INNOVATIVE WAYS
OF TEACHING ENGLISH
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Edited by:

Ágnes Bethlenfalvyné Streitmann –
Melinda Nagy – Andrea Puskás

Innovative Ways of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

If an Abstract was to be added before the *Introduction* part of this collection, the keywords would definitely include: innovation, teaching EFL, literary text, drama techniques, fairy tales, proverbs, culture, history, interdisciplinary approach, ICT, inclusion, creativity, cooperation and critical thinking.

There has been an increasing need to reimagine current educational practices and approaches to teaching in order to motivate learners and provide a safe and at the same time challenging and inspiring learning environment for them.

The present publication is the result of long-term friendship and cooperation between two institutions, the Apor Vilmos Catholic College in Vác, Hungary and the J. Selye University in Komárno, Slovakia. The collection contains fifteen papers written by eighteen authors from five different countries. What these papers have in common is their eager wish to make education learner-centred, fair, enjoyable and creative. Many of the papers deal with the ways of improving creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving in the foreign language classroom, but also many of them pay attention to the role of schools in providing equal opportunities for all of their learners not only in the foreign language classroom. Literary texts, cultural studies and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching English as a foreign language gain a central role in the collection. The authors of these papers offer new perspectives by proposing an out-of-the box way of thinking and presenting solutions that help to reimagine and redesign everyday school practices. There are papers that concentrate on the theoretical framework of education and the latest updates in the theory of teaching English as a foreign language, but there are also papers which present concrete activities, tasks, worksheets which are ready to be implemented immediately in the classroom and deal with the more practical side of teaching.

The idea of using literature and literary texts in the foreign language classroom is a reoccurring motive in the collection. Several authors underline the potential of literary texts in fostering critical thinking, self-expression and creativity, while all the authors examining this topic underline the significance of carefully

selected texts. There are papers investigating the role of drama techniques in foreign language teaching and papers dealing with the usage of technology in the classroom and the potentials of technological devices and tools in education as well as the lessons learnt from e-learning or online education during the pandemic.

The authors of the papers included in this collection are professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, practising teachers, novice teachers and fresh university graduates – all contributing to the diversity of perspectives on how to innovate and update education at various levels: primary schools, secondary schools and higher education. They are all driven by the same passion and enthusiasm, which is to explore the many factors and solutions that can make education effective and rewarding, both for teachers and learners.

The ideas presented in this publication are designed to suit scholars, educators, teachers, teacher trainees and parents at various fields operating in several different contexts of education. We hope to inspire our readers so that they can select and find solutions that work for them.

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Improving creativity with the help of drama techniques in the EFL classroom

Beatrix NAGY[1]

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on improving creativity with the help of drama techniques and literary texts in the EFL classroom. It defines creativity, describes drama techniques and lists the commonly used drama techniques and their advantages. The paper also deals with the theory of improving creativity with drama techniques. It presents the findings of a study based on a questionnaire, which was designed for English teachers working in Hungarian schools in Slovakia. The questionnaire asks the teachers about their habits of using drama techniques during their English lessons and it also highlights some concrete drama techniques. Another aim of the questionnaire is to ask the teachers´ opinion about trainings concerning drama techniques.

Keywords:
creativity, drama techniques, English as a foreign language, research

Introduction

Nowadays, creativity can be heard more and more times in connection with English language teaching. More and more teachers realize that creativity takes a huge place in language teaching and it is important to improve creativity. Creativity can help students to learn languages and with language learning we can help students to improve their creativity. It has become a key term, because recently, lessons are learner-centered where students without creativity may struggle. The word creativity

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covers a lot of different elements, which can be improved during EFL classes as well. It is important to state that everybody can be creative – not just people and students with special talents. It can be improved and it is the part of our everyday life, too.

1. Definition of Creativity

It is hard to give a concrete definition for creativity, because a lot of scholars defined it very differently, but it is indisputable, that the field of creativity is interesting, and it plays an active and effective role in our everyday life. As pointed out by Puskás (2020), creativity, problem solving skills and cooperation are the most significant skills of the twenty-first century.

It is important to define what creativity is because the definitions can help teachers to teach more effectively, and they can motivate students to be more creative. As creativity is nowadays a key term in language teaching – mainly because the lessons are learner-centred where students without creativity may struggle - there are different definitions of it.

Throughout the years some parts of the definition of creativity changed and some parts remained. De Bono (1977) deals with lateral thinking in his book. He writes about creativity as the part of the lateral thinking and he also lists some modes how we can use it: new ideas, problem solving, processing perceptual choice, periodic reassessment, preventions of sharp divisions and polarizations. I think that the above-mentioned modes of use can be paralleled with some characteristics of creativity, which are nowadays important.

It is important to state that everybody can be creative, and creativity can be improved. As Bohm (1998) claims, creativity is not appropriate only to a few people with special talent or so called "genius". It is a misconception that creativity is about special talent. He also states that creativity is more about the ability of learning new things and the interest in what one is doing. In the book More Ways than One (1997), Cropley is on the same opinion, he writes that creativity is for everyone, it is not necessary to conceptualize it as something only for gifted people. This means that creativity is present in our everyday life, even if we are not conscious about it. In the case of gifted people creativity centres in a specific skill, for example: good drawing and painting skills among artists. But in the life of ordinary people this creativity "is divided between the arts, the sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, organizational roles, and leadership" – so between the different parts of their everyday life.

The creativity of everyday life is present in Puskás´s book *Improving Creativity in the EFL Classroom* (2020). She writes about two basic types of creativity: the Big C and the little C. Big C means "the eminent examples of creativity" like Shakespeare or Beethoven, and little C is the creativity of our everyday life. Carft (2001) distinguishes between two types of creativity, too. She mentions high creativity and ordinary creativity. According to her high creativity is "creativity which changes knowledge and/or our perspective on the world". In contrast ordinary creativity is more relevant to education, because it is the creativity of the ordinary person and it also includes, that all students can be creative.

Cropley (1997) also distinguishes between two uses of the word creativity. The first is s a special kind of thinking or mental functioning or in other words divergent thinking, and creativity in the aesthetic or professional sense. In his opinion creativity means the capacity to get original, inventive, and novel ideas and he says that when children are "creative" it means that they are daring and innovative in their thinking. We can find sources where instead of defining creativity, the creative individual or creative behaviour is defined. According to Cropley (1997) "the main characteristic features of a creative individual are the following:

- seek change and adventure,
- express impulses and are consequently sometimes undisciplined, although they are perfectly capable of highly disciplined behavior when pursuing a goal which they value,
- readily accept new ideas, challenge rules and authorities on occasion,
- dislike conformity and conformists,
- are inclined to be disorganized, but are capable of attention to details when pursuing a valued goal,
- prefer loose and flexible planning,
- are very skillful at rolling with the punches and adapting quickly to circumstances,
- are usually friendly but may sometimes be withdrawn or else may talk too much."

Puskás (2020) summarizes the characteristic features of creative behavior and learning in the following way: it is often collaborative; uses the mind and the body, emotions, eyes, ears and all the senses; it is an effort to face a challenge or solve a problem; can include physical, social, reflective, musical or visual thinking;

involves learners' activities that create new and unusual connections between ideas, domains, processes and materials; learners and teachers step outside the boundaries of predictability; learners may be physically engaged.

Starko (2005) claims that "creativity is purposeful and involves effort to make something work, to make something better, more meaningful, or more beautiful". He also mentions that a person is creative, because he wants to create and, individuals created for example works of art or literature because they had something to communicate.

Puskás (2020) states that creativity is a human potential that is possessed by everyone, and it cannot be limited to certain people or groups of people. Although she claims that the level of creativity may vary not just between different people, but- due to the fact that creativity can be improved - it can vary throughout the different stages of an individual's life, too.

Throughout the years, there were some researches made connected to creativity. Usually these examined creativity in connection with intelligence, memory, talent, emotion, invention, individual genius. According to Puskás (2020) creativity is also connected to the creative work of an artist (who produces some kind of beauty or innovative form) but it could also refer to the productive and innovative activities of scientists, learners, individuals and even groups - which constitute the basis of the contemporary creativity research, where creativity "is rather defined as an activity generated by even common sense and everyday mental mechanisms that every person is able to carry out."

2. Drama Techniques

Drama techniques can be an interesting tool of improving creativity and a means of helping learners become more open to new ideas and solutions.

Firstly, it is essential to define what drama techniques are. Maley and Duff (2005) summarize it as they are usually activities which are based on techniques used by actors, but in language classes for example, students can create the material for the lesson with the help of their personality.

Almond (2005) defines drama as "a whole-person approach to language teaching which requires us to look at communication holistically." Being part of a drama technique is an emotional and intellectual experience, "which makes the learning process more meaningful and memorable and transferable to the real world." He also lists the boarder parts of communication, which are examined and practiced by drama. These are gesture and gesticulation, facial expressions,

eye contact and eye movement, posture and movement, proxemics and prosody. While using drama techniques we can use our ability to imitate, mimic and express ourselves with the help of gestures and facial expressions. From the point of view of the students, with drama techniques they can improve their creativity, imagination and memory. Drama techniques can bring real life content to our language classes, but we can freely use our imagination, too.

Puskás (2016) emphasizes that using drama in English language teaching does not always mean staging a play or dramatizing dialogues, because the emphasis is not on the audience, but on the students, who take part in the drama activities.

Maley and Duff (2005) emphasize the power of groupwork. They explain that it is highly beneficial for students to work, play and learn with and from each other. One person is brought together with another, each student is different, so they all add something new o the learning process. They highlight that drama techniques can improve in students´ "what is physical about language".

2.1. Commonly Used Drama Techniques

There are a lot of drama techniques which can be used on our language classes, some of them are used on a regular basis, other less commonly. Drama techniques can usually be combined, shortened, or expanded. The same drama techniques can be used with students of different language levels. For example, we can modify a concrete technique to elementary or intermediate students, too.

Puskás (2018) lists the ten most used drama techniques. According to her, these are improvisation, teacher-in-role, sculpting, still image, thought bubbles, teacher narrative, hot-seating, mirroring, mingling and miming. She states that most of these techniques provide experience, which would be impossible to achieve during a traditional lesson. She differentiates difficult and easier techniques, for example according to her the most difficult drama technique is improvisation. There are also techniques which require less concentration, for example mingling. Typical warming up activities like miming are mentioned, too. She also claims that teacher-in-role is a technique where the teacher becomes a partner for students during the activity and the atmosphere is more relaxed. It can help to develop the potential of drama in education. Teachers during this technique usually act as if they are someone else, so they can work with the students from a new point of view. They can be equal with the students or even on a lower level.

According to Puskás (2018), improvisation and hot-seating are the best techniques to create real life communication in the English language classroom. This real-life atmosphere can help them to feel safe to communicate freely in English.

Scrivener (2005) also lists a variety of drama activities which are common in English language teaching. He lists role-play, simulation, drama games, guided improvisation, acting play scripts, and prepared improvised drama. He writes about the importance of the real-life context, which can provide students to use the language. According to him it also helps to become free from the expected behavior in the classroom.

As for drama techniques, there is a long list to choose from. The teacher needs to select carefully, taking into consideration the main objectives of the lesson.

2.2. Advantages of Drama Techniques

Several teachers and educators have already asked the question why they should use drama techniques in the language classroom. Maley and Duff (2005) list the main reasons to answer this question:

- It integrates language skills in a natural way – listening, verbal expressions, reading and writing are all key features.
- Integrates verbal and non-verbal communication, too – it brings together mind and body, creates a balance between physical and intellectual aspects of learning.
- It emphasizes the importance of feeling and thinking.
- It brings the classroom interaction to life, with an intense focus on meaning.
- It emphasizes the whole- person learning and learner differences.
- It helps to develop self- confidence and motivation.
- It transfers the responsibility for learning from teacher to learner.
- It creates an open, exploratory style of learning – creativity and imagination can be developed.
- It promotes risk taking, as an essential part of language learning.
- It has positive effects on the classroom atmosphere.
- It is enjoyable and low-resource.

Puskás (2016) mentions some advantages, too. According to her, these advantages are that drama activities help to develop self-expression, creativity, confidence, they provide situations for communication and they are motivating. She also highlights that drama provides space for physical involvement, so children can feel that they are actively involved in learning not just mentally but emotionally and physically, too.

Puskás (2016) also writes about teaching English as a foreign language as a subject, rather than a theoretical goal. Drama techniques are based on the parts of the real life and it is necessary to express feelings and moods from the start of the language learning, because many times these influence the grammatical form as well.

Puskás (2018) claims that with the help of drama techniques speaking and listening skills can be improved, too. Mainly because the imaginative situations during the activities are considered to be real, and they provoke students to speak. Learners use different language styles, they use language differently and they can use different vocabulary, too.

Puskás (2018) declares that drama techniques can help students to become more empathetic, imaginative and helps to develop their critical thinking, too - mainly because of the real-life situations throughout the activities. Working in groups with the other students also improves, their cooperation skills.

According to Almond (2005) drama can build learner´s confidence, improve their spontaneity, develop their fluency, and strengthen their ability to communicate in realistic situations. We can conclude that the teachers and the students can benefit from using drama techniques on the English as a foreign language lesson.

2.3. Improving Creativity with Drama

Maley and Duff (2005) provide some practical points, which can help teachers to improve students´ creativity. They point out that teachers should always specify different points while using a drama activity. These points are aim, focus, level and time. Aim is the reason for doing an activity. Focus means the linguistic objectives of the activity, but it can also mean what we think will happen during the activity. Level is one of the most important points, because the same activity can be done at different levels, so we have to pay attention, to apply the activity in parallel with the level of students. We also have to try to set an accurate timing, mainly to be able to finish an activity, to achieve its effect on the learning.

Maley and Duff also write about the importance of discussion. If teachers want the drama technique to be successful, the preparatory discussion is indispensable. Students need to understand their task, what they have to do during the activity. The authors also suggest not to use mother-tongue during the activities. If there is a use of it, teachers have to encourage students to use more English.

The teacher´s role is also essential if we want to improve creativity with drama techniques. Maley and Duff (2005) state that if teachers want an activity to work well, they have to be convinced that it will work, because students can sense hesitancy, lack of conviction or nervousness. The teacher has to realize that he or she is the key

to the success of using drama. The teacher has to show his/her open body language, friendly tone of voice, has to demonstrate, that he/she knows what to do – needs to be well prepared and organized. According to them it is also important to give non-threatening, helpful feedback to the students and to create a relaxed atmosphere, where students can experience the flow of experience and learning.

Puskás (2016) explains that during drama activities the teacher´s role changes. He/she is not always the source of knowledge or an authoritative figure, but a facilitator or a helper.

Puskás (2018) points out that teachers should not give up with drama if it is not an immediate success in the classroom. It can develop into an effective way of teaching and learning, we just have to be patient. Teachers need to be prepared to unexpected situations, too, because drama can create a lot of new things. Having more activities prepared can help to stay flexible during drama classes.

From the point of view of the students it can be improving for them to feel that everyone has the task in the production – everyone has to fell that without them the production on the lesson would not work, would be less effective.

If we want to improve our students´ creativity we have to leave enough space for them to be independent and to come up with new ideas and suggestions. Puskás (2018) suggests starting the lesson with a warm-up activity so that we can help our students to be more relaxed and help them to concentrate. Teachers should not tell students what to do, but they have to guide them how to solve a given situation or task – ask them questions or give them hints.

Almond (2005) states that drama is a bridge between carefully controlled language work in the classroom and the unpredictable language and behaviour in the outside world – so students can be present in safe and unsafe situations. He declares that drama does not deal just with spoken language, it forces learners to react and respond with their intellects, emotions and their whole personality. Almond writes about the benefits of drama from the point of view of the teacher, too. He thinks it is important to the students to see that the teacher is participating in the activities, too - this proofs them that it is not unreasonable or impossible what we ask them to do. He refers to the three significant phenomena which are important when talking about drama: voice and body, movement and space, humour. Lists the reasons why humour should be the part of the lessons:

- It can help the teacher to seem more positive.
- Reduces anxiety and tension.
- It can maintain student attention.
- It conveys enthusiasm.
- Acts as effective mnemonic device.

3. Questionnaire for Teachers of English Working in Hungarian Schools in Slovakia

The main aim of the pilot research was to collect some information about the knowledge of teachers of English, working in Hungarian schools in Slovakia, about drama techniques and, also to find out what they think about using drama techniques on English lessons. The main goal was to reveal whether they use drama techniques during their lessons, how often they use them, what their attitude toward drama techniques is like and whether they are open to further drama trainings which would help them to be more confident in using drama techniques in their EFL classes. The research was based on the questionnaire method.

3.1. General Information about the Respondents

The final version of the questionnaire was sent to teachers, working in Hungarian schools is Slovakia as well as it was shared on social sites, in order to involve more teachers of English in the survey. The main aim of the first five questions was to collect some general information about the respondents: The questionnaire has been completed by 50 respondents. 66% of the respondents were women and 34% were man. There was a question connected to the age group of the teachers. 54 % of them fall into the age group between 20 and 30, 20% between 41 and 50 and 18% between 31 and 40. There were also respondents from the age group between 51 and 60 (4%) and from the age group 61 and above (4%).
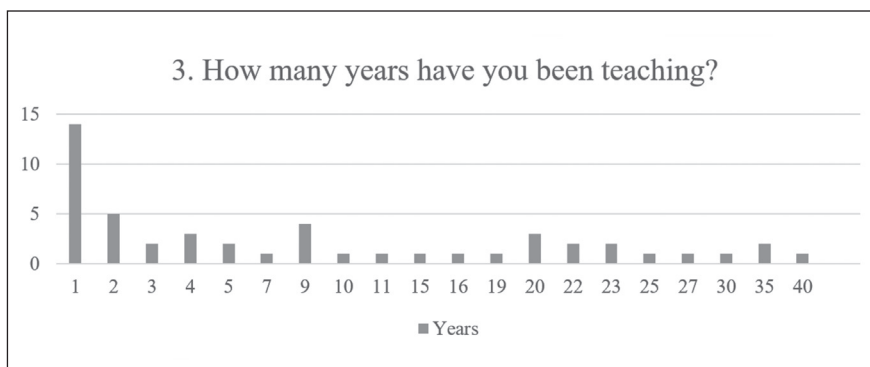
Figure 1. The teaching practice of the respondents, given in years.

It can be seen, that most of the respondents are teachers, who just began their career as a teacher – 28 % of the respondents. 10% of the respondents have been teaching for 2 years, 4% for 3 years, 6% for 4 years and another 4% for 5 years. 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 25, 27, 30 and 40 years were each answered just by one – one teacher. 8% of the respondents have been teaching for 10 years, 6% for 20 years and 4 – 4 % for 22, 23 and 35 years.

The fourth and fifth questions asked about the schools of the teachers. The fourth asked for the location of the school. 60% of the schools are located in a town, 22% in a village and 18% in a city. In the fifth question the respondents had to give the type of their school:
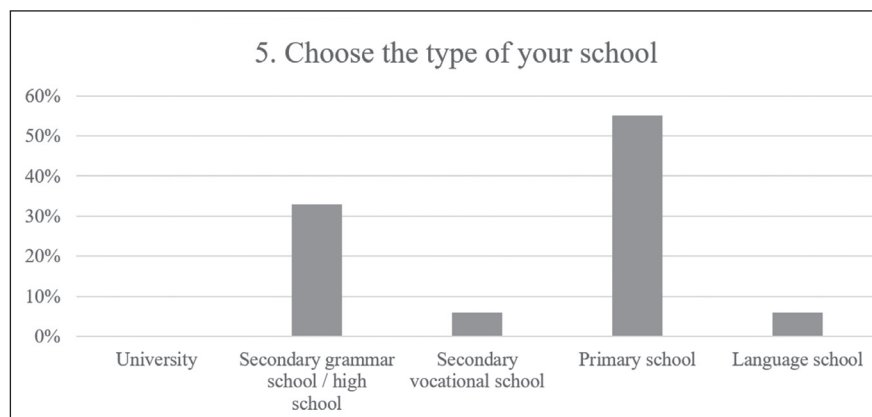
Figure 2. The types of the schools of the respondents.

Most of the respondents work in primary schools (55%). 33% of them teach English in secondary grammar schools or high schools and 6% in secondary vocational schools. Another 6% of the respondents work in language schools. As we can see in Figure 2, there were no university teachers among the respondents.

3.2. General Questions about Drama Techniques

The second part of the questionnaire contained questions about drama techniques. Their main aim was to find out whether teachers of English use them on their lessons, and what the best-known techniques are.

This part started with a general question if the teachers have ever heard about drama techniques or not. Most respondents answered with "yes" – this means 70% of the teachers. 16% answered with "no" and 14% of them was not sure about is, so they gave the answer "maybe".

The teachers, who answered with yes, had to list some drama techniques they are familiar with in the next question. 33 respondents gave answer for this question. The most often mentioned techniques are the following:
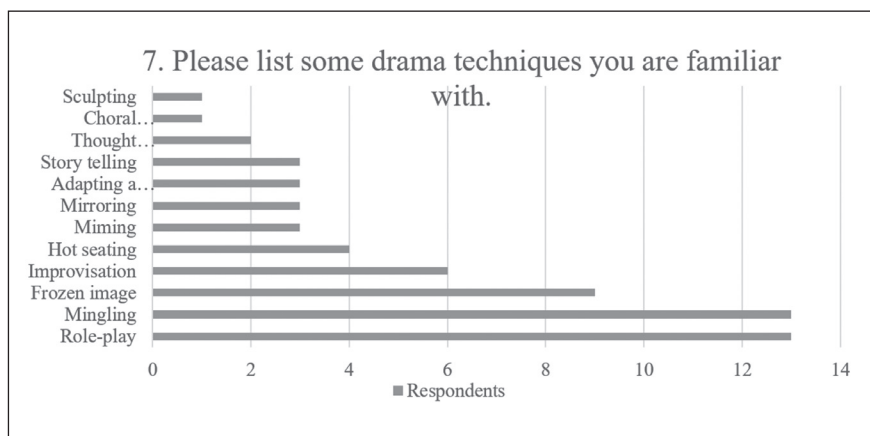
Figure 3. The most frequently mentioned drama techniques.

As we can see the most frequently mentioned drama techniques are role play, mingling and frozen image. These are followed by hot seating, what was mentioned four times. Miming, mirroring, adapting a story and storytelling, each were mentioned three times. Two rarely known techniques were present, too – sculpting and choral speaking.

36% of the respondents have never used drama techniques during their English lessons. 34% of them have used them sometimes. 22% of the respondents used them, but very rarely and 8% are using drama techniques regularly. As we can see, most of the respondents never used drama techniques – in this case this means 18 respondents. There is one fact which came as a surprise, that out of these 18 respondents 39% belonged to the age group between 20 and 30 years old, 33% to the age group between 41 and 50.10% of the respondents belonged to the age group between 51 and 60, and 10% to the group 61 and more.

Figure 4. The frequency of using drama techniques on English lessons.
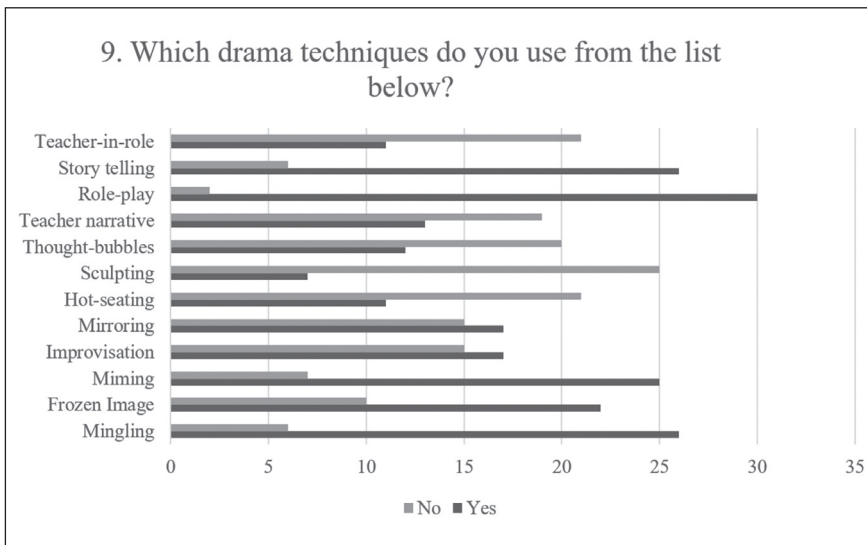
Figure 5. The most frequently used drama techniques by the respondents.

For the respondents, who answered the previous question with "no", the questionnaire ended at that point. The respondents, who answered it with "yes" had to continue – 36% of the total amount of the respondents. The ninth question was connected to concrete drama techniques. 94% of the teachers use role-play, 81% use storytelling and mingling, too and 68.5% of the respondents use the technique frozen image – these are the most used techniques. There are techniques which are not that popular. To this group we can add sculpting – 78.1% of the

respondents, do not use this technique. Hot seating and teacher-in-role are the part of this group, too – both techniques got the answer "no" from the 65.5% of the teachers but thought-bubbles and teacher narrative were not so popular as well.
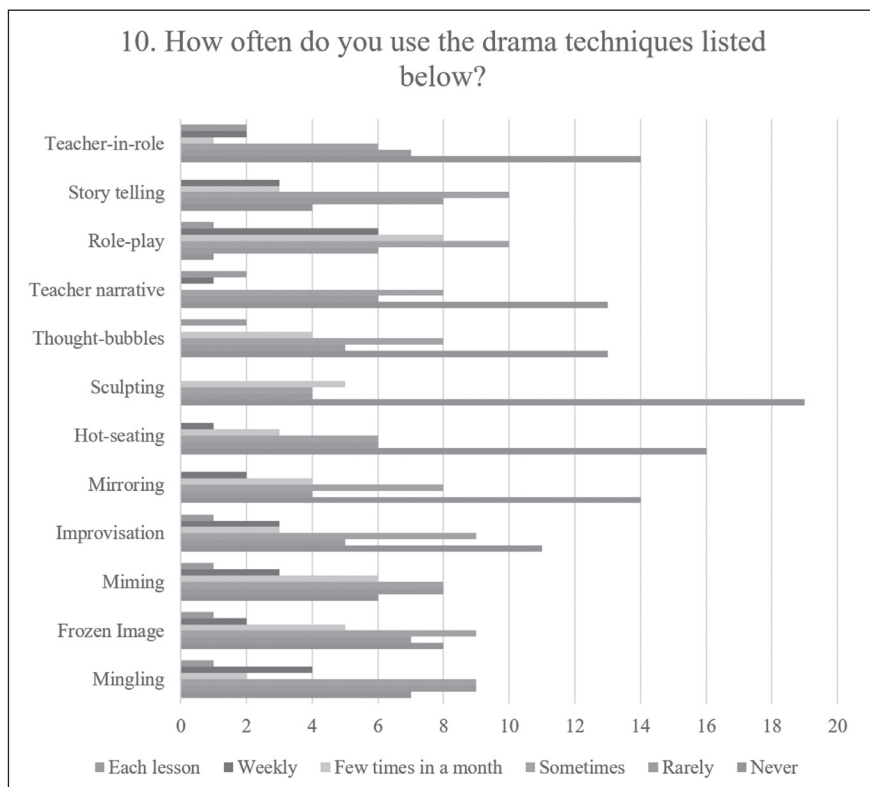
Figure 6. The frequency of using concrete drama techniques.

The tenth question was connected to the frequency of using concrete drama techniques. The respondents had to decide how often they use the listed techniques. From the chart above it can be seen that most of the respondents never use sculpting, hot-seating, mirroring, thought-bubbles and teacher narrative. The most frequently used drama techniques are role-play, miming, frozen image, mingling and storytelling. The respondents usually use these techniques: few times in a month, weekly or even each lesson.

3.3. Opinions about the Sentences Connected to Drama Techniques

The next part of the questionnaire listed sentences about drama techniques in connection with the respondents and, also, with the students. The teachers had to decide whether they agree or disagree with the listed sentences. The eleventh question contained the sentences in connection with drama techniques and the respondent.
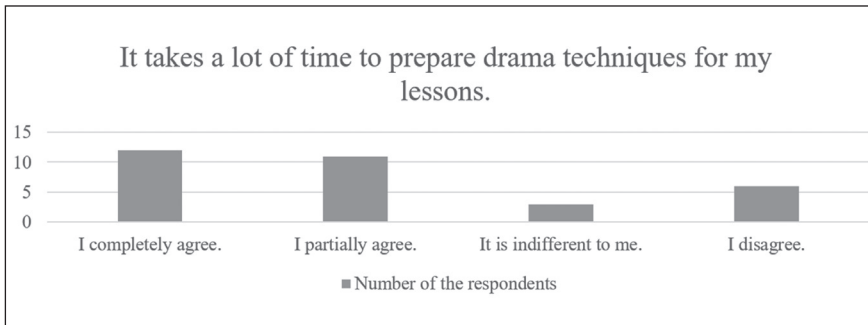
Figure 7. The answers of the respondents for the first sentence in connection with drama techniques.

According to the questionnaire we can conclude, that 37.5% of the respondents completely agreed, that it takes a lot of time to prepare drama techniques for the English lessons. 34.37% of them partially agreed and 18.75% disagreed. For 9.37% of the teachers the question was indifferent.
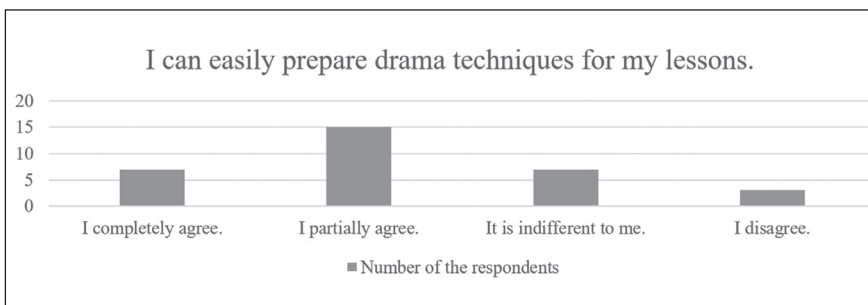
Figure 8. The answers of the respondents for the second sentence in connection with drama techniques.

It can be seen that 46.78% of the teachers could partially agree, that they can easily prepare drama techniques for their lessons. 21.87% of the respondents completely agreed and 9.37% of them disagreed. For 46.78% of the respondents the sentence was indifferent.
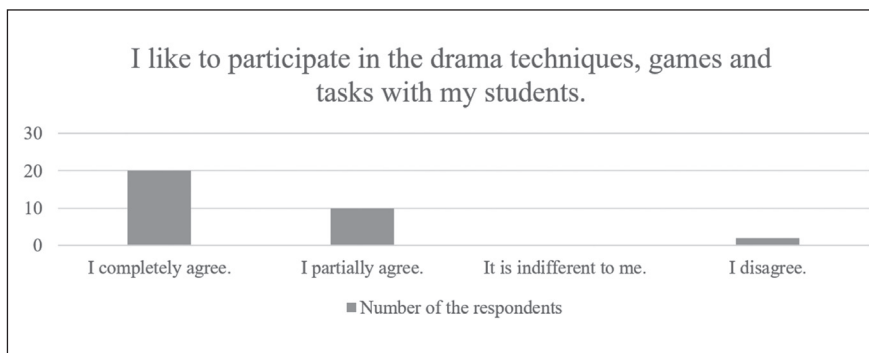
Figure 9. The answers of the respondents for the third sentence
in connection with drama techniques.

62.5% of the respondents completely agreed, that they like to participate in the drama techniques, games and tasks with their students. 31.25% of them agreed, too, but partially and 6.25% disagreed with the sentence.
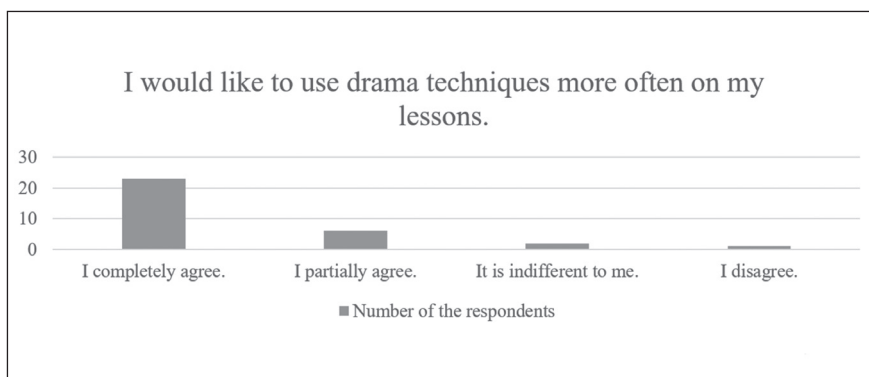
Figure 10. The answers of the respondents for the fourth sentence
in connection with drama techniques.

71.87% of the respondents completely agreed with the statement, that they would like to use drama techniques more often on their lessons. 18.75% of the teachers partially agreed with it and just one respondent disagreed. There were 6.25% of the respondents whom the statement was indifferent.
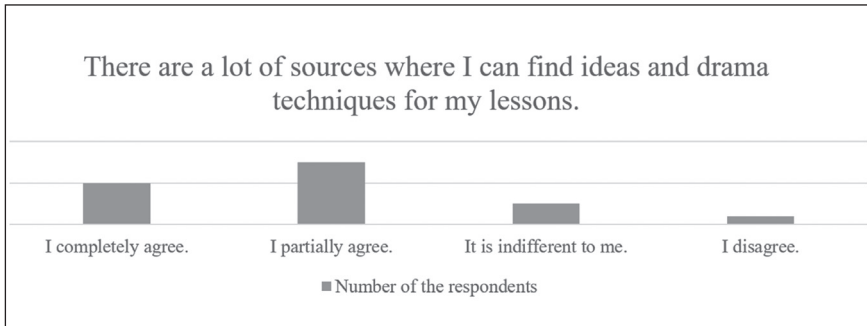
Figure 11. The answers of the respondents for the fifth sentence
in connection with drama techniques.

On this chart, it can be seen, that most of the respondents partially agreed with the sentence – this means 46.87% of them. 31.25% completely agreed and 6.25% disagreed. For 15.62% of the respondents the statement was indifferent.
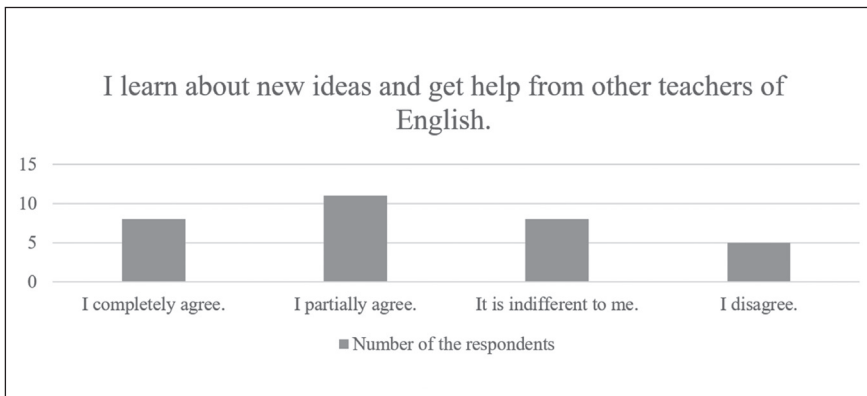
Figure 12. The answers of the respondents for the sixth sentence
in connection with drama techniques.

34.37% of the respondents partially agreed, that they learn about new ideas and get help from other teachers of English. 25% of them agreed completely and for 25% of them the statement was indifferent. 15.62% of the teachers disagreed.
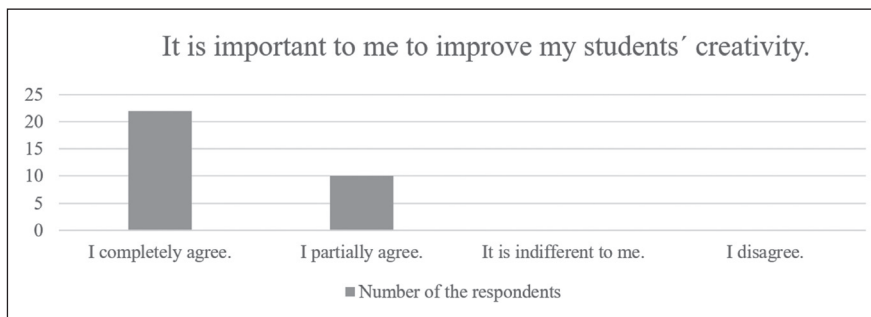
Figure 13. The answers of the respondents for the seventh sentence in connection with drama techniques.

Based on the seventh sentence we can state, that for almost all the respondents it is important to improve their students´ creativity. 68.75% percent of the respondents completely agreed that it is important to them and 31.25% of them agreed partially.

Almost all the respondents agreed with the eighth sentence. 78.12% of them completely agreed, that they can improve their students´ creativity with drama techniques. 18.75% of the teachers agreed partially with the statement. For one person it was indifferent, and no one disagreed with it.

In the twelfth question the respondents had to agree or disagree with similar sentences like in the previous question, but the sentences in this part were connected to their students.
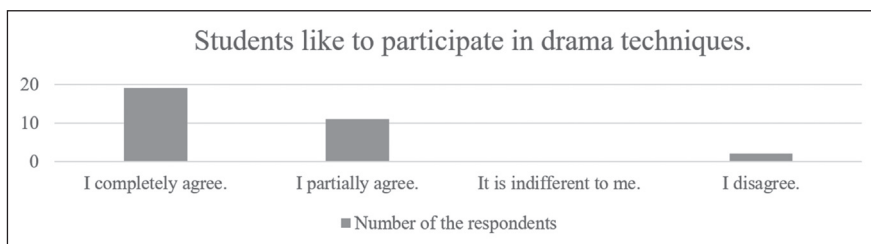
Figure 14. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude to drama techniques in the first sentence.

It can be seen, that most of the teachers – 59.37% of them - completely agreed with the statement, that their students like to participate in drama techniques. 34.37% partially agreed with it and 6.25% disagreed. Nobody gave the answer that it is indifferent to him.
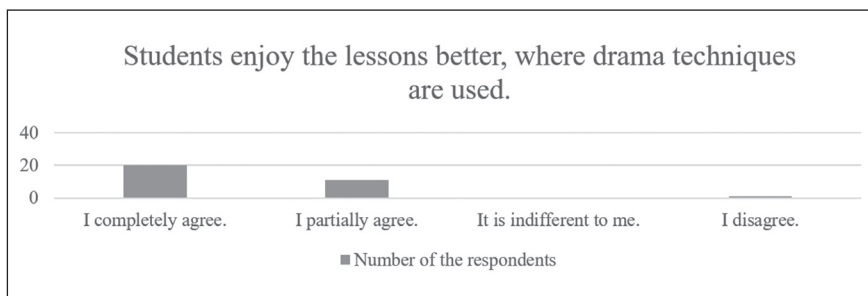
Figure 15. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the second sentence.

62.5% completely agreed with the sentence, that the students enjoy the lessons better, where the teachers are using drama techniques. 34.37 % of them partially agreed and just one person disagreed. The sentence was not indifferent to anyone.
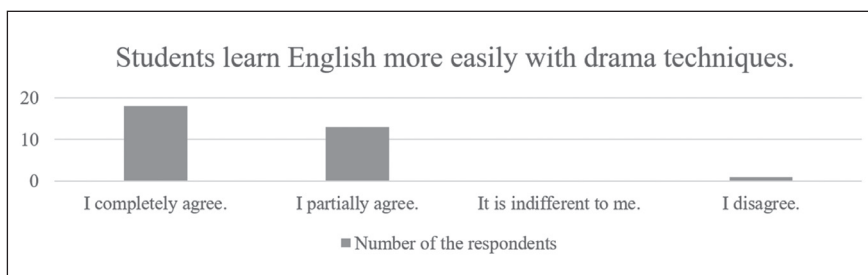
Figure 16. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the third sentence.

Almost all the respondents agreed - completely or partially - with the statement that students learn English more easily with the help of drama techniques. 56.25% of them agreed completely and 40.62% agreed partially. One person disagreed and nobody gave the answer that it is indifferent.
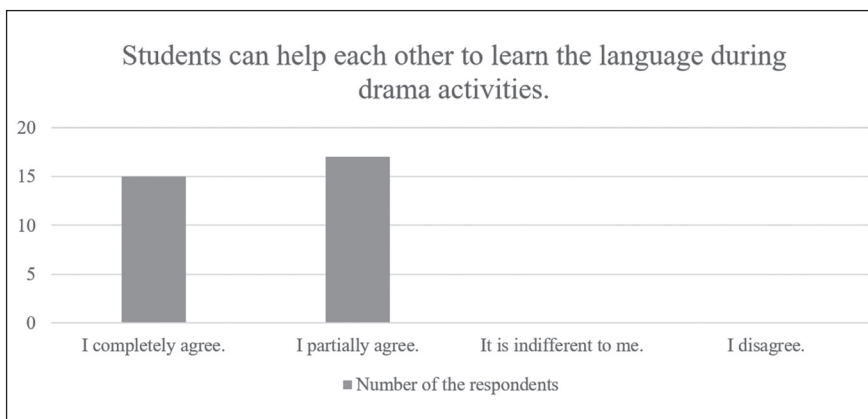
Figure 17. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the fourth sentence.

In the fourth sentence the teachers were asked whether the students can help each
other in language learning during drama activities or not. 53.12% of them partially
agreed and 46.87% completely agreed, that they can help each other to learn the
language. There were any respondents, whom the sentence was indifferent, and no
one disagreed with it.
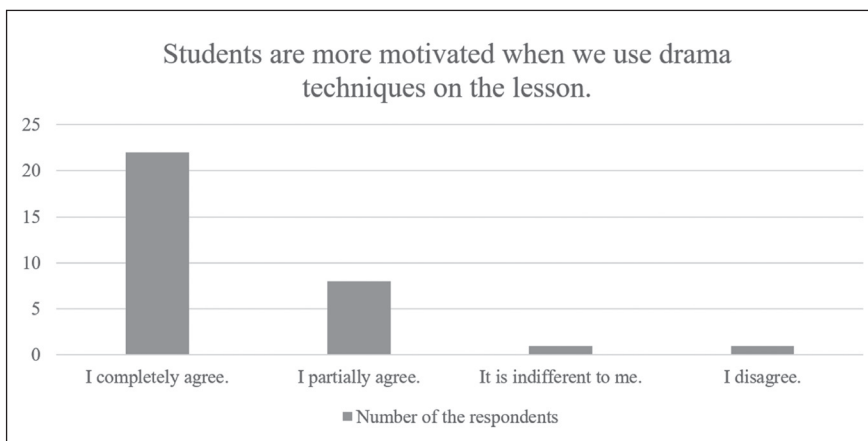
Figure 18. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the fifth sentence.

68.75% of the respondents completely agreed that students are more motivated when we use drama techniques on the lesson. 25% of them partially agrees with the statement. One person disagreed with it and for one person it was indifferent.
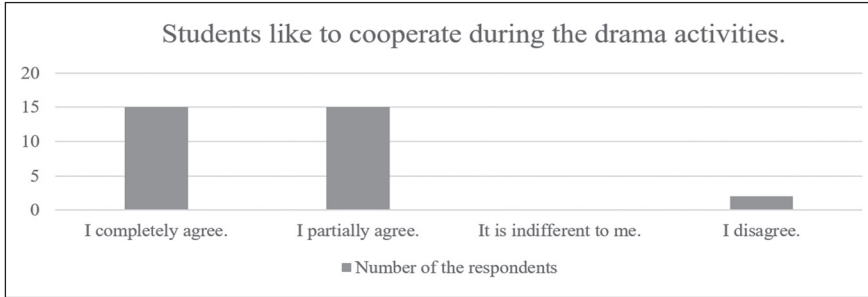
Figure 19. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the sixth sentence.

According to 46.87% of the respondents, students like to cooperate during the drama activities. 46.87% of them partially agreed with the statement and 6.25% disagreed with it. The sentence was not indifferent to any of the respondents.
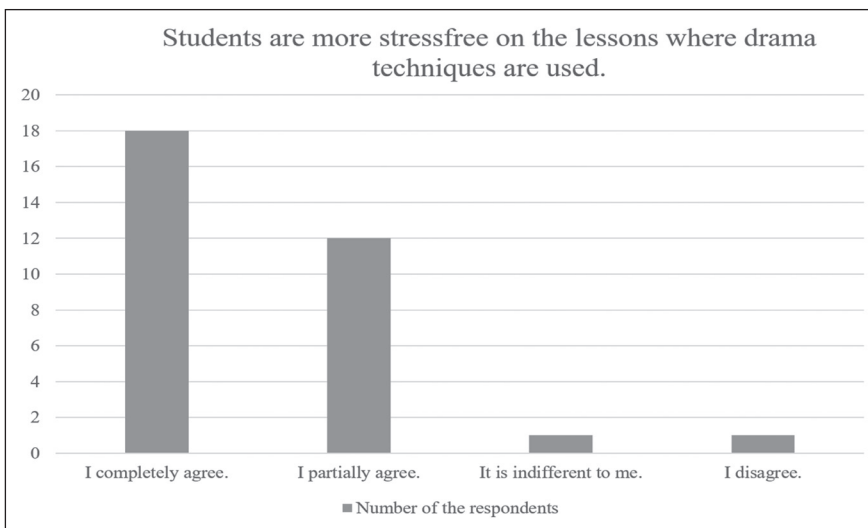
Figure 20. The teachers´ opinion about their students´ attitude
to drama techniques in the seventh sentence.

In the last sentence the teachers were asked whether their students are more stressfree on the lessons where drama techniques are used or not. 56.25% of them completely agreed with it and 37.5 % just partially agreed. Only one person disagreed and for one person the statement was indifferent.

3.4. Interest of Respondents in a Training in Drama Techniques

The last part of the questionnaire asked the teachers about their interests in a training in drama techniques. This part consisted of two questions.
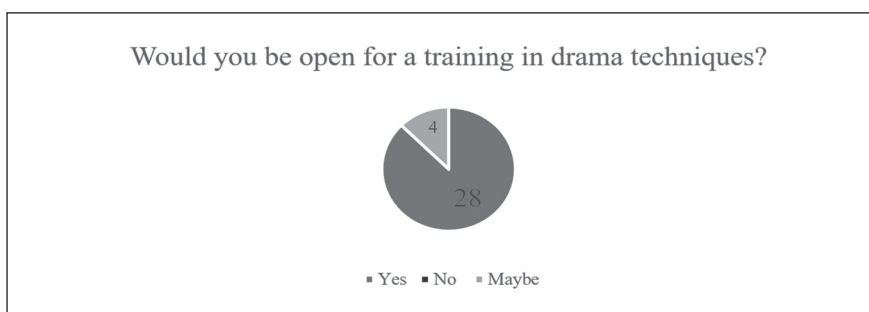
Figure 21. The answers of the respondents about their interest
in a training in drama techniques.

87.5% of the respondents would be open for a training in drama techniques. 12.5% of them answered with maybe for this question.
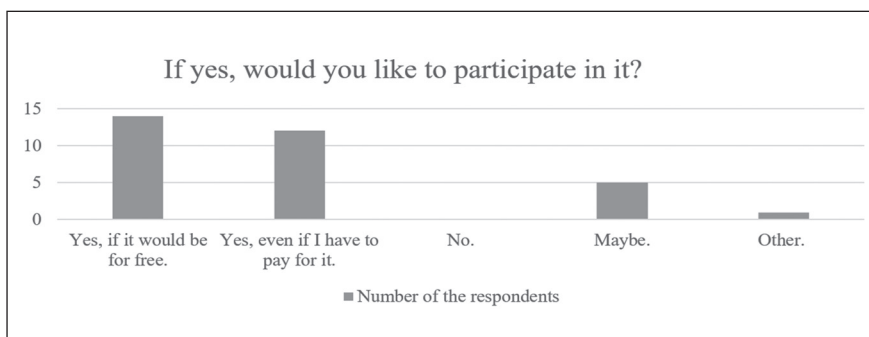
Figure 22. The reasons why the respondents would participate on the training.

43.75% of the respondents would participate on the training only if it would be for free. 37.5% of them would participate even if they have to pay for it. 15.62% of them answered with maybe and one respondent gave a different answer – this respondent connected the participation to her family and free time.

Conclusion

Drama techniques can be useful and practical parts of an English as a foreign language lesson. It is important for EFL teachers to be familiar with as many methods for teaching the language as possible. Drama techniques are one of these methods and they can help teachers to make the English lessons easier and more enjoyable.

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Practical activities for developing communicative competence at level A1

Klaudia PAULIKOVÁ[2]

ABSTRACT

One of the primary goals of many European countries' foreign language education policies is to achieve communicative competence in a foreign language. The unified concept of communicative competence provides learners with equal opportunities for mastering languages to the best of their abilities and enables its development from the start of learners' studies. This paper provides a theoretical insight into the phenomenon of developing communicative competence at the lowest proficiency level - A1. Information is provided on what communicative competence is, how it was formed and what sub-competences it involves. A list of useful practical techniques and activities are presented to show the manifold ways, in which individual competences can be integrated into the teaching process.

Keywords:
communicative competence, activities, level A1, TEFL

Introduction

The global world has had a significant impact on foreign language education in the modern era. Education, as such, reflects current societal needs and requirements and adapts flexibly to the global changes. The demand for language users today is much higher than it has ever been, as the fundamental language teaching policy of many countries around the world is to achieve *communicative competence* in

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at least one or two foreign languages [1]. On almost all existential levels, we are required to use a unified, global language. It is no longer sufficient to be able to read and translate texts, as it used to be in the past. The modern world calls for a wide range of competencies and skills, from basic communication to mastering ICT and specific technical terminology - all in one, global target language.

Learning theories underpin modern teaching trends. Subsequently, they are supported by governments in the forms of educational acts and reports [2]. Curriculums are built on these foundations to create frameworks and guidelines that depict the primary goals of education. However, they rarely provide step-by-step instructions on teaching methodology [3]. Due to the fact that there are no specific regulations governing teaching methodology, it is primarily up to the teachers to select suitable and effective approaches and methods [4, 5].

The primary goal of modern foreign language education is to provide learners with knowledge that they can apply outside of the classroom [6]. It is critical to become aware of and respect the diversity of cultures, which necessitates teachers training their students to be able to use language effectively in intercultural measures [7]. Learners must become fully-fledged in their use of the language, which entails learning how to use language effectively in various social contexts and functioning well in a real communicative environment [8]. As a result, in terms of language teaching, developing communicative competence is just as important as any other aspect of language. In particular, it serves as a foundational component of communicative language teaching as it requires both the correct application of communicative skills as well as knowledge and understanding of culture in all of its facets [9]. Communicative competence has evolved into one of the most important factors for successful language acquisition, and it is now included as one of the primary goals of teaching in almost all national and international curricula and syllabuses.

1. Communicative Competence

The meaning and understanding of the phenomenon has shifted slightly over the course of its 50-year existence. Various concepts and models have been developed, all of which depict communicative competence in all of its complexities. When referring to language knowledge as more than just grammar knowledge, Hymes [10] was the first to coin the term communicative competence. Canale and Swain [11] defined the phenomenon as the combination of essential language knowledge

and skill. Their concept was made up of three types of knowledge: grammatical rules, social communication, and discourse utterances. The ability to communicate in real-life situations was referred to as skill. On the basis of their concept, the authors developed their model including grammatical, strategic, and sociolinguistic components. Canale [12] later emphasized the importance of incorporating a discourse component to the whole, as he believed successful communication would be extremely difficult to achieve without discourse competence.

In contrast, Bachman [13] defined communicative competence in terms of evaluation and testing. He defined it as having two major components: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence was concerned with the ability to regulate the formal structure of language – grammatical competence and textual competence. Vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology were all examples of grammatical competence. The ability to join utterances to form a spoken or written text was referred to as textual competence with cohesion and rhetorical organization as examples. Pragmatic competence was defined as the ability to use language in relation to other language users and the context of a communicative situation. Later, Bachman and Palmer [14] emphasized the importance of communicative competence to include meta-cognitive strategies. In utterances, these would stand for goal setting, planning, and assessment. Celce-Murcia et al. [15] argued that, in addition to the existing components of communicative competence, there was a need to consider functional language, as well. Their actional competence was defined as the ability to convey and understand communicative intent that was matching actional intent. Celce-Murcia [16] expanded her refined understanding of communicative competence later in her paper. She regarded discourse competence as the centre of communication, with socio-cultural competence (pragmatic knowledge), interactional competence (language functions and nonverbal means of communication), linguistic competence (language systems), and formulaic competence (automatized use of phrases, idioms, and so on) surrounding it. She emphasized that strategic competence for problem solving and error correction was an ever-present inventory that could be used at any time.

According to Usó-Juan and Martnez-Flor [17], communicative competence was dependent on a balanced development of the four communicative skills – listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Their understanding of the phenomenon included linguistic competence, strategic competence, intercultural competence, and pragmatic competence as a means of achieving successful discourse (discourse

competence), which is inextricably linked to the four communicative skills. Littlewood [18] brought the most recent understanding with five components: linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics), discourse competence (participating in discourse), pragmatic competence (using language in real situations), sociolinguistic competence (using language appropriately in different situations), and socio-cultural competence (cultural knowledge).

2. Communicative Competence at level A1

To define communicative competence at level A1, it is important understand the characteristics of the level itself first. According to the CEFR [8], we generally associate primary education with proficiency level A1. According to the reference document, the user of this level is able to "...understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help" [8: 24] Desiring to understand the nuances of communicative competence at this level, we should take the Breakthrough Manuscript into account, as well [19], which is an extension document designed specifically for the purpose of enriching the CEFR at the given level. This document contains detailed specifications on all aspects of English learning.

In her study, Pauliková [20] provides a an analysis of the two documents and reveals that at the level A1 there are three main groups of competences to be developed – linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence. Learners should master lexical competence, more specifically a specific range of single words and word expressions, as part of their linguistic competence. In addition, they should develop grammatical competence in terms of sentence production, phrase use, and word forms, all of which are naturally within their scope of knowledge. They should also be able to demonstrate phonological and orthoepic competence, that is, the ability to correctly use language sounds and pronounce written forms. Finally, they should develop orthographic competence, which is the ability to spell words correctly and punctuate them correctly [20].

Learners should further be able to use and understand language in a variety of cultural contexts as part of their sociolinguistic competence. They should be able to use basic greetings, introductions, addressing, and politeness phrases like please, thank you, and sorry. They should also be familiar with some types of expletives [20].

Finally, learners should develop two sub-competences within *pragmatic competence*. They should develop functional competence in the first place, which entails correct use of language functions. These comprise imparting and seeking information, expressing attitudes, persuading, socializing, structuring discourse, and repairing communication within their domain of expertise. Secondly, students should master discourse competence, which is the ability to produce meaningful sentences and maintain conversations through turn-taking. Provided that they develop all of these, they will be completely communicatively competent at the proficiency level A1 [20].

3. EFL Activities for Developing Communicative Competence

As the preceding lines demonstrate, each component of communicative competence is very specific and places different demands on learners. There are numerous teaching techniques and activities that can be used to develop these parts individually or in groups. We like to think that if teachers give their students enough opportunities to practice all of the components of communicative competence in their classes, learners have a good chance of succeeding outside of the artificial classroom environment, as well.

1. Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence is a fundamental component of overall language knowledge. As a result, it appears to be very simple to look for teaching techniques that could work to develop this competence, as the market is brimming with books and guidelines for teaching it effectively.

Lexical competence

For developing lexical competence, authors suggest various activities depending on whether learners are being exposed to the vocabulary for the first time, or are already practicing. Harmer [3] for instance suggests doing *associations* of words and phrases to sounds, or pictures when meeting vocabulary for the first time. Other useful activities for introducing vocabulary are *dramatisations, mimics, drawings*, *gestures, descriptions*, *stories*, or *dictionary work*. Vocabulary practice, on the other hand, can be done by various *matching activities*, *gap filling activities*, *word searches*, *songs*, *crosswords*, or *drills* [21]. Using technology has also been found useful for developing lexical competence [3]. A study conducted by Polakova and

Klimova [22] revealed that mobile apps designed for vocabulary practice develop lexical knowledge of the learners and are very popular among young generations of students. Furthermore, incorporating *drama* assists in motivating the students, forming encouraging intellectual and emotional surroundings, and promoting long-lasting vocabulary retention [23]. Conversely, in order to become lexically competent, besides presentation and practice, students also must be able to produce the language. This includes a variety of activities involving the skills of speaking and writing, as well as development and knowledge of other competencies [5].

Grammatical Competence

Young and beginner learners should be exposed to new grammatical structures inductively through *authentic texts* or *demonstrations.* Incorporating new grammar elements should be done by using *tables* or *forms.* Subsequently, *explanations* and *demonstrations* of the new language are recommended to be done [8]. Grammar development activities include *drills* with changing variations, various *writing tasks*, and different types of *dialogues* [21]. Games (competitive games, drama games, collaborative games) can also be useful, when practicing grammatical structures [24]. *Grammar awareness activities,* as their name also suggests, assists in raising awareness of students concerning grammar. These activities can be divided into two types: word-grammar activities and sentence-grammar activities, each with their own set of goals and objectives [25]. Grammatical structures can also be practiced by activities such as *translations*, *grammar focused fluency activities, gap filling activities*, *constructing sentences*, *category substitutions*, *multiple choice activities,* or *question-answer activities* [8].

Phonological and Orthoepic Competence

The most important for developing phonological and orthoepic competence is to give learners opportunities to hear language pronounced correctly and accurately [26]. According to Gower [27], it is crucial to deal with such sounds that learners' mother tongues do not contain. This can be accomplished by using *gestures* to teach voiced and voiceless consonants, *mouthing* (exaggerated use of lips, teeth, and tongue), emphasizing specific syllables, or using *visuals*. Pronunciation practice should be integrated in *model dialogues* to allow natural acquisition [26]. Reid [28] suggests being exposed to authentic language as much as possible. According to her imitating teachers, audio and video recorded native speakers is key to acquiring proper pronunciation. She lists activities as *reading aloud*, *imitations, tongue twisters*, *listening and repeating* (using CDs, interactive boards, or internet

resources), *drilling* (repetition drills, jazz chants, substitution drills, transformation drills, chain drills,) *minimal pairs*, *ear training*, *recording learners' pronunciation*, or *sound colour charts* (replacing phonemic alphabet).

Orthographic Competence

The ability to spell correctly and use proper punctuation and spacing in the target language is the final component of linguistic competence. Correct spelling is essential, but it can be difficult for students to achieve, because often there is very little or no correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it should be spelled. Teachers should incorporate a variety of reading activities into the teaching process, because that allows students to notice the language and assists in the continuous improvement of their spelling [3]. Olshtain [29] suggests that learners practice spelling by completing simple *tasks* that are related to letters. *Text copying* [30], *dictations, memorizing alphabet elements*, *various writing tasks*, *memorizing word forms*, or exposing students to a variety of *written texts* [8] are all suggested techniques and activities for developing orthographic competence.

2. Sociolinguistic Competence

One of the most important components of sociolinguistic competence is cultural knowledge. As a result, when it comes to developing sociolinguistic competence, teachers should begin teaching culture to their students. Reid [31] recommends a set of CEFR-based techniques and activities for teaching culture. *Games, illustrations, role plays*, *discussions*, *simulations*, *negotiations*, *explanations*, *comparisons*, *cultural assimilations*, *cultural capsules*, *predictions*, or *portfolios* are all examples of excellent ways for developing sociolinguistic competence. Using *authentic materials*, further, is one of the most effective ways of teaching culture and mastering sociolinguistic competence [32].

3. Pragmatic Competence

Using language in speech or writing in a communicative environment is referred to as pragmatic competence, which comprises two sub-competences - functional competence and discourse competence.

Functional Competence

Functional competence should be developed by a continuous and gradual increase in the difficulty of functional scope of texts, as well as a gradual and continuous increase in the requirements placed on learners and their language production [8].

Assigning students with *practical tasks* and activities encouraging functional language use is key to developing functional competence. The interactional function of language use calls for the implementation of language practice and production in *pairs* and *groups* [33]. Celce-Murcia [16] recommends activities to be *interactive* and *learner-centred,* such as *conducting interviews, writing* (*emails*, *letters*, *advertisements*, *etc.*)*, making summaries with a partner*, *simulating phone calls*, or doing *role-plays*. Provided that they are intended and designed with the aim of practicing language functions, various free speaking activities, such as *discussions*, *debates* or *dramatisations* can also be considered as useful for developing functional competence [5].

Discourse Competence

Discourse competence should be aided by gradually increasing the complexity of discourse, assigning tasks that follow patterns of verbal exchange, and teaching discourse structures explicitly [8]. It is important to *model conversations* for learners, particularly those with low proficiency levels. Yet, it is critical to distinguish between accuracy and fluency-based pragmatic use of language, as tasks are frequently limited to linguistic structure practice only, while free communication is completely ignored. Accuracy-based activities do not necessitate communication to be meaningful and are directed to correct language use, whereas fluency-based activities imitate natural, meaningful communication that is unpredictable [33]. A variety of *pair* and *group* activities is suggested to be used to underline natural communication between learners. That consequently leads to learner autonomy and automaticity in the language use [33]. Pairing and grouping learners develops overall fluency of learners, boosts their motivation, as well, and helps with their ability to acquire and produce more language [33]. Thornbury [34] recommends *precision dialogues* for practicing both linguistic structure appropriacy and the ability of turn-taking. *Presentations* and *talks*, further*,* prepare learners for speaking in real life. Authors [33, 34] also suggest techniques and activities as *jigsaw puzzles, information gap activities*, *surveys*, *role-playing*, using *drama*, *simulations*, *story-telling* techniques, or different *games* as excellent for developing the ability to interact naturally in situations similar to those in real life. *Discussions* and *debates* also develop discourse competence to a great deal [34]. Concerning written production, a variety of *writing tasks*, *diaries*, or *portfolios* are regarded as outstanding ways for developing students' writing skills [34].

Conclusion

When it comes to foreign language education, one of the most significant advantages of the modern times is the variety of approaches, techniques, and activities available for the education process. Due to the fact there are no strict guidelines for a single methodology to be used, teachers have great freedom in choosing such approaches, which they find the most suitable. The aim for the teaching process is to be multifaceted, with a plethora of resources available to achieve the teaching objectives. The development of communicative competence is very similar to this. We must be aware that if we want our students to develop and master their communicative competence to its full potential, an environment rich in stimuli and opportunities to practice language must be created. Textbooks are a good source of knowledge with plenty of activities, but it is also important to include supplementary materials to increase the quality of the teaching process. If students are provided with well-prepared and well-organized teaching including a balanced distribution of activities for all the sub-competences of communicative competence, the probability of their success in and outside of the classroom is unquestionably increased.

This paper depicted communicative competence from a theoretical point of view. Not only did we find out that communicative competence as a phenomenon is a substantial part of foreign language education, we were also able to identify and understand its individual components. The list of techniques and activities provided in the study shows that there are numerous ways how communicative competence can be developed. It is assumed that if teachers select these activities in accordance with the teaching objectives and the needs of their learners, not only will the learners master individual aspects of language, but they will also develop their communicative competence at its best.

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Project-based learning as a creative and innovative way of teaching English as a foreign language

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to introduce and analyse the different tools and tasks used during project-based learning and teaching. The paper contains two main sections. The first section deals with the theoretical part of project-based teaching and learning, focusing mainly on the methods used to improve the personal bonding of learners to teaching and learning techniques. The second section deals with the practical background of project-based teaching and learning and how it is used innovatively in order to create a more student-centred teaching and learning process. The structure of this paper and the main topic are based on the investigation of the project-based learning process of learners, a process in which learners are actively engaged. Through this teaching approach, learners study and are personally and actively involved in important projects, while teachers control and observe the process itself.

Keywords:
project-based learning, teaching, student-centred education, creativity, innovation

Introduction

The implementation of creativity is one of the most important aspects of contemporary education. Teachers everywhere try to do their best to create lesson plans that are not only creative but also understood and accepted by the school system, and most

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importantly are not boring for the learners. Teaching English as a foreign language can be very challenging for teachers as they need not only to grab the attention of their learners but also to keep it. The building up of the lesson plans with the modern innovations of creative teaching methods of some of these brilliant teachers can be the reason why they still love and enjoy teaching despite all the challenges of this occupation. In order to create a student-centred foreign language classroom, it is important for teachers to have a creative mindset, but it also requires learners who are susceptible to learning.

The first section of this paper deals with the theoretical part of project-based learning. It is argued that learners develop personal deepening in learning if they are involved in the teaching and learning process more actively. Serious tasks such as examining, processing and interpreting data can enhance the creative and critical thinking of the learners. It can be difficult to find learners at a young age that are naturally creative individuals and in order to improve their creativity it is not only the teachers but also the schools that need to be open for it.

The second section of this paper deals with a more practical background of project-based learning. This type of approach is more student-centred and it involves the learners in the learning process. It is mostly considered to be a more active way of achieving a deeper knowledge of the processed educational material. The paper focuses on project-based research and it also deals with the most important ways and tools of project-based learning.

1. Project-Based Teaching and Learning in Theory

It is an important role of teachers to help their learners engage in learning and more importantly to develop a deeper understanding of themselves. While trying to find and use a creative teaching method, it is crucial not to forget to focus on the real and modern meaning of education, which is not only the transition of lexical knowledge but also helping learners learn by applying their ideas and being engaged in real-life activities. Teaching English as a foreign language may be quite difficult if we consider the differences among learners (e.g. ability, interest, learning style, prior knowledge, motivation, gender, social background, etc.) and the fact that English might be a foreign, a second or a third language for them. Many learners lack the sense of and talent for languages and it is very difficult for them to learn another language beyond their mother tongue. A foreign language educator faces many challenges while teaching in a language classroom, so it is vital

to find a creative teaching method. Project-based teaching and learning is not only a creative way of engaging learners, it also allows them to investigate and learn on their own in a controlled environment. Project-based learning (PBL) is considered to be one of the best teaching and learning methods in modern education because of its creativity.

The ideas of John Dewey, a professor and philosopher and his Laboratory School at the University of Chicago (based on the process of inquiry) are considered to be the root of project-based learning. Dewey's train of thought was that if learners are involved in the learning process more actively and are engaged in real-life tasks, they develop personal investment. Decades after Dewey's research, scientists proved that active inquiry leads to a deeper understanding [3]. Dewey's experiments gave a lot of boost to scientists and educators to try something new in the classroom and also to gain a better understanding of their learners and their acquired knowledge.

In a project-based classroom, learners challenge themselves and their classmates by discussing questions and hypotheses and examine new ideas. It is vital to allow all the learners to brainstorm about any new hypothesis or idea that pops into their minds while they try to investigate them. Arguments shared among learners while brainstorming can also have a positive effect on learning.

Krajcik and Blumenfeld claim that learners in project-based classrooms gain higher scores than those participating in traditional classrooms [3]. There are five key features of a project-based classroom. First of all, they start with a question that needs to be solved (a so called driving question). After the question is set up, learners have to analyse and process it. Teachers and learners require to expert the problem-solving ability in which social interactions are very important. During participation in the examination process, learners get help to acquire abilities they do not have yet. In the end, after all the exploration, actual products are created by the learners that are usually accessible as well [3].

These theories were first examined by learning sciences experts and after years of experiments they understood more precisely how learners gain 'remaining knowledge' (a type of knowledge that stays longer and is acquired by the active participation of learners in the learning process) [2]. There are more divisions of learning ideas by different research areas and educators. A good example is the Durham University research study, where there were five essential parts of the project: centrality, driving question, constructive investigations, autonomy and realism [2]. There may be different listings, but all the research activities and results suggest the same ideas in project-based teaching and learning.

Scholars built up a learning idea (based on Dewey's insight) which consists of four major parts. The four parts of this idea are the following: active construction, situated learning, social interactions and cognitive tools [3]. In the active construction phase learners passionately and actively build their knowledge while exploring the world around them. Participating in real-world activities while constructing (and reconstructing) new ideas and learning new experiences are the essential steps of this phase. It is often discussed that learners cannot gain permanent knowledge from simply reading and listening to teachers and computers or books, it is rather a passively taken set of information which does not stay with us for a long time. Observations and drawn conclusions from the real world are the base essentials of the second phase, which is situated learning. Learners can find a better understanding of their actions and experiments if they are involved in specific scientific processes such as investigating, explaining and presenting their ideas. Conjunctions formed between prior and new knowledge during active experiments help learners understand a phenomenon and acquire information. When learners work together with their classmates or teachers and they socially interact, it helps them gain the best way of learning. In the third phase, social interactions summon shared understanding with debating and sharing ideas among learners. Cognitive tools (fourth phase) are appliances that help learners understand and visualize the patterns they study (these tools are referred to as learning technologies, such as computer technologies, software, etc.) [3]. All four parts of this learning idea show that participating actively in the learning process help learners understand not only the mechanism of learning but they also gain deeper knowledge that sticks better than that acquired through superficial learning.

It can be quite challenging to abstract from traditional education and it is certainly a harder task, but if we consider the notion of what the learners who study English as a foreign language can gain from a project-based classroom, it may be worth trying. Learners in EFL classrooms are sometimes quite shy because of language barriers. They may be afraid to talk in front of their peers and they can act nervously because of that. Project-based teaching and learning can help them loosen up a bit since they work hard during this learning idea, and while they need to discuss and present their ideas to their classmates and teachers, first they acquire all the necessary and essential knowledge for that.

Applying these parts in an EFL classroom may require teachers who are open to working hard and sacrificing time to help their learners in the learning process. Although, this learning idea is not spread in the EFL classrooms yet, it can be an Ace card in making English lessons more creative in the future.

2. The Practical Background of Project-Based Teaching and Learning

Project-based teaching and learning is way more time-consuming than traditional lessons in practice – that is what we tend to have in mind when thinking about PBL. It may be true, that the preparation of such lessons takes more time, but the results speak for themselves. PBL results in a more creative lesson where learners gain a deeper knowledge while they are enjoying EFL classes more than usual. The following section gives a detailed description of how project-based teaching and learning is set up in the practical background of teaching.

The first and most important step when putting project-based teaching and learning into practice is to identify a driving question. Setting a driving question can be done by the teacher or the learners or they work together to set one (it is up to the teacher whether s/he wants to be part of this). Setting a well-founded driving question can be quite difficult for learners, so most of the time they need their supervisor's help. A valid driving question must be rooted in a real-life situation, it must be meaningful and ethical. A driving question that is meaningful organizes and provides a sufficient background for the whole project, in which learners are able to work continuously. It is important for learners to find the value of the driving questions that explore essential learning standards. Learners that find a good driving question are also eager to find solutions to the problem and it evokes their desire to learn. It is the teacher's duty to bring awareness on the driving question while the work is in progress. During a situated inquiry, learners study previous surveys, investigations and construct new ideas and hypotheses and use cognitive tools to interpret data in order to find relevant answers. Suggestions are made by learners in order to model the investigation which is done by them, though it is led by the teacher. To interpret their work, learners have to come to a conclusion which needs to be explained by them. In order to obtain the best final result during the working process, the members of the classroom need to collaborate. Collaboration helps learners (and teachers) understand each other's views and thoughts, and at the same time it creates a sense of connectivity with others, it also helps learners understanding relationships and create new ideas [6]. To gather and analyse data, technological tools are used by the learners, such as the Internet. Artefacts developed by learners are extremely crucial parts of project-based learning. These projects are the projections of learners' ideas, which help them and their classmates and teachers to understand their work and process deeper. Teachers should always give individual or group feedback to the artefacts and the research process [3].

Teachers must be flexible and open to the ideas and investigation models offered by their learners and ready to change direction if necessary. Similarly, learners learn from their mistakes and it helps them to re-evaluate their leading questions or working process if necessary. For many schools, it is not difficult to access the Internet and help their learners by providing online dictionaries or web pages in English language. However, a lot of teachers also face the fact that their learners are not able to use the Internet correctly, or they cannot search for relevant information effectively. To use the technological tools correctly, teachers need to make sure first that their learners do not face difficulties with them. After this, they can start to use them in their projects. Artefacts that can be useful for an EFL class include videos, web pages, programmes, games, interviews or books.

An analysis of interviews with teachers recognised as experts in the area of project-based learning revealed successful techniques by which teachers can help and support their learners during the process of project-based learning. Productively scheduling projects and time management can be highly helpful to manage the timeline. Helping learners formulate a research question and plan before getting started may be constructive for learners. Learners need to learn how to learn and teachers need to give them some responsibility and self-management while designing their project. Establishing and keeping track on groups is also important for teachers in order to keep collaboration efficient. Finding the correct type of technology can be crucial for learners (especially if they are younger), so the help of teachers is highly recommended in this stage. As it was previously mentioned, evaluation and assessment are also significant parts of the whole process [2].

Al-Balushi and Al- Aamri conclude that project-based teaching and learning is as troublesome as traditional education in terms of time and resources within the walls of the school building (this is based on their research on project-based learning). Technology helps learners to design and develop and to efficiently share their projects. The effectiveness of project-based teaching and learning depends not only on the learners, but also on the teacher and on how s/he can support and motivate the learners. For a successful final result, teachers also need important assistance, autonomy and aids from the school itself [2].

A study where project-based learning was monitored in EFL classrooms in Indonesian schools[4] shows that students' participation have increased during English lessons because they have directly been involved in the learning process.

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4   In this research study, three different schools and classrooms were monitored. The project topic was the same for all the groups, but they got independent authority to work with it.

Learners asked more questions from the teachers while they were walking around the learners, paying attention to the working process. Learners' achievement also increased thanks to creativity and reasoning exercised while working on the project. The study showed that project-based learning had a positive effect on the learners' achievement and participation and it improved their skills and learning abilities in the EFL classroom [5].

Another study claims that project-based learning has many advantages in the EFL classroom, such as improved communication among the learners, upgraded language, listening and reading skills and authentic activities that are not boring for the learners. However, there are some disadvantages as well. Projects need to be constructed and implemented very carefully, so it takes more time and requires more and deeper investigation. Teachers also need to be well-prepared and trained and need to provide motivation for the learners so that they can to finish the project [1].

Research on project-based teaching and learning clearly shows that learners and teachers acquire not only deeper knowledge, but also new experiences. Collaboration with other members of the work process results in meaningful life lessons while learners gain new perspectives on different topics. Interdisciplinary topics included in EFL lessons may help to increase not only the vocabulary of the learners but it also widens their perspective and even worldview. Project-based learning gives lifelong knowledge and experience to learners, not to mention that it is more challenging and greater fun for them.

Conclusion

Enjoyable teaching methods and approaches are hard to find in classes of English as a foreign language for modern learners. Children of the modern age are exposed to a huge amount of external influence and technology plays a significant role in their everyday life. EFL teachers try to make their classes as creative and satisfying for their learners as possible, however, it may be a difficult task (especially in the case of young learners) when learners are used to sitting still for a long time. Learners often complain about classes being boring and they cannot pay attention and focus because of this. Traditional EFL teaching methods are considered to be obsolete, because many people think that they do not prepare learners for real-life problems, they only focus on lexical knowledge. Based on this, learners are not able to use the language properly. Project-based teaching and learning can be a possible solution to this problem, which can make EFL classes more creative and enjoyable. According

to the late professor John Dewey, who is identified as one of the first educators doing research on PBL, learners gain personal investment while they are actively involved in real-life tasks and this helps them to deepen their knowledge [3].

Project-based learning is a student-centred teaching approach, where learners are the most active participants of the learning process, because they design and create the project by researching and interpreting data through authentic problems, while the teacher is an attentive and helpful observer. The teacher supports and guides the learners during the working process. Project-based learning may be a solution that helps learners and teachers to focus and concentrate on a higher level. Learners engage in the learning process which is maximised through solving real-life problems. Building up a meaningful driving question is the first step to start the learning process. During the process, an active construction phase is reached by the learners, where they construct new ideas based on the answers found for their driving question. This is closely related to situated learning as well. Learners construct and gain new ideas and experiences through the observation of real-life tasks. Being part of the process helps them to gain a better understanding of the learning process. Social interactions between the learners and the teacher help the development of the learning process, during which new ideas are provided and several facts are questioned [4]. Cognitive tools play a big role in modern education and they are the indispensable parts of project-based teaching and learning. These do not only help the working process but also make it more creative and innovative. The outcome of project-based learning must be an end product, which is interpreted and concluded by the learners.

Learners of a project-based classroom tend to acquire higher scores during evaluation than those learning in traditional classrooms [2, 3]. Project-based teaching and learning makes the participants understand the working and learning process more, while they acquire deeper knowledge through it. At the end, learners conclude their project and teachers must not forget to provide feedback (whether it is individual or group assessment) to the learners in order to encourage and help their future work. Project-based teaching and learning is not much more time-consuming than designing traditional lesson plans for classes, however, they may need more advance preparation, but in the end it leads to better results.

In the EFL classroom, there are various types of learners. Many of them are shy, they are scared to talk or have various language barriers. The process of project-based learning may help them overcome these obstacles. Collaboration with other class members or teachers may also result in increased participation during the

classes, because learners learn to learn and work during the sessions. Researches confirm that learners ask more questions and their learning results are improved during the process of project-based learning [2, 3]. PBL also improves linguistic skills such as listening and reading skills in EFL classrooms, while most learners become better communicators as well. Of course, there are a few disadvantages of this learning approach as well, like it needs well-prepared and motivated teachers or prior investigation, but overall, it is agreed that project-based learning helps to improve the atmosphere of EFL classrooms.

Project-based teaching and learning is an innovative and creative way of teaching English as a foreign language. Learners tend to enjoy these classes more and they gain longer-lasting knowledge, improved skills and competences during the learning process. It has more advantages than traditional lessons. PBL may be one of the best solutions to make EFL lessons up-to-date and efficient.

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Acknowledgements

Literary texts and English language teaching

Beatrix NAGY[5]

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the role of literary texts in English language teaching. The first part examines the importance of literary texts in the foreign language classroom. This part also deals with the different types of texts used in foreign language teaching. The second part lists the advantages of literary texts. The third part provides useful tips on text selection. The last part of the paper gives a concrete example of using a literary text in the foreign language classroom in the form of a lesson plan. It shows how a literary text can help to teach languages.

Keywords:
literary texts, text selection, English language, teaching, lesson plan

Introduction

The importance of foreign language teaching and the usage of relevant methods and approaches is a frequently discussed topic today. More and more scholars emphasize that literary texts can help teachers teach English as a foreign language effectively and in a more enjoyable way.

This paper focuses on the place of literary texts in the language classroom. The first part defines and outlines the different types of literary texts: poems, novels and short stories. All of them can be used in language teaching. The second part deals with the advantages of these texts and the third part provides help in text selection. The last part of the paper gives an example of using literary texts in foreign language teaching. It offers a lesson plan for students learning English as a foreign language, which is based on the Harry Potter series.

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1. Literary Texts in the Language Classroom

First of all, it is necessary to define what a literary text is. A literary text is authentic, real language in context, we can respond directly to it. The reader of this text is placed in an active interactional role – as he or she is working with and making sense of this text. Secondly, it is important to distinguish between a literary text and a traditional informational text. This difference manifests mostly in the relationship between the reader and the text. The readers of a literary text have to recreate reality in their minds, they have a creative role and have to involve their imagination. The text, the reader and the external world are in a dynamic interaction. It can help students to realize why they like reading, what they read and their linguistic competences can be improved.

When learning a foreign language, it is necessary to understand the learners´ needs and other factors which can help them to acquire the language successfully. The factors which influence foreign language learning the most are intelligence, language learning aptitude, learning styles, personality, attitude, motivation, social factors, and learner beliefs. There are scholars, like John H. Schumann, who say that each of us is different, we have different value systems so learners are not the same either, because each of them achieves learning goals differently [16]. One of the main tasks of a teacher is to notice and find the most useful ways of teaching a foreign language. The most important from the above-mentioned factors is motivation because we cannot use literature during our classes without students who are not motivated to use them. Motivation explains why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to work on/for it and also how long they want to keep on making an effort.

It is important to realize that not each teaching method is suitable for each learner. If we want to use literary texts on our lessons, we should be careful with choosing the texts. It may occur that not each learner likes them – it requires a harder job from the teacher to deal with these learners.

Literature carries meaning, which can depend on different factors. It has an important role as a subject. In this case it means an activity which involves and uses languages. Literature in language teaching emphasizes the use of literature to support language learning which requires the interaction of the teachers, the readers, and the texts. For that reason, the activities in the language classroom are usually based on the text which needs to be in accordance with learners' speaking level.

Literature can be used in language classes because of several reasons. Rindilla Antika claims that there are four main reasons which lead an educator to use literature: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement [1].

1.1. Types of Literary Texts

There are different types of literary texts which can be used in the language classroom. Teachers need to develop the literary competence of learners. This means making them more sensitive to the different kinds of styles, forms and genres, which they can meet while reading literary texts. We should be careful not to mix these genres, because each of them has advantages and disadvantages, too. The three main types of literary texts are poetry, fiction and drama.

A poem is "a piece of writing in which the words are arranged in separate lines, often ending in rhyme, and are chosen for their sound and for the images and ideas they suggest" [1]. It is usually considered as the most difficult form of literary texts, because of its complicated comprehension, but the above mentioned quotation points out something else. It rather suggests the enjoyable part of poetry, which can help the language learning of foreign language learners with different speaking levels. Poems improve not only linguistic competences, but also promote learners' self-expression.

Antika claims that poetry is language which is used in particular ways, which can involve rhyme, rhythm and meter. With the help of poetry, we can share experiences, tell stories, express feelings or ideas. An important part of poetry is imagination, which creates realistic visual images and stimulates sensual experience. A poem can stimulate our mind, helps us see, hear and think of things in a new way [1]. Looking always at the linguistic points of a language can be boring, poems bring a new way of teaching languages. Of course, there are teachers, who do not feel confident using poetry. The main reason of this is that they think they are not creative, but creativity comes when we start work on it.

Panavelil lists several benefits of poetry in the EFL classroom [14]. These benefits are:

(1) Teachers can use it as a resource to introduce and practice language, as real language in context which can develop students´ language skills,

(2) It is an opportunity to enrich students´ vocabulary in a new way,

(3) It encourages students in developing their creativity,

(4) It motivates, because it causes strong emotional reactions,

(5) It helps students to develop cross-cultural awareness, which helps them to acquire fluency in the target language,

(6) It deals with universal themes and human concerns which develops personal involvement in learners. [14]

Collie and Slater point out that poems give a rich and varied repertoire and are a source of enjoyment for students and teachers, too. They provide strong imagery and powerful effects. While using poetry a freer and more creative atmosphere can outline [4].

Poetry is usually a favourite tool used in language teaching because of its short length, peculiar structure and linguistic characteristic features. Its imagery, its appeal to feelings and personal experience make it interesting and enjoyable for foreign language learners.

When choosing a poem there are some important aspects which teachers should take into consideration. For example: motivation, interests, cultural background of the students, teachers' interests – because the teacher should enjoy the class, too. The length of the poem and the students´ level of the foreign language are also important and for this reason, contemporary poems can be more applicable, because their language and syntax are more understandable for the learners.

Novels and short stories are also suitable for the language classroom. From the point of view of language classes, the most important difference between them is their length – a novel is longer than a shorts story, and short stories are much more focused on mood.

Khatib and Seyyedrezaei highlight that short stories can raise cultural and linguistic awareness, motivation, critical thinking, and they can improve all four language skills [10]. They also list the pedagogical benefits of using short stories.

These benefits are:

(1) they are short, learners can read them more easily and quickly,

(2) they give a better view of other cultures,

(3) more attention is needed,

(4) present a new, fictional, interesting world,

(5) develop creativity,

(6) develop cultural awareness,

(7) reduce anxiety and help learners feel more relaxed,

(8) provide a multicultural context. [10]

They also specify the advantages of shorts story-based language teaching. They state that interaction and communication are present, it is based on humanism and cooperative learning, linguistics, sociolinguistic and communicative competence are emphasized, all four language skills can develop and can be practiced constantly. The student's native language is used only when it is needed, a stress-free and

friendly environment is specific. Vocabulary can be developed in the context of the short story and grammar is taught based on focus on form. Teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student interactions are needed [10].

Collie and Slater provide a few advantages of short stories. They state that their length is more practical than a novel´s and learners feel that they have managed to read a piece of work and they are more likely to succeed in finishing reading. Short stories also offer a greater variety than longer texts, this means that the teacher can choose different short stories, it is easier to find something good for each learner's taste [4].

Novels and short stories have a lot of features in common, for example: the chronological order of events which are linked by different relations (relations of effects or cause). As it was mentioned above, the main difference is length, and also narrator, and the self-conscious way of the language of a novel, number of characters, more complicated plot and more complex narration.

2. Advantages of Using Literary Texts

There are different methods, techniques and practices which make teaching a foreign language easier. Using literary texts is one of them, because literature and language are highly connected to each other.

The main question connected to the advantages of using literary texts in the EFL classroom is: WHY? Why should teachers use literary texts in language classes? Collie and Slater (2010) explain that the main reasons of using literary texts can be grouped into four categories. These reasons are the following: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement [4]. By valuable authentic material they mean that the meaning of a literary text is not static, because it can speak to the reader from another time or country, and these texts make students work with the target language – they encounter different linguistic uses, forms, writing mode and social network, too. It is also authentic, because the literary texts are not made specifically for teaching languages – this means, that the pieces of the everyday life, the outside world - real life context can be taken into the classroom [4].

Literary texts also give cultural enrichment to the reader. When students start to learn a new language, they cannot know or understand the culture of that foreign language. It is also common, that most of the learners are unlikely to ever visit the country of the language. So, while using literary texts learners can discover characters from different social background, their feelings, thoughts,

believe systems, what they fear or enjoy – we can increase the insight of the learners into the country of the foreign language, so they get to know the culture and also the structure of a real society.

Gillian Lazar investigates the connection between literary texts and cultural background, too. She claims that literature provides students an access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying, but this area is more complex than we think [11]. With the help of literature students can maintain their ability to contextualize how a member of a specific society might behave or react in a specific situation. Lazar also suggests that teachers should always be careful with the cultural aspect of literature, it should always be treated critically, because the cultural and ideological assumptions in texts are not always accepted and reinforced [11]. The teacher should teach learners that they should question, evaluate and subvert texts and ideas most of the time.

Collie and Slater also write about language enrichment. Reading a text can help students to get familiar with the formation and function of sentences, their structure, and their ways of connecting to each other. Students can also develop their ability to deduce meaning from context and open up new dimensions of perception. With the reading of a well-chosen text they can become more creative and they can start to "appreciate the richness and variety" of the target language [4].

Antika lists several advantages connected with language enrichment. Literature can be memorable, because the words stick in the minds of students without conscious effort, for example in the case of songs and poems. It also helps students to recognize the rhythms of the language. She mentions that using a literary text has the power to make students use the four language skills, it requires learners to think out and put them into practice [1]. Using literature in the EFL classroom can bring changes in the attitudes of the learners. It allows students to form an opinion on their lives, learning, and language and students can question, interpret, connect and explore the language, too.

Lazar points out the encouraging language acquisition as an advantage, too. She states that around the world students have limited access to spoken English, but literature can provide an appropriate way of stimulating language acquisition, because it provides meaningful and memorable contexts for mastering the new language. The use of literary texts is usually a successful way of promoting activities where learners need to share their feelings and opinions, for example in the case of discussions and group work. The reason for this is that literature is rich in multiple levels of meaning. To give our students a task in which they have to express their own opinion and feelings to the multiple levels of meaning can only serve the students' acquisition of the target language. [11]

Collie and Slater connect using literary texts with personal involvement. Most of the time learning is analytic, repetitious, boring, but literary texts can make learners to shift their focus beyond more aspects of the system of the target language [4]. While reading or using a novel, short story the learner begins to 'live in' the text. They want to know what will happen next – the development of the story becomes more important than the language itself, they sympathize with the characters. Students can benefit from this during their language learning process, but only when the reading experience is interesting. They must not feel that working with the text is a burden or an unmanageable task for them.

Besides these advantages, some others can be mentioned, too. Using literary works activates and enhances the students' emotional intelligence. When literature is suited to the language classroom it leads to more effective language learning. Language learners can also enhance their critical thinking while using literature. It is important to mention that using literature has some advantages for the teachers, too. For teachers, literature provides opportunities to enhance their literary competence, as well.

Lazar highlights three other benefits of using literature in EFL classes. The first benefit is that literature is motivational material, the second is that literature develops learners' interpretative skills and the third is that it educates the whole person, because literature can have a more extensive educational function in the classroom: it can encourage the imagination of learners, develop their critical skills and enhance their emotional awareness [11].

Literary texts can highly increase the standard of the EFL lesson, and they can help teachers to make their lessons more enjoyable.

3. Selecting The Right Text

As it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, if a language teacher wants to work with a literary text during the lesson, the most important thing to be taken into account is text selection. It can cause a hard time for the teacher if the text is not appropriate for the students. Text selection can be linked to some factors: language of the text, level of students, cultural issues and the length of the text, age, gender, and background knowledge, interests of the students [2].

The role of motivation in foreign language teaching has frequently been discussed [6]. It is an up-to-date topic highly connected to using literary texts in the EFL classroom, too, because if learners are not motivated to use these texts, the lesson cannot be successful or the requested results are difficult to achieve. Literary

texts can be motivating due to their authenticity and their meaningful context. Motivation is one of the elements which can drive learners to go ahead. It is mostly achieved when students are engages in what they do and the text they are reading is enjoyable.

Collie and Slater explain that a primary factor when selecting a text is whether the chosen work is able to stimulate the personal involvement of the learners or not. This personal involvement means that the text can awake the learners' interest and it can provoke strong and positive reactions. They also suggest choosing a text which is relevant to their life experience, but enjoyment is also important [4]. The right choice of text and a careful usage of literature in the language classroom can contribute to learners' creativity [5, 15].

Several scholars emphasize the importance of selecting interesting texts [2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 15]. Teachers can even let students find the text which is interesting for them or they can make a 'Reading interest questionnaire' which assesses the details of students' reading habits. The main purposes of reading can vary, and these can help text selection. These purposes may include: getting information, responding to curiosity about a topic, following instructions, reading for pleasure and enjoyment, trying to keep in touch, finding out what is happening in the world and find out information about details, times and places [12, 13]. These different purposes are interconnected and may lead to different types of texts. For example, learners can get information from dictionaries, catalogues, travel brochures, etc. For enjoyment and pleasure, learners can read poems, short stories, plays or reviews. To know what is happening in the world, they can use, for example, news articles magazine articles, advertisements or guidelines.

Lazar highlights three main areas that should be considered when choosing the text. These areas are: the type of course we are teaching, the type of students who are doing the course and certain factors connected with the text [11]. Four criteria are connected to the type of course we are teaching: level of students, students' reasons for learning English, kind of English required, length/intensity of course. The following criteria are connected to the type of students who are doing the course: age, intellectual maturity, emotional understanding, interests/hobbies, cultural background, linguistic proficiency, literary background. The last area is connected with the availability of texts, length of text, exploitability and fit with syllabus are connected [11]. Lazar also mentions that the age of students, their emotional and intellectual maturity and their interests and hobbies are the most important criteria when choosing the appropriate texts [11]. Teachers should choose texts that are suitable for the majority of students in the class.

It can be concluded that the most important thing when talking about text selection is the needs of learners, so teachers need to pay careful attention to their students.

4. Harry Potter in the EFL Classroom

The lesson plan provided in this section has been prepared for students learning English as a foreign language in Hungarian schools in Slovakia. The lesson plan was designed for fourteen and fifteen-year-old students. It is an example for EFL teachers showing that improving creativity, drama techniques and literary texts can all fit into a language classroom at the same time.

The main theme of the lesson plan is Harry Potter. This means that the atmosphere of the lesson is based on the Harry Potter book series written by J.K. Rowling. The story of Harry Potter started a new era in reading books – it presents a beautiful imaginary world, full of magic and creativity.

The lesson plan got the title: *Harry Potter and the Ghost in the Wardrobe*. It was planned to help to learn the different types and names of clothes items. Another aim was to improve cooperation by implementing group work. Of course, the lesson plan was designed with the aim of encouraging learners to read. It includes tasks where students have to read different passages from the book.

4.1. A Lesson Plan: Harry Potter and the Ghost in the Wardrobe

Time: 45 minutes
Number of learners: 12
Age of learners: 14-15
Language level: pre-intermediate – intermediate
Aids: a big crest of Hogwarts, big crests of the Houses of Hogwarts (placed on the board), pictures about Slytherin and Gryffindor outfits, copies of a worksheet (see below), two different pictures/posters of scenes from the Harry Potter film, a Sorting Hat (it can be an ordinary hat or cap which is named as the Sorting Hat)

Lesson objectives:
By the end of the lesson a successful learner will be able to
• list names of different clothes
• work in groups
• read and work with literary texts
• describe differences between different outfits
• describe words connected with clothes and fashion

Step 1: Warm up: List of the things you need
Time: 5 minutes
Organization: independent work
Aim: The aim of this activity is to warm up the students for the lesson.
Description: Each student gets a worksheet with a part of the book: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer´s Stone*. Their task is to fill in the gaps in their worksheets. The worksheet includes a list of words they can use during the task. When everyone is ready, the class checks the answers together.

Worksheet:
HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

UNIFORM
First-year students will require:
1. Three _____ of plain work robes (black)
2. One plain pointed _____ (black) for day wear
3. One _____ of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
4. One winter _____ (black, silver fastenings)
Please note that all pupils' clothes should carry _____ _____.

COURSE _____
All students should have a copy of each of the following:
The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1) by Miranda Goshawk
A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot
Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling
A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch
One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore
Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger
Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander
The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble

OTHER EQUIPMENT
1 wand
1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)
1 set of glass or crystal phials
1 telescope set
1 brass scales
Students may also bring an owl OR a _____ OR a toad.

PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED THEIR OWN _____

Key: Missing words: sets, hat, pair, cloak, name tags, books, cat, broomsticks

Step 2: The shoe
Time: 5 minutes
Organization: whole class work
Aim: The aim of this activity is to make pairs for the following activity.
Aids: a shoe from each student
Description: Before the activity each student has to leave a shoe outside the classroom. The teacher has to collect the shoes and redistribute them. Everyone should have one which does not belong to them. Students are asked to find their pairs by finding the owner of the shoe.
Possible Problems: The activity can be chaotic if the teacher does not pay attention to making pairs while distributing the shoes.

Step 3: What is the difference?
Time: 10 minutes
Organization: pair work
Aim: The aim of this activity is to develop concentration and speaking skills.
Aids: pictures about Slytherin and Gryffindor outfits
Description: Students work in pairs. Their task is to list the main differences between the Slytherin and the Gryffindor outfits, and then to discuss the one they prefer out of the two. When they are ready, they can share their ideas and choices with the class.

Step 4: Poster puzzle
Time: 10 minutes
Organization: whole class work
Aim: The aim of the activity is to create groups.
Aids: Two different pictures/posters of scenes from the Harry Potter film
Description: The teacher cuts each poster into six pieces and puts them into the Sorting Hat. Each student chooses one piece. Their task is to create two groups with the help of the pieces. They have to put the two posters together like a jigsaw puzzle. When they are ready, the members of each group discuss the outfits of the characters in the pictures/posters.

Step 5: The hot seats
Time: 15 minutes
Organization: group work
Aim: The aim of this activity is to develop students´ creativity and speaking skills.
Aids: two chairs
Description: Students are divided into two groups for a competition. Two chairs
are placed in front of the board – these are the hot seats. One student from each
group sits down, back facing the board. The teacher writes a word on the board.
The groups have to define the word to the students on the hot seats. The student
who guesses the word first, can swap places with the groupmate sitting on the hot
seat and the teacher writes another word on the board. Each correct answer means
1 point for the group who guesses correctly. The teacher counts the points on the
board. The team with the most points wins.
The category of words the teacher chooses from is: CLOTHES: coat, scarf, hat,
T-shirt, pullover, shoes, boots, pyjamas, raincoat, belt, trousers, jeans, socks,
underwear, dress, suit, gloves, jacket, etc.

Conclusion

Using literary texts in the EFL classroom may seem hard and frightening at first sight.
Of course, the teacher who uses them has to be prepared, but the effort pays off soon.
Literary texts can make language lessons more enjoyable and help students to learn
and practice the language easier and effectively. Literary texts can enhance learners'
creativity and can improve various skills, including speaking, writing, reading
and listening. A very careful choice of literary texts is needed to that learners are
encouraged and can feel motivated to read and work with these texts.

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Improving critical thinking through literary texts in the EFL classroom

Andrea PUSKÁS[6]

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the role of critical thinking in the English as a foreign language classroom and examines how it can be improved with the help of literary texts. The place of literary texts in teaching EFL is unique, since the primary role of these texts is usually linguistic, i.e. the improvement of the learners' language level and skills, however, these texts can be exploited for the improvement of twenty-first century skills as well. The paper examines how a literary text can be used for both linguistic purposes and for the improvement of critical thinking. A short story by Mark Twain, The Stolen White Elephant has been selected to confirm that a literary text can be suitable for the above mentioned purposes and a concrete lesson plan based on Twain's short story is provided as an example.

Keywords:
critical thinking, literary text, reading comprehension, short story, Mark Twain

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the link between the improvement of critical thinking and the potentials of using literary texts in the English as a foreign language classroom. Literature is seen as a resource that offers opportunities for personal enrichment, getting acquainted with cultural values and enhancing learners' critical thinking skills. Literary texts can stimulate learners' intellectual growth by encouraging them to examine the world through various perspectives

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and these texts can also be used for promoting character education [4, 10]. In addition, several studies confirm that the usage of literary texts can contribute to linguistic development, i.e. the development of various linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) [1, 2] and also the most up-to-date skills and competences learners need in the twenty-first century.

1. Twenty-First Century Skills in the EFL Classroom

There have been several debates and publications on what learners (not only foreign language learners but learners in general) need in the twenty-first century. Emotional intelligence, self-expression and improving social skills such as communication skills, cooperation and creativity have been common topics and very frequently used terms when talking about effective language learning and teaching. Learner-centred approaches to teaching examine the most current social changes and demands and how contemporary schools and educators can prepare learners to be able to live up to these social expectations and changes. Special attention is paid to the 6 Cs, the six competences that have a central role in education, namely creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, character education/connectivity and culture/citizenship. These skills and competences need to be improved in foreign language teaching as well.

2. Critical Thinking in the Foreign Language Classroom

Learners are surrounded by plenty of information and a variety of input and it is challenging not to lose track of this whole body of information and distinguish between which piece of information is correct or relevant and which one is misleading or even false. Critical thinking does not necessarily mean being judgemental or over-critical with something or focusing on the negative aspects of phenomena, it is basically about understanding, interpreting, analysing information and being able to evaluate it.

Critical thinking is usually connected with the more general concept of thinking skills or cognitive skills and abilities. Thinking skills have several definitions, they usually refer to mental activities including logical reasoning, making relevant connections, the ability to decompose a whole into parts and the ability to put parts together to create a whole (analysis and synthesis), noticing similarities and differences, uniformities, justifying opinions, evaluating processes and situations, organizing information, contradicting claims, interpreting and evaluating solutions [14].

Sternberg defines critical thinking as, "the mental processes, strategies and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions and learn new concepts" [16: 46]. Another definition of critical thinking from Robert H. Ennis is that it is, "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do" [7: 10]. Lipman argues that "critical thinking is thinking that (1) facilitates judgment because it (2) relies on criteria, (3) is self-correcting, and (4) is sensitive to context" [11: 211-212]. According to Lipman's definition, applying a set of criteria in different contexts can lead to different judgements which the critical thinker needs to be aware of. It is crucial for learners to understand that what applies in one context does not necessarily apply in another and that one claim taken out of context may be misleading. Similarly, taking different sets of criteria may lead to completely contradictory judgements. This understanding of the relativity of judgements is helpful as it allows learners to understand that different critical interpretations have different reasons and underlying assumptions. In addition, it helps them to become more open-minded, able to accept different standpoints and perspectives and to recognize situational differences [14: 69-70].

Ennis describes several characteristic features of learners who are able to think in a critical way and summarises the following central points:

Critical thinkers:
a) are open-minded,
b) take a position (or change a position) when they are convinced by evidence
c) take into account the entire situation, adopting a holistic approach
d) seek precision and objectivity in information, making use of credible and reliable sources of information
e) deal in an orderly manner with the elements of a complex whole
f) search for options and alternative solutions
g) look for reasons
h) seek a clear statement of the issue
i) keep the original problem in mind
j) remain relevant to the point, and are sensitive to the feelings and knowledge level of others [8].

A very important characteristic feature of critical thinking is that it can be taught and developed. As John Bean puts it, it is a "learnable skill" [3: 4] and teachers have a great responsibility in helping students learn this skill. When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, a variety of opportunities must be provided for learners to practise and develop critical thinking. The four basic language skills,

writing, reading, speaking and listening can all be combined with the development of critical thinking skills and can provide a lot of learning opportunities. In addition, there is research evidence that the development of critical thinking skills can help learners become more efficient and successful language learners and there is a strong link between language learning and critical thinking skills (e.g. Alanna Carter, 2020 [5] or Tsiplakides Iakovos, 2011 [9]).

3. Literary Texts in the EFL Classroom

Until the beginning, more concretely, the first decade of the twenty-first century, there were two major approaches to the usage of literature in the foreign language classroom. The first deals with literature and literary texts as the object of study, presenting various literary movements, schools and genres. It focuses on the cultural value literary texts involve and the presentation of historical, cultural and literary values that the target language is connected with in the foreign language classroom. This approach uses literature as educational content and investigates the methodology of teaching this content, for example the different ways of teaching poetry, the modes of dealing with several authors or a comparative analysis of literary periods. The major representative figures of this approach are for example Elaine Showalter (2003) [15] or Cristina Vischer Bruns (2011) [18]. The second approach to using literature in the EFL classroom focuses on literature as a means of improving learners' language, i.e. linguistic skills. This approach is much more interested in the potential of literary texts for example to encourage learners to speak in the target language or to improve other skills such as writing, reading or listening. Literary texts are used to enhance learners' vocabulary and improve their grammar. The representatives of this approach are Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater [6], though there has been a significant exchange of ideas between the two approaches and the two borrow techniques and ideas from each other. With the significant shift to twenty-first-century skills, there has been much demand to pay attention to a third approach to using literary texts in the EFL classroom, one that understands literary texts as materials and tools which have the potential to improve learners' 6C's, namely creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, character education/connectivity and culture/citizenship. The teacher can use the literary text as a stimulator and exploit it in a way which helps to develop the above competences and skills. Authentic literary texts involve cultural knowledge and are excellent for practising perspective-taking, interpreting situations or thinking about alternative solutions.

The right choice of a literary text has a significant role in designing an effective lesson, since certain texts are more appropriate for the purposes of an EFL classroom. Particular factors such as the length of the literary text, the language level, the complexity of the plot, the relevance and the popularity of the topic should be taken into consideration. These factors should be considered wisely when selecting a literary text to work with in a language classroom, since they can determine the success of using literature in the class. Different literary texts are used for different ages of learners, for example in primary education, typical genres are folk and fairy tales, poems, nursery rhymes or children's books [12], but in secondary education genres become more elaborate, e.g. short stories, tragedies, love poems, young adult fiction or extracts from novels. Because of time limitations, shorter texts are usually preferred, however, learners can receive longer or more complex text for homework. They can even participate in the process of text selection and give ideas on which texts they would prefer to work with.

Several scholars underline the importance of using literary texts also from the point of view of developing reading comprehension and critical thinking and in helping learners become more aware and critical readers (partially because of the high attention paid to reading and interpretative skills since PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment) [13].

4. Mark Twain and Critical Thinking

Mark Twain's short story *The Stolen White Elephant* is a great example of the author's typical style and usage of irony and sarcasm. It can be classified as a detective story or a detective mystery. It is a satirical depiction of police investigation, the depiction of how the police deceives the public and how the disappearance of the white elephant is handled by public authorities. The basic story is about the gift of the King of Siam, a white elephant sent to the Queen of England, however, the elephant mysteriously disappears, it is stolen at a stopover in Jersey City and is never found again. The narrator of the story, the person in charge of delivering the white elephant, is eager to cooperate with police officers, however, is absolutely left alone and let down by state authorities. The story is often referred to as a tragicomedy, because although the comic portrait of detectives (especially of Inspector Blunt) and the exaggerated nature of the whole investigation process suggest a comic atmosphere, the final death of the elephant and the complete destruction of the disappointed narrator give the short story a tragic undertone. The story also points out corruption, bureaucracy, flattery and human weaknesses. The short story offers opportunities for exercising critical thinking in a variety of ways.

The lesson plan below is based on the central aim of improving critical thinking in the EFL classroom with the help of a literary text. It involves the development of various skills, in addition to critical thinking and creativity, as far as linguistic skills are concerned, it focuses on reading, speaking and writing and if the spare activity is involved, then even listening skills. The lesson plan has been designed on the basis of the theoretical principles and practical aspects of developing critical thinking and using literary texts in the EFL classroom listed in the previous sections of this paper. Learners are asked to read the short story before the lesson and are asked to bring a copy of the text of the story either in a printed or an electronic form.

4.1. The Stolen White Elephant: A Lesson Plan

Time: 45 min.
Number of learners: 12-16
Age of learners: 15 and above
Language level: intermediate – advanced
Aids: slips of paper with sentence halves from quotes by Mark Twain (see the concrete quotes in the Warm-up activity), a handout including the questions for listening comprehension, speakers, laptop, projector, blank sheets of paper, pens

Lesson objectives:
By the end of the lesson a successful learner will be able to:
- ask questions about specific characters in the short story The Stolen White Elephant in an oral form
- answer questions connected with the short story The Stolen White Elephant in an oral form
- identify and describe connections, relationships and logical sequences in the short story The Stolen White Elephant in an oral form
- work in groups and cooperate with classmates
- describe the events of the short story The Stolen White Elephant from the perspective of various characters in a written form

Warm-up:
Time: 5-6 mins.
Organization: pair work
Aids: slips of paper with sentence halves from quotes by Mark Twain (see the concrete quotes below)

Description: Students work in pairs. They receive slips of paper with sentence halves from quotes by Mark Twain. The task is to match the sentence halves to reconstruct the quotes.

Match the beginning of a quotation with its ending:

a) Golf is a good walk
b) There is no sadder sight than
c) The man who does not read good books
d) I never let schooling interfere
e) Patriotism is supporting your country all the time,
f) If you tell the truth,
g) The fear of death follows from the fear of life.
h) Thunder is good, thunder is impressive;
i) The more things are forbidden,
j) Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority,
k) Age is an issue of mind over matter.
l) Go to Heaven for the climate,
m) Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored
n) It's not the size of the dog in the fight,
o) A man's character may be learned from
p) Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world.
q) Suppose you were an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress;
r) Kindness is the language
s) All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence,
t) The best way to cheer yourself up
u) The human race has one really effective weapon,
v) Humor is

1) and your government when it deserves it.
2) which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.
3) A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.
4) it is time to pause and reflect.
5) If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.
6) Hell for the company.
7) it's the size of the fight in the dog.
8) than to anything on which it is poured.

9) and then success is sure.

10) is to try to cheer somebody else up.

11) and that is laughter.

12) the adjectives which he habitually uses in conversation.

13) but I repeat myself.

14) you don't have to remember anything.

15) but it is lightning that does the work.

16) mankind's greatest blessing.

17) I know because I've done it thousands of times.

18) a young pessimist.

19) the more popular they become.

20) with my education.

21) spoiled.

22) has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.

Key: a) 21, b)18, c) 22, d) 20, e) 1, f) 14, g) 3, h) 15, i) 19, j) 4, k) 5, l) 6, m) 8, n) 7, o) 12, p) 17, q) 13, r) 2, s) 9, t) 10, u) 11, v) 16

Stand in a line

Time: 5-6 mins.

Organization: e.g. group work

Aids: 10 large sheets of paper with the indicated lines from the dialogue (see below)

Description: Ten students are selected or ten volunteers are asked to come to the front of the classroom. Each of them receives a large sheet of paper including a sentence from the dialogue coming from the short story. There are ten sentences altogether, each student receives one. Students are asked to stand in a line based on the order of the sentences. They need to read each other's sentences and decide on which sentence comes first, which comes second, etc. in the dialogue. The ten learners have to cooperate in deciding the correct order of the sentences. When they are ready, the rest of the class reads the sentences silently and decide if they think the order is correct. They can suggest changes in the order given by the group by asking learners to swap places.

The lines to be included in the large sheets of paper:

"Now--name of the elephant?"

"Hassan Ben Ali Ben Selim Abdallah Mohammed Moist Alhammal Jamsetjejeebhoy Dhuleep Sultan Ebu Bhudpoor."

"Very well. Given name?"
"Jumbo."
"Very well. Place of birth?"
"The capital city of Siam."
"Parents living?"
"No--dead."
"Had they any other issue besides this one?"
"None. He was an only child." [17]

Choose the correct answer
Time: 6-8 mins.
Organization: e.g. individual work and pair work
Aids: a handout with the multiple-choice questions
Description: Students go through the first part of the story and answer the following multiple-choice questions. They can work individually or in pairs.

1. When did Siam and Britain stop their conflict?
   a) a year ago
   b) five years ago
   c) four years ago
   d) three years ago

2. Who gave the white elephant to the British Queen?
   a) the King of the USA
   b) the narrator of the story
   c) the King of Siam
   d) the English King

3. How did the narrator go to New York?
   a) by plane
   b) by car
   c) by ship
   d) by ferry

4. What was Inspector Blunt's first reaction after he had listened to the story of the stolen white elephant?

    a) He asked for a minute to think about what he had heard.
    b) He thought it was a stolen dog.
    c) He wanted to go home.
    d) He asked the narrator to stand up from his seat.

5. What did Inspector Blunt ask Alaric to do?

    a) To ask the reporters to stay for a while.
    b) To ask the reporters to remain silent about the case.
    c) To offer the narrator a seat.
    d) To help him with the case.

6. When the elephant was stolen, it:

    a) had a box containing precious objects on his back.
    b) had a box containing golden rings on his back.
    c) had a castle containing seats for fifty persons.
    d) had a castle containing seats for fifteen persons.

7. When the elephant disappeared, he limped slightly with his

    a) right front leg
    b) right hind leg
    c) left front leg
    d) left hind leg

Key: 1. b), 2. c), 3. c), 4. a), 5. a), 6. d), 7. b),

Discussion questions
Time: 10-12 mins.
Organization: group work
Aids: a handout including the questions for discussion
Description: Students work in groups of three or four. They receive a handout including nine questions. They discuss the questions with their groupmates.

    1. What details does the inspector want to know about the Elephant?
    2. How many parts is the short story divided into and in what ways are these parts different from each other?

3. Find sentences in the short story that describe the police and the attitude of the police.
4. How did policemen investigate the case of the stolen white elephant? What were their methods?
5. How are newspapers and journalists depicted in the story? How would you describe the relationship between the press and the police?
6. How long does the investigation take place? Is it successful? Do they find the white elephant? How does the story finish?
7. What does the white elephant symbolise?
8. What is the message of the short story?
9. The short story is many times referred to as tragicomedy. What do you think why? Do you agree with this classification?

Perspective taking
Time: 10-12 mins
Organization: group work
Aids: blank sheets of paper, pens
Description: Students work in groups of three and four. The groups can be identical with the groups used in the previous activity. Learners are asked to write a letter to the Ministry of Justice from the perspective of various characters. The letter is written after the investigation of the missing white elephant was started but before it was found. Each letter should consist of approximately 120 words and should focus on the given character's perspective trying to obtain help from the Ministry of Justice or to justify the measures or decisions the given character has taken or made. It can even be a letter of complaint or a letter of inquiry. The three characters/perspectives are: Inspector Blunt, the narrator and a novice reporter. The main idea is that learners need to investigate different perspectives and standpoints.

Calming-down activity
Time: 4-5 mins.
Organization: e.g. pair work
Aids: blank sheets of paper, pens
Description: Students work in pairs. They are asked to write ten questions about the narrator of the short story concerning the ending of the story (after the death of the elephant and the destruction of the narrator). The questions should focus on the narrator but can be related to any aspect of the narrator's life, future or feelings.

Spare activity:

Listening comprehension

Time: 5-6 mins.

Organization: individual work

Aids: a handout including the questions for each student, speakers, laptop, projector (if students

Description: Students listen to and/or watch a video about Mark Twain's life.

The video is available in the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMtBPa7hpsA

While listening/watching, they take notes to answer the following questions. They work individually, then they can discuss their answers in pairs before checking it in class.

1. When and where was he born?
2. How old was he when his father died?
3. How old was he when he got his first job? What kind of job was it?
4. When did he lose his job as a steam boat pilot? Why did he lose it?
5. What job did he have in San Francisco?
6. What was the title of his first literary masterpiece that made him famous?
7. What are his best-known novels?
8. Who said: "American literature comes from Mark Twain"?
9. How many books did he write? (not short stories)
10. What was his public image like?
11. How old was he when he died? When and where did he die?
12. What does the critic say at the end of the video? Finish the sentence: "Mark Twain is one of the towering figures of American literature because he is …."

Conclusion

The development of twenty-first century skills is inevitable and should be the part of contemporary education. The development of critical thinking should be incorporated in the teaching of English as a foreign language as well. In addition to linguistic skills, the most crucial twenty-first century skills should be paid special attention to in the EFL classroom, too. The usage of literary texts has a great potential and can provide opportunities for improving critical thinking skills. Literary texts written in the target language can offer opportunities for interpreting situations, taking different perspectives, being open-minded, checking the ob-

jectivity of information, searching for reasons and motives behind decisions or events, comparing and contrasting characters and situations, understanding relationships between events or taking a holistic approach.

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Ways with texts: Using literature and multiple intelligences in the EFL classroom

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the use of literary texts combined with Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in English language teaching. Literature is one of the most creative educational tools that can be used flexibly to teach content and form simultaneously in a lifelike setting. While talking and thinking about a literary work, students can practise the four well-known language learning skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening along with cooperation, communication, critical thinking and creativity. What makes this rich combination of skills possible is the different tasks adapted to the students' personal preferences and strengths. Relying on evidence from teaching in-service and pre-service primary teacher students, the paper contends that English language teaching can be made more enjoyable and effective by using literature and MI in the foreign language classroom.

Keywords:
literature, multiple intelligences, creativity, variety, holistic approach

Introduction

We all want our students to enjoy learning English. Enjoyment goes together with creative engagement, which means that students become active agents of their own language development. Yet, the rigid structure of coursebooks cannot always bring

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about this desired atmosphere. Coursebooks are grammar- and topic-based, which is all justifiable, except that this structure often leaves little room for creativity and joy. So, if you want joyful and creative engagement for your students, you need to look elsewhere. This is where literature comes in. Stories and rhymes provide fun and meaningful content, a bit of fresh air in the EFL classroom. Besides providing opportunities for the development of the four traditional language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), literary works can also encourage students to practice their critical thinking, creativity, communication and cooperation skills.

As a college teacher, I found it inspiring to combine literature with the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) invented by the American developmental psychologist, Howard Gardner. When the intelligence research of the first half of the twentieth century culminated in the criticism of IQ tests in the '60s and '70s for their narrow definition of intelligence, Gardner suggested a broader understanding of intelligence based on the different ways people process information to create new products. His MI research has defined nine intelligences so far, but there may be more to come. In his understanding, everyone is clever in a certain way, and providing students with activities that suit their personality can enhance their motivation in the classroom. [2] Since the language teacher's aim is to give a sense of success to as many language learners as possible, this paper claims that it is worth teaching English through literature using MI activities.

The activities presented here reflect my teaching experience with in-service and pre-service part-time primary teacher students in the English language specification at Apor Vilmos Catholic College, Vác, Hungary. In-service teacher students are qualified primary teachers who also want to teach English in lower-primary. They take part in a two-semester postgraduate training. Pre-service primary students study for a primary teacher degree with a four-semester English specification. Since both specification programmes are part-time, students need to work very intensively to gain expertise. Despite the restriction of time, I believe it is important for them to get a first-hand experience of these methods in order to employ them successfully in the classroom. By personal engagement, they can have memories of how joyful it was to deal with literature through MI activities. They also learn what worked for them and what did not. This can later be of great help for them when they plan their own MI activities for primary pupils. Experiential learning is key to the development of teachers' professional skills, so I will give an example of both working modes: involvement and planning.

1. Using Literature in the English Language Classroom

There are different literary genres that can be used effectively in the primary classroom. Genres of poetry (nursery rhymes, poems, songs, and chants), genres of prose (short stories, tales, picture books, and novels) and genres of drama (comic sketches, dramatized stories, and simulations) can all be used in the EFL classroom. In this paper, I will refer to college teacher students' work with prose works, but drama and poetry can certainly be used with a similar variety and effect. In terms of content, literature takes pupils into other worlds, other realities, and thus improves pupils' intelligences related to emotional, cognitive, social and motor skills. In terms of form, literature consists of language, so reading an English literary work with EFL students can provide them with a good model of how the English language works. However, it is more difficult to read a story in your own language than in a foreign language. Therefore, adapting a text to the learners' level and needs is crucial.

1.1. The Multimodality of Literary Texts

Literature has been used to develop children's skills for a long time. It is also well-known that literature has had a strong connection to other forms of art – just think about the illustrations in picture books and the filmed or dramatized versions of literary works accompanied by music and sound effects. These all show the multimodal nature of literature. Still, it has been only recently that researchers turned their attention towards the "multimodality" of literary works, especially the online or mobile-based forms of literature like the different apps, interactive websites and video clips [1].

From the above-mentioned forms of representation, illustrations, whether online or on paper, are particularly important. They support the readers' understanding and expand their imagination, and thus enhance their visual literacy. Children can reconstruct a storyline by "reading" the pictures and decoding the meaning [2]. Visual images are similar to texts in the sense that they are constructed according to human convention. Their code systems must be interpreted in order to comprehend the visual or textual message, and, of course, language and images can support each other in the meaning making process.

Similarly to images and texts, music and sound effects also have a code system based on convention, even though this is a more complex one. Yet, a piece of music can be used effectively to make the meaning and atmosphere of a text more palpable and enjoyable. Rhythm and melody help the learners memorise the words and phrases of a song, rhyme or chant.

Online tools have been with us for more than two decades now. Yet, it is only recently that the use of information and communications technology in education has really gained ground due to the Covid pandemic. Although many teachers have come to terms with the new circumstances uneasily, applications and websites available for online teaching have proved to have several benefits regarding student motivation, variety of material, and teacher preparation time.

The above long list of supporting elements around literature are all invaluable resources for teachers if they want to work with a literary text in the EFL classroom. Since they relate to the pupils' different fields of interest and intelligence, they can enhance pupils' enjoyment and motivation.

1.2. Using the Right Text

Coursebooks mostly contain stories, rhymes and dialogues prepared specifically to teach certain grammar rules and vocabulary items. Although these rhymes, stories and dialogues can sometimes be enjoyable, often they are not. The endeavour of the authors to fit the purpose make these texts dead – somehow lacking in the flavours of life. This is the reason why many teachers agree that authentic literary works are a better choice for their intercultural and aesthetic values. However, they have properties that can make them inappropriate for classroom use. If a piece of literature is too long or its language is too complex, pupils will not enjoy it no matter how you support it with other modes of representation. For effective learning, teachers need to consider their pupils' language level, interests and other needs in the planning phase.

Classical children's literature is tempting to use but it is often the most difficult one to tailor. The rich language and the elaborated plot make these works hard for second language learners to enjoy in their original forms. Whether a piece of work can be taught as it is or it needs some modification is at the teacher's discretion but the criterion of learnability must be borne in mind.

If the teacher decides to use authentic and unabridged literature, one solution could be the use of books written for native English toddlers. Eric Carle's or Julia Donaldson's books are deservedly popular with English children as well as in TEYL methodology for their fun content and loveable illustrations. Their simple, often repetitive plotlines and accessible thematic focus (colours, numbers, fear or friendship, just to name a few) make them accessible for beginner language learners as well. The problem is that in Hungary and other European countries not all pupils start to learn English immediately after kindergarten, and the age-gap might cause

problems. Hungarian state schools normally start English as a subject from grade 4, to ten-year-old pupils. Although most lower-primary students do not mind picture books, some of them may find these books 'babyish' or simply boring.

If this is the case, the teacher must look for literature that suits these pupils' age and interest. However, literature for older children also means more complex language and plot. Consequently, different techniques should be employed to support the meaning making process: visual aids and audio material, or the pre-teaching of some basic vocabulary items, for example. Another idea can be the use of graded reading material. Graded readers (*Oxford Dominoes* or *Penguin Young Reader* series, for example) are readily available. They have been abridged and simplified for second language learners, using a certain number of head words according to language levels. Bilingual editions could be another option. Reading the original version of a story while seeing the translation on the adjacent page can be uplifting and reassuring for teachers and pupils alike. Finally, language teachers can also decide to take the challenge and prepare their own material. However, they need to be careful: when they simplify the language and shorten the text to suit their teaching purposes, they should not lose the aesthetic and stylistic value of the text. Although this kind of material development can take up a lot of time and energy, it is worth the effort in the long run because teachers can customize the text to their pupils' needs and the requirements of the curriculum.

2. Gardner's Theory Adapted to Literary Works

Adapting Multiple Intelligences (MI), the Harvard developmental psychologist, Howard Gardner's theory to literature is an exciting teaching method because it acknowledges the fact that literature is multimodal exactly because human beings are multimodal too. We will see how the different MI activities employed to process a text are in line with the different modes of representation mentioned earlier. Another aspect of this methodology is that the use of MI for language learning purposes respects the students' individual differences in language learning, and thus caters for an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

2.1. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner (1943–) is one of the most original minds in the field of educational psychology. He has been participating in different projects related to creativity and thinking skills (*Project Zero*, 1967); and ethical collaboration, work

and play (*The Good Project*, 1995) since the 1960s. He is still active but by now it has become obvious that he will be remembered worldwide as the theorist of *Multiple Intelligences* (MI). He turned his attention to the study of intelligence in the sixties when IQ tests started to be criticised for their narrow focus on verbal and mathematical skills. He observed that different cultures valued different skills and competences, which he later called *intelligences*. In a nomad tribe, for example, a person who can hunt professionally counts as intelligent. In an urban setting, however, a software developer is regarded intelligent. Such differences in the definition of intelligence made Gardner realize that there were different types of intelligences that were equally important to succeed in society.

Gardner published his theory of MI first in a book called *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in 1983. In this book, he named seven separate categories of intelligence: the *linguistic (also known as 'word smart')*, *musical ('music smart')*, *logical-mathematical ('number smart')*, *spatial ('picture smart')*, *bodily-kinesthetic ('body smart'),* and the personal intelligences: the *intrapersonal ('people smart')* and *interpersonal ('myself smart')* intelligences. He has used strict criteria to determine what counted as a separate type of intelligence. [4] He has found nine intelligences to date, adding to the original list two more over the years: the *naturalist ('nature smart')* and the *existential ('life smart')* intelligences. We must emphasise that this is a research in progress, so there may be more intelligences to come.

Gardner believes that most people possess nearly all these intelligences, but everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. One of the major objectives of education should be to improve all of children's intelligences – nurturing their strengths and improving on their weaknesses. Gardner claims that intelligences only represent capabilities. According to his definition, intelligence is "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture." [3] This means that we may have genetic potentials, but they must be realized and reinforced through practice and education.

Here, Gardner puts the emphasis on the creating phase, and not the processing phase like the theory of learning styles. Our dominant intelligences determine how we approach and create end-products or solve problems [2]. There are some overlaps between the names of the intelligences and school subjects. However, this comparison can be misleading. In fact, in an ideal world, MI would be used in every subject at school. Gardner talks about different approaches to processing information and creating something new out of that.

2.2. The Nine Types of Intelligence in the Light of Literature and Language Learning

After this brief theoretical background, let me give an overview of the nine intelligences through examples of activities related to language and literature. The exciting thing about using MI is that students will realize that they are all good at something, and this will make them more confident and motivated. Providing them with a variety of MI tasks will develop their skills and enhance their talents [2, 5]. Here, I would like to describe the nine intelligences in a language and literature learning context.

Pupils with a *linguistic* intelligence would typically enjoy reading, listening to or performing storytelling, discussion, creative writing, thinking about or explaining the meanings of words. The ones with a *logical-mathematical* intelligence would be happy to create word lists, grammar charts, word games like word search or matching, counting words of different word categories in a text, and anything to do with categorization and classification. Learners of *visual/spatial* intelligence are confident to use the following techniques: graphical representations of a literary text like story maps or character network, colour cues to highlight information, and creating or using picture dictionaries. *Body smart* pupils like action songs, finger rhymes, drama games for reading comprehension, or playing with objects (e.g. puppets or word cards). Learners with a *musical* intelligence appreciate sing-along, reading or writing something rhythmic (e.g. poems, raps or chants), learning aloud, or having a musical background to learning. Those who have *interpersonal* intelligence like pair work, group work, debates, board games, dialogues, project work, or cooperation. Whereas learners of *intrapersonal* intelligence prefer to work individually and at their own pace, reflecting on their own work, writing a journal or personal notes. *Nature smart* pupils would enjoy studying outdoors, doing projects about the natural environment in a story (plants and animals), connecting any aspect of a story to nature or the environment, but many educators agree that activities demanding skill also belong here (e.g. building the set or preparing the costumes for a theatre performance). Finally, learners with an *existential* intelligence like to understand the whys and wherefores of a story (characters' motivations, consequences of their deeds etc.); they are happy to engage in discussions related to values and beliefs, philosophical questions or extended thinking activities (e.g. What would you have done in his place? How do you think his life will continue?).

2.3. Creating MI Activities for a Literary Work

I first tried out my own MI activities when teaching English children's literature to in-service primary teacher students in spring 2020. (At that time, I did not know that would be my last contact session for a long time.) I wanted to give the group a first-hand experience of MI activities. I was also curious to see how this approach would work. Since the topic of the session was Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), a children's classic, I decided to read and analyse the opening scene when the Rat takes the Mole on a river journey in his boat. This is a great scene about friendship, adventure and the calm of the river bank, which are some of the main themes of the novel.

Surprisingly, I found the preparation quick and easy. After collecting activities for the different types of intelligences, I printed them out separately on numbered sheets. I did not indicate the names of intelligences on purpose. I wanted to tell them about Gardner's theory afterwards. My activities were the following:

- *mathematical-logical:*
  a) Collect 5 vocabulary items for each category:
  NOUNS
  VERBS
  ADJECTIVES
  PREPOSITIONS
  b) Prepare 4 Sudoku puzzles using 3 words from each word category in exercise 1.
  c) Make a word search with 8 vocabulary items from the above list.
  d) Make a story map of this episode.
- *verbal-linguistic:*
  Write a short, simplified conversation between Mole and Rat on the river based on the extract. Prepare to tell the story.
- *musical:*
  Create or look for soundtracks (music and sound effects) that could support this episode. (1-2 people) Cooperate with the people miming the story, and practice how you can put together the acting and the background music.
- *bodily-kinesthetic:*
  In the roles of Rat and Mole, mime their first meeting on the river according to this short episode. (2 people)
- *visual-spatial:*
  Prepare 2 or 3 illustrations for this episode.

- *intrapersonal:*
  After reading this short episode, write about the following:
  a) What is your opinion about using a mole and a rat for animal characters in this story?
  b) If you could go on a boat trip, where would you go, who with, what would you see and do?
- *interpersonal:*
  Discuss the following questions. (2-3 people)
  1. How would you describe the characters of Mole and Rat?
  2. Describe their emotions.
  3. How do the animal and human elements blend in their characters?
  4. If they were real people, how would you imagine them? What age, class, profession, family status etc. would they have?
  5. How is the atmosphere created by the author?
  6. Why do you think Grahame set his story along a river bank?
- *existential:*
  Think about the following, take notes and prepare to share your opinion with the others:
  a) What might the river symbolize in this story? What could it symbolize in general?
  b) In what sense can we suggest that Rat is "coaching" Mole? How does he do that? Why is this friendship important for Mole's personal development?
  c) What can you learn from this story for your own personal development?
- *naturalist:*
  Choose one of the following:
  a) Make a leaflet about the flora and/or fauna of the River Thames.
  b) Make a poster about how rats and moles live.

We can see from this list that there are overlaps between the different intelligences: some activities could be interesting for people with different intelligences. This is normal because the content and form of the activities call for more intelligences.

Back to my teaching experience: in the classroom, I introduced the author and the work to the seminar group, and we read out the extract I wanted to work with. Then, I spread the nine worksheets on separate desks, and encouraged the students to walk around and find an activity they thought they would enjoy. The idea was to give the group a free choice to decide which activity they wanted to do. Most

of them enjoyed the activity they chose. There was only one student who chose an activity of answering some philosophical questions (existential intelligence) related to the extract from the story, but soon changed her mind and tried her hand at some word puzzles (logical-mathematical intelligence). Those students who finished early tried out other activities.

After around 20 minutes of parallel work (individually, in pairs or in a group), students showed each other what they had done in connection with the text. The effect was exhilarating. All of them listened attentively to each other's presentations, and they felt in the end that they had understood the text in great depths – while writing, speaking and thinking in English. Some of them shared their answers to different questions related to the text (interpersonal intelligence), some of them read out what they wrote independently (intrapersonal intelligence), some of them passed their logic word puzzles over to other students to solve them (logical-mathematical intelligence). I performed with a student the scene between Rat and Mole on the river (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence), with some background music from another student who had searched for soundtracks matching the scene (musical intelligence). When I told them about Gardner's MI theory and labelled each activity according to the nine intelligences, they were impressed, and, to my surprise, some of them admitted they had not heard of it before. This theory is nearly fifty years old now, and I found that even if primary teachers knew about it, not many of them employed it in their teaching practice on a regular basis.

2.4. Students' Own MI Activities

To use MI activities in the primary classroom the teacher needs two things: a new mindset and some skill at preparing activities this way. Skill comes with practice, so in my groups I also encouraged the students to invent their own MI activities with primary pupils in mind. We brainstormed MI activities together in class (online) and students were also required to include MI tasks for at least 3 types of intelligences in their lesson plans. This was definitely a kind of challenge for them, but not as great as I had thought. Language teaching inherently involves the use of several intelligences, so to sing or mime or write are common features. However, this assignment was still useful for the teacher students' professional development since MI is not just a set of well-known techniques but also a professional attitude towards the pupils and the curriculum.

Eventually, I would like to describe an example of how teacher students created their own MI activities related to *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Beatrix Potter. After being introduced to the theory of MI, this was the first time they tried to write

their own activities. During our online academic year, students worked together in a common Google document as editors to brainstorm MI activity ideas. I prepared some parts of the document in advance. In this document, I shared some charts from Fleetham's book describing the MI teaching resources they could use. This material was followed by the colour-coded headings of the different intelligences in capital letters under which they could contribute their own teaching ideas. After explaining how I wanted them to work, half an hour of concentrated individual work followed. Students were editing the same document collaboratively in real time – one of the magical features of online apps. The group came up with the following ideas (I cite this with minimal editing):

VERBAL/LINGUISTIC:
- Vegetables word search, family members (listen, read, write)
- Fruit names in English: write the ones ending with –berry. Which one is in the story? (blackberry, blueberry, gooseberry), which one is not in the story? (strawberry, raspberry)
- The same with objects. ☺

LOGICAL/MATHEMATICAL:
- What berries/fruits/ are there in the tale? What tools does Mr. McGregor have?
- How many vegetables did Peter eat before McGregor started to chase him?
- How many (kinds) of animals were in the tale?

MUSICAL/RHYTHMIC:
- Clap your hands together to some rhyme related to rabbits
- Let's listen to a song about rabbits together (from YouTube)

VISUAL/SPATIAL:
- Draw a scene from this story! Draw McGregor's garden!
- Draw your favourite character! Draw the vegetables from the story!
- Complete the pictures where Peter (or his clothes) was - under, - on, -next to etc.

INTERPERSONAL/TEAM-PLAYER:
- Let's play it together: the first part-first group/second part-second group etc.
- How does Peter feel in Mr. McGregor's garden?

INTRAPERSONAL/INDIVIDUAL:
- Writing a summary about the story;
- Looking up background information about the author and putting a short presentation together about her

BODILY/KINESTHETIC:
- Hop like a rabbit! Flitter like a bird! Shake your hands like an angry McGregor!
- Playing a tag game outside where "it" (the one who catches the others) is McGregor, and the others are the bunnies. If you are caught, you give a token to McGregor (like Peter left his jacket and shoes there), and at the end of the game, you have to do different activities to get your tokens back.

EXISTENTIAL/PHILOSOPHICAL/SPIRITUAL:
- a little drama play: talk about the characters and act them (the "good" behaviour and the "bad") Which one is more interesting? Why?
- talking about which one is better: to stay at home or to take adventures?
- Why is family important? Was Peter right to disobey?

NATURALIST:
- Vegetables in the garden, which vegetable parts grow under the ground, above the ground.
- Having an obstacle course in the school yard where the kids are "Peter Rabbit" in McGregor's garden, and they take turn to skip over or climb under obstacles, run fast back to the others, and then the next person can go.
  We can see that some of the ideas would need further improvement but it was great to see how excited they got about the task and brainstormed all sorts of different activities; the first stage of good planning. These tasks can all be adapted to the learners' language levels flexibly. Primary pupils need task variety to develop their language skills and talents, and MI provides just that.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate how Gardner's MI theory can be combined with teaching a second language through literature. By sharing some of my teaching practice and the students' work with MI, I suggested implicitly that the holistic approach to education, a common practice in early childhood education and care, could gain more prominence in primary education as well. Most teachers understand the importance of educating children through play and the use of stories, rhymes, songs and movements, but the curriculum objectives and the assessment requirements diminish this understanding, and, consequently, pupils are mostly taught using only three or four intelligences regularly. True, they sing in the music class and they move in the P.E. class, but singing and moving should not be restricted to certain subjects. Learning could be more fun if pupils could choose more often from a number of different activities. I believe it would be more educational for them if they could process the information and create different end-products according to multiple intelligences.

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Teaching English tenses
with Mary Poppins

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ABSTRACT

Children's books usually work with less challenging vocabulary than other classic literature. This genre can be nicely used to practice English tenses – from the easiest (e.g., present simple present continuous, and past simple) to the more difficult tenses (e.g., present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect continuous). P. L. Travers's children's books, the *Mary Poppins* fantasy series, are not an exception either. The present paper demonstrates a few writing and speaking exercises inspired by the first chapter of *Mary Poppins* ("East Wind") and certain scenes and illustrations from *Mary Poppins from A to Z and Mary Poppins in the Kitchen.* These exercises aim at revising English tenses at level B1/B2 in the EFL classroom. "East Wind" enables the learners to meet new words, and at the same time, it helps not to be distracted by the difficulties of the text itself (as far as its vocabulary is concerned) and to be more focused on grammar and English tenses such as present simple, present continuous, past simple, past continuous, present perfect, past perfect, going to future and future will.

Keywords:
Mary Poppins, East Wind, TEFL, grammar, English tenses, B1/B2 level

Introduction

Teaching English tenses is a basic requirement of TEFL education and an essential task of grammar teaching. Using tenses accurately is important in both written and spoken English since, without them, the language learner (speaker and writer) can hardly express himself/herself precisely and meaningfully. EFL teaching uses various methods to get students to learn and understand the rules and apply them aptly.

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For example, writing exercises aid in practicing the correct form of verbs (positive, negative, question form). They also enable to compare one tense to another (e.g., past simple and present perfect). These writing exercises also help students become more conscious of the spelling specificities in certain tenses in British English (e.g., doubling consonants in progressive form – I am trave*ll*ing tonight). At the same time, speaking exercises such as picture description and picture comparison can function as mechanic drill activities, namely, repeating the same pattern concerning a particular topic, e.g., In this picture, I see a woman. *She is wearing* blue shoes. I also see a man. *He is wearing* black shoes). These exercises are usually based on everyday topics (e.g., shopping, environment, technology, and family).

However, I think literary texts, from classic as well as children's literature, can be nicely applied in the EFL classroom to teach English tenses. As far as children's literature is concerned, firstly, its texts mostly work with not-so-complex vocabulary, which helps the learner focus on what tenses should be used rather than first trying to translate words and expressions to be able to do the task. Secondly, many literary texts are illustrated, and illustrations are suitable for picture descriptions. Finally, it contributes to cultural and emotional enrichment as learners are provided with a view of another culture. Therefore, I believe that professionals should consider teaching English tenses with (children's) literature in the EFL classroom.

1. Teaching English Tenses with Literature in the EFL Classroom

Teaching literature in a second language (e.g., in English) can be approached in two ways. The first approach considers literature an "academic subject" covering "the ways and issues of teaching literature, literary criticism." The second attitude "deals with literature as a source of language and as an instrument of language teaching" [10: 97]. According to the second approach, literature is capable of mediating knowledge on a certain (target) language, e.g., it shares information on grammar; it also means that using a literary text, we can acquire new vocabulary in a specific context. Moreover, literature "encourages students to speak, read or write and motivates them to use the target language as much as possible" [9: 95]. Furthermore, literature can develop skills of interpretation, problem-solving, evidence-based argument, and critical thinking [2: 11], and literary texts (such as fairy tales and fantasy) improve "an elasticity of mind" [7: vi]. Finally, "literature also contributes to the cultural enrichment of the learners, since it increases the learner's insight into the country whose language is being learnt" [8: 46].

As an ever-present and always popular branch of literature, I argue that children's literature is as suitable for sharing and teaching information on grammar as other literary texts. Hence children's literature works with relatively easy vocabulary, and it helps the reader's reading comprehension with its illustrations [4: 9]. Moreover, considering its wide range of genres (from fairy tales to dark fantasy), using juvenile literature in the EFL classroom functions properly for children as well as adult language learners. As far as grammar teaching and learning is concerned, grammar "is often associated with accuracy" and the meaning of a particular message in a communicative situation, which is created by the combination of vocabulary and grammar [10: 61; 15: 75-76]. Thornbury names two meanings and two main goals of language. "The first is to represent the world as we experience it" [representational function], and the second is to influence how things happen in the world, specifically in our relations with other people [interpersonal functions]." [14: 5].

Teaching tenses in the EFL classroom is a continuous process. Language learners gradually learn the twelve basic English tenses: the present simple, present continuous, past simple, past continuous, present perfect, present perfect continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous, future simple, future continuous, future perfect, and future perfect continuous [3: 59-85]. Learning tenses is not an easy task because despite their best efforts, language learners "consistently misuse, misunderstand and misapply tenses" [1: 5]. Aitken enumerated various reasons for this, such as the learner's expectations about the studied language based on their mother tongue, different cultural "attitudes and concepts of the relationship between time and tense" [1: 5]. There are some basic steps to plan a tense for teaching purposes: to *choose* the tense, to *analyse* the uses of the tense (e.g., to compare it with other tenses, look at it in all its persons, the negative and positive form and the variations of form, sound, and function), to *order* its function (from the most common functions to the least usual), to *select* one specific function we want to teach, to *identify* the context; to prepare *auxiliary materials* (pictures, diagrams, picture sequences, timetables), be prepared for the patterns of the *learner's errors* (caused by mother tongue interference, false patterning, by interlanguage) [1: 7-9].

So, teaching and learning these tenses is not an easy task and needs practice. Among the most frequent activities for practicing grammar and so tenses are: mechanical drills, ordering dialogues, multiple-choice questions, reordering sentences or words, grammar quiz, information gap activities, matching sentence halves [10: 64]. When doing these exercises, the language learner usually reads sentences or a shorter/longer text about everyday people and everyday situations.

These texts are precisely structured so that the learner can study and learn the rules and proper use of certain tenses. Since "the aim of grammar practice is to get students to learn the structures so thoroughly that they will be able to produce them correctly on their own" [15: 83]. They are sometimes almost the same, only the signal words show him/her the difference between the sentences. E.g., Sarah plays tennis *every* Monday. *BUT* Sarah is playing tennis *this* Monday. As "language is context-sensitive" [14: 69], it is often the context that helps the learners recognize and use the correct form. E.g., Tom and Anne are going to the movies. The movie begins at 7:30, and it is already 7:20. It will take 20 minutes to get there. When they get there*, the film will have already started* [6: 21].

Although these exercises effectively help students practice the English tenses, I believe it is sometimes necessary to reach out to literary text for the same purpose. Firstly, it is important because students can expand their general knowledge of literature; secondly, they step out of their everyday language learning routine and experience a new combined approach towards language learning, in which literature and linguistics complement each other. Finally, literature comprises both meanings of the language: the representational function because literature conveys the writers' and poets' messages about the world as they experience it and the interpersonal function since every literary text is set in a certain context (time and place), which reflects on world events and human relations. Confirming the place of (children's) literature in the EFL classroom, in the following, the *Mary Poppins* books, children's fantasy series, will demonstrate how many possible ways English tenses can be practiced with the help of literature.

2. A Brief Overview of *Mary Poppins*

Mary Poppins's character has been known worldwide since Walt Disney's film adaptation, which was released in 1964, and its reputation has only risen since its sequel, *Mary Poppins Returns,* came out in 2018. Mary Poppins's 'literary legacy' is ever-present in the media (e.g., Coca-Cola's Christmas 2021 Commercial works with *Chim Chim Cher-ee* song from Disney's *Mary Poppins*), children's literature (e.g., J. K. Rowling and Neil Gaiman both admitted Travers's influence on their works), and popular culture (e.g., *The Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*). Since Mary Poppins is a well-known character, it can be easily brought into the EFL classroom.

The character of Mary Poppins was created by the Australian author, poet, and essayist, P. L. Travers (born as Helen Lyndon Goff). The author wrote eight books of the magic nanny between 1934 and 1988: *Mary Poppins* (1934), *Mary Poppins*

Comes Back (1935), *Mary Poppins Opens the Door* (1943), *Mary Poppins in the Park* (1952), *Mary Poppins from A to Z* (1962), *Mary Poppins in the Kitchen* (1975), *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane* (1982), and *Mary Poppins and the House Next Door* (1988). *Mary Poppins from A to Z* includes twenty-six vignettes, one for each letter of the alphabet, whereas *Mary Poppins in the Kitchen* shares recipes. The books were illustrated by Mary Shepard, the daughter of Ernest Howard Shepard, the illustrator of the *Winnie-the-Pooh* books, and *The Wind in the Willows*. Travers's editor was Peter Llewelyn Davis, one of the Lost Boys befriended by J. M. Barrie, the writer of *Peter Pan,* one of Travers's favourite children's books [4: 190].

With her full and at once empty carpet bag and with her talking and flying parrot-headed umbrella, the austere, strict, distanced, and mysterious governess pops into 17 Cherry Tree Lane, to the home of the chaotic Banks family in order to educate and raise the noisy, curious and imaginative Jane and Michael, the twins, John and Barbara, and later the little Annabel Banks, who are the children of the "fragile and hesitating" Mrs Banks [5: 4]. Together with Mary Poppins, the children participate in wonderful adventures (e.g., tea parties under the sea, in a plasticine par, or the ceiling; flying with balloons; dancing with stars).

'East Wind' is the first chapter of *Mary Poppins.* In this part, Travers introduces the setting (Cherry Tree Lane, where the Banks house stands in a post-Victorian, Edwardian age), the characters (the Banks family, the Banks family's servants). In addition, Jane and Michael Banks meet Mary Poppins – their new, mysterious, and miraculous nanny – for the first time. Their previous nanny has just left the family because of Jane's and Michael's ill-manner, and the parents are desperately advertising for "the best possible Nanny at the lowest possible wage and at once" [11:11]. Mary Poppins unexpectedly arrives with the East Wind at the Banks' house and proudly takes the job. Jane and Michael are amazed by her presence and magic. For instance, she flies with her parrot-headed umbrella, slides up the banister, and pulls different things out of her seemingly empty carpet bag.

3. *Mary Poppins*-Based Grammar Exercises

The following writing (gap-filling and multiple-choice) and speaking exercises (picture description and role play) pay particular attention to English tenses. Writing exercises focus on present simple, past simple, past continuous, present perfect, and past perfect. Speaking exercises are based on present simple, present continuous, present perfect, going to future, and future will. Certain parts from

"East Wind" and particular illustrations from *Mary Poppins in the Kitchen* and *Mary Poppins from A to Z* function as sources to practice English tenses in written and spoken form. The exercises are suitable for English language learners at the B1/B2 level.

3.1. Writing exercises

1) **Read the following passage and put each verb into its correct form. You can choose from the following tenses: present simple, present continuous, present perfect, past simple, and past perfect simple.**

IF YOU WANT to find Cherry-Tree Lane all you have to do is ask the Policeman at the cross-roads. He will push his helmet slightly to one side, scratch his head thoughtfully, and then he will point his huge white-gloved finger and say: "First to your right, second to your left, sharp right again, and you're there. Good-morning." And sure enough, if you follow his directions exactly, you will be there — right in the middle of Cherry-Tree Lane, where the houses ……… (1. RUN) down one side and the Park ………. (2. RUN) down the other and the cherry trees go dancing right down the middle.

If you …………………. (3. LOOK FOR) Number Seventeen — and it is more than likely that you will be, for this book is all about that particular house — you will very soon find it. To begin with, it is the smallest house in the Lane. And besides that, it is the only one that is rather dilapidated and needs a coat of paint. But Mr. Banks, who …………… (4. OWN) it, said to Mrs. Banks that she …………………………. (5. CAN HAVE) either a nice, clean, comfortable house or four children. But not both, for he couldn't afford it.

And after Mrs. Banks ……………… (6. GIVE) the matter some consideration she …………… (7. COME) to the conclusion that she would rather have Jane, who ……….. (8. BE) the eldest, and Michael, who ……….. (9. COME) next, and John and Barbara, who …………. (10. BE) Twins and came last of all [and later Annabel]. So it was settled, and that was how the Banks family came to live at Number Seventeen, with Mrs. Brill to cook for them, and Ellen to lay the tables, and Robertson Ay to cut the lawn and clean the knives and polish the shoes and, as Mr. Banks always said, "to waste his time and my money."

And, of course, besides these there was Katie Nanna, who ………………………………… (11. NOT/REALLY/DESERVE) to come into the book at all because, at the time I ……………………… (12. SPEAK OF), she …………………….. (13. JUST/LEAVE) Number Seventeen.

"Without by your leave or a word of warning. And what am I to do?" said Mrs. Banks.

"Advertise, my dear," said Mr. Banks, putting on his shoes. "And I wish Robertson Ay would go without a word of warning, for he …………… (14. AGAIN/POLISH) one boot and left the other untouched. I shall look very lopsided."

"That," said Mrs. Banks, "is not of the least importance. You …………….. (15. TELL) me what I'm to do about Katie Nanna."

"I …………………. (16. NOT/SEE) how you can do anything about her since she ……………………. (17. DISAPPEAR)" replied Mr. Banks, "But if it were me — I mean I — well, I should get somebody to put in the Morning Paper the news that Jane and Michael and John and Barbara Banks (to say nothing of their Mother) ……………… (18. REQUIRE) the best possible Nannie at the lowest possible wage and at once."

Key: 1. run, 2. runs, 3. are looking for, 4. owns, 5. could have, 6. had given, 7. came, 8. was, 9. came, 10. were, 11. doesn't really deserve, 12. am speaking of, 13. had just left, 14. has again polished, 15. haven't told me, 16. don't see, 17. has disappeared, 18. require.

2) Choose the best option *A, B* or *C*.

"Ha!" said Mr. Banks, drawing in his head very quickly. "Admiral's telescope ………….. (1) East Wind. I ……………… (2) as much. There is frost in my bones. I shall wear two overcoats." And he …………. (3) his wife absent-mindedly on one side of her nose and …………… (4) to the children and went away to the City. […]

Jane and Michael watched at the window and wondered who ……… (5) come. They ……………. (6) Katie Nanna ……………. (7), for they …………….. (8) her. She was old and fat and smelt of barley-water. Anything, they thought, would be better than Katie Nanna — if not much better.

When the afternoon …………….. (9) to die away behind the Park, Mrs. Brill and Ellen came to give them their supper and to bath the Twins. And after supper Jane and Michael …………… (10) at the window watching for Mr. Banks to come home, and listening to the sound of the East Wind blowing through the naked branches of the cherry-trees in the Lane. The trees themselves, turning and bending in the half light, looked as though they ………….. (11) mad and ……………… (12) their roots out of the ground.

"There he is!" said Michael, pointing suddenly to a shape that banged heavily against the gate. Jane peered through the gathering darkness.

"That's not Daddy," she said. "It's somebody else."

Then the shape, ………………….. (13) under the wind, lifted the latch of the gate, and they could see that it belonged to a woman, who ………….. (14) her hat on with one hand and carrying a bag in the other. As they …………… (15), Jane and Michael saw a curious thing happen. As soon as the shape was inside the gate the wind seemed to catch her up into the air and fling her at the house. It was as though it ……………….. (16) her first at the gate, waited for her to open it, and then ……………… (17) and thrown her, bag and all, at the front door. The watching children heard a terrific bang, and as she ……………. (18) the whole house shook.

(1) A said / B was saying / C says
(2) A think / B thought / C have been thinking
(3) A kissed / B had kissed / C was kissing
(4) A was waving / B had been waving / C waved
(5) A would / B will / C could
(6) A was glad / B were glad / C had been glad
(7) A has gone / B had gone / C went
(8) A did never liked / B had never liked / C have never liked
(9) A began / B was beginning / C had begun
(10) A sat / B were sitting / C had sat
(11) A had gone / B went / C were going
(12) A was dancing / B were dancing / C danced
(13) A was tossing and bending / B tossed and had bent / C tossed and bent
(14) A was holding / B held / C had been holding
(15) A were watching / B watched / C had watched
(16) A flung / B had flung / C was flinging
(17) A lifted / B had lifted/ C had been lifting
(18) A was landing / B had landed / C landed

Key: 1. C, 2. B, 3. A, 4. C, 5. A, 6. B, 7. B, 8. B, 9. A, 10. A, 11. A, 12. B, 13. C, 14. A, 15. B, 16. B, 17. A, 18. C

3.2. Speaking exercises

1) **You are going to work in pairs. First, observe your picture; then, describe it to your partner.**
   Version A (B1):
   Pair A gets a picture that (s)he has to describe and answer the following question in detail: What is happening in the illustration? Where are they? What are they wearing? What are they doing? How are they feeling?
   Pair B gets a picture that (s)he has to describe and answer the following question in detail: What could have happened to the characters in the picture that make them feel/act the way they feel/act?

Figure 4. Mary Poppins and the Banks children in Mrs Corry's candy shop

Figure 5.
The Banks' House and Mary Poppins

Key:

Figure 4 – Jane, Michael, and Mary Poppins are in Mrs Clara Corry's, Mary Poppins's relative's, candy shop. Behind the counter and on the shelves are lots of sweets. In addition, two portraits are hanging on the wall. They are portraits of rulers. Jane and Michael are happily dancing around Mary Poppins. Michael is

wearing a red coat, grey shorts and stockings, and brown shoes. Jane is wearing a purple coat, a blue dress and stockings, and grey shoes. They are holding some sweets (gingerbread) in their hands, which Mary Poppins has just bought them. Mrs Corry is feeling happy, and Mary Poppins seems satisfied. She is wearing a blue coat, a flowered hat, and black shoes. She is carrying a shopping basket.

Figure 5 – Ellen has just got a cold. Mrs Brill has been frightened because she almost dropped the dish. Mary Poppins has left the dining room for her day out. Mr Banks has scolded his family (he is not satisfied with the dinner). Annabel has dropped the spoons, and John has spilt his milk on the table. Barbara has dropped her empty cup and a slice of bread on the floor. Michael has been scolded because his hair looks awful. Jane has just said something (she wants dessert).

Version B (B2)

Pair A gets a picture that (s)he has to describe and follow the instruction: Narrate a story based on the picture: what was happening/what happened? What were they doing in the picture? Where were they?

Pair B gets a picture that (s)he has to describe and answer the following question in detail: Based on the scene, what do you think is going to happen? / What do you think will happen?

Key:

Figure 6 – It was a cosy afternoon. Mr Banks was playing with the twins, John and Barbara. Annabel was resting in her mother's lap. Michael was reading his favourite tale to her mother, and Jane was preparing her imaginary tea time. Suddenly, Mrs Brill entered the living room and started to read her letter out to Mrs Banks. The message of that letter made Mrs Banks stressed and desperate. The letter had said that her family needed Mrs Brill, so she left the house for a while. Mary Poppins stayed still and calm. She said she would run the household while Mrs Bank was away.

Figure 7 – The Park Keeper is going to/will clamber over the fence to talk to Mary Poppins. The Park Keeper will warn Mary Poppins that they have to collect their cherrystones and throw them to a container at the corner. Mary Poppins seems upset and angry, so she is going to disagree and argue with the Park Keeper. Jane is going to/will climb the tree to get more cherries. Anabel on the floor is going to/will ask for more cherries. Michael is going to/will stamp on cherries. John is going to/will drop the cherries in his hands. The black cat in the front is going to/will catch a caterpillar at the dustbin.

Figure 6. Mary Poppins, the Banks family
and Mrs Brill, the cook

Figure 7. Mary Poppins, the Banks children
and the Park Keeper

2) **Roleplay based on passages from 'East Wind'.**
   Version A: Read the following short text. Then, you are going to work in pairs.

   Jane and Michael could see that the newcomer had shiny black hair – "Rather like a wooden Dutch doll," whispered Jane. And that she was thin, with large feet and hands, and small, rather peering blue eyes. […]

   You'll find that they are very nice children," Mrs. Banks was saying. Michael's elbow gave a sharp dig at Jane's ribs. "And that they give no trouble at all," continued Mrs. Banks uncertainly, as if she herself didn't really believe what she was saying. They heard the visitor sniff as though she didn't either.

   "Now, about references – "Mrs. Banks went on.

   "Oh, I make it a rule never to give references," said the other firmly. Mrs. Banks stared.

   "But I thought it was usual," she said. "I mean – I understood people always did."

"A very old-fashioned idea, to my mind," Jane and Michael heard the stern voice say. "Very old-fashioned. Quite out of date, as you might say."

Now, if there was one thing Mrs. Banks did not like, it was to be thought old-fashioned. She just couldn't bear it. So she said quickly: "Very well, then. We won't bother about them. I only asked, of course, in case you – er – required it."

Imagine the following:

Partner A: You are Mrs Banks and your partner is Mary Poppins. You have to convince Mary Poppins of the importance of references. List reasons and justify your opinion.

Partner B: You are Mary Poppins and your partner is Mrs Banks. You have to justify why you consider giving references an old-fashioned idea and why you insist on refusing to give references.

Comment: if there are boys in the role play, they can rewrite the scene and play Mr Banks.

You have to come to an agreement.

Version B: Read the following short text. Then,
you are going to work in groups of 3.

When their Mother had gone, Jane and Michael edged towards Mary Poppins, who stood, still as a post, with her hands folded in front of her.

"How did you come?" Jane asked. "It looked just as if the wind blew you here."

"It did," said Mary Poppins briefly. And she proceeded to unwind her muffler from her neck and to take off her hat, which she hung on one of the bedposts.

As it did not seem as though Mary Poppins were going to say any more — though she sniffed a great deal — Jane, too, remained silent. But when she bent down to undo her bag, Michael could not restrain himself.

"What a funny bag!" he said, pinching it with his fingers.

"Carpet," said Mary Poppins, putting her key in the lock.

"To carry carpets in, you mean?"

"No. Made of."

"Oh," said Michael. "I see." But he didn't — quite.

By this time the bag was open, and Jane and Michael were more than surprised to find it was completely empty.

"Why," said Jane, "there's nothing in it!"

"What do you mean — nothing?" demanded Mary Poppins, drawing herself up and looking as though she had been insulted. "Nothing in it, did you say?"

And with that she took out from the empty bag a starched white apron and tied it round her waist. Next she unpacked a large cake of Sunlight Soap, a toothbrush, a packet of hairpins, a bottle of scent, a small folding armchair and a box of throat lozenges.

Jane and Michael stared.

"But I saw," whispered Michael. "It was empty."

Imagine the following:

Partner A: You are Mary Poppins. You insist on owning your carpet bag and keeping the secret of its magic.

Partner B: You are Michael Banks. You want to persuade Mary Poppins to reveal the magic of her carpet bag.

Partner C: You are Jane Banks. You want to convince Mary Poppins that the carpet bag should belong to you.

You have to come to an agreement.

Key: optional.

Conclusion

Thanks to Mary Poppins's popularity and fame, certain passages from the fantasy series can be easily and effectively applied to teach and practice English tenses. Firstly, because of the Walt Disney films' success, students can be more motivated to work with a text that they already know or of which they have already heard. Secondly, suppose language learners are encouraged to practice English tenses with a new text. In that case, the quality of their performance might be increased by their interest and curiosity in the new.

Various writing (gap-filling, multiple choice) and speaking exercises (picture description and role play) were demonstrated. Writing exercises focused on the following tenses: present simple, past simple, past continuous, present perfect, past perfect. Speaking exercises helped practice the tenses such as present simple, present continuous, present perfect, going to future, and future will. Certain parts from 'East Wind' (*Mary Poppins*) and particular illustrations by Mary Shepard (*Mary Poppins in the Kitchen* [13]*, Mary Poppins from A to Z* [12]) functioned as sources to practice English tenses in written and spoken form. The exercises were designed and planned for English language learners at the B1/B2 level.

By doing the first writing exercise, a successful learner can compare simple present and present continuous, past simple and present perfect, past simple and past perfect simple, and also use the correct form (positive and negative, first-person and third-person). The second exercise can help language learners choose the best past form (past tense, past continuous, and past perfect simple). By describing the pictures in the first speaking activity, the language learner can practice certain present continuous, present perfect, past continuous, and future simple patterns. The second speaking exercise gives the learners a free space to spontaneously express themselves in English. In addition, these speaking exercises develop the students' imagination, creativity, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. All in all, the exercises introduced above develop language proficiency since they offer learners the opportunity to practice the proper use of English tenses in both a written and a spoken form.

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Thinking about ethics through Andersen's tales

Marianne SZENTPÉTERY[9]

ABSTRACT

The timeless messages of Andersen's tales were discussed with first-year students within the frameworks of the subject *Introduction to Ethics* at Apor Vilmos Catholic College's English-language Kindergarten Educator programme. The tales ironically illustrate human frailties and faults, shed compassionate light on the socially disadvantaged, and set an example of coping and resilience. Andersen knew the Bible well, and readers can find parallels with stories, parables and wisdoms from the Old and New Testaments. The stories were dealt with in a cooperative learning activity, which helped students realise the connection of ethics and aesthetics, ethics and Christian teaching. The tales also served as springboards for discussing certain moral aspects of modern life like talent support, parental responsibility, segregation and inclusion, consumer society, economic consciousness and sustainability.

Keywords:
Andersen, Bible, cooperative learning, ethics, moral of a tale

Introduction

Hans Christian Andersen's tales carry precious moral messages which can be well used in the emotional, moral and value-oriented education of pre-schoolers. Their content, style, imagery and irony make these tales entertaining and edifying for children and

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adults alike. The tales also proved useful in the subject of Introduction to Ethics on the part-time English-language Kindergarten Educator training programme at Apor Vilmos Catholic College. Students discussed them within the framework of a cooperative learning exercise, which offered a healthy combination of individual and joint work, laid stress on individual and group accountability, gave ample food for thought, triggered students' creativity, developed their storytelling and English language skills, and, hopefully, contributed to group cohesion.

The group studied the following tales: *The Teapot, The Money Pig, The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Little Match Girl, Five Peas from a Pod, The Fir Tree, The Ugly Duckling*. The stories raise questions which are acute also today: having too much (*The Money Pig*) or having nothing (*The Little Match Girl, Five Peas from a Pod*), mistreatment (*The Little Match Girl, The Ugly Duckling*), coming of age (*The Fir Tree, The Ugly Duckling, Five Peas from a Pod*), lifelong (emotional) learning (*The Teapot*), thinking outside the box (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Ugly Duckling*), finding meaning in life (*The Teapot, Five Peas from a Pod, The Fir Tree, The Ugly Duckling*), resilience (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier, Five Peas from a Pod, The Ugly Duckling*), coping (*The Teapot, The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Ugly Duckling*), mindfulness (*The Teapot, The Fir Tree*), the conflict of insiders and outsiders and the problem of loneliness – in all tales.

Rasmussen (2010) distinguishes four significance levels in Andersen's tales: 1. action plane 2. idea, moral or point-plane 3. self-biographical plane 4. universal or cosmic plane. From our point of view it is the second and the fourth level which are of importance [12]. The study is going to focus on the "moral plane" and, at certain points of the tales draw biblical parallels and thus reinforce the message on the "universal plane", on a transcendental ethical level, as it is also important for the students to see the interconnectedness of the subjects they study. An exercise like this points to the presence of ethics in all areas of life, helps the students to realise the connection of ethics and aesthetics, ethics and Christianity as well as identify the different fields of practical application (applied ethics).

Andersen knew the Bible well: " ...from my first entrance in the school I had clearly understood what was said and taught by it [i.e. the Bible]" [2: 59]. He wrote about the common means of divine revelation and literary art: "...through all men's lives runs a [red] thread, invisible indeed, that shows we belong to God. To find this thread [...] in our own life and in all about us, the poet's art helps us. [...] The Bible itself has enclosed truth and wisdom that we call parables and allegories. Now we know [...] that allegory is not to be taken literally by the words, but according to the signification that lies in them, by the invisible thread that lies through them. We know that when we hear the

echo from the wall, from a rock or the heights, it is not the wall, the rock or the heights that speak, but a resounding from ourselves; and so we should also see in the parable, in the allegory, that we find ourselves, – we find the meaning, the wisdom and the happiness we can get out of them.[...] So the poet's art places itself by the side of Science and opens our eyes for the beautiful, the true and the good..." [2: 430].

Tales

1. *The Teapot* – **From Vanity to Wisdom**

A proud porcelain teapot, the queen of the table thinks it is more superior in beauty and in importance to the other members of the tea service. It has a calling to "spread blessings among thirsty mankind" [1]. Its *hybris*, self-deceptive false modesty and perfectionist attitude does not allow it to form an objective picture of itself. The phenomenon of over-achieving is not uncommon around us, but "perfectionism is a defensive move. It is a belief that if we do things perfectly and look perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment or shame" [6: 106]. When the teapot is dropped, it loses all its privileges and its "defensive move" right away. Its brokenness cannot be hidden. Its crisis is a turning point, and crisis is an opportunity to bring about positive changes in its character [9: 59]. When they put earth into the pot it is as if it has been buried. Still, the bulb planted in the earth gives it something it "never had before": "a living heart" [1]. From the conceited "saviour of mankind" the teapot becomes a nameless mother secretly nursing a new life.

Through a painful learning process, the teapot manages to reframe, to adjust its mindset to the new and altered situation. The self-centred, ridiculous, narcissistic thing changes into an old potsherd which forgets itself in the flower's beauty. The teapot's lifelong (emotional) learning results in wisdom, love and understanding. "...Even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by so doing change himself. He may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph" [7: 147]. After losing everything the teapot could be envied for, it says: "But I have my memory; *that* I can never lose!» [1].

This story beautifully illustrates the Word "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14) [4].

2. *The Money Pig* – **To be or to Have?**

A conceited penny bank on the top shelf of the nursery thinks he can buy everything in the world; he is not subdued to the rules that others are. He even has a romantic scenario of his own burial, the first time when he wants to show his generosity. All the other toys want to please him and earn his goodwill. The end, however, comes unexpectedly. Instead of a festive burial, the fallen and broken penny bank is thrown away and replaced by an empty new one. He can make no use of the money he contains. Andersen draws a parallel between being full of money and having (containing) no money at all, and the common point is emptiness. The tale raises the questions: can money buy happiness? Who is happier? The fat money pig or the battered toys "down there"? In the world of the nursery he is respected, but not loved. He is unable to share (he is far from the other toys) or to communicate (he cannot rattle). The pointless insistence of this miser on his possession hampers him in doing good while he can. Frankl calls the "will to money the most primitive form of the will to power" [7: 112]. Wealth is relative: the money pig is awed for just a handful of pennies and two silver dollars by the pocket universe of the nursery – where there is no need for money.

Fromm (2008) distinguishes two basic modes of existence: the mode of having and the mode of being. Whereas the former is about possessing everything and everybody, the latter is about "authentic relatedness to the world" [8: 20-21] or the true reality as opposed to "deceptive appearances" [8: 20-21].

This story makes us think of the Parable of the Rich Fool: "…But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12: 13-21) [4]; and also Paul's warning: "… if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1Timothy 6: 8-10) [4].

3. *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* – **Faithful, even to the Point of Death**

The story's hero is a little toy soldier, which was cast last of his 24 brothers. Though with one leg, the little tin man covers a long way. He gives an example of coping, resilience and moral integrity for first-year students often struggling with a variety of difficulties. He remains steadfast in all his ordeals, and preserves the honour of the uniform: office obliges. His strength stems from two sources: his official duty and his love for the ballet dancer. Tribulations make him tough in body but soft in heart.

The story teaches an important lesson to future teachers. This little man has a severe handicap and needs support. When the army retreats, he remains outside the box. The phrase "to think outside the box" is often used to express unconventional thinking. Here, being outside the box opens new perspectives (through a journey) and makes our hero more experienced than "the rest" in the box. During his adventures he has to struggle with the elements; he is at the mercy of capricious children and ill-willed creatures. Through his Odyssey he becomes "a remarkable traveller" [1], deserving special attention. And he should have deserved special care, too...

The story obviously reminds us of the story of Jonah in the whale, and also of the importance of the eminent virtue of courage as we read in Paul's warning: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong" (1Cor 16: 13) [4].

From a prosaic origin (cast last of a tin spoon) the little soldier goes through extraordinary adventures only to gain a promising new life with his love through the devastating pain of a cathartic fire.

4. *The Little Match Girl* – a yuletide angel

The Little Match Girl was presumably inspired by Andersen's experience in Pozsony –Pressburg (today Bratislava) [13] in 1841. The story takes place on the last day of the year in the city streets where a little "bareheaded and barefoot" [1] girl is walking, trying to sell matches. There must be orderly homes behind the walls: there is friendly light in the windows, the smell of roast goose in the streets... The child is lonely, bereft, physically and emotionally neglected. She is unable to defend herself, and she cannot expect warmth and comfort from her own home. This angel-like creature with her "long, fair hair with pretty curls over her neck" [1] must be surrounded by passers-by, surely, good people, who do not take notice of her. She is also angel-like in the sense that she is invisible to the others. We follow her in her visions about warm and happy homes, about the paraphernalia of the Christmas season, a traditionally peak time of charity.

The major part of the story is descriptive: the storyteller talks about the child, her appearance, her circumstances as well as her feelings, speculations and visions. Her voice cannot be heard. She opens her mouth first when she sees a star falling: "Now someone is dying." [1] as if anticipating her own death.

We do not know the little girl's name, and this makes her character a symbolic one – an embodiment of all the suffering children and also of some kind of an angel with impeccable moral purity [10], an invisible creature who is at the mercy

of other people, and who, at the same time, offers them the opportunity to do good. We remember the Word: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13: 2) [4]. The matches in her hand may symbolise the potential of warmth the good deeds could kindle in the hearts of the people around her.

Though the child dies on that miraculous night, the ending has a positive overtone, her life is fulfilled in the transcendent [14: 50].

The tale raises the questions of parental responsibility, campaign-like charity activities, and the conflict between the haves and the have-nots. Isaiah warns us to "Take up the cause of the fatherless ..." (Isaiah 1: 17) [4]. And Jesus reminds us to notice the ever-present need around us: „…For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me..." (Matthew 25: 35-36) [4].

5. *Five Peas from a Pod* – faith, hope, love

Five peas "fly the nest". The reader recalls the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13: 4-9) [4]. The sower works in the field with what we might call low efficiency: only some of the seeds produce crop. In Andersen's tale four peas are hindered by adverse circumstances and cannot fulfil their dreams. Unrealistic dreams may turn into the reverse: the most ambitious pea ends up in the gutter. Only the last pea falls into good soil to bring a destitute child and her mother a promise of hope. With its shining warmth the sun symbolizes love and radiates health.

The story of the last pea also reminds us of John 12: 24: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed..." [4] The pea's death brings blessing to the little girl. The mother's jubilant words testify of humble faith: "»Our Lord Himself planted the pea, and made it thrive, to bring hope and joy to you, my blessed child, and to me, too!« said the happy mother, and smiled at the flower, as if to a good angel from God." [1].

Two lives develop parallel: the pea plant and the recuperating girl, tending each other and taking delight in mutual growth and renewal. The pea vine appreciates the care "with a fully blown pink pea blossom", and the girl with "the rosy hue of health on her cheeks": "...whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" (Proverbs 11: 25) [4].

6. *The Fir Tree* – skipping stages

In this coming-of-age story we meet the young fir tree in the forest. Its only ambition is to grow, to get older and taller. "Rejoice in your youth" [1] warn the sunbeams the young fir tree, echoing the Old Testament warning: *"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth"* (Ecclesiastes 11: 9) [4]. The tree spends its energies on a tormenting longing instead of being mindfully present in its own life. Its futile endeavour to skip the stages of development reminds us of a verse in the Sermon on the Mount: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matthew 6: 27 KJV) [4]. The young fir tree is too eager to notice and appreciate its faculties (young, healthy etc.); it is unable to be thankful for what it has. This leads to a loss of balance which is also expressed in the physical sense: the tree is cut off its roots, and transported far away from its homeland. Decorated and candle-lit, it spends one splendid Christmas night with a family. Though quivering, it enjoys being in the limelight. But the regained balance is shaken again the next day when it is thrown aside bereft and humiliated. This turns our attention to the absurdity of its existence, to the pointless felling of the tree.

By the time this talented and ambitious tree acquires wisdom, grows up not just physically but also spiritually, all possibilities for a happy and fulfilled life are gone. The tale emphasizes the importance of being mindfully present on both the weekdays of our lives and on the holidays. Respecting the laws of nature and learning patience. The word 'happy' is repeated three times, all in the context of days past irrevocably.

The story about "a perpetually unsatisfied individual who [...] can only live now in memory, now in hope" is a "harsh self-judgment" of the writer [11: 78].

Today a lot of young people, contrary to the fir tree, are afraid to grow up, shoulder responsibility and be committed. Can "Peter Pans" or "hikikomoris" understand the problem of the fir tree?

7. *The Ugly Duckling* – talent and mediocrity

A "big, ugly, gray" [1] duckling is hatched in the yard. It is unlike the others of the same brood, and there are different ways to deal with the perplexing situation. No one in the duck yard supports the little duckling, even the mother is short of the emotional intelligence to encourage her offspring. The author illustrates with irony the false assumptions of the characters in the yard, which is obviously the

centre of the world for them, where they can achieve happiness as long as they suit themselves to the norms and do not stand out. The mother teaches the children all the necessary knowledge about the world; actually, the word "world" occurs eight times in the English translation (in the Danish original seven times). The ugly duckling has no place in it.

This tale shows life from two perspectives: from a worm's eye-view and from a bird's eye view. The average ones everywhere create a comfortable and predictable environment for themselves. To see that someone does not fit in, makes them feel uncomfortable, aggressive or exclusionary. The young bird suffers from the value statements and prescriptivism of the inhabitants of the different microcosms he gets into.

The ugly duckling is identified by many as the writer himself. Andersen came from a very low social stratum, accomplished his schools much later than his peers, felt often lonely and had strange personality traits.

This tale can be interpreted as a metaphor of the conflict of talent and mediocrity; a carefully painted picture of the vulnerability and loneliness of a talented person a teacher should be aware of. Such students need a supportive environment, which does not label but helps to find and strengthen the positive coping and balancing skills [3: 22-24].

After a long, cruel and lonesome winter, spring comes for the ugly duckling: „Then, quite suddenly, he lifted his wings. They swept through the air much more strongly than before, and their powerful strokes carried him far. Before he quite knows what is happening, he finds himself in a great garden where apple trees bloom." [1]. His flow experience takes the ugly duckling into a beautiful garden with blooming apple trees, a winding river and noble swans. This Garden of Eden brings about the revelation that he also belongs to the royal birds in it. "Being born in a duck yard does not matter, if only you are hatched from a swan's egg." [1].

Besides the biblical warning of "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6: 4) [4], the tale also calls our attention to the importance of critical thinking which can enable us to recognize and cope with prescriptivism, prejudices and false assumptions.

Conclusion

In her story therapy Boldizsár finds the question of "Where are you in the story?" [5: 103] more useful than the question of "Who are you in the story?" [5: 103]. In their struggles, heroes of the tales appear at a variety of places, and even a fearsome

place can be an opportunity [5: 107]. In some of the above tales the fall of the hero, the loss of balance is expressed by literally falling off from somewhere high (*The Teapot, The Money Pig, The Fir Tree*); the elevation of the hero is expressed by being moved upwards (*Five Peas from a Pod, The Little Match Girl, The Fir Tree, The Ugly Duckling*), the series of tribulations is expressed by being tossed up and down (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier*). A cathartic fire transits the hero to a new quality of life (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Little Match Girl*); the crushing of *hybris* goes parallel with the physical disintegration of the hero (*The Teapot, The Money Pig, The Fir Tree*). Figurative and literal meanings go hand-in hand, and children and adults alike "find the meaning, the wisdom and the happiness" [1: 430] in them.

In their quest of happiness most of the heroes walk the thorny path of character education. Andersen's tales about condescendence, negligence and humiliation can help both younger and older readers cope with difficult situations or find consolation [14: 54]. Crises open new perspectives, and make those who have coped wiser, more confident and more resilient.

The tales can also serve as springboards for discussing the ethical aspects of modern pedagogical and societal themes like talent support (*The Ugly Duckling*), parental responsibility (*The Little Match Girl, The Ugly Duckling*), segregation and inclusion (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier*), throw-away society vs. sustainability (*The Teapot, The Fir Tree*), or economic consciousness (*The Money Pig*).

Andersen's tales written with compassion and subtle irony provide a rich source for the professional and personal development of future kindergarten educators and through them for the character formation of their students.

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The history and literature of English-speaking countries in the English as a foreign language classroom

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on using literary texts and culture-based lesson plans in teaching English as a foreign language and extracurricular workshops to help learners in acquiring and improving skills in vocabulary and language areas. These lesson plans aim to motivate learners to learn more about culture and folklore-based topics and to encourage them to vocalize their thoughts and opinions in the target language. Furthermore, the paper presents ways of creating interdisciplinary connections between subjects, focusing on English with the combination of other subjects such as History and Geography.

Keywords:
creativity, literary texts, history, culture, foreign language classroom, extracurricular workshop, digital technology

Introduction

In the twenty-first century if someone thinks of a question, answering it is nearly as simple as to open a search bar on a mobile phone or on the computer and thousands of answers show up. Most of the times, we only need to search for a confirmed fact. Nowadays, it is not different for students either.

Searching for something on the Internet is simply part of learners' everyday habits and it is likewise observable in the teaching-learning process. The problem is not with the added option of searching for information on the Internet. More

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likely, the notion that students today do not read and understand what they find and see is part of everyday life, they often randomly select certain data without any clarification. In his book *Turned on and Tuned Out: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Managing* (2014), John K. Kriger emphasizes that "Creativity, communication, interaction and information sharing have all been enhanced in the classroom through every conceivable form of technology. The problem lies in that, with every advantage comes along, there are also disadvantages" [11: 70]. Kriger writes about how students lose their communication and person-to-person skills and how much those impersonal interactions overtake [11].

In the same way, students gradually forget how to write, how to read and understand the text that is in front of them, instead, they search for some analysis on the Internet. One of the hugest problems is that they do not know how to come up with original ideas they can confidently vocalize – therefore, critical thinking is continuously getting harder to acquire, students are in fact not used to it. Technology and the Internet are undoubtedly useful sources in almost every aspects of life, including the teaching-learning process. Indeed, it is a goal best targeted in the forming years of children. For the case of students and young learners, Kriger proposes that "encouraging creative and interactive play, talking and having conversation with them, teaching and singing songs with them, reading stories to them, or having them read (yes, even before they are really able to read) all promote brain function development" [1: 78]. Using technology as a background and additional source for teaching in a language classroom can be a great combination of achieving skill development and motivation.

Ultimately, the need for teaching in creative and unique ways in the English as a foreign language classroom has been dynamically increasing in the recent decades. Lesson plans more and more often include drama techniques, where learners have the opportunity to participate more actively in real-life situations, outside the traditional box of frontal teaching and learning. Besides, audio-visual aids as an addition to other sources are similarly more often used in language classrooms.

1. Literature and Foreign Language Learning/Teaching

Using literature in the language classroom should definitely be an important factor to consider, just like its usage outside the classroom. It has many benefits that can help learners even in their spare time to shape their character.

At the very beginning, it is necessary to decide on the appropriate aspect of using literature in a classroom. In English-speaking classes, the study of literature undoubtedly can have a significant place, because learners are already familiar with the language itself. However, in a foreign language classroom where students are only learning the target language, teaching literature as a resource should be considered very carefully. This factor is explained by Gillian Lazar (1993) in the following way: "The study of literature makes literature itself the content or subject of a language course, while the use of literature as a resource draws on literature as one source among many different kinds of texts for promoting interesting language activities" [2: 17]. She also explains that at lower levels, when children are reading and listening to literary texts, it can unconsciously lead to developing literacy competences. When they are re-acting scenes from a tale or when they are doing kinaesthetic activities based on a short poem, it is also extremely motivating, it has an educational value, students most of the time really enjoy it, mainly if they can also develop a connection towards it and finally, they are emotionally invested. Andrea Puskás points out that "students are touched by the content of the text or by certain characters, which can stimulate their desire to read more, talk about the story and express their own viewpoints" [5: 98]. Ultimately, they will be able to verbalise emotions, thoughts, opinions and facts in an oral form and sooner or later in a written form, too.

At higher levels, the process and principles are almost exactly the same. Not every student manages to develop this emotional connection in the early stages. Many of them realise later in their learning process that they can be engaged in reading. The aim is to help them find the reason why to read, why to invest time in reading. The goal should never be merely teaching the language and literary competences. One of the most important objectives of teaching English as a foreign language is to help learners find enjoyment in learning and reading for a life-time.

Lazar draws attention to culture as a reason for using literature with language learners. She argues that because most countries in the world have their own history of literature, it can be highly beneficial for the students to get to know more and other cultures and compare them with their own cultural background, which also develops their interpretative skills [2: 18]. In addition, reading itself enriches

culture. It shapes beliefs, personalities and feelings and depending on what we read we educate ourselves – and it is possible to do so about almost anything. This claim is supported by Daniel R. Schwarz, in his book *In Defense of Reading: Teaching Literature in the Twenty-First Century* (2008), where he claims that "what each of us reads individually tells us who we are in terms of our own separate and special identity. We define ourselves by what we read and what we choose not to read– our desires, our needs, our demands, our disappointments, our fixations, our obsessions" [6: 12].

Research results show that reading amongst young people is actually increasing in number even if this was the exact opposite a few years ago [4]. Articles report facts and data about this change claiming that "children's enjoyment of reading has increased during lockdown (from 47.8% pre-lockdown to 55.9% post-lockdown)" [4] or that "a third (34.5%) of children and young people say they are reading more during lockdown" [4]. The new generation needs new places where they can express their ideas and which encourages them to do so. This leads to various platforms on the Internet where they can give voice to their perspectives. Nowadays, when technology is an absolutely indispensable tool in everyday situations, it is not surprising that it, in fact, has a huge impact on unfolding a specific type of reading habits. Audio-books and online books have already had increasing popularity, but with the appearance of social media sites, people have started to share with each other not only messages and information, but recommendations, too. Digital platforms have become major tools in motivating people in picking up on reading. First and foremost, YouTube was the number one digital platform where readers could connect [8]. More and more people watched videos about book reviewing, bookish tags, character and plot analyses – it is a platform easily accessible, created by young people themselves, a place where people with the same interest can communicate. Moreover, because 'influencers' were just as much everyday people as their viewers, the language used was quite easily understandable even for a beginner learner of English [8].

Although in the recent years YouTube has still been one of the most visited platforms for book lovers, Instagram (and later TikTok) have slowly but surely taken over the leading role. The start of the so called *bookstagram accounts* and *bookstagrammers* influenced reading even further. A short definition of bookstagram can go like "This new social media platform is different from YouTube in that it doesn't consist only of videos. Rather, it consists mainly of photos and images" [8]. Since posting a photo on a social media platform is much

faster than uploading and editing a video, also not to mention that the feedback is more genuine and easier, Bookstagram has become a quickly growing advocate for reading. Readers share short reviews of all kinds of books, but instead of talking about it, they write descriptions. Lots of them even combine their bookish Instagram pages with a YouTube platform, ultimately helping viewers developing both their reading and listening skills. And since Bookstagram is definitely more popular in recommending books written in English, teenagers tend to pick up foreign language books more often. Furthermore, monthly or thematic reading challenges and read-alongs successfully expand the motivation in the circle of young people who want to start reading.

New times need new methods and techniques. The benefits of reading are simply indispensable, therefore, schools need to encourage their students to read both inside and outside the classroom.

2. The Different Aspects of Traditional and Children's Literature in the Classroom

On a primary school level, in the beginner years of studying English, it should be taken into account that learners must be motivated and encouraged not to be afraid of discovering new language rather than immediately jump into mastering the basic grammatical elements. Beginning with the development of speaking and listening skills could be the primary aim instead of spending loads of time writing down basic words.

The usage of children's literature and other various kinds of adaptations in the classroom should be the starting point. Young learners already have the opportunity to begin their English courses with a wide variety of literary texts: nursery rhymes, folk tales, fairy tales and plenty of visuals. Traditional literature undoubtedly has a role in teaching and learning – many young learners can probably find connections between English originated stories and the ones told in their mother tongue. Denis I. Matulka (2008) explains that "traditional literature (sometimes called folklore, folk literature, or fairy tales) features the accumulated stories passed down through oral storytelling, from generation to generation" [8: 99]. This kind of literature has many different forms and genres such as animal tales, legends, myths, fables – just to list a few out of the most popular categories, all bringing students closer to understanding a foreign culture in an encouraging way. The moral dilemma dressed in dialogues between animals who act like humans makes children think

and speak, which develops their early critical thinking mindset. Myths and legends tell stories of heroes and villains, different cultures, great adventures creating interest in the history of various places and realms – both real and fictional.

Barbara D. Stoodt, Linda B. Amspaugh and Jane Hunt emphasize that "both traditional literature and modern fantasy are make-believe. Both are important in children's lives as well as adult lives. For young and old they serve the function of play, dreaming, and imagining better worlds and solutions to problems" [7: 204]. Lesson plans using folk tale or fairy tale scenes help learners to understand the greater picture: how to communicate, how to act in real-life-based scenarios, how to acknowledge reasoning, how to respond, how to find the door where a fantasy-built phenomenon can be interpreted based on contemporary practices, all in the safe environment of the language classroom.

Myths and legends also help in deepening the previously mentioned emotional connection and later developing interdisciplinary relationships. They tell tales mostly as if they were true, already becoming fascinating by presenting origin-stories of various cultures, adventures of legendary heroes and anti-heroes, creating stepping stones into the fact-filled past of history whilst searching for deeper meanings. Currently, it is an ever-going discussion how well literature and history allude on each other.

English textbooks like *Project* already have pages such as 'English Across the Curriculum' where the subject of History also appears. In the same way, units of English culture and history can be supplemented with lesson plans based on the combination of real-life facts and myths and legends. Matulka too sums it up by saying "Myths, like legends are stories told as tough they were true. (…) With complex symbolism, a myth is to a culture is what a dream is to an individual" [3: 102].

Stoodt et al. also state that "children eventually learn there are underlying patterns in both fiction and fact" [7: 179]. Research shows that by working with traditional and children's literature even with young learners visibly develops intellectual abilities and qualities. Stoodt et al. quote Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) when they write that "they discovered that even two-year-olds understood some story structures and used introductions such as "once upon a time" and closings like "they lived happily ever after"" [7: 179]. Pitcher and Prelinger's research therefore proves that without learning specifically about grammar tenses children still can use some grammatical patterns and recognize the presence of the past tense when telling a story [7: 179].

Nowadays, literary texts adapted into film provide a combination of visual and textual forms and can be in fact easily altered into materials used in teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, books for primary school learners such as *New English Adventure* can work as great source materials. They contain pages of film-and-book adapted plots, settings and characters which are helpful to grab and hold the learners' attention. Student books like *New English Adventure Level 1-2* already include scenes from well-known and popular film adaptations such as *Brave, The Incredibles, The Jungle Book* or *The Lion King.* The opening pictures at the start of the units function as props for an open-lead discussion, followed by visual-and-audio-aid activities or a task based on drama techniques. To refer to this topic, more and more storybooks and picture books are being made as complementary materials in language teaching classes: there are various available versions of storybooks describing the narratives of *Disney Princesses* supplemented with audio aids or illustrated editions of influential novels like the *Harry Potter* series, for instance. What is more, comic books have high influence on acquiring language skills as well. Learning the consistency of a story in a comic book style and recognising the role of speech bubbles, unit sections and hidden symbolism promotes creativity and personalized learning opportunities, not to mention the fact that it shapes reading habits. Comics such as *Captain America* or *Wonder Woman* are amazing tools for teaching in a History classroom, where students can get bored easily while listening to facts and number-based information during a lesson. However, if they receive a page or an illustration from a comic book mentioned above, they immediately become more encouraged to find those connections where a History lesson and a fictional super-soldier might connect.

It is important to prove that learners enjoy and value new methods of learning about something they know to some extent. Therefore, using digital and interactive tools not only increases attentiveness, it also develops co-operation and problem-solving skills in the classroom, not to mention reading for fun. Therefore, it is also important to establish the belief that these young learners are capable of understanding literary texts and specific types of texts in particular stand close to their interests.

The teacher has to recognise what should be chosen from the wide range of literary texts and what should be brought into the classroom. Many aspects have to be considered both in connection with the target groups and with the literary texts – as well as their adapted forms. Undeniably, learning the basics of how to use and understand a new language is a principal goal to achieve, so the level and

the age of learners are significant factors. Especially young learners might need additional assistance with some possible linguistic difficulties and challenges. Another important goal is to help learners gain confidence, to catch their attention and to help them stay motivated whilst expressing their own ideas and opinions.

3. Culture and History in an Extracurricular Workshop

A research study took place in a primary school with Hungarian as the language of instruction named Munka Utcai Magyar Tanítási Nyelvű Alapiskola in Komárno, Slovakia in the school year of 2018/2019. An extracurricular workshop was organised for learners of fifth to seventh grades. A group of sixteen learners was managed to start with mixed abilities and skills, between the ages of 10 to 12 with learners from the fifth and the sixth grade. Despite the differences between the learners, they all had a high anticipation for learning and they wanted to participate in the tasks and activities. During the lessons they were focused, attentive and highly interested. A very important goal was to create a course plan where learners could develop their language skills while having fun. For this reason, when they suggested something interesting and it could be connected to the lesson, these suggestions were taken into account during class work.

The course consisted of carefully designed lesson plans. Topics covering the weekly meetings had to be chosen correctly and appropriately so that every learner had the opportunity of practicing in the lessons with something they were more or less familiar with, and to provide materials they could understand and which inspired them to communicate and take part in discussions in the target language. For this reason, it was very important to work with topics the learners were not afraid of and ones they could talk about freely and we could tie various activities to the lesson's final goals. When the course plan was first drafted, the learners provided ideas on books, films, TV shows, anything that they found interesting, so the course could be something that was truly exciting for them and did not feel like a wasted learning opportunity.

The series of lessons during the course focused on the history and culture of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and other English-speaking countries. The history of the United Kingdom is a recurring topic in every English textbook where culture pages or 'English across the Curriculum' pages frequently appear. Mythology, tales and folklore can be very easily adapted and combined with drama techniques, which can become highly motivational for the learners. Another

important goal when designing the lesson plans was to be able to use them within the framework of traditional curriculum, use materials covering certain language areas to expand vocabulary, improve reading and speaking skills, and to develop co-operation and problem-solving skills with special attention to imagination and creativity.

3.1. Practical Tips for Using Myths, Legends and Folklore

Literature and history are undoubtedly connectable subjects, and they can swap each other's topics and themes during teaching. Bringing the literature and culture of English-speaking countries to classrooms or workshops can create something new and enjoyable for learners.

The following tips are based on the practical lesson plans implemented in the EFL workshops, during the research study and the course described in the previous section. The concrete lesson plan in question reflected on British culture, specifically the mythology and folklore of the United Kingdom.

- **Maps** – It can be a great and creative way of teaching students how to use a map as a primary source of creative thinking. With this, we are actually able to create interdisciplinary connections between subjects such as English with Geography and History. The goal is not quizzing learners about facts, but to make them observe and think, to have an interpretation that is educational while still entertaining. With the wide range of differently styled maps, we can focus on many alternatives – to begin with, they can list cities and classify them into the correct category of countries, or to find the capital cities and the parts of the United Kingdom. Many maps include illustrations, even of mythical creatures located in the UK. Illustrations help to deepen the newly learnt knowledge and makes it easier to create a connection to some specific information. In the case of mythical creatures placed on a map, learners are easily able to recognise many of them while describing them in details. They can also think of mythical figures from their own folklore to find out whether there are any similarities with the ones they can see in the map. The goal is to improve their speaking skills.
- **Film scenes** – One of the greatest advantages of using digital technology or film-based aids in the classroom is the aspect of how close it stands to learner interest, a fact that should not be dismissed during teaching. Choosing scenes or screenshots from films based on or including mythological

elements can really help to draw attention to this topic. Adaptations based on a literary text (even including other mythology-based plots other than just the culture of English-speaking countries, e.g. *Harry Potter, The Chronicles of Narnia, Percy Jackson & the Olympians, How to Train Your Dragon*) can also be encouraging even with a variety of teaching methods. Lessons can focus on improving listening skills while also including speaking activities.

- **TED talks** – Very similarly to film scenes, myths-based TED talks can also serve as another Internet or digital technology based tool. The vivid and uniquely made videos can maintain focus and the topics are great stepping stones to encourage learners to participate in the discussion using the target language instead of their mother tongue. Furthermore, the possibility of using the option of subtitles is a great tool in the case of a linguistically diverse classroom.
- **Texts** – Sources in a written form can develop reading skills, help with understanding the topic more thoroughly and detect new words and definitions. Texts based on legends and myths are great for group-based activities, where learners can share their opinions and ideas while working together. They can be used as sources for further speaking activities, comparing descriptions. Using texts can be combined with drama techniques, too.
- **Games** – Game-based activities are also suitable for warming-up and calming-down activities during the lesson, e.g. with word dices a new topic-related story can be created or with plasticine, learners can make their own little mythical creatures and present them to their classmates.

Conclusion

Nowadays, it is absolutely necessary to pay close attention to all the changes that occur in the teaching and learning process and how these changes affect young learners. Encouraging creativity and creative thinking both in the classroom and in extracurricular workshops should be of major concern and should receive central attention.

The paper aimed to show that literary texts and culture-based topics have a great potential in language teaching, which motivates the learners, develops their critical thinking and even reading habits, whilst persuading them in expressing their thoughts and ideas in the target language. Teaching during the pandemic

really showed that technology is now definitely part of our everyday life and habits. Digital technology and audio-visual based adaptations could continuously become tools often used by various teaching methods – maintaining interest, shaping learning skills. The idea of successfully using literary texts and adaptation-based materials even in primary schools could be the part of the every-day reality of teaching English as a foreign language.

The paper presented several ways of combining culture and literature in the English as a foreign language classrooms and presented the advantages of culture-base lesson plans. The idea of combining subjects as English with History and even elements of Geography shows that it is possible to teach outside the traditional box of frontal learning and teaching. Earners appreciate lessons much more, if the materials stand close to their knowledge and interest, which means that they are even more likely to participate in the lesson. They pay more attention, they do their best and after a certain time they are less afraid of using the target language confidently. Co-operation between the learners expands by creating a safer learning environment, since student-student interaction is also an ultimate goal to achieve in foreign language teaching.

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Developing English language proficiency within an American Cultural Studies course

Renáta LENGYEL-MAROSI[11]

ABSTRACT

One of the essential parts of English teacher training is developing listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills continuously. Therefore, when designing courses (be they literary, linguistic, or cultural), these criteria should be taken into account. At the Department of English Language and Literature (J. Selye University, Komárno), the course called *History and Culture of the USA* provides first-year university students of English language and literature with the opportunity to improve their language skills besides getting to know the history and culture of the United States of America. The aim of the present study is to demonstrate a few writing, reading, listening, and speaking exercises on the culture and history of the USA, with a special focus on Native Americans (Iroquois creation myth), the historical background of Thanksgiving Day (The Pilgrim Fathers), the reasons and consequences of Prohibition, and the US Government with its branches.

Keywords:
language proficiency, the history and culture of the USA, writing, reading, listening and speaking activities

Introduction

The objectives of the course *History and Culture of the USA* are threefold. The priority is to familiarize students with the main events and people of 'old' and 'modern' American history. The second purpose of the course is to provide information

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about American customs, society, politics and culture. "The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people" [5]. Accordingly, the course covers the following topics [1, 2, 3]:

1. Introduction to the course (clarification of basic concepts: United States of America, North America, Central America, and South America)
2. United States of America: regions, climate
3. United States of America: geography; regional differences
4. Native American Culture (Indians)
5. Native American Culture (Eskimos)
6. Colonial Period (Discovery of America, First Colonies, American Thanksgiving)
7. Colonial period (Salem witch trials)
8. War of Independence; Constitution; Unity Crisis: Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston Tea Party, Conflicts with Great Britain, United States Declaration of Independence)
9. United States of America in the twentieth century (First and Second World War; Vietnam War). The United States in the twenty-first century (current debates on identity and multiculturalism, civil rights movements, terrorist attacks)
10. Presidents of the United States
11. Government and presidential elections
12. American flag and anthem
13. American multiculturalism (emigration)

Finally, at the same time, the course aims at helping students practice their language skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). During the seminars, teacher trainees work with various worksheets, including writing, reading, listening, and speaking exercises on the culture and history of the USA. As one could see, a great emphasis is placed on language proficiency, and it is because as Puskás claims, "only effective and highly proficient second language users can teach the language in an appropriate way and well-prepared, motivated trainees can become teachers who are able to develop their expertise with experience" [8: 53].

When designing the worksheets that can be used to develop teacher trainees' language skills, professors at the Department of English Language and Literature consider two crucial things, which likewise applies to planning programmes and

courses: "firstly, what the trainees should learn, what kind of knowledge and skills should be acquired by the trainees and secondly, how that specific knowledge should be transmitted and how those particular skills should be developed within the framework of the programme" [8: 55].

For the same reason, the worksheets designed for the *History and Culture of the USA* cover exercises that are similar in structure and form to exercises that the students can face at language exams. Thus, firstly, they can practice exercises for a language exam they might want to take; secondly, as future teachers, they are familiarized with various exercises characteristic of language exams. They will be aware of what types of exercises are in an exam and how they should be solved. Hence, consciousness plays a "crucial and productive role…in the language learning process" [10: 2]. Also, these worksheets add some variety and interaction to the course as they enable students to work not only individually but also in pairs or groups.

So, teacher trainees acquire different methods of working with texts and pictures – in both spoken and written form. However, it is worth keeping in mind that it is impossible and not even advisable to develop language skills separately as students (such as teacher trainees) should experience EFL learning in its complex form. Therefore, each of the following exercises develops language proficiency in multiple ways.

1. Language Skills in Focus

As for its mode of study, *History and Culture of the USA* is a seminar, which is "essentially [more] interactive in nature" than a lecture can be [11: 37]. Therefore, it enables the students to improve their language proficiency effectively either individually, in pairs, or in groups and with the help of the teacher.

A well-prepared teacher is able to work with texts (be it literary works or other texts): critically analyse and interpret them, acquire relevant pieces of information from them, and use them for practical purposes, for example, to teach EFL. Also, a highly-skilled professional can select appropriate listening materials to develop English language skills. He or she is also able to choose topics and tasks that develop learners' fluency in written and oral form, encourage them to express their opinions, and cultivate their creativity and problem-solving skills. However, language proficiency-based worksheets do not solely focus on language skills; they can also function as sources of knowledge on literature and cultural studies.

Indeed, there are several types of exercises to achieve these goals as well as to practice for a language exam. Among the listening exercises are: gap-filling, multiply choice question, and multiply matching, sentence completion, short-answer questions, and true or false task. Reading exercises can include the following tasks: match the headings with the paragraphs, true or false, multiple-choice, open-ended questions, put the paragraphs into the correct order, missing sentences, gap-filling. As for speaking activities, at GCSE and language exams, it is common to describe certain pictures and share opinions on a topic related to the pictures.

When designing lesson plans and exercises for language learners at any level (A-C), it is a must to realize that learning English as a foreign language and developing skills that a learner needs in order to succeed is a complex and continuous process that could be hindered by many things. With a well-prepared lesson plan and exercises, a professional can avoid these obstacles, or (s)he can help language learners acquire methods with which they could cope with these difficulties.

For example, firstly, reading in a second or foreign language is a complex process because it is "hindered by the reader's imperfect knowledge of the language being read. As a result, the reader is often unable to make the guesses or predictions, will use the wrong cues or make the wrong associations, and will have difficulty in recalling earlier cues owing to a shorter memory span" [7: 47-48]. So, when planning reading exercises, it should be taken into account that reading is an active process that involves comprehending, an interaction between thought and language [7: 48].

Secondly, writing that covers overlapping and intertwining stages, with its recursiveness and multiple drafting, is likewise a complex process in terms of "three areas of difficulty: sentence structure [e.g., paragraphs and coherence] and grammar; rhetorical structure and organization; and diction, spelling [e.g., punctuation] and knowledge of idiom" [7: 49; 4: 8]. Writing tasks also vary. There are reinforcement writing (which reinforces the language that has been taught), preparation writing (which functions as a preparation for some other activity, i.e., a preamble to discussion), activity writing (e.g., to write short dialogues which they will then act out) [4: 32-34].

Thirdly, the purpose of a listening task highly influences the outcome. Namely, there are several types of listening. E.g. Listening for gist, when the learner needs to know the general or main idea of what is being said, as well as who is speaking to whom and why, and how successful they are in communicating their point. Listening for specific information means that the learner listens selectively for the specific information (e.g., hearing the news about something). Learners listen in

detail when they need to find errors or determine differences between one passage and another. In this case, they cannot ignore anything because they do not know exactly what information will help them achieve their task. [12: 10]. The success of listening can be affected by numerous factors, such as characteristics of the message (e.g., simple mishearing, unknown words), characteristics of the delivery (the speakers ramble on, duration, number of speakers, and accent), characteristics of the listener (lack the ability to sustain concentration, anxiety, tiredness, boredom or the listener having a cold (blocked organs), characteristics of the environment (e.g., the temperature of the room, background noise or defective equipment which affects the clarity of a recording), and the role of memory in listening [12: 10-15].

Finally, as for speaking, professionals have to consider the following features: it is *linear*, so at the level of utterance, speech is produced step by step, word-by-word. Utterance also depends on a proceeding one accounting for its *spontaneity* [9: 2].

2. The Four Skills in a Cultural Studies Course

Out of the types of exercises mentioned above, the following will be demonstrated with examples:

- **Gap-filling**: it requires the learner to insert some written material – letters, numbers, single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs – into spaces in a text. The response may be supplied by the learner or selected from a set of options. [6: 49]

  In Exercise 3.3, the teacher trainees' task is to read an Indian creation myth and fill in the missing information from a set of options. Since the vocabulary of the text is not very difficult, the gap-filling process has been made complex: they do not only fill in the text with the missing information, but the letters of each word are also scrambled. So, first, they have to unscramble them. It should be done individually.

- **Multiple-choice:** it "consists of a question or incomplete sentence (stem), with a choice of answers or ways of completing the sentence (options)" [6:51]. The language learner's "task is to choose the correct option (key) from a set of three, four or five possibilities, and no production of language is involved…They may be discrete or text-based" [6: 51].

  In Exercises 3.1. (task 1) and 3.2. (task 2), the teacher candidates have to circle/underline the correct answer to each question about Thanksgiving Day and Prohibition. This writing exercise is based on a listening task. It should be completed individually.

- **True or false**: the learner's task is to carefully read the text and then decide if the statements about that text are true or false. They also have to justify their decision.

  In exercises 3.1. (task 2) and 3.3. (task 2), the teacher trainees' task is to read a text carefully about Thanksgiving Day and read a certain creation myth. They have to mark the true and false statements and explain why certain statements are false. They can work alone, or it can be pair work.

- **Match the headings with the paragraphs**: the learner's task is to read certain headlines and texts. Then, they have to find the best headline for each text. Usually, each headline can be used only once, and there are some extra headlines, which they do not need to use.

  In Exercise 3.2. (task 2), students read short texts about Prohibition. They have to select the best heading for each passage. Here they should look for the keywords in each text, which summarize the main idea. It can guide them to the right heading. They can work alone or in pairs.

- **Picture description:** it is a visual representation of something, such as a person or scene, produced on a surface, as in a photograph, painting [13]. The learner's task is to carefully look at a certain picture/photo and talk about it with their own words. It usually consists of three parts. First, they have to talk about the picture in general; secondly, students introduce what they see in detail; finally, they speculate about the context of the picture and express their own opinion on the topic related to the picture [15].

  In Exercise 3.4., teacher trainees describe a visual representation of the US Government. First, they have to recognize the basic branches of the government and then introduce their responsibilities and sub-branches. Finally, they can compare it to the Slovak/Hungarian government (e.g., which branches are missing or how responsibilities differ). If it is too difficult for them, they can express their opinion on the current political system (e.g., what do they think about the US presidential system, which system – Hungarian/Slovak or the US – is more sympathetic for them and why). In the beginning, they can work alone; then, it can turn to class discussion.

3. Activities

3.1. The Pilgrim Fathers and the Story of the American Thanksgiving

1) **Watch and listen to the video. Try to remember as many details as you can. Then, circle the correct answers in the text below.**

Early in the 17th century, a group of people called the Great Fathers/ Pilgrims/ Indians wanted to reform and purify England's/Scotland's/Wales's Churches. However, because of their efforts, they were awarded/persecuted/expelled. At first, they decided to sail to the Netherlands/Scandinavia/India in order to live in democracy/religious freedom/anarchy. They spent 12/20/21 years there, but they left because Dutch society attacked them/ they struggled to make a living/Dutch society forced them to work for free. They wanted to live in a society that matched their social ideals/religious ideals/political ideas. The refugees could travel to the New World with the help of the London Bank/London Stock Company/Dutch Bank. In 1630/1620/1612, 102/201/101 passengers set sail from London/Plymouth/Oxford on a ship called the Nightingale/Mayflower/Whydah. The journey took 65/165/55 days. Many passengers were cold/wet/unhappy and damp because of the bed and stormy weather. On 11 December/November/January 1620, the Pilgrim landed at Plymouth Rock. They chose this place because it had an excellent port/ good weather/good climate and a big forest /a large lake/tilled fields. [17]

2) **Decide if the statements are true or false.**

   1. The Pilgrims built their houses by March 1621.
   2. The house building went on without any difficulties.
   3. Nearly three-quarters of the Pilgrims died in that first winter.
   4. The Native American Indians attacked them.
   5. Samoset and Squanto, the local Indians, welcomed the settlers in English.
   6. Samoset helped the settlers survive.
   7. Squanto showed them how to tap the maple trees for sap, plant Indian corns, and other crops, and recognize the poisonous and the healing plant.
   8. The settler celebrated their successful settling and that they had survived their first winter in the New World.
   9. The Pilgrims gave thanks to King James for their survival.
   10. Two years later, 29 November was proclaimed a day of thanksgiving.
   11. Now Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the 3rd Thursday of November.

12. It became an annual observance only in the 19th century.
13. On this special day, people watch professional tennis and parade.
14. Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes with gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, sweet corn, and pumpkin pie are traditional meals of Thanksgiving Day.

Key:
1)
Pilgrims, England, persecuted, Netherlands, religious freedom, 12, they struggled to make a living, religious ideals, London Stock Company, 1620, 102, Plymouth, Mayflower, 65, cold, December, excellent port, a large lake.

2)
1. T, 2. F (storms, cold weather), 3. F (half of them died), 4. F (They helped to survive), 5. T, 6. F (It was Squanto), 7. T, 8. T, 9. F (It was Squanto), 10. T, 11. F (on the 4th Thursday of November), 12. T, 13. T, 14. T

3.2. Prohibition

1) A short quiz
Watch the video about the USA in the 1920s and circle the correct answers.

1. What is Prohibition?
    a. The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which banned the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors.
    b. The 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which limited the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors.
    c. The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which limited the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors.

2. When did Prohibition take place?
    a. 1918-1928
    b. 1920-1929
    c. 1919-1933

3. What was the first unintentional consequence of Prohibition?
    a. On January 17, 1920, less than two hours after spirits had become illegal throughout the United States, armed men robbed a Chicago freight train and made off with thousands of dollars' worth of whiskey.

b. On January 17, 1920, less than one hour after spirits had become illegal throughout the United States, armed men robbed a Chicago freight train and made off with thousands of dollars' worth of whiskey.

c. On January 17, 1920, less than one hour after spirits had become illegal throughout the United States, armed men robbed a Michigan freight train and made off with thousands of dollars' worth of whiskey.

4. Secret illegal bars during the Jazz Age were called:
   a. Speakeasies
   b. Flappers
   c. Bee Hive

5. The prohibition of alcohol could not last forever. Risky investments led to the Stock Market Crash of…..
   a. 1925
   b. 1929
   c. 1933

6. During the Great Depression, the government needed tax revenue from alcohol sales. They believed that lifting Prohibition would
   a. only increase poverty
   b. stimulate the economy.
   c. led to riots.

7. The 21st Amendment ….. the 18th Amendment.
   a. confirmed
   b. cancelled
   c. repealed

2) Read the headlines a-j and the texts 1-8. Find the best headline for each text. Each headline can be used only once. There are two extra headlines, which you do not need to use.
   A. A complex social concern without a solution.
   B. Working towards the same goal in the USA.
   C. The USA follows a European pattern.
   D. Illegal consequences of Prohibition.
   E. The period of flourishing private entrepreneurship
   F. The history of Prohibition

G. Loopholes
H. Alcohol: a common enemy.
I. Failure of the 18th Amendment.
J. A complex social issue needs another solution.

———————————————————

1. Less than one hour after spirits had become illegal throughout the United States, the robbers made off with thousands of dollars' worth of whiskey.

———————————————————

2. The nationwide ban on the production and sale of alcohol in the United States came on the heels of a similar ban in Russia that started as a wartime measure during World War I.

———————————————————

3. But the view in the Western world of alcohol as a primary cause of social ills was much older. It first gained traction during the Industrial Revolution as new populations of workers poured into cities and men gathered in saloons to drink.

———————————————————

4. Women's organizations were active participants from the beginning, arguing that alcohol made men neglect their families and abuse their wives. Religious authorities, especially Protestants, denounced alcohol as leading to temptation and sin. Progressive labour activists believed alcohol consumption harmed workers' ability to organize. Governments weren't strangers to the idea of prohibition, either. In the United States and Canada, white settlers introduced hard liquors like rum to Native communities, then blamed alcohol for disrupting these communities.

———————————————————

5. The Amendment took effect a year later under the Volstead Act. Since the act did not ban personal consumption, wealthy people took the opportunity to stock up while restaurants and bars rushed to sell their remaining supplies.

———————————————————

6. Workers lost their jobs as distilleries, breweries, and wineries closed down. Meanwhile, organized crime groups rushed to meet the demand for alcohol, establishing a lucrative black market in producing, smuggling, and selling illicit liquor. People could also make alcohol at home for their own consumption or obtain it legally with a doctor's prescription or for religious purposes.

7. But by the late 1920s, it was clear that Prohibition had not brought the social improvements it had promised. Instead, it contributed to political corruption and organized crime and was flouted by millions of citizens.

8. Members of the temperance movements believed that alcohol was the root of society's problems, but the reality is more complicated. And while banning it completely didn't work, the health and social impacts of alcohol remain concerns today.

Source: [14]

Key:
1)
1. a. (The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which banned the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors), 2. c. (1919-1933), 3. b. On January 17, 1920, less than one hour after spirits had become illegal throughout the United States, armed men robbed a Chicago freight train and made off with thousands of dollars' worth of whiskey, 4. a. (Speakeasies), 5. b. (1929), 6. b. (stimulate the economy), 7. c. (repealed)

2)
1 – d, (Illegal consequences of Prohibition), 2 – c (The USA follows a European pattern), 3 – f (The History of Prohibition), 4 –h (Alcohol: a common enemy), 5 – e (The Period of flourishing private entrepreneurship), 6 – g (Loopholes), 7 – i (Failure of the 18th Amendment), 8 – a (A complex social concern without a solution).

3.3. Iroquois Creation Myth

1) Fill in the origin story below with the following words. However, the letters of each word are scrambled. First, you have to unscramble them.

lyqueit, sniwt,, Dislan, lohe, mdu, nolovca,, teurtl, stasr, doog, sprign, warte, litgh, dedestroy, ndasses

Long before the world was created, there was an …………, floating in the sky, upon which the Sky People lived. They lived ………. and happily. No one ever died or was born or experienced ………….. However, one of the Sky Women realized she was going to give birth to ……….. She told her husband, who flew into a rage.

In the centre of the island, there was a tree that gave ………… to the entire island since the sun hadn't been created yet. He tore up this tree, creating a huge ………. in the middle of the island. Curiously, the woman peered into the hole. Far below, she could see the waters that covered the earth. At that moment, her husband pushed her. She fell through the hole, tumbling towards the waters below.

………….. animals already existed on the earth, so far below the floating island, two birds saw the Sky Woman fall. Just before she reached the waters, they caught her on their backs and brought her to the other animals. Determined to help the woman, they dove into the water to get ……….. from the bottom of the seas. One after another, the animals tried and failed. Finally, Little Toad tried, and when he reappeared, his mouth was full of mud. The animals took it and spread it on the back of Big …………... The mud began to grow and grow and grow until it became the size of North America.

Then the woman stepped onto the land. She sprinkled dust into the air and created ………. Then she created the moon and sun. The Sky Woman gave birth to twin sons. She named one Sapling. He grew to be kind and gentle. She named the other Flint and his heart was as cold as his name. They grew quickly and began filling the earth with their creations.

Sapling created what is ……... He made animals that are still useful to humans. He made rivers that went two ways, and he put fish without bones into these. He made plants that people could eat easily. If he was able to do all the work himself, there would be no suffering.

Flint ………….. much of Sapling's work and created all that is bad. He made the rivers flow only in one direction. He put bones in fish and thorns on berry bushes. He created winter, but Sapling gave it life so that it could move to give way to ……….. He created monsters which his brother drove beneath the earth.

Eventually, Sapling and Flint decided to fight till one conquered the other. Neither was able to win at first, but finally, Flint was beaten. Because he was a god, Flint could not die, so he was forced to live on Big Turtle's back. Occasionally his anger is felt in the form of a ………….. [18]

2) **Decide whether the statements are true or false.**

   a. The Sky Woman's husband was happy when he learnt about his wife's pregnancy.
   b. A magic cherry tree gave light to the Sky People.
   c. The Sky Woman fell through the hole that her husband had made when uprooting the tree in his anger.

d. Various water animals fetched mud from under the sea.

e. The Sky Woman landed on a toad's back.

f. The Sky Woman created the stars.

g. The Sky Woman gave birth to two girls.

h. Flint was the good boy who created nice things.

i. Sapling created spring.

j. Finally, Flint was beaten in a battle, and his anger is felt in the form of a geyser.

3) **Write a summary of the origin story above.**

Key:

1)

Long before the world was created there was an **island**, floating in the sky, upon which the Sky People lived. They lived **quietly** and happily. No one ever died or was born or experienced **sadness**. However one day one of the Sky Women realized she was going to give birth to **twins**. She told her husband, who flew into a rage. In the centre of the island there was a tree which gave **light** to the entire island since the sun hadn't been created yet. He tore up this tree, creating a huge **hole** in the middle of the island. Curiously, the woman peered into the hole. Far below she could see the waters that covered the earth. At that moment her husband pushed her. She fell through the hole, tumbling towards the waters below.

Water animals already existed on the earth, so far below the floating island two birds saw the Sky Woman fall. Just before she reached the waters they caught her on their backs and brought her to the other animals. Determined to help the woman they dove into the water to get **mud** from the bottom of the seas. One after another the animals tried and failed. Finally, Little Toad tried and when he reappeared his mouth was full of mud. The animals took it and spread it on the back of Big **Turtle**. The mud began to grow and grow and grow until it became the size of North America.

Then the woman stepped onto the land. She sprinkled dust into the air and created **stars**. Then she created the moon and sun. The Sky Woman gave birth to twin sons. She named one Sapling. He grew to be kind and gentle. She named the other Flint and his heart was as cold as his name. They grew quickly and began filling the earth with their creations.

Sapling created what is **good**. He made animals that are useful to humans. He made rivers that went two ways and into these he put fish without bones. He made plants that people could eat easily. If he was able to do all the work himself, there would be no suffering.

Flint **destroyed** much of Sapling's work and created all that is bad. He made the rivers flow only in one direction. He put bones in fish and thorns on berry bushes. He created winter, but Sapling gave it life so that it could move to give way to **Spring**. He created monsters which his brother drove beneath the Earth.

Eventually, Sapling and Flint decided to fight till one conquered the other. Neither was able to win at first, but finally, Flint was beaten. Because he was a god Flint could not die, so he was forced to live on Big Turtle's back. Occasionally his anger is felt in the form of a **volcano**.

2)
a. F (the husband was angry), b. F (the story does not specify what tree gave light to the Sky People), c. T, d. F (It was a little toad that fetched mud). e. F (She landed on a turtle's back), f. T, g. F (She gave birth to two boys), h. F (He destroyed the nice things), i. T, j. F (Flint's anger is felt in the form of a volcano)

3)
The Sky Woman lived with her husband in perfect peace and happiness until she got pregnant. In his anger, the husband uprooted the tree giving light to their world and pushed his wife through the hole, which had been made when removing the tree. With the help of animals, she landed on a turtle's back onto which a toad carried mud. It grew into North America. The Sky Woman created the celestial bodies and gave birth to Sapling (the good boy who created pleasant things) and Flint (later destroying all the good things his brother had created). Finally, in a battle, Sapling won and, according to the myth, Flint's anger is felt in the form of a volcano.

3.4. The U.S. Government

What can you see in the picture? Describe it in your own words.

3 BRANCHES *of* U.S. GOVERNMENT

Constitution
(provided a separation of powers)

Legislative
(makes laws)

Executive
(carries out laws)

Judicial
(evaluates laws)

Congress

President

Supreme Court

Senate

Vice President

Other
Federal Courts

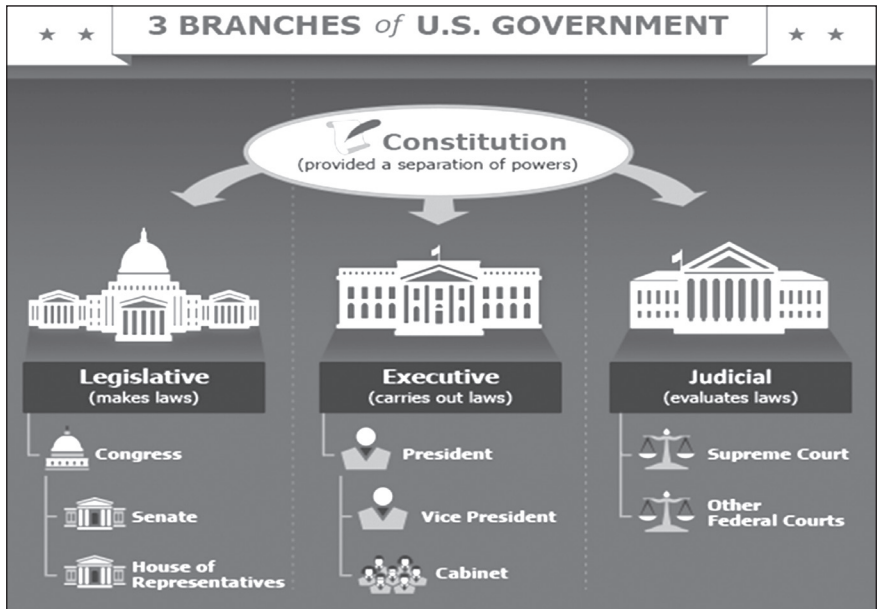House of
Representatives

Cabinet

Figure 1.

Key:
"The Constitution of the United States divides the federal government into three branches to make sure no individual or group will have too much power:
- Legislative—Makes laws (Congress, comprised of the House of Representatives and Senate)
- Executive—Carries out laws (president, vice president, Cabinet, most federal agencies)
- Judicial—Evaluates laws (Supreme Court and other courts)

Each branch of government can change acts of the other branches:
- The president can veto legislation created by Congress and nominates heads of federal agencies.
- Congress confirms or rejects the president's nominees and can remove the president from office in exceptional circumstances.

- The Justices of the Supreme Court, who can overturn unconstitutional laws, are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

This ability of each branch to respond to the actions of the other branches is called the system of checks and balances." [16]

Conclusion

Teacher training of English language and literature requires and requires to develop language proficiency continuously with the help of reading, speaking, writing and listening activities in every type of course: literary, linguistic or cultural. At the Department of English Language and Literature (J. Selye University, Komárno), the course called *The History and Culture of the USA* offers teacher trainees a wide range of activities, which enable university students to improve their language skills besides getting to know the history and culture of the United States of America. The present paper demonstrated certain writing, reading, listening and speaking activities on the culture and history of the USA with special attention to Native Americans, Thanksgiving Day, Prohibition, and the US Government. Each activity (gap-filling, multiple-choice, true or false, match the headings with the paragraphs, and picture description) aims at developing each language skill simultaneously in an effective and interactive way.

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Innovative ways of incorporating Anglo-American proverbs into teaching English as a foreign language

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ABSTRACT

The study addressing the innovative ways of incorporating Anglo-American proverbs into teaching English as foreign language consists of five sections. In the first section we concentrate on what makes proverbs an especially effective pedagogical medium for the teacher of English as a foreign language. The second section addresses ways in which Anglo-American proverbs can be used in the language classroom by offering various exercises which can be used in order to facilitate and promote speaking and writing skills. The third section discusses how proverbs are used in tales, fables, and short stories. The fourth section addresses three of T. Litovkina's books treating Anglo-American proverbs and how they can be incorporated into teaching English as a foreign language. Last but not least, section five demonstrates how proverbs can be incorporated into the language classroom via providing some materials created by Anna T. Litovkina's PhD students: two sets of activities (proverbs about money for Russian learners by Polina Oleneva and proverbs about women for Arabic

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learners by Mohammad Amro), and a famous Hungarian tale *A csillagszemű juhász* (The Star-Eyed Shepherd) translated into English and reshaped with proverbs by Szilvia N. Varagya.

Keywords:
proverb, exercise, book, textbook, Anglo-American, tale, fable, story, creativity, lesson plan

1. Proverbs as an Especially Effective Pedagogical Medium for the Teacher of English as a Foreign Language

Proverbs can be an especially effective pedagogical medium for the teacher of English for many reasons. First, proverbs are an important part of the American cultural heritage. The person who does not acquire competence in using proverbs will be limited in conversation; will have difficulty comprehending a wide variety of media – printed matter, radio, television, songs, advertisements, comics and cartoons – and will not understand anti-proverbs, which presuppose a familiarity with a stock proverb. Furthermore, proverbs are ideally suited to pedagogical purposes because they are easy to learn. Proverbs are relatively pithy, and often contain rhyme (e.g., East or West, home is best; A friend in need is a friend indeed; A whistling girl and a crowing hen always come to no good end; An apple a day keeps the doctor away; A moment on the lips, forever on the hips) or word-repetition (e.g., Easy come, easy go; A penny saved is a penny earned) which facilitate their recall. Sometimes both word-repetition and rhyme occur: Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise; A friend in need is a friend indeed. Alliteration also makes them quite easy to memorize: E.g., Money makes the man; Curiosity killed the cat; He who laughs last, laughs best; What is good for the goose is good for the gander; Where there's a will there's a way; When the going gets tough, the tough get going; It takes two to tango; Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive; Willful waste makes woeful want; Rob Peter to pay Paul; Live and let live. Proverbs contain frequently-used vocabulary and exemplify the entire gamut of grammatical and syntactic structures [10, 11].

2. Exercises to Promote Conversational and Writing Skills with the Help of Proverbs

In previous studies and books (see discussion of her three books in Section 4 below), Anna T. Litovkina has considered various ways in which language teachers can employ well-known American proverbs in the language classroom.

The articles *An Analysis of Popular American Proverbs and Their Use in Language Teaching* and *Incorporating of Anglo-American Proverbs into the Language Classroom* present exercises in which proverbs may be used to enhance the learning of grammar and syntax, phonetics, vocabulary development, culture, reading, speaking, and writing [10: 140–150, 11]. E.g.,

1) Use proverbs you know in situations on your own (e.g., *Look before you leap*).

2) Answer questions using proverbs, e.g.: What might you say when too many people work together on a project? (e.g., *Too many cooks spoil the broth; Two heads are better than one*)

3) Discuss a single proverb in a class.

4) Discuss proverbs on one theme (e.g., about women, money, men, dogs, time, etc.).

5) Give a situation suggesting a view contrary to the one implicit in the proverb.

6) Contrast a narrative which demonstrates the wisdom or fallacy of a given proverb. [10: 149]

T. Litovkina's articles *Incorporating of Anglo-American Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs into the Language Classroom*, *The Creative Use of Proverbs in Story-Writing in Teaching English as Foreign Language*, etc. discuss exercises that employ proverbs to facilitate and promote creative writing skills (e.g., transforming proverbs into parodies; using proverbs in advertisements; writing stories, fables, tales, or dialogues to illustrate proverbs) [14, 16]. Last but not least, her study *Old Proverbs Never Die: Anti-Proverbs in the Language Classroom* focuses on proverb-transformations created by the students who have attended her courses on Anglo-American proverbs at JPTE and ELTE [13].

Let us focus here only on some additional exercises which can be developed to support the usefulness of proverbs in facilitating and promoting speaking and writing skills:

Use two contradictory proverbs in situations of your own. Proverbs to be used:

Haste makes waste. – Procrastination is the thief of time.
Caution is the parent of safety. – He that is too secure is not safe.
Fling dirt enough and some will stick. – Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.
Like attracts like. – Two of a trade seldom agree.
Fine feathers do not make fine birds. – Fine feathers make fine birds.
Clothes make the man. – Clothes do not make the man.
Barking dogs don't bite. – A dog will bark before it bites.
Look before you leap. – He who hesitates is lost. [14: 45]

Use synonymous proverbs in situations of your own. Proverbs to be used:

1. There is many a slip 'twixt (the) cup and (the) lip; Man proposes, God disposes; Don't count your chickens before they are hatched; Don't halloo till you are out of the wood; Never fry a fish till it's caught; First catch your hare, than cook it; Catch your bear before you sell its skin.

2. Waste not, want not; Waste makes want; Willful waste makes woeful want; Save for a rainy day.

3. A good beginning makes a good ending; A good beginning is half the battle; Well begun is half done; It is the first step that costs.

4. After a storm comes a calm; It is always darkest before the dawn; It is a long lane that has no turning; Always look on the bright side; Never say die; While there is life, there is hope.

5. Enough is enough; Enough is as good as a feast; Moderation in all things; More than enough is too much; Too much pudding will choke a dog; Too much water drowned the miller.

6. Like begets like; Like father, like son; A tree is known by its fruit; Like mother, like daughter; As the tree, so the fruit; An apple never falls far from the tree; What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.

7. Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you; Let well enough alone; Let sleeping dogs lie; Don't play with fire.

8. Nothing venture, nothing have; Faint heart never won fair lady; Fortune favours the bold.

9.   More haste, less speed; Haste makes waste; Patience is a virtue; Rome wasn't
     built in a day; Slow but sure (wins the race); Make haste slowly; The oak is not
     felled with one stroke.

   10.   The pot calls the kettle black; You can see a mote in another's eye but cannot
         see a beam in your own; People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw
         stones. [14: 47-49]

Use Biblical proverbs in situations of your own. Proverbs to be used:

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. (Leviticus 24, 20; Exodus 21, 24;
Matthew 5, 3; Deuteronomy 19, 21)
As you sow, so you reap. (Galatians 6, 7–8; II Corinthians 9, 6)
Better a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.
(Proverbs 15, 17)
Better a dry morsel and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with
strife. (Proverbs 17, 1)
Do as I say, not as I do. (Matthew 23, 3)
Do not throw pearls before [to] swine. (Matthew 7, 6)
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Do as you would be done
by. (Luke 6, 31; Matthew 7, 12)
Don't muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. (I. Timothy 5, 18; Corinthians
9, 9; Deuteronomy 25, 4)
Every man must carry his own cross. (Galatians 6, 4–5)
Faith will [can] move mountains. (Matthew 17, 20)
Judge not and you won't be judged [that you be not judged]. (Matthew 7, 1–2)
Let the dead bury the dead. (Matthew 9, 21–22; Luke 9, 60)
Like mother, like daughter. (Ezekiel 16, 44)
Like tree, like fruit. (Matthew 7, 18; Luke 6, 43)
Love your [thy] neighbour as yourself. (Leviticus 19, 18; Matthew 19, 19; Mark
12, 31; Romans 13, 9; Galatians 5, 14; James 2, 8)
Man does not [cannot] live by bread alone. (Deuteronomy 8, 3; Matthew 4, 1–4;
Luke 4, 4)
Man proposes, God disposes. (Proverbs 16, 9)
You can't put new wine in old bottles. (Matthew 10, 16–17) [12: 7-14]

Use proverbs of Latin origin in situations of your own. Proverbs to be used:

Fortune favours the brave. (lat. Audentes fortuna iuvat)
Idleness is the root of all evil. (lat. Omnium malorum origo otium)
Let the cobbler stick to his last. (lat. Ne sutor ultra crepidam)
Love is blind. (lat. Amor est caecus)
Man is a wolf to man. (lat. Homo homini lupus)
Man proposes, God disposes. (lat. Home proponit, (sed) Deus disponit)
Money has no smell. (lat. Pecunia non olet)
Necessity knows no law. (lat. Necessitas non habet legem)
Nothing comes of nothing. (lat. Ex nihilo nihil fit)
Time flies. (lat. Tempus fugit)
Variety is the spice of life. (lat. Varietas delectat)
Where there's life there's hope. (lat. Dum anima est, spes esse dicitur)
Whom the gods love die young. (lat. Quem Di diligunt, adolescens moritur)
Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. (lat. Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat) [12: 2-6]

3. Incorporation of Tales, Fables and Stories into the Language Classroom

Students might be asked to read folktales, fairy tales or the fables of Aesop, La Fontaine, James Thurber or Arnold Lobel and then to choose the proverbs that would make the most appropriate endings for these stories [15]. T. Litovkina sometimes assigns this kind of exercise when she wants to test students' knowledge of proverbs and their ability to use appropriate proverbs in a context [14].

However, what really excites and inspires students is using proverbs to write their own stories or to rewrite well-known traditional tales (see also Szilvia N. Varagya's story in Section 5.3). Although shaping stories with proverbs is not new at all [4], the incorporating of this exercise into T. Litovkina's teaching practice was inspired by one of the students attending her course on Anglo-American proverbs. Elvira Nagy (1995, Janus Pannonius University) was in a cheerful and playful mood when she used the Anglo-American proverbs that T. Litovkina had assigned her class to rewrite one of the most popular tales in the world, *Little Red Riding Hood*. As she read her proverb tale aloud at the next class meeting, the students responded bursts of laughter.[16]

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16   The tale was first published by T. Litovkina [10: 155–156], see also [13: 41–43].

All the students in T. Litovkina's group found this exercise extremely exciting and volunteered to create similar rewritings of well-known fables or fairy tales, or to create their own stories, for her next class meeting. It goes without saying that this class was just fantastic. And we cannot agree more with Ruth Stotter's remark that "…stories are what is in that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow" [23: 24]. The proverbs that stud T. Litovkina's students' stories might even be considered the source of much of what glitters in that pot of gold.

Since 1995, the use of proverbs to shape new stories or reshape classic fairy tales and fables has become one of the favorite activities of students attending Anna T. Litovkina's courses on Anglo-American proverbs and Phraseology. If the number of students in a seminar group is larger than 15, there is no time to read all the stories out loud; instead we post them on the walls or blackboard, thus allowing everyone to read them during the break. After students have created their stories, they sometimes replace the proverbs with blanks, provide a list of proverbs, and then ask their peers to refer to the list and insert the appropriate proverbs into the blanks in the text. Students sometimes convert this exercise into a contest: the one who inserts all the proverbs into all the stories in the shortest period of time wins. The students also become enthusiastic when discussing different versions of the same tale. What stories could be used most effectively and efficiently? T. Litovkina's experience has shown that any story will do and that it is best to trust the students' choice, although the following classic tales are without any doubt among the ones most frequently reshaped with proverbs: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, The Elves and the Shoemaker* [see also 13: 17–92].

By transforming their favorite tales, fables, or stories in their own way with the help of proverbs, students acquire experience in creative writing; they can use proverbs in innovative ways and change their favorite stories according to their current interests, beliefs, and imagination. Rewriting existing stories or writing their own stories with the help of proverbs will work with any age level, provided a teacher supplies the students with a stock of appropriately chosen proverbs.

4. Anna T. Litovkina's Books on Anglo-American Proverbs

In this section we will focus on three of T. Litovkina's books treating Anglo-American proverbs, two textbooks: *A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away* [12] and *Teaching Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs* [14]; and, last but not least, a collection of tales, fables and stories, *Once upon a Proverb: Old and New Tales Shaped by Proverbs* [13].

4.1. *A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away*

The textbook *A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away* [12] helps familiarize the reader with more than 450 proverbs frequently used in American English today. The main intent of the book is not merely to give the language learner a list of some commonly used proverbs to memorize per se, but rather to provide a series of activities and exercises that help the learner discover what each proverb means and how to apply it in particular situations. Along with the 450 or so commonly known American proverbs, the book contains more than 1000 rarer American proverbs, as well as scores of proverbs from other world cultures. The exercises bring the proverbs alive with short illustrative quotations from hundreds of books, newspapers, and magazines as well as from poems, fables, and narratives. The following exercises may vary from one unit to another:

Match the proverbs from each column that are equivalent (or opposite) in meaning;

Use the given proverbs in situations of your own;

Match the American proverbs with their Hungarian (international) equivalents;

What incidents from your life confirm or contradict the moral of the proverbs of this unit?;

After reading the anti-proverbs below transform some proverbs of this unit into parodies;

Write a story, fable or tale to illustrate the proverbs of this unit;

Using any proverbs of this unit, write an ad;

Try to identify the proverbs from the initial letters given below;

Sum up the fable below by using a proper proverb;

Construct a narrative which demonstrates the wisdom or fallacy of a given proverb;

Give a situation suggesting a view contrary to the one implicit in the proverb;

From the following proverbs select the one best suited to the jokes below, etc.

The book also focuses on proverb humor: the reader will find a number of jokes, wellerisms, fables, twists and parodies based on familiar proverbs. The book's approach has been thoroughly tested in T. Litovkina's seminars on Anglo-American proverbs and Phraseology.

The book consists of 47 units arranged into four sections [12: 1-355]. The first and the shortest section cites proverbs while focusing on their origin, dealing specifically with proverbs of Latin origin, as well as ones originating in the Bible [12: 1-14]. In the second section [12: 15-115] proverbs are grouped into fifteen units according to different internal and external features, structures, patterns, or "markers", e.g., rhyme and alliteration, oppositions, word-repetition, paradox, ellipsis, pithiness, metaphor.

The eleven units making up the third section [12: 116–197] emphasize the words most frequently used in American proverbs, e.g., man and woman, God and the Devil, numbers, body parts, animals, food and drink, time. The fourth and the longest section of the book, divided into nineteen units [12: 198–355], covers the main topics of proverbs, e.g., money, love, knowledge and wisdom, children and parents, speech and silence, words and deeds, necessity and adversity.

Seven tests help readers to check their acquisition of the proverbial material. The key supplies the answers to exercises given both in the units and the tests [12: 361–381]. The proverb-finder index indicates the number of the unit in which the required proverb is discussed [12: 356–360]. The selected bibliography contains mainly British and Anglo-American proverb collections, as well as the books and articles most frequently cited throughout the book, primarily concerning anti-proverbs [12: 382–384].

4.2. *Once upon a Proverb: Old and New Tales Shaped by Proverbs*

The book *Once upon a Proverb: Old and New Tales Shaped by Proverbs* [13] consists of two parts. In the first part, *Part I: Tales, Fables and Stories Illustrated by Proverbs* [13: 17-92], one will find the most enjoyable reading materials created by the students attending T. Litovkina's course on Anglo-American proverbs. Along with world famous classic fairy tales and fables (e.g., *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, The Elves and the Shoemaker*, and many others) reshaped with proverbs, the book contains some absolutely new stories that T. Litovkina's students have shaped by using proverbs. The traditional tales chosen by the students are, by and large, so well known that their status in Western culture has become nearly proverbial. Such tales as *Snow White* (which appears in five

versions in the book [13: 18–29]), *Cinderella* (two versions [13: 35–41]), *Little Red Riding Hood* (two versions [13: 41–44]), *The Shoemaker and the Elves* (two versions [13: 30–35]), and *The Princess and the Frog* [13: 76–77] and *Hansel and Gretel* [13: 80–82] (one version each) are known throughout the world through the collection of the Brothers Grimm, which was first published in 1812 and achieved its best-known form in the seventh edition of 1857.

The students who chose to adapt *Cinderella* relied on versions of the story descended from the French adaptor Charles Perrault (1697). *The Ugly Duckling* [13: 61–62] (one version) has no history in folk tradition; rather, it was penned by comes from Hans Christian Andersen in 1843. *Jack and the Beanstalk* [13: 70–72] is the most famous English folktale, appearing in chapbooks dating back to the eighteenth century and especially famous through its the storybook version of Joseph Jacobs (1890). Almost all of these tales have also been translated into other artistic forms. *Cinderella* and *Hansel and Gretel*, respectively, have become the subjects of operas by Rossini and Humperdinck, and *The Ugly Duckling* and *Cinderella* have been adapted into Broadway musicals. Animated films have been especially influential in spreading the tales to contemporary audiences. The Walt Disney studios, for example, has produced extremely popular animated versions of *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

The fables chosen by the students are also part and parcel of the European cultural environment. Such tales as *The Fox and the Crow* [13: 47–48] and The Hare are the Tortoise [13: 51–52] trace their history to Greek and Latin versions dating back as far as 2000 years. These tales are also well known in oral versions collected by folklorists throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of these fables have been associated with a mysterious blind slave named Aesop, said to live in Greece 2500 years ago. Scholars have long debated over how many, if any, of the fables can be attributed to Aesop, and most question whether such a figure ever existed, because the tales attributed to him have long been widely dispersed throughout the oral cultures not only of Europe, but also of South and East Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Two of the students' tales are adapted from classics of children's literature. *How the Camel Got Its Hump* [13: 90–92] is a retelling from the *Just So Stories* (1902) of Rudyard Kipling, an author of British ancestry born in India. *Eeyore's Birthday Present* [13: 48–49] is based on an episode in the book, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1925), by English author A. A. Milne; Milne's work, like many of the folktales earlier discussed, has become enormously popular in recent years as a result of Disney cartoon treatments.

The second part of the book, *Part II: Proverbs Explained* [13: 93–104], contains all the proverbs used (192) in the tales, fables, and stories, together with their meanings. The *Selected Bibliography* is given at the end of the book [13: 105–106].

4.3. *Teaching Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs*

The textbook *Teaching Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs* [14] consists of the Introduction, two parts, and Reference. In the introduction at first T. Litovkina discusses the topics of contradictory proverbs and people's doubts in the truthfulness of proverbs, then she reviews the background of anti-proverb research and terminology; and she addresses the proverbs most frequently parodied, as well as internationally spread anti-proverbs. Furthermore, the author explores different mechanisms of proverb variation and main topics emerging in proverb alterations. In the first part of the book one will find seven chapters. In the first chapter T. Litovkina discusses ways in which Anglo-American proverbs can be used in the language classroom, she also focuses on some of her studies on this topic, and she explores the value of incorporating Anglo-American proverbs into language-teaching situations, and she offers various exercises which can be used in order to facilitate and promote conversational and writing skills. The second chapter comments briefly upon T. Litovkina's experience in teaching courses on *Anglo-American Proverbs* and *Proverbs in an American Cultural Context* in various Hungarian universities and colleges. The focus of the third chapter is on four of T. Litovkina's books on the theme under consideration. The fourth chapter treats proverb collections and proverbs to be used in the language classroom, and the fifth chapter demonstrates activities in which anti-proverbs can be incorporated into the language classroom. The last two chapters address tales, fables and stories. While the sixth chapter discusses proverbs in tales, fables and stories, the seventh chapter addresses various types of activities with the help of which tales, fables and stories, along with proverbs could be incorporated into the language classroom. The second part of the book contains nine appendices, which are followed by a list of bibliographical data.

The book *Teaching Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs* is directed towards the student of English, the teacher, the folklorist, the linguist, and anyone interested in entering the magical world where tales and proverbs overlap.

5. Proverbs in Action

The last section of this paper demonstrates how proverbs can be incorporated into the language classroom via providing some materials created by Anna T. Litovkina's PhD students: two sets of activities (proverbs about money for Russian learners by Polina Oleneva and proverbs about women for Arabic learners by Mohammad Amro), and a famous Hungarian tale, *A csillagszemű juhász* (The Star-Eyed Shepherd) translated into English and reshaped with proverbs by Szilvia N. Varagya.

5.1. The Creative Way of Teaching Anglo-American Proverbs about Money for Russian Students[17] (by Polina Oleneva)

In this section, Anglo-American proverbs about money are presented. This material can be integrated into the structure of some English lessons for Russian students.

List of proverbs:
Lend your money and lose your friend.
Money can't buy happiness.
Money doesn't grow on trees.
Money has wings.
Money has no smell.
Money is the root of all evil.
Money isn't everything.
Money makes a man.
Money makes money.
Money makes the mare go.
Money talks.
Take care of your pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves.

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17   The section is the adaptation of exercises from the Unit 4.1 *Money Talks: Money* (see T. Litovkina [12: 199–205]. The proverbs and anti-proverbs about money in this section were taken from the following sources: Margulis, Alexander – Kholodnaya [18]); T. Litovkina [12] and T. Litovkina – Mieder [17]); [20]

Activities:

1. What are the English equivalents of the following Russian proverbs? Most English proverbs can be chosen from the above list of proverbs.

 1. Деньги не пахнут.
 2. Не в деньгах счастье.
 3. Деньги глаза слепят.
 4. Деньги не щепки, на полу не подымешь.
 5. Денежки труд любят.
 6. Бедность не порок.
 7. Копейка рубль бережёт.
 8. Время – деньги.
 9. Деньги – зло.
10. Деньги все двери открывают.

2. Match the Anglo-American proverbs from column A with their Russian equivalents from column B.

A

 1. Money can't buy happiness.
 2. Money is the root of all evil.
 3. A good name is better than gold.
 4. Money opens all doors.
 5. Money breeds money.
 6. Money has wings.
 7. Money has no smell.
 8. Money talks.
 9. Time is money.
10. One good turn deserves another.
11. Money does not grow on trees.
12. Poverty is not a sin.
13. Beggars can't be choosers.
14. Take care of your pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves.

B

a. Денег ни гроша, да слава хороша.
b. Деньги к деньгам идут.
c. Деньги – зло.
d. Деньги счастья не приносят.
e. Деньги все двери открывают.
f. Деньги – крылья.
g. Деньги решают все.
h. Деньги не пахнут.
i. Беднее всех бед, как денег нет.
j. Копейка рубль бережёт.
k. Бедность не порок.
l. Время – деньги.
m. Долг платежом красен.
n. Богатому как хочется, а бедному как можется

**3. Match the proverb from column A that corresponds
to its definition in column B [20].**

A

1. A fool and his money are soon parted.

2. A good name is better than riches.

3. The love of money is the root of all evil.

4. Time is money.

5. Money makes the world go round.

6. It takes money to make money.

7. Money doesn't grow on trees.

8. Money is a good servant, but a bad master.

B

a. Without money, many things we do or need would not be available to us.

b. To make money, you have to have some already.

c. Lust for money makes men neglect morality.

d. A good reputation is worth more than any amount of money.

e. It is not easy to earn money, you have to work hard to get it.

f. Money is controlling us like a master controls his servant or slave.

g. People who spend their money on foolish things will lose it and become poor

h. It takes time working to make money.

4. Complete the proverbs in A with the correct endings in B.

A

1. When money flies out of the window,

2. Money is a good servant,

3. Lend your money

4. If you marry for money,

5. Money makes

6. There is one law for the rich

7. Poverty is not a sin

8. The lack of money is

B

a. you sell your freedom

b. the wheels go around

c. but something much worse

d. love flies out of the door

e. and lose your friend.

f. the root of all evil

g. but a bad master.

h. and another for the poor

5. Match the proverbs from each column that have opposite meanings.

A

1. Money is the root of all evil.
2. A silver key can open an iron lock.
3. An honest man cannot be bought.

B

a. Every man has his price.
b. Money is power.
c. There are some things that money can't buy

6. Guess the meanings of the proverbs below.

1. When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.
2. Time is money.
3. Take care of your pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves.
4. Money talks.
5. Money makes money.
6. Money is power.
7. Money is like sea water. The more you drink, the thirstier you become.
8. Lend your money and lose your friend.

7. Do a cross-cultural comparison and contrast of basic attitudes towards money in the USA and Russia.

8. Which proverbs are being parodied?

Benjamin Franklin had an axiom, "A penny saved is a penny earned." But that was before the sales tax was invented.
Anyone who says money doesn't buy happiness doesn't know where to shop.
Money can't buy you friends, but it can bring you a better class of enemies.
Money doesn't grow on trees – but trees don't grow on money either!
If money is at the root of all evil, it is also at the root of all morality.
Money isn't everything, and don't let anybody tell you it is. There are other things, such as stocks, bonds, letters of credit, traveller's cheques and drafts.
Money makes the man...an eccentric; if without it he would be called a crackpot.
Money breeds money – when invested.
Money makes the mare go – but not the nightmare.

An orator complains, "When I talk, nobody listens. When money talks – everybody listens."

Money talks...Even when it whispers, people listen and hear it.

Don't be penny-wise and sound foolish.

Save up your money for a rainy day, and then stay home when it rains.

Take care of your pennies, and the dollars will take care of your heirs and lawyers.

9. Try to identify the proverbs about money from the initial letters given below.

1. Money d…. g… o... t…; 2. Money h.. n.. s…; 3. Money t…; 4. Money c… b… h… .

10. Here are some proverbs about money from various countries of the world [20]. Choose a proverb and write a story illustrating it.

Money grows on the tree of persistence. (Japanese)

The money you dream about will not pay your bills. (Indian)

A happy heart is better than a full purse. (Italian)

One coin in the money-box makes more noise than when it is full. (Arab)

Money saved is as good as money gained. (Danish)

The wise man's wealth lies in good deeds that follow ever after him. (Tibetan)

If a soup is sweet, it is money that cooks it. (Nigerian)

Money is flat and meant to be piled up. (Scottish)

A clear conscience is more valuable than wealth. (Filipino)

Money is only good for a weekday, a holiday, and a rainy day. (Russian)

A donkey is a donkey though it may carry the Sultan's treasure. (Lebanese)

Money spent on the brain is never spent in vain. (English)

If small money does not go out, big money will not come in. (Chinese)

Wealth belongs to the person who enjoys it and not to the one who keeps it. (Afghan)

A man without money is like a boat without sails. (Swedish)

If you marry a monkey for his wealth, the money goes and the monkey remains as is. (Egyptian)

There are men so poor that the only thing they have is money. (Icelandic)

Men made money; money never made men. (Vietnamese)

If you sell a drum in your own village, you get the money and keep the sound. (Malagasy)

It is better to work in your own land than to count your money abroad. (Croatian)

Money is sharper than a sword. (Ghanaian)
The supreme treasure is knowledge, the middle treasure is children, and the lowest treasure is material wealth. (Mongolian)
Save money and money will save you. (Jamaican)
When the last tree has been cut down, the last river has been polluted and the last fish has been caught – only then do you realize that money can't buy everything. (Native American)
Gratitude is the heart's money. (French)

5.2. A Woman is Only a Proverb (by Mohammad Amro)

> "Why mak'st thou it so strange?
> She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
> She is a woman, therefore may be won;
> She is Lavinia, therefore must be lov'd.
> What, man! more water glideth by the mill
> Than wots the miller of; and easy it is
> Of a cut loaf to steal a shive, we know"
> (Titus Andronicus) [19: 49]

As it was already pointed out in the first section, proverbs are one of the ways that can enrich the mental lexicon of a language learner, they can increase the number of words and also give them a better understanding of the conversation. In this section, we focus on proverbs about women and how they can be taught to Arabic students.

List of proverbs:

A little **powder** and a little paint makes a woman look like what she ain't.
A **man's** got to do what a man's got to do. A woman has to do what he can't.
A **mother** can take care of ten children, but ten children can't take care of one mother.
A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.
A **woman's** place is any place she wants to be.
A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail.
A **woman's** word is never done.
All women and cats are black in darkness.
Anything boys can do girls can do better.
Both melons and women are hard to know.

Diamonds are a girl's best friend.
Little things mean a lot to a woman.
Never underestimate the power of a woman.
The best **man** for the job may be a woman.
Women and elephants never forget.
Women and wine, game and deceit, Make the wealth small and the want great
Women are the devil's nest.
Women are the root of all evil.

Activities [based on 5, 12, 19]

1. Cut the following proverbs and then put them in a small bag and ask your students to rearrange the words to form the proverbs.

Women	are	the	root of	all	evil

All	women	and	cats	are	black	in	darkness

The	best	man	for	the	job	may	be	a	woman

2. Do any of the proverbs below have their exact equivalents in your language? For example:

A woman's place is in the kitchen
المرأة لو وصلت المريخ مصيرها للطبيخ (Arabic)

a. Women are the root of all evils
b. A **woman's** work is never done
c. The best **man** for the job may be a woman;
d. A little **powder** and a little paint makes a woman look like what she ain't
e. All women and cats are black in darkness
f. Women and elephants never forget

3. Create a sketch in groups of two or three that embodies one of the proverbs from the list above to perform in front of your peers. Can your students figure out which proverb you are talking about? For example:

Both melons and women are hard to know
Student 1: Hello sir, I would like to buy a melon.
Student 2: Welcome, sure, how many kilos would you like it to be?
Student 1: It does not matter I would like it to be red and sweet.
Student 2: It can be hard to know.
Student 1: It is so funny, you have just reminded me of a proverb.

4. Introduce a proverb and ask your students to guess the meaning of it and how it can be used. Then explain it and check whether anyone has got it right. For example:

- Begin by writing some proverbs on the board, e.g..: "The best *man* for the job may be a woman."
- Ask your students to guess the meaning of the proverb you have written, allowing them to share their ideas and interpretations with the class.
- Has anyone correctly interpreted the proverb written on the board?
- Put it into a context. Ask students to use proverbs in situations of their own, ask them to create dialogues or role-plays.

5. One of the effective ways to teach proverbs is to use visual input, e.g., to use a picture that best describe the proverbs, or to use it as an infill in blank activities. For example:

Using the following pictures try to fill in the proverbs about women below.[18]

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18   The following sources have been consulted for this section: [3], [7], [8], [9], [21], [22].

- Women are the ……. of all evils
- The best **man** for the ……. may be a woman
- Women and …………... never forget
- Both ……… and women are hard to know
- All women and ………. are black in darkness
- A little…… and a little paint makes a woman look like what she ain't

6. Under what circumstances would you use the proverbs below?
Can they ever be wrong?

1. A **mother** can take care of ten children, but ten children can't take care of one mother.
2. A little **powder** and a little paint make a woman look like what she ain't.
3. Women and elephants never forget.
4. A **woman's** place is any place she wants to be.
5. All women and cats are black in darkness.

7. Complete the proverbs in A with the correct endings in B.

1. The best man for the job

a. but ten children can't take care of one mother

2. A **mother** can take care of ten children

b. never forget

3. A little **powder** and a little paint

c. are black in darkness

4. Women and elephants,

d. A woman has to do what he can't.

5. A **man's** got to do what a man's got to do

e. makes a woman look like what she ain't

6. All women and cats

f. may be a woman

7. Women and wine, game and deceit,

g. Make the wealth small and the want great

8. Write the definitions of the following proverbs.

Women and wine, game and deceit, Make the wealth small and the want great.
A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail.
A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.
Diamonds are a girl's best friend.
Little things mean a lot to a woman.
The wife is always the last to know.
A good woman is hard to find.

9. Match the American proverbs from A with their Arabic equivalents from B [2, 6].

A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail حكي ثنتين خرب بيتين

A good woman is hard to find. البنت الحرة مثل الذهب بالصرة

Whatever (What) Mama wants, Mama gets. ألف عين تبكي ولا عين أمي تدمع

Like mother, like daughter طبّ الجرة على ثمها بتطلع البنت لأمها

A women place is in the kitchen المرأة لو وصلت المريخ مصيرها للطبيخ

10. Ask your students to find other proverbs about women from different cultures and ask them to find their equivalents in English or your mother tongue.

11. Which of these proverbs have a positive meaning about women in your opinion?

A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail.

A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.

Diamonds are a girl's best friend.

Anything boys can do girls can do better.

Never underestimate the power of a woman.

5.3. *The Star-Eyed Shepherd* Reshaped with Proverbs (by Szilvia N. Varagya)

Szilvia N. Varagya has reshaped a famous Hungarian tale, *A csillagszemű juhász* [19] (*The Star-Eyed Shepherd*) with proverbs.

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived a powerful king. All the people were so afraid of him, that when they saw him from afar, they started to shake like a leaf. When this king sneezed, every man in the country had to say "Bless you!" immediately, otherwise they were all to die.

There was just one single man who did not play by the rules; it was the star-eyed shepherd. The king's soldiers therefore captured him and brought him to the palace where he had to face his destiny. *A chain is only as strong as its weakest link*, thought the angry king, so we must fix this rebellion, as soon as possible.

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19   The translation of this tale into English was done by Szilvia N. Varagya. While doing it, she used the following source: [1]

"What, so you refuse to say 'Bless you!' to me?"

"Of course, I'd say 'God bless me!' Your Majesty."

"Not you, but me, you lowly shepherd!"

"Well, I've said it already: 'Bless me!'"

The marshal grabbed him by the neck: "Say 'Bless you!' immediately!" But *the leopard can't change its spots*, and the shepherd just refused to pay homage; "I won't say it until His Majesty grants me his daughter's hand." The princess was sitting next to her father and did not dare to utter a word, but her dreamy eyes were set on the shepherd, *the look on her face was worth a thousand words*.

The king immediately instructed his soldiers: "Take this man and put him into the white bear's dungeon." The soldiers did as they were instructed and locked him up with the bear, which had not eaten for as many as three days and was ravenous. When the bear spotted the shepherd, it stood up on two legs and gave out a loud roar.

Out of sight, out of mind. Everyone thought the shepherd would not live to see the morning, but a miracle happened; as the bear saw the star-eyed shepherd, it was hypnotized, it suddenly calmed down and laid back on the floor. The young man was thus found alive the next morning and brought before the king. "All right, but you were at least scared, weren't you? Will you say 'Bless you!' to me now?" The shepherd replied: "Not until you give me your daughter, even if I have to face ten deaths."

Every man is the architect of his destiny, thought the king. "Lock him in the pit of ten deaths." That place was the home of ten giant hedgehogs. As the shepherd was not able to look in the eyes of all of them at once, their anger did not melt away. *You can't always get what you want*, thought the shepherd, but *where there is a will, there is a way*. And although *clothes do not make the man*, if there are some hidden treasures to find, they can at least save a man's life. So he took out a flute from his coat and played it lively and fast until the exhausted hedgehogs had all fallen fast asleep. *God helps those who help themselves.*

"Oh, you are still alive!" exclaimed the astonished marshal the next morning. "I am and I am not going to die until I get the princess as my wife," answered the shepherd. He was brought before the king again. "Now, you survived the bear's dungeon and the ten deaths pit. Are you ready to say 'Bless you!' to me?" asked the king. "No, never!" reacted the shepherd.

"All good things come to an end," shouted the angry king. "Take him to the hundred death cell." It had a deep well in the middle with hundreds of scythe blades all around and a burning candle at the bottom. He who was once thrown into it, never came out alive. Poor boy, me! This is no joke at all, but *necessity is the mother of invention*, so the shepherd asked the soldiers to leave him alone for

a while to reconsider saying "Bless you!" to the king. As soon as they left the cell, the shepherd stuck his crook on the verge of the well, hung his bag and coat on it, put his hat on the top, and hid in the corner of the cell. The soldiers came back and asked him: "Have you decided what to do? Will you say 'Bless you!' to the king?" "I will not say it," answered the shepherd. "Well, so we throw you into the well," and so they did; they grabbed his big coat and threw it into the depth of the well. As soon as they saw the candle go out, they were sure the shepherd died.

The next morning the marshal came to make sure that the young man was dead. To his biggest surprise, he saw him sitting next to the well playing his flute. *Cats have nine lives,* but how many has this boy? wondered the marshal while he took him before the king. The king asked the shepherd: "You have been in the hundred deaths well. Are you finally ready to say 'Bless you!' to me?" And the shepherd answered: "As soon as you grant me your daughter's hand, Your Majesty".

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread, thought the king, who was passionately longing now to hear 'Bless you!' from the shepherd at least once. He thought, Well, he will quickly learn that *a live dog is better than a dead lion*. Let's see if *money talks*. He seated the shepherd in the royal carriage right beside himself, and they rode off together into the silver forest. The king asked him: "Do you see this silver forest? I will give it to you if you say 'Bless you!' to me." It was a beautiful forest, but the shepherd said: "No, never, Your Majesty, until you give me your daughter." So they rushed away to the golden castle. "Can you see this castle? It will be yours as soon as you say 'Bless you!' to me." But the shepherd answered as usual: "No, never, Your Majesty, until you give me your daughter." Then they rushed right to the diamond lake where the king said: "Now, shepherd, can you see this diamond lake? It will be yours immediately you say 'Bless you!' to me." The answer was just the same as before: "No, never, Your Majesty, until you give me your daughter." Then the king gave up and said: "All right you little beggar, I will give you my daughter but say 'Bless you!' to me at last."

As soon as they arrived home, the king announced all over the country that he would marry off his daughter to the star-eyed shepherd. Everyone who wanted to come was invited to the wedding. The shepherd was sitting right beside the king, and when the delicious meal with radish had been served, the king suddenly sneezed. "Bless you!" wished the shepherd around and around. "Oh, please stop it, begged the king, I will rather give you my whole country." And the shepherd was crowned right there at the palace. He was so beloved among his people that when he sneezed, everyone shouted with one heart and soul: "God bless you, Your Majesty, and give you good health!".

All's well that ends well.

Conclusion

The first section of the paper focused on what makes proverbs an especially effective pedagogical medium for the teacher of English as a foreign language. In the second section, we addressed various ways in which Anglo-American proverbs can be used in the language classroom, by offering various exercises which can facilitate and promote conversational and writing skills. The third section discussed how proverbs are used in tales, fables, and short stories. The fourth section addressed three of T. Litovkina's books on Anglo-American proverbs and how they can be incorporated into the teaching English as foreign language. Last but not least, section 5 provided two sets of activities (proverbs about money for Russian students by Polina Oleneva and proverbs about women for Arabic students by Mohammad Amro), and a famous Hungarian tale, *A csillagszemű juhász* (The Star-Eyed Shepherd) translated into English and reshaped with proverbs by Szilvia N. Varagya.

It is hoped that our paper will encourage the use of proverbs and anti-proverbs in the language classroom, and that teachers will use some of suggestions offered here, as well as find new ways to include proverbs and anti-proverbs in their teaching. Although this study focuses on the introduction of Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs into second-language education, the main ideas expressed above could be easily transferred to other languages and cultures as well. It is our wish that the magic of storytelling, combined with proverbial wisdom, could enter every classroom to transform attitudes, enhance the atmosphere, and intensify students' excitement and creativity in ways similar to those that T. Litovkina has witnessed in her own classes.

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Group projects during e-learning in TEFL in higher education

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ABSTRACT

The paper introduces group work as an effective technique in TEFL in distance education. Research has shown that the forced shifting to online education because of the Covid-19 pandemic has had substantial impact on education overall. Authors refer to various advantages, but also disadvantages that e-learning in this era has brought. This paper investigates the possibilities of using group projects in e-learning. The theoretical part displays e-learning, group work and projects from a theoretical point of view. A qualitative action research reveals that using group work in the EFL classroom is effective and successful. The results show that such activity is not only successful from the observations of a researcher, but is also found attractive and enjoyable by the students.

Keywords:
e-learning, distance education, group work, projects, TEFL

Introduction

The 2019 outbreak of the new coronavirus disease has had a substantial impact on the whole world. Due to its fast spread it was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization within months, having caused social distancing, lockdowns, closures in schools, and postponements or cancellations of various events since spring 2020. Many educational institutions worldwide were forced to close their doors in

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the first months of 2020 and suddenly shift their teaching programs to the online sphere [1, 2]. Most of the universities and schools were not prepared for such a fast, discontinuous and demanding transition from face-to-face education to online education [3]. Despite the great technological progress we have encountered in the past several decades, schools in this shift struggled with numerous obstacles – technical, logistic, pedagogical, and also financial [4].

The human organism is however able to adapt to any - even very severe, catastrophic changes in the environment very quickly in order to survive [5]. This ability has been continuously proving as true in the sphere of higher education, as well. Integrating technology and transitioning from traditional forms of distance education (e-mails, television systems, radio, internet) we have succeeded in building e-Universities and virtual education in a very short period of time [6]. Web-based learning, CALL and MALL have been proven successful and attractive for students [7, 8, 9] even before the pandemic, therefore adapting these to introduce new strategies and methods in teaching in the new era was inevitable [4].

Research shows that the philosophy of distance education should be based on learners' autonomy with minimal teacher-student interaction and maximum amount of high quality materials for learning [10]. Learner autonomy is a phenomenon well known in the world of FLE, moreover it is one of the key goals to be achieved [11]. It is assumed that distance education can become a beneficial tool for practicing and developing learner autonomy, keeping pace with the current day and age and all the developments that it has to offer [4].

This study investigates the incorporation of group work into the teaching process during the times of e-learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. The theoretical overview introduces e-learning in distance education from a more specific and detailed viewpoint. It provides information on the benefits of group work. Group projects as specific techniques in TEFL are investigated via action research in a higher education environment. The results of this qualitative enquiry show that such activities are not only efficient for developing team working skills of students, but are also beneficial in developing learner autonomy and their communicative competence.

1. E-learning during the Pandemic

The concept of distance education has changed since the very beginning of its existence to a great extent. Education was completely shifted to the online sphere, thus teachers and students had to rely on external forces shaping the teaching process to a great deal. Several already existing and some new platforms for learning were started to be used [12].

E-learning in its broadest meaning could be defined as such, in which students are not required to attend classes physically every day [13]. It is viewed as a flexible tool for studying, as it provides a great variety of materials, which can be accessed anywhere and at any time [14]. Authors view it as increasing motivation and not as time consuming as traditional face-to-face education [15]. Pustika [16] further believes that implementing e-learning can save students a large amount of money. He argues that traditional education courses are more expensive than those offered through online learning. Moreover, he further notes that students studying via e-learning have more opportunities to do both - earn for a living and study at the same time.

Some authors however point out that that e-earning can be less efficient when it comes to explanations and clarifications given for the study material [15]. Creating lesson planning for online lessons has proven to be substantially more time intensive. Furthermore, many professors may find it difficult to prohibit unethical exam tactics such as cheating [12]. Sagedhi [13] lists several more disadvantages of e-learning. According to him, students may be distracted easily by various external influential factors when studying online, lack social interaction and show difficulty in staying in contact with their instructors.

Interestingly, several studies conducted on e-learning from the perspective of students themselves have found out that they experience only minor if not any drawbacks coming from online education. For instance, in a study written by Coldwell-Neilson, Craig and Goold [17] more than 2700 respondents participated and only a very small percentage of them mentioned disadvantages such as their opinions are not heard, they keep being logged out, or their internet connection is very slow. On the other hand, advantages dominated almost for all the respondents. Among others, the respondents mentioned that e-learning allows them to work when they want, gives access to readings online, is easy to be used, provides a permanent record of discussions or provides great access to study materials.

2. Group work

Group work is a sort of cooperative learning, which occurs when students work together in order to achieve specific goals [18], solve problems [19] and improve their comprehension of subjects [20]. Students are accountable for their own learning as well as assisting other students in the group. They collaborate to complete assignments, which has numerous benefits [20]. According to Taqi and Al-Nouh [21] group work is an instructional strategy, where learners take responsibility not only for their own learning, but also for that of others in the group, hence one member's success becomes a success of all.

Using group work in the EFL classrooms has numerous benefits. Students engaging in it are more likely to develop their communicative skills to a higher degree, and besides finding this type of activity enjoyable, they are also more likely to form new friendships more easily outside the classroom [19]. Based on various studies, group work assists in improvement in the ability to learn, improving learners' overall achievements [19, 22, 23], respecting the learning pace of other members of the group, and creating a learner-friendly and stress free environment in the class [19]. A comparative study conducted by Johnson & Johnson [24] moreover shows that cooperative learning is better at achievement than individualistic learning.

Naturally, factors influencing the success of group work need to be taken into consideration, as well. Taqi and Al-Nouh's [21] study reveals that there are several factors that influence group work - the learners' age, their nationality, year of study and the overall GPA (grade point average). Teachers play a significant role in the processes of using group work in the classes, as well [25]. The findings of a study conducted by Forslund Frykedal and Hammar Chiriac [26] indicate that managing roles of teachers have a rather big impact on their intention to use group work. Teachers may be hesitant to use group work because they believe it only teaches learners collaborative skills rather than subject knowledge. According to the authors, this could be a secondary but important explanation for why group work is declining in classrooms.

2.1. Projects

Project work has been proven effective in both language and content learning by numerous authors [27, 28]. According to Beckett [29], researchers and educators have used different equivalents referring all to the same term - project work, project approach, project-oriented approach, project-based instruction, or project based learning.

Nonetheless, all the terms stand for a learning technique that emphasizes students' intellectual and social development. More particular, projects allow individuals to actively participate in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills without proper teacher supervision [30]. Apple and Kikuchi summarize several benefits of using projects in the EFL classroom. Among others, the authors list that projects are "student-centered, [...] process- rather than product-oriented, they require the use of all four language skills, allowing students to exercise their multiple intelligences, they are motivating, enjoyable, and increase self-reliance and autonomy, they provide students with real-world tasks that have value outside the language classroom" [31: 111]. Despite the benefits, there is some evidence that EFL students and teachers may be frustrated by using projects. A study conducted by Beckett [29] revealed that by project learning students were inhibited from focusing on language skills and learning from the teacher and textbooks. The teacher noticed a reduction in student attendance as well as a loss of student respect. Therefore, for using projects successfully, it is required to take several steps into consideration. Firstly, the topic of a project should be agreed on by both the students and their teacher [32]. Then, structure should be provided - task goals, student roles, materials to be used, and the expected outcomes [24]. The teacher should take the role of a guide to assist their learners in case they would meet any difficulties [31]. Provided that all the criteria are met and a precise and genuine planning takes place, there is a high chance of the project work being successful.

3. Methodology

This study was aimed at investigating group work, its use and possible benefits in the process of e-learning in the COVID-19 pandemic in real classroom conditions. We aimed at finding out whether it is possible to use them successfully in virtual learning with the same amount of quality they hold in the face to face education. The research question that guided us through the study was as follows:

Can group projects be used effectively in online classes?

The main intention of every good teacher should be to provide their learners with such conditions in the classroom, which offer the best learning opportunities and maximize the success of the overall teaching process. The professional development of a teacher is a lifelong procedure and it is natural, that from time to time they come through some fields for improvement or even difficulties to be dealt with. An in practice teacher has many things to bear in mind – what approach to choose, what methodology to use, what extra activities to implement and even

how to motivate their learners as much as possible in order to succeed in teaching. In the case that there are deficiencies in any parts of the teaching process, action for the improvement of the teaching process shall be done. Action research is a powerful type of research, which can be carried out under any circumstances and in any settings. Its main focus is finding improvements in case of problems or designing solutions for more effective outcomes. In most of the cases it forms a bridge between study and practice [33]. Due to the fact that it happens in real conditions of the education process, there is a chance for instant corrections or adapting of actions [34]. There is a varied number of phases authors refer to be used while conducting action research. Its cyclical nature of identification, planning, acting, observing and reflecting is however, the same for all of them. In this study we referred to Zuber-Skerrit's [35] four main phases of action to carry out our research: planning, action, observation and reflection.

3.1. Participants

One group of English teacher trainees participated in the study in the winter term of 2021 at a Slovak university. From the 20 participants 9 were males and 11 were females. They were all in their early twenties (belong to generation Z) and were in their bachelor studies in the time the research was conducted. These students were very familiar with working online and using technology and internet for their everyday life. The majority of the participants were Slovaks, the group however also consisted of two Ukrainian and two Serbian students. The participants knew one another very well and were familiar with working together on various group tasks in the times of face to face education. The level of proficiency was very high for the majority of the group – as high as C1. There were only three students in the group whose English knowledge could have been marked as weaker. These students, however, were very conscientious and compensated their deficiencies with hard work at the seminars.

4. Results

Phase planning
The first phase included preparation for the online class. The platform used during the teaching process was Microsoft Teams. This platform allows teachers to create classrooms - groups of students and also breakout rooms within one classroom, where different numbers of students can be grouped together. Such breakout rooms allow the

students to work together within one breakout room without others disturbing them. The teacher is the only extra person allowed to enter and interfere in the happenings. The breakout rooms give space for everything the students may need while working together – microphone, camera, sharing content, using white board, etc.

The study was conducted at a language seminar. These seminars aim at students developing their communicative competences and skills complexly and offer a wide range of topics to be dealt with. The seminars are held weekly and last for 180 minutes. All the 20 students took part in the examined seminar. At the beginning of the seminar the students were acquainted with the topic to be dealt with – *diseases, traditional and alternative medicine.* Prior to sending the students to groups they did a short - five minute warm up connected to the topic. The teacher asked them to watch a short video that was concerned with famous diseases. Subsequently, they did a brainstorming activity – whatever association the students had with the topic, they were free to share with the class. After the warm up they were given instructions. They were explained that they would work on this topic in groups of five. They were asked to do some research, collect some relevant information that could be new and unknown to the rest of the class and subsequently present their findings to their peers. The time limit was set to 90 minutes. The way of the results' presentation was free of choice – they could either make a short PowerPoint presentation, present a web page, create a poster or show a list of notes. The teacher generated four breakout rooms with five students randomly assigned to each and the group projects started.

Phase action

All the four groups started working immediately. In *group 1* a leader was formed naturally. *Student 1* proposed their concept of cooperation to the rest of the group and projected their plan of presenting the outcomes. The other four members of the group agreed with both - *student 1* being the leader of the group and the plan of working, as well. Subsequent to this two members (*student 1* and *student 2*) started searching the internet and sending links of web-pages and various chunks of text to the group chat. Another two members (*student 3* and *student 4*) were working on a PowerPoint presentation, which was being shared on the screen. *Student 5* was looking for pictures and videos. They were continuously discussing the information they were working with. Although in the very beginning of the group work it could have seemed that *student 1* would lead the group through the whole time of working, they blended into a team very quickly. Afterwards, all the other members could make decisions, as well.

They did a 10 slide PowerPoint presentation on the most prominent diseases present in the world today. The presentation included text, pictures and a link to a short video. When the group was ready with the presentation, they divided the presentation between the five members equally. They spent the last few minutes of the activity preparing and training their speeches.

Group 2 spent the first few minutes of their group work with a discussion. The members clarified the task in the first place - they asked several comprehension questions to make sure they knew what they were about to do. They did not select a leader, they rather proposed their thoughts and ideas individually. Subsequently, they agreed on preparing a poster with only key words as text and a several pictures. They also decided on including a video to their presentation. All of them did individual research for about 25 minutes about an innovative type of medicine. Afterwards, they reported their findings to the group. They then did the poster. Although they worked on this task together as a group as well, the majority of the manual work was done by *student 6*, who was sharing the poster on screen. The rest of the group members were guiding the work verbally. When they were ready with the poster, the group trained their speech together. Due to the fact they finished their work a few minutes early, the students took a few minute break.

Group 3 used all the 90 minutes for work, but did not have time to revise and train their speech. They spent the first 10 minutes of the group work with deciding what exact topic from the scope they should deal with. They were rather indecisive, but in the end they agreed on alternative medicine to be their topic. All of them spend around 30 minutes with searching the internet for relevant information. They continuously posted links of different websites to the chat. Afterwards they started working on a PowerPoint presentation individually, no one was sharing content. When they were ready with their parts, they pasted the individual parts together into a complex 14 slide presentation. Most of this work was done by one student (*student 11*), who also took responsibility for unifying fonts and their sizes.

Group 4 selected two leaders naturally. *Student 16* and *student 17* were the most dominant ones from the very beginning of the group work. In the beginning they portrayed their ideas, which were approved by the rest of the group without hesitation. They decided on researching innovative ways of surgeries. The students did individual research for about 25 minutes. *Student 18* interrupted several times and asked some questions for clarification, which were either answered by *student 16* or by *student 17*. After collecting information the group decided to create a PowerPoint presentation. The leaders asked the members of the group to

insert their parts into a simple template. After that they finalized their 25 slide presentation together. In the last minutes the group went through the presentation and discussed their parts, but did not revise word by word.

Subsequent to the group activity, the four groups were called back to the main meeting, where they presented their results. The presentations lasted approximately 10 minutes per group. All the students took their part. Their speeches were fluent and smooth and their presentations were well prepared. After the presentations a short discussion was conducted, where the students were asked to evaluate the activity.

Phase observation
The group activity was observed to be successful and very popular in all the four groups of students. This assumption is based on the fact that all the students were working very eagerly throughout the whole course of the activity and the final presentations were well structured, prepared and of a high quality in all the cases. Despite the fact that one of the groups did not distribute their time wisely in order to train their presentation prior to exhibiting it, the group during their presentation did not lack fluency of professionalism by any means.

The communication of the students in the groups was relaxed, easy-going and smooth. They were comfortable with sharing their views and opinions even in those groups, which were led by leaders. Rarely did the students chat about topics not connected to their work. In the several cases that were recorded, these conversations did not last longer than a minute or two. Some of the communication, however, was conducted in students' first language. Four out of the five groups were recorded using their first language to convey meanings, give explanations or ask questions for clarification. The formerly mentioned chatting was also done in the first language.

The students seemed more than comfortable with working in the online sphere. They did not report any difficulties with looking up information, even though the topics they were working with were not something they could be familiar with. They did not lose their interest at all and seemed genuinely motivated. The fact that the PowerPoint presentations and the poster they created were of a high quality, approves their willingness and overall enthusiasm in the task.

The Internet connection of the students was good quality. Only one case was recorded when a student would be kicked off from the meeting for unknown reasons. Logging back in and joining the meeting again lasted for about two minutes. This student was then navigated back to their work by the rest of the members of their group.

Generally, no difficulties or obstacles were observed. The students were able to cope with the task easily and without complications. Never did they ask the teacher for anything. If clarification or guidance was needed, the students asked their groups. The most frequent inquiry, interestingly, was concerned with the time limit. Several students noted that the time is being not enough. Despite that, they were able to finish everything they were doing in time.

Phase evaluation

The short evaluation of the group project revealed that all the students enjoyed the task beyond expectations. In the discussion after the presentations they said the activity was fun and interesting. They reported it as a challenge, because the topic they were working with was unknown, not simple, and something new. When asking what they liked about the task the most, they stated that it gave them responsibility, as they were forced to work on something on their own without the help of their teacher. Furthermore, they stated that they felt very comfortable in the online sphere throughout the whole time, as they were in the comfort of their homes or dormitory rooms. Some of the students said that they enjoyed this online group work even more than if they were in the classroom personally.

To the questions regarding working with their classmates in groups, the students answered that they experienced no difficulties or drawbacks. They regarded the group work as easy, comfortable and pleasant. There was only one student who admitted that they normally enjoy working individually more than in groups, but as they said they were able to cope with the task without difficulties. The students themselves regarded group work in general as beneficial.

Finally, the students were asked to compare working in groups in the class to this activity online. Interestingly, almost all the students said they enjoyed the online group work more than working at school. They justified it with the fact that when working online they have more comfort, more resources to work with and more autonomy from the teacher. One of the students said that in such cooperation they are free to drink and eat while working and nobody feels offended.

5. Discussion

Based on the results of our enquiry, we have come to a conclusion that using group projects during online teaching can be very beneficial for the students. They can develop learner autonomy, learn how to cooperate with others and gain knowledge and experience in various fields. Such activity is not only enjoyable for the students, but it also helps them develop various communicative skills and competences. They improve their team working skills and if preparing a presentation, they also improve their presentation skills. Unlike Ivenz [36], who discovered that some groups may be less willing to communicate and more difficult to keep track with when completing tasks online, we came to a conclusion that the communication of students in our case was effortless and easy. Moreover, it was easy to keep track with the happenings in the groups. Naturally, the factors that Taqi and Al-Nouh's [21] define in their study, must have been influencing the overall outcome to a great deal. The group of participants in the study were all Generation Z students with a high proficiency level of English and an overall good team working skill. The fact that they have known one another and have worked together in the past must have had a positive impact on the overall outcome, as well. To conclude, we assume that in case all the influencing factors are taken into consideration and the best possible circumstances are provided, using group work during online education can be beyond beneficial.

Conclusion

In our study, we examined using group projects in online education. The changes in the world of online education forced universities and schools to adapt new methodologies in order to succeed in their teaching. Recent research has shown that e-learning has multiple benefits but also drawbacks. Authors more or less agree that teachers need extra preparation in case they want their lessons to be successful.

The main intention of this study was to portray using group work in online classes in TEFL from a perspective of a real time classroom. A qualitative enquiry was conducted, which investigated the possibility to use group projects in online language classes with success. An action research was done with a group of university students in the winter term of 2021. A close observation of the groups revealed that working on group projects online is not only possible, but also very

successful. That was proved when after the activity all the four examined groups performed beyond expectations at the presentations of their outcomes. Moreover, in the last phase the students gave positive feedback to the activity, as well.

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Learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in an inclusive school

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the position of learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and the aspects and opportunities of inclusive schools. It clarifies basic terminology, provides a brief overview of the history of school inclusion in Slovakia and focuses on the most important strategic documents outlining the practices and nature of inclusive school systems and institutions and the main principles and priorities of inclusive schools are highlighted. The paper presents the results and findings of a questionnaire study that aimed to map the methods, techniques or practices of schools providing education for learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in Slovakia. The paper also shows the results of document analysis, the analysis of the national strategies for social inclusion and other related documents of the four countries, namely Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania.

Keywords:
learners with special needs, socially disadvantaged background, inclusion, strategy

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Introduction

During the past decades, there has been an increased interest in identifying and exploring learner differences. Taking a learner-centred approach to education enables the investigation of learner differences, which leads to a more efficient way of satisfying learner needs. General differences between learners can be of various kinds, including differences in physical needs, psychological needs or difficulties, family background and upbringing, personality traits, levels of interest, pervious experience with learning, levels of social skills, learning styles as well as social and cultural background, just to mention a few. Learners with special educational needs have received more attention recently and this topic has been part of contemporary debates and discussions on the practical nature and mission of public education. Special educational needs vary from needs connected with cognition and learning (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia or dyspraxia), communication and interaction (e.g. speech difficulties), sensory and physical needs (e.g. visual impairment, physical disabilities) to needs related to social, emotional and mental health (e.g. obsessive compulsive disorder or attention deficit disorder, etc.) [9]. One of the most frequently discussed educational need nowadays is he socially disadvantaged learner, a learner who lives in a socially disadvantaged background. A socially disadvantaged learner is often defined as a learner who comes from a family with a low socio-economic status or from a poor community. This learner may be affected by negative factors such as lack of money, poor housing, poor health or low educational level of parents. These factors can affect the learner's education and development, including their ability to learn, motivation and self-esteem. In these cases, the school can be one of the few safe and stable environments which can play a key role in providing support and opportunities to help these learners overcome barriers and make their learning process more efficient and successful.

Schools and other educational institutions should provide these learners with additional support and services to help them overcome the difficulties they need to struggle with and achieve their full potential in education.

1. Integration as a Precursor to School Inclusion

The integration of learners with special needs in Slovakia preceded school inclusion. The idea of integrating previously marginalised or separated groups of learners is based on the principle of eliminating social differences and getting rid of exclusive practices in order to promote tolerance, acceptance and empathy. The basic idea of integration was to create institutions where all learners can be educated under one roof.

The legal framework for integration is based on the idea that some of the learners who have been educated in special schools due to severe deviations in mental or physical functioning can (and should) be integrated into mainstream schools. The rationale for introducing integration is, for example, that research has not shown that separate education produces better educational outcomes than mainstream education for learners with special needs. Separate education does not equip learners with the social skills needed for both able and disabled learners (or learners with special needs) living together in society. The integration movement has always been linked to human rights, changing perspectives on disability and questioning the legitimacy of forcibly separating a certain group of people from mainstream institutions [11].

The integration movement was given a new dimension by the concept of special educational needs, created by a commission led by the philosopher Mary Warnock, which recommended abandoning the medical categorisation of learners and replacing it with the concept of 'special educational needs'. The main reason given was that disabilities do not necessarily affect learning, and at the same time there are many 'non-disabled' or 'able' learners whose education is conducted with significant difficulties [11].

Integration has meant that the problems of learners with special educational needs have received the same attention in schools as those of learners with disabilities. At the same time, special education has been maintained because integration can be hindered by barriers on the part of the school or the learner. Over the decades of building an integrated school system, the contours of the constraints and challenges have also become clearer in traditional school systems. A certain disillusionment with integration led to searching for new ways and solutions, and the concept of inclusion entered the debate [11].

The common use of the word inclusion dates back to the Salamanca Conference on the Education of People with Special Needs, organised by the Spanish government and UNESCO in June 1994. Participants from all around the world agreed on a

document, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (1994), which outlined their vision of education: an inclusive school is one in which all children learn together as much as possible, regardless of their differences and difficulties. Teaching, the curriculum and organisational structures must be adapted to meet the different needs of each child.

2. The Philosophy of School Inclusion

Inclusion in education has been defined by various scholars. Takala and Aunio define it as "a flexible educational approach in which all kinds of children have the opportunity to participate in general educational programmes" [11: 39]. These two Finnish experts point out that inclusion is a political rather than an education matter, since the primary aim of inclusion is to eliminate social, economic, environmental and cultural barriers in contemporary society. There are also scholars who claim that inclusion does not have a universally accepted and applicable definition but is rather based on a set of principles [10].

The Index for Inclusion is a basic model of the process of creating an inclusive environment elaborated by Booth and Ainscow. The Index for Inclusion is a model designed to stimulate inclusive school development through self-assessment and support, and is therefore described by the authors themselves as a tool for developing learning and participation in schools [2]. It was published in 2002 following pilot validation in the UK. After further refinement, it has been translated into almost 40 languages and is still in use in many schools and countries. The whole cycle of working with the model is based on five phases [2, 15]:

- Starting to work with inclusion (getting acquainted with the ideas of inclusion, creating an ethos);
- Finding out about the situation in the school (first detailed self-assessment based on criteria and questions according to different dimensions and areas);
- Drawing up a plan for the inclusive development of the school (defining priorities and sequential steps);
- The implementation of priorities;
- The retrospective evaluation of the process (the self-evaluation of what has been achieved and the repetition of the cycle from phase 2).

The content of this cyclical process is based on assessing and creating the supporting dimensions of a pro-inclusive school environment, such as building an inclusive school culture, which consists of creating a safe, welcoming, collaborative and supportive community where everyone feels important to the whole, and establishing shared inclusive values. It is also about creating an inclusive school policy, ensuring a school for all, where inclusion is built into every aspect of planning, where exclusionary pressures are minimised, and also about supporting diversity in clear strategies that enhance the school's responsiveness to learner differences, which together form a coherent system. The third pillar is the development of inclusive practices through practical procedures, appropriate organisation of teaching and learning that supports everyone's involvement, drawing on their knowledge and experience gained outside the school, but also through the mobilisation of all resources to support learning and engagement, both material and those offered by the mutual collaboration of teachers, learners, parents and the surrounding community [2, 15].

3. Inclusive Education in Slovakia Today

Although Slovakia has signed up to the principles of inclusive education by ratifying international documents, there has been no explicit political commitment to inclusive education for a long time. In 2018, The National Programme for the Development of Education in Slovakia, a document which was approved by the Slovak government and should determine the direction of Slovak education in the next ten years, considers inclusion in the education system to be insufficient, thus justifying the need for reform changes in the education system aimed at increasing the inclusiveness of the system [8].

3.1. Research Objectives

This study tracks school integration in schools across the country, as well as in government policy documents that influence the work of community partnerships to reverse inequality and social exclusion. Our aim was to collect baseline data on schools with high proportions of learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds – to find out what methods, activities and practices they use to help disadvantaged learners. We also observed and compared the national strategies of four countries - Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania - linked to the Horizon 2020 project 'School-Community Partnership for Reversing Inequality and Exclusion': Transformative Practices of Segregated Schools" (2020 - 2024).

3.2. Materials and Methods

The J. Selye University in Komárno is a partner organisation of the international Horizon 2020 project no.: 101004653 Inclusion4Schools "School-Community Partnership for Reversing Inequality and Exclusion: Transformative Practises of Segregated Schools" (2020 - 2024), which ensures the implementation of the project goals in the territory of the Slovak Republic. In addition to our university, universities and professional institutions from three other countries are involved in the project: the John Wesley Theological College, Hungary (as the lead partner), the Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development, Hungary, the C.E.G.A. Foundation, Bulgaria, the Oltalom Charity Society, Hungary, and the Albanian National Orphans Association, Albania [4].

Data from Slovak schools were collected through an online questionnaire. The processing of this questionnaire will allow us to build up a picture of the professional experience and requirements of these schools. In 2021, an invitation to complete an online questionnaire was sent to schools with learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, according to the list of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, which keeps a record of these learners for the purpose of their financial support. Out of the 330 schools contacted, 75 schools completed the questionnaire. These schools are mainly located in the eastern and southern parts of Slovakia and come from 68 municipalities and towns (there were cases where several schools from a given locality completed the questionnaire). 24% of the participating schools are schools with Hungarian language of instruction.

The analysis of the national strategies of the four countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania) was carried out on the basis of publicly available policy documents published on ministries' or EU portals.

3.3. Results and Discussion

In schools, the aim is to create an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment - in connection with this aim, Section 107(1) of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (the National Council of the Slovak Republic 245/2008 Coll., 2021) on Education and Training (School Act) and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts stipulates that the education and training of learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds shall be provided in schools according to individual conditions. Individual conditions include the adaptation of the organisation of education and training, the adaptation of the environment in which education and training take place or the application of specific methods and forms of education and training. A learner

whose special educational needs result solely from his or her development in a socially disadvantaged environment may not be admitted to a special school or to a special class in a kindergarten, primary or secondary school. In primary schools, there must be one teaching assistant or social pedagogue for every 50 learners from a socially disadvantaged background [5].

The methodology supporting inclusive education in schools in Slovakia [1] is also offered by the State Pedagogical Institute, which is a direct budget organisation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. This publication was released as part of the project "Innovative training for primary school pedagogical staff to increase their intercultural competences in the educational process of Roma pupils". The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology also publishes methodological and support materials. In 2018, it published a brochure for primary school teachers with the title *From Integration to Inclusion* [11], which can be helpful for teachers in schools with learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds [5].

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic supports the creation of a value-oriented school environment where positive interpersonal relations prevail without segregationist manifestations.

In response to the question "Is there a class in your school where the majority of the learners are Roma?" 84% of them answered in the affirmative, i.e. most schools are struggling with the problem of segregation. 77% of the schools have established methods, which they also specifically mentioned, some of them by name. The remaining schools (23%) do not yet have any methods or techniques to deal with this issue.

8.6% of the schools that mentioned methods, activities or practices, i.e. have established methods, reported that these activities or practices are linked to a project. Schools are involved in a variety of projects aimed at improving the learning outcomes of learners with different levels of disadvantage, but also in projects and activities that help learners develop not only their knowledge but also their complex personalities. The schools identified specific projects, namely Together Smarter 2, Supporting the Teaching of the Mother Tongue of a National Minority 2021, ImO and Helping Professions in the Education of Children and Pupils 2. Further details can be found in the study "Inclusion of Socially Disadvantaged Pupils in Primary Schools in Slovakia" [5].

23% of schools run a preparatory year for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds before starting the first class of primary school. In addition to mainstream classes, some schools have special or specialised classes, and many

schools employ teaching assistants. Act 138/2019 Coll. on pedagogical and professional staff (the National Council of the Slovak Republic 138/2019 Coll., 2021) [7] defines a pedagogical assistant as an employee who, according to the requirements of a teacher or an educator, in cooperation with professional staff, creates equal opportunities in education and training, helps a child, a learner or a group of learners overcome architectural, information, language, health, social or cultural barriers.

16% of schools reported having an inclusion team. Learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are taught in mainstream classes with other pupils, where teachers try to help them with an individual approach. These schools have an inclusion team consisting of a special education teacher, a social educator and a pedagogical assistant who, in cooperation with the teachers, take care of the education and training of learners with disabilities and learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in extracurricular activities taking an individual approach. 4% of the schools answered that they also cooperate with specialised counselling centres and use the professional help of the Centre for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention and the Centre of Special Educational Counselling [5].

In accordance with EU requirements, Slovakia has developed the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030*, approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution No. 181/2021. This strategic framework document is a commitment of the Government of the Slovak Republic that defines, at the level of priorities, the direction of public policies in order to achieve visible changes in the field of equality and inclusion of the Roma. Due to its cross-cutting nature, the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* is an umbrella document for the development and implementation of the planned strategic documents of the relevant ministries in the relevant areas. Its content contributes to the fulfilment of the Government's intentions regarding the improvement of the status and situation of the Roma, as stated in the *Programme Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period 2020-2024*, and also reflects the objectives of the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030*. The national strategy presents a set of starting points and objectives aimed at ending the segregation of Roma communities, achieving a significant positive turn in the social inclusion of the Roma, non-discrimination, changing attitudes and improving coexistence. [16, 18]

The Action plans to the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* for 2022 – 2024 started to be prepared in May 2021 and these plans are a direct follow-up to the previously adopted strategy named above, containing concrete measures and activities from each priority area, including

their financial quantification, measures which need to be implemented to achieve the set objectives. The approved material includes an attachment, a Methodological Document on the calculation of indicator values, which is a manual [17, 18].

The coordinating role in relation to the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* and the implementation of the Action Plans is fulfilled by the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities through the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities, which is also the national focal point [16, 18].

The vision of the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* is to increase the effective participation of marginalized Roma communities children and pupils in quality education and training in mainstream education, with an emphasis on the application of desegregation and inclusion policies in the educational process at all levels of education, including lifelong learning programmes in Slovakia. As part of the preparation for mainstream education, it is necessary to focus on increasing the participation of Roma children aged 0-3 in early childhood care and education programmes to at least 30% of all marginalized Roma communities children. By increasing the participation of 3-4 year-old children in pre-primary education to the level of 50%, and 100% by educating 5-6 year-old Roma children in the Slovak Republic, the level of the national average will reach 75% of educated children from marginalized Roma communities at the pre-primary level. The *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* also aims to halve the number of marginalized Roma communities learners in primary and special primary schools (secondary schools) who repeat a year to 11%, to halve the number of learners who drop out of compulsory primary school to 36%, and to increase the number of Roma people who complete secondary school to 45% for males and 40% for females, with a focus on using tools in order to eliminate the current gender gap in education [16].

An important element of the *Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030* in Slovakia is the implementation of integration and desegregation policies at all levels of education to reduce the number of learners educated in predominantly ethnically homogeneous classes or schools by at least half to 30% [16].

Similarly to Slovakia, the other monitored countries have adopted strategic documents in this area: in Bulgaria, for example, the Council of Ministers adopted the *National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030)* and *The National Action Plan for the Period 2022-2023* (Council of Ministers' Decision 278 as of 5 May 2022). The proportion of the Roma in Bulgaria who do not complete primary education remains high.

The number of the Roma who drop out of school early and do not complete secondary education is also significantly high. Only half of Roma children attend preschool or kindergarten, and very few of them continue their education after completing compulsory schooling. Only 21% of Roma women and 25% of Roma men aged 16-24 have completed secondary education or higher education. In 2019, 68% of Roma children dropped out of school early, despite the 10% target of the previous EU *Framework 2011 for National Roma Inclusion Strategies and the EU 2020 Strategy*. 18% of Roma learners in Bulgaria went on to higher education, and the rate of absenteeism and early school leaving among Roma learners was significantly higher than among other categories of pupils [19, 20].

As far as Hungary is concerned, there is no Hungarian strategy designed directly for the social integration of young people, however, several official documents are related to the inclusion of the Roma. According to the *National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030*, Hungary's overall vision for 2030 is to significantly advance the equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma, which will be achieved through progress in a number of areas (child well-being, education and training, employment, health, housing and access to public services, community development, cultural and ethnic rights) and in the horizontal areas mentioned above. As described in the *National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030*, the early school leaving rate among Roma learners in Hungary is 64.6%, the number of Roma learners aged 15-24 participating in tertiary education is 2.2%, the share of young Roma not in education or employment is 41.0%, the share of Roma aged 15-74 with low educational attainment is 77.4% and the employment rate among Roma aged 15-64 is 45.5% [21, 22].

According to the *National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030*, not all Roma are socially marginalised, but all experience certain kind of discrimination; therefore, the Roma population needs to be empowered to be agents of change. The involvement of the majority society is equally important for true equality and inclusion. The Strategy's lines of intervention set out the main tasks, while the three-year action plans describe the programmes and interventions through which the government will contribute to poverty reduction. Therefore, the government adopted the *Action Plan 2021-2024 for the Implementation of the National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030* including the tasks of the relevant actors [22].

The *National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania (2021-2025)* was adopted by the Government of Albania on 18 November 2021.The Action Plan was prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in close coordination with

other relevant ministries, municipalities, independent institutions, international organisations, civil society organisations, experts and representatives of Roma and Egyptian minorities in Albania. This plan is a new commitment by the government, which includes both mainstreaming and targeted programmes and actions for the Roma and Egyptian populations residing in Albania, with the aim of reducing the gap in access to quality public services as compared to the majority population. The plan introduces an escalation of the measures already implemented (during the previous Action Plan 2016-2020) and the ones being in progress, and also launches new activities to promote the integration of the Roma and Egyptians with funds provided by the state budget, similarly identifying the financial gap [23].

The Roma and, to a lesser extent, the Egyptian population have lower educational levels than the rest of the Albanian population. In pre-school education, the gap between the Roma and the non-Roma reaches up to 31%. Similarly, in compulsory education, the gap between the Roma and the non-Roma reaches up to 31%, with 66% of Roma learners enrolled. Roma and Egyptian children have relatively low school enrolment, literacy and completion rates compared to the national average, although recent progress has been almost exponential. 14,379 Roma and Egyptian boys and girls enrolled and attended pre-school and compulsory education in 2019. However, increasing Roma enrolment and completion rates in primary education to 90% and enrolment and completion rates in upper secondary education to 50% remains a challenge in the Western Balkans [23].

The Local Pre-university Education Office (throughout the pre-university education system) provides information on students who drop out, interrupt their education, attend irregularly, with a special focus on learners from the Roma and Egyptian communities, students from families headed by women, orphans, etc. [23].

Conclusion

The results of the questionnaire aiming to map the methods, techniques or practices of schools providing education for learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as the analysis of the national strategies for social inclusion and other related documents of the four participating countries will be used to design the further process of the research project, such as providing practical counselling assistance and services to build communication and professional contacts for cooperation among schools and methodological institutions in Slovakia, as well as in the other three countries involved in the project (Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania). The aim is to support the cooperation of primary schools and teacher

training faculties, non-profit organisations, local governments and parents in order to jointly increase the professionalism and competitiveness of school institutions [4]. We plan to facilitate the dialogue between the active participants of this sphere within the educational system, to promote tolerance and integration, and also to use the possibilities of musical art and folk art [3, 13] to build good relations between parents and the teachers of primary schools and colleges, as well as with the local government and the civil sphere.

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The survey of ICT equipment in a primary school in Budapest and its comparison to a representative national survey

Attila Pivók[26]

ABSTRACT

In the Europe 2020 strategy [6], the European Union has stated the expectations towards the member countries including the further development of digital competence. According to a representative national survey in 2011, the quality and the quantity of the information communication technology (ICT) equipment of Hungarian primary schools are still far from the expected results. In general, we have a ratio of 15 students sharing one computer in primary schools; meanwhile the EU standard would be 8 students per computer. According to the survey, many of these school computers are older than 4 years; therefore, they can be considered out-of-date. To summarize my results after the data comparison of my own school and the Hungarian school average, I can claim that there is no difference in respect of ICT equipment, but we have an outstanding result concerning the student-computer ratio as my school has achieved the expected EU level.

Keywords:
ICT, ICT classroom, student-computer ratio, Europe 2020 strategy, primary school

Introduction

"All in all it can be claimed that in Hungary at this moment the prevalence rate of the modern information communication technology (ICT) equipment is very low, which does not help to acquire the ICT-competencies or to accomplish education suitable for the twenty-first century challenges." [5]

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The education system has not achieved the task to create the conditions for ICT-competencies, and could not meet the requirements of the First Lisbon aims, which stated that by 2010, digital literacy should have been developed in all over Europe by the effective use of ICT tools.

Education should encourage and enable students to enter the digital age but teachers should be able to apply the latest technological results. It can be a problem that the quantity or the quality of devices is not satisfactory in the schools. In 1995, in the White book about education – which was an important document of the educational strategy of the European Union – it can be found that cooperation within the school and cooperation between schools should be encouraged [2].

The ICT infrastructural establishment was governed by higher authorities in Hungary, too and different developments were organized according to these plans. First in 2000 within the Sulinet programme, when every school in Hungary had fix Internet access, and later around 2005, when the interactive board programme was launched. The intention of the 'Public education IT development programme' was to equip every second classroom in Hungary with an interactive board connected to a computer and a projector by the year 2010.

The First Lisbon aims also claimed that by 2010 there should be one computer for every eight students in primary schools. The results did not meet the requirements that is the reason why the EU started its Europe 2020 strategy, where formal education has a priority [5].

A new, twenty-first century digital learning space has to be established following the EU aims. It can be done only if modern digital devices are available, keeping in mind that only these are not enough to achieve effective learning.

Another problem is technological determinism, although reality always proves the opposite of this uncritical optimism. The existence of devices in the school only does not help us to achieve the aims of the European Union. It can have more reasons but mostly, the problem is caused by misunderstanding and oversimplification. For example, Internet access is not equivalent with conscious Internet usage. The use of computer in the classroom is not equivalent with modern pedagogical methods. The established knowledge base is not equivalent with knowledge. Digital tools themselves do not mean effective learning [3]. The basis of the realization of the EU aims is to map the ICT infrastructure in Hungarian schools. It is important to know what role the input indicators have in primary education. There were significant surveys about it, but they were voluntary or examined the situation from a non-educational aspect.

The most respected survey was done by Márta Hunya and her colleagues at the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development. In the eLemér programme they surveyed hundreds of voluntary schools. From the survey it is clear that schools have good digital equipment. The possibility to use ICT in the classroom is given in many schools, but the access of them indicates that it is limited [1].

The representative survey – see [5] – was done by MTA-SZTE Képességkutató Kutatócsoport and SZTE Neveléstudományi Intézet, where they surveyed the ICT equipment of Hungarian schools in 2011. Their research study was based on four questions:

- How are schools equipped with ICT, with special attention to computer rooms?
- What is the student-computer ratio in primary schools?
- How are schools equipped with ICT in non-computer classrooms?
- Are there regional differences?

The study did not survey the interactive boards in primary schools; therefore, I cannot compare my data of this important ICT device to a national representative average.

In my school, we have 6 interactive boards, which are installed in classrooms and to use them more effectively the computer room is not equipped with it. When they were distributed, we divided them equally between the junior and the senior section; therefore, there are 3-3 interactive boards. We have 18 classrooms, excluding the gym and the exercise room, and six of them are equipped with interactive boards, so our coverage is 33%, which means that every third classroom has an interactive board and we have not got any unexploited, not installed interactive boards.

In the following, a survey of the ICT equipment of my school will be presented, which is based on the three questions of the MTA-SZTE survey and the results will be compared with the national average. It consists of three parts:

1. The ICT room survey
2. The non-ICT classroom survey
3. The student-computer ratio

Regional differences will not be examined now, but in the above mentioned survey there are interesting findings about it. They claim that there are no handicapped regions in Hungary, there is proportional distribution regarding the ICT equipment of primary schools [5].

1. Survey

I teach in a primary school in Budapest – hereafter: my school – where there are 444 students and 51 teachers. In every grade we have 2 classes and there is a section for learners with special needs, where there are special education teachers. My schools' student number is above the Budapest average, which is 390.8.

1. The ICT room survey

In my school, we have one ICT room – a computer room – where there are 20 desktop computers for students allowing to teach a half-class.

According to the survey, 50.3% of schools have one and only 31.7% of them have got two ICT rooms. They also examined how many students can be placed there. The ratio of ICT rooms with 10.1-20 computers is around 70%, which enables to place a half-class. In Hungary, only 10% of schools have ICT rooms with 20.1-30 computers, which allows to place a whole class.

In my school, the ICT room computers are more than 5 years old. According to the survey, 40.2 % of the schools have computers older than 4-5 years.

In my school, only desktop computers are available for the students, all of them are connected to the Internet and the ICT room is equipped with a projector. According to the survey, 97.6% of schools have desktop computers and 74.2 % of them have a projector in the ICT room.

The comparison: my school has results in a match with the national average, but the age of the computers are below the data of the survey. Besides the national data, the Budapest data are also interesting. 32.2 % of Budapest schools have brand new computers, which are not 1 year-old and 12.9 % of them have computers which are older than 5 years. Nationally, every ICT room is connected to the Internet, thanks to the Sulinet programme. Another important result is that every ICT room computer in Hungary has Windows operation system, thanks to the Tiszta Szoftver programme.

2. The non-ICT classroom survey

In my school, the non-ICT classrooms are equipped with computers and Internet access. There are 17 classrooms, excluding the computer room, the gym, the exercise room and the teachers' rooms. We have 12 classrooms with desktop computers, which means 70 % coverage.

According to the survey, 61% of schools have Internet access in the non-ICT rooms.

In my school, there are 7 classrooms with projectors, six of them are combined with interactive boards. According to the survey, 40% of schools have classrooms with projectors, but the number of these classrooms is not more than 10.

The comparison: the non-ICT classrooms of my school have results in a match with the Hungarian average, but as regards the number of projectors, my school is above average.

3. The student-computer ratio

In my school, there are 444 students and I included the computers which are for student use. In the school statistics, the computers are indicated as they are used for educational purpose, community purpose or administrative purpose. The administrative-purpose computers are for administrators and teachers, the community-purpose computers are in the library. I did not include these computers as they are not used in the classrooms. In the ICT room, there are 20 desktop computers. In the non-ICT classroom there are 12 desktop computers. Then, I included the 18 student laptops in the English rooms. For a total, we have 50 computers.

In my school, there are 8.88 students for one computer.

According to the survey, in Hungary there are 15 students for one computer on average, but if we do not count the computers which are older than 6 years, then this number grows to 19.

The comparison: my school has an extremely high rate compared to the national average. In this regard, the school meets the European Union requirements, which recommended 8 students for one computer.

Conclusion

The ICT equipment of my school has a match with the national average. However, there are two significant differences. Unfortunately, our ICT-room computers are all in the outdated category considering their age. We can be proud of one outstanding result, which is the student-computer ratio. It is due to our efforts to expand our digital equipment. Last time – in 2012 – we managed to buy 18 student laptops in a project. Because of technological development, it is necessary to modernize and expand the school equipment. In my opinion, the most effective way of it is to apply for projects. It is very important for the school to apply for equipment which refers to a real need and the teachers want to use it. The usage and the efficiency of the devices which are from an external source is uncertain because it does not come from internal motivation.

I would like to emphasize that this survey on equipment does not indicate if these devices are used in the classroom or they are just the part of school statistics. In the future, I would like to survey all the schools in the district or to make an

international comparison. "Although the existence of technical infrastructure cannot solve educational problems, it can contribute to the necessary methodological changes that have to come and with which the growth of educational efficiency can be realized" [4].

It can be said that the use of digital tools does not directly mean efficient learning, and to continue my research I will examine the student and teacher competencies as well.

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Applying innovative technologies in the English classroom in the context of Kazahstani schools

Dinara ZHORABEKOVA[27], Anna T. LITOVKINA[28]

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses interactive, information and communication approaches based on digitalization of education as perspective approaches in teaching English. The first section provides a general description of the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan as well as educational prospects and priorities. In the second section, the choice of such teaching methods as discussion, e-mail project method, web quest technology, Skype technology and remote educational platforms is justified. The fourth section presents the results of a survey of teachers on the use of the selected teaching methods in their daily teaching practice.

Keywords:
level-based education, interactive approach, information and communication approach, education digitalization, discussion, E-Mail project, web quest technology, Skype-technology

1. Priorities and Prospects for Foreign Language Learning in Kazakshtan

The processes of globalization occurring in the world, the rapidly growing dynamics of the development of modern society, the development of international contacts and cooperation led to the spread and strengthening of the role of English

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as the international language of modern civilization. The world's trends have entered Kazakhstan's reality as well. Currently, Kazakhstan is a unique linguistic space, the sociolinguistic and demographic complexity of which is represented by a multilingual society with more than 100 ethnic groups. The entry of the Republic of Kazakhstan into the world community, as well as the impact of political, economic, social and cultural globalization for communication, requires the determination of the role and place of the English language in the socio-communicative space of the country and integrated development of the problem of its functioning in various fields [4]. Thus, integration processes occurring in Kazakhstan led to the dynamic development of the English language, which touched upon all areas of its use.

Consequently, one of the priorities of language policy in Kazakhstan is the entire development of English and expansion of its use [6].

The state compulsory standard of education is designed in such a way as to eliminate the problems of the previous curriculum in English such as lack of set goals or criteria for the adequate evaluation of academic success in the English language, as well as the lack of consistency and continuity of the programme, so students had no opportunities to develop skills acquired in previous courses.

More detailed and specific expected learning outcomes for each study level have formed the basis of new educational standards. These outcomes are described in details for each level (from A1 to C2) for all four speech competences. Specific expected learning outcomes are important components of the curriculum. They are the basis for setting daily language objectives and tasks in the classroom, for choosing educational materials, as well as assessing language competencies [4].

2. Interactive Technologies as a Way of Increasing Motivation to Learn English

The peculiarities of the natural multicultural language environment of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the transition to the updated content of education in response to the requirement of globalization and the digital era contributed to the emergence of prerequisites for transition to level-based learning of languages. These levels were adapted from the Common European framework of references for learning languages [2], consequently they were assimilated into our own framework with additional sublevels. Modern technological progress, innovation in the economy, construction of an open society, active migration processes (internal and external), the interaction of languages and cultures require from modern youth to activate their critical thinking, their skills for analysing and evaluating situations which

they encounter in daily life, the ability to produce ideas and independently search for information in the global Internet space, as well as the development of personal qualities and teamwork skills, emotional and aesthetic perception of real life. All this has become possible as a result of new educational trends, which are reflected in the new curriculum and is presented as level-based learning of English. The organization of the educational process in foreign language learning involves the comprehensive use of communicative technologies (projects, interviews, role-playing, discussions, debates, conferences, competitions, dramatization, etc.). It is also advisable to actively use information and communication technologies and a wide range of extracurricular activities, which contribute to improving the motivation to foreign language learning, intensifying the cognitive activity of learners, their spoken interaction and the development of their creative potential. The process of foreign language education as any pedagogical process is based on theoretical and methodological approaches as a strategy for implementing research positions. Currently, research in the field of teaching foreign languages and cultures is focused on studying the mechanisms of interaction between the teacher and the learner. This innovative approach is called interactive.

The innovative nature of the interactive approach to the study of the problems of learning foreign languages and cultures lies in the fact that it makes it possible to comprehensively consider the most effective models and methods of teaching a foreign language from the standpoint of a personally-oriented paradigm of education. The theoretical grounds for the use of the interactive approach in foreign language learning are the following: the organization of dialogue communication in the classroom contributes to the formation of interactive competencies; cognitive activity is implemented in group communication and discussion, which in its turn stimulates the development of cognitive competencies; the formulation and solution of educational tasks in the form of communicative interaction enhances the development of learners' critical thinking.

The practical aspects of the implementation of the interactive approach in the English language classroom are expressed in its methodological support, that is, the introduction of innovative methods and technologies that aim at intensifying interactive communication in foreign language speaking activities [5].

The practice of implementing interactive methods and technologies can be successfully examined on the example of the English language lesson, which becomes innovative if these methods are used. Let us consider examples of some interactive methods and technologies, examining their innovative potential.

Effective techniques include authentic written and oral activities, activity-oriented tasks, learners' portfolios, the involvement of learners in peer and self-assessment as well as many other activities that have a learner-oriented nature.

Debates and discussions are techniques of problem learning increasingly finds its application in the English classroom due to the fact that it helps to integrate the knowledge of students from different areas when solving the problem, which makes it possible to apply language knowledge and skills in practice, formulating new ideas in the form of group work. In the English classroom, the following forms of discussion can be used:

- forum – discussion, during which there is an exchange of views within the group;
- the round table is a conversation in which a small group of students (usually about 5 people) participates, during which there is an exchange of views both among them and with the rest of the audience;
- the meeting of the expert group ("panel discussion"), at which, at first, the planned problem is discussed by all the participants of the group (from 4–6 participants with a previously appointed chairman), and then they set out their positions to the whole audience;
- brainstorming is the most famous option for finding creative solutions for tasks, in which participants in the group are required to develop as many solutions as possible. Then the most successful option is chosen to be used in practice;
- debates – a discussion based on pre-established speeches of participants – representatives of the two opposing teams (groups);
- role-playing game – an active variety of experimental behavior, allowing to study someone's own involvement through organized "experiencing" the situation, etc.

Thus, the interactive approach implemented in the English language classroom is fundamental and complies with the modern requirements of the state educational standards and theory and the practices of teaching foreign languages and cultures.

The latest trends in the education system are also associated with the introduction of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital education [3]. These trends are primarily connected with modernization processes that are supported by government initiatives. Modern digital technologies

are able to reinforce any approaches and methods of teaching foreign languages. Therefore, digitalization can be used both to create new and improving existing approaches. Digital educational resources are successfully used in foreign language teaching. The innovative potential of using ICT is as follows:

- guarantees the involvement of learners to work in the classroom by increasing learning motivation;
- provides more opportunities for a teacher with layout and modelling each particular lesson;
- creation of a poly-functional medium in class (real and virtual);
- support for active independent and research work;
- improving ICT competence of students.

The practical aspects of the implementation of this approach in English lessons can be presented on the example of its implementation of the following technologies using digital educational resources and Internet resources [1].

The principle of the E-Mail-Projects method lies in the exchange of information on a certain topic of projects with native speakers from different countries of the world; it allows keeping a dialogue with a representative of a foreign language culture; it uses the possibility of performing project tasks of a communicative directivity by e-mail. The tasks of E-Mail projects include: the motivation for self-education as well as the development of interests among students; the formation of students' abilities for an independent study of the necessary information, its processing and rational use; creating authentic language medium based on intensive communication with native speakers and setting the task of forming a need to study a foreign language; improving the level of knowledge of students on the subject.

Quest Technology (Web Quest) is a task with role-playing elements, which requires a learner to use Internet information resources. Web Quest consists of the following stages:

- introduction – choosing a specific topic and briefly describing it;
- tasks – formulating a specific task, analysis and description of the results;
- stages of work and necessary resources for its implementation – describing sequences of stages and resources that will help to perform this assignment;
- assessment – describing the criteria and assessment of the task of the web quest, which is presented in the form of a rating table;

- conclusions – students describe what they learned by completing Web Quest;
- materials – references to resources that were used to perform web quest;
- notes for the teacher – methodical recommendations for the teacher.

Skype technology and remote educational platforms. Lessons with the use of Skype technologies and remote educational platforms especially acquired relevance and widespread use during the COVID -19 world pandemic, when schools were forced to switch to distant learning format. These technologies allow mastering a foreign language under the guidance of a qualified teacher. This language learning technology has a number of advantages: the universality of the curriculum; interactivity of the learning process, namely, the possibility of communication through the Internet with a real teacher; the possibility of learning for people with disabilities. Using Skype technology and remote educational platforms expands the possibilities of learning and makes it more efficient and interesting. Applying Skype in the lesson with a native speaker allows solving the following problems:

1) to improve the pronunciation and listening skills of students:
2) to develop foreign language communicative and intercultural competence;
3) to create real communication situations with representatives of foreign countries;
5) to overcome the language barrier;
6) to get acquainted with the new traditions, customs and mentality of representatives of other linguistic cultures.

The main communication advantages of Skype technology are: video calls to Skype network users; text chat; the possibility of creating voice and text conferences; formation of interest groups. In the educational process, the use of Skype technologies is possible for individual and group classes; consultations; elective courses in a foreign language; webinars; audio/video conferences and telecoms. Remote educational platforms such as Moodle for example, make it possible to create text lectures and surveys, add program content, create interactive learning material, etc. Grammar/vocabulary based applications can be of great effectiveness and motivation for learners to study the language since they spend a lot of time with their smartphones, tablets, laptops outside the classroom. Teachers can also make a great use of different online tools.

3. The Practical Use of Innovative Technologies in the English Classroom

To determine the effectiveness of the innovative English language teaching technologies described above, a survey was conducted among practicing teachers. The survey was presented as a questionnaire, which was sent and tracked using the Survey Monkey platform. The online survey of teachers, accessible in Russian/Kazakh and English, consisted of three sections. In the first section, teachers were asked for general information about themselves, such as age and teaching experience, in the second section the teachers briefly commented on the methodological techniques used by them in daily practice. In the third section, teachers were asked to answer a series of closed and open questions related to the practical application of the innovative English language learning technologies. The teachers indicated the frequency of use of certain practices on a scale from zero to five, where zero means "uselessness", and five – "most frequent use". These two extreme points of the scale in the survey were assigned such verbal descriptors as "Never" and "often".

The English language teachers from 6 secondary schools of Nur-Sultan (the capital of the country) and Karaganda (central city) took part in the survey. For the validity of further research on this topic, it is recommended to include data obtained from all regions of the country with the participation of teachers of both urban and rural schools.

In the first section of the questionnaire, general information was collected, reflecting such parameters as age and work experience. The age of respondents range from 24 to 57 years, having work experience from 8 to 32 years.

On the second section, the respondents answered that they try to adhere to the methodical recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the organization of the educational process, which are as follows:

1) to apply communicative technologies (projects, interviews, role-playing, discussions, debates, conferences, contests, dramatization, etc.);

2) to use ICT and opportunities for extracurricular activities, which contribute to the creation of conditions for improving motivation to the study of a foreign language, intensifying the cognitive activity of students, their speech interaction, the development of creative potential;

3) to use training technologies that allow modeling situations of foreign language speech communication, ensuring the maximum possible degree of independence of students in interpretation of intercultural communication phenomena;

4) the study time of the lesson should be mainly used for the development and improvement of oral speech skills and competences;

5) to introduce and practice a new lexical and grammar material in communicative situations;

6) to increase the time of speech activity of each learner by organizing work in pairs, groups;

7) to teach reading and listening with the obligatory observance of the pre-, while- and post- stages of work;

8) to alternate and combine various types of tasks: oral, written, compulsory, optional, general, differentiated, individual, combined, creative. The tasks of a creative nature precedes preparatory work in the lesson.

At the same time, the respondents also answered that traditional learning methods are often used and they believe that the competent combination of traditional and innovative methods of teaching only increase the effectiveness of the educational process.

Let us consider some questions of the third section of the questionnaire in details.

"Please indicate how often you use every element of innovative learning methods BEFORE and AFTER the changes in the content of education"

Figure 1 shows that before the update of the educational program, the respondents noted that traditional teaching methods were most often used in their teaching and they paid attention to the study of language structures (average response of 3.7 from the maximum 5 points) and corrected students' errors as they appeared (3.5 out of 5). On the contrary, after the update of the program, the most frequent in practical use was the use of communication methods of teaching, such as authentic oral, written tasks based / approximate to real linguistic situations (4.2 and 4.1 of 5 points). The most significant change in the frequency of use in the practice of teaching was the prompting / promotion of students to independently define the competences necessary to fulfill a task (2.1 to 3.8 after).
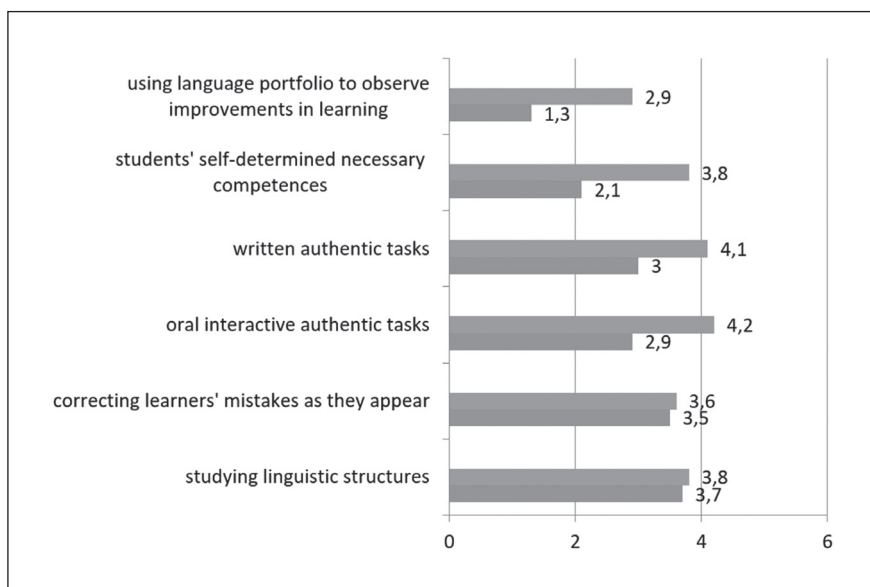
Figure 1. Frequency (0–5) of the use of learning elements in the practice of teaching before
(lower scale) and after (upper scale) the update of the content of education

*"What elements appeared in your planning to develop language competencies,
and how often did you use each element in your planning BEFORE and AFTER
the update in the learning program?"*

As for the second question, the respondents reported that during the planning of
lessons, the main focus was made on the development of language competencies of
learners (average score 4.2 from the maximum 5). On the contrary, after the update
in the content of education the teachers began to use a more balanced approach in
their planning and reported that they pay attention to the use of each of the target
learning elements, and not just on the development of language competencies.
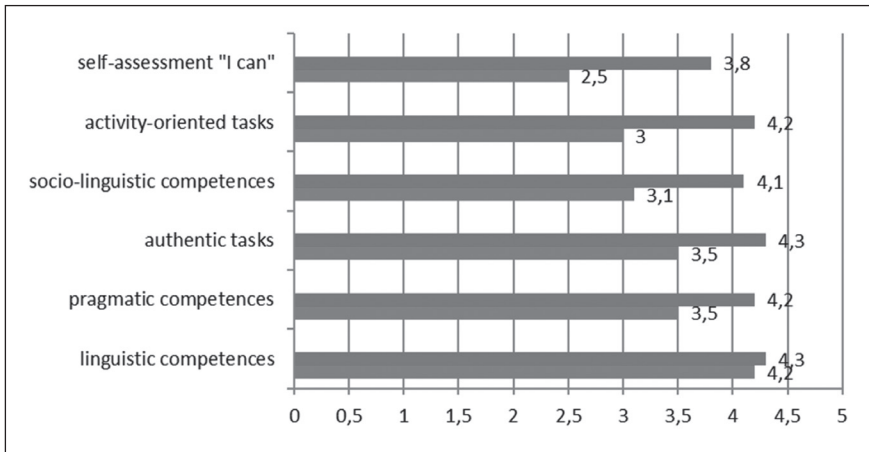
Figure 2. Frequency of use of educational elements when planning a lesson BEFORE (lower scale) and AFTER (upper scale) the update in the content of education (in%)

"What percentage of school time did you allocate the development of each language skill when planning before and after updating the content of education?"

According to the third question, the respondents shown that after updating the curriculum, the amount of time planned was devoted to teaching oral speech skills such as listening and speaking (27% and 31% of the time, respectively), while previously the focus was on the development of writing and reading skills (28% and 34%) (see Figure 3)
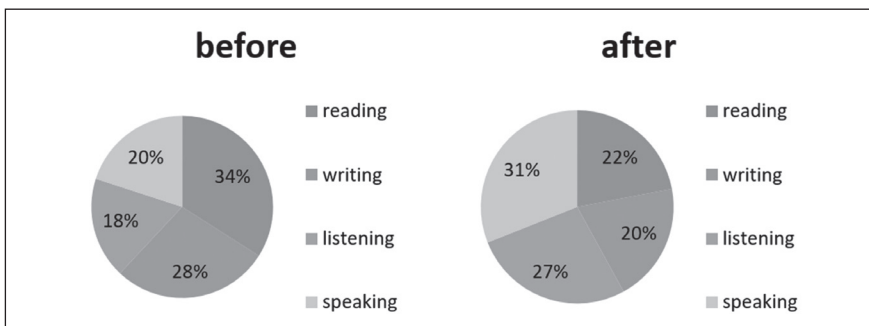
Figure 3. Percentage ratio of time distribution on the development of language skills when planning lessons BEFORE and AFTER updating the content of education

"Please describe one effective activity that you use to stimulate authentic spontaneous speech interactions between learners".

Among the activities that stimulated / motivated learners to authentic, spontaneous, speech interaction, the respondents listed authentic situations (36% of teachers), conversations in the classroom with a guide (22%), as well as work with a partner or group, including group evaluation (22%). The teachers also mentioned the use of audio / visual tips to exchange views, disscussions and motivation to discussions (12%). 10% of teachers mentioned actions that included the use of language in context, activities based on demands and projects based on "I can" structure.

"What change in your teaching practice after the update of the curriculum do you think has had the greatest impact on the academic achievements of your students?"

The respondents believe that academic progress of their learners was mostly affected by the application of interactive methods of teaching to everyday class routine (44% of teachers), less focus on the use of decontextualized grammar, a large concentration on language competences in context (18%), as well as the use of authentic resources (17%). The teachers also noted the positive impact of clear criteria and goals set in the curriculum (21%).

Thus, the practical application of innovative approaches to teaching is characterized by a high communicative opportunity and the active inclusion of students into the learning process, the potential of activating speaking and listening skills effectively develops the skills of communicative competence. The survey participants noted in their responses that the use of communicative and interactive teaching methods increase the interest of students to study English, contributes to the improvement of their academic achievements.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to note the following: modern foreign language education implemented on the basis of the state compulsory standards of education should be fully related to their target landmarks and at the same time correspond to the innovative orientation of the educational process on teaching foreign languages. To fulfill these tasks, it is necessary to develop appropriate methodological platform and apply effective methods and technologies of

teaching. We believe that interactive approach and ICT possess this potential. The integration of these approaches into teaching practice guarantees the effectiveness of learning English as a foreign language.

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