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Language Learning and Teaching: Contemporary Challenges in Language Education

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Editorial: Language Learning and Teaching. Contemporary Challenges in Language Education

The present issue brings together a collection of empirical studies, a position paper, and a tutorial paper intended to advance the discussion of current challenges in language education. In recent years, the socio-political landscape has undergone significant changes that have consequences for the present and the coming years. The outbreak of the pandemic, a full-scale war in Europe, mass migrations, as well as advancements in communication technologies and the rise of artificial intelligence have affected the functioning of societies worldwide, including the educational sector. Education, which by nature dwells at the junction of the present and the future, attempts to respond to increasing current demands on the one hand and, on the other, to equip younger generations with skills and knowledge that would enable them to cope with the challenges of tomorrow. To do this, a deeper understanding of the dynamism of change is needed, as well as a thorough analysis of the interplay of individual and contextual features in shaping educational reality. Hence, the effort of the present authors to describe and analyse numerous aspects of the domain of language learning and teaching with a view to offering fresh insights and inspiring reflection, exposing problem areas, and opening doors for further discussion.

The issue opens with a position paper "An Ecological Perspective on the Challenges in Language Education: Focus on Agency and Affordances" by Joanna Rokita-Jaśkow who embraces two theories, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman) and Ecological Theory (van Lier), which have widely been adopted in the field to account for the complexity and dynamism inherent in acquiring an additional language in formal and informal contexts. Her broad treatment of the most current themes encompasses the application of diverse technological tools in language education, the importance of possessing digital skills, and the possibilities technology creates for out-of-school learning. The focus of the contribution is on the teacher, their agency and well-being. Rokita-Jaśkow concludes her article with advice and recommendations for teacher education

and development that put a premium on teacher agency as a tool to overcome obstacles and confront variety and novelty.

Similarly, in the contribution by Dorota Werbińska, "Understanding Language Teachers' Positional Identities in a Professional Promotion Appraisal Context", the attention is directed at the teacher. Serving as an examination commission member, Werbińska gained access to data pertaining to ways in which teachers position themselves during professional promotion examinations. This unique opportunity enabled her to offer a comprehensive view of the link between teacher identity, agency, and emotions, showing areas of concern and room for improvement.

The article by Aleksandra Szymańska-Tworek, "EFL Teachers Supporting War Refugee Students from Ukraine in Schools in Poland", provides an account of the impact of the arrival of Ukrainian students in Polish schools, concentrating on the work of English teachers, who, in addition to performing their primary role, are also expected to act as translators and cultural mediators. Szymańska-Tworek shows how teachers have coped with tasks that considerably exceed their regular duties of providing instruction and managing the classroom. Importantly, the author exposes problem areas and system deficiencies, emphasizing teachers' own commitment and the effort they make to accommodate refugee students, often without much support.

The focus of the next two contributions shifts towards the learners, as both are empirical papers exploring different routes to learner success. The choice of the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory as the underlying framework to study aspects of instructed second/foreign language acquisition was dictated by the need to capture intricate connections and codependencies among a large number of individual and context-dependent variables. And thus, Katarzyna Rokoszewska in "Group and Individual Learning Profiles of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in L2 English Writing at Secondary School" traces developmental trajectories of individuals as compared to groups of learners. As the author argues, group level outcomes fail to accommodate individual variation, which testifies to the uniqueness of the learning experience. Tomasz Róg, in turn, in his "Exploring Task-Based Learning of L2 English Formulaic Sequences from an Intra- and Inter-Individual Perspective", takes a closer look at effects of task-based language teaching, an instructional approach that emphasizes authenticity and communication. In his comparison of the effectiveness of three types of tasks in acquiring language formulas, Róg discovers various progress and regression patterns, not detectable at the group level, which again proves the singularity of linguistic development. Both Rokoszewska and Róg suggest ways in which this aspect could be tackled in the context of a language classroom.

Another challenging area of language education that the present collection intends to address is Foreign Language Geragogy, a fast-growing domain that originated in response to the increasing number of older adults (over sixty years old)

enrolled in language learning courses. The general well-being and health benefits of learning foreign languages for ageing adults have long been recognized; however, the field remains uncharted territory to a large extent. As many as three contributions in this special issue deal with various aspects of late-life foreign language education. Agata Słowik-Krogulec in “Is It All That Positive? An Exploratory Study of Emotions in the Older Adult In-Person and Online EFL Classrooms” investigates emotions experienced by older adults in the two modes of instruction. The author attempts to diagnose the degree to which the settings meet the criteria of positive language education (Mercer et al.), as well as to identify what positive and negative emotions are generated and how the former can be promoted and the latter hindered. “Older Adult Learners’ Willingness to Communicate in English during Task Performance” by Anna Borkowska is an account of a study of older adult learners’ readiness to initiate and sustain communication while performing information-gap activities. The author emphasizes the role of the social dimension of classroom interaction in enhancing learners’ willingness to use the target language despite low proficiency and enumerates conditions that facilitate communication. She also describes a range of communication strategies most frequently applied by learners in this age group. Finally, Ebru Noyan’s paper “Older Adult EFL Learners’ Readiness for Autonomous Language Learning” revolves around the topic of learner autonomy. The researcher investigates the readiness of Turkish learners for autonomy in learning English in later life and traces the sources of their extensive dependence on teachers, acknowledging the impact of culture and previous learning experience.

The issue closes with the methods tutorial paper by Joanna Pitura, who offers practical guidance on the application of software to develop analytic skills of students at the tertiary level. Her “Teaching Quantitative Data Analysis with GNU PSPP: A Cognitive Apprenticeship Approach” presents a detailed account of the implementation of a methods course, its evaluation, as well as an extended discussion of the theoretical background on which it was based. The Cognitive Apprenticeship Model (Collins et al.), which rests on modelling and coaching, allows students to acquire essential knowledge that can easily be put to practice. According to Pitura, this approach prepares students to embark on their own research projects. Moreover, she highlights the use of open-source software as a means of fostering research independence among students and researchers, as well.

The nine papers brought together in this issue, although covering a wide range of topics, present only a fraction of the wealth of themes that engage researchers in the domain of language learning and teaching. It is my deepest hope that the concepts, processes, and phenomena presented here will inspire further discussion and set novel directions for research.

Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak
Wrocław, 10 June 2024

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An Ecological Perspective on the Challenges in Language Education: Focus on Agency and Affordances

Abstract: The article presents an overview of recent research trends from an ecological perspective, arguing that the ecological perspective can be most aptly used to describe current language education, characterized by dynamic and unpredictable changes. It delineates such topics as the spread of technology and out-of-school language learning, linguistically diverse classes, and teacher well-being. The notion of teacher agency is addressed, which can be critical in the perception of the challenges in education, i.e. whether they will be used as affordances to modify teaching or as a threat undermining the teacher's professional identity. In conclusion, guidelines for current teacher education are provided.

Keywords: agency, affordances, ecology, technology, language socialization, teacher well-being

1. Introduction

Unquestionably, recent years have been characterized by unprecedented changes in the socio-political and, consequently, educational reality. In Poland, the educational reform in 2017 changed the school structure and limited the teaching of foreign languages other than English. The COVID-19 pandemic forced many teachers to acquire digital skills and integrate technology into their classes. The outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022 resulted in many Ukrainian refugee learners transforming schools from monolingual to multilingual. Lastly, the introduction of ChatGPT in 2023 raised concerns about the future of teaching and learning. These sudden and unexpected changes affected the teaching methodology and teacher identity, and threatened their emotional well-being.

The goals of this paper are twofold: it intends to outline research trends that aim to characterize the dynamics of the educational ecosystem, thus pointing to the relevancy of the ecological theory in describing the educational reality, and secondly, it aims to identify implications for teachers and teacher educators as to how to cope with the lack of stability and predictability.

2. The tenets of the ecological approach in applied linguistics

The language teaching-learning process should no longer be merely perceived as a process of information exchange between the teacher and the learner, whereby the teacher is the primary provider of linguistic input and the learner its receiver, or when the teacher provides feedback on the student's linguistic output. It takes many biological, psychological, and social factors that direct teachers' and students' engagement in the process and, consequently, impact student learning outcomes and teachers' professional identity.

It seems that, particularly in the dynamically changing times, it is necessary to consider the broadly construed social context in which schools, classrooms, teachers, and learners function as they indirectly impact the teaching-learning processes. This assumption lies in focus of many theories, such as the social learning theory of Albert Bandura or the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky, and the educational models, such as Pfeiffer's model of glottodidactics. However, the theory which seems to most accurately describe the current times at its best, as the name suggests, is the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, which derives from Larsen-Freeman's Complexity/Chaos Theory. The tenets of the theory are that language is a complex and dynamic adaptive system, that undergoes both stability and change, and language use is the outcome of repetition and coadaptation. It uses the semiotic potential of the environment in which it takes place. This means that the language itself changes (e.g., in semantics or pragmatics), and certain new forms appear in the language and become part of the system when they reoccur. They arise in response to the novel objects and symbols in the environment that must be named.

Akin to the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory and gaining in popularity in recent years is the Ecological Theory proposed and conceptualized by Leo van Lier in his seminal book titled *The Ecology and the Semiotics of Language*. The basic tenet of the theory is that learning should be viewed in its ecology (i.e., environment) as a process deriving from the interactions between the learner and different objects in that environment, which can be physical, social, semiotic, and symbolic. The relations with these objects can constitute affordances for language learning, yet it depends on the learner if and how they will use them. As van Lier ("The Ecology of Language Learning") posits, the ecological approach is "an ap-

proach that focuses primarily on the quality of learning opportunities, of classroom interaction and educational experience in general" (5). Following that, it can be claimed that dynamic changes in the learning environment create new opportunities for language learning. The key terms that describe the learning ecosystem are *relationships* (rather than objects), *context*, *emergent patterns*, *quality*, *value*, *critical perspective*, *variability*, *diversity*, *agency* (van Lier, *The Ecology*), and *affordances* (van Lier, "The Ecology of Language Learning"). This means that any learning process should be seen in the primarily understood context, which comprises the relationships of various actors, such as teachers, learners, parents, school head teachers, etc., and which is diverse due to the idiosyncratic features of the agents. The mutual interactions among the actors provide opportunities/affordances for learning from one another and define the quality of learning, which is thus a dynamic, emergent process characterized by the fluctuation of the language competence of the actors. The ecological theory also adopts a critical stance towards reality, indicating that not all learners have the same learning opportunities and access to high-quality learning, another factor accounting for the variability of the process. For the sake of this paper, I would like to focus on two terms, i.e., agency and affordances.

The agency is a fundamental concept for ecological theory as it depicts "the capacity of actors to shape their responsiveness to problematic situations critically" (Emirbayer and Mische 971). Thus, it denotes how individuals approach novel situations, whether they perceive them as a threat to an existing situation or as an opportunity for learning. Teacher agency is essential to activating learner agency. Suppose the teacher approaches a novel situation, e.g., the necessity to acquire novel skills in an emergency, in a positive way and tries to find new solutions to cope with the challenge. In that case, the students will likely follow the model. Teacher agency is related to autonomy, reflectivity, and resiliency (Werbińska). Thus, only autonomous teachers who reflect on their actions can exercise agency irrespective of the unfavourable conditions they may encounter in their work. Thus, it is often considered a personal trait demonstrated only in a few teachers, precisely cut out for teaching. However, from the ecological perspective, it must be recognized that agency is not a stable feature of an individual, as cognitive theories would posit, but is changeable under the influence of external circumstances. This also means that individuals may find no space to act in certain situations or unfavourable conditions may undermine their agency.

Affordances is a term coined from the verb "to afford" by Gibson and relates to what the environment "offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (127). Aronin and Singleton further extrapolate on this definition by saying that "different physical dispositions and characteristics afford different behaviours for different animals, including the human species, and different kinds of encounters … a book in a foreign language presents different affordances for learners and users with differing levels of mastery of this language" (318).

Affordances can be diverse. One of them is happening affordances, which denote that an unplanned event without a particular goal can indirectly facilitate language learning and teaching. For example, living in a multilingual situation can facilitate acquiring the language present in the surroundings, even if one did not plan to learn it. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many classrooms to go online, allowing many teachers to become acquainted with learning platforms and to modify/improve their teaching even when returning to regular classroom teaching. Thus, the pandemic can be said to have precipitated teacher development/education in learning technologies.

Van Lier's ecological theory is often cited and used in the company of Bronfenbrenner's model of human development. The latter is portrayed as a set of concentric circles, each layer depicting a different environment that envelops the learner's growth: the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems. Additionally, the chronosystem marks temporal milestones in the learners' learning process. The micro-system refers to the immediate environment of the learners, such as school and classroom; the mesosystem refers to the relationships between school and home, which can additionally endorse the learner's language development; the exosystem refers to the out-of-school indirect influences, e.g., through societal beliefs, semiotic landscape; macrosystem refers to the impact of top-level decision-makers who shape and implement language education policies, such as Ministries of Education, local education authorities, head teachers, and who, by their decisions, may impact the learner's learning situation. Notably, at these intersections of each level of the ecosystem, dynamic interactions (relations) take place that can either boost or inhibit agency of the participating actors. Relations and tensions between different elements of the same ecosystem are a potential source of crisis, which can be handled in two ways: either as an affordance to improve one's teaching or as a threat to one's identity, and consequently, loss of agency.

Although the ecological approach to the study of language learning has not gained comprehensive support in Polish academic circles (cf. Sujecka-Zając), the dynamic changes of the educational reality seem to suggest that in order to capture the transient moments and their effects on learners and teachers, an approach which emphasizes the widely understood social context, as well as its idiosyncrasy, has to be adopted. Consequently, any research inquiry must be done from the emic perspective using qualitative tools, such as diaries, observations, and interviews. Additionally, a vast amount of recent research seems to show a growing interest in ecological theory, as can be judged by the titles of many publications internationally (cf. Chong, Isaacs, and McKinley; Hammond; Kruk et al.). In line with the above-mentioned causes of crisis, a few significant trends can be distinguished and presented below with references to specimen studies. They are concerned about the use of technology in the language classroom, the teaching and integration of migrant/multilingual learners, and the emotions and well-being of teachers.

3. Technology in the language classroom

The ecological perspective enables researchers to investigate learner-oriented teaching and the learners' interaction with the environment, whose nature can be psychological, cognitive, experiential, socio-cultural and ideological (Tudor). Further, Berglund postulates that the ecological approach to language learning in virtual environments should consider how learners employ various out-of-school learning spaces and how learners differently use their propensities in utilizing these resources. Thus, he recognizes that language learning does not only take place in the classroom and that, for this reason, the teacher must consider knowledge, (digital) skills, and interests the students bring into class. He investigated multimodal online student interactions utilizing videoconferencing tools and observed that learner participation depended not only on the contextual factors, such as technological tools and communication tasks used, but also on the individual differences between learners, including their educational experiences and communication styles. This finding indicates that while studying ICT use, the whole ecology of the digital environment should be considered, including the learning context in interaction with the individual propensities of the learners. Following this argument, Lafford acknowledges that the ecological perspective in the analysis of CALL is an affordance by itself because it assumes an emic perspective, i.e., is conducted from within the community, analyses language behaviour specific for a given context, and perceives language learning as a process which is nonlinear, dynamic and whose efficiency depends on contextual factors.

Likewise, any new technological device serves as an affordance to language learning and teaching, thus changing the educational process. In a specimen study from the ecological perspective, Huang, Jiang, and Yang indicate the affordances of an educational platform for formative learner assessment, such as:

- the pedagogical affordances, which enable current insight into the learners' progress and give them immediate feedback;
- management affordances, which include maintaining discipline, group distribution, checking attendance, etc.;
- assessment affordances, which allow the calculation of the summative grade from component grades automatically;
- social affordances, which offer more personal interactions between the teacher and learners, which is impossible in other situations;
- developmental affordances, which indicate the changing role of the teacher, who not only supplies knowledge but delivers materials and organizes the learning activity.

Technology, and the Internet in particular, also serves as an affordance to the learners, who, thanks to it, have immediate access to information (e.g., through online encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and databases), can communicate with others in

long-distance settings, including native speakers, and can constitute a resource of target language input (via the Internet). These features make FL learning more accessible, less elitist, and more democratic. From an ecological point of view, technology can be seen as supportive of the idea of equity, as all learners have similar access to language learning resources, which fulfils yet another principle of ecological theory. Additionally, it has to be recognized that much learning, particularly of *lingua franca* English, occurs outside the classroom, whereby learners can improve their language skills by utilizing educational platforms, learning apps, social media, and chatrooms (Krajka, "Teacher").

Finally, technology appeals to the learners' intrinsic motivation, who are often referred to as digital natives, and for whom technology is part and parcel of everyday lives. Using it, particularly for entertainment purposes, such as gaming, is profoundly engaging and allows learners to experience flow, in Csikszentmihalyi's terms. Gaming, although implicitly, also leads to the development of listening, reading, and conversation skills.

Technology also changes the role of the teacher from the all-knowing authority to the one who is a mentor and organizer of the teaching-learning process. They must accept that knowledge cannot and must not only come from them. For this reason, they must recognize that knowledge can be generated and negotiated in mutual interactions with the learners, or even can originate from the learners themselves. Hence, the role of the teacher is to focus more on preparing problem-solving tasks rather than on transferring facts, rules, etc. Therefore, the suggested didactic solutions consist of such novel techniques and approaches as the web quest, task-based learning, inquiry-based learning, videoconferencing, telecollaboration, etc. ChatGPT could additionally modify the process by replacing the teacher in e.g., giving explanations on grammar use and thus preparing learners for a flipped classroom, in preparing a model text for writing practice or even in preparing a mock/sample test or even in error correction (Zadorozhnyy and Lai). These examples of ICT showcase that numerous innovative pedagogical tools and solutions are available, yet require a shift in the teacher's role. The application of technological tools develops teacher competencies and creates affordances for arousing learner agency. It depends on the teachers whether they will treat technology as a threat to their authority or as an *affordance* to modify their teaching practice and adjust to learners' changing interests and motivations. However, as Hammond argues, in line with the ecological perspective, teachers can effectively implement ICT if they obtain support from all system levels within Bronfennbrenner's model.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enforced the necessity to transfer to emergency online synchronous teaching, thus precipitating the technological turn and opening many teachers' minds to the latest technological advances. This critical and challenging moment was approached in different ways: some teachers transferred the same techniques they used in the regular classroom uncritically to the virtual

environment (Turula), while others willingly participated in online training sessions and used the emergency online teaching as an opportunity to try out new tools and new teaching solutions (Krajka, "Teaching"). Moreover, they continued to use the ICT tools even when they returned to the regular classroom. However, it must be pointed out that the transfer to online teaching was done without prior preparation or support from the state. Any supportive workshops appeared progressively as the pandemic continued and were mainly provided by enthusiastic educators. Thus, it depended solely on the teachers' agency whether they sought information on coping with this new challenge, or tried to implement the solutions known from the actual classroom.

4. Teaching and integration of migrant/multilingual learners

An ecological approach holds that the school environment cannot be perceived as monolithic and homogenous. However, its diversity, particularly in the era of enhanced migration, should be identified as a new reality. This viewpoint underlines that school classrooms comprise learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and that their needs and rights should be recognized. Acknowledging this fact presupposes the presence of diverse languages in the foreign language classroom and utilizing them as an affordance for learners' multilingual growth. This may often be realized in the pedagogy of translanguaging (Cenoz and Gorter), where switching between various languages is allowed as a learning (e.g., for note-taking) and communication strategy between all members of the school ecosystem, which signifies moving away from monolingual ideologies (Alisaari et al.; Otwinowska). Learner multilingualism is seen as an asset, thanks to which learners can discover similarities and differences between languages (e.g., through cognates, international words, or structural similarities), gain confidence in using them, and develop plurilingual and pluricultural competencies.

Since Polish schools are accepting more and more migrant learners, e.g., refugee Ukrainian children, Polish return migrants, children born to mixed couples, etc., it is essential that teachers recognize that their classrooms are no longer monolingual and that they are prepared to meet the challenge of working with multilingual learners. In our study of EFL teachers (Rokita-Jaśkow et al.), we observed that in the absence of an overt multilingual policy, the teacher's agency in integrating learners into the new school and classroom environment comes to the fore. Teachers have faced the necessity to cope with the situation when neither they nor the incoming students shared a common language, that is, Polish or English. While some of the teachers, even without prior training, showed inventiveness and creativity in planning such tasks that would involve the migrant learners in their English lessons

by, e.g., using elements of translanguaging or translation technological tools, the majority of them felt at a loss, without adequate financial and didactic support, or continued teaching as they used to do with their monolingual Polish students, disregarding the fact that the students may not understand explanations in Polish, nor have sufficient knowledge of English. We also observed that teachers experienced emotional tensions resulting from dilemmas between what they felt they should do, e.g., introduce a more individual approach to teaching and assessment of migrant learners, and what they were required to do by the accountability demands to school authorities, such as school results at high stakes exams. Therefore, the investigated teachers perceived the macrosystem as limiting their autonomy and agency.

Teacher agency in working with multilingual learners is recognized as essential in realizing top-down multilingual policies and integrating new students into schools at the bottom level. It is recognized to be dependent on personal experiences of working with such learners and received training on multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy as well as teachers' plurilingualism (Rokita-Jaśkow et al.; Mieszkowska and Otwinowska). It manifests in their attitudes to foreign migrant learners and adopted practices: whether they treat student multilingualism as a threat or problem to the so-far monolingual classroom or as a challenge, mobilizing their linguistic resources (e.g., in communicating with the newcomer by employing known languages, nonverbal language, scaffolding, visuals, etc.). Additionally, the presence of multilingual learners in the EFL classroom can provide affordances for the development of language and intercultural awareness of Polish learners because they can become communicative partners of EFL learners where the authentic information gap can stimulate their communicative development.

However, in the socialization of multilingual migrant learners, it is not only the agency of teachers that matters but also that of peers, migrant learners themselves, and their parents, who, by reciprocal action and relations, will increase the opportunities for the newcomers to learn the language of the host society, which is also the new language of schooling. This is a challenging task, which can only succeed if all actors of the exosystem work towards this goal, i.e., the migrant learner has a positive attitude and makes a conscious effort to learn the language of the host society; secondly, classroom peers willingly play/interact with the new learner and include him/her in their games, thus generating more language input for the learner; thirdly, the learner's parent helps him/her in overcoming learning difficulties and cooperates with the school (Schwartz and Deeb). However, as studies in other multilingual school settings show, contrary to policy goals, peers are not always willing to socialize with newcomers (e.g., Cekaite and Evaldsson), who additionally lack language communication skills, which is another factor precluding migrant learners from successful language and school socialization.

Considering all these factors, it can be clearly seen that the sudden forced migration from Ukraine in 2022 posed another challenge for Polish teachers, who were suddenly faced with the need to adjust their teaching with respect to students'

other first languages than Polish. Additionally, they had to cope with the problem of class disintegration as Polish learners were not always willing to socialize with their migrant peers, and having foreign learners in class was also a novel situation (Rokita-Jaśkow et al.). Consequently, the migrant learners often dropped out of school, except when they were enrolled in preparatory classes and could count on the help and mediation of cultural assistants (Tędziagolska, Walczak, and Wielecki). Language barrier turned out to be a critical factor that impeded successful socialization. While some teachers attempted to cope with this novel situation, thus showing their agency in this respect, they did not obtain any support from educational authorities. Some training programmes and projects, such as Mamlise project (https://mamlise.amu.edu.pl), are only germinating. For one more time, the agency was activated by single teachers. Other ecosystem members, such as educational authorities, including top-level decision-makers and head teachers, did not seem to show it sufficiently.

5. Emotions and well-being of teachers

Another aspect that has recently been studied from an ecological perspective is teacher emotions and teacher well-being. This may have been caused by the fact that the teaching profession consists of numerous interactions with other members of the educational ecosystem, which can create tensions and result in various types of emotional critical incidents, both positive and negative (Rokita-Jaśkow, "Emotions"). Secondly, the aforementioned dramatic changes in the educational ecosystem, which posed new challenges and enforced readjustment of teachers' teaching methodology, may have undermined their stamina and motivation, consequently threatening their professional identity.

Notably, it is observed that teachers' emotional well-being at the workplace boosts teacher agency and empowers them to act. By contrast, notoriously experiencing obstacles and negative emotions requires excessive emotional labour (Benesch) to regulate one's emotions, and may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Zembylas). Thus, emotional experiences can boost and inhibit teacher agency, either empowering them or preventing them from engaging in their professional work. This is how teachers' professional identity can be affected by their well-being. Additionally, teacher agency is influenced by autonomy, reflectivity, and resilience to unfavourable conditions (Werbińska). Mercer and Gregersen indicate a few factors that influence teacher well-being, such as positive and negative emotions experienced at the workplace, engagement in professional life and fulfilled roles, relations with other people, both in- and out-of-the workplace, meaningfulness of their work and their professional achievements and language achievements. While for some of them, the teachers can take care by themselves, e.g., finding meaning in their work, other elements arise in reference to other actors of the educational

ecosystem, such as learners, parents, teachers, head teachers, and educational authorities in line with Bronfennbrenner's model, who provide both affordances and constraints for acting.

Observing a teacher's functioning in a workplace can provide us with information not only on their functioning but also on the condition of the whole educational exosystem, as tensions and emotional challenges appear at all levels of the ecology (Rokita-Jaśkow and Werbińska). Gadella Kamstra in her study of demotivating factors, points to the following ones:

- at the micro-level, these are high expectations of one's performance, task repetitiveness;
- at the meso-level, these are the learner variables and their attitudes to learning, relations with colleagues and other workers at school;
- at the exo-level, this is work overload, limited resources (e.g., low pay, lack of in-service training), physical conditions of the school;
- at the macro-level: educational system, lack of prestige, lack of opportunities for self-development, limitations connected with curriculum implementation.

Babic et al. add an authoritarian management style to this list, while Nazari, Karimpour, and Ranjbar include a burden connected with learner expectations regarding assessment. While the list of stressors is probably not exhaustive, it can be agreed that they are integral elements of every teacher's life. Since they must cope with most of them independently, any additional challenge to their established routines causes an additional emotional burden. For this reason, in most studies on teacher well-being from an ecological perspective, it is emphasized that it should first be the macrosystem's elements that should support teachers and head teachers, as representatives of the meso-system, in meeting the challenges by appropriate financial provision and in-service training. This expectation, while being socially just, may be too idealistic to materialize. For this reason, Gkonou, Dewaele, and King posit that acknowledging the dynamics of emotions, it does not matter what emotions the teachers feel but what the teachers do about them. In other words, it is the teachers' job to cater for their emotional well-being, e.g., learning to control/keep away the stressors, prioritizing duties, keeping work/life balance, etc. Teachers must also realize that they are part of their microsystem, and thus are responsible for shaping it. This is where they can enact their agency by catering for the relations with their students and their workplace colleagues. This way, by contributing with time and effort, they help to create positive work environments.

Positive institutions have recently been the focus of research (Budzińska; Michońska-Stadnik) as they can be presented as models of good practice for creating stable and friendly work environments in unstable times. Michońska-Stadnik enumerates features that help head teachers develop such institutions which include showing the purposefulness of one's own and others' activities; transparent rewarding; work culture that promotes cooperation instead of competition; accessibility of

educational resources; positive relations with school administrators, parents, and colleagues which support school climate, and self-identification with school values.

Positive institutions prioritize teacher well-being because only teachers who feel well at their workplace can cater to the student's well-being, as emotions help foster relations and are reciprocal. The agentic teachers are autonomous, motivated, and resilient (Werbińska), and those who have space to enact their agency in their institutions.

To summarize, the ecological theory in respect of teachers' emotions and well-being implies that they are also dynamic and changeable. This means that education cannot provide only positive emotions but that adverse incidents are part and parcel of everyday teaching. Teachers need to recognize that they are both members of and are responsible for the micro-system in which they function, and that this is the space where they can and should enact their agency.

6. Conclusions

The goals of this paper were twofold. Firstly, it aimed to demonstrate that the ecological approach can justly aid the description and learning of the current dynamic learning environments and, as such, is omnipresent in the current research. The dominant trends concern the study of out-of-school and mainly digital environments, the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in language classrooms, and teacher well-being and emotions in response to the challenges of the postmodern world. Secondly, it aimed to postulate that lack of stability and dynamic changes signify postmodern times. One must accept this fact, learn how to cope with it, and exercise one's agency within the available means.

It is argued that it is up to the teacher whether they will treat novel situations as an affordance or a threat to their identity. While it must be acknowledged that the meso- and macrosystems can limit teacher agency, it is essential for the teacher to realize that they still can exercise agency in their microsystem (i.e., classroom, school), e.g., by creating positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents, and that their agency is a model to the students as well. It must be realized that one's immediate ecology will not be impacted by some top-managing authorities but that each member of the given ecosystem is its object and an actor; thus, educational change is possible through his/her engagement with the environment.

These observations bear important implications for teacher education and development. Future and practising teachers should have much more hands-on experience and observation of positive institutions and agentic teachers. Focusing on critical incidents from an emic perspective should enhance their reflectivity, self-awareness of experienced emotions, and problem-based learning to teach. This can take place through teacher development workshops, initiating discussion groups, and reading professional literature. Secondly, teacher trainees should know that

there are no magic teaching solutions that work always and in all situations. Instead, they should be encouraged to boost their agency in meeting the challenges by finding and implementing innovative teaching solutions and avoiding routine and boredom. Finally, teachers are recommended to abandon the view of language learning and teaching in which there is a linear relationship between teacher input and learner output. Instead, they should recognize that to a large extent language learning occurs outside the classroom, from a diversity of semiotic resources and through relations with others. Thus, they should learn to perceive the teacher's role not only as a provider of knowledge but also as a caterer of classroom climate by developing relationships with students and among students, which can be achieved by a more individualized and personalized approach to language teaching.

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Understanding Language Teachers' Positional Identities in a Professional Promotion Appraisal Context*

Abstract: This study examines how forty-eight Polish in-service language teachers position themselves through their discourse during professional promotion examinations for teachers. The data were collected via field notes concerning the participants' narratives and their responses to the questions asked by the members of the examination commissions. Of particular interest were the teachers' three self-positions: the unique self, the ideal self, and the fearful self. The analysis of the data revealed that, apart from the emergence of the references to the three positional identities, each of these self-positions could be further subdivided into other self-position constructions which shed light on what language teachers believe would be appreciated by the examiners under the circumstances. The significance of the study lies in its focus on in-service language teachers' discourses obtained in a particular professional situation— teacher promotion examinations— to which access is rather rare. The findings shed further light on the connection between teacher identity, teacher emotions, and teacher agency and offer implications for in-service language teachers, teacher examiners, and teacher educators.

Keywords: language teacher positional identity, teacher self-positions, professional promotion exam, teacher agency, teacher emotions

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a significant interest in language teacher identity to the extent that some authors argue that we live in the age of identity (Shirley

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and Hargreaves). To this end, comprehensive studies have been offered focusing on multiple dimensions of language teacher identities (e.g., Gallardo; Nagatomo; Rushton et al.). Although these investigations undoubtedly provide further nuance on many teacher identity issues, there is dearth of studies that concern teacher identities in less-obvious job-related contexts, such as language teacher promotion examinations and self-positions which teachers assume in them.

Investigating teacher self-position identities adopted during professional promotion examinations seems vital. This is because the access to teachers' examination discourses is relatively infrequent. Besides, what teachers say under such circumstances and how they behave further elucidates our insights into who they are and what they think, believe, and do.

This paper argues that there are three basic self-position identities that language teachers under such circumstances adopt: the unique self, the ideal self, and the fearful self. Although these self-positions had been identified prior to the commencement of the study, they emerged when the teachers were requested to describe their "professionalism" and respond to their talk-related questions in order to be professionally promoted.

2. Self-positioning

Van Langenhove and Harré, the originators and advocates of positioning theory, distinguish different kinds of positioning, one of which is *self-positioning* discussed here. Self-positioning is very much related to *other-positioning*, because whenever a conversation participant positions another person, at the same time, they position themselves. Of interest to us is *intentional positioning* (Van Langenhove and Harré 23), further subdivided into *deliberate* and *forced positioning* as well as *reflexive positioning* (Van Langenhove and Harré 24).

Deliberate self-positioning happens in situations in which people express their personal identities. This is achieved in three basic ways: by referring to their agency and actions, by showcasing their self-consciousness and unique points of view, and by referring to their (auto)biography. By explaining their agentic behaviour, emphasizing their personal powers and rights, or sharing their biographic stories, people try to achieve the aims they have set. Therefore, engaging in self-positioning can be a kind of "strategic positioning" intentionally adopted for the sake of "presenting" themselves (Van Langenhove and Harré 25).

Forced self-positioning is initiated by another person than the person involved. It can range from a mild question to a promotion examination pressing, such as "Could you talk about your greatest educational achievement?", and invites a kind of self-report, on the basis of which institutional decisions can be made. Both kinds of intentional positioning can be understood as products of people's performative, situational-accountable, and personal features.

In the studies devoted to investigating positioning in SLA (e.g., Kim; Turner), the most popular seems to be *reflexive positioning*, which happens when people assign positions to themselves. Van Langenhove and Harré explain that reflexive positioning, as well as hitherto discussed intentional self-positioning, “occurs in every conversation where one wants to express his/her professional identity”, for instance, “by referring to events in one’s biography” (24).

In positioning theory, there is a link between positions and identities. To this end, Kayi-Aydar (18) argues that people’s positional and conversational identities can be shaped and reshaped through positions emerging in various social contexts. She continues that over time a particular position becomes more dominant in a certain context, and through an accumulation of positions in the context, positional identities are (re)formed (19).

Positioning, as defined above, enables scholars to investigate many different aspects of language teachers’ lives. In order to find out what language teachers’ self-positions are revealed in the promotion examination situation, I conducted the present study with the following research question: How do language teachers self-position themselves in the narratives in a formal workplace situation when they are being assessed?

3. Orientation to the study

The possibility of being promoted is an integral element of any profession. Apart from moving up in the job hierarchy, teacher promotion satisfies three important needs: financial—related to a higher income, psychological—generated by workplace contentment, and sociological as it offers an opportunity to play a new professional role (Szumiec).

The system of professional promotion for teachers in Poland is based on legal regulations and the most popular professional degrees are those of appointed teacher (AT) and chartered teacher (CT). Becoming an AT is a significant stage in a Polish teacher’s professional career in terms of job stability. Becoming a CT means obtaining almost the highest level of professional promotion in the teaching profession, and the promotion at both levels involves an increase in the teacher’s prestige.

The teachers applying for both AT and CT status must pass a formal examination consisting of a candidate’s presentation followed by the commission’s questions (ATs) or a qualifying interview (CTs). The content of the examination or interview questions is a teacher’s professional work with reference to the guidelines specified in educational regulations. In both cases, the commission consists of experts from a ministerial list of experts, teachers’ principals, representatives of school running bodies, and, for the case of ATs, supervisory bodies.

Of all the self-positions presented by the teachers, I decided to focus on three: *the unique self*, *the ideal self*, and *the fearful self*. The first and most expected to appear in the teacher promotion situation is the one that positions the teacher as someone

who is one-of-a-kind, different from other teachers, in a word, an exceptional teacher. I anticipated that the teachers would like to make use of this self-position due to the appraisal context in which they found themselves and the people who were present there, such as their school principals or other language teachers who were exam experts. In addition, the teachers were expected to self-present as teachers who are very much oriented towards aspirations, professional or personal development, which is in line with the possible selves theory (Markus and Nurius). Such a projective dimension with a clear professional direction was even more anticipated after the introduction of modifications in the regulations in 2019, according to which the teachers taking a qualifying interview for the status of a CT had to discuss their professional visions and orientations for the future. Although these two self-positions were more frequent and perhaps more important for the teachers, the third position— the fearful self (Kubanyiova) was also sought after. In line with this possible self, the teachers were predicted to perceive the whole examination situation as an opportunity to share their tensions, doubts, and frustrations with the other professionals and to give vent to their being reflective and reflexive. That was more anticipated among the more senior teachers, as their promotion was formally called a qualifying interview, not an examination. Hence, the promotion interaction provided a channel to facilitate the teachers' sense-making of their self-positions.

4. Participants and situating the researcher

The present study, which is part of a larger research project[1], includes forty-eight language teachers of whom twenty-two were applying for the position of AT and twenty-six for the CT status.

According to the recent trend on addressing reflexivity statements in qualitative studies (Gilgun), it must be acknowledged that I acted as one of the commission experts. This function provided me with an emic perspective, which is critical to qualitative studies of this kind.

5. Data collection and analysis

This study covers the years 2017 to 2020. The principal method of data collection were in-the-field notes "inextricably linked to participant observation in that they serve as the primary means of recording the detailed observations and insights gleaned through such experiences" (Harrison 346). The data sources were detailed notes of interactions that took place during my participation in various examination commissions. There were forty-eight note files of twenty-two ATs and

[1] Full information about the project is provided in Werbińska (53–69).

twenty-six of CTs, that is one note file for each teacher. The whole analysis can be divided into two phases.

5.1. Phase 1

Once all forty-eight files of my field notes were ready, I proceeded to coding. First, I read all of them several times until I felt confident about their content. Then I made initial comments, focusing on what "'was actually going on" rather than what I expected to happen. To do this, I made comments on each line of the notes. While identifying the concepts, I went through the data to find any "signs" of possible indicators of one of the three pre-selected self-positions. Then I reviewed the data to make better decisions about my understanding of them. Collecting more instances to confirm specific issues led me to creating a new file with the data concerning the teachers' self-positions. Finally, I referred back to the original notes, but now thinking of them as possible "candidates" for examples of three "self-positions" discussed in the study. For the sake of the article, the excerpts have been loosely translated into English.

5.2. Phase 2

In order to find out more nuanced categories within the identified three self-positions and to convey the voice of each teacher's I-position, I looked for phrases starting with first-person singular personal pronouns and then assigned a name to each thematic unit. As a result, each thematic unit was given two labels: one corresponding to the teacher's individual way of acting in this position (i.e., enthusiast/inspirer) and the other corresponding to the self-position (i.e., "an IT enthusiast" under enthusiast/inspirer in Table 1, row 2) identified within the unique self-positions. With the teachers' illustrative words, Tables 1–6 in the Appendix provide a flavour of the sense of the three self-positions.

6. Findings

6.1. Unique self

In the educational literature, the term teacher's unique self usually refers to teacher effectiveness. It is associated with differentiating certain teachers from other teachers and highlighting particular teachers' unique status, unique preparation for the job, or unique position and experience to provide education (Preston 335). Those teachers who rely on their unique resources may better overcome various work-related challenges (Collie et al. 359).

As the teachers' participation in the interview was caused by the definite purpose—to become promoted—the teachers certainly desired to successfully pres-

ent their professional uniqueness. They tried to use arguments which justified the validity of their uniqueness claim in their minds. The claims were grounded in their actual experience and, perhaps, imagination of what would be relevant to their goal-directed behaviours in the promotion situation.

Reading their unique self-positions, I found it remarkable how many unique selves the teachers came up with, perceiving them as important under the circumstances: eleven in the AT (Table 1) and ten in the CT group (Table 2), almost all of them overlapping between the two groups. This is why I decided to treat them together. Clearly, their unique self-positions did not seem to depend on the group to which they belonged: ATs or CTs. After reducing the self-positions to broader groups, I received six constructions of language teachers that they have and/or claim they have as distinctive about them. They include: *an enthusiast and inspirer*, *a formalist*, *a pursuer of knowledge*, *a manager*, *a good relations carer*, and *a unique knowledge holder.*

The teachers describe themselves as enthusiastic and inspiring both students and their colleagues. Teachers' enthusiasm and inspiration are important, as they can be translated into what students call "interesting lessons". The teachers in the study were enthusiastic about IT (AT1), interesting and home-made teaching aids (AT4), using drama (CT6), even the ways of making the classroom environment as authentic as possible (CT26). Their engendering of others with enthusiasm for English, learning English, taking part in English competitions, even becoming an English teacher, as was the case in mentoring novice teachers (CT13), seems one of the principal qualities of a good teacher.

Some of the teachers resorted to their accountability in an effort to become promoted. In practice, they referred to their scrupulous fulfilment of legal regulations and procedures. They pointed to their good understanding of educational law (AT4), implementing the Minister's annual directions for educational policy (CT10), or flawless performance of an examiner's role (CT10). It can be assumed that they viewed their participation in a formal professional event as an "accountable" occasion and expected that the members of the commission awaited "accountability" from them, which could be seen in their emphasizing the formal accounting of their teaching actions. To support this view, AT3's words may be recalled: "I'm convinced that the presentation of my professional output has met all the requirements needed to become an appointed teacher".

Being an effective classroom manager is a popular quality of a good teacher in the language teaching literature (e.g., Harmer 3; Ur 17). This role involves efficient organizing language learning activities, dividing students into groups, closing down tasks, giving instructions and feedback. The teachers indicated their successful role of teacher as manager by using a discipline contract with students (AT1), as well as less obvious ways of being effective, such as meeting the expectations of students' parents and organizing afternoon English remedial classes (CT26), or

trips to English-speaking countries during which the teacher, apart from playing the usual teacher roles, is a tourist guide conducting culture lessons (AT23).

Other teachers perceived their uniqueness in their willingness to pursue new knowledge. They drew the commission's attention to their regular reading English websites and magazines with a view to finding interesting aspects of culture (T6a), while developing linguistic skills. Interestingly, some of the teachers opt for classroom observation and reflection as a way of learning about the profession (AT20, CT7). They claim to be inspired by everyday critical events (Tripp) and use classroom situations to gain new knowledge about learners. In a way, teachers, like CT7 who finds it interesting to observe how different students communicate with one another, epitomize Dewey's characteristics of an open-minded teacher or Schön's idea of reflection-in-practice.

Learners were also all-important for some teachers (AT4, AT8, AT20, AT22), as they strongly featured in the narratives. Their unique self-position construction stresses the emotional relation to the pupils, that is the teachers' kindness and caring on the one hand, and the students' well-being and development on the other. This expression of uniqueness positions the teachers who use it as people who recognize students' individual needs, which is important in establishing good relationships with students.

Interestingly, there was a teacher whose construction of self-position was related to another field of knowledge. Teacher CT2, who is a professional dietician alongside being a teacher of English, was very keen to highlight this. She chose to talk about her food educational project, organized in all her classes, and throughout the whole interview she tended to come back to her possession of this unique knowledge. Clearly, she desired to make an impression of being a teacher who is competent in teaching English but, in addition, has another unusual asset—paying attention to students' eating habits.

6.2. Ideal self

The ideal self-position is closely related to Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system and the concept of "future L2 selves" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 20). In this teacher identity construction, an individual's current state is different from a desired state. Future selves are important because they play a motivating role in creating teachers' visions, making future plans, and bringing into existence teachers' ambitions and goals. As Miyahara (26) emphasizes, imagination cannot stand for people's fantasies and must be grounded in what is realistic for teachers. Ushioda (20) adds that ideal future selves are continuations of current selves—ambitions and aspirations mediated by what people feel they are able to achieve. Interestingly, teachers' ideal selves need not encompass only teaching practices or strictly professional goals. They can be treated broadly and include teachers' personal aspirations in

accordance with the spillover model (Bakker and Demerouti), which refers to outpouring of plans from one domain to another.

I further reduced the obtained ideal self-positions, in which the teachers present their hoped-for future selves, to four self-position constructions. The ideal self-positions— their dream positions—of the investigated teachers are presented in Table 3 for ATs and Table 4 for CTs. As the obtained visions overlapped among the teachers from both groups, I discuss them together without differentiating between the groups, as I did with their unique self-position constructions.

The emergent narratives reveal that the teachers' ideal-selves refer to *finishing various formal courses*, deriving *satisfaction from the job*, better *helping their learners*, and *participating in educational experiments.*

As professional teacher development is an integral part of being a teacher, it can be expected that the teachers' willingness to attend formal courses for the sake of learning more would appear. It seems more important what kind of courses teachers would like to attend, because in-service teacher development is typically connected with school-organized development courses for all teachers working in a given institution. Therefore, the training that is promoted by regulatory educational bodies may not coincide with particular language teachers' views on their professional development.

Professional development forms that the teachers in the study seem to need are both formal courses preparing for higher qualifications: MA studies in English (e.g., CT1), PhD studies in American culture (e.g., CT12), courses in IT tools which are believed by teachers to contribute to their better teaching (e.g., AT1, CT4, CT20), and, what struck me, a lot of plans to learn another language, for example English in the case of German teachers or Spanish, to a level sufficient to be able to teach it (e.g., CT2, CT11). There were also aims to attend a Matura preparation course for teachers or intentions to participate in a European project, even to coordinate one (CT13). One teacher (CT3) emphatically said that learning is part and parcel of being a teacher, and what she needs is a better transfer of what she reads or hears from experts into her school practice. It can be concluded that in terms of professional development, the teachers are more focused on themselves as people than on themselves as teachers.

Another insight, more in line with being a person than being a teacher, is striving for job satisfaction. Although the teachers may understand it differently, it is interesting that they mind their own well-being in this respect. AT3 hopes that her teaching enthusiasm is sustained, whereas CT13 and CT6 point to the opportunity to teach in another area in which they have qualifications. Hence, deriving satisfaction from the job is both broad and non-specific (the experience of joy) as well as more narrowed-down (teaching a particular subject in the future).

Some teachers desire to continue to focus on learners' needs in their future plans. For example, AT8 wishes she had access to her students' emotions in a given moment because that would give her more possibilities to appropri-

ately respond to their needs. In the same vein, teacher CT25 dreams of possessing therapeutic skills to make her English classes inclusive and beneficial for all students. Other teachers also align with the ideal-self position that is focused on learners but would keep moving towards making a difference to students' lives outside of the classroom. For example, AT2 creates an ideal image of a teacher who is remembered with tenderness, AT7 would like to be more engaged in voluntary work for the sake of his local community, whereas CT6's and CT21's visions of imagined future states are directed towards organizing trips to English-speaking countries for students.

Finally, there was also an image of a classroom experimenter. Here, the teachers came up with the idea of taking part in innovative English learning projects, or simply continuing what they have started, i.e., working with a method personally perceived by them as effective (CT20). The latter alternative may also suggest that they have not spared enough thought to their future plans and want to convince the commission that they are fulfilling their dreams right now.

Hence, the direction in which the teachers' future attention is focused is primarily dictated by the teachers' way of thinking about themselves (i.e., language courses and job satisfaction), their students (i.e., helping learners with problems and making a difference to their lives), or about teaching methodology (i.e., conducting English teaching experiments).

6.3. Fearful self

In the study, I also wanted to discover what the fearful self-positions the teachers expressed. A feared possible self was argued by Oyserman and Markus (119), according to whom the fear of what would happen if the assumed intention failed was a powerful incentive for action. Although it cannot be said that the fears that the teachers shared with the commission were well-founded or would ever be assuaged, it is definitely interesting to see what they amounted to, as they could stand in the teachers' way to achieving their ideal selves. As in the case of the previous self-positions, some of the fearful selves were common for the teachers in both groups. In general, the emerged teachers' fearful selves relate to *profession specific challenges*, *classroom management*, and *teacher personal characteristics* in the AT group (Table 5) and *profession specific challenges*, fear of *routine*, fear of *language incompetence*, and *classroom management* in the CT group (Table 6).

Although all of the emerged "fears" refer to the language teacher profession, a separate category was created to accommodate the factors which may sometimes occur in this particular profession. Among the examples of challenges there were lesson observations by superiors or colleagues, lack of competence to teach ESP classes or to use IT tools, or facing the issues which result from running international school projects. The challenges mentioned here do not always happen during a teaching career, but they produce a great deal of stress if happen unexpectedly.

A surprising issue could be the fear of the aspects that are related to classroom language teaching and, therefore, well anticipated. In both groups, one of the most feared self-positions was the teachers' anxiety over managing the classroom, in particular a smooth transition from one stage of the lesson to another, or teaching a new group of students, the latter even voiced by more experienced teachers.

Teacher anxiety over linguistic incompetence also emerged. Although long debated with the "death of the native speaker" (Paikeday) and the arrival of the Lingua Franca Core (e.g., Jenkins) and all that this involves, the teachers still are concerned over being compared to English native speakers or other proficient speakers in their students' evaluations. The fact that this pertains to both well-qualified English teachers coming from big cities (CT26) and to teachers from village schools testifies to the fact that the "native-speaker complex" is still somewhat alive and that the teacher's proficiency in the language taught seems paramount in the job.

That said, there were fearful self-positions in one group that did not emerge in the other. For example, AT2, who is dedicated to fostering good relations with students, came up with the fear of being too empathic, which enhances interpersonal competences on the one hand, but, if exceeded, causes difficulty in the teacher's ability to detach and disconnect from school issues on the other. In consequence, such a lack of creating boundaries around work may have a negative impact on the teacher's private life and her overall well-being. On the contrary, CT15 shared a sense of fear in relation to the routine of the job. It seems that monotony, repetitiveness, boredom, or lack of purpose may also, in the long run, lead to the teacher's psychological and emotional destruction. Described by Gmelch (10) as "rust-out", the sense of stagnation in the job may be as damaging to the teacher as too much variety. Put in this way, both extreme stimulation and lack of an appropriate amount of challenge may contribute to teachers' fearful selves.

7. Discussion

In this study, I have endeavoured to identify various self-position constructions which appeared when the teachers talked about themselves. To this end, I have identified six self-position constructions when the teachers revealed their unique selves: an enthusiast and inspirer, a formalist, a pursuer of knowledge, a manager, a good relations carer, and a unique knowledge holder, four positions in which the teachers' ideal selves appeared: attending different formal courses, deriving satisfaction from the job, helping students, and taking part in educational experiments, as well as five positions which emerged in relation to the teachers' fearful selves, such as experiencing challenges specific to the profession (e.g., sudden need to teach ESP, being observed), classroom management (e.g., teaching new classes), some teacher personal characteristics (e.g., too much empathy), fear of routine, and fear of language incompetence. There were no major differences between the self-position

constructions in relation to unique and ideal self-positions, whereas their fearful-self constructions differed in two points: ATs were afraid of being too empathic with students, which did not appear in the other group, and CTs occasionally expressed their concern about boredom, which did not occur in the case of the other group.

The three self-positions seem to show what the teachers identify with (the unique and ideal selves) and what they distance from (the fearful self). It can be seen that the construction of their present selves embraces typical roles of the language teacher—a model of language (pursuer of knowledge, knowledge holder), a classroom manager (manager), a supporter of students (good relations carer), which seems to corroborate Badia and Liesa's study on Catalan teachers' I-positions, such as their four clusters in which teachers focus on instruction and school management, on instruction and improving their educational practice, on educating children and teaching students, and improving their educational practice (86–88). Weighing these facts, there are two interesting points worth noting here. The first one is that within the discourse of the present study, there are only unequivocally good examples of teacher uniqueness. This can be explained by the context of the situation and the teachers' desire to present themselves at their best to become promoted. The second interesting point is the fact that how the teachers imagine themselves in the future is also strictly related to the teachers' common roles, such as: helping students (good relations carer), attending various formal courses and conducting educational experiments (pursuer of knowledge, knowledge holder). What is more, the teachers' fearful selves also seem linked to the same points. When the teachers are afraid of disclosure of their language incompetence, they refer to their linguistic knowledge, when they talk about teaching new classes, or possible suffering from routine, they are concerned about classroom management, and when they express, however subtly, the detrimental effect of being too empathic or too sympathetic with their students, they touch upon teacher-student interpersonal relations. Even in the cases of investing in themselves (i.e., learning Spanish), they (CT2, CT 11) stress that they would like to teach the new languages in the future so as to extend their teaching repertoire. By investing in the new language, they seem to think that they will acquire new symbolic and material resources, enhance their cultural capital and competitiveness on the job market (Norton), which can be illustrated by the words voiced by CT24, who is a German teacher right now and would like to teach English ("As a German teacher I'm very frustrated about my ignorance of English. I'd like to teach it"). Yet, they still identify with the typical roles of the language teacher as specified in the literature, associate their ideal selves with the furthest fulfilment of these roles (i.e., conducting language teaching experiments) but at the same time distance themselves from any disruptions that could affect their comfort (e.g., new classes, exhibition of language incompetence).

This similarity of issues in constructions of the teachers' selves may also derive from the fact that the teachers encounter fearful situations on a daily basis,

realize the problematic nature of such experiences, and predict their own concern as to the appearance of such feared states or outcomes in the future. For example, CT10, who is afraid of a new challenge in the form of having to teach ESP or completely new classes, remembers what was told about the difficulty of that or may even have experienced unpleasant incidents connected with that. It can be surmised that the fearful self-positions represent the teachers' positions of future cases based on their past or future within their experienced past, as the fear of them signals that they may have already happened.

The fact that the fearful selves even emerged from the teachers under the circumstances also suggests that some of the teachers present themselves as human beings, not one-dimensional figures. For example, AT1, who is generally enthusiastic and self-confident, expresses her uncertainty about IT and teaching seventh-graders in the primary school for the first time ("What I lack are specific IT tools. I don't know if and how they can be made. Also, I lack educational competences to prepare them for the school-leaving exam."). AT20, who made an impression of a self-confident person, interested in constant learning and developing a good rapport with students, admitted that her perception of students with special needs had been too stereotypical. What is more, when they talk about their competencies, they usually present them in contrast to someone who lacks this competence (e.g., AT1 talking about her mentor who lacks the knowledge that she has, "She could learn a lot from me"). It can be surmised that the teachers are aware that they depend on the here and now of the promotion situation and therefore use all opportunities available in the interview setting to achieve their goal. These, sometimes dichotomous, self-position constructions may not be seen at first glance, as they only emerged through my multiple readings of a given extract. The existence of several contesting forces in the teachers' narratives also makes space for the negotiation of alternative and different teacher identities.

8. Limitations, conclusions, implications

The study has some limitations which need mentioning. The greatest potential limitation is that the data were only drawn from hand-written notes, however meticulous these may have been. Yet, the goal of my study was not to generalize, but to better understand language teachers and to shed more light on the teachers' discourses about their self-positions expressed during a promotion situation. The impracticality of recording discourses during the interviews makes it well-nigh impossible to obtain ethnographic emic data from this context of language teachers' work. The fact that the study was accomplished thanks to scrupulous notes means that the perceived limitation could also be regarded as one of the strengths of the study.

Another shortcoming that might be levelled against the study is its reliance only on the field-notes. Conducting follow-up interviews with the teachers or members of

the commission, enriching the data with investigations of the teachers' classrooms, or obtaining information about the teachers from their students could have made the study more reliable. However, it also seems reasonable to claim that the study was supported with empirical evidence collected over several recent years and the participants came from different schools, different locations, and taught different foreign languages. These variables significantly minimize the shortcomings related to multi-method issues.

My study provides some insights into teachers' self-positioning in the professional promotion context, which is a small part of the picture of language teachers in Poland and an even smaller part of language teachers globally. The study aimed at presenting what language teachers in Poland tend to say in order to become promoted. It evidenced "localness" with all its nuances and subtleties. Therefore, the obtained findings can scarcely be generalized to all language teachers in the process of their professional promotion, although the ideal-self positions related to being an inspirer, a good-relations carer, or a pursuer of knowledge may somewhat resonate with Badia and Liesa's (84) study and their investigated teachers' I-positions.

It is hoped that the discourses presented here will find resonances with many ATs and CTs in Poland and become informative for readers engaged with language teacher evaluation. They may also encourage language teacher education researchers to consider the task of further problematizing the complex subject of language teacher appraisal, and perhaps initiate greater acceptance of current challenges and more up-to-date ways of coping with them.

Appendix

Table 1: ATs' unique-self positions

1. An inspirer (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By inspiring others	My mentor learnt from me a lot of things, e.g., assertiveness, because she's a wonderful teacher but can't show it (AT1). I exchange information with teachers a lot (AT4). I'd like to infect you a bit with what I've focused on in my internship (AT20).
2. An IT enthusiast (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By active using IT	IT is my hobby, I like it a lot. I make e-coursebooks, YouTube films, use websites (AT1).
3. A successful classroom manager (manager)	
By using contracts	I start each term with joint making contracts and classroom codes. I don't have problems with misbehaviour thanks to using the contract (AT1).
By talking to students in private	I successfully coped with the curbing of students' temperament and their emotional problems (AT7).

4. A learner (pursuer of knowledge)	
By extensive reading	I'm trying to read in English, Newsweek or websites. I'm trying to read the articles about European and British culture, so that I can convey something extra, a fun fact, something enriching their knowledge (AT6).
By taking part in in-service teacher training	There wouldn't be any increase in the quality of school work hadn't I taken part in various forms of teacher training (AT12). I very much like to educate myself. During my internship I finished postgraduate studies in two fields: oligophrenopedagogy and rehabilitation of people with the autism spectrum disorder (AT20).
5. A materials designer (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By making teaching aids	As to the teaching aids in the slides, I have to boast myself. All of them were handmade by me (AT4).
6. A learner-oriented teacher (good relations carer)	
By recognizing learners' developmental needs	I always try to recognize students' developmental needs either during the competitions or school events (AT4).
By establishing good relations with students	I always take care of a good rapport with students. I'm trying to be open to them, I want them to feel supported in every situation. They treat me as an answer provider to all possible kinds of questions (AT20).
By observing students	I'm such an interpersonal type of personality. I always try to observe students and I'm able to notice if a person, who is even active in the lesson, has some problems with understanding or not (AT20).
By differentiating work	In my work I try to look at each student individually, adjusting myself to their situation. It's easier for me because I'm from this community, I'm an English teacher and their football coach. I am in contact with their parents practically all the time (AT22).
7. A classroom team member (good relations carer)	
By using lexical choices	I put a lot of emphasis on their saying "we are" because I'm also a member of their team, I'm not a teacher in my class, I'm a member and we're a community. We have to help each other and engage in the school's life (AT20).
8. An accountable person (formalist)	
By admitting to slight negligence	I will definitely read this. We've never had such a case. I'll read this today. I'm embarrassed (AT4).
By referring to accountability	I'm convinced that the presentation of my professional output has met all the requirements needed to become an appointed teacher (AT3).
9. A legal knowledge user (formalist/unique knowledge holder)	
By being able to find necessary legal regulations	Obviously, I don't know the regulations by heart but I know where to find them if I need (AT4).
10. A teacher of English culture (manager)	
By organizing trips to English-speaking countries	I managed to organize a school trip to New York, which was an exceptional event locally. There was no tour office, I was the guide. We'd been to UK a few times before (AT21).

11. A reflective thinker (pursuer of knowledge)	
By changing beliefs	I used to have stereotypical knowledge about children with intellectual deficiencies. I thought they wouldn't learn English, given that they had problems with Polish. I thought the same about people with the autism spectrum disorder who would sit against a wall, without any eye contact, bumping heads against the wall. But working in our school with children with special needs was like illumination. I don't perceive them as disabled but intellectually challenging (AT20).
	I once thought it was enough to explain something and they were obliged to know it. It's different in reality, though. I've learnt to explain difficult things in a simple way, relate English grammar to Polish grammar, to real life practice, and this is the greatest change in my way of teaching (AT21).

Table 2: CTs' unique-self positions

1. An initiator of school projects (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By initiating and participating in school projects	I'm, as a teacher, open to new initiatives and innovations (CT1). As the only one at school, I started a project. At first, I wanted to join others, there was a project with a school from Turkey but I also decided to write my own. If others can write, why not me? (CT4). I've created a syllabus for teaching English in which students decided about the pace of their work, the topics to work on, and forms of assessment (CT23). I'm the author of a teaching German innovation which is an annual German language and culture district competition. A good healthy competition between our local schools (CT24). We regularly organize The Day of Languages. I always engage in it and always write a play, either with students or by myself in which there are lots of languages. Together with my colleague I also organized a contest of songs in other than English languages (CT20).
2. An enthusiastic teacher (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By using drama	I'm a person who likes performing on stage. I'm trying to convey this to my learners because I think it's a good introduction to the foreign language world (CT6).
By using IT	For me a great discovery was using the applications, such as Kahoot or Quizlet. Students like using them. They extend their vocabulary and they are good for revising grammar, even topics related to English-speaking countries (CT11).
By never switching to Polish	I have a method that the door to my classroom is magical. After passing through it only English is used. All my students are used to this, no matter if they are from the 2 grade, or the 8 grade (CT26).
3. A fully-fledged examiner (formalist)	
By finishing the course	It was interesting because I could share my knowledge with other teachers who have been correcting the exam papers for several years. I was proud of myself that the assessment of my exam papers was acknowledged by the verifier (CT1T).

4. A holder of unique knowledge (holder of unique knowledge)	
By holding other attractive qualifications	I coordinated two European projects linked to healthy eating. I'm a certified dietitian. I was able to connect English with the knowledge of nutrition. It was very interesting (CT2).
5. An effective teacher (manager)	
By conducting optional afternoon English classes	That was meeting the parents' expectations. The parents asked about remedial classes because they couldn't afford private lessons for their kids. In the first year there were too many students . We were sitting in one semi-circle, then in another one and this is how I taught them. Most of those who came to the lessons passed scoring 80% (CT26).
By being praised by Americans	When Americans heard her, they were delighted. Such a good accent. I asked her if she was attending any extra lessons of English and she said: "No, only with you at school". And from the Internet, you know (CT12).
6. A knowledge sharer (formalist)	
By conveying knowledge about assessing exam papers in spontaneous conversations	Thanks to the fact that I was an examiner in the past, I'm able to support my colleagues preparing students for exams. I tell them how I would prepare them, what to pay attention to (CT10). The most popular form of sharing knowledge is a spontaneous conversation. This is the easiest method but the most effective. I was able to take part in a course for a Matura examiner and I could use this knowledge with my colleagues to help them how to assess papers (CT11).
By giving talks on a selected topic to colleagues in teachers' meetings	As a leader of foreign language teachers' team, I was asked to give a talk on active methods in a language classroom, especially for novice teachers (CT23). There was one teachers' meeting and I presented the methods concerning mediation (CT25).
7. A learner motivator (good relations carer)	
By encouraging learners to participate in language contests	I have a really big group of students who take part in language contests every year. I think they are motivated by me, my work, and the methods I use. I'd like to think it is like this (CT11).
8. A teacher mentor (good relations carer)	
By being empathetic	I was very empathetic, I took into consideration the fact that the student teacher didn't have father, took care of his younger sister, and I had to adjust the time he was able to spend during his school placement. I have a mentee preparing for being an appointed teacher and we get along very well. She asked the principal for choosing me as her mentor. I had to think this over because this is a very responsible role (CT13).
By giving a lot of practical knowledge	All the English students from the university want to take part in my lessons. I've had thirteen during my internship. Sometimes there are too many of them. One teacher waited for me from 7:15 a.m. to be accepted. She didn't want to go to other English teachers at school. What I was to do when I came breathless at 7:55a.m. Of course, I agreed (CT26).

9. An accountable teacher (formalist)	
By obeying legal regulations	I was a language teachers group leader. I tried to implement all the assumptions of the conception of school's work. I was a mediator between the group and the principals, I made a schedule of our work, of psychological and pedagogical aid. I shared experience with my colleagues. We analysed examination papers. I always paid attention to the Ministry of Education's assumptions for a given year, made sure that teachers talk about cyberviolence, Internet security, health promotion, even the independence anniversary. We also created repair plans, and in this way increased the quality of our school (CT23). Expert: The analysis of your external exam results shows the necessity of change. What actions would you take up? Teacher: We would certainly prepare a repair programme. We would analyse the answers carefully and do Excel calculations for every task. Perhaps we'd offer extra classes. Expert: And what would that be based on legally? Teacher: The Curriculum Core to see if we stick to it (CT10)
10. A reflective thinker (pursuer of knowledge)	
By observing	I had a chance to teach students from different school specializations: art, vets, police specialization. That was interesting. What I got out of these classes was the experience how people's minds communicate (CT7).

Table 3: ATs' ideal-self positions

1. A teacher satisfied with the job (satisfaction achiever)	
By being satisfied	I hope the joy that I'm deriving from my work now will be with me for many years to come (AT3).
2. A professional development pursuer (knowledge pursuer)	
By doing courses and postgraduate studies	My next plan is to take up postgraduate studies in autism, develop knowledge through self-education, use all available forms of professional development in a local in-service teacher centre, especially that they are free (AT4). Postgraduate studies in speech-therapy, develop self-education, and use various forms of professional development (AT6).
By regular updating professional knowledge	I'd like to extend my knowledge as a class teacher. There are so many courses … but what I lack are specific IT tools. (AT1).
By taking part in international projects	I'm going to enrich my work, extend my qualifications and competences, take part in an e-twinning project, as there's a lot of interest, especially the students' parents want me to apply for it (AT11).
3. A contributor (difference maker)	
By doing voluntary work	I'd definitely like to devote more time to voluntary work. I wish I had done more during my internship. Most activities were organized during long weekends but my home is a five-hour-drive from here so I wanted to spend more time with my family (AT7).

By being remembered	I'm from a teacher's family. My mum was always concerned about her pupils. She's still well remembered by them. I'd like to be the same. This is my dream (AT2).
By recognizing learners' needs	I'd like to know what my students are feeling at a given moment and what emotions torment them. A student may be gifted, willing to participate but has a worse day, argued with his mum, unhappy in love, and I know he won't write this test […] If I could get into the mind of each student, I would know what they are guided by at a given moment. I think it would be easier to work and know how to respond and help such a student (AT8).

Table 4: CTs' Ideal self-positions

1. A learner of another language (knowledge pursuer)	
By learning another attractive foreign language for extending a school offer	I'd like to learn another foreign language. Spanish would be useful at school (CT2). I'm seriously deliberating BA Spanish studies to learn Spanish so that I could teach it in the future (CT11).
By learning English to overcome exclusion	As a German teacher I'm very frustrated about my ignorance of English. I'd like to teach it (CT24).
2. A professional development pursuer (knowledge pursuer)	
By completing formal studies (MA, PhD, a new field)	I'd like to finish MA English studies. I learnt the practice first, but formal studies are studies. Teacher development all the time (CT1). I'm dreaming about PhD in American culture studies …, perhaps applying for an honorary title of professor of education (CT12).
By completing IT courses	I'll continue developing my knowledge. Most of all, training related to modern IT methods, speaking, as there are things that we sometimes focus on but are not important in practice (CT4). I'd like to be trained in one of the Microsoft actions and go in this direction to conduct lessons in which my students could learn with students from other countries (CT20).
By becoming an examiner	Taking part in a project on Matura preparation (4CT). I'd like to be an examiner (CT8). To acquire new skills that will help me better prepare children for the exam (CT10).
By taking part in international projects	I'd like to become a coordinator of Erasmus+ (CT11).
By confronting theoretical knowledge with practice	I'm very much interested in the psychological sphere. I'd like to develop in this area. I try to understand students' responses, I often use the ideas from the courses, some of them work, others don't, but I go on (CT3).
3. An interdisciplinary teacher (job satisfaction achiever)	
By teaching a dream subject	I graduated from geography studies. It's been my passion since grade 4. I'd like to have, however small, occasion to teach this subject in a project form. I think projects are the future, not short ones but exceeding the terms, the whole year (CT13).

By connecting English with other qualifications	I did postgraduate studies in professional advising. I'd like to connect it with English. I've got an idea on meetings with people who specialize in maritime themes (CT6).
4. A contributor (difference maker)	
By focusing on inclusion	There's one thing I'd very much like to introduce. I organized a Day of Coloured Socks and I think we could create something about the people with Down Syndrome. The students' tolerance towards them is very low. Even if there are problems in class, students can't cope with acceptance and I'd like to do something that would help them accept such people (CT5).
By organizing trips to an English-speaking country	I dream about organizing a trip to an English-speaking country. I've never participated in such a trip but I'd like to organize one (CT6). I'd like to organize a foreign trip with our students (CT21).
By acquiring therapeutic competences	I noticed that many teachers just come to school to teach and that's all. My plan for the future is to become a specialist working with people with autism, Asperger syndrome, behavioural problems. Such therapeutic competences (CT25).
5. A good practice implementor (classroom experimenter)	
By continuing the current practice	I'd like to continue the work I've started but to extend the organization of the contest and have it between schools, not only within our school (CT11). I'd like to work with the LDL method and organize the song contests (CT20). I'd like to continue the functions that I'm playing at school now. A team leader, an evaluation leader, extra English classes for pupils, a class teacher (CT21). I'll be implementing various innovations because they develop learners and myself. I'll be using learning apps and create my own lessons (CT21). Further cooperation with the Goethe Institute (CT24).
By introducing new ideas to her students	My cousin in Germany teaches English and Spanish via projects. I think it might be interesting to implement the core curriculum in a block form. It might be engaging for kids (CT6).

Table 5: ATs' fearful self-positions

1. Unable to solve an educational problem (fear of job-specific challenges)	
By not having specific tools or educational competences By having lessons observed	What I lack are specific IT tools. I don't know if and how they can be made. Also, educational competences to prepare them for the school-leaving exam (AT1). The principal would come to my lessons and that was very stressful. For a long time, I hadn't had a chance to teach in classes of children with special needs. When I started working in this school I had to do it in the presence of a support teacher. That was a challenge for me. I wondered if I would cope with having an observer in every class (AT17).

2. Too empathic (fear of own vulnerability)	
By empathizing too much	I'm a very empathic person. Sometimes it's a disadvantage. I really see a situation through the other person's eyes. My first experience being a class teacher. I'm about to start crying. I trust them, they trust me. Sometimes the trust is lost and then negative emotions crop up. I come home and talk to myself like "I tried so much, but it has no effect". Sometimes it's too overwhelming and I can't cut off from this (AT2).
3. Methodologically deficient (fear of teaching)	
By observing other teachers	During the observation of other teachers' lessons I noticed that I have to spend more time on the first lesson stage, that is student preparation for what is to be told. I'm better at the final stage, that is the round-off (AT7).

Table 6: CTs' fearful self-positions

1. Afraid of professional challenges (fear of job challenges)	
By complaining about teaching ESP	A big challenge ahead of me. I'm teaching ESP and I've been assigned robotics, automatics, and electronics. I'll be doing firm placements. A big challenge, three new professional areas. It won't do that I'll translate something. The learners may ask "What is it for?", because they are only in the first class learning the job. I'm very stressed about it. These are completely new challenges (CT10).
By being afraid of formalities in project making	There is always some kind of stress, a fear when you do new challenges. The most stressing for me is the time assigned for the project, the deadlines, and doing everything according to the schedule (CT4).
By dismissing taking part in international projects	Expert: Why have you never taken part in Erasmus projects? Teacher: I've never met a person who would deal with it in my school. Expert: But you could be the first one. Teacher: Perhaps, but I'm afraid I may not cope with it (CT22).
2. Afraid of routine (fear of routine)	
By being aware of its destructive consequences	When I invite colleagues or principal to my lessons, they may always look at me with a critical eye and say, "Listen, this method here could've been better" or ask "Why are you doing this in groups?" So, I'm trying to remember about the "routine", as I know this is one of these notions that may decrease my work and my students' outcomes (CT15).
3. Insecure about language skills (fear of language incompetence)	
By acknowledging a native speaker complex	A test for me as a mentor of a student teacher was a university student, about forty, with darker skin, who came to me and said she was from the USA and uttered: "Yes, yes, I'd like to have an apprenticeship". And it got to the point where she started teaching as well. I thought my poor kids wouldn't understand her, but it was wonderful. She understood them, they understood her, and later she said to me: "Why were you so nervous? You give lessons in the same way". Phew! (CT26).

4. A weak classroom manager (fear of teaching)	
By having problems with students' behaviours	I've always felt frightened when teaching a new group. Everything seems fine but you can see a growing frustration and new people are afraid that they are not going to be accepted, including teachers (CT3).

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EFL Teachers Supporting War Refugee Students from Ukraine in Schools in Poland

Abstract: This paper is devoted to the discussion of a specific crisis situation that had a considerable impact on the professional lives of many teachers in Poland, namely the appearance of war refugee students from Ukraine in Polish schools after 24 February 2022, that is, after the Russian invasion on Ukraine and the subsequent influx of refugees from Ukraine to Poland. The aim of the study was to gain insight into the experiences of Polish teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the context of this situation. The general picture emerging from the study is that the respondents, who teach refugee students, make an effort to create a friendly and safe learning environment for them. As far as the language of communication is concerned, it is especially early- and late-career teachers who made an effort to learn the language(s) of their students: many early-career teachers learn Ukrainian or Russian, and many late-career teachers are motivated to brush up on their Russian to communicate with their students. Most of the respondents show interest in participating in professional training to gain knowledge and skills in working with refugee students, although such training was only available to a small group of study participants. The study also asked the respondents if certain activities, such as adjusting the teaching content to the level of the students or talking to Ukrainian students about their feelings about being in a new environment, were problematic or difficult for them. Most of the respondents did not report any major problems in this regard.

Keywords: refugee students, students from Ukraine, EFL teachers, language(s) of communication

1. Migration trends in present-day Poland

Poland is defined as a country of emigration because the level of mobility of Poles has remained high throughout centuries (Sterniński 59). While emigration has a long history in Poland, when taking more recent times into consideration, emigration peaks can be observed in the 1980s, that is in the last years of communism in Poland, as well as the years following Poland's 2004 accession into the European

Union and the signing of the Schengen Agreement in 2007, which eliminated visas across most countries of the European Union (Długosz and Biały 26). In the period following Poland's accession to the European Union, the countries of emigration most commonly chosen by Polish people were: the UK, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Belgium, Sweden, and Spain (Central Statistical Office, *Informacja*).

Until recently, migration to Poland was not a massive phenomenon; however, Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 and subsequent economic growth, which allowed a gradual reduction of income differences in Poland in relation to western European countries, made Poland an attractive destination for migrants (Sterniński 59–60). The inflow of immigrants to Poland increased rapidly after 2014, that is since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. This is reflected in the number of work permits issued by the Polish government, which increased from 18,000 in 2008 to nearly 329,000 in 2018 and involved foreigners from, among others, Ukraine, Nepal, Belarus, India, Bangladesh, Moldova, Georgia, and Uzbekistan (Sterniński 63).

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, large numbers of refugees have escaped from Ukraine and found refuge in many European and non-European countries, primarily in neighbouring Poland. By the end of September 2022, about 6.7 million people fleeing the danger of war were allowed to stay legally in Poland and received support in different areas of life: health, social services, education, and work (Straż Graniczna, qtd. in Szaban 173). This was the period of time when one could easily hear the Ukrainian language in Poland—in the streets, on public transport, in shops, or at playgrounds—not only in major cities, but also in small towns that were not popular with migrants before. The wave of migration caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine was different from the previous population flows in terms of its unprecedented scale, rapidity—it happened practically overnight—and the sex and age of the migrants—it was mainly women and children who left their war-stricken country.

All these migration trends have had and will continue to have a powerful impact on the demographics of Poland. A relatively homogeneous country since World War II in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, Poland is currently transitioning from a predominantly monolingual and monocultural nation to multilingual and multicultural one (Nosidlak 440).

2. Students from Ukraine in Polish schools

These migration trends are reflected in the fact that a constantly increasing number of foreign students are joining Polish kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools, as well as other educational institutions. The vast majority of these students come from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia—these three nationalities com-

prise 80–85% of the whole population of foreign children, while the other larger groups are students from Vietnam, Germany, Bulgaria, France, China, and South Korea (Kościółek 604). More accurate data concerning Ukrainian students are as follows: in 2020 there were 30,777 students from Ukraine in Polish schools; this number has increased rapidly as a result of the Russian invasion on Ukraine—in April 2022 there were approximately 166,000 Ukrainian students, including 29,000 in kindergartens, 124,000 in primary schools, and 13,000 in secondary schools (Jędryka 30). As Szybura (112) stated, the Polish school is no longer a place where students learn about multilingualism and multiculturalism only from textbooks.

The wave of war refugees from Ukraine who came to Poland after 24 February 2022 triggered the need for a quick response to include and accommodate children and adolescents into the existing schooling system. These students had to face the challenge of adapting to new social and institutional settings, which must have been difficult considering that they were literally torn out of their home environment overnight and had to join a new education system without any preparation (Szaban 173). It should be noted here that although Poles and Ukrainians are both Slavs and live in neighbouring countries, there are many differences between them, making the adaptation a complex process. The differences include, for example, the language (Polish vs Ukrainian), the alphabet (Latin vs Cyrillic), denomination (Catholic vs Orthodox), considerable differences in education systems and, of course, many cultural differences. In addition, throughout the centuries there were some historical events that antagonized both nations and strained the relations between Poles and Ukrainians. Even today, in some circles, the relations between Poles and Ukrainians are tense, or even openly hostile, because of the difficult past. As noted by Szybura (115–16), school is a place where both negative and positive consequences of migration are clearly visible; the negative ones being: cross-cultural resentment and conflicts, language barrier, and social maladjustment. On the other hand, the presence of foreigners in the classroom brings out a lot of positive aspects in that migrants are perceived as representatives of cultures that Polish students can get to know in a natural way, through conversation and day-to-day interaction, which helps to foster the attitudes of openness, tolerance, and motivation to learn foreign languages among students (Szybura).

For most teachers in Poland, the experience of having war refugees in their classroom was new; in fact, many teachers had no experience of teaching any immigrant students. The lack of experience, as well as the lack of formal training in this regard, means that Polish teachers rarely have the knowledge or skills to work with migrant students (Nosidlak 445). Rokita-Jaśkow (194) points out that while Polish schools are becoming increasingly diversified in terms of students' native language(s) and culture(s), most teachers were prepared during their university education to teach in monolingual classes. The influx of refugees from Ukraine after 24 February 2022 and the resulting appearance of Ukrainian students in

Polish schools posed a challenge to teachers and, most often, put a strain on their workload and professional life. The problems were of various nature. One of the most fundamental problems was the inability to communicate with the new students, who sometimes spoke Ukrainian and Russian, but not necessarily Polish or English. In this case, senior teachers were at an advantage, as the Russian language was compulsory in Polish schools until 1990 (Figarski 93), and they were far more likely than their younger colleagues to speak at least some Russian and thus be able to come into interaction with the Ukrainian students.

The appearance of Ukrainian students in classrooms in many cases required a major reorganization of the whole teaching process; teachers needed to adjust the teaching content to the level of the new students and were often asked to run additional (remedial) classes for them. What many teachers also did, often on their own initiative, was to take care of the emotional and psychological well-being of the new students by talking to them about their feelings about being in a new environment and generally helping them with integration into their new schools and classrooms. What should also be noted is that Ukrainian students joined already existing groups of students, which means that classes often became overcrowded. It is believed that all the above factors, as well as the chaos and stress that accompanied them, contributed to an increased workload for teachers, requiring them to adopt a number of new identities, such as carer, therapist, or psychologist. As pointed out by Nosidlak (453), the role of foreign language teachers was especially prominent in this respect, as they are customarily treated as translators, cultural mediators, and guides within the Polish educational system. In other words, having to work with traumatized students who were brutally and abruptly torn out of their homeland required teachers to do far more than teach a curriculum and manage a classroom.

3. The study

3.1. The aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the present study was to gain insight into the experiences of Polish teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the context of the appearance of war refugee students from Ukraine in Polish schools after 24 February 2022, that is, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent influx of refugees from Ukraine to Poland.

The research questions (RQs) posed in this study are as follows:

RQ1. How many of the respondents have had the experience of teaching students from Ukraine who came to Poland after 24 February 2022?

RQ2. Were they provided with training on how to work with refugee students?

RQ3. What language(s) have the respondents used to communicate with refugee students from Ukraine?

RQ4. Have they been prompted by the situation to learn the language(s) of their Ukrainian students?

RQ5. What aspects of working with refugee students from Ukraine have been particularly difficult or problematic for them?

3.2. The research tools

The study used a self-constructed questionnaire in an online format (see Appendix). The questionnaire was created with the use of Google Forms, a survey administration software. The language of the questionnaire was English. A brief introduction to the instrument informed the participants about the topic of the research and assured them of their anonymity. It needs to be noted that the questionnaire was addressed to all teachers of English, regardless of whether or not they had experience teaching refugee students from Ukraine. This was because the questionnaire was intended to reveal how many of our respondents have actually had the experience of teaching students from Ukraine who came to Poland after 24 February 2022.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire encompassed general questions about the teachers' background variables: their age, gender, type of school where they currently work, and years of experience as a teacher. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of a series of questions designed to gather a range of data about their teaching experience in the context of the appearance of war refugee students from Ukraine in schools in Poland. This set of questions asked the respondents, for example, about the number of refugee students from Ukraine they have had in their classroom, about the language they have used in communication with these students, and, more generally, about various problems and challenges they have experienced when accommodating refugee students in their classroom.

The questionnaire was distributed in two stages. In the first stage, the link to the questionnaire was sent by email to five kindergartens, five primary schools, and five secondary schools from each of the sixteen voivodships[1] in Poland. This means that a total of 240 email messages were sent to school administration with a kind request to forward the questionnaire to teachers of English who work in a given school. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed through social networks by posting it on various Facebook pages devoted to teaching English in Poland. In this way, all of the respondents were self-selected by responding to an invitation to participate. After the first stage, the sample showed a clear dominance in the number of mid-career and late-career teachers over early-career teachers. To make the body of subjects as representative as possible, it was decided to send out more invitations, this time asking specifically to forward the request to fill out the

[1] Voivodship is the largest unit of local government in Poland. Since the administrative reform in 1999, there are sixteen voivodships in Poland.

questionnaire only to early-career teachers (with up to seven years of teaching experience). The process of recruiting early-career teachers for the research turned out to be difficult and in the second stage of the study email invitations were sent to four kindergartens, four primary schools, and four secondary schools to each of the sixteen voivodships, making a total of 192 email messages. Also, the questionnaire was posted on social media again, this time with the request that only early-career teachers should respond. The responses were collected in the period from March 2023 to November 2023.

Using an online web questionnaire as a research tool is not void of limitations. Questionnaires are not precision instruments, and they depend heavily on the respondents' honesty and their ability to recall information from the past and to introspect. The sample consists of anonymous respondents willing to fill out the questionnaire, which means that this type of research may be susceptible to self-selection bias, e.g., a given topic may draw attention of a particular group of respondents. However, there are also considerable advantages of using an online questionnaire which justify its application. Most notably, in the case of this research, using an online questionnaire enabled efficient and cost-effective data collection from multiple respondents from all over Poland.

3.3. The respondents

The respondents in the study were EFL teachers who teach English in kindergarten, primary school, or secondary school in Poland. Altogether, 128 participants took part in the questionnaire. In terms of gender identification, ninety-four respondents identified as female, nineteen as male, three as non-binary and twelve chose not to reveal their gender. This unbalanced gender distribution is in line with the dominance of female teachers visible in the education sector in Poland; for example, in the school year 2022/2023 women constituted 82.3% of all teachers in Poland (Central Statistical Office, "Oświata").

The respondents represent a wide range of teaching backgrounds and levels of experience. In regards to the distribution of participants by the type of school where they teach, the data show that 56.25% teach English in secondary school, 44.53% in primary school, and 15.63% in kindergarten. The sum exceeds 100% because some of them work in more than one place. The age of the respondents varied: 20.31% ($n = 26$) were aged between twenty and thirty, 27.34% ($n = 35$) were aged between thirty-one and forty, 23.44% ($n = 30$) were aged between forty-one and fifty, 25.78% ($n = 33$) were aged between fifty-one and sixty and 3.13% ($n = 4$) were older than sixty.

Concerning teaching experience, the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate one of the three options: one to seven years, eight to twenty-three years, and more than twenty-four years, which reflect the three stages of the teaching career—

early-career, mid-career, and late-career—proposed by Day and Gu (qtd. in Mercer). In the sample, 36.72% have teaching experience of up to seven years, 32.03% between eight and twenty-three years, while 31.25% have teaching experience of twenty-four and more years.

The following part of the paper presents and discusses the results of the study.

4. Results and discussion

The respondents were first asked if they had any experience of teaching refugee students (from any country) before the Russian invasion on Ukraine, that is, before 24 February 2022. Here, 35.16% (*n* = 45) answered "yes". The respondents were then asked if they have had in their classroom students from Ukraine who came to Poland after the Russian invasion on Ukraine, that is, after 24 February 2022. Here, as many as 85.16% (*n* = 109) answered affirmatively. The following Table 1 presents how many of these students the respondents have had in their classroom so far (at the moment of filling out the questionnaire).

Table 1: The number of refugee students from Ukraine that the respondents have had in the classroom

Number of refugee students	1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	20+	0
Number of respondents	36.72% (*n* = 47)	20.31% (*n* = 26)	10.94% (*n* = 14)	7.81% (*n* = 10)	9.38% (*n* = 12)	14.84% (*n* = 19)

The data in Table 1 show that most of the respondents have taught individual students from Ukraine and only a few teachers, perhaps those in major cities, such as Warsaw or Wrocław, have had numerous students from Ukraine in their classroom. However, let us not lose sight of the bigger picture here—behind these numbers are often traumatized students who do not speak Polish, and having even one such student in the classroom may pose a considerable challenge for the teacher.

The next question asked the respondents about the language(s) which they have used in communication with refugee students from Ukraine; the results are presented in Table 2. When analysing the obtained results, the respondents' teaching experience was taken into consideration—teachers with teaching experience of one to seven years are described as early-career, with the experience of eight to twenty-three years as mid-career and with more than twenty-four years as late-career (Day and Gu, qtd. in Mercer). Of the 128 respondents, twelve stated that they have not communicated with refugee students from Ukraine and were therefore not included in Table 2.

Table 2: The language(s) the respondents use in communication with their refugee students from Ukraine in relation to their teaching experience. The total numbers in the columns exceed 100% because some of the respondents use more than one language in communication with the students

Language used to communicate with refugee students	Early-career teachers (n = 44)	Mid-career teachers (n = 34)	Late-career teachers (n = 38)	Total number of teachers (n = 116)
English	88.64% (n = 39)	94.12% (n = 32)	100% (n = 38)	93.97% (n = 109)
Russian	27.27% (n = 12)	14.71% (n = 5)	52.63% (n = 20)	31.90% (n = 37)
Ukrainian	29.55% (n = 13)	14.71% (n = 5)	10.53% (n = 4)	18.97% (n = 22)
Polish	93.18% (n = 41)	85.29% (n = 29)	89.47% (n = 34)	89.66% (n = 104)

The data show that the vast majority of the respondents (93.97%) communicate with their students from Ukraine in English. This is natural because the respondents are teachers of English and Ukrainian students take part in their English classes, but also because English serves the role of international lingua franca and most often it is the first choice means of communication in intercultural settings. The remaining 6.03% of the respondents (n = 7) have not used English in communication with the students from Ukraine; six of them work in kindergarten and one in primary school, which means that they teach very young children with whom communication in English is not possible. All of these seven respondents indicated Polish as the language of communication. It is noteworthy that more than half of late-career teachers (52.63%) use Russian as one of the languages in which they communicate with Ukrainian students. This is unsurprising as the Russian language was compulsory in Polish schools until 1990, and experienced teachers are far more likely than their younger colleagues to speak at least some Russian. In the group of mid-career teachers only a small part uses Russian (14.71%) or Ukrainian (14.71%), while the group of early-career teachers uses these languages to a larger extent: Russian (27.27%) and Ukrainian (29.55%). A further question asked the respondents if they have been prompted by the current situation to brush up on/learn Russian or Ukrainian. Of the entire researched sample (n = 128), 28.13% (n = 36) answered this question affirmatively; early-career teachers (36.17%, n = 17) and late-career teachers (30.00%, n = 12) tried to learn these languages to a larger extent than mid-career teachers (17.07%, n = 7). This resonates with the previous finding which states that among the respondents many late-career teachers communicate with Ukrainians in Russian, while early-career teachers communicate in Russian and Ukrainian more often than mid-career teachers. What needs to be emphasized here is that while late-career teachers may have learned Russian at school, it is unlikely that early-career teachers had Russian classes during their own schooling. When the Russian language ceased to be a compulsory school subject in 1990, its popularity decreased immediately. Nowadays, Russian and Ukrainian are not commonly taught foreign

languages in Polish schools; for example, in the school year 2022/2023, Russian was learned by 3.96% of primary and secondary school students, which is more than French (2.79%) or Italian (0.81%), but less than Spanish (5.28%) and significantly less than German (36.32%) and English (94.18%), while other foreign languages are learned by 0.24% of students (Central Statistical Office, "Oświata"). As for Ukrainian, its teaching in Polish primary and secondary schools is marginal. That is to say, early-career teachers who communicate with their students in Russian or Ukrainian, are able to do so because they made an effort to learn the language(s) of their students, not because they were schooled to speak these languages.

The question about whether the respondents have been prompted to brush up on/learn Russian or Ukrainian can also be analysed by taking into consideration only the group of 116 respondents who communicate with students from Ukraine (cf. Table 2 above). In this case, the percentage is higher than when the entire population is taken into account and is as follows: early-career teachers—38.64%, *n* = 17, late-career teachers—31.58%, *n* = 12, mid-career teachers—20.59%, *n* = 7, total—31.03%, *n* = 36. The higher percentage results from the fact that none of the respondents who stated that they have not communicated with refugee students from Ukraine answered affirmatively on whether they have been prompted by the current situation to brush up on/learn Russian or Ukrainian. This can indicate that it is the necessity to communicate with Ukrainian students that motivates teachers to learn Russian or Ukrainian; the respondents are not motivated to learn these languages so to speak "in advance". This information shows, however, that the respondents engage in learning Russian and Ukrainian after having Ukrainian students in their classroom.

Asked if they have organized, co-organized, or taken part in charity events for refugees from Ukraine, 68.75% (*n* = 88) of the respondents answered affirmatively.

As many as 80.47% (*n* = 103) of the respondents stated that they were not offered any training on how to work with refugee students; 19.53% (*n* = 25) were offered a possibility to take part in such training. At the same time, 75.19% (*n* = 73) of those who did not have the opportunity to participate in this type of training stated that they would have participated in training on how to work with refugee students if they had been offered it. This information shows that the respondents are committed to creating a friendly and effective learning environment for students from Ukraine; it also shows that they want or need support in doing so.

In the final part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked whether and to what extent certain activities connected with the presence of refugee students from Ukraine in the classroom are difficult or problematic for them. The respondents were requested to rate these activities on the scale from one to five, where 1 = not at all problematic, 5 = very problematic. The activities and the results—the calculated mode, mean, and standard deviation—are presented in Table 3. The respondents for whom these activities were not applicable are excluded from these calculations.

Table 3: The extent to which activities connected with the presence of refugee students in the classroom are difficult/problematic for the respondents

Are the following activities connected with the presence of refugee students from Ukraine difficult or problematic for you? (1 = not at all, 5 = to a large extent)	Mode	*M*	*SD*
Q1. Adjusting the teaching content to the abilities/level of the students	1	2.81	1.41
Q2. Running additional (remedial) classes for Ukrainian students	1	2.43	1.59
Q3. Talking to students from Ukraine about their feelings/emotions about being in a new environment	3	2.71	1.23
Q4. Talking to students from Ukraine about their fear, trauma, or sense of threat connected with the war in their homeland	3 and 4	2.96	1.37
Q5. Helping refugee students to integrate into their new classrooms and the school environment	4	2.93	1.43
Q6. Talking to Polish students about tolerance, openness, support, war trauma, and intercultural communication	1	2.45	1.56

The data show that, in general, the activities listed in the questionnaire were largely unproblematic for the respondents. The mode for Q1, Q2, and Q6 is 1, which indicates that the most frequently chosen response to these questions was "not at all problematic". In Q5 the most frequently chosen answer ($n = 26$) was "somehow problematic" and the mode for this question is 4; however, in the same question the second most frequently chosen answer ($n = 25$) was "not at all problematic". Q4 has two modes, the answers 3 ("hard to say") and 4 ("somehow problematic") were selected by the same number of respondents. The means of all of the questions are below 3. As can be seen, there is no evidence in the researched sample that the activities connected with the presence of refugee students from Ukraine in the classroom were particularly problematic or difficult for the respondents.

The general picture emerging from the study is that the respondents who have refugee students in their classroom make an effort to create a friendly and safe learning environment for these students. They communicate with them in their native language(s), they are motivated to learn Russian and Ukrainian, they take part in charity events, or even organize such events, and, finally, they want to receive professional training to learn how to work with these students. At the same time, they do not report any major problems with various activities connected with the presence of refugee students, for example, "adjusting the teaching content to the level of the students", "running remedial classes", and "talking to Polish students about tolerance, openness, support, war trauma, and intercultural communication" were marked as largely unproblematic. Concluding, the respondents in this study show commitment (they engage in learning Russian and Ukrainian) and desire for self-development (they want to take part in professional training); they also seem to have the situation in the classroom under control.

5. Conclusion

The wave of war refugees from Ukraine who came to Poland after 24 February 2022 generated the need for a quick response to include and accommodate the incoming children and adolescents into the existing schooling system. This posed a considerable challenge for Ukrainian students—who were forced to leave their old home, school, friends, often their family, and embrace a completely new reality in a foreign country—but also for the teachers who, in many cases, had to reorganize the whole teaching process to adjust it to the needs and abilities of the new students. The present paper examines some of the experiences of EFL teachers in the context of the above-mentioned crisis.

What needs to be noted first is the scale of this wave of migration. The data show that while 35.16% of the respondents had experience of teaching refugee students (from any country) before February 2022, as many as 85.16% have had experience of teaching students from Ukraine who came to Poland after the Russian invasion on Ukraine, that is after February 2022. The difference is considerable, and it shows not only that a lot of Ukrainians left Ukraine for Poland, but also that among those who left there were many children of school and pre-school age.

The data show that the respondents' teaching experience impacts the language in which they communicate with the students. Here, two groups of teachers deserve special attention: late-career teachers and early-career teachers. More than half of late-career teachers (52.63%) use Russian as one of the languages in which they communicate with Ukrainian students. Among those late-career teachers who have students from Ukraine in their classroom, 31.58% decided to brush up on/learn Russian or Ukrainian, prompted by the current situation. Among early-career teachers, 27.27% uses Russian and 29.55% uses Ukrainian to communicate with their students. While these numbers are not great, they still indicate how committed early-career teachers are—they speak these languages because they made a conscious effort to learn the language(s) of their students, not because they were taught these languages during their own schooling. As many as 38.64% of early-career teachers among those who have Ukrainian students in the classroom were prompted to learn Russian or Ukrainian.

The general picture of EFL teachers that emerges from the present study is positive. The respondents who teach students from Ukraine put effort into creating a safe learning space for these students, even though only 19.53% of the respondents were offered a possibility to take part in training on how to work with refugee students. In terms of the language of communication, it is especially early- and late-career teachers who make an effort to learn the language(s) of their students: many early-career teachers learn Ukrainian or Russian and many late-career teachers are motivated to brush up on their Russian. Most respondents took part in charity events or even organized such events to support refugees from Ukraine. They show a considerable interest in professional training in order to gain knowledge and skills

in working with refugee students. The study also asked the respondents if certain activities, such as adjusting the teaching content to the level of the students, talking to students from Ukraine about their feelings about being in a new environment, or helping refugee students to integrate into their new classrooms, were problematic or difficult for them. Most respondents did not report any major problems in this respect. It needs to be noted, however, that the responses for the present study were collected in the period from March 2023 to November 2023, that is up to one and a half year after the initial crisis in February 2022. This means that the respondents had time to address some of the potential problems, work out strategies/techniques for dealing with them, and settle into some kind of routine. The fact that this study took place such a long time after 24 February 2022 is one of the limitations of this research; on the other hand, the time perspective let the respondents see the bigger picture and examine the situation with the benefit of hindsight.

Appendix

Questionnaire

1. How old are you?
   a. 20–30
   b. 31–40
   c. 41–50
   d. 51–60
   e. above 60

2. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Non-binary
   d. Prefer not to say

3. Where do you currently teach? (you can choose more than one option)
   a. Kindergarten
   b. Primary school
   c. Secondary school

4. What is you teaching experience (in years)?
   a. 1–7
   b. 8–23
   c. 24 or more

5. Did you have any experience in teaching refugee students (from any country) before the Russian invasion on Ukraine (that is, before 24 February 2022)
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Have you had in your classroom students from Ukraine who came to Poland after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (that is, after 24 February 2022). If yes, how many such students have you had so far?

a. 0
b. 1–5
c. 6–10
d. 11–15
e. 16–20
f. more than 20

7. What language(s) have you used in communication with refugee students from Ukraine?
not applicable
a. English
b. Russian
c. Ukrainian
d. Polish
e. other ______________

8. Have you been prompted by the current situation to brush up on/learn Russian or Ukrainian?
a. Yes
b. No

9. Were you offered an opportunity to participate in training on how to work with refugee students?
a. Yes (if yes, move to question 11)
b. No

10. If you had been offered training on how to work with refugee students , would you have taken part in it?
a. Yes
b. No

11. Have you organized/co-organized/taken part in charity events for refugees from Ukraine?
a. Yes
b. No

12. Are the following activities connected with the presence of refugee students from Ukraine difficult or problematic for you? (1 = not at all, 5 = to a large extent)

a. Adjusting the teaching content to the abilities/level of the students
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

b. Running additional (remedial) classes for Ukrainian students
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

c. Talking to students from Ukraine about their feelings/emotions on being in new environment
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

d. Talking to students from Ukraine about their fear, trauma, or sense of threat connected with the war in their homeland
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

e. Helping refugee students to integrate into their new classrooms and school environment
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

f. Talking to Polish students about tolerance, openness, support, war trauma, and intercultural communication
Not applicable
1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

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Group and Individual Learning Profiles of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in L2 English Writing at Secondary School

Abstract: According to Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), language development is an individually owned process. CDST studies should draw from both group-based and individual-based data since research results should not be generalized from the group to the individual and vice versa unless the group is an ergodic ensemble. This paper describes a part of a sequential mixed method (MM) study in which group-based data obtained in a panel study were further analysed with respect to all individual learners. The aim of the study was to examine the individual learners' development of syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency (CALF) in L2 English writing at secondary school in comparison to the whole group. The study was based on *The Written English Developmental Corpus of Polish Learners* (WEDCPL), which includes 1,923 essays written by one hundred learners during twenty-one data waves organized over the period of three years at secondary school. The results of the study indicated that the individual learners rarely differed from the group in terms of the average CALF results, but in terms of progress over time, most learners represented different learning profiles than the group. The main implication for practitioners is to empower more individual learners to succeed in L2.

Keywords: Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, fluency (CALF), individual learning profiles, L2 writing, learner corpus, secondary school

1. Introduction

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) is an alternative approach to second language development (Atkinson) which provides a new perspective on many constructs, including the CAF triad (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; Verspoor, de Bot, and Lowie; de Bot). Complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) function as measures of language performance, proficiency, and development. Initially, they were investi-

gated as dependent variables in studies which measured the effect of various factors, such as age, instruction, individual learner differences, task design, and learning context, on learners' proficiency and performance (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). Recently, CAF research has been criticized for varied operationalization of its constructs which might have led to inconsistent findings (Housen and Kuiken; Norris and Ortega; Robinson, Cadierno, and Shirai). Hence, Bulté and Housen ("Defining") highlight the need for meta-analyses of previous CAF studies. CAF research has also been criticized for its reductionist approach (Larsen-Freeman; Norris and Ortega; Pallotti; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim) which neglects the fact that complexity, accuracy, and fluency are distinct, but complex and interrelated constructs whose interaction changes in the course of language development. Thus, they should be examined simultaneously and longitudinally from a broader conceptual framework provided by CDST (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; Verspoor, de Bot, and Lowie). In this framework, complexity, accuracy, and fluency often function as independent variables whose development is examined its own right (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder).

So far, the CAF triad has been investigated in a number of CDST-informed case studies which were based on longitudinal corpora of single learners (Verspoor, Lowie, and van Dijk; Caspi; Spoelman and Verspoor; Chan, Lowie, and de Bot; Lowie et al., Penris and Verspoor; Hou, Loerts, and Verspoor) and small groups (Kowal; Bulté and Housen, "Defining"; Verspoor, Lowie, and Wieling). However, CDST research has recently been criticized for a lack of quantitative studies verifying the main assumptions of this theory (Pallotti). Hiver and Al-Hoorie (72) explain that it is a common misunderstanding that "quantitative data elicitation and analyses are poorly situated to CDST-informed empirical research or that qualitative designs are inherently more compatible with dynamic change and interconnectedness". Following Molenaar and Cambell, Lowie and Verspoor argue that research results should not be generalized from the group to the individual and vice versa unless the group is an ergodic ensemble. Generalizing results from the group to the individual may lead to ecological fallacy, whereas generalizing them from the individual to the group may result in atomistic fallacy (Hiver and Al-Hoorie). Thus, it is recommended to combine findings from group-based and individual-based levels (Lowie and Verspoor). The present mixed-method study employs a quantitative method, compatible with CDST, which has been rarely used, namely panel design (Hiver and Al-Hoorie; Bülow and Pfenninger), followed by individual data analysis. Taking into consideration the fact that research on CAF has provided mixed results, the present study intends to contribute to this area of research within the CDST framework by analysing the development of syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency (CALF) of many learners in comparison to the whole group in L2 English writing at secondary school on the basis of a big longitudinal corpus.

2. Complexity, accuracy, and fluency in CDST

From the CDST perspective, complexity, accuracy, and fluency are multidimensional constructs. Linguistic complexity, which refers to formal, semantic, and functional features of language items, comprises grammatical and lexical complexity (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). The former refers to the breadth and depth of L2 grammatical structures and involves syntactic and morphological complexity (Bulté and Housen, "Defining"). The latter pertains to the breadth and depth of the learner's repertoire of L2 lexical items (Bulté and Housen, "Defining"). It involves lexical density, which measures the amount of information in a text (Ure), lexical sophistication, which indicates the depth of lexis (Laufer and Nation; Read), lexical variation, which shows the range of vocabulary in a text (Malvern et al.), and lexical compositionality, which refers to formal and semantic components of lexical items (Bulté and Housen, "Defining"). Furthermore, accuracy denotes error-free use of language in accordance with L2 norms (Michel). It may be analysed either in a unitary way or in a non-unitary way when divided into grammatical and lexical accuracy (Polio). It may be measured with the use of holistic, global, or specific scales (Michel), but it should account for error gravity by means of weighted accuracy measure (Kuiken and Vedder; Foster and Wigglesworth) as opposed to the accurate-inaccurate grammaticality judgment. It should also accommodate appropriateness and acceptability (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). Finally, writing fluency involves smooth, rapid, and effortless text production (Kowal). It may be examined as a product in terms of the length-based or rate-based measures. Alternatively, with the use of the keystroke logging software (Leijten and van Waes), it may be measured as a process in terms of rapidity, which shows the amount of information provided in a given period of time, automaticity, which refers to retrieving language items from long-term memory, and smoothness, which shows pauses and self-corrections (Kowal).

As far as cognitive processes behind the CAF triad are concerned, it is said that complexity is determined by the degree to which L2 learners have transformed declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge (Towell and Hawkins; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim). Accuracy is influenced by the degree to which the learners have adjusted their declarative knowledge to native-speaker norms and by the degree to which they are able to use it under processing limitations. Fluency depends on the learners' control over language reflected in the speed with which they can access and use L2 information to communicate in real time. Such control increases with the proceduralization and automatization of L2 knowledge. Thus, in terms of Levelt's speech production model, complexity and accuracy refer to the representation of L2 knowledge at the level of the conceptualizer and the formulator, whereas fluency, which refers to the control over L2 knowledge, depends on automaticity at the level of the formulator and the articulator (Housen,

Kuiken, and Vedder). Furthermore, cognitive mechanisms behind the CAF triad are differently explained by Skehan's Limited Attentional Capacity Model and Robinson's Multiple Resources Attentional Model. According to Skehan, L2 learners are not able to allocate their limited attentional resources to all aspects of language production. Increasing cognitive task complexity reduces the general attentional pool, which makes the learners focus on content so that their linguistic complexity and accuracy decrease. Thus, in line with this model, fluency competes for attentional resources with accuracy, which in turn competes with complexity. In contrast, according to Robinson, learners can access different attentional pools at the same time so that all three CAF components may increase or decrease depending on task conditions.

It has been assumed that an overall developmental sequence for the CAF triad, namely complexity > accuracy > fluency, follows three stages which indicate major changes in the language system (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). First, the internalization of new L2 items leads to greater complexity. Then, the modification of the internalized items results in greater accuracy. Finally, the consolidation and proceduralization of L2 knowledge ensure greater fluency. However, longitudinal CAF studies have provided mixed results on this developmental sequence in L2 writing. In a case study of four advanced learners of English which lasted one year, Caspi observed that the development of lexical and syntactic complexity preceded the development of accuracy in these areas. Polio and Shea reported that instructed L2 English learners made greater progress in complexity than in accuracy per one semester. However, Larsen-Freeman found that five Chinese learners of English made grater progress in accuracy as opposed to complexity and fluency. In the case of languages other than English (LOTE), Spoelman and Verspoor found that a Dutch learner who studied Finnish for three years increased not only syntactic and lexical complexity, but also accuracy in most aspects. Gunnarsson, who observed five Swedish L2 learners of French for thirty months, found that some learners progressed in accuracy as opposed to fluency, but others did exactly the opposite. In a three-year case study of fifteen Polish students of Swedish, Kowal found that the development of fluency and accuracy was ahead of complexity. As for quantitative studies, Storch and Tapper observed significant progress in accuracy and complexity at the cost of fluency in the case of postgraduate English students in Australia. However, in the case of undergraduate students in the same context, Knoch, Rouhshad, and Storch reported significant gains only in fluency.

With respect to syntactic complexity, Norris and Ortega proposed the developmental sequence consisting of coordination, subordination, and nominalization, which has been challenged by some studies (Inoue; Bulté and Housen, "Syntactic"). Concerning the development of lexical complexity, some studies reported progress in lexical sophistication and variation with regress in lexi-

cal density (Durán et al.; Storch and Tapper; Zheng), whereas others did not report significant progress in any of them (Bulté and Housen, "Conceptualizing"; Knoch, Rouhshad, and Storch). As for the co-development of these two types of complexity, some support has been provided for the claim that lexis develops before syntax (Caspi; Verspoor, Schmid, and Xu; Verspoor, Lowie, and Wieling). Notwithstanding, it is assumed that more synchronized development of different subsystems indicates automatic language use (van Geert and Verspoor; Kowal; Hou, Loerts, and Verspoor).

Generally speaking, complexity, accuracy, and fluency are multi-componential subsystems which may develop differently in different learners under different learning conditions (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). CDST research has highlighted both intra-individual and inter-individual variability in CAF development. With respect to the former, CDST studies reported significant peaks (Verspoor, Lowie, and van Dijk; Spoelman and Verspoor; Penris and Verspoor; Hou, Loerts, and Verspoor) and phase transitions (Baba and Nita; Wang and Tao) in CAF development. With respect to the latter, such studies emphasized differences between individual learners (Larsen-Freeman; Caspi; Gunnarsson; Kowal; Bulté and Housen, "Syntactic"; Pfenninger, "The Dynamic"; Baba), even in the case of identical twins (Lowie et al.). Since such differences are not always statistically significant, Vercellotti argued against the idea of separate developmental paths. Thus, the present study will compare the individual learners' learning profiles with the whole group in L2 English writing at the level of secondary school.

3. Method

3.1. Research aim and questions

The aim of the present study was to examine the individual learners' development of syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency (CALF) in L2 English writing at secondary school in comparison to the whole group. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1. What progress did the whole group of learners make in the development of CALF variables in L2 English writing at secondary school?

RQ2. What group profiles can be distinguished with respect to progress in these measures?

RQ3. What progress did individual learners make in the development of the CALF measures in L2 English writing at secondary school in comparison to the whole group?

RQ4. What are individual learner profiles with respect to progress in these measures like?

3.2. Research method and variables

The present study was a sequential mixed method (MM) study (Johnson and Christensen; Hiver and Al-Hoorie) in which group-based data obtained in a panel study were further analysed with respect to all individual learners. A panel design is a study in which the same variables are measured repeatedly in the same individuals over a longer period of time (Dörnyei; Salkind; Hiver and Al-Hoorie). The study focused on eleven general and specific CALF variables whose operationalization is presented in Table 1 (Ellis and Barkhuizen; Larsen-Freeman; Lu, "Automatic"; Leech, Rayson, and Wilson; McKee, Malvern, and Richards). The main unit of analysis was a T-unit, defined as the main clause with subordinated clauses (Hunt).

Table 1: Research variables

Index	Symbol	Index description
Syntactic complexity	SC	Number of clauses per T-unit
Lexical complexity	LC	Complex TTR—word types per square root of two times the words
Accuracy	AC	Correct T-unit ratio—number of correct T-units per all T-units in a text
Fluency	FL	Average number of words per T-unit in a given text
Subordination	SB	Number of dependent clauses per T-unit
Coordination	CO	Number of coordinated phrases per T-unit
Nominalization	NM	Number of complex nominals per T-unit
Lexical density	LD	Number of lexical tokens per total number of tokens
Lexical sophistication	LS	Number of advanced tokens per total number of lexical tokens
Lexical variation	LV	Randomized type-token ratio
General language development	GLD	Weighted arithmetic mean from general and specific measures calculated on the basis of normalized data

3.3. Participants and setting

The study was carried out at secondary school in Poland in 2014–2017. The research sample consisted of one hundred secondary school learners, i.e., forty-five boys and fifty-five girls, aged sixteen to nineteen in grades 1–3, respectively. After around nine years of learning English at lower educational levels, the learners represented the B1 level in grade 1 and the B2 level in grades 2 and 3 at secondary school. They participated in an extended English programme, followed the same coursebook, and had four to six lessons per week depending on the grade. They were taught in seven language groups by five different teachers. The instruction, which was delivered mainly in L2, was based on the presentation, practice, and production sequence,

involved all language areas and skills, and entailed formal assessment. Around half of the learners had some extra-curricular classes in English. The learners' results on the final written exam in English (B1—91.8%; B2—72.1%) were better than the national results (B1—73.0%; B2—63.0%).

3.4. Data collection and analysis

The Written English Developmental Corpus of Polish Learners (WEDCPL) is a genuine longitudinal corpus (Granger) compiled on the basis of a multi-wave procedure within which the panel of the same one hundred learners was asked to compose essays on different topics during twenty-one data waves which spanned the period of three years at secondary school (Table 2). The corpus comprises 1,924 per total of 2,100 texts, the return rate being 91.6%. The size of the analysed corpus was 393,202 words, with the average text length of 204 words. The corpus compilation involved the following stages: asking learners to write essays on various topics without reference materials during English lessons once a month; checking the essays and giving feedback to the learners; converting hand-written essays into electronic transcripts with the use of the speech recognition program Dragon Naturally Speaking (Nuance®); verifying the transcripts with the original versions, including the learners' errors; and truncating the transcripts to a specified length. The accuracy of the transcripts was checked by an inter-rater ($r = 1.00$).

Table 2: Longitudinal corpus compilation

Time	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
September	Organization		Organization		Organization	
October	Test 1	Fashion	Test 9	Books and films	Test 17	Love
November	Test 2	Internet	Test 10	Shopping	Test 18	TV
December	Test 3	Music	Test 11	Friendship	Test 19	Crime
January	Test 4	Education	Test 12	Christmas	Winter break	
February	Winter break		Winter break		Test 20	Terrorism
March	Test 5	Ecology	Test 13	Family	Test 21	Tolerance
April	Test 6	Pets	Test 14	Health	End of school-year	
May	Test 7	Work	Test 15	Fame	Final exams	
June	Test 8	Holidays	Test 16	Home and living	—	

The corpus was analysed by means of different computer programs. The analy-sis of accuracy, which was conducted manually in Microsoft Excel, involved marking T-units for spelling, lexical, grammatical, and discourse errors in British and American English on the basis of the 0–1 scale, with the inter-rater reliability

equalling 0.93. Fluency and syntactic complexity were computed by means of the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) (Lu, "Automatic"). The reliability of the T-unit count in the analyses of accuracy, syntax, and fluency was 0.99. Lexical density and sophistication were measured by means of the L2 Lexical Complexity Analyzer (L2LCA) (Lu, "The Relationship") while lexical variation by Text Inspector (*Text Inspector*). The reliability of the word count in the two programs was 1.00. The research samples were pre-processed for automated syntactic and lexical analyses. For the former, spelling, morphological, and morphosyntactic errors were corrected (James), whereas for the latter, minor spelling errors and morphosyntactic errors were corrected, but words with major spelling errors, morphological errors, and L1 or L3 words were excluded (Hemchua and Schmitt; James).

The panel data from these language programs were first analysed at the group level and then at the level of all individual learners. For this purpose, the missing data (8.4%) were forecast with the ETS function in Excel, which uses the Exponential Triple Smoothing (ETS) algorithm to predict future values on the basis of prior data in a time series taking into account peaks and lows. The differences between the group and individual results were checked by the Mann-Whitney *U* test for independent samples ($\alpha = 0.05$; $n = 21$). This non-parametric test was used because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality ($\alpha = 0.05$; $n = 21$) had not shown the normal distribution of scores in any of the CALF variables measured in the group with which the individual learners were compared. The relationships between CALF variables and time were calculated by means of Pearson's linear correlation coefficient (r), the critical value (r^*) being 0.43 ($n = 21$; $\alpha = 0.05$). The group and individual profiles were plotted on the basis of time correlations. Positive correlations indicated progress while negative correlations regress in a given variable, with insignificant correlations denoting lack of change.

4. Results

4.1. CALF development—group results and profiles

The results of the study (Table 3) indicated that, in terms of syntactic complexity, the whole group of learners, on average, produced 1.40 clauses per T-unit ($SD = 0.08$) while, in terms of lexical complexity, it obtained 5.26 points ($SD = 0.20$). In terms of accuracy, the group used 34.00% of correct T-units per all T-units in a given text ($SD = 0.05$) while, in terms of fluency, it produced 10.80 words per T-unit ($SD = 0.89$). As far as language progress is concerned, the correlations between the group results on all tests and time showed positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationships in the case of lexical complexity ($r = 0.59^*$) and fluency ($r = 0.56^*$), but insignificant relationships in the case of syntactic complexity ($r = 0.33$) and accuracy ($r = -0.05$) (Table 3). Thus, the group profile concerning

the general CALF measures consisted of progress in lexical complexity and fluency (LC/FL) (Figure 1).

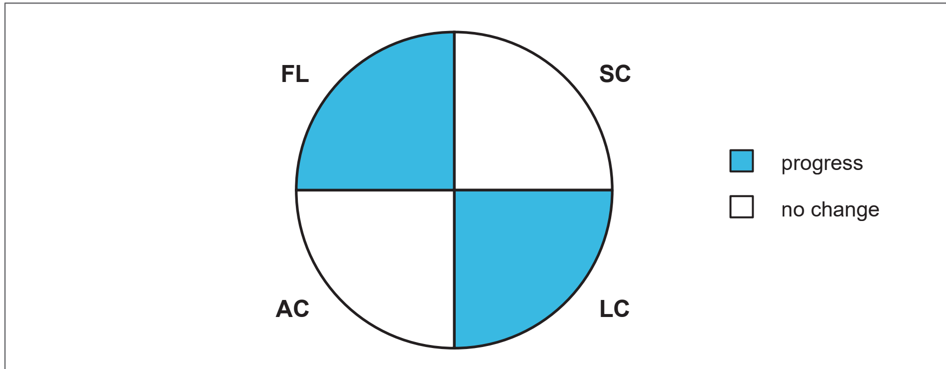

Figure 1: Progress in complexity, accuracy and fluency—group profile

Source: own data.

In terms of specific measures of syntactic complexity, the group, on average, produced 0.41 subordinated clauses (*SD* = 0.08), 0.30 coordinated phrases (*SD* = 0.30), and 1.11 complex nominals per T-unit (Table 3). Time correlations indicated a positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationship for nominalization (*r* = 0.64*), but insignificant relationships for subordination (*r* = 0.35) and coordination (*r* = 0.37) (Table 3). Thus, the group profile of syntactic complexity involved progress only in nominalization (NM) (Figure 2).

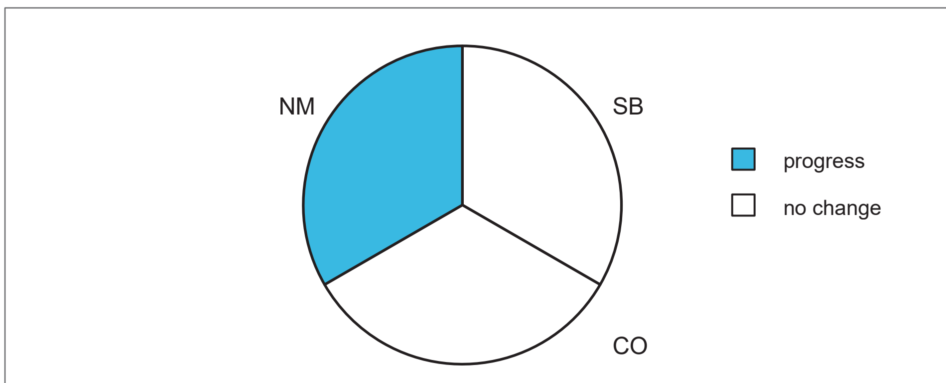

Figure 2: Progress in syntactic complexity—group profile

Source: own data.

As for specific lexical measures, the study showed that, in terms of lexical density, the group used 52.00% lexical items per all items in the text (*SD* = 0.02),

whereas in terms of lexical sophistication, it used 22.00% of words which went beyond the first two thousand most frequent words in English per text (*SD* = 0.04) (Table 3). For lexical variation, the group obtained 79.94 points (*SD* = 7.36). Time correlations revealed a positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationship for lexical variation ($r = 0.53$*), but insignificant relationships for lexical density ($r = 0.22$) and sophistication ($r = -0.32$) (Table 3). Hence, the group profile of lexical complexity entailed progress only in lexical variation (LV) (Figure 3).

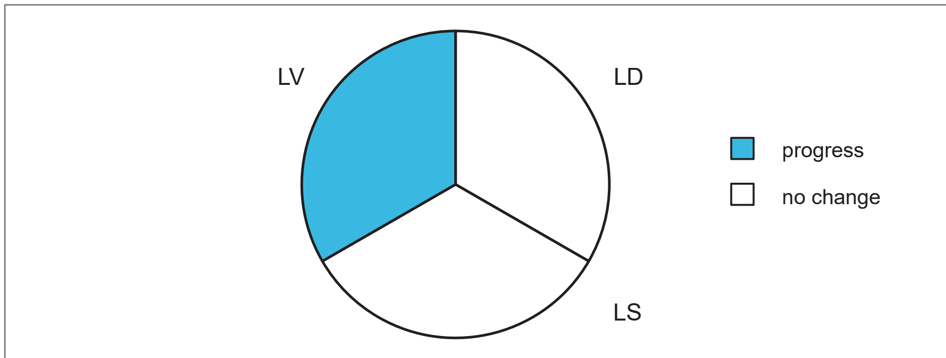

Figure 3: Progress in lexical complexity—group profile

Source: own data.

Finally, general language development of the whole group of learners was equal to 0.47 on the 0–1 scale (cf. 3.2) (Table 3). Its correlation with time was quite strong, positive, and statistically significant ($p = 0.73$*). Language progress in all areas is summarized in Figure 4.

Table 3: Group results and progress in language development

Data	SC	LC	AC	FL	SB	CO	NM	LD	LS	LV	GLD
M	1.40	5.26	0.34	10.80	0.41	0.30	1.11	0.52	0.22	79.94	—
M_N	0.32	0.50	0.48	0.55	0.35	0.44	0.48	0.51	0.67	0.45	0.47
SD	0.08	0.20	0.05	0.89	0.08	0.05	0.20	0.02	0.04	7.36	0.13
Min	1.29	4.96	0.26	9.21	0.30	0.23	0.78	0.47	0.13	66.68	0.22
Max	1.62	5.56	0.43	12.12	0.62	0.39	1.47	0.56	0.26	95.96	0.69
r	0.33	0.59*	−0.05	0.56*	0.35	0.37	0.64*	0.22	−0.32	0.53*	0.73*

Note: asterisk—statistically significant results (Pearson product, $\alpha = 0.05$, $n = 21$).

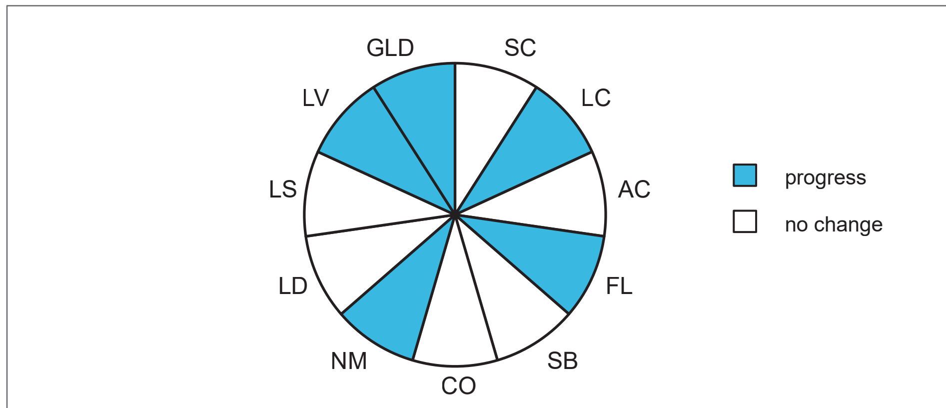

Figure 4: Language progress—group profile

Source: own data.

4.2. CALF development—individual results

The analysis of the differences between the group and individual learners' average results in the development of all CALF measures, conducted by means of the Mann-Whitney *U* test ($\alpha = 0.05$; $n = 21$), revealed that seventy-six per total of 1,100 results, i.e., 6.91%, obtained by individual learners differed from the group (Table 4). More precisely, twenty-four per 1,100 results, i.e., 2.18%, were significantly higher than the group's average score, whereas fifty-two per 1,100 results, i.e., 4.73%, were lower than this score on different CALF variables. The biggest number of differences was observed in lexical variation, with five per one hundred better results and thirty per one hundred worse results obtained by the individual learners.

As far as the individual learners' progress is concerned, the results of the study (Table 5, Figure 5) indicated that the correlation between syntactic complexity and time was positive and statistically significant for 22.00% and negative for 3.00% of the learners (n = 100), whereas the correlation between lexical complexity and time was positive for 28.00% of the learners. In terms of accuracy, the time correlation was positive for 8.00% and negative for 5.00% of the learners, whereas in terms of fluency, it was positive for 34.00% of the learners. Furthermore, positive time correlations for specific syntactic measures were as follows: subordination—23.00%, coordination—14.00%, nominalization—45.00%, whereas negative time correlations were: subordination—1.00% and coordination—1.00%. As for specific lexical measures, positive time correlations included: lexical density—16.00%, lexical variation—28.00%, whereas negative correlations were: lexical density—3.00% and lexical sophistication—23.00%. Finally, the relationship between general language development and time was

positive for 41.00% of the learners. In total, 295 per 1,100, i.e., 26.82%, time correlations were statistically significant, including 259 (23.55%) positive and thirty-six (3.27%) negative correlations.

Table 4: Differences between group and individual learners

Data	Group	Individual learners			
		Higher results		Lower results	
	M	*n*	%	*n*	%
SC	1.40	2	2.00	4	4.00
LC	5.26	2	2.00	2	2.00
AC	0.34	4	4.00	5	5.00
FL	10.80	3	3.00	3	3.00
SB	0.41	2	2.00	3	3.00
CO	0.30	3	3.00	4	4.00
NM	1.11	2	2.00	1	1.00
LD	0.52	1	1.00	0	0.00
LS	0.22	0	0.00	0	0.00
LV	79.94	5	5.00	30	30.00
GLD	0.47	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	—	24	2.18	52	4.73

Table 5: Progress in language development—individual learners

Data	Progress		Regress	
	n	%	*n*	%
SC	22	22.00	3	3.00
LC	28	28.00	0	0.00
AC	8	8.00	5	5.00
FL	34	34.00	0	0.00
SB	23	23.00	1	1.00
CO	14	14.00	1	1.00
NM	45	45.00	0	0.00
LD	16	16.00	3	3.00
LS	0	0.00	23	23.00
LV	28	28.00	0	0.00
GLD	41	41.00	0	0.00
Total	259	23.55	36	3.27

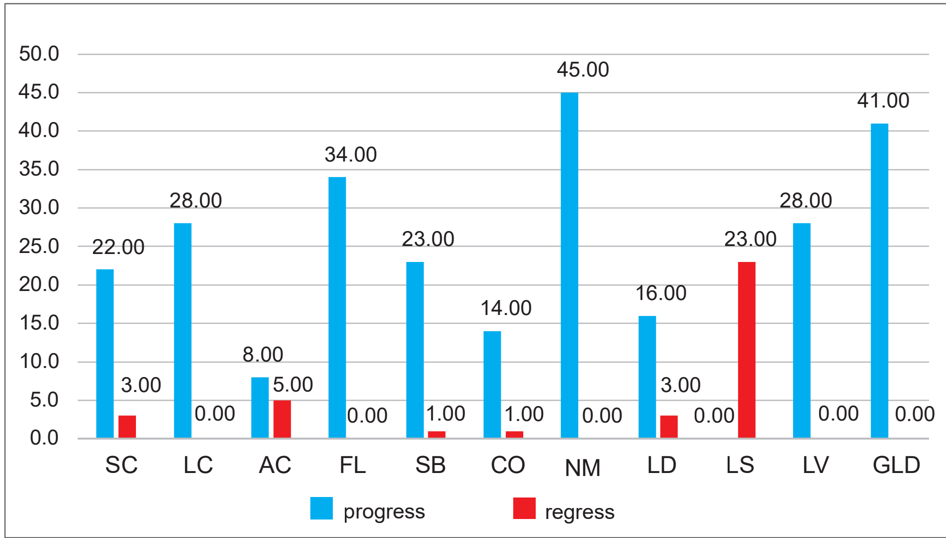

Figure 5: Progress in language development—individual learners

Source: own data.

4.3. CALF profiles—individual learners

Concerning individual CALF profiles, the study showed that, in the group of one hundred learners, most individuals made significant progress in the development of one general measure, namely lexical complexity—13.00%, syntactic complexity—4.00%, fluency—8.00%, and accuracy—5.00%, with one learner (1.00%) making regress in accuracy (Table 6, Figure 6). Some learners made progress in two general measures, namely SC/FL—12.00%, LC/FL—8.00%, and SC/LC—2.00%. However, three learners (3.00%) progressed in fluency at the cost of accuracy, with one learner (1.00%) making progress in syntactic complexity at the cost of accuracy and another one (1.00%) progressing in accuracy at the cost of syntactic complexity. Only three learners progressed in three general measures: SC/LC/FL—2.00% and SC/AC/FL—1.00%, with one learner developing syntactic and lexical complexity to the disadvantage of accuracy (1.00%) and another learner developing lexical complexity and accuracy to the disadvantage of syntactic complexity (1.00%). Still, for 37.00% of the learners, the CALF profile involved neither significant progress nor regress.

In terms of specific syntactic measures (Table 7, Figure 7), most learners made significant progress in the development of one measure: nominalization—25.00%, subordination—8.00%, and coordination—3.00%, with one learner making regress in coordination (1.00%). Some learners progressed in two measures, namely SB/NM—11.00%, CO/NM—5.00%, and SB/CO—1.00%. Only 4.00% of the learners

made progress in all three syntactic measures. Overall, the syntactic measures remained at the same level for 42.00% of the learners.

Table 6: Progress in complexity, accuracy, and fluency—individual profiles

Profile	*n*	%
LC	13	13.00
FL	8	8.00
AC	5	5.00
SC	4	4.00
AC*	1	1.00
SC/FL	12	12.00
LC/FL	8	8.00
SC/LC	2	2.00
AC*/FL	3	3.00
SC*/LC	1	1.00
SC*/AC	1	1.00
SC/LC/FL	2	2.00
SC/AC/FL	1	1.00
SC/LC/AC*	1	1.00
SC*/LC/AC	1	1.00
None	37	37.00

Note: asterisk—regress.

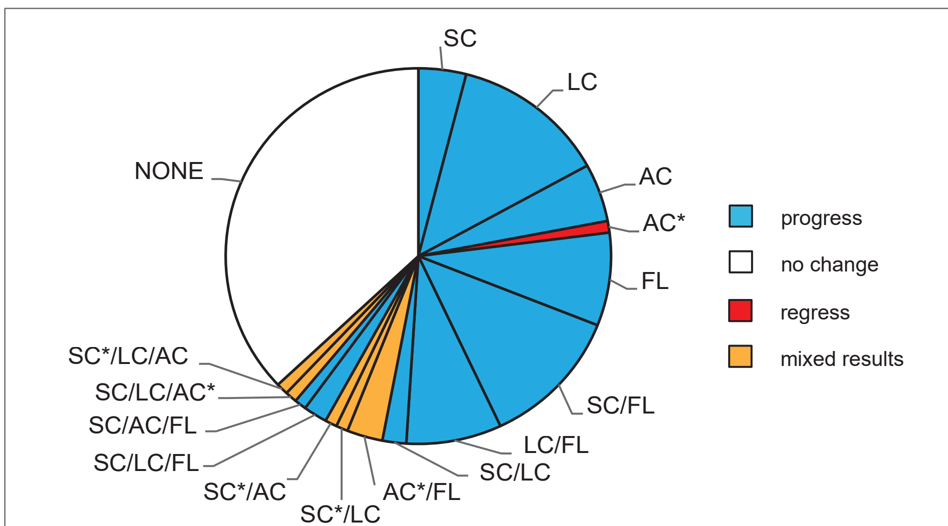

Figure 6: Progress in complexity, accuracy, and fluency—individual profiles

Note: asterisk—regress.
Source: own data.

Table 7: Progress in syntactic complexity—individual profiles

Profile	*n*	%
NM	25	25.00
SB	8	8.00
CO	3	3.00
CO*	1	1.00
SB/NM	11	11.00
CO/NM	5	5.00
SB/CO	1	1.00
SB/CO/NM	4	4.00
None	42	42.00

Note: asterisk—regress.

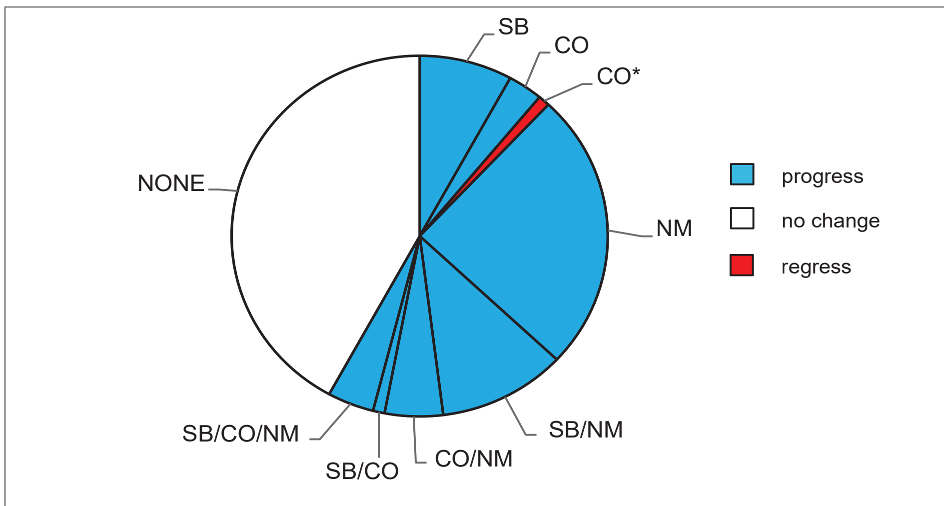

Figure 7: Progress in syntactic complexity—individual profiles

Note: asterisk—regress.
Source: own data.

As for specific lexical measures (Table 8, Figure 8), 15.00% and 8.00% of the learners progressed in lexical variation and density, respectively. However, 16.00% of them regressed in lexical sophistication, with one more learner (1.00%) regressing in lexical density. As for other profiles, 8.00% of the learners developed both lexical density and variation, while 5.00% of the learners developed lexical variation to the disadvantage of sophistication. In addition, two learners regressed in lexical density and sophistication, but one of them progressed in lexical variation. Still, for 45.00% of the learners, the lexical profile did not involve any significant changes.

Table 8. Progress in lexical complexity—individual profiles

Profile	*n*	%
LS*	16	16.00
LV	15	15.00
LD	8	8.00
LD*	1	1.00
LD/LV	8	8.00
LS*/LV	5	5.00
LD*/LS*	1	1.00
LD*/LS*/LV	1	1.00
None	45	45.00

Note: asterisk—regress.

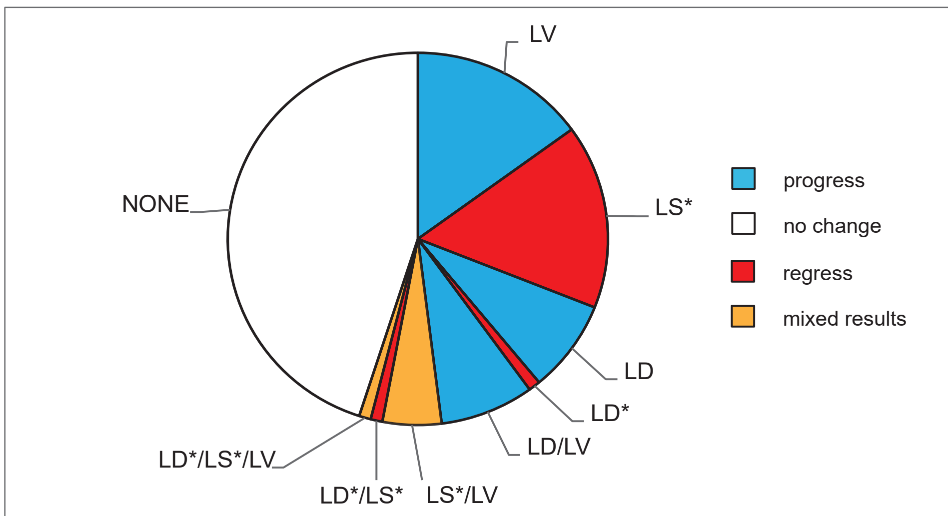

Figure 8: Progress in lexical complexity—individual profiles

Note: asterisk—regress.
Source: own data.

Finally, as already mentioned (Table 5), 41.00% of the individual learners in the group made significant progress in general language development, there being no change for the remaining 59.00% of the learners (Figure 9).

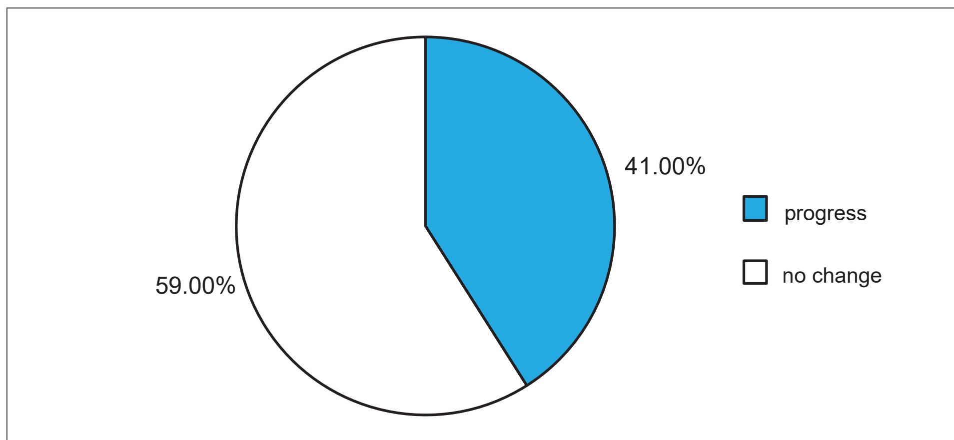

Figure 9: Progress in general language development—individual profiles

Source: own data.

5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to compare the individual learners' development of syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency (CALF) to the whole group in L2 English writing at secondary school (cf. 3.1). In reference to the first (RQ1) and second (RQ2) research questions, which focused on the group results and profiles in the development of CALF variables (cf. 3.1), the panel study indicated that the whole group of learners progressed in lexical complexity and fluency at the cost of syntactic complexity and accuracy. These findings overlap with other studies which point out that complexity precedes accuracy (Caspi; Polio and Shea) and that lexis precedes syntax (Caspi; Verspoor, Schmid, and Xu; Verspoor, Lowie, and Wieleing). Moreover, the group in the panel study made significant progress in nominalization as opposed to subordination and coordination, which contrasts with Norris and Ortega's developmental sequence, but supports the trade-off between subordination and nominalization (Bulté and Housen, "Syntactic"). Additionally, the group developed lexical variation to the disadvantage of lexical density and sophistication, which contrasts with studies that reported lack of progress in all three variables (Bulté and Housen, "Conceptualizing"; Knoch, Rouhshad, and Storch), but partly overlaps with studies that reported progress not only in lexical variation, but also in lexical sophistication at the cost of lexical density (Durán et al.; Storch and Tapper; Zheng). In total, despite the fact that the group developed some areas better than others, it made significant general language progress.

In relation to the third (RQ3) research question, which pertained to the individual learners' results in the development of CALF measures (cf. 3.1), the analysis of the panel data revealed that there were few statistically significant differences between the group and individual average results in CALF, one exception being lexical variation. As for language progress over time, the individual results reflected the group results in that more individuals progressed in fluency and lexical complexity than in syntactic complexity and accuracy. The same was true for nominalization as opposed to subordination and coordination as well as for lexical variation as opposed to density and sophistication, with some individuals actually regressing in the last measure. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that around 40.00% of the learners did not undergo any significant progress in the general CALF measures (37.00%), as well as the specific syntactic (42.00%) and lexical measures (45.00%), leaving more than half of the learners with a lack of general progress (59.00%). Although the study does not provide the profile on all eleven measures, it was double-checked that only 15.00% of the learners did not undergo any change at all. In general, the study showed that making significant progress in many aspects of language was difficult for learners in the EFL context, the more so as the so-called plateau effect (Richards) is characteristic for intermediate learners who tend to believe that their language level is adequate for everyday life communication.

As for the last research question (RQ4), which concerned the learners' individual learning profiles (cf. 3.1), it was revealed that the majority of the individuals represented different learning profiles than the group. In terms of the general CALF measures, only 8.00% of the individual learners demonstrated the same learning profile as the whole group, consisting of progress in lexical complexity and fluency. As for syntactic complexity, 25.00% of the learners followed the group profile, which involved the development of nominalization. As for lexical complexity, 15.00% of the learners had the same learning profile as the whole group, which entailed the development of lexical variation. Finally, in terms of general language development the number of similar profiles amounted to 41.00%. The learners' profiles showed that different subsystems developed in different ways in individual learners (van Geert and van Dijk; Larsen-Freeman; Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder). The learners allocated their limited cognitive resources to the development of one subsystem to the disadvantage of other subsystems (Skehan). Not being able to synchronize different subsystems, they prioritized some subsystems over others (van Geert and Verspoor; Hou, Loerts, and Verspoor).

Generally, it may be said that in terms of the average CALF results, the L2 learners were not so different after all (Pfenninger, "Not So Individual"; Vercellotti). However, in terms of language progress over time, the learners' differing learning profiles indicated that language development might be an individually owned process (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; Verspoor, de Bot, and Lowie). The study also showed that generalizing the research results from the group to the individual learners would have led to false conclusions as hardly any group is an ergodic

ensemble (Molenaar and Campbell; Penris and Verspoor) and hardly any learner is exactly average (Hiver and Al-Hoorie).

The study has some limitations which need to be addressed. Firstly, sequential mixed method studies have recently been criticized for a lack of integration between the primary and secondary method (Seawright; Hiver and Al-Hoorie). Secondly, although the study covered the whole educational level (Ortega and Iberri-Shea), the period of three years constituted merely a fragment of such a long process as foreign language development, with the plateau effect at the inter-mediate level (Richards). Thirdly, although the study involved a multi-wave research design, the granularity of measurement (Finkel) was rather low for process-oriented analyses ($n = 21$), irrespectively of the fact that each data wave involved one hundred learners. Finally, the learners' performance might have been influenced by the fact that within the iterative research procedure, the learners were provided with the same tasks in the same conditions, but with different topics. In addition, their performance might have been affected by instruction provided by different teachers with potentially different teaching styles.

Notwithstanding, the study offers important implications for English teachers in the secondary school EFL context in Poland. As the group data indicated, Polish teachers of English should work on learners' fluent use of complex and accurate language. In terms of syntactic complexity, they should focus on subordination while in terms of lexical complexity on lexical sophistication. However, the teachers should realize that individual learners may differ from the whole group as language development is not only a complex, dynamic, and variable, but also an individually owned process. As the individual data showed, learners whose average results are apparently similar may in fact follow different learning trajectories over the course of language development. Due to their limited linguistic and cognitive resources, they may progress in some areas, but regress in others. Hence, the teachers' task is to support the development of different subsystems in accordance with the learners' abilities and needs in order to cater for more coordinated language development which is said to characterize successful language learners. Moreover, it is a real challenge for the teachers to empower more learners to make significant progress in different aspects of language development in L2 English writing in an EFL context. Providing learners with extensive usage-based instruction should lead to the internalization, accommodation, and proceduralizing of complexified language which learners would be able to use automatically, accurately, and appropriately in free written communication.

6. Conclusions

The study examined language development along general and specific measures of complexity, accuracy, and fluency in L2 English writing at secondary school by

comparing this process between the group and individual learners. In the light of the data, a few conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, as a whole group, the learners made significant progress in lexical complexity and fluency at the cost of syntactic complexity and accuracy. Moreover, they progressed in nominalization at the cost of subordination and coordination, and in lexical variation at the cost of lexical density and sophistication. These results amounted to their progress in general language development. Secondly, the individual learners differed from the group not in terms of the average CALF results, but in terms of progress over time. In contrast to the group, many learners did not make significant progress in the clusters of the general and specific CALF measures, which was visible in the fact that less than half of the learners progressed in terms of general language development. Thirdly, the learners differed not only from the group, but also from one another in terms of the learning profiles which they followed. Thus, there arises the need to foster coordinated language development more efficiently in individual learners in the EFL context.

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Exploring Task-Based Learning of L2 English Formulaic Sequences from an Intra- and Inter-Individual Perspective

Abstract: This study aimed to find out which of the three tasks, summarizing (SUM), discussion (DIS) or retelling (RT), was more effective in teaching L2 English formulaic sequences to a group of Polish teenagers. In so doing, 108 EFL learners were assigned to one of the three groups: SUM ($n = 36$), DIS ($n = 36$), and RT ($n = 36$) and followed a three-week-long task-based intervention which was similar for all the participants apart from the target task. At the inter-individual level, the statistical analysis revealed progress but no significant differences in achievement between the three groups. A further analysis at the intra-individual level, following the principles of Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, revealed that each learner displayed unique progress and regression patterns.

Keywords: formulaic sequences, TBLT, task, complex dynamic systems

1. Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to L2 instruction in which meaning-focused and outcome-oriented tasks are employed as sources of input, drivers of output and interaction, and frameworks for organizing lessons (East; Ellis, *Task-Based*; Ellis et al.; Long; Nunan; Róg, "Trudność"; Van den Branden). Consequently, TBLT provides opportunities for explicit, implicit, and incidental L2 learning as a result of performing tasks in the target language (Lambert, Aubrey, and Bui). This educational framework is supported by most current SLA theories (East; Ellis et al.; Long), and research, on the whole, shows that L2 learners following TBLT make substantial progress in developing grammar, vocabulary, and language skills (Bryfonski and McKay; Xuan, Cheng, and Liu; see Boers and Faez for discussion).

Tasks are central to TBLT as they serve as primary units of instruction and assessment. However, the efficacy of specific tasks remains an area of active exploration (Gilabert and Malicka; Malicka; Róg, "Trudność"; Zhou, Wang, and Liu). This paper uses a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) to investigate the feasibility of different task types for teaching L2 formulaic sequences. Research into TBLT has thus far focused on statistical testing based on group means; however, one important implication of CDST is that inter- and intra-individual variability of second language development becomes as important as the statistical generalizations across subjects. The "full story of L2 learning" (Pfenninger, Festman, and Singleton) consists, therefore, not only of the snapshots of learners' states at a given time but also of observations of the trajectories of their L2 development. Advocates of CDST suggest that fluctuations in learner performance, as well as the dynamics between internal and external learner resources, be given more attention in second language studies (Freeborn et al.; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman), and this is what the present paper aims to do.

Accordingly, the present study identifies the general group-level and the specific intra-individual effects of different types of tasks on the acquisition of target L2 formulaic sequences. In so doing, it follows the development of three groups of learners, each taught according to the principles of TBLT but using different task types: summarizing, discussion, and retelling. The paper begins with an overview of pertinent literature.

2. Literature review

This section is an overview of pertinent literature concerning the use of tasks in second language instruction and the role of formulaic sequences in second language development.

2.1. Task-based language teaching

Tasks in L2 instruction can be broadly defined as activities that people may potentially do in their everyday lives that require the use of language. Exemplary tasks include writing a comment on social media, watching a film, searching for information online, responding to someone else's words, etc. Tasks facilitate language development while preparing students to use their language skills in meaningful interactions outside the classroom (Norris, Bygate, and Van den Branden). However, Boers and Faez caution that tasks are often misunderstood for exercises. The former require the use of language to achieve a specific goal, while the latter have a specific language-focused outcome. For instance, reading a recipe in a foreign language to make a shopping list of the necessary ingredients can be considered a task, while filling in gaps with a given grammatical structure is clearly

an exercise. Ellis and Shintani suggested four inclusion criteria of a task: (1) there is a focus on meaning rather than on the language code, (2) there is some sort of a gap so that learners have to retrieve or share meanings, (3) learners rely on their own linguistic resources to perform a task, i.e., the task does not stipulate explicitly what language structures to use while completing it, and (4) there is a clear outcome other than practising the language, i.e., something has to be achieved through the use of language. Importantly, these four criteria do not preclude language-focused exercises during the lesson. In fact, many advocates of TBLT (Ellis, *Task-Based*; Nunan; Willis) suggest their inclusion in the post-task phases of a lesson.

For the above reasons, TBLT uses tasks (not language items) as units of instruction. A typical lesson in a TBLT framework is not focused on teaching a preselected lexicogrammatical structure, such as a grammatical tense or a thematic set of words, but on preparing learners to complete authentic, communication-driven tasks. However, TBLT is not solely focused on teaching language through meaning. Within a task, specific characteristics exist that incline learners to engage in particular language usage and cognitive processes that have been identified as advantageous for language acquisition (Ellis et al.). Throughout the process of task-based language learning, students actively interact and engage in the negotiation of meaning to establish understanding, while tasks prompt noticing and application of linguistic structures that learners are to acquire (Mackey, Ziegler, and Bryfonski).

A task-based lesson is usually based on the task cycle (Ellis, *Task-Based*; Willis). The pre-task phase comprises activities administered prior to the main task, serving as a preparatory phase for learners. These activities encompass techniques such as activating prior knowledge through brainstorming, identifying keywords or key ideas, dictionary search, mind mapping related to the task topic, observing model task demonstrations, engaging in similar tasks, or allocating time for pre-task planning. The during-task phase centres around the actual task and the various options available to learners. Teachers may impose a time limit for task performance and decide whether learners can access input data while undertaking the task. Introducing unexpected elements into the task is also a viable option. The post-task phase entails procedures for addressing task performance with three primary objectives: providing an opportunity for task repetition, encouraging reflection on task execution, and promoting a focus on forms. This is where more explicit instruction may occur (East; Ellis et al.).

Current research (Boers and Faez; Bryfonski and McKay; Xuan, Cheng, and Liu) generally points to favourable results of task-based and task-supported programmes, although unclear inclusion criteria of what constitutes a task make meta-analyses difficult. Studies show promising results concerning the feasibility of TBLT in teaching L2 vocabulary, although with a few provisos. Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman, in an overview of pertinent studies, conclude that tasks (1) encourage learners to modify their input to help other learners comprehend vocabulary, (2) help both productive and receptive vocabulary acquisition, and that (3) task-induced

interaction between learners aids vocabulary retention in general. Similarly, Lu and Fan noted that TBLT likely enhances vocabulary acquisition due to opportunities for output and interaction. TBLT has thus far been successfully applied to teaching L2 English business vocabulary at a Ukrainian university (Nychkalo et al.) and Iranian ESP courses (Sarani and Sahebi), with task-based groups outperforming traditional groups. Some researchers compared the effectiveness of differently focused tasks on vocabulary acquisition. For instance, Nguyen and Boers found that input-based tasks followed by an output-based activity, such as an oral summary, yielded slightly more significant improvements in vocabulary meaning recall. Duong et al. reported that input-based tasks led to higher gains in vocabulary recall at the meaning level, while output-based tasks resulted in better scores in form recall. No significant differences were found in spontaneous use and meaning recognition tests. Importantly for the present article, there remains some unclarity regarding task sequencing and the impact of the complexity of different task types on L2 development (see: Malicka; Róg, "Trudność", "Impact"; Zhou, Wang, and Liu), an issue which requires further empirical investigations.

2.2. Formulaic sequences

Formulaic sequences (also: formulaic expression or conventionalized phrases; see Bardovi-Harlig for an overview of the terms) are sequences of words that are stored in long-term memory as single units and retrieved as such from the mental lexicon (Nattinger and DeCarrico; Roever; Wray, *Lexicon*, *Boundaries*). They are not, therefore, created anew but are recalled as specific word combinations that are usually established expressions. Formulaic language includes collocations, idioms, sayings, conceptual metaphors, and other rephrased chains of words, such as "how are you", "taking into account", "truth be told", or "roll of the dice", belong to formulaic language.

The main advantage of formulaic sequences is the ease of their recall. The structures lodged in memory do not require thinking about the grammaticality of the utterance, and most of them are used in predictable situations (e.g., "Happy birthday to…"). Since striving to minimize effort is a natural human trait, this also applies to minimizing mental effort (Pawley and Syder). Formulaic sequences serve such a function because they reduce the burden on mental processes, which is true both in the production and perception of language (Bardovi-Harlig and Su; Sánchez-Hernández and Alcón-Soler; Taguchi, Li, and Xiao). According to Sinclair, people strive to maximize cognitive processes with minimal effort in communication. Gałkowski (168) concludes that "under normal circumstances, language users do not fully exploit the creative potential of language" as Chomsky would have wished and as his followers have also suggested. Indeed, when talking about human psychological resources, reproducing language is much more economical than processing it, and therefore, "there is a natural tendency to avoid grammar

as much as possible". The way to avoid grammar in this way is precisely by using prefabricated language.

The fixed nature of formulaic sequences leaves little room for error and makes it possible for learners to exceed their competence (Bardovi-Harlig; Roever). Empirical research confirms that speakers using formulaic language are perceived as more fluent since they sound more natural, use fewer pauses, hesitate less, and produce phonological units more smoothly (Boers et al.; Wood, "Effects"; Tavakoli; Tavakoli and Uchihara). Tavakoli and Uchihara found that competent L2 English speakers employ many different formulaic sequences and do so frequently.

As for instruction, many researchers (Tang and Taguchi; Wray, *Lexicon*, *Boundaries*; Wood, *Formulaic*) argue that explicit teaching of L2 formulaic sequences may contribute to the development of greater fluency and, because of the fixed nature of formulas, greater accuracy. Taguchi explains that while other opaque pragmatic rules may require extensive exposure to be internalized by L2 learners, formulaic sequences benefit from explicit classroom instruction. Such instruction may comprise a range of classroom techniques. Nguyen enumerates teacher-fronted explanations, awareness-raising activities that require learners to work with samples of pragmatic input to deduce rules, and overt feedback on L2 use, for instance, metapragmatic comments on a learner's performance.

Concerning teaching formulaic sequences within a TBLT framework, several studies have emphasized the need for a more explicit approach. Evidence suggests that when TBLT approaches incorporate language-focused activities in the post-task phase of a lesson, this produces superior long-term effects compared to the presentation, practice, and production (PPP) approaches (de la Fuente). Wood ("Effects") proposed that explicitly teaching formulaic sequences to students and providing practice in communicative interactions can increase their usage of such sequences in unrelated conversations and enhance fluency. Similarly, McGuire and Larson-Hall found that although task-based teaching facilitates extensive input and output and promotes speaking practice, integrating explicit attention to formulaic sequences in the classroom can enhance students' frequency of use and improve speaking fluency in a second language context. Kim, Kang, and D'Arienzo reported on Korean adolescent L2 English learners' inability to produce target lexical items following an uncontrolled video-production task spanning five days, suggesting that teachers may need to explicitly instruct students to utilize new vocabulary items if this is a task objective.

Overall, little research has been done on using tasks in teaching L2 formulaic sequences. The observation of Ngyuen and Larsen-Freeman, which inspired and became the basis for the current study, supports the view that TBLT effectively directs learners' attentional resources to language forms that would otherwise be unnoticed. Consequently, TBLT may help in the development of L2 formulaic sequences. However, the study by Ngyuen and Larsen-Freeman employed a collaborative gap-fill and spot-the-difference task, which are somewhat debatable if tasks are

to be defined following the suggestion of Ellis and Shintani. I argue that collaboratively performing language-focused activities counts as an exercise, not a task. The study reported below uses three different task types to observe their effect on the acquisition of formulaic sequences: summarizing, a discussion task, and retelling.

3. Current study

The above literature review identified two research gaps. First, tasks have rarely been used in teaching L2 formulaic sequences, so there is a need to explore the potential of a task-based approach to teaching such conventional expressions. Secondly, it remains unclear which tasks are more conducive to L2 development than others, which makes the inquiry into the effectiveness of different task types an interesting research avenue. To address these issues, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: Is there an effect of TBLT on teaching L2 formulaic sequences? If yes, which type of task is more effective? What is the effect at the inter- and intra-individual level?

RQ2: How do the three tasks—summary, discussion, and retelling—affect productive and receptive knowledge of L2 formulaic sequences?

RQ3: Are these effects lasting?

4. Methodology

This section describes the methodological framework of the study.

4.1. Participants

The study involved 108 secondary school learners aged fifteen to sixteen in a town in the north of Poland. They had been learning EFL for at least eight years and had a language proficiency level around CEFR B1, which is considered intermediate. The school attended by the learners had relatively small language group sizes (around seventeen learners in a group) and offered five hours of EFL instruction per week. The study was conducted when the learners were in their first grade. Prior to the study, the teacher-researcher had taught approximately sixty classes to each group. The participants were divided into three groups taught by the same teacher-researcher. The division into these groups was randomly assigned using convenience sampling, as all the students had a similar level of English proficiency. The EFL course provided no specific method or approach before the study, instead employing an eclectic design with a strong emphasis on communicative tasks.

4.2. Target phrases

Two criteria have been used to ensure the validity of the dependent variable (i.e., the target formulaic sequences). The primary criterion for the selection was the presence of the formulaic sequences in the PHRASE List, i.e., "a list of most frequent non-transparent multiword expressions in English, intended especially for receptive use" (Martinez and Schmitt). The second criterion was the teacher-researcher's intuition (see Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman). The selected formulaic sequences had to be the ones the learners were unfamiliar with but, at the same time, ones that were not overly complex or rare. The thirty selected formulaic sequences belong to the second thousand of most common multiword phrases in the PHRASE List and include formulae such as "a call for, in particular, take over, may well, in terms of, in addition to, even though, a great deal of, followed by, and so on". Such selection criteria ensured that the targets were mostly unknown to learners and suitable to their proficiency level. This was confirmed by the results of the pre-test, which showed little productive and receptive knowledge of these targets (discussed below).

4.3. Instrument and analysis

The pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests measured the participants' productive (PK) and receptive knowledge (RK) of the target formulaic sequences. They were a modified and adapted version of Paribakht and Wesche's Vocabulary Knowledge Scale. The pre- and the delayed post-test comprised thirty items: fifteen requiring learners to provide either an explanation, a translation, or a sentence containing the given sequences. These items measured the participants' productive knowledge of the targets. The next set of fifteen multiple-choice items checked the participants' receptive knowledge (see Appendix). The maximum score for the tests was thirty. A point was awarded if a participant produced or chose a suitable formulaic sequence following standard rules of English. There were also three immediate post-tests, each employed in one of the three intervention weeks. The post-tests were designed in the same way as the pre- and delayed post-tests. The only difference was that they covered only ten target phrases, the ones which were targeted in each week of instruction. A maximum of ten points was awarded for each of these tests. Altogether, the participants could score thirty points on the immediate post-tests, and this total score was used in the analysis.

4.4. Procedure

The groups were taught by the same instructor and followed the same procedure in the pre-task stage of the lesson, completed the same first task (i.e., a reading comprehension task), and followed the same post-task phase (i.e., language-focused activities such as matching the target formulaic sequence to its meaning).

This was done to keep the three groups as similar as possible to reduce the potential influence of any other variables. The intervention took three weeks, during which all groups met five times a week, but only one of those meetings was devoted to teaching the target formulaic sequences. The other four lessons were coursebook-based.

Each lesson began with a warm-up activity followed by a pre-reading activity (usually brainstorming topic-related phrases, a discussion, and a prediction activity). Then, in the task phase, the learners read a passage of about two hundred words at CEFR B1 level, which contained the ten target formulaic sequences (FS) and answered ten comprehension questions. The comprehension questions did not require the use of the target FS. If the learners had any questions regarding the meaning of the phrases in the text, the teacher provided explanations.

Then, each group performed a different task. The first group, SUM (*n* = 36), was asked to "work individually and write a passage summary in around fifty words for a peer who might find this information useful". The second group, DIS (*n* = 36), performed a collaborative discussion task in which learners worked in pairs to discuss to what extent they agreed with ten statements. Each statement contained the target FS (e.g., "A call for the abolition of all national borders and the establishment of a borderless world"). The third group, RT (*n* = 36), was given five minutes to prepare to "retell the passage to a partner to ensure that you both understood it in a similar way". Importantly, neither of the groups was told to use any of the FS.

Once the task phase was complete, learners' attention was explicitly drawn to the target phrases, and in the post-task phase, the learners were asked to complete a matching activity in which they matched the target phrases to their definitions.

Table 1: Outline of the study

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>SUM (n = 36)</th><th>DIS (n = 36)</th><th>RT (n = 36)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Week 1</td><td colspan="3">Pre-test</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Week 2
Week 3
Week 4</td><td colspan="3">Pre-task: Pre-reading activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Task 1: Reading comprehension</td></tr>
<tr><td>Task 2: Summarizing the text in about fifty words</td><td>Task 2: A communicative discussion task based on the text</td><td>Task 2: Retelling the passage</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Post-task: Language-focused activities; immediate post-test after each week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Week 5</td><td colspan="3">Delayed post-test</td></tr>
</table>

The three different tasks can be seen as fulfilling the criteria stipulated by Ellis and Shintani and their revised version in Boers and Faez. The three tasks are all meaning-oriented in that learners have to focus on exchanging or presenting some thoughts. There is a gap in information or opinions. Learners were not told to use specific structures, so they had to rely on their own linguistic resources. Finally,

there is an outcome other than the use of language—learners prepare a summary, retell the story, or exchange their opinions.

Table 2: A comparison of the three task types across task criteria

	Summarizing	Discussion	Retelling
Meaning- focused	Yes (learners find and present in writing the main ideas in the passage)	Yes (learners communicate to exchange opinions)	Yes (learners exchange information contained in the passage)
Gap	Yes (an information gap)	Yes (an opinion gap)	Yes (an information gap)
Learners' own resources	Yes (no specific language elements imposed on the learners)		
Outcome other than the use of language	Yes (an account of the main ideas)	Yes (exchange of opinions)	Yes (a brief account of main ideas)

4.5. Analysis

The pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests were assessed separately for productive and receptive knowledge of the target FS using JASP 17.2. The distribution of the accrued data in both types of knowledge was assessed for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which found that the data did not follow a normal distribution ($p < 0.001$). As the data violated the normality assumption, non-parametric tests were selected to compare the between- and within-group results. The Kruskal-Wallis test was deemed appropriate to measure between-group comparison in the present scenario as it does not rely on the assumption of normal distribution and is designed to compare medians across more than two groups. To compare within-subjects effects, Friedman's test was used as it allows for detecting differences in treatments across multiple test attempts. Further, the data underwent a more fine-grained analysis in that individual learners' results were analysed for instruction effects and retention rate.

5. Results

5.1. Productive knowledge

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences between the groups on the pre- ($p = 0.422$), post- ($p = 0.682$), and delayed post-test ($p = 0.282$). This suggests that the type of task did not produce a statistically significant difference in the results. A Friedman test was conducted to examine the differences between the three tests (pre-, post, and delayed post-test) in each group. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of task type on the test ($\chi^2(2) = 140.934$, $p < 0.001$,

Kendall's $W = 0.652$). Also, the significant chi-squared value indicates differences in the timing of the test, suggesting that the groups achieved different results on consecutive tests.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Conover's test were conducted to examine the specific differences among the test results. Learners in all groups made improvements from the pre- to the post-test. Specifically, significant differences were observed between the results of pre- ($M = 3.972$) and post-tests ($M = 9.777$) [$t\,(214) = 11.778$, $p < 0.001$], the pre and delayed post-tests ($M = 6.194$) [$t\,(214) = 4.494$, $p < 0.001$], and the post- and delayed post-tests [$t\,(214) = 7.284$, $p < 0.001$]. Descriptive statistics for the productive knowledge part of the tests are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviations on productive knowledge tests (max. score = 30)

	PK pre-test			PK post-test			PK delayed post-test		
	DIS	RT	SUM	DIS	RT	SUM	DIS	RT	SUM
Mean	4.250	3.917	3.750	9.750	9.500	10.083	7.167	5.750	5.667
SD	2.523	1.730	1.663	3.541	3.621	3.597	2.893	3.074	3.269

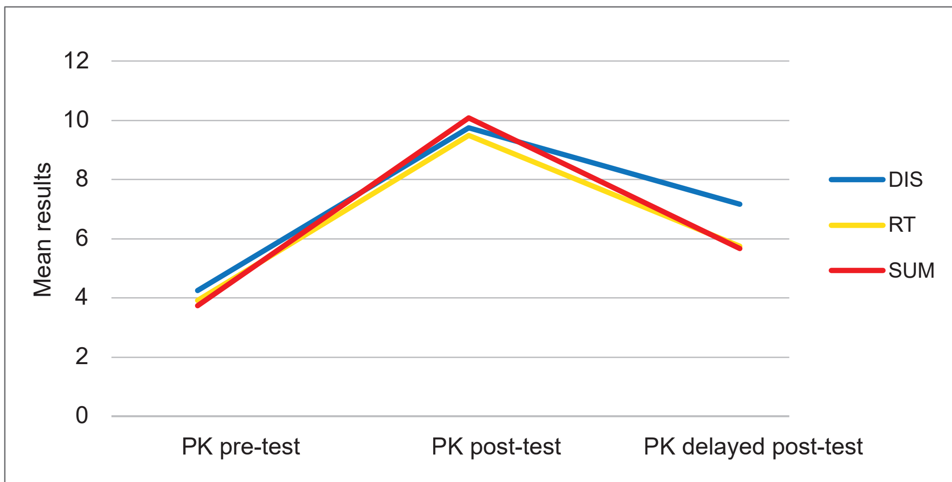

Figure 1: Productive knowledge group results

As presented in Figure 1, all three task types had a similar positive effect on learners' productive knowledge of target FS. At a group level, learning took place, and there was some decay in the retained knowledge over time. The type of task did not impact the learners' performance. Yet, a deeper investigation into intra-individual changes, in accordance with CDST (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron; Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman; Verspoor, de Bot, and Lowie), shows that these general tendencies were not true for all learners.

Table 4: Selected participants' productive knowledge results

Group	Participant	PK pre-test	PK post-test	PK post delayed-test
SUM	S8	3	15	3
SUM	S31	3	15	15
DIS	S38	9	9	9
DIS	S39	12	15	12
DIS	S54	3	3	6
RT	S74	9	6	9
RT	S100	6	9	12
RT	S102	3	3	3

There is a much greater variability among the participants than the group means suggest. For instance, in the SUM group, learner S8 exhibited notable advancement but reverted to their original proficiency level. In contrast, learner S31 demonstrated an equivalent progression, notably sustained in the delayed post-test. Within the DIS group, learner S38 maintained a static performance, exhibiting no discernible progression across all three consecutive evaluations. Learner S39 displayed marginal improvement yet regressed to their initial proficiency level in subsequent assessments. Intriguingly, learner S54, who exhibited no immediate improvement post-intervention, showed minor advancement in the delayed post-test. Within the RT group, learner S74's post-test performance declined compared to the pre-test, which suggests the instruction may have adversely impacted their performance. Nevertheless, this same learner achieved a higher score in the delayed post-test. Remarkably, learner S100 consistently improved across all evaluations. Consequently, their performance in the delayed post-test surpassed immediately after the instruction, indicating an intriguing trend of sustained improvement. Table 4 presents these selected participants.

5.2. Receptive knowledge

Similarly to the results of the productive knowledge of FS, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences between the groups on the pre- ($p = 0.520$), post- ($p = 0.829$), and delayed post-test ($p = 0.365$). The Friedman test revealed a statistically significant main effect of task on test results (χ^2 (2) = 71.719, $p < 0.001$.) Kendall's *W*, computed as a measure of effect size, indicated a moderate association among the variables (Kendall's $W = 0.332$). The significant chi-squared value suggests statistically significant differences between consecutive tests' results.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Conover's test indicate statistically significant differences between the pre ($M = 7.666$) and the post-tests ($M = 11.000$), [t (214) = 8.419, $p < 0.001$], the pre- and the delayed post-tests ($M = 9.333$), [t (214) = 3.276, $p = 0.001$], and the post and delayed post-tests [t (214) = 5.143, $p < .001$]. This indicates that learners in all groups progressed from the pre- to the post-test. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for the receptive knowledge tests.

Table 5: Mean scores and standard deviations on receptive knowledge tests (max. score = 30)

	RK pre-test			RK post-test			RK delayed post-test		
	DIS	RT	SUM	DIS	RT	SUM	DIS	RT	SUM
Mean	8.000	7.583	7.417	11.417	11.333	10.250	9.750	9.917	8.333
SD	3.364	3.324	3.083	2.359	2.878	2.902	2.419	3.500	2.694

Again, the results at the group level suggest that tasks had a significant impact on learners' receptive knowledge. However, the task type did not significantly impact learners' ability to understand formulaic sequences, as all the tasks brought similar results (see Figure 2). At an intra-individual level, the results create a more complex picture.

As evidenced in Table 5, the intervention did not affect the scores of learner S74 in the RT group. In contrast, learner S2 in the SUM group exhibited gains that were subsequently retained on the delayed post-test. Conversely, learner S97 in the RT group demonstrated poorer performance on both the post-test and delayed

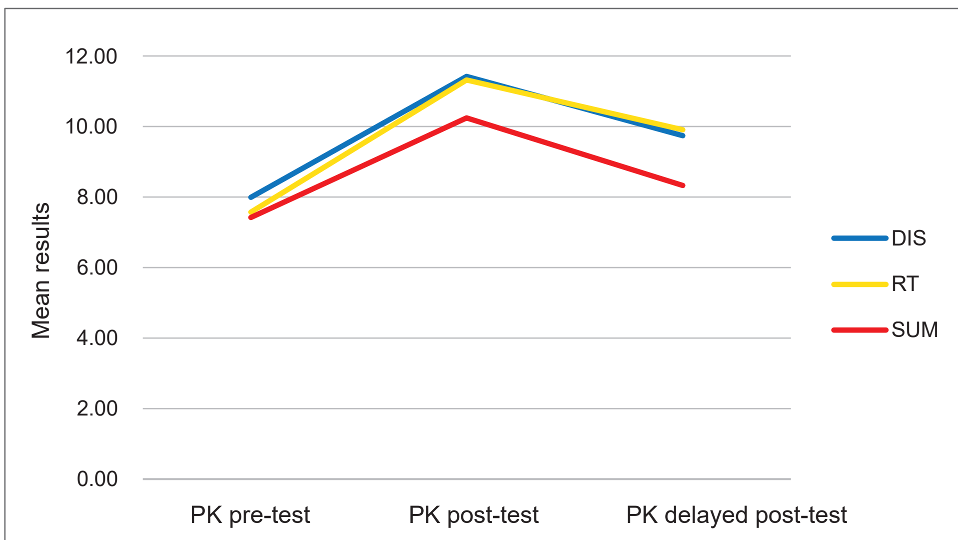

Figure 2: Receptive knowledge group results

post-test. Several learners demonstrated progressively higher scores across consecutive tests, including learner S105, who surprisingly achieved a higher result on the delayed post-test than the immediate post-test. Furthermore, learner S99 exhibited inferior results on the post-test compared to the pre-test. However, this learner subsequently achieved a higher score on the delayed post-test, albeit still lower than their pre-test results. An unusual variation was also observed in the case of learner S7, who initially demonstrated progress immediately after the intervention but regressed below their pre-test results on the delayed post-test. Another example is learner S9, for whom the intervention appeared to have no impact on the post-test, but their delayed post-test results were higher.

Table 6: Selected participants' receptive knowledge scores

Group	Participant	RK pre-test	RK post-test	RK delayed post-test
SUM	S2	9	12	12
SUM	S7	12	15	9
SUM	S9	3	3	9
RT	S74	15	15	15
RT	S97	6	3	3
RT	S99	15	9	12
RT	S105	6	9	12

5.3. Retention rate

Retention rate is an additional measure that can be considered when analysing intra- and inter-individual effects of instruction. It is calculated by dividing learners' scores in the delayed post-test by their immediate post-test scores (Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman). The retention rate allows us to observe the attrition of productive or receptive knowledge over time. Overall, learners retained their receptive knowledge better than their productive knowledge. The mean retention rate for receptive knowledge is 0.88, and for productive knowledge, it is 0.69. At an intra-individual learner level (see Figure 3), it can be observed, for instance, that learners S9 and S17 had an impressive retention rate of three, which means that these learners, in fact, had three times higher scores on the delayed post-test than on immediate post-tests. On the other hand, learners S54, S74, and S99 displayed an unusually high retention rate of their productive knowledge, i.e., their delayed post-test scores were higher than those in immediate post-tests. As Figure 3 shows, many learners only retained minimal productive knowledge. Fourteen learners retained only 25% or less of this type of knowledge. A group of learners (S8, S16, S65, S80, S93) managed to retain the whole of their receptive knowledge but no more than

25% of their productive knowledge. This short examination suggests that factors other than the type of task or the instruction target are at play.

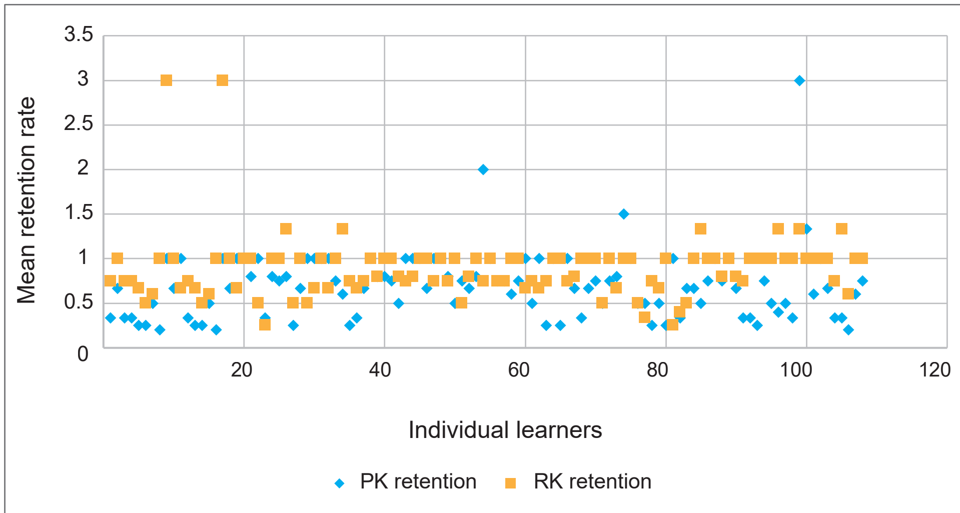

Figure 3: Productive and receptive knowledge retention rates of individual learners

6. Discussion

RQ1: Is there an effect of TBLT on teaching L2 formulaic sequences? If yes, which type of task is more effective? What is the effect at the inter- and intra-individual level?

The results of the present study show a positive effect of TBLT on teaching L2 formulaic sequences. It was observed that learners significantly improved their productive and receptive knowledge of FS following the intervention. However, the type of task (SUM, DIS, RT) did not produce a statistically significant difference in the results, suggesting that no particular task type was more effective than the others. Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman, who employed a control group in a similar study, found that the two task-based groups (a spot-the-difference and a gap-fill group) outperformed the control group. No differences were found between the groups in the productive knowledge. However, the spot-the-difference group had significantly better results than the gap-fill group in receptive knowledge tests.

At an inter-individual (group) level, all types of tasks have a positive effect, but the results are more nuanced at the intra-individual level. Each learner displayed unique progress and regression patterns. Some learners showed continuous improvements, some showed initial improvements with subsequent decay, and a few displayed regressions or even no improvement. Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman's study found similarly interesting variations. For instance, while TBLT generally improved

learners' knowledge of FSs, some learners (particularly three in the control group) were able to notice and internalize FSs without explicit instruction. On the other hand, three learners in the experimental groups did not benefit significantly from instruction or interaction with the materials.

Previous studies showed that the effectiveness of a certain task depends on several interacting factors such as task complexity and difficulty (Skehan; Robinson), sequencing of tasks (Gilabert and Malicka), learners proficiency level, or type of feedback (see Ellis et al.). Yet, micro-evaluations of whether a given task mediates teaching are scarce and have so far been conducted primarily by practitioners in their specific contexts (Ellis, *Teachers*). At the same time, it has to be stressed that task effectiveness depends on many interrelated factors and, as Lambert, Aubrey, and Bui (1) stress, even the most well-designed and sequenced tasks are subject to variability in the extent to which learners take advantage of learning opportunities.

RQ2: How do the three tasks affect productive and receptive knowledge of L2 formulaic sequences?

All three types of tasks positively influenced both productive and receptive knowledge of L2 FSs. Learners' knowledge improved significantly from the pre-test to the post-test and from the pre-test to the delayed post-test for both productive and receptive knowledge. However, there was some decay over time, as indicated by the difference between the post-test and delayed post-test scores. Again, no significant difference was observed between the three tasks, meaning all tasks similarly influenced the learners' productive and receptive knowledge.

RQ3: Are these effects lasting?

The effect of the three tasks appears to be partially lasting. While there were improvements from the pre-test to the post-test and from the pre-test to the delayed post-test, indicating a degree of retention, a decline in scores from the post-tests to the delayed post-test suggests some knowledge decay over time. The retention rate analysis also indicates knowledge decay over time, especially for productive knowledge. The average retention rate was 0.69 for productive knowledge and 0.88 for receptive knowledge. This suggests that although learners can retain a significant portion of their knowledge, they lose some over time. In Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman's study, the retention rates were 0.5 and 0.9, respectively.

At an individual level, retention rates varied widely. Some learners, such as S9 and S17, scored higher on the delayed post-test than on the post-test, indicating increased knowledge over time. In contrast, other learners, such as S54, S74, and S99, experienced a decrease in their knowledge over time. This suggests that individual factors may impact the long-term effects of TBLT on L2 formulaic sequences learning. Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman also pointed out the difference in learners' knowledge retention rate over time, which varied significantly between individuals and different types of knowledge (productive vs receptive). In general, receptive knowledge was retained better than productive knowledge, but the degree of retention varied among individuals.

A few limitations are worth mentioning. First of all, the study did not employ a control group. This decision was made because the aim was not to confirm the effectiveness of TBLT but to check which type of task was most effective. Secondly, the study primarily employed quantitative analysis to assess the effects of tasks, which might not capture the full richness of qualitative aspects that could shed light on the learners' experiences and perceptions. Future studies could analyse participant discussions during task-based activities to understand how language is used to negotiate forms and meanings, express preferences, and convey experiences.

7. Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrated a positive effect of TBLT on teaching L2 formulaic sequences. Participants exhibited significant improvements in both productive and receptive knowledge following the intervention, which spanned three weeks. However, the choice of task type (summarizing, discussion, or retelling) did not yield any statistically significant differences in the overall outcomes. At the group level, all tasks positively impacted learners' productive and receptive knowledge of the target formulaic sequences.

Some complexities emerged at an intra-individual level. Learners displayed diverse progress and regression patterns, suggesting that individual differences were crucial in shaping the outcomes. Some learners showcased consistent progress, while others demonstrated initial improvements followed by knowledge decay, regression, or even no noticeable improvement. These intricate individual patterns underscore the multifaceted nature of language acquisition and highlight the importance of recognizing learner variability.

The results of the present study support the central tenets of CDST and suggest that learner development is not a "one-size-fits-all" phenomenon but is characterized by interindividual and intraindividual variation. This complexity is shaped by various factors, including learners' knowledge of different languages, learning histories, and individual ways of processing external information. Therefore, although TBLT is generally effective, its effectiveness can be mediated by these other variables, suggesting a complex relationship between instruction and acquisition.

The findings support the broader application of TBLT, not only for teaching grammatical structures and individual words but also for formulaic sequences, which are often overlooked in language instruction. They also underline the need for more individualized and flexible approaches in language teaching, taking into account the complex and varying paths of language acquisition among learners. Additionally, the findings may apply to researchers in that they show how not only the group means are essential for drawing conclusions but also the complex interplay of multiple factors related to language development, their change over time, and the context they appear in, are also important.

Appendix

Productive—receptive knowledge test (sample)

Czy znasz znaczenie tych zwrotów? Jeśli tak, wyjaśnij je, podaj ich tłumaczenie lub podaj przykład ich użycia w zdaniu.

1. a call for ______________________________
2. in particular ______________________________
3. take over ______________________________
4. may well ______________________________
5. in terms of ______________________________

Wybierz prawidłową odpowiedź i wpisz literę w lukę:

6. Sarah is a great cook _____ her busy schedule.
   a. even though; b. because of; c. in order to; d. despite;

7. John spent______time studying for his exams.
   a. a massive deal of; b. a large deal of; c. a great deal of; d. a big deal of;

8. We went to the beach, ______ we visited some museums.
   a. in addition; b. instead of; c. except for; d. alongside;

9. The teacher gave a lecture,______a class discussion.
   a. followed by; b. followed up with; c. followed with; d. followed for;

10. The trip to New York City included visits to museums, art galleries,_____.
    a. etcetera; b. and so on; c. in the end; d. as well;

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Is It All That Positive? An Exploratory Study of Emotions in the Older Adult In-Person and Online EFL Classrooms

Abstract: Late-life foreign language education (i.e., FL geragogy, FLG) is said to be related to the delay of age-related cognitive changes in healthy individuals and has been shown to positively affect the quality of life of older adults, the fastest-growing age group worldwide. These are also the two main reasons which seem to be behind the high enrolment rates for FL courses at the Universities of the Third Age (U3A) and senior centres alike. Nowadays, following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and months spent in the emergency remote teaching, some of the older learners decided to continue their education online, others came back to the classrooms. In both cases, the research on third age learner emotions remains rather scarce, despite a gradually increasing interest of applied linguists in this age group. The aim of this paper is thus to bridge the gap between FLG and Positive Language Education (Mercer et al.) by discerning the reasons behind the learners' choice of in-person or online classes and investigating the emotions experienced in both modes. To this end, the qualitative research was conducted in two groups of older adult English as a FL learners in the in-class ($n = 11$) and online mode ($n = 6$). The data was collected via open-ended questionnaire and a thematic analysis of the dataset was done to identify patterns of meaning. The results indicate that although the emotions in both modes are similar, and learning English in later life is a source of pride, satisfaction, and self-fulfilment irrespective of the form of classes, the online experience is decidedly more negative and causes greater anxiety, frustration, and boredom. In addition, face-to-face social interaction seems to play a vital role in the learners' overall perception of the course.

Keywords: University of the Third Age (U3A), foreign language geragogy (FLG), lifelong learning, positive psychology, positive language education, learner well-being

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised numerous challenges for education community worldwide. A particular example was the emergency remote teaching (ERT)—an

urgent and unexpected request for previously face-to-face courses to be taught online (Hodges et al.). As a result, due to crisis circumstances, all students alike, took part in online courses using various platforms and applications. Yet, older adults (at the age of approximately sixty and older) who this far have attended traditional, in-person foreign language (FL) classes and are often not as versed in technology as younger students, had to quickly adapt to the new situation and acquire new skills that would allow them to participate in the online classrooms (in this paper understood broadly as a learning environment with a synchronous interaction between teacher and students irrespective of the mode). This often meant that only those open to new challenges, supported by others (usually younger family members), or already familiar with the use of computers, were for some time able to continue their education. As a result, many older learners were left out without any chance to spend time with their peers (e.g., at the U3A in Wrocław, the number of regular English courses dropped from fourteen in 2019, to two online classes in 2020, and three in 2021). Among those few who have currently signed up for EFL courses online, there are students who prefer this type of instruction, which, however, is not without its drawbacks (see Baran-Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec; Kruse, Lutskovskaia, and Stepanova; Pikhart et al.). But despite the emerging issues and the real necessity to learn more about the needs and abilities of this very particular group of learners, the research on FLG has a relatively short tradition as it started to flourish in the second decade of the twenty-first century (Gabryś-Barker; Ramírez Gómez). Thus, as can be expected, there seems to be a shortage of studies related to the online older adult FL education, the related emotions, and its potential challenges. In fact, the research on emotions, has also expanded only in the past two decades as Positive Psychology (PP) has gained its momentum following the publication of the seminal paper by Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi in 2000. Since then, the research on PP in the context of second language acquisition (SLA) studies has also been marked by a shift of interest in FL learner and teacher psychology (MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer, *Positive*, "Setting"; MacIntyre and Mercer). The earlier literature on emotions in SLA has concentrated mainly on negative feelings associated with FL education, classroom anxiety (FLCA) in particular, which has been receiving scientific attention for decades (see Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope). The shift of interest has led to a more balanced approach, in line with which positive and negative emotions are understood as complementary and intricately linked, instead of being the opposite ends of the spectrum (Dewaele and MacIntyre, "The Two").

2. Older adult FL learners

With the societies ageing, the number of older adult FL learners is also rapidly growing, which causes significant challenges to widely understood education. Recent research shows that older people who take part in purposeful, socially

engaging, and intellectually stimulating activities enjoy better physical and health outcomes (e.g., Antoniou, Gunasekera, and Wong; Antoniou and Wright; Irving, Davis, and Collier), including a decreased risk of dementia (WangK et al.; Bialystok et al.) or loneliness (Zhong, Chen, and Conwell) and an improved quality of life (Owen, Berry, and Brown). The studies on cognition also indicate that in the case of normally ageing individuals memory training may either improve or even slow down further decline (Harada, Love, and Triebel). Hence, learning a FL language in later life, which is such a complex and multidimensional brain-stimulating cognitive leisure activity, has been shown to have a positive effect on older adults' subjective well-being (e.g., Klímová et al.,"Factor"; Pikhart and Klímová; Pot, Keijzer, and de Bot; Słowik-Krogulec) and mental functions (e.g., Klímová and Pikhart; Pfenninger and Singleton; Pfenninger and Polz; Ware et al.). As pointed out by Pfenninger and Polz, learning an additional language in later years demonstrates cognitive (Pfenninger, Festman, and Singleton; Ware et al.; Wong et al.), attentional (Bak, Vega-Mendoza, and Sorace), linguistic and socio-affective improvement, though, there are studies that do not support this claim (Berggren et al.). Overall, at present, cognitive scientists agree that the brain maintains its plasticity across the lifespan and can be affected by experience at any time (Pfenninger and Singleton 2). Finally, late life foreign language learning is "not just a goal in itself, but … a means of promoting social interaction and integration—an important finding considering that it is partly through the stimulation of social well-being that its cognitive effects may be observed" (Pfenninger and Polz 10). However, the benefits of FL learning, including the stimulation of positive emotions and an improved quality of life, might be outweighed by the inability to take part in the classes caused by learner-internal factors, for instance the fear of negative evaluation, or contextual reasons, such as problems with the use of technology, especially computer handling and familiarity with virtual meetings platforms, e.g., MS Teams or Zoom, not uncommon for older adults.

3. Emotions in FL learning

For years, cognitive factors have been at the heart of SLA research. In addition, educational psychologists and applied linguists have concentrated on an investigation of negative emotions, such as anxiety and burnout. It was only after the emergence of PP and its rejection of the focus on problems (Dewaele and MacIntyre, "Do") that the research on learner and teacher psychology started to flourish. As a result, the past decade has witnessed a fast growth of studies that recognize the value of understanding emotions in FL learning and teaching (MacIntyre and Gregersen; MacIntyre and Mercer). The learners are no longer seen as deficient, but rather as individuals on the path leading to self-development and well-being (Dewaele et al.). The focus has thus shifted from research on FLCA to positive

emotional states and learner characteristics, among others, enjoyment, love, grit, buoyancy, resilience, flow, and well-being.

Positive emotions are also one of the elements of Seligman's PERMA model published in 2011 (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement), and are the building blocks of subjective well-being, forming the basis of flourishing (Seligman). In fact, as indicated by MacIntyre and Gregersen in 2012, the ability to imagine the change from the "negative-narrowing emotional responses that individuals associate with language learning" to "a relaxation response when confronted with the negatively conditioned stimulus" (205) might help the learners utilize the power of positive emotions and create a balance between positive and negative states. The authors further argue that teachers can affect learner emotions to a certain degree, by creating a safe learning environment and showing the disparity between the learners' present and future selves. Experiencing more positive emotions should, in turn, make it easier to learn a FL, become more resilient, and mitigate the effect of negative emotions (Dewaele et al.; see also Fredrickson). The post-pandemic experience of emergency remote teaching has also shown that the dynamics of emotions which emerge in the online educational settings might have far-reaching consequences in terms of the learners' FL achievement and well-being (Resnik and Dewaele), and that the role of the teacher is, indeed, crucial in creating a positive and propitious learning environment (e.g., Baran-Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec).

The COVID-19 pandemic has additionally accelerated the process of re-imagining education by integrating the so-called twenty-first century skills (including 4Cs—Creativity, Critical Thinking Skills, Collaboration, and Communication, as well as digital literacy, ecoliteracy, global citizenship, and well-being) with linguistic competencies (see Babic et al.). This educational approach, termed in 2018 by Mercer et al.—Positive Language Education, promotes student well-being through language and places it at the centre of education alongside academic subjects. This has also important implications for late-life FL learners, whose participation in education, also online, is completely voluntary, and their need for social interaction seems to be very high. Moreover, as already mentioned, many older people are not versed in technology and the digital divide can be observed even during EFL classes, which can have a negative impact on the learners' emotional states and their in- and out-of-the-class quality of lives.

4. Research aim and questions

The present study aims to investigate the emotions of older adults in different modes of instruction in reference to various aspects of the teaching and learning processes. The following research questions (RQs) have thus been addressed in this article:

RQ1: What are the emotions experienced in the FL classroom in both modes? Are they different in relation to the process of learning English, the teacher, other students, and the materials used?

RQ2: Are the emotions experienced in the two EFL courses different from those in the other classes at the U3A? If so, what are the differences?

RQ3: What are the reasons behind the choice of online or in-person classes at the U3A?

5. Method

5.1. Participants

There were seventeen older adult learners of English as a FL from the U3A in Wrocław that took part in this research: eleven participants (referred to as P#, P1–P11) chose the in-class option (64.71%) at the beginner level and six learners (later referred to as “Participant Online,” PO#, PO1–PO6) attended pre-intermediate classes in the online mode (35.29%). All the participants agreed to having their information processed and informed written consent was collected. The sample consists of fifteen women and one man. Ten of the respondents (58.82%) are between sixty-one and seventy years of age, and seven (41.18%) fall into the age bracket of seventy-one to eighty. All but one of the older adults are no longer vocationally active. They have either secondary (23.53%) or higher (76.47%) education. Their self-reported proficiency levels vary from beginner (52.94%), through elementary (17.65%), to pre-intermediate (29.41%). They have studied English between six months and ten years (for the average of 4.32 years). Among other languages learnt by the respondents are Russian (41.18%), German (35.29%), French (29.41%), and Latin (11.76%), which is typical for people who attended school between fifty and sixty years ago.

The classes were taught by two different instructors: the online course was designed and taught by a Turkish educator with over a year of experience in teaching and researching older adults, who did not share the L1 with the study participants; the stationary classes, on the other hand, were taught by the author—a Polish teacher with over a decade of prior experience in FLG. However, it should be highlighted that each group had also classes with the other instructor: the online classes, with the same participants, were previously taught by the author (2020/2021 and 2021/2022) and another Polish teacher (2022/2023), and the stationary group was taught by the Turkish instructor in October and November 2023 as part of the staff mobility training programme.

5.2. Procedure and data collection instrument

This qualitative study, whose aim was to identify the emotions associated with in-class and online modes of FL instruction at the U3A, was based on the data gathered from seventeen older adult volunteer participants described above. The data was collected in two ways: in pen-and-paper form during one of the regular meetings, in the case of the stationary classes, and as a Google Form questionnaire

sent to the online course participants. Both questionnaires, which consisted of a short demographic survey with seven questions (the results are presented in the section on participants), and eleven open-ended questions focusing on emotions in one of two modes, were administered the same week in winter term 2023/2024. The open-ended questions elicited responses to emotions regarding the mode in relation to various aspects, such as the process of learning a FL language, the teacher, the other students, and the materials/tasks used. The respondents were first asked to enumerate the emotions and then to justify their answers, as well as to compare their FL experience to the other mode and to classes at the U3A they attended.

5.3. Data analysis

The data set was analysed on the basis of Braun and Clarke's principles of reflexive thematic analysis from 2021. Data coding explored older adult learner emotions pertaining to the two modes of FL instruction. The analysis was based on the identified themes, topics, and patterns of meaning, and was also inspired by the already existing themes, informed by the literature review. The responses of the participants provided in the questionnaires were transcribed, fed into the NVivo software, coded, and translated into English by the author.

6. Research results

The study revealed the presence of both positive and negative emotions in stationary and online classes. However, instead of yielding data related solely to emotions, the questions seemed to evoke various associations with FL classroom experiences (other themes include motivation, engagement, curiosity, kindness, understanding, friendliness, patience, rapport, and rivalry), which were considered important for the better understanding of learning in each mode and are thus included in the results.

6.1. In-person classroom—emotions

The emotions identified in the responses of students attending the stationary course included both positive (e.g., excitement, enjoyment, happiness, satisfaction, self-fulfilment, hope, pride, pleasure) and negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, embarrassment). Overall, the respondents note that the classes caused a mixture of emotions, but the positive experience is more common (e.g., P8: "There are both positive and negative emotions, but there are decidedly more positive ones."). The prevalence of positive emotions relates to the perceived benefits of lifelong learning (P1: "Overall, these positive emotions come from the need to know more, to learn more, to exercise my brain."; P6: "There is just so much pleasure in learning something new, broadening our horizons, listening to other people,

trying to talk in another language. I think it will help me to communicate abroad.") and is rooted in the constant need for self-betterment (P10: "There are many more positive emotions. I am interested, engaged, happy, and curious to learn. The classes are interesting, the teaching style is good for us. This allows for self-development, self-improvement. I feel that I'm constantly learning, and I already know something!"). The positive perception of the course can also have its source in the learners' self-efficacy, best encapsulated by the comment made by P5: "Enjoyment and satisfaction, because 'I still can' in my age!" and extrapolated on in the excerpt from P1: "An ability to continue self-development, to learn new things, to recall what we already know, but also to socialize and spend time with peers. I am now better able to deal with difficult and stressful situations such as travelling and talking to other people in English." In addition, during the stationary FL classes it is also the state of flow, which is an optimal psychological experience of total immersion, task concentration and the feeling of joy (cf. Csíkszentmihályi) that seems to emerge (e.g., P4: "I feel great enjoyment when I know something and when I experience very deep focus and full attention."). Finally, the element of competitiveness can also be seen as something enjoyable as shown by two respondents' comments (P1: "It's a great way to enhance memory capacities, to check your abilities, but there is also an element of rivalry involved—you want to compare yourself with others."; P9: "I can see my progress in comparison to others and I am proud of my achievements.").

When the responses concerning the teacher are considered, they can be a source of positive emotions and alleviate the feeling of shame caused by the learners' self-perceived inadequate knowledge. This is exemplified by the following two comments: "I know that the teacher will be helpful, considerate, and won't try to embarrass me. She is conscientious, has a sense of humour and—what is most important—a real understanding of older people, but I'm still aware of the questions I ask …" (P8); "The teacher has great rapport with the group, is engaged and clearly likes teaching, has a great sense of humour, is really good at this job, thanks to that I never feel embarrassed or ashamed of myself. I can see the results." (P11). Similarly, by sharing certain age-related qualities and the experience of learning a FL in later life, other learners can also positively affect the overall enjoyment of the course (P2: "These are people in similar age, there is a lot of mutual understanding."; P7: "I like these classes very much even though I am not always prepared, but I don't feel anxious about it—other students are my age and also often forget about things they need to do."). In addition, the commitment to learn the language and the joint feeling of accomplishment and pride seem to add to the positive atmosphere in the classroom and can be an additional incentive to learn (P3: "I don't feel any negative emotions towards them, instead sometimes I feel real sympathy, pride even, when I see their attitude towards learning English."; P11: "Other learners really want to learn, and you can see it. It's a very close-knit group. Everyone is really engaged, and it has a positive effect on others. I feel really motivated by that.").

However, it appears that contextual triggers in the classroom can cause positive and negative responses simultaneously, such as peer-induced enjoyment and FLCA associated with the fear of negative evaluation. Both emotional states can be either learner-induced, as shown in the excerpt from P2: “The friendliness of other learners and a nice atmosphere make me want to be here, but there is also the element of stress related to speaking and answering questions in English. I’m a little concerned about the reaction of other learners when they hear me talk.”, or teacher-induced, as shown in the quotes by respondents P1 and P9 (P1: “The enjoyment is coming from the possibility to meet the teacher in person, gratefulness that I can learn new things and motivation comes from the need to perform well, maybe to boast a bit about the newly acquired knowledge. Then, when [the teacher] is listening carefully, there is some stress.”; P9: “Stress, but in a positive sense, motivates me to work. Also, meeting expectations—each teacher is pleased with the results of their work, I want to meet these expectations and make the teacher proud.”).

Overall, negative emotions are rather few and are mainly associated with learner-internal factors. First, there is boredom resulting from a high degree of individual variation, typical for learners at this age who are said to be a heterogenous group, as shown in the following comment on mixed abilities made by P3: “At times I feel bored because of the pace, but everyone needs to understand before we move on, and that’s fine, I understand it.”. The individual dimension can also manifest itself in an overall age-related decline in cognitive function that can lead to FLCA or anger (P5: “There is a lot of anxiety caused by my age.”; P3: “Nowadays, I’m very forgetful and disorganized, so sometimes I feel angry with myself. It wasn’t the case when I was younger.”; P8: “I’m angry because it still takes me so long to do all the tasks.”), learning difficulties that cause frustration with oneself (P4: “Anger with myself when I can’t understand something.”; P2: “I’m very impatient and I find it difficult to memorize new words.”), or anxiety and shame caused by the fear of negative evaluation (P10: “I feel shame, because I don’t want to be worse than others.”; P9: “I find it very stressful, because I have just started to learn this language and it seems to me that others know much more, they already have the skills I don’t. I keep comparing myself to them.”; P8: “Other learners will be surprised and impatient because of the mistakes I make.”). Among learner-external factors, there are, for instance, negative associations with homework rooted in school experiences (P3: “Ever since I was a child, I did not like homework.”).

6.2. Online classroom—emotions

The themes discerned in the online dataset that are related to FL learning experience were similar to the in-person mode and once again covered the whole range of both positive (e.g., excitement, happiness, joy, self-confidence, satisfaction, and

self-fulfilment) and negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, doubt, uncertainty, shame, discomfort, dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger). The data show that the sources of positive emotions in the online setting are mainly internal to the learner and are associated with the following factors: the feeling of pride caused by one's achievements as emphasized in the comment by PO2: ("Positive emotions but also a kind of 'voluntary compulsion'. I treat learning a language as brain gymnastics and the source of essential knowledge for foreign trips."), an ability to understand other people using English (PO2: "Only positive emotions, whether I'm learning something new or just refreshing my knowledge. The possibility of deepening my knowledge of the language and the joy that I can understand or guess the meaning of English words spoken by the teacher. Curiosity."; PO4: "Interest and satisfaction when I understand the teacher's explanation."), and the satisfaction in the continued efforts to learn the language, though at times followed by an uncertainty of one's actual achievements (e.g., PO1: "I have a sense of fulfilment that I won't forget the language, and I exercise my brain; something will always stay in memory, although I don't have great results."). There are also positive emotions associated with the feeling of freedom, independence, and self-efficacy, as exemplified by the following excerpts: PO5: "Definitely more positive aspects, such as no stress during presentations, I can turn off both the microphone and camera at any time, I manage my own activity during classes."; PO4: "Self-confidence, the ability to overcome problems, and the feeling of fulfilment.".

Among the external sources of positive emotions, common for the majority of the participants, are also the teacher and other students. Although, as shown by later comments, some learners find their teacher's inability to communicate in their L1 very stressful (see below), others point to it as a contextual factor affecting their overall positive perception of FL education (PO3: "Excitement, especially caused by the fact that the teacher is not Polish and doesn't speak our language. Also, the teacher is Turkish, and I am interested in the history and culture of this country."; PO5: "Our teacher, who doesn't speak Polish, conducts classes exclusively in English, which excellently enhances our conversation skills, enriches vocabulary, and opens us up to using English without any stress during, for example, international travel or interactions with English speakers. It allows for increased self-confidence abroad."). Similarly, other learners can cause discomfort and anxiety (see below), but the shared experience of FL learning online can also be the source of positive states (PO4: "Satisfaction, pleasure— the participants in the group are positive and friendly, helping each other."; PO5: "Eliminating the fear of speaking, greater belief in one's ability to use English with other people, motivates me to really learn the language."). Finally, the need to compare one's achievements to other students is also prevalent in the online classroom (PO2: "I observe how others cope with language learning, and sometimes it's admiration for how much they already know, but there's also satisfaction that I'm not the worst.").

However, even though the elicited emotions in the two modes are seemingly alike, as shown in the quote from the respondent who claims that there are no significant differences between the two modes (PO3: "Emotions are similar to the ones in the classroom."), in the online classroom there are more sources of negative states mainly caused by the learner-external factors. As suggested by the data, among them are, for instance, problems with technology which trigger anxiety (PO6: "The emotions are similar, but during the online classes we are really stressed by technological issues."; PO5: "It is stressful when you have to change from listening to speaking—you have to make sure that you switch your microphone on and then off again. Sometimes my hands are shaking when I do that."). Boredom and embarrassment appear mainly due to the form of classes, in which older adults feel as if they are working individually instead of being a part of the group. There are no close bonds with other learners, who are even referred to as "these people" in the following example excerpt from PO6: "I am bored when other students are answering questions as I'm just sitting in front of the computer and waiting, it is somehow different than in class when you as if experience all the interactions. I also feel shame when I am asked a question, and I can't answer it or there are some problems with technology I can't solve, or I don't notice them (e.g., the microphone is off). I don't know what these people are thinking then."). Moreover, tasks and materials are yet another source of negative emotions. The new, perhaps too difficult for the learners, coursebook once again causes anxiety in the learners (e.g., PO1: "I have a textbook in a paper version, and I prepare for classes in advance. Without preparation, I have difficulties with vocabulary."; PO3: "I approach it without any emotions, however another new textbook, different from all used so far, causes stress.").

Teacher-induced FLCA is caused either by their inability to communicate in students' L1 (PO1: "I feel really anxious that I won't understand what the foreign language instructor is saying."; PO1: "Our teacher does not speak Polish, so I feel a bit uncomfortable.") or by a different approach to teaching than the one known by the learners. This last reason is extrapolated on by one of the participants (PO4) in a longer passage which covers a whole range of emotions from more positive ones (related to the current teacher's personality or caused by previous year's teacher's approach to online education) to negative states of discontentment, shame, and frustration (associated with a new approach to teaching):

> I am unhappy about a different teaching style (there is no reading, translation, creating dialogues, asking questions to individual students, all tasks are done together, the answers given together). Students are shy and uncertain, they are mostly quiet, take part in the classes as "passive listeners" and the teacher is not trying to engage them in any way. But the teacher is very nice, friendly, and open, she explains everything well. I could imagine that one-to-one classes with this teacher must be great, but not classes in a group. Here, you never know if the assigned material will be covered as homework. Last year it was different, I was much happier with the [online] classes and I could see the progress I made. Here, I am never sure if I will understand the explanation given by the teacher, I feel ashamed when I give a wrong answer.

> With the previous teacher there were more positive emotions, it all depends on the teaching style and the abilities of the teacher. (PO4)

Other learners can also be the external cause of disaffection as online classes may impede the development of social connections and maintenance of interactions, as shown in the next two comments: PO5: "We don't know the other participants, with cameras off, I don't know what the participants look like, sometimes there are some issues and you have to reconnect, you can't hear what they are saying, although it's not really bothering me."; PO1: "After half a year I still don't personally know all the participants.". Due to this lack of a close relationship with the group, others' efforts to take an active part in the classes may seem intimidating and overwhelming, which can lead to an almost hostile response (PO3: "Every time I wonder… Will, as usual, only two or three people be active? What for? They are clearly much stronger that the rest of the group.").

In addition, there are also comments related to both the teacher and other students, which show the lack of negative emotions, but simultaneously do not express in any way the enjoyment ascribed to learning, as exemplified in the following three excerpts: PO2: "I treat it as something to be done."; PO5: "These are not intense emotions, rather a motivation for increased activity during classes and systematic learning. The term 'emotions' is associated with a state stronger than the ordinary. The classes are not something extraordinary for me; I fulfil a previous resolution, and I simply consistently implement my plans."; PO1: "The group has been the same since the pandemic; everyone already knows how to behave, e.g., turn on the microphone to talk. They are ok.").

6.3. EFL vs U3A emotions

According to the in-class participants the emotions are more positive during FL classes due to their different character and the learners' attitude towards them, as shown in the following excerpts: P9: "When I study by myself, or I am sitting in a lecture room, I never feel as many emotions as in here."; P1: "FL classes are much more engaging, help with improving memory, exercising our brains, and give us great satisfaction." P8: "The language classes are much more motivating."). The voluntary aspect of English classes also seems to play an important role in the learners' perception of the course (P5: "The emotions are very different, it's a real pleasure to attend these classes, knowing that I can but, I don't have to."). Finally, both self-factors and a joint learning experience contribute to the more positive reception of the English course (e.g., P6: "English classes allow me to concentrate on myself and my self-development. There is peace and quiet, other people come here to learn this language and not to disturb others and just have a chat with peers, which is the case during many other classes at the U3A."). Among the sources of more negative responses are memory problems (P8: "I'm afraid the emotions are different because of the long time it takes me to memorize words and learn this

language.") and FLCA caused by the novelty related to learning English as a FL (P7: "I feel more stressed during English classes, because I have never studied this language before and I find it very difficult to learn it now.").

In contrast, the data gathered from the online participants show that other classes at the U3A seem to trigger less negative emotions as 1) the educators share the learners' L1 (e.g., PO1: "I prefer classes with someone who can speak Polish."; PO3: "Emotions are very different because the teacher is Turkish and does not speak Polish."), 2) there are problems with participation in this mode (PO4: "When doing homework or attending lectures it is satisfaction; in here, most often dissatisfaction because I feel that I am not participating in the classes 'to the full'."), and 3) they seem to cause more positive emotions (PO4: "In all other classes, I experience only joy and satisfaction."). However, there are also advantages of the online English course, which include course-specific active participation (PO2: "Here I am an active learner, during most other classes at the U3A I'm just a passive listener.").

6.4. In-person vs online classroom preference

The reasons behind the choice of in-person classes result from the need to socialize, including strengthening social connections, and supporting one another (e.g., P8: "A direct contact with people is very important to me."; P7: "It's all very positive from leaving home to getting here and spending time with my friends."; P1: "It is also easier to ask questions and to seek help."). They are also caused by the convenience it offers (P5: "They are more comfortable. Also, the dialogue is crucial here."), or by attention problems in the online mode (P6: "In the classroom we are with other people, online we sometimes don't concentrate on the classes at all, we're doing other things, instead."). The presence of other people is motivating (P9: "Face-to-face contact with the teacher forces me to focus on learning.") and more engaging than the online experience (P2:"There is greater engagement during English classes."; P7: "I'm much more active in these classes."; P4:"They are more interesting—force you to work, no one cares what you do online."). In addition, one does not need to be versed in technology, which might be problematic for some of the older adults (P8: "Also, there is no stress related to problems with technology.").

Interestingly, the choice of the online mode was influenced by a variety of reasons, ranging from convenience (PO2: "It's so much more comfortable! I learn English while sitting at home in my slippers and drinking coffee."; PO3: "I travel a lot to other cities and abroad, it's just easier to join and still take part in the classes."), the necessity caused by problems with attending regular classes due to work obligations (PO5: "I am 76, but I am still working so I can only attend the online classes."), or because of the potential health issues (PO6: "It's just safer like that especially in wintertime—due to the COVID-19 and the flu season"). Other students confessed the online mode was their only possibility to continue FL education (e.g., P3: "There

was no other choice."; PO1: "I couldn't get to a normal group, so I decided to stay [online] so that I can continue learning, but I prefer face-to-face classes.").

7. Discussion

One of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and ERT has been the increased accessibility of new technologies, leading to a proliferation of online courses available to learners worldwide, including those at the U3As. There are clearly many advantages to this shift of modes, but there are also some disadvantages, which might affect the learners' subjective well-being. The aim of this study was, thus, to establish the range of emotions experienced by older adult EFL learners in the in-class and online mode. It should be highlighted that, as stated earlier, the participants did not delimit their answers to emotions experienced in both types of classrooms, but the additional responses seem to deepen the understanding of the nature of FLG in both modes, hence they are included in this study.

The answer to RQ1 revealed a multitude of emotions experienced in both modes, ranging from excitement, enjoyment, happiness, contentment, and gratitude, through pride, satisfaction, fulfilment, curiosity, hope, and empathy, to anxiety, boredom, frustration or even anger, which once again points to a coexistence and interdependence of all emotions (cf. Dewaele and MacIntyre, "The Two"; Dewaele et al.). However, even though the themes identified in both samples are very similar, the accumulation of positive and negative emotions in in-person and online classrooms clearly differ. For instance, enjoyment seems to be a prevalent emotion in the face-to-face classroom mode, while anxiety appears to be rather short lived, emerging mainly in relation to fear of negative evaluation by other students (rarely by the teacher) or is caused by memory problems and poor preparation for the classes, which is in line with the earlier findings (cf. Baran-Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec). In contrast, the online mode seems to provoke more negative emotions such as frustration, uncertainty, and anxiety, associated with the lack of feedback from others, more passive participation in the classes, and a lack of strong bonds with the group, or problems with technology. Boredom and shame also appear more often in the context of online education and seem to be caused by an atypical form of FL instruction. Positive emotions like excitement, happiness, and joy are not absent from this mode but they appear mainly in relation to FL learning as such. However, there are also emotions that exist equally often across all the dataset, such as, e.g., self-fulfilment and satisfaction, which suggest older adults' overall attitude towards learning a new language in later life— it gives them a sense of accomplishment, is a source of pride, and an important incentive to make continued efforts to learn.

There are also differences in learner emotions associated with various contextual factors, such as the teacher, other students, or the materials used, and late-life EFL learning. Once again, these outside effects were categorized into learner-centred and

learner-external predictors of various emotions. The data show that the respondents seemed to give more credit to the teacher and their peers in the classroom context and were much more critical towards them in the online environment. There are two main reasons that may be inherent in this issue: (1) the lack of direct contact with other people seems to negatively affect the learners' perception of others and create the feeling of isolation and estrangement, (2) technical issues impact communication and create additional obstacles in the process. As a result, the respondents proved to be disapproving of the online learning experience and expressed their discontentment with many of its aspects. The responses to the teachers' L1 seemed to be rather ambiguous and were mentioned only in relation to the online mode. In sum, despite the teacher's inability to use the learners' L1 which causes additional stress for some students, it is also seen as a great opportunity to use English by others. In addition, although each teacher uses their own materials, according to the respondents, a different than usual, and perhaps too difficult coursebook that was chosen in winter term 2023 for the online course also affected their overall feelings. The data yielded from the stationary classes corroborated these findings and clearly showed the importance of face-to-face contact. The respondents were more forgiving of other students' mistakes and behaviours, showed empathy, understanding, and support. They also compared their peers to themselves and viewed their classmates as a group with similar problems. As a result, the described emotions frequently referred to the relationship with peers and the teacher. In contrast, the comments made by the online course participants more often revolved around themselves and reflected their self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-determination to complete the tasks and continue FL education.

With regard to RQ2, both positive and negative emotions in the two modes were revealed, as compared to other classes at the U3A. It seems, however, that once more there is a clear preference of face-to-face interaction with other learners and the teacher. Therefore, the participants who attend classes in the traditional form claim that they experience many more positive emotions during their English classes as they are able to socialize, interact, and provide support to one another. Different reasons are given by the other group of respondents, who argues that other classes at the U3A are more enjoyable than online classes: the learners claim that at the U3A all lecturers speak Polish, and it is easier to participate without the need to rely on technology, hence the classes are anxiety-free. But for some, the online classes are the only ones they can attend due to their other obligations, such as work or travel, therefore, they are grateful to have this opportunity.

The last RQ helped to establish the reasons behind the preferences for the traditional or virtual classes at the U3A. The results show that there were three main criteria for choice: availability, convenience, and preferences. For some of the learners, these were simply the only options still offered by the U3A at the moment of course enrolment. Others find the chosen mode easier because there are no technological issues involved, and leaving home is beneficial for overall health and well-being. The virtual format, however, is more convenient for those who are

still vocationally active or travel frequently and cannot attend stationary classes. Finally, there is a group who prefers face-to face interaction, as it fosters motivation to learn, improves social cognition, and communication skills, as is the case with traditional classes, while some learners value the comfort and safety of home, which is crucial at this age and ensured by the online education.

8. Limitations and recommendations

While this research has provided certain insights into positive language education and FLG, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the limitations inherent in the methodology and scope of the study. First, it should be highlighted that the convenience sample choice might have also affected the emotions elicited by means of the questionnaire, thus the questions should be posed again to students, whose teacher's L1 is the same throughout the study. However, the current choice was dictated by the following factors: (1) it is the only group of older adults that has continued to study online since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, (2) for reasons mentioned in the discussion above, the learners do not want to or cannot attend English classes in the other mode, and (3) it is believed that as both groups had experience of classes with the same instructors and in both modes, the observations are still valid. But despite the careful choice of answers pertaining to the four aspects of two modes of instruction enumerated in RQ1, caution is still needed. Thus, the future study design should ensure that the factors besides the teaching modes were constant, and both groups at the same level of proficiency experienced classes in an online mode and then in the classroom, or vice versa. Second, the instrument may not have yielded as thorough and explicit outcomes as expected. Adding Likert scale questions with a list of emotions would help the learners to concentrate on this aspect of FL education, before sharing their overall impressions of the course. Thus, further triangulation would be of benefit to the research design. Finally, interviews instead of the open-ended questionnaires would ensure a more in-depth interpretation of the results.

9. Conclusions

Although the investigation of emotions in SLA has a long tradition, there is still a scarcity of research on older adults' experience of late-life FL education in this regard. Hence, the findings presented in this paper expand on the results of previous research (e.g., Baran-Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec) by demonstrating third age learners' emotions experienced in traditional and virtual classrooms. Overall, the data revealed that the emotions in both modes are not dissimilar, they form an interdependent complex network of internal and external factors, but the online

classes seem to weaken positive emotions (cf. Dewaele and MacIntyre, "The Two") and provoke more negative states. Although the feelings of pride and self-fulfilment are common for both groups of respondents and show their overall attitude towards late-life education, the absence of face-to-face communication, including the feeling of connectedness, mutual support, and even peer-teaching (see Murphey), seems to lower enjoyment and increase anxiety, frustration, and boredom. Through engaging in direct interactions in a FL, social cognition, and communication skills of the learners are enhanced and well-being is stimulated, which seems to positively affect the learners' perception of the language learning experience. Thus, once more it should be highlighted that learning a FL in later life is not an aim in itself. Socializing, strengthening the sense of community, stimulating emotional well-being, and promoting harmonious ageing are of equal importance to older adult EFL learners (Liang and Luo; Słowik-Krogulec). Thus, trying to bridge the digital divide (Wu et al.), introduce the principles of Positive Language Education (Mercer et al.) to FLG, and raise teachers' awareness of the potential problems experienced in both the in-person and online modes, may have a considerable impact on both learner cognition and their in- and out-of-class quality of life (Mercer et al.; Pfenninger and Polz; Klímová et al., "Comparative").

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Older Adult Learners' Willingness to Communicate in English during Task Performance

Abstract: The article primarily intends to explore older adults' willingness to communicate (WTC) during dyadic work, as well as to identify communication strategies (CSs) applied in the course of task performance. The instrument comprised biodata items, In-Class WTC Level Scale, and In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale. The data analysis revealed that the older adult learners (sixteen students) were eager to communicate in English in class during an information-gap activity. The task type seemed to exert a positive influence on their WTC, and they appreciated the role of the interlocutor. The results also showed a strong positive correlation between in-class WTC level and the duration of learning English indicating that the older adults' WTC enhanced as the length of learning English increased. The participants employed mainly direct strategies, namely retrieval, self-repair, and self-paraphrasing. Retrieval was the most commonly used as it helped to gain time to express thoughts effectively. When it comes to interactional strategies, the age-advanced learners applied repetition requests and confirmation which suggested the partner played a vital role in achieving a communicative goal.

Keywords: willingness to communicate, older adults, English, communication strategies

1. Introduction

Numerous studies have indicated that one of the major motives to learn an FL in late adulthood is gaining and developing communicative skills that may be principally used outside the classroom (e.g., Jaroszewska 257; Pfenninger and Polz 6; Oxford 12). Undoubtedly, the ability to achieve communicative goals is the most significant objective of FL learning and teaching in all age groups since "it constitutes the yardstick for evaluating an individual's competence in the target language on

the first encounter with native speakers or other foreigners" (Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak 20). However, in order to become involved in out-of-class interactions in an FL, learners need to be willing to communicate and engage themselves in communicative tasks in class that, basically, aim to practise oral production of an FL (cf. MacIntyre 112).

The present study attempts to gain an insight into the nature of in-class older adults' willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre et al., "Conceptualizing", 546–59) in English during dyadic interactions by investigating both its level and correlations with sociodemographic variables. It also seeks to identify the communication strategies that the participants applied during an information-gap activity performed in pairs.

2. Classroom WTC and its measurement

The early conceptualization of L2 WTC which originally emerged from L1 was recognized as "one's predisposition toward approaching or avoiding the initiation of communication" when an opportunity arises (McCroskey 16). It reflected one's stable feature that, in a general sense, "some people talk a lot while others talk very little" (MacIntyre 112). This approach of L2 WTC as a personality-based propensity has been overruled by the heuristic model advanced by MacIntyre et al. ("Conceptualizing"). The scholars proposed the notion of L2 WTC that is viewed as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., "Conceptualizing" 547). This framework, which was conceptualized at dual levels, illustrating both enduring and transient factors, underlines the importance of a state of "readiness" rather than an innate "tendency" to engage in L2 communication (MacIntyre et al., "Conceptualizing"). The model postulates that one's readiness to communicate hinges upon distal (e.g., personality, communicate competence, motivation) and proximal (e.g., desire to communicate with a specific person, state communicative self-confidence) antecedents (MacIntyre et al., "Conceptualizing"). Contrary to L1 WTC, which is perceived as a trait-like predisposition, "in the specific situation of learning and using an L2, it is the language of communication that interacts with the structure of the individual's willingness" (Piechurska-Kuciel 137). The shift to the focus on "the role of context in the emergence of WTC" has enabled researchers to investigate diverse variables (e.g., personal, situated-based, context related) shaping WTC in the FL classroom setting (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, "Dynamics" 652).

Importantly, the early research into L2 WTC made no distinction between in-class and out-of-class L2 WTC (Peng, *Willingness* 16–17). For instance, McCroskey used a scale aimed at measuring L2 WTC in various situations that could occur in the L2 context between different receivers (friends, strangers, acquaintances) and in various communication contexts (public, meeting, group, and dyad)

(17–24). The tool comprised such items as talking with a police officer or talking to a friend while standing in a line. The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they were willing to communicate in certain contexts (0%—never to 100%—always). This probability-estimate scale in a self-report format failed to reflect the conditions where learners were to use an FL. MacIntyre et al. ("Willingness") examined high school learners' WTC in all four language skills in the immersion context (e.g., speaking in a group about your summer vacation, reading a novel, writing a story, taking directions from a French speaker) (374–83). The researchers used the same scale for both WTC inside and outside the classroom without any reference to interaction with people of different professions, but rather L2 communication with strangers or friends. The tool developed by MacIntyre et al. ("Willingness"), however, mostly described situations that less frequently occur in an FL classroom (374–83). Obviously, as Peng remarks, WTC inside and outside the classroom needs to be measured in a different manner because in-class WTC requires classroom-specific items (e.g., when you have a group discussion in an English class), whereas out-of-class WTC ought to include situations characteristic for natural settings (e.g., when sitting next to a foreigner on a train) ("The Challenge" 289).

A significant modification was proposed by Weaver who examined WTC among Japanese university students (399–412). The scale comprised statements related to readiness to speak and write in a variety of tasks and situations typical for the FL educational context (e.g., role plays, interviews, writing tasks). Although Weaver's tool (415) was criticized as some items contained the unspecified word "someone" that could be interpreted as either "the teacher" or "classmates", it was regarded as "a promising tool" in the FL classroom (Peng, *Willingness* 17). This instrument was adapted by Peng and Woodrow who created a new scale measuring Chinese university students' WTC in meaning-focused (e.g., giving a speech in the classroom) and form-focused (e.g., asking the meaning of a word) tasks between three types of interlocutors, such as a teacher, a peer, and a group of peers (843–61). What should be noted, however, is that these tools still "failed to capture the more subtle influences that the interplay of antecedents exerts on building someone's willingness to interact" (Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak, "Designing" 21).

Therefore, it has become necessary to "revisit the pyramid" and apply tools (i.e., qualitative, mixed-methods approach) that examine situation-sensitive and moment-to-moment changes (MacIntyre 119). For instance, Kang utilized observations and stimulated recall to discover that situation-based WTC in English was shaped by three psychological antecedents, such as security, excitement, and responsibility (280–88). Cao, who employed observations and stimulated interviews to investigate younger adults' WTC, pointed out that the factors contributing to readiness to communicate could be categorized as environmental (topic, task type, interlocutor, teacher, interactional pattern), individual (self-confidence, personality, emotion), and linguistic (language proficiency, reliance on the L1) (470–78).

Peng applied a mixed-methods approach (questionnaire, observations, interviews) to examine different factors affecting FL university students in China (*Willingness* 95–142). The findings showed that WTC was synergistically influenced by a large number of individual (beliefs, attitudes, expectations) and environmental (interaction pattern, teaching methods, teacher support) variable. A noteworthy mixed-methods study was conducted by Cao and Philp who used a questionnaire to investigate younger adults' predisposition to communicate, whereas a state level of WTC was measured by observations and interviews audio-recordings of group and dyadic work (483–89). Significantly, the data indicated a mismatch between self-reports of WTC and the learners' actual in-class communication. The actual mixed-methods classroom-based study (a questionnaire and WTC grip) conducted by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak ("Fluctuations"), who attempted to record WTC fluctuations among college students in Poland. The participants were to self-rate their WTC on a scale (−10—extreme unwillingness to speak to +10— extreme willingness to speak) during the task performance (a monologue and a dialogue) on a special WTC grid after hearing a beep every 30 seconds (251–56). It is important to note that the initial high level of WTC in the monologue tended to decrease (tiredness, lack of arguments) during the task performance while a reverse trend was reported in the case of the dialogue (the effect of the interlocutor). Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (*Willingness*) also investigated younger adults' WTC as they intended to develop a new measuring scale in a macro-perceptive, as well as the micro-perspective aimed to demonstrate the situational and dynamic nature of WTC by means of a detailed analysis of the variable "shaping learners' readiness to contribute to ongoing classroom interaction" (117). This method enabled them to identify such classroom-related factors as—among others—teacher-related (e.g., preparation, involvement, feedback), student-related (e.g., interest, boredom, overall attitude), and task-related (e.g., productive, receptive, information-gap, pre-task). Another interesting study was conducted by Gałajda who investigated WTC, both in the L1 and FL (English) among university students in Poland. The participants were asked to self-evaluate their level of WTC on a scale from 0% (absolutely unwilling to communicate) to 100% (absolutely willing to communicate) in the L1 (e.g., talk with a university friend in private) and the FL (e.g., communicate during pair work in front of learners) contexts (59–126). Also, a study conducted by Mystkowska-Wiertelak among younger adults indicated that the interlocutor's behaviour seemed to be vital in the case of engagement and satisfaction, and, additionally, the tasks done with a different partner contributed to generating positive emotions ("Link" 102–19). The partner's dominant style discouraged "less forceful students" to communicate, while the partner's unwillingness to speak generated the feeling to responsibility (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, "Dynamics" 106). The participants appreciated the opportunity to share information with others, as well as they emphasized the significance of good relationships with a speaking partner.

At this juncture, it seems substantial to conclude that researchers have surely adopted a great variety of methods to analyse WTC from different angles. It is

fairly evident, however, that WTC has been mostly studied among younger adults, and the literature lacks empirical evidence regarding older adults' actual in-class communicative behaviours and their readiness to speak in English.

3. Older adults' potential in-class WTC in English

When it comes to learning English in late adulthood, the results of several studies have indicated that older adults demonstrate rather homogenous and consistent self-perceptions about the significance of improving communication skills during English courses (e.g., Derenowski 100–49; Matusz and Rakowska 117–25). It is important to note, however, that the data gathering tools, mainly questionnaires (e.g., Jaroszewska 152–63; Pawlak, Derenowski, and Mystkowska-Wiertelak 81) and interviews (e.g., Piechurska-Kuciel and Szyszka 115), were designed to gain general perspectives of learning an FL in later life, and they basically explored older adults' motivation and motives (e.g., Gabryś-Barker 162–69; Grotek 131–42), their expectations of the teacher as well as FL learning processes (e.g., Kacetl and Klímová 3–8; Słowik-Krogulec 193–99), and learning strategies (e.g., Posiadała 310–18; Ramírez Gómez 112–58). Undoubtedly, little is known about their actual speaking behaviours during in-class oral activities. Therefore, there is a need for studies that would examine a more detailed picture of this cohort group's actual task performance, as well as the nature of their in-class WTC in English (cf. Pfenninger and Singleton 45).

Age-advanced learners' potential in-class WTC is by all means worth examining since it could, on the one hand, indicate how eager they are to engage themselves in communicative in-class interactions, while, on the other hand, it may determine their authentic openness to developing or maintaining interpersonal bonds and appreciating a social aspect of learning (cf. Derenowski 111). Older adults tend to declare the need for out-of-class communication with foreigners while vacationing abroad or with their friends and family, including grandchildren who are frequently incapable of speaking their native languages (e.g., Gabryś-Barker 159). As a matter of fact, an interlocutor for authentic communication seems to be "an important consideration in developing WTC", as they play a powerful role in boosting the student's motivation to learn an FL (MacIntyre et al., "Willingness" 369). Thus, it is reasonable to think that third-agers ought to be willing to communicate in English in class as WTC "represents the probability that the learner will use the language in authentic interaction with another individual, given the opportunity" (MacIntyre et al., "Conceptualizing" 558). Significantly, Grotek remarks that older adults have a preference to dyadic work in the classroom context, as this interaction pattern meets their learning expectations, which are associated both with communication practice and integration with group members (141). Speaking, as "the most anxiety-generating skill", ought to be practised in pairs because, as opposed to teacher-fronted tasks, it gives seniors time to exchange ideas with a peer (Baran-Łucarz

and Słowik-Krogulec 247). In addition, it may result in developing new bonds with conversation partners, and, more importantly, it could reduce the feeling of isolation and facilitate the quality of life (Rzadkiewicz and Łazarewicz 181–83).

Furthermore, it may be hypothesized that dyadic interactions have the potential to generate high levels of older adults' in-class WTC, as pairs could increase one's security and excitement owing to mutual responsibility and partner's arguments (e.g., Kang 185; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak, *Willingness* 174–76). According to Zhang and her colleagues' framework of situational antecedents of state WTC, cooperation with peers, their contribution and participation in a task are essential variables influencing state WTC (233). In a general sense, FL learners opt for speaking with a familiar and friendly partner because they have some bonds with each other, and, as a result, they may feel more self-confident and willing to communicate (e.g., Cao and Philp 186–88). The results of a questionnaire study indicated that the older adults were more eager to speak in meaning-focused exercises performed in dyads as they feel less apprehensive and more secure (Borkowska, "Age-Advanced Learners" 12–13). What needs to be remembered at this point is that senior students tend to express self-defeating attitudes towards learning that heavily influence their self-esteem and a sense of usefulness (e.g., Ramírez Gómez 173–75). This fact is associated with the age-related decline (i.e., biological, psychological, cognitive) that older adults experience in the course of ageing (see, e.g., Pfenninger and Singleton 419–49). Societal negative stereotypes commonly referred to as ageism also play a role in stigmatizing the image of older citizens (see, e.g., Tomaszewska-Hołub 138–47). For this reason, the FL classroom environment should give priority to third-agers' emotional well-being which may be grounded in socio-emotional selectivity theory proposed by Carstensen (331–38). The scholar states that older adults direct their attention to emotionally meaningful goals and fulfilling these aims requires the pursuit of social relationships that "results in greater complexity of emotional experience and better regulation of emotions experienced in everyday life" (Carstensen, Fung, and Charles 104). Additionally, familiarity with the interlocutor could create positive group dynamics and a laid-back atmosphere that is perceived as one of the most fundamental factors while learning an FL in older adulthood (cf. Derenowski 107). Positivity may lead to combating self-stereotypes and age-related defeatism and, consequently, facilitate FL learning (cf. Oxford 10). Gałajda aptly underscores that "the development of positive self-image of the learners" hinges mainly on creating a supportive atmosphere that principally boosts FL communication in the classroom context (132). The study findings conducted among older adults indicated a positive correlation between in-class WTC and classroom environment suggesting a great impact of group cohesion, classroom atmosphere, and teacher support on eagerness to speak English (Borkowska, "Relationship between" 165–71). Similarly, FL enjoyment was related to WTC indicating that openness to communicate positively influenced both private and social aspect of FL enjoyment, and WTC had the potential to generate positive emotions in class.

In a similar vein, task types are of great importance in shaping WTC (e.g., Cao 47). Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (*Willingness*) emphasize that performing tasks that involves elements of challenge, curiosity, and novelty is likely to generate higher WTC (175). For instance, it may be true in the case of any information-gap activity which represents "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on meaning rather than form" (Nunan 10). Information-exchange tasks are of practical importance, and they require learners' learning experience, which, in the case of older adults seems to be "the richest source for future learning" (Gabryś-Barker 161). It is worth mentioning that Knowles et al. remark that "the emphasis in adult education is on experiential techniques" that are close to learners' life and learning histories, and help to effectively tackle the various situations which may occur in real life (44).

When it comes to older adults, it seems important to focus on the application of communication strategies (CSs) that are viewed as "mutual attempts of the interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (Tarone 419). Pawlak posits that the employment of learning strategies by older adult learners appears to be the "context that needs to be singled out as worthy of more robust empirical investigation" (826). Significantly, there is a need to provide data concerning the use of learning strategies during the performance of different tasks in the classroom-based settings (Pawlak and Oxford 527). Although this "micro-perspective environment of strategy use" may be challenging due to a multitude of taxonomies, data collected in qualitative studies can still provide valuable insights into the application of learning strategies by FL learners of different ages (Przybył and Pawlak 107).

Dörnyei and Scott proposed an interesting taxonomy where CSs are classified on the basis of problem-management and they are divided into three categories, namely direct, indirect, and interactional (197) (Table 1).

Direct strategies are recognized as alternative ways of getting the meaning across, indirect are to help indirectly in creating "the conditions for achieving mutual understanding", whereas interactional strategies are applied in order to achieve mutual understanding that "is a function of the successful execution of both pair parts of the exchange" (Dörnyei and Scott 199). Dörnyei and Scott's (182–83) taxonomy was used in the study by Posiadała, who identified CSs applied by older adults while performing a communicative task (312–17). The participants (B1 level of German) mainly employed direct strategies (self-repair, code switching, retrieval), and interactional strategies (appeals for help, asking for repetition, clarification, confirmation). It was stressed that age-advanced learners' strategic competence hinged upon individual differences, learning experiences, and task types. Niżegorodcew writes that "senior students' strengths and weaknesses depend not only, and not primarily on how old they are, but on their study objectives and learning strategies" (90).

Table 1: Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (197)

	Resource deficit-related strategies	Own-performance problem-related strategies	Other-performance problem-related strategies	Processing time pressure-related strategies
Direct strategies	E.g., literal translation, code, switching, retrieval	Self-rephrasing, self-repair	Other-repair	—
Interactional strategies	Appeals for help	Comprehension check, own-accuracy check	E.g., asking for repetition, asking for confirmation	—
Indirect strategies	—	Verbal strategy markers	Feigning understanding	Use of filters, repetitions

The present study is prompted by a need to examine older adults' level of WTC during dyadic interaction and to explore their self-perceptions about the task performance. In order to explore how the participants overcome communicative breakdowns, particular attention is given to the deployment of CSs in the process of task performance.

4. Study[1]

4.1. Research aims and questions

The main objective of the present study was to examine the older adults' in-class WTC in English during an information-gap activity, and to identify the application of CSs during the task performance. It was also intended to examine correlations between the level of the students' WTC and selected sociodemographic variables. In particular, the research was conducted to address the following questions:

RQ1. What is the level of in-class WTC in English during task performance?

RQ2. How do the participants self-evaluate their participation in the task?

[1] The study is a part of an unpublished research project (Borkowska, unpublished dissertation).

RQ3. What is the correlation between the older adults' WTC level and the selected sociodemographic variables?

RQ4. What is the correlation between the learners' WTC self-assessment and the selected sociodemographic variables?

RQ5. Which CSs do the participants use while performing the task?

4.2. Participants

The informants were sixteen members of the Third Age University (TAU) in Nowy Targ who had been regularly attending English classes for seniors. Table 2 presents the third-agers' demographic data.

Table 2: The older learners' demographic data

Gender		Age			Place of residence		Education		CEFR	
Male	Female	Maximal	Average	Minimal	Village	Town up to 50,000 residents	Tertiary	Secondary	A1	A2
1	15	75	69	61	1	15	12	4	8	8

On average, the subjects had been learning English for eight years throughout their life, and for four years only during English courses for senior learners. As regards the knowledge of other (than English) FLs, nine subjects admitted knowing Russian, five knew German, and one student reported the knowledge of Italian. Two students reported that English was the only language they knew, and all the participants were not learning any other FL in later life.

4.3. Instrument

The instrument was a questionnaire comprising sociodemographic data and two scales. The first one, referred to as In-Class WTC Level Scale, was a self-assessment questionnaire adapted from Peng's (*Willingness* 183) scale measuring WTC level in class, and Gałajda's (145) WTC Scale, where students were to choose the frequency of their WTC in English (0%— never, 100%—always). In the current study, the respondents were asked to indicate how willing they were to communicate in English during the information-gap activity (0%—full unwillingness, 100%—

full willingness). The scale was structured in an increasing manner every 10%. The third-age students were to explain why they had chosen a particular WTC level. Additionally, they were to self-evaluate their participation in an information-gap activity by means of the second scale, known as In-Class WTC Self-assessment Scale, which was constructed for the purpose of this study. The tool was designed as a 6-point Likert scale (1—I strongly disagree to 6—I strongly agree), and it was comprised of the four following items: "I found answering questions easier than asking them", "Asking questions had a positive impact on my WTC in English during the task", "Answering questions had a positive effect on my in-class WTC in English", and "I was willing to take part in this activity".

4.4. Task

The older learners were to perform an information-gap activity. The exercise was exclusively designed for this study by the present author. As shown in Table 3, Student B was to ask their partner questions regarding their name, surname, age, nationality, job, free time, favourite day, breakfast, yesterday evening, and next weekend, whereas Student A was to answer those questions using the given information. In a similar manner, Student A was to ask questions about their name, surname, age, country, hobby, every Saturday, favourite month, cooking, last weekend, and tomorrow, while Student B was to give responses based on the provided information (Table 4). The partners were taking turns, and when Student B was interviewed, the roles were swapped.

4.5. Procedure

The study was conducted in March 2021. Owing to the circumstances of the pandemic, the members of the TAU were forced to have regular online classes. Therefore, the study was conducted during extra classes in the classroom settings. There were only two pairs in the classroom. The participants could choose their partner which, in practice, meant that they cooperated with the student they always worked with during classes. While one pair of students were performing the task, the other one was asked to complete vocabulary revision exercises. The teacher (the present researcher) was not allowed to help the students to complete the activity, however, they were informed that they could help each other in case of any communicative problems. Immediately on the completion of the exercise, the older adults were given the questionnaire to fill in and the next pair were preparing to do the task.

Once the study was completed, the questionnaires were collected and coded. The statistical analysis was conducted by means of IBM SPSS Statistic 26 software. Descriptive Statistics, together with Shapiro-Wilk tests, were calculated for the dependent variables and Cronbach's alpha coefficient to verify the reliability of the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale was used. In order to test the relationship

between the quantitative sociodemographic variables and the dependent variables, a series of Pearson's *r* and Spearman's rho correlation analyses were conducted. Due to the large disparity in gender, the place of residence, education, and the knowledge of another foreign language in the study group, the relationship between these sociodemographic variables and the dependent variables were not tested. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 3: The information-gap task: Set 1

Student A code:	Student B code:
Ask you partner about:	Answer your partner's questions:
1. name	1. name: Fatima
2. surname	2. surname: Brown
3. age	3. age: 55
4. nationality	4. nationality: Indian
5. job	5. job: doctor
6. What/like/free time?	6. free time: Nordic walking and yoga
7. favourite/day? Why	7. favourite day: Monday
8. What/eat/breakfast?	8. breakfast: tuna sandwich, white coffee
9. What time/were/at home/yesterday evening?	9. yesterday evening: 7:00 p.m.
10. Where/go/next weekend?	10. next weekend: best friend

Table 4: The information-gap task: Set 2

Student B code:	Student A code:
Ask you partner about:	Answer your partner's questions:
1. name	1. name: Robert
2. surname	2. surname: Smith
3. age	3. age: 66
4. country	4. country: Scotland
5. hobby	5. hobby: do gardening
6. What/do/every Saturday?	6. every Saturday: clean my flat and cook dinner
7. favourite/month? Why	7. favourite month: May
8. How often/cook?	8. cooking: every morning
9. Where/were/last weekend?	9. last weekend: opera with my cousin
10. Where/do/tomorrow?	10. tomorrow: drink read wine and relax

In addition, in order to determine the application of CSs, the task performance was audio-recorded by means of a voice recorder placed in front of the students. The recordings were transcribed, and CSs were coded on the basis of Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (197). The present author focused on the employment of direct and interactional strategies as they directly contribute to "achieving mutual understanding", whereas indirect strategies, are not "meaning-related", and they are not perceived as "strictly problem-solving devices" (Dörnyei and Scott 198).

4.6. Study findings

4.6.1. Descriptive statistics and normality tests for dependent variables

Table 5 depicts descriptive statistics and normality tests for two scales, namely the In-Class WTC Level and the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and normality tests for dependent variables

Scale	*M*	*Me*	*SD*	*Sk.*	*Kurt.*	*Min.*	*Max.*	*W*	*p*	*α*
In-Class WTC Level Scale	0.91	1.00	0.14	−1.82	3.32	0.50	1.00	0.72	<0.001	—
In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale	5.03	5.25	1.10	−2.88	9.89	1.25	6.0	0.67	<0.001	0.842

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test turned out to be statistically significant for the vast majority of the analysed variables which basically means a deviation from a normal distribution. The mean level of WTC was 91%. The standard deviation for the In-Class WTC Level Scale was relatively low ($SD = 0.14$) which indicates that the respondents' answers were quite homogenous. Also, the analysis of Cronbach's alpha coefficients revealed a good level of reliability of the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale ($\alpha = 0.842$). This essentially indicates that all the statements in the tool measured the same construct, namely WTC. The total mean and median of the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale was relatively high ($M = 5.03$, $Me = 5.25$), which might suggest that the older respondents positively assessed their task performance. Likewise, the standard deviation was relatively high ($SD = 1.10$) which shows that there was a large disparity in the third-age learners' responses to the items in the scale.

4.6.2. Older adults' in-class WTC in English

When it comes to individual levels of in-class WTC among the older adults, the data are presented in Figure 1.

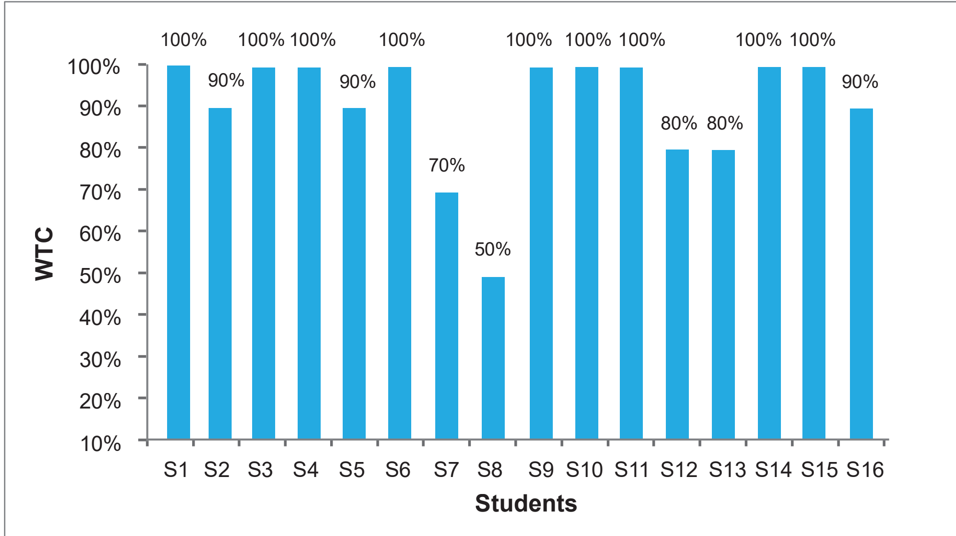

Figure 1: Levels of individual older adults' in-class WTC in English during dyadic interaction

It is noteworthy that more than a half of the students (nine students) declared the maximum WTC, and three learners admitted to being eager to communicate in 90% of interactions. They seemed to pay due attention to communication in English: "I'm learning English as to be able to communicate" (S3), "Communicating in English gives me a lot of pleasure" (S15), "I practise speaking, and it gives me communicative competence in English" (S6). Two participants highlighted the importance of the classroom atmosphere during the task performance: "… good, friendly atmosphere" (S9), "The atmosphere was supportive and my conversation was very relaxed" (S14). Two students appreciated the task itself: "It is nice to check the level of my progress while asking and answering questions" (S10), "… because it [the exercise] is hilarious and you can get more information about the person you've talked to" (S4). Some students emphasized the role of a partner: "I'm more secure when I speak with a partner" (S1), "I am very willing to communicate with another person since conversation allows me to improve a foreign language" (S2). One of the students who reported 80% level of WTC acknowledged: "Communicating during the task makes it possible to overcome a barrier and I felt motivated to ask questions, and when it comes to answering questions, it also improves my knowledge" (S13).

Student 8 who declared the lowest level of WTC (50%) of all the participants pointed out: "I've been trying hard, but it is not always as I would like it to be". Likewise, Student 7, whose level of readiness to communicate in English was 70%, pointed out that she required some time to make a response: "Because I need time to think about what I should answer, I have problems with responses".

4.6.3. Self-assessment of the task performance

The older adults' opinions about the information-gap activity and its impact on their WTC are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: The means, medians, and standard deviations for In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale

No.	Item	*M*	*Me*	*SD*
1.	I found answering questions easier than asking them.	4.69	5.00	1.62
2.	Asking questions had a positive impact on my WTC in English during the task.	5.00	5.00	1.26
3.	Answering questions had a positive effect on my in-class WTC in English.	5.19	5.00	1.22
4.	I was willing to take part in this activity.	5.25	5.50	1.24
	Total	5.03	5.25	1.10

The data analysis revealed that the seniors' responses to individual statements were heterogeneous as the standard deviations were relatively high. They appeared to be eager to take part in the task (item 4, $M = 5.25$). According to the students, answering questions had a more beneficial influence on their in-class WTC in English (item 3, $M = 5.19$) than asking questions (item 2, $M = 5.00$). Even though the third-agers found answering questions easier than asking them, their responses were the most diverse here ($SD = 1.62$), which may derive from individual preferences.

4.6.4. The correlation between the older learners' WTC level and the selected variables

As previously mentioned, the Shapiro-Wilk's test was significant, and for this reason, a non-parametric measure of rank correlation (Spearman's rho) was conducted. The correlation analysis is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: The correlation between three selected sociodemographic variables and In-Class WTC Level Scale

Variable		In-Class WTC Level Scale
Age	Spearman's rho	−0.47
	p-value	0.065
Duration of learning English throughout the whole life	Spearman's rho	−0.16
	p-value	0.550
Duration of learning English during English courses for seniors	Spearman's rho	−0.54
	p-value	0.029

As regards the correlation between WTC level and age, as well as WTC level and the length of English learning throughout the entire life, the data showed that

there was insignificant relationship between the variables. Surprisingly, the analysis revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between the duration of learning English at TAU and the senior learners' in-class WTC level. This especially means that the level of WTC decreased as the duration of learning during English courses for third-agers increased. Noteworthy is the fact that the correlation was very strong ($r > 0.50$).

4.6.5. The correlation between the third-agers' self-assessment and the selected variables

In a similar vein, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was performed with the aim of examining whether there was a relationship between the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale and the three selected sociodemographic factors.

Table 8: The correlation between three selected sociodemographic variables and In-Class Self-Assessment Scale

Variable		In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale
Age	Spearman's rho	0.30
	p-value	0.263
Duration of learning English throughout the whole life	Spearman's rho	0.64
	p-value	0.007
Duration of learning English during English courses for seniors	Spearman's rho	0.27
	p-value	0.307

The analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale and the duration of learning English throughout the whole life. This means that as the overall length of learning English increased, the older adults' self-assessment of the task increased. Importantly, the statistical effect proved to be strong ($r > 0.50$). There were no significant relationships between the In-Class WTC Self-Assessment Scale and the participants' age or the duration of learning English during courses for senior students. This finding demonstrates that the change of the participants' age or the length of English learning had no statistical effect on the change in WTC self-assessment.

4.6.6. The application of CSs

The older participants primarily employed direct strategies over the course of the dyadic interaction. The most commonly used was surely resource deficit-related strategies, classified as retrieval, which are presented in excerpts 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d.

Excerpt 1a	
S9:	What time what time (1.4) do you *what time* (1.7) *what time were were* you at home yesterd yesterday evening?
S10:	I was at home yesterday evening at 7:00 p.m.

Excerpt 1b	
S15:	What's your favourite day?
S16:	My *favour favourite* day is Monday.
S15:	Yes, why?
S16:	Why? (3.1) er because er is er … because it is start week.

Excerpt 1c	
S14:	What's your hobby?
S13:	My hobby er (0.8) do *gar … gardening gardening.*

Excerpt 1d	
S15:	What do you do?
S16:	Do you do?
S15:	What's your job?
S16:	*My job* … *my job* er … a doctor.

Retrieval seemed to be of great relevance during communication in dyads. In some cases, the data analysis suggested that retrieval as such helped the age-advanced learners to gain time which resulted in providing correct answers by means of self-repair (excerpt 2a, excerpt 2b, and excerpt 2c).

Excerpt 2a	
S4:	Where are you going to go on the next weekend?
S3:	To my best friend er *visit* I … *I'm going to visit* my best friend … my best friend.

Excerpt 2b	
S14:	What are you doing tomorrow?
S13:	*I'm … reading … I'm reading a book …* drink ... *I drink read … I'm ... drinking* red wine and relaxing.

Excerpt 2c	
S5:	Do you have some plan for next weekend where you want to go?
S6:	Next weekend … I (2.2) *I meet* my best friend next week.
S5:	Ok.
S6:	*I'm meeting … I'm meeting* my best friend the next weekend.

What should also be remembered at this point is that the third-agers also applied self-repair as a single strategy. Self-repair and self-paraphrasing were also employed by the older adults (Table 9).

Table 9: Own-performance problem-related strategies in direct strategies applied during task performance

Self-Rephrasing	Self-Repair
S15: *What do you do?* S16: Do you do? S15: *What's your job?* S16: My job … my job er … a doctor.	S7: What's your favourite month? Why? S8: My favourite month is May because my birthday is *on … in* May.
S2: *What do you want to do tomorrow?* S1: Tomorrow?= S2: *=What do you like to do tomorrow to what what would you like to do tomorrow?* S1: Tomorrow?	S14: *Where are you where were you sorry … where were you last weekend?* S13: I was er (2.4) in the opera with my cousin last weekend.
	S8: What's your nationality? S7: *My nationality* (1.1) *er I'm … I'm Indian.*

Interestingly, one student, who reported to know German, used code switching to the third language, and instead of using "free", the student used "frei" (excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3	
S9:	What … What do you like … What do you like er do in your *frei* time?
S10:	I like Nordic walking and yoga.

When it comes to interactional strategies, the age-advanced learners deployed other-performance problem-related strategies, such as asking for repetition (excerpt 4a, excerpt 4b) and confirmation (excerpt 5).

Excerpt 4a	
S6:	What is your surname, Robert?
S5:	My surname is Smith. Sound very specially.
S6:	*Can you repeat me* I don't (2.1) *Can repeat your surname*?
S5:	Smith.
S6:	Smith. Thank you.

Excerpt 4b	
S13:	What time were … at home yesterday evening?
S14:	*Repeat, please.*
S13:	What time were you at home yesterday evening?

Excerpt 5	
S2:	What do you do every Saturday?
S1:	*Only only in Saturday*? on on
S2:	Every every every
S1:	*Every Saturday?*
S2:	Every Saturday.

It seems essential that the senior learners did their best to solve communication problems during the task performance, and they were willing to ask the interlocutor for help. It may be concluded that although the older participants experienced some communication difficulties, they were conscious of their strategic competence and how to use it effectively.

5. Discussion

The evidence from this study clearly suggests that although the older adults represented lower proficiency levels (i.e., A1 and A2), they were very willing to communicate in English during the dyadic interaction. Both average and individual levels of WTC were very high, and, interestingly, nine students reported the maximum level of WTC. It may be deduced at this point that the seniors' openness to speak was strongly associated with the fact that age-advanced learners tend to enjoy FL communication as such because it brings about positive emotions, helps to eliminate social isolation, as well as fulfils their learning needs (cf. Derenowski 111–26).

In the present study, some third-agers acknowledged that communication in English was crucial and pair work boosted their motivation to speak. This confirms the fact that a partner and task type have a great impact on individual's WTC (e.g., Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak, *Willingness* 168) As stated by Cao and Philp, "WTC behaviour in pair work would be co-constructed with the interlocutor either pulling up or pulling down the speaker" (488). What this essentially means is that attentive and cooperative partners tend to play a positive role in shaping one's WTC level as they express the feeling of responsibility for successful completion of the task (Kang 284). Success, as a positive emotion, helps, in turn, to establish a supportive and mutually respectful classroom atmosphere which constitutes the core of adult education (Knowles et al. 52). Likewise, Dewaele believes that WTC may be boosted by "creating a friendly and sufficiently challenging and interesting

emotional classroom environment, and picking conversation topics that match the students' interests" (13).

The statistical data showed that the older adults' self-assessment of the task performance was relatively high. The learners admitted that the activity shaped their WTC in a positive manner because the information-gap activity involved both meaningful interactions and FL communication (cf. Borkowska, "Age-Advanced Learners" 11–17). One possible explanation is that, as previously mentioned, the third-agers chose familiar partners, and this fact might increase their security and confidence (e.g., Zhang, Beckmann, and Beckmann 233). In addition, the task seemed to be interesting as it was based on the idea of false identity, and, in fact, the senior students talked about themselves which is one of the most fundamental topics to discuss in later life (cf. Milewski and Kaczorowska-Bray 151). It is to be surmised that in order to foster older adults' WTC, the teachers should concentrate on such topics as family, everyday life, or practical issues, since they draw attention to their life experiences (Derenowski 132).

When it comes to the relationship between the two scales and selected sociodemographic variables, only two statistically significant results were found. The first was a strong negative correlation between the WTC level and the duration of English learning during English courses for seniors may suggest that there is an inconsistency of the older adults' opinions. On the one hand, they enjoyed participating in the task with familiar interlocutors, on the other hand, this finding can be interpreted as boredom or predictability while working with the same partner as usual during English classes. This might be in line with Mystkowska-Wiertelak's study where the opportunity to cooperate with a new partner stimulated engagement between younger adults ("Link" 108). In contrast, the second statistically significant correlation showed a strong positive relationship between the self-assessment scale and the length of learning English throughout life. This result might indicate that the participants' who had had long and past learning experiences appreciated the opportunity to cooperate with the partner during English classes because, from their perspective, they could practise the most fundamental skill, namely speaking (e.g., Oxford 11; Pawlak, Derenowski, and Mystkowska-Wiertelak 83). It is noteworthy that, as former students in formal education, the older adults used to attend teacher-centred FL classes where instructors followed the Grammar Translation Method, and, basically, there was no space for any interaction between peers (cf. Grotek 135).

As regards the last research question, it is evident that even though the participants appeared to apply quite a restricted repertoire of CSs in the course of the task performance, they could "maintain success despite linguistic flaws" (Piechurska-Kuciel and Szyszka 120). Most frequently, they employed retrieval which seemed to help them gain time to express thoughts, and, as stated by Ramírez Gómez, age-advanced learners "conduct themselves more slowly" (40). They experience a decline in general cognitive functioning and reduced working memory

capacity owing to deficits in inhibitory control (e.g., Pfenninger and Singleton 8–21). As a result, they need more time to compensate difficulties with memory recall that may potentially occur (cf. Posiadała 314). The older adults also applied self-repair and self-paraphrasing which showed their determination to use English accurately and to self-correct their mistakes. One possible corollary for this situation is that, as autonomous and self-directed learners, the third-agers self-reflected on their speaking performance (cf. Knowles et al. 43–47). Similarly, the employment of interactional strategies, namely asking for repetition and confirmation, may indicate the crucial role of the interlocutor and cooperation which was needed to successfully exchange information in the course of task performance (Dörnyei and Scott 199).

Although this study has offered important insights into age-advanced learners' in-class communicative behaviours, it is not without limitations. Firstly, it included older adults that had been taught by the same teacher, and it might be plausible to think that third-agers taught by different instructors would demonstrate a more heterogenous spectrum of WTC levels, as well as perceptions about the task itself. Secondly, the weakness of the research may be the participants' proficiency level, which was relatively low. This resulted in the choice of a rather simple exercise which might not have required a variety of CSs to complete. Thirdly, owing to the small sample size, the data analysis showed only two statistically significant correlations between the variables. It would be reasonable to repeat this study and explore other relationships between in-class WTC and different sociodemographic factors.

6. Conclusions

In spite of its limitations, the study certainly adds to a better understanding of the nature of older adults' in-class WTC in English. What should be highlighted is the fact that the seniors were willing to communicate even though their proficiency levels were relatively low. They had an authentic interest in speaking practice and cooperation with a peer. Therefore, a fundamental implication is that in order to develop senior learners' WTC, a mindful teacher ought to engage them in a variety of dyadic activities that might match their practical needs concerning real-life topics and natural communicative interactions. It is also apparent that openness to communicate in an FL among older adults is facilitated by a stress-free atmosphere, cooperative peers, and challenging tasks that arouse a genuine curiosity to perform a task. In effect, positive emotions may be generated, and, consequently, older adult learners are likely to develop new valuable bonds with their peers that potentially lead to numerous fruitful communicative interactions in English, both in-class and out-of-class. It is undoubtedly worthwhile to note that further research should be undertaken to scrutinize older adults' WTC in different tasks performed in a variety of patterns of interaction.

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Older Adult EFL Learners' Readiness for Autonomous Language Learning

Abstract: Learner-centred education has emphasized the significance of learner autonomy in language learning over the past forty years. Currently, the literature on the topic implies that cultural and educational environments affect autonomous learning perception and practice, therefore students' readiness must be examined before creating autonomous learning activities. Given the scarcity of studies, the purpose of this research is to shed light on the issue of whether older adult learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are ready for learner autonomy. To achieve this goal, the present study collected responses from sixty-five EFL learners, aged between sixty and eighty-six. The data were obtained through a questionnaire consisting of five sections: background information, views on teacher and student responsibilities, decision-making skills, motivation, and autonomous activities both within and outside the classroom. Furthermore, eight voluntary EFL learners participated in the follow-up interviews. The analysis involved utilizing descriptive statistics from the questionnaire replies, as well as interpreting the interview data. The findings revealed that Turkish older adult EFL learners exhibited a limited degree of readiness for autonomous language learning, despite their notable levels of enthusiasm and eagerness to improve their English proficiency.

Keywords: learner autonomy, older adults, older adult English, readiness for learner autonomy

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy, as described by Holec, refers to the capacity to take control over one's own learning. Holec, in a seminal report issued under the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project, was the first to propose this concept (Benson). Autonomy in language acquisition has been described using several approaches. Thus, for instance, Holec treated autonomy as an attribute of the learner. In contrast, Dickinson (as qtd. in Benson), who defined it as a condition in which learners have the responsibility to make decisions on their own learning and carry out these

decisions, used the term to describe learning situations. Finally, Little ("Learner") introduced a psychological aspect and argued that autonomy encompasses the ability to engage in critical thinking, make decisions, and take independent actions. Still, it is Holec's definition which is the most frequently cited in the literature.

Autonomous learners have the ability to assume responsibility for their own learning by establishing learning objectives and devising strategies to accomplish them. They must also engage in reflective thinking regarding their learning, choose appropriate sources, and evaluate their own progress (Chan). Little ("Language") explains that learner autonomy is mostly linked to adult education and self-access learning systems, and it entails taking independent action. The idea of learner autonomy gained attention in the language teaching domain, in part, due to the emergence of learner-centred educational theories. Therefore, the notion has been widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in facilitating a productive language acquisition process, linked to both classroom-based (Dam) and independent learning (Benson). On the other hand, the growing number of older adults interested in continuing education in later years has led to an increased scientific interest in Foreign Language Geragogy. Indeed, the popularity of learning foreign languages in late adulthood has grown, following the dissemination of research on the positive physical, psychological, and cognitive effects of foreign language learning (Ramírez-Gómez, "Critical") and upon recommendations made by the World Health Organization (WHO), which highlighted health benefits associated with learning in later life. This has also sparked a significant interest in further research in the field of applied linguistics in the process of learning English by older adults.

It should be noted that in this study, older adult learners are healthy EFL learners who are at the age of sixty and older and are either retired or semi-retired and do not require nursing assistance.

2. Literature review

2.1. Learners' readiness for autonomous learning

Research on learner autonomy has suggested that cultural and educational scenarios can influence the way learner autonomy is perceived and practiced (Yıldırım). Hence, as also suggested by Cotteral, it is imperative to accurately ascertain learners' readiness to take responsibility for their own learning prior to any intervention or developing and modifying instructional materials and exercises to promote student autonomy in a language classroom.

Several studies have been conducted to measure learners' readiness for autonomy so far in various educational contexts. For example, in a study conducted by Koçak, the objective was to determine the readiness of students enrolled in an

English language preparatory school at a private university in Turkey to engage in autonomous language learning. The study's findings revealed that a significant proportion of the students exhibited higher levels of motivation. Another finding was that the students exhibited a propensity to employ certain metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Furthermore, the learners perceived the teacher as being primarily accountable for most of the duties involved in their own learning process. Likewise, a significant proportion of students exhibited a tendency to engage in extracurricular activities aiming at enhancing their English proficiency. There was no significant difference in the sense of responsibility and the frequency of performing out-of-class activities in English based on the respondents' gender and major field. However, there was a difference based on their proficiency level. Language learners at the intermediate level were more inclined to engage in extracurricular activities, whereas their sense of responsibility did not vary depending on their degree of competence.

Karabıyık, in turn, examined Turkish university students' readiness for autonomous learning and its connection to their learning culture. The goal was to determine whether students' attitudes towards autonomous learning were influenced by their cultural learning patterns or if they could be attributed to differences in their educational backgrounds and experiences. A significant correlation was found between the participants' learning culture and their readiness for learner autonomy. This showed that the level of exposure to autonomous education in high schools where the participants studied, influenced their subsequent attitudes and actions towards learner autonomy. The results also suggest that it is imperative to consider learners' prior learning experiences, including their learning culture, as well as other individual aspects, before learner autonomy is fostered.

Yıldırım conducted a study with the purpose of determining the level of readiness for learner autonomy among Turkish EFL learners at the university level. The study examined the viewpoints of 103 learners regarding the responsibilities of teachers and learners, their beliefs about their own ability to act independently, and the frequency at which they engage in autonomous language learning activities. The findings showed that learners were willing to take responsibility in various aspects of the language acquisition process.

With an emphasis on teaching English, Alrabai evaluated Saudi students' readiness for independent and autonomous learning as well. The results validated the comparatively limited readiness of Saudi EFL learners for self-directed learning. The learners exhibited a diminished sense of responsibility, while reporting a moderate level of proficiency and enthusiasm in acquiring English language skills. A significant proportion of participants indicated limited engagement in self-directed activities, displaying a notable reliance on teachers and a small degree of autonomy. Although the participants had a decent understanding of the concept of learner autonomy and its requirements, their responses indicated that their autonomy was limited.

Tayjasanant and Suraratdecha conducted a study to investigate perceptions of Thai teachers and learners on autonomous learning in the context of Thai learning culture. The aim was to assess the readiness of both groups for autonomous learning. The findings revealed that educators and learners share favourable attitudes towards self-directed learning. However, the results suggest that the examination system, students' reliance on teachers, and lack of understanding from families and surrounding communities pose challenges for both groups in attaining a significant level of autonomy.

Lin and Reinders, in turn, examined the beliefs, practices, and readiness for autonomy of 668 students and 182 professors in the college English course. Using a triangulated methodology, they discovered that both students and teachers exhibited mental but not technical or behavioural readiness for autonomy. The obstacles to fostering autonomy in Chinese colleges appear to be mostly related to pedagogy rather than cultural barriers.

In their study, Cirocki, Anam, and Retnaningdyah investigated how Indonesian secondary school students understood the concept of learner autonomy, assessed their level of motivation to learn English, and evaluated their preparedness to engage as independent learners in the teaching-learning process. The results indicated that a large number of students lacked knowledge on the concept of learner autonomy. Furthermore, their enthusiasm to study English was very low and they often lacked the necessary abilities and competences to be independent learners.

Kartal and Balçikanlı investigated the culture of learning among student instructors in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and their readiness to become independent learners, as well as their ability to encourage learner autonomy among their students in Turkey. The evidence suggests that learner autonomy was not promoted in educational settings that the participants knew before. Nevertheless, they expressed their willingness to assume some responsibility for their own language acquisition and engage in more self-directed activities beyond the confines of the classroom.

2.2. Older adults and EFL learning

Older adults are people at the age of approximately sixty and over, as described by Ramírez-Gómez (*Language*) in her studies on foreign language geragogy. According to the WHO, population ageing happens at a quicker rate than before and, until 2050, the percentage of the global population aged over sixty will almost double, increasing from 12% to 22% (2022), which has created a need for nations to adopt a comprehensive strategy to ensure well-being of their ageing population. So far, researchers have highlighted the advantages of studying foreign languages for older adults at the psychological, affective, social, and cognitive levels, including improvements in cognition, prevention of dementia, and increased physical and social activity (Klimova and Kuca; Ramírez-Gómez, *Language*). However,

research on foreign language education in this age group indicates that while older adults have strong motivation and ample time to learn new languages, they may also have limitations in the cognitive or physical abilities necessary to learn a foreign language. Another problem is the lack of appropriate teaching methodologies and materials (Jaroszewska; Noyan and Aşik; Słowik, "Developing"). As a result, the benefits of late life FL learning might only be visible when correct methodology, activities and materials are selected or adjusted to the needs, characteristics, strengths or weaknesses of older adults, otherwise it might generate negative attitudes and frustration (Ramírez-Gómez, *Language*). On top of that, Singleton and Ryan claim that as individuals grow older, there is a decrease in vision and auditory acuity leading to significant impairments, which might negatively impact older adults' capacity to acquire a second language, particularly in regard to comprehending the oral input. Likewise, some researchers asserted that older adults might experience age-related cognitive, psychological, and physical changes that are not experienced by younger adults, such as decline in working memory capacity, encoding and remembering new information, processing speed, and attention (Scott; Hakuta, Bialystok, and Wiley). Thus, their fading memory and delayed reflexes can hinder the foreign language learning process. Finally, according to Ramírez-Gómez (*Language*) and Słowik ("Adult"), older people bring their past learning experiences to the class, which may differ from those of younger generations.

McElree and Dyer, on the other hand, argued that aging does not always result in a decline in working memory capacity, but is instead more closely related to processing speed impairment. It has also been suggested that both experience and training can enhance working memory capacity, perhaps aiding older adults in learning a second language (Singleton). Therefore, according to the current considerations on age, success or failure in second language acquisition cannot be determined primarily by age since it is also impacted by numerous cognitive, social, and psychological factors (Singleton and Leśniewska).

In terms of learner autonomy, on the other hand, one of the rare studies that focused on older adult learners' autonomous learning practices was conducted by Schiller, Dorner, and Szabó. The authors' aim was to monitor and enhance independent learning behaviours of people in this age group. The findings indicate that older persons are highly motivated to learn a new language autonomously due to its benefits for their understanding and speaking skills. Additionally, the constructs of self-awareness in learning and metacognitive knowledge were recognized as crucial elements for engaging in self-study practice. Older adults' learning behaviours were consistently influenced by cognitive stimulation, sustained learner motivation, and specific self-relating components. The utilization of cognitive- and memory-enhancing learning strategies, along with technology-supported learning resources, were concluded to have a significant impact on the practice of independent learning.

2.3. Research aim and questions

As shown in the review of the previous studies above, most of the relevant research on learner autonomy concentrated on individuals who were either high school or university students. Given the importance of learners' awareness concerning benefits and principles of autonomy before implementing a syllabus promoting it in class, as well as the scarcity of studies exploring older adult EFL learners' views on learner autonomy, research in this field appears relevant. Thus, this study aims to investigate older adult learners' views on teacher and student responsibilities in English classes, decision-making abilities, motivation level, and actual autonomous behaviours in order to measure their readiness to take charge of their own FL learning. In this context, the present research has attempted to answer the following research questions (RQs).

RQ1. What are older adult EFL learners' views on teachers' responsibilities in English classes?

RQ2. What are older adult EFL learners' views on students' responsibilities in English learning?

RQ3. What are older adult EFL learners' decision-making abilities?

RQ4. To what extent do older adult EFL learners feel motivated to learn English?

RQ5. What are older adult EFL learners' autonomous behaviours while learning English?

3. Methodology

This study utilized an explanatory mixed-method approach, involving the triangulation of data gathering. Triangulation is necessary to verify the accuracy of information provided in a questionnaire. Hence, supplementary interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the current study.

3.1. Participants and setting

The research was conducted with senior learners participating in English courses organized by Kadikoy Public Education Centre in Istanbul. This centre offers English courses at the CEFR A1, A2, B1, and B2 levels annually, serving primarily learners aged between forty and ninety. A modified version of the questionnaire was shared in the institution's WhatsApp group and learners aged sixty and above were specifically requested to fill it in. Consequently, the researcher was able to obtain seventy-three responses from this group within a span of three weeks. Excluding the replies which did not match the requirements, sixty-five questionnaire forms were collected, which was followed by interviews with eight participants. Table 1 shows the demographics.

Table 1: Participants

Age	60–69	54 (83.1%)
	70–79	10 (15.4%)
	80–86	1 (1.5%)
Gender	Female	58 (89.2%)
	Male	7 (10.8%)
Degree of diploma	Middle school	3 (4.6%)
	High school	14 (21.6%)
	Vocational school	7 (10.8%)
	Bachelor's	34 (52.3%)
	Master's	6 (9.2%)
	PhD	1 (1.5%)
Years of learning English	0–5	45 (69.2%)
	5–10	9 (13.9%)
	10–15	2 (3.1%)
	15–20	1 (1.5%)
	20+	8 (12.3%)

3.2. Data collection

The study utilized a mixed-method design in which data were obtained from the Learner Autonomy Readiness Scale, involving five sections, and the following interviews. The first part explored students' demographics (Table 1). Four further sections were based on Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys' questionnaire which was selected as Deci and Ryan, Holec, and Littlewood, prominent autonomy researchers, influenced its design.

The questionnaire initially had four sections and fifty-two questions. The participants were required to indicate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "not at all" to "completely". Two qualified Turkish EFL instructors evaluated the translation of the items and their correspondence to the study goal. The revised version was also evaluated by two older adult EFL learners for the items' clarity and applicability for this age group. After administering the questionnaire, eight volunteers were interviewed online to analyse the constructs in detail.

The interview primarily consisted of eight questions, with one or two questions allocated for each section (see Appendix). They were also scrutinized by a pair of experts and two EFL students above the age of sixty, to ensure their appropriateness and clarity. The interviews were conducted via Zoom with each session lasting between twenty and twenty-five minutes.

3.3. Data analysis

SPSS, a statistical software package, was used to compute descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, for participant responses in each component individually. Follow-up interviews were conducted using Zoom and subsequently transcribed. This allowed the researcher to analyse learners' responses alongside the questionnaire data.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Older adult EFL learners' views on teachers' responsibilities in learning English

The second part of the questionnaire included items exploring learners' views on teachers' and learners' own responsibilities, addressing RQ1 and RQ2. The answers were expected to reveal whether the participants were ready to take responsibility for learning, or whether they relied on their teachers. Table 2 shows older adult learners' views on the role of their teachers in EFL classes.

As can be seen in Table 2, most of the learners believed that teachers are "mainly" or "completely" responsible for carrying out all the aforementioned actions, especially for those related to methodological concerns. Furthermore, it was seen that thirty-eight (58.4%) learners selected the options "mainly" and "completely" in the item "deciding what you learn outside of class" and twenty-nine (43.7%) others chose the same options for the item "making sure you make progress outside of class", which shows that the majority of the learners attribute the responsibility to their teachers even for their out-of-class learning activities. Taking into account these results, it is evident that older adult learners rely on teachers for decisions concerning their learning, especially when it comes to deciding what and how to do in class.

Similarly, during the subsequent interviews, the majority of participants expressed their preference especially for in-class language learning facilitated by a teacher. Regarding the implementation of learning and teaching activities, teachers were expected to assume the role of "leaders" in the classroom. They were required to monitor learners' progress, curate activities and resources, and determine their specific needs as exemplified in the comment made by Participant 1 (P1) who states that

> [t]eachers are responsible for choosing materials and activities, assessing student progress, and determining the appropriate amount of time to allocate for each activity. The teacher should have primary control over all aspects of teaching and learning. The multitude of problems we face and the need to monitor their development divert individuals of our generation from acquiring knowledge (sixty-one years old).

Table 2: Views on teacher responsibilities

Teacher responsibilities	Not at all	A little	Some	Mainly	Completely
1. Make sure you make progress during lessons	0 (0 %)	3 (4.5%)	15 (22.7%)	33 (50%)	14 (21.2%)
2. Make sure you make progress outside class	5 (7.6%)	10 (15.2%)	21 (31.8%)	23 (34.8%)	6 (9.1%)
3. Stimulate your interest in learning English	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	11 (16.7%)	39 (59.1%)	13 (19.7%)
4. Identify your weaknesses in English	1 (1.5%)	3 (4.5%)	8 (12.1%)	40 (60.6%)	13 (19.7%)
5. Make you work harder	0 (0%)	5 (7.6%)	19 (28.8%)	31 (47%)	10 (15.2%)
6. Decide the objectives of your English course	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	12 (18.2%)	33 (50%)	18 (27.3%)
7. Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (15.2%)	36 (54.5%)	19 (28.8%)
8. Choose what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	11 (16.7%)	31 (47%)	22 (33.3%)
9. Decide how long to spend on each activity	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	13 (20%)	27 (41.5%)	4 (36.9%)
10. Choose what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons	0 (0%)	3 (4.5%)	9 (13.8%)	33 (50%)	20 (30.8%)
11. Evaluate your learning	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	12 (18.5%)	36 (54.5%)	16 (24.2%)
12. Evaluate your course	0 (0%)	5 (7.7%)	10 (15.4%)	40 (61.5%)	10 (15.4%)
13. Decide what you learn outside class	3 (4.6%)	11 (16.9%)	13 (20%)	29 (44.6%)	9 (13.8%)

P1 suggests that when methodology is not appropriate for older adult learners, it might generate frustration or a self-defeating attitude, which is in line with the finding of Ramírez-Gómez (*Language*). In addition, considering that most students in this age group had been exposed to traditional teaching methods, such as the grammar translation method, during their early years of education, these findings validate the notion that these students carry their previous learning experiences into their current educational systems (Ramírez-Gómez, *Language*; Słowik, "Adult").

Some of the participants emphasized the importance of the proficiency level and experience in language learning. Accordingly, having teacher control is especially important for beginner level students or those who do not have any language learning experience, as shown in the following statement from participant P2:

> As language level and experience of the student increase, it becomes possible for him to learn a language on his own. For example, what I have learned in the past comes out while I am trying to learn a language. I combine the information from the past with the present. This is not the same with those who have just started to learn a language. I think it is very difficult for them to learn a language without teacher guidance (sixty-two years old).

In fact, the level of autonomy might be affected by the language level of the learner more than their age; however, according to Benson, measuring autonomy in language learning may be problematic because FL has many grammatical constructions that one needs to handle and define separately and the stages of autonomy depend on linguistic and communicative demands of particular tasks, thus trying to correlate the level of autonomy and language proficiency might be a mistake. The results show that intermediate learners performed more out-of-class activities autonomously, which corroborates Koçak's findings, however, Koçak's study concerned university students. Therefore, when both age and level factors are considered simultaneously, it can be inferred that especially beginner level learners in this age group need to be given more teacher assistance in order to develop autonomy in language learning, but age of the learner and the linguistic and communicative demands of the tasks might still be of importance.

4.2. Older adult EFL learners' views on their responsibilities in learning English

To answer RQ2, the participants were required to assess the elements listed in the learner responsibilities section of the questionnaire in relation to their own skills and traits. Thus, Table 3 presents a summary of the data on learners' views on their own responsibilities in learning a foreign language.

The data presented in Table 3 clearly indicate that the majority agreed that students and teachers are equally responsible for most of the listed activities. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for certain items to be seen as responsibilities of learners more than teachers. Furthermore, when examining the prevalence of responses indicating "not at all", particularly in relation to features of methodology (items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10), it may be concluded that participants perceive their teacher as having a greater level of responsibility for their language learning process.

The subsequent interviews corroborated the individuals' perspectives as shown in the data yielded from the questionnaires. Most of the interviewees expressed the opinion that the instructor should create an English class curriculum that enables learners to easily understand and comply with their instructions and especially learners with very low motivation require guidance from teachers. According to P4,

> The teacher must be the leader in the class and show the way in learning a language and as students, we should follow that way. It requires a great passion for someone to do something they don't know how to do. Otherwise, you will lose the student. The student needs someone to increase his interest for something. This is especially true for those who have low motivation in learning English (sixty-five years old).

Table 3: Views on learners' responsibilities in learning English

Learner responsibilities	Not at all	A little	Some	Mainly	Completely
1. Make sure you make progress during lessons	0 (0%)	4 (6.2%)	16 (4.6%)	27 (41.5%)	18 (27.7%)
2. Make sure you make progress outside class	1 (1.5%)	8 (12.3%)	15 (23.1%)	31 (47.7%)	10 (15.4%)
3. Stimulate your interest in learning English	0 (0%)	4 (6.2%)	21 (32.3%)	36 (55.4%)	4 (6.2%)
4. Identify your weak-nesses in English	1 (1.5%)	4 (6.2%)	28 (43.1%)	23 (35.4%)	9 (13.8%)
5. Make you work harder	0 (0%)	3 (4.6%)	14 (21.5%)	33 (50%)	15 (23.1%)
6. Decide the objectives of your English course	4 (6.2%)	11 (16.9%)	28 (43.1%)	21 (32.3%)	1 (1.5%)
7. Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons	4 (6.2%)	11 (16.9%)	28 (43.1%)	21 (32.3%)	1 (1.5%)
8. Choose what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons	5 (7.7%)	14 (21.5%)	31 (47.7%)	14 (21.5%)	1 (1.5%)
9. Decide how long to spend on each activity	8 (12.3%)	12 (18.5%)	31 (47.7%)	12 (18.5%)	2 (3.1%)
10. Choose what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons	7 (10.8%)	16 (24.6%)	32 (49.2%)	9 (13.8%)	1 (1.5%)
11. Evaluate your learning	2 (3.1%)	9 (13.8%)	31 (47.7%)	21 (32.3%)	2 (3.1%)
12. Evaluate your course	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.8%)	20 (30.8%)	34 (52.3%)	3 (4.6%)
13. Decide what you learn outside class	2 (3.1%)	8 (12.3%)	18 (27.7%	30 (46.2%)	7 (10.8%)

In contrast, P2 presented a divergent perspective on the learning process of those who possess extensive experience in learning English and have a high proficiency in the language. According to this respondent, the learners should have the capacity to make decisions regarding their education during various stages of their development:

> Our teachers are usually younger than us. They cannot understand the difficulties we have regarding learning and retention. Supposing that they are aware of it, they cannot know without experience. As older adults, we understand each other better. In this case, it would be better for us to guide the lessons. Teachers may initiate an activity, then we can work in groups and do what we have to do (sixty-two years old).

In fact, the importance of self-awareness and metacognitive knowledge is usually emphasized in self-study practice. As suggested by Schiller, Dorner, and Szabó, the learning behaviour of older persons is consistently affected by cognitive

stimulation, continuous learner motivation, and unique self-relating components, which might explain the differences in terms of autonomous behaviours among older adults.

4.3. Older adult EFL learners' decision-making abilities

To assess the readiness of older adult learners for learner autonomy, the questionnaire incorporated a third section that specifically addressed their decision-making ability investigated in RQ3. The responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Views of decision-making abilities

Decision-making abilities	Very poor	Poor	OK	Good	Very good
14. Choosing learning activities in class	3 (4.6%)	15 (23.1%)	29 (44.6%)	16 (24.6%)	2 (3.1%)
15. Choosing learning activities outside class	2 (3.1%)	23 (35.4%)	25 (38.5%)	13 (20%)	2 (3.1%)
16. Choosing learning objectives in class	2 (3.1%)	14 (21.5%)	33 (50.8%)	13 (20%)	2 (4.6%)
17. Choosing learning objectives outside class	2 (3.1%)	22 (33.8%)	23 (35.4%)	17 (26.2%)	1 (1.5%)
18. Choosing learning materials in class	4 (6.2%)	18 (27.7%)	28 (43.1%)	13 (20%)	2 (3.1%)
19. Choosing learning materials outside class	6 (9.2%)	21 (32.3%)	21 (32.3%)	15 (23.1%)	2 (3.1%)
20. Evaluating your learning	3 (4.6%)	13 (20 %)	26 (40%)	20 (30.8%)	3 (4.6%)
21. Evaluating your course	2 (3.1%)	14 (21.5%)	22 (33.8%)	21 (32.3%)	5 (7.7%)
22. Identifying your weaknesses in English	4 (6.2%)	15 (23.1%)	22 (33.8%)	17 (26.2%)	7 (10.8%)
23. Deciding what you should learn next in your English lessons	6 (9.2%)	21 (32.3%)	19 (29.2%)	14 (21.5%)	5 (7.7%)
24. Deciding how long to spend in each activity	3 (4.6%)	29 (44.6%)	17 (26.2%)	12 (18.5%)	4 (6.2%)

By merging "very poor" and "poor" responses, as well as the "good" and "very good" alternatives, the data indicate an almost equal distribution in frequency across most items. Seeing that most participants selected the "OK" option in performing most of the activities provided on the list, it can be inferred that

older people feel moderate self-confidence in their decision-making abilities when given an opportunity. Also, it can be understood that these learners might have a greater difficulty in making selections with respect to methodological issues. Considering the sum of "very poor" and "poor" responses in the table, almost half of the learners appear to have low confidence in deciding what to learn next in English lessons (41.5%), "choosing learning materials outside the class" (41.5%), or "deciding how long to spend in each activity" (49.2%). However, when taking the high numbers of "OK" and "good" responses into account, it can be claimed that older learners might have higher self-confidence in their decision-making abilities for methodological concerns than most of the younger adults, who did not seem ready for autonomous learning in previous studies.

The results of the follow-up interviews, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of the proficiency level and experience, providing further support for Ramírez-Gómez's (*Language*) assertion of the significance of previous learning experiences. P1, who identified herself as an intermediate English speaker, claimed to be proficient in nearly all of these tasks with the following statement:

> At A1 level, I did not feel skilled enough to perform these exercises. Nevertheless, I am at intermediate level and believe that I can accomplish nearly all of these tasks. I have a good understanding of how to perform language tasks due to my learning experience (sixty-one years old).

P1's comments seem to stay in line with Koçak's findings concluding that intermediate students have a higher tendency to learn outside the class, highlighting the correlation between the level of proficiency and autonomous learning behaviours.

4.4. Older adult EFL learners' views regarding their motivation level to learn English

To answer the RQ4, section 4 prompted the respondents to assess their level of motivation for learning English, as having high motivation and willingness to learn a foreign language are considered as signs of being autonomous in language learning.

The results presented in Table 5 reveal that 92.2% ($n = 60$) of the participants identified themselves as "highly motivated", "well motivated" or "motivated" to learn English. Seeing that none of them claimed to be "not at all motivated", it can be inferred that the majority of the learners had sufficient motivation, which is a vital component of being an autonomous learner.

During the interviews, the researcher inquired about the learners' assessment of their motivation level and the underlying reasons for choosing to learn English. This was done to ascertain their willingness to learn English. The findings have corroborated the questionnaire results and helped to establish that older persons acquire English language skills because of their intrinsic desire to learn a new language. Several individuals provided justifications, such as the necessity to communicate with foreigners, related to the presence of relatives or friends living

abroad, travelling, and the desire to enhance their memory, as shown in the following excerpt from P7:

> My son resides in London and is married to a Polish woman. I require to establish communication with his spouse. Furthermore, I have observed a decline in the strength of my recall. It is advisable to acquire a new language in order to reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (sixty-nine years old).

The results are in parallel with the study by Schiller, Dorner, and Szabó in terms of participants' high motivation to learn a foreign language, which might refer that these individuals appear ready for autonomous learning, or they can be prepared for it with guidance and support from teachers.

Table 5: Views on level of motivation for learning English

Highly motivated to learn English	9 (13.8%)
Well-motivated to learn English	32 (49.2%)
Motivated to learn English	19 (29.2%)
Slightly motivated to learn English	5 (7.7%)
Not at all motivated to learn English	0 (0%)

4.5. Older adult EFL learners' inside and outside class autonomous behaviours

The last part of the questionnaire involved items regarding autonomous behaviours in- and out-of-class. Information about self-directed activities that learners usually practice was supposed to inform whether they were ready for the autonomous learning mode. Table 6 displays the frequency and percentages of the participants' responses for the relevant items.

Based on the sum of the "sometimes" and "often" responses in Table 6, it can be concluded that the most common out-of-class activities rated by older adult EFL learners are "reading English notices around you" (76.9%), "watching English movies" (70.7%), "watching English TV programmes" (66.2%), "doing revisions not required by the teacher" (64.6%), and "doing grammar exercises" (62.4%). On the other hand, the sum of the "never" or "rarely" responses showed that engaging in activities such as "sending e-mails in English" (73.8%), "listening to English radio" (72.3), "talking to foreigners in English" (66.1%), and "practicing using English with friends" (66.1%) are among the least common activities for learning outside of formal settings among older adult EFL learners.

Similarly, in terms of in-class activities, considering the sum of the "sometimes" and "often" responses, it can be seen that the most frequent items rated by older adults are "noting down new information" (93.9%) and "asking the teacher questions when you don't understand" (87.7%). Likewise, most of the participants seemed to feel confident in "taking opportunities to speak in English" (76.9%) and

Table 6: Inside- and outside-class autonomous learning activities

Autonomous behaviours (outside class)	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
26. Do assignments which are not compulsory	6 (9.2%)	18 (27.7%)	23 (35.4%)	18 (27.7%)
27. Note down new words and their meanings	0 (0%)	11 (16.9%)	22 (33.8%)	32 (49.2%)
28. Send text messages to your friends	16 (24.6%)	19 (29.2%)	25 (38.5%)	5 (7.7%)
29. Read English notices around you	2 (3.1%)	13 (20%)	31 (47.7%)	19 (29.2%)
30. Read newspapers, books, or magazines in English	6 (9.2%)	32 (49.2%)	18 (27.7%)	9 (13.8%)
31. Send e-mails in English	26 (40%)	22 (33.8%)	14 (21.5%)	3 (4.6%)
32. Watch English TV programmes	3 (4.6%)	19 (29.2%)	31 (47.7%)	12 (18.5%)
33. Listen to English radio	23 (35.4%)	24 (36.9%)	16 (24.6%)	2 (3.1%)
34. Listen to English songs	3 (4.6%)	25 (38.5%)	22 (33.8%)	15 (23.1%)
35. Talk to foreigners in English	19 (29.2%)	24 (36.9%)	20 (30.8%)	2 (3.1%)
36. Practice using English with friends	19 (29.2%)	24 (36.9%)	20 (30.8%)	2 (3.1%)
37. Do English self-study in a group	9 (13.8%)	27 (41.5%)	27 (41.5%)	2 (3.1%)
38. Do grammar exercises	3 (4.6%)	21 (32.3%)	29 (43.9%)	12 (18.5%)
39. Watch English movies	2 (3.1%)	17 (26.2%)	27 (41.5%)	19 (29.2%)
40. Write a diary in English	29 (44.6%)	11 (16.9%)	3 (4.6%)	2 (3.1%)
41. Use the internet in English	17 (26.2%)	24 (36.9%)	18 (27.7%)	6 (9.2%)
42. Do revision not required by the teacher	6 (9.2%)	17 (26.2%)	29 (44.6%)	13 (20%)
43. Attend a self-study centre	23 (35.4%)	17 (26.2%)	17 (26.2%)	8 (12.3%)
44. Collect texts in English (e.g., articles, brochures)	13 (20%)	27 (41.5%)	18 (27.7%)	7 (10.8%)
45. Go to see your teacher about your work	12 (18.5%)	19 (29.2%)	28 (43.1%)	6 (9.2%)
Autonomous behaviours (inside class)				
46. Ask the teacher questions when you don't understand	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.8%)	27 (41.5%)	30 (46.2%)
47. Note down new information	0 (0%)	4 (6.2%)	18 (27.7%)	43 (66.2%)
48. Make suggestions to the teacher	7 (10.6%)	28 (43.1%)	28 (43.1%)	2 (3.1%)
49. Take opportunities to speak in English	1 (1.5%)	14 (21.5%)	36 (55.4%)	14 (21.5%)
50. Discuss learning problems with classmates	4 (6.2%)	14 (21.5%)	39 (60%)	8 (12.3%)

"discussing learning problems with classmates" (72.3%) in class. It seems that the only item that more than half of the participants rated for the "never" or "rarely" options was "making suggestions to the teacher" (53.7%). The fact that this is still close to the amount of those who responded as "often" and "sometimes" to this item, and that the participants marked "often" and "sometimes" at a high rate regarding other in-class autonomous learning activities might indicate readiness for the autonomous learning mode; however, the smaller percentage of participants who reported "often" and "sometimes" for their out-of-class activities compared to in-class activities may also imply that older individuals gain confidence from the teacher's presence in class.

During the subsequent interviews, it was discovered that some learners engage in various in- and out-of-class activities such as following Instagram accounts regarding learning English (P1), watching YouTube videos (P1), watching movies with Turkish subtitles on Netflix (P2) and checking the Turkish equivalents of unknown words (P4), listening to the pronunciation of English words (P3), making translations (P2), reading books repeatedly so that the words can be easily recalled (P2), forming and answering questions in relation to the texts they read (P2). This indicates that older adult English learners like repeating listening and reading activities and practicing vocabulary and sentence structures, which might be associated with the difficulties they face in perceiving and retaining new words.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate Turkish older adult EFL learners' readiness for autonomous learning in terms of five aspects: (1) learning responsibilities of teachers, (2) learning responsibilities of students, (3) decision-making abilities, (4) level of motivation for learning English, (5) involvement in autonomous activities inside and outside the classroom. The findings proved that issues pertaining to older adults' readiness for learning autonomy need further investigation as in many parts of the questionnaire, the results revealed that Turkish older adult EFL learners do not appear to be well-prepared for learning on their own despite having a strong motivation to learn English, which is a clear indicator for learner autonomy. While a few individuals claimed to possess the capacity to independently make judgments about their own learning if given the chance, a significant proportion of participants expressed a sense of inability to perform tasks, particularly those related to methodological issues. Similarly, a few of them expressed the preference for being supervised by the teacher in the process of FL learning. Similarly, whereas the questionnaire indicated that teachers and students share nearly equal responsibilities for most learning activities, the follow-up interviews revealed almost the opposite of these results.

Most of the interviewees indicated that the teacher should have the authority to make decisions regarding the implementation of learning and teaching activities in the language classroom. According to their viewpoints, the teacher is expected to assume a leadership role while learners are supposed to stick to the programmes designed by the teacher. Regarding autonomous learning behaviours both inside and outside the classroom, most respondents rated activities such as watching movies and TV, doing revision or grammar exercises as highly important. On the other hand, activities that involve self-reflections, such as making suggestions to the teacher or discussing learning problems with friends, were rated as less important. In conclusion, it is possible to say that older adult EFL learners may be independent to a certain extent, but their previous learning attitudes and experiences could hinder them from feeling fully prepared for autonomous learning scenarios.

5.1. Limitations

The sample size might be considered to be a drawback, especially for the quantitative part of this research. Due to the scarcity of EFL learners aged sixty and above in Turkey, the findings may not be conducive to establishing broad generalizations. Furthermore, the questionnaire was generated using Google Forms and distributed to individuals for online completion. Given the possibility of older individuals experiencing concentration or memory challenges, as well as lacking proficiency in technology, it is expected that learners in this age bracket would want additional assistance from researchers when completing the questionnaire.

5.2. Pedagogical implications

The primary practical implication of this study is the need for well-designed instructional programmes that foster learner autonomy among older adult learners, considering their learning challenges and perceptions of autonomy in the learning process. Furthermore, doing an analysis of these findings in relation to students’ language learning experience and English proficiency level is expected to produce distinct and more dependable outcomes.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

1. Have you heard of the concept of autonomous learning before? What do you think about it?

A. Views on teacher and student roles

2. Based on your answers to the survey, why do you think ______________ is a responsibility of the teacher? In your opinion, what other responsibilities might the teacher have in language teaching?

3. Based on your answers to the survey, why do you think _____________ is students' responsibility? In your opinion, what other responsibilities might the student have in language learning?

B. Views on decision making abilities

4. If given the opportunity, would you like to take on an active role in English lessons, such as planning the lesson, deciding on the materials and activities to be used, evaluating the lesson, and monitoring your own development? How good do you think you would be at applying these?
5. In the survey, you stated that you are good/bad at _______________ Why do you think so?

C. Motivation

6. Why do you want to learn English?

D. Autonomous activities

7. How do you study English? What actions do you take autonomously to enhance your learning? (in-class/out-of-class)
8. What difficulties do you experience while learning English? What/who would help you the most to solve these problems? Do you need support?

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Teaching Quantitative Data Analysis with GNU PSPP: A Cognitive Apprenticeship Approach

Abstract: The ability to analyse quantitative data using software is of great importance but represents a substantial challenge for many in the applied linguists' community. One way to support them in this challenge is to provide inexperienced analysts with appropriate training. Accordingly, this methods tutorial paper aims to present the GNU PSPP open-source software and provide guidance on the development of analytic skills using this software among higher education students. The cognitive apprenticeship theory and research are addressed first as the theoretical foundation. What follows is a description of how cognitive apprenticeship approach was applied to teaching analytic practice in a Moodle-based course offered to graduate students enrolled in the TEFL MA programme at a university in Poland, where GNU PSPP was integrated in the coursework. The paper concludes with a brief evaluation of the course, showing that this approach works well for supporting students throughout the course and for enabling them to transition towards conducting quantitative data analysis using software in their own MA research projects. The paper may be of interest to those tasked with providing training and development programmes to students, faculty and researchers in applied linguistics and beyond, including those for whom access to commercial software may be of concern.

Keywords: quantitative data analysis, GNU PSPP, cognitive apprenticeship

1. Introduction

Quantitative data analysis—i.e., the analysis of data represented by numbers (Creswell 175; Dörnyei 199; Lowie and Seton 13)—is one of the stages in the research process, preceded by the formulation of a research problem, the planning of research, and data collection, and followed by reporting and evaluating research (Creswell 174–201; Dörnyei; Wild and Pfannkuch 226). The data analysis stage itself is conducted in a series of steps, from preparing the data for analysis (e.g., assigning numeric values to the data and inputting the data into data analysis

software), through running the analysis (e.g., conducting descriptive and inferential statistical procedures), reporting the results (using tables and figures), to discussing the results obtained in the analyses (Creswell; Dörnyei). Software packages—paid (e.g., SPSS, SAS, STATA) or free, open-source (e.g., GNU PSPP)—aid researchers in their analytical process. These allow researchers to conduct a wide range of statistical procedures, including descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as more advanced procedures, such as regression or factor analysis, also allowing for data visualization through tables, charts, and histograms. The ability to analyse quantitative data with the use of software is essential for quantitative and mixed methods researchers (cf. Loewen et al., "Knowledgeable" 886), and may also be of great importance for qualitative researchers conducting, e.g., case or action research studies, who may need to analyse quantitative data (e.g., participants' test scores) (Pitura, *Using*). Without the ability to independently analyse, interpret and present quantitative data, researchers might be unable to deliver trustworthy results that will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field, enhance practice, and guide policy decisions (Creswell; Gass et al. 252; Loewen et al., "Knowledgeable" 887).

Regrettably, existing research suggests that many researchers in the field of applied linguistics may have insufficient knowledge and skills for conducting such analyses effectively and appropriately on their own. Research done on researchers, faculty, and graduate and doctoral students in the area of applied linguistics revealed deficiencies in their statistical literacy, despite having attended courses in statistics, which, *nota bene*, the majority of the surveyed participants found not adequate and satisfactory (Gönülal; Gönülal, Loewen, and Plonsky; Lazaraton et al.; Loewen et al., "Knowledgeable", "Statistical"). This situation exists in spite of the availability of many handbooks, textbooks, chapters (e.g., Dörnyei; Larson-Hall, *A Guide*; Lowie and Seton; Mackey and Gass; McKinley and Rose; Phakiti et al.; Plonsky), and articles (Larson-Hall, *Moving*; Larson-Hall and Herrington; Lindstromberg; Norris; Norris et al.; Plonsky and Oswald) written, among others, to improve applied researchers' quantitative data analysis skills. This brings to the foreground the significance of suitable training and development programmes for students, faculty, and researchers allowing for the development of quantitative data analysis skills that they need to understand and assess the quality of research published in the field and to conduct their own research projects (Gass et al. 254; Loewen et al., "Knowledgeable" 887).

Importantly, it has been pointed out that data analysis is, at least in part, a craft skill that is best acquired by hands-on experience (Li and Seale). From this perspective, the theory of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., *Teaching Students*; Collins et al., *Making Thinking*; Collins and Kapur), which is gaining traction in educational contexts (Matsuo and Tsukube), may be a useful instructional approach to teach quantitative data analysis skills. It emphasizes the importance of interaction with a competent practitioner who models the target cognitive activity for learners to observe, guides learners while they practise, and provides them with feedback

on their performance. In order to improve graduate students' problem-solving in educational statistics, this theory was applied to design a Moodle-based instructional intervention, which appeared to have beneficial effects on student learning of statistics (Saadati et al.). However, while this unique research shows that the theory of cognitive apprenticeship can be considered an adequate teaching approach to help students understand statistical concepts and procedures, there is not enough information available on how to integrate quantitative data analysis software in the coursework to more fully develop students' capacity for data analysis. Without such guidance, research methods educators might not be able to assist students, faculty, and researchers in gaining expertise in quantitative data analysis in university courses and professional development programmes.

In efforts to address this challenge, the purpose of this methods tutorial paper is to promote the teaching of quantitative data analysis with the use of software in the field of applied linguistics. In light of this, the cognitive apprenticeship theory and research are presented first. What follows is a description of how cognitive apprenticeship approach was applied to teaching analytic practice in a Moodle-based course offered to graduate students enrolled in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) MA programme at a university in Poland. The course utilized the GNU PSPP open-source software due to limited access to commercial software in this context. In doing so, this work adds to the body of methodological literature available, and responds to calls for improving methodological skills in the field of applied linguistics (Gass et al. 2021; Loewen et al., "Knowledgeable").

2. Cognitive apprenticeship—theory and research in education

The cognitive apprenticeship model was developed by Collins and colleagues (Collins et al., *Teaching Students*; Collins et al., *Making Thinking*; Collins and Kapur) as a variation on the traditional apprenticeship that focuses on workplace training in the field of crafts and trades (e.g., shoemaking). In this context, the targeted skills are easily observable from the outside, allowing apprentices to learn the skill by watching the master perform a specific task and practise with master's support. Instead of focusing on physical skills, the model of cognitive apprenticeship concentrates on cognitive skills, such as the learning of mathematics, reading, or writing. The model is based on the premise that, in contemporary classrooms, students do not have access to teacher's mental processes, which can serve as a basis for learning through observation. Similar to this, teachers are unable to observe students' thought processes, making it impossible to monitor how students are using knowledge to complete the tasks at hand. Therefore, the aim of cognitive apprenticeship is to make the thought processes used by experts (teachers, experienced practitioners, professionals) while performing cognitive tasks visible so that students can

see them in action and practise them. It is maintained that knowledge is valuable when it can be employed in various situations to solve problems in the real world. As such, cognitive apprenticeship theory appears to be suitable to teach quantitative data analysis skills, allowing students to acquire knowledge and skills under the guidance of instructors before applying these skills for their own research project purposes.

The theory distinguishes four elements constituting the cognitive apprenticeship learning environment: Content, Method, Sequence, and Sociology. Each element is described in more detail below.

The first element, Content, covers the many kinds of knowledge novices need for expert competence. This area encompasses *domain knowledge*, i.e., concepts and procedures specific to a field of study, and *strategic knowledge*, i.e., knowledge of how to apply domain knowledge to address real-world problems. Strategic knowledge, in turn, comprises a range of strategies, such as *heuristic strategies* (techniques for completing tasks), *control strategies* or *meta-cognitive strategies* (approaches for regulating task execution), and *learning strategies* (knowing how to learn concepts and procedures) (Collins and Kapur 111–12). It is thus clear that, in order to effectively teach students how to analyse, interpret, and present quantitative data in their own research, instructional content should place a strong emphasis on helping them become familiar with statistical concepts and procedures, conducted with the aid of statistical software.

Method, the second element in the cognitive apprenticeship framework, highlights the importance of providing students with the chance to observe and learn from experts (teachers) in context. In light of this, the model offers six distinct methods for fostering the growth of expert knowledge, i.e., modelling—students observe the teacher completing a task; coaching—student work is observed and facilitated by the teacher; scaffolding—students are assisted by the teacher in completing a task; articulation—students are encouraged by the teacher to express their understanding verbally; reflection—students compare their own performance with others' performance on a task; and exploration—students formulate and address their own problems (Collins and Kapur 113–15). It is assumed that the first three methods—modelling, coaching, and scaffolding—aim to help students in acquiring skills through observation and practice under expert's (teacher's) guidance, which is similar to what takes place in traditional apprenticeship. The methods of articulation and reflection are provided to assist students in gaining awareness of and control over problem-solving processes, whereas the method of exploration aims to promote autonomy by allowing students to formulate problems on their own. These methods seem to have the potential to support the learners of quantitative data analysis by giving them the chance to interact with and learn from experienced researchers in authentic research contexts.

The third element, Sequencing, addresses the issue of organizing instructional activities. The theory holds that tasks should be of increasing complexity, increasing

diversity, and ought to focus on global before local skills. Specifically, it is maintained that students need to: 1) be provided with learning activities that become progressively complex, 2) practice in a range of contexts, and 3) understand the entire task before carrying out its specific parts (Collins and Kapur 115). It follows that the objectives in the course that teaches quantitative data analysis should similarly focus on global knowledge before specific one, grade the introduction of statistical concepts and procedures, and should also employ a wider range of statistical concepts and procedures in learning tasks over time.

Finally, Sociology, refers to the social aspects of the learning environment and includes four characteristics. First, it makes reference to situated learning, wherein students gain knowledge while working on practical problems. Next, Sociology embraces the notion of community of practice which entails the discussion of the different ways tasks can be performed. Intrinsic motivation, in turn, concerns students creating their own objectives to learn skills. The last aspect, exploiting cooperation, emphasizes student collaboration while achieving their objectives (Collins and Kapur 115–16). Clearly, such social factors must also underpin the design of the quantitative data analysis course.

The principles of cognitive apprenticeship have been applied in the design of learning environments in a range of educational contexts, as reported in a recent review study conducted by Matsuo and Tsukube. The researchers found that, in primary and secondary education settings, the theory has been used for designing and implementing programmes in science, chemistry, and multimedia education. The theory has also been used in post-secondary education to create teacher-student tuition programmes for music instruction, performance consulting programmes in management education, qualitative research methods in programmes for doctoral students, and grant proposal writing programmes. In addition to this, there are programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as those in healthcare, that are based on cognitive apprenticeship theory. The theory has been employed in adult education for a variety of purposes, including the creation of writing curricula for adolescents, military education programmes, business education programmes for the hospitality and tourism industry, and library training. Finally, as reported by the researchers, the theory has been applied to develop Internet-based programmes, such as a writing programme in primary education, an instructional planning programme in pre-service teacher education, and a statistics course in postgraduate education. Overall, existing evidence presented in this review study demonstrates the value of cognitive apprenticeship theory in programme design, web-based programmes in particular, for enhancing the acquisition of cognitive skills among students and employees. As the study describing the design of the statistics course is of special relevance to the current paper, it will be discussed in more detail next.

In efforts to improve the learning of educational statistics among postgraduate students, Saadati et al. conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a Moodle-

based learning environment designed as an extension to face-to-face lectures, referred to by the researchers as a web-based Cognitive Apprenticeship Model (or *i*-CAM). In the main, the designed model of teaching consists of three phases: handling, supporting, and self-exploring. At the handling phase reported in the paper, congruent with the methods of modelling and coaching of the cognitive apprenticeship theory, instructors use intentionally arranged learning resources and activities available on Moodle to demonstrate statistical procedures, students complete problem-solving tasks, and leave comments in the forum if they have questions. At the supporting phase, consistent with the methods of scaffolding, articulation, and reflection, scenarios describing statistics problems are posted in the forum. Students follow instructors' hints (that decrease in amount over time) to arrive at solutions. In addition, students explain their thinking about how to approach a given statistical problem and point out the challenges they may be facing. In addition, students engage in conversations with one another to reflect on the work they complete. In the final, self-exploring phase, students are encouraged to talk about the difficulties they had with their assignments and share their solutions. The study participants comprised two groups of postgraduate students from the Faculty of Educational Studies enrolled in the Educational Statistics course: the treatment group (n = 27) and the control group (n = 26). Both groups had the same content, assignments, instructor, and class duration. What differed was the way students conducted the learning activities on Moodle; while the treatment group was guided by instructors in the learning activities in the way described above, the students in the control group had access to the materials on Moodle, engaged in discussions with peers, and could also approach their instructors for help with their tasks. Data were collected with a pre-test and post-tests to measure students' knowledge of statistics at the end of every phase of the *i*-CAM. In terms of mean test scores at the end of each phase, the treatment group outperformed the control group, indicating that the programme had enhanced statistical problem-solving skills of the participants in the treatment group.

All in all, the theory of cognitive apprenticeship seems to help structure our thinking about how to design and implement the training of cognitive skills, quantitative data analysis training programmes in applied linguistics being a case in point. Importantly, this theory contributes to our understanding of quantitative data analysis abilities as a complex cognitive skill, requiring the knowledge of statistical concepts and procedures that can be next applied to conduct statistical procedures with software, to interpret and present the obtained results. The theory also offers helpful information regarding the kind of learning environment that is conducive to the development of analytic skills. The study describing the effectiveness of the web-based statistics programme offers particularly valuable insights on how the principles of cognitive apprenticeship can be applied to design a learning environment aiming at the development of analytic sills. However, it appears that research systematically and purposefully integrating software to develop students'

ability to conduct statistical procedures has not been conducted to date. Without such research, instructors might be left with little guidance on how to create training programmes for quantitative data analysis that are effective. As a result, without exposure to the use of quantitative data analysis software, students, faculty, and researchers might find it more difficult to become independent analysts. This paper extends the existing literature by embodying the principles of cognitive apprenticeship theory in the design of a Moodle-based course integrating GNU PSPP in the coursework. In what follows, there is a description of the course introducing MA TEFL students to qualitative data analysis with open-source software, aiming to assist students in understanding how the instructor, an experienced practitioner, creates analytical workflows with the use of the software, and to help students gain the ability to apply analytic skills in their own MA research projects.

3. Moodle-based quantitative data analysis instruction for MA TEFL trainee teachers in Poland

3.1. Background

The Institute of English Studies at a university in Poland offers the IT in Didactic Research course to MA TEFL students who are required to write and defend a research-based MA thesis. This course introduces students to both quantitative and qualitative data analysis with software in TEFL research. The said course is a continuation of the Research Methods in Language Education course taught a year earlier which aims to familiarize the students with the issues around various research approaches, designs, and data collection methods, covering, among others, research ethics, forming research questions, and so forth. The number of participants in the course fluctuates each year, the maximum being twenty students in a group. The course has been taught by the present author since 2016 in the face-to-face mode, except for the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 academic years when instruction was held synchronously online via MS Teams. Course content and delivery has evolved over years to accommodate students' learning experiences, as well as author's own experiences as a course instructor and a supervisor of MA theses. In what follows, the focus is on the first part of the course in its current form that deals with quantitative data analysis utilizing the GNU PSPP open-source software instead of a commercial statistical package, since students lack access to the latter.

3.2. Course goals

Course goals target the development of domain knowledge and procedures necessary in the process of quantitative data analysis. Specifically, in line with the

regulation of the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education on the standard of education preparing for the teaching profession (*W sprawie standardu*), course goals aim at developing students' expertise with regard to:

- principles of quantitative data processing and analysis,
- verification and coding of quantitative data,
- basic statistical analysis, e.g., descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, measures of central tendency and dispersion, correlations, statistical inference,
- the use of software supporting the analysis of quantitative data.

3.3. Theoretical framework

Course design is informed by the cognitive apprenticeship theory (Collins et al., *Teaching Students*; Collins et al., *Making Thinking*; Collins and Kapur) which involves acknowledging the cognitive character of the abilities underpinning quantitative (and qualitative) data analysis. Therefore, it is recognized that the learning environment must allow students to have experiences akin to those of an apprentice, to observe the instructor working, and to practise under instructor's guidance and apply statistical concepts and procedures using software in their own research. Additionally, it is considered essential that, in order for students to advance toward independent skilful performance, they need to be surrounded by both experienced researchers-analysists and other students, who are all engaged in data analysis in real-life research that constitutes one of the stages of the research process (Creswell; Dörnyei; Wild and Pfannkuch).

3.4. Course resources

The course is supported by a number of online resources available on/through Moodle—the university Learning Management System. These include:

- GNU PSPP software download links and installation instructions,
- selected chapters from the electronic version of the statistical handbook (in Polish) edited by Bedyńska and Cypryańska, accessible online through the university library,
- e-articles reporting on empirical research in the field of TEFL,
- instructor's Google Slides class presentations, mainly based on the content from Bedyńska and Cypryańska,
- YouTube video tutorials demonstrating specific statistical procedures with the use of GNU PSPP recorded by the instructor,
- sav. file datasets for student practice,
- GNU PSPP tasks prepared by the instructor requiring students to conduct analyses with the use of GNU PSPP, the provided dataset, and a video demonstrating how the analytic task is to be accomplished, as well as

specifying how the output of analyses is to be made available for instructor's feedback.

In addition, in order to keep student work organized and accessible for the instructor throughout the course, Google Docs are used to serve as student online workbooks. Students create their own documents and share the link on the Workbooks Moodle forum.

3.5. Content

The content is sequenced and designed to be covered in separate classes as Moodle modules in the following way:

- Class (module) 1. Preparing data for analysis in PSPP,
- Class (module) 2. Data presentation—Frequencies,
- Class (module) 3. Data presentation—Descriptives,
- Class (module) 4. Scales and indicators,
- Class (module) 5. Correlation,
- Class (module) 6. Statistical significance,
- Class (module) 7. Differences—Categorical variables,
- Class (module) 8. Differences—Continuous variables.

It is assumed that the mastery of these concepts and procedures is necessary for novice researchers on their way to expert performance.

In each class (module), learning resources are organized to support the teaching of specific statistics concepts and procedures, in keeping with the tenets of cognitive apprenticeship. For example, in a class focusing on correlation, the resources available on Moodle include an e-article reporting on a research study utilizing correlational analyses (resource 1), a Google Slides presentation on correlations (resource 2), tasks in which students learn how to conduct correlational analyses with PSPP (resources 4 and 5) using the provided dataset (resource 3), as well as instructions on reading materials to prepare for the forthcoming class (resource 6), i.e., a chapter from the statistical handbook and a new research e-article (Figure 1).

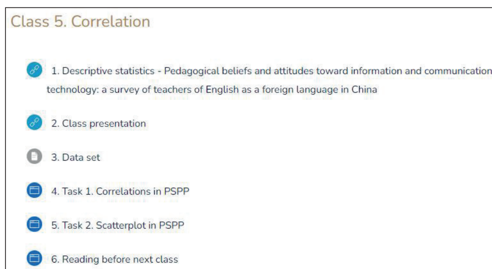

Figure 1: Organization of the resources in a class (module) devoted to correlational analyses with GNU PSPP

3.6. Procedure

Class procedure is designed to support the development of students' analytic skills using the six methods derived from the theory of cognitive apprenticeship in four phases, as presented in detail below. In the main, this course differs from the course described by Saadati et al. (2015) in that all the six methods of cognitive apprenticeship are applied to promote the learning of each concept or procedure in every class, while the said researchers applied the theory to structure the learning activities in three phases throughout the whole course.

3.6.1. Phase 1: Building students' knowledge of concepts and procedures in quantitative data analysis

Phase 1 focuses on developing students' knowledge regarding a specific statistical concept or procedure necessary for students to be able to conduct quantitative data analyses. During this phase, the activities are organized to correspond with the methods of modelling, scaffolding, and coaching of cognitive apprenticeship.

Specifically, before class, in order to prepare for learning in class, students are asked to read two texts: 1) a chapter form a handbook of statistics (Bedyńska and Cypryańska 2013); and 2) a research article that utilizes that specific statistical concept or procedure. For example, when preparing for class dedicated to correlations, students read a chapter entitled "Measures of relationship between variables—correlation coefficient" (Bedyńska and Cypryańska) and an article "Pedagogical beliefs and attitudes toward information and communication technology: a survey of teachers of English as a foreign language in China" (Liu et al.).

In class, the instructor begins the learning sequence by analysing the article. He/She asks questions such as: What is the purpose of the study?, Who were study participants?, What data collection methods were employed?, What were the findings?, etc. Accordingly, in a class aiming to familiarize the students with correlations, students answer these questions about the study on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and attitudes towards ICT. By referring to the whole research inquiry cycle conducted by experienced researchers, the instructor contextualizes the use of a specific analytic practice in a wider research process and, in so doing, prevents student perceptions of a target statistical concept or procedure as not a particularly useful theoretical construct.

Next, the instructor focuses students' attention on the Results section in the article that features a target statistical concept or procedure. The instructor asks: Do you recognize the statistical procedure used here?; Why do you think it was used?; etc. These questions are asked to explain the need for this type of analyses with reference to the research questions formulated by the researchers—authors of the analysed article. For example, in the article utilizing correlational analyses, the instructor draws students' attention to the correlational matrix and the interpretation found in the text and elicits the reason why this type of analysis was conducted.

As such, the research article helps model data analysis by demonstrating how experienced researchers conduct their analyses in real-life research context in order to establish the need for student ability to conduct specific analyses and to motivate students to make effort to engage in the activities that follow.

After that, the instructor organizes and develops student knowledge concerning the target concept or procedure using a Google Slides presentation. Throughout the presentation, the instructor guides the students to constructing the understanding of specific statistical concepts or procedures. Specifically, he/she explains the concept or procedure, applies it in examples, and clarifies difficulties. For example, to develop student understanding of correlation, the instructor gives a presentation covering the following aspects:

- introducing students to correlation,
- cautioning students that correlation does not imply causation,
- providing basic characteristics of *r*-Pearson correlation coefficient,
- explaining how specific values are interpreted,
- displaying examples of scatterplots as graphic representations of correlation,
- listing other correlation coefficients (rho-Spearman, Kendall's Tau-b, Phi, Cramer's *V*, and Eta),
- providing students with an example of a correlation matrix and of a report.

On the whole, the procedures in this phase allow for building student domain knowledge that underpins the ability to analyse quantitative data, interpret the output and present the results with regard to a specific statistical concept or procedure. This phase resembles the handling phase described by Saadati et al. in that students are engaged in the activities that aim at developing their understanding of statistical problem solving using the learning resources and activities available on/through Moodle. However, in the course described here, this phase constitutes an initial part of each class—not the whole course—providing students with the theory and practice of each targeted statistical concept and procedure.

3.6.2. Phase 2: Improving students' ability to analyse quantitative data with GNU PSPP

Phase 2 aims at developing students' knowledge concerning the use of GNU PSPP to conduct a specific statistical procedure. The purpose of instruction is to help students deepen their knowledge of data analysis and develop their analytic skills through the observation of the instructor performing analyses with the use of software and the practice under instructor's guidance. Like the previous phase, phase 2 is aligned with the methods of modelling, scaffolding, and coaching to improve students' skills in the use of quantitative data analysis software.

In class, the instructor makes use of video-based GNU PSPP tasks available on Moodle to meet this objective. Individually, using headphones, students complete GNU PSPP tasks, guided by instructor demonstration recorded in videos.

They take screenshots of the output and paste them in their online workbooks. For example, when covering the topic of correlations, students are asked to conduct correlation analyses with GNU PSPP on the dataset provided by the instructor by completing two tasks. Task 1 involves correlating variables (Fig. 2), in which the output—the corelation matrix—is pasted in the workbook. Task 2, in turn, entails generating a scatterplot for two variables and pasting the output in the workbook as well (Figure 3). The students who are absent, need more time to understand and perform a specific procedure, or, for technical reasons, are unable to complete tasks in class, are allowed to complete and submit tasks after class.

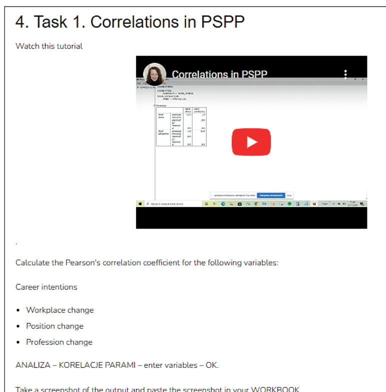

Figure 2: Conducting correlations in PSPP—Task 1 instructions

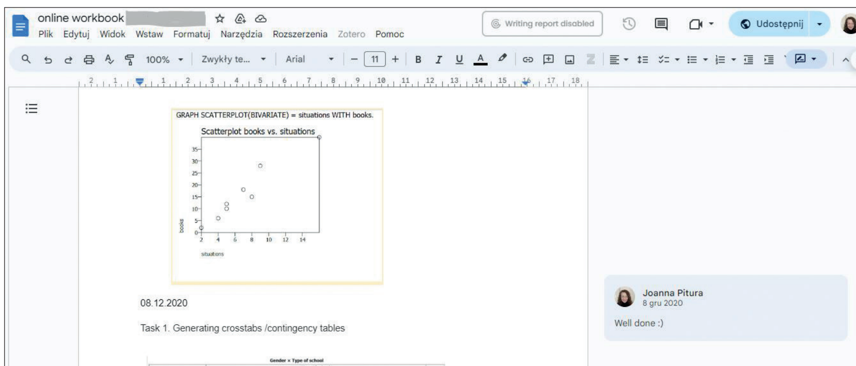

Figure 3: Instructor feedback provided as a comment in a student workbook

This procedure allows the instructor to support each student individually in observing an experienced analyst perform a target procedure utilizing GNU PSPP and to scaffold student emerging analytic performance. In particular, video tutorials help the instructor to verbalize the procedures applied while completing the task. In addition, by making the demonstration videos available online, students can access the video tutorials whenever necessary and replay them as many times

as they need. In this way, support is individually adjusted and becomes less and less necessary over time.

As students work on PSPP tasks, the instructor monitors progress on students' computer screens and checks the output provided in student online workbooks. The instructor assists those students who need help, provides feedback face-to-face and through comments in student workbooks. An example of a comment provided in a class covering correlation is displayed in Figure 3. In this way, the instructor promotes competent analytic practices among the students.

Unlike Saadati et al.'s course, this course includes content allowing students to acquire the ability to conduct quantitative data analysis with the use of software. It is believed that without this content, students' domain knowledge would be incomplete.

3.6.3. Phase 3: Increasing students' control of analytic practice

Phase 3 concentrates on increasing student control of analytic practice with regard to a statistical concept or procedure covered in class. At this phase, corresponding with the methods of articulation and reflection of the cognitive apprenticeship theory, learning activities assist students in developing the ability to interpret obtained results.

This phase begins when students have completed GNU PSPP tasks and submitted the output in their workbooks. The instructor displays the output then, students compare their results with the one displayed, and are asked to interpret this output. If necessary, the instructor modifies student interpretation, ultimately refining their understanding of a specific statistical concept or procedure. For example, when students complete correlation tasks, the output (displayed in Figure 3) is interpreted (e.g., The more books students read, the more situations they can deal with). After that, the instructor goes back to the article by Liu et al. analysed at the beginning of this class to interpret the results obtained by the researchers. Students look at the correlation matrix shown in the article and comment on the strength and direction of a few selected results. By giving students opportunities to express their understanding verbally, i.e., interpreting the results of the work they have completed and the results reported in the article, as well as by allowing students to compare their interpretation with experienced researchers' interpretation, the instructor helps students gain increasing control over their own analytic practice.

This phase echoes the Supporting Phase described in Saadati et al.'s study, during which students were asked to work with other students, to compare their knowledge with that of others, to report their thinking while solving statistical problems and the challenges they faced while performing. In the present course, the cognitive apprenticeship methods of articulation and reflection are applied in each class to develop students' ability to use each statistical concept and procedure,

which is different from Saadati et al.'s course, in which these methods were applied in the second phase of the whole course, covering a range of statistical concepts and procedures.

3.6.4. Phase 4: Promoting student independence in analytic practice

Phase 4 aims to foster student use of a specific statistical concept or procedure in a different context, i.e., the content of the research goals pursued in their own research projects. This phase aligns with the method of exploration and is designed to give students opportunities to (re)formulate problems requiring the application of quantitative data analysis skills, and to conduct such analyses on their own.

At this phase, with instructor's support, students focus on their own data collection and analysis plans and explore the applicability of the concept or procedure taught in class in their own research. They are encouraged to revise their plans, having gained more knowledge about a specific statistical concept or procedure. For example, in a correlations class, students are asked to list all (planned) continuous variables in their study, sketch a hypothetical correlation matrix, and fill it in with fictional output. They share their visualizations with peers and the instructor, who provides additional guidance and advice, if needed. As such, students explore the pertinence of a specific concept or procedure in the context of their own research in order to continue developing their competence in quantitative data analysis.

This phase resembles the last phase in the course designed by Saadati et al., during which students continued their learning activity while cooperating with peers, the instructor remaining withdrawn and providing far less assistance. Again, in this course, the exploration of how a particular concept or procedure may be used in different contexts is conducted in every class allowing students to investigate the applicability of target concepts or procedures in the context of their own research plans.

3.7. Assessment

Students' analytic skills are assessed in the written exam conducted on Moodle in a university computer lab at the end of the course. The exam consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. The first part of the exam covers the theory of quantitative (and qualitative) data analysis. Students are provided with true/false items, such as "The Pearson correlation coefficient has a value between 0 and +/−1 inclusive" (true / false) or "T-test are used to compare three or more means" (true / false). The practical part requires the students to conduct analyses with the use of GNU PSPP and report their results in the exam form. Sample task instructions are displayed in Figure 4, and examples of questions testing students' ability to conduct statistical procedures with software are presented in Figure 5.

PSPP TASK

A researcher studied English language teaching effects in two schools, taking three skills into consideration: 1) Speaking, 2) Writing, 3) Reading. A group of 10 students took 3 tests to measure each skill, the rating scale being 0–50 for each test. Find the results below.

Student	School	Speaking	Writing	Reading
1	1	34	24	24
2	1	31	19	50
3	1	25	24	29
4	1	47	10	20
5	1	29	25	38
6	2	20	21	45
7	2	50	27	23
8	2	34	29	14
9	**2**	15	17	29
10	2	43	29	46

Step 1. Create the following variables in PSPP: School, Speaking, Writing, Reading.

Step 2. Enter the data for 10 participants.

Step 3. Answer the questions included in the test.

Figure 4: Sample GNU PSPP examination task

What is the value of the standard deviation (*SD*) of the variable Writing for students in School 1?

a. 6.27
b. 5.37
c. 6.48
d. none of the above

What is the value of the Pearson’s *r* coefficient for Speaking and Writing?

a. 0.129
b. −0.29
c. 0.456
d. none of the above

Figure 5: Sample GNU PSPP examination questions

4. Evaluating course suitability—student perceptions

In order to evaluate the suitability of the course based on the cognitive apprenticeship model, this methods tutorial uses student stories that were submitted as part of their coursework. As the course progressed to the second part (which focused on qualitative data analysis), the students were asked to document their beliefs, feelings, and experiences related to statistical analyses before, during, and after their learning in the course. The intent of this assignment was to create a textual dataset that could be used to train students in qualitative data analysis. Out of the total number of students participating in the course ($n = 33$) in 2020–2021, twenty-five students (female $n = 22$, male $n = 3$) provided written informed consent for the use of this work at the conclusion of the course. For the present tutorial purposes, the stories were analysed to provide insights into students' perceptions of their competence, beliefs, and feelings around quantitative data (statistical) analysis using GNU PSPP (see also Pitura *Revealing* for a Systemic Functional Linguistics analysis of MA TEFL students' attitudes towards statistics in this course). In what follows, student words are quoted in the original form.

Based on the responses, before the course, the students' perceptions of statistics were shaped by their lack of familiarity with and experience in conducting research and quantitative data analysis. The students had limited knowledge of statistics (e.g., "I only knew what 'mean', 'mode', and 'median' were.") and had little to no experience using statistical tools beyond Microsoft Excel ("I know that thanks to this program we can create various diagrams and tables."). Yet, some recognized the importance of statistics in their MA thesis research work and felt a need to learn more about it. Some students expressed uncertainty about conducting research and analysing data, as well as a lack of confidence in their ability to understand statistical concepts (e.g., "I must confess that when reading research for my MA I would only glance at tables with data because I had no idea how to interpret what they presented."). Many students initially experienced negative feelings: they reported feeling intimidated, stressed, overwhelmed, terrified, and "not … too excited" by the prospect of taking a course teaching statistical concepts. Some of them were anxious about the expectations of the course and their ability to succeed in it (e.g., "I would say that I am rather a humanistic soul, that is why I was not so optimistic about these classes"; "I was perplexed and scared how would I ever succeed in such a course."). Some students reported feeling that statistics was a new domain and not something they expected to learn during their studies. Others expressed a dislike for numbers and maths (e.g., "a word 'statistics' sounded boring to me, so I did not think that I would enjoy these classes at all."). Only three students were positive about the prospect of taking a course on statistics. While one of them expressed curiosity and a desire to learn about the subject, another one expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn statistics as they recognized its relevance to

their future research work. One of the students expected that the course would be challenging, but they also viewed it as useful.

The data show that the first, introductory class was rather daunting for the students. For many, the concepts were new; one student reported having the impression of taking a lesson in a new foreign language and another student was unable to connect the content supplied in class with their research process. Some students expressed feelings of dislike (e.g., "During the first class in which we started to learn statistics I felt that it is not my cup of tea."), fear, and anxiety, with one even bursting into tears. However, despite these initial challenges, students' perceptions of statistics became more favourable over time. With the instructor's explanations, statistics became more understandable and tasks were more feasible. Participants reported learning how to enter, compare, and visualize data, as well as gaining familiarity with statistical vocabulary in English. Although some struggled while learning (e.g., "Every class I had a feeling that I totally do not get what the teacher tried to convey. If I said that I understood everything, it would be a lie."), others found it ground-breaking to discover new software and websites ("As time passed by, I got familiarized with certain websites, [software] and discover what my laptop is capable of. It was ground-breaking."; "I had no idea that there was a special program to solve all my doubts as well as uncertainties—PSPP."). In addition, the participants considered the course to be practical and useful, with direct applicability to their MA thesis research. The data suggest that students' feelings shifted from initial overwhelm to a positive and enthusiastic outlook as they became more confident and interested in statistical concepts. As reported by one of the students, although they found the concepts complicated and had to spend extra time after class to study them, they ultimately derived satisfaction from grasping the ideas, one student even found enjoyment in creating charts and tables. Beyond this, some participants declared gaining respect for those working in research and recognized the importance of understanding statistical procedures for conducting research. One participant expressed a newfound "fascination towards this discipline and its power to organize what was disorganized and to label the terms that seemed impossible to be defined".

Having completed the course on quantitative data analysis, student words indicate that the course was challenging, but valuable and rewarding, providing them with valuable skills and knowledge which will be useful not only in their thesis writing, but also in future research. The students declared gaining theoretical and practical knowledge about statistics (e.g., "now, numbers do not scare me anymore, I know where to look, what they mean, how to read them"). In addition, the students reportedly developed confidence in their ability to understand research (e.g., "I do not regard statistics as something undoable"; "right now I do not find statistics intimidating"; "interpreting research papers would be way less daunting to me"), as well as to conduct their own research and analyse data (e.g., "I feel that I made

a lot of progress, and believe that without the course I would have problems with hitting the deadlines I agreed on with my MA supervisor."). Although some students still need to revise their knowledge (e.g., "As for the theory, I really need to go through my notes a few times more, since there are still some issues that I have not fully understood yet."), they generally feel prepared to complete their MA thesis (e.g., "I feel that I have the knowledge to conduct my research and show its results in the right and correct way."; "I feel that I have all the tools and a considerably big amount of knowledge needed to complete the statistical part of my work.").

As to the tasks requiring the use of PSPP, it appears that the students had positive experiences, despite some initial difficulties. For example, one of the students reported that during the first lesson, they had problems with their computer, and they were very afraid that they would be unable to meet the deadline. Another student also indicated trouble completing the tasks; they got lost multiple times, in spite of being provided with video tutorials. It took longer than they had anticipated to complete the assignments. However, the students realized that they were given plenty of time to complete tasks and that the tasks themselves were manageable. Student words also indicate that the PSPP software was first met with some scepticism, ("I thought PSPP would be another non-user friendly program I would download, install, and never use again"). Overall, it appears that, with practice, the students became comfortable and skilled to use the software, the students found PSPP to be intuitive and a helpful tool for data analysis, and many planned to use it in future research projects.

Video tutorials were well-received by the students. In general, the tutorials were seen as a valuable resource which helped the students to increase the ability to use the software (e.g., "In fact, I found PSPP to be quite easy to figure out with the help of tutorials"; "thanks to the tutorials that the teacher prepared, those classes were not hard"). The tutorials were considered more helpful than live lessons as they provided the ability to fast-forward or rewind the video, allowing students to work at their own pace ("I must admit that such tutorials are much better than live lessons as I have the chance to fast-forward the video or go back if needed."). The tutorials were also praised for their clarity and simplicity ("I also liked the fact that we had tutorials prepared specifically [by] the teacher that were really concise and easy to follow."), and one of the students appreciated the instructor's voice in the videos ("Additionally, I loved the voice of my teacher—it eased my mind every single time."). The tutorials were especially helpful for those students who missed a class, as well as those who needed to review a concept.

Finally, individual students shared their experiences with other course resources, i.e., the handbook of statistics, Google Slides presentations, e-articles, the dataset, and the Google Docs workbook. As reported by one of the students, the first chapter selected from the handbook of statistics proved to be challenging, so the student sought help from their mother, a maths teacher, to be able to grasp the basics. According to another student, the presentations were helpful in clarifying

theoretical concepts, but they had to revisit them multiple times to fully understand the presented aspects. E-articles, in turn, were considered valuable for one student's future MA thesis. The dataset provided by the instructor was described as "interesting" by yet another student as they "could see the differences between age and gender, schools, degrees among teachers". Lastly, one student found the workbook to be a convenient tool to refer back to while conducting research ("We have everything in one place and we can always go back there while doing our research to recall some information.").

5. Conclusion

Recognizing the importance of the ability to conduct quantitative data analysis with the use of software as a core research skill, this methods tutorial addresses the issue of teaching quantitative data analysis to students, faculty and researchers in the field of applied linguistics. In the effort to enhance methodological training, the paper presents a Moodle-based course that integrates software training in the coursework to help MA TEFL students acquire quantitative data analysis skills. The theory of cognitive apprenticeship was applied to design and deliver learning experiences allowing students to observe, imitate, and apply analytic procedures in their own research.

Based on students' in-class performance and the accounts found in their stories, the present author considers this approach effective in assisting students throughout the course. Specifically, the course allows students to acquire requisite initial knowledge to be able to analyse, interpret, and present quantitative data that is needed for their research projects. Additionally, course procedures help the instructor to monitor and support his/her students in real-time and to encourage continual reflection and exploration practices which are important to develop expertise. Importantly, however, to provide a more rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of the training, quantitative assessments of student learning outcomes are needed, indicating a potential area for future research.

Overall, this methods tutorial contributes to existing methodological literature by providing guidance on teaching quantitative data analysis with the open-source software, GNU PSPP. The approach described in the paper appears to have the potential to foster research independence among students, faculty, and researchers, which is crucial for their future research projects. Notably, the adaptability of this approach allows for its application to the training of analytic skills in the fields beyond applied linguistics, including STEM and social sciences. Lastly, the use of GNU PSPP, an open-source alternative to commercial statistical software, may be relevant for higher education institutions, particularly those with financial constraints that cannot afford the price of software subscriptions, as they develop and implement training programmes.

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Please send your review to: anglicawratislaviensia@gmail.com
Thank you very much for your cooperation,
Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak

Paper submission guidelines for *Anglica Wratislaviensia*

Advice for Authors — *Anglica Wratislaviensia*

1. *Anglica Wratislaviensia* welcomes submissions of articles, review articles, and reviews.
2. Articles should be between 4000 and 5000 words in length (including in-text citations, footnotes and references) unless otherwise agreed upon. Review articles should be up to 3000 words. Each article/review article should be preceded by an abstract of up to 200 words and 4–8 keywords. Reviews should be between 1000 and 1200 words (no abstract/keywords required).
3. Articles should be submitted together with a short bionote (ca. 100 words) including name, surname, affiliation, email address and postal address (postal address for editorial use only), and with a scan of a signed Statement of Originality (to be downloaded from the section of Documents for Downloading).
4. To submit a manuscript to *Anglica Wratislaviensia* authors need to create an account on the journal website, where they can submit the manuscript in electronic format using Open Journal Systems.
5. On the first page of the article, information about the Author should be placed in the upper left corner and include the following:

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— Independent researchers should give the name of the sponsoring agency or the lab they have accessed, the country where the research has been conducted, the country of their residence.

6. MLA style coupled with the requirements listed below should be used throughout the paper. A major failure to comply with this specification will cause an automatic rejection of the manuscript.
7. The number of footnotes should be kept to a minimum. For citing sources, in-text citations should be used.
8. Italics (and not underlining) should be used for titles of larger works, and double quotation marks for titles of shorter works.
9. Punctuation, unless part of the quotation, should be placed outside quotation marks.
10. For terminology italics should be used (please do not underline).
11. British spelling conventions should be applied but with -ize endings instead of -ise (e.g., finalize, organize).

Complete guidelines can be downloaded at:
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Peer review process & publishing procedures

1. Editorial Board reviews submissions for compliance with the profile of the journal and appoints reviewers. Editors may consult the Advisory Board on their decisions. Editors and any editorial staff of the journal treat received manuscripts for review as confidential documents and do not disclose any information about submitted manuscripts to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher. Manuscripts considered by the Editors to be inappropriate for *Anglica Wratislaviensia* may be declined without review. Editors of *Anglica Wratislaviensia* who submit their manuscripts for publication in the journal are subjected to the publishing procedures described above. The reviewers cannot have their work published in the same volume as the one containing the paper/s they have evaluated.
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4. Articles accepted for publication are sent to the authors who introduce necessary changes. Any difference of opinion is resolved by the Editorial Board which is entitled to the final decision. The recommendations of reviewers are advisory to the Editors, who accept full responsibility for decisions about manuscripts. The author may be asked to write a reply to the reviewer's comments.
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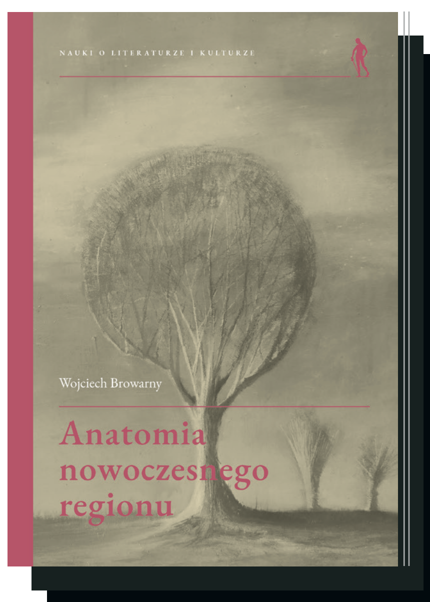

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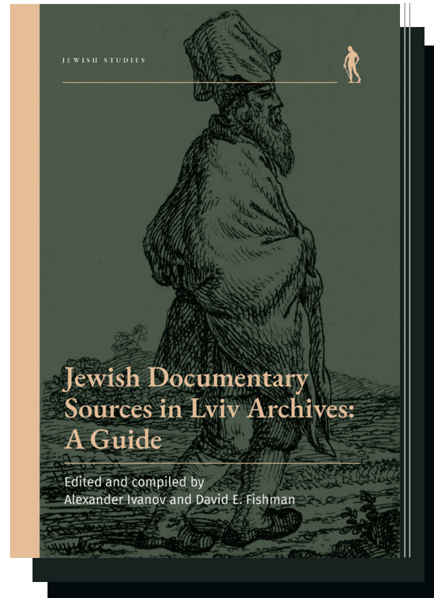
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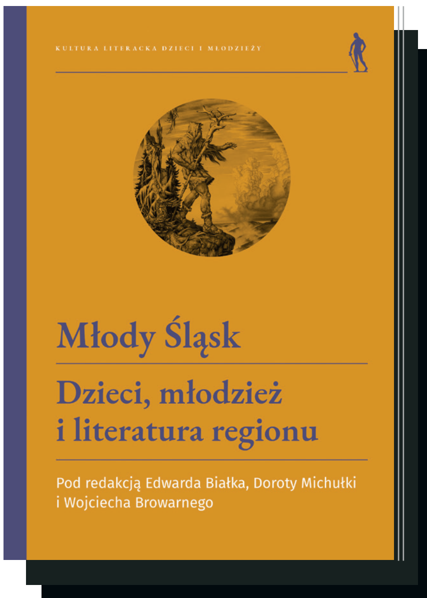
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