Training LANGUAGE and CULTURE

'A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in
the soul of its people'
– Mahatma Gandhi

1(4)

TRAINING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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Training Language and Culture covers language training, cultural training and linguistic research. The journal aims to enhance the scientific foundation of the teaching process, promote stronger ties between theory and practical training, strengthen mutually enriching international cooperation among educationists and other professionals, as well as to make a contribution to language studies outside the teaching perspective. All articles are peer reviewed. Areas of interest include:

- language and linguistics research
- intercultural research
- language, intercultural and communications training
- language and cultural training technology
- language and cultural assessment

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About our contributors

Robert O'Dowd

Associate Professor at the University of León, Spain. Has taught at universities in Ireland, Germany and Spain. Has published widely on the application of Virtual Exchange in university education. His most recent publication is the co-edited volume *Online Intercultural Exchange Policy, Pedagogy, Practice* for Routledge. Has recently coordinated INTENT – a project financed by the European Commission aimed at promoting online intercultural exchange in European Higher Education. Currently coordinates the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 project *Evaluating and Upscaling Telecollaborative Teacher Education* (EVALUATE).

Svetlana Popova

CSc in Linguistics, Lecturer at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Research interests cover Linguistics, English teaching methodology, Internet Network Expansion, gamification and computerisation of society and their implications for teachers and students.

Heiner Böttger

Full Professor of English Didactics and EFL at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. Chairman of the Early Language Learning Advisory Board, founded in Munich. Present research mainly focuses on the preconditions for language learning and the role of memory within the language acquisition process. Explores how children develop communicative competences, which language strategies they use and when, the brain processes underlying language development and the jigsaw pieces for acquiring three or more languages. Author of over 150 papers on English didactics and language research.

Julia Dose

CSc in Education, Research Assistant at Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. Explores characteristics of inclusive foreign language teaching for students with learning support. Research member of LEARLab with main focus on eyetracking and EEG studies. Since 2012, has taught Biology and German as a First and Second Language at different high schools. Was a member of the Learning Support Team at the Franconian International School implementing a German Inclusion Programme for students with special needs.

Tanja Müller

CSc in Education, Lecturer in English Didactics Dpt at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. Holds a degree in Sociology with focus on market and opinion research. Research interests cover early English language learning, socially fair educational programmes, testing and assessment in educational contexts, blended and e-learning approaches, distance learning. Since 2015, has been acting as an expert for the Brussels European Research Executive Agency in the Horizon 2020 framework.

Oleg Radchenko

DSc in Linguistics. Professor in the Dpt of General and Comparative Language Studies, Moscow State Linguistic University (Russia). Member of Modern Language Association USA, Community of Language History studies Germany, Canadian Association of German Language Teachers. Titular member of the Academy of Pedagogical and Social Sciences (Moscow). Honoured Worker of Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

Viktoriya Vetrinskaya

Teacher and Lecturer in Foreign Languages Dpt, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). A member of the Business and Vocational Foreign Languages Teachers National Association. Research interests cover the German language, professional and business communication. Member of the Russian authors group that developed the language examination for the school-leaving certificate.

Sawsan Askoul

Holds a Master's degree in Bilingual Translation from the University of Westminster and a second Master's degree in Applied Linguistics & Communication from Birkbeck College, University of London. Postgraduate research student specialising in phonetics and phonology, investigates the English sound system produced by native Arabic speakers. In her current study, she is aiming to reverse the process by scrutinising Arabic speech sounds produced by native English speakers learning Arabic as a foreign language in the UK.

Alexander Litvinov

Associate Professor in Foreign Languages Dpt, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Research interests cover Business English teaching methodology, discourse analysis, intercultural communication, linguistics and psychology. Author and co-author of over 60 publications.

Svetlana Burikova

CSc in Linguistics. Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages Dpt, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University).

Dmitry Khramchenko

DSc in Linguistics, Professor at Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University. Research interests cover functional linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, rhetoric, business communication, linguosynergetics, stylistics, British and American studies. Author of over 90 publications.

Barry Tomalin

ICC Board member and Joint Managing Editor of TLC. Founder and facilitator of the ICC-recognised Business Cultural Trainers Certificate. Teaches at the Academy of Diplomacy and International Governance at Loughborough University and International House London. Author and co-author of a number of books on international business culture, including *World Business Cultures – a Handbook* and *Cross-Cultural Communication: Theory and Practice*. Research interests cover international communication and cultures.

Introduction to Issue 1(4)

by Barry Tomalin

Joint Managing Editor TLC

Welcome to Issue 1(4) of Training Language and Culture.

We present another varied review of the academic field of language, culture and literature. The key theme this issue is alternative approaches to education with articles by Robert O'Dowd on internationalising the classroom through Virtual Exchange, Heiner Böttger et al. on how a different font type and colour can help or hinder reading fluency, and a challenging article by Svetlana Popova on how ICT can be used to motivate Generation Z students to learn more effectively.

Robert O'Dowd was our keynote speaker at the ICC International Conference held in April at the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) in Graz, Austria. (See ICC News for information on the conference on refugee education in May.)

In a challenging article, Svetlana Popova examines the reasons for demotivation in learning experienced by Generation Z learners faced with 'traditional' methods of imparting language and cultural knowledge in school. Should we not, she asks, be embracing the language of the 'Tweet and Txt' generation to enthuse our students and to get

across essential knowledge? This is a challenge sure to generate a strong response.

Heiner Böttger will be well-known to readers for his article on gender diversity in early reading and writing published in Issue 1(2) of TLC. With his colleagues, Julia Dose and Tanja Mueller, he explores the impact of font type and colour on reading speeds, especially for young learners experiencing reading difficulty.

Brian Bebbington's article on Sappho in Issue 1(3) of TLC struck a chord with Oleg Radchenko and Viktoriya Vetrinskaya who have explored the personal life of a 19th century Austrian essayist and poet, August von Platen. How far is it possible to gain clues from an author's writings into his or her private life and to what extent is the writing itself underpinned by private life experience? We look forward to publishing more articles on the study of literature and ways of understanding the social and cultural background of authors through their writing.

Pronunciation hasn't figured much in our pages so far and we now welcome Sawsan Askoul's research into the pronunciation of the letter /p/ in English by speakers of Arabic. The methodology of research may prove valuable for teachers and researchers into pronunciation and we welcome more work in these areas which will help the process of transformation from near native speaker to native speaker pronunciation.

For learners and users of English, using phrasal

verbs correctly is a challenge at all levels. Alexander Litvinov et al. unravel the problem and advocate the study of the economics press to help familiarise business English students with their use.

In the reviews section, Michael Byram introduces a project to teach intercultural citizenship through foreign language study. In doing so, the book describes surveys and projects carried out in countries as far apart as China, the USA, Japan, Argentina, Denmark, Korea, Taiwan and Italy. It also explores peace studies in the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, sport and sustainability and the role of intercultural citizenship in protecting human rights.

Harold Evans, one of the London Times and Sunday Times pioneering and most successful editors, went on from there to become President of Random House Publishing in New York. He tackles the importance of good writing in *Do I Make Myself Clear?* and offers examples of confusing writing and edits them to make them clear and exciting.

Finally, *The Bonjour Effect*, humorously but incisively reveals how different topics and styles of conversation in French can build or hamper the development of relationships. Julie Barlow and Jean-Benoît Nardeau examine the history and current state of French communication using historical research, analysis and personal experience.

The issue also features news from RUDN University, ICC and EUROLTA.

TLC Editorial Board welcomes contributions in the form of articles, reviews and correspondence. Detailed information is available online at rudn.tlcjournal.org. Feel free to contact us at info@tlcjournal.org or info@icc-languages.eu.

Virtual Exchange and internationalising the classroom

by [1]Robert O'Dowd

[1]University of León

Telecollaboration, or 'Virtual Exchange' refers to the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of learners in geographically distant locations with the aim of developing their foreign language skills, digital competence and intercultural competence through online collaborative tasks and project work. In recent years approaches to Virtual Exchange have evolved in different contexts and different areas of university education and these approaches have had, at times, very diverse organisational structures and pedagogical objectives. This article provides an overview of the different models and approaches to Virtual Exchange which are currently being used in higher education contexts and outlines how the activity has contributed to internationalising university education to date.

KEYWORDS: *telecollaboration, virtual exchange, online communication, digital competence, intercultural competence*

1. INTRODUCTION

Universities are increasingly concerned with the task of preparing graduates to be active and responsible global citizens in a world which is intrinsically digitalised, globalised and multicultural in nature. For many years, international mobility programmes were considered the most effective way to prepare students to be 'global citizens' and develop their 'capacity to critique the world they live, see problems and issues from a range of perspectives, and take action to address them' (Leask, 2015, p. 17). However, the number of students who have engaged in study abroad programmes remains stubbornly low and research has demonstrated the limited impact of study abroad on students' intercultural attitudes and awareness (Kinginger, 2009; Papatsiba, 2006). This has led educational institutions to look increasingly at 'internationalisation at home' (IaH), defined by Beelen and Jones (2015) as *'the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments'* (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 59).

As part of their IaH initiatives, a growing number of higher education institutions are engaging their students in Virtual Exchange or telecollaboration – a rich and multifaceted activity which refers to online intercultural interaction and collaboration projects with partner classes from other cultural contexts under the guidance of educators and/or expert facilitators (Dooly, 2017; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). Virtual Exchange has had a long history in university language education (Warschauer, 1995) and, over the past two decades, approaches to Virtual Exchange have evolved in different contexts and different areas of university education and these approaches have had, at times, very diverse pedagogical objectives. For example, approaches in foreign language education have explored the development of autonomy in language learners, foreign language competence (O'Rourke, 2007) as well as aspects of intercultural competence (Belz, 2002). Virtual Exchange initiatives such as *Soliya* have focused on bringing students from the West into dialogue with students from the Muslim world with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the perspectives of others on important socio-political issues and also to develop critical thinking, intercultural communication and media literacy skills (Helm, 2016). Meanwhile, initiatives from the field of Business Studies such as *XCulture* have striven to develop in students the necessary competences to work in what are commonly described as *Global Virtual Teams* (GVTs) and to

'The first examples of online collaborative projects between classrooms around the globe began to appear within a few years of the emergence of the Internet'

give them first-hand experience in online international collaboration in professional contexts (Taras et al., 2013). In this article, we will review the different approaches and highlight the different characteristics of each model of exchange.

2. THE ORIGINS OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

The first examples of online collaborative projects between classrooms around the globe began to appear within a few years of the emergence of the Internet. Early reports include the work of the Orillas Network (Cummins & Sayers, 1995), the AT&T Learning Circles (Riel, 1997), as well as more in-depth research studies into foreign language exchanges (Brammerts, 1996; Eck et al., 1995). The publication *Virtual Connections: Online Activities for Networking Language Learners* (Warschauer, 1995) included a collection of 'cross-cultural communication' projects which reported on foreign language students creating personal profiles, carrying out surveys and examining cultural stereotypes with distant partners. Around this time, a number of websites, including *Intercultural E-mail Classroom*

'One possible categorisation of the different initiatives involves differentiating between subject-specific Virtual Exchanges, shared syllabus approaches and service-provider approaches'

Connections (IECC) and *E-Tandem*, also became available online in order to link up classrooms across the globe and to provide practitioners with activities and guidelines for their projects. The IECC listserv was established by university professors at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, USA and functioned as one of the first 'matching services' for teachers who wanted to connect their students in e-mail exchanges with partner classes in other countries and in other regions of their own country. Between 1992 and 2001, IECC distributed over 28,000 requests for e-mail partnerships.

The E-tandem server was aimed at matching learners of foreign languages and was supported by a network of research and project work carried out at Trinity College in Dublin (O'Rourke, 2005). Meanwhile, practitioners such as Ruth Vilmi in Finland (Vilmi, 2000) and Reinhard Donath (Donath, 1997) in Germany helped to make the activity better known by publishing practical reports of their students' work online. Vilmi's work focused on online collaboration between technical

students at universities across Europe, while Donath provided German secondary school foreign language teachers with a wide range of resources and information about how projects could be integrated into the curriculum.

3. DIFFERING APPROACHES
3.1 Managing Virtual Exchange
Since its initial steps, Virtual Exchange has emerged as an educational tool in various disciplines at different stages over the past 20 years and the practice has continued to evolve in different communities of practitioners and researchers who, in many cases, have been relatively unaware of the work of their counterparts in other disciplines. The consequences of this have included a certain degree of 'reinventing the wheel' in terms of methodology and tasks and also that there has been a superfluous number of terms to refer to the same overarching activity (Rubin & Guth, 2016). This, in turn, has often led to either confusion in the academic community or to a general lack of awareness of the actual scale and importance of this area of research and practice.

Nevertheless, a positive outcome has been that no one model has exclusively imposed itself as the way to engage in online intercultural exchanges and Virtual Exchange has been adapted and developed to attend to different needs and aims across numerous areas of education.

One possible categorisation of the different initiatives involves differentiating between subject-specific Virtual Exchanges, shared syllabus approaches and service-provider approaches. We will now look at each of these in some detail.

3.1 Subject-specific Virtual Exchange – foreign language learning initiatives

It is not surprising that one of the disciplines to most eagerly take up Virtual Exchange as a learning tool has been foreign language education. From the beginnings of the Internet in the early 1990s, foreign language educators have seen the potential of connecting language learners with counterparts in other countries in order to engage them in interaction with native speakers of other languages and to give them semi-authentic experiences of communicating in these languages.

In foreign language education, Virtual Exchange has been referred to as *telecollaboration* (Belz, 2003), *telecollaboration 2.0* (Guth & Helm, 2010), *e-tandem* (O'Rourke, 2007) or *Online Intercultural Exchange* (O'Dowd, 2007; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016) and over the past 20 years it has gone on to become an integral part of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) or Network-based Language Teaching (NBLT) (Kern et al., 2008). Virtual Exchange in foreign language education has traditionally taken the form of one of two models – each one reflecting the principal learning approaches prevalent in foreign language

education at the time. The first well-known model was e-tandem, which focused on fostering learner autonomy and learners' ability to continue their language learning outside of the language classroom. The second model is usually referred to as *Intercultural Telecollaboration* or *Online Intercultural Exchange* (O'Dowd, 2007) and reflects the emphasis in the late 1990s and early 2000s on intercultural and sociocultural aspects of foreign language education.

In the e-tandem model (O'Rourke, 2007), two native speakers of different languages communicate together with the aim of learning the other's language, and messages are typically written 50% in the target and 50% in the native language, thereby providing each partner with an opportunity to practise their target language and, at the same time, provide their partner with authentic input.

These exchanges are also based on the principle of autonomy, and the responsibility for a successful exchange rests mainly with the learners, who are expected to provide feedback on their partners' content and/or on their foreign language performance. In this sense, tandem partners take on the role of peer tutors who correct their partners' errors and propose alternative formulations in the target language. The role of the tutor or class teacher in the e-tandem model is usually minimal. For example, learners are often

encouraged to take on responsibility for finding their own themes for discussion, correcting their partners' errors, and keeping a learner diary or portfolio to reflect on their own learning progress.

The example below of an American student writing an email to her partner in Spain illustrates many of the key aspects of a typical e-tandem. The American student begins by writing in English and talking to her Spanish partner for his recent message. She then takes on the role of peer-tutor and provides some corrections of Pablo's English. Although she does not provide detailed grammatical feedback, she is able to suggest alternative correct formulations of his errors and she is sure to praise him for his writing in his foreign language.

In the second part of the message she then takes on the role of Spanish learner and tells her partner about student life in New York. It is likely that in the following message, Pablo will respond to Elena, providing some corrections to her Spanish and continuing the conversation.

Hey Pablo!

It was great to receive your letter. I was so happy to see that you responded to my questions. Thank you. Your responses were very informative and definitely showed me that family life in Spain was not all I'd expected it to be. (I was surprised, for example, that your family is not religious. I

assumed that most families in Spain are, and I'm sure you have many assumptions about life in America as well).

Your English is very good. There are only a few problems that I have to correct. Some of your sentences are too long, and would make more sense if you separated them into two or three sentences instead. For example, "My parents are not divorced in Spain there are very few cases of divorced" could be rewritten as "My parents are not divorced. In Spain there are very few cases of divorce." Your letter was great and made sense despite these things. Good work.

Las fiestas en la ciudad de Nueva York son muy locas y emocionantes. Voy a las discotecas con mis amigas los jueves, los viernes, o los sabados. Vamos a los bars tambien. Nosotros volvemos a nos salons de dormitorio a las cuatro de la manana. Queremos bailar a las discotecas. Necesita tener veintiuno anos por beber el alcohol pero la mayoria de estudiantes en las universidades tenen los "fake IDs" y ellos beben el alcohol ...

Although the model is now over 20 years old, e-tandem continues to be a very popular form of Virtual Exchange in foreign language education. A large amount of research on the outcomes of e-tandem learning continue to appear in the literature (Bower & Kawaguchi, 2001; O'Rourke,

2005; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011). Browsing the many partner-searches which appear on the UNICollaboration.eu platform for class matching reveals that many practitioners continue to look for e-tandem-style exchanges.

In the late 1990s a second model or approach to Virtual Exchange in foreign language education began to appear which was characterised by a stronger focus on intercultural aspects of language learning and communication and by a greater integration of the online exchanges into classroom activity. This form of Virtual Exchange was to become broadly known as *'telecollaboration'*. The term was coined by Mark Warschauer in his publication *Telecollaboration and the Foreign Language Learner* (1996) and a special edition of the journal *Language Learning & Technology* was dedicated to the subject where Belz (2003) identified the main characteristics of foreign language telecollaboration to be *'institutionalised, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a languacultural expert (i.e., teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence'* (Belz, 2003, p. 2).

The telecollaborative model of Virtual Exchange strives to integrate the online interaction comprehensively into the students' foreign language programs and involves international class-to-class partnerships in which intercultural projects and tasks are developed by partner teachers in the collaborating institutions. For example, students' contact classes are where online interaction and publications are prepared, analysed, and reflected upon with the guidance of the teacher. Foreign language telecollaboration also places the emphasis of the exchanges on developing intercultural awareness and other aspects of intercultural communicative competence, in addition to developing linguistic competence.

There is great variety in the type of tasks which educators have used to develop intercultural approaches to telecollaboration. Some of the better-known tasks involved requiring students to work together with their international partners to produce websites or presentations based on comparisons of their cultures. Belz (2002), for example, reports on a USA-German exchange which involved developing a website which contained bilingual essays and a bilingual discussion of a cultural theme such as racism or family. Another popular intercultural task for telecollaborative exchanges has been the analysis of parallel texts. Belz (2005) defines parallel texts as *'linguistically different renditions of a particular story or topic in which culturally-conditioned varying representations of that story or topic are presented'* (Belz, 2005, p. 21). Popular examples of parallel texts which have been used in

telecollaborative exchanges include the American film *Three men and a baby* and the French original *Trois hommes et un couffin*.

A further intercultural task adapted to telecollaboration was the application of ethnographic interviewing in synchronous online sessions. O'Dowd (2005) trained a group of German EFL students in the basic techniques of ethnographic interviewing and the students then carried out interviews with American informants in the USA using group-to-group videoconferencing sessions and one-to-one email exchanges before writing up reflective essays on their findings. The combination of synchronous and asynchronous tools allowed the students to develop different aspects of their intercultural competence. Videoconferencing was seen to develop students' ability to interact with members of the target culture under the constraints of real-time communication and also to elicit, through a face-to-face dialogue, the concepts and values which underlie their partners' behaviour and their opinions.

However, email was employed to both send and receive much more detailed information on the two cultures' products and practices as seen from the partners' perspectives. In other words, e-mail was suited to foster cultural knowledge, while videoconferencing supported the development of students' intercultural negotiating skills.

The end of the 21st century's first decade has seen foreign language Virtual Exchange gradually diverge in two paths. The first of these paths has led telecollaborative exchanges away from formal language learning and engage learners in language and cultural learning experiences by immersing them in specialised online interest communities or environments that focus on specific hobbies or interests. Thorne (2010) describes this form of telecollaborative learning as *'intercultural communication in the wild'* and speculates that it may be *'situated in arenas of social activity that are less controllable than classroom or organised online intercultural exchanges might be, but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action and meaning making'* (Thorne, 2010, p. 144).

The second, alternative path in foreign language Virtual Exchange involves attempts to integrate telecollaborative networks more comprehensively in formal education. The argument here is that if Virtual Exchange is such a valuable learning experience, then it should not be used as an 'add-on' activity but rather as a recognised, credit-carrying activity which is valued and supported by university management. Based on this belief, reports have emerged of how universities are integrating Virtual Exchange into their study programs (O'Dowd, 2013), the use of alternative credit systems for students' telecollaborative work

(Hauck & MacKinnon, 2016), and about the development of competence models for telecollaborative learning (Dooly, 2017) and for teachers engaged in telecollaborative exchanges (O'Dowd, 2015). Between 2011 and 2014 the INTENT project was financed by the European Commission to achieve greater awareness of telecollaboration around the academic world and to look for ways for its integration into university education. One of the main outcomes of this project was the UNICollaboration platform (www. unicollaboration.eu) where university educators and mobility coordinators could establish partnerships and find the resources necessary to set up telecollaborative exchanges. Since then, *UNICollaboration* has established itself as an academic organisation and holds regular bi-annual conferences for practitioners from all disciplines who are interested in Virtual Exchange.

3.2 Subject-specific Virtual Exchange – business studies initiatives

Another discipline which has recognised the relevance and potential of Virtual Exchange is Business Studies, in particular in the areas of International Business and International Marketing. In modern business contexts, online communication is widely considered as offering a cost-effective way of conducting business, as a manner to reduce power differences in team work and to enable physically disadvantaged employees have greater access to the virtual environment than

'The end of the 21st century's first decade has seen foreign language Virtual Exchange gradually diverge in two paths'

the physical workspace. As online communication becomes increasingly common in many organisations, a growing number of educators are looking to Virtual Exchange as a tool to prepare students of Business Studies to successfully work and collaborate online with colleagues and customers in other locations. The central interest here is in developing in students the necessary competences to work in what are commonly described as *Global Virtual Teams* (GVTs) and to give them first-hand experience in online international collaboration in professional contexts.

GVTs are defined as *'geographically dispersed teams that use Internet-mediated communication to collaborate on common goals, and typically consist of members who have diverse cultural backgrounds and who have not previously worked together in face-to-face settings'* (Taras et al., 2013).

A review of practice in this area would suggest that Virtual Exchange initiatives are, in comparison to foreign language telecollaboration, relatively scarce and under-researched, but the reports that

'There is a growing number of examples of practitioners from different subject areas who are introducing Virtual Exchange into their classrooms'

do exist provide an insight into how Virtual Exchange is being introduced into the discipline. Duus and Cooray (2014), for example, describe a project for students of Marketing which brings together business students in the UK and India to take part in a simulation which involves working in online virtual teams and setting up a new business in India. Lindner (2016) reports on an exchange between business studies students at the University of Paderborn in Germany and Masaryk University in Brno in the Czech Republic which involved students collaborating online with their international partners to create a website which compared a product, service, or managerial innovation across two cultures.

Osland et al. (2004) present the *Globally Distant Multiple Teams* project (GDMT) which brought groups of German, Austrian and American students together in virtual teams in online communication using e-mail, chat rooms, and other online communication tools. Students were asked to prepare a report or develop a website comparing a product, service, or organisational feature across their countries. For example, one

group compared differing marketing approaches and consumer attitudes related to soft drinks in Germany and USA.

3.3 Shared syllabus approaches to Virtual Exchange

Although it has been less well documented and researched, educators in other subject areas apart from foreign language education and Business Studies have also been engaging their students in Virtual Exchange initiatives since the beginnings of the Internet. Their motivation has been to give students in different universities the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills including intercultural competence and critical thinking, while working on shared subject content and also providing them with different cultural perspectives on their particular subject area (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008).

There is a growing number of examples of practitioners from different subject areas who are introducing Virtual Exchange into their classrooms. Vallance et al. (2015), for example, report on a project which engaged Japanese undergraduate students and UK high school pupils in online collaboration to design and programme robots in both the real world and in virtual world simulations. However, in the area of the shared syllabus approaches to Virtual Exchange, there is one particular approach which has become dominant and that is *Collaborative Online*

International Learning (COIL). Although this approach has existed for many years, the COIL model (as it is known today) was actually developed in 2004 by Jon Rubin and his colleagues at the State University of New York (SUNY) network of universities (Rubin & Guth, 2016). The COIL approach to Virtual Exchange involves connecting two or more classes of similar course content in different countries. Once connected, the instructors in the partner universities design course modules in a way that the two different student populations will engage in communication and collaboration together. Often, the two groups of students have to work together to discuss course materials, address a practical problem, or produce another type of grade-able product. Collaboration may occur synchronously (in real time) or asynchronous (not in real time) and students may connect via email, voice, video, or in some combination. (Wojenski, 2014).

The key difference between COIL exchanges and those that come from the foreign language or Business Studies traditions of Virtual Exchange is undoubtedly the emphasis which is put on examining different cultural and national experiences or interpretations of subject content. While foreign language telecollaboration, for example, usually takes language and culture as the content and focus of an exchange, COIL adds a collaborative and comparative perspective to the

'There are currently 34 university members in the SUNY Global Partner Network and these are engaged with other institutions in collaborative projects'

subject content by creating a shared syllabus which is worked on by all participating classes.

Of course, as is the case with subject specific Virtual Exchange, there is no one definitive COIL methodology. For example, in their volume which reports various COIL projects, Schultheis-Moore and Simon (2015) present examples of courses which are completely online and others which are blended in nature. They also include courses which have negotiated a complete common syllabus and assignments but they also report on projects which only come together to work on one particular assignment. In recent years, COIL has become one of the largest Virtual Exchange networks. There are currently 34 university members in the SUNY Global Partner Network and these are engaged with other institutions in collaborative projects. Rubin reports that from 2006 to 2016 COIL also worked more occasionally with an additional 30-40 universities and that they are presently supporting at least 65 joint COIL courses, serving well over 2500 students (Rubin & Guth, 2016).

Although there is relatively little reported research on the learning outcomes of the COIL model, various reports of how the model works and examples of good practice are available. Rubin & Guth (2016) provide a broad introduction to the volume and its impact to date, while the volume by Schultheis-Moore and Simon (2015) provides a fascinating overview of examples of online exchange initiatives in the Humanities which have stemmed from the work of the COIL Centre. Contributions to this volume provide examples of how the shared curriculum model can be integrated effectively into the study of subject areas as diverse as jazz music, feminism, the diaspora, gender roles and human rights.

3.4 'Service-provider' approaches to Virtual Exchange

We have looked at Virtual Exchange initiatives which have emerged from the work of individual teachers. However, there is also an important field of work being carried out by organisations which are dedicated to providing the curricula and online environments (and even, in some cases, the educators) which universities may need to engage their students in Virtual Exchange.

This 'service-provider' approach to Virtual Exchange is actually quite common at all levels of education and various groups and organisations have been providing ready-made Virtual Exchange environments for primary and secondary

education for many years. The oldest of these organisations is iEARN, a non-profit organisation which was founded in 1988 and is currently made up of over thirty thousand schools and youth organisations in more than 140 countries. iEARN reports that over two million students each day take part in their projects worldwide. The organisation offers over 150 pre-designed projects and provides online environments where educational institutions can sign on, choose the project which best suits their students' curriculum, and then participate with international partner classes to complete the activities.

Although iEARN caters principally for students in pre-university education, there are various other Virtual Exchange 'providers' which attend exclusively to higher education institutions. In contrast to the practitioner-driven approaches which generally rely on the teachers of the classes to organise and lead the exchange, these providers use 'facilitator-led' models which involve trained intercultural educators leading the online discussions and facilitating the intercultural learning. One of the best-known of these models is the *Soliya Connect* programme , which brings students from West into dialogue with students from the Muslim world with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the perspectives of others around the world on important socio-political issues and also to develop critical thinking, intercultural communication and media

literacy skills (Helm, 2016).

Each iteration of the project connects more than 200 students from more than 30 different universities in the United States, Europe and the predominantly Arab and/or Muslim worlds. Students are placed into small groups and guided through an eight-week, English language dialogue programme by pairs of trained facilitators. Students receive credit from their local institution for participating in the project, even though the facilitators and the online exchange environment are contracted from the *Soliya* organisation by the different universities.

Since its establishment in 2003, *Soliya* has worked with well over 100 institutions and boasts over ten thousand activated alumni from 28 countries. They have also trained over 1,300 young people to work as professional online facilitators since 2003. Although the initiative started as an attempt to promote West/Arab dialogue in the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks in the USA, *Soliya* has gone on to broaden its curriculum in order to attend to other areas, such as 21st century skills (e.g. cross-cultural communication, collaborative problem solving, team work, etc.) that enable participants to engage with differences more positively and to become active global citizens.

*Soliya'*s Virtual Exchange programme contains various characteristics which differentiates it from

'traditional' class-to-class Virtual Exchange set ups which we have seen until now. Firstly, communication takes place through synchronous videoconferencing on a specially designed platform. Students take part in a two-hour videoconference every week for eight weeks and this makes up the core of the programme. Students are allocated to small groups of 8 to 10 for interaction, if possible with an equal division between participants from the 'West' and the 'predominantly Arab and Muslim world,' so that they can be exposed to a multiplicity of diverse viewpoints.

However, the most distinctive of the *Soliya'*s characteristics is undoubtedly the role of the facilitator who takes part in all the online sessions and whose role it is to create a safe dialogic space for learning and to ensure that the dialogue process is constructive and meaningful.

Soliya also follows a structured eight-week program which ensures that, as relationships develop, participants are able to explore difficult conversations and gain critical awareness on their peers and themselves in the process. The *Soliya* curriculum also has clear education goals and a specific structure to help groups reach their learning objectives and to ensure that certain learning components on cross-cultural communication are a part of everyone's dialogue process. However, the format of the curriculum is

'The practitioners and promoters of these different forms of Virtual Exchange work closer together to promote the overall goal of increasing the number of students who benefit from online intercultural exchange as part of their university education'

semi-structured, thereby providing space for each group to discuss issues that are important to those young people in question.

Finally, the online interface that is used by *Soliya* in its Virtual Exchange programs has been custom-made for dialogue. This ensures that the technology facilitates diverse dialogue and supports inclusive discussions where everyone is able to be heard.

Another example of a Virtual Exchange 'service provider' has been pioneered by the *Sharing Perspectives Foundation*, which is a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing students and academics with opportunities to collaboratively study contemporary themes related to the subjects of political science, law, economics and social science.

Their model of Virtual Exchange works in the following way:

Providing academic content. Participating universities construct a shared curriculum which is presented through video lectures by the participating educators.

Online discussion. After watching the video lecture assigned for that particular week, students come together in subgroups of one student per participating university in a web-based videoconference room. Here, they discuss the lecture of that week. These discussions are hosted by professionally trained facilitators.

Engaging in collaborative research. Students are then required to collaboratively design, conduct and share survey research about the topic in their own communities to learn about the broader societal impact of the topic.

A recent example of a *Sharing Perspectives* project is *Perspectives on the Euro(pean) Crisis*, which involved eight partner universities with funding from the European Commission. The project explored the causes of and possible solutions to the European crisis and was structured around the major economic, political and sociocultural challenges that were at stake in the European Union. The exchange lasted 16 weeks and included two video lectures a week, mostly contributed by the partner universities; a two-hour weekly dialogue session with 8 to 10 students from each university in the group which was led

by trained facilitators; and a research component, with participants carrying out three surveys and gathering responses from peers and young people in their countries. Selected participants from each university were then invited to Brussels to present the research results. Students who successfully complete *Sharing Perspectives* projects are usually awarded 5 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) grades for their work by their local institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

The review of different Virtual Exchange initiatives and models which has been presented here provides an insight into the great variety and richness of work which is currently going on in the field. Of course, on a general level, all the initiatives can be seen to share a basic educational approach which involves a commitment to experiential learning, collaborative critical enquiry and cross-curricular learning (Cummins & Sayers, 1995); and all would also share common educational goals such as the development of transversal skills, digital literacies, intercultural awareness and the ability to live and work together with people from other cultural backgrounds (Guth & Helm, 2010). The initiatives also appear to have encountered the same problems and challenges as they seek to expand their practice to greater numbers of classrooms and institutions. These include students having limited access to technology, limited digital competences of

teachers, time-differences hindering synchronous communication and institutional resistance to the inter-institutional approach to learning which Virtual Exchange can involve (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008; O'Dowd, 2013).

Differences between the models emerge at the level of organisational structure behind the initiatives. There is a clear difference, for example, between practitioner-led approaches such as the foreign language telecollaboration models outlined above, shared syllabus approaches such as COIL and the service-provider initiatives such as *Soliya* and *Sharing Perspectives*. Inevitably, each approach can be seen to have its strong and weak points. Practitioner-led initiatives are developed by teachers who believe passionately in the underlying principles and aims of Virtual Exchange and therefore these models are likely to grow in a slow, but steady bottom-up fashion.

On the other hand, approaches such as COIL will benefit from the institutional support provided by university management and are likely to receive the funding and training necessary to integrate Virtual Exchange on a large scale across an institution. However, the belief and support of senior management cannot guarantee the passionate belief and motivation of the teaching staff to this approach to learning. Finally, service provider approaches provide a valuable service to educational institutions, providing their students

with well-designed frameworks of trained facilitators, partnerships and tasks which they can access without needing staff from the institutions themselves to be knowledgeable in this area. In this sense, they provide an excellent supplementary educational resource which can complement students' regular studies without actually needing to be integrated into course syllabi. However, as was pointed out earlier, these initiatives are likely to have serious issues of sustainability as they continue to grow in popularity.

Inevitably, it is likely that Virtual Exchange will continue to grow in different directions, depending on practitioner-driven, institutionally-led and outsourced initiatives. The important issue is that the practitioners and promoters of these different forms of Virtual Exchange work closer together to promote the overall goal of increasing the number of students who benefit from online intercultural exchange as part of their university education.

In conclusion, the future of Virtual Exchange would appear to be bright yet still unclear in many respects. While it is clearly beginning to gain recognition at national and trans-national policy-making levels, there is still a lack of communication and coordination among the many initiatives and organisations and this undoubtedly hinders the further dissemination of this educational approach among the wider academic community. Agreeing to use one term, such as Virtual Exchange, may be a first step in the right direction, but even this proposal is likely to be rejected by many of the practitioners mentioned in this article. Further steps may include organising joint conferences and research initiatives with representatives of all the initiatives and organisations mentioned here.

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Teaching Generation Z: Methodological problems and their possible solutions

by [1]Svetlana Popova

[1]Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)

The focus of the article is on the younger generation of today, which is referred to as Generation Z. The theoretical grounding is based on the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory. The paper discusses lack of motivation to study efficiently and looks into the reasons for misunderstanding which often arises among students and teachers born a few generations earlier. Analysis proves the significance of the difference in values and worldview influenced by various venues, circumstances and surroundings that are unique for each generation. Online games, computerisation, communication via text messages and inability to read the context are mentioned among the features of Generation Z. Difference in the attitude to work and studies is explained with the continuous 'information noise' and special hypertextual perception of reality that influences the personal and social life of Generation Z representatives. The article suggests a number of steps to optimise the teaching process with the coming generation of students.

KEYWORDS: context reading, computerisation, fan fiction, Generation Z, hypertext, motivation, text messages, theory of generations

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of studying foreign languages is rarely questioned. Having failed to learn a foreign language, one might find it quite tricky to soar to success regardless of occupation, age or nationality. Learning a foreign language is a must for most of the world population. Nevertheless, only a small number of students can admit that they have mastered a foreign language easily, effortlessly and speak it fluently. By the end of secondary school, students usually succeed in mastering English at elementary or pre-intermediate levels. Yet, should they fail to sustain their level of language proficiency, many learners return to the beginner level, in many ways due to lack of proper motivation and a conservative approach to the teaching process. The situation might appear even more challenging in view of a seemingly decreasing interest in education. What is the reason for this? Is it because teachers are now teaching differently, or is that students are less capable of learning? Is there any reason that we

fail to notice or tend to ignore? Is it possible to turn things around? These are some of the questions this paper aims to address.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The age gap between teachers and students is said to result in misunderstanding and poor training outcome. To address this concern, the study relies on the 'Generational Theory' developed by William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991) and adapted for Russia in 2004 by a team of scholars led by Eugenia Shamis, Rugenerations Project Coordinator (Shamis & Antipov, 2007). According to this theory, everyone can relate themselves to one of the following generations:

- Baby Boomer Generation (1943-1963)
- Generation X (1963-1984)
- Generation Millennium or Y (1984-2000)
- Generation Z (since 2000)

The theory is based on the values of large groups comprising average citizens born within a particular period of time and having witnessed certain political, economic, technological and social changes. Their character, perception of reality and reaction to what is happening around them has been formed by a combination of factors.

Since the events of social life, educational methodology and the level of intelligence in society are similar throughout separate historical periods, the values of most people who form a certain generation are similar, too. Some values formed in childhood and adolescence are acquired automatically in the process of social communication and upbringing. Subsequently, they largely determine the model of human behaviour in various life situations and manifest themselves unconsciously and instinctively. Sometimes the behavioural characteristics of one generation seem inadequate and inexplicable to the representatives of another generation, thus leading to misunderstanding and conflicts between the two. Modern children are born in the age of computer technology, mobile communications and the Internet. Per Generational Theory, they belong to Generation Z – people born post-2000. They form their own set of social characteristics in view of political, economic and cultural events taking place during this period of time.

This study is about understanding the world of today's high school students and future university students against the backdrop of the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory.

Teaching experience of the past has proved that teacher-centred methods are conservative, flat and limited in tools and technologies. The teaching of the future demands a student-centred approach as the only possible way for teenagers to develop skills and abilities, promote self-expression and

keep motivated during the whole period of studies.

Today's teenagers are born into the world full of technological knowhow. The global network also provides resources of a new kind. While earlier websites offered piles of information to read and download, today one can create their own virtual space based on the suggested platform. Such resources are called Web 2.0. Thus, in order to catch up with this dynamic world, teachers need to master and implement the latest computer technologies.

To engage students and enhance their motivation, the communicative approach should be established as a teaching priority. The younger generation is very dynamic and versatile. Therefore, it is difficult to meet everyone's learning aspirations equally, for there is a danger of destroying the stem of the whole system of education that can end up lopsided, sophomoric and unqualified. Thus, the communicative approach in teaching should be combined with constructivist strategies so that the teacher facilitates the process of learning and encourages students to be responsible, interactive and dynamic.

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1 Text messages

One of the phenomena of modern youth communication is the language of text messages originally presented in SMS (Short Message Service) and ICQ (Internet Chat Query). Short text messaging began its rapid development about fifteen years ago, the resulting phenomenon being labelled 'textese', 'slanguage' or 'hybrid shorthand'. The greatest development was observed in the sphere of SMS. Later on, scholars analysed 'the language of SMS' (Crystal, 2008), i.e. the language of abbreviations based on the standard English language. For example, a common sentence like *How are you doing today? Want to go for a coffee later?* can be transformed into *HRU 2day? Wnt2go 4 a cofy l8r?* Such mode of writing allowed sending maximum of information in one message and helped save money on mobile communication services. Besides, it was a kind of encryption code for the younger generation, as it was easily understood by adolescents, but proved difficult to read for their parents. Crystal (2008) points out most prominent linguistic features typical of texting, including abundance of pictograms and logograms (*xxx* for 'kisses' or *b4* for 'before'), initialisation (i.e. words replaced by single letters, as in *Y* for 'Yes' or *NP* for 'No problem'), omitted letters (*englis, rite, txtn*), shortenings (*pos* for 'positive'), or the so-called genuine novelties incorporating several of the above features.

Later, with the introduction of touch screens with wide keyboards and decrease in SMS cost, the need for contractions, once so fashionable among

'Later, with the introduction of touch screens with wide keyboards and decrease in SMS cost, the need for contractions, once so fashionable among modern youths, was no longer topical'

modern youths, was no longer there. ICQ messages were surpassed by unlimited Internet access and a new generation of iPhones and smartphones with functional apps, such as *Viber, WhatsApp* and *Telegram*. And while it is no longer customary to use abbreviations in texting, 'emoticons' or 'emoji' are now coming into fashion as a replacement for emotional writing, along with static pictures and gifs. This is a feature of a more emotionally charged informal communication, whereby one can express sympathy or convey interest in the conversation.

Taking into account this peculiarity of youth communication, one might set out to develop an original evaluation system using 'emoji' accompanied by a brief motivating comment. As far as classes of English are concerned, one way of doing this could be a verbal message with complex vocabulary, which students would have to translate to understand the meaning. Such an assessment might be more relevant for young people, and the teacher may earn students'

approval by doing so. It could be a good opportunity to build reputation, which is a valuable intangible asset in teacher-student relations especially in the case of teenage audience.

3.2 Computerisation of society and online games

Text communication developed alongside the advance in computer technologies. The Internet originated in the second half of the 20th century and for some time it was mainly of interest to military and later academic professionals, since at its initial stage it consisted mainly of an exchange of technical documentation and e-mail messages. Rapid development of the Web took place after 1993, when a number of network nodes and users began to grow in geometric progression. Soon, the Internet was an alternative to other means of communication, as well as a convenient way of transferring and storing information. Today, Internet resources are used by a vast number of people and has become an integral part of modern life. At the moment, World Wide Web is acknowledged as the most popular Internet service and the most convenient means of working with information.

Together with the development of the Internet, computer games have become widely popular. This hobby is chosen by millions of people all over the world, regardless of gender, age and occupation.

With the transition of games to online mode, the tradition of online text messaging has been developing as well. In a game, all messages between team members should be as informative and brief as possible, since the time for making a general decision and developing an action strategy is limited, and the positive outcome of the game also depends on this. As a result, the slang of gamers has rapidly developed and is understandable only for players with experience.

Firstly, due to the limitation imposed on the number of characters in the message line (10 characters) and, later, saving time for communication during a dynamic game, players turned to all sorts of abbreviations, contractions and numeric designations. Among such abbreviations are some well-known, generally accepted text messages.

2 – addressed to (e.g. *2 Anna* meaning 'To Anna');
555 – laughing;
G2G – got to go;
AKA – also known as;
BTW – by the way;
OMG – Oh, my gosh;
WTB – want to buy;
WTS – want to sell;
YT – your turn;
WB – welcome back;
TISNF – that is so not fair;
UL – upload;

Y – why;
RDY – ready;
LOL – lots of laughs.

They also use abbreviations widely spread among computer programmers.

BRB – be right back;
NC – no comment;
AFK/AFTK – away from the keyboard.

There are a lot of abbreviations that have special meanings and are understandable only for gamers, because they have rich experience of communication on the network and therefore know patterns of virtual characters' behaviour in the course of the game.

B / S – I both buy and sell something;

AoE – area of effect, spells of mass destruction with damage to the area;

DD, Damager – the character whose main job is to inflict damage;

DP – Divine Power, points of 'rage' collected after the 10th level and allowing the player to use the skills of special destructive power;

IDDQD – the code of immortality in the game 'DOOM'. Usually it's a joke, wishing luck before

an attack.

There is, of course, a possibility of misunderstanding, especially among people who are not gamers. To avoid this and help beginners, special slang dictionaries have been compiled. And since many concepts quickly become obsolete while new notions appear, the dictionary is uploaded to one of the chats rooms for everyone to see or make suggestions for editing the content.

Online games erase borders between countries and continents. People from different parts of the world can play in one team. This can be a great stimulus for learning English because it is a 'lingua franca' for most of the online gamers.

As a rule, it takes a long time to master the special terminology of the game and become a full member of one of the teams. Commonly, the study of such 'online dictionaries' does not require knowledge of the English language, as about 75% of the words included in such glossaries are only transliterations into the native language of the gamer that do not clarify meaning and the ways of word-formation. Perception of such vocabulary is often passive, and the time of assimilation is directly proportional to the time spent online communicating in the network.

Trying to withstand the passive perception of information, and also make the most of this

fashionable pastime, it might be appropriate to apply a more conscious approach to the study of these words. This study sets out to explain the language processes that resulted in the formation of certain concepts, citing examples from etymological dictionaries, describing semantic parallels and also providing explanations about certain features and rules of computer gaming. One of the gamers' dictionaries offers the following interpretations for some of the notions.

Bit by the bear (expression) – having a bad luck streak, often considered contagious by superstitious players. Possibly comes from the old adage, *'Sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you.'* Also called 'bear-bit'.

Clippy (noun, derogatory) – a player who reminds the GM (Games Moderator) of a rule that is harmful to the PCs. Named after the annoying paper clip from Microsoft Office which constantly offered unwanted advice.

Four-Point Hanger (expression) – a positive phrase referring to a close call that ended up working out perfectly. Taken from the barroom game of shuffle puck, in which a puck hanging off the edge of the board is worth a coveted 4 points. While on the board, the puck is worth 3 points; had the puck fallen completely off, it would have been worth no points. Example: *'Wow, those two mutant super-*

Nazis accidentally killing each other instead of us was a real four-point hanger!'

Get Medieval (verb) – to use excessive violence. Popularised by the film *Pulp Fiction*.

These are words and phrases that need to be explained even to native speakers. Teenagers speaking English as a foreign language are bound to encounter even more difficulties. Coming across a new word while playing, they usually don't give it deep thought but simply translate it into their native language. They may guess its meaning by the action of the characters they can see on the screen but not bother to learn more about the translation, etymology, etc.

A more 'linguistic' way of providing vocabulary will contribute to a better understanding of the words' semantic origin, their formation and translation, thereby increasing interest in learning English. Implementation of this strategy has a number of advantages.

Firstly, being beginners and taking the study of gamers' slang seriously, students can expand their vocabulary, especially if they play the original version with the software written in English.

Secondly, a teacher of English who understands the terms of the game will be elevated in the eyes of students, and, as a result, the interest in the

teacher's personality will increase interest in the subject he or she teaches.

Thirdly, it is crucial to consider the general trend towards gamification – the process of adding games or game like elements to something (such as a task) so as to encourage participation. It is possible to create an interesting interactive educational game where, as a key to passing to a new level, it will be necessary to upload the completed homework or use different grammatical and syntactical structures instead of a variety of weapons. And when the student is graded, the following message can be displayed: *GG (Good Game!).*

3.3 Networking literature, fan fiction and hypertext

By the end of the second millennium, the Internet included large arrays of literary texts. Initially, these were primarily libraries with electronic versions of works that had already been published. Later on, there appeared websites for posting books by amateur writers. A special place in the network is occupied by electronic diaries – blogs, many of which serve to discuss issues of interest to the author and to post small texts. This way of writing has become widespread and has opened the doors for a special kind of electronic literature – networking literature.

The volume and variety of electronic texts that

exist on the Internet have become comparable with traditional printed texts. Literary works that exist on the Internet have become extremely diverse. However, one of the most notable places among them is taken by a special phenomenon commonly referred to as 'fanfiction'.

The emergence of fanfiction is primarily associated with the growing popularity of the genre of fantasy, with J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling as its most prominent representatives. Since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the *Harry Potter* series, their popularity has been steadily growing to attract a vast number of fans among readers of different ages. The books were translated into various world languages and several films were made based on the plot of the books tp contribute to an even greater growth of the writers' popularity. Many children and teenagers not only read these books, but also aspire to take up writing themselves.

By the start of the 21st century, a number of communities of science fiction and fantasy fans had begun to appear. They arose as clubs providing a platform for the exchange of thoughts, impressions and opinions. Via the Internet, fans of the fantasy genre moved to a new level: visitors of many specialised websites not only discussed their favourite books, but also made their first attempts at writing. Literature created by fans was called 'fanfiction' and their texts were called 'fanfics' or

'The emergence of fanfiction is primarily associated with the growing popularity of the genre of fantasy, with J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling as its most prominent representatives'

'fics'. For now, this phenomenon is familiar to most of today's youth. Teenagers either read fanfiction, or create it themselves.

Another phenomenon of interest to the study is hypertext which in the broadest sense refers to an electronic text with markup words (commands) inserted into it to link the reader to other parts of the same text or related online documents, photographs, pictures, etc. Hypertext is a multi-level concept used not only in programming, but also in other areas of knowledge (particularly in language studies and literary criticism).

The idea of a hypertextual information system is that a user has an opportunity to view documents (pages of text) in the desired order, rather than lineally as is customary in reading books. Hence, hypertext is often defined as 'a non-linear text'. This is achieved by creating a special mechanism linking different pages of the text using hypertextual links, i.e. the plain text has links like 'next-previous', and hypertext can build as many other links as the programmer likes.

Computer hypertexts as a particular phenomenon have become widespread because of the special features offered by such data organisation. First of all, modern users, to which the children of Generation Z also belong, are attracted by an opportunity to choose the source that best meets their current needs, as well as by the presence of built-in and associated hypertextual links, built-in graphs and the ability to search by keywords. A potentially unlimited number of potential consumers of information and free access to it regardless of location is an added attraction.

Given the peculiarities of hypertextual perception of information by young people and their desire to create their own works on the web, it will be advisable to develop educational portals, and unite pupils/ students in communities according to the level of knowledge, the topic of the project / research or according to their interests. The main form of presentation may be an essay, a composition or even a fanfic on a pre-arranged topic, but teachers should try not to limit students to the precise framework of the structure and genre so that they could feel free to be creative and build their own hypertextual algorithm while fulfilling the task.

It is important to update the information on this website regularly, add useful links and assignments such as a case study or a dilemma task that will provide freedom of choice and self-expression for the Generation Z students.

3.4 Reading the context

Even though Generation Z students are keen on computers, surf the net freely, don't have any difficulties with expressing and supporting their point of view and building their own hypertextual reality, they often fail to follow the clues of the context of a simple text when dealing with an ordinary gap-filling task. It would seem that 'jumping' from one page to another and following their own logic of thinking should help develop the skill of seeing connections among documents, pages, ideas, etc., and yet in practice this is often not the case. Instead of setting thoughts in order, it blurs the logical ties and derails the process of building associative links between different pieces of information. This ultimately results in less efficient performance in humanitarian subjects at schools and universities, especially as concerns reading, which is estimated as the most difficult, time-consuming and tiring task to fulfil. Students lose concentration as they often aren't able to 'read between the lines'. They see an unknown word and very often skip it. If it's not essential, they're lucky, otherwise they lose track of the plot and make mistakes or try to look up every word in the dictionary or even use Google Translate or similar services. Thus, another problem of modern students is that they can't work with context. While this is a difficult issue to resolve, it is far from hopeless.

First and foremost, students should be taught to use contextual clues. There are always phrases and expressions in the text that might help. Examples are synonyms, definitions, antonyms and background knowledge.

The task of a teacher here is not to give out the translation of the word or the correct answer at once but create a 'problem solving' situation, set a challenge for the students to cope with, be able to intrigue the audience and motivate them to carry out small contextual research. It's better to start introducing these types of tasks in the early stages in order to develop skills and confidence by the time of exams which can influence students' future life and career.

There is an example of a task that can help develop the skill of contextual reading, taken from flo-joe.co.uk.

Which one word fits all three sentences?

1. If someone has a .... of cards I can show you a trick.

2. During the cruise we spent our days on .... soaking up the sun.

3. My parents got me a tape .... for my birthday.

The answer is 'deck'.

What word best fits the blank space?

1. Michael Chamberlain was a pastor with the Seventh-day Adventist ...., a protestant denomination.

2. I believe in America where the separation of .... and state is absolute.

3. Dr William Estes, an Old Catholic .... Bishop, put a finer point on this temptation.

The answer is 'church'.

This type of exercise is easy to compile using one of the open corpuses of the English language available online. The task encourages students to use their background knowledge and think out of the box beyond the limits of a single context as well as motivate them to read more and to develop their confidence.

3.5 Psychological and demographic characteristics of a Generation Z student

From the first minutes of life, modern children are inundated with an incessant flow of information. TV, computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, game consoles – these gadgets are accessible to most kids already in their early childhood. As a rule, their moms and dads get tired of communicating with children, who, in turn, are often restless and tend to quickly switch from one

type of activity to another and lose interest in monotonous, longer-term tasks. This can lead to a growing lack of understanding between adolescents and their parents. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. Difference in the speed of cognition (with the younger generation it considerably exceeds the analogous indicators of their parents).

2. Grandparents play a less significant part in the education of their grandchildren.

3. Due to demanding economic conditions, parents spend ever more time at work, trying to earn more money.

4. Increased consumerism contributes to the increase in the material needs of the society, which also forces the current generation of mothers and fathers to work longer and spend less time with their children.

5. Statistics shows that parents of many Generation Z youngsters are often divorced, therefore, in most cases, they are busy solving material problems rather than spending time with their children, sharing their life experience and views.

6. The coming generation of future students are better at typing than at writing, since they were born in the age of computers, smartphones, fast and cheap Internet and social networking.

As a consequence, modern children are often left to themselves in matters of finding the right information and developing their own views, their world outlook. Moreover, since today there are fewer 'filters' of information flows, the child's organism and brain learn to protect themselves, developing a reaction of indifference and abstraction from 'information noise' (Popova, 2016). Therefore, modern educators should not be surprised that children do not hear them, do not understand the instructions the first time round, and perceive information slowly.

Children usually have hundreds of 'online friends' they communicate with using short messages replacing emotions and speech figures with 'emojis' and 'memes'. A meme is defined by as *'an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture'* (Dawkins, 1976, 44).

A new generation of children is not used to correcting mistakes, remaking, repairing things, redoing and rewriting. For them it's always easier to throw a thing out and buy a new one, abandon the project and start from scratch. Children of Generation Z change activities easily, looking for what exactly they are good at. Thanks to Internet technologies, the world of Generation Z children is wider than that of their parents and teachers. They are often called lazy and selfish, yet they are

'A new generation of children is not used to correcting mistakes, remaking, repairing things, redoing and rewriting'

very efficient and quick if motivated properly. These people are talented and better oriented in the world. They quickly analyse large amounts of information, find new original solutions, and easily cope with several tasks simultaneously (multitaskers). Their handwriting is often incomprehensible but they type fluently. One might think they have bad memory and cannot concentrate, but they remember all the keyboard buttons combinations for text formatting and codes of immortality for computer games. These children may experience difficulty understanding text which is longer than 140 characters, the maximum length of a Tweet. There seem to be even more drawbacks and weak points we want them NOT to possess. But why not try and play the game by their rules?

Networks and bloggers obviously keep them informed about current trends. They are a treasure for teachers and scientists. But to get this 'treasure', one needs to change the strategy of giving and representing tasks.

The question of motivating Generation Z students is a highly relevant issue. The point is that external types of motivation that work well with the representatives of other generations do not play out with modern teenagers. The main reason for this is their unwillingness to follow instructions and conform to strict rules. They have got used to dealing with everything new in their life without instructions manuals. The quickest and the most effective way of mastering the subject for such teenagers is to start with practice, introducing theory in small portions before, after or during a practical task. The teacher should be ready to adapt quickly and to follow the hypertextual model of the lesson giving the students 'freedom within limits' that is very similar to the Montessori approach to education, projected onto the modern environment and background.

The quickest way to convert the external type of motivation to study a subject to an internal one is to praise students for the things they've done well. It's difficult to explain this to some teachers today because there is a misconception that any compliment will decrease the enthusiasm of students, making them lazy and idle in the near future. Research suggests that praise is underused in both general-education and special-education classrooms (Kern & Clemens, 2007).

To make the praise effective and sincere for Generation Z students, one simply needs to give a short description of what they are praising them for. These children often perceive the teacher as

someone who is keen on the subject. A pure emotional reaction to the performance, such as 'Good job!', is likely to be considered inadequate as it lacks behavioural description (Hawkins & Heflin, 1997). If the teacher makes an effort to give a short description with a behavioural element, such as, *'You've found and located three strong and topical facts in your essay. Good job!'*, the phrase achieves its goal and extends its triggering effect onto further work and studies. Moreover, it has been suggested that praising the general ability to be good at the subject can reduce the student's desire to take risks and show effort. Instead, the teacher should focus on specific examples of students' accomplishment. Thus, if the phrase *'You are really good at English'* is transformed into *'It's obvious from your grade that you worked hard to prepare for the test. Well done!'*, then such praise can help students see a connection between the invested effort and make them more interested in academic performance.

One more characteristic feature of modern children is that they are not used to solving complex problems on their own. They grew up in a fairly safe environment. In their childhood, loving parents decided which kindergarten, school or hobby group they would go to, the choice of the university and future profession was also made under parental control, only partially independently. These children are used to trusting adults making important decisions.

'To make the praise effective and sincere for the students of Generation Z you simply need to give a short description of what you are praising them for'

In this regard, teachers should be flexible and understanding. If the student loses interest to the project, they should ask him/her to look at the problem from a new angle, for example, from the position of competitors, not importers but exporters. Students of Generation Z should be enthusiastically motivated. At the same time, the teacher fulfils the duties of a leader who should consider interesting and prospective facets of a student's personality, notice what they are keen on and what areas or topics they are interested in. It is essential today, as Generation Z students will successfully cope with the task only if the topic aligns with their personal interests.

4. CONCLUSION

A fact of modern reality is that one of the market leaders, Twitter, is going to double the amount of the characters available in a single message. They will soon make it 280 instead of current 140. It is already causing much fuss among the users. Some of them approve of the initiative as they believe there are always many details left unexpressed when you are restricted to a short message. Others disagree, saying that it will take more effort to read

and to grasp the main idea if there are more words in a single tweet. They claim that the whole spirit of 'the brief and sharp' messenger will be ruined. One writer who supports longer tweets is Kurt Wagner who writes, *'Twitter's character limit is a holdover from the app's early days when tweets were sent as texts, which were limited to 140 characters. It has since become one of the product's defining characteristics'* (Wagner, 2017).

It is obvious that it will take time for the innovation to be totally accepted. But Facebook hasn't give up on the idea and keeps trying despite the negative reaction of some of the users and a risk of losing some customers. They continue implementing the initiative, claiming that in the end it will attract more people who will tweet. '*When people don't*

have to cram their thoughts into 140 characters and actually have some to spare, we see more people tweeting' (Wagner, 2017). The point is that at present the whole system of education, each educational institution and each teacher in particular should follow the above-described model. They need to find out what the students expect from them, analyse their potential abilities in mastering a particular subject and adapt the content and methodology to the coming generation of 'education consumers'. But at the same time, it should be done in a wise and forward-looking manner – firstly, in order to attract more attention, effort and not to scare them away, and secondly, not to lose the valuable component of every subject by making it an item of goods but perceive it more as an opportunity granted.

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Contrast and font affect reading speeds of adolescents with and without a need for language-based learning support

by [1]Heiner Böttger, [2]Julia Dose and [3]Tanja Müller

[1] [2] [3]Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt

This pre-study investigates the effects of the font type and the contrast between the colour of the text and the colour of the background on the reading speed of readers a) with different age groups and b) with a different need for language-based learning support using state-of-the art eye-tracking technology. We determine no significant difference between participants who were or were not receiving learning support (special support with a specialist teacher) due to language-based reading disabilities when reading the font type Open Dyslexic. This suggests that this font increases the reading speed of participants who receive learning support for language-based learning disabilities. Comparison of the reading speed for different passages of text displayed in different colour combinations indicates that a contrast of light text on a dark background may improve reading ability and reading performance. Both of these findings have significant implications for foreign-language teaching.

KEYWORDS: *eye-tracking, font type, colour contrast, reading speed, reading comprehension, learning support, language-based learning disabilities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a key linguistic competency that is required to obtain information and participate in cultural life (Perfetti, 2013). All educational processes are based on reading and being able to decode information encoded in text independently. The ability to read as a linguistic competency must be explicitly taught and practised to a great extent, as there is only limited evidence to suggest that humans are biologically predisposed to become literate (Böttger, 2016, p.

139-140). Reading ability plays a particularly significant role in success in school for learners with dyslexia, which has a negative effect on the literacy acquisition in learners of average intelligence (Gallego et al., 2011). Around 5% of school pupils are affected by dyslexia (Snowling, 2000; Shaywitz, 2003). Zorzi et al. (2012) for example, referencing Cunningham and Stanovich (1998), note that children with dyslexia read as many words in a year as children without dyslexia do in two days. They go on to state that is it

incredibly important to get children with dyslexia to read more in a shorter period of time in conditions of EBD (Emotional Behavioural Disorder) in order to ensure that they are able to access information. Reading speed is less dependent on the type or genre of text and more on the difficulty of the content and the complexity of the surface structure (e.g. syntax) (Eysel, 2011, p. 355). In a school context, learners who require linguistic support are therefore given special support in the form of specific programmes and measures to compensate for disadvantages – not only in their native language. They also require support to promote their ability to read and understand English texts in a foreign language teaching context, since proficiency in the *lingua franca* of English is crucial in many situations, such as in order to read scientific publications.

One aspect of reading ability is the connection between reading speed and reading comprehension. This can be promoted through targeted educational measures, such as providing individual learning support, but could hypothetically also be facilitated by altering teaching and learning materials, a method that has not yet been thoroughly researched (Zorzi et al., 2012, p. 11455). Two areas that are of interest to research in this context – but have received little attention to date – are the relationship between reading speed and font type, and the relationship between reading speed and colour contrast. In

our literature review, we identified only a small number of studies that investigated reading in the context of learning rather than in the field of marketing. In the latter context, Frey et al. (2013), for example, focused on targeted information seeking during the reading of texts with the aim of co-registering eye tracking measurements and EEG (Electroencephalography) signals. Zhao et al. (2014) studied reading strategies for understanding combinations of text and images and show that texts are very important for pupils in order to construct mental models (Zhao et al., 2014, p. 46).

In the context of dyslexia, various recommendations exist for a preferred font. The British Dyslexia Association has developed a comprehensive style guide that recommends the use of fonts such as Arial, Comic Sans, or Verdana (www. bdadyslexia.org.uk). What all of the recommended fonts have in common is that they are sans-serif, which suggests that the British Dyslexia Association considers serifs a potential hindrance to the reading process. Wilkins et al. (2007) suggest that the additional lines of the serifs increase the visual stress created by the vertical and horizontal lines that make up a letter.

Furthermore, studies by Cornelissen et al. (1991) and O'Brien et al. (2005) show that people with dyslexia have problems recognising individual letters when the distance between them is too small. Increasing the distance between letters

therefore leads to improved reading accuracy and faster reading speed among these readers (Zorzi et al., 2012, p. 11457). Beymer et al. (2008) investigated how font size and font type affect reading performance when reading text from a computer screen. They obtained remarkable results for the serif font Georgia in comparison to sans-serif font types. The participants in their study read Georgia almost 8% faster than the sans-serif font (Helvetica). However, overall this result was not statistically significant. The authors state that the versions with and without serifs are visually very similar, so the non-significant result is unsurprising (Beymer et al., 2008, p. 17). They do not provide any further interpretations of the result. However, in the discussion they note that the result could be due to differences in the native languages of the study participants, as significantly longer fixations and shorter saccades were measured for participants who did not state English as their native language compared to those who did. Rello and Baeza-Yates (2013) were unable to determine any significant difference in the reading speed of people diagnosed with dyslexia for serif and sans-serif fonts. They summarise that the font has an effect on overall readability, but they do not specify how strong this effect is. In their study, they determined a significantly faster reading speed for texts in sans-serif, non-italic, mono-spaced fonts in comparison to texts in serif, italic, proportional fonts. Although Arial is often recommended, for example by Evett and Brown (2005), Rello and

Baeza-Yates (2013), studies are unable to confirm its suitability. They deduce from their results that people with dyslexia are able to read Courier and Helvetica faster. Their results support those of a study by De Leeuw (2010), who did not identify any effects on readability when the font Open Dyslexic is used. Furthermore, the participants with reading difficulties in the study by Rello and Baeza-Yates (2013) stated that they preferred Verdana or Helvetica over Open Dyslexic, a font that was designed especially for people with reading difficulties.

The statement that a larger font size may increase reading speed is contradicted by various recommendations including Wilkins et al. (2007) and Rello et al. (2012). With regard to colour contrast, Gregor and Newell (2000) emphasise that this is particularly significant for people with dyslexia. For example, coloured transparent overlays that can be placed over black text printed on white paper are available for people with dyslexia. It is generally suggested that the combination of black text on a white background should also be avoided on websites. In addition, the study by Rello et al. (2012), in which people with dyslexia were presented with different combinations of text and background colour, shows no beneficial effect on reading when grey backgrounds are used. The most successful colour combination was cream-coloured text on a black background.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Testing instruments

The aim of the pre-study was firstly to determine the effects of the font type on the reading speed of readers (a) with different age groups and (b) with different need for language based learning support and in a second step to determine the effects of the contrast between the colour of the text and of the background on the reading speed of readers (a) with different age groups and (b) with different need for language-based learning support.

The data used for the study were collected between December 2016 and January 2017 through field research carried out under laboratory conditions at the Franconian International School in Erlangen, Germany, and at the English Didactics department at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

The technical equipment used consisted of the high-performance MangoldVision Software Package© with an eye tracker, eye tracking project manager, and accompanying data analysis software.

We selected excerpts from the novel Robin Hood as the basic texts for our study. We adapted selected passages on the archery competition for pupils from different grades who were assigned to three different proficiency levels. The excerpts that we used were taken from the textbook *The New*

Green Line 5 and from the version of the novel by Gina Clemens. Our changes were focused not on potential linguistic barriers (cf. pupils' years of experience learning the language) but on adapting the syntactic structure and the number of words. As the learners in 12th grade were being taught at level C1/ C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and higher, they were assigned to the same group as university students and adults.

The three versions of the text (for 6th grade pupils, 8th grade pupils and 12th grade students/adults) consisted of four paragraphs of almost identical length (± 3 words). Each of these paragraphs was written in a different font: one each in Times New Roman, Arial, Courier, and Open Dyslexic. The fonts were chosen on the basis of the studies described above, as well as the fact that the frequency of their use is high. When selecting the fonts we also took care to include both serif and sans-serif fonts in addition to Open Dyslexic, a font that was designed especially for people with dyslexia.

To randomise the study, we created two different versions of each text in which the order of the fonts varied. As this was a pre-study with a small sample, we decided not to create further randomised versions in order to avoid decreasing the number of participants who read each different version even further.

We also developed comprehension questions on the text for each group that could not be answered on the basis of general knowledge of *Robin Hood* alone. The purpose of this was to allow us to contrast the reading speed with reading comprehension.

In addition, for each group and for each font we created two further passages of text in two different contrast combinations: yellow text on a black background and black text on a cream-coloured background. We chose these colour combinations as they were identified most frequently in the study by Rello et al. (2012).

Here we also created different variations of the text passages in which different parts of the text for each age group were shown in different contrast combinations for the purposes of randomisation. We decided not to create additional colour combinations due to nature of the pre-study design with its small sample. We also developed a set of comprehension questions on these passages according the same principle as above. These were used to create several questionnaires for each group in which the order of the questions varied.

Finally, we uploaded all of the files that we had created to the Mangold Project Manager©. Here we marked the passages in different fonts as one stimulus and the passages with different contrasts as another stimulus.

2.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 47 participants. Of these, 16 were pupils in the 6th grade, 12 were pupils in the 8th grade, and 19 were pupils in the 12th grade (students or adults).

Originally 50 people were recruited for the experiment, but as it was not possible to calibrate the equipment properly for three participants, data was only obtained for 47.

The composition of the different age groups included in this pre-study was as follows.

The native language of the majority of the pupils who participated in the experiment was German (N=19). A further eight were bilingual, while five participants had English as their native language. The pupils who had learned English as a second or foreign language had been learning the language for an average of 7.41 years (*SD – standard deviation* – 1.32) in the 6th grade group, 8.75 years (SD 1.09) in the 8th grade group, and 10.5 years (SD 0) in the 12th grade group. Because the learners were attending an international school where classes were taught in English, and due to the number of years that they stated they had been learning the language for, it can be assumed that the L2 learners in each age cohort had native-speaker level English proficiency.

Differentiating the participants by their learning

support status results in the following groups: Nine of the pupils were receiving learning support from the school and were classified as having reading difficulties/dyslexia (6th grade *N*=3, 8th grade *N*=1, 12th grade *N*=5). This means that these learners were participating in a special support programme at the school that aimed to improve their reading abilities. All learners were officially tested for their need for learning support in order to officially be given this status by the school.

The remaining 15 participants were students of

English from the university and teachers from the school, and had an average age of 41.33 years (SD 10.86). Seven of the adults stated that they had learned English as a native language either monolingually or bilingually. The students and teachers with English as a second or foreign language had been learning English for an average of 16 years (SD 7.29). The number of years that those with English as an L2 had been learning the language means that it can also be assumed that the participants in the adult/ student group all had a comparable level of proficiency.

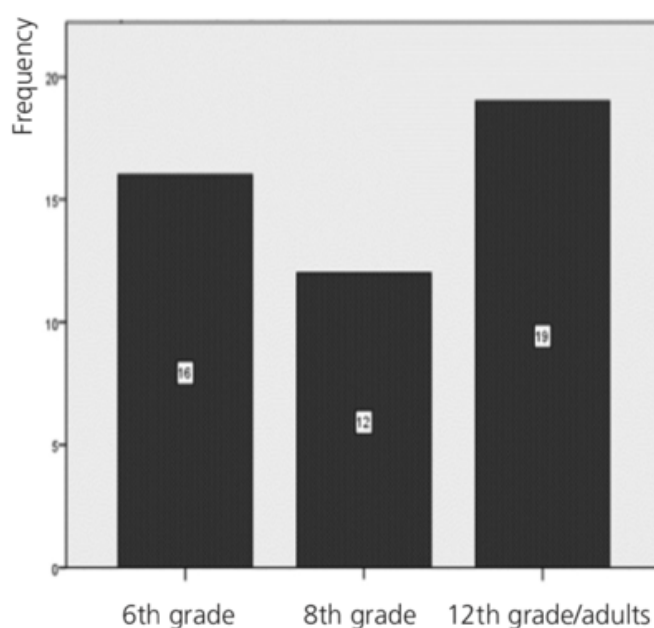*Figure 1.* Participants by age group

2.3 Experimental procedure

After the participant had provided consent to participate in the experiment (with parental consent in the case of the pupils), the Mangold

Player© was started on a laptop, with the desktop also displayed on an additional screen for the participant. The participant was then allocated an ID. The Mangold Eye Tracker©, which was

attached to a bracket under the participant's screen, was subsequently adjusted exactly to complete the calibration. Through calibration the eye tracker was set to the position of the participant's eyes/ pupils while he or she looked at specified points on the screen. It was necessary to recalibrate the eye tracker in some cases, sometimes multiple times. Once suitable values, which were displayed in a green area in the Mangold Player©, had been reached, the data collection was initiated. First the participant was shown written information on the test design. Then the part of the test using different fonts began (independent variables: age, learning support status/dependent variable: text versions). The participant's task was to read the text once and give the experimenter a signal once he or she had read the text in full. While the participant was reading the Mangold Eye Tracker© recorded the eye movements.

As soon as the participant had finished reading the text once, he or she was asked the comprehension questions that he or she had been told to expect. The participant was then asked to rank the different fonts according to which was the most pleasant to read.

After this the part of the test using the different colour contrasts began. The font that was rated as the most pleasant before was the font in which the subsequent two passages with different colour

contrasts were shown. As this was a pre-study, no other fonts were presented in different contrasts.

The participant was then asked further comprehension questions. Finally, the participant's demographic data were recorded.

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1 Software and samples

As the Mangold Vision Player© had divided the screen into sections using an x/y coordinate system while data was being collected and transferred the position of the participant's pupils that was determined during calibration to all other movements, we were able to use the Mangold Vision Analyzer© to analyse the data for each time unit. In order to obtain exact information on how long a participant spent looking at a particular point on the screen, it was necessary to define areas of interest (AOIs). We placed an area of interest (AOI) over each line of text in the Mangold Vision Analyzer© to allow us to determine the amount of time each participant spent looking at the line. The Analyzer calculates the amount of time that the gaze is directed at the AOIs that have been determined. When creating the AOIs, we ensured that each AOI was identical in size by copying and pasting the marking over the text each time. This allowed us to determine the amount of time participants spent reading each individual line. We then calculated the means for each font type and each colour contrast using the

statistics program SPSS, Version 24 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). We used this data as the basis for further statistical analysis. Due to the small sample in this pre-study, we used mean values as the basis for our data analysis because the conditions for multivariate analysis methods were not sufficiently fulfilled; however, MANOVA and multiple regression analysis point to the same relationships/differences.

3.2 Font types

3.2.1 Calculations

In order to determine the effects of font on reading speed, in this pre-study we made calculations on the basis of age group. The results show that Open Dyslexic font was read significantly faster than the others. The participants spent an average of only 3.2 seconds reading this area of text. By contrast, they required 6 seconds for both Arial and Courier. They required the longest amount of time to read Times New Roman, with an average of 7 seconds. This indicates that although the same amount of text was shown in each font, the participants processed the text displayed in Open Dyslexic significantly faster. They required twice as long for the fonts Courier and Times New Roman as they did for Open Dyslexic, which indicates a clear and significant difference in reading speed.
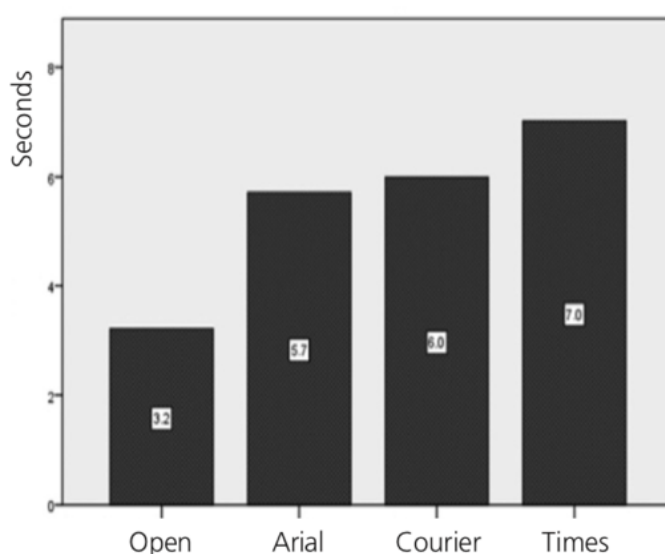

Figure 2. Average reading speed by font

If Open Dyslexic allows to understand the same amount of content while doubling reading speed in comparison to when Times New Roman and Courier – two quite common fonts – are used, it may be more suitable in teaching contexts, such as in textbooks, than the current standard fonts.

3.2.2 Reading speed according to font and age group

To examine these assumptions more closely, we analysed our results on the basis of age group. The following figure shows that Open Dyslexic was read the fastest by all age groups. On average, the font that the participants in the 6th grade group and the 8th grade group required the longest amount of time to read was Times New Roman, while the group of 12th grade pupils and adults appeared to have the most difficulty processing Courier.
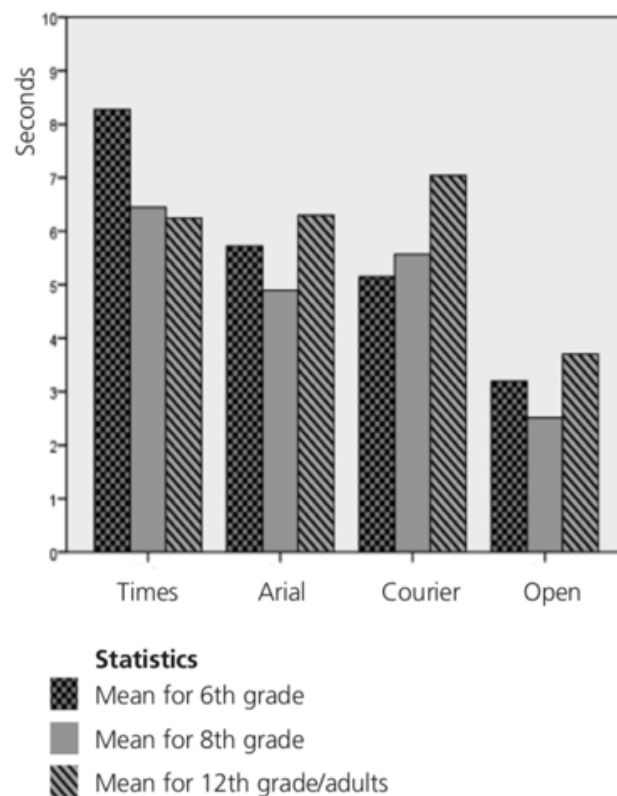
Figure 3. Average reading speed by font

The 6th grade group was the slowest at reading Times New Roman (>8 seconds). The group of 12th grade pupils and adults was the slowest for Arial (>6 seconds) as well as Courier.

These participants were also the slowest at reading Open Dyslexic. It is striking that the oldest group was only the fastest for Times New Roman and was the slowest on average for all other fonts. This is surprising, as the 12th grade pupils and adults are the most experienced readers. A possible explanation could be the higher difficulty level of the texts, despite the fact that they were designed for this age group.
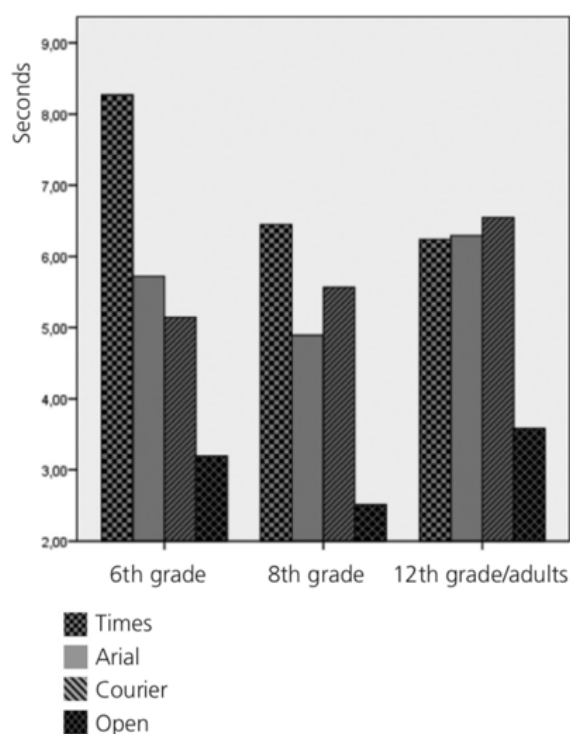
Figure 4. Average reading speed by age group

The figure above shows that Open Dyslexic was read the fastest by all age groups by a considerable margin. Participants required an average of between 2.5 and 3.5 seconds to read Open Dyslexic, while it took them between 6 and 8.2 seconds to read Times New Roman. In the group of 12th grade pupils and adults there was almost no difference in reading speed between the commonly used fonts Courier, Times New Roman, and Arial, but a highly significant difference for Open Dyslexic. The younger the children, the larger the differences in average reading speed between different fonts.

This suggests that people become accustomed to commonly used fonts during their time at school and there is therefore no statistically demonstrable relationship between font and reading speed for the 'standard' fonts. The diagram shows that the reading speeds for different fonts become increasingly similar as pupils progress through the grades. The uncommon font Open Dyslexic is a significant exception here as it is processed twice as quickly.

3.2.3 Reading speed according to font and need for learning support

Our sample can also be broken down into participants who require learning support and participants who do not.

Open Dyslexia was designed specifically for people who require learning support in

reading, and our analysis indicates that the difference in reading speed between people who do and do not require learning support is smallest for this font. As the following figure shows, the participants who required learning support were slower than those who did not when reading all four fonts:
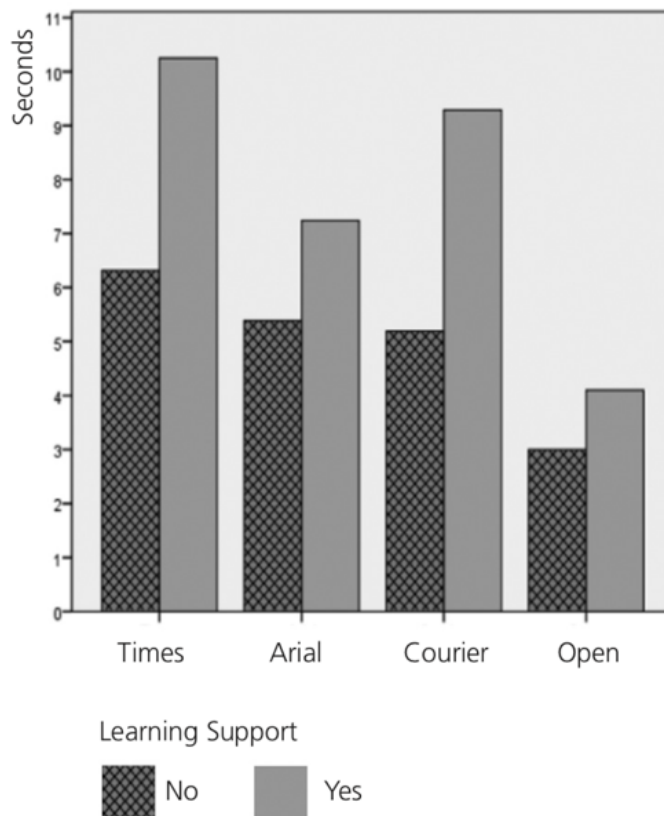
Figure 5. Average reading speed by font and need for learning support

The difference in the average amount of time taken to process the text is 4 seconds for Times New Roman and Courier and 2 seconds for Arial, while for Open Dyslexic it is only one second.

It must be taken into consideration that the passages of text were relatively short; for a text of this length, a difference of 4 seconds is statistically relevant.

To reinforce the results in spite of the small sample size, we examined the reading speeds for each font in more detail according to the age of the participants and whether or not they require learning support, and determined that those who require learning support achieved significantly slower reading speeds. The younger the participants, the larger the difference is for all four fonts. With increasing age, the difference becomes

smaller. In light of this, Open Dyslexic stands out because from the 8th grade onwards participants who require learning support were in fact faster at reading this font than those who do not.

This supports the assumption that using Open

Dyslexic in inclusive settings promotes the performance of pupils who do and do not require learning support.

These findings are based on the following statistics (Table 1):

Table 1

Average reading speed by font and need for learning support

Inclusion	Grade			Times	Arial	Courier	Open
No	6	N	Valid	13	13	13	13
			Missing	0	0	0	0
		Mean		7.0481	5.5173	4.7415	2.5713
		Median		5.9300	5.3800	4.6050	2.5600
	8	N	Valid	11	11	11	11
			Missing	0	0	0	0
		Mean		6.1891	4.9245	5.5773	2.5755
		Median		5.6200	4.6450	5.4400	2.4600
	12	N	Valid	13	13	13	13
			Missing	1	1	1	1
		Mean		5.6969	5.6477	5.3233	3.7892
		Median		6.1700	5.2100	4.6300	3.6400
Yes	6	N	Valid	3	3	3	3
			Missing	0	0	0	0
		Mean		13.5767	6.6050	6.8883	5.8883
		Median		13.8500	6.7000	7.3850	6.7750
	8	N	Valid	1	1	1	1
			Missing	0	0	0	0
		Mean		9.2800	4.5500	5.4550	1.8250
		Median		9.2800	4.5500	5.4550	1.8250
	12	N	Valid	4	4	5	5
			Missing	1	1	0	0
		Mean		8.0012	8.3900	11.4950	3.4830
		Median		8.2500	8.4750	12.8800	3.1400

The findings on the next page are based on these statistics (Table 2):

Table 2

Average reading speed by contrast and need for learning support

Inclusion	Grade			Contrast 1	Contrast 2
No	6	N	Valid	13	13
			Missing	0	0
		Mean		2.2328	2.2902
		Median		2.0270	2.1400
		Standard deviation		.76817	.80989
	8	N	Valid	11	11
			Missing	0	0
		Mean		1.6321	1.6269
		Median		1.6020	1.5180
		Standard deviation		.31172	.57596
	12	N	Valid	12	12
			Missing	2	2
		Mean		2.5183	2.1703
		Median		2.6688	2.1163
		Standard deviation		.98990	1.37334
Yes	6	N	Valid	3	3
			Missing	0	0
		Mean		2.9143	3.5300
		Median		2.8170	3.5300
		Standard deviation		.94377	.42700
	8	N	Valid	1	1
			Missing	0	0
		Mean		1.8750	1.4730
		Median		1.8750	1.4730
	12	N	Valid	5	5
			Missing	0	0
		Mean		3.0112	2.9748
		Median		3.2540	2.7000
		Standard deviation		.46246	.97693

3.3 Contrast

In this study we use the term 'contrast' to refer to the difference between the colour of text and the colour of background, whereby one is light and the other is dark.

We created two additional passages of text for each group and for each font in the following contrast combinations: black text on a cream-coloured background (Contrast 1) and yellow text on a black background (Contrast 2) (cf. 1.2).

The results for reading speed according to contrast and age showed that the normal contrast, Contrast 1 (dark text on a light background), was only processed faster than Contrast 2 (light text on a dark background) by the 6th grade pupils. The other age groups processed Contrast 2 faster. This applied to both participants who required learning support and those who did not. We did not identify any other trends.

Our results indicate that with increasing age a non-standard contrast of light text on a dark background (Contrast 2) leads to improved reading speed.

The 12th grade participants who do not require learning support required an average of 2.5 seconds to read a passage of text in Contrast 1, while they only required 2.1 seconds for a passage in Contrast 2.

The differences in speeds are significantly smaller in the lower grades. Participants who required learning support found it easier to read Contrast 1 in the lower grades, while Contrast 2 appeared to be easier for those who required learning support with increasing age.

The 6th grade participants required an average of 2.9 seconds for the passage in Contrast 1 and 3.5 seconds for the passage in Contrast 2. In comparison, the 12th grade participants required

almost the same amount of time for Contrast 1 (3 seconds) as for Contrast 2 (2.9 seconds). The majority of participants stated that their preferred contrast was the familiar contrast (dark text on a light background).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Font types

The data obtained in this pre-study allow us to identify various tendencies that require further verification for individual variables in a study with a larger number of participants.

The results show that differences in reading performance can be reduced, at least to some extent, by using the font Open Dyslexic, as participants who required learning support found it much easier to read this font than the common fonts Times New Roman, Courier, and Arial. Participants who required learning support processed Open Dyslexic three times faster than Times New Roman. In this regard, their performance was almost identical to that of participants who did not require learning support. This means that using this font could promote equal opportunities in inclusive settings.

However, Open Dyslexic appears to be advantageous not only for people who require specific learning support but also for those who do not. The participants without a language-based learning disability were also able to read this font

much quicker with the same level of comprehension. What is surprising here is that, unaware of this data and the increase in their reading speed, the participants who did not require learning support did not respond well to this font. It ranked last in the list of their preferred fonts. By contrast, the participants who required learning support were strongly in favour of this font, ranking it among their preferred fonts.

As the experiment shows, a familiarisation effect occurs with the commonly used fonts, leading to the reading speed for each font becoming increasingly similar over time and resulting in the font in which a text is displayed being of almost no relevance any longer.

The very small sample size as mentioned before, which is weakened further by the randomisation, should be considered critically. In further studies the sample should be increased in size and ideally tested in series.

Furthermore, it could be suggested that although the participants were able to read the text faster, they may have understood or internalised it to a lesser extent. For this reason, we asked the participants questions on the individual passages of text. To ensure that the reading speed did not affect comprehension, we only included data for a passage if the participant had answered the questions correctly. In addition, we ensured that

none of the fonts were associated more frequently with more difficult passages than others by randomising the experiment.

Our evaluation of participants' comprehension showed no significant differences between the different fonts, providing further evidence to suggest that Open Dyslexic can indeed be read faster with the same level of retention and comprehension.

4.2 Contrast

These data from our pre-study also indicate tendencies that require verification in another study. Our analysis of the data for the different contrasts showed no empirically significant differences in reading speed. The differences described above may be due to chance. This is mainly due to the very small sample size — for example, only one pupil who was receiving learning support in the 8th grade — and the very short text, which consisted of only a few lines. Due to the length of the text, the differences here are in the range of mere milliseconds (1.632 compared with 1.626 seconds). The sample size and the length of the passage of text would have to be increased considerably in order to obtain more meaningful and statistically relevant results.

5. CONCLUSION

Although Open Dyslexic was unfamiliar to and unpopular with the majority of the participants,

our findings regarding the reading speeds for this font were remarkable (up to three times faster than for others). It appears to be especially advantageous for students who require language-based learning support. Further investigation into the possibility of using it systematically and consistently in the context of education is therefore required. We may suggest on the basis of our findings that a contrast of light text on a dark background could improve reading ability and reading performance. Indeed, this combination is already used in certain situations, such as in the presenter view in Microsoft PowerPoint and increasingly in the design of the slides themselves. Our data provide support for a shift in this direction. While it would be necessary to repeat the experiment with a much larger number of participants in order to draw empirical conclusions, our findings provide initial indications that are of significance for educational contexts.

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Gender literature: How much is it underpinned by authors' private lives?

by (1)Oleg A. Radchenko and (2)Viktoriya V. Vetrinskaya

(1)Moscow State Linguistic University (2)Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)

The study is concerned with Gender Literary Criticism and the teaching of German Literature in school and at university. The paper examines 'close reading' as one of the key methods in Gender Literary Studies and applies it to explore August von Platen's poems to come to a better understanding of one of the most important German poets of the 19th century and demonstrate the essential meaning of Gender Literary Criticism for the development of a proper interpretative skill in class. The analysis is exemplified by a close reading of Platen's homoerotic writings. The authors argue that exposing layers of public consciousness based on the assessment of an outstanding personality such as Platen can help de-stigmatise public attitudes and overcome a deep-rooted framework of public thinking.

KEYWORDS: close reading, feminist literature, gender literary criticism, gender consciousness, gender poetics, August von Platen

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender literary criticism is an emergent phenomenon and a new issue in the practice of teaching literature and culture in Russia. While feministic linguistics and feministic literary criticisms have long since become an integral part of philological research in Europe and the USA, these topics only came to Russia in the 1990s in the form of the study of feminine literature and gender poetics. In relation to theory, these trends focused the attention on such basic categories as gender consciousness, individual characteristics of the author in question and their characters. Thus,

Savkina (1990) emphasises the need for separate consideration of issues of female literary creativity and the terminological isolation of 'male' and 'female' literatures:

If we recognise the fundamental difference between a man and a woman, then perhaps there is a need to recognise that self-observation, self-expression of a woman in literature, her view of the world and herself in the world differs somewhat, and maybe in a significant way, from the male one' (Savkina, 1990, p. 149). The main trends of gender literary criticism include (1)

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representing female creativity; (2) eliminating gender stereotypes in the interpretation of a literary work, mainly its imagery system; (3) identifying and analysing specific formal content components of women's prose; (4) studying the peculiarities of 'female language' at the level of the text of literary works, 'female writing' in linguistic and psychoanalytical aspects; (5) identifying female sexuality in literary texts; and (6) defining originality of the 'female' vision of life in the literary genre of autobiography (memoirs).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Gender literary criticism

The typology proposed by literary critics translates into three key types of women's prose, namely (1) *androgynous female prose*, which, while remaining feminine, carries a masculine view of the world, (2) *the annihilation type*, when both elements destroy one other, and (3) *the feminine type.*

Bolshakova (2010) characterises the status of gender literary criticism: *'The image of the author is the centre, focus in which all artistic means meet being used by a real biographic personality. But as a male author and a female author differ from each other, as, by all possible similarity (or dissimilarity) in their lexicon, artistic means and techniques, the latter bear different psychological, emotional contents, different world models (acquired at levels of the collective and individual*

unconscious). In this sense, both 'male prose', and 'female prose' do exist. And the dispute on distinction between Female and Male in literature is first of all a dispute over distinction not only between gender archetypes, but also between images of the author' (Bolshakova, 2010. p. 169).

Hence, the major categories of gender poetics are the individual features of an author and characters. The differences between men and women appear on linguistic level: lexis (peculiarities of vocabulary organisation), phonetics, morphology, and syntax (Böttger, 2017).

Thus, gender poetics addresses various social and cultural configurations of sexuality in literary texts (Downing, 1992) and defines a number of tasks, such as revaluating female literature, revising the world literary canon, researching into the gender nature of literary creativity, specifying the mental nature of literature, eliminating gender stereotypes in interpretations of literary works, researching 'female language', determining a feminine / masculine worldview on the basis of autobiographies, etc. Gender poetics appears as a hostage to gender dualism and escapes this captivity by opening its own new domains – minority discourses as the works of 'stigmatised soul' submerged in the life of the author.

This approach was applied in European literary criticism in the 1970s under the slogan *'Queering*

the Canon!' which meant canonisation of previously ignored authors and new reading of the canonised authors. In the 1990s, the increased attention to 'queer' discourse resulted in a withdrawal from essentialism in the assessment of gender minority life. Identifying minority discourse was the most difficult step in establishing new literary criticism that prompted the method of 'close reading' of literary texts, letters and biographies of the specific author (Beers & Probst, 2013). Gender minority often acts as a camouflage, a hidden text layer as well as an incentive of literary creativity.

The minority perspectives have been studied successfully in German literature within the gender analysis of literature. Popp's (1992) analyses of androgyny and erotic discourse in Goethe's and Kleist's writings can serve as a good example. Articles concerned with this perspective are frequent in European literature in general (Bebbington, 2017; Bernsen, 2006).

Recognised classics of world literature can be found among the authors 'read closely' by literary critics, including British and American authors such as Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Tennessee Williams, Wystan Hugh Auden, James Baldwin, Truman Capote, and Edward Albee; Russian authors such as Mikhail Kuzmin and Sofia Parnok; French authors such as Arthur Rimbaud, André Gide, Marcel Proust, Jean Cocteau, Jean Genet,

and Michel Foucault; and German authors such as Heinrich von Kleist, August von Platen, Stefan George, Thomas Mann, Bruno Vogel, and Klaus Mann.

2.2 Stigmatisation of gender in literature

These poets are treated as part of a classical literary canon not only in their own language communities, but also in world literature in general, which raises a question of the relevance and extent of the emphasis of gender in their creativity as they become a subject of teaching and learning at school and university. The problem is aggravated by the fact that in Russia a researcher of such a 'marginal' subject is often associated with the subject by a professional community which frightens off young linguists and literary critics from examining current and complex problems of modern philosophy and the theory of literature. Therefore, stigmatisation accompanying the life and creativity of gender minority authors also strikes those who seek to get behind the mysteries of their creativity.

Erotic literature, and erotic poetry in particular, offer a good example of a similar stigmatisation which marked not only the 19th century poetry, but also earlier and later historical eras and other genres of literature.

Erotic discourse that emerged together with the first images of nudes in nature and the first stories

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'From the beginning of the 19th century, we can add an aspect which can be referred to as 'a gender minority perspective' to this list'

devoted to the art of love, gradually captured all spheres of human sensuality with their case phenomena (names, texts, everyday situations, role relations, rules and standards of behaviour). This discourse is embodied in various manifestations of art, media genres, forms of communication and literary creations. The rapid blossoming of erotic discourse is hardly surprising. Sensuality is immemorial as a cultural universal that corresponds to the purely human aspiration to openly express love, desire, expectations and disappointments where, in what can probably also be seen as a cultural and spiritual universal, disappointment becomes the most generous source of masterpieces.

Of course, sensuality has never remained free from criticism within public, legal and moral standards, however the extent of stigmatisation in various eras of development of humanity has differed significantly. Suffice it to mention Sappho from Mytilene and her touching chants or Lucian of Samosata and his scenes that describe that very wide – even from the liberal point of view at the beginning of the 21st century – horizon of the appropriate in antique erotic discourse.

2.3 Attitudes to sexual backgrounds in literature

The essential aspects moulding discourse and its stigmatisation are age, the agent's and his/her object's sex, obvious and latent illocutions, emotional background, reciprocity, a certain love phase, and a degree of romanticism. Per moral standards relevant to the time, these aspects generate opposition between appropriate and forbidden emotion, norms and deviations in behaviour, reality and fantasy and platonic and physical relationships.

From the start of the 19th century, 'a gender minority perspective' was added to the list. Like other aspects of the erotic discourse, the attitude towards sexuality beyond the norm established by the society varied and still varies depending on the stage of development of a specific society, prevailing gender models and extent of influence of the institutions having sufficient authority for bringing stigmatisation to the logical end – punishment (religious, political and other institutions). And if political institutions played the main role in prosecuting minorities in the first half of the 20th century (Stalinism and Nazism with their criminal prosecution of homosexuality using retaliatory psychiatry and concentration camps), now a far more essential role is being played by religious institutions. A similar influence on public morals was also noted in Germany in the 19th

century embodying the first ever examples of stigmatised German literature.

Stigmatised literature is a flickering paradigm, it is always present and ubiquitous, often an attribute of the creativity of authors of the highest level. These authors, however, seldom utilise their own 'marginal' sexuality in their writings, interweaving it with plots and hints. The literature written by open outsiders is often stigmatised for this reason (for example, Rosa von Praunheim, born in 1942), but it is difficult to rank this literature as a creation of highest quality.

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1 August von Platen

German literature of the 19th century 'gave birth' to an unambiguously stigmatised author of the highest quality – Karl Georg Maximilian Count von Platen-Hallermuende. The status of this poet as one of the greatest was established long ago. His poetry has been republished and set to music by Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, Engelbert Humperdinck and Paul Hindemith. August von Platen's creativity was a subject of research by, among others, Link (1971), Teuchert (1980), and Kluncker (1969).

Studying Platen's creativity demands a certain immersion in the hidden contexts and situations of his life, explaining the creation of various works, and the general tone of his creativity.

Augustus von Platen was born in Ansbach on October 24, 1796 into the family of a Prussian Chief Forester, Philip Count von Platen of Ansbach and Baroness Eichler von Auritz. His family moved to Brunswick from Rügen, and at the court of the Prince Elector Ernst Augustus von Hannover, Platen's father managed to build an outstanding career. It was there that the son of the Chief Forester discovered his poetic muse because in Ansbach the famous German poets Johann Peter Uts and Baron Johann Friedrich von Cronegk both lived and wrote their poems.

Studying at the cadet school in Munich in 1806-1810, Platen had an opportunity to start a military career. In 1810, he entered the Royal Page Institution, and in 1814 he was made lieutenant in the regiment of King Maximilian. During the same period, he seems to have understood his own homosexuality.

In 1815, during the campaign against Napoleon, Platen lived in France for a while, but came back in late autumn without having taken part in any fighting. In 1816, he travelled across Switzerland, and in 1818 he began studying Philology and Philosophy at the University of Würzburg for which he was granted a three-year leave from the army. While majoring in Jurisprudence, he preferred to learn languages instead – Latin, Greek and later Persian, Arab, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch and Swedish – in order

to be able to read poets in their mother tongues. In September 1819, he left Würzburg and moved to Erlangen where he lived in a lodge on Mount Burgberg. In 1820, at Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen Nuremberg he was lucky enough to meet with Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling who had just arrived as Professor of Philosophy, and what followed were *'happy days in Erlangen'* which Platen would remember frequently. Wishing to get accustomed to the university environment, Platen entered the German Fraternity (*Deutsche Burschenschaft*), appreciating its patriotic spirit, but not approving of *'the students' merry laziness'*.

Platen undertook several trips across Germany. He visited Vienna where he met Major von Knebel and Johann von Goethe. During his visit to Stuttgart he became friends with Ludwig Uhland, but the most important of all his friendships happened in Nuremberg where destiny brought him together with Friedrich Rueckert, whose influence, along with Schlegel's monograph *On the Language and Wisdom of Indians* persuaded him to study Eastern poetry and write surprising verses in the style of the Persian and Arab lyrics. In 1821, he published *Gazelles* (a cool public reaction disappointed him). The following year he published *Hafiz's Mirror*, and in 1823 *New Gazelles*. This time Platen received praise from Goethe himself, his ability to master the various styles of German and to introduce them in the

'The essential aspects moulding discourse and its stigmatisation are age, the agent's and his/her object's sex, obvious and latent illocutions, emotional background, reciprocity, a certain love phase, and a degree of romanticism'

form of eastern lyrics is widely considered his greatest gift. However, he also attracted criticism, including that of Karl Immermann and Heinrich Heine.

In 1823-1824, Platen published his first dramatic work: the tragedy *Marat's Death* and the comedies *The Glass Shoe, The Treasure of Rampsinit and Berengaria*, in 1825 they were followed by the play *Fidelity for Fidelity* and the comedy *Seven Gates' Tower* and in 1826 by the comedy *A Fatal Fork*. Platen supported theatrical experimentation with his research paper on *Theatre as a National Institution*.

In 1824, new verses were published, including one on the death of Platen's friend, Ulrich Kernell. Following Kernell's death, Platen discovered and fell in love with Italy. He visited Switzerland and Venice following which he was arrested and thrown into a punishment cell in Nuremberg for the violation of military discipline. *Sonnets from*

Venice were the most important result of this trip. Having published a collection of sonnets with the support of F. von Fugger, Platen asked for a leave and, having received it on September of 1826, he again travelled to Italy, this time for ever. His stops on the way were blessed with literary inspiration, including an ode to Florence (1826), a collection of lyrics (Rome, 1827) and the ode *Goethe* (1827).

Having received messages from Germany regarding attacks on his person and criticism from Heine and Immermann, he responded by publishing the *Romantic Oedipus* (1828). The dispute with Heine developed into a deeply personal conflict in which both Platen and Heine resorted to low blows: Platen critically contemplated Heine's ethnic origin while Heine openly denounced Platen's sexual preferences. These attacks strengthened Platen's decision never to return to Germany. However, he had to do it twice more.

In 1832, he attended his father's funeral and spent a winter in Munich having written *The League of Cambrai* there, and in the spring of 1834 he visited his friend F. von Fugger in Augsburg to edit a new collection of verses.

In 1828, he spent a year travelling across Italy and at the end he received news of his election as a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences that brought him a small, constant income and relative

financial security. He was able to continue his constant travels, suffering only from the local climate and the search for new places to visit. In Siena, in the house of Countess Pieri, he began his historical studies, first the Abbasid dynasty and then the history of Naples. He completely supported the Polish revolt against Russia and wrote angry verses to condemn Russian policy. The play *Meleager* (1834) was one of his last creations.

3.2 The death of Platen

In June 1834, he left on his travels again in Tuscany, Siena, Naples, and Florence, where he spent the last winter in his life. In March 1835, in Sicily, he learned about an outbreak of cholera and returned to Naples. He told a friend, *'Cholera won't spare Sicily, but it is at least more poetical to die there, more precisely – to be buried there; because the local Protestant cemetery is situated two steps away from the brothels'* (Scherr, 1844, p. 64). In September 1835, fearful of catching cholera, he returned to Sicily, and on November 11 arrived in Syracuse, full of fear and in pain. He died on December, 5.

3.3 Eros and Anteros

The tragic circumstances of his private life-ending creativity are, of course, not reflected in any official biography of Platen. To identify the source of his creativity, one needs to understand the spiritual concepts that create a background to his poetry as the recognition of a suffering soul.

Eros and Anteros are the key to these contradictory concepts. Eros in Greek mythology was the god of love, sex and eroticism. His bow and arrow struck love in the hearts of those he aimed at but that love was not necessarily returned. Eros was also represented in Roman mythology by the love god, Cupid. Eros's counterpart in Greek mythology was Anteros, Eros's brother and the god of requited love. In his work Platen embraces Anteros, the god of relationships and requited love but also understands the conflict between Eros and Anteros, a topic he broaches in one of his greatest poems.

'What grieves me? This is the violent demon:

The one to whom I gave heart doesn't give heart in exchange.

What extorts a tear? It is the pressing truth:

Only for sneers a target. I who so gently loved.

What, does my look grow so dark? By all efforts and will

What I want to forget, I am not in a state to forget.

What sends darkness of melancholic folds on my forehead?

In the kingdom of the possible there is no place for my hopes;

But without hopes how to live? How to forget about desires?

Ah, I am so painfully angry, ah, love is such a cure!

If I lose possession of you, my kind adolescent,

Just the possession of you I will so greatly desire.

If I gain possession of you, my artful adolescent,

I will begin to damn you for that possession of you.

Only that man is happy, happy, happy, spared by love,

The one who hasn't been struck with a deadly arrow in a breast,

That whose life is as a stream flowing like a heavenly reflection,

Whose barrier a rough and foamy wave is not to become.

You are happy, young man, knowing the Cupid's quick cheerfulness

From chants of love by sad poets alone!

But even more blessed than the one who silently, innocently

Is enjoying his life as it is destiny's will,

Three times blessed will be one if fallen in love, warmed by love!

(Translated from German by Oleg Radchenko)

At first reading, all signs of an Anteros discourse are hidden. Eros is presented as a violent, painful demon offering disappointment and despair, vain hopes, the aspiration to possess and unwillingness to possess at the same time, envy to those who didn't love, and yet the glorification of love despite all odds.

Still, this first observation forces the reader to make serious efforts in order to detect any difference between 'other' love and love of the woman described in the poem and to question whether there is any difference there at all. Is the gender minority discourse is truly faintly flickering, or is it really present only for the informed reader knowledgeable of the circumstances of life and personal difficulty of Platen? The presence of

Anteros in Platen's work might be the first sign that the gender minority discourse can possess its own specific characteristics.

Perhaps, the roles and masks with which Platen's writings abound also help us draw a line between gender minority and gender majority in erotic discourse. As an example, one might consider the two roles illustrating the previously mentioned contrasts in the poet's desires – to seek for possession, but nevertheless not really to wish to possess.

In the poem *Amalfi* (1827), Platen brings 'the clean adolescent' on stage, an object of desire (*'gesitteter Jüngling'*) secretly praised by the poet in his work:

Nice like an angel of God that climbed down in the depth:
Charmingly the brown color surrounds his black-wavy hair
Gleaming night, purely shines the blossoming flame of the eye,
Never clouded by desire nor by the look of questionable friendship,
Which is common with the cooking blood in the southern sun.
However, who is able, because the time rolls by, to hold on the beauty?

The adolescent who has become a friend, however, isn't capable of inspiring the poet to joyful anthems, more likely it is quite the opposite, he provokes doubts and suspicions:

Are you still mine, if you are besieging my heart?
Are you a snake, if you escape eternally?

Are you a silkworm that is quietly

Surrounding me with a severe, thin network?

Are you a stream? The darkness is impenetrable

Of those waves that you send at each other.

Are you the moon, if with an immense eye

You are overlooking the world at a transparent night?

Are you a pious nightingale of love,

If you are praising a mortal cup of roses?

The frames of Anteros which comprise a mental map of the poet, unhappy and devastated by destiny, are especially eloquent in *'The sonnet in the spirit of Camoes'*.

Was beut die Welt, um noch darnach zu spähn,

Wo ist ein Glück, dem ich mich nicht entschwur?

Verdruss nur kannt´ich, Abgunst kannt´ich nur,

Dich, Tod, zuletzt, was konnte mehr geschehn?

Dies Leben reizt nicht, Leben zu erflehn;

Dass Gram nicht töte, weiß ich, der´s erfuhr:

Birgst du noch größres Missgeschick, Natur,

Dann seh ich´s noch, denn alles darf ich sehn!

Der Unlust lange starb ich ab und Lust,

Selbst jenen Schmerz verschmerzt ich, büßt´ich ein,

Der längst die Furcht gebannt mir aus der Brust.

Das Leben fühlt ich als verliebte Pein,

Den Tod als unersetzlichen Verlust,

Trat ich nur darum in dies kurze Sein?

Finally, there is a need to address basic scenarios and Platen's scripts, among them – left to despair, to the treachery of the lover, to the tranquil pleasure of the darling and to the indecision of consent which has been transmitted by a secret signal.

Oh, he whose pain means life, whose life means pain,

May feel again what I have felt before;

Who has beheld his bliss above him soar

And, when he sought it, fly away again;

Who in a labyrinth has tried in vain,

When he has lost his way, to find a door;

Whom love has singled out for nothing more

Than with despondency his soul to bane;

Who begs each lightning for a deadly stroke,

Each stream to drown the heart that cannot heal

From all the cruel stabs by which it broke;

Who does begrudge the dead their beds like steel

Where they are safe from love's beguiling yoke?

He knows me quite, and feels what I must feel.

4. CONCLUSION

Minority erotic poetry is a difficult but rich and fulfilling field for research. In analysing such poetry, it is worth addressing whether stigmatisation refers to person, way of life, style of creation, or the plot.

Does stigmatisation manifest through taboo subjects, language, or the degree of openness about 'other' love?

How does it influence the spirituality of the time and how is it influenced in its turn?

Is it possible to catalogue stigmatisation markers? Does a special style of minority poetry exist?

Are there reasons to distinguish this poetry from the general outline of love lyrics and are there any factors of special emotionality capable of explaining it?

Reflections on this subject also have a hidden, but extremely important aspect: the analysis of layers of public consciousness based on the example of assessment of such an outstanding personality as Augustus von Platen can help de-stigmatise public relations and overcome an inbuilt framework of public thinking, and this is one of the most important missions of linguistics and literary criticism, proving the value of their existence as sciences dealing with the human mind, heart and spirit.

Gender literature: How much is it underpinned by authors' private lives?

by Oleg A. Radchenko and Viktoriya V. Vetrinskaya

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An acoustic analysis of the production of word-initial stop /p/ by late Arab bilinguals

by [1]Sawsan Askoul

[1]University of London

The aim of this study is to examine the production of the word-initial stop /p/ by Arabs speaking English as a second language (L2). Arabic was chosen as a counter language since its phonetic contrasts between voiced and voiceless sounds differ from English. The data was collected from 50 participants, consisting of one group of highly qualified Arabs (n= 30 bilinguals) living in London for 10 years, and two groups of baseline speakers (n= 10 for inexperienced native Arabic and native English baseline groups, respectively). The production of /p/ by late Arab bilinguals (who learned English after puberty) was elicited via three oral tasks. Acoustic analysis was conducted to measure the voice onset time (VOT) value of /p/. VOT is defined as the length of time between the release of a stop consonant and the onset of vocal fold vibration. Research shows that length of residence (LOR), level of education, quality and quantity of input and rigorous usage of L2 are more important than AOA (Age of Acquisition) in enabling L2 learners to achieve native speaker-like pronunciation of the sound /p/, although for late Arab bilinguals the overall results demonstrated that AOA is a key predictor of L2 sounds. The final results demonstrate that the production of /p/ by late Arab bilinguals differed significantly from that produced by inexperienced Arabs. Late Arab bilinguals managed to establish new phonetic categories for English /p/ that does not exist in their language (L1). However, their production of /p/ deviated from that of native English speakers. Only nine out of 30 late Arab bilinguals were able to achieve native speaker-like pronunciation of /p/.

KEYWORDS: *pronunciation, bilingualism, late learners, Arabs, voiceless consonant, voice onset time, (VOT)*

1. INTRODUCTION

In second language (L2) speech the production of some L2 sounds is challenging to L2 learners, especially those sounds that exist in the L2 speech system but do not exist in their first language (L1) inventory (e.g. Lado, 1957; cf. Flege, 1995; Flege

& Port, 1981). The Age of Acquisition (AOA), defined as the age of the first exposure to an L2 (Flege et al., 1999), is the most studied variable which is believed to affect L2 speech production. It has also been confirmed by a substantial amount of research as a key predictor of successful L2

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attainment. The younger a learner is exposed to an L2, the more native speaker-like proficiency they attain (e.g. Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Baker, 2010; Bialystok, 1997; Birdsong, 2006; Bongaerts et al., 1997; DeKeyser, 2000; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Flege, 1991; Flege et al., 1995a; Flege et al., 1999; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Patkowski, 1990; Saito, 2015b; Scovel, 1988).

However, other studies speculate that successful L2 pronunciation is dependent on a wide variety of variables other than AOA such as L1 influence (Flege & Davidian, 1984), the distance between L1 and L2 (Flege, 2003), the relative usage of L1 and L2 (Flege, 1999; Flege & MacKay, 2004), the quality and quantity of L2 input (Flege & Liu, 2001; Jia & Aaronson, 2003), aptitude (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2008; Loup et al., 1994), motivation (Mayor, 1999), ethnic identity (Gatbonton et al., 2011; Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2008), level of education (Derwing & Munro, 2008; Flege et al., 1999) and length of residence (LOR) in an L2 speaking community (e.g. Saito & Brajot, 2013; Saito, 2015a).

Nonetheless, the demonstrable variations shown by late learners (those who commenced L2 learning after puberty) in successfully mastering L2 sounds have suggested that the independent and/or combined effects of AOA, together with other variables on L2 sound production, are largely inconclusive.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Seeking to contribute to the growing body of research in the area of L2 speech acquisition, this study was conducted with the aim of examining the production of the English /p/ by Arabic speakers who have learned English from the age of 13 onwards. It was accomplished by performing an acoustic analysis of voice onset time (VOT) – defined as the length of time between the release of a stop consonant and the onset of the vocal fold vibration (Lisker & Abramson, 1964, 1967) in their speech, alongside other acoustic cues which are not discussed in this article. Our aim was to determine whether late Arab bilinguals are able to produce the sound /p/, which does not exist in their L1 inventory, like a native speaker VOT value. The sound of /p/ produced by late Arab bilinguals was then compared to that of native speakers. The tendency is for the native speaker /p/ sound to be replaced by a /b/ sound by late Arab bilinguals. A bachelor's degree obtained from an English university was set as the minimum qualification required in order to participate in the study, in addition to, LOR (≥ 10 years), intensive and

authentic input from English native speakers (average 70%) and intensive English use on a daily basis (average 85%). We also hypothesise that AOA is not a key predicator of L2 sound production by late Arab participants. Therefore, it may safely be neglected when other variables have been firmly controlled, specifically, level of education, LOR, quality and quantity of L2 input and dominant usage of L2. Such variables combined allow late Arab bilinguals to attain native speaker-like pronunciation of the sound /p/ with a native speaker-like VOT value, despite their late AOA (≥13 years).

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1 Voice Onset Time (VOT)

There is broad consensus that foreign accents are a natural outcome of late L2 learning. This notion is supported by research and empirical studies demonstrating that late learners are most likely to produce their L2 speech with non-native patterns of pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2005). However, native speakers of a language are equipped with the ability to discriminate whether or not a speaker's accent reflects their mother tongue, even when the speech is structured with faultless syntax and a robust lexicon. This judgement is frequently made by detecting certain acoustic cues and phonetic features produced by the speaker (Scovel, 1995). Although there are different acoustic features that distinguish speech sounds, such as articulatory force (fortis and lenis)

'However, native speakers of a language are equipped with the ability to discriminate whether or not a speaker's accent reflects their mother tongue, even when the speech is structured with faultless syntax and a robust lexicon'

and aspiration (when a sound is pronounced with/out an audible explosion and an interlude of noise), voicing is undoubtedly one of the most salient auditory signals *'identifiable by ear with great ease'* (Lisker & Abramson, 1967).

In contrast, articulatory force has no agreed physical meaning and aspiration has a contrastive meaning limited to particular contexts. Voicing is readily measurable and a distinction between the contrasting sounds in all positions of occurrence is possible (Lisker & Abramson, 1967; cf. Yeni-Komshian et al., 1977).

Voicing distinguishes between voiced sounds that are characterised by vocal cord vibration or glottal pulsing (Lisker & Abramson, 1964, 1967) and voiceless sounds that are pronounced without such glottal pulsing. The occurrence or non-occurrence of pulsing is a distinctive feature that is more often accompanied by stop consonants than

'Voicing is readily measurable and a distinction between the contrasting sounds in all positions of occurrence is possible'

is the case for other speech sounds (Yu et al., 2015). English stop consonants include the voiced /b/, /d/ and /g/ that cognate to the voiceless /p/, /t/ and /k/. Such sounds are pronounced by closure or severe constriction and the build-up of considerable air pressure in the oral cavity, followed by a sudden release of the constriction (Flege, 1988; Lisker & Abramson, 1964, 1967).

When acoustically analysed, the closure of stop consonants is fairly well marked and clearly shown on spectrograms by the presence of a 'burst' or brief interval of high-intensity noise (Lisker & Abramson, 1967). The onset of the burst can be fixed with considerable certainty and provides a convenient reference point for measuring voicing duration. Consequently, it is possible to relate the degree of voicing of a stop to the time between the burst and onset of pulsing. This time is known 'voice onset time' (VOT). VOT is defined as the duration of the period of time between the beginning of the stop release burst and the onset of the vocal fold vibration, glottal pulsing or periodicity, as some researchers prefer

to call it. It is usually measured in milliseconds (ms). VOT is commonly found in different languages around the world and has three universal categories: voicing lead (50-150ms), short lag (0-30ms), and long lag (50-110ms).

3.2 English /p/

In terms of phonology, the sound /p/ is classified as one of the English phonemes which, according to the *Longman Dictionary of Linguistics*, is the smallest unit of sound in a language which can distinguish two words. In English, the words *pan* and *ban* differ only in their initial sounds: *pan* begins with /p/ and *ban* with /b/, therefore, /p/, /b/ are phonemes. Since phonemes are categories rather than actual sounds, they are not tangible, instead they are abstract theoretical groups that have only a psychological reality. In other words, we cannot hear phonemes, but we assume they exist because of the way they are used by native speakers (e.g. Flege & Port, 1981; Murray, 1995).

In comparing English to Arabic sound systems, Flege (1981) has observed that /p/ is considered 'voiceless' because of the absence of glottal pulsing upon articulation. No equivalent sound to /p/ is found in the Arabic sound system (Yeni-Komshian et al., 1977), which makes it an odd language among its sister Semitic languages (Newman, 2002).

The closest Arabic sound to the English /p/ is ب.

'In terms of phonology, the sound /p/ is classified as one of the English phonemes which, according to the 'Longman Dictionary of Linguistics', is the smallest unit of sound in a language which can distinguish two words'

[ب] is pronounced with vibration of the vocal folds and a very short obstruction of the flow of air as the two lips are pressed together but the velum is up, thus blocking access to the nasal cavity. The pressure builds up behind the blockage caused by the two lips and the lips come apart and the air escapes through the mouth in a burst (Newman, 2002).

In conclusion, Arabic lacks an equivalent to the English /p/ which constitutes a big challenge for any Arabic speaker wishing to pronounce the English /p/ accurately, especially for those who learn English in naturalist settings, as the distinction requires a high degree of perception and awareness of details which differentiate the English /p/ from the Arabic [ب].

3.3 Participants

The participants were chosen on the basis of the results of an initial interview (Saito & Brajot,

2013). In order to control other variables that could affect the Arabic speakers' oral production, the participants were required to meet the following criteria: a) native Arabs, b) highly qualified with a bachelor degree minimum obtained from England, c) engaged in full time jobs, d) living in England for a minimum of 10 years, e) first intensive exposure to English was at the age of 13 years or more, and f) bilinguals spoke two languages: Arabic as an L1 and English as an L2. This last condition was with the aim of excluding participants from multilingual backgrounds.

3.4 Baseline speakers

Data was also collected from two control groups to determine baseline acoustic description for native Arabic and English speakers' production of the English /p/.

The Arabic speaking baseline was determined by highly qualified Arabs (e.g. Flege, 1991) with educational attainments and work experience equivalent to those of late Arab bilinguals. In their country of origin, Syria, the Arabic speaking baseline participants worked in: a) educational sectors – one headteacher, teachers and two retired teachers, b) engineering – agricultural and civil engineers, and c) university students.

There were 10 native speakers of Arabic (7 females and 3 males) who had just arrived in London with

LOR ranging from 3 to 8 months only. Their ages ranged from 19 years to 70 years (mean age 40.4 years, SD=20.08). As can be seen, the chronological age of the Arabic speaking baseline participants was closer to the age of the late bilinguals than those in the English baseline (see below).

Regarding the English baseline and following Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam's (2009) model in selecting baseline groups, there were 10 university students, a) some speaking English at home during childhood, b) with English as the only language at school, c) one who had lived his whole life in England without interval. In order to ensure that a variety of VOT values differing according to age, sex and speech rate (Yu et al., 2015) was consistent with the variety reflected in the Arabic speaking baseline, the English baseline consisted of seven females and three males. Additionally, in an attempt to match the Arabic speaking baseline and late bilinguals' chronological age to that of the English baseline participants, one elderly retired teacher participated to constitute the group. Their ages ranged from 19 -70 years old (mean age 30, SD=14.8). Linguistically they had no previous knowledge of English phonetics and phonology.

3.5 Target words

The 12 target words exploited in the three oral tasks had the form of consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word-initial (e.g. Flege & Eefting, 1987b;

'Arabic lacks an equivalent to the English /p/ which constitutes a big challenge for any Arabic speaker wishing to pronounce the English /p/ accurately'

Flege & Liu, 2001; Flege et al., 1995a) and singletons (e.g. Flege & Brown, 1982).

The lexical familiarity and frequency (Flege et al., 1996) of the words were taken into consideration on the grounds that lexical factors are believed to have some effects on L2 sound production (Saito & Brajot, 2013).

3.6 Task description

Echoing Saito & Brajot (2013), the selection of tasks utilised in this study aimed to focus on late Arab bilinguals' /p/ production in more communicative contexts within a *'realistic time limit'* (Saito & Brajot, 2013, p. 851). They were not allowed prolonged planning times, so that they would demonstrate their real implicit knowledge stored in long-term memory (Flege, 2015) rather than exhibiting explicit knowledge stored in general memory (Ellis, 2005). The three tasks included:

1. A series of picture descriptions. In order to elicit the natural spontaneous speech of the participants without causing them to pay attention to their

production of /p/, the participants were presented with a cartoon used in Munro and Derwing's (1999) study that illustrated *'an amusing story'* (p. 290) and were asked to describe the events depicted. The cartoon was displayed on a classroom projector or a laptop screen with seven word prompts, three of which were target words and the other four of which were distractors (Saito & Brajot, 2013). The target words included; *pass, pain,* and *pick* while the distracting words were *city, suitcase, man* and *women*. Each participant was given 10 seconds of planning time.

2. *Timed picture descriptions.* In this task, the participants had to describe what they saw in seven different pictures. Under each picture, three prompt words were given. One of the three words was the target word. Overall, three out of the seven pictures contained the target words, and the other four pictures were distractors. For example, the distracting picture contained a picture of a cat sitting in a sink. The cat had noticeably big green eyes. The three prompt words were *cat, sink* and *eyes*. The pictures were in a certain order, whereby the distractors were presented first then the pictures with the target words. This technique was used with the purpose of familiarising the participants with the procedure (Saito & Brajot, 2013). They were not required to say more than two to three sentences to describe each picture using the target words which included *pill, pen* and *pan*. The pictures were presented on a

classroom projector or a laptop screen. Participants were given five seconds of planning time after each picture had been displayed.

3. *Word reading.* In this task, the participants read a list of words (e.g. Yeni-Komshian et al., 1977; Riney & Takagi, 1999) consisting of 17 words. Overall, eight words were target words and nine other words functioned as distractors. The target words were *put, pass, pull, push, poor, pet, pain* and *pack*. The distractors included frequent and easy words such as *snow, window* and *mobile*, in addition to less frequent words such as *linguistics, economics, industry* and *geography* (Saito & Brajot, 2013). The word list was presented on a classroom projector or a laptop screen with a font size of 72. No planning time was given for this task.

3.7 Acoustic analysis

All 50 participants, late Arab bilinguals (n=30) and the 2 baseline groups (n=10 in each group) completed the three tasks in the same order, in addition to an initial interview prior to the tasks. This took place at a convenient location for each participant, including their workplace, home and university classroom. The instructions for all procedures were delivered in English for the English baseline group, and Arabic for both late Arab bilingual and Arabic speaking baseline groups (cf. Flege, 1980; Flege & Eefting, 1987a). The speech production by all participants was

'The instructions for all procedures were delivered in English for the English baseline group, and Arabic for both late Arab bilingual and Arabic speaking baseline groups'

recorded either directly on Praats (the acoustic analyser of speech sounds downloaded from its official website with its updated version (last modified in May 2017), set at 48000 Hz, which is appropriate for human speech on a portable laptop with a unidirectional microphone) or by using an Olympus WS 812 4GB voice recorder. Audio clips were saved on the same laptop in waveform audio. Echoing Saito and Brajot (2013), in order to obtain spontaneous speech production and to prevent them from focusing on their pronunciation, the participants were informed that the oral tests were to check the fluency and comprehensibility of their speech. However, the real aim of the study was unveiled once they had finished the tasks. The tests were given in the order of a series of pictures description, timed picture description and finally word reading. Following Flege et al.'s (1995a) model, the VOT of the sound /p/ in all tokens (12 initial-stop words x 30 Arab late bilinguals x 10 English baseline x 10 Arabic speaking baseline) was measured spectrographically using a Praat spectrogram and waveform.

4. DISCUSSION

Following Stölten et al.'s (2014) model, the mean values of VOT for all words produced in the three oral tests (a series of pictures description, timed picture description and word reading tests) were submitted to one-way ANOVA to establish if there was any significant difference between the three groups (late Arab bilinguals, Arabic speaking and English baselines). ANOVA is a statistical variance analysis test developed by Ronald Fisher in 1918. The ANOVA results indicated that there were overall significant differences between the three groups ($F_{(2, 47)} = 52.3$, $p = 3.19$). However, the one-way ANOVA test usually shows there is an overall difference between groups, but it does not state which specific group differs. For that reason, an additional confidence interval (CI) test was also carried out on the mean value of VOT produced by each group. The results for the Arabic speaking baseline, late Arab bilinguals and English baseline, (95% CIs [7.9, 10.1], [49.4, 62.8] and [66.2, 82.8]) respectively, demonstrated that the VOT values of /p/ produced by late Arab bilinguals differed considerably from the VOT values produced by the Arabic speaking baseline, which was expected. The VOT values of /p/ by late Arab bilinguals also deviated significantly from that of the English baseline, which was unpredicted. Furthermore, no overlap was observed between the English baseline and late Arab bilinguals' VOT values as was further demonstrated by a post hoc t-test ($p < 0.001$) (see Figure1).
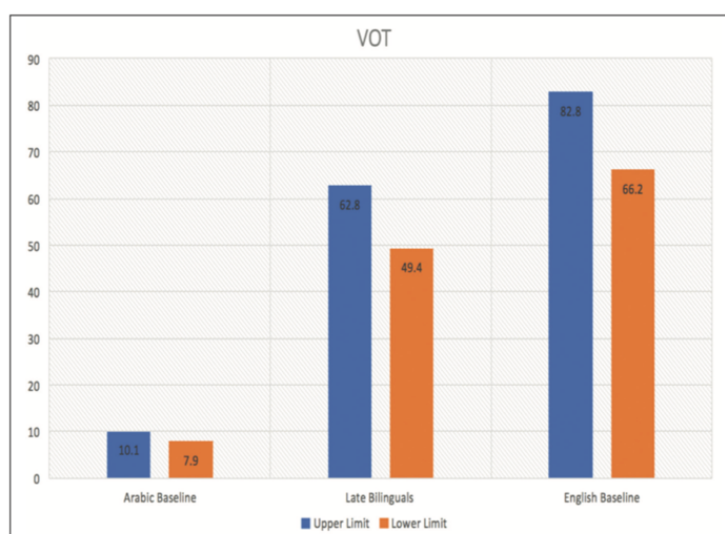
Figure 1. The result of CIs from the late Arab bilinguals group
compared with the results of baseline groups

Saito and Brajot (2013) emphasise that L2 learners perform better in word reading than spontaneous speech as they may have sufficient time to access their explicit knowledge, rather than tapping into their actual implicit knowledge, resulting in production of more native speaker-like L2 sounds. On the other hand, Lisker and Abramson (1967) observe that the VOT value of stop consonants in all languages changes depending on whether /p/ occurs in running speech or isolated words (also see Kessinger & Blumstein, 1998). In order to confirm Lisker and Abramson's (1967) observation, and echoing Yeni-Komshian et al., (1977), three different correlated t-tests were conducted to compare VOT values between spontaneous speech tasks and word reading tasks within each group. The results confirmed Lisker and Abramson's (1967) observation but it did not demonstrate how

well or poorly late Arab bilinguals did in comparison to the two baselines. To achieve this insight and following Flege's (1991) model, two one-way ANOVA tests were carried out to compare the performance of late Arab bilinguals to those of the Arabic speaking and English baselines in the spontaneous speech tasks. Another two one-way ANOVA tests were run to compare the performance of late Arab bilinguals to those of the Arabic speaking and English baselines in the word reading task. The results demonstrated that late Arab bilinguals' performance was much better than that of the Arabic speaking baseline in word reading ($F (1,38) =52.5$, $P= 1.13$). However, it also differed from the performance of the Arabic speaking baseline in spontaneous speech ($F (1,38) =48.1$, $P= 2.9$). The overall results established that late Arab bilinguals delivered a much better

performance than did the Arabic speaking baseline in the three tasks, as hypothesised. Yet, they were unable to completely match the English baseline in both spontaneous speech and word reading tasks.

Computing the mean VOT value of each participant revealed that nine participants produced mean VOT values similar to the VOT values of the English baseline. A subgroup for those participants was created and termed 'Highly Professional'. Following the same procedure as that conducted for the other participants, the results from a one-way ANOVA indicated that the

mean VOT value of the 'highly professional' subgroup and the English baseline were almost equal.

A further CI test was conducted to accurately identify the upper limits and the lower limits of VOT values in each group. The results indicated that the upper limits of the two groups did not differ greatly. However, the lower limit of the highly professional group was higher than that of the English baseline (see Figure 2), which means there was a slight overlap between the two groups. This overlap was not greatly significant thus both groups produced /p/ in a very similar manner.
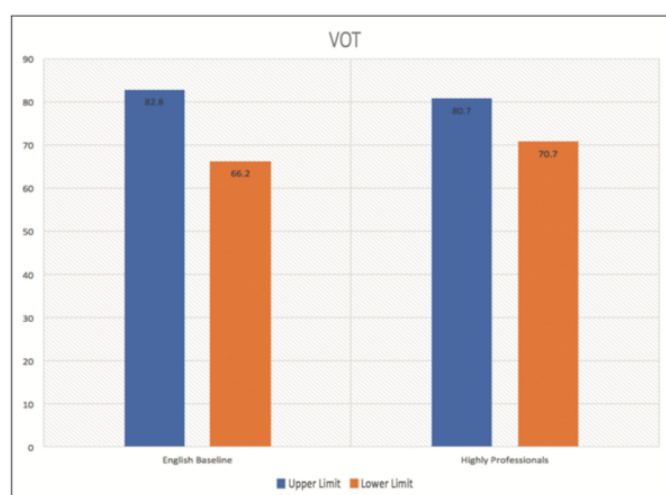

Figure 2. The results of CIs from the highly professional group (n=9) compared with the results of English baseline

5. CONCLUSION

The study measured VOT initial /p/ sounds produced by late Arab bilinguals through three different oral tasks. This was accomplished to prove

the hypothesis that AOA is not a key predicator when other variables are firmly controlled, namely LOR, level of education, quality and quantity of L2 input and rigorous usage of L2. The overall results

'Although there has been a shift from a narrow focus on linguistic competence to a broader focus on communicative competence, teaching pronunciation is still underestimated and has a marginalised status compared to teaching other skills'

demonstrated that AOA is a key factor in predicting late Arab bilinguals' proficiency. Brain maturity was judged to be the key factor in predicting the overall quality of late Arab bilinguals' /p/ production. Indeed, as Bley-Vroman (1989) observe, *'Virtually no adult learner achieves perfect success, if what one means thereby is development of native speaker competence'* (Bley-Vroman, 1989, p. 44).

Despite the common observation that L2 learners usually strive to attain native-speaker linguistic ability, few adult learners can attain this goal, and a distinct foreign accent is a common characteristic of L2 speech (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Flege et al., 1995a). Foreign accents are usually described by omissions, substitutions, or distortions of L2 sounds (Flege, 1988). One instance of such distortions is the distortion of the VOT value of stop consonants.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that L2 learners' production of VOT is closely correlated with native speakers' perceptions of foreign accent. Major (1987) measured VOT values by adult learners learning English as a foreign language in Brazil. He found a positive correlation between VOT value and foreign accent; the more native speaker-like a speaker is rated, the closer the VOT conforms to the English norms. Similar results have been achieved by other researchers such as Flege and Eefting (1987b) and Riney and Takagi (1999). Accordingly, it is firmly established that 'in L2 pronunciation there is a basic correlation between GFA (global foreign accent) and VOT' (Riney & Takagi, 1999, p. 298).

Although many researchers argue that L2 learners should set up a realistic goal for prioritising comprehensibility over attaining native speaker-like proficiency (e.g. Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Derwing & Munro, 2008; Flege et al., 1995a), the case of Arab learners may be different, as this study shows. Many experimental studies confirm that when Arabs speak English, they tend to produce /p/ with a very small VOT value resembling that of /b/. In a study by Flege and Port (1981), English native judges perceived /p/ produced by Arabs as /b/, since Arab participants produced the voiceless /p/ as a voiced /b/ with a short VOT value that did not exceed 30ms. The Arab participants in that study produced the word *bin* instead of *pin*, for example, when they were

'Accordingly, it is firmly established that in L2 pronunciation there is a basic correlation between GFA (global foreign accent) and VOT'

instructed to produce /p/ in initial word positions. Therefore, such instances are not only about the substitution of one sound with another, rather they involve replacing one word with another that has a different meaning. This could affect their ability to produce comprehensible output and deter effective communication causing listeners to misjudge Arabs' affective state or provoking negative personal evaluation. This is further proved by Arabs' self-assessment and anecdotes.

Although there has been a shift from a narrow focus on linguistic competence to a broader focus on communicative competence (Morley, 1991), teaching pronunciation is still underestimated and has a marginalised status compared to teaching other skills (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

In her helpful article, Morley (1991) provides a long list of advice and recommendations to educational institutions, teachers and learners

equally. Among the different recommendations, she focuses on the necessity to equip teachers, through the necessary training, with a very specific knowledge of applied English phonetics and phonology, in addition to increasing the number of professionals with informed expertise directed toward facilitating learners' development of functional pronunciation patterns. She also asserts the continuing need for further research into aspects of language sounds with a distinguishable phonological and phonetics nature, as well as the course of development of L2 phonological system and different inter-language phonologies. She discusses the technology revolution that has been very advantageous to pronunciation work, in supplying teachers with a variety of teaching materials such as videos along with computer capacity applicable in classroom settings and learning laboratories.

Additionally, she states that learners themselves should take certain responsibility for improving their pronunciation through self-awareness of the features of speech production and speech performance and by building a personal repertoire of speech monitoring and modification skills in order to continue to improve speaking effectiveness in English in the long run, among many other recommendations.

Editor's note: For a longer version with additional research, please apply to us.

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Phrasal verbs as learning material in Business English courses for students majoring in Linguistics

by [1]Alexander V. Litvinov, [2]Svetlana A. Burikova and [3]Dmitry S. Khramchenko

[1] [2]Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) [3]Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University

The study highlights the existing views on the nature of English phrasal verbs and their theoretical grounding in Russian and English linguistics. Particular attention is paid to phrasal verbs teaching requirements as part of Business English courses for students majoring in Linguistics. The authors see phrasal verbs as a specific part of business communication that needs thorough consideration due to a disparity in the integrated semantics of a verb combined with its postpositive and the correspondent language components in a student's mother tongue. The study suggests that mere training of phrasal verbs like is insufficient, and assimilating these language units into students' communicative competence requires disclosing to them the underlying semantic structure which results in these verbs' synergistic meanings. The authors provide some classifications to explore the difficulties of learning phrasal verbs by non-native speakers. The paper also examines some aspects of Business English related to the issue and states the conditions for the mastery of phrasal verbs.

KEYWORDS: *phrasal verb, business communication, communication, teaching methods, communicative competence, business rhetoric, Business English*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English for professional communication, ESP and Business English has become an important mission, with international economic and financial activity growing exponentially every decade. Working with non-native students, who have little to no experience of cross-cultural interaction is a challenging task. The key to success lies in developing very specific skills allowing future specialists to fully understand the whole pragma-semantic spectrum of an English utterance, recognise various registers and styles of speech by numerous carefully studied language features and properly react to interlocutors' replicas in both oral and written discourse.

Traditionally, students majoring in Linguistics have an advantage over other learners as they better understand that the skills of grammatically and phonetically correct speech production aren't

enough to sound convincingly authentic. It is rhetorical skills and ability for sophisticated communication that help impress British and American partners through expression of thoughts and ideas in a clear way and get all necessary messages across. Years of teaching practice prove that main problems for EFL students can be classified into several categories: (1) English linguistic phenomena that have direct equivalents in the learners' native tongue; (2) English language units that bear a certain degree of similarity to corresponding units in the learners' native tongue; and finally (3) English language units that don't look much like corresponding units in the learners' native tongue. The third category is obviously the one that causes most difficulties in the learning process. Phrasal verbs can serve as a good example of the kind of problem that non-native speakers of English face.

The relevance of studying phrasal verbs is justified by their expansion in business written and oral discourse as well as by insufficient knowledge of all peculiarities of their usage and patterns of functioning in professional English. This paper explores how phrasal verbs can be integrated into classroom activity as learning material.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Theoretical grounding

The theoretical basis for this research comprises works on teaching methodology, functional

'Phrasal verbs can serve as a good example of the kind of problem Russians and other nationality non-native speakers of English face'

linguistics and pragmatics, most notably by Professor Evgeniya Ponomarenko and Professor Elena Malyuga (Ponomarenko & Malyuga, 2012; Ponomarenko & Malyuga, 2015; Malyuga & Tomalin, 2017; Khramchenko & Radyuk, 2014). The grounding for the study of phrasal verbs includes research by scholars such as Arnold (1986), Dirven (2001), McArthur (1975), Povey (1990), etc.

Phrasal verbs are studied through Linguodidactics (Peters, 2016; Sung & Kim, 2016; Torres-Martinez, 2015; Zareva, 2016), the meaning of individual particles of phrasal verbs (Mahpeykar & Tyler, 2015; Rosca & Baker de Altamirano, 2016), and the systematisation of phrasal verbs in dictionaries (Luzer & Coslovich, 2016; Garnier & Schmitt, 2015) among others.

At Peoples' Friendship University of Russia and Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University students of linguistics are taught basic theoretical information on phrasal verbs during seminars in Lexicology and later apply this knowledge in practical Business English classes.

2.2 Phrasal verbs in linguistics and linguodidactics – theoretical analysis

The term 'phrasal verb' was introduced by the American essayist and critic Logan Smith in the first quarter of the 20th century. Since then, many linguists have been studying the definition, distinctive features, and the classification of phrasal verbs. For example, according to Povey (1990), a phrasal verb can be defined as a combination of a verb (a 'simple' one, e.g. *walk, write*) and an adverbial postposition (*up, down*). Both elements form a single syntactic and semantic unit. In her research, Povey (1990) has identified a number of distinctive features of a phrasal verb.

1. A phrasal verb can be substituted with a 'simple' verb, which characterises a phrasal verb as a semantic unity. *To put up with* can be substituted by *to tolerate; to call up* by *to telephone*. Of course, this criterion does not apply to all phrasal verbs in the English language, since their equivalent is often a phrase. For example, the equivalent of the phrasal verb to *break down* is the phrase to *stop functioning; to take off – to leave the ground.*

2. Another distinctive feature of phrasal verbs is their idiomatic nature. An idiom is a combination of two or more words which meanings differ from that of the idiom itself. Most phrasal verbs cannot be reduced to the meaning of their individual

components, as in *to bring up – to educate* or *to come by – to obtain*. This criterion is not universal for all phrasal verbs. Moreover, it is often difficult to determine whether the meaning of the given verb is idiomatic, since phrasal verbs typically have several meanings, some of which are idiomatic, while others are easily derived from the given phrasal verb's components.

3. Questions with phrasal verbs have a pronominal form (*who* or *what*), rather than an adverbial form (*when* or *where*). This property of phrasal verbs helps distinguish phrasal verbs from simple verbs with a preposition.

In the introduction to the *Longman Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* a phrasal verb is defined as a verb consisting of two (*turn on*) or three words (*look forward to*). Most phrasal verbs consist of two words – a principal verb and a particle (an adverb or preposition) (Povey, 1990, p. 12).

Krylova (2012) argues that a verb and a postposition, preserving their original meanings, do not form a semantically indivisible unit, i.e. a phrasal verb. In other words, the idiomatic meaning is an essential property of a phrasal verb (Krylova, 2012, p. 256).

Dixon (1982) notes that without the use of such phrases, a foreigner will sound unnatural and stilted, though grammatically correct. Hence,

phrasal verbs are invariably used by native speakers of English in a variety of communicative situations. MacArthur (1975) identified two types of combinations of a verb and a postposition – literal, i.e. direct meaning relating to both the verb and the particle (e.g. *The postman brought in long-expected letters*), and figurative, i.e. idiomatic meaning relating to some extent to the polylexemic verb (e.g. *A new policy was brought in by the President*). In the first example *brought in* means *delivered* and in the second – *introduced*.

German linguist Dirven (2001) defines phrasal verbs as a phenomenon characterised by idiomaticity arising in the following situations: (1) combination of a verb and a preposition (e.g. *to depend on something*); (2) combination of a verb and a detached particle (e.g. *to run up the flag, to run the flag up*); (3) combination of a verb and a non-detachable particle (e.g. *to run up a debt*); and (4) combination of a verb, a particle, and a preposition (e.g. *to face up to problems*).

Considering different approaches to teaching phrasal verbs, it is important to note that modern linguistics still lacks a single interpretation of the nature of their second component. In research and academic literature, the second element of a phrasal verb is referred to as *an adverb, a particle, an adverbial particle, a prepositional adverb, a fixed preposition, a postverb, a postpositive, a postpositive prefix, a postposition,* etc. In the 20th

'Considering different approaches to teaching phrasal verbs, it is important to note that modern linguistics still lacks a single interpretation of the nature of their second component'

century, linguistics referred to the second component of phrasal verbs as the *English adverbial postposition*.

Phrasal verbs can be defined as combinations of monosyllabic verbs with a postpositive adverb (preposition/adverb and preposition) resulting in two-component (and sometimes three-component) lexical and phraseological combinations. Linguists also refer to the postpositive element as the postposition. Postposition is somewhere between an individual word and a morpheme equating it with nouns, adjectives, pronouns, modal verbs, adverbs, particles, prepositions, unions, and interjections.

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1 Methodologically relevant classification of phrasal verbs

For the sake of teaching methodology, it is important to provide students with an understandable and substantial classification of

phrasal verbs. According to the semantic approach, phrasal verbs are usually classified into the following three groups (from the point of view of interpreting their meaning).

1. Non-idiomatic phrasal verbs. In this case, both components of the phrasal verb retain their lexical meaning (e.g. *After you tore off a leaf in the calendar*).

2. Semi-idiomatic phrasal verbs, where the postposition affects the verb's literal meaning (e.g. *His grandmother said that he had the greatest difficulty in beating it off with his umbrella*).

3. Idiomatic phrasal verbs. Here the meaning of the phrasal verb as a whole cannot be deduced from the meanings of its individual components (e.g. *I do not think you should sniff at her advice*).

In addition to the semantic approach, there is a simpler approach to the classification of phrasal verbs.

Type 1: verb (transitive) + preposition. For example, *to get over (an illness)*.

Type 2: verb (transitive) + adverb. For example: *to bring up (the children)*.

Type 3: verb (intransitive) + adverb. For example, t*o come about (to happen)*.

Type 4: verb (transitive) + adverb + preposition. For example, *to run out of (sugar)*.

For academic purposes, better understanding and easier memorising, phrasal verbs can be classified in two groups. The first group includes (1) verbs that are used with a preposition and always have the same lexical meaning, as in *to insist on, to depend on, to rely on*; and (2) verbs that in combination with adverbs or prepositions do not radically change their lexical meaning, and the preposition or adverb is only used to clarify the meaning, as in *to hear – to hear about, to hear from, to speak – to speak out.*

The second group includes phraseological units which meaning cannot be deduced from their constituent elements. These are the so-called 'permanent context units' that have their own meaning. For example: *The criminals held up the train (i.e. stopped by force to rob) and stole all the passengers' money. Held up* cannot be derived from the meaning of the verb *to hold* since it is a set idiomatic phrase (verb + preposition/adverb).

Although the above properties of phrasal verbs can be used to decide whether a given combination is a phrasal verb, none of them are universal. There are always a lot of exceptions and borderline cases in the language, which is not surprising given the huge number of such combinations and their variations. Many scholars agree that it is

impossible to draw a clear line between phrasal verbs, on the one hand, and verbs with 'pure' adverbs and prepositions, on the other.

Having considered a number of characteristics of phrasal verbs as an innate feature of the English language, the study shall turn to some aspects of Business English. First of all, Business English and its functioning are among the most complex, interesting, and relevant areas of research. Studies conducted since the early 1990s have helped overcome reductionism in the interpretation of the concept of Business English by identifying the functional and communicative types of speech, which, by interacting with each other and becoming a single whole, give an idea of the true nature of the English language used for business purposes: socialising for business purposes, telephoning for business purposes, business correspondence, business documents and contracts, the language of business meetings and business media).

3.2 Significance of phrasal verbs for the Business English course

Everything said so far highlights the importance of teaching business communication in a foreign language, which facilitates the establishment by future graduates (today's students majoring in Linguistics) of business contacts with foreign colleagues. The growth of international contacts prompts the need to improve the training of

'The growth of international contacts prompts the need to improve the training of professionals whose foreign language competencies approach the native speaker's level'

professionals whose foreign language competencies approach the native speaker's level. *'Doing business in view of the complex economic and political processes in the world requires specific abilities for sophisticated communication in different communicative registers, especially being in contact with international businessmen'* (Ponomarenko & Malyuga, 2012, p. 4524).

At the same time, developing foreign language skills comparable to those of a native speaker with a university degree requires not only memorising vocabulary units and formal rules of combining them in speech, but also mastering idiomatic English, including phrasal verbs. Skilful use of idioms in the broad sense means understanding the complete semantic structure of the foreign word and its compatibility with other words. Strong idiomatic speech skills, combined with the use and understanding of phrasal verbs, should be taught at all stages of learning. In other words, the

ability to correctly use phrasal verbs in Business English is an important component of effective communication with foreign colleagues. Phrasal verbs are socially significant units of nomination in an English-speaking team, and serve the purposes of categorising the world. They designate the action and clarify it in a concise and clear way. Traditions and dynamics of business communication imply a transition from a more formal (or neutral) style to a less formal one and, vice versa, from informal style (in oral speech) to formal business style in written communication (Ponomarenko & Malyuga, 2015).

Teaching experience indicates that, for students majoring in Linguistics, who take courses in Business English, one of the greatest challenges is the lexical aspect, namely lexical units, characterised by specific semantic and structural properties. Difficulties arise from interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference caused by a discrepancy between the content and the expression of those units – the meanings of individual components do not add up to the semantic integrity inherent in phrasal verbs.

3.3 English phrasal verbs – semantics, teaching methodology and practice

Research conducted in this area has revealed that the following is required in teaching phrasal verbs as part of Business English courses for students majoring in Linguistics:

– authentic material;

– teaching aids that take into account the specifics of teaching business communication to students majoring in Linguistics;

– oral modelling of business communication situations;

– systematisation of the corresponding theoretical concepts;

– monitoring of the learning process.

To successfully develop a methodology for teaching phrasal verbs in a Business English course, it is imperative to design a learning process allowing students to achieve the following:

1) regular systematisation of their theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study, acquired through their studies of linguistics;

2) gradual introduction of new phrasal verbs to their active and passive vocabulary;

3) stimulating the use of phrasal verbs in business communication role-playing games in class.

A necessary element of the instructor's work in this respect is modelling situations of business communication requiring the use of phrasal verbs.

'Teaching experience indicates that, for students majoring in Linguistics, who take courses in Business English, one of the greatest challenges is the lexical aspect, namely lexical units, characterised by specific semantic and structural properties'

This method allows students to recreate real-life business communication situations using previously acquired communication skills (Malyuga & Tomalin, 2017).

Another important task facing the instructor is to continuously monitor the learning process by selecting appropriate material and adapting it to the students' needs. An equally important task is evaluating the effectiveness of the selected material. The instructor should make every effort to ensure that the selected original business-related texts are of interest to the students and motivate them to discuss the content in English.

One of the most effective ways of teaching phrasal verbs is to consider the meaning of their prepositions. This approach can be viewed as an efficient method of teaching phrasal verbs in Business English classes as well. Learners'

attention should be focused on the meaning of the postpositions of phrasal verbs. It is pivotal to clearly understand and remember the meaning of the main postpositions. Consequently, there will be no need to learn the meaning of each individual phrasal verb by heart.

Some prepositions and adverbs are parts of the vast number of phrasal verbs. The most common prepositions are *up, out, off, in, on* and *down*. In contrast to these, *aback* and *across* only appear in a few phrasal verbs.

First of all, the teacher should attract students' attention to the preposition *up* referring to the movement from the bottom up. The general meaning of that preposition can be classified into (1) movement; (2) growth and improvement; (3) attachment and limitations; (4) execution and completion; (5) collection; (6) preparation and beginning; (7) forthcoming; (8) deviation, refuse, concession; (9) detection; (10) breakage and destruction; (11) emergence and establishment; and (12) severance.

Set up – establish, found, organise. E.g. They needed money to set up a special school for gifted children.

Soften up – reduce resistance. E.g. You go in and soften father up, and then I will ask him for the money.

Run up against – arrive at a position where positive progress may be blocked. E.g. The film ran up against strong competition.

Face up to – accept something difficult or unpleasant and confront it. E.g. Retirement is something we all have to face up to sooner or later.

Draw up – arrange, prepare, draw or compose a written document. E.g. If you agree to the terms, let us draft up your letter of employment now. *Come up with* – create, devise, produce, find. E.g. This artwork is rubbish! Can't you come up with anything better than that?

Be up against – to be, or arrive, at a position where positive progress or forward movement is, or may be, blocked. E.g. Profits have fallen because the company is up against stronger competition than expected.

To help master phrasal verbs teachers can ask students to provide their own examples from business texts with the same preposition but different meaning.

Another productive preposition in phrasal verbs is the adverb *out*. Its general meaning is *movement outside*. It can be subdivided into (1) departure; (2) appearance; (3) increase; (4) completion; (5) displacement; (6) being outside the home; (7) completeness; (8) organisation; (9) criticism, protest; (10) search, discovery; (11) reproduction; (12) duration; and (13) support and assistance. The meanings can be illustrated with examples from business discourse.

Be (go) out of action – to not work or operate, to fail to function or to stop working/ operating/ functioning. E.g. The computer is out of action at the moment, due to an electrical fault.

Carry out – fulfil, perform, complete, finish successfully. E.g. The oil company is carrying out geological surveys before drilling begins.

Iron out – remove problems or difficulties by discussion or action, sort out, put right. E.g. There are a few matters that need ironing out before we talk about your salary increase.

Point out – show or indicate; make clear. E.g. The presenter pointed out to the audience the important features of the new product.

Smooth out – remove problems or difficulties by discussion or action. E.g. There are a few matters that need smoothing out before we talk about your salary increase.

Rule out – forbid or prohibit the possibility. E.g. The government has ruled out any further support for the industry.

'To help master phrasal verbs teachers can ask students to provide their own examples from business texts with the same preposition but different meaning'

Spell it out – make one's position obvious. E.g. Let me spell it out for you. Deliver the goods by tomorrow or we will cancel the contract.

Try out – test or use for a trial period. E.g. We should try out the new equipment on a limited scale before going into production.

Obviously, students will need to practise translating and paraphrasing the sentences. Very often phrasal verbs are used with the adverb *off*, which means the movement from something or division from something. *Off* can also mean (1) departure; (2) deviation; (3) cancellation; (4) displacement; (5) protection; (6) reduction; (7) barrier; (8) beginning; and (9) completion.

Pull off – carry out successfully. E.g. It takes a lot of skill to put off something like that.

Trigger off – cause or bring about. E.g. He has triggered off all this uproar by his casual remark.

Spark off – cause or bring about. E.g. The management decision sparked off a series of arguments.

Cut off – stop. E.g. People have been suggesting that we should cut off economic aid.

Lead off – start. E.g. The chairman led off with a financial statement.

Fight off – fight, overcome. E.g. You shouldn't have to fight off too much competition for the job.

Break off – end suddenly. E.g. The breaking off diplomatic relations between two countries may signal the start of warfare.

Another productive preposition in forming phrasal verbs is *on*. Generally, this adverb means that one thing is situated above the other or one thing is moving to another thing. This meaning can be subdivided into eleven further meanings, namely (1) movement and location; (2) forward movement and development; (3) attack; (4) attachment and addition; (5) action onset and management; (6) connection; (7) continuation of the action; (8) impact, feeling; and (9) detection.

Wait on – to wait before taking a decision. E.g. The company will delay the deal and wait on events.

Decide on – to take a decision. E.g. He decided on a career in the army.

Agree on – to reach agreement about, to accept, to have the same opinion as, to come to the same conclusion. E.g. I am afraid we cannot agree to your offer. The negotiators quickly agreed on the key points.

Base on – to use as a basis, ground, or system of reasoning. E.g. The scientist's calculations were based on the results of his experiments.
Keep an eye on – watch carefully, guard in case of some risk. E.g. We keep a careful eye on share price movements in market sectors where we do business.

Shed light on – give a reason or explanation of something which isn't clear. E.g. The problem isn't as complex as it may seem – this diagram may help shed light on it.

Zero in on – identify and focus on some target. E.g. We need to come up with new products and zero in on new markets if we are to stay ahead of our competition.

The adverb *in* is also one of the most common among phrasal verbs. It has the meaning of moving inward. Traditionally, some additional meanings include (1) movement, entrance, arrival; (2) mixing, inclusion; (3) durable being in some place; (4) penetration; (5) collecting; (6) limitation, prevention; (7) collapse, damage, end; (8) filling; and (9) involvement.

Be in line with – to be in conformity or agreement with. E.g. Your ideas are very interesting, especially as they're very much in line with our own.
Be in touch with – to be in contact, to continue contact. E.g. Although they don't meet very often, they are in constant touch with each other by letter or phone.

Be in the dark – not to know, to be without information. E.g. It's no use asking me about the company's takeover plans – I'm as much in the dark as you are.

Be in the picture – to know, to have information. E.g. Let's go over those points again, to make sure you're completely in the picture, before we go any further.

As far as less frequently used adverbs and prepositions are concerned, words like *aback* and *across* tend to be more limited in use.

Get across – communicate to make clear, to reach. E.g. When making a presentation, you need to decide what ideas or information you want to get across.

Take aback – astonish or disconcert. E.g. His sudden change of opinion took us all aback.

Each preposition can be practised using exercises with assignments such as: *Give the English for*

these Russian business phrases, Paraphrase, Translate from Russian into English, Underline the most suitable preposition in each of the expressions, Fill in the blanks, Complete and translate and so on.

The study of phrasal verbs as part of Business English courses for students majoring in Linguistics is based on two interrelated components – theoretical comprehension and practical assimilation. Theoretical comprehension implies comprehension of the structure, grammatical properties, and semantic relations between the components of the phrasal verb. For this purpose, students can be given research assignments using various corpora of the English language. When working on such assignments, students learn to recognise and isolate phrasal verbs in the text in order to analyse their structure and semantics.

Practical assimilation, as a rule, is based on the language content to be studied at a given stage of the course. For example, language content may include economic texts and articles where phrasal verbs rarely acquire a narrow, special meaning, which is why their meanings in economic texts are very diverse. In general, business texts and articles containing English phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions enrich the students' vocabulary and help recognise and use phrasal verbs in various registers of business communication such as meetings, presentations, negotiations and

'Theoretical comprehension implies comprehension of the structure, grammatical properties, and semantic relations between the components of the phrasal verb'

telephone conversations.

In selecting lexical units, both the thematic principle and the principle of semantic value should be followed. It is desirable to select original texts that have a coherent sequence of oral or written statements characteristic of a specific business communication scenario. The phrasal verbs contained in such texts should have adequate communicative value and meet the criteria of frequency of use and stylistic adequacy. The meaning of the new phrasal verbs is interpreted through the situation modelled in the proposed content, through the semantics of the phrasal verb components, and by other language descriptors, such as synonyms, antonyms, metaphors and definitions.

Since phrasal verbs are quite common in the English language, one of the recommendations to students is to memorise the meaning of postpositions, i.e. how the postposition modifies the meaning of the verb by becoming attached to it.

1. *Back* indicates the response: *You should call him back when you come home.*

2. *Away* denotes distancing, movement away from the object or person: *He is going away in a month. Don't run away. We need to talk to you.*

3. *Down* means weakening, decreasing quantity, deterioration, decreasing strength: *Our partners refused to bring down the price.*

4. *On* – continued or progressing action: *The conference went on until eight o'clock.*

5. *Over – consider*: They need more time to think it over. *I hope we'll talk it over after breakfast.*

It is advisable to develop the lexical skills of using phrasal verbs in view of the challenges posed by this specific vocabulary and typical usage mistakes made by students taking Business English courses. The phrasal verbs to be learned should be carefully selected. Topics and situations of business communication included in the programme of the respective course stage could be used as guidance, and original business texts serving the goal of helping the students in developing communicative competencies could be used as the source. Some scholars believe that the thematic selection principle should not be adopted as the key criterion because of the difficulties encountered in linking phrasal verbs to

a particular topic of Business English training. However, textbooks are available where phrasal verbs are systematised into topics, including business communication topics. Phrasal verbs included in such textbooks have a high frequency of use, both in oral and written speech. In addition, they feature multiple exercises helping transfer phrasal verbs from passive to active vocabulary through thematic texts accompanied by practice exercises.

4. CONCLUSION

Teaching business communication in English to students majoring in Linguistics is an important challenge. The effectiveness of mastering phrasal verbs as part of a Business English course depends on the following conditions.

1. Identifying the difficulties of mastering phrasal verbs, bearing in mind their linguistic characteristics and typical mistakes made by students.

2. Selecting phrasal verbs relevant to the scope, topics, and business communication situations featured in the given stage of the study course.

3. Developing lexical skills in how to research and use phrasal verbs in spoken business communication.

4. Developing a teaching methodology for phrasal

verbs and monitoring its effectiveness in the learning process.

5. Using authentic materials to develop the skills of understanding phrasal verbs in specific business situations and building students' communicative competencies.

Raising students' awareness of phrasal verbs as a highly productive, dynamic, and semantically rich group of English verbs is a big step towards

achieving the main goal of any Business English course, i.e. enhancing rhetorical effectiveness of business English discourse among EFL students. Learning more about the semantics of numerous phrasal verbs, drilling them in multiple business-related contexts in both spoken and written interaction helps students not only memorise these lexical units, but also understand their functional significance, stylistic colouring and patterns of efficiency in solving communicative tasks which are essential for business and professional life.

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Review

From Principles to Practice in Education for Intercultural Citizenship

by Michael Byram, Irina Golubeva, Han Hui and Manuela Wagner (Eds.)

Multilingual Matters 2017

Reviewed by [1]Barry Tomalin

[1]International House London

Published as part of the ICE series of *Languages for Intercultural Communication and Education* this is a survey of how students and teachers around the world perceive the concept of intercultural citizenship and how intercultural citizenship can be developed and taught as part of the foreign language teaching syllabus. In doing so, it describes surveys and projects carried out in countries as far apart as China, the USA, Japan, Argentina, Denmark, Korea, Taiwan and Italy. It also explores peace studies in the Malvinas / Falkland Islands, sport and sustainability and the role of intercultural citizenship in protecting human rights.

The authorship is the result of an unusual coming together of teachers and researchers interested in intercultural education and involved in a collective research venture under the umbrella organisation of the Cultnet Research Group, founded by Michael Byram and colleagues. As Professor Martyn Barrett explains in his foreword, the group undertook a range of projects involving cooperation between language learners in different countries. As a result of these projects, teachers and learners in different groups bonded and formed and built new intercultural and citizenship awareness. In doing so, they built an understanding of two concepts crucial to civic and citizenship education – global citizenship and intercultural citizenship.

The book is divided into three sections. Section 1 examines learners' and teachers' perceptions of intercultural citizenship. Section 2 reports on activities carried out by teachers in class collaborating across borders. Section 3

examines how language learners cooperate across borders and include collaborative projects based on human rights, peace building and even mural art and graffiti.

There is a fairly common belief in language education that intercultural understanding and intercultural citizenship is a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) topic or topics that can only be dealt with at higher intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency. Many of the projects described in this book contest that idea. For example, Section 2 begins with a project involving international students studying Japanese at CEFR A2 level and comparing education systems and values in the students' different countries. Using Japanese as the basic means of communication supplemented by English where necessary, young university students surveyed education provision, policy and the cost of education in their respective countries in different countries and compared and discussed results. In doing so they learned not only about different education systems but also learned to question the assumptions behind the information.

For Byram and his colleagues this is an important feature of intercultural citizenship, the development of 'criticality', defined as the ability to develop critical awareness and to question the assumptions behind the facts. In undertaking these projects, the authors argue, students learn and use

language, improve their language skills and broaden their awareness of the world and develop the critical skills to analyse and also empathise with people in similar situations, like education, in other environments. In doing so, the students develop the key qualities of intercultural citizenship as put forward by Oxfam in *Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools*. A Global Citizen is someone who (1) is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen; (2) respects and values diversity; (3) has an understanding of how the world works; (4) is outraged by social injustice; (5) participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global; (6) is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place; (7) takes responsibility for their actions.

A strong feature of the book is a description of projects and their results and particularly in Chapter 3 entitled *Intercultural Encounters in Teacher Education* a number of experiential learning mini-projects that teachers and students can try in class. Each project describes the aims of the project and the students who took part and explains the preparation progress and how the project was carried out. But the authors also describe and quote students' reactions, which shows how their views expand and their intercultural awareness grows through taking part in the project. Finally, the feedback session on each project identifies successes and challenges

students and teachers faced and how they were dealt with.

The book describes projects carried out at all levels of the education systems including primary and lower secondary, high school, university undergraduate and pre-service teacher training, demonstrating the key components of intercultural citizenship education in language learning specified by Byram in *Intercultural Citizenship and Foreign Language Education* as (1) learning more about one's own country by comparison; (2) learning more about 'otherness' in one's own country (especially linguistic / ethnic minorities); (3) becoming involved in activity outside school; (4) making class-to-class links to compare and act on a topic in two or more countries.

An interesting example of schoolchildren from different countries is described in *Green Kidz* where 12 to 13-year-old students in Copenhagen took part in a joint project on climate change and sustainability with students from a school in La Plata, Argentina. Inspired by the UN Climate Change summit in Copenhagen in 2009, the students decided to take a more activist approach on its conclusions and produced videos and a Facebook page on climate change and sustainability. Although originally a Natural Sciences project, *Green Kidz* then became a language project and the school found a partner in Argentina. In 16 lessons spread over three months

the two schools exchanged information and ideas using English as a lingua franca, Spanish and Danish through videos, SKYPE meetings, emails, blogs, Facebook and other media outlets.

The topics included *My School, My Community and My Family, Green Crimes in School and in the Community* and designing slogans and posters to encourage the school and community to deal with waste, avoid pollution and protect the environment.

According to the project evaluation and feedback, the project raised awareness and promoted action and also encouraged a spirit of co-operation practically and linguistically in the use of *we* and *our* as well as a focus on the vocabulary of agreement and cooperation. Above all, the project contributed to the development of an internationalist outlook and respect for two communities with very different backgrounds and histories (and to some extent, lifestyles and school behaviour, such as wearing or not wearing uniforms).

Inevitably there are challenges. Time is one. The school language syllabus is already crowded and taking time to develop language skills through intercultural citizenship projects may put a strain on the programme. On the other hand, the rapid development in fluency and confidence in using a foreign language and developing critical

awareness skills more than compensates.

Target language levels is another. Some students may feel frustrated and even demotivated by their perceived inability to deal with the topic at the level required. Feedback suggests that if the topic is interesting enough students will apply themselves to it and if the teacher can support them by suggesting simpler language to use it will be important, especially at lower levels of language learning.

Mismatched expectations are another potential cause of frustration, especially in cross-border projects. Students in country A may have different expectations from students in country B. The important thing is to have common expectations right from the start and as the project evolves any disagreements can be the subject of discussion leading to resolution. That after all, is part of the strategy of building intercultural citizenship – empathy with and harmonising different expectations.

Finally, many of the topics are highly sensitive, such as human rights and 'action in the community'. These need to be dealt with sensitively by teachers and students in a way that

issues can be raised for discussion and political limitations of that discussion are recognised and dealt with. Once again, awareness of and sensitivity towards dealing with international issues is once again an important aspect of intercultural citizenship.

The central message of this book is that citizenship training, particularly intercultural citizenship, can be brought into language learning and teaching. In fact, in many international language learning textbooks topics on climate change and human rights and the importance of intercultural awareness are already part of the course design. In the opinion of the editors, the key needs are: what is still experimental in our language classrooms needs to become routine; teacher education is a key to successful introduction of intercultural citizenship projects and international co-operation into language classes at all levels; and it is vital that management of student expectations should enable students to feel confident and engaged in dealing with intercultural citizenship issues in their language.

In our challenging times this is an informative book with many practical ideas for projects with a noble aim in our accelerating globalising world.

Review

Do I Make Myself Clear? Why Writing Well Matters

by Harold Evans

Little Brown 2017

Reviewed by [1]Barry Tomalin

[1]International House London

Former editor of the *Times, Sunday Times* and President of *Random House Publishers* in New York, Harold Evans is one of the most prestigious of international newspaper editors. I had the honour and privilege of interviewing him for the BBC while he was still at the Sunday Times and admired his simplicity and clarity of explanation while sharing his liking for George Orwell's essay on style in *Politics and the English Language*. Orwell indeed appears in the introduction, praised for *'indicting bad English for corrupting thought and slovenly thought for corrupting language.'* However, as Evans goes on to say, *'For all its benefits the digital era Orwell never glimpsed has had unfortunate effects, not least making it easier to obliterate the English language by carpet-bombing us with extravaganzas of marketing mumbo-jumbo.'*

This is a book about style, how to write simply and clearly but also using words and images that are memorable. It will be of great value to teachers and students at CEFR B2+ and C1 levels and also to near fluent non-native speakers and to native speakers interested in improving their writing skills. It uses up to date references from international politics and business and shows how to edit them for great simplicity and great effect. Therefore, it is also useful as authentic material for CLIL classes in global politics, business and for teaching academic writing and journalistic skills.

Harold Evans has divided the book into three sections. The first part, *Tools of the Trade*, focuses on techniques. The second part, *Finishing the Job*, focuses on narrative and the final section, *Consequences*, examines some of the results of poor use of words and misleading language. The nub of the book for teachers and learners are the chapters on sentence structure and organisation

and on techniques for making yourself clear with an analysis of good and bad style. In the *Sentence Clinic* chapter Evans analyses a number of long political tracts and shows how to edit them rewriting the text so that it becomes shorter and clearer. For example, he reduces a 165-word text by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to 29 words and makes the meaning absolutely clear. Writing shorter sentences is the first and one of the most important pieces of advice.

Evans describes long introductory phrases as 'predatory phrases'. These are subordinate clauses placed before the main point and intended to introduce it. All these clauses do however is to distract the reader and make it more difficult to grasp the main point. Punctuation can also be confusing. The overuse of dashes and misuse of brackets to add explanations can also take away from the all-important central message. Another problem is cramming too many ideas into one sentence so that the reader is confused and the central message is lost. Among several ideas for improving sentence structure is making sure the message is clear. Look at your text. Are your sentences too long? Do you sandwich together too many ideas?

Can you break sentences up? Make them shorter? If you can, you will be a better writer and your readers will understand better and appreciate what you have to say. In the chapter *Ten shortcuts to make yourself clear'* Evans offers tips which writers can put into action immediately.

Use active rather than passive voice to ensure your writing is clear, vigorous and concise.

Be specific. Use simple concrete terms.

Avoid abstract nouns or if you can't avoid them, use them sparingly.

Ration adjectives, he advises. Raze adverbs.

Cut the fat. Review your work and cut out repetition.

Organise your work for clarity, be positive and put people first.

Don't be a bore. Be prepared to vary the types of sentences you write in order to maintain the reader's interest.

However, says Evans, don't be afraid to repeat a word when it is necessary and makes an impact. All these points and many others are illustrated by texts by well-known journalists, authors, reporters and, where necessary, edited to make them shorter and more effective. They provide really useful examples for classwork. Study the text with the students and then get them to edit it to make the

message clearer and stated in fewer words. Then show how Harold Evans has done it and compare. The result? A wonderful lesson in writing and editing skills which can help students improve their style and approach the texts they read with greater critical awareness.

Zombie nouns, flesh-eaters and pleonasms are three Evans bugbears. *Zombies* are nouns that have *devoured* verbs. For example, using *implementation* when it would be easier to use the verb *implement*. Zombie nouns have the effect of creating abstractions that reduce the impact of the message. If you use a verb the sentence has much more impact, is shorter and more concise. For example, *the problem is of a considerable extent* is much more actively expressed as *It's a big problem*. Instead of *car parking facilities,* why not simply say *car parks?*

Flesh eaters describes phrases used instead of simply words. Evans lists 1100 of these, such as *at this point in time* instead of *now*. Pleonasms are similar to *flesh eaters* but they are redundant phrases often used for emphasis. For example, the phrase *free, gratis and for nothing* simply means *free* but the pleonasm *free, gratis and for nothing* emphasises the fact that the product or service referred to is free of charge.

In case you are wondering, yes, there is a list of over 200 pleonasms with the redundant words in italics – another useful exercise.

The second part of the book is concerned with narrative and has a very useful section of words that are frequently confused. For example, *further and farther*. Use *farther* for distances Harold Evans advises and gives the example, *Thus far and no farther*. Use *further* for additions as in *furthermore*.

The final part of the book comes back to the opening comments about Orwell. The speed and nature of modern electronic communication has introduced new words and new styles of writing into language.

It has also immensely increased the number of times language is used to hide wrongdoing and to confuse customers about their commercial and even legal rights. Evans takes a number of stories and articles describing commercial fraud, political manipulation and world events such as reports on terrorist attacks, prints them out and in an appendix and shows how their message can be made clearer in an edited and shorter version.

These texts offer wonderful authentic material for teachers and self-study material for journalists, publicists and people involved in legal drafting and explanation. Students can study the text and understand the background context they intend to explain. Then, in groups they can edit them and then compare their efforts with Harold Evans's

edited versions.

Finally, let us be clear. This is not a language teacher's manual. This is an enormously interesting and entertaining review of how English language style has deteriorated and how it can be revived. In this sense, it recalls Mark Thompson's analysis of the decline of public speech in his *Enough Said* (See the review in TLC 3). Its aim is to show how laziness and manipulation have diminished the impact of the printed word and how careful editing and style can ensure writing with impact. For Evans, writing well matters. Does he make himself clear? Absolutely.

Review

The Bonjour Effect: The Secret Codes of French Conversation Revealed

by Julie Barlow and Jean-Benoît Nadeau

Duckworth Overlook 2017

Reviewed by [1]Barry Tomalin

[1]International House London

There is a feeling among some interculturalists that etiquette and protocol has received too much attention as an indicator of cultural differences. It has obscured the more important influences of attitudes and values, communication styles and above all business and social behaviour. On the other hand, the building of social relations is also important as a business and diplomatic tool and creating the right impression through greetings, showing respect, dress code, gift giving and hospitality all matter.

The Bonjour Effect addresses these social relationship-building issues in relation to France but also examines the historical and social roots of language use and behaviour. It is written by two Canadian journalists who have already scored international success with *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't be Wrong* and *The Story of French*. Their present book, subtitled *the Secret Codes of French Conversation* divides into two parts, form and content and explains complexities of French conversation and behaviour that often confuse foreigners and will be instructive for teachers of language and culture for all communities.

Presented as a guide to French conversation, the book extends to discussions of political, historical and social influences on the French use of their language and on French culture in general. It is particularly useful for new immigrants to France offering insights on how to help children integrate the French school system and for parents to decipher the French conversation code. Phatic communication, sounds and stock phrases used with a particular stress or intonation are an important part of social speech. As Julie Barlow and Jean-Benoît Nadeau point out, *'Phatics are*

part of the communication protocol that establishes links, like the scratchy, squealing sounds modems made back in the 90s when people had to dial up the Internet.'

The greeting *Bonjour* in French meaning *Good morning* or *Good day* has at least three different meanings, each vital as a way of establishing positive contact. First it means, *I'm here*. (I greet therefore I am). The second meaning is *We are going to communicate or I am going to talk*. The third is, *I'm entering your territory*, such as going into a shop, getting on a bus etc. As Barlow and Nadeau put it, *'You can never say too many Bonjours. Our rule of thumb is to say Bonjour in all contexts and all circumstances. When it seems like overkill you are probably right on.'*

Another important area in all cultures is 'the privacy rule'. This determines what you talk about and what you don't mention. What constitutes acceptable public and private behaviour? The anthropologist Edward T. Hall introduced the notion of 'spatial dimensions' or 'bubbles' in the 1960s to explain how people interact. Hall identified the four spheres of intimate, personal, social and public. For example, French people tend not to talk about work and families to people they don't know well (the personal bubble).

Barlow and Nardeau illustrate the points they make with examples from their own lives in Paris

and that of their children. They go into the reasons why some French may say *No'* at first when with a little persuasion that can change to *Oui'* As they point out, *'iit takes a certain amount of faith, and sometimes a lot of talking, but you can almost always find the yes hiding behind a French no if it's there.'*

A key part of the book deals with the French love of conversation. They discuss the origin and development of the *Academie Francaise*, France's guardian of the French language, and the rise of salons in the 18th century. This leads to an extended discussion of the role of teaching self-expression and logical thought and exposition through the study of philosophy in the Lycee (High School) system. They also show how the art of conversation permeates French social life. They explain how their daughters were educated in primary schools to learn and recite classic poems and how they learn exactitude in grammar and presentation skills. For the authors, learning the art of conversation is a prime aim of French education and they discuss its role and how it plays out in dinner parties and other social events.

Part of this fascination with conversation is what the authors as describe the *fixation on French*. According to Barlow and Nadeau the history and development of the French language and its use and the introduction of new phrases is part of the French conception of *culture generale* (a good

education). However, one interesting feature of French usage is the tendency to abbreviate, partly influenced by *txting*. A personal coiffeur is known as a *coiffeur perso*.

The linguistic habit of shortening words and ending with an *o* or *lo* is very common in everyday speech. For example, a *directeur* (director) may be popularly called *un dirlo*. Also, you may hear popular jargon or slang called *verlan*. This consists of reversing the syllables of commonly used words, such as, *femme* (woman) which becomes *meuf, fete* (party) becomes *teuf* and *discret* (discreet) becomes *scred*.

The value of this book is that it combines history, culture and language with personal experience to offer a reasoned and sometimes humorous insight into French culture, values and attitudes, communication styles and behaviour. It is interesting on attitudes to the UK (*les Anglo-saxons*) and the USA and also on the concept of French exceptionalism. It also examines the French penchant for criticising France and everything French and supports arguments for more positive appreciation of French life and culture.

It is also interesting for the authors' comparisons with life and attitudes in the UK, the USA and in their native Canada. France, like other countries, has been struck by terrorism attacks in Paris and Nice and also by the attack on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in January 2015. Chapter 18, *Proof of Identity*, explores the nature of French identity and the relations of the multiple diverse minorities who call France home. France itself keeps no statistics on its minorities. You are either *citoyen* (citizen) or *etranger* (foreigner). In addition, France is *anti-communautaire* (denying the idea of separate ethnic or racial communities).

As a French citizen, you are part of the civic state, a policy that comes from the suppression of religious minorities in the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries in France. Also, important in France is the principle of *laicete* (laicity or secularism), a principle introduced after revolts by Catholic extremists in the 19th century. As sociologist and philosopher, Raphael Liogier explained to Julie Barlow, *laicete* represents not freedom of religion but freedom FROM religion and applies to Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus alike although freedom of worship is also a French principle.

The question is whether the principles of secularism and anti-community can continue in a world where many overseas citizens of France feel disadvantaged and confined to poorer suburban areas and become radicalised in protest. The authors however are confident that faced with stronger demands from Muslims for recognition and, confronted by the attacks of 2015 with a corresponding increase in 'Islamophobia' by some

French, France will produce a new formula to deal with current issues. As the authors cheekily assert in conclusion, *'You can always count on the French to talk their way out of anything.'* The book concludes with *Dos and Don'ts*, offering 12 guiding principles of French Conversation, behaviour to adopt and to avoid and Do and Taboo topics of conversation. All in all, it is an interesting, instructive and entertaining read, *The Bonjour Effect* is really useful for researchers and teachers specialising in French language and culture and for people moving to France who need to understand the roots of its language and culture. The book's structure can also serve as a practical basis for analysing other countries' languages and cultures.

ICC News

by Michael Carrier

ICC Board Member

The Great Migration Debate: The Role of Language and Culture

After a very successful conference at the ECML in Graz in 2017, the ICC is already finalising the details of the ICC 2018 conference. Next year's ICC 2018 Conference will be hosted by Ifigenia Georgiadou of the Hellenic Cultural centre, and will take place in Santorini, one of the most beautiful and fascinating islands in the Grecian Aegean Sea with a tremendous culture and history.

The ICC 2018 Conference dates are May 4-6, 2018. Delegates will be able to stay in local hotels at low cost and take advantage of the beaches and taverns of this beautiful Greek island. The local climate is very attractive with temperatures in May around 20-23 degrees. Further information is available at holiday-weather.com.

There is a lot to see on this and neighbouring islands. Participants will be able to add extra tourist activities before or after the conference and take advantage of the delightful location. We advise adding a day or more if they can schedule some time to tour the island. Further information about Santorini, its history and the volcano can be found at lonelyplanet.com.

The core theme of the ICC 2018 Conference will be *Migration, Communication and Culture*. One of the greatest challenges that Europe faces at the moment is dealing with the huge increase in economic and refugee migration, with the heart-rending dramas of migrants crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa and the Middle East to find eventual security and a new life. The number of migrants has caused problems at political, economic, housing and security levels; in some countries there has been internal political unrest.

Our concern as Europe's International Language Association is language learning and cultural integration. Our role as educators means that we need to assist with the design and planning of the language training and cultural engagement that this migration makes necessary. What are the most successful projects for migrant culture and language integration? What kind of society do we want to achieve? Is 'Multiculti', the philosophy of multicultural societies without immigration restrictions, now a failing concept? If so, what can replace it to avoid sectarianism and internal strife?

Language and cultural policy and best practice are the questions we will address during the conference. There will be a number of well-known speakers and educators from Greece and around Europe. Conference hosts and organisers are inviting educators to put forward a proposal for presentations and workshops at the Santorini conference. Please visit the conference page at icc-languages.eu to find more information on submitting proposals for papers.

EUROLTA News

by Myriam Fischer Callus

EUROLTA Co-ordinator

Teacher Training Centre Opens in Kiev, Ukraine

The International Language Company (ILC) has been accredited as the first EUROLTA Teacher Training Centre in Ukraine. ILC has been working in the language educational field for over 10 years and remains among top five best language schools in Kiev. It caters for students of different professions and ages, ranging from school children to university students to CEOs of national and international companies. The student population is international, with students representing many countries across Europe, Asia and the Americas. The school employs 25 highly qualified and experienced professional teachers (70% freelance, 30% fully employed). The teachers consider their job as a vocation and have not only excellent command of foreign languages and a creative approach to teaching, but also numerous professional achievements, such as international certificates, work experience abroad, diplomas and several awards. ILC has significantly expanded their range of services and have opened a translation office, English children sports camp, international exam preparation centre, English testing centre for corporate clients and an English management school.

Ms Dzhemma Grebenko, Managing Director of ILC commented: *'Our mission is to effectively and successfully satisfy the requests of our clients. Our values are high standards and quality of service, personnel professionalism and responsibility to clients.'*

Ms Inna Yatsyshyn, Director of Studies, noted: *'I am very pleased that we have reached this important milestone. We have sent out a clear signal in Kiev that excellence in education starts with high quality training on the job. EUROLTA prepares talented teachers who are ready to excel in the classroom. We look forward to working with the ICC to help nurture and develop the next generation of teachers in Ukraine.'*

EUROLTA Annual Conference in Germany

October 21, the Bavarian EUROLTA 2017 conference took place in Munich. The main topic of the conference was Apps and Co-Digital Media in the language classroom. The conference was organised by BVV (the umbrella organisation of all non-commercial adult language institutions in Bavaria, Germany) inviting all EUROLTA trainers and the members of a work group whose main interest is the development and the marketing of the teacher training programme.

The keynote and workshop speaker was Ms Silke Riegler, a university lecturer and in-company trainer based in Munich. The challenge that teachers are facing nowadays is how to embed digital tools purposefully and effectively into the modern foreign languages classroom. Ms Riegler started the workshop by guiding the EUROLTA trainers through the maze of technical possibilities

inside and outside the classroom. She gave an overview of what Internet and smartphone apps have to offer and how they can improve language learning.

It became apparent very fast that some trainers felt overwhelmed by the technology itself, while others feared that learners might not want to get engaged in digital communication. However, after a discussion about the advantages and challenges of using apps and the Internet in the classroom, the trainers quickly got involved in a hands-on session. They downloaded various apps and tried out a number of tasks themselves. Podcasts, Kahoot, Quizlet, blogs, wikis, QR codes, puzzle makers, videos, online dictionaries, online news, apps for vocabulary and grammar practice and weather apps were some of the tools discussed. Most of these apps are free, are accessible at different language levels and the possibility in using them is endless.

The speaker showed clearly that technology lends itself very well to personalised and independent learning where learners can work at their own pace, complete interactive exercises in class or at home and receive immediate feedback. Moreover authentic materials become more accessible to our learners. Ms Riegler showed that working with technology and incorporating learning apps in language classes can effectively add a new dimension to language teaching. New technology complements rather than replaces classroom learning. You can contact the speaker at silke.riegler@t-online.de.

RUDN University News

by Elena Malyuga

Joint Managing Editor TLC

Cambridge Certification Exams at RUDN University

In November and December, the Department of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Economics successfully held certification exams in English: Cambridge English First Certificate (FCE), Cambridge English Business Certificate (BEC Preliminary, BEC Vantage). In the framework of language training at the Faculty of Economics, students are preparing to take exams in General and Business English. Twice a year they are provided with an opportunity to confirm their level of foreign language proficiency at the international level.

International Research Conference at RUDN University

December 7, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia hosted a Research Conference on *World Economy in the 21st Century: Global Challenges and Development Prospects*. Participants discussed the issues of the global economy, international finance and foreign economic activity. Seminars on Business English for MA students were conducted by Barry Tomalin of Loughborough University London, the author of well-known works on intercultural and business communication.

Russian-Korean Dialogue Forum

November 9-10, the Russian-Korean Dialogue forum that took place in Seoul (Korea) provided a platform for the 5th Rectors' Forum of leading Russian and Korean universities. Russian-Korean Dialogue is an open forum intended to discuss topical public issues, as well as issues of Russian-South Korean relations. The forum is designed to establish a constructive dialogue between representatives of all spheres of public life of the two countries and maintain a solid basis for cooperation regardless of current political situation.

RUDN University MA Programme in International Marketing

RUDN University launched an MA programme in International Marketing in cooperation with the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. This full-time programme was introduced in the framework of a collaborative agreement with the University which is part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The term of study is 2 years.

19th World Festival of Youth and Students

RUDN University students attended the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students. The forum welcomed about 30 thousand participants coming from 188 countries. In the course of 8 days in October, the festival was attended by the largest delegation from Moscow consisting of 850 people (with over 10,000 applications submitted). The forum welcomed young politicians, entrepreneurs, musicians and journalists and offered lectures, seminars and joint projects. Discussion topics

covered technology, politics and the future of social policies. RUDN University students participated in sporting events (including athletics, volleyball and basketball), attended cultural events, and shared their opinions on different topics during discussions and round tables. The future economists also communicated with well-known politicians, writers, sportsmen, public figures, and the representatives of foreign delegations.

Meeting of Rectors and Vice Rectors for International Affairs

December 6, RUDN University hosted a meeting of Rectors and Vice Rectors for International Affairs organised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. The meeting covered issues associated with the implementation of the priority project Development of the Export Potential of the Russian Education System, including the BRICS space, The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the CIS.

The meeting incorporated round table discussions on the following topics: (1) improving and developing the regulatory framework for the training and accommodation of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation; (2) creating a set of measures to increase the attractiveness of Russian higher education, including the development of networking potential; (3) creating favourable conditions for foreign citizens studying within the territory of the Russian Federation; (4) promoting Russian education as a brand in the international market of educational services.

Training Language and Culture