto termínom rozumie „psychické prejavy jednotlivca, ktorými sa odchyľuje od prijatých zvykov a noriem spoločnosti, v ktorej žije, odkláňa sa od nich, porušuje ich, čím viac alebo menej spôsobuje ťažkosti a problémy sebe alebo druhým.“

Rizikové správanie žiakov je procesom, ktorý má negatívny vplyv na život žiakov a do určitej miery ohrozuje aj ich zdravie. Môže viesť taktiež k tomu, že ukončenie štúdia bude pre žiaka problémom. Problémy v správaní u žiakov zapríčiňuje do veľkej miery aj obdobie dospievania. Jedinec prechádza v tomto období veľkými zmenami v rámci osobnosti. Táto premena sa týka najmä somatickej, psychickej a sociálnej oblasti života. Dôsledkom premeny osobnosti jedinca teda môže dochádzať k zvýšeniu rizikového správania a tým pádom aj k zlyhaniu v sociálnej a psychickej oblasti. Rizikové správanie žiakov narúša a porušuje isté spoločenské normy, avšak neradíme ho medzi trestnú činnosť mládeže. Naopak kriminalita či delikventné správanie predstavujú trestnú činnosť mládeže (Emmerová, 2007).

Dôležitým faktorom, ktorý môže ovplyvňovať rizikové správanie žiakov je škola. Žiaci či študenti tu trávajú veľké množstvo času. Význam školy je naozaj veľký, žiaci tu nadobúdajú sociálne zručnosti, ktoré spočívajú v stretávaní sa s rovesníkmi či v robení rôznych záujmových aktivít. Škola má pre jedinca mimoriadny význam, avšak aj tu dochádza k negatívnym veciam, napr. k rozvoju rizikového správania sa žiakov. Častá je šikana, ktorá primárne vzniká najmä v školskom prostredí. Úlohou učiteľa je predchádzať rizikovému správaniu žiakov. Toto negatívne správanie jednotlivcov sa vyskytuje viac v školách, kde chýba pocit bezpečia. Problémy s negatívnym správaním v školskom prostredí súvisí najmä s

konzumáciou alkoholu, fajčením tabakových výrobkov, samovražednými myšlienkami či násilným správaním (Emmerová, 2019).

Na základe uvedených informácií možno poukázať na dôležitú socializačnú úlohu školy. Túto úlohu plnia lepšie vzdelávacie inštitúcie, ktoré vytvárajú bezpečnejšie prostredie pre svojich žiakov. V procese predchádzania rizikového správania žiakov je nevyhnutné, aby učitelia zakročili voči prejavom nežiaduceho správania. Veľmi dôležitá je aktivita učiteľov konať a pomôcť žiakom, ktorí sú najviac zraniteľní. Rizikové správanie žiakov je ovplyvnené aj negatívnymi faktormi, akými sú užívanie škodlivých látok, ktoré sú pre dospelujúci organizmus veľmi nebezpečné. Zastávame názor, že pri prevencii či výskyte rizikového správania u žiakov musí prebiehať efektívna a úzka spolupráca učiteľov, rodičov a ďalších relevantných odborníkov z praxe.

Rizikové správanie žiakov v školskom prostredí ovplyvňujú aj poruchy správania, ktorými môžu daní jedinci trpieť. Pod poruchovým správaním môžeme chápať takú formu správania, ktorá vybočuje zo školskej disciplíny, ale aj z disciplíny v bežnom živote. Správanie je teda neadekvátne po kvalitatívnej aj kvantitatívnej stránke. Problémom je aj nerešpektovanie noriem spoločnosti. O poruchovom správaní žiakov možno hovoriť aj vtedy, keď daný jedinec rozumie normám, ktoré má dodržiavať, ale nechce ich akceptovať. Jedná sa napríklad o inú hodnotovú hierarchiu človeka, alebo o zlé ovládanie správania jedincom. Poruchy správania, ktorými trpia určití žiaci sa prejavujú pri zlom vytváraní si sociálnych vzťahov v škole. Mnohokrát nechcú a ani sa správne nevedia prispôbiť spoločenským a sociálnym normám. Problémom môže byť aj prenos slabých citových väzieb z rodiny žiakov do školského prostredia.

Vybrané formy rizikového správania

K jednej z najzávažnejších foriem rizikového správania nielen žiakov v súčasnosti radíme šikanovanie. Ťažisko šikanovania tkvie v dlhodobom, opakovanom a zámernom ubližovaní s úmyslom dosiahnuť presilu. Jeho typickou črtou je nepomernosť síl, nakoľko obeť šikanovania je z nejakej príčiny bezmocná. Šikanovanie prebieha najmä počas prestávok, cestou do školy alebo zo školy, v priestoroch školy, ktorými sú napríklad šatne, toalety, a v iných miestnostiach bez pedagogického dozoru (Emmerová, 2007).

„Šikanovanie označuje určitý typ agresívneho jednania, ktoré prebieha za špecifických podmienok a tak nemôžeme opomenúť nadradený pojem, agresiu. Podstatou agresie je jednanie, ktorého cieľom je ublížiť inej osobe.“(Jánošová a kol., 2016, s. 25).

Podľa K. Hollej (2010) môžeme šikanovanie rozčleniť do troch kategórií:

1. Fyzické šikanovanie špecifické strkaním, údermi, bitkami, poškodzovaním majetku a pod., objavujúce sa predovšetkým v priebehu prestávok a na miestach bez pedagogického dozoru. Pre obeť šikanovania to znamená permanentný strach z konca vyučovania, ako aj nesústredenie sa v rámci neho často s dôsledkom horších študijných výsledkov. Niekedy dochádza práve z obáv zo šikanovania aj k absentovaniu na vyučovaní.

2. Verbálne šikanovanie vyznačujúce sa slovným urázaním, zastrášaním či posmievaním. Obeť šikanovania v tomto prípade znáša slovné útoky počas celého výchovno–vzdelávacieho procesu bez výnimky vyučovacích hodín, kedy si učiteľ nevšimol uvedené známky šikanovania. Aj tu je evidovaný pokles výkonu žiaka počas vyučovania predovšetkým z obáv, že môže byť opäť terčom posmechu a urážok.

3. Sociálne šikanovanie typické najmä poškodením mena obeť prejavujúce sa spoločenským vyradením, ohováraním, vydieraním či ponižovaním. Dieťa je v kolektíve ignorované, neakceptované a nechcené zo strany spolužiakov, na učiteľov pôsobí ako introvert bez chuti do učenia čomu odpovedajú študijné výsledky.

Kyberšikanovanie môžeme definovať ako druh šikanovania využívajúci moderné technológie (počítač, internet, mobilný telefón a pod.), ktorý sa realizuje vo virtuálnom prostredí prostredníctvom rozličných prostriedkov a služieb (sociálne siete, sms správy, telefonáty, diskusné fóra, a iné).

I. Emmerová (2021) vymedzuje, že kyberšikanovanie je spôsob využívania nových technológií za účelom adresovania agresívnych a zastrahujúcich správ inej osobe pričom za najväčšie riziko považuje práve anonymné prostredie, v ktorom kyberšikanovanie prebieha. Okrem realizácie šikanovania a kyberšikanovanie zvlášť, je nebezpečná aj kombinácia týchto dvoch foriem, kedy klasické šikanovanie v podobe fyzických útokov je nahrávané a neskôr publikované na internete čo má za následok ešte väčšie poníženie obeť.

Záškoláctvo patrí taktiež medzi jednu z najfrekvencovanejších foriem rizikového správania vyskytujúcej sa v prostredí základných škôl. Všeobecne vyjadruje pojem záškoláctvo určitý jav, kedy žiak zámerne vymeškáva povinnú školskú dochádzku a je neprítomný na vyučovaní bez ospravedlnenia. Žiak koná buď bez povolenia rodičov alebo aj s ich vedomím (Hroncová a kol., 2006).

Dôvody žiakov absentovať na vyučovaní sú rôzne, môže ísť o zlý vzťah s učiteľom alebo spolužiakmi, neprispôsobenie sa na prostredie školy, narušené rodinné prostredie tendencia vyhýbať sa skúšaniam, vplyv partie, strach zo šikanovania a pod. Záškolák je potom žiak, ktorý neoprávnene absentuje na vyučovacom procese (Kyriacou, 2005).

Záškoláctvo predstavuje ďalšiu nebezpečnú formu rizikového správania, najmä z hľadiska jeho motívu. Môže byť spájané s inými druhmi problémového správania, ako je napríklad šikanovanie, ktoré býva práve jedným z dôvodov záškoláctva. Je veľmi dôležité poznať príčiny, ktoré vedú žiaka k absencii na vyučovaní, nakoľko môžu značiť ďalšie ťažkosti pre vyvíjajúceho sa mladého jedinca. Záškoláctvo predstavuje úmyselné vymeškávanie školskej dochádzky žiakom. O jeho absenciách v škole väčšinou rodičia nemajú vedomosť, avšak môže ísť aj o situácie, kedy o tom vedomosť majú. Vyučovacie hodiny, ktoré žiak vymeškal nemá ospravedlnené ani rodičom, ani lekárom.

Agresiu môžeme označiť, ako nepriateľské, útočné správanie voči určitému objektu, ktorý nám prekáža na ceste k uspokojeniu potreby. Jedná sa o krátkodobý nepokoj, jednorazové vybitie uvoľnenej energie. Agresivita sa zväčša prejavuje deštruktívnym správaním k inému jedincovi. Dochádza však aj k deštruktívnemu konaniu k sebe samému. Hľadať príčiny agresivity je veľmi náročné, nakoľko ju ovplyvňuje veľmi veľa faktorov. Môže ísť o faktory sociálne, či ekonomické, ale aj psychologické. Veľakrát je jej spúšťačom citová nevyrovnanosť, úzkosť, či frustrácia. Ďalším z jej spúšťačov môže byť aj alkohol. Viacerí jedinci, ktorí konzumujú alkohol nevedia ovládať svoje konanie a kvôli tomu dochádza k agresivite jedinca. Môžeme povedať, že veľakrát dochádza k ešte väčšej agresivite vtedy, keď sa dané agresívne pohnútky potláčajú. Kvôli tomu môže dôjsť k prekypeniu správania človeka a tak sa môže stať, že agresivita človeka bude ešte väčšia.

Droga je schopná zmeniť fyzické a psychické vlastnosti človeka. V dôsledku užívania drog postupne dochádza ku vzniku závislosti. Ide buď o psychickú, alebo fyzickú závislosť. Ďalším negatívnym dopadom pri užívaní drog môže byť aj intoxikácia človeka. Predstavuje dočasnú zmenu psychických a fyzických vlastností jedinca. Nemusí sa však jednáť len o dočasnú zmenu. Dlhodobé užívanie drog môže spôsobiť až poruchy fyzických a psychických funkcií organizmu človeka. Medzi ďalší následok užívania drog môžeme zaradiť aj zneužívanie. Pod zneužívaním môžeme chápať stav, ktorý súvisí so sebapoškodzovaním jedinca, zaraďujeme tu aj somatické zmeny, ktoré sa vyskytujú z dôvodu intenzívneho a dlhodobého užívaniu drog.

Prevenca rizikového správania žiakov

Účelom prevencie na základných a stredných školách je zabrániť rizikovému správaniu žiakov, aby neprerástlo až do páchania trestnej činnosti a taktiež predísť tomu, aby sa žiaci stali obeťou rizikového správania. Významný aspekt je v tomto smere komunikácia so žiakmi a vybudovanie dôvery, aby sa žiak nebál v žiadnom prípade obrátiť na dospelú osobu (Emmerová, 2019).

I. Emmerová (2007) diferencuje tri štádiá prevencie rizikového správania:

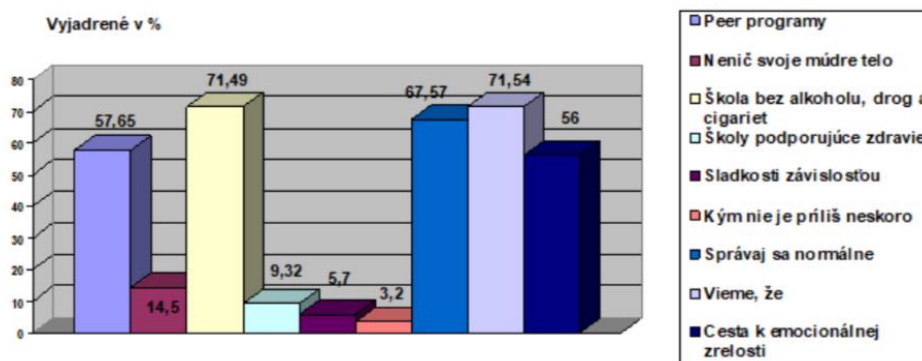
Primárna prevencia, definovaná aj pod synonymami univerzálna alebo generálna, predstavuje najkomplexnejšie požiadavky predchádzania vzniku rizikového správania. Uskutočňovaná je rodinou, školou, médiami a pod.

Sekundárna prevencia, uvádzaná aj pod termínmi selektívna či adresná, je zacielená na konkrétne problémové skupiny ľudí so zámerom obrátiť ich späť k spoločensky žiaducemu správaniu. Vykonávaná je psychologickými, sociálnymi, vzdelávacími či zdravotníckymi inštitúciami.

Terciárna prevencia alebo aj indikovaná prevencia sa koncentruje na zamedzovanie návratu rizikového správania. Praktizovaná je odbornými zamestnancami resocializačných zariadení.

V prostredí základných škôl je prítomnosť a činnosť minimálne jedného odborného zamestnanca viac než žiaduca. Zákon č. 138/2019 Z.z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch charakterizuje niekoľko kategórií odborných zamestnancov, ktorí sú oprávnení pôsobiť v školách a školských zariadeniach. V zmysle činností zameraných na rizikové správanie hovoríme primárne o sociálnom pedagógovi, výchovnom poradcovi, koordinátorovi prevencie a školskom psychológovi.

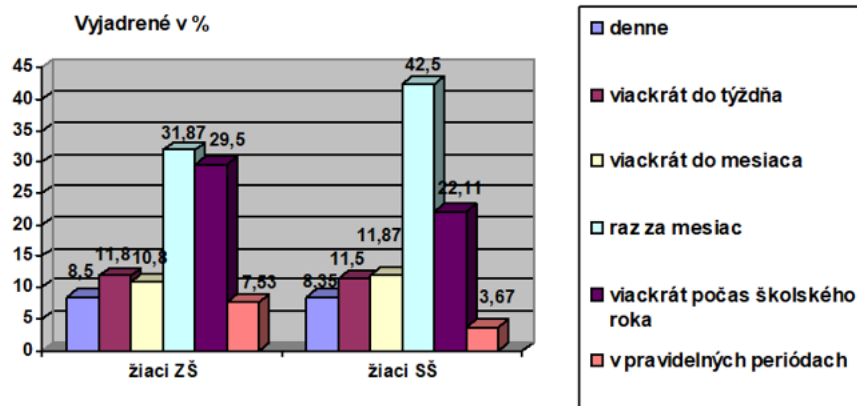
V Grafe 1 uvádzame závery výskumu (Diechová, 2021), ktorý bol zameraný na zistenie a analýzu výskytu, prevencie a riešenia rizikového správania žiakov v školskom prostredí. Graf 1 popisuje druhy preventívnych programov realizovaných na školách so žiakmi.



Graf 1 Druhy preventívnych programov realizovaných na školách so žiakmi (výskumný súbor – žiaci ZŠ a SŠ)

Z výpovedí respondentov výskumného súboru žiakov základných a stredných škôl vyplynulo, že najčastejšie realizovaným preventívnym programom na ich školách bol preventívny program „Vieme, že“ (71,54 %) a najmenej realizovaným preventívny program „Kým nie je príliš neskoro“ (3,20 %).

Vo vyššie uvedenom výskume sme sa zameriavali aj na zistenie frekvencie realizácie preventívnych aktivít. Závery uvádzame v grafe 2.



Graf 2 Frekvencia realizácie preventívnych aktivít (výskumný súbor – žiaci ZŠ a SŠ)

Z výpovedí respondentov výskumného súboru žiakov základných a stredných škôl vyplynulo, že najčastejšie sa na ich školách preventívne aktivity vyskytujú spravidla „raz za mesiac“ (ZŠ – 31,87 %, SŠ – 42,50 %) a naopak najmenej sa vyskytovala odpoveď „v pravidelných periódach“ (ZŠ – 7,53 %, SŠ – 3,67 %).

Pedagogická komunikácia a rizikové správanie žiakov

Pedagogická komunikácia je vzájomná výmena informácií medzi účastníkmi výchovno-vzdelávacieho procesu, ktorá slúži výchovno-vzdelávacím cieľom. Informácie sa v nej sprostredkujú jazykovými a neязыkovými prostriedkami. Účastníci vstupujú do komunikácie preto, aby niečo vyjadrovali, písali, hovorili a pod. Komunikujú o nejakých faktoch, vyjadrujú svoje stanoviská, názory, želania a príkazy. Výmena informácií predpokladá aj ich vnútorné spracovanie. Účastníci informácie nie len vnímajú, ale aj chápu, hodnotia a zapamätávajú (Konôpka, 1995). Pedagogická komunikácia sa realizuje v škole aj mimo školy, počas vyučovania aj počas prestávok. Najmä komunikácia v tzv. neformálnom prostredí môže lepšie prispieť k prevencii sociálno-patologických javov. Počas triednických hodín môže uskutočňovať aktivity na podporu vzťahov v triede. Môže pridať aj aktivity na prevenciu sociálno-patologických javov v kolektíve žiakov. Mimo vyučovania sa môže komunikácia realizovať na exkurziách, výletoch a po vyučovaní. Pri takej realizácii vyučovacej hodiny má učiteľ možnosť uskutočňovať tzv. neformálnu komunikáciu, teda môže skôr odhaliť problémy žiakov a cez aktivity odhaliť, čo sa stalo v triede. Sprostredkúva sa verbálnymi a neverbálnymi prostriedkami, učiteľ a žiaci spolu píšú, kreslia, ukazujú predmety a pritom využívajú aj neverbálnu komunikáciu (Gavora, 1988).

Podľa Zelinu (1996, s. 144) „komunikácia v škole je najprirodzenejší spôsob a prostriedok, ktorý sa používa na rozvoj osobnosti dieťaťa“.

- je prostriedkom k uskutočňovaniu výchovy a vzdelávania
- utvára každý výchovno-vzdelávací systém, lebo tvorí jednu z hlavných zložiek tohto systému (Gavora, 1988). Predovšetkým dve funkcie ako vzájomné pôsobenie účastníkov a formovanie osobnosti žiaka je dôležité aj pri prevencii sociálno-patologických javov u žiakov, ako aj k prevencii rizikového správania žiakov. Tým, že meníme osobnosť dieťaťa, tak môžeme účinne meniť aj jeho správanie. Keďže učiteľ by mal byť vzorom správania, tak sa podľa neho môžu začať správať aj žiaci a podľa neho sa meniť. Ovplyvňovať okrem

učiteľa ho môžu aj spolužiaci. Najmä v prípadoch formovania osobných vzťahov medzi rovesníkmi v skupine.

Pedagogickou komunikáciou sa zaoberalo viacero autorov, ktorí sústredili svoje výskumy na rozličné oblasti tejto otázky: I. Konečná (1995, v Lazorčíková, 2022, s. 209) skúmala dĺžku replík u žiakov na prvom aj druhom stupni základných škôl podľa počtu slov. Výskumnou metódou bolo pozorovanie. Zistila, že vo verbálnom prejave žiakov dominujú veľmi krátke repliky. Podobné výskumy uskutočnili aj K. Zelinková (1988, v Lazorčíková, 2022, s. 209) a J. Pstružinová (1992). Výskumy zamerané na používanie otázok vo vyučovaní realizovali Hrdina (1992) a M. Zelina (1990). Výskum výučbovej komunikácie realizovali Šed'ová, Švaříček a Šalamounová (2012). Skúmali priebeh komunikácie medzi učiteľom a žiakmi na vyučovaní na druhom stupni základnej školy. Prostredníctvom analýz z pozorovania vyučovacích hodín a pomocou rozborov videonahrávok zisťovali základnú štruktúru výučbovej komunikácie, typy otázok, kladené učiteľmi žiakom, pozíciu spätnej väzby v štruktúre vyučovacej hodiny a pod. (Lazorčíková, 2022).

Podľa J. A. Devita (2008) rozlišujeme tieto fázy interpersonálnych vzťahov v komunikácii:

1. kontakt – na začiatku nastáva vnemový kontakt – vidíme a počujeme druhého. Potom nasleduje interakčný kontakt – účastníci si vymieňajú základné informácie. Už po tomto úvodnom kontakte vieme povedať, či chceme v komunikácii pokračovať alebo ju radšej ukončíme.
2. zapojenie – snažíme sa zistiť o tom druhom trochu viac ako pri kontakte.
3. dôvernosť – dochádza k rozvoju a prehĺbeniu vzťahu. Začíname zdieľať väzby, ktoré sme mali vybudované predtým. Môžu sa vytvoriť dve časti: interpersonálny zväzok – súkromný a dôverný vzťah; spoločenský zväzok – so svojim vzťahom sa prezentujete pred inými.
4. zhoršenie – ide o oslabenie vzťahu. Čoraz viac sa tomu druhému vzd'alujete, je medzi vami menej komunikácie, viac kritiky.
5. náprava – snažíte sa zastaviť zhoršovanie vzťahu. Najskôr dochádza k analýze toho čo sa pokazilo a hľadajú sa spôsoby riešenia. Vzťah môžete buď napraviť alebo ukončiť.
6. ukončenie – ide o úplne prerušenie vzťahu s iným.

Nezáleží na tom, ako dlho ten, ktorý vzťah trvá, či niekoľko rokov, alebo niekoľko minút. Všetky vzťahy sú dôležité a všetky nám umožňujú, aby sme sa lepšie vnímali a poznávali. Ľudia v našom okolí sú pre nás zrkadlom, vďaka nim sa veľa o sebe dozvieme (Sperandio, 2008). Môžeme nadväzovať vzťahy s inými ľuďmi a tak ich ovplyvňovať. Najmä učiteľ cez komunikáciu ovplyvňuje žiakov a vytvára u nich vzťahy s inými, napr. s rodinou, so spolužiakmi, ale aj s ostatnými, ktorí sa dostávajú do kontaktu s výchovno-vzdelávacím procesom, ako sú pracovníci v škole, rozličné inštitúcie a podniky. Oni všetci môžu ovplyvňovať žiaka ale aj učiteľa v rámci komunikácie a postojov k iným. Učiteľ je pre žiaka zdrojom informácií, názorov a postojov. Má svoje postoje a názory, ktoré môže prenášať na žiaka a tým meniť jeho postoje a názory. Každý takýto vzťah môže u žiaka znamenať iný postoj k nejakému javu zo života. Táto zmena postoja môže byť tak pozitívna ako aj negatívna. Učiteľ by mal však vytvárať vzťahy, ktoré budú smerovať k pozitívnej zmene a budú pre žiaka znamenať nie len vedomostné napredovanie ale aj napredovanie v oblasti citov, emócií a správania. Mal by ich viesť k ukončovaniu negatívnych vzťahov a negatívnych nastavení vo vzťahu k iným ľuďom.

U učiteľa je dôležitá aj komunikačná schopnosť. Podľa Štěpaníka „pod komunikačnými schopnosťami chápeme umenie vychádzať s ľuďmi. Sú to profesijné schopnosti, ktorých úloha a funkcia majú špecifickú podobu vzhľadom na žiakov danej vekovej kategórie“ (Haláková, 2012, s. 39). Komunikačné kompetencie znamenajú vyjadrovanie sa primerane situácii, počúvanie a prezentovanie informácií, komunikovať cez informačné a komunikačné technológie (Haláková, 2012). „Komunikačné schopnosti môžeme

podľa Janáčkovej deliť na verbálne a neverbálne. Medzi verbálne schopnosti zaraďuje umenie klásť otázky, schopnosť motivovať a vytvárať výzvy, schopnosť objasňovať, vytvárať logické súhrny, schopnosť výkladu, prejavenie porozumenia. Neverbálne komunikačné schopnosti sú pozorovanie, počúvanie, empatia, prejav záujmu a rešpekt“ (Haláková, 2012, s. 40). Toto všetko by mal učiteľ ovládať, mal by disponovať oba druhmi komunikačných zručností na vysokej úrovni. A to ho môže naučiť aj štúdium na škole, resp. prax, ktorú vykonáva počas školy na jednotlivých typoch základných aj stredných škôl. Toto môže pomôcť študentom zdokonaľiť ich komunikačné schopnosti v rámci komunikácie ako takej, ale aj v rámci pedagogickej komunikácie. Na rozvoj komunikačnej zručnosti pedagóga sa zameriavame najmä v pregraduálnej príprave študenta vysokých škôl. Smerujú k tomu najmä predmety zamerané priamo na komunikáciu učiteľa ale aj na komunikáciu ako takú. V rámci žilinskej univerzity sú to predmety teória pedagogickej komunikácie, F2F komunikácie, alebo komunikácia vo virtuálnom prostredí. Prvé dva sa zameriavajú na rozvoj a podporu komunikačných zručností študentov v bezprostrednej verbálnej aj neverbálnej komunikácie. Zameriavajú sa predovšetkým na pedagogickú komunikáciu. Posledný predmet sa zameriava najmä na komunikáciu vo virtuálnom prostredí a na to aké typy komunikácie sa využívajú napr. pri online vyučovaní. Jeho opodstatnenosť preverila najmä posledná doba, keď museli učitelia prejsť na online výučbu a zrazu museli výučbu realizovať v špecifickom online prostredí, ktoré so sebou prinieslo ne jeden problém najmä pri realizácii jednotlivých predmetov. Išlo najmä o predmety zamerané na komunikáciu ako takú, ale aj o predmety napr. zamerané na výučbu jazykov.

Rozvoj komunikačných schopností podporuje aj pedagogická prax študentov učiteľských študijných programov. Počas praxe majú možnosť naučiť sa pedagogickú komunikáciu na hodinách daných vyučovacích predmetov. Nepôjde len o správnu výslovnosť v jazyku a správne sprostredkovanie informácií a poznatkov, ale aj vyjadrenie pocitov, názorov a postojov. Môžu sa naučiť aj tzv. neformálnu komunikáciu, teda tú, v rámci ktorej dokážu riešiť jednotlivé problémy vo výchovno-vzdelávacom procese. Preto sa odporúča, aby sa študenti v rámci pedagogických praxí, realizovaných na pôde Fakulty humanitných vied a jednotlivých cvičných škôl zúčastnili aj triednických hodín, dozoru počas prestávok, resp. stretnutí predmetových a iných komisií. Teda podieľali sa na celkovom živote školy ako takej a na práci so žiakmi aj mimo klasických hodín. Pedagogická prax 1 slúži na oboznámenie sa študentov so školským prostredím z pozície budúceho pedagogického zamestnanca. Informácie, ktoré sú študentom v rámci tejto praxe prezentované sa zameriavajú okrem iného aj na prehľad v rôznych typoch pedagogických dokumentov, či už v tlačenej, alebo elektronickej podobe (triedna kniha, triedny výkaz, osobný spis žiaka, školský poriadok a pod.). Počas pedagogickej praxe 2 môžu pozorovať prácu učiteľa a tak sa učiť komunikačným zručnostiam priamo v praxi. Môžu si osvojiť aj podobu komunikácie, ktorú učiteľ využíva na prevenciu sociálno-patologických javov, ale aj na riešenie jednotlivých problémov spojených so vzťahmi v triede medzi jednotlivými žiakmi. V rámci ďalších typov praxe, t.j. pedagogické praxe 3 a 4 sa môžu túto časť komunikácie naučiť využívať a pracovať s ňou priamo počas hodín aj mimo nich. Aj z analýzy už realizovaných pedagogických praxí vyplýva požiadavka zapojiť študentov nie len do vyučovacieho procesu ale do celkového chodu školy. Nejde len o pomoc študentov mimo vyučovacieho procesu, ale aj o podporu a rozvoj ich zručností komunikovať mimo vyučovacích hodín.

Študenti majú počas praxe na aktivity prevencie sociálno-patologických javov lepšie podmienky v tom zmysle, že sa pripravujú na predmet občianska náuka. Je to predmet, ktorý svojimi aktivitami umožňuje študentom rozvíjať komunikáciu v prevencii rizikového správania a lepšieho začlenenia žiakov do skupiny spolužiakov a do triedy ako takej. Aktivity sú rôzne a môžu slúžiť na rozvoj akýchkoľvek typov komunikácie v škole aj mimo nej. Môžu byť zamerané na verbálnu, neverbálnu komunikáciu a aj komunikáciu činom. Ide nie len

o pedagogickú komunikáciu ale aj sociálnu komunikáciu v rámci spoločnosti. Zameriavajú sa na výchovu dobrého občana v spoločnosti a jeho začlenenie a pôsobenie v rámci spoločnosti. Budujú aj vzťahy v rodine, medzi známymi a priateľmi. Ďalšími vzťahmi sú vzťahy v skupinách a komunikácia zameraná na spoluprácu a spoločné plnenie úloh. Mimo týchto typov komunikácie môžu byť zamerané aj na sociálno-patologické javy, prevenciu rizikového správania a posilnenie vzťahov v triede medzi spolužiakmi, ale aj medzi učiteľom a žiakmi. Pri sociálno-patologických javoch je komunikácia zameraná najmä na prevenciu jednotlivých typov a podôb takýchto javov. Zameriavame sa skôr na to, aby sme predchádzali takýmto javom a naučili študentov vyhýbať sa im.

Záver

Pedagogická komunikácia je dôležitým nástrojom využívaným o.i. aj pri prevencii rizikového správania žiakov. Rizikové správanie žiakov ako negatívny protispoločenský jav sa v prostredí škôl vyskytuje vo veľkom meradle a preto je úloha vhodne zvolenej a pripravenej pedagogickej komunikácie o to významnejšia, keďže sa uplatňuje ako preventívny nástroj.

Jednou z kľúčových úloh pedagógov zabezpečujúcich pregraduálnu prípravu študentov učiteľských študijných programov by preto mala byť podpora transdisciplinárnej prípravy študentov v rámci teoretickej výučby, ale aj pri realizácii jednotlivých typov pedagogických praxí.

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Sociodrama's opportunities in the social competence formation of future English teachers: Resilience Approach

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Abstract

The thesis is dedicated to studying the role of the sociodrama method in the development of future English teachers' social competence through the prism of the resilience approach. In this regard, the relevance of using this method through the self-regulation skills' development to overcome difficulties through the prism of tolerance to the feelings of others is substantiated. The empirical sample of the pilot study included 22 respondents, who are BA and MA students at the National University of Ostroh Academy. The use of The Free-Association Test (FAT) revealed 36% of free bilingualism and 64% of translation bilingualism. With this level of bilingualism, the respondents have an average resilience level (68%), only 32% have a high resilience level, and there is no low resilience level (The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25)). The importance of using the sociodrama method in the conditions of educational bilingualism for understanding the cultural characteristics of the people whose language is studied as a foreign one, preventing social conflicts, and finding effective strategies for overcoming the challenges of today is evidenced by the results of the study.

Keywords: future English teachers, social competence formation, bilingualism, resilience approach, sociodrama

Introduction

The development of such professional competence in future primary school teachers as the social competence has great importance in the conditions of adapting the educational process to emergencies related to the quarantine regime and Russian aggression, as well as the topicality of developing skills to find peaceful answers to the conflict resolution. The abilities to work in a team, prevent conflicts and resolve them by reaching compromises are especially in demand. In this process, the resilience phenomenon is important, which includes the competence in coping with difficulties and tolerance to negative emotions among other components (Resiliency Assessment Scale by N. Ogińska-Bulik & Z. Juczyńskim, 2008 Handzilevska & Tymoshchuk, 2021). That is why in modern crisis conditions it is important to psychologically secure future teachers through forming psychological stability (Bačová & Leláková, 2014). The resilience approach allows to make the educational process through restoration and development of psychological resources in all life spheres (Husak et al., 2017). An effective means for this can be sociodrama method as a kind of psychodrama method (Moreno, 1946), the guideline of which is the "unlocking" of spontaneity and creativity for social activity.

Literature review

According to the dramaturgical-role approach, social life involves personality development through the prism of various roles approbation. The connection between the role and identity expression, which is inseparable from interpersonal interaction, is also pointed by Jacob L. Moreno (Handzilevska, 2018).

The psychodrama method can be effective for the implementation of the competence approach in the educational space by unlocking creativity and spontaneity, expanding the range of role repertoire, and assigning new experiences, was emphasized in our previous research (Handzilevska & Tymoshchuk, 2021). The competence approach shifts the emphasis from the process of knowledge accumulation to creative, practical action, to apply their own

experience in different situations, the authors emphasize, based on the work of K. Rudnytska. Within the resilience approach framework, which focuses on the self-regulation development of the individual, its openness to new experiences (Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008) for the social competence formation of future English language teachers, the sociodrama method is gaining relevance, which is often considered by scientists as a type of psychodrama. After all, educational (artificial) bilingualism involves learning a foreign language in a specially organized educational environment, where productive bilingualism includes understanding the cultural characteristics of the people whose language is being studied as a foreign language, assimilation of culture (Handzilevska & Shiryayeva, 2011).

Among modern Ukrainian researchers, P. Hornostay deeply analyzes the possibilities of using psychodrama in education (Hornostay, 2008). In his opinion, psychodrama in education is a synthesis of psychodrama and pedagogy, the use of improvisational role-playing games in the educational process. It is suitable for all age groups, from kindergarten to postgraduate education. Studying dramaturgical-role technologies, the author focuses on sociodrama, the methodology of which is closely related to theories of social conflict (Hornostay, 2005). Note that the word “sociodrama”, if we turn to the etymology, consists of “socius” and “drama”, i.e. “surrounding” and “action”. It means “acting with the people around you”. Sociodrama is defined as a deep-action method aimed at the relationship between different groups and collective spectacles (Leutz, 1974), and therefore is effective for the group resilience strengthening.

Consequently, the psychodrama method implementation in the educational space and requires the introduction of such a variety, psychodrama, as sociodrama, which through action in a role-playing game stimulates interest in cognition and self-knowledge, provides experience of group interaction (Radul, Hundarenko & Kowalczyk, 2020), while reducing the anxiety level of its participants.

Therefore, psychodramatic techniques, which we have studied previously, first of all,

- as an effective psychotherapeutic tool for diagnosis and correction of life scenarios of the individual (Handzilevska, 2018),
- as mastering a foreign language (Handzilevska & Shiryayeva, 2011),
- as a means of developing the conceptual sphere of bilinguals (Handzilevska, Shiryayeva, 2013) and others, could be adapted for its use in the educational process through the prism of sociodrama.

The results of previous psychological research, conducted based on the Scientific Center “Sanogenic Pedagogy and Psychology” of the National University of Ostroh Academy (Ukraine), indicate the relevance of studying the key components of resilience, including emotional intelligence development, critical and sanogenic thinking of teachers (Handzilevska, Kalamazh, Ratinska & Khmiliar, 2021), their professional reflection, correction of negative attitudes towards innovation (Handzilevska & Kondratiuk, 2021). It should be noted that the interest in the concept of “resilience” as a continuous, active process aimed at developing resources for adaptation and recovery (Husak et al., 2017) is also considered at the University of Žilina (Slovakia), with the researchers of which, resilience was studied as a factor in preventing procrastination of students in the conditions of mastering a foreign language: Ukrainian-Polish-Slovak experience (Handzilevska, Kostyuchyk, Hundarenko & Lelakova, 2022). The significance of resilience development of to prevent students’ procrastination, who are studying a foreign language, is statistically evidenced by the results of the study.

Research results

Therefore, the research aims to study the role of the sociodrama method in the development of future English teachers' social competence through the prism of the resilience approach.

The objectives of the research are to empirically explore the peculiarities of Ukrainian students' resilience during English studying and to characterize the possibilities of sociodrama for future English teachers' social competence development through the prism of psychological stability.

For achieving the goals and objectives of the study, such diagnostic tools were used through Google forms, for identification of an indicator of bilingualism – The Free-Association Test (FAT) (Kozlyakovskiy, 2004) and for determination of psychological stability – The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) (Riopel, 2019).

The empirical sample of the pilot study included 22 respondents: BA and MA students (BA's and MA's degree programs in 035.041 Philology. Germanic Languages and Literatures (including Translation), English Major; BA's degree program in 013 Primary Education with Advanced Study of English) of the National University of Ostroh Academy (Ukraine) (the average age of respondents – 20.2 years; 19 women, 2 men, and 1 person did not indicate gender; the average duration of learning English – 9.5 years; language proficiency level: A1 – 0%, A2 – 0%, B1 – 23%, B2 – 23%, C1 – 31%, C2 – 23%; among them 45% students only study, 55% students' study and work at ones).

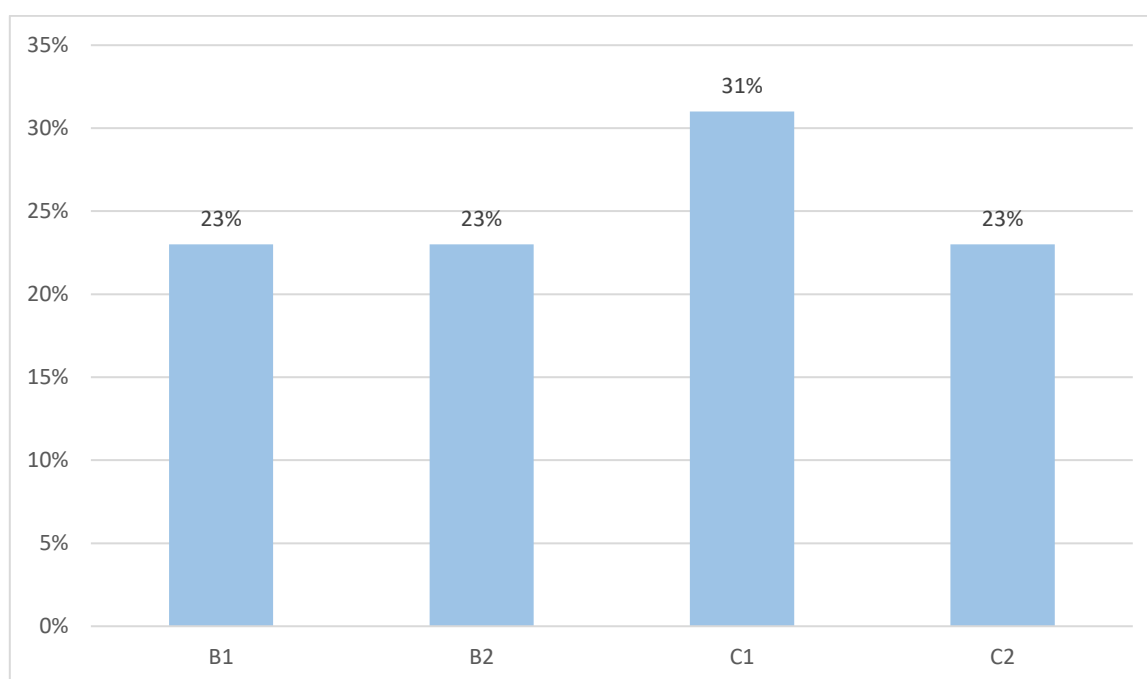


Figure 1 Indicators of Language Proficiency

Bilingualism as a simultaneous fluency in two languages, in our case Ukrainian and English, was calculated by an indicator that was determined based on the analysis of associative reactions given in two languages, which were indicated by students as a result of an alternate review of stimulus words in each of the languages.

The use of The Free-Association Test revealed 36% of free bilingualism and 64% of translation bilingualism (Figure 2).

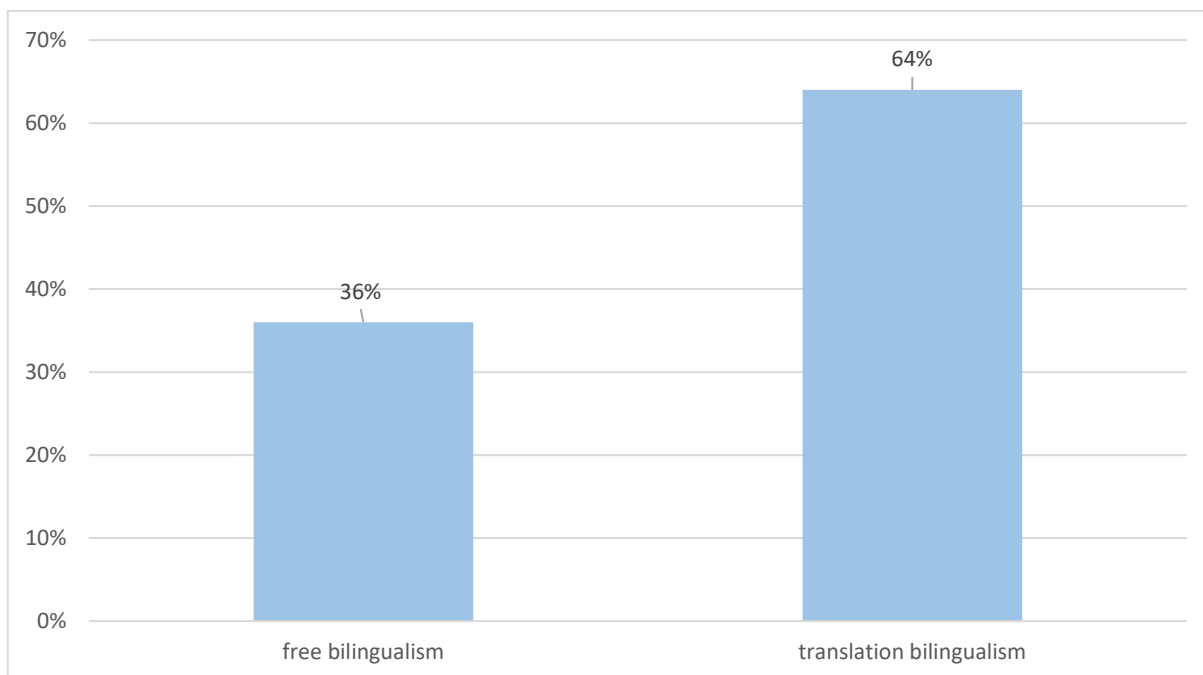


Figure 2 The Free-Association Test indicators

With this level of bilingualism, the respondents have an average resilience level (68%). Only 32% have a high resilience level. At the same time, it should be noted that there is no low resilience level. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale allows you to find out how well a person is ready to recover from stress, which is quite relevant in today's world (Moreno, 1946). Resilience is an excellent indicator of our ability to learn, change and develop (Riopel, 2019). Therefore, the resilience development of English studying students is obvious. The prospect of further research aims to prove or refute this hypothesis statistically, provided that the empirical sample increases. However, the obtained results already indicate the relevance of English teachers' psychological resilience development. Sociodrama is the tool that we offer for the formation of social competence through the prism of resilience.

Discussion

The aim of the research is to study the role of the sociodrama method in the development of future English teachers' social competence through the prism of the resilience approach. The importance of using the sociodrama method in the conditions of educational bilingualism of future English teachers' (students) social competence, which involves the development of the ability to prevent and resolve conflicts, and to organize a psychologically safe educational space, is evidenced by the results of the study.

P. Hornostay (2005) emphasizes that the sociodrama method works with topics common to the group and is useful if you need to overcome negative trends in group dynamics, intergroup or intragroup confrontation, hostile stereotypes, and prejudice against others.

Therefore, the future teacher, having experience of participation in sociodrama, will be able to use certain techniques in group interaction of students in the future. This method is suitable for children because the process of interaction is not in thinking, but in action,

activity. At the same time, it allows the use of emotional, sensory, and physical components of the child's behaviour. This makes it greater efficient of assigning experience. Also, such activity helps to unlock spontaneity, the development of children's creative potential. This method allows talking to take the place of another, helps children to understand the point of view of others, and to find different ways of behaving.

In addition, sociodrama is often seen by researchers as a continuation of sociometry, as a means of correcting individual difficulties and disharmonies, and therefore strengthening the resilience of each group member. The projective technique of "Social Atom", which allows you to identify socio-emotional relationships of the individual, can be useful to identify such difficulties.

According to Jacob L. Moreno, a person's behaviour largely depends on the position he occupies in the informal structure of a small group. Sociodrama techniques ("Role Exchange", "Mirror") allow performers to look at themselves and the situation from the outside and to try new ways of behaving. It is possible to do it quite effectively with children, using also toys. The game, according to the supporters of this method, is so fascinating for participants that the support disappears by itself, resulting in changing rigid patterns of behaviour, and unlocks creativity and spontaneity, which is important in forming adequate responses to new situations (Jacob L. Moreno, Grete Anna Leutz, Alfons Aichinger, Walter Holl and others) (Handzilevska & Tymoshchuk, 2021).

At the same time, our study proposes the use of sociodrama tools in the conditions of initial bilingualism through the prism of the resilience approach.

Limitations

The study is not without research limitations, which are characteristic of one group of students of one Ukrainian university. It can be expanded to include wider groups of English language learners at different universities, who aim to educate children in perspective. This can provide a more specific algorithm for the use of sociodrama in bilingualism through the prism of the resilience approach, in particular statistical confirmation or refutation of the hypothesis that the level of bilingualism depends on the development of resilience or vice versa.

Conclusion

Consequently, by creating additional reality, the sociodrama's psychodramatic space allows its participants:

- to look at themselves hyper ballistically through the eyes of others,
- to realize their place in this space,
- to model themselves in a situation,
- to expand the repertoire of roles in the social world,
- to assimilate life resources and to strengthen the group's resilience in general, as well as its participants separately.

The relevance of using this method in the conditions of bilingualism can be seen through self-regulation development to overcome difficulties through the prism of tolerance for the feelings of others. The importance of English learning students' resilience development for the development of social conflict prevention skills, the organization of a positive climate in the educational space, the organization of a psychologically safe

educational environment, and the finding of effective strategies for overcoming today's challenges is evidenced by the results of our study.

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Smartphone English Language Learning Apps: Challenges and Perspectives

Rastislav Metruk

Abstract

New technologies have triggered major changes in our lives, exerting substantial impact also on the field of education. Recently, a shift from computer-assisted language learning to mobile-assisted language learning can be observed as the popularity and availability of mobile learning is constantly increasing. Language learners can enjoy immense benefits from employing smartphones and language learning apps to practice and enhance their language abilities. Although there exist numerous important advantages, teachers and students need to overcome several serious challenges that may hinder the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this article attempts to explore the drawbacks of using language learning apps for the purposes of language learning by examining the responses of 100 university EFL learners. Drawback such as functionality and reliability of apps, absence of a peer or a teacher, or inability to develop all the language systems and skills are subsequently discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations formulated.

Keywords: smartphone-assisted language learning, language learning apps, mobile learning, EFL learners, challenges and drawbacks of m-learning

Introduction

Modern digital technologies profoundly influence each sphere of human activity, including the field of education. “Educational practices are constantly adjusting to technological advances, in order to improve their effectiveness in delivering knowledge and preparing students for the challenges of modern digital society” (Rovithis et al., 2019, p. 144). Nowadays, it is also mobile learning that is becoming widely acceptable as a learning tool, especially as regards efficiency, usefulness, interactivity, and convenience (Cheung, 2014). It appears that it is the smartphone which is now at the center of attention owing to several reasons such as being superior to standard cellular phones, having computer-like functionality, and due to the fact that its popularity and availability is increasing (Horvath et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2014). Leis et al. (2015) even suggested a new acronym – SPALL, which stands for smartphone assisted language learning since smartphones possess capabilities that surpass those of standard cellular phones.

Smartphones offer the possibility to install 3rd party applications, what can be regarded as one of its major advantages. According to Mindog (2016), apps offer high potential, capable of facilitating the learning process. Further, language learners have a chance to practice all the language systems and skills by choosing appropriate apps. “This is the best thing that apps can bring: a portable solution to every learning style which can suit different language learning skill requirements: grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, writing or speaking” (Rosell-Aguilar, 2014). According to Hossain (2018), learners receive the following benefits as regards using learning apps for the language learning purposes:

- practice any item of the language anytime anywhere;
- the smartphones and the apps are portable;
- the learners do not have to carry books, pen and paper;
- they can take tests on the different skills of the target language;
- they can share their proficiency with their friends through the same device;
- they can practice the four skills of the target language on the same device;
- on the apps, they can have lessons and tips on the different skills;

- they can have knowledge and fun together;
- they can be technologically advanced and linguistically benefited simultaneously;
- they can get the apps for free;
- apps can accompany them 24/7 like an expert teacher on the target language.

On the basis of the mentioned advantages, it can be stated that language learners can choose when, where, and how they can build and practice their language ability. Moreover, it can be performed without using any books or writing materials, with a possibility to share their learning success with their peers (Metruk, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that smartphone-assisted language learning offers considerable potential to enhance the teaching and learning process.

However, there also exist numerous challenges which both teachers and learners face. There is a high number of applications that language learners have at their disposal, which makes it rather difficult to choose the appropriate ones. Heil et al. (2016) maintain that the majority of apps appear to be decontextualized, and that they concentrate rather on isolated words than on authentic language production. Moreover, there may also be problems with the Internet access and connection, small screen size, absence of face-to-face contact, or multitasking issues (Klímová, 2019). In relation to multitasking, Chen and Yan (2016) maintain that this could be a principal source of distraction in terms of academic performance, which hampers the learning process.

It may be also apps functionality that is in question – many of them have been reported to contain bugs which developers have to deal with (Metruk, 2022). Finally, both teachers and learners' preparedness ought to be explored since many students and instructors appear to be underprepared concerning the effective use of language learning apps; for example, a study conducted by Dashtestani (2013) suggests that foreign language teachers did not demonstrate necessary skills concerning the use and development of MALL activities. Another study that was carried out by Isham, Siti and Siti (2013) aimed at examining how teachers are ready in terms of accepting technology for the pedagogical use, concentrating on mobile phone technology within the teaching and learning process. It appears that instructors do not seem to be ready enough as they do not possess relevant competences, also lacking access to the available resources.

It is apparent that there is a huge gap to be filled in by conducting studies concerning the drawbacks and challenges of smartphone language learning and using apps in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Smartphone apps show tremendous potential for language learning, but learners need some planning and guidance so that apps are used effectively, and that they suit students' needs (Abdullah, Tajuddin & Soon, 2019; Kacetl & Klímová, 2019).

Methodology

The prime objective of this small-scale study was to identify the challenges of using smartphone English language learning apps with Slovak university EFL students. The research sample was formed by 100 students-trainees (71 females and 29 males) in the Teacher Training of English Language and Literature study program at a university in Slovakia. On average, they were approximately 22 years of age. Responses were obtained by distributing a short questionnaire that was administered via the Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised 14 statements, and learners were also asked to write any supporting comments to their statements. The answers were then analyzed and interpreted.

Research results

Figure 1 below displays the responses of respondents in ascending order.

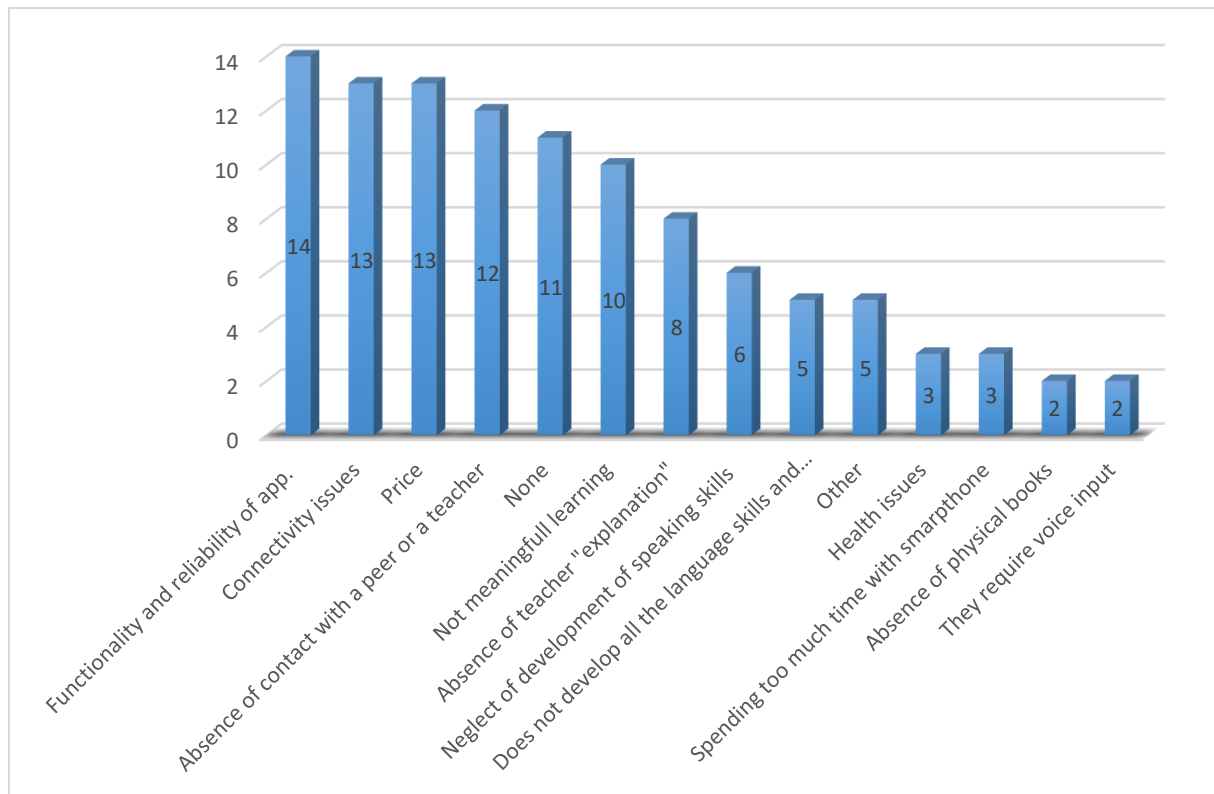


Figure 1 Smartphone language learning apps challenges

Most occurrences received the functionality and reliability of apps. The respondents claimed that some of the apps did not seem to be reliable, contained mistakes, were rather limited, or that they simply did not function properly.

Connectivity issues were mentioned altogether 13 times. The students emphasized that the constant Internet connection is required in order to use the apps, which means that you need to have also another Internet connection options such as additional data, which students have to pay for.

Price was also mentioned 13 times. The respondents indicated that while some of the apps are free, many of them need to be paid for. Thus, the affordability of using apps for the language learning purposes decreases since not every learner has adequate financial resources so that they can buy the apps they desire.

Next, it was the absence of contact with either a peer or a teacher that received 12 mentions. The respondents stressed the absence of interaction with other individuals, suggesting that the practice with apps was impersonal, lacking personal contacts with other speakers. It was also mentioned that lack of adequate feedback, which could be received from a peer or an instructor, was related to this issue.

11 respondents claimed that there were no issues identified in terms of smartphone English language learning apps for the purposes of language learning.

The fact that learning was not meaningful was pointed out 10 times. Students felt as if they were just doing some routine tasks, whose aims are merely to refresh some parts of the

structures and skills they had already acquired. They further indicated that such learning is rather difficult, concentrating more on the result than on the process itself.

It was also the absence of teacher “explanation” that received 8 mentions. Although within the learner-centered and communicative language teaching and learning the language structures are taught inductively, learners discovering rules often on their own, the teacher still seems to play an important role within the process. Being in a role of a facilitator, taking their needs and learning styles into consideration, and creating positive and stimulating learning environment, they can explain what learners cannot discover on their own, which facilitates the learning process.

Next, it was the neglect of developing speaking skills and subskills (6 mentions) and the fact that practicing language through language learning apps does not allow to develop all the language skills and systems (5) times. The skill of speaking is often regarded as a primary language skill, which stands at the center of attention when it comes to EFL learning (Mishan and Timmis, 2015; Ur, 2012). Other skills (writing, listening, reading) are also of great importance since the communicative language teaching stresses the need of developing all the four language skills. The neglect of practicing any of the four skills appears to be a challenge that needs to be addressed by both academics and researchers.

5 respondents identified some other drawbacks such as having too many apps at their disposal, apps optimization, or the chance of becoming distracted.

Finally, it was health issues (3 mentions) such as potential headaches or eye strain, spending too much time with the smartphone (3 mentions), absence of physical books (2 mentions), or the fact that they require voice input (2 mentions).

Discussion and conclusion

Smartphone language learning apps represent an innovative and attractive way of learning languages, demonstrating potential to facilitate language learning. Although apps offer numerous significant advantages, it should be also emphasized that there exist several serious and considerable challenges that need to be addressed and responded to by both EFL teachers and learners.

Apps functionality and reliability represent vital issues which need to be considered by app developers as they definitely contribute towards the effectivity of learning. Absence of other peers or a teacher also constitute a formidable challenge. Researchers, instructors, and teachers need to find a way how the use of apps, whether in-the-classroom or outside-the-classroom, can be made more communicative and interactive.

Another real challenge is represented by the fact that students are unable to practice all the language systems and skills. Arising out of the principles of the communicative language teaching, all four language skills are important and need to be developed and practiced by EFL learners. Language learners ought to be provided with some advice on how to appropriately utilize learning apps so that their learning takes place.

Finally, it is also other matters that merit attention of both teachers and learners, such as health issues or spending a great deal of time using the apps. Exploring and considering these issues will also help facilitate the learning process.

It can be concluded that it is absolutely vital that further research studies in this field of education are conducted in order to cast more light on this matter.

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Challenges of Distance Education in Language Teaching

Eva Leláková, Sevda Kubilay

Abstract

The study aims to reveal challenges lecturers have experienced during language teaching. The study was carried out in a qualitative design and included 12 participants who have been working in a state university in Turkey and teaching English through online platforms. The participants were interviewed with a semi-structured form and gathered data were analysed with the content analysis method. The findings revealed that challenges can be categorized under four themes: Instructional challenges, communicational difficulties, technical problems, assessment and evaluation challenges.

Keywords: distance education, language teaching, challenges, technology usage

Introduction

The emergence of distance education is based on the idea of autonomy and independent study that enables learners to manage their own learning processes and provision of communication and interaction between the learner and the teacher who are far away from each other. The theories based on the innovations brought by industrialization have also been effective in the application of distance education (Gökmen et al., 2016). In the most general definition, distance education is a form of education free from time and space, which gives flexibility to learners and teachers (Holmberg, 1977). Moore (1973), defined distance education as a method in which teaching behavior is carried out separately from learning behaviors, and communication is facilitated by printed, electronic and mechanical means. In distance education, course contents, programs, assignments are conveyed to students by means of information technology applications, multimedia resources, intranet, internet and video conference. Students can access these materials whenever and wherever they want (Barjis, 2003). Depending on the nature of the educational interaction between the teacher and the student, especially the period in which the interaction occurs, distance education can be carried out synchronously and asynchronously (Dung, 2020).

Distance education makes it possible to follow courses for pupils who have a long-term illness or are disabled (Neale et al., 1999). Similarly, some students may experience temporary absence due to their parents' work abroad and they can study anywhere without having obligation to travel and commute. Another advantage of distance education is students' having control over their speed of learning and repetition of the subject matter. On the other hand, distance learning is time consuming in terms of creation of course materials and the lack of direct interactions between the learner and the teacher (Csachová & Jurečková, 2020).

Although the concept was mainly discussed with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been widely used in developed countries. As the coronavirus has begun to spread around the world, education has taken the form of distance education throughout the world and most of the countries have struggled to adapt to new norms (Mikušková & Verešová, 2020). The pandemic has accelerated the process of establishing the necessary infrastructure for distance education in educational institutions. The transition from face-to-face education to distance education was painful but promising, so some higher education institutes still take advantage of that experience.

Nowadays, undergraduate and graduate courses in most universities are given online for various reasons such as increasing the quality and diversity in education, making the interaction between universities more efficient, reaching more students and reducing

economic costs (Pichette, 2009). So as to say, distance education is commonly used in tertiary education and in Turkey most universities carry out compulsory courses via distance education tools. Foreign language courses are included in these compulsory courses as well.

Literature review

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the internet has started to take place more in daily life. With the reflection of the internet on education services, besides face-to-face language teaching, internet-based blended language teaching and distance language teaching applications that are carried out completely online have emerged (Doğan, 2020). Hartnett (2016), asserts that technologies such as distance, online, open, flexible, blended, flipped and massive online open courses (Moocs) are aimed at the use of digital technologies in education. He draws attention to the term 'e-learning' that encompasses all these concepts integrating digital technologies into the learning process. Schulze and Scholz (2018) state that there is a trend towards giving more language lessons online because online environments provide students with new social interaction areas, make it possible to reach a wider audience, and are more economical.

Some studies carried out before the pandemic revealed that distance language learning has a positive effect on achievement and attitudes of students (Glisan, Dudt, & Howe, 1998), and collaboration among teachers (Khoshsima, Saed & Arbabi, 2018). On the other hand, Ekmekçi (2015), studied distance education in foreign language teaching from the perspectives of university students and found out that although a great majority of the students were satisfied with the content, reading and grammar sections, the activities aiming to develop listening, speaking and writing skills were found insufficient. Similarly, Valentine (2002), claimed that speaking skill is developed after the acquisition of reading, listening and writing skills and speaking skill is considered as difficult to be taught via distance education (Sritulanon, Chaturongakul, & Thammetar, 2018). Hence, we believe that corpus-driven exercises (Lacková, 2021) are applicable when developing students' vocabulary via distance language learning. Another research emphasized that lack of interaction and feedback from the students were seen as the main drawbacks of online teaching (Khoshsima, Saed & Arbabi, 2018).

With the pandemic, almost all courses were conducted through distance education, which has led to an increase in research on distance education issues. Researchers emphasize the advantages as well as the disadvantages of distance education. Although there are significant number of studies dealing with distance education, the research focusing on language teaching through distance education is limited. During the pandemic distance education of foreign languages has become more common and the aspects that need improvement have been highlighted. Dolmacı and Dolmacı (2020), analyzed the perspectives of the lecturers in foreign language teaching via synchronous distance education and indicated that traditional face-to-face education was more effective and had various advantages over distance education. The researchers emphasized the power of body language and eye-contact and gestures to provide classroom management and active participation. They pointed out that it is easier to motivate students and test their language skills in traditional classes. Sandorova and Betak (2021), pointed out the lack of immediate feedback and the correction of mispronunciation which retard language development. They emphasized that the effectiveness of distance education was still questionable, as the real essence of personal human contact can't be replaced in distance education. Also, in-class lessons teachers have more interaction with students to help them improve their language skills; for instance, giving profound explanations, translating unknown words, giving feedback and providing guidance. İskender

(2021), investigated the distance learning courses in teaching Turkish as a foreign language and found out that the development of speaking and writing skills is problematic because of the inadequacy of practicing opportunities and lack of materials. Güngör, Çangal and Demir (2020), investigated the views of learners and instructors about distant language learning and revealed that students prefer traditional classes to distance education because of insufficient interaction, delay of language skill development and lack of assignment control.

The literature review indicates that distance education has some shortcomings depending on the teaching area, learning expectations and the quality of teaching and learning platform. In this study, we aimed to discuss the challenges lecturers have faced while teaching English through online platforms. In our research, we wanted to identify the difficulties related to the compulsory common English courses given in Turkey from the perspective of the lecturers.

We believe research findings provide insights for the improvement of foreign language courses conducted through distance education and it will also form the basis for future research.

Research results

This study aimed to discuss the challenges lecturers have faced while teaching English through online platforms. The research was conducted in a state university in Turkey with 12 lecturers who have been teaching English during the 2021-2022 academic year and have experience in distance education. Participants were determined by the convenience sampling method and the research was carried out in a qualitative design. The interviews were conducted with semi-structured interview forms and the participants were asked questions about the difficulties they experienced during the distance education process. The interviews were conducted within the framework of ethical rules and the interviews were recorded after the participants' consent was taken.

The research data were analyzed by content analysis. The content analysis includes creating categories and it aims to analyze the situations in which the categories are related (Silverman, 2018). Codes were obtained from the data and then themes to represent these codes were determined based on the literature review. The findings are given in Table 1.

Themes	Codes
Technological Problems	Poor internet connection
	Transmission problems
	Lack of appropriate electronic devices
	Lack of technical support
Instructional challenges	Motivation problem
	Insufficient interaction
	Difficulty in giving feedback
Communication problems	Psychosocial distance
	Lack of eye contact and body language
Assessment and evaluation challenges	Exam-oriented assessment
	Difficulty in monitoring exams
	Technical problems during the exam

Table 1 Themes and codes

1. Technological Problems

The participants stated that one of the most challenging obstacles for distance education was the problems related to technological infrastructure.

Poor internet connection

Participants pointed out that although most of the students have internet access, as students connect to the internet to watch the lesson synchronously, the density experienced on the internet line causes a poor internet connection. It poses a problem, especially for students. The participants stated that the regular attendance and active participation of the students in the classes were negatively affected by the poor internet connection. Another reason for poor internet connection is that the infrastructure is not good in suburbs in comparison to city centers. One of the participants expressed this situation as follows:

«The internet infrastructure in the region where some students live is insufficient, so the students leave the course from time to time and have to reconnect».

Transmission problems

Transmission problems can be caused by jammed time, internet provider, hardware or software usage. Transmission quality is important to follow the course effectively. For instance, poor voice transmission hinders students from listening to the course actively and understanding the topic. Similarly, transmission problems related to visuals or recordings negatively affects the course flow. In such a situation, the lecturer has to omit the visual or recordings and then continue with an alternative activity. A participant explains her solution as follows:

«When I share a picture and talk about it, I sometimes realize that students can't see it on their screen. At that point, I turn off the picture and keep on teaching without that».

Lack of appropriate devices

The pandemic has made the digital divide between students more evident. Some students do not have the appropriate electronic devices to follow distance education and in crowded families, students have had to share the devices to follow their courses. If they don't have personal computers, laptops or tablets, they have used their parents' smartphones. One of the participants drew attention to this situation as follows:

«Some of the students connect to the lessons via smartphones. This is not very convenient for active participation in the lesson».

Lack of technical support

With the pandemic, there was a rapid transition to distance education, as a result of which there was no time to check the internet usage levels and readiness of students and teachers. Although education stakeholders have improved themselves in the process, lecturers may not have the competence to solve technical problems or they don't want to deal with technical problems. The participants think that there should be a responsible person who will intervene immediately in the technical problems experienced during the lesson. One of the participants explained her feelings when she faced a technical problem as follows:

«I feel very helpless when there is a technical problem during the lesson. Students expect you to solve the problem as the sole authority, which puts pressure on you».

2. Instructional challenges

The second theme is instructional challenges that affect the quality of the course. For a lesson to be effective, the instructor is expected to be more than a passive transmitter of information; instead, the instructor is supposed to keep students' attention active and ensure active participation in the lesson. However, in distance education it can be difficult to manage the atmosphere in the online class.

Motivation problem

Most of the participants think that students are less motivated for online learning. They stated that students get easily bored and their attention is quickly distracted, as well as constantly looking at the screen is tiring and demotivating. One of the participants expressed that students are sometimes reluctant to participate in the lesson:

«Students do not actively participate in the lesson. Most of the time, I myself answer the questions that I ask the students».

Insufficient interaction

It has been stated that students' participation in the course in distance education is less than expected. Peer-work and group work activities are important for the acquisition of language sub-skills but it is difficult to organize them. Interaction is mostly carried out through question-and-answer activities.

«Students often play the role of passive listeners and there is little or no interaction among students».

Difficulty in giving feedback

In-class teaching, learners are free to ask questions and profound explanations, get feedback for their assignments, etc. In distance education, it is more difficult for a lecturer to allocate time for each student, as the online courses are kept shorter and sometimes the number of students is higher. Also, to interfere with a student's speech in online teaching is inconvenient. Some participants stated that they use chatbox to give feedback but students mostly miss them.

“In traditional teaching, it is an effective method to ask a student to come near of you and discuss about the mistakes in the assignment paper. However, in distance education, we just add explanations on assignments and send them back online, but we do not know whether the student understands them or not”.

3. Communication problems

Face-to-face interaction enables more intimate relationships between individuals. In distance education or online learning, there is a more formal relationship between teacher and student. Communication is incomplete when it lacks body language.

Psychosocial distance

What creates such a distance between learners and lecturers are the lack of a warm physical learning environment, lack of face-to-face conversation and insincere classroom climate. In distance education, students feel shy to ask a question or share a problem with a lecturer but in traditional education, every lecturer has office hours to help and support students. Another important point is that in Turkey students don't have to switch on their cameras but lecturers mostly appear on the camera. In such a situation, students are just voices behind the screen,

which creates a distance. Although the participants generally focused on these points, one participant especially emphasized that recording the synchronized lessons created a more formal and cold atmosphere.

“The lessons are recorded and shared for others to watch, this creates some kind of pressure on lecturer and students so I think some students feel shy to ask questions or participate actively”.

Lack of eye-contact and body language

Eye contact, gestures and body language are important components of in-class communication and classroom management. Teachers can get feedback from students about course flow or they use body language to make a lesson more vivid and attention-catching. A participant emphasized the significance of body language to get silent messages from students:

“Sometimes body language tells more than words. Eye contact and body language give clues to the teacher whether the subject is understood or not. In distance education, you even do not know whether the student is behind the screen or not”.

4. Assessment and evaluation challenges

In distance education, attendance to courses is not compulsory because synchronous lessons are recorded and shared for students to watch again, thus participation to courses is less than expected. The participants of the study underlined the importance of a healthy and fair evaluation system that doesn't rely solely on exam results.

Exam-oriented assessment

Participants emphasized the importance of students' attendance in courses and active participation during the lesson. In traditional classes, some participants declared that they had criteria to evaluate students' in-class performance and criticized the multiple choice exam-oriented assessment.

“In face-to-face education, students' attendance and participation are taken into account in the evaluation process. However, the only criterion in distance education is the exam”.

Difficulty in monitoring exams

Online exams are applied simultaneously to all students taking the course. However, cameras are not used in the exams, there is only a time limit. All of the participants think that online exams are not reliable and students can cheat easily. Compulsory courses that are taken by hundreds of students are difficult to monitor and ensure fairness. A participant pointed out that a student can get help during the exam or replace him/herself with another person who is better at that subject matter.

“We can't see students during an exam, maybe someone else is answering questions or someone is helping out”.

Technical problems during the exam

Participants stated that sometimes technical problems may occur in the exams. These problems may be software-related ones or external reasons such as power outages and poor

internet connection. Participants stated that they do not want to be the addressee of technical problems. A participant expressed his negative experience with the system as follows:

“The platform we used once finished the exam 2 or 3 minutes earlier than the scheduled time. Some of the students could not answer all the questions. In such a situation, it is annoying to be exposed to the complaints of the students”.

Discussion

The study revealed the challenges and limitations of distance education from the perspective of language teachers. The findings highlighted the importance of internet infrastructure and internet access of students and institutions. While the internet connection is not a problem in city centers and metropolises, problems can be experienced in rural areas or city surroundings. Access to the internet in distance education is the same as access to education because problems such as limited internet quota and poor internet connection negatively affect students' attendance and access to education. Transmission problems interrupt the flow of the course, especially speaking and listening activities can't be completed when there is a slow transmission. Hanesová and Niklová (2022), studied the impact of Covid-19 and declared that the overall reduction in children's level of educational achievement was influenced by three significant factors, one of which is the absence of an internet connection and a smartphone. The pandemic clearly indicated that digital competence and readiness are crucial to maintaining educational services. As it is examined internationally, the highest internet access is in North America and Europe with 89%; Central and South America and the African continent have the lowest rates (OECD, 2021). There is an undeniable imbalance between developed and developing countries, so the governments are responsible for providing equal conditions for all students.

As far as the instructional challenges are concerned, apparently insufficient interaction meets the eye. The number of students who attend the course and their willingness determine the quality of the course; however, due to the lack of compulsory attendance, the motivation of students is lower than expected. It can be inferred that motivating students for distance education is challenging for lecturers. As for giving feedback, lecturers have difficulty in correcting mistakes and mispronunciation spontaneously; additionally, when they give feedback in written form (Hundarenko, 2021), it doesn't provide the same effect as verbal notice. This finding is supported by the research conducted by Sandorova and Betak (2021), they investigated the opinions of students about distance education and found out that majority of the respondents demanded more spoken interaction, explanation and feedback.

The study also revealed that communication problems, lack of body language affect language education in terms of the relationship between educators and learners as well as language skill development activities. Štefančík and Stradiotová (2021), define the loss of direct social contact between teacher and students as the biggest shortcoming of distance education. They point out to the significance of students' nonverbal expressions and the reduction of interaction by students' reluctance to turn on their cameras. Considering the importance of drama, role play and theatrical activities in foreign language education, it is a great deficiency that teachers and students cannot see each other and cannot use body language.

Lastly, the participants shared their concerns about assessment and evaluation processes. In the case of compulsory language courses, there are hundreds of students taking the course and the exam-oriented assessment is preferred however, it is nearly impossible to monitor all students and provide fairness in the exam. Lecturers have to trust the students or

the institutions should develop a control mechanism to check exam fairness. The problems related to testing and assessment are also highlighted in some other research (Štefančík & Stradiotová, 2021; Hašková, Šafranko, Pavlíková & Petrikovičová, 2020). In addition to ensuring fairness in the exams, another point to be considered is to ensure that there are no technical problems during the exam.

Conclusion

This study aimed to reveal the challenges of distance language education from the perspective of lecturers and indicated that there are technological, instructional, communicational and assessment related difficulties in distance education. However, this research is limited with the participants working at a state university and giving compulsory English courses in Turkey so findings will vary in a different contexts and with participants of different profiles. In the light of the findings, our suggestions are as follows:

- The Ministry of National Education should take an active role in the solution of problems related to internet infrastructure and technical problems.
- Blended learning can be a better option for language teaching in a way that skills can be taught in face-to-face courses and the content for online teaching is designed as reading activities or assignments.
- Active participation of students in distance education classes should be included in the grading process accordingly, students can be awarded bonus points to get motivated for the next course.
- To ensure assessment reliability, face-to-face exams can be done.

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Using art therapy methods to form inclusive and emotional-ethical competencies of future primary school teachers

Oksana Derkachuk

Abstract

The latest transformations in education in connection with the integration of Ukraine into the European educational space, significantly affect the strategy of organizing the educational process in higher education. First of all, this applies to the training of future primary school teachers, because it is on them that the formation and development of the personality of the junior school student depends. Children come to primary school, different in character, behaviour, level of development and level of preparedness. All this is complicated by imperfect adaptation to the educational process, loss of interest in learning, manifestations of deviant behaviour. The task of teachers is to minimize the negative effects of the environment, to preserve spiritual and value orientations, to form the creative and intellectual potential of younger students. The variety of innovative technologies that characterize the current state of development of pedagogical science and practice includes art therapy - the technology of creating and using different types of art to convey feelings and emotions, which goes beyond traditional art education and aims to ensure harmonious and comprehensive development of junior students. through artistic and creative self-expression, self-knowledge and self-realization. With the help of art therapy, it is possible to solve educational and psycho-correctional tasks, as well as to develop a creative attitude to reality, in particular to learning, communication, group and family interaction. The use of elements of art therapy in school subjects is considered by teachers to be the most acceptable and effective in working with special children. It should take its rightful place in the educational process of an inclusive institution. After all, the introduction of non-standard, creative, non-medical means of influencing the activation of the internal resources of the child's body, creates more chances for its development.

Keywords: art therapy, art therapy methods, children with special needs, future primary school teachers.

Introduction

Mastering the methods of art therapy by future teachers provides the possibility of contact with the child and is based on different types of visual, plastic, audio communication. The future teacher must show a strong motivation to implement methods and forms of art therapy, have knowledge of the nature and specifics of art therapy technologies, their types and characteristics, develop creative imagination and alternative thinking, produce and theoretically substantiate new ideas, design ways to implement them, evaluate their own activities and the activities of others, etc.

Literature review

Art therapy opens space for the creative search of a teacher, as it helps to form a person, his worldview, life strategies and scenarios, teaching a person to be the creator of his own life and develop his creative potential.

There is a lot of applied research on various aspects of the application of art therapy in the educational process in higher education. Some areas of art therapy - drama therapy, music therapy, fairy tale therapy, sand therapy, as well as play therapy - are already deeply developed and popularized as effective methods for working with children with special educational needs. Therefore, we believe that the preparation of teachers for the use of art therapy is logical to consider in the context of such deeply and comprehensively researched issues as pedagogical innovations and technologies, development of professional competence, creativity, and a number of others as methodological and theoretical foundations for the whole complex.

Future teachers will be able to implement the knowledge and skills in art pedagogy and art therapy gained in the process of professional training in the form of: individual techniques, techniques, procedures in specific educational matters (activities) for the period of various pedagogical practices; the process of volunteer practice in the field of additional education (in institutions of social and psychological assistance, centers of children's creativity, shelters, orphanages, experimental sites); forms of supervision together with art therapy teachers, psychologists, social educators, etc.

Tasks of preparation of students for development of creative potential of junior schoolchildren by means of art therapy are built through a number of the purposes developed on the basis of structure of readiness for the given kind of activity. Its essence is that the goals of training future teachers to develop the creative potential of primary school students through art therapy are projected through the results of educational activities, which in turn are projected as certain achievements in skills, abilities, knowledge, methods of action and more. The technological nature of goal setting makes it possible to diagnose the level of formation of the components of readiness for the development of creative potential of junior schoolchildren by means of art therapy and to promptly make adjustments in the process of training future teachers.

Art therapy is especially important for those who cannot "speak out", for whom it is easier to express their fantasies in art than to tell about them. Fictions depicted on paper often speed up and facilitate the verbalization of experiences.

Isotherapy, as an art-therapeutic method, is a creative, spontaneous or thematic drawing. Drawing is an effective tool, because thanks to it, a person can freely express their thoughts, feelings and experiences through the language of images, symbols and colors, as well as free themselves from negative experiences and "paint" their attitude to reality.

Any picture and image in it, in a way, act as a psychological protection, in which a person accumulates his traumatic and negative experiences.

According to T. Kiselyov and L. Lebedev, the process of preparing future teachers for the introduction of art therapy technologies in the educational process should take place in stages. Scientists have identified four stages of preparation of future teachers for the use of art-therapeutic technologies in the educational process.

At the first stage there is a development and deepening of interest in the teaching profession, the ability to analyze and solve creative pedagogical problems, the development of general technology of creative search, self-analysis of themselves and their activities.

In the second stage, students learn the basics of art therapy, pedagogical research, acquire knowledge and skills, learn art therapy technologies (planning stages of the experiment, analysis and forecasting of art therapy technologies, introduction of these technologies in the educational process, correction and monitoring of experimental results).

O. Soroka in his study in the introduction of art therapy technology in the work of primary school teachers identifies three stages that relate to the structure of future primary school teachers, the sequence of study of pedagogical disciplines and pedagogical practice, their capabilities in preparing for the use of art therapy technologies in the educational process. The first stage (introductory) involved the formation of students' motivation to carry out art-therapeutic activities, clear ideas about the nature and possibilities of art therapy. The second stage (basic) involved the application of students' art therapy knowledge, skills and abilities in practice.

Research results

Experimental work was aimed at developing the qualities and abilities of students to art therapy, further development of motivation to carry out art therapy. The purpose of the third stage (constructive) - systematization of art-therapeutic knowledge, improvement of skills and abilities, awareness of the importance of using art-therapeutic technologies in the educational process of primary school.

The result of preparation of future teachers for the development of creative potential of junior schoolchildren by means of art therapy is the formed readiness for this type of activity.

Discussion

In my classes with students, I used such methods of art therapy as mandala therapy, puppet therapy, isotherapy. Mandala therapy is a unique method that helps to diagnose the current psychological state of a person and also has a healing calming effect. During this technique, I noticed which of the students needed help. It is especially important to carry out diagnostic techniques now that there is a war in our country and it is important not to miss the difficult psychological states of students.

Conclusion

From everything presented in the article, the following conclusions can be drawn: Art therapy creates an opportunity both for immersion in painful experiences and for the actualization of resource states, as well as for the transformation and integration of experience. Many authors emphasize the great value of using art therapy (especially in working with children and adolescents) who have suffered from violence, in particular, sexual violence.

Thanks to the transfer to visual production, a symbolic image can act as a "container" of negative emotions - fear, irritation, anger, pain, guilt, and others. Then influencing the created image - trying to destroy or change it - the client can achieve a certain control over the negative effects.

Self-control is the main prerequisite for the harmonious development of an individual, in particular an individual with special educational needs. And the teacher who works with this category of children must be able to control himself and his emotions, first of all, so as not to convey negativity to the student. So I believe that I managed to substantiate the importance and expediency of using art therapy methods in the training of future teachers who will work with children with special educational needs.

While working with children with special educational needs, art therapy has a very great therapeutic effect. Art therapy helps to develop fine motor skills, activates cognitive activity, promotes communication between children, and also helps to develop sensory abilities.

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Exploring Punctuation Practices in EFL Classroom: Slovak/Ukrainian University Classroom Experience

Olena Hundarenko, Tetiana Kibalnikova

Abstract

The article reveals possible factors that hinder EFL learners on the way of mastering punctuation skills. The authors advocate the idea that among the basic factors are the interference of the mother tongue, as well as certain practices of the punctuation of the other languages. The Slovak and Ukrainian university classroom experience proves that EFL students encounter some punctuation rules in the context of syntactical complexes, which enables them to acquire partial punctuation habits. Typical of both groups is the application of the first-language technical competencies while working with English-based contexts, which testifies to the importance of teaching academic writing (namely punctuation) to EFL students.

Keywords: academic writing, punctuation competence, EFL students, punctuation marks, interference of the mother tongue

Introduction

Language training for professional and academic purposes involves reception, production, interaction and mediation communicative activities as stated in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2020). Written production has always been a confusing competence, especially in terms of punctuation. Teaching punctuation principles proves to both challenging and fun experience in EFL university classroom environment (Hundarenko, 2020a). The interference of the mother tongue, as well as certain practices of the punctuation of the other languages can hinder EFL learners on the way of mastering this technical skill.

However, a comforting prospect is that the painstaking effort to teach academic writing skills (namely punctuation) to EFL students is rewarding when learners are aware of the need to improve their English language knacks and gain the mastery of key technical skills required both for their academic and professional life. The most important role of a teacher in the classroom is to show that *punctuation* is a powerful instrument applied for both fun and literacy, but its major purpose is to remove ambiguity and misunderstanding. Therefore, the main objective of this article is to specify the most common punctuation mistakes Slovak and Ukrainian EFL students make in academic essays, clear out factors that hinder mastering this skill and suggest possible solutions to polish this technical skill.

Literature review

The main objective of the competence-based curriculum for both Slovak and Ukrainian EFL students is to develop basic integral, general and specific professional skills. The latter includes phonetic, grammatical, lexical and communicative competences, whereas punctuation efficiency is left beyond the scope of the curriculum. We cannot but agree that punctuation literacy testifies to the level of students' communicative competence. Careful punctuation makes ideas clear when syntactical structures fail. However, educational and professional Bachelor or Master's degree programs do not include this competence as a separate one. Both Slovak and Ukrainian EFL students encounter some punctuation rules in the context of syntactical complexes, which enables them to acquire partial punctuation habits. Typical of both groups is the application of the first-language technical competencies

while working with English-based contexts. This all reflects into misuse or disuse of the proper punctuation marks.

Punctuation competence has long been disregarded in EFL methodology, the focus being on teaching lexis, grammar and syntactical structures. Nowadays, written production is one of major communicative activities, and this fact provokes the necessity to place academic writing in a university curriculum where punctuation competence is to become one of the professional skills of an EFL teacher.

Linguists whose mother tongue is English treat punctuation as a significant issue for meaning differentiation: Robinson (2002) speaks of the philosophy of punctuation; Truss claims that without punctuation “there is no reliable way of communication. Punctuation herds words together, keeps others apart. Punctuation directs you how to read, in the way musical notation directs a musician how to play” (Truss, 2003, p. 20); Elliott (2006) views punctuation marks as road signs. To punctuate correctly means to find the correct way of gluing the words in a sentence, in the way the reader will feel the pauses and be navigated smoothly in the world of a text.

Punctuation competence in Slovak and Ukrainian secondary and high school curriculum are also in the focus of native language methodologists’ attention. However, often in a university curriculum for EFL teachers, punctuation competence is viewed as a component of a major competence, which is a linguistic one. Teaching punctuation is sometimes a complementary though never principal objective of major courses such as Grammar and Practical English. The Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zilina, Slovakia can now boast a possibility to teach both major courses in Academic Writing and Advanced Academic Writing for both BA and MA students as well as an elective course in Professional Writing Skills (where punctuation is given a special focus). However, the syllabus for the elective course of Academic Writing in Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State Pedagogical University (Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine) includes the module “Punctuation”, where this technical skill is viewed as “essential as grammar and vocabulary” (Hundarenko, 2020b).

We advocate the idea that punctuation competence is to be included into the list of essential professional skills of EFL teachers. Every class, EFL students encounter professional texts, write essays, term papers and, finally, BA/MA theses. Therefore, it is urgent to consider writing challenges and find relevant solutions.

Research results

To specify the most common punctuation errors in written papers by the Ukrainian and Slovak EFL students and the factors they are caused by, we applied the method of comparative analysis. The corpus of the experimental data for this research comprises 30 expository essays written by the Ukrainian EFL students obtaining BA and MA degrees and 23 Slovak ones. The students were suggested a range of topics to express their opinion on: teaching profession, principles of the democratic society, the influence of Mass Media on people’s viewpoint, crime and punishment, pros and cons of living in a high-tech society, etc. Comparative analysis of typical Slovak / Ukrainian EFL students’ errors in expository essays proved that the major factor which influences mastering punctuation skill is the interference of their mother tongue. The punctuation rules for the three languages are different, and these differences can be identified by comparative analysis of L1, L2 and L3.

The analysis of the corpus of experimental data proved that Slovak / Ukrainian EFL students tend to misuse commas more frequently than other punctuation marks. Typically, they use commas excessively to join homogeneous members of a sentence. Let us consider the most evident punctuation divergencies caused by the interference of the mother tongue.

According to the norms of the Ukrainian language, homogeneous members are separated by comma if they are connected by coordinating conjunctions of contrast such as *a, але, проте, однак, зате*, e.g.: *Лисиця не біжить, а лежить, червона-червона на сліпучо-білому фоні...* (О. В.) (Tkachenko, 2001, p. 27). Whereas in English, comma is used before coordinating conjunctions *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet* only in case they join two independent clauses, e.g.: *The game was over, but the crowd refused to leave*. In the sentence *My father is quite strict but warm-hearted* comma is not used. However, in the Slovak language, homogeneous members are *not* separated by comma if they are connected by coordinating conjunctions of contrast such as *a, alebo, ale, ani, tak*, e.g.: *Chcel som zmrzlinu ale nemal som peniaze. Som veľmi zaneprázdnený a musím si oprat' oblečenie, pokosiť trávnik a vyčistiť kúpeľňu*. Hence, the Slovak learners do not experience any punctuation issues in an English context due to similar rules with their mother tongue; the Ukrainian students encounter troubles.

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
CORRECT: <i>Mass media have a great impact on young people and often affect young people's opinions on many objects of reality.</i>	INCORRECT: <i>You're expected to not only teach, but to be a guidance counselor yourself, be a friend or even a parent at some moments.</i> CORRECT: <i>You're expected to not only teach_but to be a guidance counselor yourself, be a friend or even a parent at some moments.</i>

Table 1 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

Another ambiguous rule for Ukrainian / Slovak EFL students is that comma is used to separate homogeneous members connected by correlative conjunctions *ні...ні..., то...то, або, чи, чи то...чи то...* (Tkachenko, 2001, p. 32). The same rule is applicable for the Slovak language (Table 1). Meanwhile in English comma is not required in case of *either...or..., neither... nor..., both... and...,* e.g.: *У мене немає ні часу, ні бажання робити це. (Ukr.) I have neither time nor desire to do it (Eng.);*

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
INCORRECT: <i>Newspapers may either impact their audience, or demotivate it.</i> CORRECT: <i>Newspapers may either impact their audience_ or demotivate it.</i>	INCORRECT: <i>A teacher may either give standard knowledge, or certain scientific background, or help in the process of discovering and investigation.</i> CORRECT: <i>A teacher may either give standard knowledge_ or certain scientific background_ or help in the process of discovering and investigation.</i>

Table 2 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

Homogeneous members of a sentence joined by a coordinating conjunction *and* are separated by commas in Ukrainian, while in English, the last item in an enumeration can be set apart by the so called “Oxford comma”, which is optional (Leláková, 2019). Ukrainian EFL students choose to use a comma before the final homogeneous member, rather than omit it, while Slovak EFL learners skip this comma in the context:

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
There are different educative programs serving various functions such as informative, pleasure, entertaining and developing.	<i>And this can cause dissatisfaction among people, who may eventually protest against the government, declare strikes, and influence the country's political life.</i>

Table 3 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

Our personal observations prove that both Ukrainian and Slovak EFL students use commas to set off essential elements of the sentence, such as clauses beginning with *that* on the analogy with Ukrainian counterpart *що*, and Slovak counterpart *že / aby*, where it is a common rule for a comma usage. However, in English *that* clauses after nouns and verbs expressing mental action are never set off, e.g.: *Вона чула, що їй завтра доведеться запропонувати іншу стратегію* (Ukr.). *Počula, že bude musieť zajtra navrhnuť ďalšiu stratégiu* (Slov.). *She heard that she would have to propose another strategy the following day* (Eng.).

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
INCORRECT: Mass media proved, that the information should not be trusted CORRECT: Mass media proved_ that the information should not be trusted.	INCORRECT: <i>Studies also showed, that people prefer online dating nowadays.</i> CORRECT: <i>Studies also showed_ that people prefer online dating nowadays.</i>

Table 4 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

In English, participial phrases are set off from the main clause if they occupy the initial position, which is true for Ukrainian punctuation, too: *Завершивши тест, він вийшов з аудиторії* (Ukr.). *Having finished the test, he left the room* (Eng.). The comparative analysis of Ukrainian and Slovak EFL students' essays revealed that students are aware of this rule and rarely make mistakes in such a context.

Apart from excessive use of commas due to the interference of the mother tongue, omission of commas after introductory clauses, phrases or words that come before the main clause is rather typical, e.g.: *Після контрольної роботи, але перед обідом я відправилася на пробіжку* (Ukr.). *After the test but before lunch, I went jogging* (Eng.). Ukrainian / Slovak EFL students frequently overlook this rule:

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
INCORRECT: <i>After reading this article and analysing its main messages_ I felt lost.</i> CORRECT: <i>After reading this article and analysing its main messages, I felt lost.</i>	INCORRECT: <i>Revealing the second objective of teachers' missionary profession_ I want to refer to a recent speech given by Joe Biden at the National and State Teachers of the Year Event.</i> CORRECT: <i>Revealing the second objective of teachers' missionary profession, I want to refer to a recent speech given by Joe Biden at the National and State Teachers of the Year Event.</i>

Table 5 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

Punctuation error analysis proves that Ukrainian / Slovak EFL learners have insufficient knowledge of the usage of commas as a decimal separator. Most English-speaking countries, including the US, Australia, and the UK, use commas to separate groups of thousands. In Ukrainian and Slovak, it is not common, e.g.: *I want to deposit 1,200 dollars* (Eng.). *Я хочу відкрити депозит на 1200 доларів* (Ukr.). *Chcem vložiť 1 200 dolárov* (Slov.).

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
INCORRECT: The agency invested 2_ 5 000 euros into its branch abroad. CORRECT: The agency invested 2, 5 000 euros into its branch abroad.	INCORRECT: <i>It is noteworthy that they have from 250_000 to 6_000_000 subscribers who read and watch their publications and probably believe them.</i> CORRECT: <i>It is noteworthy that they have from 250,000 to 6,000,000 subscribers who read and watch their publications and probably believe them.</i>

Table 6 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

Improper usage of quotation marks in direct speech constitutes another area of punctuation mistakes of non-natives. The most common practice in English is to enclose direct speech in double quotation marks always in upper case in contrast to the lower-case usage in Ukrainian and Slovak. Besides, Ukrainian / Slovak EFL students often ignore the fact that in English direct speech following the author's introductory words is set off by a comma, and a period is enclosed within the direct speech. In the two Slavic languages, the author's introductory words are followed by a colon, and the period is not enclosed within the quotation marks, e.g.: *John said without emotion, "I'll see you tomorrow."* (Eng.) *Джон сказав беземоційно: „Побачимося завтра”* (Ukr.). *John bez emócií povedal: „Uvidíme sa zajtra”* (Slov.).

Slovak EFL students' punctuation errors	Ukrainian EFL students' punctuation errors
INCORRECT: The journalist said: <u>"You cannot believe everything you hear"</u> . CORRECT: The journalist said, " <u>You cannot believe everything you hear</u> ".	INCORRECT: <i>One of the prisoners says: „I wish I had not done it, but now I must pay for my crime"</i> . CORRECT: <i>One of the prisoners says, "I wish I had not done it, but now I must pay for my crime"</i> .

Table 7 Comparative analysis of punctuation errors

The punctuation errors which we identified as a result of the research are typical for the Ukrainian and Slovak EFL students, although the list of punctuation divergencies is not final. There are punctuation marks which cause fewer problems, such as exclamatory or question marks, dash and colon. Such mistakes occur sporadically and do not arise much concern.

Discussion

The primary objective of the research was to specify the most common punctuation mistakes Slovak and Ukrainian EFL students make in academic setting and to clear out factors that cause such writing challenges. It is obvious that the major factor is the interference of the mother tongue. In Slavic languages, punctuation principles vary depending on the functional style. While in fiction punctuation rules are determined by the contents of utterances, both scientific and professional texts are punctuated according to logical, structural and syntactical

principles. Having no punctuation practice in EFL classroom leads to poor punctuation efficiency in doing research, writing essays or BA/MA thesis. This negligence can create considerable obstacles on the way of becoming proficient users of English as punctuation is an inseparable tool of literacy today.

Hence, one of the most efficient ways to eliminate punctuation errors in students' written discourse is to enhance EFL students' awareness of punctuation norms in the process of the second language acquisition (Leláková, 2012).

Notably, difficulties in achieving success in writing can also be caused by psychological barriers, in particular, by the presence of attitudes which, performing the functions of psychological hyper-immunity, limit productive self-realization (Handzilevska, Nikitchuk & Balashov, 2019), as well as the presence of emotional exhaustion, which stimulates the process of losing psychological resources, including the ability to perform adequate reflective analysis of the activity (Handzilevska, H. Kalamazh, Ratinska, & Khmiliar, 2021). Such a phenomenon requires additional research.

Limitations

The research is not devoid of study limitations which are featured by two groups of BA/MA students of one Slovak and one Ukrainian university completing a similar writing assignment. It can be extended further on incorporating wider groups of EFL learners with various foreign language proficiency. This might provide more interesting and important samples for further comparative/contrastive analysis of common errors occurring due to a mother tongue interference.

Conclusion

Punctuation competence is to be regarded as one of the key professional competences of EFL students, whose written literacy testifies to the level of their social and cultural maturity. To promote punctuation literacy, Academic Writing is to become one of core courses in the curriculum of any European university. It will secure further cultivation of efficient writers, competent teachers and persuasive researchers.

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Online learning: advantages and disadvantages

Myroslava Fabian

Abstract

In the current situation of the new pandemic, educational institutions get increasingly compelled to turn to distant forms of operating. Online learning has become a modern reality, functioning as an integral constituent and supplement to the traditional form of learning for the contemporary student and expanding the opportunities of classical school and university education. The article deals with the notion and essence of online learning, its effectiveness, benefits and challenges. It presents the action research findings and the SWOT analysis of online teaching and learning.

Keywords: online learning, advantage, disadvantage, action research, SWOT-analysis

Introduction

At present, Ukraine evidences a rapid development of online learning, which is based on the use of modern technology. In the conditions of the pandemic of coronavirus infection COVID-19, online learning is becoming the most accessible form of education. Universities all over the world are subject to quarantine. Almost all universities in Ukraine have switched to distance learning since March 2020. In the context of this transition, there are many discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of online learning. In order to properly assess the strengths and weaknesses of this form of functioning, it is necessary to turn to the essence of the discussed concept.

Online learning is considered as a set of technologies ensuring the delivery of the basic scope of the educational material, interactive communication between students and teachers in the learning process, providing students with the opportunity to work independently striving to master the studied material, as well as in the process of the teacher-guided learning. It is the interaction between teachers and students at a distance reflecting all the inherent components of the teaching and learning process (including its objectives, content, approaches, organizational forms, and teaching aids) and realized via Internet technologies, ensuring interactivity.

The work aims to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of online learning by means of action research.

The relevance of the study is primarily determined by the entry of the world community into the era of informatization, the intensification of information processes, the development of communications, which require that education is a continuous process and lasts throughout a person's life. All this cannot but affect the system of learning in higher educational institutions. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic situation has created the conditions for developing and implementing information and communication technologies in education, as well as consolidating online education as a form of learning, which is novice and necessitates a thorough study.

Literature review

The research and improvement of online learning methods are a hot topic for modern methodologists and general researchers. Luis Miguel Dos Santos (2020) points out that the search for optimal and effective teaching methods and strategies is an integral part of foreign language teaching (Santos, 2020, p. 105). Nowadays, online learning is becoming more and more popular. Reni Puspitasari, Dwi Lestariyana and Handoyo Puji Widodo (2018) note that

in this digital age, modern students have a great experience in active use of digital technologies through resources such as Facebook, Instagram, blogs and WhatsApp (Puspitasari, Lestriyana & Widodo, p. 489). Thus, the online environment is quite familiar to them. That is why researchers pay attention to the issues of online learning these days. Thus, Murphy (2020) argues that humanity is currently experiencing the dawn of learning based on modern technology. This type of learning is an affordable means of spreading ideas, innovation, and education around the world. According to the researcher, the abundance of options for finding information has stimulated an explosion wave of learning in the direction of virtual classes and other similar online learning platforms (Murphy, 2020).

Nowadays, there is a continuous improvement in the existing means of online learning. New forms have a number of advantages, which, according to Saleh (2020), have led to considerable improvements in the academic infrastructure and have significantly saved time in obtaining new information. Nariyati, Sudirman, and Pratiw (2020) also highlight the rapid changes in the learning process and underline that information technologies play a crucial role in advancing learning in the digital age (Nariyati, Sudirman & Pratiw, 2020, p. 42).

Chartrand (2016) notes that modern technology offers everyone unlimited access to educational materials (Chartrand, 2016, p. 10). This fact greatly facilitates the educational process and makes it accessible to a wide range of people. A similar point of view is expressed by Nadiran Tanyeli (2009), who believes that the use of the Internet as a learning tool allows making the learning process more engaging, first of all, for those who study a foreign language. The author draws attention to the fact that higher education institutions are more and more actively involved in the development of online language programs (p. 564).

Scholars also address the influence of new forms of learning on students' motivation to learn. Muhammad Dafit Pitoyo, Sumardi Abdul Asib (2020) point out that in the XXI century, there is a tendency to reduce the role of traditional forms of learning. Their study proves that students increased their level of motivation, starting to learn more intensively after taking game tests on the free learning platform Quizizz (Pitoyo, Asib, 2020, p. 7).

The research of the educational platform Moodle has been carried out by Sanchez and Hueros (2010), Machado and Tao (2007), Suvorov (2010) and other authors. Costaa, Alvelosa, Teixeiraa (2012) focus their study on analyzing the functionality and tools of Moodle platform and their use by students. The scholars note that this online platform opens many opportunities for students for effective learning. Thus, the Moodle platform, adopted in many Ukrainian universities, contains modules that allow the creation of educational resources, communication between participants in the educational process, objective assessment of activities, etc.

Owing to its complex nature and diverse features, online learning can enhance the educational process. However, in order to promote successful collaboration and performance, teachers and students must know how to integrate it effectively into the teaching and learning process. According to Tham and Werner (2005), the effectiveness of online learning is shaped by three elements: institution, which involves teachers who know how to use the tools to boost learning, how to interact with their students and create a convenient and enjoyable learning environment and how to bring students closer creatively and to hold their careful attention; students, who may feel forsaken owing to the absence of their peers. In this case, teachers should know how to establish relationships and links with students and technology (Tham & Werner, 2005, p. 19).

The main innovative features of online learning include:

- 1) provision of all components of the educational process: obtaining information, practical exercises, certification (control of learning achievements);

- 2) interactivity, which provides a significant expansion of opportunities for independent learning work through the use of activity-based forms of learning;
- 3) the opportunity for more meaningful learning outside the classroom.

The emphasis on completeness is not accidental. It is not about searching and retrieving textual information from remote sources. Completeness, in this case, implies the implementation outside the classroom of such types of learning activities that previously could be performed only at the university: learning new material on a subject basis, current knowledge control with evaluation and conclusions, preparation for exams, and much more, up to the collaborative learning work of remote users (Cohen & Nycz, 2006, p. 26).

In terms of online learning, academic studies of both offline and online learning have manifested the effectiveness of online learning in the educational field. Research shows that when online learning has been implemented, students become able to comprehend and grasp information equally, or even better than students studying traditionally, and that distant learning turns out to be effective particularly in the case of quiet, easily intimidated individuals and students with slow learning pace who usually avoid speaking up and expressing themselves in the classroom (Stern, 2004, p. 198).

Researchers note that, unlike offline learning, online mode achieved popularity primarily because of its flexible character in delivering lessons and evaluating content and resources. Thus, online learning has great importance in the learning process since it is characterized by the possibility to enhance its quality offering the opportunity to personalize and accustom courses to the needs of certain learners (Babu & Sridevi, 2018, p. 85).

Owing to its flexibility, online learning removes barriers of space and time, thus, the learner can have access to an ample scope of information, which promotes collaboration, enables students to learn according to their own pace and rhythm, instigates learners to interact with their fellow students, discuss and exchange points of view and their ideas. The studies also point to the benefits of online learning, noting the fact that it is faster, saves time and money because it does not involve traveling. Moreover, the uploaded content is consistent and allows for easy updates (Sadeghi, 2019, p. 85).

Al-Dosari (2011) studies the perception of students and teachers about online learning and comes to the conclusion that online learning includes the following advantages: accessibility, focus on students, flexibility, and collaboration. Moreover, participants regard accessibility to be the most significant advantage of online learning (Al-Dosari, 2011, p. 403).

Indeed, online learning has many benefits, but some drawbacks should also be addressed. One of such disadvantages is the fact that online learners get distracted, lose focus while doing the assignment, or fail to observe deadlines. Another minus is the dependence of online learning on technology: students may not have access to the internet connection and computers, and interruptions or system errors may occur during classes (Sadeghi, 2019, p. 86).

The necessity to organize the learners' way of study and the amount of time spent on learning can sometimes result in their losing or decreasing motivation. In addition, the studies point to the lack of physical interaction and presence of peers, which can make students feel isolated.

A serious disadvantage of online learning can be attributed to aggravating students' physical health. Since teachers and learners spend many hours seated and in front of a computer screen, they may develop problems with their sight or spine (Nazarlou, 2013, p. 13).

Ukrainian scholars have also addressed the issue of online learning in the pandemic context. O. M. Sheptuha (2020) notes that online education involves personal interaction between instructors and students on a regular basis. This is because it is used as a blended learning technique along with other strategies. It is designed to be used in conjunction with a

variety of other personal learning techniques. According to the scholar, the advantages of online education include (Sheptuha, 2020, p. 52-53):

1) it is a great way to increase student engagement when it is used as part of a blended learning methodology. Blended learning involves using a variety of learning resources and teaching methods to provide content in multiple ways;

2) the use of online learning tools makes it easier for teachers to divide their workloads. Using a tool such as a digital curriculum, teachers have more flexibility and control to delineate their classes without requiring extra time on evenings and weekends;

3) saving time on the teacher's ability to plan his or her workload, as a number of digital curriculum tools are applied, providing ready-to-use lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessments. Some online learning tools can automatically define grades and post them to the instructor's dashboard (Sheptuha, 2020, p. 52-53).

However, some problems may arise when implementing online education in Ukraine, including:

1) slow development of high-speed mobile Internet;

2) non-acceptance of foreign practices of distance education by educational institutions;

3) lack of innovative thinking among teachers of traditional universities;

4) subsidization of the so-called "state" education;

5) little experience of potential teachers in forming courses/programs;

6) lack of methodological apparatus and practice of distance learning;

7) lack of investment in online education;

8) the state's long-standing neglect of online education opportunities for distance and inclusive education.

Among the opportunities for the development of online education in Ukraine are the following:

1) inclusive education in educational institutions can get a new impetus owing to online platforms;

2) inclusion of young people from rural areas and small towns into the general processes of education and science, technology and communications development, which will enable a "social lift" for talented young people;

3) the emergence of new specialties and education in those areas where literature and academic knowledge is lacking;

4) teaching for diaspora and Ukrainian scholars abroad on the basis of domestic higher educational establishments (Sheptuha, 2020, p. 53-54).

Research results

Action research is particularly crucial to our study as it gives the possibility to deal with a narrow topic such as advantages and disadvantages of online learning in order to get insight into the problem and extend professionally. It is actualized in a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The research strategy regulates how the research questions are addressed and ensures that the research technique is in line with the research objectives. According to Babbie et al. (2007), research design types can be classified as either empirical or non-empirical (Babbie et al., 2007, p. 78). Regarding the researchers' typology, the current work is an empirical study that employs a survey focused on gathering primary data. The primary data for the current analysis are derived from the original research and include the information collected by the researcher meeting the research objectives (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2009, p. 149).

According to Fink and Kosecoff (2005), a survey is a research method that can be used to collect data from a representative sample of subjects through communication and interaction either verbally or in writing. In this study, the second phase of data collecting was conducted using a quantitative survey method.

The focus group in the study involves 54 students in the second, third, fourth and fifth years of study at the Faculty of Foreign Philology, Uzhhorod National University. The study was conducted in May 2022.

A self-administered questionnaire was employed in the study. According to Cooper and Schindler (2008), a self-administered survey is “an instrument delivered to the participant via personal (intercept) or non-personal (computer-delivered, mail-delivered) means that is completed by the participant without additional contact with an interviewer” (Cooper & Schindler, 2008, p. 711). A self-administered questionnaire poses a researcher with a challenge since, despite its many benefits (questionnaires are affordable, time-saving, and customizable), it requires researchers to rely on the clarity and accuracy of the written questions rather than on their own expertise. Additionally, as compared to other modes (e.g., tet-a-tet interview), the response rate for mailed or online questionnaires is typically lower (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Moreover, a self-administered questionnaire also permits for a non-response bias since in case a respondent feels any doubts, they cannot be resolved immediately.

A structured questionnaire allowed taking into consideration the information collection method represented by an online questionnaire. An online survey to gather data was created with the help of the questionnaire service Google Forms and was developed in English.

The designed questionnaire was assessed by means of the Likert scale. P. Subedi (2016) states that the Likert scale is mainly used to evaluate respondents’ attitudes when they are given a choice of responses to a particular question or statement. The Likert scale questionnaire requires a respondent to mark his/her degree of agreement or disagreement with each given statement. Consistently, 5 categories of responses were included in the questionnaire ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Thus, the Likert scale of 8 items was devised to analyze students’ attitude to online learning.

The data in the present study were interpreted utilizing both descriptive and statistical methods. Descriptive statistics describes or summarizes the data which were obtained for a group of separate units of analysis.

The research used the following descriptive statistics techniques:

- frequencies, which indicate the frequency of a particular response or the proportion of responses to a particular statement.
- the mean, which is calculated by dividing the total value for all observations by the total number of observations. The central propensity, or the average response of participants, is calculated using a mean (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 265).
- the median is determined by observing the “middle” value, i.e., the number for which half of the observations are lower and half are higher.

The study has also made use of the SWOT analysis. According to V. Hour, SWOT is the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Hour, 2019). SWOT analysis has a lot of advantages in terms of analyzing educational issues in the aspect of online learning. First of all, it gives an overview of the current situation and the position of online learning in relation to the face-to-face mode of learning. The analysis highlights the spheres for improvement, processes that can be enhanced and things that can be avoided to increase the beneficial potential of the analyzed mode of teaching and learning. It enables educators to revise their educational goals and to become better prepared for the future.

Therefore, SWOT analysis enables us to determine the strengths (internal, positive attributes), weaknesses (internal, negative factors), opportunities (external, positive attributes) and threats (external, negative factors) of online teaching and learning.

Discussion

The analysis of answers given to the statements is presented in Table 1, demonstrating the mean and median for each statement.

	Statements	Mean	Median
1	I often have problems with access to the Internet as needed for my studies	3,907	4
2	I have sufficient technical skills to study online	3,555	4
3	I am uncomfortable communicating online with my teachers	2,037	2
4	I am willing to actively communicate with my groupmates online	3,703	4
5	I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary to learn	2,962	3
6	I am motivated by the material in an Internet activity outside of class	3,518	4
7	I believe that learning on the Internet is more motivating than a regular course	3,222	3
8	I think that my experience of learning online is beneficial to my overall university studies	3,870	4

Table 1 Students' attitude to online language learning

The data of the table clearly show that the mean scores for questions fall in the range with the highest mean score of 3,907 (Statement 1) and the lowest 2,037 (Statement 3). Statements 5 and 7 demonstrate the median value of 3, which means the respondents were quite unanimous in their responses.

The frequency distribution for statements is presented graphically in Figure 1.

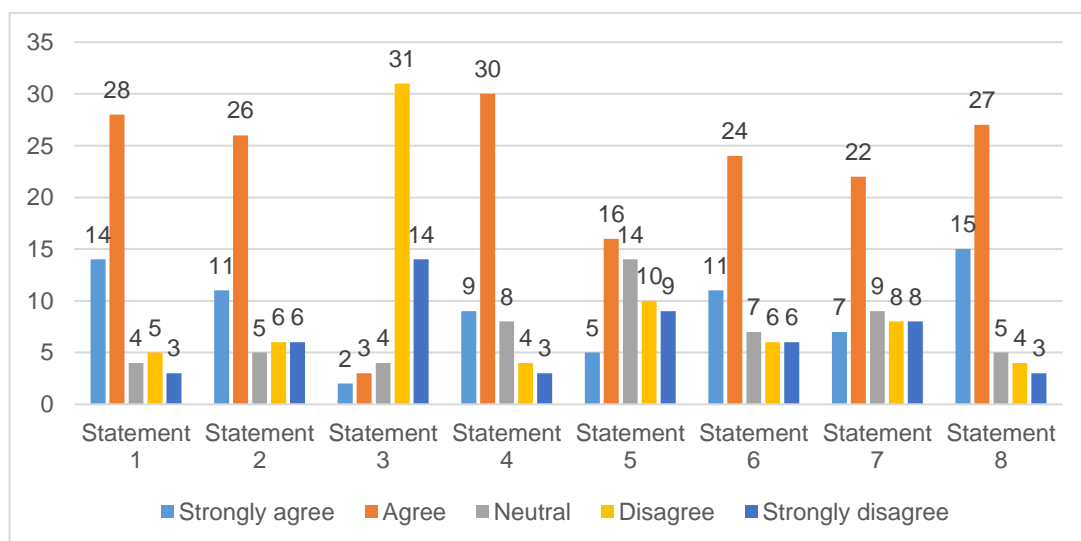


Figure 1 Frequency distribution for students' answers to statements

Table 2 represents the percentage of Likert scale answer options to each question. According to the presented data, the respondents gave a total of 77,7% of positive answers to the first statement. Thus, they agree that they often have problems with access to the Internet as needed for their studies.

The respondents' attitude to the statement affirming that students have sufficient technical skills to study online yielded the following results: 48,1% of respondents agree with the statement, while 20,3% of the respondents strongly agree with it.

Statements	Likert Scale Answer Options (Percentage)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Statement 1	25.9	51.8	7.4	9.2	5.5
Statement 2	20.3	48.1	9.2	11.1	11.1
Statement 3	3.7	5.5	7.4	57.4	25.9
Statement 4	16.6	55.5	14.8	7.4	5.5
Statement 5	9.2	29.6	25.9	18.5	16.6
Statement 6	20.3	44.4	12.9	11.1	11.1
Statement 7	12.9	40.7	16.6	14.8	14.8
Statement 8	27.7	50	9.2	7.4	5.5

Table 2 Percentage of the respondents' Likert scale answer options

The statement that students find it uncomfortable to communicate online with teachers is confirmed by a total 83,3% of negative responses (57,4% disagree and 25,95 strongly disagree).

The data clearly manifest that the majority of the survey participants (55,5% agree and 16,6% strongly agree) are willing to actively communicate with their groupmates online.

The statement that face-to-face contact with their instructor is necessary to learn is positively affirmed by a total 38,8%, while 25,9% of respondents have chosen to be neutral. 64,7% of students affirm that they are motivated by the material in an Internet activity outside of class. However, the total of 22,2% of respondents disagree with the statement.

A total of 53,6% of the respondents (12,9% strongly agree and 40,7% agree) state that learning on the Internet is more motivating than a regular face-to-face course. The statistical analysis demonstrates that a total 72,7% of the respondents agree with the statement that their experience of learning online is beneficial to their overall university studies.

SWOT analysis helped to assess the effectiveness of online learning (see Table 3). The analysis was performed based on the theoretical literature review as well as the students' survey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. The online learning system most adequately and flexibly responds to the needs of society and ensures the implementation of the constitutional right to education of every citizen of the country.	1. Lack of strategy and tactics for the implementation of distance learning in the educational process.
2. Substantial expansion of the scale of personnel training, including in the sphere of education.	2. Poorly developed information infrastructure in a number of regions.
3. Relatively small financial investments of	3. The absence of a policy of mass training of the population using information and communication technologies.
	4. Insufficient investment in new information

<p>educational institutions in technology.</p> <p>4. Ensuring accessibility of education for the population (regardless of the place of residence, health and other factors of traditional education), and the openness of educational resources of higher educational institutions.</p> <p>5. More inclusive education, personalized learning.</p> <p>6. Using a variety of methods to deliver educational information (audio/video broadcasts, audio/video conferences, Internet conferences/Internet broadcasting; smart technologies).</p> <p>7. Choice of method and technology for acquiring knowledge.</p> <p>8. Flexibility as to where and when to acquire knowledge.</p> <p>9. Quick communication with students at any time it is convenient for them.</p> <p>10. Distance learning forces the student to study independently, and develops skills of self-education.</p>	<p>technologies.</p> <p>5. Lagging rate of provision of the educational sphere with new information technologies and innovative equipment.</p> <p>6. Deficit of highly professional staff with skills to use distant technologies.</p> <p>7. Lack of official websites with information about distance learning courses of different educational institutions.</p> <p>8. The economic difficulties of the population to purchase computer devices for receiving full-fledged distance learning.</p> <p>9. Lack of public organizations in the field of distance learning.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>1. Improvement of the demographic situation in the regions, avoiding mass relocations of the population to metropolitan cities.</p> <p>2. Opportunity to obtain educational services in prestigious universities.</p> <p>3. Improving the level of education of the population due to the availability of education.</p> <p>4. Favourable organizational and legal conditions for expanding the range of educational services through the use of innovative forms and methods of education, increase of alternative options for the implementation of the educational process.</p> <p>5. Mutual interpenetration of branches, wide availability of interdisciplinary research and innovative developments.</p> <p>6. Transgression of education in innovative development.</p>	<p>1. The lack of a clear position of the authorities with regard to the implementation of online learning and copyright of electronic courses.</p> <p>2. Insufficiently developed legal framework for the implementation of distance learning and copyright protection of distance courses leads to the fact that there are no accredited and certified high-quality distance learning courses.</p> <p>3. The emergence of low-quality distance education in the regions by the method of “shock therapy”, which spread widely during the closure of educational institutions in the country.</p> <p>4. Non-linear development of distance learning, unpredictability.</p> <p>5. The uncertainty of the social effect as a result of online education.</p> <p>6. High competition with foreign universities that provide distance learning with free access to the Internet.</p> <p>7. Negative impact of computer and Internet use on health.</p>

Table 3 SWOT analysis

Thus, the performed SWOT analysis has allowed determining the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of online education. Therefore, it may be helpful in the evaluation of potential difficulties that may arise in the process of learning and may be beneficial in planning the strategies for effective online teaching.

Conclusion

With the existence of the information society, along with traditional forms of learning, teachers are increasingly using modern ways that are based on technologies such as online learning with the use of webinars, focused on the individual needs of the student and his/her level of knowledge, which enables the educational process to be more flexible, versatile and person-oriented.

The action research allowed concluding that the main challenges students encounter in online learning is the poor access to the Internet; technical problems are the most common factors hindering the learning process; acquiring and processing information online is considered to be harder online compared with the offline mode of teaching. It should also be noted that students feel a lack of interaction with their peers the most while studying online.

The positive side of online learning consists in the fact that students are motivated by learning English online; they consider their experience of learning online to be beneficial to their overall university studies; the respondents are satisfied with the online learning environment. Based on our personal experience, we may conclude that e-learning enhances students' social competencies, including the feeling of solidarity through teamwork, as well as cultivates emotional intelligence helping learners to manage their emotions, feel and show empathy and the ability to deal with conflict.

The SWOT analysis of online learning shows that the strengths of online learning include the ability of the online learning system to adequately and flexibly respond to the needs of society to acquire education. In addition, it requires relatively small financial investments of educational institutions in technology. Moreover, it provides access to education for the population. It offers more inclusive education, personalized learning, etc.

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Literature as a tool for the development of critical thinking

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Abstract

The paper deals with approaches to teaching literature that are oriented towards the implementation of critical thinking skills in the class. It presents the concept of critical thinking, its features and it also presents arguments for the involvement of literary works into the teaching process and various skills that learners can obtain from this synthesis are discussed. The outcomes of various approaches to enhancing critical thinking skills in the class are presented in the form of discussions of the results of questionnaires that were distributed to students who participated in literature-oriented courses.

Keywords: critical thinking, literature, teaching, class, questionnaire

Introduction

At present, young people are exposed to various types of information from a variety of media forms and therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the nature of information that is presented. In this process, critical thinking plays an important role and its development in the educational process is seen as a vital concept. With the development of skills that are designed for the development of critical thinking, students can formulate their own standpoints and therefore, they are not passive consumers of the information that is presented. In order to improve critical thinking skills, teaching literature and discussions about literary works in the classroom may present an important component - when discussing the approaches towards the analysis of the works of art, which also include literary works, Dumitru (2019, p. 4) observes that the process of analysis “requires interpretation skills, explanation, analysis and a proper motivation to engage in such a process with support from a refined sensibility”. This statement also points to the importance of the teacher’s role in the educational process and in the development of critical thinking which can be also improved in literature-oriented courses. These courses also provide the “opportunity for vocabulary acquisition, the development of reading strategies, and the training of critical thinking” (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000, as cited in Hall, 2005, p. 54). Therefore, literature-oriented courses can be also useful for students of foreign languages.

The first part of this paper presents arguments for including literary works into the classroom and the following sections deal with the concept of “critical thinking” and with the suitability of the implementation of skills which are related to “critical thinking” in the classroom. The discussion section in the paper presents the results of anonymous questionnaires which were distributed to the students who study the study programme “Teaching of the English Language and Literature and Citizenship Education” at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, University of Žilina in Žilina. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate aspects of the teacher’s organization of seminar sessions in literature-oriented classes and the potential of this form of organization for the development of critical thinking and for the presentation of students’ opinions in the class.

Literature and Language Teaching

Carter (2007, p. 10) claims that “[l]iterature has begun to assume a higher profile in contexts of second language acquisition” and literary works can be seen as effective tools in the development of basic language skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking. Therefore, the integration of literature into the educational process results into the acquisition of e.g., better communicative competencies and into improving the knowledge of language. In addition, literature has a “powerful function on raising moral and ethical concerns in the classroom” (Lazar, 2003, p. 3) and consequently, “[l]iterature is justifiable in the modern curriculum for its contributions to the cultivation of imagination and of empathy” (Gillespie, 1994, p. 16). With the help of various examples from literary works, which include, e.g., short stories or poems, literature can represent aspects and issues in human existence in a detailed and personal manner, e.g., students can connect their own experience with the experience of the characters that are featured in literary works (Gillespie, 1994).

Collie & Slater (1987, pp. 3-6) list four aspects that support the inclusion of literature into the educational process. The first advantage is literature in the form of “valuable authentic material” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 3) for the readers - despite the fact that certain literary works are set in the past, they can “transcend both time and culture” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 3) and they can provide readers with new ideas. Another positive aspect is related to the level of proficiency in language - as learners gradually become more proficient, they can even improve their knowledge of language and with reading, they gain “additional familiarity with many different linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode: with irony, exposition, argument, narration” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 4). The following aspect deals with “cultural enrichment” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 4) that is related to gaining knowledge of culture where a particular language is spoken and cultural enrichment also provides a form of access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying. In this way, literature is also seen as “as potentially playing a role in facilitating the learner’s access to this English - using culture” (Hall, 2005, p. 55). E.g., in literary works, there is a depiction of characters from various layers of society, their customs, language, together with insights into other cultures as well (Collie & Slater, 1987). Similarly, Schofer (1990, p. 329) claims that literary works are “also an authentic part of the foreign country’s daily life. An expanded notion of literature can help in that task” (see also Gillespie, 1994). Literary works also present the idea of “language enrichment” (Collie & Slater, 1987, pp. 4-5) that represents various aspects of grammar that can be mastered in a less complicated way. The knowledge of these features of language contributes to the “student’s ability to make inferences from linguistic clues” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 5). Also, literary works as such present a form of inspiration for communicative activities of students (e.g., when there are opportunities for discussions about favourite literary works of students) and this contributes to the activation of various forms of creativity of learners (Collie & Slater, 1987). Another aspect that is useful in the classroom is the “personal involvement” (Collie & Slater, 1987, pp. 5-6). Instead of dealing with “mechanical aspects of the foreign language system” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 5), readers are encouraged to use creative activities that lead to the “inhabitation” (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 6) of the texts. This activity concerns an increased participation of the reader in the activity of reading.

Critical thinking

In the teaching process, the development of critical thinking skills could present a tool that could introduce students and learners to understanding of the subject matter as such, to

discovering the relationships between the acquired information and facts and to a gradual formulation of students' own perspectives. Parker (1999, p. 473) provides the following definition of critical thinking and its concerns literature - it is a "thoughtful analysis of the text by someone with an informed mind who is in active relationship with the text yet has the literary sensitivity to realise the text is authored, and probably authored by someone from a different culture from her own". This definition stresses the importance of synthesis of various aspects, such as the ability to evaluate literary works in an "artistic" way and it also concerns aspects that are related to cultural functions of teaching literature.

Commeyras (1990, as cited in Taglieber, 2003, p. 143) notes that "[c]ritical thinking, which involves reasoning, is the process the reader uses to determine which interpretations are consistent with textual evidence and background knowledge". Therefore, the students also need to demonstrate their perspectives which are based on the activity of reading and then it is necessary to combine this factor with the information that they already have about a topic that is being discussed. As a result of this approach, analytical and also cognitive skills can be improved (see Dumitru, 2019; Kosturková, 2013) and this activity leads to the final outcome - to deepening of the knowledge of the content of the given course and to gaining skills in critical thinking. According to Dwyer, Hogan & Stewart (2014, p. 43), "CT skills are vital in educational settings because they allow individuals to go beyond simply retaining information, to actually gaining a more complex understanding of the information being presented to them". In this way, it is possible for students to develop more complex skills. Critical thinking is concerned with obtaining facts and information and also with the evaluation of these facts - this is in contrast with rather passive receiving of information in the teaching process (Turek, 2010).

According to Commeyras (1989, p. 703), "since literature reflects life, it can well be used in the classroom to promote critical thinking". The objective of introduction of critical thinking skills into the classroom is connected with aspects such as the ability to provide arguments, to justify them on the basis of evidence from literary works. After their classes at the level of secondary-level education, students are *acquainted* with the basic terminology related to literature and they have a certain degree of preparation for discussions about literary works. In addition, in literature-oriented classes at universities, students obtain skills that are required for more detailed types of analyses. Lazere (1987, p. 3) suggests that there are critical thinking skills that can be subsequently improved and these include skills whose objective is to unify and make connections in one's experience; to follow an extended line of thought through propositional, thematic, or symbolic development; to engage in mature moral reasoning and to form judgments of quality and taste; to be attuned to skepticism and irony; and to be perceptive of ambiguity, relativity of viewpoint, and multiple dimensions of form and meaning (literal and figurative language, syntactic and structural complexity, etc. (Lazere, 1987, p. 3)

As has been mentioned, in literature-oriented classes as well, various skills can be enhanced, such as reading or speaking. In approaches to teaching that are learner-centered, teachers are supposed to support students in their efforts to develop critical thinking skills. The supportive role is related to providing prompts for a critical investigation of what is being presented to students, not just to passive reception of the content of education from the perspective of students (Turek, 2010).

Procedure and instruments for research

The objective of the procedure was to obtain indicators on the basis of which the students' opinions on the organization of seminar sessions in literature-oriented courses could

be evaluated and in order to obtain these indicators, the method of questionnaire was adopted. The formulation of the questions in the questionnaire follows the recommendations provided by Kosturková (2013, pp. 296-297) who claims that from the teacher's perspective, the development of skills in the area of critical thinking should include principles such as providing the opportunities for discussions in the class (Kosturková, 2013, p. 296) and also employing the method of questionnaire, which is a form of the "self-reflection" (Kosturková, 2013, p. 297) of the teacher. As a result of these activities, teachers can implement the findings into their educational process, which in turn becomes more effective for students.

The seminar sessions in literature-oriented classes were designed to enhance students' critical thinking in the seminar sessions - these were organized in the following fashion: students were expected to read the assigned seminar readings before the class in order to familiarize themselves with vocabulary and the structure of the literary works and subsequently, in the seminar sessions, they were expected to present their opinions and ideas on the readings under discussion. From the perspective of the teacher, in all courses, the design of the seminar sessions tended to avoid the presentation of the "true meanings" of text" (Ollmann, 1996, p. 577) and the students were instructed to "construct individual interpretations of literature based on evidence from the selection. Through discussion with peers and the teacher, readers refine these understandings, but they remain uniquely their own" (Ollmann, 1996, p. 577). Therefore, the introduction of these elements into the teaching process could offer various perspectives for the interpretation of literary works.

Participants and the design of the questionnaire

This section of the paper presents the design of the questionnaire that was distributed to the students of the study programme "Teaching of the English Language and Literature and Citizenship Education" at the Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Žilina in Žilina in the academic year 2021/ 2022 (in winter/ summer semester). The questionnaires were distributed via MS Forms and the targeted groups of respondents were the students of the 1st year and of the 2nd year of Bachelor's degree and the students of the 1st year of Master's degree. The mother tongue of all participants was the Slovak language. In order to ensure the reliability of the results, each class of students received an identical wording of the questions.

The questionnaires concerned the courses whose content was related to the history of British literature (more specifically, with students of the 2nd year of Bachelor studies, the course was titled "British and American Studies and Literature 3" and with the students of the 1st year of Master's degree, the course title was "Major Works of Anglophone Literatures 1" and finally, with the 1st year students of Bachelor's degree of studies, the course title was "Introduction to the Study of English Language and Literature 2"¹). The questions concerned the contents of study of the whole semester (for each class of students, there were 13 weeks of classes in each semester which amounted to 13 hours); therefore, a continuous process of development of critical thinking skills could be observed and the questionnaire was distributed at the end of respective semesters, which prevented a possible bias that could result from the final assessment.

The ranking scale for the evaluation of respective questions was numbered from 1-5 (the higher the value the better evaluation) and it reflected the students' opinions on the amount of time given to the presentation of their opinions and on the development of critical

¹ The course title is "Introduction to the Study of English Language and Literature 2"; however, the course content was oriented only on literary works.

thinking skills in seminar sessions. More specifically, the questions were formulated as follows:

Q1²: “In the seminar sessions, there was a sufficient amount of time given for the presentation of students’ opinions related to the issues of various literary works that were covered during the semester”.

Q2: “Did the way of conducting the seminar sessions contribute to the formation of various insights and opinions on the given literary works, to the understanding of broader contexts and to the development of critical thinking?”

The formulation of question No.1 is in its essence related to the principles of learner-centered approach to teaching which deals with the support for learners from teachers and it also includes discussions and engaging students in the class. Question No. 2 reflects the argument made by Parker (1999, pp. 474-475) who claims that “[c]ritical thinking about literature involves being critical about multiplicity; multiplicity generated and ordered within a series of activities (seminars, informed reading, discussion) and contexts (frameworks set by historical, academic or generic agenda)” (see also Lazar, 2008). The principles of “multiplicity” are related to the “formation of various insights and opinions” (see Question No. 2) mainly in the seminar sessions - this was the teacher’s objective in the process of instruction.

Results of the questionnaires

This section presents the results that were obtained from anonymous questionnaires - the results are presented in Tables 1-3 and they introduce particular courses, the overall number of respondents who participated and the evaluations in the form of average scores for each question.

Course title: “Introduction to the Study of English Language and Literature 2” (1st year students, B.A. Degree, second semester of studies)	
Overall number of respondents	20
Q1	Average score: 4.90
Q2	Average score: 4.60

Table 1 Introduction to the Study of English Language and Literature 2

2 The wording of Question 1 takes the form of an “inquiry”; however, the students provided their evaluations, which led to obtaining the information about the courses and therefore, for the purposes of the paper, it will be identified as a question.

Course title: “British and American Studies and Literature 3” (2nd year students, B.A. Degree, the third semester of studies)	
Overall number of respondents	15
Q1	Average score: 4.87
Q2	Average score: 4.20

Table 2 British and American Studies and Literature 3

Course title: “Major Works of Anglophone Literatures 1” (1st year students, M.A. Degree, the first semester of studies)	
Overall number of respondents	12
Q1	Average score: 4.92
Q2	Average score: 4.42

Table 3 Major Works of Anglophone Literatures 1

Discussion of the Results

The question No. 1 concerned the amount of time given for the presentation of opinions in seminar session and within each study group, the obtained results indicate consistent outcomes with regards to the evaluation of the amount of time devoted for discussions and for the presentation of students’ opinions. The consistency that could be observed in the evaluation indicates that the skills for the presentation of students’ ideas were implemented regularly in the teaching process in the course of particular semesters. At the same time, the results reflect the ability to introduce the learner-centered approach into the class, which is in opposition to the teacher-centered approach. The sufficient amount of time in the class fosters the potential for discussions and it can contribute to deepening of the dialogues between students as well. Also, students with a lower level of self-confidence can benefit from this form of organization and they can improve their skills. When teachers provide students with a certain amount of time for the development of their thoughts and with the opportunity to present them in the class, it may be helpful in the creation of new concepts. The process can also enable teachers to manage the student’s progress in a more effective way.

The question No. 2 was concerned with the organization of seminar sessions in respective courses and with the contribution of this organization for the development of critical thinking. The results of the evaluation present rather stable values in all study groups (the resulting score was in the value above 4). In the seminar sessions, students are encouraged to justify their perspectives on literary works and this could lead to the activation of their potential for the development of skills, such as the formulation of new concepts and inferences. The average scores that have been obtained also present the potential of students for the interpretation of literary works and for defending their arguments. At the same time, the results indicate the capacity of students to practice thinking and to proceed from rather abstract thoughts into specific ones and the opportunity to organize their arguments in a proper way is present as well (see also Mathis, 2002). This leads to another aspect which is

effective and it was supported by the teacher - the justification of students' opinions with selected examples from literary works that were discussed in the class.

Generally, the skills that students have obtained with the development of critical thinking can be also transferred to other areas or courses in their studies, e.g., in their courses in the studies of "Citizenship Education". It should be also stated that not all students participated in seminar sessions as much as it was expected - this may have been caused by the lack of interest in the topics or there may have been various "social factors in a class inhibiting students from expressing themselves" (Lazar, 2008, p. 42) and therefore, e.g., a lower score of 4.20 (Question No. 2, Table 2) can be seen as an indicator of this less active approach. Possible solutions that can increase the results in the area of Q2 may include, e.g., fostering creativity in the class and employing learner-centered approaches in a greater degree. Alternatively, the effectiveness of critical thinking in the class can be also increased with the help of the following strategy that involves four stages (Clifford, 1980, as cited in Taglieber, 2003, p. 148):

- (1) involvement, in which students develop personal interest in the text;
- (2) perception, in which they contemplate their first personal response by noticing the details in the text [...]
- (3) interpretation, in which they shift their attention from inside to outside and begin to draw meanings from the text; [...]
- (4) evaluation, in which they make judgments about the texts. (Clifford, 1980, as cited in Taglieber, 2003, p. 148, emphasis in original)

The seminar sessions can be also organized on the basis of this system, with the emphasis on the stages of the "intepretation" and "evaluation" (Clifford, 1980, as cited in Taglieber, 2003, p. 148) and in this way, the ranking in Q2 can be improved.

Conclusion

The introduction of "critical thinking" into the curriculum has received attention in discussions in the Slovak Republic and it has been one of the major issues in discussions about future tendencies in the educational system. This paper has summarized the importance of developing critical thinking skills in the classes that are literature-oriented. The approach to the development of critical thinking represents an effective component in the classroom and it can be used in literature-oriented classes - when students adopt the skills of critical thinking, they may be able to take into consideration various perspectives and opinions and this contributes to the formation of their individuality. The paper has also presented the results of the questionnaire that concerned the opinions of students of the study programme "Teaching of the English Language and Literature and Citizenship Education" at the Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Žilina in Žilina - it has been seen that in the courses whose content is literature-oriented, students perceive the time for discussions in seminar sessions as sufficient; therefore, they can present their opinions on the works that are discussed and the fact that the courses have enhanced their critical thinking skills presents further perspectives in this area.

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Enlarging Students' Vocabulary with the Help of Corpus-Driven Data

Marta Lacková

Abstract

The paper deals with the ways of enlarging students' vocabulary with the help of data obtained from the investigation in the framework of the English monolingual synchronic annotated textual corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20); Sketch Engine serves as a search tool for the needs of the research. As a preliminary step, a group of specific lexical units is selected – we study units that have entered the English word stock as a result of blending processes at the beginning of the 21st century. Predominantly, word sketch (collocations) together with concordance (contextual occurrence of the search pattern) are inquired in order to describe their traits from the lexicological perspective. Thereafter, we utilize the acquired information in order to increase the efficiency of teaching vocabulary in the university environment (within the Lexicology course) – we outline a sample of corpus-driven exercises on the recent blends. The examples of authentic language incorporated in the exercises can provide university students with a more vivid picture of the English language than that they usually acquire from traditional textbooks.

Keywords: corpus, concordance, vocabulary, blending, teaching

Introduction

The development of the global pandemic has imparted increasing demands on all spheres of life. During the pandemic, the digital competencies of countries and individuals have become more prominent than ever (Kubilya, 2021, p. 60). Moreover, the overlap of online and offline ways of communication verifies the education quality of future professionals in the vast majority of spheres. These processes are being mirrored in the area of future teachers training, too. They have recently led to the alterations of the principal requirements imposed on the qualifications and skills of a modern teacher; one of the fundamental requirements is that he/she is supposed to incorporate latest didactic principles and trends into continual self-development. Klein (2007, p. 218) claims, when striving to fulfil the demands, the importance of humanistic, integrative interdisciplinary, and content-based components is highlighted.

In concord with Karpenko (2017, p. 50) we understand that the interconnection of various branches of science while searching for new approaches in contemporary educational processes has become relevant. This phenomenon encourages the need to state the necessity of individual bonds between scientific disciplines while teaching a foreign language, within our research, the English language. Generally speaking, a language is a system that covers essentials from both linguistic and extra linguistic domains thus it naturally makes it possible to fulfil the requirement of interdisciplinarity.

An essential part of the teacher training curriculum is that a modern highly qualified and educated teacher is expected to possess an adequate command of English vocabulary; the knowledge of vocabulary is supported within the course of Lexicology of the Contemporary English language, and it is predetermined by an adequate understanding of terminological vocabulary from the field lexicology, semantics, and word-formation processes. In addition to this, there appear the following advantages of terminological competence from the linguistic sphere: it makes it possible for the teacher to develop professionally and it contributes to the enhancement of his/her abilities to elaborate professional information delivered in the English language.

Literature review

We employ theoretical and methodological knowledge provided by didactics and corpus linguistics with the aim to meet the above discussed interdisciplinary bonds. Broadly speaking, the textual or linguistic corpus is defined as a huge collection of information of linguistic nature that is elaborated with the help of information technologies and that is applicable for the needs of linguistic research (Baker, Hardie & McEnery, 2006, p. 42). Linguistic or textual corpora have modified the methods and procedures how vocabulary systems are researched (Schmitt, 2010, p. 120). The branch of applied linguistics delivers a direct empirical basis for the linguistic unit behaviour instead of traditional relying on our intuition; therefore, the techniques of corpus linguistics have gained the position of an influential instrument in the vocabulary studies since the 90s of the 20th century.

Within the given frame of reference, one of the preliminary tasks researchers have to cope with is to find an appropriate discourse sample to do their research on as corpus linguistics explores linguistic systems based on discourse; we denote the sample the corpus (Halliday et al., 2004, p. 100). Corpus linguistics with its instruments and evidence has the capacity to offer a more delicate and broader insight into the studied language in use; it means; they help the researcher understand how languages operate in given contexts (Leláková, 2022, p. 34).

Together with Sinclair (2004, p. 13) we find it important to consider words in context when we investigate their word-formation characteristics and semantic components for the needs of their subsequent implementation into the teaching of the English language. Corpus collocations and concordances make it easier to understand how much the semantic elements have the roots in context; there appears a question of whether lexical units possess a meaning that might be described as independent at all (Moon, 2006, p. 199). Here we come to another interdisciplinary bond, namely with psycholinguistics since it indicates that textual corpora build certain contexts where a lexical unit appears, and it is the knowledge of the language user about the lexical unit that matches it to its associations with other lexical units in the specific discourse (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 52).

As it will be indicated in our research part, the choice of blends that have recently appeared in the English language for our multidisciplinary analysis has been motivated by their frequency in the corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20). Nevertheless, scientists often comprehend frequency to be a relative measurable condition as different linguistic corpora result in different frequency lists of the corresponding lexical units. In connection with this, Mahlberg (2005, p. 91) asserts that individual words in selected frequency lists provide information about the content of the utterance; yet, the position of the words in the list does not infer much about their individual semantic elements. As Stubbs (2001, p. 47) highlights the frequency lists, graphs and other computer findings are solely the presentation of chosen formal features of the words, they do not display the interpretation of their semantics elements.

Taking into account the procedures of corpus linguistics, there appears a necessity to join the formal properties with contextual ones with the aim to uncover the elements of meaning and word-formation within the investigated words. While doing our investigation, we worked with a specific group of blends; at this point, we have to emphasize that researchers do not find the concept of the element of meaning as the specification for a word as arbitrary (Halliday et al., 2004, p. 118).

Moving to the methodological perspective, Aijmer (2009, p. 25), O'Keeffe (2007, p. 164) stress that English language teachers do not need to exaggerate the role of textual corpora when teaching a foreign language since the corpora cannot replace either a natural or teacher communication acts in the classroom. The intentional application of corpora-driven

information ought to be in concord with an effective learning means and language acquisition principles that are generally valid in didactics studies.

Although the concept of applying blends connected with the Covid-19 pandemic in teaching Lexicology is a new one, corpus-driven exercises have been used in the teaching process for a number of years and scholars do not deny their positive and profound impact on the sphere as they open up interesting pedagogic perspectives (O’Keeffe, 2007, p. 58, Hidalgo, 2007, p. 38, Granger, Hung & Petch-Tyson, 2002, p. 151).

Granger, Hung and Petch-Tyson (2002, p. 72) demonstrates that there are two areas that have benefited most from corpus-based work – namely these are classroom methodology and materials design. Corpus-driven data and exercises have the potential to play an important role in the selection and structuring of the teaching content.

Research methods / The main objective of the research

It is self-evident that future teachers need to follow the latest trends in the vocabulary development; therefore, the paper focuses predominantly on a specific layer of vocabulary – blends that have recently entered the English language in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. The students are asked to direct their attention to the semantic and word-formation features of these linguistic components; at the same time, their contribution to the fulfilment of communicative acts must be taken into account.

The main objective of this study is to verify the importance of incorporating interdisciplinary principles into the teaching of lexicology in the university surroundings. The fundamentals are further mirrored in the possible enhancement of communication skills of future teachers. Simultaneously, with the help of corpus-driven exercises we find it appropriate to implement the holistic grounds of the social knowledge and skills development in the training of future teachers.

The investigation of blends that have recently entered the English language in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic from the corpus linguistics standpoint has not been a topic of huge interest so far. Moreover, there do not exist sufficient practical materials that would illustrate the interdisciplinary links when teaching neologisms with the help of corpora instruments; therefore, we are inspired to contribute to the demonstration of the interdisciplinary phenomena application in the teaching process and to the uncovering of this didactically challenging issue.

The linguistic material in question is studied in the framework of the English monolingual synchronic annotated textual corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20); the search tool Sketch Engine serves a primary working tool in the given context. As a corpus-driven paper, the aim is to elicit repetitive patterns where the investigated blends occur so that we can examine their features and functions in the studied discourse. The occurrences need to be identified since they demonstrate clear-cut similarities within the investigated sample. The pattern-matching ability is significant for successful communication acts, language learning/teaching, and corpus analysis (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 129).

The preliminary process of the investigation was realized in terms of searching, sorting, and classification of the selected blends *zumping*, *lockstalgia*, *coronanoia*, *schoolcation*, *coronopticon*, *safecation*, *homecation*, *spendemic*, *locktail*, *drivecation*, *coronawashing*, *quaranqueen*, *mockdown*, *coronacation*, *shecession*, *coronasomnia*, *maskhole*, *blursday*, *coronapocalypse*, *quaranzine*, *nakation*, *quaranteam*, *twindemic*, *quarantine*, *covidiot*, *smize*, *phygital*, *infodemic* in the corpus. In order to perform this stage, we used statistical and corpus linguistics methods united in the Sketch Engine search tool. In

corpora we can see the linguistic units in the discourse context; yet, the samples of language given by the corpora do not directly illustrate features of linguistic units in their most general configuration; therefore, there arises a need apply procedures of analysis, classification, comparison, and generalization of linguistic phenomena.

The textual corpora together with computational tools are understood as a starting point for the evaluation of qualitative features of the studied units; they enabled us to study the discourse in which the investigated blends appear and observe semantic differences/similarities between discrete patterns.

In some cases, it was not feasible to relate the exact incidence of the blends as the result of their polysemic character (e.g. *morona, homereference, infit, workstation, zombie, maskine, coronial, loxit, covideo*): Moreover, we were forced to filter manually out (or to work with the filtering tool) the forms that are not part of the searched expression paradigm (e.g. *covidpreneur, ronacoaster walktail, coroneologism, coronial, covidivorce, coronacronym*). Another important factor when choosing the sample for the paper is the fact the number of blends that have recently entered the English language in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic we could handle here is limited; the aim is to investigate a manageable amount of information that might be presented in the section of research results.

Results and discussion

In the subsequent section, we deliver results of the first investigation stage which is the observation of concordances of the blends *zumping, lockstalgia, coronanoia, schoolcation, coronopticon, safecation, homecation, spendemic, locktail, drivecation, coronawashing, quaranqueen, quarantune, mockdown, coronacation, shecession, coronasomnia, maskhole, blursday, coronapocalypse, quaranzine, nakation, quaranteam, twindemic, quarantine, covidiot, smize, phygital, infodemic* in the textual corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20); the number of concordances of individual blends in question is enumerated in the table below. The textual corpus evidence reveals the existence of the blends within a wide range of discourse structures; the necessity of differentiating between various patterns by discarding the irrelevant ones and grouping the relevant ones was fulfilled.

blend	number of occurrences	frequency per million
zumping lockstalgia coronanoia	1	0.001 per million
schoolcation coronopticon safecation	2	0.002 per million
homecation spendemic locktail drivecation	3	0.003 per million
coronawashing quaranqueen	5	0.005 per million
mockdown	6	0.006 per million
coronacation	11	0.01 per million
shecession coronasomnia	15	0.02 per million

maskhole	17	0.02 per million
blursday coronapocalypse	23	0.02 per million
quaranzine	30	0.03 per million
nakation	43	0.04 per million
quarantune	45	0.04 per million
quaranteam	70	0.2 per million
twindemic quarantini	138	0.1 per million
covidiot	200	0.2 per million
smize	222	0.2 per million
phygital	484	0.5 per million
infodemic	676	0.7 per million

Table 1 The number of occurrences of the investigated blends and their frequency per million in the corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20)

Exercises developing students' vocabulary together with reading assignments, creative and communicative activities, while observing blends in various types of discourse, became efficient for the enhancement of students' grammatical and lexical competencies. In the given context, we follow general didactic principles that learning a foreign language involves learning a new conceptual system and constructing a new vocabulary network (a second mental lexicon) (Thornbury, 2002, p. 52).

Corpus-driven exercises motivate learners to be involved in explaining the meaning of the new blends through discovery techniques and to organize their mental lexicon by building network of associations for self-directed learning; they are made to think about the meanings of the blends presented.

The correct choice of lexical units contributes to successful communication acts and these are the examples of authentic language (presented in typical contexts concerning meaning, register, collocations, and syntactic environment) incorporated in the corpus-driven exercises; yet, they are not suitable for the development of all stages of vocabulary learning (they are adequate from the B1 level higher).

Moreover, this manner of vocabulary teaching contributes to the enhancement of sustainable skills in both English and mother languages and the implementation of the suggested tasks and activities reflects the level of mastering the linguistic background by future teachers together with the development of their professional skills. Learners should be subsequently provided with opportunities to apply the blends in communicative activities that enable them to produce an authentic output together with personalization activities while talking about themselves, their attitudes, opinions, and feelings.

Here we outline examples of corpus-driven exercises on the blends that have appeared in the English language in connection with Covid-19 pandemic. The scope of possible activities is much broader (e.g. accuracy-focused activities, revision activities, choosing the correct word, gap filling/completing the concordances, mixed letters, matching words with pictures, matching words from the corpus with their definitions, guessing meaning of words, classifications of words, crosswords, word search, the odd one out, word fields, etc.), but the space of the paper does not make it possible to display them fully. Such a wide range of exercises enables learners to be exposed to the new blends several times, to retrieve them from memory repeatedly.

*Task 1. There is one mistake concerning the blends denoting specific situations connected with the Covid 19 pandemic. Supply the wrong word with a suitable word in the given context. You can choose from **mockdown**, **phygital**, **blursday**, **smize**, **maskholes**.*

1. For many people, our personal understanding of time has been challenged during the covid-19 pandemic, with minutes, hours and days of the week seeming to all merge together into blue Monday, without our previous pre covid-19 routines to help us mark points in time. [ku.edu]
2. This market will recover but I have no good feeling for the country returning to the old days. This easing of the lockdown, which some people have started referring to as a easydown, is happening while over 100 people die in the U.K. each day. [newsweek.com]
3. Do this in front of the mirror to see how your face responds each time to the eyesmile and until you find the best look for your photos. [kipkis.com]
4. So what will it take to convince holdouts to mask up? As tempting as it may be to call people covididiots or maskidiots – or worse – resist the impulse. "Shaming is never going to work to change their behavior," said Atascadero Susana Lopez psychologist. [sanluisobispo.com]
5. How do you grab and retain a Gen Zer's attention whose world is equal parts physical and digital, otherwise metaphysical? [invisalign-go.co.uk]

Task 2. All lexical units below represent blends created with vacation as one of the bases. Fill the gaps in the following sentences with one of them.

nakations – safecation – coronacation – schoolcation – homecation

1. Neither Rhoda nor I relish the idea of travelling endless miles on busy motorways, nor do we want to spend hours in crowded airport terminals. So we came up with the idea of a staycation or maybe we should call it a [nicholasrhea.co.uk]
2. The new packages feature remote-work accommodations in the luxury resort's private retreat villas and beachfront cabanas, plus, options offering remote-learning support during school hours. [travelpulse.com]
3. Naturist holidays, or, appear to be taking the world by storm, but why on earth would anyone in their right mind want to bare it all on holiday in front of others? [aito.com]
4. It may have more to do with a news outlet eager to publish a fun story about new words than having a meaningful impact on the language. But who knows whether any or all of them could catch on?, – forced time off work due to the virus [grammarunderground.com]
5. As a result of the ongoing pandemic, solo travelers, couples, small groups and families alike are seeking trip, options that adhere to social distancing protocols... [purewow.com]

Task 3. Pair and dictionary work. Arrange the mixed letters into meaningful blends (all of them are created with corona as one of the bases), match them with their dictionary definition and fill into the sentences below.

1. News pages are predicting a **yconacsearolppo** with far-reaching implications on public health, economics and human relations at all levels. [talkingdrugs.org]
2. **Calaorioonsnlu** – having delusional or strange thoughts due to pandemic [grammarunderground.com]

3. But the small perk holds big appeal if the thought of crowded vestibules gives you the **nociaornao** shivers. [knpr.org]
4. But wait, does Covid-19 effect our sleep? It certainly does and in fact some experts now refer to it as **roosonniamma**. Covid has created a world of chronic insomniacs trying to deal with reduction in productivity, stress, shorter fuses, depression, hypertension, and a variety of other health problems. [sailboat-cruising.com]
5. These opportunistic campaigns – now being referred to as **wanacoingrosh** by some – must be exposed and stopped. [globalpolicy.org]
6. We are already dangerously close to what The Economist has dubbed the **notoroonpic** – a brave new age of surveillance and data control catalyzed by hasty tech decisions under Covid-19. [timminstoday.com]

Task 4. All the blends below are created with quarantine as one of the bases. Fill the gaps in the following sentences with one of them. Can you observe any other blends connected with the Covid 19 pandemic?

quarantini – Quaranqueen – quaranteams – quaranzine – quarantunes

1. Travel bubbles or corridors are arrangements between countries to allow access to their citizens across otherwise sealed international borders. Similarly, are social bubbles: a limited group of people who meet regularly and exclude all others as health risks. [tripod.com]
2. From covidiot to zoombombing via locktail hour and, ordinary people are creatively reflecting their own experiences of life under lockdown. [kcl.ac.uk]
3. There's a new cocktail for the self-isolated, it's called a, It's the same as an ordinary martini but you just drink it on your own. [talkmagic.co.uk]
4. The Library and our community created our own, and thank you all so much for your lovely contributions. [mcpl.info]
5. "It's wonderful connecting with people through the mad idea that is our Costume Challenge," she wrote. [honey.nine.com.au]

Task 5. Now do the same with the blends with pandemic as one of the bases.

twindemic – infodemic – spendemic

1. Brits are in the hold of, Spending on siestas, purchasing vehicle, on amusement and culture rose is a portion of the fundamental bearing witness to focuses where individuals contribute their cash. [uberant.com]
2. Public health experts and health-care providers are increasingly worried about a, caused by an overlap of seasonal flu and COVID-19 that would double the burden on already strained health care facilities. [wypr.org]
3. The relentless news cycle, an of misinformation, let alone the personal challenges of a pandemic which affects each and every one of us, have made this one of the most unique stories reporters will likely ever tell. [un.org]

Task 6. Reading. Match the beginnings and endings of the following sentences. How would you explain the meaning of the words in bold? Are there words with similar meaning in the Slovak language?

1. A regular recession is a mancession, meaning that women's total labour supply increases relative to men's, whereas the pandemic recession is a

2. Should anti-vaxxers, covid deniers, coronavirus conspiracy theorists and general **covidiots** be
3. In a recent poll, 33% of respondents said **quaranteam** – combining quarantine and team, meaning a group of people who go into quarantine together – should be
 - A) exiled to remote island in hope they will infect each other and die? [thesleaze.co.uk]
 - B) added to the dictionary. Other suggestions include the portmanteau words **quaranteen**, **coronial** and **lockstalgia**. [cam.ac.uk]
 - C) **shecession**, with deep employment losses for women. [weforum.org]

Conclusions

As this survey has demonstrated the characteristics of the blends as observed in the corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) are in concordance with general principles of the contemporary English language functioning and they reflect the needs of language users involving various psychological and sociological phenomena outside the language. The same is true for the word-formation process of blending in their roots; the corpus-driven data suggest that the studied blends hold the analogous word-formation capacity for creating specialized concepts connected with Covid-19 pandemic as naming units of a more general character.

Our aim to illustrate that textual corpora bear the capacity to offer a stimulating addition to English language acquisition has been fulfilled. The suggested exercises might lead to several ideas for English teachers how to illustrate recent word-formation processes during the course of Lexicology; moreover, the corpus-based information contributes to the understanding of mechanisms behind the selection of blends in individual communication acts from psychological/social standpoints.

Possible limitations of the study are evident when reflecting on restrictions connected with the observations of lexicosemantic and morphological properties of the investigated units of language and the usefulness of linguistic corpus-driven patterns for finding the difference between texts aimed for general public and professionally-oriented texts, and

Eventually, the interdisciplinary aspects implied in the paper might provoke potential future research activities in the field of corpus linguistics with the focus on other word-formation processes and their results as reflected in relevant textual corpora. Further development of the corpus-based methodology might be realized in the framework of interdisciplinary seminars with the aim to enhance language competences of future teachers.

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Implementation of the Teaching Program “Education in English” at Technical Universities (based on the experience of the National Aviation University)

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Abstract

The article deals with the research of University teachers' competence of delivering lectures in English. Higher educational institutions of Ukraine are currently focusing on internationalizing its curricula and placing greater emphasis on global studies. Clearly, university courses in a wide range of professional subjects require instructions through English. There is a growing need for professionals who speak English at B2 level. The research conducted at Flight Academy of the National Aviation University during 2016-2019 years involved 64 University teachers of technical subjects. At the end of the experiment the teachers were tested in English. In the research paper the experimental data has been presented, which proved the University teachers' readiness to deliver study materials in English.

Keywords: University teacher, teaching in English, technical subjects, control group, experimental group

Introduction

Dynamic processes of socioeconomic life have revealed contradictory trends. On the one hand, deeper professionalization of professionals' activity of any specialty is necessary, on the other hand - an interdisciplinary integration of knowledge, the importance of integrated skills for professional activity is increasing. These general tendencies lead to new requirements for lecturers of higher educational institutions.

Ukraine is now experiencing crucial changes in the system of education connected with the process of integration into the European community, and higher educational institutions are currently focusing on internationalizing its curricula and placing greater emphasis on global studies. Clearly, university courses in a wide range of professional subjects require instructions through English. According to the recommendations of a Common European Framework of Reference, there is a growing need for professionals who speak English at B2 level. To obtain this level, a trainee must be able to effectively communicate in English in a professional environment in order to: 1) discuss teaching instructions and special issues in order to reach an understanding with the interlocutor; 2) prepare presentations in public on a number of professional issues, using appropriate means of verbal communication and adequate forms of discussion and debate; 3) find new text, graphic, audio- and video English information, using relevant search methods and terminology; 4) analyze English sources of information for obtaining the data necessary for carrying out professional tasks and making professional decisions; 5) write professional texts and documents in English on a number of professional issues; 6) write business and professional letters, demonstrating intercultural understanding and prior knowledge in a specific professional context; 7) translate English-language professional texts into their native language using bilingual terminology dictionaries, electronic dictionaries and translation software.

The significance of the conducted study, which involves designing an ESP syllabus for technical university lecturers, can be based on the following:

1) interdisciplinary approach: interaction of English with major professional courses. Interdisciplinary approach in technical institutions between English and major aviation courses appear in different ways. An academic subject “English” with a series of sub-subjects (“Professional English”; “Technical Aviation English”; “Phraseology of Radio

communication”) contacts with adjacent major aviation courses (“Human Factor and Flight Safety”; “Aerodynamics”; “Meteorology / Weather”; “Air Carrier Operations”; “Crew Resource Management” (CRM); “Multi-Crew Environment Safety Operations” and others).

2) professional upgrade qualifications of lecturers, which appear in different ways.

Knowledge of English is based on fundamentals of technical subjects. In turn, all technical documentation includes English terms, abbreviations and definitions. Thus, there is a contradiction: it is impossible to master professional aviation terminology in English without knowledge of English. This predetermined the necessity in studying English by teachers of technical subjects and developing ESP syllabus for teacher training.

Literature review

The Ministry of Science and Education states that there is an urgent need to upgrade the system of methodological training for university lecturers, which is aimed at the development of new standards for all levels of higher education. To ensure a good level of the English language in teaching process, the update of the teaching staff is needed. Thus, it is stated by Ministry of Education that it is necessary to strengthen the study of English for the period until 2029.

The action plan of The Ministry of Science and Education is based on the idea that the teaching staff must have a good command of English for teaching (Level B2 and above) and be familiar with modern teaching methods in order to ensure a good teaching process in English at higher educational institutions.

At present in Ukraine lecturers’ training courses are held once every five years, while the world practice of developed countries recommends upgrading qualifications two or three times a year. The authors agree with this approach as Ukraine is a developing country which claims to be the member of the European Union in the foreseeable future.

The Ministry of Science and Education emphasizes that the programs of advanced teachers’ training curricula are out-of-date and do not have a sufficient linguistic component that would raise the level of English of the teacher/lecturer up to level B2. Thus, upgrade qualification curricula need constant improvement and modernization through the including of the English level component and the system of testing of the level of proficiency in the foreign language by taking an international language exam.

With this purpose a new legislation was introduced concerning English language for university lecturers. In 2016 The Ministry of Science and Education adopted “Procedures of assigning scientific degrees and academic rankings to scientific and pedagogical staff” which totally changed the existing system of post-graduate education. The Procedures determine the mechanism of assigning academic degrees and rankings to scientific and pedagogical staff at higher educational establishments, the main criteria for assessing their academic and pedagogical activities, as well as the order of cancelling of academic degrees and rankings. Hereinafter there are some of the provisions and basic criteria of the Procedures concerning the level of English for the university teaching staff:

1) an applicant has to undergo a training course / exchange program / has been working in a higher educational, a scientific or technical institution in the country which is a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (hereinafter OECD) and / or the European Union or an applicant is / was an executive / member of an international project / projects funded by the aforementioned countries and has a certificate, diploma or another document confirming the participation in it.

2) an applicant has to teach disciplines in the state language and / or in the foreign language of the country belonging to the OECD, at a high academic level;

3) an applicant has to publish at least one (for the academic rank of docent) / two (for the academic rank of professor) articles, which are indexed in international databases SCOPUS or Web of Science, and are not the translations from native language;

4) an applicant must have an international certificate of a language level in accordance with Common European Framework of Reference (B2 level and above) from the languages of the countries of the European Union of qualification documents (diploma of higher education, academic degree) which are connected with use of these languages, or at least 10 articles published in English in periodicals indexed in international databases SCOPUS or Web of Science. (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine: Procedure for awarding academic titles to scientific and scientific-pedagogical staff №13 from 14.01.2016).

As seen from the Law of Ukraine the first and foremost is academic mobility of teachers. The exchange of students or teachers is an opportunity to spend some time as a student or intern at a foreign university without interrupting studies or work at the country of origin. The objectives of academic mobility programs are the internationalization of higher education and the cultural integration of young people from different countries. Academic mobility traditionally has a two or more-sided character, that is, one and the same university not only sends its students or teachers abroad, but also hosts foreign students (lecturers) from partner universities. Using the benefits of academic mobility, a lecturer gets a great opportunity to get acquainted with the culture and system of education of another country, improve foreign language skills, find new friends and gain valuable experience. Participation in the teacher exchange program will be a good addition to teacher's rating at university and will definitely increase competitiveness in the labor market.

Academic mobility appears in different ways:

- exchange through inter-university cooperation within the framework of direct bilateral agreements between the Higher Education Institutions and universities of other countries provides for the practice or study abroad;

- exchange through the participation of University in international mobility projects, for example, Erasmus +, Fulbright Scholar Program.

- teaching staff are invited to participate in mobility programs with partner universities, as well as in other international programs;

- universities invite teachers and researchers from all over the world to cooperate in the following areas: one-time lectures, meetings with students and researchers; participation in English language master's programs as guest lecturers and visiting professors; carrying out a research at Universities.

Taking into consideration the national diversity of students at technical universities (more than 40% of foreign students before the war time), the study is mostly focused on adjusting English teaching methodology to the multicultural audience, which have different professional, psychological and ethnical background. Thus, a teacher must be able to work with international audience, not to get stressed about language and deliver information at appropriate level. Therefore, it is important for university teachers to know English at appropriate level.

One of the ways to achieve it is to develop ESP course for teachers of technical courses which would meet the requirements of the university and would be interesting for teachers.

Designing ESP course is not an easy task. It is a time-consuming endeavor that involves various challenges. Many parameters should be taken into account before, during and after the developing and implementation of the course. In this review, we will primarily focus on some approaches. Based on Hutchinson and Waters (1987) there are three main approaches to course design: language-centred, skills centred, learning centred.

Language-centred approach to course design focuses on the analysis of the target situation by conducting a needs analysis that reveals trainees' needs, lacks and wishes. It aims at putting the ESP learner in a real-life situation and makes a close link between the needed material and content of the ESP course. According to this approach a course design is aimed at analyzing theoretical background and linguistic features of the target language. It also predetermines assessment procedures in order to test the acquisition of syllabus items (Hutchinson and Waters (1987)).

Nadežda Stojković and Basim M. Abubaker Faraj (2016) emphasize that skills centered approach to course design is a combination of performance and competence. If to consider, lecturers at non-linguistic universities as target audience of the research, then their academic needs and skills that meet these needs should be taken into account. In some researches professional skills include intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course as a part of the wider course of ESP at university.

For the purpose of increasing level of academic qualifications Nadežda Stojković and Basim M. Abubaker Faraj (2016) have developed an ESP course on teaching formats of written and spoken presentations. They have presented theoretical rationale and methodological basis for the syllabi of the ESP course based on written and spoken presentations. (Stojković & Faraj, 2016).

Fethi Guerid, Naouel Abdellatif Mami (2017) state that learning centered approach to course design focuses on the learner and his/her motivation of using the language in professional surrounding. Learning a language can be considered as an internal process, which depends on the learners' knowledge as well as on their motivation to use it. The following approach encompasses many factors, namely: target audience, needs analysis, interactions of the learners and the society, learners and teacher, learners and institution. These are the crucial factors in the learning process that should be taken into consideration. (Fethi & Abdellatif Mami, 2017). The learning centered approach considers the ESP learner at all the stages of teaching the course and takes into account the interests of all the stakeholders.

The idea of curriculum design is highlighted by Miriam N. Kyule, Jacob J. J. O. Konyango, Agnes O. Nkurumwa who conducted the research focused on teacher training and teacher technical knowledge and skills about Dry Land Agriculture (DLA) practices, training and support. The research sought to point out the teacher factors influencing implementation of agriculture curriculum in secondary schools in Kenya. As it was stated by the scholars "to maximum exploit the agriculture sector, the education sector has to play its role by preparing human resources who are competent through proper implementation of the agriculture curriculum in schools" (Kyule et al., 2017).

We agree with the scholars that ESP course as a form of English language teaching should be included into university syllabi as it directly prepares students and teachers for the linguistic challenges and requirements they will encounter during their future professional careers.

As Adam J. Simpson suggests incorporation of technology into the language curriculum which is effective. Being a member of the department's technology team he created a virtual learning environment (VLE) which is consistently used as a part of language courses inside and outside the classroom based on curriculum teaching materials that utilize the Internet and the available technology for classroom use (Simpson, 2016).

The principles of instruction in curriculum design were proposed by David Merrill in 1999. Those principles are: task / problem-centeredness, activation, demonstration, application, and integration (Merrill, 2002). Application of David Merrill's principles of instruction is highlighted in the scientific work of Jessie Choi, who focused on developing professional writing skills in the context of a professional ESP writing course (Choi, 2014). We can agree that principles of instruction developed by David Merrill can be adapted and

implemented by using different practices, including ESP course design for teachers of technical subjects, which will then determine course effectiveness and ESP learners' engagement.

Elena Belyaeva offered a detailed comparative analysis of the following ESP courses: "English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)", "English as a Medium of Instruction for Academics". The comparative analysis covered the following components: syllabus statement, course content, techniques and methods, assessment, resources and learning outcomes. The scholar makes a conclusion that ESP course as a medium of instruction is very efficient and enables university faculty teaching staff: to facilitate interactive teaching techniques; to use interactional English speech more confidently; to develop academic presentation skills in English; to understand intercultural communication issues; to become part of a bigger academic community and to exchange experience and ideas in international network; to meet the English as a global language requirements and to raise language level according to dynamically changing norms and standards (Belyaeva, 2018).

Jun Lin, Aiguo Wang, Changjie Zhang offer an ESP course based on Aviation context for aircraft engineering at the Civil Aviation University of China. The paper offers an approach within an action research model. A curriculum presented for an integrated course in aviation English, so that learners of ESP can learn the target language more effectively and put the learning to practical use (Lin et al., 2014).

From the studies reviewed above, it is evident that many of them have been devoted to the field of ESP. Yet no studies have been conducted concerning academic English for teaching staff at technical universities. Thus, undertaking of the current study makes it significant.

Research results

The purpose of the study was to implement the study course in teacher training and to increase the teachers' level of English. At the end of the training course teachers' readiness to deliver courses in English has been checked.

The research aimed at implementation of the Educational Project "Teaching in English" was conducted at Flight Academy of the National Aviation University (Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine) during 2016-2019 years. It involved 64 University teachers of technical subjects.

During the research it was assumed that after the implementation of special training course for teachers their level of English would increase, therefore their readiness for delivering professional technical courses in English would increase.

The project was implemented as follows. Classes for teachers were conducted 3 times a week (6 academic hours a week during 3 academic years). Apart from teacher training for general English (B2+ level of English), some extra activities were conducted, namely: 1) preparation of a course of lectures and seminar classes in the Ukrainian language; 2) compiling a terminological dictionary, phrases, abbreviations of the aviation context; 3) translation of educational materials into English, development of additional tasks to practice English language skills in the aviation context; 4) joint extracurricular activity – development of educational and methodological guides by English teacher and a teacher of a professional aviation course; 5) audio recording of the terminological dictionary with correct English pronunciation; 6) analysis of European requirements for learning English to achieve the B2 proficiency level; 7) adaptation of the English language testing curriculum according to the European scale to the training of management, teaching and instructor staff at the Flight Academy of NAU; correlation of the number of hours allocated to achieve the level of

proficiency B2 and ICAO; 8) creation of the "European English Speaking Club" group in social networks in English on Facebook, which allows quick exchange of information, advertising campaign and establishment of foreign contacts; expanding the group by involving cadets, colleagues and members of other groups; 12) taking ICAO advanced training courses by English language teachers in order to improve knowledge of aviation English; 13) classes with US Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine; collaborating with teachers of adjacent departments with the aim of learning English and “immersing” in the English-speaking atmosphere; practicing standard phrases and expressions in classes; listening in order to understand phonological features and correct intonation.

To conduct an experimental study, there were formed two groups of teachers: experimental (EG) and control (CG). It was investigated the readiness of teachers to deliver technical aviation courses in English according to the defined criteria: 1) motivational; 2) cognitive; 3) interactive; 4) reflexive. The teachers were also differentiated by levels of knowledge and skills in English: low, medium, high.

The study was conducted in two stages: diagnostic and operational. The generalized indicators of the teachers’ readiness have been analyzed.

At the diagnostic stage the research study was aimed at the following: checking of the initial level of university teachers’ knowledge and skills in English; the formation of the conditions in which the experiment was conducted; instructing the participants of the experiment on methods and conditions of the study.

Diagnostics of the levels of readiness of the participants of the experiment was carried out on the basis of empirical data obtained at this stage. The results of the diagnostic stage of the study on teachers’ level of English are presented in Table 1.

Level		Low	Medium	High
Criteria				
Motivational	C	26,9	63,2	9,9
	G			
	E	28,6	62,7	8,7
Cognitive	C	25,9	63,7	10,4
	G			
	E	29,7	59,5	10,8
Interactive	C	27,5	61,5	11,0
	G			
	E	28,1	61,6	10,3
Reflexive	C	26,6	62,0	11,4
	G			
	E	29,2	60,0	10,8
Total	C	26,9	62,6	10,5
	G			
	E	29,2	61,1	9,7

Table 1 Generalized data of the levels of teachers’ readiness of control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) at the diagnostic stage of the study (in %)

The levels of readiness to deliver courses in English of the participants of the experiment were studied according to each criterion separately.

In the motivational criterion, the professional need, functional interest, curiosity of the participants of the experiment, and the desire for self-improvement through increasing level of English were studied. For carrying out the study of this criterion the method "Self-assessment of professional and pedagogical motivation" (adapted by M. Fetiskin) was used [3]. High level of readiness according to the motivational criterion was found in 9.3% of respondents, among whom 46.8% were from EG, and 53.2% - from CG. The medium level was recorded in 62.9% of the teachers, among whom 49.8% were from EG, and 50.2% - from CG. 27.8% of the respondents were at a low level, among which 51.5% were from EG, and 48.3% were from CG. At the diagnostic stage of the experiment according to the motivational criterion, the studied groups were qualitatively homogeneous, and their quantitative indicators did not differ significantly.

In the cognitive criterion, the level of knowledge about the essence, structure, functions of professional aviation course; level of professional knowledge and psychological and pedagogical basics of educational work. We carried out this study according to the author's questionnaire in aviation subjects developed by Departments of the University.

According to the cognitive criterion, a high level of readiness was recorded in 10.6% of respondents, among whom 51.2% were from EG, and 48.8% - from CG. The medium level was found in 61.6% of the subjects, among whom 48.3% - with EG, and 51.7% - with CG. 27.8% of the subjects were at a low level, among which 53.4% are from EG, and 46.6% are from CG. The contribution of each group to the overall distribution of the levels of readiness according to the specified criterion at this stage was approximately the same. The groups turned out to be qualitatively homogeneous, and their quantitative indicators did not differ significantly.

In the interactive criterion, the ability and skills of the participants of the experiment to interact in working environment in English using modern means of information and communication technologies, the ability for interpersonal interaction, organizational skills, and communication skills were investigated. The research was carried out according to the authors' methodology based on ICAO Aviation English test.

A high level of readiness according to the interactive criterion was recorded in 10.6% of respondents, among whom 48.4% - from EG, and 51.6% - from CG. The average level was found in 61.6% of the subjects, including 50.0% with EG and 50.0% with CG. 27.8% of the subjects are at a low level, among which 50.5% are from EG, and 49.5% are from CG. According to the interactive criterion at this stage, the groups were also qualitatively homogeneous.

In the reflexive criterion, the qualities necessary for professional and personal growth, the ability to evaluate one's own pedagogical activity, and the ability for self-regulation in the process of professional activity were investigated. The research is carried out according to the methodology of B. Fedoryshyn "Methodology for measuring communicative and organizational abilities" (Method of Measuring of communicative and Organizational Abilities).

A high level of readiness according to the reflexive criterion was recorded in 11.2% of respondents, among whom 48.6% were from EG, and 51.4% were from CG. The average level was found in 61.0% of the subjects, including 49.2% with EG and 50.8% with CG. 27.8% of the subjects are at a low level, among which 52.3% are from EG, and 47.7% are from CG. According to the reflexive criterion, at this stage the quantitative indicators of the groups did not differ significantly.

According to the data obtained at the diagnostic stage of the study, the levels of teachers in CG and EG were nearly the same. Now, the teachers were trained a course of English and the second stage (operational) of the study was conducted.

The results of the study at the operational stage are presented in table 2.

Level		Low	Medium	High
Criteria				
Motivational	C	18,7	67,0	14,3
	G			
	E	10,8	64,3	24,9
Cognitive	C	18,7	64,8	16,5
	G			
	E	10,8	64,3	24,9
Interactive	C	19,8	64,3	15,9
	G			
	E	11,4	62,7	25,9
Reflexive	C	18,7	64,8	16,5
	G			
	E	11,4	63,2	25,4
Total	C	19,0	65,2	15,8
	G			
	E	11,1	63,6	25,3

Table 2 Generalized data of the levels of teachers' readiness of control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) at the operational stage of the study (in %)

After the operational stage of the experiment, the number of respondents with high and medium levels of teachers' readiness to deliver courses in English in the experimental group (EG) increased by 15.2% and 2.7%, respectively; at the same time, the number of participants in this group with a low level decreased by 17.9%. The group has significantly grown qualitatively, and its quantitative indicators after the experiment significantly exceed the corresponding indicators before the experiment.

Discussion

The course program assumed that teachers have an entry level A2 and was aimed to achieve B2+ level of English. The content and the structure of the syllabus are aimed at preparation of the trainees to complete the FCE test (First Certificate in English) which corresponds to B2 level. The syllabus contained the goals and objectives of the course, the curriculum of the course, content modules, training and assessment methods, information and methodological provision of discipline, including ICT-based technologies.

The program meets a wide range of educational needs of the university stakeholders: administration, faculties, departments and students. The study program is general and can be used for a number of aviation specialties, its content was selected based on the analysis of

national and international educational standards, professional requirements and needs of teachers at technical universities. The program has a practical orientation, proposing the acquisition of professional and functional communicative competence in the use of the English language.

The idea of the project of teaching professional courses in English had practical result. During the research it was assumed that the implementation of teacher training course of English would form the readiness of teachers for delivering professional technical courses in English. After the operational stage of the experiment, there were positive changes in both studied groups. In the control group, these changes were not significant, but in the experimental group, they led to a significant increase in the level of English of the group. Thus, the effectiveness of the training course for teachers has been proved. Prospects for further research consist in the study of ways of implementing teacher training courses of various subjects in the postgraduate education system.

Conclusion

In recent years, Ukrainian universities have taken a big step in the direction of international standards. This includes the emergence of English-language programs, the establishment of active ties with foreign universities, and participation in academic exchange programs. We are trying to step forward and meet modern aviation requirements.

Postgraduate education of teachers is the blurring of boundaries between learning and communication. In this case, education turns into a single, consistent process that ensures the formation of the teacher's personality and the improvement of his/her qualifications. It should be emphasized that the short duration of the advanced training course does not allow to sufficiently harmonize the external stimulation of professional activity and the manifestation of productive initiative in the teacher's professional activity.

Thus, the National Aviation University can be proud of implementing the Program "Education in English", which gives the chance: to become proficient in English special terminology; to find prestigious well-paid job; to obtain along with the Diploma of the University a special Certificate in both languages on graduating from the University; to work at educational institutions in different countries of the world; to participate in the international scientific and technical symposia, conferences, seminars; to communicate and collaborate with scientists from different countries; to work in the international aviation institutions; to take part in the development of international standards, manuals and other documentation; to continue education or find a job in any country of the world.

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Sustainability in Teacher Preparation: Shifting from Paper to Electronic Portfolios in Slovak Higher Education

Zuzana Součková

Abstract

Though effectiveness of a portfolio has been proven by a considerable number of scholars, it might not be a “survivable” tool in terms of global virtualisation. The presented study aims to explore the shift from paper to electronic portfolios in Slovak higher education through a questionnaire distributed among the selected universities in Slovakia. The main objective was to investigate the readiness of student teachers towards the use of e-portfolios, their educational needs, and perceptions of the tool in terms of sustainability. Based on the data, student teachers are more positive towards the idea of shifting from paper to digital portfolios.

Keywords: electronic portfolio, paper portfolio, professional development, sustainability, teacher education.

Introduction

Portfolios in general have fast become a key instrument in teacher training programmes, especially with regards to the teaching practice. However, from a long-term point of view, paper portfolios may not qualify to meet all the requirements and needs of student teachers. Nowadays, the question of sustainability is becoming more addressed and plays an important role in education. The issue of teaching and learning sustainably has received considerable attention. Thus, investigating the concept of sustainability within the context of teacher education appears to be of a great importance since beginning and future teachers are those who can initiate the shift towards a sustainable future not only in themselves, but also in their students' thinking processes.

The past thirty years have seen increasingly rapid advances in the field of digital technologies. Paper-and-pencil activities are becoming overshadowed by virtual advances and traditional paper portfolios are getting replaced by electronic portfolios. However, this transition has been challenged by various obstacles (e.g. requirement of digital skills, privacy issues, insufficient instruction sessions) which may hinder the implementation process. Among other benefits, e-portfolio offers a virtual space for student teachers to continuously add various artifacts and track their progress over time. Not only can they reflect on what they add, but also share ideas and experiences with their peers, or work together within communities of practice towards a common goal.

The presented study seeks to examine the changing nature of using portfolios in the context of Slovak higher education with the emphasis put on the teacher training programmes. It aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring the transition from paper-based to electronic portfolios towards sustainability – in connection to environment, continuous professional development and creation of communities of practice. The study is organised in the following way: it begins by outlining the theoretical background related to the topic and literature overview. Then it goes on to data collection, data analysis and research findings presented.

In the pages that follow, it will be argued that electronic portfolios may serve as a useful tool to promote sustainability in teacher education.

Literature review

Over the past years, much more information has become available on sustainability and a considerable amount of literature has been published on how to support and promote sustainability. These studies put a special emphasis on education, i.e. sustainability education since leading future generations towards making positive changes in society appears to be inevitable in order to increase sustainable way of thinking. Traditionally, it has been argued that teachers' role in shaping minds of students is one of the most responsible tasks. Studies such as that conducted by Fien and Maclean (2000) claim that in order to set the learning conditions in a way that students are led towards sustainability, there is a need for teachers to be aware of the fundamentals of the sustainability education and the concept as such.

Recent studies emphasise the need for embedding sustainable education in teacher training programmes, i.e. teacher education (Martin, 2007; Santone et al., 2014; Karrow & DiGiuseppe, 2020). According to Martin (2007), neither in teacher nor in post-compulsory education should the topic of climate change be omitted. Similarly, Santone, Saunders & Seguin (2014) highlight the importance of problem-solving skilfulness of teachers so that they can educate sustainability. Moreover, in their study, the authors point out the concrete abilities of teachers needed when educating for sustainability (EfS), such as: “clearly state philosophies of sustainable education; identify sustainability content knowledge; practice sustainability oriented pedagogy and instructional design; use sustainability appropriate assessments; seek professional growth and collaboration as EfS teachers” (p. 3).

Based on the literature review, Evans et al. (2017) recognise specific approaches which can be used to incorporate sustainability when educating teachers. The approaches comprise the following issues: “embedding sustainability education widely across curriculum areas, courses, and institution; through a dedicated core/compulsory subject; through a component of a core/compulsory subject; and through a dedicated elective subject” (p. 405). More on the problematics of embedding sustainability in teacher education can be found in the book edited by Karrow & DiGiuseppe (2019). As noted by Hopkins & Kohl (in Karrow & DiGiuseppe, 2019), education for sustainability development, being a rather broader term, may be sometimes difficult to understand. This may lead to understanding this concept as a separated discipline. However, education for sustainability development only elaborates on what already exists. Future teachers, if exposed to different ways of education, can reconsider “purposes of education and schooling; role and responsibilities of teachers; curriculum; pedagogical practices; assessment; classroom and behavior management; school and classroom climates” (Santone et al., 2014, p. 12).

The study by Dymont and Hill (2015) explored the perceptions of initial education students on the sustainability as the cross-curriculum priority. Based on their findings it may be concluded that once again, the role of a teacher educator is of a great importance in order to help student teachers comprehend the concept of sustainability in connection with the cross-curriculum priority. Furthermore, the student teachers' comprehension of the concept revolved predominantly around the view of environment rather than economy, politics or society. Another study conducted by Buchanan (2012) reported rather occasional incorporation of sustainability into education and at the same time points out how sustainability education “struggles” to be a part of the curriculum.

According to Guidelines and Recommendations for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability, there are several problematic issues which may be challenging in connection to education for sustainable development (ESD): “official national and provincial curriculum rarely mandate sustainability; teacher certification guidelines do not mention sustainability; lack of or inadequately trained professionals who are knowledgeable about ESD; lack of or inadequate funding and material resources; lack of or inadequate national,

provincial, and local policy to support ESD, etc.” (p. 31). Thus, it is essential that conditions in teacher education are set in a way that in the process of its transformation, as few as possible obstacles occur.

When talking about sustainability, a question arises whether values in general can be taught at all, as Howard (2012) claims. In addition, the author puts an emphasis on the fact that the values are essential in the process of shaping our way of thinking about our role in the world. The following paragraphs present e-portfolio as one of the tools for enhancing sustainability in terms of its environment-friendly, economy-friendly nature and the possibility of using it beyond the university purposes, i.e. professional growth, self-presentation and lifelong learning. Moreover, the creation of communities of practice – shareability of e-portfolios can promote sustainable education and reinforce the sense of community among the student teachers.

Several studies have been carried out on e-portfolios and their role in supporting sustainability (Habron, 2015; Buzzetto-More, 2010; Adamy & Milman, 2009). By drawing on the concept of sustainable education, Adamy and Milman (2009) claim that “to be sustainable, an innovation must either clearly meet a defined need not already addressed sufficiently by an existing solution, or improve existing processes such that stakeholders recognize the need for, and adopt or adapt, the innovation” (p. 45). In the case of e-portfolio, the tool as such upgrades the already existing tool (paper portfolio) and adapts it so that it can become more effective, useful and sustainable. A broader perspective has been adopted by Buzzetto-More (2010) who highlights the attempts to reach economic advances and considerable sustainability, as mentioned at the Council of the European Union meeting in Lisbon in 2000. In addition, the benefits of e-portfolios are emphasised for they can help to form communities of practice where it is possible to collaborate and share views, experiences and practices of their teaching.

In the study conducted by Habron (2015), the structure alongside with formal direction of e-portfolio were emphasised in order to fully use the potential e-portfolio offers in terms of sustainability. Previous research has highlighted the eco-friendly nature of e-portfolio (Buzzetto-More, 2010; Jean-Francois, 2018; Jarrott & Gambrel, 2011; Alawdat, 2013), which in comparison with traditional paper portfolio righteously appears as a more sustainable tool, moreover, not only environment-friendly nature, but also the cost-effective feature was pointed out in the study by Elshami (2018). The evidence presented in this section suggests that electronic portfolio might be a proper tool towards increased sustainability in the context of (not only) teacher education. However, the shift from paper to electronic portfolios might not be easy, for both teachers and students have been used to paper-and-pencil for a long period of time. Therefore, in the context of teacher education, it is important to investigate how student teachers would react towards the use of e-portfolio, what advantages/disadvantages they perceive as well as how they imagine best practices of e-portfolio use.

Even though most of the student teachers have had some experiences with portfolio as such during their studies in the teacher training programmes (e.g. collecting various artifacts during their teaching practice), e-portfolio opens up a completely new virtual dimension and provides opportunities which would not be possible with a paper portfolio (e.g. shareability, customisation for a latter professional portfolio, multimedia artifacts). On the other hand, traditional paper portfolios may also appeal especially to users who prefer paper-and-pencil tools over virtual platforms which often require digital skills at a certain level.

In terms of sustainability, electronic portfolios with their environment-friendliness and the use beyond university purposes (e.g. professional portfolios, creating communities of practice, lifelong learning), can serve as an (not only) and education tool towards a more sustainable future.

Research results

In the research, a quantitative approach was applied. To be more specific, the method of a questionnaire was adopted since this method allows for a greater generalisation. The questionnaire consists of nine questions and five sub-questions. As to the nature of the questionnaire, both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used.

Data were gathered from multiple sources – i.e. selected universities in Slovakia. Participants were aged approximately between twenty to twenty-five years and were selected on the basis of their teacher training programme as well as teaching practice experience. Altogether, two hundred and one participants were involved in the research from both Bachelor's and Master's degree. They were recruited from four universities: University of Prešov, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Constantine the Philosopher University, The Trnava University.

The questions covered the following areas: experience with the use of (any) portfolio, effectiveness and usefulness of its use, the use of portfolio in the future, influence of teacher's attitude towards portfolio on students' perception, advantages and disadvantages of e-portfolio, characteristics of a desired e-portfolio, etc.

The question is, therefore, whether student teachers are ready to shift from the traditional paper to e-portfolio and what their needs and perceptions are towards the e-portfolio tool (also in terms of sustainability). The questionnaire in the form of needs analysis was aimed to explore the current situation in Slovak higher education. Open-ended questions reflect the frequency of answers in percentage. Furthermore, in case the participants skipped some questions, they were classified as “no response”. It is important to acknowledge that this paper presents partial data (+ table and figures) and enriched analysis from the author's dissertation (Lukáčová, 2019) which was later included in a monograph (Součková, 2021).

When asked about the previous experience, 84% of the participants stated they had experienced the use of portfolio before (see Figure 1). Furthermore, they had used the portfolio during seminars (39%), teaching practice (45%), in their work environment (1,4%) or others (2,4%), as reflected in Figure 2. Other answers to this open-ended question included the following: during the primary and lower/upper secondary schools; seminars/lectures at university. The purpose of the portfolio was a dossier (42%), self-reflection/feedback tool (32%), evaluation table (15%), others (1,6%). The participants also included, e.g. a collection of tasks for a lesson observation and reflection during teacher placement as shown in Figure 3. Therefore, based on the data it is possible to conclude the participants had used portfolio especially during their studies.

Based on the function of e-portfolio, various types can be recognised. Stefani et al. (2007), provides the following classification of e-portfolios: “Assessment e-portfolio: This is used as an assessment tool. It can be used as proof of competency. Showcase e-portfolio: It is similar to a traditional portfolio and is also called a ‘presentation e-portfolio’. Like a CV, it can be used to show competency and developmental possibility. Development e-portfolio: It can be used as data to support personal development planning. It shows learners’ course history, education background, etc. Reflection e-portfolio: This assists in the self-evaluation of learners. Here, learners can check their learning goals and reflect on their learning process and outcomes” (In Shon 2011, p. 35).

It may be stated that portfolio is a versatile tool that can be used in a number of fields and school/university levels. Thus, in terms of sustainability, it can be continuously used from lower to higher education levels and later even as a professional portfolio for a potential employer.

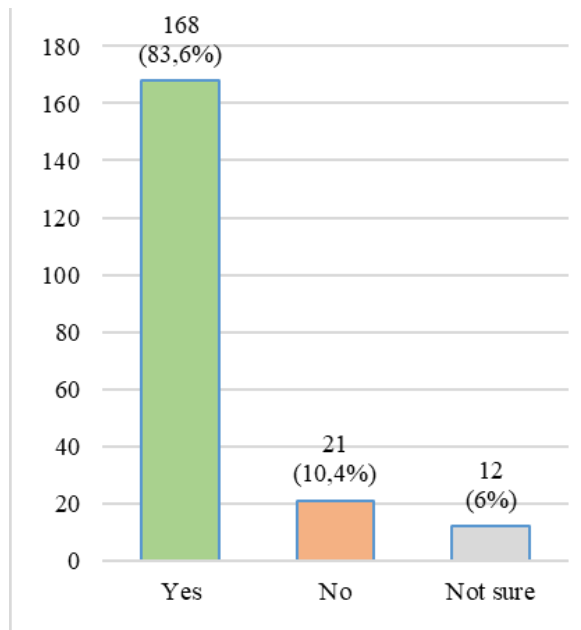


Figure 1 Experience with the use of Portfolio

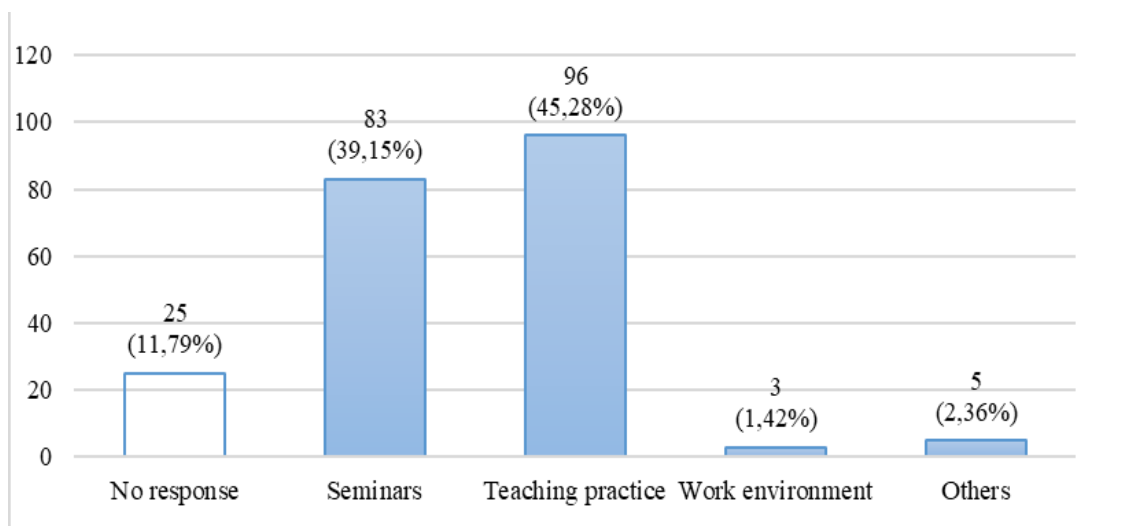


Figure 2 The use of Portfolio

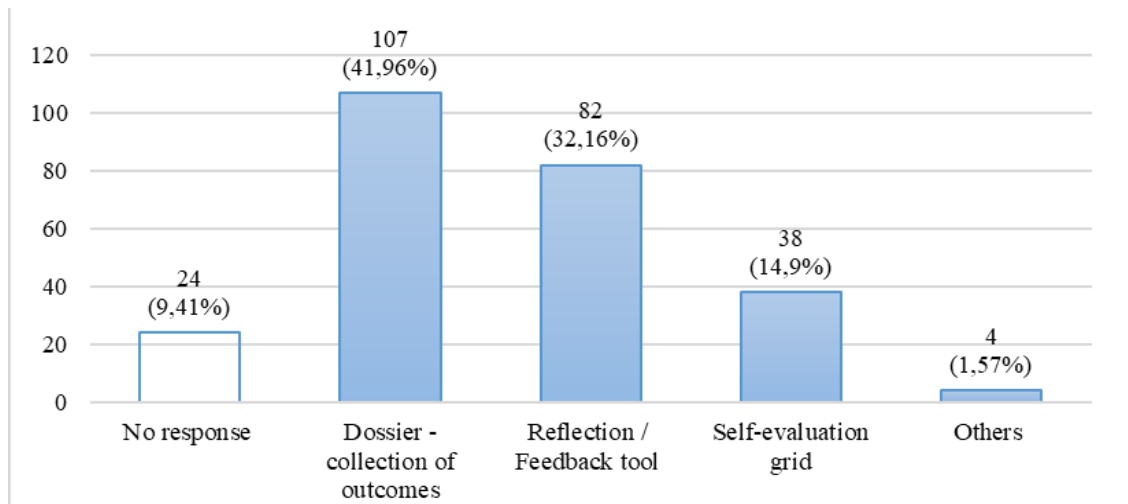


Figure 3 Purpose of Portfolio

Basto (2014) introduces several questions to be asked when constructing e-portfolio tasks: “Purpose – What is the purpose of the portfolio? Audience – In what audiences will the portfolio be created? Content – What samples of student work will be included? Process – What processes (e.g., selection of work to be included, reflection on work, conferencing) will be engaged during the development of the portfolio? 5. Management – How will time and materials be managed in the development of the portfolio? 6. Communication – How and when will the portfolio be shared with pertinent audiences? 7. Evaluation – If the portfolio is to be used for evaluation, when and how should it be evaluated?” (In *Sustainability Starts with Teachers* - UNESCO/Rhodes University 2020, p. 31). It has to be noted that a thorough planning should precede the process of e-portfolio implementation, i.e. stating the function of e-portfolio and the outcomes expected.

When asked about the usefulness of the experience itself, various opinions were reported. Approx. 38% of the participants believed their work with portfolio had been useful, 16% disagreed, 34% hesitated and 11% did not answer, as visible in Figure 4. However, the majority of the participants (93%) consider self-reflection as a useful tool for development, i.e. professional growth (see Figure 5). Both paper and electronic portfolios can be used as self-reflection tools, but e-portfolio may provide some additional value in a way that reflection can be enhanced with a supervising teacher's/students' feedback more easily throughout the process of teaching practice.

Although the participants consider self-reflection to be crucial for professional growth, merely 38% believe the experience with portfolio was useful. This could be a subject for further investigation since e-portfolios have been generally proved to be an effective tool for enhancing self-reflection (Slepcevic-Zach & Stock, 2018; Yastibas & Yastibas, 2015; Parkes, Dredger & Hicks, 2013). Moreover, their virtual nature promotes connectivity and thus may enhance student-student/student-teacher interaction.

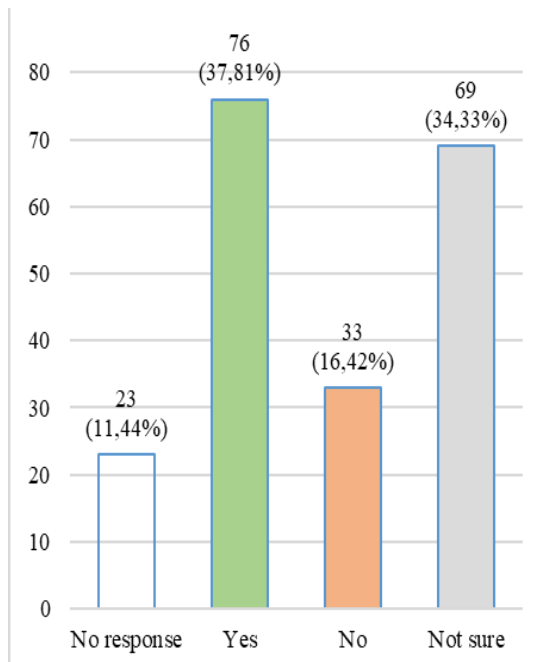


Figure 4 Usefulness of the Experience

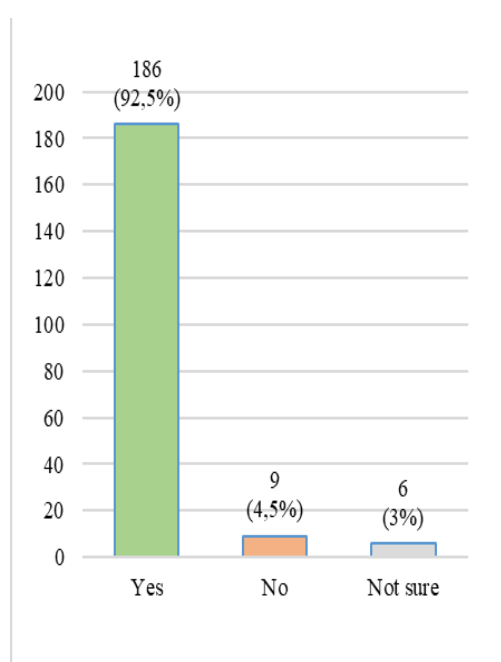


Figure 5 Self-reflection as a Tool for Self-development

In relation to pre-gradual studies and in-service teachers, 52% participants believe in the importance of portfolio in pre-gradual studies and 65% for teachers in practice. Nonetheless, in connection to pre-gradual studies, approximately 41% were hesitant as can be seen in Figure 6. It is possible to conclude that even though the participants consider portfolio to be important in teacher preparation, this result is more prominent in the case of in-service teachers (see Figure 7).

It is essential to note that 64% of the participants think that portfolio promotion and the attitude of a teacher towards the portfolio affects its perception by students (see Figure 8). The shift from paper to electronic portfolios, therefore, may depend on teachers' attitude towards the tool as such. Similar views were echoed in the studies by Oakley, Pegrum and Johnston (2014) and Lanteigne (2014). What is more, proper training session seems to be of great importance in order to introduce the tool to teachers who can then explain its usage to their students. It is also possible to create a manual (as a document or a video) and upload it to the shared space within the platform itself for the students to see/download whenever the need arises.

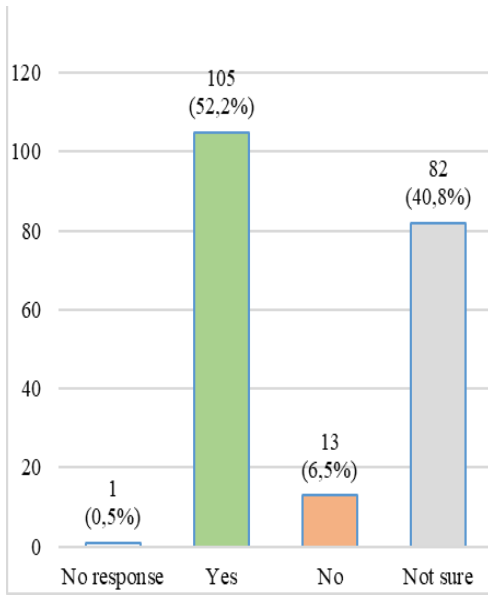


Figure 6 Importance of Portfolio in Pregradual Studies

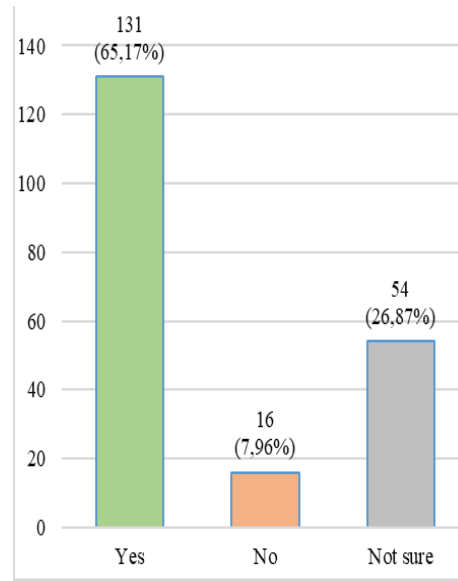


Figure 7 Importance of Portfolio for Teachers

Based on the data obtained, 83% of the participants had not have any knowledge of teaching e-portfolio for self-reflection (see Figure 9). This could have been caused by a number of reasons, e.g. lack of information about e-portfolios. Highlighting the versatility of the tool could potentially increase the knowledge of e-portfolios. Moreover, the fact that there are many e-portfolio platforms available (some of them are free of charge, others have to be purchased) may cause more hesitance and disinclination to e-portfolios. This aspect of e-portfolios can be viewed as a serious downside since schools/universities/institutions may use different e-portfolio platforms which may not necessarily be compatible with each other.

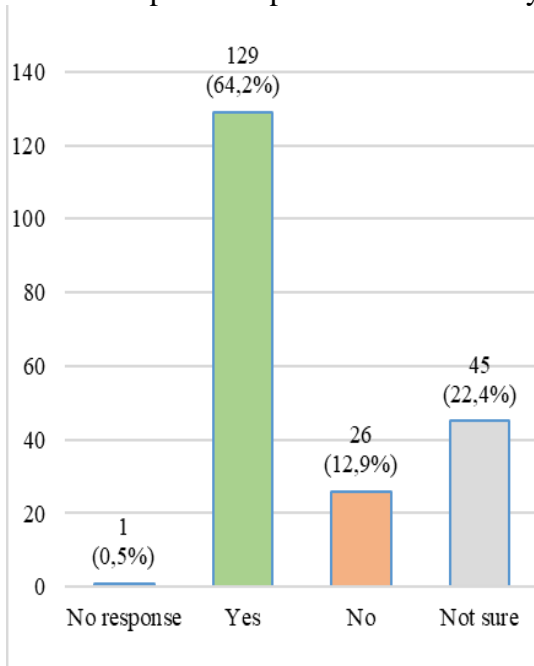


Figure 8 Teacher's Influence on Student's Perception

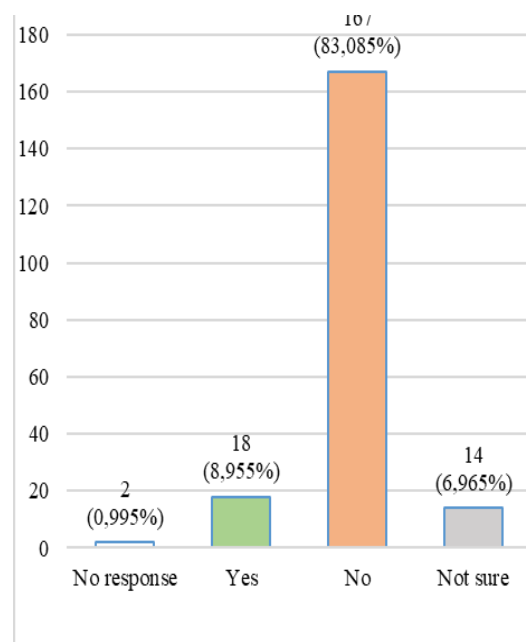


Figure 9 Awareness of Teaching E-portfolios for Self-reflection

In terms of the benefits of e-portfolio, the participants reported the following: practicality of e-portfolio (33%), environment-friendly nature (36%), accessibility (27%), and others (3%). The participants appreciate mostly the environment-friendliness of electronic portfolios which basically goes hand in hand with a more sustainable way of thinking.

Among other advantages reported were the following: efficiency; it can increase motivation among children and students or back-up files. 3% of the participants did not know what to mention. Figure 10 provides the overall visualisation of the data.

Nowadays it is important to look for sustainable tools that would support environment-friendly solutions. Moreover, digital skills are becoming more and more required in various fields of study/work. Thus, working with e-portfolios may promote those aspects and create space for greater cooperation and interaction. However, the tool as such comes with a number of disadvantages, of course, which will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

Figure 11 reflects the possible drawbacks of e-portfolio: digital skills required (25%), technology required (41%), possible disorganisation of information (21%), others (11%). Among the other downsides of e-portfolio the participants stated: no option to save documents continuously; a great amount of time spent on the computer (e.g. causing damage to eyes); contribution to the overall electronisation of the society and electrosmog; technological blackout and loss of information; internet access. Ten participants (5%) reported no drawbacks related to e-portfolio whatsoever. 2,5% of the participants did not know what to write (this could have been caused by the lack of experience with e-portfolios). Gerbic et al. (2009) emphasise the significance of the instructors/lecturers “knowing” the tool and being aware of its features. Once more, the participants pointed out a downside of e-portfolios – electrosmog – which can be viewed also in connection to sustainability and current environmental issues. To sum up, e-portfolios can be perceived from different points of view and there are, of course both advantages and disadvantages connected to its use.

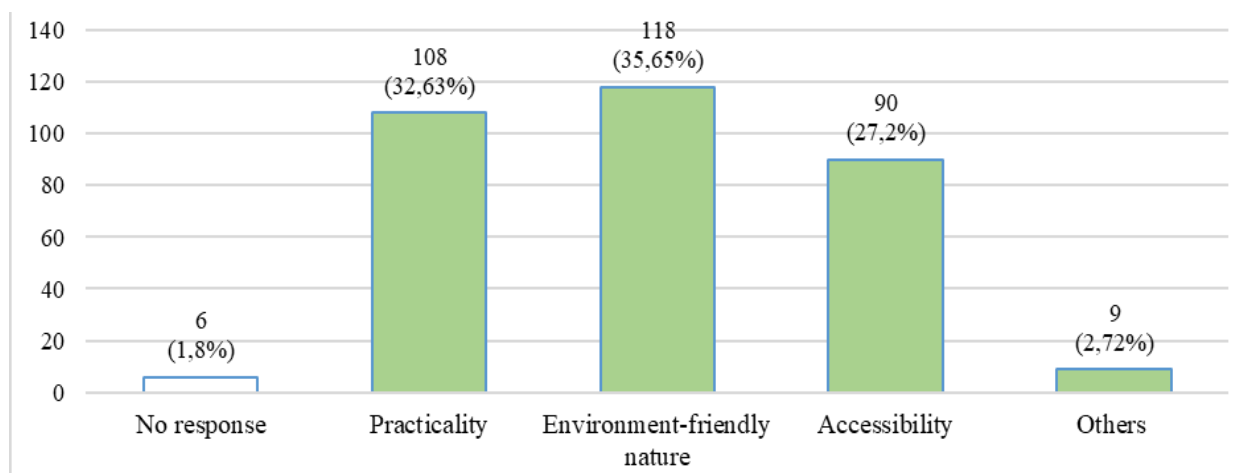


Figure 10 Advantages of E-portfolio

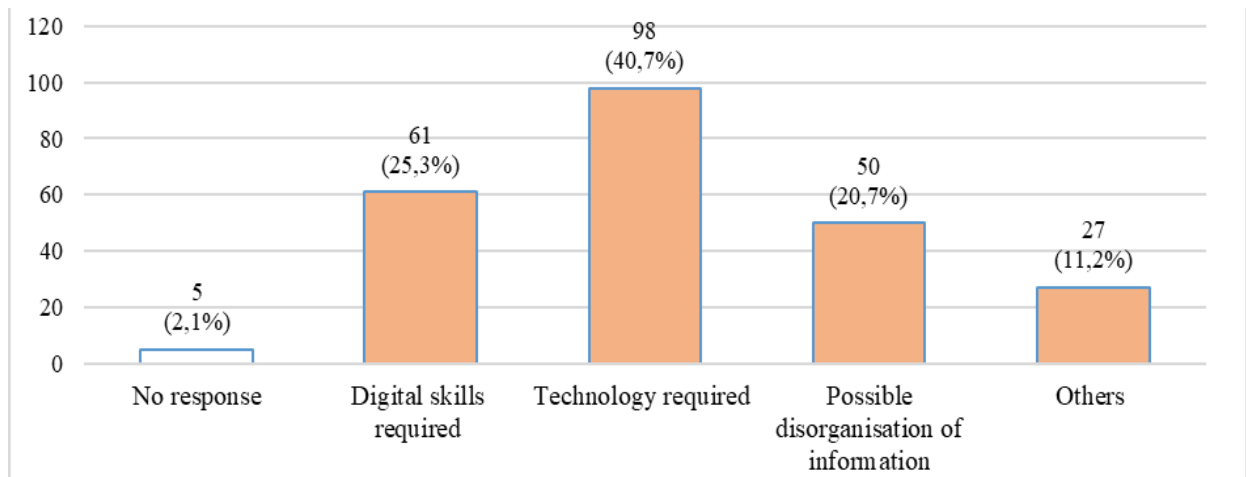


Figure 11 Disadvantages of E-portfolio

When asked about creating e-portfolio, only 6% of the participants answered yes (6%), as visible in Figure 12. In connection to this result it is important to take into consideration the fact that 83% of the participants had not been knowledgeable about any teaching portfolios for self-reflection before.

According to 48% of the participants, e-portfolios are more practical than traditional paper portfolios. On the other hand, approx. 12% disagreed and approx. 40% were not sure, as can be seen in Figure 13. Thus, more than 50% of the participants were either not sure or disagreed with the notion that e-portfolios are more practical in comparison with traditional paper portfolios. It is important to add that the participants had not had the opportunity to compare both forms, which could also influence the results.

In relation to advantages of e-portfolio, Shon (2011) also highlights the possibility to store different kinds of data, compared to traditional paper portfolios. This could mean incorporating digital media, such as photographs, pictures, videos, audios and various types of documents and thus allow for a freer and more extensive self-presentation without the need to print it out, which can be considered a much more environment-friendly and sustainable option.

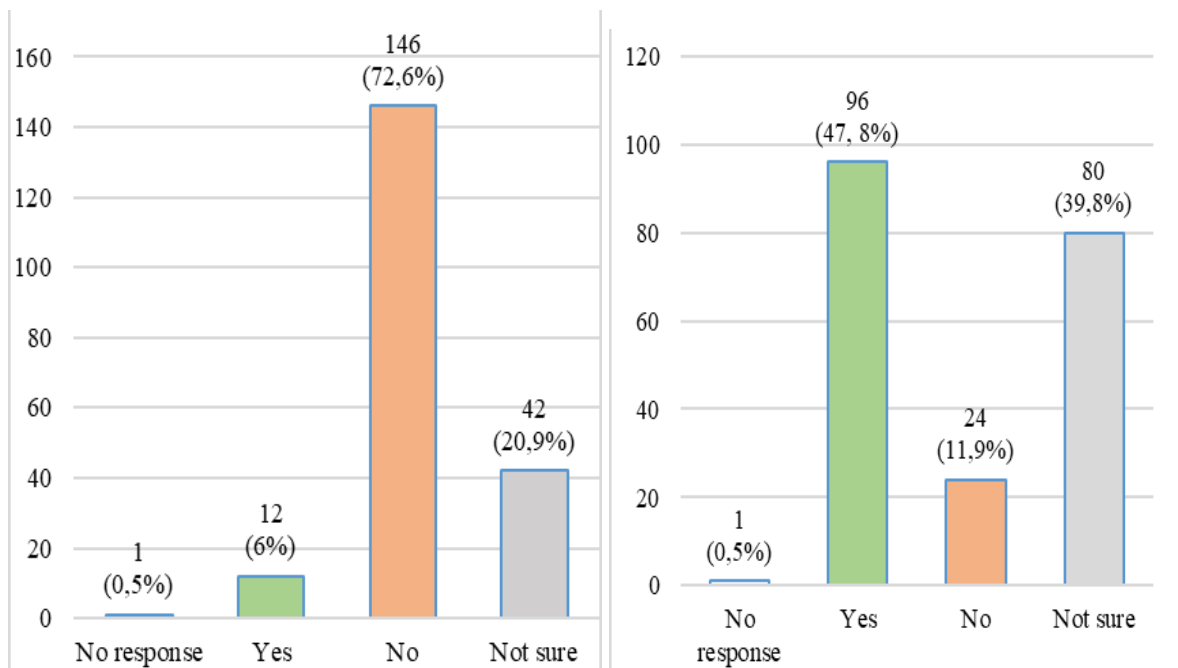


Figure 12 Ability to Create Own Teaching E-portfolio
Figure 13 Practicality of E-portfolio over Paper Portfolio

Despite the lack of experience with e-portfolio, the participants provided its useful/desired features as follow: well-structured/organised, accessible, simple/user friendly, practical, concise, comprehensible, efficient, informative, concrete parts, attractive graphic design, purposeful, environment-friendly, customisable, shareable, printable, interactive, consistent, pragmatical, applicable, explanatory, free of charge, up-to-date, public, relevant, complex, useful, intuitive, reflecting self-development, offline access, manual required, app friendly, innovative, well-promoted, professionally oriented, compatible, reliable, different media formats, continuously developing as can be seen in Figure 14.

To recap, the most frequent characteristics of e-portfolio were structure/organisation, accessibility and simplicity. Thus, when introducing the tool, it is important to make sure the overall layout is well-organised, the tool is accessible through (i.e. compatible with) various devices (cellphones, laptops, computers, tablets, etc.) and the platform is simple enough to work with without causing more difficulties.

Speaking of sustainability, e-portfolio should be an open access tool (i.e. for free), and, of course, environment-friendly. Thanks to the digital nature of virtual portfolios, there is no need to print them out unless required, as previously mentioned. There is also an option to download the whole e-portfolio and send it to, for instance, a potential employer. Therefore, e-portfolio can go hand in hand with a sustainable point of view in a way that not only does it allow to easily track one's progress over time, but it also provides space to continuously develop and present skills and competencies and use it throughout the elementary/secondary/university studies and possibly later on during the whole teaching career.

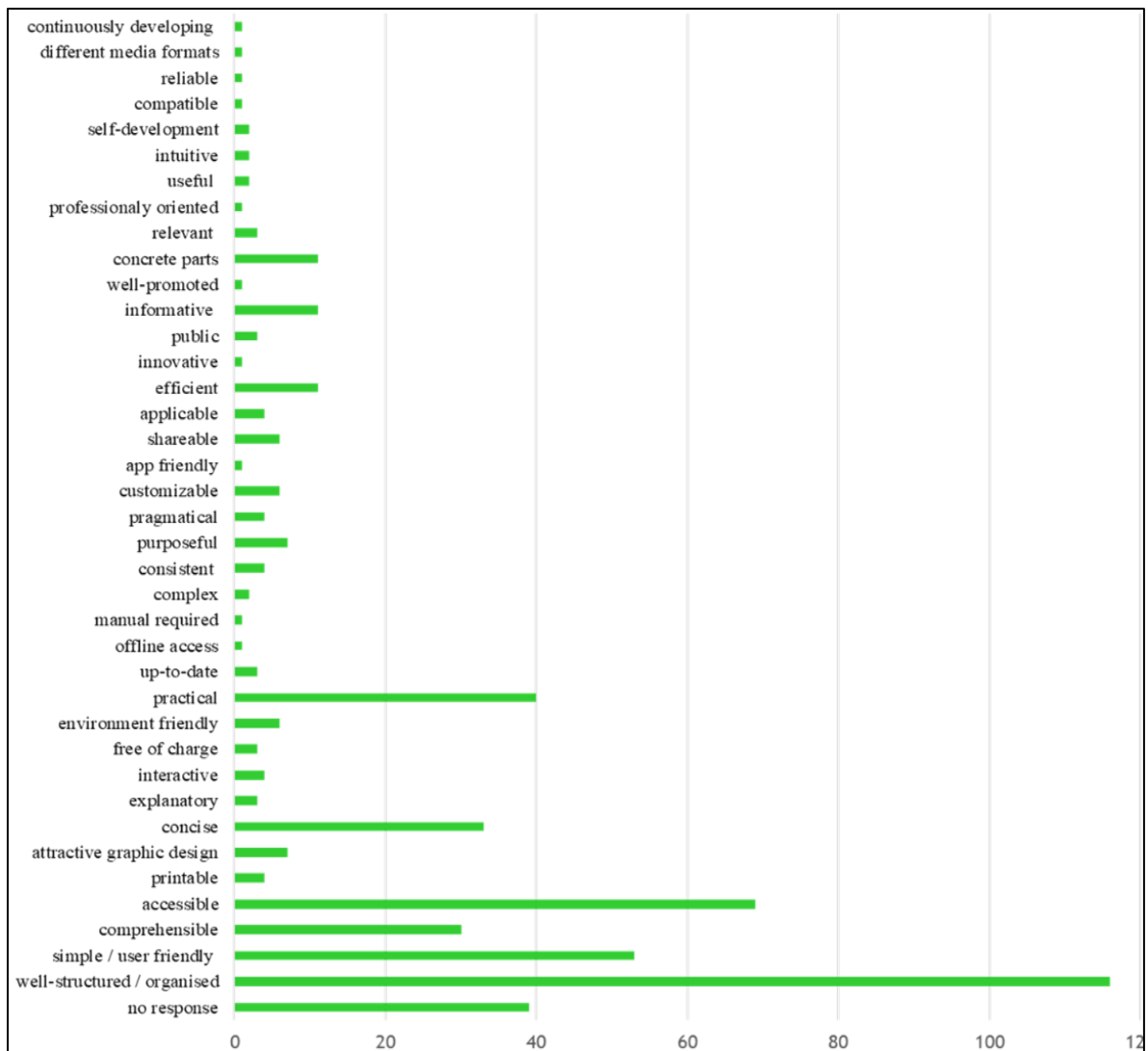


Figure 14 Desired Features of E-portfolio

The whole e-portfolio or its partial outcomes can be shared among students/teachers and thus so-called communities of practice can be created. Hung (2012) and Wang (2010) in their studies further discuss the notion of communities of practice in relation to e-portfolios. What is more, e-portfolios can be used to track progress over time (since older outcomes are easily accessible and can be compared with newer ones) and to enrich reflection with the feedback from other students/teachers, as previously mentioned. This view is echoed by Shon (2011) who summarizes some advantages of e-portfolios (identified by Shon 2008; Kim 2009; Mason & Kim ,2010; Stefani et al., 2007), for instance “it allows learners to manage their learning history and competency information that can be exchanged among interoperable systems; it allows learners to participate intensively in the reflection process” (in Shon 2011, p. 34).

The table below reflects the percentage of answers to the questions included in the questionnaire.

	No answer (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	
NQ1	0	83,58	10,45	5,97	
		Seminars (%)	Teaching Practice (%)	Work (%)	Others (%)
NQ1.1	11,79	39,15	45,28	1,42	2,36
		Dossier (%)	Self-reflection / feedback tool (%)	Evaluation table (%)	Others (%)
NQ1.2	9,41	41,96	32,16	14,9	1,57
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	
NQ1.3	11,44	37,81	16,42	34,33	
NQ2	0,00	92,54	4,48	2,99	
NQ3	0,50	52,24	6,47	40,80	
NQ4	0,00	65,17	7,96	26,87	
NQ5	0,50	64,18	12,94	22,39	
NQ6	1,00	8,96	83,08	6,97	
		Practicality (%)	Environment-friendly (%)	Accessibility (%)	Others (%)
NQ6.1	1,81	32,63	35,65	27,19	2,72
		Digital skills required (%)	Technology required (%)	Disorganisation of information (%)	Others (%)
NQ6.2	2,07	25,31	40,66	20,75	11,2
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	
NQ7	0,50	5,97	72,64	20,90	
NQ8	0,50	47,76	11,94	39,80	

Table 1 Overall Percentage of Answers (own elaboration)

It is possible to state that the participants are aware of both benefits and drawbacks of e-portfolios and are more positive towards the idea of shifting from paper to digital portfolios.

Discussion

The presented study was designed to explore the process of shifting from traditional paper to electronic portfolios in Slovak higher education and to investigate how ready the student teachers are to accept this process of transformation. In this study, the aim was also to compare electronic with traditional paper-based portfolios and to examine the perception and needs of student teachers with regards to e-portfolios in terms of sustainability.

Returning to the aims stated at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to note that student teachers are fully aware of the “extra” opportunities e-portfolios provide with regards to continuous professional growth, shareability, creating communities of practice, its environment-friendly nature and the role of a teacher in promoting such a tool. On the other hand, the student teachers pointed out some concerns over the use of e-portfolio, such as digital skills which are required from its users.

One of the more important findings from this study is that even though student teachers consider self-reflection as a necessary part of the continuous professional growth, their experience with a previous traditional paper portfolio was evaluated as rather negative. This aspect could be the subject of further investigation.

Conclusion

The study aimed to contribute to existing knowledge of electronic portfolios in the context of teacher education by providing data obtained from a number of universities across the Slovak republic. Despite its quantitative nature, it offers insights into the transformative processes in Slovak higher education in terms of the possible shifting from paper to electronic portfolios and pushing the higher education towards a more sustainable way of thinking. This research has raised some questions in need of further investigation as to providing a greater degree of accuracy by using also a qualitative research approach.

An implication of these findings is that e-portfolios in the context of teacher education may help to “soften barriers” between university studies and the future teaching profession by allowing the students to continuously track their progress over time and thus supporting sustainable education.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, it may be concluded that “never before has it been so possible both to enhance the quality of education and to become a central element in the search of a sustainable future for the planet in a concerted global undertaking” (Hopkins & Kohl, 2019, In Karrow & DiGiuseppe, 2019, p. 34).

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The paper presents enriched analysis based on partial data from the author's dissertation (Lukáčová, 2019) which were later included in a monograph (Součková, 2021).

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Emergency Distance Language Learning in the Conditions of the COVID-19 Pandemic and War in Ukraine

Halyna Onyshchak

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and a full-scale Russian invasion have significantly changed the Ukrainian higher education system. As a result, distance learning became the only acceptable form of education, complying with the current world norms of academic space. The research aims to examine the inherent challenges and opportunities for English as a Foreign Language (hereinafter – EFL) learners in the distance mode. The survey results demonstrate that distance language learning has many advantages. It enables instructors to structure their teaching practices to best suit students' learning styles, enhance their interaction, and foster a student-oriented approach.

Keywords: emergency distance language learning, EFL learners, learning styles, interaction, student-oriented approach.

Introduction

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the full-scale Russian invasion, which came as an abrupt shock to millions of Ukrainians, education systems were obliged to suspend online classes and realign instruction to various remote areas and hybrid environments creating a distinctive context for teaching and learning. Despite considerable challenges facing many educators worldwide, they still “scrambled to shift their practice from in-person to remote teaching within a matter of days” (Trust & Whalen, 2020, p. 189). Adapting to new appalling “living” conditions, each higher education institution has implemented both generally accepted and exclusive practices of EFL distance teaching and learning. However, the educational process still poses a rigorous test for both instructors and students.

Emergency education is the education with disrupted access to learning facilities and materials due to natural disasters or man-made crises. Under these circumstances, the right to education primarily serves as an indispensable security and protection tool. Due to the COVID19 pandemics and war in Ukraine, distance learning is becoming the prevalent form of education, “partially putting classroom education on the back burner” (Kamal et al., 2021, p. 7307). The issue has grown in importance in the light of recent research in foreign language teaching and learning (Dhawan, 2020; Dam, 2021; Alcalde Penalver & Garcia Laborda, 2021). In their seminal article, Yuzyk et al. (2022) outline the legal and regulatory framework for the introduction of distance learning in higher education institutions in Ukraine and its practical aspects in the conditions of quarantine and military conflicts. Rahim (2020) discusses the challenges and strategies for facilitating viable online assessment in emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, much uncertainty still exists about the specificity of distance learning implementation in the EFL classroom with its diverse forms, methods, and means.

The research aims to examine the inherent distance learning challenges and opportunities for EFL learners in emergencies. Furthermore, since the distance education model will grow in its dissemination in the forthcoming years, it is necessary to present the foreign language learners' experiences to act on suggestions for further improvements to the current model.

Literature review

The impending crises served as a powerful stimulus to use the emergent technology in the education environment, which provided “new ways to communicate and new forms of social organization, that enable new spaces to learning using information technology” (Carvalho, 2015, p. 133-134). Momentous decisions must be made to avoid educational and professional training disruptions. Subsequently, distance learning was pioneered as an autonomous pedagogical technique, didactically coordinated and collaborative. The former must fulfill education goals with the extensive use of information technology. Although emergency distance learning, also known as emergency remote learning, involves engaging the available distance learning tools formerly exploited for delivering online or blended instruction, the experts in the field find dramatic differences between online and emergency distance learning. The latter is seen as “a stopgap or temporal measure aimed at mitigating the interruptions that emergencies might bring into the educational delivery process” (Sedofia & Ampadu, 2021, p. 24).

On the contrary, Evans & Pauling (2021, p. 122) are convinced that the future of distance education is “intimately connected to broader social, economic and cultural changes”. Since education is the universal good, the powerful force of evolutionary progress, and the basis of equality and peaceful existence within human civilization, its goal is “a person, not a service with all that it implies” (El Guessab et al., 2021, p. 496). Thus, different emergency distance learning strategies have been adopted by different higher educational institutions in Ukraine. The increased use of both online teaching modes and other media have been introduced to help minimize the effect of the pandemic and military conflicts on students’ academic achievements. However, such “just-in-time” distance learning posed real challenges to Ukrainian academic communities. The instructors were demanded to manage both group-based and individual learning environments, identify some common contexts, foster students’ learning autonomy, and assure social presence on a 24/7 basis.

Language learning is a complex cognitive and social process that is “directional, intentional and conscious” (Funk et al., 2017, p. 27). Therefore, it is reasonably assumed that distance learning in the EFL classroom allows language learners to develop their cognitive abilities with technological advancements and practice a foreign language more authentically. Respectively, the classroom can be configured as “a space for inquiry in which what is central are the learning processes that are possible to unfold” (Landau, 2019, p. 54). Furthermore, communication held in an offline format is anchored in a specific time and place, requiring students’ complete alignment with the academic curriculum. Conversely, distance learning introduces more flexibility in the EFL classroom, offering boundless opportunities for language learning without a fixed curriculum.

The digital tools that have been implemented in emergencies are capable of engaging language learners in an interactive learning experience. However, they are yet to replace the face-to-face environment. Information technologies disclose novel multifunctional approaches to EFL teaching and learning compared to conventional ones. Distance language learning is implemented in synchronous and asynchronous modes, each having a considerable difference. Syno et al. (2022, p. 461) claim that “synchronous learning promotes learner communication by fostering cooperative activities and often expanding the lesson above the curriculum”.

In contrast to synchronous mode, asynchronous learning creates an academic space to learn through students’ personal language experiences. According to White (2003), in asynchronous mode, learners can participate in in-class activities and respond at their convenience, receiving time for thought and reflection between responses and revisiting discussions later. However, to bring together the benefits of both delivery modes, most instructors focus on integrating them while teaching a foreign language. Due to this

multisynchronous learning approach, the students can feel utterly and effectively engaged in learning activities within online class settings and establish bilateral communication with the instructor.

In any mode, the learner's autonomy plays a crucial role. This view is supported by Chik (2018), who states that the learner should be capable of two abilities: "first, the ability to take charge of one's own learning through digital practices and in digital worlds, and second, the ability to take charge of one's own learning in terms of language learning needs" (Chik, 2018, p. 74). In other words, the student must possess competence in digital literacy and timemanagement skills, the capacity to select relevant academic resources, and awareness of his/her language learning needs regarding the level of proficiency and learning styles.

This inquiry has been undertaken to determine how the distance mode of language learning in emergencies affected academic efficiency within the Ukrainian EFL university curriculum. Firstly, it aims to analyze the resulting changes in the educational process of the teacher training study program "English Language and Literature. World Literature" offered by the Department of English Philology of the Faculty of Foreign Philology of Uzhhorod National University (Ukraine). Secondly, the survey helps explore the students' learning styles and preferences based on their personal experiences. Thirdly, it examines the prospects for implementing distance language learning in the academic landscape.

Research methodology and participants

A special questionnaire was developed comprising ten questions. The questionnaire was administered to the Bachelor students of the Faculty of Foreign Philology of Uzhhorod National University in electronic format. The sample of this study includes 45 respondents who participated in the questionnaire survey. All the participants were females. They are Ukrainians by nationality. Data analysis was performed, and results were presented in terms of percentages. The qualitative analysis seems quite effective since it allows getting accurate figures and deeper insights into the issues in question.

Research results and discussion

This study explored how students respond to being exposed to the unexpected transition to distance EFL learning in conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. An attempt to address the research problem necessitated finding out about: 1) information and communications technology (hereinafter – ICT) infrastructure and modes used in EFL distance learning; 2) the advantages of delivering foreign language classes in emergency distance mode, and 3) its disadvantages. To achieve this goal, the questionnaire was designed for students to voice their experiences after a sudden transition to a different EFL learning modality.

The first question in the questionnaire concerned the mode the instructors use to deliver online EFL classes. 53% of the respondents indicated that teachers conduct their classes in synchronous mode. However, 47% reflected that they encountered a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous modes while learning a foreign language. None of the students pointed out purely asynchronous mode to be constantly implemented in the EFL learning setting. Thus, the students are primarily placed in the conditions of real-time communication, being assigned a definite function.

The survey results for the second question are shown in Fig. 1. A total satisfaction rate of distance EFL learning in emergencies was 53,3%. Two groups of respondents (40%) were

partially and generally satisfied yet had minor complaints. These results from the observation will yield further improvements in didactic practices and learning experience.

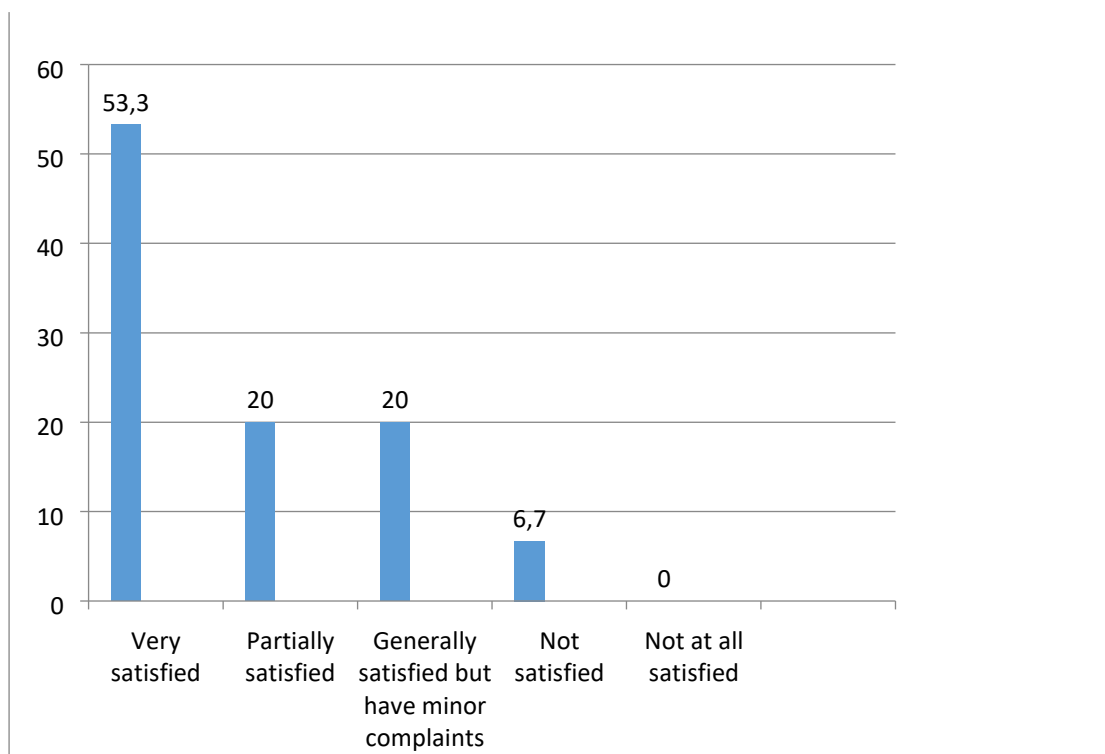


Figure 1 Satisfaction rates of distance EFL learning in emergencies

The overwhelming prevalence of distance education has brought about a rise in digital tools available for quality and authentic teaching and learning in a virtual environment. However, the right choice of modern updated technology often shadows well-known, established practices of face-to-face EFL courses. The survey results revealed that despite the rapid transition to online learning, none of the students were left without the required technology tools. 51,8% used personal computers and laptops to access online classes, 44,4% worked on their smartphones, whereas 7,4% exploited tablets.

Question 4 in the questionnaire focused on the benefits the distance learning model has brought into the EFL classroom. The students were asked to tick all the options they agreed with. According to the results, the most significant advantages of distance EFL learning are varied learning styles, interactive and student-oriented approaches, fine-tuning the learning pace, and the possibility of being provided with differentiated instruction. Regarding the answers above, we can assume that flexibility played a vital role in the EFL learning process.

Though distance foreign language learning has a plethora of advantages, it is not devoid of disadvantages. Responding to Question 5, the students were asked to tick the option(s) they considered to be an obstacle to distance learning implementation in the EFL classroom. The two most significant issues raised by the distance learning experience are the absence and instability of the Internet connection (73,3%) and an increased time spent on learning (33,3%). In addition, 20% of the respondents echoed that they experienced extra cognitive load and were exposed to extraneous work that was conceptually aligned with the required task. 13,3% highlighted that the teachers managed to simulate “living” EFL classroom situations online for students to overcome pressing problems. The equal number of students (6,7%) pointed to the lack of computer literacy skills in achieving the desired learning outcomes and decreased interaction and succinct communication with instructors.

There are diverse communication platforms that turned out to be effective in EFL learning and summative assessment (Fig. 2). All the students encountered that video conferencing helped them progress through their language learning the most. In order not to leave any “gaps” in students’ learning activity and accumulate linguistic knowledge without disruption, MyEnglishLab (93,3%) and Google Classroom (87,6%) served as indispensable virtual tools. However, messengers (6,7%) were not opted to fulfill vital functions in EFL learning pedagogy.

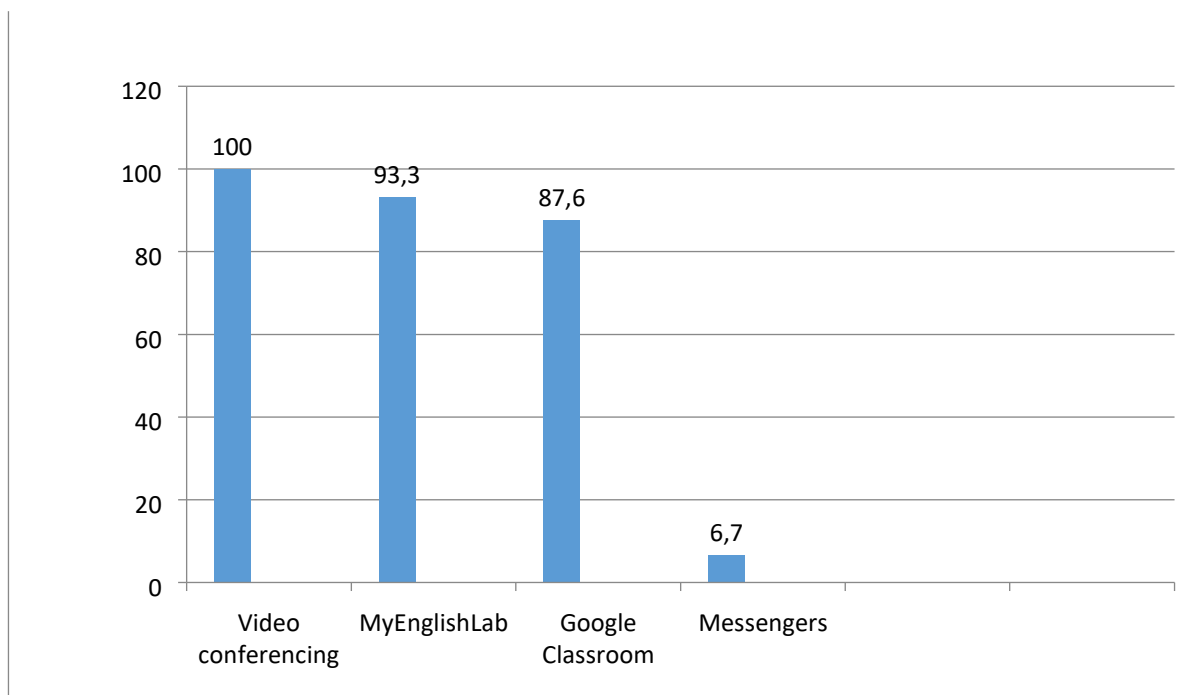


Figure 2 Communication platforms used by the teachers during EFL distance learning

The issue of assessment in remote mode is quite acute. Admittedly, many students (46,7%) reflected that assessment strategies adopted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine had not changed. 40% of the respondents witnessed instances of alternation in conducting assessments, whereas 13,3% did not wish to voice their views on the issue and remained undecided.

Although distance education has grown substantially in volume over the past three years and most notably since the COVID-19 quarantine, its role in shaping accessible EFL learning has been a subject of an ongoing debate. The current situation in Ukraine has promoted its importance in the emergency teaching and learning space. Nevertheless, most of the respondents (60%) see distance learning elements as an auxiliary learning method. The rest would like it to be implemented as the primary method of language skills acquisition. The results support the assumption that distance learning is not equally efficient, and the students are not equitably proactively engaged in the learning process.

Question 9 concerned the future engagement of distance learning in curricular and cocurricular settings. 53,3% of the respondents would like the elements of distance learning to be implemented partially in the educational process in the future, 40% would agree to use it, whereas 6,7 % are unsure about its use in the future. In this respect, the instructors aim to expand on the hastily implemented models during the emergency transition to remote instruction.

As to the aspects hindering a full-scale impactful implementation of distance learning in the EFL classroom, the students pinpointed an unstable Internet connection (46,7%), rapid fatigue due to prolonged work in front of a computer (20%), loads of assignments (18,3%) and lack of necessary equipment (15%). To prepare the students for the growing demands of digitalization, the instructors should leverage to facilitate greater student mobility and flexibility.

The results of this research and the responses of the EFL students involved in it support the idea that the necessary and optimal conditions must be created for impactful and authentic distance language learning in higher education establishments. When questioned, most students admitted that they consider the distance learning model quite feasible due to its many benefits in the EFL learning setting. However, its practices do not seem to have been perfectly coordinated so far due to the absence of a single common strategy or model for executing this learning mode.

Conclusion

The paper examined the students' experience of the unforeseen transition to distance language learning as the only option to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. The survey questions guiding this research address to report the benefits and hindrances of delivering impactful online language courses during lockdown and military conflicts. The results illustrated how distance language learning exposed a lack of information technology infrastructure and students' engagement while offering flexibility and increased teacherlearner-content interaction.

The qualitative data showed a trend of increasing satisfaction with online courses. Despite the overall favourable attitude towards distance language learning displayed by most EFL students, 60% of the respondents consider it an auxiliary learning method in the future, giving their preferences to a more conventional educational environment. Nevertheless, 86,7% are convinced of the necessity to acquire skills in using distance learning technologies in their future professional activities. The survey results demonstrate that distance learning has many advantages for EFL learning, enabling better structuring of teaching practices to adjust to students' learning styles and increasing their social presence. Many of the student respondents in our study revealed the advantage of flexibility given by digital and distance learning, be it in a synchronous or asynchronous mode. However, an unstable Internet connection (46,7%) and rapid fatigue due to prolonged work in front of a computer (20%) are the aspects that negatively affect the organization of full-scale distance learning.

Based on the results of the current study, it would be interesting to explore in-depth the impact of emergency distance teaching on achieving learning outcomes related to theoretical and practical aspects of foreign language acquisition.

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Integration of Displaced Students into the Education System: Glimpses from Turkey and Slovakia

Sevda Kubilay, Eva Leláková

Abstract

This research aims to reveal the policies followed by Turkey and Slovakia in integrating displaced children into the education system. For this purpose, the phenomenon of mass migration, which is the common experience of both countries, is discussed. The humanitarian crises in Syria and Ukraine have caused many people to migrate to neighboring countries. Turkey and Slovakia have been directly affected by these crises and have taken actions to ensure that displaced children and individuals have access to education. In the study, these actions were examined comparatively.

Keywords: displaced children, humanitarian crisis, integration policies, education of refugees

Introduction

The migration phenomenon, which dates back to the oldest days of humanity, still has an intense impact on the world. Migration is a social movement as well as physical displacement, so it affects host countries as well as immigrants. It has socio-economic and cultural consequences for host countries (Han, 2010). Throughout the history, millions of people around the world have been forced to leave their homeland because of international hostility, civil war, violence and cruelty. As a matter of fact, the proportion of individuals who have been subjected to forced migration today is undeniable. As of 2021, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide is 89.3 million and an estimated 36.5 million (41%) of the forcibly displaced people are children below the age of 18 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021).

Children are the ones most affected by migration and forced displacement in the world. International human rights law guarantees education for all without discrimination. This principle of non-discrimination extends to all persons residing in state territory regardless of their legal status (Coomans, 2018). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children who are refugees or asylum-seekers should be entitled to all rights which are expressed in the Convention (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 1989).

Literature review

The region that has witnessed staggering forced migration waves in recent years has been the Middle East. A political movement, which started in North Africa in 2010, affected the close geography in a chained manner. This wave, expressed as the 'Arab Spring', extended to the crisis in Syria (Ekici & Tuncel, 2015). Due to the civil war in Syria, there has been an intensive migration from Syria to neighboring countries since 2011; as a result, 5.684.148 individuals had to migrate to neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2019).

Education and training services came to a halt with conflicts and civil war in Syria, even some school buildings were used as headquarters and were subjected to devastating attacks. Many young people of education age were actively involved in conflicts and their educational life was ended (Seydi, 2013). It is known that in Syria where the education services were interrupted by the war, had previously been carried out in a healthy way (Emin,

2016). The schooling rate of primary school was 99% and that of secondary school was 82% before the war. However, during the civil war 4 thousand schools were attacked and became unusable (Coşkun, 2018). The number of Syrian children and adolescents out of school reached approximately 1.75 million due to all these problems. In addition, 1.35 million children were at risk of drop-out (UNICEF, 2018).

Another humanitarian crisis, which has been experienced recently, is Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The invasion has resulted in Russian forces attacking major cities and infrastructure in Ukraine. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) verified 5,024 deaths of civilians in Ukraine during the war as of July 11 (Statista Research Department, 2022). The war in Ukraine has resulted in more than 6 million Ukrainians fleeing to neighboring countries. This includes nearly 665,000 students and over 25,000 educators. Currently, around 86% of schools in Ukraine have 'officially' resumed classes (following short-term closures after the invasion), but almost exclusively via online/distance modalities. There are various online schooling initiatives to maintain access to education during the war, both for students within Ukraine and refugee students outside Ukraine, though there are significant gaps in coverage (The World Bank, 2022).

Research results

This study aims to reveal educational regulations and implementations have been done in Turkey and Slovakia to integrate displaced children into their educational systems. The two specific cases that have affected Turkey and Slovakia are examined in the research: The civil war in Syria that started in 2011 and continued far too long than expected; the Russian aggression against Ukraine that started on the 24th of February 2022 and it is still going on. These two unfortunate cases caused mass migration, as a result, millions of people have been displaced. Turkey and Slovakia as neighboring countries have hosted a lot of displaced people and have taken legal and humanitarian actions to integrate displaced children into their education systems. This research is based on data obtained from literature review, document analysis, and statistics from official institutions or governmental agencies.

The Case in Slovakia

The escalation of conflict in Ukraine has caused civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure, forcing people to flee their homes seeking safety, protection and assistance. Millions of refugees from Ukraine have crossed borders into neighboring countries and more than 5.6 million individual refugees recorded across Europe (UNHCR, 2022).

The European Union's response to the emergency was fast and solution-oriented. On the 4th of March, the EU ministers agreed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for the first time since its adoption in 2001. Ukrainian refugees were granted an immediate protection status (Rasche, 2022). The status grants Ukrainian people the right to work and to housing, as well as to education for minors. Family reunification is also possible for spouses. A 'Solidarity Platform' has been set up by the Commission with a view to coordinate the operational response among the Member States. The immediate response from neighboring countries, including Slovakia, has been predominantly welcoming due to the geographic proximity of the war, close cultural links, and ethnic ties.

Access to Education

An estimated 429 705 Ukrainian refugees, mainly women and children, entered Slovakia between the dates of 24th February and 18th May (World Health Organisation

[WHO], 2022). The children of Ukrainian citizens who have applied for temporary protection or asylum are entitled to free education in Slovakia. To facilitate the schooling and integration of the displaced children, *an adaptation coordinator and an interpreter* are appointed in schools. This applies to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Children are placed in the appropriate grade according to their age, level of previous education and ability to speak the Slovak language.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic created a comprehensive web page to facilitate educational issues for Ukrainian students and parents (<https://ukrajina.minedu.sk>). This web page gives information about available capacities in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in Slovakia together with their contact details. It also provides:

- Guidelines for parents about school enrollment and assessment procedures,
- Language courses for both adults and students,
- Guidelines for teachers about the assessment and methodical recommendation,
- Information about higher education opportunities,
- Job opportunities for Ukrainian teachers,
- Webinars and supporting materials to facilitate students' adaptation.

An intervention team is formed to implement activities for the adaptation and socialization of children and to provide counseling for children, students, teachers and parents. Experienced psychologists, special educators and social educators have taken part in the team.

Distance Learning Opportunities

There are also distance education opportunities for families who plan to return to Ukraine, so students can participate in distance education within the Ukrainian education system. With distance education opportunities, it is aimed that the education life of students will not be interrupted by forced migration and students will easily adapt to the system when they return to formal education.

The main educational platform containing interactive materials such as videos, visuals, assignments, and exercises that are based on the official Ukrainian curriculum is "All-Ukrainian School Online" (<https://lms.e-school.net.ua>). Another online learning platform that was created by the company of Soficreo is "School to Go online". It offers distance learning classes led by Ukrainian teachers (<http://www.schooltogo.online/>). The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has also been carrying out online courses for Ukrainian students, including links to various teaching and learning materials and videos.

Times of crisis reveal how important distance education is to keep students in education and provide educational content regardless of time and place.

Higher Education Opportunities

Ukrainian students can follow either non-degree programs or full-degree studies. The non-degree study is available for the ones who have already started their study at a Ukrainian university and want to continue collecting ECTS credits for individual subjects. This option makes it possible for students to continue their degree program at the home university once they return to Ukraine. They will also be able to get their credits recognized at the home university.

The second option is following a full-degree study, which allows persons with temporary protection access to admission to higher education for the bachelor-level programs. The right to follow a full-degree program is ensured with the Higher Education Act (Slovak Academic Information Agency [SAIA], 2022).

The Case in Turkey

The civil war in Syria caused mass migration movement to neighboring countries and more than 5 million Syrian citizens were displaced. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, currently, Turkey hosts 3.648.983 Syrian and the number of children under 18 is nearly 1.7 million.

In the beginning, the idea that the civil war would end soon and that the Syrian people would return to their country, however this period was prolonged and with the continuation of the civil war permanent solutions were tried to be found (Kızıl & Dönmez, 2017). Syrian citizens were considered and called as “guests” in Turkey for a while and they kept their lives in temporary shelters. However, as time passed, needs such as accommodation, education, and employment emerged and Turkey had to legally recognize Syrian immigrants. In 2013, with the Law on Foreigners and International Protection Syrian individuals have been given temporary protection status. The provisions on international protection have been stipulated on Law compliance with EU *acquis* and human rights standards. Temporary protection which is provided in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons gained a legal basis first time in Turkey.

Access to Education

The first attempt to educate Syrian children was carried out by volunteer Syrian teachers in temporary shelter centers. The training activities that started at the shelter centers were carried out with the Arabic curriculum. The idea behind these trainings was that the Syrians would return to their countries and the aim of the training was to enable the students to continue their education without interruption (Emin, 2016). With the increase in the number of Syrians in Turkey, the Syrian population has increased in different cities of Turkey. It was no longer enough to provide education in the shelter camps and the Syrians were slowly settling in Turkey. The number of Syrians living in the camps gradually decreased, and the Syrians began to make a life for themselves in different cities of Turkey. In such a situation, the education of Syrian students was carried out through three different paths: Temporary training centers (GEM), private schools financed by Syrians and Turkish public schools.

Temporary Training Centers (GEM): The GEMs are the institutions where the Arabic curriculum is taught by mostly Syrian educators. These centers are opened after taking the approval of the governorship and the National Education Directorates. Admission and enrollment, placement tests are carried out by the commissions formed by the Ministry of National Education. In 2017, there were 338 GEMs throughout the country, however GEMs have been gradually abolished after the education policy aimed to integrate Syrian students into public schools (MoNE, General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2019).

Private Schools: These are the schools sponsored by Syrian individuals. In these schools, a revised Syrian curriculum is taught but they are not very popular among Syrian families. They are mostly located in big cities like Istanbul and Gaziantep in which the Syrian population is also higher (Emin, 2016).

Public Schools: With the circular numbered 2014/21 on Education Services for Foreigners, Syrian children have been given the opportunity to benefit from all kinds of educational services together with their Turkish peers (Emin, 2016). After this decision, the number of Syrian students enrolled in public schools increased rapidly. Today, almost all Syrian students are educated in public schools. In these schools, they receive education in accordance with the Turkish curriculum, with a priority of Turkish literacy skills.

Non-formal Education Opportunities

Adopting an inclusive education policy, Turkey has made it possible for Syrian students to attend public schools, however language barrier has been the biggest obstacle to the integration policy. The official language in Syria is Arabic and Syrian students speak the Arabic language. Although Turkish and Arabic have a few common words, they have different structures and alphabets. It is not easy for Syrian students to acquire Turkish literacy skills because they have to learn the Roman alphabet first and then grammar and vocabulary. To facilitate the adaptation process, public schools that have a significant number of Syrian students have given Turkish literacy courses for both students and parents after school or at weekends.

After the integration policy adopted, it was seen that Syrian students who attend public schools have difficulties in following the curriculum. To support students, back-up training has been given after school by their teachers. Also at schools, counseling services have been provided by psychological counselors.

Vocational courses have been organized for adults and young people out of school at public education centers under the control of the Ministry of National Education.

Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES)

PIKTES is a European Union-funded project implemented by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey. The project started in 2016 and contributed a lot to promote the integration of Syrian students. Main activities carried out within the scope of PIKTES are:

- Turkish and Arabic language courses for Syrian children and parents,
- Catch-up training for Syrian children out of school,
- Back-up training for children in public schools,
- Social integration activities,
- Providing scholarships, school transportation and stationery for Syrian students,
- Informing Syrian families about the education system,
- Psycho-social support,
- Developing an examination system for Syrian students' language proficiency and academic performance (<http://www.piktes.gov.tr>).

Higher Education Opportunities

Some regulations have been made by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) for students who had to leave their university education unfinished and come to Turkey due to the crisis in Syria. These students were granted the right to enroll in universities located in 7 provinces close to the border. However, students will be able to attend classes with "special student" status. Although this regulation was limited to the 2012-2013 academic year, it was prolonged on the continuation of the war.

In addition to this opportunity provided by the Council of Higher Education, Syrian refugees, like every foreign student, have the right to study at a higher education institution in Turkey by taking the Foreign Student Examination (YÖS). Syrian students are given the same rights as other foreign students (Güngör & Soysal, 2021).

According to the data from the Council of Higher Education, the number of Syrian refugee students at associate, undergraduate, graduate and doctorate levels has reached 37,236 as of 2020.

Discussion

In this study, we aimed to examine how Turkey and Slovakia have responded to the intergration issue of displaced children. It is evident that Turkey and Slovakia have taken similar initiatives to integrate displaced children. However, Slovakia has started the process in a faster and more organized way due to the common policies of the EU. In Turkey, the educational integration process was implemented after some legislative regulations because Turkey was faced with mass migration for the first time and there was an expectation that the civil war would end soon. The fact that there were different types of educational institutions in the beginning and some of them taught the Arabic language and Syrian curriculum may have delayed the integration process. Although there is religious unity between Syria and Turkey, these two communities are quite different from each other in terms of culture and language. In comparison to Turkey's case, similarities between the Slovak language and Ukrainian language and common ethnic origin between the two nations can make integration much easier.

What makes the education of displaced children so important for two nations is the need to create a healthy integration process. Participation in education functions as a catalyst for refugees to adapt socially, culturally and psychologically to the target culture or society because only through education, the language and culture of the target society can be acquired (Güngör & Soysal, 2021). The struggle for existence as an individual can be realized as a result of an appropriate and qualified education and then individuals can contribute to economic and social life effectively.

Conclusion

The research indicated that there are similarities in terms of policies and practices followed in Turkey and Slovakia. In both countries, serious steps have been taken especially in terms of access to basic education. Inclusion in the education system helps displaced children to adapt to target culture. Considering that schools are a small reflection of society, it is important for displaced children to acquire social life norms and cultural values in the school environment. Education not only ensures the academic, mental and social development of individuals, but also prevents them from committing crimes and enables them to comply with the social rules. An important variable affecting the policies of countries in mass migrations is the length of stay of the immigrant population in the country. Depending on this variable, the education of Syrian children in Turkey was initially carried out based on the Arabic curriculum, but with the prolongation of the war, Syrian students were allowed to enroll in public schools. However, this process is carried out simultaneously in Slovakia, while the Ukrainian curriculum is given by distance education, it has been possible for Ukrainian children to attend public schools. In terms of higher education opportunities, in both countries displaced young people are provided with part-time and full-time enrollment opportunities. Inclusive approach in higher education institutions is ensured with national or international acts.

Comprehensive migration policies play a crucial role in the formation of a peaceful and prosperous society. As it is said, every humanitarian crisis is also an education crisis, so countries should manage the integration process well. Every individual matters and everyone can contribute to society. In order not to create a lost generation, governments and educators should do their best to integrate individuals into society.

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Classroom Projects and eTwinning

Caroline Ann Daněk Kyzek, M.A.

Abstract

Since 2020, it has been inevitable that we teach online. We have all had to make alterations and adjustments in our teaching, testing and grading, in order to fulfill online educational requirements. Classroom activities have had to be modified. This is why, an online platform like eTwinning, was an advantageous tool for teachers and students alike. eTwinning is an enterprise of the European Commission that aims to inspire European schools to cooperate together using Information and Communication Technologies by providing the essential setup to do so. In the first part of the paper, I will explain what exactly eTwinning is, its benefits, and why it provides a safe environment for schools to collaborate. I will also explain the significance of utilizing online technology for learning and collaboration. The final part will involve experience in four particular projects that I have worked on and why they are useful for the actual classes in which they were implemented. These projects were called *Debating and Dealing with Social and Current Topics in 2020's World*, *Slovakia and Spain Discussing Current Affairs*, *Intercultural Dialogue Between 3 European Universities*, and *Our School Radio Station*. In the paper I will go over each project in order to illustrate the various possibilities that eTwinning can have for teachers who want to incorporate projects and activities for students online.

Keywords: eTwinning, classroom activities, collaboration, online learning.

Introduction

As our society becomes more technologically advanced, so does our teaching and learning. In the past few decades, we have seen that communication has progressed extensively by use of various applications such as Skype, Facebook messenger, and WhatsApp to just name a few. The same is true for the classroom. I recall days when our classrooms involved copying notes from the chalkboard scribbles of our teachers and waiting for the television to arrive in the classroom whenever the teacher wanted to show a movie. Today, classrooms are provided with the technology to present information with PowerPoint presentations and display videos with the click of a button. It comes as no surprise that technology has immensely helped with the development of classroom activities. Now, a teacher isn't limited to activities within the classroom, but has the possibility to incorporate collaboration among students from different schools, even ones that are abroad. eTwinning, which has launched in 2005, has since then become a wide used platform for online collaborative projects and activities in schools throughout Europe. As of 2021, this free online educational community has more than 946,000 registered users, most of whom are teachers at every school level, from pre-school to university education. In addition, eTwinning is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. (Mouratoglou et al., 2021, p. 7) Another plus, is that the platform is safe to use, as you can only gain access from the approval of the support team. Once, set up, the platform is simple: "Registered teachers have access to a restricted area called eTwinning Live, which is the individual teacher's interface with the community: it enables users to find partners, interact, collaborate in projects and participate in professional development activities" (Licht et al, 2019, p. 4). In this article, I will discuss the advantages of eTwinning and go over the projects that I have incorporated as classroom activities.

Literature review

When analysing different articles about online projects and eTwinning, there are two major groupings to anticipate. First and foremost, it is significant to find out information specifically about eTwinning and the possible projects and benefits. Then, there are articles that are not particularly about eTwinning, but they are related to online learning or collaboration. Although generalized, this information is also helpful because we can utilize these online experiences and benefits to fit the needs of the eTwinning community. The next group involves articles written before vs. after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is important to consider, because digital classroom activities and collaboration have not only become a bonus, but a necessity. It changed the way we instruct and learn, since we had to rapidly become acclimated to the internet for all facets of teaching. According to David Shrier, “The COVID-19 pandemic forced upon the \$7 trillion global industry a new perspective. Instead of optional ‘extras’ around online, it now became the only way to deliver instruction. In the words of one top business school dean, digital went for ‘nice to have’ to ‘core competency’ in a matter of months” (Shrier, 2021, p. 70). Therefore, we can see how significant online learning became during the pandemic, and why utilizing an online platform like eTwinning is a useful tool to facilitate classroom discussion and activities.

Before the pandemic, it was also significant to utilize technology as a way of collaborating with other countries. Robert O’Dowd discusses online trends and telecollaboration, which is how we were able to successfully interconnect with others: “Telecollaboration also places the emphasis of the exchanges on developing cultural awareness and other aspects of intercultural communicative competence, in addition to developing linguistic competence” (O’Dowd, 2016, p. 293). Therefore, classroom learning is also enhanced by this type of collaboration. Linguistic skills of students are strengthened by communicating with students from other schools and at the same time they develop cultural awareness by actively participating in discussions with people from different countries. Therefore, we see how vital online learning has always been, but after the pandemic it was necessary to accelerate this mode of learning.

In relation to eTwinning, Rose-anne Camilleri discusses the significance of intercultural awareness in a study where the purpose was to help recognize the benefits and challenges of intercultural collaboration from the perspectives of teachers. As a benefit, she says that students are motivated since they are enthusiastic about using technology to share and collaborate with other students. They are able to apply digital skills to various areas in education (Camilleri, 2016, p. 9). However, a challenge is the support that the teacher receives: “Teachers lack technical support, proper infrastructure and training in ICT skills to manage projects. It is also evident that many teachers refrain from participating in eTwinning projects because it is not part of the curriculum” (p. 9). Having technical support is vital for the success of eTwinning, and therefore we can safely say that since then, there has been an increase of this type of support considering that it is now obligatory for teachers to utilize technology in teaching. With the proper tools, we can create intercultural awareness and communication in schools, and eTwinning is a great platform to do so.

Acar and Peker also discuss the advantages of teachers using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) through eTwinning. They draw upon Camilleri’s research, but also focus on the purposes of teachers for using the eTwinning platform. On a table of various purposes, the highest number was in “to make the learning-teaching process more effective” and “professional development” (Acar & Peker, 2021, p. 96). Therefore, eTwinning is a way to facilitate online learning as well as create new contacts by collaborating with different countries. The projects allowed for teachers to improve communication skills themselves, as well as exchange ideas and share knowledge with their

colleagues (p. 100). “Along with these, several teachers stated that the platform contributes to their personal development in terms of the sense of belonging to the community, productivity, and leadership-respectability (Acar & Peker, 2021, pp. 100-101). Therefore, we see the benefits of eTwinning not only for the students, but for the teachers as well.

Research results

In terms of results, tables or data will not be presented as statistics are irrelevant in this article. Rather, I will explain the types of projects that were utilized and how they enhanced classroom productivity. All of these projects were for classes called Developing Communicative Competence, which is taught for four semesters at the bachelor’s level and three semesters at the master’s level. The purpose of these classes is to develop communication among students by enriching them in all five major skills: vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and speaking. The goal of the projects hence, was to enhance the communication of the students by collaborating and interacting with students from different universities.

The first project, called *Debating and Dealing with Social and Current Topics in 2020's World*, took place during the summer semester of the 2019/2020 academic year. My students were first year master’s students who were collaborating with a university classroom in Spain. The objectives of the project were for students to be able to work through TwinSpace (an eTwinning platform), express their justified opinions in a polite manner, foster participation through ICT, and deal with current social problems and issues. These issues included government control, alternative medicine, arts, history in the movies, and addictions, which were all topics from the book *New English File: Advanced*. Therefore, the students were able to practice communicating about the topics that would later appear in their examinations. The second project occurred the following semester (the winter semester of the 2020/2021 academic year) and involved the same Spanish university, but this time we also included another Slovak university. The project was called *Slovakia and Spain Discussing Current Affairs*, and the setup was very similar to the previous project. The students were discussing various topics, and there were three major assignments: an introduction, a discussion on a topic, and a final farewell. The students had to post videos where they introduced themselves and then had to make comments on each other’s posts. In the second assignment, they were put in mixed groups, in which each group was given a topic and had to post a video about it. They were graded not only in how well they discussed the topic, but how they responded to the videos of other groups.

During the winter semester of the 2021/2022 academic year, my students (each semester it was always a different group of students) participated in the project *Intercultural Dialogue Between 3 European Universities*. This time, having had some experience, I was able to be the creator of the project. We worked with two universities, one from Italy and one from North Macedonia. The students were put into twelve groups, in which each group was assigned a particular topic and had members of each university. The setup was similar to the previous projects, involving three assignments and incorporating discussion topics from our Developing Communicative Competence classes. The students were assessed on the videos that they posted as well as the feedback and comments they gave on other students’ posts. The fourth project, which was the most recent semester (the summer semester of the 2021/2022 academic year) worked somewhat different from the rest. Once again we worked with Spain, but this time the Spanish students were involved in creating podcasts that they presented to children at schools. Also, for the first time I chose one of our bachelor level classes, as our students from the master’s level have already been involved in the previous project. In this

project, *Our School Radio Station*, the first task that my students needed to do was introduce themselves and post a logo that they felt represented the project. The students in Spain created the podcasts and then shared them with us, so that we can listen and then give them comments and feedback which was the final assignment.

Discussion

In the past, usually homework by way of writing assignments was utilized in these Developing Communicative Competence classes. Although developing writing is important, sometimes grading these assignments was exhausting. The students sometimes missed the point and I had to painstakingly check to see that no plagiarism was utilized. When the assignment was to partake in the activities by utilizing the eTwinning platform though, the students were actively engaged. Through the videos I was able to learn things from students that I didn't know before, and see them come alive. Grading the assignments for more enjoyable as I was able to watch videos and read comments.

Not only does eTwinning make grading more enjoyable, but it also is an excellent way to gain knowledge in various pedagogical methods and enhance professional development. Acar and Peker discuss the importance of eTwinning projects for teachers: "Thanks to eTwinning projects and learning activities on the platform, teachers gain pedagogy and technology knowledge and innovative perspectives. This contributes greatly to their professional development and the learning journey of teachers never ends" (p. 101). We as teachers are always learning new methods and techniques to enhance our pedagogical output. This not only simplifies the teaching process, but allows to us to connect to students and other teachers more easily. Communication is the key to professional development. We can say the same for the students. Their need to interconnect is very important: "It is not only learning technology for its own sake but is learning in a context. The students want to communicate, send photographs and create videos and presentations to share with other countries, they want to share knowledge, customs and traditions and so they need to use technology for this purpose" (Camilleri, 2016, p. 8). Therefore, eTwinning is important for the teaching and learning processes for both teachers and students.

Another noticeable point, is the fact that the first project took place during the first semester after being hit by the pandemic. When COVID-19 came in the middle of the semester, in March 2020, we had to close down the schools and we were all scrambling, figuring out how we were going to effectively teach and communicate with students, and especially in what manner now we were going to examine them. Luckily, because everything related to the project had already been set up on the eTwinning portal, the students had no trouble to actively continue doing what they already had been doing.

The significance of utilizing eTwinning during the pandemic is seen in a study in Turkey, by elementary school teacher Yavaş and teachers from Usak University, Delen and Özüdoğru. Their main goal "was to understand how the pandemic influenced activity planning, design process, teacher connections, and in-class interactions from the teachers' viewpoint" (Delen et al., 2021, p. 188). They compared two projects, one which was conducted before the pandemic and one which was conducted after. In the end, they found that there weren't many significant differences except that "the pandemic made the social aspect of the design process difficult to handle" (p. 199). Aspects such as activity planning and design process stayed the same, but the connections and interactions were more difficult. This demonstrates that of course there will always be areas that are hindered by online learning, but there are also areas where a teacher can work just as effectively online as in a

classroom. The eTwinning platform makes it simple to create classroom activities in a situation such as the pandemic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, eTwinning is a wonderful tool to utilize for online learning. As we become more technologically advanced, our teaching and learning methods also progress. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was impossible to facilitate classroom activities face to face, these activities had to be on a virtual platform. Therefore, eTwinning was a productive way to incorporate classroom activities and keep the students engaged. By incorporating collaboration among students from universities throughout Europe, students were able to improve on communication skills that were vital for their curriculum. It also opened up their cultural awareness and increased their ability to facilitate active discussions. As a teacher, I was able to assess the students in a productive way. Since eTwinning is simple to use, safe, and used by teachers and students from every grade level, there is no doubt that it was be used even more in the future.

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