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Edited by Renata Geld and Stela Letica Krevelj

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1.1. Foreword

This volume stems from University of Zagreb Round Table 2018 (UZRT 2018) conference, a yearly event which is organized alternately by the University of Pecs and the University of Zagreb.

The volume comprises nine empirical studies which cover various topics and contribute to the wealth of knowledge in the field of applied linguistics. The contributions tackle a number of questions pertaining to fundamental language skills, cognitive and affective factors in L2 language learning, multilingualism, aspects of language teacher education, blended learning, language assessment, and aspects of learners' contact with L2 outside classroom.

Even though most of the papers have the English language as their direct or indirect focus, we believe that the range of educational and sociolinguistic settings as well as the fact that they address both teachers and learners as subjects of inquiry make the volume appealing to a wider audience of researchers, teachers and students, as well as curriculum designers and developers.

We would like to thank the authors and reviewers for their thoughtful contributions, and hope the content of the volume will raise new research questions and inquiries.

The editors

On the nature of relationship between self-regulation and lexical competence

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1. Introduction

The complex construct of lexical competence has generated a plethora of approaches to modelling its multidimensionality. Thus, separate traits models itemize and describe all aspects and dimensions of lexical knowledge (cf. Nation, 2001; Milton 2009), global traits models attempt to encompass a few essential dimensions that represent the main characteristics of lexical knowledge and are unrelated to the features of individual lexemes (cf. Daller et al., 2007; Bulté et al. 2008). In addition, the models may include dimensions to account for the difference between the receptive and productive aspects of lexical competence or for word networks created in a person's mental lexicon. Productive vocabulary knowledge can be further divided in: *controlled*, which involves "producing words when prompted by a task" (e.g. cloze and translation tests) and *free*, dealing with the "use of words at one's free will, without any specific prompts for particular words", as is the case of free writing (Laufer, 1998, p. 257).

An inspection of these models reveals that the number of proposed dimensions differs, but most models recognize the theoretical constructs of size, width and depth of vocabulary knowledge which are statistically measured by the corresponding behavioural constructs of lexical diversity, lexical density or productivity, and lexical sophistication (Read, 2000).

However, in order to understand the process of vocabulary learning observing only lexical issues does not suffice. Other factors influencing lexical development must be taken into consideration, which include learners' engagement and action, which assumes learners' ability to employ learning strategies and tactics to regulate their learning (Tseng & Schmitt, 2008: 358).

The present study is an attempt to explore the role that self-regulated vocabulary learning may play in lexical competence of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

The paper is organized as follows: first, the concepts of language learning strategies and self-regulated learning are defined and explained, then the lexical dimensions pertinent to the study are outlined. The study is described in section 2. The conclusions, implications and future research paths close the paper.

1.1. Language learning strategies vs. self-regulated learning

When learning a foreign language, learners adopt numerous language learning strategies, i.e. "actions chosen by learners (either deliberately or automatically) for the purpose of learning or regulating the learning of language" (Griffiths, 2015, p. 426). Language learning strategies (LLSs) have raised considerable interest among experts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), which has led to establishing a strong research community committed to studying them. Forty years of research of LLSs has generated significant insights into this aspect of learners' individual differences, depicting what learners do in order to tackle language learning problems (cf. Macaro, 2006; Cohen & Macaro 2007; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014). Nevertheless, it has also attracted criticism due to a range of pending issues such as the lack of a unanimous definition of the construct of strategy, problematic classifications and inadequate research instruments (cf. Dörnyei, 2005; Rose, 2012a; 2012b).

The ongoing argument about the exact nature of LLSs and the methods of studying them led to a rather revolutionary proposal put forward by Dörnyei (2005) who suggested the focus of research should be on studying a trait, i.e. students' aptitude for strategic learning, rather than on specific learning behaviours (i.e. LLSs) which are simply the result of aptitude-driven efforts. He referred to this aptitude as self-regulated learning (SRL), drawing on the legacy of a well-established research field in education and psychology that has only recently extended its reach to the second language acquisition (SLA) research (Collett, 2014). A widely accepted definition of SRL describes it as "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453). SLA theorists have discussed self-regulation as a broader construct which, in addition to LLSs, also includes autonomy, metacognition, motivation, and self-management (Chamot, 2014). Gao (2007) believes that the study of self-regulated learning should not lead to replacing but rather complementing LLS research, where self-regulation measures the initial force and the strategy research measures the outcomes. Likewise, Oxford (2011, 2017) has incorporated the concept of self-regulation into the existing paradigms of strategies, emphasizing that on the one hand, strategies are vital elements of most theories of self-regulation and on the other hand, self-regulation is the major purpose of LLS use (Oxford, 2017).

As a result of new research possibilities opening up by introducing the construct of self-regulation LLSs research has taken a number of directions identified by Rose et al.

(2018): (i) study of self-regulation has replaced LLS research; (ii) self-regulation is acknowledged within existing conceptualizations of LLS (e.g. existing instruments have been adapted to provide psychometrically-sound measures of LLSs); and (iii) LLS research is re-conceptualized (theory from both self-regulation and LLS research is considered). Not surprisingly, these findings indicate that LLS research has not been terminated by the introduction of the concept of self-regulation because LLSs "are the raw material of learner agency and a key to understanding achievement, or the lack thereof" (Ranalli, 2012, p. 373) and, as specific learning behaviours, will continue to draw attention in spite of difficulties of defining the right approach to measuring them.

This study sets out to research the concept of self-regulation as students' aptitude to be strategic about their vocabulary learning, as envisaged by Dörnyei (2005), and embodied in the Tseng et al.'s (2006) seminal study focusing on the development of a new instrument for measuring self-regulation in vocabulary learning. The instrument, called Self-regulatory Capacity for Vocabulary Learning (SRCvoc) (Tseng et al., 2006), embodies the proposed idea that conceptualizing and assessing strategic learning should be based on the learners' innate self-regulatory capacity, i.e. a trait, rather than the specific strategic behaviours they engage in while learning. It is a questionnaire limited to measuring self-regulatory capacity in the domain of vocabulary learning, following the authors' conviction that each domain should be treated separately because it is not possible to design an instrument to embrace all language aspects. The structure and content of the questionnaire are based on taxonomies of action control strategies developed by Dörnyei (2001), thus the 20 items measure five different facets of self-regulatory capacity for vocabulary learning, each measured by 4 items of the questionnaire. Commitment control refers to the learners' ability to preserve or increase their commitment to achieving the original goal (e.g. Item 10: *When learning vocabulary, I persist until I reach the goals that I make for myself.*). Metacognitive control involves monitoring and controlling of concentration and reducing procrastination (e.g. Item 5: *When learning vocabulary, I have special techniques to keep my concentration focused.*). Satiation control indicates the ability to eliminate boredom and to add extra appeal to the task (e.g. Item 1: *Once the novelty of learning vocabulary is gone, I easily become impatient with it.*). Emotion control pertains to eliminating turbulent emotions or moods, and generating emotions more conducive to learning (e.g. Item 6: *I feel satisfied with the methods I use to reduce the stress of vocabulary learning.*). Environmental control concerns managing environmental influences by making them supportive in attaining the set goals (e.g. Item 20: *When learning vocabulary, I look for a good learning environment.*).

Rose et al.'s (2018) findings show that this approach to LLS research has thus far been limited to the validation or adaptation studies of this work indicating that the potential of this approach has not yet been fully exploited. This study will attempt to partly fill this gap in research by providing some answers pertaining to the relationship of self-regulated vocabulary learning and lexical competence.

1.2. Aspects of lexical knowledge

One of the analytical frameworks for researching the development of lexical competence, put forward by Bulté et al. (2008), is shown in Picture 1. Lexical proficiency is defined as a cognitive construct consisting of the declarative and the procedural component. Procedural lexical competence, comprising learners' control over this knowledge, accounts for the manner of online lexical access, retrieval and (de)coding. The declarative component, entailing the components of size, width and depth of lexical knowledge, accounts for much of the complexity of lexical knowledge. Because these theoretical constructs cannot be observed or measured, conclusions must be drawn on the basis of the manifestations of the cognitive constructs in learners' comprehension and production. Thus, the declarative component is operationalised via the lower-order constructs of lexical diversity, sophistication, complexity and productivity.

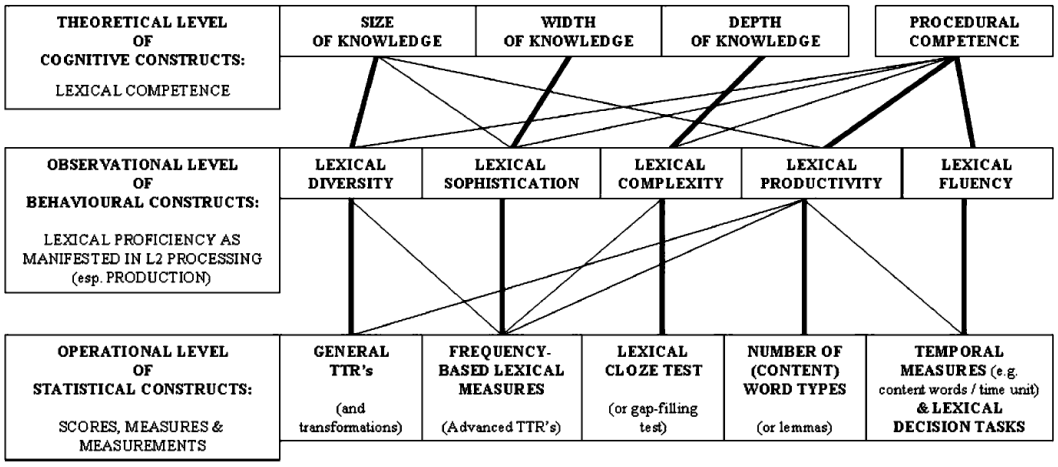

Figure 1. Analytical framework for researching the development of lexical competence (from Bulté et al. 2008)

The behavioural constructs adopted for this study were lexical density, lexical diversity and lexical sophistication. This triad of interrelated aspects of lexical competence have been used elsewhere in research to depict the multidimensional feature of learners' language production referred to as lexical richness (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Read, 2000). Read's (2000) conceptualization of lexical richness also involves the fourth element - lexical errors – that are, however, not in the focus of the current research. The construct of lexical richness has been proved to relate directly to the learners' ability to engage in effective spoken and written communication (Lu, 2012) which makes it a significant construct in SLA research. The terminology allocated to the constructs adopted for this research is not yet fully stable. Thus, what is indicated as lexical productivity in Bulté et al.'s (2008) framework is also known as lexical density in other research (e.g. Lu, 2012), and it stands for the ratio

of the number of lexical words to the total number of words in a text. Lexical diversity**,** also known as lexical variation (Read, 2000; Lu, 2012) refers to the range of learners' vocabulary as displayed in their language use. Finally, lexical sophistication or lexical rareness is "the proportion of relatively unusual or advanced words in the learner's text" (Read, 2000, p. 203).

The advance of research on lexical richness has been accompanied by the development of a range of improved measures, i.e. statistical constructs that operationalise the various components of lexical richness. Research pertaining to these statistical indices has indicated the most reliable ones (Lu, 2012; McCarthy and Jarvis, 2007, 2010), which were selected for inclusion in this study (Picture 2). As can be seen, there is a wide range of measures of lexical diversity. The original measures of lexical diversity (e.g. number of different words – NDW; type token ratio - TTR) proved to be sensitive to the length of language sample which prompted pursuit of more reliable measures, often based on different sampling techniques. Taking into account lexical sophistication as one of the measures puts focus on the frequency with which particular words are generally used in a language. A larger number of low-frequency words used in a text would indicate a higher level of vocabulary knowledge. Such approach was adopted by Laufer and Nation (1995) in designing their Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) which calculates the proportion of word types in a text at different levels of frequency (in the first 1,000 most frequent words, the second 1,000 most frequent words, the university word list and those not included in any of these three).

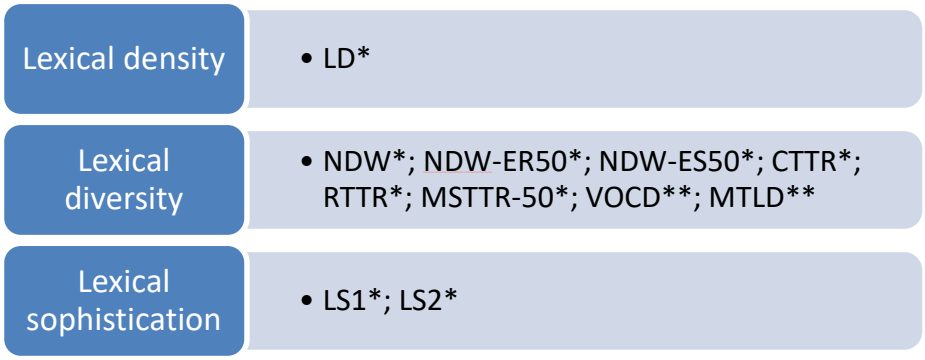

Figure 2. * - according to Lu, 2012; ** - according to McCarthy and Jarvis, 2007, 2010

2. The study

2.1. Aim

The main aim of this study is to explore the role of self-regulated vocabulary learning in students' productive lexical competence. Accordingly, there are two research questions that the study will try to answer:

RQ 1: Is there a correlation between students' self-regulatory capacity for vocabulary learning and lexical diversity, density and sophistication of their writing?

RQ 2: How much of the variance in lexical competence scores can be explained by the five dimensions of self-regulation in vocabulary learning (i.e. commitment control, metacognitive control, satiation control, emotion control and environmental control): Which of these facets is a better predictor of each of the indicators of lexical competence, i.e. a) lexical diversity, b) lexical density, and c) lexical sophistication?

2.2. Instruments

In order to provide answers to the two research questions the study applied three instruments:

1) Self-regulating capacity in Vocabulary Learning Scale (SRCvoc) (Tseng et al., 2006); 2) measures of lexical diversity, density and sophistication as operationalisations of the construct of lexical competence; and 3) students' written texts.

SRCvoc is a questionnaire measuring self-regulated capacity for vocabulary learning. The items in the questionnaire are worded as general declarations or conditional relations and there are no specific strategic behaviours mentioned. The response to the questionnaire items is given on a 6-item Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". In statistical data analysis attention should be paid to the two negatively worded items that require re-coding (1 and 12). The questionnaire items ($\alpha = 0.845$) form five subscales: commitment control ($\alpha = 0.592$), metacognitive control ($\alpha = 0.663$), satiation control ($\alpha = 0.557$), emotion control ($\alpha = 0.654$), and environment control ($\alpha = 0.507$). The reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha as measured for each scale is lower in this study than in the original questionnaire (commitment: $\alpha = 0.81$; metacognitive: 0.71; satiation: 0.80; emotion: 0.82; environment: 0.74). The replications conducted in Japan and Iran also showed lower Cronbach alpha values than the original ones (commitment: 0.63 in Japan and 0.65 in Iran; metacognitive: 0.74 in Japan and 0.66 in Iran; satiation: 0.71 in Japan and 0.42 in Iran; emotion: 0.66 in Japan and 0.69 in Iran; environment: 0.67 in Japan and 0.65 in Iran) (for details see Mizumoto and Takeutchi, 2012; Doaee et al., 2017). The Turkish validation of SRCvoc reported on the overall Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = 0.89$) but did not provide reliability coefficients of each particular subscale (Yeşilbursa & Bilican, 2013). However, the authors did report on problems with several items and concluded although SRCvoc proved to be a reliable and valid instrument "it may be be sensitive to cultural differences, and hence further studies need to be conducted in different cultural contexts with participants of different ages to shed more light on the concept." (Yeşilbursa & Bilican, 2013: 885).

As for lexical knowledge, this study has opted for measuring the productive knowledge given the fact that the study participants have a relatively high level of English

proficiency and often claim they have a higher receptive than productive command of the language. The analysis of students' lexical competence was conducted within the analytical framework for researching the development of lexical competence put forward by Bulté et al. (2008) (cf. Picture 1). As has been stated, the behavioural constructs included in this study were lexical density, lexical diversity and lexical sophistication. *Lexical density* (LD) was measured by a single index which stands for the ratio of the number of lexical words to the total number of words in a text. Based on Lu (2012) the following indices of *lexical diversity* were included in the study: NDW (number of different words), NDW-ER50 (expected random 50; calculated as the mean number of different words of 10 random 50-word samples), NDW-ES50 (expected sequence 50; calculated as the mean number of different words of 10 random 50-word sequences), CTTR (corrected type token ratio), RTTR (root type token ratio), MSTTR-50 (mean type token ratio of all 50-word segments). Two more measures were added following McCarthy and Jarvis (2007, 2010) who are strong advocates of VOCD, calculated through random sampling or sequential sampling, and MTLD (measure of textual lexical diversity), "calculated as the mean length of sequential word strings in a text that maintain a given TTR value" (McCarthy & Jarvis, 2010, p. 384). The authors consider these to be more robust approaches to lexical diversity assessment and yet they advise researchers to use a combination of indices rather than any single index. Two indices of *lexical sophistication* were used in this study: LS1 stands for the ratio of sophisticated lexical words to the total number of lexical words while LS2 refers to the ratio of the sophisticated word types to the total number of word types in a text (Lu, 2012). The statistical indices were calculated using the online tools described below (see section 2.4.).

In order to obtain a sample of students' real language for which the described lexical measures can be taken we opted for eliciting free production in form of written compositions, the form whose level of complexity allows us to distinguish between more proficient and less proficient writers (Laufer, 1998).

2.3. Participants and data collection

The participants of this study were 84 students of the Tourism study programmes at the Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism, University of Split. The study involved both students of undergraduate (N=48) and professional study (N=36) programmes who took English for Specific Purposes (English in Tourism 1 and 2) as obligatory courses in the first two semesters. The current syllabi for these courses include a series of written assignments related to the studied topics. One of the assignments, related to the topic of accommodation, required students to write a text describing property (real or imagined) to be advertised on Airbnb. The text structure was provided in form of the subtitles following the Airbnb's guidelines for property description: The space, Guest access, Interaction with guests, The neighbourhood, Getting around. Besides offering scaffolding to the inexperienced writers

this structure was also meant to make the texts more comparable. The length requirement was between 300 and 500 words. The length of the 84 analysed texts ranged from 139 to 616 words. For the needs of this study the task was performed under test conditions to ensure the texts were actual students' free production. The writing took place on the computers in the IT lab where students were logged in the exam mode. Such setup connects all students' computers to the central one (that of a researcher) making it possible for students to access the task and to submit the task in a common folder which facilitates the process of task administration (allocation and submission). More importantly, this setup does not allow importing any external documents or information and it does not allow access to any external sources of information (e.g. the Internet).

SRCvoc was administered on a different occasion. In order to ensure students' anonymity but be able to match the two submissions (the text and the questionnaire) we asked participants to code their contributions following these guidelines: 1st letter in their mother's name, 1st letter in their father's name, F or M (for female or male), date of birth (two digits).

The following section explains how we approached data analysis and what tools were used for that purpose.

2.4. Data analysis

The statistical analysis of the data was performed using SPSS 23.0 (2015). In particular, the correlations between the five facets of self-regulatory capacity of vocabulary learning and the selected indices of lexical density, diversity and sophistication were calculated. Also, we ran a series of regression analyses with all lexical measures as dependent variables.

Two lexical density measures (VOCD and MTLD) were calculated using the Text Inspector (2018) while the rest of statistical indices described in 2.2.2. were generated using the Lexical Complexity Analyzer (Ai & Lu, 2010). Before submitting the texts to the automatic analysis performed by these two online tools they had to be pre-processed: numbers were removed; proper nouns were deleted (e.g. names of cities, streets, restaurants, etc.); spelling errors were corrected. Such methodological decisions were made because keeping the removed items would have affected the results and/or their interpretation (see for example Granger & Wynne, 1999). The latter two interventions were to ensure that the automatic analysis programmes did not recognise the proper nouns and spelling mistakes as rare words, thus mistakenly increasing the values of the calculated indices. For example, the word lists applied in measuring sophistication do not contain names of the cities and would classify these words as rare and the text itself would have an inflated lexical sophistication score. The same is true of spelling mistakes which would produce the words not included in any of the frequency word lists. For the same reason the texts would also seem to be characterised by higher lexical density and diversity.

3. Results

In order to answer the research question 1 correlation analysis was run between the five facets of self-regulatory capacity for vocabulary learning and all the statistical indices of lexical density, diversity and sophistication selected for this study. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations between five facets of the self-regulatory capacity for vocabulary learning and measures of lexical density, diversity and sophistication (N = 84)

	commitment	**metacognitive**	**satiation**	**emotion**	**environmental**
lexical density	.063	.063	.150	.213	.014
NDW	.129	.186	.253*	.202	.057
NDWERZ	-.070	-.096	-.077	-.105	-.015
NDWESZ	-.200	-.043	-.043	-.066	.030
MSTTR	-.143	-.053	.036	-.048	-.047
CTTR	-.031	.046	.069	.068	-.057
RTTR	.075	.088	.167	.149	-.007
VOCD	-.074	-.040	-.034	-.029	.020
MTLD	-.098	-.044	-.007	-.030	.005
LS1	.039	.057	.128	.084	.100
LS2	.057	.050	.154	.144	-.033

*$p < 0.05$

As indicated by the results only one correlation showed low statistical significance at the 0.05 level (r = .253). This is the correlation between satiation control and one of the measures of lexical diversity (NDW – number of different words). This result could potentially indicate that the students who are better able to eliminate boredom and to add extra appeal to the task when learning vocabulary also have a wider range of vocabulary as displayed in their language use. This is, however, not supported by any other of the

remaining 7 measures of lexical diversity. The rest of the correlations were not significant. This leads us to conclude that there is no correlation between the five facets of self-regulatory capacity of vocabulary learning and the students' lexical competence operationalised by the three measures of lexical richness (lexical density, lexical diversity, and lexical sophistication).

Next, in order to answer the research question 2 we ran a number of regression analyses with all lexical measures as dependent variables and SRCvoc facets as predictors. In total, eleven regression models were run. As shown in Table 2 the variance in the dependent variances explained by the models is minute (between 0.7 and 7 %). None of the models were significant and none of the predictors reached statistical significance which means that SRCvoc facets are not predictors of lexical competence as measured by these indices.

Table 2. Results of the regression analysis with the range of lexical measures as dependent variables and five facets of the self-regulatory capacity for vocabulary learning as independent variables

Dependent variable	**R**	**R^2**	**adjusted R^2**	**Sig**
lexical density	.272	.074	.015	.296
NDW	.153	.023	-.039	.865
NDWERZ	.214	.046	-.016	.591
NDWESZ	.085	.007	-.056	.989
MSTTR	.110	.012	-.051	.965
CTTR	.268	.072	.012	.315
RTTR	.112	.013	-.051	.963
VOCD	.229	.053	-.008	.509
MTLD	.161	.026	-.036	.836
LS1	.199	.040	-.022	.668
LS2	.185	.034	-.028	.736

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper we addressed the issue of the relationship of lexical competence and self-regulatory capacity of vocabulary learning. It was assumed that a greater ability to self-regulate ones' vocabulary learning would lead to greater vocabulary gains, i.e. higher lexical proficiency. Furthermore, it was assumed that this relationship would best be captured by measuring lexical richness of free productive use of language on the one hand, and applying a psychometrically valid measure of self-regulation on the other hand.

The results showed that there was no correlation between students' self-regulatory capacity (measured by SRCvoc) and lexical density, diversity and sophistication of their writing (measured by LD, NDW, NDW-ER50, NDW-ES50, CTTR, RTTR, MSTTR-50, VOCD, MTLD, LS1, LS2). In other words, the results suggest that students with a higher lexical competence (operationalised as the three measures of lexical richness) are not those who perceive themselves as being more highly self-regulated in vocabulary learning and vice versa, those students who achieved higher scores on the self-regulation instrument did not produce lexically richer texts. Accordingly, the regression analyses ran with the selected lexical measures as dependent variables showed that self-regulation as measured by SRCvoc is not a predictor of lexical competence. These findings imply that factors other than self-regulation as conceptualised in the SRCvoc might have stronger influence on lexical proficiency. Learner-dependent factors that have a stronger predictive power may well be vocabulary learning strategies, i.e. actual behaviours/actions students adopt when learning vocabulary. According to Gu (2018) this could also be more useful since SRCvoc – being a measure of learner's capacity for self-management and control – lacks the ability of indicating the actual ways in which vocabulary should best be learned.

5. Limitations of the study

The findings of the present study could be attributed to the possible limitations of the study. These limitations also indicate the way forward for future research in this field.

Not finding any correlation between the aptitude for being strategic about one's vocabulary learning (the "trait approach") and the lexical competence calls for re-introducing the study of strategies students employ in vocabulary learning, as has been indicated above. This would necessitate introducing a strategy inventory questionnaire in the study design.

Next, as already mentioned accuracy is an important element of lexical competence but was not the focus of this study. Adding lexical error analysis would generate one more variable whose relationship with the five self-regulation facets could be explored thus potentially providing a deeper insight into the role of self-regulation in lexical competence.

Also, instead of individual lexical measures, a more holistic assessment score of lexical competence as the dependent variable might yield different results.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the present sample may have played a role in the study's outcome. The respondents in this study were non-language majors who had been exposed to many years of both instructed and naturalistic English language learning. This may have resulted in the decline of self-regulation of vocabulary learning or the lack of awareness of strategies used to this end, as a result of a relatively high language proficiency. It appears possible that the results may be different in studies involving participants at lower levels of language learning or at different age levels, or those of different professions and cultural backgrounds. Having a larger sample may also prove beneficial.

Finally, one cannot disregard the possibility that the underlying self-regulation model stemming from the volitional theory of self-regulation does not optimally account for language learners' approaches to vocabulary learning. Therefore, an attempt can be made to look at self-regulation in vocabulary learning using a different theoretical model (for examples of self-regulation theories and models see e.g. Ranalli, 2012; Panadero, 2017).

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The Application of Objective Measures of Text Difficulty to Language Examinations

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1. Introduction

The comparability of language examinations has long been an issue all over the world. While not all language examinations target specific levels, most of them claim to test candidates' language proficiency as related to specifically defined level requirements, which are either generally accessible or are specific to the exam. With the publication of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 2001), exam providers have increasingly been adding CEFR labels to their exams; thus, comparability has become an ever growing concern, and the main issue seems to have been the question of how successfully exams are aligned with the CEFR levels (cf. Harsch & Hartig, 2015; Martyniuk, 2010). Although a detailed set of guidelines concerning alignment have now been available for quite some time in the form of the *Manual for Relating Examinations to the CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2009), the doubts about the comparability of supposedly CEFR-based examinations continue to prevail (e.g., Vinther, 2013).

In the Hungarian context language examinations are typically offered in the framework of national accreditation, which is a requirement for exam providers to offer nationally acknowledged exam certificates. The accreditation procedure is discussed in the *Accreditation Handbook* (Educational Authority, 2018, Chapter 2), and it includes procedures to verify whether the exams are sufficiently linked to the CEFR levels. While the rigorous procedures are intended to guarantee the comparability of the exams, so far few empirical studies (e.g., Szabó & Kiszely, 2010) have attempted to verify this assumption. In this paper a study is presented in which the texts used in the B2 level reading comprehension papers of four commercial examinations and the advanced level school-leaving examination (also recognized as an examination at level B2) are compared in order to examine whether the texts are of the same level of difficulty.

2. Background

The construction of reading comprehension tests necessitates the selection of appropriate texts, which meet requirements that are determined by the specifics of the context for the test. One such requirement tends to be the level of the text. While the term "level" is frequently used in this context, determining the level of an actual text may be more challenging than one might presume. First, the level of the text is usually interpreted in relation to the comprehensibility of the meaning of the text. Meaning, however, is not a clear-cut concept. Instead of meaning, it may be more appropriate to discuss the concept of meaning potential (Halliday, 1978), i.e. the view that texts have no meaning as such; rather, they have potential for meaning, which then is realized in turn by the reader. Indeed, Alderson even argues that individual readers construct unique understandings of a text (Alderson, 2000, p. 6). Along the same lines, one may even argue that, because of unique interpretations, texts do not even *have* levels, only particular characteristics. While this may appear to be a rather extreme position, it demonstrates how challenging it may be to come to a decision concerning a text's level. The problematic nature of determining text levels is further supported by the fact that texts may be understood at different levels depending on level of detail and interpretation. This approach to text difficulty is, in fact, supported by the CEFR, as the descriptors frequently differentiate levels based on whether only the main points, or also details or even implied messages of the texts are understood (cf. Council of Europe, 2001).

Text level, then, can be interpreted in a variety of ways; yet, several attempts have been made in order to somehow quantify this property of texts in the form of various indices designed to capture the elusive idea of text difficulty, and thus text level. Most of these measures have been readability indices, probably the best known ones of which are the Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level indices, both of which are based on a hypothetical relationship between the number of words, the number of sentences and the number of syllables (Klare, 1974-1975). Several authors (e.g., Alderson, 2000; Brown, 1998), however, have been quite critical of these indices, especially in an L2 environment, mainly on grounds that they are too simplistic.

Recently, more elaborate attempts have been made to develop measures of text difficulty, an example of which is the Coh-Metrix readability formula (Graesser, McNamara, & Kulikowich, 2011). Coh-Metrix describes text characteristics with the help of 53 measures. As interpreting such a large number of measures would be rather impractical, principle component analysis has been used to reduce the number of measures to eight principal components: narrativity, referential cohesion, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, causal cohesion, verb cohesion, logical cohesion, and temporal cohesion. These components have then in turn been mapped to the five-level theoretical model proposed by Graesser and McNamara (2011): Genre (narrativity), Situation model (causal cohesion, verb cohesion,

logical cohesion, and temporal cohesion), Textbase (referential cohesion), Syntax (syntactic simplicity), and Words (word concreteness). Thus, Coh-Metrix results are expressed along these five dimensions, which makes interpretation significantly easier to follow.

On the basis of Coh-Metrix results, a specific L2 readability index has also been constructed, which relies on a lexical, a syntactic and a meaning construction index (Crossley, Greenfield, & McNamara, 2008). The formula has also been compared to traditional formulas developed to measure readability and was found to be superior to them (Crossley, Allen, & McNamara, 2011).

Since Coh-Metrix combines several different facets of text difficulty, it seems like an ideal instrument to be applied for determining text levels in a variety of contexts. Accordingly, in the following Coh-Metrix indices will be utilized to perform a comparative analysis of texts.

3. The study

3.1. Research design

As was mentioned above, the current study intended to compare the difficulties of the texts used in B2 level English reading comprehension examinations. The study was focusing on English, as it is by far the most commonly learned foreign language in Hungary, and on level B2, because this level is the most popular one in nationally accredited examinations. Data were to be collected from sample materials of four nationally accredited commercial examinations, as well as live test materials used in the advanced level school-leaving examination, which is also officially recognized as a B2 level exam. The materials to be analyzed included all texts used in the reading component of the respective examinations. This meant that in the case of tasks where the texts were not presented to candidates in a complete form (e.g., banked gap-filling), texts were reconstructed into their original form. Thus, the texts, regardless of what task types they were linked to in the exams, became comparable. The advantage of this approach was that, unlike in a similar earlier study (Szabó, 2014), the comparative analysis could be performed on all texts used in each exam, thus providing a more comprehensive account of the difficulty of the texts used.

The actual analysis was conducted using two web tools made available on the Coh-Metrix website: the *Coh-Metrix Common Core Text Ease and Readability Assessor (TERA)* web tool and the *Coh-Metrix* web tool (McNamara, Louwerse, Cai, & Graesser, 2013). These two web tools provide a large number of measures related to text difficulty and readability. The current study relied on the following ones:

- narrativity
- syntactic simplicity
- word concreteness

- referential cohesion
- deep cohesion
- Coh-Metrix L2 readability.

The first five of these measures are provided by TERA, where the results are expressed in percentile figures. A sample TERA output is presented in Figure 1.

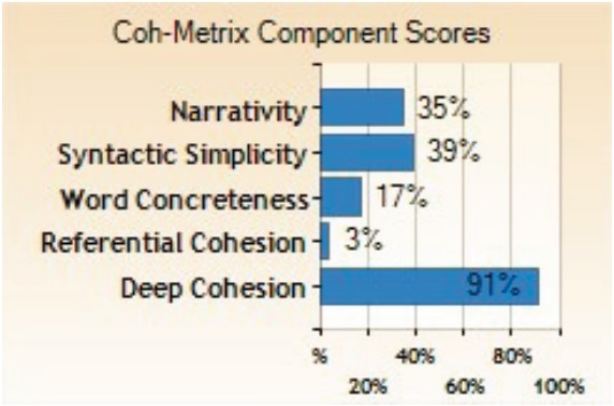

Figure 1. Sample TERA output

Narrativity represents a continuum stretching between texts that are highly narrative in nature, believed to be easier to process, and informational texts, which are more difficult to understand. Narrative texts contain a high proportion of frequent words and easy-to-understand verbs as well as pronouns making texts more engaging for readers (Jackson, Allen, & McNamara, 2017, p. 55.)

Syntactic simplicity is defined in terms of the complexity of sentences in the text. The measure is based on several indices of syntactic complexity, including the number of clauses and the number of words in a sentence, as well as the number of words before the main clause. The similarities in sentence construction across paragraphs are also taken into account (Jackson et al., 2017, p. 56.).

Word concreteness is based on the proportion of abstract and concrete words in the text. Abstract words are believed to make comprehension more difficult; therefore, a text with a large proportion of concrete words is thought to be easier to understand (Jackson et al., 2017, p. 57.).

Referential cohesion is expressed in terms overlap between words, word stems and concepts from sentence to sentence. A high proportion of overlaps is considered to make comprehension easier (Jackson et al., 2017, p. 57.).

Deep cohesion as a measure is based on the number of connectives in the text, representing how well the events or the various bits of information in the text are tied together. A high number of connectives indicates stronger links, making comprehension

easier (Jackson et al., 2017, p. 58.).

The fifth measure, *L2 readability*, is accessible with the Coh-Metrix web tool, and it is expressed as a score, which is based on lexical frequency, syntactic similarity, and content word overlap (Crossley, Greenfield, & McNamara, 2008).

Once the indices above were obtained for all texts, statistical checks for significant differences across the texts were performed. On the one hand, it was examined whether the texts used in the same exam showed any differences; on the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, it was checked whether the texts used in different exams showed any significant differences. In order to detect significant differences, an independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test was run. The rationale for this procedure was that, since all the readability indices discussed above feed into the same construct, they may legitimately be considered as different facets of the same property of a text (i.e. difficulty). Hence, all the indices can be treated as scores, even if on an ordinal rather than an interval scale.

It is important to clarify that this study did not intend to map Coh-Metrix scores on the CEFR or vice versa. While references are made in the discussion to how TERA measures may be explained in terms of CEFR descriptors, this can only be done in a tentative manner. The reason for this is that the Coh-Metrix based quantitative measures and the qualitative CEFR descriptors approach difficulty from different perspectives: Coh-Metrix focuses on objectively measurable text properties, while the CEFR descriptors intend to capture what learners at particular levels can do. Thus, the purpose of the study was rather to approach the texts that have most probably been chosen with CEFR levels in mind using a set of objective measures of text readability to see how they compare.

3.2. Method

As has been discussed earlier, the data for the analysis comprised texts. They were collected from the sample reading tests provided on their homepages by four major commercial exam providers in Hungary: BME, ECL, Euro and Origo. Since the exams have differing structures, the number of texts in each exam is not the same, either. Yet, since the sample materials are to demonstrate the format of the complete reading component in each case, the texts collected may well be considered to be representative of the respective exams' reading components. Three texts were collected from BME, two from ECL, three from Euro and two from Origo. The fifth source of texts was the reading component of the May 2018 version of the advanced level school-leaving exam, which included four texts. It is worth noting that this latter exam was the only one where the analysis could be performed on live test materials.

3.3. Results and discussion

First of all, it seems appropriate to examine the actual figures yielded by the analysis measure by measure. The results for each measure are presented in separate Figures where the texts belonging to the same examination are marked by the same color and have a sequence number. The different examinations are referred to by their names, while the school-leaving exam is abbreviated as SLE. The first measure in line is Narrativity, depicted in Figure 2.

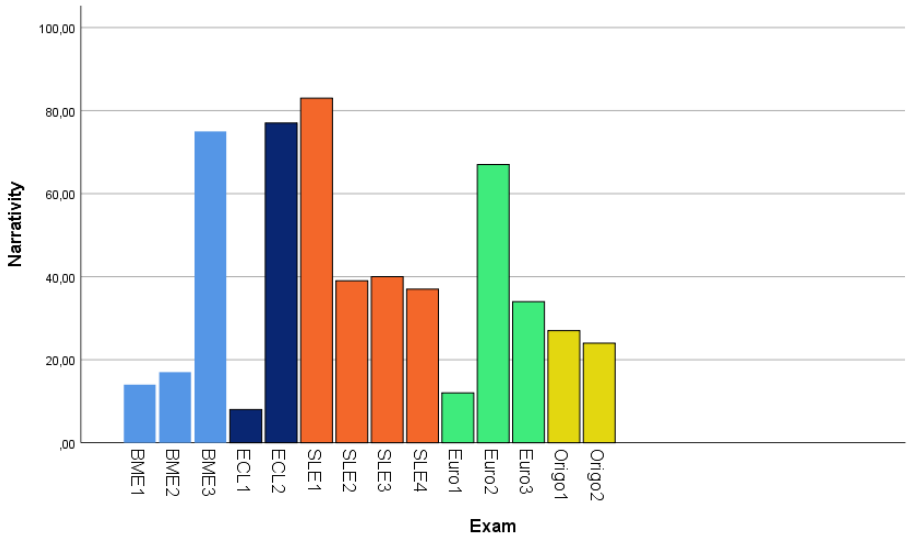

Figure 2. TERA results for "Narrativity"

As can be observed, results for Narrativity indicate considerable variety across the texts. The actual figures range from 8% (ECL1) to 83% (SLE1). Indeed, according to the TERA narrative descriptors, four texts (BME1, BME2, ECL1 and Euro1) are considered to be low in narrativity and thus more difficult to comprehend, another four texts (BME3, ECL2, SLE1 and Euro2) are high in narrativity and, accordingly, are easier to understand, while the rest of the texts are considered to be average in narrativity. Based on the above it seems reasonable to presume that the texts and thus the exams differ in difficulty. A note of caution is appropriate here, however. While narrativity clearly contributes to text difficulty, it would likely be unjustified to claim it is the main feature of text difficulty. Indeed, considering the characteristics of B2 level reading ability, it seems likely that texts at different levels of narrativity may still be considered to qualify for B2 level reading. This assumption is confirmed by a B2 descriptor from the "Overall reading comprehension" scale of the CEFR that says: "Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 69). The adaptation as well as the difference in texts and reading purposes point to a variety that could clearly include texts not characterized by a high degree

of narrativity. Another observation worth noting is the fact that, with the exception of Origo, texts show considerable variation in terms of narrativity within examinations. Euro is a particularly good example of this, where each of the three texts used shows markedly different degrees of narrativity. Considering the fact that validity is significantly supported by the broadest possible sampling of the content domain, a wide variety in terms of narrativity may, in fact, mark a greater degree of content validity.

Next, let us take a closer look at the results on the second measure provided by the analysis, Syntactic simplicity, in Figure 3.

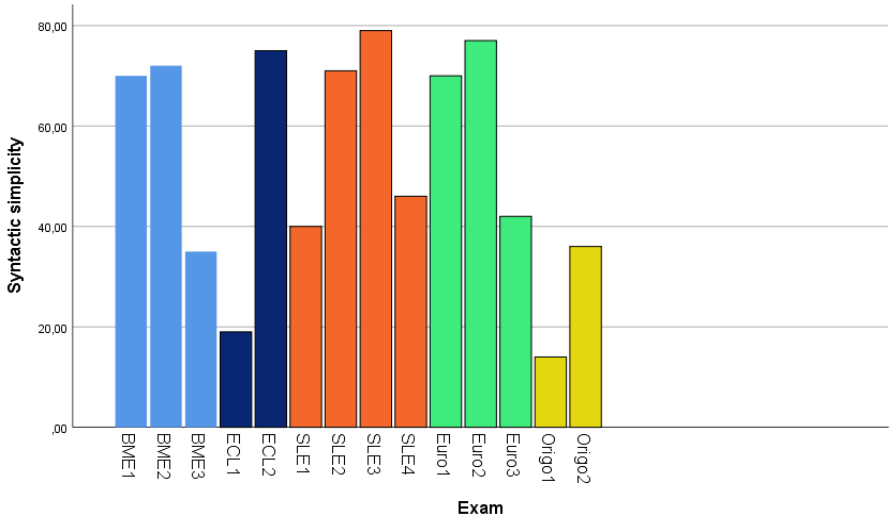

Figure 3. TERA results for "Syntactic simplicity"

Concerning this measure, the picture is slightly different, even though the spread is considerable again ranging from 14% (Origo1) to 79% (SLE3). There are only two texts (ECL1 and Oriogo1) that can be classified as low on syntactic simplicity and thus relatively difficult to read. Seven of the texts (BME1, BME2, ECL2, SLE2, SLE3, Euro1 and Euro2) yielded high scores on this measure, indicating that these texts are relatively easy, while the rest of the texts can be considered average on syntactic simplicity. Once again, it needs to be noted that while syntactic simplicity is a facet of difficulty, it is not necessarily a crucial factor. When attempting to evaluate these figures in light of the CEFR, we need to face a challenge. Though the CEFR discusses general linguistic range and grammatical accuracy in the form of descriptor scales, it does so almost exclusive with production in the focus. This is not fundamentally different in the recently published Companion Volume (CV) to the CEFR either; yet, the Grammatical Accuracy scale of the CV contains a new descriptor that may provide some guidance: "Has a good command of simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms, although he/she tends to use complex structures rigidly with some inaccuracy" (Council of Europe, 2017. p. 132). While the focus is clearly on production, having "a good command" of structures may well be interpreted as referring to reception as

well. If the descriptor is interpreted with this in mind, the few examples of texts with low levels of syntactic simplicity seem justified. All the more so, as, once again, variety can be observed within all examinations under scrutiny.

The third measure applied was Word concreteness. The results are presented in Figure 4. As is apparent, the texts examined show, once again, a considerable spread with respect to this measure, ranging from 13% (Euro3) to 95% (ECL1). There are three texts (BME3, ECL2 and Euro3) that are considered to be low on word concreteness, indicating that these texts are relatively difficult to understand, while six of the texts (ECL1, SLE1, SLE2, SLE4, Euro1 and Origo1) are high on word concreteness and are, in turn, relatively easy to comprehend. The remaining texts are considered average in terms of word concreteness. Just like in the case of the previous measures, we need to add here though that word concreteness alone is not to be interpreted as the ultimate measure of difficulty. In an attempt to evaluate the significance of these results, it seems reasonable to consult the scales in the CEFR that relate to vocabulary. A B2 level descriptor from the Overall Reading Comprehension scale says, for instance, that a reader at this level "has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 69). Another descriptor from the Vocabulary Range scale says that a reader at this level "has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 112). A new descriptor from the same scale, as presented in the CV says a B2 learner "can understand and use much of the specialist vocabulary of his/her field but has problems with specialist terminology outside of it" (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 131).

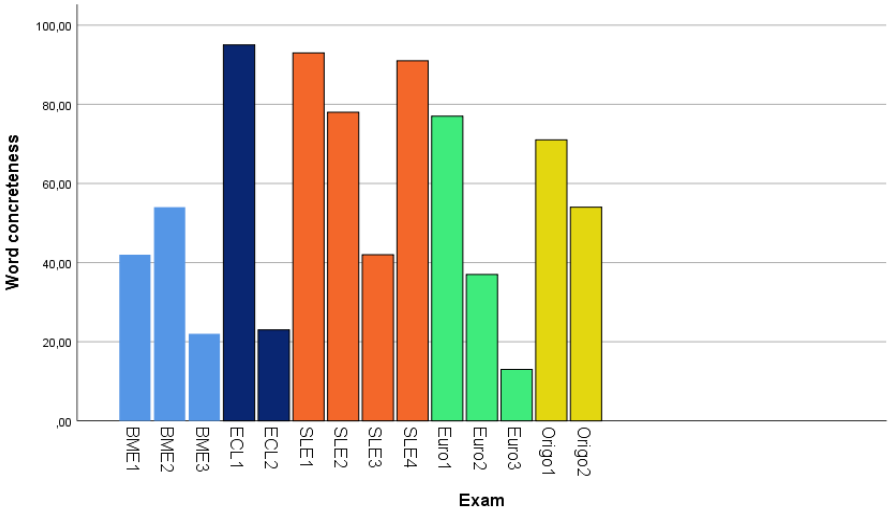

Figure 4. TERA results for "Word concreteness"

As can be seen, the scales are more informative in this case than concerning syntactic simplicity, even though word *concreteness* is not specifically addressed. Yet, the reference to "low frequency idioms" as well as "specialist terminology" seem to relate to word

concreteness (or the lack of it), indicating that at this level a higher degree of word concreteness is most probably acceptable. Just like in the case of the previous measures, variation within examinations is again to be emphasized, with Euro, once again, providing three texts with three markedly different levels of word concreteness, but other examinations, apparently, also sampling the construct with the help of texts differing in this respect.

The fourth measure to be examined is Referential cohesion. The results for this measure are presented in Figure 5. Compared to the previous measures, the figures here appear to be quite different. First, they are lower than in previous measures, and they also show a much narrower spread. The actual range is from 1% (BME2) to 31% (BME3 and SLE1). What this means is that all but the highest two texts fall into the low category on this measure, and even 31% means an average level of referential cohesion. To understand what may lie behind this phenomenon, it is worth coming back to the notion of referential cohesion. As has already been discussed, this property refers to the overlap that may exist between words, especially those referring to content, with the help of similar or identical words as well as the ideas they convey. A low level of referential cohesion is interpreted as a source of difficulty (McNamara, Graesser, Cai, & Kulikowich, 2011, p. 8). As the TERA analysis puts it, "… low referential cohesion indicates there is less overlap in explicit words and ideas between sentences. These conceptual gaps require the reader to make more inferences" (TERA text comparison, 2018).

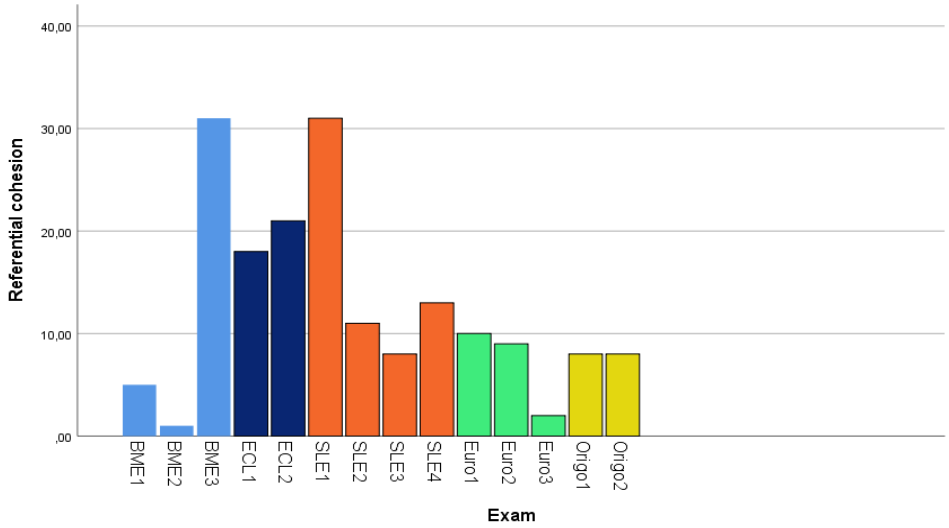

Figure 5. TERA results for "Referential cohesion"

The indication of the above is that the exam providers seem to effectively all agree that the lack of such overlaps and the resulting inferencing are hallmarks of comprehension at this level. Can this be justified in light of CEFR descriptors? Interestingly, though cohesion is clearly an important element contributing to comprehension, the CEFR scales related to

reading make no mention of this property. While there is a "Cohesion and Coherence" scale in the CEFR, it refers exclusively to productive skills. In the CEFR's "Identifying Cues and Inferring" scale, the B2 descriptor says a learner at this level "can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points; checking comprehension by using contextual clues" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 72). Especially the use of "contextual clues" may be related to the kind of inferencing the TERA analysis refers to. Also, a new descriptor in the "Reading for Information and Argument" scale in the CV states that a B2 reader "can recognise different structures in discursive text: contrasting arguments, problem-solution presentation and cause-effect relationships" (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 62). The recognition of "different structures in discursive text" may also be interpreted as an element linked to referential cohesion. Despite the above, there appears to be no clear CEFR-based argument to justify such low levels of referential cohesion in the texts examined. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, it is this measure on which the texts appear to show most homogeneity.

The fifth measure applied was Deep cohesion. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 6.

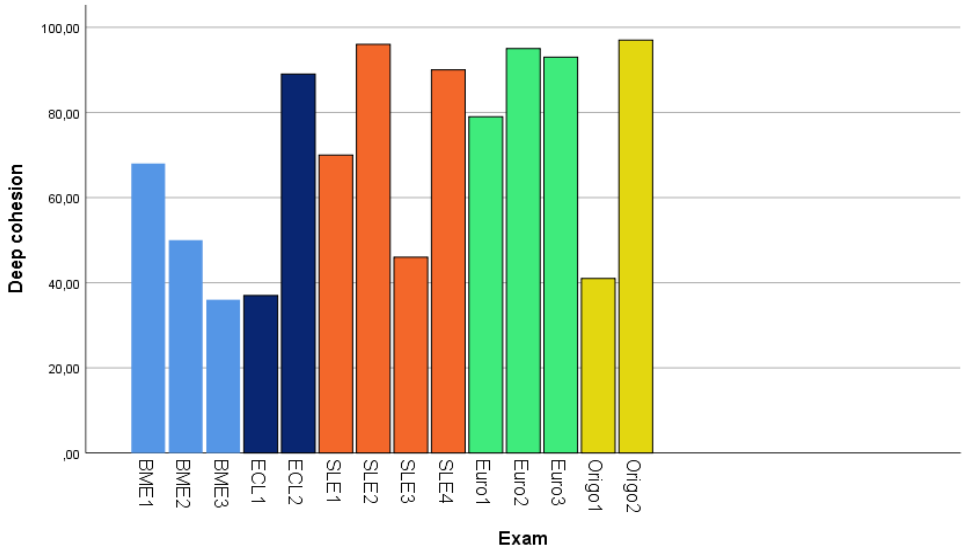

Figure 6. TERA results for "Deep cohesion"

The pattern that can be observed here is markedly different from that of the previous measure. Figures range from 36% (BME3) to 97% (Origo2). What this means is that seven texts (ECL2, SLE2, SLE4, Euro1, Euro2, Euro3 and Origo2) are considered to score high on deep cohesion, and the rest of the texts are in the average range. Thus, the texts seem to indicate that at this level the expectation is that learners will be able to handle texts where the logical connectedness of sentences is clearly marked. Finding justification for this assumption on the basis of the CEFR is, once again, challenging. For reasons discussed earlier, it is difficult to find descriptors that match the construct of deep cohesion. A

descriptor that has already been quoted in relation to referential cohesion may be of some assistance though. According to this descriptor, found in the modified "Reading for Information and Argument" scale in the CV, a B2 reader "can recognise different structures in discursive text: contrasting arguments, problem-solution presentation and cause-effect relationships" (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 62). Concerning deep cohesion, it is probably the end of the descriptor than may be worth considering. "Cause-effect relationships" are clearly within the realm of deep cohesion, even if the rest of the descriptor presents no one-to-one match with it. Thus, similarly to referential cohesion, we find relative homogeneity across the texts without a solid CEFR-based argument to explain it. It is worth noting that this similarity is of particular significance, as it seems to suggest the relatedness of the two constructs as well. A similar tendency has been observed in earlier research of comparable focus (Szabó, 2014), which suggests that the relationship is an actually existing one.

The last measure employed was a specific L2 readability index, which is not part of TERA, but which a Coh-Metrix analysis still provides. The results are presented in Figure 7.

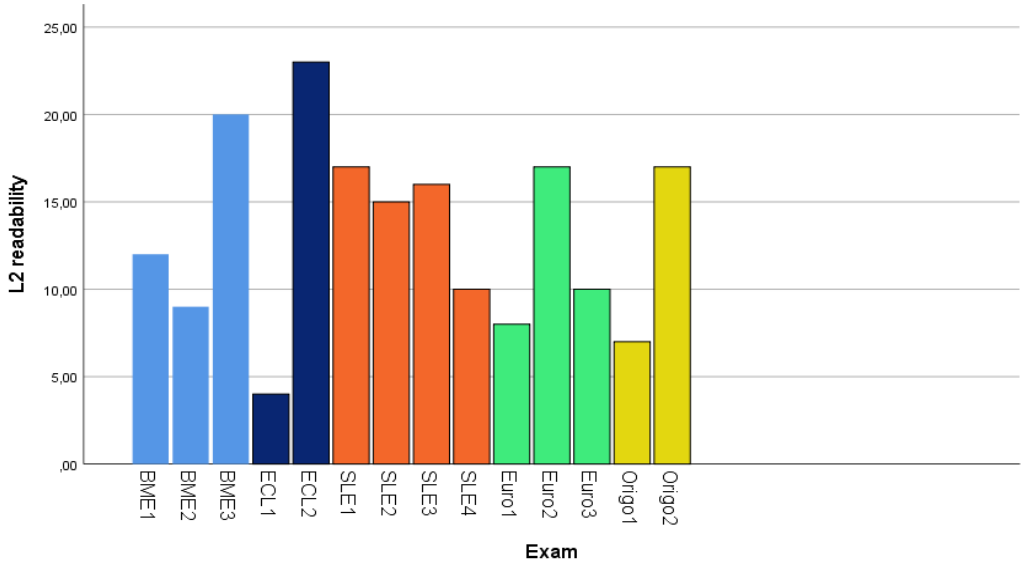

Figure 7. Coh-Metrix "L2 Readability" results

Once again, the scores for the different texts appear to be spread out noticeably, ranging from a score of 4 (ECL1) to 23 (ECL2). It is also worth noting how the three texts appearing to be the most similar (SLE1, Euro2, Origo2, all scoring 17), are so markedly different in light of the TERA measures. Indeed, the L2 readability index is reported to be a composite measure of a lexical, a syntactic and a meaning construction index (Crossley, Greenfield, & McNamara, 2008). Thus, it is likely that there may be different subscores for different texts, which may balance out at the level of the L2 readability index. What this suggests, in turn, is that the differences across the texts observed with respect to this measure are likely to stem from the combination of a variety of measures. Also, it needs to

be emphasized that while the L2 readability index, as the term suggests, was developed with non-native readers in mind, the TERA measures are to be interpreted without reference to the reader's native language.

What has been discussed so far seems to point to the direction that the texts analyzed may well be significantly different from one another in terms of difficulty. In order to check this impression, an independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test was performed where the six measures the Coh-Metrix analysis yielded were interpreted as six facets of a common underlying variable, text difficulty. The analysis was performed both at the level of the exams, i.e. all texts associated with a particular exam were treated together as feeding into a common text difficulty measure for each exam, and at the level of the texts, where individual texts were treated separately, as if they had not been part of clusters of texts for individual exams. Figures 8 and 9 present the results of the Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Test Statistics[a,b]

	CM_scores
Kruskal-Wallis H	3,137
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	,535

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Exam

Figure 8. Kruskal-Wallis test results at exam level

Test Statistics[a,b]

	CM_scores
Kruskal-Wallis H	7,759
df	13
Asymp. Sig.	,859

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Text

Figure 9. Kruskal-Wallis test results at test level

Somewhat surprisingly, the analyses in both cases indicated no significant differences. As can be seen in Figure 8, in the case of the exam-level analysis, it was found that the exams were not significantly different ($p \leq 0.535$), while the text-level analysis, presented in Figure 9, revealed that the individual texts were also not significantly different ($p \leq 0.859$). What could explain this result, seemingly contradictory to the observations made at the level of the individual measures? The answer, most probably, is quite simple. As has been discussed, individual text characteristics varied a great deal across the texts, but it seems they were acting in a compensatory manner. In other words, where certain texts appeared to be more difficult on one measure, they were less difficult on another. For instance, ECL1 scored low on Narrativity and Syntactic simplicity, but extremely high on

Word concreteness, and average on Referential cohesion and Deep cohesion, even if low on L2 readability. What this seems to imply is that the examinations used texts of differing characteristics, as suggested by the variety of results even within text clusters in terms of the individual measures, which, however, still result in the same overall level of text difficulty. As mentioned earlier, this may, in fact be a highly positive feature, as the variety of texts may well indicate a broader content domain sampling, and thus a higher degree of content validity.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we attempted to compare texts used in a variety of B2 level language examinations in Hungary by means of relying on text readability indices generated by the Coh-Metrix platform. As has been pointed out, the texts appeared to differ in terms of the individual measures, but showed no statistically significant differences when the measures were treated as facets of text difficulty, feeding into the same underlying construct. While some preliminary conclusions have already been drawn in the previous section, a few caveats need to be noted at this point. First, though the differences identified at the level of the individual measures may mean that the texts provide a broad content domain sampling, this is not necessarily so. Indeed, as was pointed out in the course of the analysis, the Coh-Metrix based results were frequently difficult to link to the proclaimed CEFR-based content domain of B2 level reading ability. There are indications of the links between the measures used in this analysis and the CEFR-based content domain, but these links would need to be further confirmed through different types of analyses as well.

Second, it needs to be noted that while the findings may be interpreted as reflections of good practice on the part of the exam providers, the data are not sufficient to serve as the basis for such claims. On the one hand, in all cases except for the SLE, the texts examined came from sample materials, not live tests. Thus, they are not necessarily indicative of regular text selection practices. Moreover, even in the case of the school-leaving exam the texts were selected from one particular exam period (May, 2018), which means we have no indication of how stable the measures may be in comparison to other exam periods.

Third, it needs to be emphasized that, as was mentioned earlier, this study did not intend to create a correspondence between Coh-Metrix based scores and CEFR descriptors. It did reveal, however, that this issue would be worthy of further investigation. While some of the criteria along which differentiation is defined in CEFR terms seem to fall outside the scope of Coh-Metrix (e.g. text length), others (e.g. sentence complexity) could be explored further in order to provide support for linking tests to the CEFR.

Most importantly, however, we need to emphasize that text difficulty does not equal task difficulty. As is commonly pointed out (e.g.: Castello, 2008, p. 16), task difficulty in reading is a multi-faceted concept, determined by the combined effect of the text, the task

and even the reader. Even if we leave out the reader (as an ever changing parameter) from this equation, we still need to make it clear that in any examination the supposed level of the texts involved is only part of the story. Thus, while the results of the Kruskal-Wallis tests seem to indicate that the texts may not have differed in terms of difficulty, this does not mean that the level of the tasks was the same as well. Since all the examinations discussed in this study claim to test the same level, we may presume they are at the same level. The current study, however, provides partial evidence at best to support this claim. Yet, perhaps this study, along with other similar ones can contribute to a better understanding of how tests of reading comprehension work, and more extensive examinations of texts and tasks can help build a better validity argument resulting in better tests. This, I believe, is a purpose worth working for.

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Motivation in modern language studies: A pilot study in Italian language

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1. Introduction

In the field of research on learners' individual differences (ID), the affective domain, motivation in particular, has been thoroughly examined (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015). The interest in motivation in SLA dates back to the early 1950s and has since been a very prolific area of research. Recently, in the period between 2005 and 2015, over a hundred publications on motivation in SLA were published, in which a number of various constructs and factors have arisen, confirming that the motivation is a dynamic and complex process (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). As a result, a large number of definitions of L2 learning motivation have been employed: from Gardner's (1985, p. 10) "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" to a broader definition by Medved Krajnović: "a set of motives, i.e. of psychological states that move and direct human behaviour and determine its intensity" (2010, p. 77). In this pilot study we shall use the latter definition.

2. Theoretical background

The most widely known motivation construct is Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner,1985), which is based on the analysis of the relation between motivation and the social context, namely, the analysis of various bilingual communities in which the language

of interest was learned or acquired. A later, revised version of this model (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 8), was based on cross-cultural research studies and it included the following dimensions: *integrativeness*, with subscales of integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages and attitudes toward L2 community, *attitudes toward the learning situation*, with subscales of evaluation of the L2 teacher and evaluation of the L2 course and *motivation*, with subscales of the desire to learn the L2, motivational intensity (effort) and attitudes toward learning the L2.

A change in this approach to motivation was brought by Dörnyei (1990), who based his premises on a longitudinal study of Hungarian students of English in a typical European FL learning context—characterised by scarce contact with native speakers and exposure to the target language that is mostly restricted to the classroom. Dörnyei reduced the importance of the role of attitudes towards the speakers and the target language community in achieving success in FL learning relative to Gardner's model. In fact, Dörnyei distinguishes between the *instrumental* and the *integrative subsystem*, linking the former to promotion (individual's desires and aspirations) and prevention (avoiding undesirable outcomes), and the latter to the interest in FLs, cultures and people, as well as to the desire to broaden one's horizons, find new challenges and fit into the global community. In 2005, Dörnyei added two more components to his model: the need for achievement and the attribution about past failures. Therefore, Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System* consists of the following components: (1) a goal or need, (2) the desire to achieve a goal, (3) the understanding that FL language learning is crucial for achieving a goal or satisfying a need, (4) the belief in success or failure in the process of learning, and (5) the importance given to possible outcomes. This approach is oriented more to the individuals themselves, which is why motivation is related to the *ideal L2 self*, the *ought-to L2 self*, and to the *L2 learning experience*. In Dörnyei's model the *ideal L2 self*, namely, the representation of the learners' linguistic ideals, is seen as a continuous motivator. In our case, the students who choose to study a language at university level tend to have very high *Ideal L2 Self* standards, usually expressed as wanting to reach a high level of "native like" language proficiency. The *ought-to L2 self*, on the other hand, concerns the attributes that the learners, based on various intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, believe they should possess. Finally, the *L2 learning experience* is related to the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, and the experience of success (Dörnyei, 2009). This latter part of the construct has not been researched sufficiently with specific populations and has therefore been the motivation for our pilot study.

In Croatian context of EFL learning as a school subject, Mihaljević Djigunović (1998) points out that, in this context, the type and the intensity of motivation change according to the teaching situation. She thus distinguishes between three types of motivation: the *pragmatic-communicative* (which corresponds to Gardner's *instrumental orientation* (1985) and Dörnyei's (1990) *instrumental subsystem*), *affective* and *integrative* motivation (Gardner's *integrative orientation* (1985) and Dörnyei's *integrative subsystem* (1990)).

Mihaljević Djigunović also stresses the impact the initial motivation exerts on the results of language learning, as well as the role of various motivating and demotivating factors related to the teaching situation (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998). This is comparable to Gardner's evaluation of the L2 teacher and evaluation of the L2 course (1985), as well as Dörnyei's *L2 learning experience* (1990).

Considering the formal, school -based context of FL learning, Balboni (2002) also highlights the role of the teacher and bases his model of motivation on duty, need and pleasure as three activating factors similar to those previously mentioned. Balboni asserts that duty is often connected to the context of learning a FL as a mandatory school subject and does not necessarily lead to success, while the need to master a FL (*instrumental orientation*) generates greater motivation and success. However, the process reaches its conclusion when learners satisfy their needs. The feeling of pleasure in the learning process and the fulfilment of a previously set goal, on the other hand, contribute to the growth of long-term intrinsic motivation and the continuity of the motivation, wherein teachers and the teaching situation greatly contribute to both.

In addition to the above-described factors that affect motivation, a high correlation between the success in FL learning and the intensity of motivation has been observed (e.g. Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). According to Gardner's socio-educational model (1985), there is a reciprocal relationship between motivation and success. Motivated students can find themselves in a positive environment in which they can achieve good results that would help them maintain their motivation and/or increase it. Alternatively, it is possible that poorly motivated students find themselves in a negative environment in which they cannot achieve good results, which results in an additional decrease in their motivation. Dörnyei (1998) and Ushioda (2001) highlight the fact that the nature of the stated correlation largely depends on the way in which an individual interprets their experience of FL learning and, consequently, on the manner in which they act. This implies that, while failure can motivate some students to work harder, it can also cause some students to become passive and lethargic. This relationship has not yet been researched enough on the student population of modern language university level programs.

In this pilot study we also apply Palotti's (2006) groups of reasons that motivate learners of FLs: *instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, and extrinsic*, wherein Palotti's instrumental motives can be long-term or short-term. The long-term instrumentally motivated individuals learn a FL to improve their social status and their career. University context implies a long-term studying period (3 years of undergraduate and 2 years of graduate study programs). Palotti's integrative motive can be general or specific. General integrative motivation stems from the desire to communicate with people from different cultures who belong to a different speech community and use a particular FL in their everyday communication (Dörnyei's *sociocultural language use* (1990) and Mihaljević

Djigunović's *pragmatic-communicative aspect* (1998). This aspect is generally attributed to university students of FLs because communicating in a target language is the part of their future careers. Specific integrative motivation, on the other hand, arises from the desire to fit into an L2 community and to adapt to their culture. For Palotti (2006) the *intrinsic motivation* is determined by the situation in which language learning takes place. It is possible to distinguish between general intrinsic and specific motivation, the former related to language input and the latter related to a specific teaching situation. It is possible to observe general intrinsic motivation in individuals prone to FL learning (Gardner's *integrative orientation* (1985), Mihaljević Djigunović's *affective motivation type* (1998), and Dörnyei's *integrative* subscale (1990). Furthermore, De Mauro and his colleagues' study results confirm that the decision to enrol in Italian studies was indeed based on this specific type of intrinsic motivation (De Mauro, Vedovelli, Barni, Miraglia, 2002). Finally, Palotti's specific intrinsic motivation relates to a particular teaching situation that depends on the students' positive or negative perception of the teaching environment (Dörnyei's *L2 learning experience* (1990), Gardner's *attitudes toward the learning situation* (1985), and Mihaljević Djigunović's *affective motivation type* (1998).

However, all of the previously described models are based on research conducted with learners of L2 or FL in primary or secondary schools, with students that learn a FL for specific purposes, or adults that attend language courses.

Students of modern languages at university level are usually experienced language learners of the target language and the choice of pursuing it at university level implies a long term intrinsic or affective motivation, namely, these students have positive attitudes towards the speakers and community of the FL, as well as instrumental orientation intended at graduating and starting a professional career. Even though this population is highly motivated to study a FL, Busse and Walter (2013) report a decrease in motivation among university students of German in the UK due to various factors such as not achieving the desired level of proficiency and the lack of classroom interaction in FL. Ushioda's findings (2001) based on qualitative research done with Irish students of French language, highlighted the following motivational dimensions as the most reported: language-related enjoyment, desired level of L2 competence, personal goals and positive FL learning history. Holi (2015), based on her small-scale study conducted with students of Czech at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, highlighted various aspects which were confirmed in previously cited models. She reported some affective aspects, such as positive emotions and a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, desire to learn about the target language culture and its speakers and the importance of the parents' and teachers' support. Her findings also include some of the learning situation aspects, such as elimination of unfavourable conditions of language learning, limited choice of courses, the fear of evaluation by the teacher and the peers and being embarrassed in front of the peers.

3. Study

Our literature research on motivation in L2/ FL learning shows that there are relatively few studies focusing on the specific population of students in modern language programs for whom FLs are a career choice (Holi, 2015; Busse, 2013; Busse &Walter, 2013; Ushioda, 2001). Based on these findings we designed our pilot study on the motivation in students of Italian at the university level by combining selected elements of the existing models (the integrative aspect, affective, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic factors) with associated questionnaires, by adapting these elements to our specific objective, and by exploring several additional aspects specifically related to the university level FL learning context.

3.1. Context of the study

We consider the students of Italian language at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb the specific population of experienced FL learners of interest in our pilot study, which differs from students that learn Italian in private language schools or in high schools as their second or third FL because for them learning the language is a career choice. Due to the language policy in Croatia, that strongly emphasise learning of English or German as a first FL from the begginign of the primary school, Italian is usually second or third language, learned as an optional subject in elementary school or as an obligatory second FL in higschools. Students' aspiration at the time of enrolment is to reach a high "native like" level of proficiency at graduation C1 with elements of C2 according to CEFR, as prescribed by the university curricula. Furthermore, they are much more exposed to the Italian language at the university in comparison to the previous levels in primary or secondary schools. The university curricula require that all the lessons and the exams from the second year on are held exclusively in Italian, whereas in primary or secondary schools they had on average 70 hours of Italian lessons a year. So, the university students in our pilot study have frequent FL input through a large number of Italian literature, linguistics and culture courses held exclusively in the FL. In addition, they have many opportunities for out-of-classroom language use since Italy is a neighbouring country and many of the students visit it as part of the Erasmus program.

3.2. Aim of the study

The aim of our pilot study was to examine the dynamics and the typology of the motivation for students of Italian at the university level. We wanted to gain insight into the following aspects: a) the initial motivation for enrolment, b) the nature and intensity of the students'

motivation, c) expectations and mismatches regarding the study programme and their career choice tendencies after graduation.

Our main research questions were the following:

RQ1: Are there any differences in the level of motivation between the groups (students year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4, year 5)?

RQ2: Are there any differences in the initial motivation and the motivation and the moment of conducting our pilot study within each group (years 1 to 5)?

RQ3: Which motivational dimensions can be identified?

RQ4: Are there any correlations between the success measured by the language exam grade, the overall success in the study program, the choice of Italian at enrolment, and the level of motivation measured by the instrument?

RQ5: What are the main motivating and demotivating factors in learning Italian at the university level?

3.3. Participants

The participants in the study were 173 students of Italian at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb divided into groups of year 1 to 5, which made 78.64 % of the total number of students were enrolled in the program in the academic year 2015/16. The undergraduate students (year 1, 2, 3), constituted 69.36% of the total sample (N=120) whereas graduate students (year 4, 5) constituted the remaining 30.64% (N=53, as shown in Table 1. For 74% of them Italian was the first choice, which implies that the remaining 25% might have been potentially unsatisfied because they had different initial aspirations. All participants had studied Italian for 5 to 9 years, which means they had studied Italian before enrolling in the university: in their primary or secondary schools. Moreover, they had passed the mandatory entrance exam at the Department, which required that they be at least level A2 in Italian according to the official CEFR guidelines. Their professional aspirations after graduation were the following: (1) translation services (81 answer); (2) language teaching (59 answers); (3) tourism (31 answer), and other.

Table 1 shows the participants' average grade as a measure of success at their university level language study of Italian. We have noticed discrepancies between their overall average grade in the Italian program and their language proficiency measured by the language exam, which will be further discussed in the Discussion section.

Table 1. Year of study, number of students whose first choice was Italian, grade average at the university and grade at their last Italian language exam (N=173)

Year of study	N	Italian was my first choice	Grade average (1-5)	Italian Language exam (1-5)
Year 1	27	70.37% (N=19)	4.29	2.48
Year 2	46	71.74% (N=33)	3.89	2.65
Year 3	47	70.21% (N=33)	3.97	3.23
Year 4	27	81.48% (N=22)	4,11	3.11
Year 5	26	80.77% (N=21)	4.11	3.15
Total	173	74.00% (N=128)	4.07	2.93

4. Methodology

Our pilot study was conducted using a mixed method approach, the most frequently used in recent motivation research (Lamb, Csizér, Alastair, Ryan, 2019). The first part of the questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data, the second part to gather qualitative data in form of open ended questions to gather more precise information about motivating and demotivating factors, while a focus group was used to obtain additional explanations of the quantitative data analysis.

4.1. Questionnaire

For the purpose of conducting our pilot study we created a new questionnaire adapted from already validated instruments based on models described in the Introduction.

Our questionnaire consisted of four parts: general data, motivation dimensions, five statements related to student's attitude toward and expectation from Italian FL study, and open-ended questions on reasons for enrolment, professional aspirations after graduation, and motivating and demotivating factors in the university program.

4.1.1. General data and linguistic biography

The first part of the questionnaire was used to gather the general data and linguistic biography from all participants: year of study, years of Italian language learning, success in FL learning measured by the average grade at the Italian study program and the language

proficiency measured by the language exam grade. The language exam is the final exam in the mandatory Italian Language Course that examines the level of competences in all four language skills each year of study. The first-year students' success was evaluated based on their secondary school overall final grade and the grade they got in their last Italian language exam during their first year. The participants were asked to evaluate their motivation for enrolling in the Italian language and culture university program on a scale of 1 to 5, both at enrolment beginning, and at the time the study was conducted. They were also asked to indicate whether Italian language study major was their first choice when enrolling at the university. This was done because in the admission process at the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences students list their desired study majors in the order of preference, but their final enrolment in a major depends on their total score, which includes secondary school grade average, the overall score at final national exams and scores in selected subjects, and the score at the university entrance exam. As a consequence, for some of the participants in the study the Italian program was the first choice, while for others it was not.

4.1.2. Motivation construct in our pilot study

This part of the questionnaire examines the participants' motivation by piloting a construct which consists of the following components: integrativeness, instrumentality, the intensity of motivation, the teaching situation and family support. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 33 Likert scale statements ranging from 1 (˝I strongly disagree˝) to 5 (˝I strongly agree˝).

Integrativeness: University-level language students that have chosen Italian have to take a number of courses on the Italian language, literature and culture and also tend to travel to the country. The purpose of this dimension is to determine whether the students have positive attitudes toward the Italian language and Italians. This was accomplished by including four statements testing for *integrativeness*: our statement number 3 was taken from Gardner's 2004 AMTB questionnaire, which deals with attitudes towards the target language. Our statements 15 and 24, which address the desired level of similarity to the target community and the desire to get better acquainted with the target language culture and its speakers, were taken from Dörnyei's model (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994). Our statement 32 tests the attitude of the students towards Italians as possible life partners and was taken from Mihaljević Djigunović's (1998) questionnaire.

Instrumentality: This dimension tests the nature of a specific goal a student wants to accomplish by learning the FL. To this end, our statements 5 and 8 were taken from Mihaljević Djigunović's questionnaire (1998) addressing the desired level of proficiency measured by the desired grade on the Italian exam and the desire to move to Italy. Students of Italian have one of the highest rates of Erasmus exchange programs participation.

Intensity of motivation: This dimension tests Gardner's dimension of motivational intensity (*effort*) and *desire* to learn FL and tests demotivation caused by a lack of success, the presence of which was confirmed in a foreign language anxiety research conducted with Croatian students at the same institution, The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Mardešić & Stanković, 2013; Puškar 2013). The questionnaire includes seven statements - 9, 2, 10, 19, 22, 29, 31 from Gardner's AMTB (2004), with statement 9 adapted so that it refers to finding a job after graduation. Demotivation was tested with statement 27, which is a part of the CROEFLA questionnaire (Foreign Language Anxiety of Croatian EFL Learners, Mihaljević Djigunović et al., 2004).

Teaching situation: As noted in the introduction, university-level FL learning context can have a profound impact on the FL student motivation. To assess this properly, we devoted seventeen (more than half of the) statements in the questionnaire. Seven statements (1, 4, 7, 13, 17, 30, 33), taken from Gardner's 2004 AMTB questionnaire, address the *learning situation*, which includes the evaluation of the FL teacher and the FL course. Four statements (6, 18, 26, 28), taken from Mihaljević Djigunović's (1998) questionnaire, specifically address the role of the teacher in the Croatian FL learning context, with issues such as the teacher's feedback and the evaluation of teaching materials. Statement 21, addressing the usefulness and quality of the courses, is taken from Dörnyei's model (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994). Two statements (12, 20) are part of the CROEFLA questionnaire (Mihaljević Djigunović et al., 2004) and refer to the perceived difficulty of Italian grammar and the competitiveness among the students, the former being an issue addressed in previous research by Holi (2015).

The three remaining statements (11, 14, 16) were constructed by the authors of this paper to include the particular aspect of the university learning context, not included in the aforementioned questionnaires. These three statements assess language anxiety as was previously found among students of the same university (Mardešić & Stanković, 2013; Puškar, 2013).

Family support: This part consists of statement 25, taken from Gardners's AMTB questionnaire (2004). This aspect has also been included in other models and research (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Holi, 2015; Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998).

4.1.3. Course expectations

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of 5 statements that test the attitudes towards and expectations from the university study program in the Italian language and culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Zagreb. Here, as well, we used a 5-point Likert scale. The participants were asked to estimate their satisfaction with the courses, the effort they put in, and their perceived success in learning.

4.1.4. Initial motivation, motivating /demotivating factors, future job aspirations

The final part of the questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions: two were used to assess the demotivating factors the students had come across during their studies, while the other two inquired into the students' initial motivation for enrolling in the Italian language program and their career aspirations after graduation. The latter two questions were adopted from *Italiano 2000* (De Mauro et al., 2002), a study that was used to collect data on the ways in which Italian spread worldwide and the conditions under which this expansion happened.

4.2. Procedure and analysis

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire during their compulsory lectures, while their lecturers were absent and two students, authors of this paper were present. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, whereas quantitative data were analysed using content analysis. All qualitative answers were first analysed and categorised by the two student researchers and subsequently discussed and re-categorised together with a third researcher. Upon completion of the first phase, 30 participants, primarily students of years 3, 4 and 5, volunteered to become a focus group and participate in the second phase of the study. These participants were shown the results of the qualitative data analysis and were asked to elaborate on them. Their answers were subsequently transcribed and analysed by all three researchers, after which they were categorised.

5. Results

5.1. Results of the quantitative analysis

The reliability of the 33 statements used in the questionnaire was verified using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated a high degree of internal consistency (α = 0.897), so all of the statements were kept in further data analysis. The internal consistency test for single components showed medium reliability degree for integrativness scale (α = 0.635), and high degree for scales of intensity of motivation (α = 0.806) and teaching situation (α = 0.865). The remaining two scales, instrumentality and family support, had a low number of statements and were not suitable for test of the internal consistency. For this reason, these last two components will be discussed only qualitatively.

The descriptive analysis of the whole sample showed that the participants were moderately motivated (M=109, SD=18.05), and the intensity of their motivation ranged from 64 to a maximum of 150 (Figure 1).

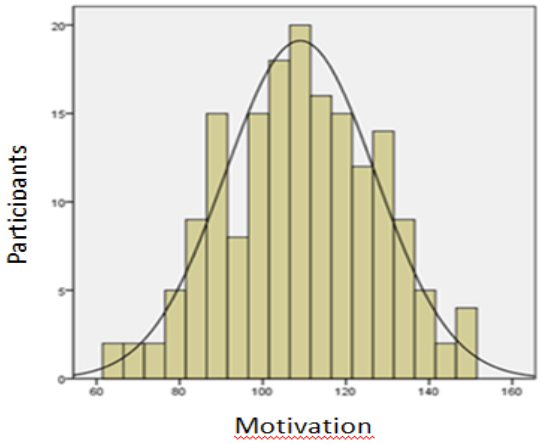

Figure 1. The intensity of motivation within the entire sample (N=173).

We find that the answer to RQ1 is affirmative as the analysis points to differences between the groups (year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4, year 5) in their motivation measured by our instrument (Table 2). The variance analysis showed statistically significant differences between year 1 and year 5 students' motivation (F=3.082, p=0.019). A noticeable drop in the overall motivation was observed between year 1 and year 2, but not at a statistically significant level, p = 0.185 (Table 2). The year 3 group, undergraduates, and year 4 group, graduates, report almost the same level of motivation (Table 2). In addition, it should be noticed that the results of the overall motivation per group point to a decrease in scores with the increase of the year of study (Figure 2).

Table 2. Overall motivation average per year of study (N=173)

Year of study	Mean	N	SD
Year 1	119.26	27	19.934
Year 2	108.54	46	17.252
Year 3	107.32	47	15.016
Year 4	107.48	27	18.958
Year 5	103.73	26	18.791
Total	108.99	173	18.050

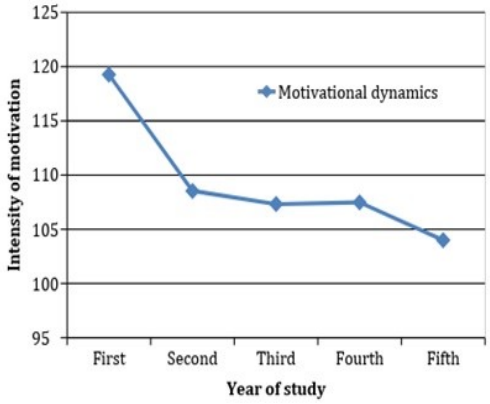

Figure 2. Motivational dynamics per year of study (N=173)

Our second research question (RQ2) about differences in the initial motivation and the motivation and the moment of conducting our pilot study, we also had an affirmative answer, because the t-test results showed a statistically significant difference between the self-evaluated initial motivation and the self-evaluated motivation at the time of the study in each group (Table 3).

Table 3. T-test results for self-evaluated initial motivation and the motivation at the time of the study per year of study (N=173).

Year of study	**N**	**t**	**df**	**sig.**
Year 1	27	3.174	26	0.004
Year 2	46	3.379	45	0.002
Year 3	47	6.144	46	0.000
Year 4	27	3.882	26	0.001
Year 5	26	4.765	25	0.000

For our third research question (RQ3) which motivational dimensions can be identified, we present the results for those questionnaire statements from the second part that showed the highest scores, from the third part those which showed the course expectations and the results of qualitative data analyses. These results showed that the participants were mostly integratively motivated, namely, they reported specific and general intrinsic reasons for their FL learning. They had positive attitudes toward the language, its culture, its speakers, and desired a high level of proficiency.

Table 4. Statements with highest score for integrative motivation (N=173).

Statement number	Statement	Score
3	Italian is a very nice language.	M=4.70 SD=0.630
29	I want to perfect my knowledge of Italian.	M=4.55 SD=0.780
24	I would like to get to know the Italians, their culture and tradition better.	M=4.23 SD=0.953
31	I am eager to learn everything there is to know about the Italian language.	M=4.02 SD=1.043

The qualitative analyses also showed the same dimensions; the most cited reasons for enrolling in Italian language program were:

1) love of the Italian language (104 answers);

2) love of Italy and Italian culture (34 answers);
3) desire to perfect linguistic competence (23 answers);
4) interest in FL in general (18 answers).

The initial instrumental orientation for enrolling is, however, also recorded in our qualitative analyses, and the desire to integrate into an Italian speaking community is present, though only in seven answers. The reasons provided were as follows:

1) the desire to use Italian in my future professional career (14 answers);
2) the participants' self-perceived linguistic competence (17 answers), e.g." I was very interested in the [Italian] language and I believe languages are something I am very good at and something I could base my future professional career on."
3) integrative motives (7 answers); e.g. "Because I want to master Italian and I might even want to move to Italy one day."

The qualitative data related to the teaching situation dimension are divided into motivating and demotivating aspects, which are further subdivided into internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) motivators and demotivators.

The internal motivating factors partially correspond to the reasons for enrolling, which is why most of the answers are related to the following statements:

1) desire to perfect linguistic competence (32 answers)
2) love of the Italian language (24 answers)
3) love of Italy and Italian culture (12 answers)
4) desire to obtain a college degree and find a job related to it (12 answers).

The external motivating factors, on the other hand, are related to the following statements:

1) the professors (38 answers), e.g." What motivates me the most is when the professors themselves are motivated for work, when they try hard to pass on information and knowledge and when the courses are well designed."
2) the appropriateness, the purpose and the selection of courses (15 answers), e.g." [What motivates me is that] the amount of knowledge I 'get' during one semester is enormous, especially in relation to my secondary school education. […] and I believe to be very good at learning Italian."
3) the teaching situation (12 answers), e.g." I was motivated by the pleasant atmosphere during the lectures and the effort some professors put into explaining some important concepts to the students."

The internal demotivating factors the students indicated were the following:

1) 'holes in knowledge' (13 answers)
2) falling behind one's peers (8 answers)
3) failure (4 answers).

These issues were corroborated by the score for statement 3: 'The Italian language studies course takes a lot more effort than I expected.' (M=3.18, SD=1.181).

Among the external demotivating factors, the most prominent ones were as follows:

1) the teaching situation (93 answers), e.g. 'Unfair grading system, failure to implement the Bologna Process, insufficient professor effort, unclear learning outcomes'
2) the appropriateness, the purpose and the selection of courses (60 answers), e.g. "I believe that the selection of elective linguistics and literary courses is not wide enough. I feel that the offered courses were not designed to introduce the students to as many aspects of Italian culture and language as possible, but to suit the professors' preferences."
3) the professors (52 answers), e.g. "The courses where professors demand a lot from their students but offer little in return."

These issues are also confirmed by the score for the statements about curriculum expectations in the third part of the questionnaire: Statement 2: 'The Italian language studies have met my expectations' (M=2.47, SD=1.124), but not at the level that the students regret their choice, as expressed by the score for statement 1: 'Sometimes I regret my choice of Italian studies.' (M=2.87, SD=1.459).

The importance of parental support was recorded by a high score on statement 25: 'My family supports me in my studies.' (M=4.57, SD=0.809).

In the answers to our fourth research question (RQ4), the analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation in the following four variables: overall motivation measured by the instrument, Italian as the students' first choice when enrolling at the university, grades obtained in language exams, and the students' self-assessed current motivation for studying.

Table 5. Correlations between the variable of Italian as the first choice, motivation measured by the research instrument, self-evaluated motivation at the time of the study and language exam grade (N=173).

	Italian as the first choice	Overall motivation	Language exam grade	Motivation at the time of the study
Italian as the first choice		0.260**	0.126	0.147
Overall motivation	0.260**		0.317**	0.742**
Language exam grade	0.126	0.317**		0.400**
Motivation at the time of the study	0.147	0.742**	0.400**	

** $p < 0.01$

The scores for the following two statements regarding the participants' self-perception of success in their studies indicate that they are moderately satisfied with themselves and confident in reaching their goal:

'I consider myself successful in my Italian studies' (M=3.40, SD=1.028).

'I'm afraid that I will never be able to use Italian with ease' (M=2.54, SD=1.353)

5.2. Results of the focus group data analysis

The focus group participants were presented with the changes in motivation exhibited in Table 2 and Figure 2. When asked to interpret the oscillations in motivation during their studies, they explained that the decrease in motivation following the completion of year 1 courses was the result of the students' expectations that studying a language at the university level would be similar to that at the secondary school level. The lack of information on the study programme of their choice was another factor that contributed to the decrease. The focus group participants stated that they hadn't consulted the study program of the Department before enrolling. When asked about the unchanged motivation level exhibited between year 3 and the year 4 in Figure 2, the focus group hypothesized that the motivation that made them successfully complete their B.A. degree (year 3) most likely made them want to continue their FL study to and obtain the M.A. degree. Other reasons given to explain the decrease in motivation are as follows:

1) the students' own incorrect perception of what language studies entail
2) fearing that their choice of major may not offer many job opportunities, they questioned their decisions to take up Italian studies
3) their discontent with how both the University and the Department are organised
4) the lack of in-class pedagogy
5) a heavy student workload, due to the courses being held in Italian.

6. Discussion

This study has confirmed that motivation in FL learning at university level is a complex and dynamic process, as has been shown in other previous studies (Ushioda, 2001; Busse & Walter, 2013; Holi, 2015). The results showed that the participants were mostly integratively or intrinsically motivated for Italian language learning. We therefore conclude that the dimensions described by Gardner's, Palotti's, Dörnyei's, Mihaljević-Djigunović's research apply to this specific population. The participants' choice of Italian studies was predominately based on intrinsic motives described in the qualitative analyses paragraph and these results are in line with De Mauro's (2002) research. Furthermore, the qualitative analyses about motivating factors during the studies indicate that the participants mostly remained intrinsically motivated, namely, they studied the language they liked and continued to like it, as cited in Balboni's model (2002). The students of other FLs at the university level highlighted positive attitudes toward the language, culture and its speakers, as well as language-related enjoyment (Busse & Walter, 2013; Holi, 2015; Ushioda, 2001).

A number of issues were found to have an effect on the intensity of motivation. These include the students' expectations about the university program, their success in the language learning, as well as motivating and demotivating factors and language anxiety, all of which are linked to specific teaching situations.

First, the data in Table 1 show that the participants' Italian language exam grades are consistently lower than their overall grades, while their motivation in the year of study decreased relative to the initial motivation in each year (Table 3). This clearly indicates that the students' perception of success in their studies is based on their language exams and not on their overall success. The results of correlations shown in Table 5 indicate that students who had better grades in language exams had a high level of motivation at the time the study was conducted. The answers to the questions about the internal demotivating factors also show that the participants considered their own lack of success to be a demotivating factor, which does not necessarily lead to putting in more effort, as suggested by Gardner (1985). These results are comparable to those obtained by the students of German (Busse & Walter, 2013) and French (Ushioda, 2001), who stated that they hadn't reached the desired high level of proficiency.

However, in interpreting the results, it is important to consider the promotion and the prevention aspects of motivation, the former including the participants' desires and aspirations, whereas the latter refer to unwanted consequences (Dörynei, 2005). The decrease in motivation during their studies can also be interpreted as the consequence of the participants' realisation that language studies required more effort than they were ready to put in. As the students progress through the university study, they tend to become more aware of the fact that acquiring an FL is a lifelong process and that completing the studies does not necessarily mean reaching a high level of linguistic competence. This, in turn, exerts a negative impact on their motivation. This conclusion is further confirmed by the high percentage of agreement with the statements which deal with the desire to perfect one's Italian language skills. In other words, there is a wide gap between the participants' *ideal L2 self* and their *ought-to L2 self* (Dörnyei, 2009), which is why a decrease in their motivation is detected.

The prevention aspect of motivation is visible in the reported importance of parental support. Parental support was included in the previously cited motivational models (Gardner, 1985; Mihaljević Djigunović, 1998; Dörnyei, 1998), where it mainly referred to encouraging a child to learn an FL or otherwise inscribing a positive attitude toward FL learning or other language communities. For this reason, the importance of parental support gradually decreases with age (Gardner, 2007) and hence one would not expect to find it at the university level. In order to explicate our finding, we note that many participants were financially supported by their parents during their studies and hence their success at the university was potentially instrumental in preventing a conflict with their parents. The

importance of parental support at the university level was also found in Ushioda (2001) and Holi (2015).

A decrease in motivation after the first year of study can be explained by the discrepancy between the idea that freshmen have of Italian studies and what the FL studies program actually entails. For instance, qualitative data in this study showed that the participants did not relate a number of linguistics and literary courses to FL learning. It could therefore be concluded that year 1 students expected to see university-level FL learning as a continuation of the secondary school approach, which includes strong emphasis on the communicative approach and development of language skills. The students of German in the UK (Busse, 2013; Busse &Walter, 2013) also expressed a higher level of satisfaction with their secondary school learning of German in respect to the university-level learning. They, as well as Irish students of French, reported infrequent classroom interaction in FL, as literature and linguistics courses were held in their mother tongue (Ushioda, 2001). The former was not the case with our participants, since starting from year 2, all the courses and exams are held exclusively in the target FL, but this, on the other hand, discourages the less proficient students or suggests a possible lack of interaction in certain courses. As internal demotivating factors, our participants report lack of knowledge, falling behind and a feeling of failure.

In the teaching situation dimension or attitudes towards the course, one of the important demotivating external factors recorded in this study was discontent with the study program and with the way both the University and the Department were organised. These factors represent peculiarities of learning an FL at the university level. A learner who is not satisfied with a language course in a private FL school can drop out or change the school. In secondary school education, the teacher's task is to adapt the prescribed curriculum to the needs of individual students and to their differences. At the university level, however, a student has no impact on the curriculum. This issue also appears in Ushioda's (2001) and Holi's findings (2015), where the participants report the fact that they can't change course options as a demotivating factor.

The importance of the teacher's support in motivation was confirmed in our study, same as in the models described in the Introduction. The participants often highlighted the lack of in-class pedagogy during the lectures, the fear of being evaluated by their professors, the lack of stimulation, the insufficient effort of professors' efforts, and unsatisfactory teaching methods. Despite the fact that the students involved in this study are adults enrolled in a university degree program, they report on the same issues as the findings by Ushioda (2001), who points out that a good choice of teaching methods is crucial in maintaining intrinsic motivation regardless of the students' age. The same issue was brought up by the students of Czech at the same Faculty (Holi, 2015). This finding is also confirmed by the pedagogical implication for first-year university students of German as proposed by Busse and Walter (2013). It should be added that the lack of pedagogical skills of the teachers at

the college level is also confirmed as a cross cultural demotivator for students in Japan, China, United States and Germany (Zhang, 2007).

7. Conclusions

Although L2 motivation has been thoroughly explored, there is scarce research on FL majors' motivation. It has been generally assumed that these learners are highly motivated at this stage of their education and that their motivation will either grow or remain unchanged, allowing for occasional variations. The results of this study indicate that motivation for FL learning at the university level is a process that is equally dynamic as that of FL learning in other contexts. The fact that students themselves enrol in modern language programs and choose FLs as their future profession does not necessarily mean that they do not come across a number of difficulties, as other learners do. We conclude that the approach to motivation of these specific populations should not differ from the general approach to motivation in FL learning.

The motivation dimension resulting from this study is based on intrinsic motives and integrative orientation, as well as aspirations, success and preventing failure. However, the teaching situation and the perception of success have an important effect on both general and specific intrinsic motivation. The university FL learning context includes some specific components, such as the university program curriculum, the outcomes of certain courses, the teaching methods and FL classroom use, the pedagogic component, as well as parental support and self-perception of success.

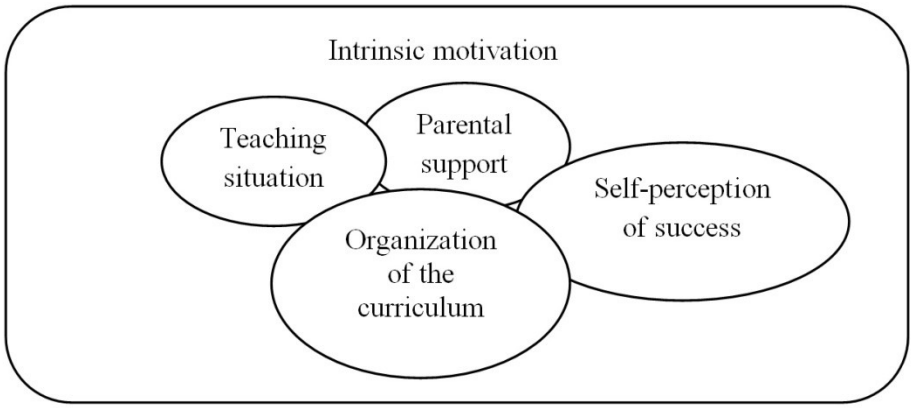

Figure 3. The proposed model of FL students' motivation at the university level

Our proposed model for FL students' motivation at the university level is schematically illustrated in Figure 3, where the four different dimensions of motivation - organization of the curriculum, self-perception of success, parental support and teaching situation - are all embedded in intrinsic motivation.

Our questionnaire displayed satisfactory measuring characteristics, but it should still be tested on a sample of students of other FLs. In accordance with the results, other specific components should be included as well. In the methodological context, this study confirmed the importance of a mixed-method approach, the use of open-ended questions and focus groups, as they help in clarifying specific issues that cannot be tested by questionnaires. The questionnaire we piloted can be used for improving the quality of the lectures and the programs and to gain insight into the common components specific to university student population.

As a pedagogical implication of this pilot study, we suggest presenting and explaining study programs to students, providing clear outcomes of specific courses, giving feedback more often and creating a positive learning environment through the entire duration of studies. It is important to note that the encouragement of self-regulated learning and self-motivation techniques that can be perfected throughout the study are of importance as well.

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9. Appendix

Questionnaire items

Integrativeness

(3) Italian is a very nice language
(15) I want to be more like the Italians.
(8) I want to master Italian to be able to live in Italy.
(24) I would like to get to know the Italians, their culture and tradition better.
(32) I would like to have an Italian partner.

Instrumentality

(9) I am losing my will to study because I think I will not be able to find a job related to my degree. *

(20) I try hard to achieve the best results possible to earn the respect of my colleagues.

Motivation Intensity

(6) I wish I had taken up another foreign language. *
(10) I put a lot of effort into studying Italian.
(27) I am losing my will to study Italian because of holes in my knowledge. *
(29) I want to perfect my knowledge of Italian.

Teaching situation
(1) My professors' enthusiasm motivates me to study.
(4) I feel uncomfortable when I have to use Italian during lectures. *
(7) I feel comfortable and relaxed during Italian lectures.
(11) My professors encourage me to have confidence in my abilities.
(12) Italian grammar is hard to acquire. *
(16) Frequent feedback on homework and assignment papers motivates me.
(18) I would be motivated to study if the lectures were more interesting. *
(21) Most of the courses our Department offers are interesting and useful.

(23) Our professors do not define their expectations clearly.
(26) The materials used in language lessons motivate me.
(28) Our professors grade unfairly.
(33) I do not like our professors' teaching methods.

Family Support
(25) My family supports my decision to study Italian.

Attitudes towards Learning Italian and Italian in general
(2) I like studying Italian very much.
(5) I lose my will to study when I get a bad grade in an exam. *
(13) Studying Italian is a waste of time. *
(14) My professors' responses to my mistakes discourage me. *
(17) I prefer studying for Italian courses to studying for courses from other departments.
(19) I am gradually losing interest in studying Italian. *
(22) Studying Italian is a pleasure for me.
(30) I believe that Italian studies are boring. *
(31) I am eager to learn everything there is to know about the Italian language.
(1s) I sometimes regret enrolling in Italian studies.
(2s) Italian studies have completely met my expectations.
(3s) Italian studies require more effort than I expected.
(4s) I believe I am a successful Italian language student.
(5s) I am afraid I will never be able to use Italian with ease.

* reverse coded item

Multilingualism in English language classrooms in Croatia: Can we think outside the box?

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1. Introduction

In order to strengthen the social cohesion and turn the linguistic heterogeneity into an asset, the Commission of the European Communities (2008) has set the promotion of multilingualism and language learning as one of its focal tasks. Having adopted the language policy which would enable EU citizens to communicate in two additional foreign languages alongside their mother tongue (Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p. 4), multilingualism (plurilingualism) has been set as an educational goal in the school systems of EU countries (European Commission 2017). Additionally, in the last 20 years, research on the educational aspect of multilingualism has intensified, encouraged by more or less empirically validated claims on the benefits of multilingualism and multiple language learning.

At the same time, multilingualism in classrooms in the EU is becoming a norm. This is due to the fact that learners, besides majority language, also speak various regional languages, foreign languages, or migrant languages. As a result, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of proposals of pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures and integrated language learning curricula which acknowledge learners' previous linguistic knowledge (their linguistic repertoires).

However, the linguistic situation is not the same in all member countries. While the EU as a whole is faced with a growing level of multilingualism, both at a societal and individual level, the linguistic situation in Croatia is quite homogenous; with the vast majority of learners in Croatian classrooms being native speakers of the dominant language, Croatian. Although Croatia has a long history of foreign language learning, and its speakers are often proficient speakers of at least one foreign language, multilingualism at the

individual level is almost exclusively the result of learning foreign languages in an additive manner as separate school subjects. Same as in many countries of the EU, English is most commonly the first foreign language learned at school, and there are voiced concerns that the hegemony of English may stand in the way of the promotion of multilingualism and additional language learning.

When trying to strike a balance between available research and language policy recommendations at the EU level, and the implementation of such policies at the level of member countries, it is necessary to look at numerous factors both directly and indirectly related to the socio-educational context in which it takes place. The implementation of educational policies depends *inter alia* on teachers' attitudes and beliefs as they underlie the choices teachers make in the classroom and the extent to which they accept new teaching approaches and strategies (Borg, 2003).

In the light of the proposals that argue for approaches to teaching which soften the boundaries between languages (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), we looked into the beliefs of English language teachers in Croatia whose classrooms are predominantly populated by learners with the same L1- Croatian. As many teachers may be multilingual, we were interested in their awareness of the potential it may have in their teaching practice and their attitudes to introducing other languages into their English language classrooms.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. From monolingual ideology to the multilingual turn

Language education has traditionally been guided by the ideology of language separation which, as put forward by Cummins (2007, p. 221), is characterized by the following beliefs: keeping languages separated, exclusive use of the target language, and no translation between the target language and the L1. The idea of language separation dates back from the Direct Method of language teaching (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Cummins, 2007) based on the premise that the contact between languages could provoke confusion and prevent learners form internalizing a new language.

This is often referred to as the monolingual ideology (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014, 2015), fixed multilingualism (Horner & Weber, 2017), parallel monolingualism or separate bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), and it is still found in educational context around the world amongst teachers who maintain that the target language should be isolated (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014, p. 240). Indicative of such perception is the usual target-language-only classroom practice and independent language syllabus, which unfortunately is often found even in schools aiming towards multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). This ideology has provoked some educational issues over the years, especially in today's context of growing multilingualism. An additional fact pointing to its inadequacy is Cummins's (2007) theory of

interrelation between languages, according to which the skills and abilities that students acquire in their L1 or L2 are not confined, but can easily be passed on across all the languages in their linguistic repertoires.

Following the interrelation theory (Cummins, 2007), a need for reassessing the monolingual ideology arose (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105), and it resulted in holistic views of language teaching and a call for softening the boundaries between languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013, Cummins, 2017). Foreign language teaching approaches taken in different countries around Europe range from the traditional additive one, where languages are taught as separated school subjects promoting the target-language-only policy, to a fully curricular or integrated approach which aims to form strong links between languages taught at school.

Focus on Multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter 2011, 2015) focuses on the speaker's whole linguistic repertoire and aims at establishing connections between languages by using translanguaging pedagogical practices (see García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014), and enhancing metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). The main goal behind such educational approaches is the need to soften the boundaries between languages and integrate the language curricula in order for learners to benefit from their prior linguistic knowledge, metalinguistic awareness and all the other skills they possess as multilingual speakers (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2014). Similar idea was put forward by Hélot (2008) advocating Language Awareness (LA) as an educational approach which, unlike the traditional foreign language learning, focuses on ''adopting a comparative approach of linguistic systems'' (Hélot, 2008, p. 4).

There are different conceptions of multilingual education and its implementation is achieved with different focal aims and objectives. This can range from catering for the needs of learners of additional languages to the teaching of more languages in an integrated way (see Lionet, Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Some of the educational projects and approaches promoting plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are the tertiary language learning (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004), the framework for plurilingual descriptors and classroom activities (Candelier et al., 2012) and more recently the projects such as the PlurCur project (plurilingual whole school policy), aiming at the inclusion of more languages across all subjects (Allgäuer-Hackl, Brogan, Henning, Hufeisen & Schlabach, 2018).

Additionally, research on third language acquisition has shown that learners rely on previously acquired languages in building knowledge of an additional language (Ringbom, 2007), and that multilingual teaching approaches can promote additional language learning and generate more beneficial effects than those achieved in monolingual language classes (Cenoz, 2003; Jessner, 2008). Furthermore, it is claimed that learning multiple languages is conducive to a specific multilingual proficiency (Herdina & Jessner, 2002) or "holistic multicompetence" (Cook 1992: 566) which contributes to the language learning process.

Accepting the fact that under favourable conditions multilingualism is a benefit for cognitive development, and that it carries a potential for enhancing other affective and social benefits for functioning in the multilingual world, the main question revolves around the best and contextually most appropriate way to incorporate the idea of multilingualism as a principle of language education. Some of the ways of introducing multilingualism into FL classrooms are:

- comparison of languages - comparing and contrasting structures, vocabulary, and concepts across the languages in students' repertoires (Jessner, 2006; Jessner, et al., 2016).
- introducing dual-language and multilingual books (Hélot, 2011).
- intercomprehension as a pedagogical approach (Doyé, 2005).
- linguistic landscapes - used as a pedagogical tool (Gorter, 2006).
- pedagogical translanguaging (García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2015; Leonet, Cenoz & Gorter, 2017).

Of greatest interest to this study is language awareness that can be fostered in the foreign language classroom. Due to the elusiveness and different understandings of the construct, this is still a largely underexplored research topic. However, research findings mostly suggest its positive benefits, such as learners' greater ability to deal with complex linguistic features and the promotion of learners' noticing of forms and features of a foreign language (for a detailed review see Sierens, Frijns, Van Gorp, Sercu & Van Avermaet, 2018). Based on the review of research on LA between 1995 and 2013, Sierens et al. (2018) concluded that LA approach has some effect on learners' affective and social development in the form of positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity, and more favourable perceptions of different languages and of speakers of these languages. They were more careful about its effect on cognitive skills and metalinguistic sensitivity suggesting that prolonged and more intensive focus of LA is necessary for the results to be obtained**.**

Further efforts were made in terms of providing concrete activities for fostering multilingual awareness (for the construct see Jessner, 2006) in multilingual learners. Jessner, Allgäuer-Hackl and Hofer (2016) provided empirical evidence that multilingual activities, which build on the language synergies and previous linguistic knowledge and learning experience, can make the learning of the target language, as well as other languages in students' repertoire, more efficient.

Nevertheless, the studies, which resulted in these educational proposals, have been conducted mostly in bilingual/multilingual socio-educational contexts. Relatively little attention has been given to the predominantly monolingual contexts where teachers and learners share the same L1 and multilingualism is achieved in an additive manner through languages being taught separately in formal settings. We agree with García (2014) that the context in with each language is an island on its own, is not truly conducive to multilingualism. If we assume that the promotion of multilingualism can have specific

affective, cognitive, and social goals, the question that follows is to what extent it can be fostered through the above identified multilingual approaches in different socio-educational contexts.

2.2. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism and multilingual practices in the classroom

Teacher's beliefs and thoughts are an important aspect to the teaching process (Borg, 2003, p. 81). As Borg (2003) explains, ''teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs'' (p. 81). In other words, as summarized by Borg (2006), teacher cognition, teaching context, and teacher experience (both professional and personal) interact with each other in the process of language learning. Thus, understanding this cognitive dimension of teaching can help us understand the decisions teachers make in the classroom (Haukås, 2016, p. 12; Egaña, Cenoz & Gorter, 2015, p. 169; Cybulska & Kabalin Borenić, 2014, p. 75, 77; De Angelis, 2011, p. 217). Apart from the experience they had as language learners, teachers' beliefs on multilingualism may also be shaped by ''the relative status of the languages in society and the institutional decisions about the curriculum, including the textbooks and materials used'' (Egaña, Cenoz & Gorter, 2015, p. 172). Despite the fact that teachers play the pivotal role in promoting multilingualism and the use of prior linguistic knowledge (Haukås, 2016, p.1-2), research on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism and especially multilingual pedagogical practices was surprisingly scarce until recently and it focused largely on migrant and minority language contexts. De Angelis (2011) reported on the beliefs of Italian, Austrian and UK teachers about the role of prior language knowledge and their impact on teaching practices. Her study showed that, despite their beliefs being positive, most teachers still thought languages should be kept apart and treated as separate. The teachers avoided making references to students' home language and culture and did not allow their use in the classroom. Egaña, Cenoz and Gorter (2015) also found that primary school teachers in the Basque Country and Friesland were reluctant to allow their students to code-switch, insisting on the use of a target language, although almost all the teachers admitted they often spontaneously used code-switching in their classrooms and some (teachers in Friesland) even used it as a teaching strategy. With the exception of a few teachers who believed language teaching should be interconnected, the authors concluded that the monolingual ideology still prevailed.

Portolés and Martí (2018) examined the beliefs of pre-service subject teachers in Valencia, Spain, on teaching English as an L3. They compared teachers' beliefs before and after a training course on the multilingual teaching approach. The teachers' initial support towards the monolingual ideology was attributed to individual linguistic background and the

lack of multilingualism training programmes, but Portolés and Martí (2018) concluded that teachers' beliefs were susceptible to training and stressed the crucial role training had in reshaping perceptions (p. 4). The problem of insufficient teacher training was also recorded in studies that included language teachers. In Griva and Chostelidou (2012), foreign language teachers in Greece highlighted the importance of in-service teaching, expressing the need for reorganizing teaching approaches in order to address multilingualism requirements. However, it should also be noted that, although having positive attitudes towards multilingualism and its promotion, only a few teachers (1.9%) mentioned cooperation between foreign language teachers and L1 teachers (Griva & Chostelidou, 2012, p. 265).

Apart from general attitudes towards multilingualism, it is important to understand language teachers' beliefs and practices when it comes to multilingual and language awareness pedagogy, as these are the main tools for softening the boundaries between languages. In her study on third language teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy in Norway, Haukås (2016) found that although all the teachers in the study said they frequently used their students' prior linguistic knowledge, this was restricted only to languages learned at school. Unfortunately, their awareness raising practices were not supported by textbook activities which called for little or almost no use of students' L1 and L2. Furthermore, even though the teachers liked the idea of collaborating with teachers of other languages, the study reported that such collaboration did not exist, mostly due to time constrains. Heyder and Schädlich (2014) also reported that FL teachers in Lower Saxony had positive attitudes to multilingual pedagogy and materials promoting multilingualism, and made a frequent (spontaneous) use of language comparison. However, the teachers rarely used multilingual materials and were somewhat reluctant to bring other languages into their classrooms if they were not familiar with them.

Positive attitudes were also found by Cybulska and Kabalin Borenić (2014) among pre-service and in-service English teachers in Croatia and Poland. When asked which activities they would use to promote pluralistic approaches, the teachers opted for analysing cross-cultural encounters, as well as scanning non-English discourses for familiar elements and structural similarities (p. 89). Additionally, they found that there was no correlation between teachers' attitudes and the number of languages they spoke or their teaching experience. These findings are particularly interesting considering the fact that both Poland and Croatia are linguistically homogenous and had not yet been affected by migrating cultures, and their foreign language teachers rarely, if ever, came into contact with students whose L1 was not Polish or Croatian. Another study in Polish context (Otwinowska 2014) examined the factors affecting teachers' levels of plurilingual awareness as well as their views on cross-linguistic practices, and corroborated the majority of the aforementioned findings. Polish teachers displayed positive attitudes towards cross-linguistic comparisons as well as the use of prior linguistic knowledge. Otwinowska (2014) found that teachers' level of plurilingual awareness did not depend solely on experience, but also on their

linguistic background. Teachers who were multilingual and whose knowledge of L3 was somewhere at the intermediate level demonstrated higher levels of plurilingual awareness. However, they were still not prepared and confident enough to put their beliefs into practice, which was attributed to their lack of training on plurilingual education.

In sum, the majority of aforementioned studies have stressed the following: a) material promoting cross-linguistic awareness needs to be included in language textbooks in order to support multilingual classroom activities and promote the learning of multiple languages, b) coordination and cooperation need to be developed between teachers of different languages, c) teachers need to be better trained in and educated on multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies and practices.

3. Study

3.1. Socio-educational background

Even though the status of the English language has been rapidly turning from a foreign language to lingua franca or second language in most countries of the EU, the way it is taught in Croatia still preserves many features of a school subject taught in a traditional way as a "foreign language" (Letica Krevelj, 2019). While elsewhere in Europe the learner make-up in the classroom is also becoming rather heterogeneous, from the linguistic perspective, the one in Croatia is still predominantly monolingual. The official language of schooling is in the majority language, Croatian, and the learners are rarely non-native speakers of the majority language. Consequently, the question of the inclusion of other students' languages is rarely raised. The presence of different languages in the repertoire of Croatian learners is not due to the diversity of cultural and linguistic background, but the fact that learning of foreign languages is promoted through the Croatian education system.

Croatia has had a long history of teaching languages through formal education (Vilke, [1999] 2019), and the attitudes to FL learning, as well as early FL learning, have been extremely positive (Letica Krevelj, 2019). The first foreign language is introduced in the first grade of primary school (at the age of six) and the second foreign language is usually introduced in the fourth grade (at the age of ten). By the end of the secondary education (at the age of 18) the majority of learners will have studied at least two foreign languages (in addition to Latin in grammar schools).

According to the statistical data (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2017), 89.7% of learners study English as the first foreign language. The second most popular language is German, followed by Italian and French. The second foreign language in primary school is taken up by approximately 62% of learners and the great majority chooses German as their second foreign language.

FL syllabus is still mostly based on the communicative approach to teaching and the ideal of exclusive target language use. At the same time, the teaching is still largely based on formal syllabus which puts a lot of emphasis on explicit grammar learning. Even though the Croatian education system has adopted the EU recommendations and policies regarding the promotion of multilingualism, and multilingualism is the declared aim, the additive approach to different FLs in the curriculum is the dominant one. Many discrepancies, at the language policy level, between the proposed curriculum framework and particular foreign language curriculum have already been identified (Petravić, 2015). Parents' attitudes to multilingualism and multiple language learning have been very positive (see Letica Krevelj, 2019), but little is still known about classroom practices with regard to the adoption of the multilingual approach.

3.2. Aim of the study

While the existing research on multilingual education draws primarily from the imminent need to cater for multilingual reality of classrooms worldwide (e.g., Hélot & O'Laoire, 2011), the purpose of this study was to examine the opportunities for the introduction of the multilingual approach in L1 homogeneous target-language-only FL classrooms. In other words, we investigated the possibilities for the facilitation of the multilingual perspective which may seem, at the moment and place, a divergent perspective on what has been called a tradition and common practice in FL classrooms in Croatia.

This study aimed to examine English language teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards bringing other languages into the English language classroom. More specifically, we wished to answer the following questions:

1) How receptive are the teachers to activities and materials promoting multilingualism?
2) Which benefits of the approach can they identify?
3) To what extent do they grasp the principle of the multilingual approach?

3.3. Participants

The participants in the study were 30 Croatian primary school teachers of English who teach children from age six to 14. Twenty-five teachers taught in state-owned primary schools, while five taught in private language schools. The teachers had an average of 20.1 years of teaching experience and only two teachers were male (6.7%). Their native language was Croatian, and besides English, they reported speaking other languages at least at the A1 level, most commonly German and Italian (see Table 1).

Table 1. Teachers' linguistic repertoires

Foreign language spoken	Number and percentage of speakers	Self-assessed proficiency level
English	100% (N=30)	C1 – C2
German	43.34% (N=13)	A1 – C2
Italian	40% (N=12)	A1 – C2
Spanish	13.34% (N=4)	A1 – C1
Portuguese	6.67% (N=2)	A1 – A2
French	3.34% (N=1)	B2
Czech	3.34% (N=1)	B1
Swedish	3.34% (N=1)	A1

3.4. Instruments and procedure

The participants were presented with a didactic material which could be used as a tool for promoting the multilingual approach in FL classrooms. The multilingual material was a multilingual picture book *Subway Sparrow* (Torres, 2012) written in three languages: English, Spanish and Polish. It features a charming story about four people (an English-speaking boy and a girl, a Spanish-speaking man, and a Polish-speaking woman) who are working together to save a sparrow caught in a subway car despite the fact that they each speak a different language. This simple story is an excellent example of linguistic diversity not being an obstacle, but a bridge connecting people of different cultures and backgrounds. An audio version of the book was recorded with proficient speakers of the three languages, and a short movie was made with pages from the picture book to accompany the audio for easier comprehension.[1]

The video was played to the teachers once (with the written text in the original languages), and afterwards they were presented with a short task which could be used as a post-listening activity with learners. The task itself involved reflecting upon the languages and lexical items encountered in the picture book and it consisted of a list of ten words from the three languages. The task required the recognition of the language to which each word belonged, the translation of each word, and additional questions aimed at raising learners' cross-linguistic and metacognitive awareness. The teachers were asked to assess the grade / proficiency level of potential learners best suited for the task.

The teachers were then asked to fill in a questionnaire. The first part included questions regarding teachers' linguistic background and teaching experience. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions which elicited data on the use of language(s) in teachers' own classrooms, and their perception of the multilingual material i.e. its educational potential. The questions were formed as follows:

1. Do you usually use other languages besides English in your classroom?
    a. If yes, which ones (Croatian or any other)?
    b. If no, why not?
2. Do you allow your students to use any other language apart from English in the classroom? Why/why not?
3. Did you like the activity? Why/why not?
4. Do you think this material has any educational value? If yes, what is it?
5. If similar material were available to you, would you use it (multilingual picture books) in your classroom? Why/why not?

The study was conducted in the fall of 2017, on three different occasions during teachers' meetings. All the participants were informed of the aims of the study and their participation was entirely voluntary.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The use of other languages in an English language class

All the teachers (100%) reported using languages other than English in their English language classes. However, the language used along English was almost always Croatian, students' and teachers' L1. Most of the explanations for their use of L1 in the classroom suggested the function of facilitating and checking comprehension, but not for making connections between languages. This may be either because Croatian is typologically more distant from English than other commonly studied languages, or that it is simply felt as different due to its L1 status.

Even though the teachers themselves spoke more than one foreign language, only seven of them (23%) reported having introduced other languages in their classrooms. Four teachers mentioned German in order to make comparisons with English (T08: *I compare English and German grammar;* T21: *Because of similarities, pupils are glad when they see they know something*) and three teachers mentioned Italian, Latin, Greek or French in order to point out the similarities between Indo-European languages or word etymology (T10: *To explain that some words are similar in other languages or to point out their origin)*. It is possible, however, that the teachers were reluctant to report such practices as these were neither promoted during their pre- or in-service education, nor clearly articulated in the FL curriculum.

The situation was similar on the question of allowing students the use of other languages during English classes. Almost all teachers (N=29, 97%) allowed the use of Croatian for comprehension purposes, translation or because the students were unable to express themselves in English. Even though only one teacher answered negatively, there were four teachers who suggested that the use of Croatian was allowed only to the youngest / least proficient learners (T02: *Only at the beginning, before we become more skilled in the classroom language*). It is important to emphasize that, when explaining the use of Croatian in their classrooms, most teachers felt a need to provide an excuse for doing so (T11: *Just to make sure there is no misunderstanding, other than that, the use of L1 in minimal*). Only six teachers justified the use of other languages by explaining the benefits they believed it had for their learners (T15: *The use of other languages can be more motivating, it can create a more positive atmosphere and lead to better learning outcomes*).

4.2. Teacher reactions to the multilingual picture book

All the teachers reacted positively to the multilingual picture book and the task. However, 19 teachers (60%) liked the picture book for reasons not related to the multilingual aspect. The reasons they provided referred to the fact that it was an authentic, audio-visual material, or that it could be exploited as a didactic material for teaching the target language. Only 11 teachers (36.7%) provided reasons related to the presence of the three languages in the story book. The potential of raising awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism was mentioned as a reason by 26% of teachers (N=8), whereby they either simply stated that it was in line with the EU policies, or they mentioned its specific goals such as raising awareness of different languages and cultures of the EU, or promoting intercomprehension. (T18: *Pupils will see that they do not have to be proficient in a language to communicate with others;* T04: *It fits well with the trend of multilingual development;* T27: *It may motivate learners to learn other languages)*.

Only three teachers (10%) liked the material because they recognized its potential for promoting cross-linguistic awareness. The three teachers mentioned the usefulness of drawing comparisons between different languages and raising students' awareness of similarities and differences between them. One of the three teachers also suggested that the picture book should contain languages students were already learning (T30: *It would be ideal if the combination were English-German, because these are the languages students learn at school so the benefit would be twofold*). The emphasis seems to be placed on the benefit the activity may have on the proficiency in languages students were learning as in "killing two birds with one stone", rather than raising cross-linguistic awareness. The teachers' reactions might have been different if the story were written in languages students were learning at school – Croatian, English and German. We may wonder whether the teachers would have liked it more or less, or recognized more benefits of such material if this were the case.

4.3. The educational potential of the picture book

All the teachers readily provided more than a single answer to the question of the educational potential of the picture book. The question asked was rather general in order to see what the teachers themselves would list as most important. The answers were divided in two categories: educational values related and those not related to multilingualism.

The teachers frequently identified the potential of promoting moral values and team work. This was not surprizing as this was one of the main issues of the original picture book which promoted the idea that a goal can be accomplished even when people did not speak each other's languages. Thus, somewhat surprizing may be the fact that six teachers mentioned the importance of learning languages as the most important educational value of the picture book. We believe that it simply reflects the importance of learning foreign languages that is very much ingrained in the Croatian society. A few teachers also identified particular aspects of the target language(s) that could be taught using the picture book (see Table 2).

Table 2. Identified educational potential not related to multilingualism

Educational potential	**No. of answers**
Social /moral values, cooperation and team work	12
Importance of learning other languages	6
Learning two languages simultaneously	3
Teaching elements of the target language	2
Total	23

When it comes to the educational potential related to multilingualism, the teachers most commonly referred to affective aspects such as general awareness of multilingualism in the world and promotion of tolerance among people speaking different languages. The promotion of cross-linguistic awareness was mentioned only in three instances, and only one teacher referred to the potential of promoting learners' use of other languages in the classroom (Table 3).

Table 3. Identified educational potential related to multilingualism

Aspects of multilingualism	**Educational potential**	**No. of answers**
Affective	Awareness of multilingualism and tolerance	15
	Motivation for learning additional languages	1
Cognitive	Cross-linguistic awareness	3
Socio-interactional	Promoting learners' use of different languages in the classroom	1
	Total	20

4.4. Including the multilingual picture book in the English language classroom

The next question inquired into teachers' willingness to include a multilingual material in their classroom. We were particularly interested in answers of those teachers who referred to the multilingual aspect of the picture book as we wanted to gauge the extent to which they see this aspect integrated into their own English classrooms.

To our delight, all the teachers stated that they would use such material were it available to them, which is a good argument in favour of developing similar material in the future. However, based on the teachers' explanations of the aims for which they would use the material, we found that 63% of teachers actually targeted the development of the English language proficiency. The reasons they provided were simply related to the novelty effect such material would have in the teaching practice, suggesting that it would be more motivating for students or that it could be used for the teaching of learning strategies. Many teachers actually pointed out that the topic was in line with the thematic aims of the English language curriculum and that they would use it for teaching vocabulary and grammatical features of the English language.

Eleven teachers (37%) stated that they would use the material in their class for the reasons related to the multilingual aspect. Three of them stated rather vaguely that it would promote the awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the EU. Seven of them mentioned the aim of promoting language awareness and cross-linguistic awareness (T01: *Thinking about language in general, not just English; interlanguage transfer).* Again, one of the teachers pointed out the aforementioned importance of the language combination, explaining that ''[i]f the material were in languages the students are learning, [students] could compare sentences, construction and words'' (T30).

It is important to emphasize that two out of these seven teachers stated that they would use this material in extracurricular classes. They stated explicitly that the aim of the English language subject is to "work" on the English language proficiency. Therefore, the majority stayed firmly within the borders of the English language explaining that their primary goal was to teach children to communicate in English. We believe that this clearly suggests that teachers in English language classrooms still follow the one-classroom-one-language ideology and that there is a long way to go before we succeed in softening the boundaries between languages.

Only one teacher who had minority students in her class suggested the aim in line with the socio-cultural dimension of multilingualism. She felt that it could promote inclusion and equality saying that "*if it were in their mother tongue, they could take part and stand out*" (T07). Even though it was a single case, we hope that this may suggest that the linguistic heterogeneity in the classroom can have an impact on teachers' perception of the usefulness of the multilingual approach in the educational system.

5. Conclusion

The study presented in this paper constitutes a small step towards striking a balance between the predominantly monolingual environment in which FL learning takes place and the recommendations of European Commission and research on multilingualism on purported benefits of multilingualism and multiple language learning. We set to examine how receptive Croatian teachers were to materials promoting multilingualism, which benefits of the materials they could identify, and the extent to which they accepted the promotion of multilingualism as an educational goal through language teaching.

Having presented the teachers with the example of a multilingual didactic material, we concluded that the teachers were positive about the material, but their focus was mainly on non-linguistic aspects of multilingualism. Despite their overall liking of the picture book, the teachers did not entertain the idea that it could contribute to overall linguistic competence. Only around 30 % of teachers showed inclination towards promoting learners' metalinguistic and cross-linguistic awareness, but even they often pointed out some contextual factors as obstacles on their path of practicing the multilingual approach (e.g. public exams and curricular constraints). It is in all fairness that we should state that this perspective may have been truly adopted only at a superficial level. This seems to be true even in multilingual socio-educational contexts (see e.g. Leonet et al., 2017), let alone in the linguistically homogeneous context such as ours.

Learning languages has been long recognized as an asset in Croatia and the implementation of the EU policies has brought nothing new in that respect. However, the EU policy documents stress not only the learning of a particular language, but also each FL classroom contributing to learners' multilingualism. Seemingly this aspect did not receive equal attention. As previously mentioned (Petravić, 2015), the teaching of English in Croatia is still focused on achieving the communicative competence in the target language, so the integration of languages in the curriculum and softening the boundaries between languages is not part of teachers' ideology.

The fact that the teachers did not appropriate the idea of the multilingual approach is not surprizing for two reasons. The teachers in the study had not been educated on multilingualism and multilingual approach during their pre- or in-service training, and multilingualism promoted through the EU policies did not follow through to the foreign language syllabi in the form of clearly articulated outcomes.

The multilingual approach contradicts the traditional foundation of foreign language teaching, e.g. ideal native speaker, in many ways (see Cenoz, 2019). Based on the analysis of our data, we could agree that multilingual approach is in conflict with the current paradigm of English language teaching in Croatia. In practical terms, in school systems which are focused on the assessment, linguistic and metalinguistic awareness as an outcome of a FL course needs to be clearly articulated and its effect / value should be obvious. There are not many empirical studies which testify to the efficacy of cross-linguistic approach when it

comes to target language learning, and the constructs such as multilingual proficiency (Herdina & Jessner, 2002) and holistic multicompetence (Cook, 1992) are still far removed from the actual teaching practices. We believe that this may be particularly the case with teachers of English, as English is most commonly the first foreign language, and that the teachers of languages other than English may be more susceptible to arguments for the multilingual approach.

The willingness of a single teacher with minority language speakers in her class to engage with multilingualism in the classroom was the closest to the translanguaging pedagogy we could identify in our study. We would like to suggest that translanguaging as a resource may arise when there is a true communicative need, rather than from the purported benefits of a single approach or even less so, from the language policy recommendations. In our context, it was spontaneously evoked when students with linguistically diverse backgrounds could not meet the traditional target-language-only policy.

6. Implications of the study

It is often the teachers who decide on the extent of the implementation of particular language policies and recommendations, and it is the ideologies and beliefs that they draw from when making decisions in the classrooms. For this reason, we believe that our study may be rather informative for similar contexts with still traditional outlook and the one-classroom-one-language approaches to FL teaching. These beliefs most certainly deserve further study.

We can only agree with previously identified need for teacher training on multilingual education. Teachers should be provided with available empirically tested findings and knowledge on multiple language learning so that they could reflect on their own practices in the light of these facts and recommendations. However, this may be a difficult endeavour in a case such as ours where the true reconstruction of ideologies may only be possible at the moment the realities of multilingual classrooms (linguistic diversity as opposed to monolingual and monocultural make-up) make teachers question the effectiveness, or at least the appropriateness, of current practices. The one-language-per-classroom approach seems to be deeply rooted in past ideologies which are simply perpetuated without critical reflection.

As the teachers themselves are often speakers of other languages besides English, there are many ways in which they could capitalize on that knowledge, and only the awareness of that potential may be a step away from one-language-per-classroom approach. We believe that if informed about the available knowledge (but also its limits) on the benefits of multilingualism and the multilingual approach to teaching, teachers would be capable of striking the balance between the recommendations and the realities of their own classrooms.

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Change in Feedback Practices and Its Effect on Students' Essay-writing Skills - an Action Research

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1. Introduction

In Croatia, secondary education is optional and is classified according to the type of school attended: grammar schools and vocational schools. Upon graduating from grammar school, the majority of students take the state school leaving exam (further in text the State Matura exam) and start tertiary education. Vocational school students who have completed a four-year program can either enter the labor market or sit the State Matura exam if they wish to proceed to tertiary education. One of the obligatory subjects within the State Matura exam is foreign language. The English language exam consists of three parts: reading comprehension, language in use, and writing in the form of an argumentative essay (A-level exam) or a reply to a short message (B-level exam).

Many vocational school students in Croatia take the A-level English language exam. For this reason, English teachers at the Secondary School of Economics and Business Administration in Slavonski Brod have decided to introduce essay-writing skills in the first year and develop them further over the remaining three years. Despite the change, several issues emerged as concerns for the teacher/researcher. Firstly, students' essays showed weaknesses in essay-writing skills, particularly in structure, but also in other areas (lexical and grammatical). Secondly, upon correcting students' essays (through indirect feedback) not much improvement was observed over time in terms of accuracy. Finally, after being given a grade (summative assessment), students did not seem to respond to the teacher's encouragement to invest effort or time to re-submit their corrected work. If to the mentioned concerns we add the continued weak results of the students' State Matura exams over the years, which seem to be a reflection of the standstill in terms of student progress and motivation to improve, the need for change was imminent.

Therefore, the teacher/researcher decided to re-examine current feedback practices. This was further justified in light of the newly proposed Framework for Assessment by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (2016) which defines feedback as gathered information used to guide learning and improve learning and teaching within the *assessment for* and *assessment as learning* approaches.

2. Literature review

Feedback as part of assessment is an integral part of the language learning process. In studying developments in the area of foreign language learning and teaching as well as second language acquisition it is evident that the assessment and feedback practices were guided by the approaches and orientations to language learning and teaching. The behaviorist tradition to language learning and teaching advocated assessment practices that reflected strict and systematic correction of errors. According to Frisby (1957, as cited in Beigi & Ketabi, 2015), the approach focused on three processes in language learning, i.e. receiving knowledge from the teacher or the educational materials, fixing it in the memory by repetition, and using it in actual practice until it becomes a personal skill. During the 1960s, Corder (1967, p.168) challenged these views stating that providing the correct form may not always be the only and most effective correction as it "bars the way to the learner testing alternative hypotheses". He also claimed that explicit feedback may prove ineffective as it often leads to too many interruptions by the teacher. In addition, he strongly advocated focusing on language learners' output, adapting teaching to students' needs and studying the errors to see if they have contributed to the students' second language. Language for communication came into focus during the 1970s and speaking without the burden of constantly being corrected was advocated by Chastain (1971, as cited in Beigi & Ketabi, 2015), who emphasized the importance of communication and getting students to speak.

During the 1990s, two opposing views on the effectiveness and usefulness of error correction emerged. Truscott (1996) claimed that error correction, more precisely grammar correction, should be abandoned as research showed it was ineffective and no research showed that it can be helpful and that for practical and theoretical reasons it can be ineffective. The practical reasons refer to "teachers' capacities in providing adequate and consistent feedback, and learners' ability and willingness to use the feedback effectively" (Truscott, 1996). In terms of theory, Truscott (1996) claimed that corrective feedback (further in text CF) will only lead to "a superficial and possibly transient form of knowledge" or 'pseudolearning', following the idea that explicit knowledge will never become implicit. Accordingly, he concluded that learners' interlanguage system is unsusceptible to CF. Finally, Truscott (1996) also claimed that CF has harmful effects in the sense that by making students aware of their errors, CF leads to learner stress and anxiety of making the same errors in future writing. This anxiety could lead learners to avoid the erroneous constructions when

writing a new text, resulting in simplified writing (van Beuningen, 2010). In 1999, Ferris wrote a counter argument on Truscott's views of CF asserting that CF is an important tool for teacher's everyday work and cannot be ruled out hastily. She maintained that feedback can be beneficial in the short-term revision of drafts as her research showed that 73% of grammar-focused teacher comments resulted in successful revisions (1997). Additional research (Ferris, 1999, 2004; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008), established that written feedback/correction of errors can help learners to both improve their drafts and their long-term writing ability. Both authors, Truscott and Ferris, agreed that the research base on error correction in L2 writing was insufficient for drawing conclusions on the usefulness of CF (Ferris, 2004) and called for more research to be conducted.

In analyzing the literature on the topic of feedback, one comes across several strategies which teachers can apply for providing feedback to students' writing and for considering students' response to feedback. According to Ellis and Sheen (2006), the strategies would comprise corrective feedback that is direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused or unfocused, electronic feedback, and reformulation. In terms of the learners' involvement in the correction process Van Beuningen (2010) distinguishes between direct and indirect feedback. Direct or explicit feedback consists of an indication of the error and the corresponding correct linguistic form (e.g. the wrong word is crossed out and the correct form is given). Indirect CF only indicates that an error has been made. Instead of the teacher providing the target form, it is left to the learner to correct his own errors. Feedback can be indirect or implicit where the error is only marked (circled or underlined) or the number of errors is recorded in the margin. Sometimes coding can be used, i.e. instead of marking every error a dot is placed in the margin reflecting an error which students have to correct themselves (Jones & William, 2008).

With respect to the focus of feedback, Ellis (2006) differentiates between focused and unfocused feedback. Focused feedback implies correcting only some preselected forms (e.g. articles, tenses) whereas unfocused feedback implies the correction of all errors. Recently, there has been a growing interest in feedback referred to as metalinguistic error correction (ML). One type of metalinguistic feedback offers a grammatical rule or added example of correct usage followed by an additional oral explanation (Nagode, Pižorn, & Juriščević, 2014). In another type of ML feedback, the teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww = wrong word; art = article) thus providing some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error (Ellis, 2006).

Electronic feedback refers to feedback offered through computer mediated communication. It involves students submitting papers electronically through classroom/learning management systems (e.g., Canvas or Moodle) and teachers providing feedback on student papers electronically. Ene and Upton (2018) inform that computer-mediated feedback can be offered either synchronously (typically through online chats) or asynchronously using email, discussion board messages, or comments/track changes in

Microsoft Word. Such feedback allows the learners to locate the corrections that are most appropriate for their own textual intentions and so encourages student independence.

Lastly, reformulation, or reconstructed sentences (Corder, 1971), involves a native-speaker "rewriting the paper so as to preserve as many of the writers' ideas as possible, while expressing them in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound native-like" (Cohen, 1989 p. 4). The writer then makes a comparison of the original draft and the one reformulated by a native speaker.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies of feedback to student writing which rely on written feedback, we come across strategies which, along with written feedback, include teacher–student conferences. According to Ferris (2011), if completed thoughtfully, conferences can provide student writers with specific, on-the-spot input about language problems and allow them to ask questions and address points of confusion. In their study, Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) established that a combination of written and conference feedback could improve the accuracy of writings significantly along with helping student writers understand the nature of error and how to correct it.

Along the lines of that conclusion, the action research undertaken aimed to introduce a change in feedback practices which could be described as indirect feedback. The change was also introduced in response to the mentioned Framework (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2016), which suggests a different approach to assessment and feedback practices. The Framework is curriculum-based and aligned with learning outcomes defined by the curriculum. Observing and recording information regarding students' progress and achievement in various areas of learning and at various times throughout the school year is recommended. The document emphasizes complementarity and balance of the *assessment of learning* approach and approaches to assessment known as *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning*. Feedback to students within the *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* approaches does not result in a grade, but in an exchange of information on learning and the results of learning (Cindrić & Pavić, 2017). It is a means of involving students in the learning process by providing information and guidance so that students can plan and manage the next steps in their learning with respect to the set outcomes. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is to offer effective CF that prompts students to reflect on their work.

3. Approach to teaching essay writing prior to action research

One of the learning outcomes in the Croatian secondary schools EFL curriculum in the first grade is students' ability to structure an essay. By grade four, students should develop a wider range of vocabulary and use more complex grammar structures in their essays. According to the Catalogue for the National Secondary School Leaving Examination in English for the school year 2017/2018 (National Centre for External Evaluation of

Education, 2017), a wider range of vocabulary encompasses more advanced collocations, idiomatic expressions, various adverbs, accurately used prefixes and suffixes, a variety of linking words, etc. Complex grammar structures include various comparative and superlative structures (for example, less, least; comparative + and + comparative; the + comparative...), comparison of adverbs, modal verbs (including those used for deduction and speculation), correct use of tenses, active and passive voice, indirect questions, reported speech (statements, questions, commands, requests, suggestions), verb patterns (gerund and infinitive), conditional clauses, relative clauses and adverbial clauses, and phrasal verbs.

In order to achieve the set learning outcome, students engage in writing one essay per term. The essays are formally graded, and the marks affect their final grade. Prior to the essay-writing, students analyze exemplary essays. The criteria according to which their essays are graded in the State Matura exam (task completion, coherence and cohesion, grammar, vocabulary) are also explained. Students' essays are corrected in the form of indirect feedback, i.e. errors are underlined drawing attention to the most frequent errors within the following categories: structure, topic, lexis, and grammar. Error correction and analysis are carried out in cooperation with students. The teacher copies errors on the blackboard and offers the correct form. Students are expected to copy the corrections in their notebooks.

To motivate students to practice their essay-writing skills, they are given the opportunity to re-write the essay and submit it to the teacher for correction. Unfortunately, students rarely undertake such a task. The reason could be that students with lower academic achievement see this as an unattainable challenge. Another reason could be that students lose motivation for correcting language/stylistic errors once their essays have been graded.

Despite the analysis of exemplary essays and detailed error correction, the teacher did not observe progress in students' essay-writing skills over time. Moreover, errors were frequently repeated and motivation to improve was low. Therefore, it was obvious that the error correction practice had to change in order to be more effective. The research in question focused on introducing change into the teacher's error correction and feedback practices with the aim to prompt students to revisit their work, think and reflect about their writing and possibly become more motivated to work on their essay-writing skills.

4. Study

4.1. Study aims

The aim of the action research undertaken was of a broader scope: 1) to gain information regarding students' estimates of their essay-writing skills, their preferences regarding feedback methods for writing tasks and opinions regarding self-assessment and peer-

assessment; 2) to establish students' reception of new feedback practices (ML + conferencing); and 3) to establish whether such an intervention would prompt students to invest more effort in their learning and possibly affect their essay-writing skills.

In order to realize the aims of the research in question, the model of action research was applied providing researchers with perceptions regarding currently used feedback practices to student writing which could contribute to applying more effective feedback aligned with the Framework (2016). Stages of the action research suggested by Sagor (2005) were adhered to in the process, i.e. clarification of the vision (focus); developing a theory of action; implementing action and data collection; reflecting and planning informed action stages.

4.2. Participants

The sample of participants comprised three classes of students (N = 60; 13 males, 47 females) in the final grade of high school within two departments (economics and administration) of the Secondary School of Economics and Business Administration in Slavonski Brod, Croatia. These students had been learning English for 12 years. Throughout the four years in high school, students had been taught by the same teacher and had three English lessons per week.

The number of students participating in different phases of the action research varied as some students were absent. Therefore, the sample of participants who completed the Initial Student Questionnaire (ISQ) was 58. Student Essays, initial and revised versions, were written by 52 and 48 students, respectively. The Student Evaluation of the intervention was completed by 45 students. Prior to the research, written consent was obtained from students. To ensure confidentiality, students used codes instead of names on their essays.

4.3. Instruments and procedure

For accuracy of the research, data was collected from multiple sources (Mills, 2003) and triangulation of data was ensured through the Initial Student Questionnaire (cf. Komadina, 2014), Student Essays (initial and revised versions with feedback and conferencing), and Student Evaluation of the intervention. The Initial Student Questionnaire (further in text ISQ) comprised 15 closed-ended questions grouped into three sections tackling specific information: 1) students' estimate of knowledge of essay structure and preference of feedback practice; 2) motivation and input from the teacher; and 3) students' opinions of self- and peer-assessment. Accordingly, the ISQ served to identify students' problem areas in essay writing, their preferred method of error correction and feedback and their attitudes towards self- and peer- assessment.

Student Essays, initial and revised versions, served as the second research instrument where the intervention in the form of ML feedback and conferencing was applied. Encouraged by the teacher, this time, students had the option to turn in the revised essay for a higher grade (see Vizek-Vidović, Miljković, Rijavec, & Vlahović-Štetić, 2014) which was also corrected and analyzed by the teacher. In a subsequent cycle of the action research the initial and revised essays would be subject to a detailed error analysis to establish whether the intervention had an effect on students' learning.

The third instrument used in the research was the Student Evaluation which was administered once the intervention was completed. The Student Evaluation comprised 13 statements (5-point Likert-type scale where 1 signifies strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) regarding aspects of the intervention to which students gave opinions and provided estimates of their achievement upon the intervention.

Data from the ISQ and the Student Evaluation were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program relying on the descriptive method of analysis (frequency, percentage, mean).

The action research was conducted over a period of six weeks during the winter semester of the 2017-2018 school year and was set up as follows. The initial phase entailed collecting information through the ISQ. Based on the analysis of these results, the teacher decided on a specific type of feedback for the first essay-writing assignment. In the second phase the research was organized in the following order: 1) essay-writing (week 2); 2) ML feedback and conferencing (week 3); 3) revision and rewriting (weeks 4 and 5); 4) ML feedback (color-coded) and conferencing (week 6). The research was completed with the Student Evaluation of the intervention and their estimate of achievement in the writing assignment.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Students' estimates of knowledge of essay structure, feedback preferences and self- and peer-assessment

A total of 58 students (n=58) completed the ISQ. According to the results, 27 (46.6%) students stated having sufficient theoretical knowledge of essay structure, 30 (51.7%) students stated that they could use more practice, and only one student reported having insufficient theoretical knowledge of the essay structure. These responses were further explained when students were asked to estimate knowledge of particular aspects of essay-writing (see Figure 1).

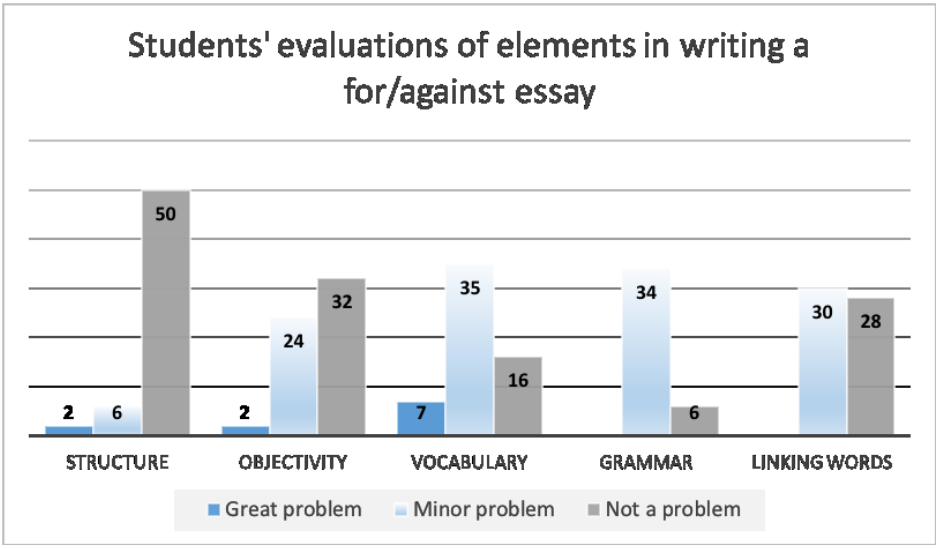

Figure 1 Students' evaluations of their knowledge of elements in writing a for/against essay

According to Figure 1, structure does not seem to be an issue for students. This estimate is in contradiction with their initial estimate of theoretical knowledge of essay structure where more than half of the students reported that they could use more practice. Furthermore, students (24; 41.4%) reported minor problems with expressing objectivity, with vocabulary (35; 60.3%), grammar (34; 58.6%) and linking words (30; 51.7%). It is interesting that grammar presented only a minor problem for the majority of students in the sample. A possible reason could be the teacher's practice of correcting students' grammar errors in speaking only when the errors impede comprehension giving students the impression that they don't make many grammatical errors. Another explanation might be derived from the students' tendency to use very simple grammatical structures in which they are not likely to make errors. Truscott (2004) finds that such a strategy is one of the drawbacks of corrective feedback.

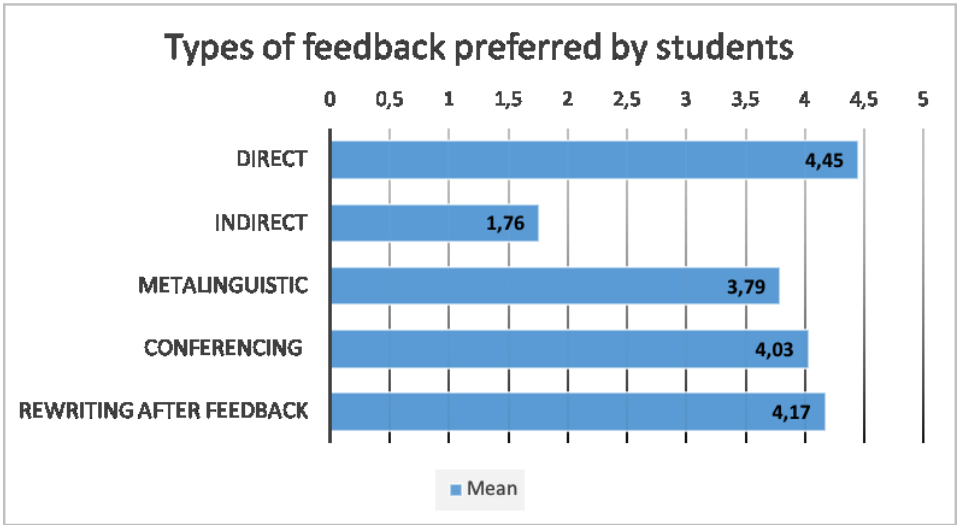

Figure 2 Mean levels for students' preferred type of feedback

On a Likert-type scale (1-least helpful to 5-most helpful), students were asked to rate different types of feedback in terms of how useful they find them for developing writing skills. According to students' ratings (Figure 2), DF with errors marked and corrected was selected as the most helpful (*M*=4.45, *SD*=0.95). Conferencing (*M*=4.03, *SD*=1.04) and rewriting after feedback (*M*=4.17, *SD*=1.09) are also options which students rated as useful. ML feedback did not come across as feedback that would be very useful for students, but neither was it entirely rejected (*M*=3.79, *SD*=1.23). Finally, indirect feedback was reported as the least useful feedback method (*M*=1.76; *SD*=0.96). This result is similar to the results of a research conducted in Slovenia on a sample of 168 grammar school students (see Komadina, 2014) where DF with corrections in combination with teacher's comments was established as the most useful type of feedback. In both research, indirect feedback came across as the least preferable feedback for error correction. Such results do not surprise as indirect feedback requires a high level of motivation and independent work and effort invested (mostly outside the school environment).

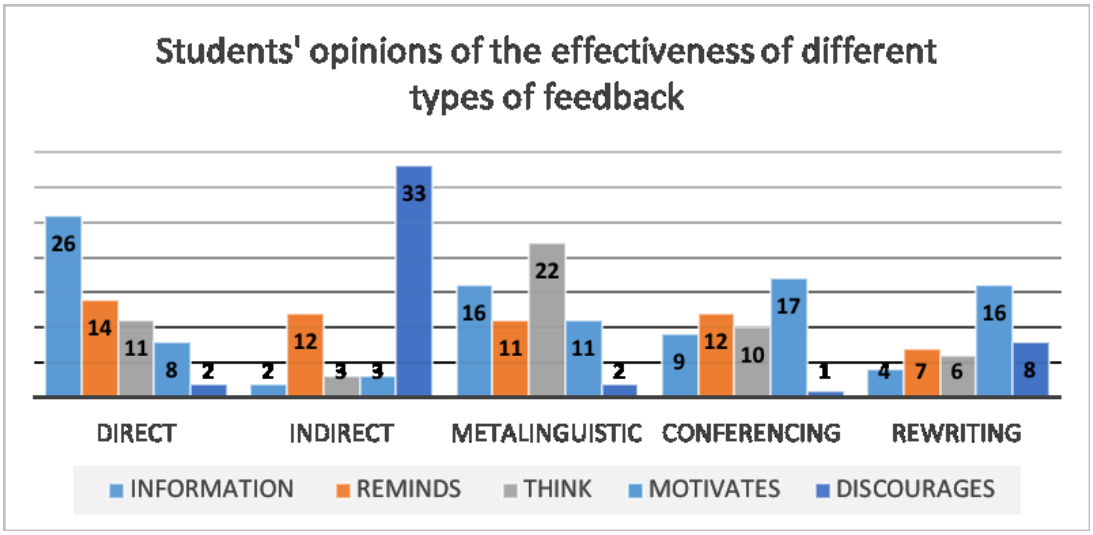

Figure 3 Students' opinions of the areas for which particular feedback types are useful

Students were also asked to specify areas for which different types of feedback are useful. According to the results (Figure 3), 26 students (44.8%) find that DF provides information on their errors and reminds them of their errors (14; 24.1%). Only 11 (19%) students reported that DF actually makes them think about their errors. Two students find it discouraging for further writing. On the other hand, more than half of the students (33; 56.9%) consider indirect feedback discouraging, while some students (12; 20.7%) reported that it reminds them of their errors. ML feedback makes students think about their errors (22; 37.9%), provides information on errors (16; 27.6%), reminds them of their errors (11; 19%). Conferencing and rewriting are considered motivating (17; 29.3%; 16; 27.6%), while 8 (13.8%) students reported that rewriting an essay would be discouraging. In observing the results, it can be concluded that ML feedback would help students think about their errors,

while conferencing and rewriting the essay would be methods that would best help them in error correction and in stimulating their interest in writing. Students recognized the benefit of ML feedback, but of all the methods, conferencing emerged as one that would motivate them to work. These results place themselves along the two currents observed in scientific literature relating to the effectiveness of direct and indirect CF. In our sample, students by far prefer DF. The reason could be that they do not have to invest much effort in correcting their errors, while at the same time they see the extent of their errors. It is claimed that DF enables learners to instantly internalize the correct form in which case the students may find this as effective for learning. Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken's (2012) research established that direct correction prompted durable grammatical accuracy of a medium size. In that sense, it is possible that upon receiving DF and after correcting their errors students gain a sense of improvement in their writing. With respect to indirect feedback, Bitchener and Knoch (2008, p. 415) claim that through indirect feedback, pupils engage in guided learning and problem solving and, as a result, it promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition. Indirect feedback was considered the least effective feedback and discouraging for our student sample. This could be attributed to students' lack of motivation to independently correct errors which can be attributed to the lack of guidance and reflection in the process itself. Thus, when faced with indirect feedback, it is not surprising that students are "lost" or discouraged. Without guidance and feedback, students don't know whether their hypothesized corrections are indeed accurate (Chandler, 2003). Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2012) found that direct correction was better suited for grammatical errors and indirect for nongrammatical. Along those lines, applying different feedback methods for different purposes may be more effective if we want our students to engage in indirect feedback.

The ISQ also provided information on students' habits regarding their writing skills. The answers showed that 41 students (70.7%) never copy and analyze errors in their notebooks, i.e. that they do not engage in revising and correcting their written work, and yet they almost uniformly state that correcting errors would help them on their State Matura exam (57; 98%). According to Ellis (2004), correcting errors does not necessarily contribute to fostering true accuracy, but CF does promote pseudo-learning, i.e. self-editing and revision skills. This finding implies that students are aware of what could possibly help them but do not seem to know how to go about it. The ability to draft, self-edit, and revise scripts emerged as the missing link in the writing process and yet the allocated writing time (75 minutes) in the State Matura exam accounts for applying the mentioned aspects. Student's low motivation for such tasks could possibly be due to insufficient guidance in the process.

The majority of students (45; 77%) stated that rewriting the essay would help them achieve better results on their State Matura exam. Their estimates of the long-term benefits of revising the essay showed that 32 students (52%) thought it would improve their English, whereas 21 (36.2%) students could not decide and 3 students disagreed. This finding is similar to the results of research which established that revising the essay using a self-

assessment sheet followed by analysis of errors in the class was most useful for improving students' writing skills (see Skube, 2014).

Students' willingness to ask the teacher for clarification of errors revealed hesitation. According to the results, 21 (36.2%) students always ask the teacher for clarification, while 30 (51.7%) students do so only sometimes and 7 (12.1%) reported never asking for clarification. This could be ascribed to the summative nature of feedback as once a paper is graded, most of the students are discouraged to seek explanations and invest time in their learning. The results also show that more opportunities for dialogue should be provided during the writing process. The majority of the students also stated that they like to read the teacher's comments on their essays (52; 89%). This finding is similar to findings by Komadina (2014) who established that grammar school students find teachers' written comments as most motivational and engaging for further work.

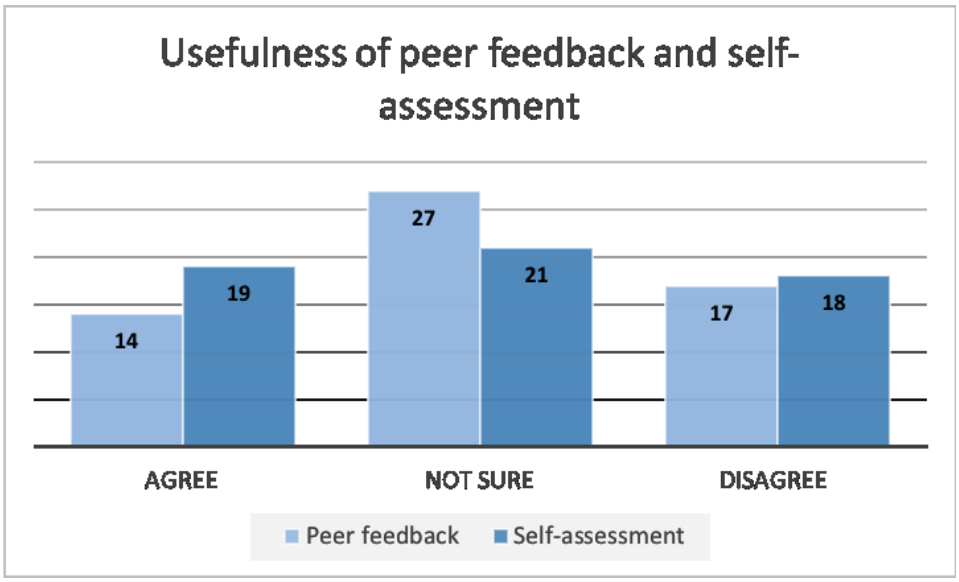

Figure 4 Students' opinions of the usefulness of peer- and self-assessment for improving their writing skills

Finally, students were asked to express their opinion on the effectiveness of peer- and self-assessment. The majority of students (Figure 4) are not sure whether such feedback would be useful. Few students (14; 19) agree that peer- and self-assessment would be effective, but almost the same number of students disagree that such feedback would be effective for their essay-writing skills. Such results show that the purpose of peer- and self-assessment is perhaps not quite clear to students. Students' hesitation and disagreement possibly come as a result of not being engaged in such activities, or if they have, they were not guided and informed. The Framework for Assessment (2016) places emphasis on the *assessment as learning* approach where the student is an active and responsible constituent of learning and assessment. It implies the ability to self-reflect, self-assess, and peer-assess in order to promote independent and self-regulated learning and awareness of one's

learning and progress. According to Skube (2014), students seem to improve their writing if given feedback and the opportunity to self-assess their work through self-assessment sheets during class time.

5.2. Students' reception of the intervention

Taking into consideration students' opinions and preferences regarding correction and feedback, the intervention comprised ML feedback followed by student-teacher conferencing along with a motivational task which was to rewrite the essay for a higher grade. Upon receiving their essays with ML feedback, student-teacher conferencing took place during regular English lessons. As students had similar types of errors, group feedback was initiated.

Students' reception of the intervention (ML feedback + conferencing; revision and rewriting) can be characterized as successful as 48 students out of 52 submitted the revised essay. The motivation to correct errors, rewrite and turn in the second paper possibly comes from students' awareness of having to sit the State Matura exam and attempt to achieve good results or to aim for a better grade. Students' readiness to conference with the teacher and discuss their concerns was evident and offers support to the statement that supportive, cooperative, equal and active student/teacher relationship contribute to establishing more effective feedback practices (Čačinovič Vogrinčić, 2008). This was also established by Skube (2014) who, from her observations of student progress in writing, concluded that conferencing with the student has the most effect on their achievement. Within this action research the teacher observed that many students were rather anxious to get feedback on the second essay not only because of the grade but also to see whether the invested time and effort was to their benefit.

To monitor their progress, feedback on the revised essay was color-coded (green - corrected errors; red - uncorrected errors; pink - new errors; blue – paraphrase). According to Truscott (2004, 2007), one of the harmful side effects of CF is simplified writing based on the assumption that CF encourages learners to avoid situations in which they make errors. Truscott claimed that the gains found in research relating to CF might be attributable to avoidance and simplified writing. The analysis of students' paraphrases in this research however does not indicate avoidance in the sense of simplification, rather the opposite. Here are some examples of students' error correction through paraphrase:

- "All of <u>this</u> famous people..." - "When you are famous…";
- "<u>At</u> my opinion…" - "From my point of view…";
- "<u>Finally</u> advantage is that they don't have many friends." – "Also, famous people don't have many friends.";
- "...their private life is in <u>dangerous</u>." - "...their private life is threatened."

Paraphrasing is an avoidance strategy (Kleinmann & Kleinmann, 1977; Perkins & Larsen Freeman, 1975) when students are not sure about the correct answer and yet, the solutions they opt for are more complex and appropriate phrases.

5.3. Student evaluation of the intervention and achievement

Upon the intervention, and completion of the assignment, students were asked to evaluate the intervention and assess their achievement for the assignment. The Student Evaluation, as the third research instrument, consisted of 13 statements and was completed by 45 students (*n*=45).

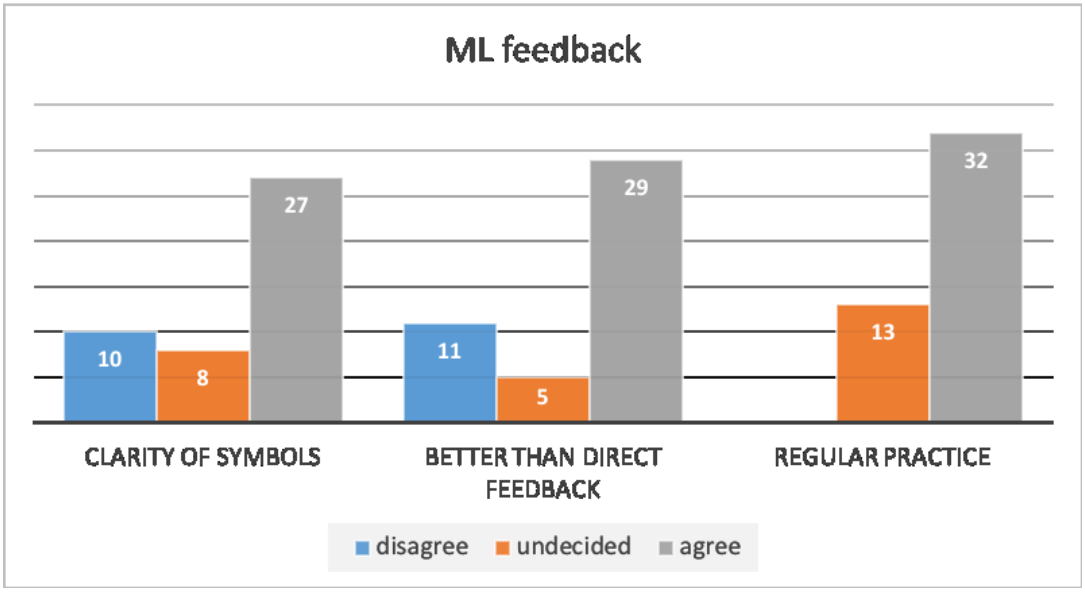

Figure 5 Students' opinions regarding MLF

According to the results in Figure 5, more than half of the students (29; 64%) reported that ML feedback was better than DF and 32 students (71%) stated that such feedback should become regular practice in essay-writing. More than half (27; 60%) reported that the symbols used in the ML feedback were clear. There were some students (10; 22%) who disagreed with the statement, and eight students were undecided. The reason could be that these students did not see the task as relevant since they were going to take the B-level English exam, where their writing task would be greatly simplified, e.g. a reply to a message.

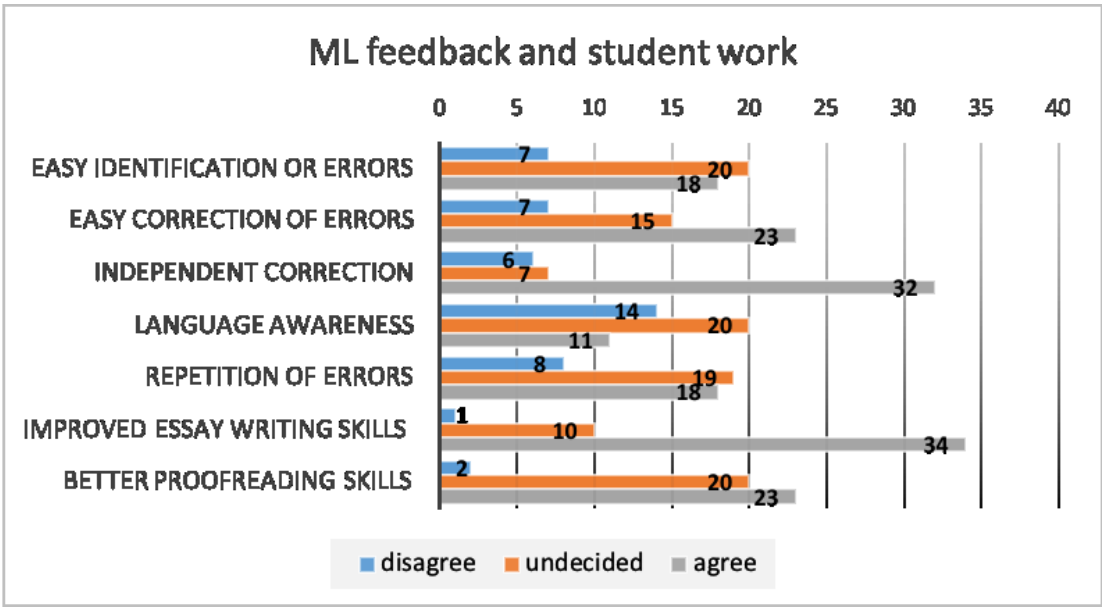

Figure 6 Students' evaluation of performance as a result of changed feedback practice

The Student Evaluation also included students' assessments of their achievement upon the intervention (see Figure 6). According to the results, students were undecided in terms of how easy it was to identify errors (20; 44%), while 18 students (40%) reported that identifying errors was manageable and only 7 students disagreed with that statement. Half of the student sample (23; 51%) stated that they could easily correct their errors, while 15 students (33%) were undecided and again 7 students found this difficult. Considering students' responses, more time should be devoted to explaining symbols and directing students to different sources for information.

Further on, the majority of students (32; 71%) corrected their errors independently. However, in doing so, only a few students (11; 24%) said that they had become more aware of language and the nature of their errors. The others reported not giving their errors much thought (14; 31%) or were undecided (20; 44%). Based on those reports, we can conclude that although students engaged in independent correction, the fact that they did so did not ensure thinking about language. This leads us to Van Beuningen De Jong, and Kuiken's (2012) finding that different feedback methods are effective for different purposes (grammar and style). The majority of the students (34; 75%) are of the opinion that such feedback practices actually helped them improve their essay-writing skills, the remaining undecided. Half of the students (23; 51%) reported having improved their proofreading skills, while twenty students were undecided in that respect.

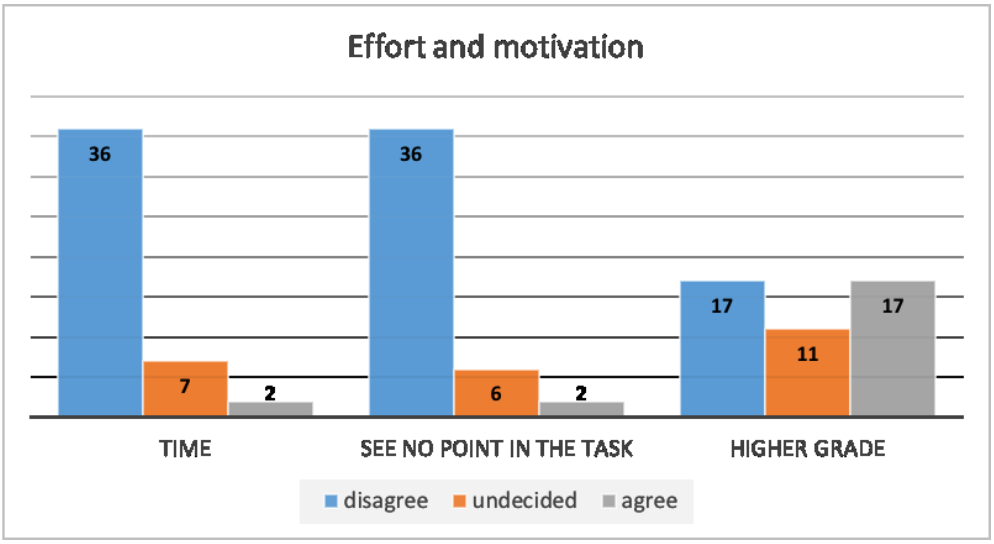

Figure 7 Students' evaluations of the time and effort invested in the task

Based on the results relating to student effort and motivation, presented in Figure 7, the majority (36; 80%) disagreed with the statement that such feedback was time-consuming and the same number of students (36; 80%) found the task meaningful. The number of students who have completed the task only for a higher grade (17; 37%) is the same as those who claim to have done it to improve their skills (17; 37%). Some students (11; 24%) could not decide whether a higher grade was the only motivating factor. The majority of students claimed that revising the essay would contribute to their knowledge of English and help them with the State Matura exam, only seventeen students stating that a higher grade was their only motivation.

6. Conclusion

The defined action research contributed to changing the common practice of error correction and feedback that generally comprised indirect feedback and summative assessment. Such practice did not indicate progress in students' writing skills, nor did it stimulate students to invest more effort in their writing.

According to the students' estimates of knowledge of aspects of essay-writing, more support is needed for structuring essays and less for expressing objectivity, grammar and vocabulary. Although students expressed a strong preference for DF, they were aware that such feedback did not promote reflection and thinking, nor did it stimulate them to improve. Conferencing with the teacher was identified as a method which would motivate students to develop their writing skills. The students were also undecided in determining the value of self- and peer-assessment. The results suggest that more opportunities for peer- and self-assessment with guidance from the teacher should be provided during the writing process.

The intervention comprising ML feedback and conferencing followed by editing and revising proved to be successful. Students found it useful for developing their essay-writing skills, increasing their language awareness and developing their skills in independent error correction. The intervention contributed to establishing a more positive attitude to writing and error correction which was reflected in the students' motivation to revisit their work. Moreover, it enhanced student-teacher rapport.

From the teacher's point of view, the undertaken action research had multiple benefits. Students were more motivated to invest effort in their writing and reflect on their work. Furthermore, it provided for a more relaxed and improved rapport. Students were of the opinion that ML feedback should be made a constant practice. However, for the teacher, correcting the second version of students' essays and color-coding was very time-consuming (about 5 hours per class). Thus, according to the teacher, the time-factor can be reported as a limitation in this type of feedback.

Two findings in this action research surfaced as challenges that need to be attended to in the future. First, areas that have been overlooked in previous feedback practices such as students' reflection skills, i.e. ability to self- and peer-assess their writing, drafting and revision skills were identified as important for students. Therefore, opportunities for such reflection should be provided during the writing process, e.g. in the form of self-assessment sheets or checklists. The second challenge refers to the emergence of new errors in the second, revised essay. To establish whether a change from DF to ML feedback with conferencing actually improved students' writing skills would require an in-depth analysis of students' errors in the first and the revised essays. Such an analysis could contribute to understanding reasons behind paraphrasing strategies, avoidance strategies, and the nature of newly emerged errors. As action research is cyclical by its nature, a comprehensive error analysis would be the next step in the process.

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Building visions and expectations in language teacher education: A study of Hungarian and Turkish pre-service EFL teachers

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1. Introduction

As a contribution to a growing body of research on the theory and practice of reflective teaching in language teacher education, this study examines the results of a structured reflective activity in which Hungarian (n=30) and Turkish (n=17) pre-service EFL teachers were asked to express not only beliefs and knowledge derived from their past experiences (Borg, 2003, 2006), but also their visions and expectations regarding their future selves in the profession (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). The recognition that teaching-related visions and expectations should also be addressed in teacher education programmes has only gained momentum in recent years, inspired by major developments in motivation research (Section 2.2) and by some pioneering studies conducted in Finland (e.g., Kalaja, 2015; Kalaja & Mäntylä, 2018).

In addition to these origins, further reasons for the exploration of teaching-related visions and expectations were put forward by Lampert, Burnett, and Davie (2012), who suggested that the mismatches between pre-service EFL teachers' expectations and job realities are one of the main causes for early teacher attrition and burnout in this profession, and by Peacock (2001), who demonstrated the tendency of pre-service EFL teachers to hold beliefs that are inhibitory to teacher motivation and professional growth (see also Moore, 2004). Whereas these claims are also supported by the results of this study, the exploration of teaching-related visions and expectations will be presented as an activity through which pre-service EFL teachers' existing knowledge and dispositions can be externalised and potentially reconceptualised as part of their professional coursework (Johnson, 2009, 2015) in local or even cross-cultural communities of practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The role of reflection in language teacher education

Although in past decades the education of English teachers has been shaped and characterised by a variety of research-based, multi-disciplinary innovations (see Hyland &

Wong, 2013), the most substantial of these has been, arguably, the adoption of reflective teaching as a standard model in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language (TEFL/TESOL). This strong commitment to the theory and practice of reflective teaching has grown out of the quickly advancing study of language teacher cognition starting in the 1980s, whereby some teacher researchers started to explore the thinking, sense-making, and learning processes of language teachers, and found that engagement in reflective activities made the teachers more attentive to the critical examination and reconceptualization of their knowledge, dispositions, and classroom experiences (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 139).

A major outcome from this line of research has recently been the conceptualisation of language teacher cognition as a highly complex, practically oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive network of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs (Borg, 2006, p. 272), which develops continuously via the teaching-related activities (Feryok, 2012) that teachers go through as language learners, as learners of teaching, and as classroom practitioners (Borg, 2003, p. 82). Considering that teachers' classroom practices are necessarily (and often implicitly) influenced by the notions and dispositions derived from past experience (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 60), it is also important to emphasize that the reflective activities in which language teachers are engaged have the potential to transform their earlier cognitions (Bartlett, 1990), and thus facilitate teachers' conceptual growth, their understanding of their own classroom practice, and, in essence, their learning (Johnson, 2009). In an explanation similar to this, Korthagen (2011, pp. 36-37) states the following:

"When a teacher reflects, often a previously unconscious gestalt develops into a conscious network of concepts, characteristics, principles, and so on, which is helpful in describing practice."

While this view implies that in the classroom practice of a typical language teacher a number of behaviours (depending on the teacher's expertise) tend to be grounded in unanalysed chunks of "earlier experiences, role models, needs, values, feelings, images and routines" (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81), Korthagen's (2011) research also suggests that even the most elusive components of language teacher cognition (e.g., gestalts) can become transparent through reflective activity. As these claims have been consistently supported by research on language teachers' reflective activity (e.g., Borg, 2006; Johnson, 2009; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015), it is easy to see why reflective teaching has become a standard model in TEFL/TESOL, urging teacher educators around the globe to realise that "making tacit knowledge explicit by reflection is a necessary step in order for fundamental change to occur in teacher behaviour" (Lugossy, 2006, p. 339), and that for teachers to become 'reflective practitioners,' they need to acquire both "the skill and attitude of making one's own actions, feelings, experiences the objects of one's thinking" (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 267).

Moving further along the same thread, research on reflective teaching has also drawn attention lately to teacher educators' role as mediators and facilitators of language teachers' reflective activity, ideally engaging teachers in ongoing dialogic interaction (Chick, 2015) and ensuring that both the focus and type of reflective activity are in tune with the teachers'

current stage of professional development (Johnson, 2015). In the sections that follow, ideas about the focus of language teachers' reflective activity are examined in light of novel approaches to language teacher motivation (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) as well as visions and future self-guides of pre-service EFL teachers (e.g., Kalaja, 2015; Kalaja & Mäntylä, 2018).

2.2. Expanding the scope of language teachers' reflective activity: The case of visions and expectations

The developments described in this section are primarily related to the focus of the reflective activity in which language teachers may be engaged as part of their professional coursework. While in the previous section it was pointed out that theories and practices of reflective teaching are already seen as an integral part of language teacher education programmes around the world, a closer look at the studies cited there (e.g., Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2015; Korthagen, 2011; Lugossy, 2006) reveals that much of language teachers' reflective activity has traditionally focused on how past experience shapes teachers' sense-making and dispositions. Recently, however, a new line of research has reminded researchers and teacher educators that language teachers' cognitions are simultaneously shaped by "meaningful experiences in the past and expectations about the future" (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 263), thus implying that exploring and shaping teachers' visions and expectations (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Kalaja, 2015) is an equally important task for teacher research and education.

To understand the role of this type of conceptual work in language teachers' development, it is indispensable to look at Dörnyei's (2009) highly appraised model of language learning motivation, more specifically, at the notion of possible selves (a key component in the model). The term, which is increasingly used in describing the dynamics of language teacher motivation as well (e.g., Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Kubanyiova, 2009), has been recently defined by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) as follows:

"Possible selves are specific representations of one's self in future states, involving thoughts, images, and senses, and are in many ways the manifestations, or personalized carriers, of one's goals and aspirations (or fears, of course). This being the case, possible selves incite and direct purposeful behaviour, and the more vivid and elaborate the self-image is, the more motivationally effective it is expected to be." (p. 87)

Implicit in this definition, as argued in Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), is an emphatic statement about the value of reflective activities through which pre-service EFL teachers have a chance to understand the role of possible selves in one's professional development, and to experience the process by which existing visions and expectations may be transformed into realistic but positively loaded future self-guides (see also Kelchtermans, 2009; Korthagen, 2004, 2011). This process of construing and constructing positive future self-guides is, according to Dörnyei and Ryan (2015, p. 96), one of the highest-order motivational forces in individuals. Similarly to other types of reflective activity, however, conceptual work with visions and expectations is also considered the most effective if

supervised by teacher educators as expert mediators (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014)—a process which I aim to demonstrate in the empirical sections of this study.

3. The study

3.1. Aim and research question

As part of a multi-stranded enquiry into the teaching-related beliefs and reflections of pre-service EFL teachers, the current study was conducted to look into the visions, expectations, and future self-guides characterising three groups of participants in two different educational contexts. Considering that the amount of research into teaching-related visions and expectations has been fairly limited so far, the qualitative orientation of the study was expected to bring about a varied and in-depth exploration of these concepts, and thereby an answer to the following research question:

What are the teaching-related visions and expectations that best characterise the Hungarian and Turkish pre-service EFL teachers participating in this study, and what are the implications of these for language teacher education?

3.2. Data collection instrument

The qualitative data for this study were collected in the form of short, written belief-statements through a self-designed instrument for language teacher reflection, which I elsewhere called a reflective template (Farkas, 2019). Essentially, the reflective template (Appendix A) is a selection of ten sentence-starters that elicit language teachers' teaching-related beliefs and experiences in a feasible form, with some items tapping specifically into teachers' visions and expectations about the teaching profession and their future professional selves. In order to maintain a clear focus on the latter components, the analysis in this study only involves the participants' responses to Statement 2 (*If I was working as a teacher, the most important thing I would teach my students is…*) and to Statement 7 (*The job of a language teacher is harder/easier, because…*); the latter allowed for a choice between two alternatives. Whereas the responses to Statement 2 were considered representative of pre-service EFL teachers' visions and future self-guides, Statement 7 was selected due to its focus on the participants' expectations regarding the difficulty of language teaching in relation to teaching other subjects.

3.3. Participants

As mentioned earlier, the participants of the study were Hungarian (n=12+18; two groups) and Turkish (n=17) pre-service EFL teachers, who filled in the reflective template (Appendix

A) as part of their professional coursework at their home universities, and agreed to their responses being used anonymously as research data. More specifically, the data were collected in three consecutive stages: first from a group of 12 Hungarian pre-service EFL teachers in 2015; then from a group of 17 Turkish pre-service EFL teachers in 2016—in collaboration with Dombaycı (2016), who analysed the same dataset on a separate project; and finally from another group of 18 Hungarian pre-service EFL teachers. The age of the participants ranged between 20 to 24 years, and each group consisted of both male and female participants (though gender distribution was not specifically observed and quantified).

At the time of data collection, each group was going through the introductory phase of teacher education prior to the teaching practicum, which, under current policy, is introduced in the fourth year of studies in Hungary (Kontra, 2016), and in the third year of studies in Turkey (Toköz Göktepe, 2015). Thus, when formulating their belief-statements for the study, the participants were drawing on their knowledge and dispositions derived from their experiences as language learners and from their professional coursework, rather than from first-hand experience of teaching language classes. For more information on the educational contexts and the teacher educational models of the countries involved, readers are advised to consult Kontra (2016) and Medgyes (2015) about EFL teaching and teacher education in Hungary, and Toköz Göktepe (2015) about EFL teaching and teacher education in Turkey.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Although the data for this study were collected in three consecutive stages (see above), the participants' responses were analysed through the same procedure in each group. After collecting pre-service teachers' belief-statements in paper-and-pencil format, the data of each group were entered into a separate electronic data file, in which the statements were gathered under the ten sentence-starters presented in Appendix A. Then, in a process of qualitative content analysis similar to Barkhuizen and Wette's (2008), the belief-statements were further categorised along the themes and patterns emerging from the data. Subsequent to this, comparisons within and across the three groups and interpretations of the results were made, thus revealing salient themes related to the participants' teaching-related expectations and future self-guides.

Despite working with a relatively small dataset, I marked the salience of emerging themes by indicating their frequency of occurrence within the three observed groups, and by including illustrative quotes for each theme in the upcoming sections. To identify the authors of the quotes, each participant was given a personal identification number: HA#11, for instance, is a participant from the first Hungarian group (n=12), HB#11 is a participant from the second Hungarian group (n=18), and TA#11 is a participant from the Turkish group (n=17) respectively.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Pre-service EFL teachers' visions of their future professional selves

To start with a structured overlook of the teaching-related visions and future self-guides that characterised the three groups, Table 1 below shows the themes and categories that emerged from the participants' responses to Statement 2 in the reflective template (see Section 3.2).

Table 1. Emerging themes regarding visions of future teaching (numbers indicate how frequently a specific theme occurred in the three groups)

	Statement #2: If I was working as a teacher, the most important thing I would teach my students is…	
Category 1.1: Intra- and inter-personal skills/knowledge	Theme 1.1 *(setting personal goals)* TA(n=6) HA(n=2) HB(n=2)	• following their dreams and finding the thing that makes them happy. (TA#9) • how to learn, how to improve by themselves, and how to find their real interests. (HA#12) • to find a long-term goal and go for it. (HB#1)
	Theme 1.2 *(increasing self-efficacy)* TA(n=8) HA(n=2) HB(n=3)	• being honest and hard-working. (TA#13) • to be confident and hard-working, because with these two they can achieve anything. (HA#8) • that they believe in themselves. There is nothing they cannot do. (TA#8)
	Theme 1.3 *(respecting others' lives and ideas)* TA(n=3) HA(n=2) HB(n=2)	• to be good [respectful] to each other. (HA#5) • respecting other people's lives and ideas. (TA#6) • how to work in pairs and teams. (HB#2) • communication, integrity, respect for others, independence. (HB#13)

Category 1.2: L2-related knowledge and dispositions	Theme 1.4 *(how to communicate)* TA(n=1) HA(n=1) HB(n=5)	• how to communicate effectively and effortlessly in every possible scenario. (HB#12) • how they can use language in real life. (HB#7)
	Theme 1.5 *(how to value the L2)* HA(n=2) HB(n=2)	• what are the benefits, why they should learn my language, how it will help them in their everyday lives. (HB#4) • to use the target language outside the classroom, out of enjoyment, too. (HA#7)
	Theme 1.6 *(how to value authentic L2 input)* HA(n=1)	• the importance of native impulses, i.e. reading literature and journals, listening to music and radio, and watching films in the target language. (HA#4)
	Theme 1.7 *(how to use grammar)* HB(n=1)	• the grammar, because if the teacher does not take the students' grammar knowledge into account, they cannot acquire the grammar properly. (HB#6)

Together with the themes and the illustrative quotes, the two main categories in Table 1 reflect a clear division between two types of future self-guides: one in which EFL teachers' focus is on developing students' L2-related knowledge and dispositions (Category 1.2), and one in which the focus is on what I should call the intra- and interpersonal skills and knowledge of the learner (Category 1.1). In fact, the frequency data in Table 1 indicate an obvious inclination to the latter category, suggesting that the majority of the participants (especially in the Turkish group) envisioned themselves not merely as language teachers, but rather as teachers whose main responsibility is to raise motivated, self-reflective, and autonomous learners, for whom the foreign language is only a tool to achieve success in other fields of life (Breen, 1999).

These findings, in turn, correspond with a recently observed re-appraisal of learner-centred and humanistic pedagogies among pre-service EFL teachers (e.g., Borg, Birello, Civera, & Zanatta, 2014; Clarke, 2008; Kalaja, 2015), and indicate a growing concern for nurturing socio-emotional abilities in individual students as members of socio-culturally

diverse learner groups (Warren, 2018). These abilities include both intrapersonal skills such as self-reflection, goal setting, and construing positive self-appraisals (Themes 1.1 & 1.2), and interpersonal skills such as cooperating with others in socially responsive ways (Theme 1.3). Clearly, as Kelchtermans (2009) and Korthagen (2004) argue, this emphatic concern for the socio-emotional abilities, the moral values, and the personal growth of learners should be accepted as a natural part of language teachers' task-perception and sense of responsibility. According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), however, if a language teacher's envisioned professional self is too complex to be realistically attained, the vision might be inhibitory rather than conducive to professional development.

From this perspective, the themes enlisted in Category 1.2 might be viewed as evidence for the tendency of some participants to construe professional self-guides that are more easily attainable and more in tune with those competences that are generally in the focus of language teacher education (Borg & Edmett, 2018). This is not meant to suggest that the visions captured in Category 1.1 should be devalued or rectified by teacher educators, but to call for reflective activities in which pre-service EFL teachers are not only required to express their current visions and understandings but also exposed to alternative and less complex professional self-guides, which they might build into their personal repertoire. By promoting such dialogue in local or cross-cultural communities of practice (Chick, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012), teacher educators can trigger a process of conceptual change in which complex teaching-related visions (e.g., Category 1.1) are complemented with teaching goals that may be easier to attain in TEFL/TESOL (e.g., Category 1.2). Additionally, this type of knowledge construction plays an especially important role in the professional development of pre-service EFL teachers (Johnson, 2015), as their understandings, teaching practices, and motivations are known to change substantially as they gain first-hand experience of school life and teaching (e.g., Lampert et al., 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2014).

4.2. Pre-service EFL teachers' expectations about the difficulty of language teaching

Turning away from the discussion of teaching-related visions and future self-guides, this section addresses another key component of pre-service EFL teachers' cognition: their expectations about the difficulty of language teaching in relation to teaching other subjects. Following a summary of the participants' responses to Statement 7 in the reflective template (see Table 2 below), the emerging themes and the underlying concepts are examined in more detail.

Table 2. Emerging themes regarding the perceived difficulty of language teaching (numbers indicate how frequently a specific theme occurred in the three groups)

Statement #7: The job of a language teacher is *harder* / *easier*, because…		
Category 2.1: L2 teaching perceived as hard/difficult	Theme 2.1 *(L2 learning as complex mental activity)* TA(n=4) HA(n=4) HB(n=5)	• harder because what he or she teaches is in a foreign language, a different grammar and different way of thinking involved in order to speak a language well. It takes much effort and time to get there. (HB#9) • harder, because they not only teach a language, but also develop cultural knowledge, communicative competence, and another way of seeing the world. (HA#4)
	Theme 2.2 *(L1-centred learning context)* TA(n=6) HA(n=1) HB(n=1)	• harder, especially in Turkey, because the language is not similar to English. (TA#3) • harder, because they have to teach a language that is usually very different from their and their students' mother tongue. (HP#10) • harder because the second language is very hard to learn for students. They need to be exposed to language. Very hard in Turkey. Excessive use of L1. (TA#5)
	Theme 2.3 *(fixed negative learner attitudes)* TA(n=2) HA(n=2) HB(n=2)	• harder because students are not interested in learning anymore. They do anything in the lesson except learning. (HB#7) • harder, because it requires not just subject knowledge, but also positive attitude to the language, and openness to new things. (HA#6) • harder because the language itself should be used interactively. It may be quite hard if students don't like the foreign language. (TA#16)
	Theme 2.4 *(methodolo-gical challenges)* TA(n=1) HB(n=2)	• harder because language (especially English) is very important and could be taught in many ways. (HB#1) • harder because the trends in language teaching are incessantly changing, and a good teacher adapts these and learns from his/her previous mistakes. (HB#3)

Category 2.2: L2 teaching is feasible	Theme 2.5 *(diverse content sparks learner interest)* HA(n=2) HB(n=7)	• easier because they can include all fields of knowledge (integrate history or art or math). (HB#13) • easier, because they can teach the language through content, and bring up topics that might not have a place in other lessons. (HA#12) • easier because a language is arguably the most interesting and useful subject, and the majority of students will agree with this. (HB#12)
	Theme 2.6 *(easy to build relationships)* TA(n=1) HB(n=1)	• easier because by practising language use, he/she can get to know the students, they can talk about real-life-like situations. (HB#10) • easier because it depends, I think, it is not hard if you like to teach English and if you have good relationships with your students. (TA#11)

What is immediately apparent from Table 2 is that the majority of the participants positioned L2 teaching as more difficult than teaching other subjects, thereby drawing attention to the poorly researched tendency of pre-service EFL teachers to construct so called inhibitory beliefs (e.g., Peacock, 2001) and identities in which their professional growth and agency are limited by various external factors (e.g., Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2015). The category of such inhibitory beliefs (i.e. Category 2.1) incorporates images of hypothetical learners who are inactive in lessons because they "do not like the foreign language" (Theme 2.3), and fears that a teacher working in an L1-centred learning context (Theme 2.2) has little chance to change these fixed learner attitudes, especially if he or she is a non-native speaker of the L2 (Medgyes, 2015). Additionally, several participants constructed a view of L2 acquisition as an overly complex mental activity (Theme 2.1), demanding a methodological repertoire that pre-service EFL teachers can hardly live up to (Theme 2.4).

In view of these results, it is worth noting that discursive fragments such as the ones displayed in Category 2.1 are known to negatively affect pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, often posing a long-term threat not only to student learning but also to teachers' sense of agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy (Moore, 2004; Peacock, 2001; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2015). For this reason, if such categories of inhibitory beliefs and expectations are not exposed and mitigated in the pre-service years of language teacher education, they may also have long-term negative effects on teacher motivation, wellbeing, and job satisfaction (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Lampert et al., 2012).

At the same time, the content of Category 2.2 is indicative of a completely different set of beliefs, equally viable but clearly more conducive to EFL teachers' motivation. More specifically, perspectives of L2 teaching as a mediation of diverse content (Theme 2.5) and a tool for building positive teacher-student relationships (Theme 2.6) can be seen as examples of conducive but realistic future self-guides (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), and it is an

auspicious finding that eight members of Group HB held such beliefs and expectations. In contrast, the scarcity of such expectations in the other two groups seems to call, once again, for dialogic reflective activities in which existing beliefs can be externalised, communally discussed, and potentially reconceptualised (Chick, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This is especially important in the case of pre-service EFL teachers, as their teaching-related beliefs and expectations are still highly adaptive to changes resulting from teaching practice, professional coursework, and the reflective activities in which they are engaged (Johnson, 2015; Yuan & Lee, 2014).

5. Conclusions

In light of the qualitative results of this study, it is supposedly a well-founded conclusion that exploring and shaping teaching-related visions, expectations, and future self-guides are relevant tasks for the educators of pre-service EFL teachers (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Although the belief-statements elicited from the Hungarian and Turkish participants are too short to capture the apparent complexity of language teachers' visions and future self-guides (see Kubanyiova, 2009), the study can be regarded as a source of new conceptual insights and implications for language teacher education. Most notably, the emerging themes in Section 4.2 have provided clear evidence of pre-service EFL teachers' tendency to hold beliefs that are inhibitory to teacher motivation and professional growth (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Peacock, 2001), thereby drawing attention to reflective activity as a tool for exposing and possibly deconstructing beliefs and expectations of this type. In addition, the majority of beliefs in this category (i.e. Category 2.1 in Table 2) proved to be characteristic of all examined groups, signalling problematic questions and themes that should be better addressed through professional coursework with the participants involved, and possibly with pre-service EFL teachers in general (see Chick, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Regarding the question of visions and future self-guides, another crucial implication of the study is that the reflective activities of pre-service EFL teachers should not only serve to bring existing beliefs into focal awareness, but also to expose individuals to more attainable alternatives (e.g., Category 1.2 in Table 1) and thus enhance the adoption and construal of realistic and positively loaded future self-guides (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). In this sense, as Kalaja and Mäntylä (2018) point out, the aim of this specific type of reflective activity is

> "to make student teachers aware of their beliefs about their professional future, and to reaffirm or reconsider these, which will possibly have consequences for the principles and practices that they will apply in their teaching once they enter working life as qualified teachers." (p. 35)

Having provided an illustration through results and an instrument for this type of reflective activity, I hope to encourage teacher educators to make reflection on visions and expectations a regular part of their professional coursework with pre-service EFL teachers,

thus providing them with additional spaces for constructive discussion and professional growth.

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7. Appendix A: The reflective template serving as data collection instrument for the study

Complete the sentences below to form statements about your views as a teacher. In sentences that offer you a choice between two options (marked with a slash), please, underline the one that you will argue for. There are no right and wrong answers, the point is that the statements hold true for you.

---

1. If I think of a good language teacher, the first thing that comes to my mind is…
2. If I was working as a teacher, the most important thing I would teach my students is…
3. One thing I would never do as a teacher is…
4. If there's one thing that annoys a teacher, it is…
5. If I could give a piece of advice to my old language teacher, it would be to…
6. Besides the subject knowledge, a language teacher needs to know…
7. The job of a language teacher is *harder* / *easier*, because…
8. A teacher's personality is *also important* / *not so important*, because…
9. I once had a language teacher who…
10. The ideal teacher is…

Face-to-face + online = success?
What I learned from designing modular blended learning listening and speaking skills development courses at the University of Pécs

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1. Introduction

The study looks at a two-semester long project that involved the combination of face-to-face and online environments to improve the overall learning experience and language skill development of English majors. The longitudinal study took place at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Pécs and involved 53 students between the ages of 18 and 25.

First, constructivism is introduced as the key learning theory of the project and its relations to blended learning and the flipped classroom approaches are explained. Next, various aspects of content creation are discussed, such as relating listening and speaking skills to social and individual learning possibilities and to core concepts in the two environments.

Finally, the findings of online student activity measurement, weekly feedback questionnaires and a focus-group interview are analyzed. The project identified key factors related to the feasibility of such a blended undertaking, components needed to succeed and further development possibilities.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Underlying learning theories

Constructivist learning theory was the frame for the two-semester long study. As Harasim (2017, p. 62) explains, the central idea in constructivism is that "we are active creators and constructors of our own knowledge". Three processes take place during knowledge construction: understanding, experiencing and reflection. From the perspective of language learning, the first two mean that prior knowledge will change through new experiences that require knowledge application, such as content creation and interaction. Finally, the reflection stage is concerned with how the new and old knowledge can be resolved (Harasim, 2017).

While constructivism was the frame for the project, blended learning (BL) provided the content. As an educational model, BL combines face-to-face and online solutions to create an improved learning environment (Holmes & Gardner, 2006). There are various realizations of BL, however, in the project this dual nature meant that the face-to-face sessions provided opportunities for social language development through peer interaction and the online space was focused on self-paced online interaction and content creation. Thus, the online platform served as an addition to the weekly contact sessions as opposed to traditional BL where online sessions substitute some face-to-face meetings.

2.2. Creating two learning environments

Combing weekly face-to-face sessions with online activities served to promote engaged learning. As Conrad and Donaldson (2011, p. 1) explain, engaged learning is centered on "student-focused learning within an instructor-facilitated environment". While their frame focused on online participation, the essence of it mirrors constructivism as students need to be "active knowledge generators who assume responsibility for constructing and managing their own learning experience" (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011, p. 5). This pedagogical core was seen as a general goal of the project.

Of course, when combining face-to-face and online elements, the most important aspect is that learners should perceive it as a whole learning experience and not a fragmented one. For this reason, creating two intertwined learning environments resembled a puzzle where authenticity, context, goals and strategy training are held together by the learning experience.

From the start, the underlying idea was to use the face-to-face and online materials that complement each other. The flipped classroom approach provided a simple but beneficial frame for this combination. This essentially two-step model, where the online activities are built on what was discussed in class (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011, p. 20), linked the face-to-face and online environments together.

2.3. Content development

Graves' (1996) framework provided a starting point for realizing the project. As a list which helps course development, it includes elements such as needs assessment, objectives, content development and organization, evaluation and constraints (p. 13). However, the starting point was determining first-year English majors' possible language background from their secondary studies and building on it.

One of the findings of my doctoral dissertation was that there is a gap between the English majors' university entry language skills and the level required to successfully participate in the courses at the Institute of English Studies (Simon, 2016, pp. 186-189). In

CEFR terms this would be the difference between B1-B2 (entry language skills) and C1 levels (university requirements). I suggested a possible two-course structure in the existing first-year language skill development courses that could bridge this gap (Simon, 2016, p. 189). The constructivist frame with two learning environments provided context to realize this plan by building on students' existing knowledge and skills and extending them both in class and online.

The key notion in content and activity design was authenticity enabling "meaning beyond the learning environment" (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011, p. 92) to promote and connect to life-long learning. In order to achieve this goal, the project applied a modular approach. The flipped classroom design made it possible for students to practice various problem-solving strategies in class and apply them in the online modules. The online learning management system (LMS) was used to present students topic-based skill development units (McGrear, 2004) which made self-paced learning possible. As the context for the online activity modules the LMS also needed to meet the criterion of authenticity. Hence, the social networking learning platform *Edmodo* was used for the online modules. The website is designed specifically for online learning and content sharing and has currently around 100 million users (https://go.edmodo.com/about/).

Next to the language backgrounds, learners also have diverse technological backgrounds. For this reason, Hubbard and Romeo (2012) highlight the importance of strategy training in any computer-assisted language learning project. This way the possible differences can be minimized, and learners can get the most out of the online environment. *Edmodo* is designed to resemble *Facebook*, building on possible learner background with an intuitive user interface, making it the perfect candidate for online learning.

The final aspect of content development was establishing core concepts which represent the key areas that learners should be familiar with by completing the course (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010, p. 26). With the Listening and Speaking Skills courses as context, the concepts focused on two skills. In terms of listening, these were listening for gist, detail and keywords whereas speaking focused on finding main ideas, supporting points and argumentation.

3. The study

3.1. Context

The context of the study were three Listening and Speaking Skills (L&SS) courses; two L&SS I courses in the 2017/2018 fall and one L&SS II in the 2017/2018 spring semester. They were held at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Pécs. The courses can be taken by first-year English majors in the three-year-long BA and five-year-long English

teacher programs. Students who have English Studies as their minor study track and international students can also take these courses.

The L&SS courses serve two main purposes. First, they aim to develop students' listening and speaking skills from the expected B2 entry level to the required C1 level by the end of their first academic year. Second, they provide students with practice opportunities for the Proficiency Exam. As a C1 level exam, the Proficiency Exam measures productive and receptive skills and successfully completing it is a requirement for a number of future courses.

3.2. Research questions

The project aimed to answer four research questions focused on measuring student activity, blending feasibility, further student needs and how blending affected students' e-learning habits:

RQ1: What factors influence student activity in the online modules?

RQ2: How feasible is the blended learning format for language skill development courses?

RQ3: What further developments are needed for the learning environment

RQ4: How has the blended learning experience influenced students' e-learning habits?

3.3. Participants

The participants came from the three L&SS courses (see Table 1). Each participant was a full-time student. The two L&SS I courses, held in the 2017/2018 fall semester, are referred to as L&SS I-T (Tuesday) and L&SS I-W (Wednesday) and the spring course as L&SS II. There were a total of 53 participants, including 49 Hungarian and four international students, with an average age of 18.76 years. Overall, 43 students were involved in just one of the phases and 10 participated in more than one.

Table 1. Overview of participants in the data collection phases

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
L&SSI-T (n=16) L&SSI-W (n=21)	L&SSII (n=15)	Students who completed both L&SSI and L&SSII (n=5)

The first data collection phase involved the L&SS I courses. L&SS I-T had 16 participants: 12 female and four male students from the BA (n=7) and English teacher programs (n=9). L&SS I-W had 21 participants, with a nearly equal gender distribution of 10 female and 11 male students. Here the teacher program was in majority with 18 participants,

whereas the BA study track had three students. Phase two involved L&SSII with 15 participants; ten female and five male students. From this sample ten students participated previously in the fall L&SS I courses. In terms of programs, nine were in the teacher training and six in the BA study track. Finally, phase three included five students actively involved in both semesters with three students being in the BA and two in the teacher programs.

3.4. Data collection instruments

Measuring students' experiences, involvement and perceptions concerning the two learning environments involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data in three phases (see Table 2). The first two phases followed the same data collection procedures for comparison purposes. First, quantitative data were collected about student activity in the weekly online modules on *Edmodo*. As a social networking learning platform, it was perfectly suited to function as the online learning hub in the project.

Table 2. Summary of the data collection phases of the longitudinal project Key: QUAN: quantitative, QUAL: qualitative

Phase 1: L&SS I 2017/2018 fall semester	**Phase 2: L&SS II** 2017/2018 spring semester	**Phase 3: Overall impressions** 2017/2018 spring sem.
QUAN: online activity measurement QUAN: weekly feedback questionnaires	QUAN: online activity measurement QUAN: weekly feedback questionnaires	QUAL: focus group interview

Data collection focused on *Edmodo* involved quantifying students' comments, answers and online discussions. Next, students' answers to the weekly online feedback questionnaires were analyzed. The first week's nine items served as a needs analysis and subsequent occasions asked students to reflect on their experiences with five items (see Appendix A).

Phase three involved a single session 45-minute long focus-group interview with five students who participated in both L&SS I and L&SS II courses. This qualitative set of 17 items (see Appendix B) focused on four key areas underlying the blended course implementations including previous e-learning experience (Q1-5), in-course blended experience (Q6-11), language development (Q12-14) and continued e-learning usage (Q15-17).

3.5. Procedures

3.5.1. Designing content

The first step in designing the two-environments for was examining the possible language backgrounds of the participants. As this information is not available during the university entrance process and there is also no way of controlling which courses participants sign up for, a list of topics was established building on possible language backgrounds. A criterion that can be calculated with, however, is that successful completion of a B2 level language exam or a school leaving exam at the advanced level in English are required for submission to English Studies at the University of Pécs.

According to the Hungarian laws, achieving between 40 and 59% on the advanced level school leaving exam grants students a B1 and above 60% a B2 level language exam (http://bit.ly/2zTxatl). Thus, cross examining the topics of the school leaving exam with a popular commercially available language exam provided an approximate insight into students' possible language background and topic familiarity.

The oral part of the advanced level school leaving exam has ten topics: (1) individual and family, (2) people and society, (3) our environment, (4) school, (5) jobs, (6) lifestyle, (7) free time, culture and entertainment, (8) travelling, tourism, (9) science and technology, (10) economy (topics translated from this Hungarian list: http://bit.ly/2Dz4YjG). The *ECL* language exam, which is a popular commercially available option in Hungary, has topics that can be sorted into each of the ten ones listed previously (see topics here: http://bit.ly/2T582IS).

Table 3. Weekly topic units in the L&SS I T/ W and L&SS II courses

L&SS I T/ W online modules	**L&SS II online modules**
Week 1: Introduction	**Week 1**: Introduction
Week 2: Creativity	**Week 2**: Movies
Week 3: Communication	**Week 3**: Role models
Week 4: School life	**Week 4**: Literature
Week 5: Travelling	**Week 5**: Music
Week 6: Genres	**Week 6**: Online session
Week 7: Cultures	**Week 7**: Environmental issues
Week 8: Traditions	**Week 8**: Food
Week 10: Learning languages	**Week 10**: Subcultures
Week 11: Digital world	**Week 11**: Festivals
Week 12: Arts	**Week 12**: Gadgets
Week 13: Time	

Based on the results, a set of topics was generated to make a modular and flipped approach possible for the L&SS I courses. The structure was also kept for L&SS II. Students participating in the L&SSI courses also voted for topics that they wanted to see in L&SSII (see Table 3 and Appendix C and D) during the final sessions of the L&SSI seminars.

3.5.2. Harmonizing content

The next step was content creation and harmonization of the face-to-face and online learning environments and the core concepts. Previous research of the present context (Simon & Kollárová, 2016; Simon, 2017) established ways to synthetize listening, speaking and vocabulary development. The findings highlighted key areas that need development and established BL as valid option in combining social and individual language development (Simon, 2016). The flipped approach enabled to address strategies in-class and elaborate on them in the online modules on *Edmodo*.

In listening development, the first in-class strategy training focused on finding keywords in the test items to guide attention. With every practice test, students had 60 seconds to do so, simulating the high-stakes Proficiency Exam context. Listening for gist and detail trainings were held throughout the semester and aimed to train students to identify key parts in the texts. Subsequent online practice introduced using transcripts via *NPR* to help comprehension with more flexible time frames (see Figure 1). Various accents were also covered using *TED* and *TED Ed* videos with subtitle options (see Figure 2) in the online tasks.

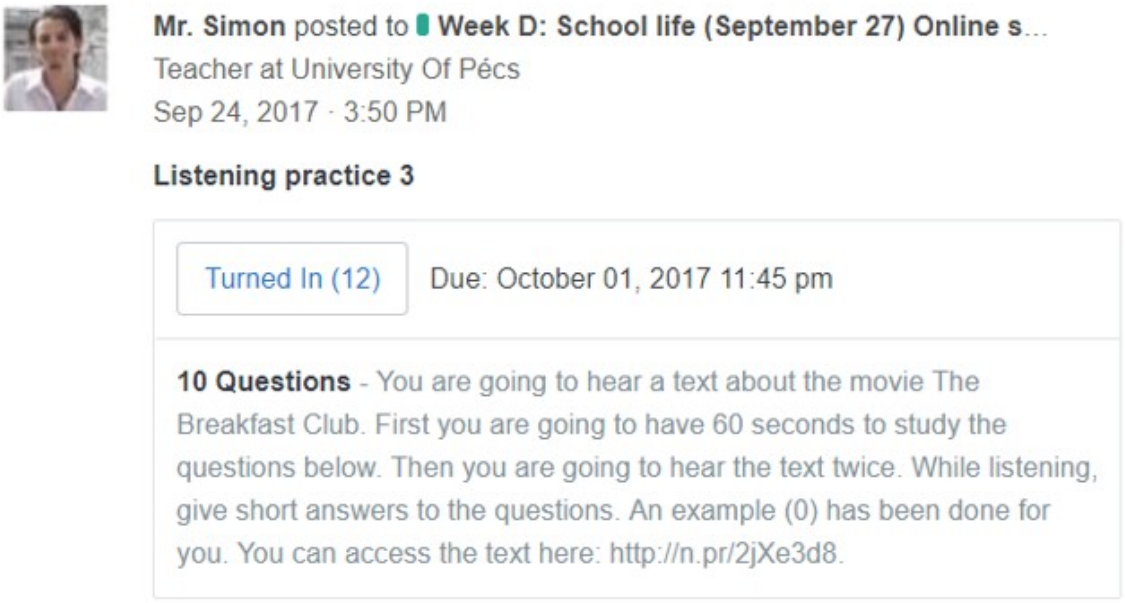

Figure 1. Example for self-paced listening development on *Edmodo*

Figure 2. Example for a *TED* talk-based post-week activity on *Edmodo*

The central idea with speaking skills was to develop students' debate and problem-solving skills by focusing on finding, supporting and arguing for ideas. Finding ideas happened in-class using group debates. Here students' task was to come up with ideas to support their cause, such as how cloning has a lot of benefits (Figure 3) (topic source: http://bit.ly/2DxJpzJ).

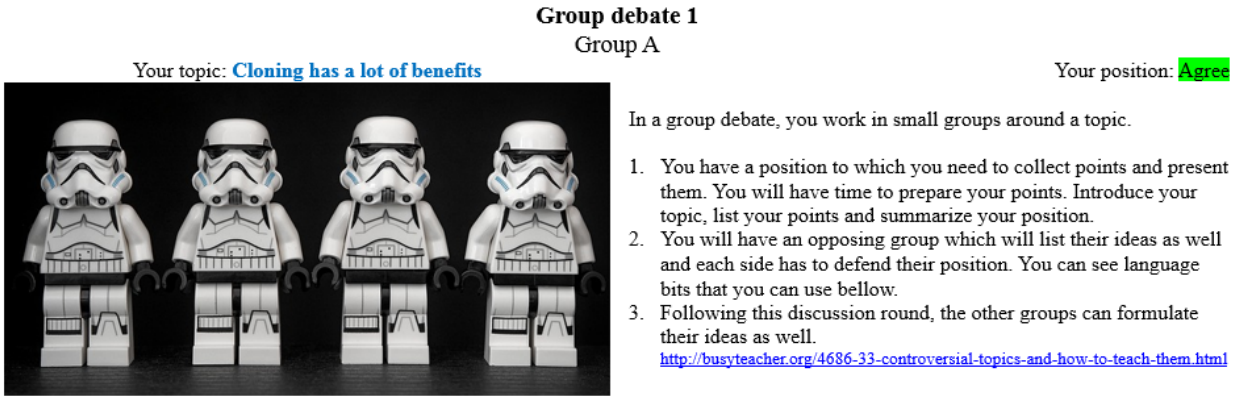

Figure 3. Example for an in-class group debate topic

Supporting ideas was the central aim of the problem-solving tasks. Figure 4 illustrates the salesperson project where each group had a given product to promote with a catch and needed to convince the other groups as potential investors that their product is worth buying

or investing in. These tasks utilized Chang and Kelly's (1999) problem solution steps as part of the in-class training (cited in Boettcher & Conrad, 2010, p. 218).

Problem solving 2 – The salesperson project

Group B

The ghost says 'hello!'

Castle in great condition for sale.

The castle has a resident ghost that won't leave.

Figure 4. Example for an in-class problem solving topic

Role play #2 *Animal therapy center*

You represent your fellow students at a university forum. The officials want to find out about your opinion on the new proposal: *the university should have a pet therapy center to help stressed students*.

You need to pick one side and argue for it.

You agree. Contribute to the event by arguing using the following points:

a) university life can be stressful
b) animals can calm down people
c) it would teach students how to handle animals
d) the center would take in animals from shelters
e) any other reason you find relevant

You disagree. Contribute to the event by arguing using the following points:

a) many students suffer from allergies
b) the animals would bring a certain smell
c) not everyone is prepared to take care of animals
d) the animals would need constant care
e) any other reason you find relevant

Figure 5. Example for an in-class role-play card

The final in-class speaking task built on the previous two activities and prepared students to properly contextualize the role play cards they will encounter during the Proficiency Exam. In this task, students are presented with an issue and two possible sides to it from which they need to choose one and contextualize the cues (see Figure 5). Additionally, an online version of the task was used without bullet points to develop generating and supporting ideas as well to create context for reacting to other students' points (see Figure 6).

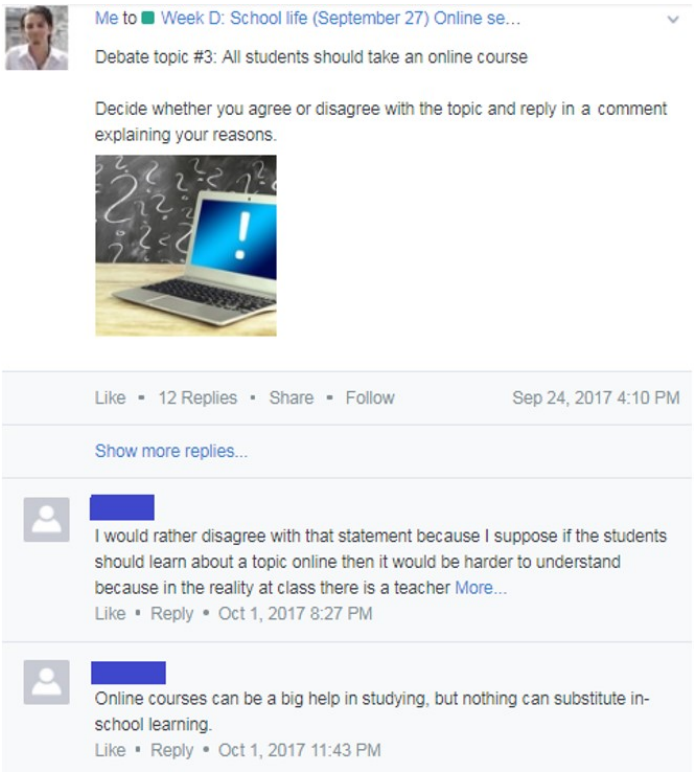

Figure 6. Example for an online debate topic on *Edmodo*

3.5.3. Data collection

Statistical data were collected on online student behavior quantifying their involvement with each of the tasks in the various modules. Complementing this step was the keyword analysis of the weekly student feedback questionnaires (see Figure 7) using Cobb's *Compleat Lexical Tutor* website. Additionally, five students who participated in both L&SS courses were involved in a focus-group interview addressing the development of their language skills and blended experiences in the project.

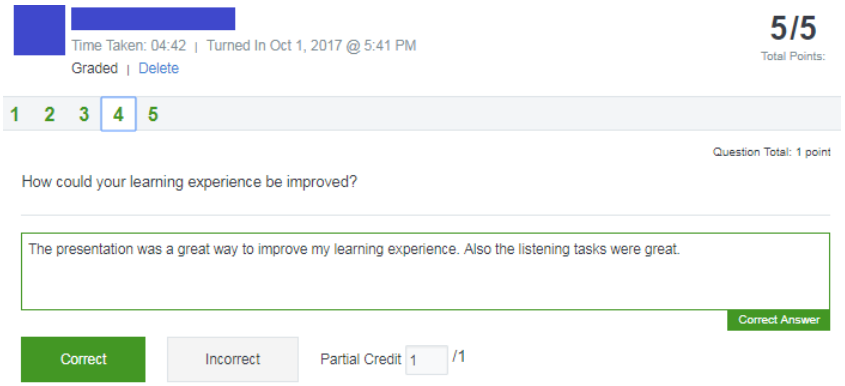

Figure 7. Example for a completed weekly questionnaire item on *Edmodo*

3.6. Findings

The findings of the project are presented in three parts starting with comparing online student activity. Next, the results of the keyword analysis of the weekly online feedback questionnaires are discussed. Finally, key areas in the overarching student experiences regarding the two learning environments are explored through the focus group interview.

3.6.1. Student activity measurement

Looking at the pattern of student activity in the weekly *Edmodo* modules in Figure 8 reveals key trends. The most visible one is how participants of the L&SS I-W course were involved the most in the online activities, save for week 4. This finding is also supported by breaking down the weekly total task completion numbers into the individual activities (see Appendix C). Furthermore, L&SS I-W students significantly outscored the L&SS I-T group with their online participation in the key online segments such as listening tasks (45 v 81), picture associations (29 v 55), post-week (35 v 85) and pre-week activities (55 v 111) (see Appendix E).

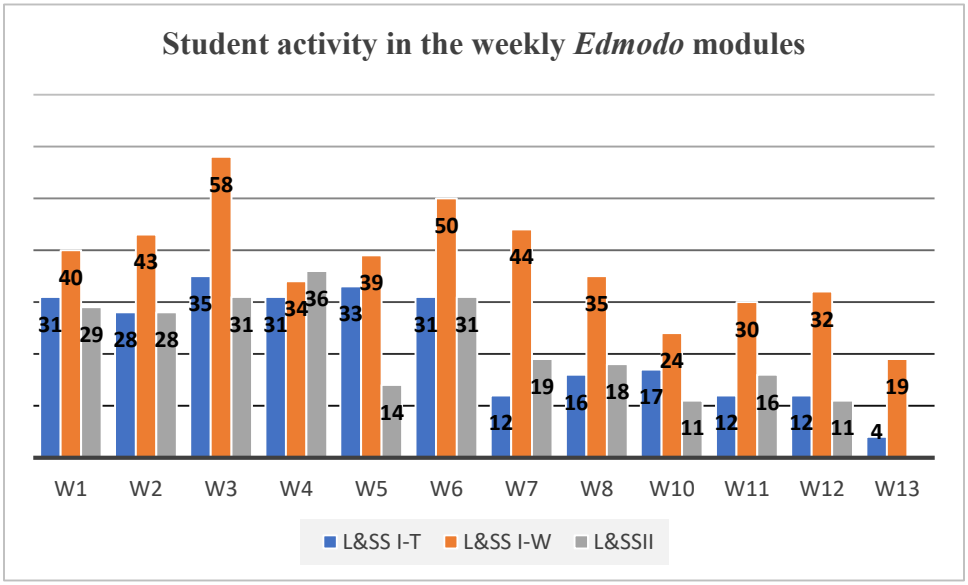

Figure 8. Comparative representation of online student activity on *Edmodo*

This unequal distribution of online task completion could be explained by course group size differences, with L&SS I-T having 17 and L&SS I-W 21 students. Statistically this distribution would equal an approximate 20% difference which is not constant. However, comparing activity measurement with the other data collection instruments reveals two key areas that explain the discrepancy.

First, despite online participation being 10% of students' final grade, they had different interests and goals in these courses which defined their level of involvement.

Partial determiners here can also be the novelty factor and overall increasing workload throughout the semester as expressed in the focus-group interview. These explain the rising and steadily declining level of involvement in the courses after the mid-term mark (around week 8).

Second, "teaching presence", which Healey, Hanson-Smith, Hubbart, Ioannou-Georgiou, Kessler and Ware (2011, p. 166) define as "the visibility of the teacher in the community" was a key variable. Healey et *al*. (2011) argue that teachers are one of the factors that contribute to a positive learning environment (p. 164). Removing myself for two weeks from the L&SSI-T online modules (weeks 7 and 8) resulted in a significant drop in student activity which my later continued presence did not fix. Continued teaching presence in L&SSI-W resulted in more gradual activity declines. This finding was also confirmed by the focus-group interview and the L&SS II course. In the L&SSII course I only corrected listening submissions and was not involved in the online debates or students' posts. While the listening tasks were completed somewhat regularly, together with picture associations (see Appendix E), once students realized the lack of teaching presence (week 7), their involvement declined and eventually reached zero (week 13).

3.6.2. Weekly feedback questionnaire keyword analysis

Collecting the weekly online feedback questionnaire submissions on *Edmodo* and running them through Cobb's *Compleat Lexical Tutor*'s keyword analysis tool revealed complementary findings to the other data collection instruments. As it is explained on the results page of the tool, the results comprise a set that are 25 times more frequent in the sample than the combined 14 million-word BNC and COCA reference corpus. With all items, the top five keywords were included for analysis in the L&SS I-T/ -W and L&SS II courses (Appendix F).

A common trend in students' development (**Q1** in Appendix F) is how items related to strategy training (*keyword*, *solve*, *improvise*, *strategy*, *technique*) appeared together with language development (*vocabulary*, *listen*, *skill*) and attitudes (*confidence*, *practice*). Students could also list further activities they would have like to have (**Q2**); most notably *videos*, *vocabulary development*, *listening* and *debates*. Their reflective answers (**Q3**) revealed that they had clear ideas about which areas needed more development. *Grammar* was listed in all three courses whereas *vocabulary*, *skill* and *listen* also appeared in both L&SS I samples.

A key finding in both samples involved improving their learning experience with more *videos* (**Q4**). This result is directly related to student activity levels regarding the pre- and post-week activities, which were all video-based, and showed the highest participation levels. *Vocabulary*, *listening* and the need for even more *communicative* tasks also appeared.

Finally, the further comments revelated (**Q5**) that most students were pleased with their experience and could not *mention* anything else and some even apologized for this, resulting in *sorry* being a keyword. However, there is also valuable feedback listed about

issues with *listening*, liking the covered *topics* and wanting more whole-*class* activities and tips to get better at *presenting*.

The results of the keyword analysis show that students could identify useful strategies. They were also aware of what skills require further development, from which they deemed vocabulary the most important, followed by grammar and listening development. Students also enjoyed video-based materials and would like to see more of them and were mostly pleased with their learning experiences.

3.6.3. Focus-group interview

The results of the focus group interview supported the weekly student participation and feedback questionnaire data in many areas. The first assessed area was e-learning experience. Students' daily devices were primarily laptops for learning and smartphones for social media purposes and occasional tablet usage in between (**Q1, Q2** in Appendix B). Students were marginally familiar with e-learning before the project through some language learning applications such as *Duolingo*, *Quizlet* or *Kahoot*. Only one participant noted how he took online courses before enrolling in the L&SS courses (**Q3**). In terms of how students understand e-learning, their definitions were similar to how Holmes and Gardner (2006, p. 110) defined the field through anytime and anywhere access, flexibility and easy usage (**Q4**). Students also highlighted that e-learning is useful to practice, however, there are areas that you cannot developed this way (**Q5**).

Students' blended experience in the project was the focus of Q6-11. They expressed their mixed feelings towards the online element; being surprising first, fun at times and overall great for brainstorming (**Q6**). Their expectations were connected to whether they liked social media in the first place and how they experienced e-learning previously (**Q7**). Students noted that *Edmodo* met their expectations in every case (**Q8**). In terms of benefits, the participants identified the variety of opportunities, future teaching uses, accessibility and addressing various learner types (**Q9**). Outside of some technical issues and finding the right ideas to express online, students had no problems using the platforms (**Q10**). Participants also highlighted the need for teaching presence as it shows the appreciation of their work and benefits the T-S relationship (**Q11**).

In terms of language development, students listed how their vocabulary developed the most, next to listening skills and how they could also express their ideas better (**Q12**). Based on participants' responses, teacher presence, task variety and solving some technical issues would further improve their development (**Q13**). Overall, students were satisfied with the language development opportunities (**Q14**). Finally, participants expressed that they did not use the self-development document containing 20 websites because they were pleased with their opportunities (**Q15**). Students also expressed that they would like to be further engaged with e-learning and some want to use the websites they liked as teachers in the future (**Q16-Q17**).

4. Discussion and limitations

Based on the findings, the following factors influence student activity in the online modules: engaging tasks, task number and variety, practice opportunities, technical issues, platform usability and teacher presence (**RQ1**). Students can identify benefits such as variety, training and self-paced learning. However, material development and online teaching presence is time consuming as only some tasks can be preprogrammed on the chosen online platform (**RQ2**). Students presented key ideas to improve the learning environment, most notably online task variety, further engagement and even more practice opportunities in-class (**RQ3**). Exposure to new online solutions, applications and websites positive affected students' e-learning habits and they also see the benefits of e-learning as future teachers (**RQ4**).

The findings of the study show that blended learning environments, while relying on technology and greater student independence, still require similar components as traditional settings. Variety is key in learner engagement in BL (Farrell, 2002, p. 34), however, it means little without teaching presence (Healey, et *al*., 2006, p. 167), which was also supported by the results of student activity measurement in phase one of the present study. However, with blended learning, possibly the most important aspect is the quality of integrating the face-to-face and online environments that underlies students' overall learning experience.

In Shahrokni and Talaeizadeh' (2013) *Moodle* project, their students stated how they also require a face-to-face course with the online component (p. 21). A related finding was identified in the present study as students described their learning experience to be pleasant due to the variety and practice opportunities offered by the two intertwined learning environments. Based on the student activity measurement, keyword analysis and the interview results, the applied blended model largely managed to reach its central goal of creating a whole learning experience for students.

The findings of the project are not applicable to wider student populations as they represent the Hungarian context at the University of Pécs. However, the results managed to identify key findings in line with the literature that provide ground for some generalization. Varity, student involvement in both environments and the need for teaching presence illustrate this point and can be seen as cornerstones of successful blended applications.

5. Conclusion and further research

The study presented a two-semester long research project assessing the feasibility of blended and flipped solutions via student activity measurement, weekly feedback questionnaires and a focus group interview. The findings indicate that modular blended

language development is possible, however, it needs to include task variety, content harmonization and teacher presence.

The next step of the project is to include the Reading and Writing Skills courses in the blended approach as well. This model would integrate all four language skills in the online environment and would enable a larger number of students to interact and develop their skills online while experiencing social learning in class.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix A – Online feedback questionnaire items on *Edmodo*

Week 1: needs analysis	**Weeks 2-13: feedback questionnaire**
1. What kind of further features would you like to see on the online platform? 2. What do you feel you need help with? 3. What do you think about the vocabulary development website of the course? 4. What are the top three to five things you have learned this week? 5. What else would like to have learned about? 6. How could your learning experience be improved? 7. What kind of further online tasks would you like to see in the online segment of the course? 8. How easy or difficult is it to navigate Edmodo? 9. How easy or difficult is it to navigate Quizlet?	1. What are the top three to five things you have learned this week? 2. What else would you liked to have learned about this week? 3. What do you feel you need help with? 4. How could your learning experience be improved? 5. Further comments (anything you would like to add not covered by the previous questions)

7.2. Appendix B – Focus-group interview questions in phase three

Items focused on previous e-learning experience

1. How do you use your gadgets in everyday life?
2. How do you use your gadgets for learning?
3. What kind of e-learning experience did you have before the listening and speaking skills development course?
4. How would you describe what e-learning is?
5. What kind of role does e-learning play in your life?

Items focused on in-course blended learning experience

6. What did you think when you learned that there is going to be an e-learning component in the course?
7. What kind of expectations did you have?
8. What do you think of Edmodo? Did it meet your expectations?
9. What would you say were the benefits of the online component for you?
10. What were the difficulties?
11. How much teacher presence is needed?

Items focused on language development

12. How did the online component influence your language development?
13. In what ways could Edmodo be further optimized?
14. What kind of further language development opportunities would you like to see in the online component?

Items focused on continued usage of various e-learning solutions

15. Did you use the self-development document?
16. What were your experiences with the various websites?
17. In what ways do you see yourself using e-learning from now on?

7.3. Appendix C – Online task completion in the L&SS I-T and -W courses

Week 1 - Introduction	**T**	**W**	**Week 2 - Creativity**	**T**	**W**
introduction	6	5	listening practice	5	13
week 1 feedback	9	9	week 2 feedback	11	10
pre-week 2 activity	7	12	post-week 2 activity	5	8
picture association	9	14	pre-week 3 activity	7	12
TOTAL	31	40	TOTAL	28	43
Week 3 - Communication	**T**	**W**	**Week 4 – School life**	**T**	**W**
picture association	6	9	podcasts	2	0
week 3 feedback	10	10	week 4 feedback	9	5
post-week 3 activity	5	12	listening practice	8	12
pre-week 4 activity	5	12	post-week 4 activity	4	8
vocabulary practice test	9	15	pre-week 5 activity	8	9
TOTAL	35	58	TOTAL	31	34
Week 5 - Travelling	**T**	**W**	**Week 6 - Genres**	**T**	**W**
week 5 feedback	8	5	week 6 feedback	4	2
podcasts	5	0	picture association	4	8
listening practice	8	10	listening practice 1	8	11
post-week 5 activity	6	12	listening practice 2	5	11
pre-week 6 activity	6	12	post-week 6 activity	4	8
TOTAL	33	39	pre-week 7 activity	6	10
Week 7 - Cultures	**T**	**W**	TOTAL	31	50
week 7 feedback	2	2	**Week 8 - Traditions**	**T**	**W**
staged debate 1	1	8	week 8 feedback	2	2
staged debate 2	2	10	listening practice	4	8
staged debate 3	2	5	critical thinking development	4	12
post-week 7 activity	3	11	post-week 8 activity	2	2
pre-week 7 activity	2	8	pre-week 10 activity	4	11
TOTAL	12	44	TOTAL	16	35
Week 10 – Learning languages	**T**	**W**	**Week 11 – Digital world**	**T**	**W**
week 10 feedback	4	3	week 11 feedback	1	3
vocabulary practice test	8	7	listening practice	4	4
post-week 10 activity	2	7	picture association	3	10
pre-week 11 activity	3	7	post-week 11 activity	2	8
TOTAL	17	24	pre-week 12 activity	2	5
Week 12 - Arts	**T**	**W**	TOTAL	12	30
week 12 feedback	1	0	**Week 13 – Time**	**T**	**W**
listening practice 1	2	5	week 13 feedback	0	3
listening practice 2	0	4	listening practice	1	3
picture association	4	7	picture association	3	7
post-week 11 activity	2	3	post-week 13 activity	0	6
pre-week 12 activity	3	13	TOTAL	4	19
TOTAL	12	32			

7.4. Appendix D – Online task completion in the L&SS II course

Week 1 – Introduction		**Week 2 - Movies**	
introduction	7	week 2 feedback	5
week 1 feedback	7	listening practice	8
picture association	8	post-week 2 activity	7
pre-week 2 activity	7	pre-week 3 activity	8
TOTAL	29	TOTAL	28
Week 3 – Role models		**Week 4 - Literature**	
week 3 feedback	3	week 4 feedback	2
POW strategy training 1	7	vocabulary practice test	8
POW strategy training 2	7	picture association – POV	8
post-week 3 activity	7	picture association – storification	5
pre-week 4 activity	7	picture association 3 - PREP	5
TOTAL	31	post-week 4 activity	3
		pre-week 5 activity	7
		TOTAL	36
Week 5 – Music		**Week 6 – Online session**	
week 5 feedback	0	week 6 feedback	0
post-week 5 activity	2	listening practice 1	6
listening practice	4	listening practice 2	5
online discussion 1	4	pre-week 7 activity	5
online discussion 2	3	podcasts	1
online discussion 3	4	online discussion 1	5
TOTAL	14	online discussion 2	4
		online discussion 3	5
		TOTAL	31
Week 7 – Environmental issues		**Week 8 – Food**	
week 7 feedback	0	week 8 feedback	0
picture association	6	discussion topic 1	5
online discussion	5	discussion topic 2	7
post-week 7 activity	4	post-week 8 activity	3
pre-week 8 activity	3	pre-week 10 activity	2
TOTAL	19	TOTAL	18
Week 10 – Subcultures		**Week 11 - Festivals**	
week 10 feedback	1	week 11 feedback	0
post-week 10 activity	6	picture association 1	6
pre-week 11 activity	4	picture association 2	8
TOTAL	11	post-week 11activity	1
		pre-week 12 activity	1
		TOTAL	16
Week 12 - Gadgets			
week 12 feedback	2		
online discussion	5		
post-week 12 activity	4		
TOTAL	11		

7.5. Appendix E – Descriptive statistics of the key weekly online activities

Feedback questionnaires	L&SS I – T	L&SS I – W	L&SS II
SD	3.88	3.23	2.41
mean	5.54	4.9	1.72
total	**61**	54	19
Listening tasks			
SD	3.88	5.93	3.51
mean	5.6	10.12	7.66
total	45	**81**	23
Picture associations			
SD	2.31	2.63	4.12
mean	4.83	9.16	13.5
total	29	**55**	54
Post-week activities			
SD	1.5	3.25	2.26
mean	3.5	7.72	3.88
total	35	**85**	35
Pre-week activities			
SD	2.13	2.54	2.69
mean	4.81	10.09	4.87
total	53	**111**	39
Online debates			
SD	-	-	9.4
mean	-	-	4.15
total	5	23	**47**

7.6. Appendix F – Results of the keyword analysis of feedback questionnaires

Item	L&SSI – T	L&SS I – W	L&SS II
1. What are the top three to five things you have learned this week?	(1) 8860.80 *keyword* (2) 667.23 *vocabulary* (3) 162.20 *solve* (4) 108.16 *technique* (5) 101.80 *confidence*	(1) 38674.00 *introvert* (2) 5524.86 *improvise* (3) 1017.74 *tattoo* (4) 465.95 *vocabulary* (5) 411.43 *feedback*	(1) 218.25 *skill* (2) 158.18 *strategy* (3) 130.98 *listen* (4) 126.58 *practice* (5) 121.83 *prepare*
2. What else would you liked to have learned about this week?	(1) 237.34 *lesson* (2) 211.85 *topic* (3) 168.99 *satisfy* (4) 149.48 *video* (5) 59.17 *express*	(1) 1328.14 *vocabulary* (2) 93.90 *debate* (3) 80.06 *improve* (4) 45.58 *listen* (5) 41.74 *learn*	not enough data
3. What do you feel you need help with?	(1) 1249.45 *vocabulary* (2) 997.15 *grammar* (3) 285.95 *confidence* (4) 164.09 *skill* (5) 112.97 *improve*	(1) 128205.00 *okay* (2) 21978.00 *improvise* (3) 1235.71 *vocabulary* (4) 986.19 *grammar* (5) 231.84 *skill*	(1) 3630.08 *grammar* (2) 219.49 *listen* (3) 123.73 *practice* (4) 118.30 *speak*
4. How could your learning experience be improved?	(1) 102190.00 *probable* (2) 923.40 *vocabulary* (3) 241.14 *practice* (4) 124.17 *video* (5) 74.21 *improve*	(1) 915.56 *discourse* (2) 198.81 *succeed* (3) 169.09 *video* (4) 131.44 *task* (5) 105.43 *communicate*	(1) 337.43 *song* (2) 192.94 *listen* (3) 163.14 *practice* (4) 117.81 *learn*
5. Further comments (anything you would like to add not covered by the previous questions)	(1) 80.76 *mention* (2) 43.85 *listen* (3) 43.23 *moment* (4) 41.99 *present* (5) 33.73 *cover*	(1) 119.31 *topic* (2) 49.32 *class* (3) 47.95 *picture* (4) 30.56 *test* (5) 30.08 *listen*	(1) 132.39 *sorry*

Hungarian EFL Learners' Extramural Contact with English

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1. Introduction and rationale

In the past five years, a number of Europe-wide surveys of foreign language proficiency have yielded results that reflected badly on Hungarians and Hungarian foreign language education in particular. These have prompted government-funded investigations into the state of language education in Hungary, including a large-sample, nationwide survey (Öveges & Csizér, 2018)[1] of language learning and teaching in Hungary. Among a diverse array of topics, the report shows that teachers have perceived a lack of motivation on the learners' part (M = 3.46 on a five-point scale; N = 1,118). The views reported by teachers are thus, to some extent, at odds with the survey's findings about language learners' motivation, who, based on the results of 11th graders, reported significantly higher levels of motivation to learn English (M = 3.84; N = 3,422) by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors than their teachers' perceptions. The survey also collected data on Hungarian language learners' outside-of-school language use habits and found that a considerable percentage of learners engage in outside-of-school activities using English (M = 3.71 on a 5-point scale; N = 3,422), implying a markedly positive attitude towards the English language. However, learners are considerably more divided in terms their attitude towards what they are asked to do and the topics they have to deal with during English lessons. Thus, as the data in the cited report shows, a striking contradiction seems to exist between language learners' in-school learning attitudes and attitudes towards the language in general, and a second one between learners' and teachers' views of motivated behaviour. The present study attempts to explore these contradictions in language learning motivation with additional constructs, e.g. autonomy and beliefs about in-school/out-of-school learning being added to the equation.

2. Foreign language learning motivation

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), language learning motivation has long become one of its most thoroughly investigated topics and is widely accepted as one of the

key individual difference predictors of language learning success (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, Henry, & MacIntyre, 2014; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). However, where motivation stems from and how it translates to actual expended effort to learn a language is of a much more complex nature. In his L2 Motivational Self System, Dörnyei (2005) conceptualized language learning motivation with three distinct constructs: 'Ideal L2 Self', which reinterprets integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) into a construct referring to a learner's hopes, ambitions or desires in connection with learning a foreign language; 'Ought-to L2 Self', referring to a learner's self-image in view of externally imposed motives (e.g. external pressure, incentives, avoidance of negative outcomes); and 'L2 Learning Experience', which is a function of the given learning situation, learning environment and language learning experience, all of which are generally influenced by learning in a formal context. All three constructs in this system have been found to have an impact on learners' motivated language learning behaviour (You, Dörnyei, & Csizér, 2016). However, it is important to note that while all three have a direct influence on motivated learning behaviour, 'Ideal L2 Self' and 'Ought-to L2 Self' also exert an indirect influence through 'L2 Learning Experience'.

As mentioned above, the factors underlying learners' efforts to learn the language (motivated learning behaviour) have been widely discussed. Self-confidence, learners' interest in the target language culture and the real or imagined target language community, and their intention to travel have all been shown - to varying degrees - to have a direct or indirect on language learning efforts (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, 2005b; Dörnyei et al., 2014).

Linguistic self-confidence (Clément, 1980; Clément et al., 1994) is described as learner's self-perceived competence of being able to learn the target language, which has a direct influence on both their Ideal L2 selves and L2 learning attitudes, and is also closely related to the quantity and quality of social contact the learner has had in the given language.

Csizér and Dörnyei (2005a, 2005b) have also claimed that learners' *attitudes towards the target culture* bear an indirect influence on their motivated learning behaviour through their 'Ideal L2 Self', which subsumes integrative motives. Both studies also show a strong effect of positive target culture attitudes on L2 attitudes (subsumed by 'L2 Learning Experience'), which have been found to have the strongest influence on intended learning effort.

Also, the construct of *attitudes towards the target language community* has appeared in Gardner's (1985) socio-educional model and has also been used in various studies (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, 2005b; Ryan, 2006; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008) of L2 learning motivation as a predictor of positive L2 attitude and thus intended effort. The studies of Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) and Ryan (2006) have also introduced the term *imagined international community*, which refers to an accessible community envisioned by learners who do not have a direct link to an actual target language community. Positive attitudes to both real and imagined communities have been shown to enhance learners'

willingness to communicate and motivated learning behaviour. The latter construct is closely linked to the concept of *international posture* put forward by Yashima and her colleagues (Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). International posture is regarded as a substitute for Gardner's (1985) 'integrativeness' in strongly unicultural contexts like Japan (or Hungarian for that matter). Yashima postulates that in cultures where there is a lack of opportunities to have social contact with native speakers of the target language, learners tend not to envision themselves as possible members of the target language community but that of an international community of native and non-native speakers of the target language (Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008).

All of the above constructs have been included in the present study as independent variables to account for possible sources of learners' *intended effort*, i.e. the amount of effort a learner claims to be willing to exert to learn a language (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005b), which was used as the dependent variable to be explained by the independent variables. In an attempt to see whether there is a difference in Hungarian learners' in-class and out-of-school motivation, two different intended effort constructs were investigated: *in-class intended effort* and *out-of-school intended effort*.

2.1. Extramural English

As noted in the introductory words of the present paper, there is an apparent discrepancy between teachers' perceptions of learners' language learning motivation and learners' self-reported motivation. Bailly (2011) has also pointed out that the traditional model of language teaching in France has lately been presented with a challenge as learners are getting an ever-growing access to foreign language input by means of *new media* (media based on computer- and online technologies), while Thorne (2008) has also drawn attention to a "problematic school-world divide between the goals and processes of conventional institutionalized schooling on the one hand and learners' increasingly mediated personal, recreational, and professional lives on the other" (p. 3). Based on the above deliberations (and others, including Benson, 2013), it may be justifiably claimed that the emergence of new media has led to a change in the overall landscape of language learning, especially in out-of-school contexts.

Lately, the term *extramural English* (Sundqvist, 2009, 2011) has been applied as an umbrella term for 'out-of-class', 'out-of-school' or 'naturalistic' learning of English as a second or foreign language. Sundqvist (2011) emphasizes that Extramural English encompasses any out-of-school learning of English, be it intentional or unintentional, in contrast with Benson's (2011) *self-directed naturalistic learning* where learners intentionally seek opportunities of exposure to naturalistic or incidental language learning. In both definitions, the term 'naturalistic' is used to denote the fact that learners acquire language in a natural setting, outside the classroom, which Bialystok (1981) argued to be valuable in

promoting functional oral and written language use, which, in turn has positive effects on both formal and functional language proficiency.

The fact that extramural contact with the target language can impact learners' foreign language learning success has been a point of discussion since the 1980s. Pickard (1995), based on data from a multiple-case study, commented that language learning should not be conceived as a process exclusively happening in the language classroom. Furthermore, both Bialystok (1981) and Nunan (1991) have found positive evidence that functional use, i.e. extramural use of the target language leads to greater proficiency.

The last two decades of research into extramural learning has yielded a number of important results. Various studies (Laufer & Hustijn, 2001; Pegrum, Hartley, & Wechtler, 2005; Webb, 2007; Webb & Macalister, 2013) have shown that learners who are frequently engaged in activities that allow for extramural contact with the target language have a more developed vocabulary, parts of which they may have learned incidentally from films and TV series. Olsson (2011) has also attested that these benefits do not only translate to receptive vocabulary knowledge, but also productive knowledge as well. In her study, learners with more extramural contact with English used more varied vocabulary and longer, more complex sentences in their writing. Studies have not found any other strong relationship between extramural contact and gains in grammar or syntax (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016), which is intriguing, in light of the findings of Sundqvist's (2009, 2011) studies, which showed that learners with more extramural contact with English have superior oral proficiency that manifested in both accuracy and fluency of language use.

More importantly, however, Sundqvist (2011) has demonstrated that the amount of extramural English learners are engaged in is unaffected by most socio-economic background variables (e.g., number of books at home, cultural capital, travel opportunities, parents' education). The only exception was the rural/urban divide, which was found to be a decisive factor in the extent of learner's extramural use of English, with learners from urban backgrounds reporting significantly more extramural contact with English. Sundqvist's findings are therefore especially consequential as extramural English can prove to be a path for development for all learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background. It must also be noted that the Swedish context, which has also been suggested to be an ESL (English as a second language) context (Viberg, 2000, as cited in Sundqvist and Sylvén, 2014), is arguably distinct from the Hungarian EFL (English as a foreign language) setting as far as learning circumstances are concerned.

2.1.1. Extramural English and autonomy

Language learning circumstances are especially important as in monolingual (and therefore EFL) countries the linguistic circumstances and/or formal teaching do not afford implicit language learning, i.e. learners are not provided ample opportunities to use the target

language in their everyday lives. In such circumstances learners tend to look for opportunities to use and learn English beyond the classroom. This behaviour is justifiably considered to qualify as autonomous learning behaviour, i.e. learners taking control of their own learning (Holec, 1981).

In connection with autonomy, Sundqvist (2011) notes that extramural English is inherently a manifestation of autonomy as learners intentionally choose to be involved in free time activities using English. Benson (2013), however, questions the reigning concept of language autonomy, and calls for the reconceptualization of language learning autonomy in accordance with recent shifts towards learners being in contact with English in extramural settings. The shift is mainly due to the much wider availability of English-learning resources (including formal resources such as coursebooks and informal resources like foreign language books of fiction, TV series, films, etc.) for learning English in EFL contexts. As he explains, there has been a shift from learners being trained by their teachers to take control of their learning to learners initiating the autonomous learning process themselves (Benson, 2013).

This paper, in line with Benson's (2013) suggestions argues that while learners often engage in self-initiated activities involving the English language, it is inaccurate *per se* to claim they are purposefully doing these activities to learn the language autonomously. Thus an additional question investigated in the present paper is the strength of the relationship between learners' extramural contact with English and their autonomous decisions to use these English-language activities to their benefit. Kormos and Csizér's (2014) investigation found language learning motivation to be a precursor to the emergence of autonomous learning behavior; therefore, the question of whether learners' motivated learning behaviour (intended effort) translates into seeking opportunities to learn the language outside the classroom is also raised in the present study.

2.1.2. Extramural English and motivational dynamics

As mentioned in the introduction section, the study aims to provide explanations to the discrepancies shown in Öveges and Csizér (2018) between teachers' perceptions of their learners' motivated behaviour and learners' self-perceptions, namely that teachers viewed their learners to be less motivated to learn English than what the learners in question reported of themselves. It is hypothesized here that differences in the contexts of language learning (e.g. in-school and out-of-school extramural) can account for the some of the differences.

The study of Lamb (2012) showed extramural language learning experience emerged as at least as strong a predictor of motivated learning behaviour as in-school experience. Regarding the question of where learners encounter the English language outside of the school, the findings of Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) and Lamb (2012) are highly relevant as

they both claimed that the geographical location and relative proximity of learners to urban environments have a substantial effect on their extramural contact with English. This may be partly explained by the different socio-economic background of the learners' families (cf. Lamb, 2012; but Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014), and by the language use opportunities through personal contact with speakers of the target language afforded by the context as noted by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005)

A number of additional studies may explain the direct or indirect relationship between learners' motivated learning behaviour, extramural contact with English and language learning success. Studies by Csizér and Kormos (Csizér & Kormos, 2008; Kormos & Csizér, 2008) have also shown that learners' contact with English-language media and their interest in the target language culture are strong predictors of overall learning motivation. Similarly, results of Lamb (2002) have implied that the most successful learners in difficult learning situations are the most personally invested, motivated and autonomous learners, who also seek formal and informal learning opportunities. Gao (2009), investigating 'English corners' as settings for extramural language learning, has found that this extramural activity has prompted learners to form a more positive attitude to English, which, drawing on the L2 Self System theory (Dörnyei, 2005), might be assumed to have had a direct impact on their overall motivated learning behaviour.

Drawing on the findings of the nation-wide survey (Öveges & Csizér, 2018) and above-discussed studies (Lamb, 2012; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014), two hypotheses are proposed: firstly, that there are differences between the motivational dynamics of learners for in-school and extramural motivated learning behaviour; and secondly, that learners have stronger motivation to expend effort to learn English out of school than in school.

2.2. Learners' beliefs about in-school and extramural language learning

As has been established by Horwitz (1987), learner's experiences with learning the language and their personal or cultural values translate into preconceived beliefs about language learning. Numerous studies (for a summary, see Yang, 1999) have shown that learner beliefs about language learning have an effect on learners' approach to language learning and their choice of learning strategies, thus predisposing learners to commit to certain actions in the language learning process.

As far as learners' beliefs of the effectiveness of learning language in the school or through extramural contact, Ryan and Mercer (2011) argued that, in countries with a pervasive presence of English in everyday life, learners may be less likely to expend effort to learn the language as they attribute language learning success more to naturalistic, extramural learning than effort. In similar vein, Henry and Cliffordson (2017) also expressed such concerns, especially after their findings showed a significant negative correlation

between strong beliefs in the effectiveness of naturalistic, extramural learning and language learning motivation.

The present study hypothesizes that based on their previous English language learning experience, learners will hold different beliefs concerning the effectiveness of in-school and extramural learning. In turn, these beliefs will have a direct impact learners' learning autonomy and motivated learning behaviours.

3. Study

In order to find possible patterns in the motivational dynamics of Hungarian EFL learners, the present exploratory study was designed in the quantitative paradigm, using a sample of 144 respondents and a questionnaire as its instrument to ensure higher generalizability of the results.

3.1. Research questions

As outlined above, the present study seeks to find answers to four main questions:

1. Are there any differences in learners' beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school learning and extramural language learning?
2. Is there a difference in learners' motivated learning behaviour for in-school and extramural learning?
3. Are there any differences between the motivational dynamics of learners for in-school and extramural motivated learning behaviour?
4. What factors make learners more likely to autonomously seek language learning opportunities outside the class?

3.2. Participants

The questionnaire used for data collection in the present study involved 144 learners aged 12-16 from 10 different institutions from Hungary. In order to achieve a more representative sample of Hungarian learners of English as a foreign language, quota sampling was used to find suitable schools to represent different geographical regions and educational levels, with the capital city, provincial towns and villages, and also primary (*általános iskola*) and secondary schools (*gimnázium*) all equally represented in the sample (see Table 1 for a distributional breakdown of the sample).[2] In contrast to the 1.7 million inhabitants of Budapest, the provincial towns ranged from 10,000 to 70,000 inhabitants, while the villages' population was around 1,500 people.

The sample comprised 70 male and 74 female participants, with an average age of 14.2 (SD = 2.1). At the time of the administration of the questionnaire, the participants had

been learning English for an average of 6.3 years (*SD* = 2.1).[3] The participants in the study had around 5 English lessons/week on average (*M* = 5.19, *SD* .85) in their schools, which is around .7 higher than the average reported in the nation-wide survey of Öveges and Csizér (2018).

Table 1. Location and school type for participants with the number of schools/location in parentheses (N = 144)

	Village	Town	Budapest (capital)
Primary school	42 (2)	25 (2)	24 (2)
Secondary school	-	26 (2)	27 (2)

3.3. Instrument

The instrument applied in the study was a three-part pen-and-paper questionnaire involving a short background data section, a section about the frequency of learners' extramural activities in English and Hungarian using a 5-point scale ranging from 'None at all' to 'Every day', and a 69-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert-type scale, encompassing 11 different constructs (see *Appendix*) and a series of questions eliciting background data.

Several constructs and items were adopted when designing the questionnaire. The constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System were adopted from Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) and Csizér and Dörnyei (2005b), e.g. 'Ideal L2 self', 'Ought-to L2 self', 'Cultural interest', 'Motivated learning behaviour', 'Language learning attitude', 'Self-confidence' and 'Travel orientation', while the 'Imagined international community' scale was adopted from Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008). All additional constructs (in-school/extramural beliefs and motivation) were designed by the author and validated using a pilot study.

The instrument was first piloted with 47 participants, and subsequently a number of items were adjusted and reworded to avoid ambiguity and crossloadings, and to ensure a higher reliability of the constructs. In order to affirm the internal consistency of the scales designed for the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all constructs. Each construct in the live study was kept for further analysis based on the Cr. alpha values. Following Pallant's (as cited in Lamb, 2012) recommendation about scales employing a low number of items, the mean inter-item correlation was also calculated for the scales (see *Table 2* for Cr. alpha and correlation values). Also, a principal component analysis was also applied to the scales to confirm that all items loaded onto the same latent

factor. Due to its low Cronbach alpha reliability (α = .602), the 'Self-confidence' scale was unused in subsequent analyses.

Table 2. Reliability coefficients for the scales included in the analyses

Scale	Number of items	Cr. Alpha	Mean inter-item correlation
Ideal L2 self	4	.681	.36
Ought-to L2 self	5	.735	.358
Language learning experience	5	.65	.437
In-school learning beliefs	4	.767	.465
Extramural learning beliefs	4	.708	.384
In-school motivated learning behaviour	4	.776	.475
Extramural motivated learning behaviour	5	.773	.406
Imagined community	5	.786	.419
Self-confidence	3	.602	.274
Travel orientation	3	.694	.435
Cultural interest	5	.653	.292
Autonomy - Opportunity	6	.853	.51
Contact with English	8	.781	.35

3.4. Procedure

In line with considerations about research ethics, firstly the principals of the selected schools were contacted for consent and then all prospective participants were given a consent form to be signed by their parents or legal guardians. The final version questionnaire, which took 25-30 minutes to complete, was administered by the author in all the locations in March-May 2018. All of the data collection occasions were in the time slot of their English lessons with the participants' English teachers being present on each occasion. Before the administration, the purpose and overall topic of the study was outlined to the participants and they were informed that all the data collected would be kept confidential and

anonymous. The answers of the paper-based questionnaires were subsequently entered manually into SPSS Statistics 23 for data analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

After the entering of the data into SPSS and the initial reliability analysis of the scales, further statistical procedures were applied. As all scales with the exception of 'Imagined international community' were non-normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used. Mann-Whitney U-tests and Kruskal-Wallis H test were used for group-related differences, Wilcoxon Signed Rank test for differences between the values of in-school and extramural variables, Spearman's rank order correlation for the strength of relationship between variables and linear regression analysis to test for causal relationships.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Differences in learners' beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school learning and extramural language learning

The first research question was focused on finding differences between learners' beliefs of the effectiveness of in-school and extramural English learning. The questionnaire items regarding beliefs about in-school learning included statements about the extent to which their efforts in the school context lead to language learning gains (e.g. "If I work more during English lessons, my English will improve." or "If we had more English lessons, my English would improve."), whereas items regarding extramural learning beliefs were concerned with linguistic gains from extramural activities (e.g. 1'If I encounter a lot of English in my free time, my English will improve."). The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test applied to the data showed a statistically significant difference between learner's beliefs about the effectiveness of learning English in-school and extramural contexts. (Z = -10.229, p <.001) (see Table 3).

In other words, students believed that the outside-the-school context was significantly more conducive to language learning than school itself, which is consequential in two ways. Firstly, it implies that learners are only moderately convinced of the effectiveness of learning in the formal context, which may be partly explained by negative language learning experience. A subsequent regression analysis has shown that the language learning experience variable is only a weak predictor (R^2 = .076, b = .276, t = 3.34, p <.05) of in-school beliefs. As an alternative explanation, we might consider the concerns of Thorne (2008) and Bailly (2011) about the increasing divide between the learning processes and requirements of the institutionalized, in-school context and the personalized, recreational extramural context. Secondly, as learning beliefs predispose learners to act in a certain way (Horwitz, 1987), it highly possible that, similarly to the findings of Henry and Cliffordson

(2017), this difference between these two beliefs is manifested in learners' motivated behaviour as well.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the motivated learning behaviour and belief scales

Scale	N	Mean	St. Dev.
In-school MLB	139	3.59	.73
Extramural MLB	139	3.76	.68
In-school beliefs	140	3.1	.62
Extramural beliefs	140	4.5	.45

Interestingly, a significant difference was found across the three location categories in terms of in school beliefs ($H(2,140) = 2.118$, $p < .05$): learners in the capital city reported less positive beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school learning than students in both provincial towns ($p < .01$) and villages ($p < .05$). It might be possible to explain this phenomenon by looking at the differences regarding L2 learning experience and out of school contact with English across the three location variables, however, the statistical analyses have not found any significant differences in this regard. Thus, it must be surmised that location-related differences may only be explained through a more complex set of variables.

4.2. Differences in learners' motivated learning behaviour for in-school and extramural learning

The second research question was concerned with possible differences between learners' motivated learning behaviour (MLB) in in-school and extramural contexts. The items pertaining to in-school MLB were focused on the effort they are willing to exert in the formal context (e.g. "I am ready to do my best to perform better at English in school."), while the extramural items were, conversely, focused on effort in informal learning contexts (e.g. "I am ready to invest time into finding opportunities to learn English in my free time.") The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test yielded a statistically significant difference ($Z = -2.433$, $p < .05$) between the two values, suggesting that learners are more likely to expend effort to learn English outside-the-school, however, as shown in Table 3, there is only a slight difference in the values in favour of extramural learning. It must be pointed out that the data has shown that all learners in the sample are fairly motivated ($M_{in\text{-}school} = 3.59$, $M_{extramural} = 3.76$) to expend effort to learn English regardless of the learning context.

A subsequent Kruskal-Wallis H test on in-school and extramural motivation based on 'location' as a grouping factor revealed a statistically significant difference (H (2, 140) = 6.38, p <.05) across the three categories concerning in-school MLB, with a post-hoc Nemenyi test finding a significant difference between the 'village' and the 'capital city' categories (p <.05). These latter findings are somewhat similar to those of Lamb (2012), whose data also showed significant differences between urban and rural learners in terms of in- and out-of-school learning experience, a direct predictor of MLB. motivated learning behaviour. However, the analyses in the present study found a significant difference only in the case of in-school MLB, but not with extramural MLB.

The result of the analysis of the gender-related difference for motivated behaviour in both contexts showed female respondents reporting significantly higher levels of motivation in the in-school setting (U(143) = 3,264, p <.05), as well as the extramural setting (U(143) = 3,040, p <.05).

4.3. Differences between the motivational dynamics of learners for in-school and extramural motivated learning behaviour

The focus of this research question was exploring the motivational dynamics for in-school and extramural motivated learning behaviour, and possible differences between them. It was hypothesized that in addition to the three key constructs (Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 self, and Language learning experience) of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005), beliefs concerning the effectiveness of in- and out-of-school (i.e. extramural) language learning will be shown to be strong predictors of motivated learning behaviour.

Table 4. Regression model for extramural motivated learning behaviour

	B	*SE B*	Beta
L2 learning experience	.486	.58	.494
Imagined community	.372	.57	.375
Extramural beliefs	.242	.79	.162
R^2		.722	
F		109.4*	

Multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the effect of a number of variables (listed in Table 2) on learners' motivation for extramural (Table 4) and in-school (Table 5)

language learning. The results yielded by the data analysis show distinctly different models. As for extramural motivated learning behaviour, a model with a significant regression equation (F = 109.4, p <.05) was found with an R^2 of .722, with language learning experience, attitudes towards an imagined community and beliefs about the effectiveness of extramural beliefs being the significant predictors of extramural MLB. The results imply that learners' attitudes towards an imagined international community of English speakers may drive them to learn the language in their free time, possibly by means of seeking opportunities to meet foreign speakers of English. Also, although the weakest predictor in the model, beliefs about the effectiveness of extramural learning have been shown to have an impact on learners' efforts to learn the language in the extramural context.

Table 5. Regression model for in-school motivated learning behaviour

	B	*SE B*	Beta
In-school beliefs	.579	.82	.498
L2 learning experience	.335	.79	.329
Ideal L2 self	.159	.78	.15
R_2		.48	
F		39.15*	

Regarding in-school motivated learning behaviour, a different model was found (F = 39.15, p <.05) with an R^2 of .48. In this case, beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school learning, L2 learning experience and Ideal L2 self were found to be significant predictors of the dependent variable. Interestingly, in this model beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school learning was found to have the strongest impact (b = .498) on the dependent variable, which is particularly consequential in light of the low ratings by the respondents (see Table 3). Thus, the learners in the present sample are not strongly convinced in the effectiveness of institutionalized English learning and are consequently less motivated to expend effort to perform well in the in-school context.

4.4. Factors influencing the emergence of learner autonomy to seek opportunities to use English

The fourth research question in the study was concerned with the factors influencing learners' autonomous decisions to seek opportunities that help them improve their English.

Firstly, correlational data shows that there is a significant, moderately strong relationship (Spearman's r = .365, p <.05), between learners' autonomous behaviour in seeking language learning opportunities and their extramural contact with English through interpersonal communication and (traditional and new) media. This might be viewed as being in line with Benson's (2013) comments that the ubiquity of English has rendered the traditional definition of language learning autonomy somewhat obsolete as learners today are in more frequent contact with the English language despite the fact that it might not be based on their autonomous, self-directed decision to do so.

Secondly, as shown in Table 6, a linear regression used with 'autonomy' as the dependent variable has yielded a regression model (F = 95.62, p <.05) with an R^2 of .59, where the two independent variables were students in- and out-of-school motivated learning behaviour (intended effort). These are in agreement with the findings of Kormos and Csizér (2014), who have shown that motivated learning behaviour manifests itself as autonomous behaviour in learning. Interestingly, neither cultural interest, nor positive attitudes towards an imagined international community was found to be a significant predictor of the 'autonomy' variable.

Table 6. Regression model for Autonomy (Seeking opportunities)

	B	*SE B*	Beta
Extramural MLB	.747	.74	.641
In-school MLB	.230	.69	.212
R^2		.59	
F		95.62*	

5. Conclusion

The investigation presented here aimed to explore possible differences between Hungarian learners' beliefs about and motivation regarding in-school and extramural learning, in an attempt to shed further light on discrepancies between teachers' less positive perception of their learners' motivation and the learners' self-perceived higher levels of motivation found in the report by Öveges and Csizér (2018).

The results pertaining to the first research question of the study implied that the underlying factor regarding the discrepancy between teachers' and learners' perceptions of motivation may be the fact that learners are less strongly motivated to do well in the in-

school language learning context, whereas they are willing to expend effort to learn the language in extramural settings.

Secondly, as regards the next two research questions, it had been hypothesized that learners' beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school and extramural learning would show differences, with the more positive beliefs attached to the extramural setting, possibly due to its personal, individualized and self-initiated nature and that these differences will impact learners' motivation to learn English. The results for the second research question revealed significant differences in learners' beliefs about the effectiveness of in-school and extramural learning, with learners reporting significantly stronger belief in learning from extramural (i.e. naturalistic, out-of-school) language learning activities than in formal in-school learning.

Although the construct of beliefs has not often been part of models concerning language learning motivation, the study investigated both types of beliefs as factors having an impact on motivated learning behavior. The results yielded by the analyses showed that beliefs in the effectiveness of in-school and extramural learning exert an influence on learners' motivation to learn English, and also fit into the framework of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005).

Also significant is the result presented for the fourth research question that was concerned with the relationship between contact with English and learners' autonomous decision to seek opportunities to learn English. The results revealed only a moderate correlation between students reported amount of contact with English outside the school and their autonomous, self-initiated decisions to seek such opportunities. Thus, the results seem to be in support of the claims made by Benson (2013), who commented that learners' pastime activities do not necessarily warrant autonomous extramural language learning for linguistic gains.

5.1. Limitations

One of the most obvious limitations of the research design is the relatively low number of participants. Although the overall sample size was respectable and adequate in terms of statistical power, a sample of at least 200 respondents (according to most recommendations) would be needed to use structural equation modelling on the date and to attempt to evaluate a new model with the beliefs constructs added to the equation. Furthermore, a subsample size of at least 30 should have been included for all combinations of school levels and locations.

A post-research evaluation of the research process has also showed that an important addition to the research design will be to use two separate constructs for in-school and extramural learning experience similarly to what were used in the study of Lamb (2012). The addition of such a construct will give more insight into the complex association of motivated learning behaviour, experience and beliefs; especially as 'language learning

experience', an element of Dörnyei's (2005) framework of motivation emerged as a core component in regression analyses.

5.2. Directions for future research

Based on the last point in the above Limitations section, one possible and highly consequential direction of research is to understand teachers' points of view, attitudes, and beliefs regarding in-school and extramural language learning and to compare it to those of the learners. A more broader overlap of teachers' and learners' needs, attitudes and understanding of the effectiveness of learning may lead to better mutual understanding, less teacher-learner conflict, and, by extension, more language-related gains in the in-school context.

Another thought-provoking angle would be to gain insight into the gender-related differences in terms of in-school motivation, which showed a significant difference; however, the analysis showed marked, but nonsignificant differences along the belief, contact and autonomy scales as well.

Most importantly, the results to the fourth research question showed a lack of a strong relationship between learners' autonomous decisions to seek opportunities of foreign language learning and their general frequency of extramural contact with the English language. Therefore, it is deemed highly important, in similar vein to Benson's (2013) call for a reconceptualization of language learning autonomy, to treat contact and autonomy more separately in future studies. The results imply that learners may not be consciously seeking language learning opportunities when engaging in English-mediated activities, but are only interested in them as a source of fun or as the same works and media products are not available to them in their native language.

5.3. Implications for pedagogy

Most definitely the fact that learners enjoy English outside the class and are willing to spend time to use it in their free time is welcome news. However, the results of the study have been shown to be a case in point of the divide between in-school and extramural learning contexts. Nevertheless, there may be multiple ways teachers can not only compensate for this divide but may also be able to harness the potential of students' extramural contact with English.

One potential solution would be to allow students to form the syllabus and thus to adjust the topics dealt with in school to their real-life needs and experiences as a way of countering students' beliefs that they will not be able to learn useful language in school. Also, besides making efforts to foster learner autonomy in learners, teachers should spend time not only to acknowledge students' autonomous decisions but also to encourage students to "bring the outside in the classroom". The possible positive outcome of such an approach is

twofold: learners can connect their real-life, individual activities to what happens in the school and with the teachers' help these extramural encounters with English may be analyzed in the classroom linguistically, thus forming new connections between implicitly and explicitly learned knowledge.

6. Acknowledgements

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7. Footnotes

[1]It must be pointed out that this survey presented many of the results of learners learning English and German as their first foreign language in an aggregated format, with English learners making up 75% of the sample. Based on the investigations of Csizér and Lukács (2010), it is justifiably surmised that there are differences between English and German as regards motivational factors.

[2]Unfortunately, due to time constraints, vocational secondary schools (*szakgimnázium*), which make up a considerable proportion of Hungarian educational institutions, are not represented in the sample.

[3]It is important to note that the Hungarian educational system introduces foreign languages from the third grade in primary schools for all learners, with the learned language predominantly being English.

8. References

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9. Appendix

Scales and items used in the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert-type scale "Strongly disagree", "Rather disagree", "Neither agree, nor disagree", "Rather agree", "Strongly agree"):

Ideal L2

I can imagine myself as a person who speaks English well.

When I think about what I want to do, I imagine a job where speaking English is important.

I can imagine that in the future I will be studying at a university where all subjects are taught in English.

I can imagine that in the future I will be able to speak English fluently with foreigners.

Ought-to L2 self

Learning English is important because the people around me expect me to learn English.

I learn English because my close friends also think it's important to speak English.

Learning English is important to me because people will respect me more if I can speak English well.

My parents think that learning English is important to be an educated person.

Learning English is important to me because a learned person needs to be proficient in English.

Language learning experience

I like the atmosphere of English lessons.

I think learning English is very interesting.

I really enjoy being able to speak English.
I really enjoy learning English.
I wish we had more English lessons at school.

Travel orientation

Learning English is important to me because I want to travel around the world in the future.
Knowledge of English is important because without it I would not be able to travel much in the world.
I learn English because I can enjoy traveling more with English.

Cultural interest

I love music from English speaking countries (e.g. USA, UK).
I like movies from English speaking countries (e.g. USA, UK).
I like English language internet content (e.g. videos, websites).
I like English language newspapers, books, magazines.
I like TV series from English speaking countries (e.g. USA, UK).

Self-confidence

I am sure that if I study, I will learn to speak English.
I am sure I have the ability to learn English.
If you put more energy into English, I can definitely learn the language.
If I continue to learn English in the future, I will certainly understand the texts I have read and heard well.

Extramural learning beliefs

I think if I use a lot of English outside of school, I will be able to speak English better.
My English vocabulary will be better if I encounter the English language many times (videos, texts, movies, music) in my free time.
I think the more I encounter English outside of school, the better I will understand English texts.
I feel that if I use English more in my spare time, my language skills will improve.

In-school learning beliefs

I think if I pay close attention to English lessons, my language skills will be better.
My English vocabulary will be better if I always do the class assignments well.
I think the more English classes we have in school, the better my language skills would be.
I feel that if I work more on English classes, my language skills will improve.

In-school MLB

I focus more on learning English than on any other subject.
I am ready to invest energy in getting even better results from English in school.
I want to do my best to learn English really well at school.
I try to spend more time learning English.

Extramural MLB

Even if I didn't have English at school, I would still love to learn English.
I would like to do more leisure activities that require the use of English.
I would love to use more English in my spare time.
I would love to be in groups where I have to speak English to foreigners.
I would like to take every opportunity outside of school where I can use English.

Imagined community

It is important that I learn a world language.
I love situations where I have to speak English to others.
I enjoy traveling to countries where I have to communicate with locals in English.
I am happy to meet English speaking foreigners.
It is good to know English because many non-native speakers in the world also speak English.

Autonomy - Seeking language learning opportunities

In my free time, I always try to look for situations where I can hear English.
I try to do leisure activities where I can write / chat in English.
In my spare time, I try to look for situations where I can read in English.
I try to do leisure activities where I can practice speaking English.
In my spare time, I try to look for situations where I can use English.
I try to do leisure activities that allow me to expand my English vocabulary.

Contact with English – Marked on a 5-point scale ("Never", "Rarlier than once a week", "Once a week", "More than once a week", "Daily")

How often do you encounter the English language when you are doing the following?

- Listening to music
- On Internet sites
- In computer games
- On Facebook
- On other social media sites (Instagram, Twitter)
- On video platforms (YouTube, Twitch)
- In English-language books, magazines, newpapers
- In English-language films or series
- When meeting friends

Students' Assessment of Difficulty and Preferences Regarding L2 Language Skills

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1. Introduction

Language proficiency is primarily seen as a "multifaceted modality" which consists of various levels of abilities and domains rather than as "a unidimensional construct" (Carrasquillo, 1994, p. 65). Hence, an important aspect of any language acquisition process, both for mother tongue (L1) and foreign (L2) languages, is the development of the four basic language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Each of these skills has its specific features, especially in the context of foreign or second language learning. Reading and reading comprehension imply successful application of a number of activities such as: visual processing of words; identifying their phonological, orthographic, and semantic representations; using syntactic rules to connect the words; understanding the underlying meaning of words and phrases, etc. (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Moreover, a successful reader needs to integrate the underlying meaning across sentences, employ related background knowledge, make inferences, identify text structure, and consider the authors' motives (Graesser, 2015).

Writing is considered not only "a matter of arranging elements in the best order", but rather "a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences" (Hyland, 2003, pp. 7, 23). Therefore, Hyland (2003, p. 23) proposes the following principal orientations to teaching L2 writing: 1) structure (emphasis is on language form, i.e. grammatical accuracy and vocabulary development), 2) function (focus is on language use in the form of paragraph and text organisation patterns), 3) expressivist (emphasizes writer's individual creativity and self-discovery), 4) process (emphasis is on the writer's control of technique), 5) content (focus is on the subject matter), and 6) genre (focus is on the text and context whereby the writer has

to display control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types). In other words, there are a number of factors which need to be considered when talking about L2 writing.

The next skill is listening, which is, according to Jafari and Hashim (2015), crucial for comprehensible input since more than 50% of L2 learners' time is dedicated to listening. Rost (2002) has confirmed its importance by pointing out that proficiency in listening is a major precondition for achieving proficiency in speaking. However, although listening comprehension is "at the heart of language learning", it is still "the least understood and least researched skill" (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 191). Thomas and Dyer (2007, as cited in Hamouda, 2013) observed that many teachers associate listening with breathing and consider it to be automatic despite the fact that it implies a number of complex activities on the part of the listener. Namely, it is a process in which a listener receives the information from a speaker, constructs and represents meaning, negotiates meaning with the speaker and responds, until he/she finally creates meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (Rost, 2002). Therefore, there are a number of listening difficulties L2 learners have reported experiencing: not being able to recognize words, missing the beginning of a sentence or message, inability to understand something because of a lack of understanding of the previous section, concentration problems, quickly forgetting what has been heard, inability to form mental representations from what has been heard, and inability to understand the message despite the understanding of words (Goh, 2000, as cited in Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). In addition, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) emphasize that listening activities in L2 classrooms usually focus mainly on the outcomes of listening, i.e. they test the learners' listening skills, which consequently only increases their anxiety, especially when they are expected not only to understand what they are listening but also to respond in the appropriate way.

Speaking, as the last (but not least) of the language skills, may be considered both as the most difficult and the easiest of the four skills (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). It is deemed difficult because it "requires command of both listening comprehension and speech production subskills (e.g. vocabulary retrieval, pronunciation, choice of a grammatical pattern, and so forth) in unpredictable, unplanned situations" (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p. 165). On the other hand, it is viewed as the easiest of the four skills because when communicating with someone, speakers need not rely solely on their language skills as they "can use body language, demonstration, repetition, and various other strategies" (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p. 165). According to Nation (2011), speaking, which is mostly an interactive and a meaning-focused activity, may also be used to help learners expand their language knowledge, i.e. it may facilitate vocabulary development, pronunciation, and gaining control of grammatical and discourse features. Finally, in order for EFL/ESL learners' speaking skills to be developed, emphasis should be on speaking confidence combined with appropriate tasks (Bailey, 2005; Nunan, 2006; Trent, 2009).

All of the above skills are equally important in the context of EFL learning and teaching because of the role the English language has in global communication and

knowledge exchange in all spheres of human life.

The goal of language teaching is the development of learners' communicative competence, and language skills are considered to be "both the aim and the means for the implementation of the communicative goal" (Frydrychova Klimova, 2014, p. 87). When language teaching is structured so that it integrates all language skills, it enables learners to activate different communicative processes simultaneously, and contributes to the functional language use. Despite many benefits of integrated skill instruction, and the fact that for many years now integration of all four language skills has been emphasized in L2 teaching and learning (Baker & Westrup, 2003; Byrne, 1984; Oxford, 2001; Šebestova, Najvar, & Janik, 2011; Selinker & Tomlin, 1986), there is nevertheless a significant body of work focusing on the development of individual language skills (cf. reading: Grabe (2009), Hudson (2007), Koda (2004); listening: Field (2009), Flowerdew & Miller (2005), Lynch (2009); speaking: Alonso Alonso (2018), Boxer & Cohen (2004); and writing: Hyland (2003), Silva & Matsuda (2001)).

A number of aspects and factors related to language acquisition, e.g., learners' perceived competence, beliefs, attitudes, etc., have been found to significantly impact language learning and teaching process. Therefore, understanding these factors may be considered an important step towards facilitating language acquisition and helping learners to achieve higher language proficiency. One of these factors is learners' perception of language skill difficulty. However, rather contradictory findings have been reported regarding this issue. Namely, an analysis of previous studies, which were mainly conducted with graduate and/or undergraduate students, who were EFL learners, indicates that different language skills have been perceived as the most/least difficult by EFL learners. For instance, Hamouda (2013), and Ishag, Altmayer, and Witruk (2015) reported speech comprehension to have been perceived as the most difficult to learn. On the other hand, Graham (2006) and Kim (2002) found listening as the language skill perceived to be the most difficult. Since in Graham's study (2006) the participants were English students learning French, and Kim's (2002) participants were Korean students taking the TOEFL test, it may be that different mother tongues and foreign languages as well as different learning/testing context may have caused differences in students' perceptions of language skill difficulty. Berman and Cheng (2010) reported listening, in addition to reading, as the least difficult language skills while speaking and writing were considered the most difficult. A possible reason for such a perception of speaking and writing may be that these two productive language skills have been found to be the least developed in ELT among primary and secondary school EFL learners (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006a; Šebestova, Najvar, & Janik, 2011). A study conducted by Zergollern-Miletić (2007) showed that Croatian primary and secondary EFL students achieved best results on their reading test, which may be why EFL students tend to perceive reading as the least difficult language skill, as confirmed in a study by Ishag et al. (2015).

In addition to language difficulty, affective domain has also long been identified as

being very important in L2 learning, both by researchers and educators. One of the factors belonging to this domain are attitudes, i.e. "acquired and relatively durable relationships the learner has to an object" (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006a, p. 10), which have been assigned an important place in L2 learning, especially attitudes towards different aspects of the teaching situation (cf. Dörnyei, 2001; Nikolov, 2002). Attitudes have also been studied in relation to language skills. So, for instance, Smith (1990, p. 215) defines reading attitude as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable". The other language skills may also be described in terms of learners' attitudes towards them.

Despite numerous studies investigating the process of EFL learning and teaching, to our knowledge, there is scarce data regarding the degree to which perceived EFL skills' difficulty is related to corresponding learners' negative attitudes towards them. It has been established that L1 might be associated with stronger emotional connotations (e.g. when expressing love and anger) (Dewaele, 2008, 2010), and that (L2) anxiety tends to be negatively related to several language-related outcomes (e.g. word recollection and production, writing and oral proficiency, etc.) (Dewaele, 2010). Moreover, anxiety in an EFL context has been investigated in relation to EFL learning in general, but also in relation to the four language skills. It has most frequently been associated with the oral aspects of language use (Horwitz, 2001; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002), but studies have focused on the other language skills as well. For instance, Mihaljević Djigunović and Legac (2008) and Kim (2000) found negative correlation between anxiety and EFL listening achievement. However, a relationship between subjectively perceived difficulty of individual language skills and learners' negative attitudes towards them has not been studied in sufficient detail.

Howe (2002) has emphasized the importance of positive transfer of the existing skills and its effect on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, but the reverse has also been confirmed, i.e. it was proposed that new information may have a positive impact on understanding previously acquired knowledge (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). Languages are no exception, that is, Koda (2004) pointed out that L1 knowledge and learning experiences are more than welcome in L2 acquisition, but L2 may also frequently be observed in bilingual speaker's L1 since the two languages are closely interrelated (Cook, 2003; Littlewood, 2004). Consequently, constant interactions and language transfer across languages confirm Cook's (1991) notion of multi-competence as knowledge of more languages in one mind. The possibility of transfer across languages has been investigated by Mihaljević Djigunović (2006b) in a study involving 13-14-year-old Croatian EFL learners. A possible interaction of L1 and L2 language skills (all but L1 speaking) was examined and the results confirmed interlingual interaction between L1 and L2, with the strongest interaction being observed for reading, and somewhat weaker one for listening and writing.

2. The Study

2.1. Study Aim

The degree to which subjectively perceived language skills' difficulty is related to corresponding learners' negative attitudes towards them is largely unknown. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to determine the degree to which university EFL learners find a particular L2 skill as being the most/least favourite and the most/least difficult. In addition, we aimed to ascertain how strongly the perceived difficulty is correlated with the learners' subjective dislike of that same language skill.

2.2. Instrument and Procedure

The research questionnaire consisted of five open and closed-ended questions (Appendix 1)[1] used to collect basic information about the participants and their EFL learning history (age, length of EFL learning and EFL proficiency self-assessment). The participants were also asked to assess subjective difficulty and dislike/preference for the following L2 language skills: reading out loud, silent reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Each of the skills was assessed using 5-point Likert-type scales where 1 indicated the most difficult/preferred and 5 indicated the least difficult/preferred language skill, but the ratings were re-coded for the analyses so that higher values indicate higher difficulty and higher preference. The questionnaire, written and completed by the participants in the Croatian language, was administered during regular English for Academic Purposes language classes. Data analyses were done in R software (R Core Team, 2013).

2.3. Sample

Research participants were eighty-three female university students (pre-service primary and preschool teachers) whose L1 is Croatian, and L2 English. The students were enrolled in English for Specific Academic Purposes course and their proficiency level, according to the CEFR, was between B1 and B2 while their self-assessed EFL proficiency was 3.64 (out of 5). The participants' mean age was 21.34 (SD=1.61) years, and the average length of learning EFL was about 10 years (M=10.17, SD=2.91) (Mikulec, 2016).

3. Results and Discussion

The obtained results (Table 1) indicate that listening and silent reading were considered the

[1] Croatian version of the questionnaire and some of the obtained results, as indicated in the paper, are parts of a larger study which was conducted in the process of PhD thesis writing by the first author (Mikulec, 2016).

least difficult and the most preferred, while speaking and writing were considered the most difficult and the least preferred language skills. Therefore, it may be proposed that the perceived EFL skills difficulty in this research is in accordance with some earlier findings (Berman & Cheng, 2010; Hamouda, 2013; Ishag et al., 2015). In addition, Flowerdew, Miller, and Li (2000) found that EFL learners assessed their listening proficiency as high, which may also be why this skill was perceived as the least difficult and most preferred in the present research.

Since studies (Buben, 2018; Horwitz, 2001; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002) have suggested that L2 learners usually name speaking as the skill causing most anxiety, it could consequently present a significant obstacle to successful L2 acquisition. This may explain why the participants in the present research also perceived speaking and reading out loud as the more difficult language skills than silent reading and listening.

Table 1 Mean values and standard deviations for the self-assessed difficulty and preferences for the tested language skills

Variables	**Difficulty**		**Preferences**	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Reading out loud	2.78	1.26	2.72	1.17
Silent reading	1.84	0.96	3.41	1.41
Writing	3.66	1.20	2.54	1.17
Speaking	3.70	1.22	2.57	1.43
Listening	2.08	1.27	3.75	1.45

A possible reason why writing was considered the second most difficult skill is that, as mentioned earlier, it encompasses a significant number of micro-skills which, according to Hyland (2003), every successful learner needs to master (grammatical accuracy and vocabulary development, language use, creativity, text organisation, etc.).

Table 2 Correlations between difficulty and preference values

Difficulty~~Preferences (pair) correlations	**ρ**
Reading out loud	-.400***
Silent reading	-.501***
Writing	-.287**
Speaking	-.648***
Listening	-.468***

Notes: ***p<.001, **p<.01

Correlations between difficulty and preference assessments for each of the language

skills are shown in Table 2. The average correlation for the difficulty and preference assessments (for all skills combined) was: ρ=-.46 (*SD*=0.13). The more difficult the skill was perceived to be, the more students disliked it, to a moderate degree, which is not surprising, given an obvious tendency towards disliking things that are perceived as more difficult. However, it is important to note that this also implies that perceived language skill difficulty does not automatically mean high dislike of that skill.

In the next step, we compared all the correlations to one another, in order to establish if any of them were significantly lower or higher than the others. The only significant difference between correlations was obtained for subjective difficulty and preference for the two most difficult skills: writing and speaking: Z=-3.02, $p_{\text{-corrected}}$=.03. It is important to remember that these are the skills almost identically perceived as the most difficult and the most disliked. However, correlation between difficulty and preference was the lowest for writing (ρ=-.29, p=.009), and the highest for speaking (ρ=-.65, p<.001). In other words, although both skills were similarly difficult and disliked, the extent of the learners' dislike for speaking is much more related to its perceived difficulty than is the case with writing.

This finding implies that the processes underlying these language skills and their assessments are probably different, as the difficulty assessment level does not necessarily translate into high dislike of these two skills in the same way. Note that speaking is mainly performed in public, i.e. it is more social, whereas writing is generally seen as an individual activity. It is possible that social situation causes greater anxiety during speaking activity, especially if the subjects are more introverted, as introversion and extraversion are related to low or high tendency (respectively) of finding pleasure in different social contexts, interpersonal communication, etc. (John & Srivastava, 1999), and introverts are more prone to language anxiety (Brown, Robson, & Rosenkjar, 2001). Therefore, students' introversion may lead to stronger relationship between the self-perceived difficulty and dislike of this language skill. Furthermore, due to known negative association between the (L2) anxiety and language proficiency measures (Dewaele, 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Kim, 2000; Mihaljević Djigunović & Legac, 2008), it is possible that anxiety both moderates and directly influences the relationship between subjective difficulty and dislike assessments of L2 skills. However, at this point, this is merely a tentative hypothesis.

Another aspect to consider is the similarity between the L1 and L2 pattern of correlations. In other words, it would be interesting to see if the effects might replicate for L1, especially since studies have confirmed positive interlingual interaction between L1 and L2 skills (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006b). Assuming that students are literate in L1, their attitudes towards the native language have been found to represent a source of attitudes toward L2 reading (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 23). The students who feel more anxious in L1 reading are probably going to feel more anxious in L2 reading as well (Yamashita, 2007). Thus, examining the differences and similarities in both L1 and L2 language skills' difficulty and preference assessments in relation to personality and setting factors should be considered in further research.

4. Limitations of the Study

Although the study provided novel insights into learners' difficulty and preference assessment of EFL learning skills, there are certain limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the sample of participants was a relatively small, gender-homogenous convenience sample, and therefore the transferability of the obtained results is limited. Another limitation refers to the fact that the results were obtained through participants' self-reports, which greatly relied on the participants' honesty, but even more so on their introspective ability to provide honest and accurate answers. Also, certain important affective factors (i.e. motivation, anxiety, and general personality, namely extraversion), as well as the quality of teaching and teachers' skill preferences, which would have provided valuable insight into the matter, have not been measured. Finally, the rating of the difficulty and preference for specific language skills did not take into account all of their possible variations pertaining to the context in which the activities related to particular skills take place, namely, speaking in class, in the street with a foreigner, or with a native speaker.

5. Conclusion

The results of the present study indicate that, since the average correlation between L2 language skills' difficulty and preference assessments was found to be moderate, the difficulty assessment level need not automatically translate into high dislike. This means that other (perhaps personality and/or situational) factors might be important to consider, especially since the largest difference in correlations was observed for two of the most difficult skills as perceived by the participants, i.e., speaking and writing. This is considered a novel finding and implies that the processes underlying these assessments are probably different and need to be further investigated.

6. Suggestions for Further Research

The observed difference in the strength of associations between subjective difficulty and preference ratings for writing and speaking is a novel finding, which (to our knowledge) has not been previously tested. We suggest that the best course of action is to investigate whether or not personality (mainly extraversion and anxiety) indeed moderates these correlations. Another thing to consider is to experimentally manipulate the context and the manner in which the language related activities take place – e.g. writing in a notebook as opposed to writing on the blackboard (in front of other students); speaking before a group of students during a whole-class discussion versus speaking with only one person; teachers' preference and more significant focus on developing some language skill(s) more than

others, etc. In general, we suggest that personality and individual differences, as well as the actual setting in which the language activities take place are the factors to be taken into consideration in follow-up studies.

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8. Appendix: Questionnaire

Background Data

1. Age_____
2. How long have you been learning English?
   _____
3. On a scale 1-5 (1 - very low, 5 - excellent) grade your English language proficiency.
   _____

Language activities – difficulty and preference

4. Grade the following activities in your English language class according to the level of perceived difficulty (on a scale 1-5, where 1 is the most difficult, and 5 the least difficult activity)?
   a. reading aloud _____
   b. silent reading _____
   c. writing _____
   d. speaking _____
   e. listening _____
5. Grade the following activities in your English language class according to the level of perceived preference (on a scale 1-5, where 1 is the most favourite and 5 the least

favourite activity)?

a. reading aloud _____
b. silent reading _____
c. writing _____
d. speaking _____
e. listening _____