ENGLISH for a Change

Edited by
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English for a Change

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IATEFL-Hungary,
Budapest, 2016

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Kiadó: IATEFL-Hungary
Budapest, 2016

ISBN 978-963-12-5850-9

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From the President

We are immensely proud of the second compilation of papers given at IATEFL-Hungary conferences. The first selection of peer-reviewed papers was published after the 23rd conference, and we really hoped we would be able do it again and again and again. All the volunteers and members of our association aim at offering various opportunities for professional development and high quality events. Since the 23rd conference, we have met regularly at the Creative Café afternoons; the incredibly popular Országh competition was organised for the third time with a record number of competing teams; we celebrated William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens; we offered training for teachers of language learners with dyslexia; and invited all our members and friends to sing along with us in our choir, resulting in an extraordinary Christmas performance at the Gödöllő Castle. This publication is yet another opportunity for all of us to think, share, discuss and change.

We strongly believe that members of our association are dedicated teachers of English, who love their profession and are ready to step out of their every-day routine for self-development. We hope to offer the opportunity for speakers to publish their work again after our Jubilee conference in Budapest.

I am very grateful to everyone who made the publication of the selection of papers from the 24th annual IATEFL-Hungary conference possible. In particular, Éva Illés and Jasmina Sazdovska made all the efforts to produce a highly professional compilation of articles again that we hope will be relevant and useful not only for educational researchers, but also for practising language teachers. Thanks are due to all the contributors as well for their hard work to share their presentations in this journal.

I wish you all a very pleasant read.

Nóra Németh

Introduction

This is the second of what we hope will be a regular series of publications from IATEFL-Hungary, based on its annual conferences. We are very glad to follow up on our first undertaking, *From Trends to Plans,* which is available on the IATEFL-Hungary website.

The current volume contains six papers presented at the 24th IATEFL-Hungary Conference, held in Veszprém from 3rd to 5th October, 2014. The theme of the conference was *English for a Change* and the papers reflect the changing context of English language use and teaching. Three of the six papers include, among other things, a discussion of global issues such as the implications of the worldwide spread of English for the teaching of the language. They deal with the relevance of teaching grammar, idioms and proverbs as well as the communities in which learners use English. Other topics in the compilation range from language testing and bilingual education in Hungary to teacher reflection and problem solving.

On this occasion, we have decided to include both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed papers and hope that this will continue in the future in order to encourage a more diverse group of authors.

We would once again like to thank Frank Prescott for his very efficient, yet thorough proofreading of the manuscript. We are also thankful to our wonderful colleagues who reviewed the papers: Réka Benczes, Katalin Brózik-Piniel, Kata Csizér, Dorottya Holló, Tamás Eitler, Krisztina Károly, Edit Kontra, Ádám Nádasdy, Marianne Nikolov and Marie-Luise Pitzl.

Éva Illés and Jasmina Sazdovska

A comparison of experienced and beginner English teachers' problem solving skills in Hungary

Helen Sherwin

Introduction

During the last 40 years, reflective practice and learning to teach by critically examining one's practice has received much support in teacher education. I think that reflective thinking is important but find it a difficult skill to foster with the student teachers I work with, who tend to describe rather than analyse practice and experience difficulties solving teaching problems. Although research into reflective practice is wide-ranging and diverse, one neglected area is teacher cognition, more specifically the thinking skills teachers use to process information when reflecting (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; McAlpine, Weston, Beauchamp, Wiseman, & Beauchamp, 1999; Ixer, 1999). The purpose of this study is to investigate one important component of reflective thinking, the skill of problem solving (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983) and explores the problem solving capability of experienced and beginner English teachers to pinpoint aspects of beginner teacher thinking that require attention during teacher training. This is important because reflective thinking is a non-visible (Field, 2000) complex cognitive skill (Tomlinson, 1999) and student teachers may struggle to recognise what they are doing, are not doing and should be doing in order to reflect effectively. Teacher educators must therefore be explicit about what effective reflection consists of, to make it accessible. I first review the literature that examines problem solving, then outline research methodology. Next I present one of the study's findings, that experienced teachers perceive problems in principled ways, the practical applications of which are discussed in the final section.

Problem solving

Mayer (1996) defines problem solving as a cognitive activity where, in a perplexing situation, a practitioner tries to reach a goal for which initially there is no clear solution. Central to Mayer's model is the notion of problem space, which consists of the following: a "given state" (Mayer, 1996, p.550), the problem's starting point such as its context, its characteristics and how they interact; the desired goal; the operators that move us from the start to goal state; and obstacles or phenomena that constrain movement through the problem space. Skilled problem solvers first define their problem space before attempting a solution, which they do by working through four problem solving processes. These are

- "representing" (Mayer, 1996, p. 551), which involves constructing a representation, a "mental map" (Davidson & Sternberg, 1998, p. 50) of the problem, to define it to ourselves, and organise our thinking. This is achieved by identifying the given and goal states, operators and obstacles and how these interrelate both with each other and with our existing knowledge

- "planning" (Davidson & Sternberg, 1998, p. 50), calculating how to best achieve a solution
- "executing" (Davidson & Sternberg, 1998, p. 50), carrying out the plan
- "controlling" (Davidson & Sternberg, 1998, p. 50), evaluating our progress towards the goal.

One area related to problem solving that can help us understand this activity more clearly is expertise studies.

Expertise studies

Expertise studies illustrate the nature of thinking by comparing how experts and novices solve problems in various fields and one critical difference is that experts construct far more reliable representations than novices. This is important because links exist between the quality of mental representations and the ability to solve problems effectively (Davidson & Sternberg, 1998; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009). For instance, studies with physicists (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981) political scientists (Voss, Tyler, & Yengo, 1983) and teachers (Swanson, O'Connor, & Cooney, 1990; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1999) revealed how experts spent far longer than novices analysing, defining and understanding their problem situations which allowed for effective solution procedures to apply. Novices quickly attempted to solve problems with quick-fix solutions but did so less effectively.

Studies also illustrated how experts represented problems in principled ways. This refers to whether practitioners understand a problem by attending to its surface features and how a situation appears or its underlying principles, and why the situation appears as it does and what inferences can be drawn (Alexander, 2003). For instance, in Chi et al.'s (1981) study, when physicists had to categorise physics problems according to the approach they would use to solve them, experts grouped problems that shared similar underlying theories (e.g., "Newton's Second Law", Chi et. al., 1981, p. 127), but novices grouped problems that appeared superficially similar (e.g., containing "circular things", Chi et. al., 1981, p. 127). Studies with teachers (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009; Berliner, 1994) revealed how experts solved problems through their underlying causes but novices reacted to the superficial features of the problem. For example, when a class misbehaved, the expert would change seating arrangements to separate friendship pairs, but the novice would discipline the miscreants.

Thus, one hallmark of proficient problem solving, a key constituent of reflective thinking, is the ability to work through the process of "representing" (Mayer, 1996) in deliberative, principled ways.

Research design

This small-scale case study (Yin, 2003) illuminated teachers' problem solving capability through these questions.

a) What differences if any, exist in the problem solving capability of teachers with differing levels of experience?
b) What implications do the findings have for teacher training?

Setting and participants

The study was based at a Hungarian university which offers two types of English teaching programmes. One is a four-year, pre-service Bachelor's degree qualifying trainees to teach Hungarian subjects plus English language to 6–12 year-olds. 30% of the programme is taught in English (language development and English teaching methodology) and 70% in Hungarian. The other programme is a part-time, two-year, in-service course for qualified, practising Hungarian teachers, retraining as English teachers (of 6-12 year-olds). This in-service programme just teaches English language and English methodology. Nine teachers participated in the study, divided into three groups, each containing three teachers.

Beginner teachers
Each beginner had fewer than 21 hours English and Hungarian teaching experience. The group included two final-year student teachers, and one newly-qualified teacher (NQT) of the pre-service programme. Their English was at intermediate B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Beginner teachers are referred to with the pseudonyms of Bettina, Boglárka and Béla (the NQT).

Accomplished beginner teachers
The term accomplished beginners refers to teachers who are skilled and accomplished in one area of expertise but beginner in another (Bransford, Zech, Schwartz, Barron, Vye, & CTGV, 1999, p. 36). Each accomplished beginner was a qualified teacher of Hungarian with over 15 years' teaching experience but fewer than 21 hours' English teaching experience. At the time of the study, two accomplished beginners were attending, and one had recently completed the in-service course. Their English was at intermediate B2 level, their pseudonyms are Amélia, Anikó and Ágnes.

Experienced teachers
This group contained three qualified, experienced teachers with over 15 years teaching experience in English and Hungarian subjects. Their English was at advanced C1/C2 level; their pseudonyms are Edit, Emma and Enikő.

Teachers were invited to participate through an open letter sent to 30 pre-service and in-service programme participants and 10 local schools. The letter detailed my research purpose, the roles of participants and myself, data collection procedures and what would happen to any data obtained. More people volunteered than I needed so selection was made according to how accessible their schools were for data collection purposes and whether the respondent was a beginner, accomplished beginner, experienced teacher. I selected teachers of differing levels of experience to add diversity to the study. I visited eight state primary schools within a 40 kilometre radius of the university.

Data collection

I selected classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and diaries for data collection as ones compatible with my exploration of classroom-based teacher thinking, given that investigating such complex, context-embedded human behaviour is best done through qualitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Data sources consisted of: 18 observational field notes; 27 interview transcripts; 27–36 e-mail diary entries. Data collection proceeded as follows.

Observation 1 – Post-lesson Interview 1 – Diary 1: I observed each teacher's lesson in their regular schools, sitting at the back of the room taking field notes. The teacher and I discussed the lesson within 30 minutes of the lesson end. Then, within 24-48 hours, the teacher wrote a diary about the experience.

Observation 2 – Post-lesson Interview 2 – Diary 2: I repeated the above process with each teacher, 4–8 weeks later.

Follow up Interview: One week after Observation 2 – Interview 2 – Diary 2, each teacher and I had a follow up interview where we discussed the research experience to explore and clarify any issues that had arisen. The teachers wrote one, sometimes two, diary entries 24 hours to one week later.

I combined observations with interviews to combat the well-documented problem of observer bias (Brown & McIntyre, 1995), so the teachers could explain their interpretations of the teaching events I had observed. Interviews were conducted in English and lasted 45–90 minutes. I recorded and transcribed them verbatim, and the teachers received their transcripts. Interviews 1 and 2 unfolded in similar ways, guided by core questions to elicit information linked to my research questions but we freely explored other topics as they arose (see Appendix 1 for interview questions). The interviews fell into two sections of (a) 'Talking about the lesson' where teachers described and analysed what had happened; (b) 'Talking about teaching' where we discussed issues such as how they perceived their own teacher learning.

All teachers wrote e-mail diaries for reasons of convenience. Although teachers were familiar with keeping teaching journals from their own teacher preparation courses, those journals were more records of work than explorations of practice which is what I asked teachers to do. Some teachers were initially unsure of what to write so I provided a sample diary entry and prompt questions for teachers to follow if they wished (see Appendix 2 for diary questions).

I restricted diary writing to one entry after each interview rather than over an extended period of time because I wanted to record and not promote reflective thinking. Diary writing may foster reflective and so problem solving skills (Porter, Goldstein, Leatherman, & Conrad, 1995) if teachers analyse their thinking systematically and long-term (Freeman, 1993; Bailey, 1995) so I did not allow this to happen.

The study was conducted in the teachers' second language of English for two reasons. The teachers themselves wanted this for the extra language practice they felt they could gain by interacting in English with me. Indeed, the beginner/accomplished beginners asked me to correct language mistakes on interview transcripts to improve their proficiency. Also, English was the language of the professional community within which we were operating: several teachers were studying in English; mentor-mentee conversations for English TP occurred in English; teachers taught from UK-published resource books. I wanted the teachers to use the professional discourse as much as possible to support their teacher learning (Freeman, 1993).

However, the second language context did create problems. The teachers had differing English language levels. The experienced teachers (C1/2 level) were more proficient, articulate English speakers than the beginner/accomplished beginners, suggesting perhaps misleadingly that they also solved problems more effectively. Also, sometimes I and the intermediate English speakers misunderstood each other, or sometimes they lacked the professional terminology that could have facilitated their reflections. The linguistic demands of speaking in English were tiring for some as well, which perhaps impeded their ability to discuss their teaching.

To increase the credibility and dependability of data, I implemented methodological triangulation (Cohen & Manion, 1996) and combined observation with diary and interview data to establish an accurate picture of problem solving processes. Diaries and interviews elicited similar information through different means and the former allowed participants time and space to articulate their knowledge without the pressure of having to communicate spontaneously in English. Also, through investigator triangulation (Cohen & Manion, 1996) four colleagues checked my own analyses of the data. Using contextual clues plus our knowledge of how Hungarians express themselves in English, we could clarify any ambiguities.

Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis followed grounded theory procedures (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) so data was broken down into thematic sections then segments then concepts until eventually thematic categories emerged that accommodated all the data. Throughout the analytical process, I cross-checked the data sources, refining the categories accordingly. Colleagues checked my own interpretations and eventually coding systems were agreed upon that accommodated all the data.

Concerning the category of problem solving, in the data I could identify what I term bounded problem solving episodes when the teachers discussed problematic teaching events that had occurred while teaching. To gain insight into their problem solving, I examined how, when discussing each episode, the teachers worked through the following four problem solving processes which have been adapted from Mayer's (1996) model.

Problem solving processes

1. Identifying the problem's most significant features. This answers the question, *What's the problem?* and corresponds to Mayer's "representing" (1996, p. 551).
2. Identifying the problem's cause: *Why did this occur*? This focuses on one part of "representing", of recognising the problem's underlying principles and is included separately to see if experienced teachers (but not beginners) attend to underlying causes as experts do in general.
3. Identifying solutions: *How can I solve it?* This refers to participants selecting and/or carrying out solution strategies. It relates to Mayer's "planning" and "executing" (1996, p. 551).
4. Evaluation: *What comments/reflections do I have on this episode?* This corresponds to Mayer's "controlling" (1996, p. 551) where participants evaluate or comment on some aspect of the problem solving process.

This excerpt illustrates how these processes were applied to the data. Experienced teacher Edit discusses the problem of passive pupils in her lesson:

> There are some pupils not interested in studying English (Problem). English is a bit over their head, they always feel that the others are much better …. (Cause). The only thing that worked with them, is when they create something in groups and they all do different things. Then they are really interested (Solution). However if we do these things all the time then they don't learn the material they should by the end of the school year and it's lots of work for me, too this differentiating … it's work (Evaluation). (Post-lesson Interview 1)

I analysed each problem solving episode that each teacher discussed and tallied the processes the teachers covered thus.

		Identify Problem	**Identify Cause**	**Identify Solution**	**Evaluation**
Experienced teacher Edit	Interview 1	5	5	5	5
	Interview 2	1	1	1	1

Figure 1. Processes of problem solving (Sample)

The rows represent problem solving episodes, the columns the four processes, the numbers record when a teacher completed a problem solving process. Thus, Edit discussed five episodes in Interview 1 (one of which is illustrated above) and one in Interview 2 and always worked through all four processes.

Findings

One main finding was that the beginners and accomplished beginners solved problems in similar ways, but differently from and less proficiently than the experienced teachers. I illustrate this through a comparison of three problem solving episodes, one each from a beginner, accomplished beginner and experienced teacher. My comparison is structured through three aspects: the number of problem solving processes covered, the accuracy and the depth of the participant's performance.

Beginner Bettina

Bettina aimed to teach present simple through the context of jobs to her 10-year-old pupils, who consistently made mistakes such as *I wears a uniform... He wear a uniform.... she wear a uniform… They wears a uniforms.* Bettina constantly corrected the pupils, but the mistakes persisted. Post-lesson, Bettina commented:

> I think they don't understand every words that "works in a uniform"… not "wears in a uniform". Maybe don't the form was the problem just the meaning of the words (Identifying problem 1). But somebody change it so they don't know that the boy is "he" and the girl is "she" (Identifying problem 2). I tried to help them to show the picture that he hasn't a…ponytail (Identifying solution)… but I don't know what was the problem with "he" or "she". (Interview 1)

Bettina worked through two problem solving processes of identifying a problem and identifying a solution. Indeed, she identified two problems. Problem 1 concerned concept when Bettina believed pupils made mistakes because they did not understand the new vocabulary and Problem 2 concerned form when pupils were confused by 'he/she' pronouns/plurals. This suggests that Bettina herself was unsure in identifying the precise problem. The problem was actually grammatical as pupils were confused by the 's' verb-ending (*I wears*), plurals 'uniforms' and 'he/she/it' pronouns.

Bettina's solution of showing a picture of a boy referred neither to the problem nor its cause, both of which were grammatical in nature and required a solution that helped the pupils notice the 's' forms. Bettina misinterpreted the problem, could not see the underlying cause and consequently identified an inappropriate solution.

Interestingly, several other beginner/accomplished beginners mentioned difficulties with identifying the precise problem. Beginner Béla bluntly stated *we cannot really see our mistakes*, and Accomplished beginner Amélia said that while she often knew something was wrong, she could not recognise exactly what: "I often think it's no good ... I… feel it".

Accomplished beginner Ágnes

Ágnes aimed to teach a restaurant dialogue to 12-year-olds. In the lesson, the pupils were inattentive and disruptive, and post-lesson Ágnes commented:

> Sometimes they talk when they had to listen to me (Identifying problem) ... I didn't want to look like a witch but I think after that I will ... tell them that ... "What I promise badly or good, I always keep it. So, please be quiet and if you don't then I will write a notice into your book" (Identifying solution). (Interview 2)

Ágnes accurately recognised the problem that her pupils misbehaved, and suggested a solution that did refer to the problem, of punishing the naughty pupils. She did not, however, consider the cause of the pupils' misbehaviour that I believe she had available to her: a visitor (me) was present; materials were inappropriate; the lesson was on a Friday afternoon; pupils had written a test the previous lesson. Nor did she evaluate the problem solving episode. This suggests that she focussed on the problem's surface features rather than its underlying structure, creating the impression that her analysis lacked depth.

Experienced Emma

In Emma's lesson, 12-year-old pupils in groups had to construct sentences related to a subsequent reading from word cards. The word cards were colour-coded to represent parts of speech (e.g., red = verb). The pupils found this extremely challenging and Emma evaluated their performance thus:

> They have the small cards and they were mixed, there was a pattern and they could not find the place (Identifying problem) ... I gave them some help and I think that they could solve the problem then (Identifying in-class solution).

She continued that the pupils did not know:

> the strategy where to start with and how to work with this pattern (Identifying cause) ... In previous lessons, I ... should've tried some patterns (Identifying solution) ... it comes from history and we have to learn it ... it takes time (Evaluation). (Interview 1)

(NB: "*it comes from history*" means that for Emma, despite recent reforms, Hungarian education is still teacher-centred, focussing on transmitting information and memorising facts. Teaching methods such as project work or co-operative techniques that foster the strategic thinking skills needed for such problem solving tasks are still underused in primary schools.)

Experienced Emma was more thorough, principled and critically aware in her problem solving than both Beginner Bettina and Accomplished beginner Ágnes. First, by working through all four processes, Emma automatically considered more aspects of the situation, suggesting a more thorough approach than Bettina and Ágnes, who only considered two processes. Second, Emma provided a principled, in-depth analysis and clearly perceived the problem through its cause, that is, that pupils lacked problem solving skills and

matched her solution of training in strategic thinking to this cause. Neither Bettina nor Ágnes addressed the cause and only discussed the problem and solution. This suggests they focused on the surface features of the problem rather than its underlying structure, implying that their analyses lacked depth. Third, by referring to Hungarian education in Evaluation, Emma highlighted a constraint to her solution, that is, that her pupils need time to learn problem solving skills. This suggests she was more insightful and critically aware than Bettina and Ágnes, who omitted this process.

		Identify Problem	**Identify Cause**	**Identify Solution**	**Evaluation**
Beginners					
Bettina	Interview 1	1			1
		1			
		*1		1	
	Interview 2	1		1	1
Boglárka	Interview 1	1	1	1	
		1		1	1
		1		1	
		Int.	1	1	
	Interview 2	2	2	2	
		2			
		Int.		1	
Béla	Interview 1	1	1	1	
		1		1	
		Int.	1		
	Interview 2	*Int.*	1	1	
Accomplished Beginners					
Amélia	Interview 1	1			
	Interview 2				
Anikó	Interview 1	3		3	3
	Interview 2	1		1	1
		1	1		
		2			
Ágnes	Interview 1	1	1		
		1			1
		1	1	1	
	Interview 2	*1		1	
Experienced					
Edit	Interview 1	5	5	5	5
	Interview 2	1	1	1	1
Emma	Interview 1	*3	3	3	3
		1		1	
	Interview 2				
Enikő	Interview 1	3	2	3	3
	Interview 2	1	1	1	1
		1		1	1

Figure 2. Processes of problem solving

(NB: * indicates that this episode is illustrated above; *Int.* indicates that I as interviewer identified the problem, but the participants identified the other processes.)

Analysis of all nine participants' problem solving revealed similar findings. Figure 2: Processes of problem solving records the processes participants used when solving teaching problems.

Figure 2 reveals that all inexperienced English teachers (beginners/accomplished beginners) worked through fewer processes and considered causes and evaluation far less frequently than the experienced teachers. This implies that the beginner/accomplished beginners were less thorough, principled, critically aware problem solvers than the experienced teachers.

Implications for teacher education: developing principled reasoning

The experienced teachers then, perceived problems in principled ways. They almost always covered all four problem solving processes, identified the cause of the problem, and selected a solution that addressed the cause. Their approach echoes the deliberate, principled approach that marks expertise in general and is therefore one area of student teachers' thinking that warrants attention to develop pedagogic problem solving skills and so reflective thinking in general.

I have been exploring ways of developing principled reasoning with my student teachers (STs) through the activities described below which are based on real situations that occurred in the study. The activities aim to push student teachers (STs) to notice the underlying structures of problems and so view them in the principled, insightful ways of experienced teachers. They draw on two teaching methods: modelling and problem solving heuristics. Modelling gives learners access to the cognitive processes experts use in principled problem solving (Bandura 1996, has details on modelling). The problem solving heuristics teach STs strategies to use when representing problems (Nickerson, 2004 and King, 1991 detail how heuristics foster principled reasoning).

Discussing cases

Discussing cases pushes STs to ask themselves: *Why did this problem occur? What theory can explain it? How? Why?* The STs compare a real problem scenario (Teacher A) with two fictive scenarios of the same problem, solved differently (Teachers B and C). STs should notice how Teachers B and C consider the problem's cause prior to selecting an appropriate solution and use theory (differentiation, socialisation skills) in their explanations whereas Teacher A just attends to surface features: children misbehave, they get punished.

- Which problem solving do you like best? Why?
- What are the differences between them?

TEACHER A
Sometimes they talk when they had to listen to me (Problem). I didn't want to look like a witch but I think after that I will ... tell them that ... "What I promise badly or good, I always keep it. So, please be quiet and If you don't then I will write a notice into your book."

TEACHER B
Sometimes they talk when they had to listen to me (Problem). I think the exercise was too easy for Juli, Laci, Dani and Zsolti and they disturbed the others. Next time I will give them harder tasks and I think this will motivate them more. Children are different so we need to differentiate between them but I think we Hungarians are just learning how to do this. It takes time.

TEACHER C
Sometimes they talk when they had to listen to me (Problem). Dani and Zsolti and Juli and Laci are best friends and they always play too much when they sit together. Next time I will change the groups so they don't work together. And this is also good, cos maybe they can get used to working with new people and develop socialisation skills.

Figure 3. Same problem solved differently

Decomposing the problem

STs break down the 'Teaching the Chant' scenario through one of the tasks below.

Béla wanted to develop pupils speaking skills by asking them to create new versions of a simple chant. Pupils were aged 8, beginner learners of English.

1. Taught/revised new words: *Snow, snowman, eyes, mouth, nose.*
2. Taught and practised the chant.
   Snow!
   Let's make a snowman!
   OK, 1, 2, 3.
   Eyes, mouth nose.
   Yippeeee!
3. Created a new version of the chant on the blackboard.
   Pizza!
   Let's make a pizza!
   OK, 1, 2, 3.
   Salami, cheese, tomato.
   Yippeeee!
4. Asked pupils to create (in pairs) their own *Pizza* version by changing food items.
5. Pupils did one of the following
   5a. Produced incomplete versions *Pizza! 1,2,3, Yippeeee!*
   5b. Produced inaccurate versions *Let's Pizza! 1,2,3, Yippeeee!*
   5c. Copied Béla's bb. *Pizza* version
   5d. Did nothing.
6. Béla scolded pupils.

Figure 4. Teaching the Chant

STs analyse the scenario by working through one of these tasks.

Working backwards

STs work backwards though the lesson guided by *Why?* questions: *Why did Béla scold pupils? Why did some pupils do nothing?* Experts invariably decompose teaching problems by working backwards from the goal to start point, which helps them identify the problem's key features such as the cause, obstacles and the causal links between them (Nickerson, 2004). This task, therefore, pushes STs to analyse a problem in the manner of experts to create an accurate problem representation.

The grid

STs represent the problem scenario in columns that replicate the four problem solving processes and so are pushed to break down a problem in the manner of experienced teachers.

Problem	**Cause**	**Solution**	**Evaluation**
What's the problem?	Why did it happen?	How would *you* solve the problem?	Comments? (Will your solution work?)
Pupils didn't write new version	*Béla taught wrong words. He taught key words from original version (e.g., Snow) not the key words pupils needed to create own version (Let's make a…..*)		

Figure 5. The grid

Drawing the problem on big posters

STs visually represent then explain their poster to partners.

Paraphrasing the problem

STs explain the problem in their own words to a partner.

In drawing and paraphrasing the problem, to accomplish the task of explaining their interpretations of the scenario to someone else in a meaningful way, STs must select the problem's key features then explain the relationships that exist between them. This focuses attention on the problem's underlying structures

Grouping problems

STs read detailed descriptions of problem scenarios and discuss whether they are:

(a) Superficially similar but with different causes. An example of this was when pupils were naughty but for different reasons (see Figure 3).
(b) Superficially different but with similar causes, for example,

> Problem 1: 10-year-old pupils behaved badly when asked to work in groups
> Problem 2: 13-year-old pupils only responded when the teacher spoke in Hungarian not English

The situations were different as the problems, lesson contents and learning contexts were different. But in both cases pupils were uncooperative because they were asked to learn in ways unfamiliar to them: working in groups (the previous teacher only used teacher-centred interaction); understanding English relying on contextual clues to guess meaning (the previous teacher spoke mainly Hungarian during lessons). Therefore, the causes were similar.

The discussion generated by this task pushes STs to understand problems by examining the underlying rather than surface features thus mirroring the principled reasoning of experts.

Conclusion

I argued at the beginning of this article that the tacit nature of reflective thinking may make it difficult for student teachers to do well, and that there is therefore a need to somehow render reflective thinking visible. The purpose of this study was to make the tacit visible by examining the cognitive processes experienced and inexperienced English teachers used in solving pedagogic problems, one important component of reflective thinking. I identified aspects of teacher thinking that could be nurtured on teacher training courses. The findings revealed that experienced teachers addressed problems in principled ways through four problem solving processes. I recognise that this was a small-scale study so I should be tentative about any conclusions I draw, but, given that these findings echo the principled approach of experts in general, this suggests that it is indeed one aspect of teacher thinking worthy of attention. Therefore, I now expose student teachers regularly and systematically to activities such as those described above, an approach to fostering reflective thinking that may be of use to other teacher educators in Hungary.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

Talking about the lesson

Talk me through the lesson.
How do you feel it went?
What was your overall aim / aim with this task?
Why ……(did you…. /did X happen/ did Y do this….?)
What was the most important thing in the lesson for you?
What would you do differently if you taught the lesson again?
Describe one problem that happened?
How did you plan this lesson?
How did the lesson differ from the plan?

Talking about teaching

What do you do if something doesn't work?
What helps you learn about teaching / Where do you learn new ideas from?
What is your biggest problem in teaching English?
Are there any differences between teaching English and Hungarian subjects?

Appendix 2

Question prompts for diary writing

1. How do you feel about the lesson?
2. What was the most important thing in the lesson for you?
3. What would you do differently if you taught the lesson again?
4. How did the lesson differ from the plan?
5. What have you learnt?

Changing views on the teaching of idioms and proverbs in the ELT classroom

Jasmina Sazdovska

Introduction

The theme of IATEFL-Hungary's 2014 annual conference held in Veszprém was *English for a Change*. The conference focused on how teaching may need to change to reflect increased internationalisation. Globalisation is becoming part of everyday life, influencing a wide range of aspects from how people conduct business to the way education is organised and delivered. There are many changes that drive globalisation. One is the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution which is "the fundamental driver, of not just globalisation but many of these changes in the economy and society" (Atkinson, 2009; p. 154). Another is the international growth of English as a lingua franca (ELF). "Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves" (Dewey, 2007, p. 333). The relationship between globalisation and ELF is a complex one because although the world-wide spread of English supports globalisation, globalisation itself also influences the way English is used in international contexts.

"The implications of globalisation in language pedagogy are substantial and far reaching" (Dewey, 2007, p. 344). Teachers are reflecting on how these changes are influencing their classroom and student learning. As new technological advances open up novel media methods for involving students through social media websites, online learning platforms and digital communication systems, the language teaching landscape is also changing. This, in turn, is being reflected not only in the technical methods for delivering education, but also in the content and methodology of the language classes. Teachers are asking questions about what type of English they should be teaching: which varieties of English to present in the classroom and which professional specialisations, branches of ESP, are relevant for their students. Issues concerning the teaching of appropriacy and pragmatics are being debated by teachers (Brock & Nagasaka, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2003). Researchers are looking into the processes of innovation (Pitzl, Breiteneder, & Klimpfinger, 2008) and creativity that are currently taking place in the use of English in international contexts.

This paper deals with two specific examples of metaphoric and creative expressions in English, idioms and proverbs, and examines ways in which teaching methodology might need to be updated in order to reflect changes caused by the increased internationalisation of English. There are two basic premises and questions that guide the argument in the paper:

1) Idioms are frequently used in the English language classroom, but proverbs are rare. In view of the increased internationalisation of English, does this need to change?
2) In research on the spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF) across the globe, there have been some claims that idioms are becoming irrelevant for language teaching as they represent only the culture and values of the native speakers. Is this truly the case and what are the implications and alternatives for the language classroom?

The first part of the paper deals with the first premise and describes the current situation in ELT methodology. It discusses the definition of idioms and their prevalence in ELT materials and also takes into consideration proverbs and the lack of their coverage in the ELT classroom. The second part of the study focuses on the second question and provides a critical overview of the research on idioms and proverbs in ELF. The research overview is aimed to provide the grounds for the main thesis of the paper which is that idioms form a central part of English language teaching, but because they are closely tied to the culture of native speakers, they might not be equally relevant for learners who will use English in an international environment with other non-native speakers. Proverbs, on the other hand, due to their metaphoric nature and prevalence in many cultures could prove to be much more useful in these circumstances.

Definitions

Idioms and proverbs are linguistic expressions that make use of a metaphor, so what they have in common is that they both belong to the superordinate category of metaphoric language. However, the way that they rely on metaphoric devices differs in each case, as does the level of transparency of the phrases.

Idioms are frequently derived from metaphoric expressions which over time have lost their direct reference, retaining only figurative meaning. To “show your true colours” (Idiom Origins, 2015), for instance, means to show your true personality or character. Historically the idiom developed from a metaphor connected to sailing. Ships would fly the flag also known as “colours” of the country where they came from. Pirates would often sail with a false flag and only hoist their real flag, that is, “show their true colours” just

before they attacked another ship. With time, the flag and sailing metaphor was lost and became no longer transparent to everyday users. This is the process of idiomatisation of a metaphor, which shows how idioms become fossilised forms of metaphoric language. This is why idioms are sometimes referred to as dead metaphors, although the notion has been challenged (Gibbs, 1993)

Idioms are unusual lexicological items because they convey a meaning which is not evident from the semantic import of their constituent lexical items. A detailed dictionary definition of an idiom is the following:

> A term used in grammar and lexicology to refer to a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit. From a semantic viewpoint, the meanings of the individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. From a syntactic viewpoint, the words often do not permit the usual variability they display in other contexts, e.g. it's raining cats and dogs – *it's raining a cat and a dog. Because of their lack of internal contrastivity, some linguists refer to idioms as 'ready-made utterances'. (Crystal, 2008, p. 236)

It is perhaps this unique feature of idioms that they convey a meaning undiscernible from their lexical content that makes them interesting items for the language classroom. In order to understand the meaning of these 'ready-made utterances' learners cannot rely on their lexical knowledge, but need to think about the connection between the utterance in which the idiom occurs and the communicative situation in order to deduce the meaning from the context. This strategy might not be possible at times in the language classroom where idioms are listed according to topic and students are provided with very little information on the communicative context in which the idioms are used. For example, idioms linked to various parts of the body are often covered in the classroom together regardless of their meanings or the situations in which they are used. In the same exercise the teacher would cover "pulling my leg" and "butterflies in my stomach" (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2008, p. 152) simply because they're both linked to parts of the body. This may be confusing for learners because the real meanings of "joking" and "nervousness" have little to do with the actual body parts.

Although proverbs are also non-literal, frequently metaphoric expressions, unlike idioms their figurative meanings might be easier to work out as their interpretation relies on a major characteristic of the literal concept. If we take as an example the proverb "an apple doesn't fall far from the tree" we can see that the link between the literal and metaphoric

meanings is more directly evident than in the case of idioms. Family lineages are often metaphorically depicted as trees and the tendency of children to resemble their parents (i.e., not be "far" from them) is linked in the proverb to the tendency of the apple to fall near the tree. Due to the fact that the meaning is linked to a central feature of the lexical content, the proverb is identical or very similar in many languages, making it easier for foreign language learners to understand it. In addition, proverbs are often pieces of wisdom or advice related to a widely held, universal truth, which makes them both popular in many cultures and relatively straightforward to comprehend even when one hears the saying for the first time.

The *Dictionary of proverbs and their origins* (Flavell & Flavell, 1993) interestingly enough uses the following definitions and proverbs to answer the question *What is a proverb?* (p. 3):

- The wisdom of the street.
- Daughters of daily experience.
- A concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all. (Oxford English Dictionary)
- Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience. (Cervantes, Don Quixote, 1605)
- The people's voice. (James Howell, 1594-1666)
- Proverbs may not improperly be called the Philosophy of the Common People, or, according to Aristotle, the truest Reliques of old Philosophy. (Howell, Lexicon, Proverbs, 1659)
- Much matter decocted into a few words. (Thomas Fuller, The Worthies of England, 1662)
- What is a proverb, but the experience and observations of several ages, gathered and summed up into one expression? (Robert South, Sermons, 1692)
- Notable measures and directions for human life. (William Penn, Advice to His Children, 1699)
- The whit of one man and the wisdom of many. (Lord John Russel, Quarterly Review, 1850)
- A proverb has three characteristics: few words, good sense and a fine image. (Moses Ibn Ezra, Shirat Yisrael, 1924)

It is clear from these definitions that proverbs have been collected, studied and defined for many centuries and that they are an integral part of culture, literature and folk wisdom. Moreover, they are collections of human wisdom, that is, the context is recoverable, speakers can relate to the context even today, regardless of their language and culture. It is this timelessness involving commonly shared experiences that makes proverbs more understandable than idioms, which are usually connected to a particular, often long-gone context. Proverbs are parcels of condensed folk wisdom which point out some essential aspect of human nature or the world, and as such should be able to transcend cultures. For the purposes of this study proverbs are compact sentences of condensed wisdom that frequently use a metaphor to express an essential truth about the world or human nature. This truth has been gained through long experience and is expressed in a catchy phrase often using techniques like repetition, rhyme, alliteration or simile. Proverbs are allegorical expressions which create a link between the central characteristic of a simple notion, understandable to all, and the same central characteristic of a more complex concept that needs to be explained. In the example "an apple doesn't fall far from the tree", the familiar concept is the tendency of the apple to fall near its tree, and the new, more complex notion that it explains is the predisposition of children to resemble their parents. Another illustration could be the proverb "the early bird catches the worm". Here, the well-known concept is the fact that birds usually start their day in the very early morning hours, and the notion which is introduced is the greater chances of the person who rises early to beat the competition and make gains.

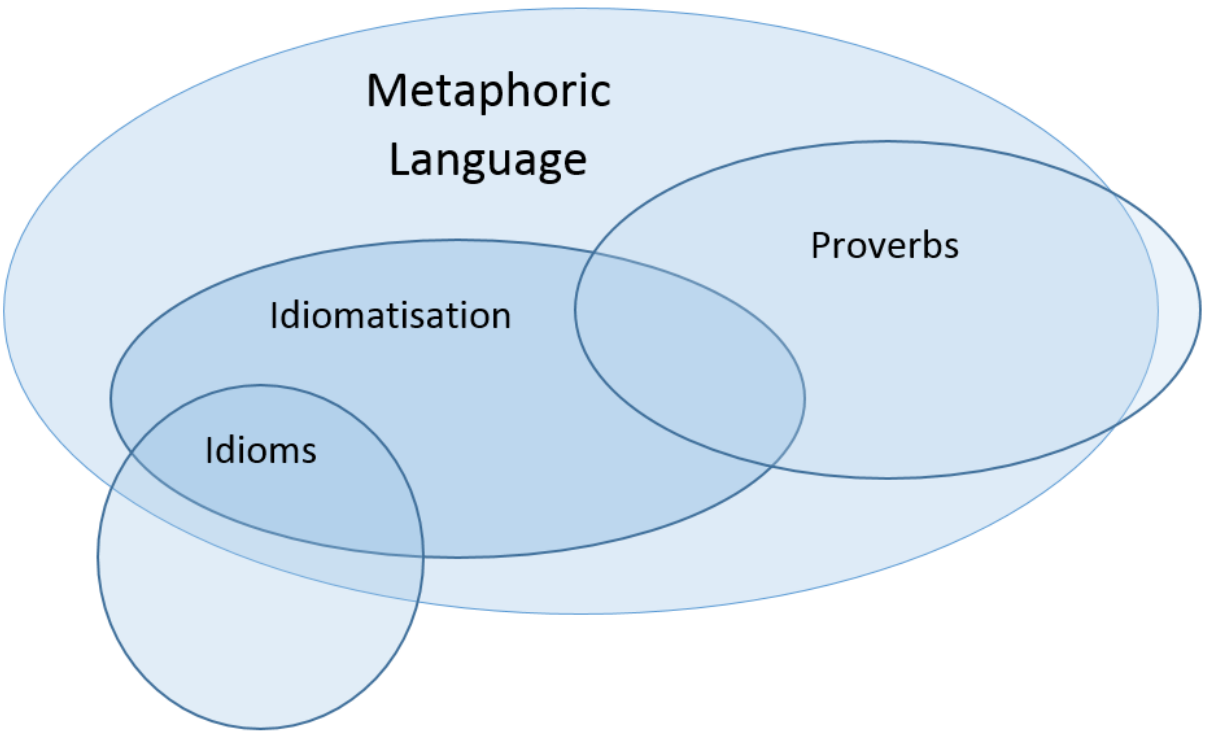

Figure 1. Idioms and proverbs as part of metaphoric language.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between idioms and proverbs. Both are part of the larger category of metaphoric language. Idioms are created through the process of idiomatisation and through their life often lose the original connotation as illustrated by the "true colours" example. Since the original metaphor is no longer evident in many idioms, they start their life as part of metaphoric language, but later are outside the realm, as fossilised or dead metaphors. Most proverbs are also metaphors, a few of which may resemble idioms, but unlike most idioms, proverbs are more explicit and transparent.

Idioms and proverbs in ELT

Idioms are deemed to hold a particularly important position in language teaching and testing as can be evidenced by looking at the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR guidelines contain a total of 28 mentions of idioms, mostly in reference to higher levels of language competence. According to CEFR, an A1 level speaker of a foreign language can only participate in simple, clear, direct and non-idiomatic conversations about personal details. Similarly, a B1 level speaker "can follow much of what is said around him/her on general topics provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 77). For spoken interaction of a speaker at B2 level the CEFR guidelines specify that idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand and that speakers at this level are only familiar with the most frequently used idioms. Moving onto the higher levels, a C1 level speaker "can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 71) and has a good command of idiomatic expressions, while a C2 level language user "has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 87). This frequent reference to the use and understanding of idioms in the CEFR guidelines attests to the fact that the authors of the guidelines support the notion of language learners aiming to achieve native-speaker-like competence and familiarity with the cultural norms of native speakers. In a time when the internationalisation of English means that 80% of its users are non-native speakers (Beneke, 1991), the ELT professionals need to ask themselves whether the CEFR guidelines emphasising native speaker norms are relevant for the teaching and testing of English as an international language.

Since the CEFR guidelines rely so heavily on idioms to define the level of the speaker of a foreign language, it is hardly surprising then that idioms are a frequent feature of English language teaching and testing materials. Exercises for practising the use of idioms can

usually be found in higher-level course books. *Business Benchmark Advanced* (Brook-Hart, 2007) covers idioms together with phrasal verbs and other expressions. It has very simple exercises for matching idioms with their meanings (Brook-Hart, 2007, pp. 65 and 95). *Cutting Edge Advanced* (Cunningham, 2003, p. 21 and 44) features gap-fill and phrase replacement exercises, while the *New English File* series of course books group idioms according to topic areas in their vocabulary banks. At the upper-intermediate level (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2008) there are very simple exercises on matching idioms and their meanings on the topics of:

- personality (e.g., "My boss is rather a cold fish", p. 146),
- clothes and fashion (e.g., "You're really dressed to kill tonight", p. 148),
- feelings (e.g., "You look a bit down in the dumps", p. 151),
- the body (e.g., "I've got butterflies in my stomach", p. 152, a gap-fill exercise this time), and
- music (e.g., "He's always blowing his own trumpet", p. 153, gap-fill again).

New English File Advanced (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2010) also contains very conventional and mundane drilling exercises grouped along the following topics:

- family (e.g., "Most families have a skeleton in the cupboard", p. 158),
- *get* idioms (e.g., "They get on like a house on fire", p. 160),
- money (e.g., "They can't make ends meet", p. 162), and
- animals (e.g., "I decided to take the bull by the horns and went to see my boss", p. 166).

Inside Out Upper-Intermediate (Kay & Jones, 2001) has a phrase replacing exercise on body idioms and *Market Leader Upper-Intermediate* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2011) asks students to match idioms with definitions, fill in gaps with idiom parts and ask a partner questions with an idiom. There are even specialised workbooks for students of English as a foreign language which focus exclusively on idioms. The *Idioms Workbook* (Goodale, 1992) is an older edition that has jokes and quotes which students have to match (e.g., "Do you know the joke about the swimming pool? / No, I don't. / Don't worry you'd be out of your depth." p. 16.), exercises with gap-fill and definition match as well as an illustration of an idiom at the end of each unit. A newer edition called *Work on Your Idioms* (Anderson & Pelteret, 2012) is aimed at students ranging from B1 to C2 level and covers over 300 idioms in 25 units. Although the edition is new, the exercises can hardly be called novel. Explanations of idioms are followed by drills with gap-fills, true or false sentences, multiple-choice gaps, reordering phrases to make sentences, grouping idioms under topics and illustrations (e.g., "Everyone knows she wore the trousers in their relationship", p. 89).

This is by no means an exhaustive list. The aim of the overview of idioms in ELT materials is to highlight two aspects: first, the fact that idioms feature frequently and abundantly in ELT textbooks and secondly, the exercises that are provided for practising idioms are predominantly, if not exclusively, drills for simple memorising of lexical items. The given sentences stand alone, devoid of rich context, focusing the students' attention on remembering the precise form of the idioms. There is frequent repetition of items in various conventional exercises to help students recall and retain the most common idiomatic expressions used by native speakers of English. This will be an important point later on in the paper when discussing the development of cognitive skills in the language classroom.

Proverbs, on the other hand, despite their prevalence in literature and popular tradition, are rarely mentioned when it comes to the study of foreign language teaching. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the CEFR guidelines have numerous mentions of idioms, yet only two references to proverbs, and even then only alongside idioms. The first comment on proverbs in the guidelines is made in connection with sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence, under the heading *Expressions of folk wisdom*. Here proverbs are described as fixed forms which are familiar to most people and which reflect and reinforce cultural values, along with other similar forms of expression.

The second reference to proverbs is made not in connection to a specific level, but is included among the list of things that users of the CEFR guidelines may wish to consider: "which proverbs, clichés and folk idioms learners should need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise and understand b) use themselves" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 122). In these guidelines it is evident that proverbs are mentioned much less frequently than idioms, and when they are referenced, it is together with idioms, clichés, slogans and quotations as items in the culture of the native speakers that learners should be familiar with in order to be able to communicate with native speakers and fit in with their norms and expectations.

The overview of the presence of proverbs in ELT materials will be even shorter simply because it is very difficult to find ANY English language course books that include a reference to proverbs. Of the series of books mentioned in connection with idioms, there is only one that has a short exercise that includes proverbs. This is *Market Leader Advanced* (Dubicka & O'Keeffe, 2011) which covers proverbs implicitly as part of rhetorical devices like metaphors (predominantly idioms in connection with health and medicine, war and fighting, natural phenomena and sport), repetition, hyperbole and paradox ("*The less you have, the freer you are.* (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)" p. 137).

In contrast to printed textbooks, recently there have appeared a plethora of online resources on proverbs for learners of English. A few of the most popular examples in a simple Google search include: English Daily (Proverbs), Learn English Today (English Proverbs and Sayings), Phrasemix (The 50 most important English proverbs), English Club (Proverb Meanings) and even YouTube videos like Learn English Proverbs 1 and 2. Most of these online materials consist of lists of proverbs and their meanings, providing few, if any, activities that can be used in the classroom. It seems that the teaching of proverbs is rarely present in the foreign language classroom, being more frequently consigned to school subjects dealing with literature, culture or religious studies.

Implications for current English language use and teaching

While the first part of the paper provided only a short description of idioms and proverbs in EFL teaching materials, the second part of the paper focuses on the second premise and question in connection with the relevance of idioms and proverbs in view of the spread of English as an international language of communication. It takes on a critical approach analysing whether the current situation in EFL truly meets the needs of foreign language learners in an international context. This analysis is done from various aspects, considering factors such as: 1) English as a lingua franca; 2) the way people use language to communicate and the process of creating idioms; 3) the benefit of proverbs in developing cognitive skills; 4) idioms and proverbs in literature and translation.

ELF context

The study of English as a lingua franca is an increasingly widespread trend which researches the way English is used by non-native speakers. Within this large research scope, there are several studies on the use of idioms in ELF. Pitzl (2009), for example, examines what she claims is a close, diachronic or historical relationship between idioms and metaphors in ELF. She postulates that "the extensive use of certain metaphors within a speech community brings about their conventionalisation, institutionalisation and codification in the course of time and … turns the metaphor into an idiom" (Pitzl, 2009, p. 303). This process is illustrated by the "true colours" example mentioned above. In later research, Pitzl (2012) further develops the idea of a diachronic link between metaphor and idiom use in ELF by looking at "the range of discourse functions of creative idioms and metaphors in the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE)" (Pitzl, 2012, p. 27). From a diachronic point of view, idioms developed from the conventionalisation and frequent use of certain metaphors, which led to the synchronic

existence of two distinct forms: idioms and metaphors. Thus, norm-developing creativity in the past has led to norm-following in the present (semantically and syntactically restricted idioms and original metaphors). Referring to the "true colours" example above, the idiom began its life as a metaphor and through frequent use it became conventionalised. This is an illustration of a process called idiomatisation (see Figure 1). Another process, which is particularly evident in ELF contexts, is that of re-metaphorisation. Through this process non-transparent, fixed expressions can once again regain their transparency and explicitness by becoming metaphors again.

Pitzl (2012, p. 27) suggests that in the context of ELF research "processes like idiomatising and re-metaphorisation take precedence over distinct categories like idiom and metaphor". This is due to the fact that native speakers are familiar with the norms dictating the use of idioms and creation of metaphors in their native language. However, speakers of English as a lingua franca may not be (and probably do not need to be) familiar with the norms of the native speaker of English. Hence, in order for them to be able to use language creatively, they need to create their own idioms and metaphors on the spot while negotiating meaning with the collocutor. Unlike idioms that are conventionalised phrases embedded in a certain culture, metaphors are a fundamental part of the human cognitive process (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, if we take the idiom "to jump on the bandwagon", a native speaker of English would probably be familiar with the fact that we use this phrase for someone who starts participating in a novel trend simply because most other people are doing the same. An ELF speaker of English, on the other hand, may not be familiar with this idiom, and might therefore resort to creating a new metaphor (e.g., "he's following the crowd like a blind sheep") to express the same meaning during a conversation with other ELF speakers. Since metaphors are part of the way humans think, the expression would most likely be understood across cultures. To have a rich repertoire of expressions, for native speakers of English it is important to be familiar with ready-made idioms or conventionalised metaphors. ELF speakers, by contrast, since they may not be familiar with the native speaker idioms, need to be more creative and either `translate' metaphors from their native language or invent new, unconventional metaphors on the spot in cooperation with the other participants in the conversation.

This is where proverbs come into play. While idioms are metaphors which have lost their direct link to the original semantic content, most proverbs still retain this connection. This makes them easier for language learners to understand and use. They can therefore more readily be used in an ELF context to quickly and easily convey dense and complex meaning. In terms of language economy, proverbs are ideal tools for expressing highly intricate notions through very simple language and short sentences. Thomas Fuller's

definition of a proverb as "much matter decocted into a few words" testifies, along with many other similar quotes, to the proverbs' usefulness for conveying, negotiating and creating meaning. The examples below (Johnson, 2013) of proverbs from many different cultures illustrate three things: first, that they are compact and convenient linguistic tools for expressing complex notions; second, they can be easily translated from one language to another (in fact, all of the examples that Johnson provides are English translations from another language); third, proverbs can easily be understood even by people who are not familiar with the local culture from which the proverb originates.

> Argentina: A dog that barks all the time gets little attention.
> Denmark: The most difficult mountain to cross is the threshold.
> Germany: Good bargains empty our pockets.
> Iceland: A sitting crow starves.
> Nepal: Opportunities come but do not linger.
> Oyambos: Small termites collapse the roof.
> Xhosas: No one can paddle two canoes at the same time. (Johnson, 2013, p. 20)

The original list by Johnson (2013) is much longer, but these few examples demonstrate that these proverbs from all over the world can easily be understood by anyone as their metaphoric system of expressing meaning is universal to all people. Proverbs can transcend culture and are global as they contain "many commonalities among peoples because we all belong to the human family" (Johnson, 2013, p. 17).

The list of international proverbs illustrates that ELF users do not need to be familiar with native speaker idioms or proverbs, but are free to resort to the vast wealth of their native proverbs and transfer those into the ELF context since the meaning of proverbs may be more obvious to those who are not familiar with them as opposed to idioms. Even though we may never have been to Argentina or Nepal, or even have heard of the cultures of Oyambos and Xhosas, we can still understand the meaning of the proverbs from these peoples. Most proverbs are transparent and translatable. The examples above have all been literally translated into English from another language and are still understandable. This is something which is not possible with idioms. Proverbs can be transferred from one culture to another and still retain and convey deep meaning. In fact, many cultures have similar proverbs on certain issues. For example, the English proverb *two heads are better than one* can easily be related to the Hungarian *több szem, többet lát* (many eyes, see more) providing a Hungarian ELF speaker with a unique, creative and easily understood bridge to the complex concept of synergy, that is, the notion that people working together can achieve more than their individual contributions. In the English example the advantage of synergy is pointed out by two people being able to solve a problem more easily if they both think about it as compared to just one person

working on the solution. In the Hungarian proverb, the notion of synergy is conveyed through eyes rather than heads or minds, but the point is similar to the English corollary, that two or more people working together (many eyes) can come to a solution more easily (see more). The point can also be seen in the comparison of the Icelandic proverb above "A sitting crow starves" and the English proverb "The early bird catches the worm". The notion of hard work and quick reaction bearing rewards is in one case conveyed through early rising and a bird catching the reward of a worm and in the other it is conveyed through a starving crow that is idle.

The importance of idioms for foreign language learners and speakers, as evidenced by the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for languages guidelines, is easy to contest in ELF communication. The CEFR guidelines presuppose that learners have integrative motivations, that is, that they are learning the language in order to be able to use it in communication with native speakers. However, since four out of five speakers of English are non-native, it could be argued that most learners have instrumental motivation – they learn the language in order to be able to communicate with other non-native speakers. Yet, Pitzl (2009) argues that due to the processes of idiomatisation and re-metaphorisation, idioms still have an important role to play in ELF too. However, in this claim she seems to be confounding the process of idiomatisation with its final product, idioms. This is why the thesis of the current paper is that while the idioms used by native speakers may not be so relevant to the ELF context, what is important is the process of idiomatisation which starts from a metaphor. Speakers of ELF can and frequently do resort to the process of idiomatisation for expressing meaning in an international context. The products of this process are not idioms that conform to the exact phrasings used by native speakers of English, even though they have been created through the same process of metaphorical thinking.

The illustration in Figure 2 shows Kachru's (1992) model of the three circles of English, adapted from Crystal (1999) to demonstrate the characteristics of the Inner, Outer and Expanding circles. For the purposes of the current argument, an additional note has been added to illustrate the use of native speaker idioms in the Inner circle, as opposed to the process of idiomaticising which can take place in any of the circles. The fact that native speaker idioms may not be so relevant to ELF speakers is also supported by the views of Seidlhofer (2009, p. 197) who claims that "in ELF, these phrases are typically co-constructed on line and do not need to correspond to conventional native-speaker idiomatic usage". What implications does this have for language learners? While the CEFR guidelines stipulate that the extensive use of idioms is an achievement of higher levels of command of the language, course books for English language learners on communication skills and cross-cultural understanding like Sweeney's (2004)

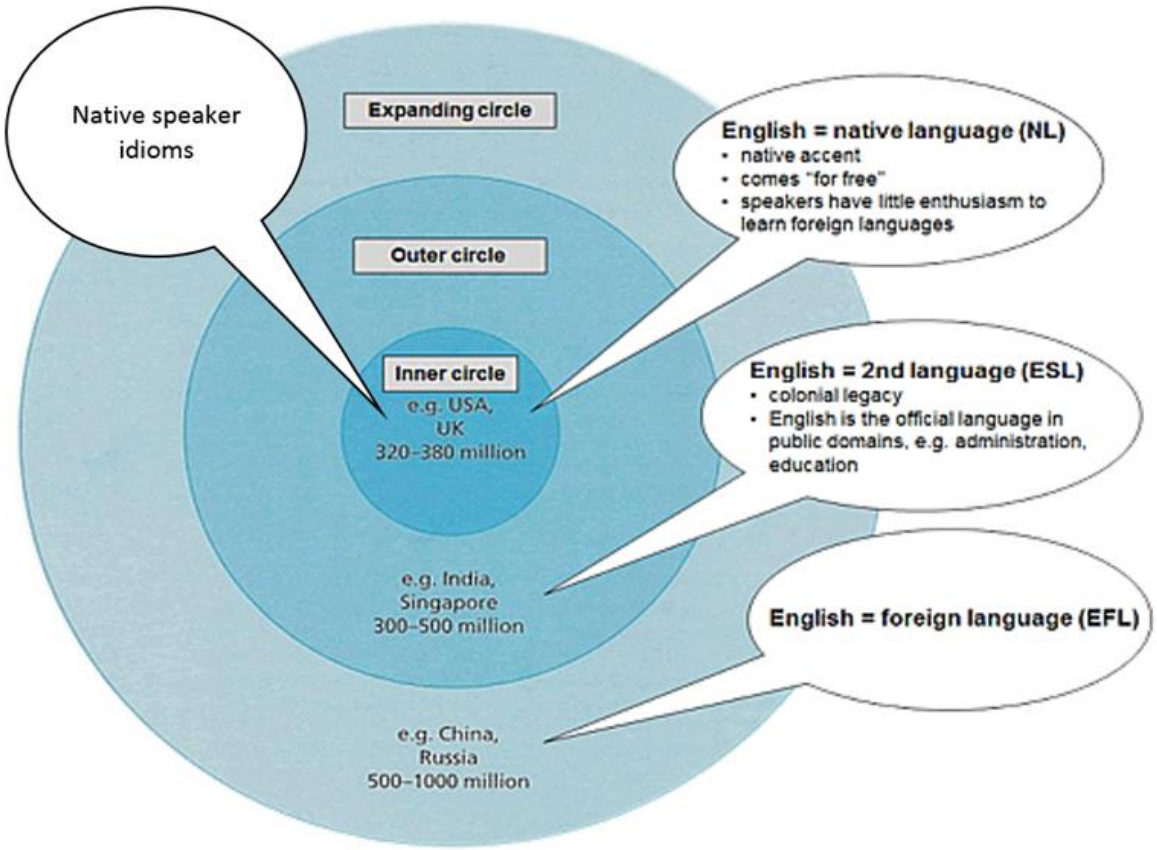

Figure 2. Kachru's three-circle-model. Figure adapted from Crystal, D. (1999), *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: CUP, p. 107.

Communicating in Business and Bovee and Thill's (1998) *Business Communication Today* claim that idiomatic expressions are a source of confusion. The latter course book actually provides an example of a Japanese business person who fails to understand his American associate due to the US native speaker's overuse of sports idioms and slang. The problem is, however, deeper in this business context than just a mere misunderstanding. International business communication conducted in English with non-native speakers requires participants to be clear, but also cross-culturally sensitive in order to be competent communicators. Because the American executive seems to be unaware of the inappropriateness of the use of local sports idioms in an international business environment, the Japanese businessman actually questions his credibility. Hence, instead of the frequent use of idioms marking a speaker as having a high command of a language as the CEFR guidelines specify, it can actually undermine the communication process and the authority of the speaker in an international business context. This is one of the reasons why the native-speaker model used in the CEFR guidelines needs to be challenged. The appropriateness of the use of idioms is dictated not only by the language level of the speaker, but more importantly by the context, the expectations of the community of practice that the speaker belongs to and its pragmatic (language in use) requirements. By contrast, according to Johnson (2013), proverbs are part of the world's vocabulary and can therefore be considered to be more readily capable of crossing from one culture to another. They can be transferred, translated or linked to a close equivalent in many cultures and languages as illustrated by the international proverbs listed above.

Idioms in native speaker discourse communities versus idiomaticising in ELF communities of practice

Now let us turn to the second point of the outline: the way people use language to communicate. The study of language use in practice is pragmatics and communities of people that share similar practices of language use are discourse communities. These discourse communities share a framework of expected linguistic behaviour known and adhered to by its members. Discourse communities usually have a common culture, language and location. However, in the case of English as a lingua franca, the widespread use of the language across the globe means that people use the same language, but have different cultures. In such cases, people often set up their own practices of language use by establishing their own rules of engagement and methods of creating meaning online. Such communities have been called communities of practice because the people in these groups have a mutual interest in a shared endeavour (Wenger, 1998). The idioms which are familiar to the discourse community of native speakers of English may not be appropriate or even necessary for the community of practice of ELF speakers as they do not form part of the shared cultural knowledge upon which they rely for effective communication.

While different ELF communities may not share a geographic or cultural background, they may still have a common framework of shared knowledge resulting either from the shared context in which the speech event is taking place or from a shared profession, interest or activity. In this case, it is not a shared native language and culture that forms the discourse community, but a common physical, professional or other engagement context that forms a community of practice. This gives them the opportunity to create their own, unique idiomatic expressions which are appropriate to their particular situation. Such idiomatic expressions carry condensed meaning and represent "shortcuts" which comply with language economy. They are created online while negotiating meaning through the idiom principle which states:

> …that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments. To some extent, this may reflect the recurrence of similar situations in human affairs; it may illustrate a natural tendency to economy of effort; or it may be motivated in part by the exigencies of real-time conversation. (Sinclair, 1991, p. 110)

In the case of native speakers, these phrases and chunks have been constructed historically through the process of idiomatisation and are available as ready-made, conventional, culturally familiar idioms. ELF speakers, on the other hand, can create innovative phrases which are mutually understood because they have at their disposal contextual resources like common physical surroundings, belonging to the same professional circles or engaging in a shared endeavour. Such creative expressions are not conventional idioms in English. Language used for such "creative purposes involves the process of pattern forming and pattern re-forming" in which "creativity does not inhere in the semantics of linguistic forms as such, but is a pragmatic function of their use" (Pitzl, 2007, p. 421). This means that as opposed to the literal meaning of words in combination, speakers can use phrases figuratively to achieve a particular purpose which can be decoded thanks to mutually shared knowledge which does not have to be dependent on the culture of native speakers of English as is the case of idioms. It is the mutually shared knowledge in ELF situations involving the physical environment in which the conversation takes place, the professional and educational background of the speakers and their relationship and joint experiences that creates the necessity to resort to the process of idiomatisation, rather than use pre-existing idioms anchored to a particular geographical culture.

It follows from this that in the language classroom teachers of English need to be focusing not on the precision of emulating native speaker idioms as described in the CEFR guidelines, but on developing the learners' pragmatic competence, that is, their ability to successfully convey a message with an intended meaning which is appropriate to the context of the communication. This skill will enable learners to generate and decode idiomatic speech created for and relevant to their own context through the process of idiomatisation. Including activities that require the understanding of proverbs and transfer from one culture to another could provide an opportunity for learners to develop these pragmatic skills, since the pattern-forming abilities needed for the creation of innovative idioms are similar in nature to the skills required for retrieving and adapting proverbs relevant to a particular context.

Idioms and slang expressions are also examples of creativity in language, but these phrases can be used to signal intimacy and mutual membership to a particular group, usually to a group of native speakers of English. Proverbs, on the other hand, as pointed out earlier, have the ability to transcend culture. If language is viewed as social practice, the fact that ELF speakers may not conform to native speaker idiomaticity marks them as outsiders to this particular discourse community of native speakers of English and is an element that can be used for discrimination against non-native speakers. Idioms can thus be used as a realisation of the territorial imperative (Widdowson, 1983), which is a tool for

establishing one's own territory and marking those who belong to or are excluded from a particular social group. The territorial imperative is used to make what you are saying acceptable to those who belong to the same `territory' or discourse community, while at the same time enhancing and emphasising the differences with those who do not belong to this particular discourse community with the intention of keeping them out (Widdowson, 2014). Hence, the deliberate overuse of and attention to obscure idioms which are only familiar to native speakers of English can be a tool to not only signal belonging to a group of native speakers, but also an instrument of discrimination and prejudice for keeping non-native ELF speakers out of the circle of so called `competent' speakers. In order to avoid such negative perceptions, language teaching needs to move away from focusing on reproducing the precise, ready-made English idioms prescribed by native speakers and towards enabling learners to idiomaticise and create expressions for themselves according to the needs for co-constructing meaning with the interlocutor. Linguistic discrimination against any group is undesirable, but when 80% of speakers of English use the language as a lingua franca and are non-native speakers it is even more problematic that the idiomatic norms of the minority native speakers should be held in such high esteem by the CEFR guidelines, English teaching materials and instructors. The alternative is to focus in the classroom on the process of idiomatisation as well as on the use of metaphors and proverbs which can have corresponding counterparts in many cultures and do not discriminate different groups of speakers, but promote mutual understanding.

Another reason to change our perceptions of the place of idioms in language teaching is their very definition. There are many different definitions of idioms and idiomaticity, ranging from broad views of the process in general, to the narrow notion of 'core idioms' only (Pitzl, 2009). These are, however, definitions of researchers. In the ELT materials listed above, the exercises on idioms are of the narrow nature, focusing specifically on most frequent idioms used by native speakers. The focus in language teaching materials and in the language classroom needs to shift from reproducing ready-made idioms formulated and used by native speakers of English to helping language learners to acquire and practice the skill of idiomaticising, which would help them create expressions appropriate to their own ELF context.

Cognitive benefits of teaching proverbs rather than idioms in the ELT classroom

Focusing on native speaker conventional idioms in language teaching is not only questionable from the point of view of ELF, discourse communities and pragmatics, but also from a cognitive aspect. The detailed list of the activities and exercises involving

idioms in ELT materials was deliberately included above to point out their overreliance on recall in learning. The activities for practising the use of idioms which are included in ELT materials described above are predominantly definition and cartoon matching and gap-fill exercises. These activities mainly consist of single sentences which are provided without almost any context for the learners to rely on in forming and developing pragmatic, linguistic and cognitive skills. The gap-fill sentences are pedestrian, memory reliant drills aimed at forcing learners to remember given idioms through frequent repetition.

The teaching of proverbs, by contrast, can be far more creative, analytical and communicative. The most important elements or stages in a lesson for students to learn the meaning of proverbs may include:

> (1) Students gain an understanding of all key words contained in the proverb itself and in the surrounding story context;
>
> (2) they are able to infer the meaning of troublesome words by considering the larger context in which the proverb occurs;
>
> (3) they attempt to identify analogical relationships between the proverb and the context;
>
> (4) and they receive repeated exposure to the proverb in diverse contexts, allowing them to abstract a more general interpretation of the expression that goes beyond the immediate story. (Nippold, Hegel, Uhden, & Bustamante, 1998, p. 54)

As can be seen from the list, learning to decode proverbs entails cognitive skills such as inferring meaning, identifying analogical relationships and abstracting interpretations. These are higher level skills than the purely mnemonic ones required for remembering idioms, because idioms usually cannot be understood by reasoning or analysis of their semantic content, whereas proverbs can. The concreteness of the nouns found in proverbs allows for them to be more easily understood by the ability to reason by analogy as in the following examples: *a good sailor likes a rough sea; when the cat's away, the mice will play* (Nippold et al., 1998). When learners are instructed to think of situations in their own lives where a particular proverb could apply, it provides important practice in the process of analogical mapping. This process requires that an analogy is drawn in the metaphor of the proverb between the characteristic of one familiar object to a similar characteristic of another object. In the proverb example "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree", the characteristic of the apple to fall close to its tree is the source which is linked to the target tendency of children to resemble their parents. In "the early bird catches the worm" the familiar object is the early bird catching the worm and the other object is the

person who starts work early and tends to beat the competition and to reap rewards for their hard work. When thinking about proverbs in the classroom, students need first to reflect deeply about the meaning of the words in the proverb, then make connections between those meanings in the source and relevant contextual clues. This strategy of deducing meaning is a transferrable skill that could be useful for understanding abstract language in general. One might argue that learners also need to practise analogical mapping when thinking of situations which would be appropriate for the use of a particular idiom. However, this process could be impeded by the language textbooks' lack of contextual information for the use of the idiom and the learners' inability to make a connection between the semantic content of the lexical items and the situation. Pragmatic competence which enables a speaker to use language appropriately in a particular context is not only difficult in the case of idioms because of the lack of context provided in the language textbooks, but is further hampered by the historical loss of the metaphorical connection between the source and the target as illustrated by the "proof of the pudding" example.

Temple and Honeck (1999, p. 41) argue that understanding proverbs presents an interesting theoretical challenge because "their use and comprehension entail a variety of issues in the areas of categorisation, mental representation, pragmatics, attention, and more". In addition, they claim that as opposed to idioms, in the case of proverbs it is easy to create novel metaphors or mottos by using the pattern of an already existing proverb, as illustrated by the following examples (p. 50):

Proverb:	The cow gives good milk but kicks over the pail.
New proverb:	The ocean delights the sailor then drowns him.
Proverb:	The best fish swim near the bottom.
New proverb:	The tastiest coffee beans grow in the highest branches.

This opportunity to create new metaphors (referred to as "new proverbs" in the example) allows for greater creativity for both native and non-native speakers as they can create new expressions which are tailored to be relevant to their current context based on their previous knowledge and the already existing resources in their native or other languages. Such corollaries of proverbs create a wealth of opportunities for coining new expressions based on an already existing pattern. If we take the example of "the early bird catches the worm" as a template for new expressions we can come up with: "the first in line gets the best seats" (for a concert or theatre performance); "the late get detention" (for school); "first come, first served" (for restaurants) and so on. Based on the idiom a "lazy eye", for example, it is perhaps possible to use a "lazy arm" or a "lazy leg" for limbs that have been

injured, but it sounds forced and does not have the same wealth of creativity that proverb templates offer because the link to the original metaphor may have been lost. In the case of proverbs, the literal meaning is decoded first and then based on that, the figurative meaning can be inferred by linking the literal meaning to relevant clues in the situation.

Friedman, Chen and Vaid (2006) support the view that proverbs have a cross-cultural and cognitive value. They claim that there is no empirical support for the theory of a cultural difference in reasoning styles of various nationalities when evaluating and interpreting proverbs. This is an important aspect both for the creation of novel sayings and expressions in a foreign language based on native proverbs, as well as for the ability to translate native proverbs which will still be understandable in a foreign language.

Proverbs in literature and translation

Apart from supporting the development of crucial cognitive skills, Nippold et al. (1998) point out that proverbs are also useful tools in literature classes. Literary texts, especially genres like fables, often include proverbs which can "lend themselves to interdisciplinary literacy integration" (Johnson 2013, p. 18). Fables which are built around or end in a proverb or moral of the story have been widespread both in literature and popular culture for centuries. Tales created by the Greek philosopher Aesop in the 6th century BC still hold an enduring appeal in our modern times. Scriptures like the Hebrew *Torah* and the Christian *Old Testament* contain chapters on proverbs and wise sayings providing moral guidance on how to live a good life. Similar short passages of condensed wisdom can be found in almost all cultures and can easily be related to analogous situations, tales and adages from one country and language to another. This multi- and cross-cultural characteristic makes proverbs an excellent resource for the foreign language classroom which has so far not been fully utilised.

Literature, according to Illés (2014, p. 12), has been "a long-forgotten outcast in ELT which, by its very nature, generates communication that requires individual engagement through the involvement of the readers'/learners' schematic and linguistic reality". Fables and stories with morals need to be included in language teaching because the proverbs in the fables can be quick and direct triggers to complex schemata that enable communicators to convey highly intricate ideas through very short sentences and simple vocabulary. Unlike idioms that are deemed to be markers of higher-level linguistic competence according to the CEFR guidelines, even elementary level language learners can use proverbs such as *the apple doesn't fall far from the tree,* which contains very simple words, but conveys a complex notion. For language learners this analogical linking of a

complex notion with simple expressions is an extremely useful tool. It provides an easy method to relay a complex message through simple vocabulary that can easily be understood in most cultures and by speakers of any level of English as evidenced by the list of international proverbs above. The ease of understanding is due to two factors. One is the triggering of a familiar schema and the other is the existence of similar or equivalent proverbs in many cultures. For instance, in Hungarian, the proverb *the apple doesn't fall far from the tree* is almost word-for-word identical to the English one, while the Macedonian equivalent is *крушка под крушка паѓа* (a pear falls under a pear).

The example is additionally connected to the issue of translation, "another outcast of communicative language teaching" (Illés, 2014, p. 13), which is being re-examined and questioned, most notably by Cook (2012), but also by Carreres (2006), Gutiérrez Eugenio (2014) and Phillip Kerr's talk entitled *Translate Your Course Book* at the 24th annual IATEFL-Hungary conference in Veszprém. The Hungarian and Macedonian counterparts of "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" illustrate that proverbs can be literally or closely translated into many languages and even though they may not comply fully with the equivalent saying in the target language, they can still be understood. The list of international proverbs provided above which have all been translated from various languages from across the world into English and have still retained their meaning and understandability support the claim that proverbs can easily be translated. Again, this would be difficult to do with idioms and could result in comic misunderstandings as both the semantic content and the syntactic structure of idioms is constrained. If we take for example literal translations of the English idiom "an old flame" in Hungarian *régi láng* and Macedonian *star plamen*, the connotative meaning is completely lost. The same would be true of the literal translations of, for example, "to let the cat out of the bag" or "to pull one's leg".

Conclusion

The argument in this paper has been that idioms are featured frequently in ELT materials, especially at higher levels, and are an indicator used by the Council of Europe in the CEFR guidelines to judge a speaker's level of communicative competence. Proverbs, on the other hand, are rarely mentioned or covered in the foreign language classroom. Native speaker idioms, which are meant to be emulated by language learners, help them to develop an understanding of the culture of native speakers. However, in these times of globalisation and in the case of English being used as a lingua franca, many of the idioms used by native speakers of English lose relevance. However, this does not mean that

idiomaticity itself or the process of idiomaticising loses relevance in ELF. On the contrary, speakers of English in international contexts can and frequently do create their own creative, metaphoric expressions while negotiating meaning in interaction by relying on many resources. This is made possible by the universality of metaphorical thinking. Proverbs, which are often metaphors, can serve as one of these resources and should therefore be used more frequently in the language classroom to enhance cross-cultural understanding, cognitive development, pragmatic competence, literacy and translation skills. Although idioms are also forms of metaphoric expressions, they are ready-made products created by and relevant for the restricted group of native speakers of a language. What we need to teach in the classroom though is not a stock of these ready-made products, but the ability to use language innovatively which can be developed and practiced through the process of idiomatisation and the use of proverbs, not as products, but as tools for developing cognitive skills.

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Grammar, grammaring, English grammars

Éva Illés

Introduction

When it comes to the question of what is to be taught when teaching a foreign language, apart from the four language skills, the list usually includes the teaching of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2007) and in some cases topics, situations, notions and functions (Ur, 1996). Except for the strong version of communicative language teaching, which promoted the natural approach and with it the idea that for learning a language, use and exposure alone suffice (Cook, 2003), grammar has always been an essential component of language teaching.

Inevitably, grammar also features prominently in linguistics, which is traditionally concerned with "how meaning is formally encoded in lexis and grammar" (Widdowson, 2007, p. 11). However, the idea that lexis and grammar are interdependent has not really found its way into language pedagogy. Well-known and widely used grammar books such as Swan's *Practical English Usage* (2005) or Murphy's *English Grammar in Use* (2004) present information about a particular grammatical structure and the related tasks at the sentence level with an emphasis on grammatically correct forms. The section on the use of ellipsis in Swan (2005a) illustrates this point:

> **short answers etc: yes, I have.**
> Ellipsis is used regularly in short answers (…), reply questions (…) and question tags (…).
>
> Have you finished? ≈ Yes, I **have**.
> I can whistle through my fingers. ≈ **Can** you, dear?
> You don't want to buy a car, **do** you? (p. 162)

As a result of the focus on the correct form, learners, for example, will be warned against saying '*Oh, my phone, I was sat on it.*' or '*Will I come with you?*' or '*Don't leave any luggage unattended on the station*' as these sentences contain errors which render them grammatically incorrect. Teachers make sure that students eliminate errors and use the correct forms such as '*Oh, my phone, I <u>was sitting</u> on it*', '*<u>Shall</u> I come with you?*' or '*Don't leave any luggage unattended <u>at</u> the station*'. Interestingly, these 'incorrect' samples represent utterances by native speakers – an issue which will be taken up later in the paper.

While acknowledging the relevance and importance of teaching the language form, the present paper aims to complement the current form-oriented approach and promote a meaning-oriented view of grammar within the language teaching context. In so doing, it

intends to highlight the process of how grammar and lexis interact to create meaning rather than focussing on the product, that is, the form(s) through which grammar is realised. The kind of grammar that prevails in ELT and the particular variety of English whose grammar is taught in the EFL classroom will also be investigated. Issues regarding various varieties of English worldwide and their often very different grammars will also be briefly discussed.

What is grammar?

The way grammar is seen and defined varies in the literature. Below is a small selection of some of the definitions that can be found in applied linguistics and language pedagogy:

1.
Grammar is the foundation of a language. It is not the largest part of a language (that distinction belongs to the vocabulary), nor is it the most noticeable part (that distinction belongs to spelling and pronunciation); but it **is** the most fundamental part. The grammar is the skeleton which makes everything hang together. Without grammar, we are left with a jumble of words and word-parts, and nothing makes sense. (Crystal, 1996, p. 6)

2.
Grammar is concerned with how sentences and utterances are formed. In a typical English sentence, we can see the two most basic principles of grammar, the arrangement of items (syntax) and the structure of items (morphology):
I gave my sister a sweater for her birthday.

Grammar is concerned with acceptable and unacceptable forms and the distinctions of meaning these forms create.
(Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 2)

3.
People sometimes associate the term 'grammar' with the different parts of speech or 'word classes' that words can belong to (…). Materials produced for studying English over the last three decades have, however, reflected and promoted an obsession with another aspect of grammar – the verb phrase (tenses, conditionals, etc.).
(Parrott, 2000, p. 1)

4.
Grammar is the set of rules what describes how words and groups of words can be arranged to form sentences in a particular language.
(Cowan, 2008, p. 3)

5.
… grammar is essentially a limited set of devices for expressing certain kinds of necessary meaning that cannot be conveyed by referential vocabulary alone.
(Swan, 2005b, p. 7)

The emphasis on grammar in language pedagogy seems to be justified by the above definitions: grammar is essential as it provides the order and framework which makes words and word-parts form coherent and meaningful units such as sentences (definitions 1, 2). In English language teaching grammar is most commonly dealt with at word and sentence levels (definition 3; see also grammar books, e.g., Cowan, 2008; Parrott, 2000) and is concerned with the structure of words and "the way words change their form to express differences in meaning or grammatical function" (Swan, 2005, p. 122). In the linguistic study of English the balance tilts towards syntax which comprises the ways in which words are organised into sentences. The reason for the difference in interest may partly lie in the fact that linguists are aware of English having changed from an inflecting language, where the different forms of words show different grammatical functions, into an isolating language where different grammatical relations are indicated by means of word order (Swan, 2005). But since learning English necessarily implies awareness of the form and structure of words, in ELT more attention is given to the word level than in language study.

It is the rules of grammar which constitute the content of grammar teaching and determine the forms and structures that are deemed to be correct and/or acceptable in foreign language use (definitions 2, 4). However, grammar does not only contribute to the creation of meaning but itself carries meaning that complements the sense conveyed by lexis (definition 5). It is the question of the relationship between grammar and vocabulary which will be posed and examined in the following section.

Grammar and lexis

There are situations where words without grammar suffice. These situations include, for instance, the purchase of a ticket at a railway station, the orders given by a doctor in the operating theatre (Widdowson, 1990) or a family meal where small chunks of language are more than enough as the conversation below demonstrates:

> Want some of this?
> No. I'll …
> Here …
> Thanks …
> Pass me …
> Could you?
> Uncle Arthur.
> What time this evening? (Widdowson, 1998, p. 708)

In cases such as the ones above, grammar is redundant because the context provides the clues and information necessary for understanding the speakers' utterances. By saying *Scalpel!*, the doctor gives an order and refers to an object in the immediate physical context that is shared by the person to whom the order is addressed and who, therefore, has no difficulty finding out which scalpel the doctor wants to get immediately. The particular member of the operating team is also aware of the roles and routines people

working in an operating theatre have to follow. This shared knowledge compensates for the lack of grammar and therefore a one-word sentence is sufficient to identify the function of the utterance. In fact, in this situation grammatical elaboration would render the communication less effective and may even put the patient in great danger (Widdowson, 1990). It then can be concluded that when there is enough information provided by the context and the necessary amount of relevant knowledge is shared by the interlocutors, there is less need for grammar.

However, in the absence of a 'here and now' context, the knowledge gap is bigger and this is when grammar is called for. If, for instance, the doctor in the above example phones home to ask a member of their family to fetch a particular scalpel from a particular place, the short order will not do and more lexical and grammatical elaboration becomes necessary. As a result, instead of *Scalpel!*, the doctor may have to resort to "Can you bring me that little sharp knife-like thing I use for doing appendectomies and which I left on the mantelpiece..." (Thornbury, 2001, p. 9). Widdowson sums up the difference between the two situations as follows:

> The greater the contribution of context in the sense of shared knowledge and experience, the less need there is for grammar to augment the association of words. The less effective the words are in identifying relevant features of context in that sense, the more dependent they become on grammatical modification of one sort or another. (Widdowson, 1990, p. 86)

It should be noted that the distance created by the gap between the knowledge and experience shared by the interlocutors may exist not only in space and time but in social relations and between what is real or unreal as well (Batstone, 1994). When talking to somebody with whom we are less familiar or who occupies a higher position on the social ladder, the social distance is bigger than between friends, which then necessitates the exploitation of politeness strategies which, in turn, require an increased amount of language, including grammar. Thus, the straightforward direct imperative can be used with someone we know well (e.g., *Help!*). However, when the social distance is greater, the one-word order needs to be complemented with more words and grammar in order to cushion the effect and/or imposition of the message: for example, *Can you give me a hand?* An even more polite version of this utterance would contain the modal verb *could*. The reason for this is the fact that the growing social distance is expressed through the temporal distance between present and past (Batstone, 1994, p. 17). The same principle applies when the distance between the real and unreal is captured through the use of the past tense. If, for instance, the doctor in the example would want to express a wish, they would have to use the past tense form to express this specific function: "If only I had a scalpel" (Thornbury, 2001, p. 7).

Apart from indicating distance in space, time, and social relations, as well as the gap between the real and the unreal, grammar enables language users to be less dependent on context and express a proposition more clearly. For example, the set of words – *hunter kill lion* – refers to a very general context which can be narrowed down and made more specific with the help of grammar. First of all, the word order will determine who the

agent or the victim is, the hunter or the lion. Adding the past tense marker to the word *kill* will indicate that the action took place in the past: hunter kill*ed* lion. Auxiliary verbs such as *is* or *was* can be used for the addition of aspect: hunter *is/was* kill*ing* lion (Widdowson, 1990). The function grammar fulfils here and in other instances of language use can be summarised as follows:

> Grammar is a device for indicating the most common and recurrent aspects of meaning which it would be tedious and inefficient to incorporate into separate lexical items. … So grammar simply formalises the most widely applicable concepts, the highest common factors of experience: it provides for communicative economy. (Widdowson, 1990, p. 87)

Another example of how grammar conveys highly conventionalised meaning is the use of articles. On the one hand, the definite article entails that the noun the definite article precedes is specific in that both the speaker and the hearer know to what particular person, object, place, and so on, the noun refers. The indefinite article, on the other hand, does not specify the noun which can, therefore, denote anyone or anything. The two sentences below differ only in one aspect: the indefinite article in the first passage has been replaced by a definite article in the second sentence. This minor change, however, becomes a question of life and death for those involved. Whereas in the first passage the son of a policeman kills a policeman happening to be at the scene, in the second sentence it is the boy's own father whom the boy kills.

> A policeman's 14-year-old son, apparently enraged after being disciplined for a bad grade, opened fire from his house, killing *a policeman* and wounding three people before he was shot dead.

> A policeman's 14-year-old son, apparently enraged after being disciplined for a bad grade, opened fire from his house, killing *the policeman* and wounding three people before he was shot dead. (Pinker, 1994. p. 80)

The sense of definiteness and indefiniteness conveyed by articles, of course, works in wider contexts as well. In a paper about definite articles, Wolf and Walters (2001) observe that more factual scientific writings contain more definite articles than literary pieces. This is fairly predictable but what is probably more revealing in the study is that within literary works, the more reputable the writer is, the fewer definite articles they use. As Wolf and Walters (2001) point out, "[t]his finding is accord with the rationale that avoiding definite and specific messages is an important criterion for artistic value in a text" (p. 967). Doris Lessing (1972), the famous writer concurs with this last point:

> … the book is alive and potent and fructifying and able to promote thought and discussion only when its plan and shape and intention are not understood, because that moment of seeing the shape and the plan and intention is also the moment when there isn't anything more to get out of it. (p. xx)

What is added or altered, that is, which feature of the context is put into sharper focus by grammar is also language dependent. In Russian, for example, there are no definite or indefinite articles, and in Mandarin Chinese verbs have one form which expresses the present, past and future. The missing meaning is usually deducted from the context, for example, with the help of time adverbials. What is true about all languages, however, is that "lexis and grammar act upon each other in the determination of meaning" (Widdowson, 1990, p. 87). Since grammar and lexis interact, in real-life language use applying grammar involves decision making about how much and what grammar to employ in a particular context. Using grammar, therefore, is performing an action, in other words, doing grammar.

Which grammar?

When teaching English, it is, of course, English grammar – one would say. But with the global spread of English and the resulting multitude of varieties, the question arises as to which English grammar we, in fact, teach. Given the British dominance in English language teaching in Europe and Hungary, what grammar and coursebooks usually adopt as the yardstick is "standard English English" as opposed to standard American English or many other standard varieties of the English language (Thomas et al, 2004, p. 175). Standard English (SE) is a variety used by the middle and upper classes and is the dialect which is considered correct, educated and proper. SE is a prestigious dialect which is used by institutions such as the law and education and is also the kind of English that is taught to learners of English as a foreign language (Jenkins, 2009). However, a word of caution is in order here. Just as "there are no such obvious criteria for defining who is an educated speaker, or even indeed who counts as a native, let alone what constitutes the standard language" (Widdowson, 2012, p. 10), it is equally difficult to establish who counts as a user of SE. For example, those native speaker teachers who teach and use SE in their language classes often code-switch and speak a different kind of English with their family and friends.

Consequently, the variety of English learners are most likely to come across outside the classroom is often different from the kind of standard English students are predominantly exposed to in the classroom. For example, the three erroneous sentences in the Introduction of this paper were produced by native speakers. *Oh, my phone, I <u>was sat</u> on it* was uttered by a bilingual native speaker of English, *<u>Will</u> I bring along a train set the next time?* was spoken by an adult from Belfast (Hall, 2014, p. 380), while utterances similar to *Don't leave any luggage unattended <u>on</u> the station* can be heard through the public address systems at railway stations in London these days.

Furthermore, it should be noted that SE has been chosen as the standard for social and political rather than linguistic reasons. SE was based on the kind of English that was spoken in the south-east Midlands area in England.

> This was a variety already achieving prominence, not on linguistic grounds but because of the region's role as the centre for learning, politics and commerce. If the political, social and commercial heart of England had been elsewhere, the current standard form of the language would look different, since it would have been based on a different English variety. (Thomas, Wareing, Stilwell Peccei, Thornborrow, & Jones, 2004, p. 177)

Once the standard variety had been chosen, the process of standardisation began. Scholars in England, mainly in the 18th century, codified the selected variety. In other words, they put together dictionaries and grammar books containing the vocabulary and the grammatical structures typical of this particular variety. Their decisions about what should be regarded as correct or incorrect were based on different kinds of rationale. The use of two negative structures, for instance, was deemed to be unacceptable on mathematical grounds. According to this logic, two negatives make a positive, so the sentence, *I didn't meet nobody* would, in fact, mean *I met somebody*. This, however, contradicts how users of English would interpret the sentence (Thomas et al., 2004). On the other hand, the rule prohibiting the use of the split infinitive as in *to boldly go* originates in the grammar of Latin where the infinitive, similarly to Hungarian, is a single word which cannot be divided. In the case of the split infinitive, however, it is possible to come across the split infinitive in the language use of highly educated speakers as the following quotation demonstrates: "One way forward, then, might be for researchers and teachers *to systematically identify* the various options available for correcting students' writing …" (Ellis, 2009, p. 97, my emphasis).

English grammar around the world

Changes in the grammar of English occur not only in time but in geographical terms as well. The global spread of English has given rise to a multitude of varieties with grammars of their own that have been influenced by the demands of local language use and other factors such as the indigenous languages spoken in a particular region. As a result, the rules of the use of English may vary greatly, depending on where and who speaks the language. The diversity coupled with the norm-developing efforts in not only first but second language environments (e.g., in former British colonies) have brought about varieties which are so independent of their ancestral home, Britain, that they are described as Englishes. In what follows, only a very small segment of different English grammars will be explored. For more detailed investigation, *World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching* by Kirkpatrick (2007) and *World Englishes* by Jenkins (2009) can serve as a convenient starting point.

The best-known case in point is American English where, in the process of breaking away from Britain not only politically but linguistically too, the regularisation and the standardisation of informal speech took place (Kirkpatrick, 2007). One of the many examples of the ridding of exceptions is the expression *by foot*, which is the American

equivalent of the British *on foot*. The American use of preposition follows the pattern of similar phrases such as *by air* and *by car*, thus eliminating the odd one out in order to arrive at the same form. Among many other features, the use of the present perfect also differs in American English. When something happened not long before the time of speaking, in British English the present perfect is used as in *She's just left*. In American, however, the simple past is preferred: *She just left* (Kövecses, 2000).

A variety with millions of speakers outside the countries where English is spoken as a native language is Indian English, which functions as an intranational lingua franca in a "baffling mosaic of multilingualism" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 89). Indian English, like many other new Englishes, has its own distinctive grammatical features which include, among other things, the use of articles, the universal question tag *isn't it* as well as the *yes/no* reversal as in the following example:

A: You have no objection?
B: Yes. (I have no objection) (Kachru, 1983, p. 13)

Another peculiarity of Indian English is the use of the present continuous in cases where the simple present is used in SE:

They are knowing the names.
We are having our house in Thana. (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 94)

Interestingly, the tendency to use the present continuous more frequently can be observed in British English as well. At the IATEFL conference in Exeter in 2008, for instance, there was a notable difference between the way native speaker and non-native speaker presenters introduced their papers. While most non-natives resorted to the *I am going to talk about* structure, native speaker presenters preferred the present continuous in the infinitive complement and said *I am going to be talking about …* (own example). The McDonalds slogan *I'm loving it* and the phrase *We've been hearing* used by newsreaders on British and American TV channels provide further evidence of the use of the present continuous in cases which were (and still are in ELT, especially in testing) until now forbidden territories. The interrogative word order in reported questions, a structure which is considered an error in ELT, is also common in Indian English. Therefore, the sentence *tell me where can you meet us* (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 94) is deemed as acceptable in the Indian variety of English.

Another continent where English is widely used, often as a lingua franca, is Africa which is "one of the most multilingual regions in the world with speakers of more than 1,300 languages" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 101). In Ghana, for example, English is a second language variety which co-exists with fifty local languages (Asante, 2012). Interestingly, features typical of Ghanaian English such as the different use of articles, invariant question tags, the answer to yes/no questions and the interrogative word order in reported questions can be found not only in Indian English (see above) but in other Englishes in Africa as well (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Similarly, the use of uncountable nouns as countable features is found

in Ghanaian as well as in other African varieties of English. This means that uncountable nouns can be used with the indefinite article as in *an advice*, and uncountable nouns take the plural form like *luggages*, *informations* and *advices*. Interestingly, Crystal notes that these erroneous forms were once part of the English language:

> Some people might think [the countable use of 'mass' nouns] 'un-English', but in fact *informations* was in English once: *an information* and *informations* can be traced back to Middle English, and are found in Chaucer, Shakespeare, Swift, and many other authors. It may only be a matter of time before they are back (as cited in Hall, Schmidtke and Vickers, 2013, p. 2)

Hall et al. (2013) argue that the use of uncountable nouns as countable has always been around since "English has never been a monolithic system of fixed forms, and multilingual or L2 users have been a part of its story from the very beginning" (p. 2). The conclusion of their investigation of countability in World Englishes is that although the ratio of countable usage is low, it is still higher than in countries where English is spoken as a native language.

What this research and other studies into different varieties of English reveal is that non-native speakers contribute at least as much to the development of the English language as their native counterparts – a claim forcefully put forward by English as a lingua franca (ELF) researchers (Seidlhofer, 2001, 2007; Widdowson, 2003). The analysis of the data provided by the VOICE project investigating ELF use confirms that those non-native speakers who use English in lingua franca contexts do not necessarily abide by native speaker norms and create their own rules. In terms of grammar this means, among other things, the following features:

- omitting the –s in the third person singular in the present simple tense;
- not using the definite/indefinite articles where they are required in SE and using them where they are not obligatory;
- using the relative pronouns *which* and *who* interchangeably;
- universal question tag (isn't it).

(Jenkins, Modiano & Seidlhofer, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2004)

As can be seen, some of these characteristics can be found in the grammar of other varieties of English. What is remarkable though is the fact that some features of non-native language use can be observed in almost all English language environments, including those where English is spoken as a mother tongue. For instance, the invariant question tag has replaced the standard variant form in Estuary English, the variety used by many young people in the south-east of England, where the universal question tag is *innit* (Eitler, 2006). This then necessarily raises the question whether SE question tags should be taught at all in ELT contexts. It seems that this is not the only dilemma teachers of English face as a result of the global use of English. The issue of how teachers can respond to the challenges of English in the 21st century is addressed in the next section.

Some pedagogical implications

Given the many varieties of English and the variation within different varieties, it seems that what once appeared to be a set of more or less fixed reference points, that is, grammar, has given way to a number of different systems with rules and patterns of their own. As a result, the difference between what learners of English experience in the classroom, where English is presented as a monolithic language (often for the sake of exams), and the diversity they encounter outside the classroom could not be more striking. How can teachers reconcile the diversity and changing nature of English with the need for stability and uniformity in the classroom context?

First of all, both teachers and learners need to be aware of the fact that the language they teach and learn is not real English but 'pedagogically modified English', a convenient abstraction designed to aid language learning. As a consequence, the English taught in ELT may as well be 'standard English English', since this is the variety that has been not only described and codified but has also been adapted to serve the needs of English language learners.

As for selecting a variety for language teaching purposes, Seidlhofer (2011) claims that any kind will do as long as its use involves the students' reality and engages them in the learning process. Kohn (2011) who, like Widdowson, views SE as an "empirical abstraction" and "prescriptive idealisation" (p. 75), argues that ELT should adopt a weak version of SE teaching which, rather than encouraging copying and cloning idealised SE speakers as with the strong version, should incorporate an SE model which allows learners to appropriate the language through developing their own English (Kohn, 2014).

Secondly, while teaching a variety of English which is used by a minority of native speakers, both teachers and learners have to be aware of the existence of the many varieties which are used all over the world. This can be achieved, among other things, through exposure to as many varieties and Englishes (Seidlhofer, 2007) as possible with the help of the Internet and other forms of contact. For teachers of English this means the necessity of developing a wider knowledge base about the language they teach (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015).

Thirdly, apart from realising that English is not one monolithic language, teachers and students have to come to terms with the fact that the pace at which English changes is fast and unprecedented. When exposed to various varieties of English, it is therefore important to keep one's finger on the pulse of the language, and notice as well as register the observed new features, uses and changes. A good way of raising awareness of the use of foreign languages including English outside the language classroom is carrying out linguistic landscape projects. The linguistic landscape comprises signs in public spaces such as billboards, shop names, advertisements, graffiti, messages on T-shirts, and so on (Sayer, 2009). Students can collect data in the form of photos, whether at home or abroad, and analyse the data, for instance, in reference to the target audience and the various meanings the signs convey (e.g., English is cool/fashionable/advanced, etc. Sayer, 2009). Such an investigation may also include noting the changes in the native-speaker use of grammar, as in the McDonalds "I'm loving it" slogan or in the sign above the checkout in a British supermarket (See Appendix 1). Collecting naturally occurring linguistic data and its analysis can then lead to the realisation that English perceived as "a

well-defined and self-enclosed entity with fully competent native speakers" (Widdowson, 2012, p. 19) is a pedagogic necessity and convenience which manifests itself as a much messier construct in the reality of actual language use outside the language class.

Furthermore, in order to replicate real-life grammaring, in language teaching a more context-sensitive and meaning-oriented approach should be taken. This entails that rather than being offered grammar in the form of the final product, the correct form in the right context, learners should be engaged in activities which require decision making regarding the amount and kind of grammar that they should use in particular contexts. These activities may include information gap tasks such as a pair of pictures with small differences or a series of pictures telling a story with different endings (Thornbury, 2001). Expanding news headlines and in so doing summarising the story, or disambiguating headlines or advertisements with more than one meaning can also make learners switch "from a lexical to a more grammatical mode" (Thornbury, 2001, p. 81). Similar tasks can be performed with text messages. In addition, students can be involved in drawing up the code of conduct of their school, which could give them the opportunity to understand and learn the use of modal verbs like *should*, *have* or *must*. For example, students can be asked to consider how seriously the rule to speak politely to everyone, including the caretaker and cleaners, should be taken: whether it should be an obligation with *must* to be used or a piece of advice in which case *should* is appropriate. Such tasks can enable learners to do grammar, in other words, to engage in grammaring, in the process of the creation of contextually appropriate grammar (Thornbury, 2001). Reading texts with situations that require certain grammatical structures can also be used for the contextual introduction of a new grammar item. The evergreen coursebook series *Access to English* has many texts which are suitable for this purpose. Below is an example which introduces reported speech while taking the (love) story of Arthur and Mary further:

> Mary and Arthur had to get into the detectives' car and drive to Middleford Police Station. They were taken into separate rooms and were asked a great many ques-tions. The police asked Mary once more where she had got the ring and she explained that she had been given it as an engagement ring by Bruce. The police were very interested in Bruce and they asked her when she had seen him last and where he lived. (Coles & Lord, 1975, p. 102)

Conclusion

If the intention in ELT is to approximate how grammar is employed in real-life language use, there has to be a shift of attention from grammar as a product with a focus on form to the process of exploiting grammar in combination with lexis and context in order to convey meaning. This change in perspective can result in a meaning-oriented conception of grammar expressing the most common concepts and experiences of the community of speakers of a particular language. In addition, if the wider context, the global spread and use of English, is to be taken into consideration in ELT, teachers' as well as learners' awareness of the diversity and changing nature of English has to be raised. Familiarity with what is happening in and to the English language outside the classroom may provide an opportunity to reconcile, to some extent, the differences that exist between the contexts of language use and teaching.

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Appendix 1

A comparison of two popular language examination methods

Ildikó Hock Némethné

Introduction

This paper raises awareness of major influences on language test performance and describes the findings of a small-scale study, which examined test-takers' perceptions of and results on two commonly applied methods used for testing reading comprehension in several B2 level accredited English language examinations in Hungary. It is commonly accepted that the scores on any test must be interpreted with care since they are not just an indication of the test taker's abilities that the test is purported to measure, but also that of test method facets. Therefore, in high-stakes tests, language performance is usually measured through various methods or task types in the belief that, by doing so, a strong method effect on test taker performance can be avoided. The actual question posed in the current study is whether this strong method effect applies to cases where test takers are clearly familiar with the employed methods, that is, the tasks to be completed in the test.

Literature review

Many studies in the professional literature (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hock, 2003) claim that the observed performance of a test taker is an indication of both their abilities (trait) and test method (task) characteristics. In other words, it is known that every test construction includes two major points: one is the *trait*, meaning the knowledge which is to be measured, and the other is the *method* referring to the task type or testing format by which the trait is assessed. The third factor that often influences test results is *measurement error*. Factors contributing to measurement error could be anxiety, ill health, excessive weariness, shyness, distractions, test-wiseness or even conferring or cheating on the part of the test takers during test administration. Further measurement error sources could relate to the testing environment (excessive noise, heat, stuffiness, etc.) or to the unreliability of either the rating or the elicitation procedures (e.g., lack of proper scoring criteria, unclear instructions, inconsistent examiner behaviour). One of the basic procedures of test validation is taking into account all the factors which may somehow have an impact on students' results. In order for these results to reflect test taker abilities (trait), we must try to minimise the effects of test method facets and those of measurement error on language test performance. In the case of high-risk tests, for instance, language proficiency examinations, both are required to be reduced to the possible minimum as part of the validation procedures. Scores from such language tests need to be generalisable, and decision makers need to be able to make fair decisions regarding test taker performance, more specifically, the test taker traits behind that performance.

In order to assess a given trait, many different methods or testing formats may be used and, as a result, each of them may affect the trait in a different way, which ultimately influences the test scores and hence the judgement of test taker performance. As a rule of thumb, very few test takers perform equally well on various tasks (methods) meant to assess the same trait and such multi-method mono-trait correlations usually do not exceed the 0.5 correlation coefficient (Anderson, Bachman, Perkins, & Cohen, 1991; Bachman & Palmer, 1981; Brütsch, 1979; Clifford, 1978, 1981; Fulcher & Marquez Reiter, 2003; Graesser, Hoffman, & Clark, 1980; Graves, Prenn, Earle, Thompson, Johnson, & Slater, 1991; Hock, 2003; Kintsch & Yarbrough 1982; Kobayashi, 2004; Lewkowicz 1983; Perkins & Brutten, 1993; Reder & Anderson 1980; Shohamy 1984; Shohamy & Inbar 1991). This basically means that even if the same abilities are claimed to be measured, when this is done through various task types or testing formats, the performance score on one task may not be an indicator of the scores on any other. In other words, whether test constructors use multiple-choice, true or false, open-ended questions or other testing formats, even if the same trait is measured, the coincidence between the results of the same test takers on different tasks will possibly not be higher than 50%. What accounts for this is partly the fact that various tasks may elicit various aspects of the trait and partly the finding that the method of elicitation clearly influences test taker performance. (e.g., Alderson, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Buck, 2001, Némethné Hock, 2010). Thus, in order to increase the validity and, therefore, the acceptability of test results in the public eye, that is, to make the public believe that test scores are indications of the trait and of nothing else, we must try to minimise the effect of test method characteristics on performance. Shohamy (1984) rightly states that a test is considered to be a good one if the method has little effect on the trait. In other words, if students' performance score on a test is the result of the trait being measured rather than that of the testing method, that test is considered to be a good measurement instrument.

With regard to reading comprehension, a large number of studies have shown how different test method characteristics affect performance (Alderson & Urquhart, 1988; Alderson, 2000; Elinor, 1997; Fulcher & Marquez Reiter, 2003; Hock 2003; Lewkowicz 1983; Shohamy 1984; Wolf, 1993). Alderson and Urquhart (1988, p. 179) concluded that "there is evidence of a strong method effect" when testing four groups of non-native students using Free-response and Gap-filling formats on five passages which varied in subject matter and difficulty level. Shohamy (1984) found that test methods influenced how readers performed on a test of reading comprehension and the effect was stronger on readers with low proficiency. Results of her study revealed that each of the test method characteristics (facets) produced different degrees of difficulty for test takers and that each of the variables, namely method, text and language, had a significant effect on students' performance on the test of reading comprehension.

With regard to the test format, most of the studies focussed on two commonly-used task types, open-ended or free-response and multiple-choice. Shohamy (1984), for example, asserted that in second language reading, multiple-choice formats were easier than open-ended formats. Wolf (1993) carried out a similar experiment and he also concluded that multiple-choice questions were easier than open-ended questions. In contrast, Elinor (1997) found that these two formats could be of similar difficulty. When examining three different methods (multiple-choice, free-response and cloze) which were used to

test the reading comprehension of non-native speakers of English, Lewkowich (1983) concluded that the correlations obtained between the different methods suggested that these "were measuring traits specific to the method in addition to a common trait or skills" (p. 47).

Némethné Hock (2010), in a validation study, looked at multi-trait-monomethod discriminant validity, which claims that correlations between tasks of the same trait should be higher than correlations between tasks of different traits measured by the same method. Among the many cases examined, she found two where the effect of method was fairly noticeable in tasks using the multiple-choice technique. In her study "grammar" and "vocabulary use" sub-tests were taken by undergraduate teacher trainees at a university in Hungary. They included items in full texts, designed to focus on a range of micro-skills related to the awareness and knowledge of advanced grammar structures and to the use of advanced vocabulary items. In the first sub-test, grammatical competence was measured in an indirect manner through tasks which have been long-established in testing practice: multiple-choice identification, multiple-choice completion, multiple-choice gap-filling, traditional grammar transformation and matching. She describes a "multitrait-multimethod convergent-discriminant construct validation" (p. 185) process, which provides a way of evaluating separately the contributions of traits and methods to test scores. For convergent validation, results from different test methods measuring the same trait were compared by checking the extent to which the results correlate. And indeed, the highest correlation figures were found to be the ones between the same methods of the same trait, followed by the figures showing the correlation between the two multiple-choice tasks – one used in the grammar, the other in the vocabulary use sub-test, thus measuring two different traits. The fairly high amount of shared variance between these two tasks then may have been affected by the common method (multiple-choice) of testing. The effect of method is thus fairly noticeable in tasks using the multiple-choice technique.

From the above it seems that test constructors must first look into the characteristics of each test format and then make the best decision for their choice. Although many versions and variations of multiple-choice have been used in language proficiency examinations over the years, more recently other task types like open-ended short answer questions and banking cloze seem to have been more popular. In Hungary, they are widely used for testing reading comprehension in many large-scale English language proficiency examinations. This study describes an experiment aimed at finding out the effect of these two test methods — short answer questions and banking cloze — on reading comprehension performance.

Before the discussion of the research findings in the field of test method effect on EFL reading comprehension tests, it is necessary to present a brief overview of the inherent properties of the two methods under scrutiny. In general, it can be stated that different types of open-ended comprehension questions require varying levels of reading skills and a varying amount and type of information to be extracted from the reading passage. If questions are asked about minor details or are related to local understanding, they do not require the reader to grasp the meaning of the whole text. Often, some questions touch upon the main themes of a text and require global understanding, but most of them normally prompt the reader to focus on specific ideas in the text.

One type of open-ended comprehension question is the so-called short answer questions (SAQ), which are free response items that require an answer of five or six words in response to a posed question. The employment of free-response format is seen as a process of constantly asking and answering questions inherent in the reading process and, therefore, parallel to an authentic task for testing reading skills. Furthermore, the candidate has to recall, search and use productive (writing) skills in order to provide an answer to free-response questions. In the short-answer version of this format, however, the number of words to be used in the answers is confined to five or six, to minimise the effect of productive skills on test taker performance.

In contrast, the procedure to be followed during a banking cloze (BC) task, where the readers have to match one out of a set of possible answers given in a box or word bank after the text, is less common in the authentic process of reading. It is often claimed that the most probable behaviour elicited by the banking cloze format is a recognition, identification or discrimination and selection pattern, for which no language production is required. Thus it seems that these two reading tasks make somewhat different demands on the test takers' skills (see Table 1 below for test method facets). Given these circumstances, the purpose of the current study is to detect whether these two commonly used testing formats (SAQ and BC) have an effect on reading comprehension performance provided that both techniques are well-known by candidates. For the purposes of this study, the reading comprehension text has been taken from a sample test offered on the internet by a Hungarian examination centre. The Centre has constructed and administered English language proficiency examinations accredited in Hungary for many years.

Methodology

Participants

In total, 42 Hungarian learners participating in a B2 level language preparatory course in a language school were asked to complete the reading comprehension tasks. The majority of them (27) were 16-20 years of age, and some (17) were young adults either between 21-30 (8) or between 31-40 (9); one learner was above 40, and another one was above 50. This set-up seems to be representative of the age ratio of candidates present in Hungarian accredited language proficiency examinations.

The reading comprehension tests were administered towards the end of the course and the participating students all had the intention to take a B2 level language proficiency examination in English after the course. Therefore, the assumption was that they were all around CEFR level B2. When asked about their perceptions of their own level of language proficiency, the average of the answers suggested a level very close to B2.

The text was the same with both tasks. The 42 learners were randomly divided into two groups (21 learners in each), with the students in one group taking the SAQ format first and the students in the other group taking the BC format first to cater for the text familiarity variable.

Materials

The text
The text used in the study was the input for a sample test available on the internet and prepared and calibrated for B2 level by the examination centre where the research was conducted. The topic of the text concerns computer hacking, a familiar issue for everyone in today's world. The length of the text is 196 words.

The tasks
The SAQ task was constructed by the examination centre and was used in the experiment in its original format (see Appendix 1). The BC task was developed to suit the same text (see Appendix 2). These response formats were included in the experiment because they were found to be common task types which both occur in the most popular accredited language examinations in Hungary to test reading comprehension at B2 level. It was ensured that the cloze items should test higher than sentence level comprehension and that the answers could not be guessed just by understanding the immediate co-text, that is, the immediately adjacent words or phrases. All the principles of task specifications for task developers were observed during task construction.

The number of items for both tasks was 10 and both response formats were set in English. Thus every effort was made to maximise the comparability of results across the two tests.

Bachman (1990) classifies test method facets into five categories: 1) testing environment; 2) test rubrics; 3) nature of input; 4) nature of expected response; and 5) interaction between input and response. According to Bachman (ibid.-), these factors can affect test performance so it is important for testers to be aware of their influences and, if possible, minimise them. Table 1 below gives a summary of these test method facets both with regard to BC and the SAQ task. In the last two boxes, the table also provides a list of underlying skills that the two tasks are purported to measure. The differences between the two tasks in terms of test method facets are marked in blue in Table 1 below.

Table 1**.** *Test method facets*

Characteristics	BC	SAQ
SETTING		
Physical setting **Participants** **Time of task**	Classroom Students b/w 16 & 51+ years of age around B2 level of LP at 10.00 / at 17.00 o'clock	Classroom Students b/w 16 & 51+ years of age around B2 level of LP at 10.00 / at 17.00 o'clock
RUBRIC		
Instructions	Language: L2 Channel: written Specification of procedures: task is clearly specified with an example linked to one part of the task; not too brief, not too lengthy	Language: L2 Channel: written Specification of procedures: task is clearly specified with an example linked to one part of the task; not too brief, not too lengthy

Structure	10 items	10 items
Time allotment	Power test (10-15 mins)	Power test (10-15 mins)
Criteria for correctness	Scoring method: Correct/ incorrect Marks are allocated for student's ability to match the right phrases to the corresponding parts / gaps in the text Explicit criterion for scoring	Scoring method: Correct / incorrect Marks are allocated for student's ability to answer comprehension questions according to the text Scoring criterion is left partly vague.
INPUT		
Format	Channel: visual / target language Length: a few paragraphs with 10 deletions + 14 three-four-word sentence fragments	Channel: visual / target language Length: a few paragraphs + 10 SAQs
Language of input	Not too long sentences with only a few subordinate clauses, clear use of reference words; textual coherence and clear organisation (temporal sequencing, main points clearly signalled and presented); explicit rather than implicit nature of information; text containing some specific vocabulary on a familiar and relevant topic; further vocabulary is of a more general nature; cultural references present	Not too long sentences with only a few subordinate clauses, clear use of reference words; textual coherence and clear organisation (temporal sequencing, main points clearly signalled and presented); explicit rather than implicit nature of information; text containing some specific vocabulary on a familiar and relevant topic; further vocabulary is of a more general nature; cultural references present
EXPECTED RESPONSE		
Type of response	Selected response Channel: visual / target language Length: 10 items	Limited written production Channel: visual / target language Length: 10 times max 6 words
Level of authenticity	low	from moderate to high
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INPUT AND RESPONSE		
reactivity	Non-reciprocal	Non-reciprocal
scope of relationship	8 items are sentence-based (from narrow to broad)	6 items are textually explicit and sentence-based others are implicit
directness of relationship	direct	direct

UNDERLYING SKILLS TESTED	
B/C	SAQ
- Using contextual cues to understand word meanings/ sentence meanings/ paragraph meaning/ text message - perceive relationships of ideas (spatial, temporal) -understanding the role of discourse markers, cohesive devices - interpret coherent paragraphs - knowledge of the world - recognising relevant points - selecting main ideas - making inferences, drawing conclusions - read critically - vary reading strategies	- Using contextual cues to understand word meanings/ sentence meanings/ paragraph meaning/ text message - perceive relationships of ideas (spatial, temporal) -understanding the role of discourse markers, cohesive devices - interpret coherent paragraphs - knowledge of the world - recognising relevant points - selecting main ideas - making inferences, drawing conclusions - read critically - vary reading strategies - ability to give an answer of five/six words in response to a posed question on text comprehension

Procedures

Apparently, the validity of any test applying two testing formats to match the same text can be questioned for reasons of text familiarity that may influence test results. Although in this current study the same text was used with both tasks, all the students in both groups received both tasks, with one group completing the SAQ task first and the BC second and with the other group taking the two tasks in the reverse order to eliminate the effect of text familiarity from the analysis of performance results. The amount of time provided for test taking was the same as in the live examination (approx. 15 mins) in both cases. After taking the second task, the participants were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 4) on their perceptions connected to task difficulty, task preference, familiarity with the task and relevance of task to reading comprehension level. The questionnaire was administered in Hungarian to avoid misunderstandings (see Hungarian version of the questionnaire in Appendix 3).

Table 2 below summarises the main results of the answers as given by the two participating groups. Group 1 took the BC task first, and Group 2 took the SAQ task first.

Table 2. *Perceptions of tasks by Groups 1 and 2*

GROUPS	TASK DIFFICULTY (Question 9)	TASK PREFERENCE (Question 17)	FAMILIARITY WITH TASK (Question 18)	RELEVANCE OF TASK TO RC LEVEL (Q 24)
1. BC + SAQ	BC – 52% SAQ – 24%	BC – 38% SAQ – 33%	AROUND 10 OR MORE SUCH TASKS	BC – 10% SAQ – 48%
2. SAQ + BC	SAQ – 43% BC – 33%	SAQ – 43% BC – 48%		SAQ – 57% BC – 10%
TOTAL	**BC – 48% SAQ – 34%**	**BC – 43% SAQ – 38%**		**BC – 10% SAQ – 53%**

BC=Banking cloze SAQ=Short answer questions RC=reading comprehension LP=language proficiency

Results

Contrary to intuitive thinking, the SAQ task did not prove to be more difficult than the BC according to test takers' perceptions. Fifty-two percent of the respondents in Group 1, in which they took the BC task first, perceived it to be more difficult than the SAQ task and only 24% thought the opposite, while the rest considered these two tasks to be of approximately the same level of difficulty. In Group 2 (their results are marked in blue ink in Table 2 above), however, where the SAQ task was taken first, 43% of the respondents claimed that it was more difficult than the BC, while 33% claimed the opposite. Naturally, the rest (24%) considered the two tasks equally difficult. As is clear from the above, perception of task difficulty is more a function of unfamiliarity with text than that of testing format provided that the testing formats used are familiar to all the test takers. Students in both groups had completed, on average, more than 10 such tasks before they took this test (see the fifth column in Table 2 above) since this was part of their syllabus on the language examination preparatory course they were attending. Consequently, both groups found the task through which they first met the text more difficult.

When asked about their task preference, both groups favoured BC as a testing format saying that it did not require any productive language use only recognition, identification, discrimination and selection of the right language chunks; therefore, it is "more comfortable" to take. Although BC as a task was preferred by both groups, they also acknowledged that SAQ were more relevant for testing their level of reading comprehension. On the whole, 53% of the participants claimed that SAQ better reflected their comprehension of the text than BC. Only 10% said the opposite, while 37% of the respondents thought that both tasks served this purpose equally well. This way, they tended to justify the employment of SAQ in reading comprehension tests as a fairly authentic measure, which backs up the face validity of the task.

Table 3 below shows the students' mean scores on the reading test for the two different response formats, respectively. It also features the minimum and the maximum scores, and the median and the mode for both tasks and for both groups. The median is the score that is right in the middle of student rankings. In other words, if one puts the

students' scores in a rank order, the median is the score that is right in the middle of this list. The mode is the score achieved by most students. For instance, if there are five students who got score 7 and all the other scores were gained by a lower number of students then the mode is 7. The mean, the mode and the median are all very informative figures because they show the central tendency in the results of the test.

In Table 3, below the headings, the first and the fourth rows show the results of Group 1, where the BC was taken first and the SAQ task second (this is also indicated by the numbers before the task names), whereas the second and the third rows show the results of Group 2, by whom the SAQ task was taken first and the BC second. The figures in brackets indicate the number of test takers achieving the given results. The next two rows feature task totals, that is, the total results concerning all the test takers first on the BC then on the SAQ, while the last two rows depict group totals, that is, the total results on both tasks of Group 1 (in blue) and of Group 2, with regard to each statistical measure.

Table 3**.** *Comparison of scores on tasks across groups*

GROUP	MEAN	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEDIAN	MODE
1. BC	6.143	1 (2)	9 (5)	7	9 (5)
2. BC	8.095	3 (1)	10 (8)	9	10 (8)
1. SAQ	7.381	3 (2)	10 (2)	8	9 (7)
2. SAQ	6.857	1 (1)	10 (1)	8	8 / 9 (5)
BC TOTAL	**7.12**	**1 (2)**	**10 (8)**	**8**	**9 (8)**
SAQ TOTAL	**7.12**	**1 (1)**	**10 (3)**	**8**	**9 (12)**
1. BC+SAQ TOTAL	6.5	1 (3)	10 (1)	7	9 (10)
2. SAQ+BC TOTAL	7.738	3 (3)	10 (10)	8	9 / 10 (10)

BC = Banking cloze SAQ= Short answer questions

As shown in Table 3, when mean performances by all the students in the two groups are compared on the two tasks (and familiarity as a variable is excluded), the comparison shows exactly the same results for the SAQ as for the BC. The scores gained by test takers on the two response formats show that there is not much difference between the two test methods since they yielded exactly the same results. In other words, there are no significant differences among the scores elicited by the two different testing formats through which test takers demonstrated their level of comprehension of the text. This is also attested to by all the rest of the statistical measures. Not only do the BC and the SAQ formats happen to have the same medians and modes, they have exactly the same mean scores, namely 7.2 on a 0-10 point scale. This may suggest that when reading comprehension is assessed through open-ended SAQ or BC, it does not matter which kind of response format is used since the task type itself will not considerably influence the results, given the fact that the test takers have approximately the same level of language proficiency and that they have all completed many such tasks before. It can be tentatively stated that this result may be due to the fact that candidates had had an extensive practice of both methods before they took the test. In other words, it can be claimed that test performance in this case is not affected by the varying response formats.

Table 3 also shows that both on the BC task and on the SAQ task the mean scores were higher in the groups that took that task second, which is clearly a result of familiarity with the text. In other words, reading comprehension performance as measured by either the BC or the SAQ format was more influenced by familiarity with the text than by the test methods employed.

Also, an analysis of the scores on the two tests shows that two such tasks with identical content (same text), but different formats (two different methods) may yield the same measures of the same trait if test takers are highly familiar with the given formats.

Conclusion

The results of this small-scale study suggest that the effect of test method on test taker performance may be eliminated if test takers are well informed about the tasks through which their abilities are measured in the live test and if they get good initial practice of these tasks. We can now tentatively claim that performance on any test would be more profoundly affected by test method facets were these methods completely unknown to test takers. Familiarity with task may also reduce the level of measurement error and thus it facilitates comparability of results across task types.

The above finding may underline the importance of test specifications for potential test takers in which a detailed description of the testing techniques, that is, the tasks, is to be provided. Meticulous practice of the task types may lead to a partial or, in the case of these two tasks, a full elimination of the method effect on test performance. A full knowledge of the examination methods or techniques will thus become part of the construct description in the test specifications, in addition to a detailed list of all the possible sub-skills and abilities that contribute to a trait.

Test specifications are obligatory to observe for test designers, test users, test evaluators and all individuals who are, in one way or another, involved in designing and using the test or its results. A detailed description of the task types through which a trait such as reading comprehension is to be measured in the live examination seems to be an imperative for all high-stakes testing procedures. Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) argue that test specifications act as a blueprint to the design, administration and use of the tests thus contributing to their construct validity. The results of the current experiment lead one to think that making test specifications public is highly recommended for all examination centres and relating to them is obligatory for all potential test takers and teachers preparing their learners for proficiency language examinations. In other words, this study once more proves the mandatory nature of test specifications in the processes of designing, administering and using tests for decision making, which involves individuals including item writers, test developers, test users and the whole society at large, especially with high-stakes tests. This pertains to the value implications of tests which can determine, in one way or another, the future of an individual.

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Appendix 1

Task 1

Read the following text and answer the questions in English. Use maximum six words. The first one has been done for you as an example. Please write your answers in the table below.

Maximum score: 10 points

Hackers tried to steal hundreds of millions from bank, court told

An international gang plotted to steal £229 million from customers' accounts at a leading bank by hacking into computers, a court was told yesterday.

A security supervisor smuggled two Belgian computer hackers into the London offices of Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation by pretending that they were friends who had arrived for a game of cards. The hackers installed spy software that recorded employees' names and passwords at the bank's European headquarters in the heart of the City.

They visited the offices several times to retrieve the security information before returning one weekend to transfer the money to accounts controlled by accomplices in Spain. When Sumitomo Banking staff arrived at work on Monday morning, they found that their computers had been tampered with, the jury was told.

The scheme was foiled because the hackers failed to fill in a field used to make money transfers.

When the security supervisor was challenged by a colleague about the visitors, he claimed that they were friends who had come over for a game of poker, the court was told. He was arrested on the day that the plot was discovered.

1.	2.	0.	How much money did the gang want to steal?	*229 million pounds*
		1.	Who did the gang want to steal the money from?	
		2.	What general method did they want to follow?	
		3.	Who took part in the offence?	
		4.	What is the connection between London and the Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation?	
		5.	What data did they need to achieve their aim?	
		6.	Where did they want to transfer the money from?	
		7.	Who uncovered the plan?	
		8.	What did they notice?	
		9.	What did hackers forget to do?	
		10.	What happened to the security supervisor?	

Appendix 2

Task 2

Read the following text and complete the sentences with the 10 phrases on page 4. Mind that there are three extra phrases that you do not need! The first one has been done for you as an example. Please write your answers in the table below.

Max. score: 10 points

Hackers tried to steal hundreds of millions from bank, court told

An international gang (0) plotted to steal £229 million from customers' accounts at a leading bank (1) _____computers, a court was told yesterday.

A security supervisor smuggled two Belgian computer hackers into the London offices of Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (2) _____ they were friends who had arrived for a game of cards. The hackers (3) _____ that recorded employees' names and passwords at the bank's European headquarters in the heart of the City.

They visited the offices several times (4) _____ information before returning one weekend (5) _____to accounts controlled by accomplices in Spain. When Sumitomo Banking staff (6) _____on Monday morning, they found that their computers (7) _____, the jury was told.

The scheme was foiled because the hackers failed (8)_____ used to make money transfers.

When the security supervisor was (9) _____about the visitors, he claimed that they were friends who (10) _____for a game of poker, the court was told. He was arrested on the day that the plot was discovered.

A. by realising the reason why
B. to transfer the money
C. had been tampered with
D. challenged by a colleague
E. by hacking into
F. arrived at work
~~G.~~ plotted to steal
H. entered software data
I. had come over
J. by pretending that
K. to cooperate with the accomplices
L. to retrieve the security
M. installed spy software
N. to fill in a field

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.

Appendix 3

Test Takers' Questionnaire

1. Név
2. Életkor 1. 16-20 2. 21-30 3. 31-40 4. 41-50 5. 51+
3. Milyen iskolatípusban érettségizett? 1. gimnázium 2. szakközépiskola 3. szakiskola 4. egyéb: ……
4. Mi a munkaköre? 1. ……
5. Hány éve tanul angolul? 1. 3-4 éve 2. 5-6 éve 3. 7-8 éve 4. egyéb ……
6. Milyen érzései voltak a feladatokkal kapcsolatban? 1. kifejezetten negatív 2. inkább negatív 3. semmilyen 4. inkább pozitív 5. kifejezetten pozitív
7. Érthetőek voltak az utasítások? 1. Nem 2. Részben 3. Igen
8. Csinált már hasonló feladatokat korábban? 1. Nem 2. Igen
9. Hasonló nehézségű volt a két feladat? 1. Igen 2. a kiegészítés nehezebb volt 3. a válaszadós nehezebb volt
10. Milyennek ítéli meg a kiegészítéses feladat nehézségi szintjét? 1. nagyon nehéz 2.nehéz 3.sem nehéz, sem könnyű 4. inkább könnyű 5. nagyon könnyű
11. Számított-e a kiegészítéses feladat megoldásában az, hogy már ismerős volt a szöveg? 1. nem 2. néhol 3. igen, ez megkönnyítette a feladatot
12. Voltak válaszai, ahol tippelt? 1. igen, szinte mindig 2. igen, gyakran 3. igen, egy-két helyen 4. nem
13. Milyennek ítéli meg a válaszadós feladat nehézségi szintjét? 1. nagyon nehéz 2.nehéz 3.sem nehéz, sem könnyű 4. inkább könnyű 5. nagyon könnyű
14. Számított-e a válaszadós feladat megoldásában az, hogy már ismerős volt a szöveg? 1. nem 2. néhol 3. igen, ez megkönnyítette a feladatot
15. Voltak válaszai, ahol tippelt? 1. igen, szinte mindig 2. igen, gyakran 3. igen, egy-két helyen 4. nem
16. Önnél általában számít a feladat típusa az eredményben? 1. nem, soha 2. igen, bizonyos feladatoknál 3. igen 4. egyéb ……..
17. A két feladattípus közül melyiket kedveli jobban? 1. a kiegészítőset 2. a válaszadósat 3. mindegy 4. egyéb ……..
18. Hány hasonló feladatot oldott meg korábban? 1. 0-3 2. 4-6 3. 7-9 4. 1 0+
19. Melyik feladattípusban szokott jobban teljesíteni? 1. a kiegészítősben 2. a válaszadósban 3. mindegy 4. egyéb ……
20. Mit gondol, tükrözheti-e a kiegészítéses feladat eredménye az Ön valós nyelvtudását? 1. nem 2. részben 3. igen 4. egyéb ……
21. Kérem, röviden indokolja meg válaszát! ……
22. Mit gondol, tükrözheti-e a válaszadós feladat eredménye az Ön valós nyelvtudását? 1. nem 2. részben 3. igen 4. egyéb ……
23. Kérem, röviden indokolja meg válaszát! …… ……
24. Ön szerint melyik feladat eredménye tükrözheti jobban a szöveg megértésének szintjét? 1. a kiegészítős 2. a válaszadós 3. mindegyik 4. egyéb ……
25. Hogyan ítéli meg saját nyelvtudásának szintjét? 1 alapszint 2 alap-közép közötti szint 5 középfok szintje 7 felsőfok szintje -- | ---------- | ---------- | ---------- | ---------- | ---------- | ---------- | --

EFL students' experience of English-speaking communities

Donald W. Peckham

Introduction

When I as a teacher of English and instructor in an English language programme consider the experience of my students, I find that I know very little about how they are using English outside of the classroom, yet these experiences of using English are vital to their development as users of English. Over the past decades many claims have been made concerning the importance of language use, interaction, and community in guiding foreign language learning beginning with the claims of communicative language teaching and the importance of using language to learn language (Littlewood, 1981) to current usage-based views of the development of linguistic competence (e.g., Hall, An, & Carlson, 2006) and the importance of communities – particularly communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – in creating conditions for learning. As will be argued below, although students surely use English in a variety of ways, it is their participation in communities of English speakers which can potentially provide important contexts for meaningful language learning and use. The present study will address this issue by reporting on the results of a survey of students which considers student participation in possible communities of English speakers. As such it is my attempt to understand more about how my students are engaged with English outside the classroom in possible communities of English users.

Learning through participation in communities has been documented beginning with Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998), and this work has been continued in applied linguistics. On this view, communities of practice can form around a variety of sites, for example, workplaces, clubs, schools, churches or other groups where members of the community share a common purpose, a set of practices and knowledge. Learning potentially happens when experts and novices engage in common practices in the community. Beyond the second language acquisition research which has extensively looked at learning through interaction (e.g., Mackey, 2007), applications of this perspective have recently been made to the development of identity (Block, 2007) and also to language learning in specific communities (e.g., Ehrenreich, 2009; Kalocsai 2009). Furthermore, usage-based views on linguistic competence have proposed that language knowledge comes about through the experience of language in specific contexts, basically proposing that our language knowledge is the sum of our experience with language rather than a system of discrete grammatical rules (Hall et al., 2006, p. 229). This theory of language use then, combined with the concept of communities of practice, can provide an explanation for why communities can be potential centres of language learning.

Thus, recent research leads to an interest in communities involving language learning and language use. For me as an instructor, two questions arise concerning this: what communities do students report participating in, and what kind of experience with English do they have in these communities?

Method

Participants in the study were 217 Hungarian university English majors in their second or third years. All students were either enrolled in the 3-year BA English or American studies, or were English teacher trainees in the new four- or five-year BA + MA programs in the same institute. The average years of experience with English for the group was 11.5 years, ranging from 4 years to 20 years. Most of the participants also had quite a wide language learning experience beyond English. Sixty percent had at least some experience with a second foreign language, and 35% had experience with a third, fourth or even fifth foreign language.

Data for this project comes from a larger project on L2 identity and motivation (Peckham, in press). For this current project, data was used from the participant personal data questionnaire of the previous study, which was originally used to select participants for interviews, but in this case also yielded useful data on its own. The data analysed for the current study is the single item: "Have you ever felt like you are a part of a 'community of English speakers'? If yes, when and under what conditions?" In the orally given directions for the questionnaire, "community" was informally described as a sense of belonging to a group of people whether or not they are close at hand or far away. The questionnaire was in English and participant responses were written in English. The data was analysed by categorising the participants' answers into five broad groups based on the source of their community experience. This was done using a bottom-up approach, letting the data itself suggest the different emerging themes of community experience through a content analysis of the data (Dörnyei, 2007).

The data presented below shows that students were able to report on a wide variety of experiences concerning potential communities of English. It is important, though, to mention two caveats concerning this data and its interpretation. First, it is impossible to know for certain if students' responses on the survey do indeed represent experiences of an actual kind of community. Second, it is, moreover, certainly impossible to establish whether or not these instances could be considered a real community in the sense of a "community of practice". The few studies which have been done on communities of practice among language learners (e.g., Ehrenreich, 2009; Kalocsai, 2009, 2014) have required extensive research involving months of observation and participation in these groups. In short, it is not possible to claim with certainty that actual instances of community have been uncovered through the limited amount of data gathered for this project.

Nevertheless, the consistency with which participants are able to report on these experiences points to the possibility that what students are reporting on has to do with a feeling of common experience through using English in real or virtual groups. At the very least, students are reporting a feeling of connection with other speakers of English across a variety of contexts. And, given the established potential that communities have for being sites and vehicles for learning, particularly for language learning, these responses by students are important to consider. In the end, for the purposes of this study this limited amount of data is useful in establishing some basic understanding of how a particular group of students may be engaged with communities of other learners outside the classroom.

Results and discussion

As can be seen in Table 1, two-thirds of the participants reported that they had experienced some sort of community of English speakers. Five categories of sources of community were located through the analysis of participant comments and responses, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Sources where participants reported experiencing a sense of a "community" of English speakers*

Source of community	Number of students (n=217)	Percentage
No community:	72	33%
Local:	37	17%
School:	33	15%
With native speakers or in an English-speaking country:	28	13%
Abroad, but not in an English-speaking country:	27	12%
Online:	16	7%
Response unclear:	4	2%

Note: percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Local

The largest source of community reported in Table 1 was analysed as "local" and involved using English and meeting people outside of the classroom, not on-line, and not specifically abroad, as can be seen in the following examples of comments made by participants concerning their experience of communities of English speakers:

(1) I sing in a choir in Kecskemét. It is held at the Kodály Institute, where I befriended a colourful palette of English-speaking international students, solely by sharing the language.

(2) Especially in those situations when I meet people from other parts of the world and I realise that we can communicate with each other because English is a link between us.

(3) Yes, in the couchsurfing community: almost everyone knows some English, most people communicate in English fairly well and are not bothered by other people's mistakes. It's all about understanding each other.

The examples in this category refer to experiences between non-native speakers of English. This was also explicitly identified as a feature of these groups by other participants:

(4) I guess I'm part of a community who uses English as a lingua franca, so when I'm talking to friends who use it as a lingua franca.

(5) When I talk with people who write and speak in English when it's not their mother tongue I always have a sense of belonging.

Data from this, the most common category, highlights the fact that when English is used by a non-native speaker, it is likely that it is being used with another non-native speaker (Crystal, 2003). Furthermore, Example 3 shows that at least some of these students recognised that interaction between non-native speakers involves skills such as accommodation between speakers, a feature of English as a lingua franca interaction (Cogo, 2009).

These examples show that there are meaningful opportunities to use English outside the classroom within Hungary involving at least temporary community experience. Moreover, it may be the case that these communities operate by different rules than the communities of native speakers that learners of English are exposed to in course books and popular media. If one accepts the proposition that communities are sites for learning (Wenger, 1998), then these potential communities of non-native speakers provide a context for both using and learning English.

Finally, in the category of local communities, participants also gave examples of abstract, virtual and imagined English-based communities that they feel they are a part of:

(6) I often feel it for example when I think or read in English.

(7) Every time I do something in English, e.g., watch a video and/or read the comments, I feel like I'm part of those people who can do that.

At these moments, even though the person may be alone, they still report feeling connected into the larger community of English speakers. This is in line with the findings

of Hungarian research on motivation using the L2 motivational self perspective which has shown that learners' orientation towards a virtual community can be interpreted as expressing integrative motivation (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006).

These examples of the local experience of community suggest that without leaving one's country or city – or even one's desk – meaningful experiences of English-based communities can be experienced.

School

The second largest source of community experience reported in this study is schools, including secondary schools and higher education. This data highlights that schools are not only contexts for learning, but provide a source of an English-speaking community for many students. This is reflected in the following examples:

> (8) In high school there was a drama class where students had to speak in English and they/we also had to do the performances in English.
>
> (9) In high school, most of the people in our circle of friends spoke English quite fluently and well; we discussed and joked about things in English on a daily basis.

In Examples 8 and 9, students refer to a sense of community being created in schools in situations where English is actually used for a communicative purpose. Similar to the local examples above, a sense of community is experienced through putting the language to use with others. This experience also extends to university classrooms and lecture halls as the following examples show:

> (10) In seminars where we get a chance to debate in English I feel like we are a part of a special English speaking group.
>
> (11) I felt it when I was in language seminars, with my group mates, and when we were arguing about things, but I also feel it when I'm on an English lecture.

With examples like the above, it can be seen that at least for some students a sense of community can come from using and learning English in secondary schools and universities both inside and outside of class. Schools and classrooms can thus be powerful sources of community experience which provide additional stimulus for learning and using English.

Experience with native speakers/in native speaking countries

The third most common reported experience of community involves experience with native speakers or in native speaking countries. Examples 12 and 13 show long-term experience working and living in England.

(12) I spent half a year in England, I worked as a babysitter and lived with an English family. There I was a member of the Anglican Church community too.

(13) I have been living in England for two years. First I felt this way when I went to school there, and next time when I was working there.

Example 12 is particularly interesting as it mentions the participation in two areas where community bonds are formed and developed through language, the family and the church. This and Example 13 show what might be considered the idealised experience of a language learner abroad, where students go abroad to practise the language through interaction with native speakers (DeKeyser, 2007). Examples 14 and 15, below, also point to the importance that native speakers have for some students.

(14) When I visit a country in which English is a native language.

(15) In high school I had the chance to welcome students from Great Britain. This was the first occasion I spoke to a native speaker.

For the student in Example 14, the contrast appears to be made between those centres where English is used by native speakers and everywhere else in the world where English is used, suggesting that he or she feels community in the inner circle countries (Kachru & Nelson, 1996), rather than in the periphery. Example 15 is a reminder that students do not need to travel to have contact with native speakers, but that it can be experienced at home, too.

The above four examples can be considered the traditional experience with native speakers, but it is obvious that the centres of native speaker English are also richly multicultural and multilingual areas where students are perhaps just as likely to be speaking English with other non-natives, as is shown in Examples 16 and 17.

(16) I was living with a nice English family, also spent a good amount of time with friends from all over the world.

(17) I spent my whole summer in England; I worked at a factory where the majority of the workers were Polish. Then I felt like I belong to those workers who speak English.

Example 16 shows a student not only participating in a community with a family, but possibly also finding connections with other foreigners who might be sharing similar experiences. Thus, while interaction with native speakers is a possibility in these contexts, in the end, the students become contributors themselves to the developing multiculturalism and multilingualism of the area. This is also apparent in Example 17, though it is unclear whether the student was showing solidarity with the Poles as fellow non-native speakers of English or solidarity with natives against those who are not using English.

Furthermore, students noted what the experience is like when using English with other non-natives, as is seen in Example 18.

(18) When I was in London for a week, I met a lot of foreign college students at my hostel where I stayed. During smoking and talking together it made me feel great! Something that is hard to describe: communicating in a common language which is not my native language, but I wasn't paying attention to my grammar, but we talked fluently.

What is described here is an English as a lingua franca context where English is used by non-native speakers as a common language, and it is intriguing that out of all of the experiences with English during a week in London, this English as a lingua franca experience is the one the student chooses to mention concerning community rather than interaction with native speakers, as might be traditionally expected.

Thus, the experience abroad in countries where English is spoken by a large number of people as a native language does open up opportunities for students to experience community through language use, and this experience may indeed involve both using English as a lingua franca as well as interaction with native speakers themselves.

Abroad but not in an English-speaking country

The fourth most commonly reported community-like experiences are those abroad but outside of native-speaking countries, as indicated in Table 1. These are by their very nature most likely experiences with other non-native speakers of English. Several examples can be provided to give a sense of the experience that students reported they had:

(19) I first felt I was belonging to a "community of English speakers" last summer when I stayed in Poland for two weeks and was part of an international group of students. English was our language of communication and it created a sense of "coherence" between group members.

(20) I felt it when I attended a conference this year in Amsterdam, where [there] were people from lots of different countries and our common language was English, and we could talk about anything, and we all understood the others.

Examples 19 and 20 are excellent examples of using English for a common purpose among groups of people who are together for a relatively longer period of time, and as such they are indeed good candidates for real experiences of communities, or even communities of practice. It is also important to mention that in both cases, the students note the quality of the experience such as how English provided "coherence", in Example 19, and how English gave them a successful common vehicle for communication, in Example 20. Experiences abroad in English may also be relatively long term, as shown in the following examples of students spending a semester abroad:

(21) In 2011 when I lived in Denmark. We spoke mostly English, I can't speak any Danish, I lived there like half a year, 6 month.

(22) In Italy with the roommates and with other Erasmus students we were communicating in English.

In the above two examples participants were spending a semester abroad, thus potentially giving them long-term experience using English in those contexts.

On-line experiences

The final category of responses concerns on-line experiences of community, which account for the smallest amount of the data as shown above in Table 1. Students reported on a variety of on-line experiences, many of which appear to refer to long-term on-line communities.

> (23) I'm part of an online community of Android developers and you can find us on [...]
>
> (24) I was part of a fan-video making community on You Tube when I was younger. We bonded over using Disney and other animated films for music videos. Nowadays I feel more a part of fanart communities and fandoms.

In the above two examples, the students can exactly identify the communities that they were a part of, even giving the web address where they can be found, as in Example 23. Example 24 is interesting because of the history of involvement with on-line communities that the student shows.

Examples 25 and 26, below, give some texture to the experiences that students have using English in on-line communities:

> (25) As I've mentioned before, I visit a gaming/chatting site where I've met some great people who I am keeping contact with outside that site; they even help me with my studies occasionally. I've known them for 3 years now and we form a kind of community.
>
> (26) I play an online computer game where my teammates are from different countries, so we use English as a "common language" in order to solve communication problems.

Example 25 shows a long-term group which has grown beyond their initial purpose. Finally, Example 26 once again notes the use of English as a lingua franca. These on-line communities, then, are important for these students and potentially provide them with rich, long-term opportunities for experiencing communities involving or centred around using English.

Conclusions and implications

I feel that several broad points can be made concerning my students and their possible experience of communities which centre around English.

First, the majority of the students who participated in the study can report having experienced a community of English speakers of various kinds and durations. Furthermore, if indeed communities are key places where language knowledge is developed and learned (Hall et al., 2006), then these experiences are potentially quite valuable and significant for language learners.

Second, while some of the more expected sources of community appeared in the students' responses – such as being part of a group abroad or speaking with native speakers – a sense of community coming from school and experience in the classroom is the second most common response. School and English classes, then, for many of these participants are not just a place where knowledge is gained and certificates are obtained, but a place where memorable and important experiences of community with others is found. In this sense, EFL classrooms are not only preparing students for using English later, somewhere else, but are creating contexts where English is being used in a meaningful and important way right now. This implies that classrooms have great potential which go beyond what may be the immediate goals presented to students in the syllabus.

Furthermore, this data shows that students need not go abroad to have a meaningful, community-based experience using English. Of the students who report experiencing community, nearly 60% of them did not need to leave home or go abroad to have this experience. Meaningful language use and even experience with real or virtual communities of English speakers is available here and now. Students do not need to wait until a later time in some other location when they can use English, and there is great potential for this experience to be encouraged and validated in the classroom.

Finally, the character and type of experience reported on by the majority of participants in the study is an experience of English as a lingua franca. Almost all communities reported on in the data involve non-native speakers communicating to each other. This implies, then, that along with teaching the features of Standard English – something which is undoubtedly important for these students and their futures as English users – teachers and programmes could also consider helping to prepare students for the reality of using English as a lingua franca. Thus, these experiences could be validated, exploited and encouraged by instructors, who are very likely to have had the same experiences themselves.

A sense of community coming from using English has great potential in motivating students, helping them develop a vision of themselves as speakers of English and giving students a meaningful field of action concerning the language which not only enhances their learning but may be an essential context for learning. As this introductory study has hopefully helped indicate, community and the use of language reported in the study are something that perhaps the majority of students experience at one time or another. Awareness of these events and their potential is in the interests of all language users.

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Research into bilingual education in Hungary at nursery and primary school level

Laura Furcsa, Annamária Sinka and Rita Szaszkó

Introduction

The question of when and under what circumstances and with which methods a child should start learning a foreign language has been fiercely debated in Hungary. These debates are often emotionally charged and lack professional arguments. For the purposes of this paper, two main facts need to be emphasised. Hungary, as opposed to most of the countries in the world, is a predominantly monolingual country (Navracsics, 2000) where 99% of the Hungarians are most likely to use the official language, Hungarian, as their mother tongue, and there are relatively few bilingual or trilingual persons living in this country (European Commission, 2012). In addition, foreign language teaching in Hungarian public education has never focused on the early years (i.e., before the age of 10); therefore, a very small number of adults living in Hungary have first-hand experience of early foreign language education (Medgyes & Miklósy, 2000). In the past, most Hungarians usually began learning a foreign language at the age of 10 or 11 in primary school (in grade 4), and many of them had to cope with the difficulties of the Russian language, which was taught mostly through the grammar-translation method even though some of the Russian teaching course books in the 1980s adopted a communicative approach.

The level of foreign language knowledge of Hungarians is one of the lowest in the European Union, which indicates that there must be serious problems in the teaching of languages in Hungary (European Commission, 2012). According to the 2012 Eurobarometer survey, Hungary is among the countries where respondents are the least likely to speak a foreign language. In Hungary 65% of the population does not speak any foreign language. Only 20% of Hungarians are able to speak a foreign language in contrast to the rest of the EU, where at least half of the people can speak a language other than their mother tongue. It must be noted, however, that in the Eurobarometer survey, the participants from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face at home. This method of research is largely influenced by the self-assessment competence of the respondents as they have to estimate their own foreign language proficiency.

Szénay's (2005) study investigated the foreign language competences of Hungarians using tests and the results also identify serious deficiencies in the mastery of foreign languages. The research revealed that 45% of Hungarians aged between 15 and 44 have a minimal level and 30% have a low level of foreign language knowledge. These findings may be explained by several reasons, for example, the unique structure and vocabulary of the Hungarian language, the methodological shortcomings of language teaching in Hungary (Nikolov, 2011), or the lack of coherent language strategies (Medgyes & Miklósy, 2000). In our view, the long neglected situation of early language education may also contribute to the low level of foreign language skills and competences in Hungary.

This paper investigates bilingual language education in Hungary focusing on children aged between three and ten. The theoretical section summarises the relevant characteristics and the latest research findings of early language learning. The results of two empirical research projects conducted by researchers of the language pedagogy research group at a Hungarian university are then presented. The first study (Furcsa & Sinka, 2014) examines the benefits and drawbacks of bilingual nursery education from the perspective of the subsequent continuation and integration of children coming from a bilingual nursery school into the traditional setting of a monolingual primary school. The second research study (Szaszkó & Jezsik, 2014) addresses the issue of the reading comprehension skills of second-grade pupils in primary bilingual education. These projects aim to contribute to the discussion of the contested issues of the theory and practice of early bilingual education and to highlight the advantages of bilingual programmes.

Issues in early language education

Theoretical approaches underpinning early language education are extensive, and therefore only ideas relevant to bilingual education are outlined in this section. One of the theories which has influenced the teaching of a foreign language to young children is based on the ideas of Krashen (1985), highlighting two distinct ways of developing foreign language ability in a second language: learning and acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Learning entails a conscious process where the learner is aware of the rules of the language. Being guided, monitored and corrected are essential parts of learning, which is usually a carefully planned process. According to Nikolov (2008), drilling is one the most frequently used ways of teaching the rules of English in Hungary.

In contrast, acquisition entails picking up a second language instinctively and subconsciously. The process is not consciously directed and concentrates on meaning and comprehensible output. Acquisition is usually realised as a kind of immersion in a second language setting. An important element of second language acquisition is getting active feedback from the environment, similarly to the acquisition of the first language. Becoming familiar with a second language is realised in a playful way through everyday activities and games focusing on positive experience.

Research findings regarding the age when language teaching should begin are often controversial and difficult to compare (Larsen-Hall, 2008). Opinions regarding the most favourable starting time have also been influenced by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967), originally suggesting that there is a critical time to learn the first foreign language – before puberty – because of neurophysiological processes concerning brain lateralisation. This view has been challenged by studies (for arguments see Nikolov, 2004) which provide evidence that achieving native-like language proficiency is possible even after puberty.

Results of language acquisition research (Muñoz, 2003) indicate that with respect to acquisition, younger learners have an advantage. However, in institutional and instructional settings, older learners outperform younger learners as younger children

are not cognitively developed enough to take advantage of explicit methods of instruction. This implies that age plays a determining role mainly in immersion or naturalistic settings. Larsen-Hall (2008) summarises several research studies which find no or modest benefits for younger starters in a foreign language environment with minimal input defined as no more than four hours of explicit instruction per week. The single benefit observed in the case of earlier starters was in motivation and attitude. Nevertheless, some research also found some modest effects of an early starting age on grammatical and phonological abilities. Larsen-Hall (2008) confirms the role starting early has when she claims that:

> … contrary to what a lay person may think, age does not confer a 'magical' ability to learn a second language quickly and natively in a situation of minimal input. However, age does seem to play a non-negligible role in improving second language acquisition, given that language learners receive enough input. Starting to study a language at a younger age is one way to ensure larger amounts of language input. (p. 58)

There seems to be a consensus that several factors are responsible for the success of language learning and proficiency achieved by the learners, apart from the starting age itself: for instance, the first language, the quantity and quality of comprehensible input, methodology, aptitude, and socio-psychological variables such as motivation and other affective factors (Nikolov, 2004). It must also be emphasised that learning a second language at an early age is a prolonged process the results of which are less impressive at the beginning and become perceptible at a later stage. Children's individual differences, too, influence the extent of measurable and noticeable performance that they are capable of or willing to produce. Furthermore, the phenomenon of the silent period was also observed in the case of young children at the initial stage (McKay, 2006), when some children do not speak the foreign language sometimes for months; however, they follow instructions and interact in language games, indicating that they understand the foreign language.

Peal and Lambert (1962) were among the first researchers to reveal the positive effects of bilingualism and its relationship with intelligence. According to the balance theory, the native language and the foreign languages coexist together in the human brain and the development of these can happen only to the disadvantage of one of them so that the balance can be maintained in the brain. A monolingual person can fully fill up a whole balloon with their native language competences, while a bi/multilingual person can fill up two or more balloons with their linguistic competences only to a limited extent (Cummins, 1993). However, the area of linguistic competences in the human brain is not as limited as is claimed by the balance theory, and foreign language skills can be developed without interfering with one's native language competences. Interestingly, although there is an increasing demand for primary-school bilingual programmes, the balance/balloon dilemma can be detected among parents (Szaszkó & Jezsik, 2014).

Early language education in Hungary

Several bilingual nursery programmes have been introduced in Hungary since 1997. Kovács and Kuti (2009) summarise the best practices of these programmes, underlining that foreign language proficiency education of children aged between three and seven is reached holistically through personality development. The nursery school programme is covered in two languages simultaneously: in English and in Hungarian. Usually there are two nursery school teachers present at the same time with the foreign language assigned to a different teacher. Kovács and Kuti emphasise that the success of these programmes depends on four equally significant factors: the intensity of language education, the methodological skills and competences of the language teachers, the sustainability of these programmes and the supportive parental background. The most frequent activities in bilingual nursery schools include action games, imaginative play, musical or role play activities, rhymes, storytelling and short narratives, which are supported by the children's advanced imitative ability and curiosity. In sum, developing foreign language skills is realised through the development of other skills.

The Hungarian National Core Curriculum (2012) requires that Hungarian children begin their foreign language learning with one compulsory foreign language in grade 4 (age 10-11) of primary school. The most commonly studied language by this age group is English (Nikolov, 2011). The number of foreign language classes may depend on the school to a certain extent, and it usually means two to four lessons a week. More affluent families tend to hire private teachers, pay for extracurricular language lessons at school, or send their children to language schools. Primary schools may begin foreign language programmes earlier, even in grade 1 as parents often put pressure on primary schools to launch early start programmes. Morvai, Öveges and Ottó (2009) examined foreign language teaching in grades 1-3 and found that in 56% of grade 1, 62% of grade 2 and 80% of grade 3 classes, children were already learning a foreign language in monolingual primary schools.

However, the effectiveness of language teaching in Hungary has often been criticised; the most common problems seem to be the lack of appropriately trained teachers, an insufficient number of foreign language lessons, the use of outdated methodology and the lack of ICT tools. A research study by Nikolov (2008) focused on the content and classroom processes of Hungarian lower-primary language lessons. She found that most of the activities could be connected to the grammar-translation approach, which is not appropriate for the cognitive level of young learners as it requires explicit learning. The activities cannot engage the children and this lack of involvement often resulted in discipline problems. Additionally, Nikolov argued that in terms of motivation, inappropriate methodology can do so much harm that children would have benefited more if they had not taken part in language education in the lower-primary classes at all.

An important trend of the last decades to improve the efficiency of foreign language education has been the growing interest in setting up bilingual schools (mainly Hungarian-English or Hungarian-German). According to the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (2012), the aims and tasks of bilingual educational programmes are manifold.

First, the synchronic and balanced development of the native and target language competences must be carried out in parallel. Second, bilingual school pupils must acquire foreign language competences as well as the skills and competences of how to learn various subjects via a foreign language. In addition, there must be a concentrated development of target language literacy. A fundamental aim is the intensive improvement of positive attitudes and cultural awareness so that the learners can get a deeper insight into the target language countries, including the following areas: geography, economy, society, history, arts, science and technology, as well as everyday life. The Hungarian National Core Curriculum does not list the target countries whose cultural elements must be focused on in the lower-primary bilingual programmes. In the case of English, cultural facets of the UK and the USA are in the limelight since most English coursebooks tend to deal with these target countries. However, the National Core Curriculum does identify the subjects that can be taught in the target language at the primary school level (Table 1). The required *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (*CERF)* language levels are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. *Recommended number of target language lessons per academic year in bilingual primary programmes (Magyar Közlöny, 2013 p. 612)*

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year	7th year	8th year
Target language	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180
Target language civilisation					36	36	36	36

Table 2. *The minimum language level in bilingual primary programmes according to NAT (Magyar Közlöny, 2013 p. 614)*

	2nd year	4th year	6th year	8th year	10th year	12th year
Bilingual education	Cannot be given in CERF level	A1	A2	B1	B2	B2
First foreign language		Cannot be given in CERF level	A1	A2	B1	B2
Second foreign language	-	-	-	-	A1	A2

Study 1: From bilingual nursery schools to monolingual primary education

The proper language environment and the time factor have key roles in supporting successful early language acquisition. However, the stimulating language environment created by bilingual nursery school programmes may alter for children when switching to a non-bilingual primary school. The question then arises as to the extent the completed bilingual nursery school programme would enhance children's foreign language skills and competences if there is no way to continue their studies in a bilingual environment. The problem of moving from bilingual nursery schools to traditional monolingual primary schools has been investigated by Furcsa and Sinka (2014). They did a qualitative research project focusing on the viewpoints and the experience of language teachers. Using structured interviews, the researchers attempted to investigate what language teachers thought about how children coming from a bilingual nursery school managed to integrate into a new, usually beginner, language group during the first four years of primary school and how they adjusted to the new context of language learning. A further research aim was to see what challenges and opportunities emerge from these situations and how the participating language teachers deal with them. The participants' answers were compared via repeated readings of interview transcripts and data coding. Content analysis was used to find emerging patterns and themes. In what follows, verbatim quotations from the interviews will illustrate the identified issues. The anonymity of the respondents was ensured by identifying them with codes, for instance T1 represents Teacher 1.

The participants of the research were primary school teachers of English who teach children coming from bilingual nursery programmes. The location of the study was a town in Hungary, where one nursery school has been offering a bilingual programme for decades. As there is no English bilingual primary school in this town, most children finishing the bilingual nursery school programme continue their studies in non-bilingual settings. These children and their English teachers were the focus of our research. We interviewed ten teachers working in one of the five primary schools. In two of the these schools, children start learning English in grade 1, while the other three schools follow the National Core Curriculum (2012) and begin foreign language education later, in grade 4.

Our first field of enquiry focused on how the English teachers detected and recognised the children coming from the bilingual nursery school. All of the teachers claimed that they were immediately able to detect which children had attended the bilingual nursery school. These learners understood the English instructions easily and they knew many children's songs and nursery rhymes. They possessed the basic vocabulary (colours, numbers, concrete nouns, etc.), they loved speaking English and they were fairly talkative. However, the English teachers did not perceive a significant difference between the performance of the children from the bilingual nursery school and the children from the other forms of language learning contexts (such as private teaching, English playhouses, Helen Doron language schools, etc.). Regarding the English competence and the mental lexicon of the children, the teachers did not notice any quantitative or qualitative distinctions between these groups.

The teacher participants were asked to estimate the percentage of children with a bilingual nursery school background in the language groups. The majority of English teachers overestimated the proportion of these children when they assumed that it was between 20-40%, which exceeded the real number. One of the interviewees thought that the number of children who came from the bilingual nursery school must be insignificant (one or two learners). Presumably, this estimate was closer to reality, as the total number of these children was between eight and ten split between several primary schools due to the structure of the entry system. The overestimation may confirm our assumption that teachers have difficulties in differentiating between the different forms of early language education.

The majority of the interviewees found the integration of the children coming from the bilingual nursery school to the English lessons successful. This success means that they easily acquired the new English vocabulary, they were conscious, self-directed and outstanding learners: "They understand the English instructions more easily, and the majority of them are more motivated" [T7]. Not surprisingly, their previous language experience influences the social integration within the classroom as well. The teachers mentioned that the children who came from the bilingual nursery school tended to disturb the learning process. Sometimes they made their classmates frustrated as they outperformed them, or they had discipline problems as they were bored. One of the teachers pointed out that their self-confidence was exaggerated: "they like the idea that the advantage they have gained is unbeatable" [T4].

Coming from the bilingual nursery school was linked to a number of benefits. The general opinion of the English teachers was that the children gained a considerable knowledge of general English. They were successful at language learning; moreover, they were not confused or disturbed by their mistakes. They possessed an age-appropriate vocabulary and their pronunciation and language comprehension skills were also better. At the same time the unevolved articulation and the pronunciation mistakes due to imitation problems were mentioned among their weaknesses. One of the English teachers emphasised the inaccuracy of their English pronunciation: "It is almost impossible to make them pronounce certain words, not even the related audio materials can persuade them" [T4]. Some teachers in the research agreed that the correction of pronunciations mistakes was a long and complicated process. This observation seems to contradict one of the well-known advantages of early language acquisition, namely appropriate pronunciation. As a matter of fact, these so-called 'errors' show strong correspondence with the children's native language acquisition. In the course of first language acquisition these developmental errors are considered as a natural sequence of native language development (see arguments in Adamikné-Jászó, 1999). In the bilingual nursery school programme the foreign language is introduced at the age of three. At this age the first language (i.e., Hungarian) is relatively well-established. Consequently, the typical developmental errors of the additional language occur later, at the age of 7 or 8.

During the interviews, we found it important to ask how the English teachers evaluated the advantages of foreign language development at an early age. Half of the interviewees considered starting early as having long lasting advantages: "The implicit and explicit second language knowledge leaves its mark anyway: it will develop the

children's talent for languages, their listening skills and will create positive attitudes toward foreign languages" [T5]. The other half of the English teachers did not regard early foreign language education as having a long lasting advantage. They suggested that the children's English language level would equalise by the end of the second or the third class [T8], and the so called 'language advantage' would disappear with the introduction of the written stage. They thought that "preparing for the English classes cannot be neglected" [T3], and "the foreign language knowledge should be continuously developed, but it is not possible without being constantly diligent" [T6]. One of the teachers pointed out that supportive parental involvement is crucial in the children's language development.

In the interviews we also asked the English teachers about their personal experience and opinions about the theoretical principles and practical application of early language education. The interviewees had minimal personal experience, and although some of them had visited bilingual elementary school programmes earlier, only one of them had observed a bilingual nursery school class. Their opinions indicate that good native language competence is a key to effective foreign language learning, and they recommended the bilingual nursery programmes exclusively for those children whose Hungarian language knowledge had already been well established: "learning English at an early age is good for those children who have already developed good speaking and listening skills in Hungarian and are not confused by mixing up the two languages" [T1]. One of the participating teachers' biggest fears was that the bilingual nursery school programme might be at the expense of the Hungarian language and cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the language teachers' attitudes were determined by the acquisition-learning dichotomy described in the previous section. When the interviewees were asked about the bilingual nursery school programmes, they referred to the characteristics of second language acquisition, that is, the non-conscious nature of the learning process [T1], where the language is the tool and not the target of the learning process [T3]. In the bilingual nursery school programme the children acquire the language through natural communication in a playful way [T5]. Every instruction can be heard in English as well as in Hungarian, which is why the children receive appropriate stimulus [T6]. The role of positive reinforcement in the bilingual nursery group is important [T2], the children can communicate without inhibition [T1], and they can use the second language spontaneously [T4]. They have a large passive vocabulary and correct pronunciation [T2]. Although the answers suggested that the English teachers were aware of the characteristics of second language acquisition in early childhood, its role was definitely underestimated. These results highlight the necessity of preparing language teachers for how to integrate bilingual children in their language classes and how to help them with the changes.

A possible reason for the participants' different evaluation of early language development can be traced back to the methodological and theoretical component of teacher training. That is, in lower primary education the depth of the methodological and language pedagogical knowledge of the teachers of English can be different due to their different educational backgrounds as some of them graduated from teacher training colleges or English MA programmes of universities, which focus on the demands and

methodologies of teaching adolescents (12-18 years), while others hold a lower-primary-school teacher degree with a specialisation in teaching English in grades 1 to 6. The findings reflect the complex nature of the methodological and theoretical knowledge and assumptions of the language teachers as well as their personal experience. The study confirmed that it is especially important in the case of young children that a teacher with adequate knowledge and skills teaches the foreign language.

Study 2: The impacts of early bilingual education on native language reading

Subsequent to highlighting the possible development and realisation of bilingual programmes at nursery schools, we focussed on the practice of bilingual primary education programmes. According to some research, bilingual primary-school education programmes can be regarded as the most efficient forms of institutional early childhood language learning (Cummins, 1993; Gold, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008), although it is still debated by many scholars (for details see Rossel & Baker, 1996). The first bilingual school initiatives were launched in the United States. Due to the multicultural nature of American society, the demand for bilingual educational programmes (English and a minority language) can be regarded as natural; however, educational policies did not tend to support bilingual educational programmes for a long time. The Bilingual Education Act in 1968 was a milestone, as it was the most significant step in the USA to officially support minority languages. This act financially encouraged the school districts to experiment with bilingual programmes, in particular in the districts inhabited mainly by non-English-native-speaker populations (Del Valle, 2003). However, the real turning point was the Canadian immersion programme, launched in 1960s in Quebec, which is mainly populated by francophone inhabitants. Within the framework of this special Canadian project, English and French speaking children could learn together where the English native-speaker pupils did not have any command of French at the beginning of the learning process. The learners immersed in French-language education in a natural way and learnt particular subjects in French (Lambert & Tucker, 1972).

In the European context, it was only in the 1990s that the primary-school bilingual programmes (especially a national language and English) started to mushroom while at the secondary-school level they had already appeared in the middle of the 20th century. The changes that could be perceived in the last decade of the 20th century were the results of the paradigm and attitude changes in many European countries' educational policies. Along with the Lisbon Process in 2005, instead of isolation, the promotion of multilingualism came into the limelight with the widespread use of the Internet as well as the manifold effects of globalisation.

In Hungary there were several educational policy decisions which resulted in the emergence of secondary-school bilingual programmes at the end of the 1980s. Due to these policy decisions, schools could decide which foreign language they wished to incorporate into their educational profile. Empirical studies (Kovács, 2006; Vámos, 1998) revealed the rapid success of bilingual programmes. Compared to their launch in 1996-1997, the number of programmes increased tenfold in 10 years, and the number of

students involved almost doubled. By 2008 there was a bilingual programme in nearly 90 primary schools. Owing to the role of English as the lingua franca, most of the bilingual programmes in Hungary are Hungarian-English and that is why it is not surprising to find that the number of learners at English bilingual primary school programmes was already 3,534 in 1998 (Kovács, 2006). In the Hungarian-English bilingual primary school programmes the number of lessons in English is minimum eight. In addition, the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (2012) requires that Hungarian lower-primary-school teachers teaching a particular subject in English should be aided by an English native-speaker assistant. Moreover, in bilingual programmes apart from the foreign language lessons, the teaching of other subjects (e.g., PE, Music) is carried out in English right from the beginning of the first year (Kovács, 2006).

Although many parents are aware of the fact that they can help their children's future if the children have better linguistic competences, still some parents have concerns regarding the efficiency of bilingual primary-school programmes. To counteract these dilemmas, a small scale empirical study was carried out by Szaszkó and Jezsik (2014) in a bilingual primary-school located in central Hungary. They investigated the effects primary Hungarian-English bilingual education has on the learners' linguistic competences. Their starting hypothesis was that the native language reading comprehension competences of the children in the bilingual programme are not poorer compared to their peers who study in the traditional monolingual programme. In the first and second year of primary school the development of the target language reading skills and competences can be commenced when the learners demonstrate appropriate reading skills and competences in their native language. The children encounter the written format of simple words and sentences in a playful way at the end of the first two-year-stage of the bilingual primary programme (Magyar Közlöny, 2013).

Szaszkó and Jezsik's (2014) study involved a second-form experimental group of 34 children (bilingual class) and a second-form control group of 25 children (traditional monolingual Hungarian class). The bilingual experimental group had five PE lessons in English a week and one Music lesson in English per week. Teaching art in English is introduced later, in one lesson every two weeks. (The subject "Életvitel és gyakorlati ismeretek" – Lifestyle and Technology – is taught only in first grade). The experimental group had four English lessons per week and an additional one with a native speaker assistant. The testing of the children's native language reading comprehension competence was carried out through a test designed for this target population age group. This competence test mainly focused on the vocabulary and the topics of the subjects taught in English. The principal aim was to examine the participants' Hungarian reading comprehension competences and the vocabulary regarding the subjects taught in English, but did not include the investigation of their factual knowledge of the subjects delivered in English.

The Hungarian reading comprehension tests done in the first and second terms of the second year, as well as the experimental Hungarian reading comprehension test, showed a consistent finding. That is, the results of the experimental group were better than that of the control group by 0.16% on the first reading comprehension test, by 0.19% on the second one and by 30.28% on the experimental test, which is a significant difference. This

study was repeated with two further second-grade form groups in the same primary bilingual educational institution in 2014 and it was revealed that the results showed similar patterns with regard to the pupils' native language reading comprehension skills. Although generalisations cannot be drawn from such a small-scale data set, the hypothesis was justified in the case of the participant classes. In other words, the bilingual educational programme at the investigated school does not have a harmful effect on the native language reading comprehension skills and competences of the participant seven/eight-year-old children.

Summary

The two studies in the field of language pedagogy presented in this article aimed to provide answers to some current issues in early childhood foreign language learning and teaching. It was found that the investigation of the benefits and drawbacks of bilingual educational programmes with regard to the nursery school and lower-primary age group is highly related to and dependent on the requirements of the surrounding social backgrounds. In our view, bilingual educational programmes can be regarded as an efficient means of language learning.

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English for a Change

Edited by Éva Illés and Jasmina Sazdovska

English for a change is a compilation comprising a selection of peer-reviewed and non peer-reviewed papers presented at the 24th IATEFL-Hungary conference, held in Veszprém, 3-5 October, 2014. It covers topics including English grammar around the world, the teaching of idioms and proverbs, ELF, teacher reflection and problem solving as well as language examinations and bilingual education in Hungary.