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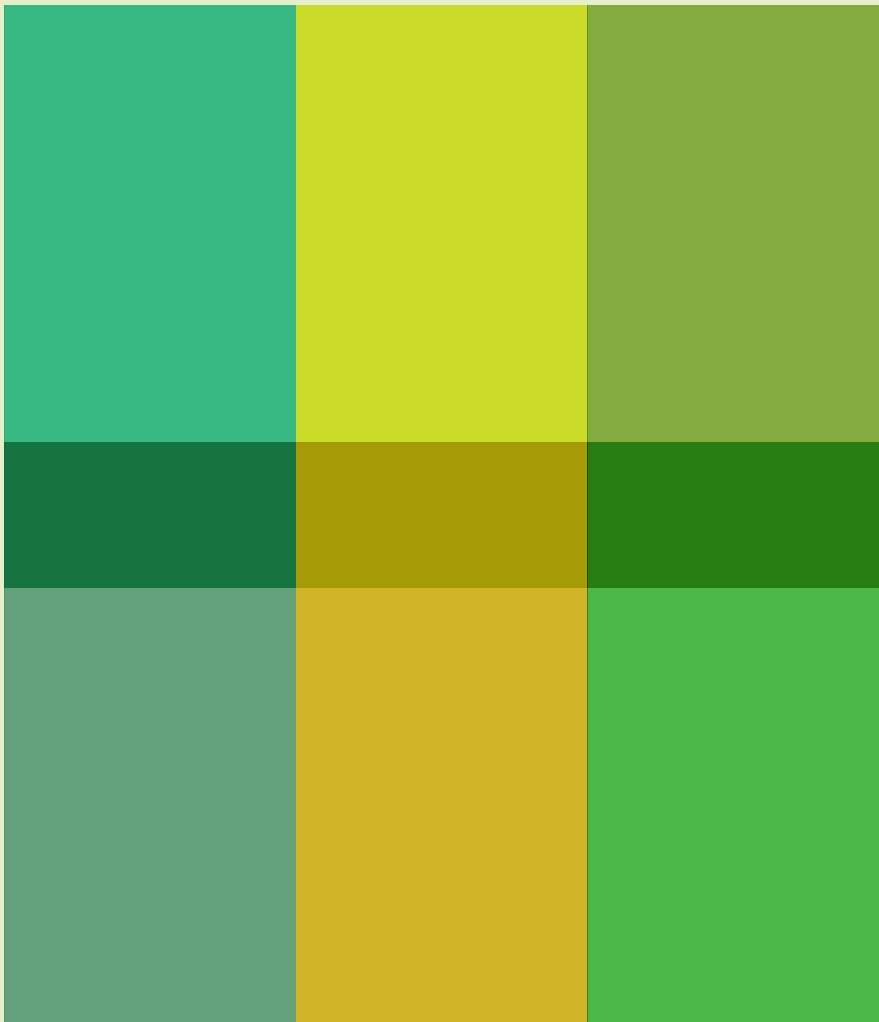
C·E·P·S *Journal*

Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal
Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij

The CEPS Journal is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing research papers in different fields of education, including scientific.

Aims & Scope

The CEPS Journal is an international peer-reviewed journal with an international board. It publishes original empirical and theoretical studies from a wide variety of academic disciplines related to the field of Teacher Education and Educational Sciences; in particular, it will support comparative studies in the field. Regional context is stressed but the journal remains open to researchers and contributors across all European countries and worldwide. There are four issues per year. Issues are focused on specific areas but there is also space for non-focused articles and book reviews.

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In 2001, the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS; see http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si) was established within the Faculty of Education to build upon experience acquired in the broad reform of the national educational system during the period of social transition in the 1990s, to upgrade expertise and to strengthen international cooperation. CEPS has established a number of fruitful contacts, both in the region – particularly with similar institutions in the countries of the Western Balkans – and with interested partners in EU member states and worldwide.

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Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij je mednarodno recenzirana revija z mednarodnim uredniškim odborom in s prostim dostopom. Namenjena je objavljanju člankov s področja izobraževanja učiteljev in edukacijskih ved.

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Revija je namenjena obravnavanju naslednjih področij: poučevanje, učenje, vzgoja in izobraževanje, socialna pedagogika, specialna in rehabilitacijska pedagogika, predšolska pedagogika, edukacijske politike, supervizija, poučevanje slovenskega jezika in književnosti, poučevanje matematike, računalništva, naravoslovja in tehnike, poučevanje družboslovja in humanistike, poučevanje na področju umetnosti, visokošolsko izobraževanje in izobraževanje odraslih. Poseben poudarek bo namenjen izobraževanju učiteljev in spodbujanju njihovega profesionalnega razvoja.

V reviji so objavljeni znanstveni prispevki, in sicer teoretični prispevki in prispevki, v katerih so predstavljeni rezultati kvantitavnih in kvalitativnih empiričnih raziskav. Še posebej poudarjen je pomen komparativnih raziskav.

Revija izide štirikrat letno. Številke so tematsko opredeljene, v njih pa je prostor tudi za netematske prispevke in predstavitve ter recenzije novih publikacij.

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Reviews

Editorial

Teaching foreign languages to young learners has gained substantial attention across the world in recent years. More and more countries have lowered the age of foreign language learning to the beginning of primary school or even lower. In most educational contexts, a communicative or meaning-focused teaching approach has typically been implemented, although a clear understanding of young learners' communicative competence in their foreign language has still not been properly and comprehensively defined (Johnstone, 2000; Butler & Zeng, 2014). What is more, our knowledge about how communicative abilities among young foreign language learners can be assessed most effectively lacks a theoretical and empirical background. It is therefore of utmost importance to identify the main factors and their co- and inter/intra-relations in order to finally better understand the way young learners learn foreign languages and how they should be assessed so as to demonstrate their language knowledge and competences.

As argued above, there many reasons why this issue is dedicated to assessing foreign language proficiency of young learners. Assessment has been neglected in many subject matter disciplines, and language assessment is no exception. In addition, empirically based information on assessment methodology for young learners is too scarce to offer sufficient information for teachers, language counsellors and language policy decision makers. It is, therefore, more than welcome that the first three articles address the issues of assessing young foreign language learners from different perspectives.

In addition to the articles addressing the main topic of this issue (young foreign language assessment) there are two more texts bringing interesting discussions on (1) the use of comics to reduce gender differences in reading literacy at the primary level of education, and (2) the challenges of the academic profession in Croatia, whose practitioners find themselves between teaching and doing research. The issue concludes with a book review of an internationally compiled publication on teaching English to young learners.

The first article, written by Dina Tsagari and entitled *Assessment Orientations of State Primary EFL Teachers in Two Mediterranean Countries*, investigates the centrality of classroom-based assessment (CBLA) in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching among primary EFL teachers in Cyprus and Greece. The study answers three relatively important questions: (1) What are the CBLA practices that Greek and Cypriot EFL primary school teachers employ with their young learners? (2) What level of training in CBLA areas do the EFL teachers have? and (3) To what extent do teachers perceive a need for further in-service

training in CBLA? The data show that both groups of teachers use tests as their basic CBLA method with varying frequency, but that their tests include a limited range of language skills and knowledge (vocabulary and grammar). The test tasks are rather unchallenging and the criteria teachers use to select testing materials and/or provide feedback (a deficit-oriented rather than positively oriented approach) on test results are not consistent. Whereas teachers express their doubts regarding the use of tests, the results show that alternative forms of assessment have only been implemented sporadically in primary schools in both countries. In addition, teachers do not seem to have a thorough understanding of alternative assessment methods due to a lack of appropriate training. What needs to be researched further is the teachers' perception of their personal professional development needs in CBLA. For example, the teachers are aware of alternative and formative ways of assessment (e.g., portfolio, peer- or self-assessment) but they are not able to implement them efficiently. In spite of the fact that the teachers express a need for training in CBLA, they still have difficulties specifying their needs in a concrete way. However, there are some promising signs that the participating EFL teachers are seriously considering the use of CBLA and are open to training initiatives to broaden their assessment literacy. This leads to the important finding that existing BA and MA language assessment courses and workshops also need to capitalise on teachers' existing experience and practices, to recognise the reality and constraints influencing teachers' assessment practices, and to encourage an action-research orientation to professional development, which will result in the combining of theory with practice in the classroom. This study also clearly shows that the implementation of the CEFR for assessment purposes and, in particular, assessment *for* learning, which is one of the most important issues in early language learning today, is very slow in classrooms in Europe. It seems that language learning still relies on summative testing of vocabulary, grammar and writing in the so-called communicative language classroom.

The second article addresses some open issues of diagnostic assessment, which several language researchers have identified as an important but neglected area that has not been as well developed as other types of language assessment, such as proficiency and achievement testing. It was not until 2004 that Alderson (2004) designed a list of features that many people agree characterise most diagnostic approaches and could be transferred to the foreign language assessment discipline. It is only recently that researchers have started to develop a framework that encompasses the entire enterprise of diagnostic assessment, and that identifies learners' strengths and weaknesses in the less well-documented areas of second/foreign language reading and listening (Harding, Alderson, & Brunfaut, 2015). The current article, *Diagnostic Tests in Czech for Pupils with a First Language Different from the*

Language of Schooling, authored by Kateřina Vodičková and Yvona Kostelecká, attempts to validate a new diagnostic test developed for primary school pupils whose L1 is other than Czech. Since the number of immigrants in the Czech population is likely to grow even more, its relevance will only increase in the future. The development of a diagnostic test for L2 primary school learners represents one of the first attempts to design an assessment instrument that would help teachers and immigrant learners to integrate more efficiently into Czech society. The authors identify fields in which further development is desirable, such as financial and human support, the training of administrators, examiners/raters and experts in providing feedback to the test users, etc. An important finding refers to the need to provide prompt and detailed feedback to test takers, teachers and schools. Another revealing discovery relates to the need to discover the impact of the diagnostic test on teaching and learning processes of Czech as a second language.

Learners between Childhood and Adulthood: Assessing Writing Competences of Teens Learning French as a Foreign Language, written by Meta Lah, is the third article tackling language assessment as a topic of discussion. The article introduces young adolescents learning French as a foreign language, who commonly find themselves between childhood and adulthood and may be identified as a "between-age group". The question set by the author as to which descriptors to use in order to analyse the writing skills of these learners is therefore highly relevant. Several parameters were included in the analysis (task achievement, communicative suitability, orthography, grammar and vocabulary), albeit based on a small sample of writing scripts collected from pupils participating in a national French language competition at the end of upper primary school. The results show that the pupils were able to meet the form requirements better than the length requirements, and that the content of the letters was mostly suitable. The pupils were also expected to use basic vocabulary and simple grammatical structures mostly correctly and appropriately. However, the compositions varied greatly regarding the language level. Another important finding refers to the appropriateness of writing assessment descriptors and their relevance as placement CEFR tools. It was discovered that the AYLITT (assessment of young learner literacy linked to the CEFR project) descriptors, which are usually used for young learners, seemed to be more appropriate than the more general CEFR descriptors, which were developed exclusively for adults. The former proved more relevant due to the fact that they are more explicit and include in-between levels (for example, A1/A2 or A2/B1 levels), which characterise the language development of young learners and, according to this study, young adolescents, as well.

The next text written by Matjaž Duh and entitled *Art Appreciation for Developing Communication Skills among Preschool Children* focuses on the

contemporary teaching of fine arts. The article discusses how works of art may affect children's communication skills. The results of the study show that children respond to works of art in different ways and at a number of levels. It was discovered that children internalised the given artworks and were able to express their emotions in words. The main finding is thus that a systematic development of art appreciation among preschool children may lead to positive effects on their communication competence.

The final article, entitled *Between Teaching and Research: Challenges of the Academic Profession in Croatia* by Marko Turk and Jasminka Ledić, discusses the synergy between teaching and research at academic institutions in Croatia. The study attempts to identify how academics see their roles: as teachers or/and as researchers. The authors use a qualitative approach (a standardised semi-structured interview) with 60 participating interviewees. The findings reveal that participating academics see their roles most often as teachers, then as teachers and researchers, and finally as researchers. This study brings new perspectives (sometimes contradicting facts) to the research already conducted in Croatia on the challenges facing academic staff in this country. It seems that there is a difference between academics' interests and their perception of themselves as primarily teachers or researchers due to external factors, such as increased teaching load, academic promotion requirements giving priority to research over teaching, non-existent or negligible support for teaching and doing research, etc.

Readers may also be interested in reading the book review by Barbara Lesničar focusing on the book *International Perspectives on Teaching English to Young Learners*, edited by Sarah Rich and published by Palgrave Macmillian in 2014. The reviewer highlights the need for more research in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. English language teaching has spread to young learners' classrooms across the globe, while providing evidence-based and appropriate support to teachers has mostly been negligible or non-existent. Let me conclude with the words of the reviewer: "The fresh insights this volume offers will help teachers to cope with different challenges in their day-to-day practice. …. it is evident that global dialogue about TEYL is not only necessary, but is also beneficial to our field."

KARMEN PIŽORN

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Harding, L., Alderson, J. C., & Brunfaut, T. (2015). Diagnostic assessment of reading and listening in a second or foreign language: Elaborating on diagnostic principles. *Language Testing*, 32(3), 317-336.

Johnstone, R. (2000). Context-sensitive assessment of modern language in primary (elementary) and early secondary education: Scotland and the European experience. *Language Testing*, 17, 123–143.

Assessment Orientations of State Primary EFL Teachers in Two Mediterranean Countries

Dina Tsagari[1]

∽   Many researchers have highlighted the central role that assessment plays in second language (L2) classrooms and have expressed the need for research into classroom-based language assessment (CBLA), an area that is gradually coming into its own in the field of language testing and assessment (e.g., Hasselgreen, 2008; Leung, 2014; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Turner, 2012). Motivated by the prominence of CBLA in recent discussions, the present study set out to investigate the CBLA practices, knowledge and skills of Greek and Cypriot primary school EFL teachers. The data was collected through teacher interviews and classroom-based tests. The results showed that teachers employ a summative orientation towards evaluating their students' performance and seem to have unclear ideas about the purposes and implementation of formative assessment, mainly due to lack of professional training in language assessment. The paper concludes with suggestions as to how EFL teachers' CBLA literacy can be enhanced.

Keywords: language testing and assessment, classroom-based language assessment, assessment literacy, interviews, classroom-based tests, teacher training

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Usmeritve državnih osnovnošolskih učiteljev angleščine kot tujega jezika na področju preverjanja/ocenjevanja v dveh mediteranskih državah

Dina Tsagari

Veliko raziskovalcev poudarja osrednjo vlogo, ki jo ima preverjanje/ocenjevanje pri učencih drugega jezika (J 2), in potrebo po raziskovanju procesov jezikovnega preverjanja/ocenjevanja v razredu. Preverjanje/Ocenjevanje jezikov v razredni situaciji postopoma pridobiva na pomembnosti in postaja področje raziskovanja v sklopu preverjanja in ocenjevanja jezikov (npr. Hasselgreen, 2008; Leung, 2014; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Turner, 2012). Zaradi pogostih razprav o pomembnosti preverjanja/ocenjevanja jezikov v razredu smo v raziskavi skušali ugotoviti, kako se to izvaja v praksi, koliko vedenja ter katere zmožnosti imajo grški in ciprski osnovnošolski učitelji angleščine kot tujega jezika na tem področju. Podatki so bili zbrani s pomočjo intervjujev učiteljev in testiranjem v razredih. Izsledki kažejo, da učitelji pri evalviranju dosežkov učencev uporabljajo sumativni pristop ter da nimajo jasne predstave o namenu in načinu izvajanja formativnega ocenjevanja – vzrok je predvsem v pomanjkljivem strokovnem spopolnjevanju na področju preverjanja/ocenjevanja jezikov. V sklepnem delu so podani predlogi, kako bi lahko pri učiteljih angleščine kot tujega jezika izboljšali pismenost na področju preverjanja/ocenjevanja jezikov v razredu.

Ključne besede: ocenjevanje in preverjanje znanja, preverjanje/ocenjevanje jezikov v razredu, pismenost na področju preverjanja/ocenjevanja znanja in zmožnosti, intervjuji, testiranje v razredu, spopolnjevanje učiteljev

Introduction

Assessment constitutes an important aspect of teachers' daily practice in the broad field of English language teaching (ELT) programmes worldwide. Classroom-based language assessment (CBLA), in particular, plays a central role in language teaching and learning and requires considerable time, knowledge and skills to be successfully implemented (Cheng, Rogers, & Wang, 2008; Leung, 2014). Given its importance, CBLA is not to be neglected or taken for granted. Its effectiveness should become the driving force for every teacher who seeks to maximise student performance, maintain and/or increase student interest. Teachers must therefore be alert to situations in which opportunities for assessment appear, and must prepare efficiently for their CBLA activities.

Although the field of language testing and assessment (LTA) has recognised the importance of CBLA, language teachers are very often found to be insufficiently prepared for their assessment tasks and lack basic CBLA knowledge (Fulcher, 2012; Gatullo, 2000; Hasselgreen, 2000; Hasselgreen et al., 2004; Tsagari, 2012; Tsagari & Michaeloudes, 2012; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Researchers call for further investigation into teachers' CBLA practices (Leung, 2014), as we still do not have a complete picture of the ways in which language teachers cope with assessment demands and whether they possess the required competencies to carry out effective assessments. Motivated by such calls, the current small-scale comparative study will attempt to delineate the CBLA landscape in two Mediterranean countries and investigate the *status quo* of teachers' CBLA literacy in the state primary school sector.

Literature Review

Leung (2014) stresses that assessment is an integral part of teaching that has received a lot of attention recently. He also points out that CBLA, in particular, has been a major focus in curricula and is part of teachers' daily life in many parts of the world (Davison & Leung, 2009). However, CBLA is not an easy task. Cheng, Rogers and Wang (2008) emphasise that "the day-to-day assessment of student learning is unquestionably one of the teacher's most demanding, complex and important tasks" (Cheng, Rogers, & Wang, 2008, p. 10). It is indeed the case that in many ELT programmes teachers undertake the task of designing and administering classroom tests themselves. They are also required to use various forms of continuous or formative assessment procedures and develop or adapt scoring schemes for their institution. Furthermore, in many contexts teachers are faced with external testing procedures, e.g.,

school-leaving examinations and international standardised tests. In Europe in particular, new developments in language teaching, as well as EU policies on language learning, require new competencies of teachers. For example, the European Language Portfolio (Morrow, 2004; Schneider & Lenz, 2001) highlights self-assessment as a supplement to teacher assessment. Peer assessment has also been added to the pedagogical agenda of the innovative foreign language teacher (Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015). These developments call for new skills to be acquired by language teachers (see also Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004), as the more teachers understand the nature and requirements of their assessment tasks, especially classroom-based assessment, the better they will be able to make principled decisions that can lead to beneficial uses of assessment to support enhanced language learning. For these reasons, teachers need to acquire sufficient levels of "*assessment literacy*".

Stiggins (2001, p. 531) defines "*assessment literacy*" of language teachers as representing the standards of professional excellence that teachers need to attain in relation to assessment, such as the ability to critically evaluate, compile, design and monitor assessment procedures in order to enhance learners' language achievement and use grading and scoring procedures based on theoretical knowledge. Assessment literacy is considered an important aspect of professionalism of language teachers and has become the topic of many presentations and discussions (Hasselgreen, 2008; Kaftandjieva, 2008; Reckase, 2008; Rogier, 2010). Language teachers with a solid background in assessment are said to be well equipped to integrate assessment into instruction and use appropriate forms of teaching leading to enhanced learning (Coombe, Al-Mamly, & Troudi, 2009; Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Malone, 2008; Stoynoff & Chapelle, 2005; Taylor, 2009).

Progress towards creating a culture of teachers who are assessment literate has, however, been slow. In his discussion of the professionalisation of language testing in the 21st century, Bachman (2000, pp. 19-20) points out that "the majority of practitioners who develop and use language tests, both in language classrooms and as part of applied linguistics research, still do so with little or no professional training". This view is shared by Alderson (2005, p. 4), who notes that "Tests made by teachers are often of poor quality, and the insight they could offer into achievement, progress, strengths and weaknesses is usually very limited indeed". Empirical research also characterises teachers' CBLA practices as largely incongruent with recommended best practice, e.g., teachers are depicted as heavy users of tests (Goslin, 1967; Gullickson, 1984) or as falling short in terms of representing the full range of students' language skills in their assessment instruments and methods (Bobda, 1993; Pavlou & Ioannou-Georgiou,

2005). Teacher-made tests often contain inadequate or unclear instructions and do not specify assessment criteria (Khalil, 2010). Teachers are not concerned with the validity and reliability of their assessments (Sook, 2003) and report assessment results only by means of numbers (Pavlou & Ioannou-Georgiou, 2005). In addition, they use formats corresponding to those used by formal external examinations (Falvey & Cheng, 2000; Rogers, 1991), they seldom reflect on what is being assessed, and they are unaware of the assessment work of their colleagues (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen & Deakin-Crick, 2003).

Teacher assessment practices are also found to vary according to teachers' experience, their views on the role of assessment in the curriculum, their collegial expectations and their external reporting demands (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004). Studies also reveal that the practical constraints of the educational context (e.g., large classes and heavy teacher workload) are likely to affect the assessment of students' language abilities (Sook, 2003). Other studies have identified the presence of tensions between administrative and educational purposes for the use of assessment instruments and state-mandated assessment policies, which seem to have a restrictive effect on CBLA practices (Arkoudis & O'Loughlin, 2004; Davison, 2004; Rogers, 1991).

Even though teachers report little or no training in CBLA, they do in fact show a high degree of awareness in determining their LTA priorities (Al-Saadat, 2004; Hasselgreen, Carlsen, & Helness, 2004; Tsagari & Vogt, forthcoming; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). However, LTA training programmes do not always adequately cater for the assessment needs of language teachers. Jin (2010) found that, even though there was adequate coverage of essential aspects of theory and practice of language testing in the courses offered to EFL teachers in China, student classroom practice and educational and psychological measurement received considerably less attention across the country (see also Csépes, 2013).

To conclude, the literature reports teachers' limited knowledge and training with regard to the standards required in order to practice successful CBLA procedures compatible with the teachers' teaching techniques or the needs of learners (Arkoudis & O'Loughlin, 2004; Davison, 2004; Falvey & Cheng, 2000; Ferman, 1998; Shohamy, 1998). However, studies conducted in the field of CBLA have mainly been carried out with teenage and adult learners, while assessing young learners has remained largely under-researched. Except for the seminal work of Penny McKay (2006), who built a comprehensive framework for the assessment of young language learners in both foreign language and second language learning situations, the number of CBLA studies with young learners (5–12 years old) has been very limited. Assessing young foreign language learners is a sensitive area and as such deserves special attention, as inappropriate

assessment procedures may have lifelong negative consequences for students' attitudes and motivation regarding language learning (Nikolov, 2016). If educators are to support and enhance the CBLA literacy of primary school teachers, more must be learned about how teachers currently perceive and use CBLA and what their training needs are. The present study will therefore investigate the CBLA practices and training needs of language teachers of young learners in the primary sector of two educational contexts (Greece and Cyprus) where research in the field is limited. The results of the study are expected to help teachers, researchers and decision makers to understand and apply appropriate assessment procedures for young learners.

Research Methodology

Research questions

Motivated by the relevant literature and the need for research in the area of assessing young learners in the two contexts in question, the present study set out to explore the nature of the CBLA practices of EFL teachers working in the primary sector. The following research questions guided the study:

- Which CBLA practices do Greek and Cypriot EFL primary school teachers employ with their young learners?
- What level of training in CBLA do the EFL teachers have?
- To what extent do the teachers perceive a need for further in-service training in CBLA?

Parallels will be drawn between what the literature proposes in the field of language assessment and the data collected with respect to current teachers' CBLA literacy. Moreover, since this study was conducted in two educational contexts, comparisons will be made between the two groups involved.

Research Design

The current study followed a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) to data collection that aimed at triangulating data from different sources in order to enhance the validity of the study (Turner, 2014). Interviews focusing on CBLA assessment practices constituted a basic tool for the collection of data from teachers (see also Cheng & Wang, 2007; Pelly & Allison, 2000). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) note that interviews allow for great depth in comparison to other methods of data collection.

The interview questionnaire prepared for use in the present study was mainly exploratory; it consisted of open-ended questions that sought to determine teachers' assessment practices and procedures (see Appendix A). The reliability of the interview questions was attained by pre-testing the questionnaire (Silverman, 1993) with a small sample of English teachers.

The interview questions were divided into three sections. The first part of the questionnaire (Bio Section) was used to gain an overall idea of the teachers' instructional background. In the second section (Assessment Procedures), teachers were asked to provide information about their assessment practices in terms of types and frequency of tests, use of other forms of assessment, etc. The third part of the questionnaire (Training in Assessment) contained questions about teacher training: it identified characteristics of pre- and in-service training and the extent to which teachers felt appropriately prepared for their CBLA tasks.

Once the relevant permissions were obtained in both countries to carry out the research study, teachers were contacted and informed of its purposes and were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. The interviews were conducted at venues and times that were convenient for the teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. At the end of the data collection period, all of the teachers' answers were processed and coded. The interview responses were initially sorted according to the predetermined questions. The data analysis involved a number of readings of the data entries and a progressive refining of the categories of analysis.

At the end of each interview, sample tests were collected from the teachers. These were analysed in terms of the types of language skills assessed and in terms of frequencies and percentages (see Table 1).

For the interpretation of the data, the study employed a sociocultural theory perspective that has recently had a significant impact on the analysis and interpretation of classroom experiences and the development of learning skills (Kramsch, 2002; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). In line with this way of thinking, the data were related to the sociocultural reality of the two contexts under study and reflected upon through the realities of the local education system, society and culture in which they occurred.

Context and participants

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught from grade one in state primary schools in Greece and Cyprus. The weekly contact hours allocated

for tuition vary between two and three, depending on local regulations. Class-rooms can accommodate a maximum of 25 students, depending on the school resources. The state sector overall is responsible for implementing the country's obligations stemming from EU policies concerning language teaching and as-sessment, as stipulated in the English Language Curricula in both countries.[23] The latter are based on CEFR levels (Council of Europe, 2001) and follow good practice in assessment, e.g., by suggesting formative and summative orienta-tions in CBLA.

In the present study, four Greek and four Cypriot EFL state primary school teachers agreed to take part in the study (eight teachers in total). The se-lection of teachers was based on a random sample, as the current study did not target any particular general characteristics, e.g., the age or gender of the teach-ers. The teachers taught fifth- and sixth-grade school students (10–11 and 11–12 years, respectively) and met the basic requirements for employment in the pri-mary sector in each country, e.g., the teachers in Cyprus had a bachelor degree in Education, while the teachers in Greece had a degree in English Language and Literature. Four of the teachers (one from Greece and three from Cyprus) also had an MA degree (Teaching English, Applied Linguistics or Educational Leadership). The teachers' level of experience ranged from 4 to 16 years.

The next section presents the results of the study where teachers' CBLA practices are illustrated via extracts from the interviews. In order to safeguard the identities of the participants, code names will appear next to the extracts identified, first by country – CY (Cyprus) or GR (Greece) – and then by a code name to denote the different teachers, e.g. T1, T2, etc.

Findings

Testing practices

In response to the first question regarding whether the teachers test-ed their students, the interviewees explained that, even though they were not obliged to do so, they usually tested their students through paper-and-pencil tests. The teachers were asked how often and why they use tests to assess their students' performance. The answers indicated that the majority of the teachers (six of the eight) usually test their students every 3–4 units, while two of the

2   (Greece) Pedagogical Institute (2003) Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework for Compulsory Education DEPPS (official English translation of part of the text available). Retrieved on 15.09.2015, from http://www.pi-schools.gr/download/programs/depps/english/14th.pdf

3   (Cyprus) Pedagogical Institute (2012) The English Curriculum (in Greek). Retrieved on 15.09.2015, from http://www.schools.ac.cy/klimakio/Themata/Anglika/curricula.html

teachers (GRT3, GRT4) test their students as soon as they finish each unit. This helps them to find out about the students' progress, to reflect on their instruction – e.g. "*that tells me how to plan the next unit*" (CYT1) – and to identify possible problems students face, which can subsequently be addressed through remedial work.

When designing their tests, Cypriot teachers explained that they primarily focus on two criteria: average students and, to a certain extent, Ministry standards.

"Of course, average students. The test needs to address average students, but my tests have tasks of different levels of difficulty" (CYT4).

On the other hand, in designing their tests, Greek teachers consider the level of the class and the individual student, as well as the areas they have taught.

In terms of content, the results from the analysis of a sample of teacher-made tests (see Table 1) show a strong preference for the assessment of vocabulary and grammar, followed by writing, while testing of reading and listening skills was infrequent. Speaking tasks were rarely encountered in the tests, and were completely absent in the case of the Cypriot sample.

Table 1. *Results of test analysis*

Skills/Elements	Greece (N=192 activities, 35 tests)		Cyprus (N=106 activities, 19 tests)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Reading	8	4.1	6	5.7
Writing	25	13.0	14	13.2
Listening	6	3.1	4	3.8
Speaking	4	2.1	–	–
Grammar	70	36.5	18	17.7
Vocabulary	79	41.1	64	62.7

Further analysis of the tests showed that the most popular task type for the assessment of vocabulary was sentence and word completion. Other tasks were: matching, crossword puzzles, true or false, correct sentences, odd word out, answer questions and finding the correct order. Regarding the assessment of grammar, two types of tasks were used more frequently: sentence completion and answering questions. In general, the tests analysed followed more or less the same pattern in both contexts.

Marking of tests

With regard to the marking of tests, five of the teachers (GRT2, GRT4, CYT1, CYT3, CYT4) reported that they were not strict with the correction of tests. One of the teachers noted "*I'm strict on the things I have taught and the objectives of the test tasks*" (CYT2). The format of the tests also seems to play an important role in the way teachers mark tests. As GRT3 explained, she is strict if it is a multiple choice test, but if it is an open-ended task she tends to be lenient.

Test usefulness

The questionnaire responses also showed that the teachers had similar opinions with regard to the usefulness of their test results. For instance, the majority of the Cypriot teachers (CYT1, CYT2 and CYT4) believe that classroom tests are an indication of what students can do, and that such texts demonstrate whether or not students have studied. However, CYT2 thinks otherwise: "*there's always the possibility that test results are not indicative of what the student knows*".

Greek teachers also shared this belief: for them, test results provide diagnostic information, e.g., they indicate the problems students face and the learning areas teachers need to emphasise instructionally. As GRT2 stressed, tests "*tell me almost everything. They clearly show each student's progress*".

Teachers were also asked to comment on the extent to which the criteria they use are clear to students. All of the teachers except GRT4 stressed that students know exactly what needs to be done and that their assessment criteria are clear, e.g., "*my students know what the test exercises ask from them and the way I mark*" (CYT4).

In response to the question as to whether teachers take classroom tests into account or whether they include test results in student reports, the teachers shared the same opinions. Six of the teachers take test results into account, while two (GRT2, GRT4) do not. GRT4 justified her choice as follows: "*No, I don't. Otherwise their marks would be basically very low for most of them*". Thus, GRT4 takes into consideration the psychological parameters that are likely to affect her students.

Feedback provided to students

Teachers provide certain types of feedback to students once the tests are marked. For example, the majority of teachers report test results in class while the test papers are handed back to the students and highlight the mistakes students have made and the areas they identify as problematic, e.g.,

"I show them the tests and then we have a discussion about how to avoid making the same mistakes" (GRT1)

It is also worth mentioning that, in addition to answering students' questions, teachers try to do remedial work to help students overcome their language problems. One of the teachers (CYT3), however, does not do remedial work with her students but instead comments positively on the test results. This teacher added:

> "If I see that there is some kind of difficulty, I will indicate that on the student's test paper" (CYT3)

Students' reactions to tests

When asked about students' reaction to tests, teachers believed that in general students like tests and look forward to them (GRT1, GRT2). They also said that students find tests easy but treat them seriously (GRT3, CYT2) and have a positive attitude towards them (CYT1, CYT3, CYT4). Some teachers pointed that, given the age of the students, tests should also include game-like tasks (CYT3).

Standardised tests

In response to the question as to whether teachers had ever worked with standardised tests (e.g., *Cambridge Preliminary English Test, Key English Test or English Young Learners,* etc.) or whether they had advised learners in this area, the majority of the teachers said that they had never done so. This is because there is no requirement to prepare students for such tests in the public sector. Even if there was such a requirement, teachers reported that they are not qualified or trained to assist students in their preparation for external tests.

Other types of assessment

In response to the question as to whether teachers used alternative approaches in their assessment repertoire – e.g., portfolio assessment, self- or peer-assessment – the analysis showed that, despite being aware of these methods, teachers were still far from implementing them appropriately or efficiently with young learners. Teachers did show some awareness of alternative forms of assessment. GRT2, for example, said that she used games and various other playful activities, while GRT3 reported that she used self- and peer- assessment as well as group work in order to assess her students. However, neither of these two teachers could explain exactly how they did so, which was true of the majority of the Cypriot teachers who acknowledged the use of alternative methods of assessment, e.g.:

> "If I want to assess vocabulary, I will have a Bingo activity where, through the use of dice, students will ask and answer or find things out. Through

this, for instance, I can check their vocabulary" (CYT3).

CYT2 also referred to the use of projects for assessment purposes, e.g.:

"We usually have some mini-scale projects. For instance, we worked with a short story, 'The Three Little Pigs', and I prepared a small project for them, which I then use as a form of evaluation".

CYT2 also used plays performed during the lesson as a way to assess student performance:

"Some units are ideal for using 'theatre plays' because they are very indicative of what they know. They are more natural, more spontaneous, and as a result you can understand their level and progress".

With regard to portfolio assessment, only CYT4 said that she had partly used portfolios, while CYT2 was planning to implement portfolios the following year. CYT1 stated that she "*checks on students through singing activities*", while CYT2 and CYT3 stressed that they used either pair or group work as a means of assessment.

The usefulness of alternative forms of assessment
Teachers' responses were divided with regard to the usefulness of alternative methods of assessment. For instance, Cypriot teachers believe that alternative methods are actually better than tests, e.g., "*of course these are better ways because they are more indicative of what students can do*" (CYT4), whereas Greek teachers believe that they are equally useful to tests (GRT2, GRT3), e.g., "*I think they are equally useful and I wish I had more time to discuss them with the students*" (GRT1).
    While the majority of the teachers said that they use alternative forms of assessment to make their teaching more effective and adjust to the students' needs, two teachers (GRT3, CYT3) reported that such forms of assessment help students to overcome certain difficulties. Teachers are not, however, interested in the results of such methods (e.g., GRT1, CYT2), explaining that they simply keep a record of the results of alternative assessments (e.g., they note the results in their notebooks). Overall, teachers find alternative forms of assessment very helpful because these methods are believed to enhance both their teaching methods and student learning, e.g., "*I take them into account and try to adjust my teaching to my students' needs* (GRT2)".

Other factors teachers consider when evaluating students

Teachers were asked about any other factors they consider when they evaluate their students. The results revealed a difference between the two groups. Greek teachers appear to take into consideration the personality of their students in their evaluations during lessons, as well as the students' participation and effort throughout the year:

> "I pay attention to the student himself, to his or her effort, willingness and behaviour." (GRT2)

Cypriot teachers, on the other hand, concentrate on students' overall performance and willingness to learn, their first language (L1) and their family background. CYT2 and CYT3 explained that students with an L1 other than Greek face a number of problems, and that this is crucial when evaluating these students. Finally, CYT1 pays attention to family problems or even learning difficulties such as dyslexia and other language difficulties.

Teacher training in CBLA

Concerning professional seminars and training, Cypriot teachers (CYT1, CYT2, and CYT4), unlike their Greek colleagues, reported attendance of several seminars organised by the Pedagogical Institute, which they found helpful and practical. The teachers were also asked whether they had learned anything about language testing and assessment during their pre-service teacher training. Even though preparation for assessment is important to the respondents, they stressed that training in language assessment had been neglected during their undergraduate studies and pre-service training, e.g.:

> "…. definitely not. We didn't receive any such information" (CYT4)

> "I do not feel prepared… There's no preparation in such matters for the primary school English teacher" (CYT2)

The general feeling of the teachers was that work needs to be done in language assessment because teachers lack the appropriate knowledge and they need to improve their overall competence in CBLA. Teachers were also asked about the type of CBLA training they would like to receive. One of the teachers commented:

> "I believe that there should be better professional training and orientation in language assessment because, although we may actually use some individual and group assessment, this is not enough…" (CYT3)

Summary of the results and discussion

The present study highlights the centrality of CBLA in EFL teaching and learning by exploring teachers' CBLA practices for assessing their young EFL students' language skills. The study also evaluates the quality of teacher training in this area as part of the teachers' professional agenda.

As the data showed, despite minor differences, both groups of teachers use tests as their basic CBLA method with varying frequency, as this helps them to gauge the progress of their students' learning and to assess the effectiveness of their teaching. Nevertheless, the analysis showed that, in terms of content, teacher-made tests include a limited range of language skills, usually restricted to the assessment of vocabulary and grammar. There is also lack of creativity with regard to the task types. Furthermore, the criteria teachers use to select testing materials or provide feedback on test results is inconsistent. Feedback procedures in particular seem to reflect a deficit-oriented approach rather than the more positively worded feedback that is inherent in the Common European Framework of Reference and its descriptors, which value competencies even on low levels rather than highlight deficits (Vogt, 2004). If frequently employed, such practices will probably be of no particular benefit to teachers and students in the long run, and are likely to result in processes that are not conducive to learning the language (referred to as the 'washback effect', see Alderson & Wall, 1993).

Irrespective of the students' positive reaction, the teachers expressed their doubts regarding the use of tests as a means of assessment. They seem to be aware that testing procedures can help them to plan their lessons or identify students' problematic areas, but they are also aware of the need to adopt methods that appeal to young learners. The teachers were sensitive towards their students age with regard to marking, and they take into account psychological factors that might affect students' learning. The results also showed that alternative forms of assessment have not yet fully entered mainstream assessment practices in primary schools in both countries. Concepts related to alternative assessment methods remain fuzzy to the respondents in the study, which is attributable to low language assessment literacy levels. Consequently, teachers have difficulties specifying their personal professional development needs in CBLA, despite their desire to receive training in this area.

Summarising the findings from the interviews, one can see that the respondents in our study tend to revert to traditional assessment procedures that are essentially written, and typically use similar assessment formats. The results indicate that teachers of young EFL learners experience various roles; for example, as well as being teachers, they are 'supporters of language development' and

they also play the role of 'examiners' and 'raters'. In these roles, teachers place an emphasis mainly on 'what' students are able to achieve rather than 'how' they can be supported in their language learning. As a result, teachers fail to grasp the potential for the implementation of formative assessment with their students. This is mainly due to a lack of teacher training. Language assessment in the educational contexts examined is therefore reduced to assessment *of* learning (summative assessment) rather than assessment *for* learning (formative assessment). As noted by Rea-Dickins (2007), this approach is likely to lead teachers to an orientation towards 'language display' rather than 'language development opportunities'.

The evidence also showed that the teacher education programmes offered to EFL teachers of young learners do not provide adequate training in CBLA. In their answers, teachers stressed that they do not consider themselves to be competent or literate in CBLA; they were aware of more recent forms of assessment, such as portfolio, peer- or self-assessment, but were far from being able to efficiently implement them due to a lack of professional training.

These findings are troubling given that the international research literature proposes a synergy between the different types of assessment for improving student learning and achievement in schools (Black & Wiliam, 1998). The data gathered does, however, provide some promising signs that EFL teachers are thinking seriously about their place within CBLA and are ready for greater levels of involvement in training initiatives in order to broaden and diversify their assessment literacy, with varying priorities depending on contextual assessment requirements. The teachers repeatedly pointed out that their assessment competency had not yet reached a level that would allow them to feel sufficiently confident about their CBLA activities; rather, they realise that professional training is required, and that this aspect of their teaching is one that definitely needs improvement. What will benefit teachers is professional development in this area.

Attending to teachers' professional knowledge and practice in CBLA will contribute to the development of a dynamic and contextually sensitive assessment literacy culture in EFL education of young learners. The challenge undoubtedly lies in providing appropriate and available professional development opportunities for teachers to meet their assessment needs. An assessment literacy development strategy could, for example, rely on a combination of training programmes in varying proportions: formal CBLA courses (BA and MA level) and pre- and in-service CBLA workshops (of appropriate length and quality) will expose teachers to new ideas and help them to meet their professional assessment needs and responsibilities. However, such courses and workshops also

need to capitalise on teachers' existing experience and practices, and take into account the results of assessment needs analysis, such as those reported in the present study. Training programmes also need to recognise and deal with the reality and constraints influencing teachers' assessment practices and encourage an action-research approach to professional development that combines theory with practice in the classroom. Training courses should also involve policy, decision makers and teachers in collaborative assessment development projects (Stiggins, 1999a, b) and allow students to be involved in assessment in order to build their confidence and maximise their achievement (Stiggins, 2001). Otherwise, such training endeavours might fall short of the professional development standards of EFL teachers (see also Harding & Kremmel, 2016; Taylor, 2009).

Concluding remarks

Assessing young foreign language learners is a sensitive and complex area (Nikolov, 2016). Despite its small scale, the present comparative study was carried out in a thorough way and reveals urgent discussion points. For example, it clearly shows that the implementation of the CEFR for assessment purposes – in particular assessment *for* learning, which is one of the most important issues for early language learning today – is very slow in classrooms in Europe. It seems that language learning still relies on summative testing of vocabulary, grammar and writing in the so-called communicative language classroom. Given that other school subjects have already successfully embraced formative assessment (Bell & Cowie, 2001; Ruiz-Primo et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2006; Shavelson et al., 2008), we urgently need to implement assessment *for* learning for the sake of our young language learners. Future research studies can investigate the effectiveness of such assessment procedures and explore the extent to which they can contribute to the quality lifelong development of the language competence of children.

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Biographical note

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Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

Section I – Bio Section

1. Male ☐   Female ☐
2. Teaching qualifications
3. English teaching qualifications
4. Years of teaching experience
5. Type of professional training/seminars esp. for teaching English

Section II – Assessment Procedures

6. How do you assess your students' performance?
7. Do you use tests? If so, how often do you use them? Why?
8. Do you have to use tests or are you given other options?
9. What do you take into account when you design these tests? The best students? Average students? Weak students? Other?
10. What do the results of these tests tell you about your students?
11. Do you take the results into account? Do you include these results in the reports of each student?
12. How strict are you with the correction of these tests?
13. Do you believe in test results?
14. What do your students say about the tests they take? What is their attitude towards them?
15. Are the criteria you use to mark tests clear to your students?
16. How do you usually report back on a test taken by your students?
17. Do you, or have you ever, prepared students for international exams (e.g., PET, KET, CAMBRIDGE YOUNG LEARNERS exams or other)? If so, how do you like this experience?
18. What other forms of assessment do you use to measure your students' progress?
19. Do you find these equally useful to tests, better or worse?
20. What do you do with the results of these assessments?
21. What would you use as a way of assessing your students if you were able to choose your own assessment methods?
22. What other factors do you consider when you evaluate your students?

Section II – Training in Assessment

23. In the English teacher-training seminars/workshops/courses that you have attended so far, did your learn anything about language testing and assessment? If so, what was it?
24. How satisfied were you with these seminars? Did you feel that they appropriately prepared you to assess your students in English?
25. What kind of training in testing and assessment for the English language would you like to have in the future?
26. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Diagnostic Tests in Czech for Pupils with a First Language Different from the Language of Schooling

Kateřina Vodičková*[1] and Yvona Kostelecká[2]

∽   Mastering a second language, in this case Czech, is crucial for pupils whose first language differs from the language of schooling, so that they can engage more successfully in the educational process. In order to adjust language teaching to pupils' needs, it is necessary to identify which language skills or individual competences set out within the framework of communicative competence should be developed. For this purpose, a new diagnostic test for lower and upper graders of primary schools was designed. Although it is not a high-stakes test, it is essential that its validity, reliability and practicality are ensured, as well as its positive impact on the teaching process, pupils, teachers, schools and society. The present paper introduces the position of pupils with a first language other than Czech in the Czech Republic. It presents a recently developed diagnostic tool and documents the characteristics of the test, such as validity, reliability, impact and practicality.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference, Czech as a second language, diagnostic test, young learners

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Diagnostični testi na Češkem za učence, katerih prvi jezik ni enak jeziku šolanja

Kateřina Vodičková* in Yvona Kostelecká

∽ Obvladanje drugega jezika, v tem primeru češčine, je ključnega pomena za učence, katerih prvi jezik ni enak jeziku šolanja, saj se le tako lahko uspešno vključijo v vzgojno-izobraževalni proces. Da lahko prilagodimo poučevanje jezika potrebam učencev, je nujno prepoznati, katere jezikovne spretnosti ali individualne zmožnosti, določene v okviru komunikacijskih zmožnosti, morajo biti razvite. V ta namen je bil oblikovan nov diagnostični test za učence nižjih in višjih razredov osnovne šole. Kljub splošnosti testa je treba zagotoviti, da ima ustrezno veljavnost, zanesljivost in praktičnost ter da ima pozitiven vpliv na proces poučevanja, učence, učitelje, šole in na družbo. V prispevku je predstavljen položaj učencev na Češkem, katerih prvi jezik ni češčina. Predstavljeni so pred kratkim razvito diagnostično orodje in karakteristike testa, kot so: veljavnost, zanesljivost, vpliv in praktičnost.

Ključne besede: skupni evropski referenčni okvir, češčina kot drugi jezik, diagnostični test, mlajši učenci

Introduction

As a consequence of the integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union, and of continuing globalisation, we have witnessed an increase in the migration of population in the last decades. Until 1989, Czechoslovakia was characterised by emigration, but after the Velvet Revolution this country of emigration began turning into a country of immigration (Drbohlav, 2011). As a result of this change it became necessary for several institutions, and in particular integration policy, to adapt the prevailing attitude in a relatively short time.

The process of integration into the host society is influenced by a range of factors, many of which are already the subject of detailed research, such as the institutional environment and migration policy (Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003), confession (Foner & Alba, 2008), cognitive skills (Suárez-Orozco, 2007) and mastering the language[3] (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). Some of these factors have already been examined in the Czech context, as well (cf., e.g., Drbohlav, 2011; Janská et al., 2011).

In connection with the growing number of non-native speakers in the Czech Republic, there has been an increasing interest in the application and study of the Czech language, not only as a foreign language but also as a second language. The growing number of children of migrants[4] (i.e., pupils with a first language, hereafter L1, that is different from the language of schooling) at Czech schools places greater demands on teachers, and therefore also necessitates a more systematic approach for pedagogical workers when solving basic lingua-didactic issues in multi-cultural classes at primary schools (cf., e.g., Šindelářová & Škodová, 2013). Although mastering a second language becomes a prerequisite for accessing and completing education, as well as for integration into the school group and consequently into society as a whole (cf. Kostelecká et al., 2013, p. 7), children of migrants face a rather complicated situation at Czech schools. The Czech school system lacks longstanding practical experience of teaching Czech as a second language, and of integrating children of migrants into the educational process and teaching multicultural classes.

We have already mentioned that mastering a second language has social and practical significance for children of migrants, and is therefore crucial for successful integration.

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3   We understand the term mastering a language as an umbrella term for learning a language and language acquisition.

4   In the 2010–2011 academic year, children of migrants represented 1.4% of the total number of children in Czech preschool facilities, while also constituting 1.7% of all elementary school pupils and 1.5% of grammar school pupils (according to the Statistical Yearbook of Education 2010/11).

In the Czech Republic, the level of communicative competence and language skills with which children of migrants arrive has not yet been measured. In order to acquire this and other information, a diagnostic test for first- and second-grade pupils at primary schools has been developed at the Pedagogical Faculty, Charles University in Prague. The present paper aims to discuss this diagnostic instrument, including its basic characteristics and intended impact.

In Part 2, we briefly address testing in general, with an emphasis on diagnostic tests and the specifics of testing young learners. We also explore the situation related to language testing, in particular testing young learners and diagnostic tests in the Czech Republic. The heart of the paper is constituted by Part 3, in which the developed diagnostic instrument is described, and Part 4, where we attempt to substantiate that it is a valid, reliable and practical instrument with a positive impact as a diagnostic tool. An outline of the direction in which the work with diagnostics might continue in the future is given in Part 5.

Developing diagnostic language tests

It is obvious that the assessment of language skills and competencies represents a very important component of language teaching. During the past decades, the field of assessment has developed considerably both theoretically and methodologically. Since language testing has become an integral part of teaching foreign languages and has developed into an individual branch of applied linguistics, there has been an increase in the quantity of publications and journals on language assessment (e.g., Understanding Language Testing by Dan Douglas), and in the number of specialised organisations such as the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the European Association of Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA) and the International Language Testing Association (ILTA), as well as the creation of the Association of Language Testers AJAT in the Czech Republic in 2012. There has also been an increase in the number of conferences, workshops and seminars on this topic.

Despite this fact, there is little theoretical background and research on diagnostic testing, although publications such as Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency (2005) by Alderson have contributed considerably to the field of diagnostic language testing. Such monographs nonetheless remain scarce. In addition, especially in the case of Czech as a second/foreign language, the number of diagnostic tests in second/foreign languages is, to our knowledge, limited. Alderson et al. (2015, p. 237) point out "the scarcity of true diagnostic assessment" and believe this may be connected with "a lack of a theory of what diagnosis in [second/foreign language] actually entails".

The definition of what constitutes a diagnostic test is itself problematic. Following the comparison of a number of definitions of this type of test, Alderson (2005) arrives at a set of features that diagnostic tests should demonstrate. They include, among others, the ability "to identify strengths and weaknesses in a learner's knowledge and use of language" (p. 11), but place an emphasis on weaknesses, so that correction can be ensured during the subsequent teaching. These tests are mostly low- or no-stakes, and should therefore provide detailed feedback and enable thorough analysis. According to Alderson (2005), diagnostic tests are based either on content that has been covered in instruction, or on some theory of language development. Alderson (2005) also points out that achievement tests and proficiency tests are often used for diagnostic purposes, or diagnostic tests are used for placement purposes.

Harding et al. (2015) developed a set of principles for diagnostic assessment, which emphasise: a) the role of the user of the test who is responsible for the diagnosis, as opposed to the test itself; b) the importance of detailed feedback for the test-taker; c) the necessity of including a number of views, such as self-assessment; d) the role of various stages in diagnostic assessment, such as listening/observing; and e) the fact that diagnostic assessment should lead to remediation or tailor-made support. However, some of these principles are often omitted in practice, which, to a certain extent, also seems to be apparent in Czech diagnostic tests for children of migrants. In this specific case, the original use of the diagnostic test, as well as the continuous work on test development, should be taken into account.

Diagnostic testing in the Czech Republic

In language testing, we encounter various types of tests, differing largely in purpose and therefore in the interpretation of results. In the Czech context, these include proficiency tests (e.g., Czech Language Certificate Exam[5]); placement tests (offered for those interested in courses by most language schools, and provided for those who are interested in taking online courses, such as at the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies, Charles University in Prague, hereafter ILPS CU); progress tests (continuous assessment verifying that the pupils/students have mastered the target material of teaching and learning; these tests have traditionally been a part of foreign language teaching at Czech primary, secondary and language schools); and achievement tests (e.g., the end-of-course examination in Czech at ILPS CU).

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5   http://ujop.cuni.cz/cce

As mentioned above, diagnostic tests do not enjoy a long tradition in the Czech context, or, more precisely, we are missing available literature on Czech diagnostic testing of a second/foreign language. The Diagnostic handbook *Diagnostika úrovně znalosti českého jazyka* (Diagnosing the Level of Czech) was written to help professionals from the Centre for Integration to get a basic idea of the level of their clients' communicative competence in Czech. In this case, the diagnostic test is designed as a proficiency test of language skills and is intended for adult non-native speakers.

Comprehensive information on other diagnostic tests (diagnostic not only in name) has, however, been so far absent in the Czech Republic.

Testing young learners in the Czech Republic

In recent decades, considerably more attention has been paid to testing young learners than to diagnostic tests (cf., e.g., Hughes, 2003; Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003; McKay, 2010). It is obvious that testing young learners in a second/foreign language differs from testing adult language users; among other things, their ages, their cognitive, emotional, social and physical growth, their attention span and their literacy skills require significantly different approaches. The importance of positive motivation must also be considered.

Although foreign language tests represent a common part of teaching at Czech primary and secondary schools, diagnostic tests of the Czech language and tests of the Czech language as a second language are not common. This fact, along with the need to diagnose the level of communicative competence achieved by children of migrants, has, among other things, led to the development of the diagnostic instrument described in the following section.

Diagnostic tests of Czech for children of migrants

A suite of diagnostic tests for children of migrants was developed in the course of 2010–2014. Using an existing placement, achievement or proficiency test was not considered appropriate, primarily for the following reasons: a) the purpose of the test may vary; b) there is a lack of Czech language tests designed exclusively for young learners and, to our best knowledge, none for children of immigrants; c) even if they existed, using syllabus-based achievement tests would not take into account the fact that the children may have learned Czech from various sources, or without reference to official teaching materials at all (there is no specific syllabus that has to be covered before the test, or that should be covered afterwards); and d) the proficiency test Czech Language Certificate

Examination for Young Learners (CCE–A1 for Young Learners and CCE–A2 for Young Learners[6]) is subject to a fee, and, moreover, is available only at A1 and A2 levels according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001, hereafter CEFR), as well as being too time consuming.

For these reasons, a pilot version of a tailor-made diagnostic test for primary schools was introduced in 2010. It was decided that the test should be a proficiency test, as there is no syllabus to which the test can relate. For this reason, there is no grammar or vocabulary test, although some information on the level of grammatical, lexical and other competencies can be inferred from the productive-skills subtests. It should also be born in mind that the first versions of the test were meant to be used to map the language situation among children of migrants in the Czech Republic, and were applied at a number of selected schools that were interested in taking part in the project and that are attended by larger numbers of children of migrants.

The format of the diagnostic test

Within project no. 13-32373S of the Czech Science Foundation, two diagnostic tests were developed. The first of these is aimed at lower graders. Taking into account the development of language skills in the respondents' first language and their cognitive development, this test is designed for pupils attending the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, which roughly corresponds to the ages from 8 to 11. It verifies the level of communicative competence within language skills at the A1 and A2 levels according to the CEFR. The second test is aimed at upper graders, i.e., the age group between 12 and 16, and verifies the level of language skills at the A1, A2 and B1 levels according to the CEFR.

When designing the test, the test developers could not base it directly on the CEFR and its descriptors, as these are defined for adult language users and do not take into account children's cognitive development and the communicative situations they enter. The tests are therefore founded on documents based on the CEFR, that is, language portfolios: the diagnostic test for lower graders is based on the Portfolio for Learners Up to the Age of 11 (Nováková et al., 2001), and the test for upper graders is based on the European Language Portfolio for Learners aged 11 to 15 (Perclová & Marešová, 2001), which means that the Can Do Statements for the particular age groups serve as the basis for the specific aims that are verified within each subtest.

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6   http://ujop.cuni.cz/cce-mladez

General information about the diagnostic test

The learners, both lower and upper graders, first take the lower level test in reading, listening and writing. If they pass, that is, if they achieve at least 60% in each subtest at this level, they proceed to the higher level test.

The scores are reported per subtest per level, as the original test is meant to map the level of communicative competence of children of migrants attending Czech primary schools. Negotiations are currently being held as to whether the test could serve as the basis for a tool to measure the progress of these pupils in Czech and/or their level of communicative competence in Czech, in order to determine how many extra lessons of Czech per week are necessary.

The format of the diagnostic test for lower graders

The lower-grader diagnostic test at the A1 and A2 levels verifies all four language skills in four subtests: reading, listening, writing and speaking. The pupils can gain a maximum of 15 points in each subtest per level (see Table 1).

Table 1. *The format of the lower-grader diagnostic test*

Level	Subtest	No. of tasks/ Total no. of items	No. of points	Time
A1	Listening	3/15	5+5+5	10 minutes
	Reading	3/15	5+5+5	12 minutes
	Writing	2	6+9	10 minutes
	Speaking	1	15	3 minutes
A2	Listening	3/15	5+5+5	15 minutes
	Reading	3/15	5+5+5	18 minutes
	Writing	2	6+9	15 minutes
	Speaking	1	15	5 minutes

The format of the diagnostic test for upper graders

The upper-grader diagnostic test verifies the level of communicative competence in four language skills at the A1, A2 and B1 levels according to the CEFR. The format of the test corresponds to the format of the diagnostic test for lower graders (cf. Table 2), although the test techniques may vary, as does

the time allotted to each subtest. It should be noted that there is only one task in the subtest Writing at the A2 and B1 level, in order to eliminate the error rate caused by fatigue and reduced concentration.

Table 2. *The format of the upper-grader diagnostic test*

Level	Subtest	No. of tasks/ Total no. of items	No. of points	Time
A1	Listening	3/15	5+5+5	6 minutes
	Reading	3/15	5+5+5	10 minutes
	Writing	2	5+10	10 minutes
	Speaking	1	15	3 minutes
A2	Listening	3/15	5+5+5	9 minutes
	Reading	3/15	5+5+5	10 minutes
	Writing	1	15	10 minutes
	Speaking	1	15	4–5 minutes
B1	Listening	2/15	5+10	13 minutes
	Reading	3/15	5+5+5	15 minutes
	Writing	1	15	15 minutes
	Speaking	1	15	4–5 minutes

The piloting phase, using the first version of the test, took place throughout 2010. After revisions were made based on the results and experience of the pilot, pretesting took place under the same test conditions in 2013. In order to ensure that both the piloted and pretested population were the same as the intended test population, the piloting and pretesting were realised at a number of primary schools on a voluntary basis. Only children between the 3rd and 9th grades whose first language was other than Czech were invited to take the test, based on parental consent.

Validity, reliability, impact and practicality of the diagnostic test

Validity, reliability, impact and practicality are usually considered the most essential quality indicators.

Validity

Validity, as an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment, is a crucial concept in language testing (cf., e.g., Hughes, 2003; Messick, 1989). Messick (1989) distinguishes six aspects of validity: content, substantive, structural, external, generalizability and consequential. In his view, the content aspect of construct validity includes evidence of content relevance, representativeness and technical quality.

In the case of the diagnostic test, these three components are addressed mainly by defining and adhering to the construct through detailed test specifications linked to the European Language Portfolios and through following these specifications.

Content validation (cf., e.g., Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995; Hughes, 2003) of the test took place above all by gathering the opinions of independent experts. Four experts were asked to review the test sets, two of these experts were experienced in language testing and two in teaching young learners, while one also had experience in designing textbooks for young learners of Czech. All four experts were experienced in teaching Czech to foreigners, but they came from various backgrounds (university teachers, teaching Slavonic versus non-Slavonic students, teaching young learners versus adult learners, etc.). Their reviews included comparisons of the test content with the test specifications. The analysis showed that the difficulty levels, i.e., A1–B1, had been maintained; however, one of the reviewers recommended meeting the construct of certain language skills – specifically, writing and reading – so that they match the descriptors for the given level referred to in the corresponding European Language Portfolios, and so that the acquired language material could be considered representative. In a few cases, the reviewers recommended adapting the communication situation so that it would correspond more accurately to situations that the given age groups enter.

Adjusting the test on the basis of the aforementioned comments resulted in an increase in content validity and, consequently, improved probability that the test more accurately measures that which it declares to measure (cf. Hughes, 2003, p. 27).

Criterion-related validity "relates to the degree to which results on the test agree with those provided by some independent and highly dependable assessment of the candidate's ability" (Hughes, 2003, p. 27). Much like, for example, Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) and Davies et al. (1999), Hughes (2003)

distinguishes between two types of criterion-related validity (external validity, in Alderson, Clapham and Wall's terminology): concurrent validity and predictive validity.

Concurrent validity is established by "the relationship between what is measured by a test … and another existing criterion measure, which may be a well-established standardised test" (Davies et al., 1999, p. 30). In the case of the diagnostic test in its pilot version, it was not possible to ensure that the pupils taking the diagnostic test also took another test serving as a criterion measure. This was mainly due to practical reasons, such as the wide choice of available and convenient standardised tests, the necessary parental consent to testing, and the financial costs.

Predictive validity "measures how well a test predicts performance on an external criterion" (Davies et al., 1999, p. 149). Working with predictive validity in the case of the diagnostic test was difficult, as a large number of factors other than language (e.g., subject knowledge, intelligence, motivation, etc.) came into play. However, it would be possible to ask teachers directly for feedback if special lessons were provided to children of migrants at school, and/or if the particular pupil was included in a group learning in Czech (taking the results of the diagnostic test into account), or if there was highly modified teaching of the second language based on the diagnostic test. Unfortunately, this feedback would, to a certain extent, be subjective and based on the untrained judgements of supervisors.

Another possibility for investigating construct validity is through think-aloud protocols and/or retrospections. However, this method did not seem to be practical due to the age of the respondents and the time required.

It is obvious that a system through which predictive validity can be verified needs to be introduced.

Reliability

Reliability in Reading and Listening

Analysing the data gained from pretesting led to verifying whether, and how, the tasks function, and to calculating reliability coefficients. For both diagnostic tests, we used the statistical software Iteman 4.1, based on Classical Test Theory. In the case of the lower-grader diagnostic test comprising A1 and A2 levels, the tasks analysed were the Reading and Listening tasks at both levels and the first Writing task at level A1. The test was taken by 129 respondents. In the case of the upper-grader diagnostic test comprising A1, A2 and B1 levels,

Reading and Listening at all levels and the first A1 task in Writing[7] were ana-lysed. The test was taken by 132 respondents.

Reliability of a test can be estimated in two ways: by parallel measure-ments (test-retest method, parallel test method) or by internal consistency (splitting the test into two halves and estimating the internal consistency). For the test-retest method, it is necessary to re-take the test after a certain period of time. This method was considered unfeasible in the case of the diagnostic tests in question because it would require testing the same pupils after some time. It proved difficult to gather the same test-takers again and/or gain their and their parents' consent for retaking the test. Using parallel tests was not considered practical either, as there would have to be two parallel versions of the test and pupils would have to take both of them, which would be demanding and time consuming, especially considering the children's age.

The most frequently used method of estimating reliability is the internal consistency method, which can only be applied to tests with homogenous con-tent. This method presupposes that the answers to all items measuring the same characteristics hold sufficiently high positive correlation, and that if the test is reliable, its parts – its two halves – must also be reliable. These halves are assessed separately and then the results are correlated. The correlation between the two halves is corrected using the Spearman-Brown Formula (Chráska, 2007).

Table 3 shows the reliability coefficients gained by applying the Kuder-Richardson Formula in the lower-grader test as a whole, as well as in its two parts. It also shows the reliability coefficient gained by the Split Half method in three variants of halving the set: Split-Half Random (items are split into halves at random), Split Half First-Last (one set consists of the first half of the items, the other set of the second half), and Split Half Odd Even (one set comprises the odd items, the other one the even items). For all of the variants of split-ting, the results are shown for both non-corrected variants and the variants corrected by the Spearman-Brown Formula. This correction is used because in the non-corrected version we compare two tests with only half of the items contained in the live test. Standard error of measurement (SEM), which esti-mates the standard deviation of the errors of measurement in the scale scores, is also reported. Regarding the values of the reliability coefficient, Chráska (2007) claims that a reliability coefficient of 0.8 and above is generally considered op-timal for didactic tests, while 0.95 is excellent.

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7   This task consists of five questions about the pupil, usually requiring a one-word answer, with the responses being rated for content only, i.e., whether the pupil answers the question or not, which makes such an analysis possible.

Table 3. *Reliability coefficients for the lower-grader diagnostic test*

	Alfa (KR-20)	SEM	Non-corrected			Spearman-Brown Correction		
			Split-Half (Random)	Split-Half (First-Last)	Split-Half (Odd-Even)	Split-Half (Random)	Split-Half (First-Last)	Split-Half (Odd-Even)
Whole test	0.951	2.180	0.921	0.796	0.919	0.959	0.886	0.958
A1 test	0.915	1.373	0.844	0.755	0.878	0.915	0.860	0.935
A2 test	0.915	1.663	0.804	0.794	0.867	0.891	0.885	0.929

The data in Table 3 show that when applying the Kuder-Richards formula the reliability coefficient exceeds 0.9 for the individual tests and even reaches 0.95 for the whole test. Slightly lower reliability coefficients occur when using the split-half method. However, it should be noted that splitting a diagnostic test in two equivalent halves is complicated. Since the tasks and items are ordered according to their difficulty, we get the lowest reliability coefficient when comparing the first and the second half of items (Split-Half First-Last Method). The reliability coefficient is considerably higher when the Random or Odd-Even variant of the Split-Half method is used. In these cases, it almost always exceeds 0.9.

Similarly to Table 3, Table 4 shows the same test characteristics for the upper-grader diagnostic test.

Table 4. *Reliability coefficients for the upper-grader diagnostic test*

	Alfa (KR-20)	SEM	Non-corrected			Spearman-Brown Correction		
			Split-Half (Random)	Split-Half (First-Last)	Split-Half (Odd-Even)	Split-Half (Random)	Split-Half (First-Last)	Split-Half (Odd-Even)
Whole test	0.971	2.523	0.904	0.798	0.952	0.949	0.888	0.976
A1 test	0.920	1.319	0.825	0.697	0.878	0.904	0.821	0.935
A2 test	0.944	1.190	0.898	0.769	0.921	0.946	0.869	0.959
B1 test	0.934	1.663	0.881	0.805	0.885	0.937	0.892	0.939

In this case, when the Kuder-Richardson Formula is applied the reliability coefficients are even higher than in the case of the lower-grader test. High values of the reliability coefficient are also gained when using the Split-Half method.

Ensuring reliability of scoring written and spoken performances

Written and spoken performances are assessed on the basis of detailed written criteria. All performances were assessed by one of two experienced raters trained to use the scale. Questionable performances were discussed by both raters, but as double marking was not introduced, inter-rater reliability has not been counted. In Speaking, one of the raters acted as an interlocutor, the other as a rater.

Impact

Impact is traditionally perceived as "the effect of a test on individuals, on the educational system and on society in general" (Davies et al., 1999, p. 79). A more detailed study dealing with the influence of the diagnostic test on pupils and the teaching process is still to be undertaken. However, it is already possible to consider whether this test can help to solve certain issues that teachers pointed out during the qualitative research for the project.[8] Among other things, the research showed the following:

- The practice of accepting children of migrants at Czech schools differs considerably.
- The decision about which grade the pupil should attend is usually made at a meeting between the school principal, the class teacher and the Czech language teacher (teaching Czech as the first language).
- The main criteria for placing children of migrants in particular grades include the age of the child, her/his L1, her/his current level of communicative competence in Czech, and the results of the child's last school report. Other criteria can also be taken into account. These would typically include the possibilities available at the school and among its pedagogical staff (e.g., the class teacher's knowledge of foreign languages, her/his personality, the number of pupils in the class, the number of pupils with L1 other than Czech, and the final composition of nationalities in the class). The tendency to place the pupils in grades primarily according to their age, not according to their level of communicative competence in Czech, was dominant.
- As mentioned above, the pupil's level of communicative competence also played a role when deciding which grade the pupil should attend, although it was not the most important factor. However, it should be noted that there was no unified, standardised way of testing: language skills were assessed more or less intuitively.

8   More detailed results of this research can be found in Kostelecká et al. (2013).

- Some pedagogues do not realise that it is not only possible but even advisable to take into account the level of communicative competence in Czech in subjects other than just Czech Language and Literature when assessing pupils with L1 other than Czech.
- The activities aimed at supporting the integration of pupils with L1 other than Czech are determined, in part, by the financial and human resources of the school. These activities may include preparatory classes, intensive summer courses and placing the pupil directly in common classes while also assigning her/him an assistant who can teach the pupil Czech intensively, supplementing the pupil's attendance at language courses throughout the school year.

We assume that the diagnostic test for pupils with L1 other than Czech would have a positive impact on a number of the points listed above. However, this assumption must be supported by further research, designed similarly to the qualitative research conducted prior to launching the diagnostic test, but this time focusing on changes brought about by the implementation of the test.

Practicality

One of the fundamental features of the test is practicality, as "however valid and reliable a test may be, if it is not practical to administer it in a specific context then it will not be taken up in that context" (Davies et al., 1999, p. 148). In the case of the introduced diagnostic test, practicality relates in particular to the following areas:

- The length of the test (respecting at least the minimum number of items that are essential in order to consider the test reliable, while at the same time taking into account the attention span of the given age group and the total time allotted to complete the test).
- The order of the subtests (Listening had to be placed as the first subtest so that the pupils could continue at their own pace).
- The demands related to the administration of the test, so that the administration can be left to trained staff at the school if necessary.
- The demands related to prompt rating, so that it is clear whether the pupil should take the diagnostic test on a higher level.
- The demands related to rating, so that at least the receptive skills can be assessed directly at schools by trained raters, not by an external team of specialists.
- The financial costs of maintenance of the test, which represent one of the points of current interest.

Conclusions

In Parts 3 and 4, we not only demonstrated what was done with regard diagnostic testing within the project, but we also identified fields in which further development is desirable.

Firstly, maintenance of the diagnostic test should be assured. This concerns not only financial support, but also human resources.

Secondly, it may be necessary to train administrators, examiners and possibly also raters if the number of test takers grows. In the piloting and pretesting phase, these roles were able to be handled by the team of test constructors, as the number of test takers was relatively low. If the test is used on the national level (although probably voluntarily), more staff will be required to participate in test administration, examination and assessment. In diagnostic testing, prompt and detailed feedback both to test takers and teachers or schools is crucial. With growing numbers of test takers, it may also be necessary to train a number of experts in providing feedback to the test users.

Thirdly, it is worth exploring the impact of the diagnostic test on teaching, pupils and teachers, as well as on schools. Although the feedback in this regard might be limited, due to the fact that the diagnostic test has not yet been introduced on a national basis, it is obvious that it would serve as valuable material and would verify whether the diagnostic test has been used in accordance with the intentions of the test developers.

Given the rapid increase in immigration to the Czech Republic in the past 20 years, the educational integration of pupils who are not native speakers of Czech is a subject that is a very relevant issue today. Since the number of immigrants in the Czech population is likely to grow even more, its relevance will only increase in the future.

The diagnostic test for lower graders and upper graders at Czech primary schools whose L1 is different from the language of instruction represents one of the first attempts to design an instrument that would help teachers, schools and children of migrants with (language) integration.

Acknowledgements

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Biographical note

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Learners between Childhood and Adulthood: Assessing Writing Competences of Teens Learning French as a Foreign Language

Meta Lah[1]

∼   The article introduces learners between two age groups: childhood and adulthood. The aim of the author is to analyse the writing skills of French primary school learners – mostly 14 years old – and to determine which descriptors could be used to assess them. The article begins with a presentation of the learners' characteristics and continues with a review of the position of the French language in Slovenian primary schools, where French is taught as a second foreign language and an elective subject. Since French is a rather infrequent subject in primary schools, it is difficult to obtain comparable materials. Finally, 36 written compositions from the national French competition serve as the basis for analysis. The detailed analysis is accompanied by a presentation of the CEFR and AYLLIT descriptors for writing, as well as reflection on which descriptors are appropriate for assessing compositions and placing them on the CEFR levels. The AYLLIT descriptors seem more relevant, as they are more explicit and appropriate for the target group.

Keywords: French as a foreign language, learners between two age groups, second foreign language, national competition, written compositions, CEFR descriptors, AYLLIT descriptors

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Učenci med otroštvom in odraslostjo: ocenjevanje pisnih zmožnosti najstnikov, ki se učijo francoščine kot tujega jezika

Meta Lah

∾   V prispevku so predstavljeni učenci, ki sodijo v dve starostni skupini – med otroštvo in odraslost. Avtorica v prispevku analizira pisne zmožnosti osnovnošolskih učencev, ki se učijo francoščino (večinoma so stari 14 let), in prepoznava opisnike, ki bi jih lahko uporabili pri ocenjevanju. V prispevku so na začetku predstavljene značilnosti učencev, v nadaljevanju pa pregled položaja francoskega jezika v slovenskih osnovnih šolah. Francoščina se poučuje kot drugi/tuji jezik in izbirni predmet. Ker je to sorazmerno redek predmet v osnovnih šolah, je težko pridobiti primerjalno gradivo. Tako je bilo na koncu za analizo uporabljenih 36 pisnih izdelkov iz državnega tekmovanja iz francoščine. Poleg podrobne analize so predstavljeni opisniki za pisanje Skupnega evropskega jezikovnega okvira (SEJO) in AYLLIT. Avtorica skuša ugotoviti, kateri od obeh opisnikov so primernejši za ocenjevanje analiziranih izdelkov in njihovo umeščanje v SEJO. Zdi se, da so opisniki AYLLIT ustreznejši, saj so jasnejši in primernejši za to starostno skupino.

Ključne besede: francoščina kot tuji jezik, učenci med dvema starostnima skupinama, drugi tuji jezik, državno tekmovanje, pisni izdelki, opisniki SEJO, opisniki AYLLIT

Introduction

The topic of teaching a foreign language to young learners was neglected for a long time, especially regarding the field of assessing knowledge for this age group, with thorough research only beginning after 1990 (Sundquist, 2014, p. 1). The Common European Framework for Languages brought many innovations to the field of testing and assessing young learners' knowledge, but it was nevertheless "based on extensive and thorough research of how adults go about acquiring another language and why" (Sešek & Pižorn, 2009, p. 294). Pižorn adds that "there are features that may be important for a particular context, but which are not addressed by the CEFR" (2014, p. 244).

Children start learning foreign languages increasingly early. As Moon and Enever stress, the term "young learner" is potentially misleading, as it is used for all children from birth[2] – or sometimes even prenatally – until the age of 18 years (2010, p. 2). The expression "young learner" is therefore perceived as questionable; if children can begin the process of learning a foreign language immediately after birth, it is difficult to define when they are no longer "young learners". There are various interpretations of the term, but legally speaking "young learners" are learners aged 18 or less who are still under parental care (Ellis, 2014, p. 75). Ellis also quotes the owner of a Paris language school, who defines a "young learner" as either someone who has just started learning English or as a five-year-old child (Ellis, 2014, p. 75). The fact that primary school systems vary from country to country should also be taken into consideration. Children do not have equal opportunities to learn a foreign language; in some countries, children attend primary school from age 5 to 11, whereas in other countries they enter education later, when they are 6 or 7, and they finish when they are 14 (Pinter, 2006, p. XIII). The latter is the case in Slovenia.

The present research focuses on adolescents learning French as a second foreign language. The pupils who participated in the study were in the final (ninth) year of primary school and were typically 14 years old. They were attending French lessons voluntarily for two hours per week, and in most cases were in their third year of learning French. The specifics of French in primary schools will be presented later.

Following a presentation of learners between the two age groups and the situation regarding teaching French in primary schools in Slovenia, the article focuses on a detailed content analysis of comparable written assignments produced by the same learners. CEFR and AYLLIT descriptors for writing are

2   Marjanovič Umek quotes studies stating that anything from 3 or 4 to 7 or 8 is regarded as a suitable age to begin learning a foreign language (2009, p. 75).

also presented, as the research attempts to establish which descriptors are more appropriate for describing the analysed assignments.

Learners between two age groups

According to some authors (Aitchison, 1997; Rixon, 1999, in Ellis, 2014, p. 76), one can no longer be considered a young learner after reaching puberty (at the age of 12 or 13). This age limit has been chosen for many reasons: it is a time of rapid mental and physical development, social habits and behaviours change, and it is the age when pupils in many countries need to enrol in secondary education for the first time. Ellis quotes various studies from the field of language learning and acquisition, based on which it is safe to assume that it is exactly around this age that considerable changes occur in the process of learning foreign languages. For younger children, learning a foreign language resembles learning the mother tongue (Ellis, 2014, p. 76). Marjanovič Umek (2009, p. 75) emphasises that learning a language before puberty is not only linked to the biological and neurological characteristics of the learner, but also and primarily to social factors.

Several authors distinguish between "young" and "older" children. According to Gaonac'h (2006, p. 20), different studies accept the statement that between the age of seven and puberty there is a significant drop in the capacity to acquire language competence similar to the competence of a native speaker. Newport (1999, p. 12) adds "For example, in much of developmental psychology, insofar as there are maturational effects, an uncontroversial generalization is typically that big kids are better than little kids. In language acquisition (and possibly in other domains as well), however, the child, and not the adult, appears to be especially privileged as a learner". Authors also stress that the advantages of young learners are better outputs in the domain of listening comprehension and speaking, and especially in the domain of better pronunciation (Lah Šuster, 2013, p. 96; Gaonac'h, 2006, p. 20).

The difference between young children and teens also consists in the way they learn and the way they are taught. Younger children are usually taught through language immersion, which Brumen says can be used in a "hard" or "soft" way (the "soft" way meaning cross-curricular teaching) (Brumen, 2003; Lah Šuster, 2013).

On the other hand, older children are more capable of analysing and collecting information, as well as organising their thoughts. They are supposed to acquire morphological and syntactic structures more rapidly (Lah Šuster, 2013), which is quite logical in view of their cognitive and mental development.

The learners involved in the present study are, however, in a different position than young learners due to another factor: French is their second foreign language and (like adult learners – Oh, 2011, p. 55) their literacy is more developed. They can transfer learning strategies from one foreign language to another. They also learn French "as a subject" (Hasselgreen et al., 2011), not by immersion, just as they learn any other subject in their curriculum.

They nevertheless possess several qualities of "young learners". From teachers' reports – and from presentations, such as their performances at the Journée francophone – it is evident that these pupils approach foreign language learning with enthusiasm and an open mind, which is a typical characteristic of children (Drew & Hasselgreen, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, they started to learn French quite recently, which could be one of the criteria for labelling them "young learners".

The position of French in the Slovenian school system

In order to justify the choice and size of the corpus, let us first introduce the position of French in the Slovenian school system. In Slovenian primary schools, French is taught as a second foreign language and in most cases is not compulsory. The number of pupils learning French is significantly lower than the number of pupils learning German, a language that is much more present in the Slovenian education system. According to data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, there were 1,738 pupils learning French in 2010; it was a compulsory subject for only 89 pupils, whereas 1,345 took it as an optional subject and 349 as an extra-curricular activity. In the same year, 24,057 primary school pupils were learning German as a second foreign language. In 2013/14, there were 1,519 pupils learning French as an optional second foreign language in primary schools.[3]

The situation has changed in the past five years, as a second foreign language can no longer be taught as a compulsory subject in primary schools, while the age limit for choosing a foreign language as an elective subject has been lowered. At present, pupils can choose a second foreign language as early in the 4th year of primary school. The present article does not intend to discuss the potential benefits of early foreign language learning, as opinions on this topic vary (Drew & Hasselgreen, 2008; Gaonac'h, 2006; Copland & Garton, 2014; Moon & Enever, 2010); nevertheless, it is possible to agree to some extent with Dagarin, who says, "the current state of affairs in Slovenia is rather chaotic, since early

3   http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/glavnanavigacija/podatki/prikazistaronovico?IdNovice=3858, National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia.

language learning occurs in various forms and at different levels" (2009, p. 156). It is essential that a good system for second foreign language learning is constructed to enable children to learn a second foreign language for three to six years. When entering and exiting the learning process, the second foreign language often remains on the level of awakening to language.

Methodology

Second foreign language evaluation and grading is poorly researched in Slovenia. Some studies have been carried out on assessment of the first foreign language (e.g., Brumen, Čagran, & Rixon, 2005), but little is known about how teachers assess knowledge of a second foreign language, which is mostly learned by teens.

For the purposes of the present paper, the last part of written assignments from a national French competition for primary school pupils will be analysed. The tasks in the first part offer a relatively small amount of information regarding language knowledge, and some of the tasks (true/false, matching) also enable guessing. Written compositions, on the other hand, lead to the assessment of various aspects: following the rules of the text type, following instructions, and using appropriate content and language knowledge. Similar to the AYLLIT project (Hasselgreen et al., 2011, pp. 18-19), pupils are expected to be able to write a short text on a predefined topic, following all of the requirements given in the instructions.

The methodology of the research includes the following steps:
- a detailed analysis of the compositions, using predefined criteria;
- an analysis of CEFR and AYLLIT descriptors for writing;
- consideration of the suitability of the descriptors for assessing the analysed written compositions.

Before analysing the assignments, it was assumed that participants would be able to meet the formal criteria, i.e., to write the required number of words and respect the form of a letter. It was also assumed that they would use basic vocabulary and simple structures without making mistakes that would affect comprehension.

The CEFR and AYLLIT descriptors that were taken into account were those for levels A1 to B1. According to Hasselgreen et al. (2011, p. 11), "levels beyond B1 are beyond the cognitive reach of children". Our learners are between two age groups, but we assume their language level not to be above B1 due to the number of hours of learning French as a foreign language.

The descriptors are as follows:
CEFR criteria (2001):

Self-assessment grid (pp. 26-27)

A1	A2	B1
I can write a short postcard which for example, sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details which for example, entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example, thanking someone for something.	I can write a simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

Overall written production (p. 61)

B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

Correspondence (p. 83)

B1	Can write personal letters giving news and expressing thoughts about abstract or cultural topics, such as music, films.
	Can write personal letters describing experiences, feelings and events in some detail.
A2	Can write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology.
A1	Can write a short simple postcard.

The AYLLIT criteria (Hasselgreen et al., 2011, pp. 23-24)

	Overall structure and range of information	Sentence structure and grammatical accuracy	Vocabulary and choice of phrase	Misformed words and punctuation
A2/B1	Is able to make reasonable attempts at texts on familiar themes that are not completely straightforward, including very simple narratives. Clauses are normally linked using connectors, such as "and", "then", "because", "but".	Sentences contain some longer clauses, and signs are shown of awareness of basic grammar, including a range of tenses.	Vocabulary is made up of very common words, but is able to combine words and phrases to add colour and interest to the message (e.g., using adjectives).	Clear evidence of awareness of some spelling and punctuation rules, but misformed words may occur in most sentences in more independent texts.

A2	Can write short straightforward coherent texts on very familiar themes. A variety of ideas are presented with some logical linking.	Is able to make simple independent sentences with a limited number of underlying structures.	Vocabulary is made up of very frequent words but has sufficient words and phrases to get across the essentials of the message aspired to.	Some evidence of knowledge of simple punctuation rules, and the independent spelling of very common words.
A1/A2	Can adapt and build on a few learnt patterns to make a series of short and simple sentences. This may be a short description or set of related facts on a very familiar personal theme.		Can use some words which may resemble L1, but on the whole the message is recognisable to a reader who does not know the L1. Spelling may be influenced by the sound of the word and mother tongue spelling conventions.	
A1	Can write a small number of very familiar or copied words and phrases and very simple (pre-learnt) sentence patterns, usually in an easily recognisable way. The spelling often reflects the sound of the word and mother tongue spelling conventions.			
Approaching A1	Makes an attempt to write some words and phrases, but needs support or a model to do this correctly.			

Choosing and analysing the assignments

As stated above, the basis for the detailed analysis is written assignments given at a national French competition for primary school pupils.

Since French is an optional subject, there are no official national exams for primary school pupils. Due to the fact that the number of pupils is relatively small, it is not easy to obtain a relevant corpus of written texts for comparison. The only comparable written tasks available are written texts from the national French competition for primary school pupils.

The national level competition is organised annually for primary school pupils of the final (ninth) year. Competitors are approximately 14 years old, children that Ellis includes in the "11-14" age group and labels with the following expressions: kids, young learners, secondary tweens, teens, early teens, teenagers and juniors (2014, p. 77). In Slovenia, the term secondary school students is not in general use yet, hence these students are instead referred to as final year primary school students.

The national competition is organised on two levels, with individual school competitions serving as qualifiers for the national level. In 2015, there were participants from 35 primary schools, with 147 pupils on the school level and 36 pupils on the national level.

The national competition exam takes 45 minutes and consists of three parts: reading comprehension, five short exercises of various types that are intended to check grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and one writing task. The latter is the focus of the present article.

For the written assignment, the pupils had to write a guided letter. The instructions were as follows:

> You have a new pen pal in France. You are writing to him/her for the first time. Introduce yourself. Describe yourself, tell him/her where you live, speak of your likes and dislikes. Say something about your hobbies. Describe your family. Explain why you are learning French and tell him/her what you would like to be when you grow up. Important: Introduce yourself with a pseudonym – not with your real name – and write the letter in the traditional letter form.

The instructions were given both in French and Slovenian. According to Pižorn, it would be better to only provide Slovenian instructions, as longer blocks of text written in French, such as instructions and examples, can make the objective grading of linguistic correctness and vocabulary knowledge difficult, since pupils can copy words and structures from the instructions to their own writing (2009, p. 314). On the other hand, it seems sensible to have instructions written in both French and Slovenian despite certain reservations, as children probably feel safer if they are given instructions in the target language as well.

It is perhaps appropriate to explain why pupils are asked to use a pseudonym. All of the competition papers are encoded and graded blind. In the past, it has happened that children used their real names in similar tasks, which resulted in reservations regarding the assessors' fair and objective grading. As stated above, the tasks used in the first part of the exam were classic paper and pencil tasks, like those usually used when testing knowledge on similar occasions, such as the national competition for secondary school students. Despite the mode of testing, authentic texts were used as part of tasks, so it did not only involve checking decontextualised structures. According to Cameron, quoting a study by Rea-Dickins and Rixon (1999): "by far the most often used method of testing was the 'pencil and paper' method, used to check individual parameters of grammar and vocabulary in isolated sentences" (2001, p. 117). The second part of the test paper was a written composition. As proposed by Czura (2013, p. 84), it would make sense to replace classical exam forms with more sensible, authentic and communication-based tasks. Unfortunately, this is not possible due to temporal and logistical limitations, and because of the desire to grade objectively.

When analysing the compositions, the point of departure was the approach of Raaen (2009), who tested pupils aged 7 and 9 attending Norwegian

primary schools[4] in a longitudinal study. After carrying out an extensive analysis of written compositions, Raaen decided to use the following criteria: length, spelling, subject-verb agreement and usage of progressive verb forms.

After a thorough analysis of content, spelling, vocabulary and linguistic structures, the following criteria were chosen:

- the length of the composition;
- communicative suitability;
- orthography (spelling);
- language proficiency – the suitability of the linguistic structures and vocabulary used.

Length of the composition

The instructions specify that the written composition is limited to approximately 200 words. If a 10% deviation is permitted, any composition between 180 and 220 words is defined as acceptable. The analysis shows that 12 compositions were of suitable length, 5 were too long and 19 too short. The shortest composition consisted of only 59 words, while most other compositions that were too short ranged from 130 and 150 words. The longest composition numbered 264 words. Evidence shows that the majority of compositions were essentially shorter, so it is possible that the task was too difficult for the target group. The shorter compositions reflect the problem touched upon above: once pupils had used all of the information from the instructions given, transforming this material into a letter, they ran out of vocabulary items and linguistic structures with which they could expand the letter. They nevertheless tried to fulfil the word count criterion, as it was evident from many of the compositions that the pupils themselves had also counted the number of words.

Communicative suitability

This criterion involves the suitability of the composition in terms of form (whether it is written as an informal letter) as well as content (whether the author includes all of the required elements).

The content of the letters was mostly suitable. Eleven compositions were missing parts of the required information, typically one and never more than three elements per composition. The most problematic part of the instructions

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4   There is an ambition to carry out a similar study in Slovenia, but the coded grading system makes it impossible to follow the individual pupil's progress. Furthermore, due to the small number of pupils learning French, it would be very difficult to receive a comparable corpus of written texts via a different channel.

was "tell them what you would like to be/do when you grow up", as pupils had generally not mastered the conditional. Further details are given in the interpretation of the analysis.

When assessing the mastering of the use of the traditional letter form, the letters that were accepted as suitable included both an initial and a final salutation written in the informal register and appropriate for a letter to a friend. If it had been a "classical" letter, we would also have insisted on a date and place, but since similar correspondence can take place via e-mail, where there is no need to write the date of the letter, this criterion was omitted.

Ten compositions were inadequate in terms of form: two were written as a formal letter and included the addresses of the sender and recipient, and the other eight lacked the initial and/or final salutation.

As the initial salutation, "Salut" (hello) or "bonjour" (literally: good day) were used most often, but there were a number of cases of Cher/Chère (dear) in conjunction with the recipient's (made up) name.

The letters ended with À bientôt (see you soon), *Au revoir* (see you), *Gros bisous* (kisses), *Merci de ta réponse* (Thanks for your reply), and even the original and authentic *Bon, c'est tout, je te laisse. Grosses bises.* (free translation: Ok, that is all for now. Sending you kisses).

The endings *Je t'aime* (I love you), as well as the imperative *Réponds!* (Reply!) used by pupils were viewed as impolite in the context or were not appropriate for the assignment.

Orthography (spelling)

Pupils struggled above all with diacritical marks, even with the most basic vocabulary, such as family members. The following spellings appeared: *frére/ fréres[5]*, even *frérés* and *frerés, mére, pére* (correct: frère/s, mère, père). Diacritical signs were also used incorrectly with other frequent words: *chere* (chère), *slovene* (slovène), *Slovènie,* also *Slovenié* (Slovénie), *je suis fortè* (je suis forte), *trés* (très), *cinèma* (cinéma), *secretaire* (secrétaire), *gèniale* (géniale).

In addition to missing or incorrectly used diacritical signs, there were other misspelled words: *seur* instead of soeur, *symphatique* or *sympatique* (sympathique), *Jacquline* (Jacqueline), *je suis excellante* (je suis excellente), *parc que* (parce que).

There were also examples of spelling mistakes that changed the pronunciation or even the meaning: *je suis gurmande* (je suis gourmande), *les gens*

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5   All of the corpus examples are uncorrected and written in italics. The incorrect examples have not been marked with an asterisk, as that would complicate reading.

pareseux (paresseux), *professiour* (professeur), *j'ĕcute* (j'écoute), *francais* (français), *la longue française* (la langue française).

Providing such mistakes do not compromise the clarity of the message, they are not perceived as crucial at this level of language learning. They are most likely slips rather than mistakes, but it is nevertheless recommended that teachers encourage pupils to pay more attention to precision, so as to avoid similar slips.

There are only two spelling mistakes that seem crucial and could indicate a lack of understanding of linguistic structures: et/est and à/a. Both examples include verbs: the first pair is the conjunction et (and) and the third person of the verb être (to be), while the second pair is the preposition à (on, in) and the third person of the verb avoir (to have). Examples of inappropriate usage found in the corpus are:

> *il à trois ans* (il a)
> *quel âge à tu* (quel âge as-tu)
> *j'habite a Črnuče* (à Črnuče)
> *il et un peu fou* (il est...)
> *mes chats s'appellent ... est Ginger* (et Ginger)

Language proficiency

After a detailed analysis of the compositions, the problematic structures and vocabulary were arranged into several groups, which are addressed separately in the sections below: incorrect conjugation of basic verbs, incorrect use of gender in articles and adjectives, and noun-adjective agreement, the latter being similar to the category used by Raaen (2010). We have added two additional categories: "elision" (élision – the shortening of an article of a pronoun before a noun or a verb beginning with a vowel) and "mistakes made in complex structures".

Conjugation of verbs

There are several mistakes found with verb forms, even regarding frequently used verbs that are present in primary school textbooks from Unit 1, such as:

> *Tu aime?* (tu aimes), *je n'aimes pas* (je n'aime pas), *Tu fait ?* (tu fais), *J'a un chat* (J'ai), *je va* (je vais), *Qui est tu?* (Qui es-tu?), *ma mère sais* (ma mère sait), *je va* (je vais), *Elles s'appelles* (Elles s'appellent), *je lit* (je lis)

The examples above are more likely to be slips than "real" – i.e., systemic – mistakes.

Some verbs were left unconjugated:

j'apprendre français (j'apprends), *je faire du sport* (je fais), *je ne parler bien le français* (je ne parle pas bien)

Interestingly enough, there are a large number of mistakes connected to the use of verbs (personal verb endings and infinitives). In certain cases, this might be influenced by the learner's mother tongue: "Rad berem, Lahko govorim s tabo, rad poslušam glasbo." (here the verbs "berem, govorim, poslušam" (English: I read, I speak, I listen) all have first person endings).

j'aime lit (j'aime lire), *Je peux parle à toi* (je peux parler à toi), *je veux joue* (je veux jouer), *j'aime écoute de la musique* (j'aime écouter de la musique), *J'aime apprends le français* (J'aime apprendre le français), *J'adore dance le ballet et joue du piano* (J'adore danser … et jouer), *J'apprends le français pour sais beaucoup* (pour savoir)
je veux je voyage en France (je veux voyager en France), *je veux je suis la proffeseur aussi* (je veux être professeur aussi).

There are few verbs in the past tense or in the conditional, and they usually contain mistakes:

j'ai lité (j'ai lu – lité is a non-existing form), *j'ai venu* (je suis venu – wrong auxiliary verb), *je voudrais danse* (je voudrais danser), *j'adore chanté* (j'adore chanter).

Incorrect use of gender in nouns, noun-adjective agreement

This is another category where mistakes occur with frequently used words, even with words where the gender is obvious (e.g., sister, brother, father). Regarding noun-adjective agreement, mistakes most often occur because pupils do not know the gender of the noun:

mon soeur (ma), *un petit soeur* (une petite), *ma père* (mon père), *mon famille* (ma)
la chocolat (le), *le langue* (la), *son profession* (sa), *ton lettre* (ta)
le glace (la), *le pizza* (la)
le lecture (la)
mon animal préférée, (préféré)
les yeux bleu, les yeux bleues (bleus), *ma cheveux long* (mes cheveux longs), *cheveux noir et yeux bleu* (noirs/bleus), *Il est tres grande* (grand), *Ses cheveux sont brun et long* (bruns et longs), *Mes yeux sont bleu et*

grande (bleus et grands), *Elle est très sportif* (sportive), *Il est grande* (grand)
dans une petit ville (petite)

Elision – L'élision

Elision is "the omission of the final vowel before a word starting with a vowel or silent h. Elision in writing is marked with an apostrophe" (Jereb, 2009, p. 14).

This could be classified as an orthographic mistake, even though it is actually caused by the impossibility of pronouncing two vowels together. Recently, it has been observed that this mistake occurs in written compositions rather frequently at all levels of learning, and it would therefore make sense to draw attention to this rule from the beginning of learning. Recognised as a simple mistake, it could be easily identified and avoided if pupils were simply aware of it.

The following variations appeared in the corpus:
je apprends (j'apprends), *je aime* (j'aime), *je étudie* (j'étudie), *je adore* (j'adore), *je achète* (j'achète), *je habite* (j'habite)
le alleman (l'allemand)
parce que il fait froid (parce qu'il fait froid)

Mistakes made in more complex structures

Despite their relatively low language level, some pupils tried to use more complex structures, Not surprisingly, they therefore made mistakes, in most cases connected to the usage of various adjectives and prepositions, such as:
Ma professeur est toujours de bonne humour et j'adore elle. (Ma professeur est toujours de bonne humeur et je l'adore), *j'adore elle* (je l'adore)
J'habite à Trzin, la ville qu'est à côté de Ljubljana (qui est à côté)
J'aime les langues qui j'étudie (que j'étudie)
J'adore voir les femmes quelles ont des talons (qui ont)
Cette année, je vais à l'Italie (en Italie)
À mon temps libre, … (Dans mon temps libre)
Je n'ai pas des frères (de frères), *je n'ai pas de la soeur* (pas de soeur), *Je viens du Ljubljana, la capitale du Slovénie* (de Ljubljana, de Slovenie)

Despite the mistakes, the message conveyed in the sentences is sufficiently clear.

Vocabulary

As far as vocabulary is concerned, the pupils resorted to the words provided in the instructions. The vocabulary is basic, as is expected at this level, so there is a lack of variety. There is separate section dedicated to spelling mistakes in the present analysis. Let us offer two examples of vocabulary mistakes:

Je ne sais pas quelle matière je vais faire (quel métier)

J'enseigne français parce que je pense que le français est une belle langue (j'apprends; confusing the verbs enseigner – to teach and apprendre – to learn).

The influence of Slovenian and English (first foreign language)

There are certain (rare) cases of mistakes influenced by the mother tongue and – more often, especially in the case of spelling mistakes – by English, which is the first foreign language that most children are taught. As stated by Skela et al.: "Besides the general effects of transfer between two written systems a foreign language learner is also burdened with the phonological system of his or her mother tongue. In oral communication this will be given away by the accent whereas in written communication this can result in some sort of a 'orthographical accent'. For example, English learners whose mother tongue is Dutch tend to duplicate the final consonant ('wekk' instead of 'week'). We can frequently determine the mother tongue of the learner simply by observing their mistakes" (2009, p. 236). It is interesting that the analysis of our corpus reveals a greater influence of the pupils' first foreign language (i.e., English) than their mother tongue.

The influence of the mother tongue is very probable in cases of literal translations:

Quoi est tes loisirs ? probably a translation of the informal "What are your hobbies?"

Je veux tous journées avec soleil pour toi, probably: "Želim ti sončne dni" (i.e., I wish you sunny days).

It is interesting that the influence of English could be observed often, especially in spelling, and in some cases English words were even used.

Je suis grande and grosse. (et).

Je déteste la scholl (l'école).

athletic (athlétique), *architect* (architecte), *sympathic* (sympathique), *colour* (couleur), *la music* (la musique), *la dance/je dance* (la danse/je danse), *les bananas* (bananes).

To conclude the analysis, let us quote a fragment of a unique composition that stands out from the average. Judging by the rich yet prominently informal, colloquial vocabulary, one can assume the author had been in contact with French-speaking people. The composition was written almost phonetically, ignored rules of orthography and posed a considerable challenge to the assessors. If read out loud, the composition appears to be meaningful in content, albeit rather informal in register, but in written form the words are almost unrecognisable.

> *Je ses pas qua exetelme je veux faire dans ma vie, mes je ses que sa va etre manifique. Se possible je je va etre un milionere, au petetre je va alle dans an pay etranger et je va recountre l'amour de ma vie. Je ses pas. Mantniau je va se concetr sur qua se passe mantenau et je va voir qua se pas dans la future.*

Summary of the analysis and interpretation of the results

A total of 36 compositions were analysed, with length, communicative suitability (respecting the form and including all of the required elements) and linguistic competence used as criteria.

Regarding the form, the suitability of the letter length as well as adherence to the criteria of the text type (i.e., whether the letter includes an initial and formal salutation, whether it is written in the proper language register, etc.) were assessed. It was established that only 12 compositions were of proper length (i.e., between 180 and 220 words), while more than 50% of the compositions were too short. It is possible that the prescribed length could be unsuitable (too long), or that the amount of time available for the written composition could be the issue. Given that the national competition aims to gain insight into the level of knowledge of better pupils, and considering the fact that some compositions were longer than prescribed, one can conclude that the length is appropriate, as it gives better pupils a chance to distinguish themselves.

As far as following instructions is concerned, content analysis reveals that the compositions meet the demands of the task. Eleven compositions lack specific elements from the instructions, in most cases one element per composition. The most problematic part of the instructions was "tell them what you would like to become when you grow up". This part was linguistically challenging: competitors recognised the conditional tense but did not know how to form it, so they either used the present indicative tense or simply ignored this question.

The analysis also covers how the imaginary pen pal was addressed. Most

participants used an appropriate salutation and a register suitable for a letter written to a friend, while two pupils wrote a formal letter and eight pupils forgot to include the initial or final salutation, or both.

With regard to orthography, there are several mistakes related to the usage of diacritical signs, even in the case of elementary vocabulary such as words for family members. In most cases, the mistakes do not alter the meaning of the word or make comprehension difficult. However, attention needs to be drawn to the pairs à/a and et/est, which are often used incorrectly, although it is impossible to distinguish mistakes from accidental slips. Other examples of language mistakes include many false uses of verb conjugation, use of gender in nouns, and noun-adjective agreement. When conjugating basic verbs, pupils were most likely careless, whereas the frequent incorrect usage of auxiliary verbs and infinitives indicates poor knowledge. Many nouns are used with adjectives of the wrong gender, even with examples as clear as "father", "sister" and "brother". Mistakes related to noun-adjective agreement are often due to pupils not knowing the gender of the specific noun. Such mistakes are relatively frequent in the compositions.

A closer examination of complex structure shows that most mistakes are related to pronouns and prepositions, which is in accordance with the expected level of language skill of pupils of this age. The vocabulary of the shorter compositions consists mainly of the words used in the French instructions, whereas the longer compositions display fairly rich vocabulary. Spelling is occasionally influenced by the mother tongue, as well as by English (the pupils' first foreign language).

Finally, let us point out a relatively frequent mistake that is quite easy to avoid: elision (élision). Teachers should pay more attention to teaching elision in class from the start.

CEFR and AYLLIT descriptors

The criteria for the assessment of written compositions, as part of the corpus, are expected to contain elements that enable the assessment of compositions according to the instructions given before writing. Hasselgreen and others (2011, p. 21) draw attention to the fact, that "the assessment criteria for writing must reflect the consensus of what good writing is and descriptors based on these criteria must reflect the age and ability of the writers for whom they are being developed".

Since the pupils in question have already succeeded in the first round of the selection process, the curricular standards determined for a second foreign

language as an elective subject are likely to be surpassed. The national curriculum defines communicative activities for the fulfilment of operative goals and knowledge standards for the 9th year (after three years of foreign language learning), anticipating that "pupils will be able to write a few sentences with the help of a template or sample (e.g., a message to a peer in which they let them know where they are, what they are doing, or where they will meet)" (2013, p. 13). The A1 level according to the CEFR is defined as the minimum standard for this level of learning, whereas the average required standard is not defined. The situation is similar in some other European countries; for example, in France, where pupils leave primary school at the age of 11. Vanthier (2009, p. 55) states: "In many European countries including France, we consider that at the end of the primary school a pupil should have acquired the level A1 of CEFR. The expected skills in writing are: can write a simple message (e-mail, postcard from holidays), can complete an extremely simple questionnaire. One wonders if the expected level is not undervalued in some cases, compared to the development capabilities of young learners (...) It might be expected that children leave elementary school with a higher level than A1."

If we compare the CEFR and the AYLLIT descriptors, we find that the CEFR criteria are too general and insufficiently detailed. In order to evaluate the analysed assignments and cover the features that emerge from the analysis, they need to be combined with other descriptors, e.g., descriptors for the general linguistic and vocabulary range.

On the other hand, the AYLLIT criteria seem more appropriate for the description and classification of the analysed assignments, as they are divided into four parts and cover most of the criteria established for analysis: overall structure and range of information, sentence structure and grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and choice of phrase, misformed words and punctuation. There is one "missing" category, namely "following instructions", which includes an evaluation of the length of the written composition and whether or not the pupil has included all of the required information in their composition. The AYLLIT criteria also define the "approaching A1" and "in-between" levels, and are therefore more adapted to our target group. Even if our pupils are between two age groups and cognitively more mature than younger children, their linguistic level can be better described using the AYLLIT criteria, since these criteria are more explicit and adapted to the writing task that was assigned to the pupils.

Discussion and conclusion

For the purposes of the present paper, 36 written compositions from the national French competition for pupils of the final year of primary school were analysed. Although the sample is small and statistically not sufficiently relevant, it is still representative if we take into account the number of pupils learning French as a foreign language in Slovenian schools. Several parameters were included in the analysis, those that seemed meaningful in view of the instructions and the language level of the pupils: following instructions, communicative suitability, orthography, grammar and vocabulary. The extra category of "content" was not introduced because guided letters were analysed and pupils had to follow rather rigid instructions.

Prior to the analysis, the hypothesis was accepted that the pupils were capable of writing the required text length and able to write a composition in the form of a letter, including the initial and final salutations. However, it emerged that more than half of the compositions were too short, some significantly so. This could imply that the required number of words was too high and/or that there was not enough time to complete the task, which is useful feedback for the authors of the test. The pupils were able to meet the formal requirements better than the length requirements: there were 10 unsuitable compositions, 2 of which were written as a formal letter while 8 lacked the initial and/or final salutation. The content of the letters was mostly suitable, although certain pupils did omit some information specified in the instructions, most frequently the part that demanded the use of the conditional tense, a structure that was too difficult for the general knowledge of the pupils participating.

The other hypothesis is related to language. Pupils were expected to use basic vocabulary and simple structures without making mistakes that affect comprehension. Even though all of the participants had already succeeded in the school-level competition before entering the national level, the compositions vary greatly regarding language levels. The least successful pupils simply copied the structures given in the instructions, but there were also some relatively elaborate compositions. The areas that appeared to be the most challenging were the conjugation of verbs and noun-adjective agreement. It is surprising that so many mistakes were made with basic verbs: the regular verbs of Group 1 and frequently used irregular verbs (i.e., "être", "avoir", "vouloir") that are present in textbooks from Unit 1. It is also surprising that there were mistakes regarding the gender of some nouns, especially nouns where the gender is obvious, such as "father", "mother", "brother" and "sister". It is impossible to distinguish between real mistakes and lapses made in a moment of inattentiveness,

or mistakes that arose because time was running out and the pupils could not reread their compositions before handing them in. Some pupils used sentences with fairly complex syntax, but they made certain mistakes, especially with pronouns.

Orthographic mistakes that occur even in common words such as those for family members were, without doubt, unexpected; there were, for example, three different alternative misspellings of the word "frère" (brother). Such issues could be avoided if pupils were more careful. Orthography, in particular, was occasionally influenced by the first foreign language (English).

Teachers could pay much more attention to mistakes related to elision, as they are very frequent in the analysed corpus. This is a mistake that can be avoided simply with greater awareness.

Regarding descriptors that could be used to place the analysed assignments on the CEFR scale, the AYLLIT descriptors, usually used for young learners, seem more appropriate than the more general CEFR descriptors. The AYLLIT descriptors include all of the categories used for the present analysis, except for "following the instructions", which should be added. They are also more detailed and include the "approaching A1" and "in-between" (A1/A2 and A2/B1) levels.

The linguistic level of the majority of the pupils participating in the competition seems to be above the minimum level determined by the school curriculum. This is not surprising, as the participants are obviously highly motivated children willing to invest enough effort into learning French to reach the national competition level.

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Art Appreciation for Developing Communication Skills among Preschool Children

Matjaž Duh[1]

In the contemporary process of teaching fine arts, children's own creative expression and art appreciation are used to encourage learners towards both perception and reception; consequently, the evaluation and internalization of works of art play an equally important role. In a qualitative empirical research study that takes the form of a case study, we studied the response of children to works of art and their demonstrated communication skills in this. The results have shown that children respond to works of art on multiple levels. With non-standardized narrative group interviews, we observed children's associations. Children perceived and internalized the given artworks and also put their emotions into words. The study has shown that systematic development of art appreciation among pre-school children can have a positive impact on their communication skills.

Keywords: communication skills, art appreciation, visual art, preschool education

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Likovna apreciacija v funkciji razvijanja komunikacijskih sposobnosti predšolskih otrok

Matjaž Duh

∾   V procesu sodobnega pouka likovne umetnosti imata enako pomembno vlogo lastno ustvarjalno izražanje otrok in likovna apreciacija, pri čemer se učeči srečajo tudi s percipiranjem in recipiranjem, torej z vrednotenjem in s ponotranjenjem umetniških del.

V kvalitativni empirični raziskavi, ki ima obliko študije primera, smo preučevali odzivanje predšolskih otrok na umetniška dela in pri tem izkazane komunikacijske spretnosti. Ugotovili smo, da se otroci na umetniška dela odzivajo na več ravneh. Z nestandardiziranim narativnim skupinskim intervjujem smo spremljali asociacije otrok. Otroci so prikazana umetniška dela zaznali in ponotranjili ter svoje občutke tudi ubesedili. Raziskava je pokazala, da sistematično razvijanje likovne apreciacije pri predšolskih otrocih lahko ugodno vpliva tudi na njihove komunikacijske sposobnosti.

Ključne besede: komunikacijske sposobnosti, likovna apreciacija, likovna umetnost

Introduction

In the preschool period, giving children experience in a range of fields is extremely important for their overall development. "Listening to music, for example, the child develops her or his ear, repeats the words they hear, probably also moves with this, thus developing many diverse abilities. Listening to fairy tales and watching illustrations children develop their vocabulary, they develop imagination and the capacity of longer concentration" (Duh, 2013, p. 33). Several opportunities thus exist for using various branches of art for the development of the child's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas. It depends on the teacher whether, in the process of artistic creative activity, children will develop their potential to the maximum; whether they will develop new skills through varied methods and forms of learning; and whether they will know how to observe, interpret, perceive, and thus develop their competences. Especially in the case of observing works of art, the teacher's guidance is indispensable (Duh & Kljajič, 2013). As a school subject, however, art develops competences not only in the area of children's creative abilities, but also in the area of perceptive and receptive abilities, which means appreciation competences. Under the term "art appreciation," we understand perceiving and reception based on emotions and experiencing the visual in works of art (Duh, 2004). It is, then, about the kind of reflection that must develop "in close association with producing and receiving and must be cultivated with creating and understanding paintings" (Regel, 2001, p. 70, quoted from Schütz, 2002, p. 123). Research (Duh, 2004; Kraguljac & Karlavaris, 1970) has shown that both creative and appreciative abilities are a matter of quantity, which means that all normally developed children possess these capacities. Contemporary teaching of art is thus conducted in two directions: (1) developing creative abilities in art (productive), and (2) understanding fine art (perceptive).

Bertscheit (2001) maintains that locating works of art into the interest area of learners is a primary goal of teaching art. This is why it is extremely important for preschool teachers' performance of the education process to include observation of works of art. Teachers must be able to establish communication between children and the work of art. The attitude of the child towards a work of art must be seen from two points of view. On one side is the child's innate feeling for visual order, and on the other side the acquired feeling for the beautiful and aesthetic (Zupančič & Duh, 2009). Today we know that art appreciation is not innate, but is an ability that can be developed with appropriate educational work (Duh, Čagran, & Huzjak, 2010).

Art appreciation and the development of communcation skills

Encouraging the development of art appreciation should begin sufficiently early, believes Payne (1990), who feels that younger students need a creative approach to the development of art appreciation. One needs to be aware that younger children in preschool are still too little and cannot use appropriate terminology. This can produce a rather low level of art appreciation as a consequence (Duh, 2013). With four-year-old children, Coates (1993) detected appreciation at an elementary level when they described a range of objects. As evidence of appreciation in its early phase, she identified children's responses such as the following:

> "That's big" in relation to size, "It's snowy" in response to a blossom tree and "It's smooth" after stroking a pebble" (Coates, 1993, p. 252). In these talks, in which children use imagination "they often generate a flow of creative ideas which can spill over into other parts of the curriculum. The impractical ones can always be rejected later on, leaving the best ideas for discussion and modification" (Barnes, 2002, p. 135).

Children describe not just things related to the works of art, but everything they see around them. Teachers can use this as a stimulus, by offering children other new experiences and thus systematically developing and widening their word power. Teachers should give children assistance in recognising the quality of objects, to lead them actively and attentively from articulating what they feel, to developing the appropriate vocabulary for describing these feelings (Duh & Zupančič, 2013). Imaginative conversation conducted in this way can additionally activate the child's thinking and also help with other fields of learning. Many creative ideas are developed that interweave with the contents of other subjects (Barnes, 2002). Children must first notice works of art in order to be able to enjoy them and talk about them on a subsequent occasion. This is why art activities in preschool must encouragechildren to acquire techniques for observing aesthetic objects. In her research, Coates found that in some cases children "looked for things that were familiar but at other times they used their imagination to try and decide exactly what each painting was about" (Coates, 1993, p. 260). If we wish to develop the capacity for appreciation in children, then talking about their perception is fundamental, since discussion with children offers teachers rich feedback. "The process of looking and questioning has an added bonus for the teacher," says Barnes and adds, "Together, teacher and child can talk in terms which build a vocabulary

for looking at things. Both of them sharpen observation by sharing what they themselves see" (Barnes, 2002, p. 141). With adequate incentives, children will acquire the ability to describe what they have seen. In a study involving preschool children, Aylward et al. (1993) discovered that initial differences in art experience among children of different ages were reduced, while differences between genders disappeared completely. The literature identifies those procedures through which children learn to see. "Watching," says Berger, "denotes a relatively passive action of looking at," and continues, "seeing points to an act of looking for and reading meaning in the viewed, i.e. to an active interpretation of the seen" (Berger, 2008, pp. 7–8). Through an open approach to works of art, visual abilities and organised observation, as well as mental, emotional and other activities are developed in children. "Aesthetic objects require recipient's openness for frequently unusual effects of motifs and materials, composition, colours, rhythms and tones" (Kirchner et al., 2006, p. 12). For the process of developing art appreciation, Pagany (1993) establishes four phases: (1) perception of a visual work with all senses, (2) releasing emotions, (3) converting images into speech, and (4) action. The first three levels give precedence to the reception of images, while the fourth phase requires production. For conversation about works of art, Barnes proposes four useful questions: (1) "What do you see? (Description); (2) How are things put together? (Analysis); (3) What is the artist trying to say? (Interpretation); (4) What do you think of it? (Judgement)" (Barnes, 2002, p. 145). Discussion with children about original artwork or reproductions offers opportunities for them to learn some special words for describing these works. Children learn to use words like form, colour, and line, provided teachers use these with sufficient frequency.

Definition of the research problem

In this study we monitored preschool children's reactions when presented with works of art and thus observed their perceptive and receptive abilities, and therefore their visual appreciation abilities. The procedures and processes of observing and receiving works of art are a good starting point for planning the observation of adult artists' artwork during art activities in preschool and while visiting galleries.

In the study we started from the fact that appreciation is accessible to everyone, although not to the same extent, and that it is an ability that needs to be and can be developed within the education process and systematically brought closer to children. "To develop appreciation it is important the perception of artworks is more than just watching and quick reaction; it must be a

meaningful experience. Observation must lead to interaction between the child and the work of art, where sensory stimuli get directly attached to memory, experience, emotions, and associations" (Duh, Zupančič, & Čagran, 2014, p. 213). Associations allow integration of various representations and depend on common features and similarities such as external form, colour, line or composition. Because associations are subjective and frequently biographically adopted, adequate conditions must be established in the group, to allow children to express their personal opinions without fear. Because of their personal perspectives and associations, these will differ for each child. "At this their perspective of vision will escalate the experience of other learners and thus also stimulate the development of art appreciation abilities in them (Duh, 2004, p. 47). The teachers who perform the teaching of art must be aware that different children react to the same work of art in different ways; it is important, however, that each should react to the same work in more than one way. There are three ways of responding: (1) response at the emotional level is manifested in an emotional response to the work of art being evoked in viewers; (2) response at the associative level refers to associations which are raised in the observer on viewing the work of art, and (3) response at the formal intellectual level refers to responses that appear with viewers after formal analysis and interpretation of the work of art (Arts Education, 1996, Viewing Art Works). These three types of responses oscillate and change from viewer to viewer and from one artwork to another. This, someone might immediately respond in an emotional way, while someone else responds at an intellectual level. A work of art can, however, also trigger an immediate emotional response with most observers, while another work evokes associations in viewers (Duh et al., 2014).

Methods

The purpose of the empirical research was to examine the response of preschool children to a work of art and the communication skills demonstrated within this activity. Within this framework, we seek to answer the following research questions:

- What associations will children have upon discovering artwork?
- In what way will they describe what they see?
- In what ways will the children get to know and experience the given artwork?
- Will the children learn to observe a work of art, perceive, accept and internalise it and also to put their feelings into words?

Research methods

The qualitative empirical research takes the form of a case study. It is based on the interpretative paradigm and an ideographic approach (Peez, 2005). The research was conducted in several phases in which children systematically and gradually learnt about various works of art. For the collection of data, the non-standardized narrative group interview was applied, in which we were not limited by predetermined questions but allowed children to say what they saw and thought was important. This kind of interview was selected because it is the most similar to everyday conversational situations among people, since we wished to create a relaxed research atmosphere for viewing the works of art. The participants in the study were informed that the conversations would be recorded.

In the research we applied the technique of document analysis, which is unobtrusive and non-reactive (Vogrinc, 2008), as a supplementary data gathering technique. The documents are represented through photographs taken during various phases of the research.

Research sample

The relevant purposive sample for the empirical research consisted of eleven children, 5 to 6 years old; of these 7 were boys (63.6 %) and 4 girls (36.4 %), who were selected from among the oldest children in the preschool at Tezno in Maribor (Slovenia). The conversations were conducted in the media room on 2 April 2015 between 12:20 and 13:40. Apart from the children and the researcher, the teacher was also present during the research interview. For easier communication, the children were divided into two groups (of 5 and 6 children); the research procedure was thus repeated twice. We selected purposive sampling. In the front of the research, was the relevant knowledge of visual art, of those involved in the process of preschool education?

Preparation of instruments and conduct of research

The research instruments consisted of a presentation programme (Microsoft Power Point), audio recording of the conversation and occasional photos taken during the research process. The presentation programme consisted of 73 slides with photographs of artworks by six Slovenian artists, along with basic information about the artists and their work. Given the findings about preferences in art motifs from a gender perspective (Duh & Herzog, 2012) we

used visual artworks with various motifs in the study. Since research (Duh, Herzog, & Ros, 2013) has shown that it is not just the motif, but also visual elements, colours, forms, composition, etc. that influence the attitude towards visual artwork, we selected diverse works of art for the use in the study.

Figure 1. Presentation of the gradual uncovering of a work of art (F. Mihelič, *Mrtvi kurent*)

In the first stage, we gradually uncovered the painting *Mrtvi Kurent* (The Dead Kurent, France Mihelič, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 147 cm). The painting was masked in grey in a shade identical to the background of the screen image (Figure 1). We uncovered the painting in 15 steps from all four outer margins inward, while (zoom) taping (audio recording) the children's observations. We adapted the pace of change for the sequence of images to the dynamics in the group of children. In the second stage, the painting *Trnovo pozimi* (Trnovo in Winter, Rihard Jakopič, 1924, oil on canvas, 51 x 70 cm) was masked behind a translucent grey that we brightened in 10 consecutive steps until the final revelation. In the third stage, the children gradually got acquainted with the painting *Portret očeta* (Father's Portrait, Marij Pregelj, 1953, oil on canvas, 116 x 88.5 cm). We removed the grey cover from the image simultaneously from the left and right margins in 14 steps. In the fourth stage, the children gradually got to know the abstract painting *Babilonski fragmenti* (Babylon Fragments, Azad Karim, 2010,

acrylic on canvas, 110 x 130 cm). As with the second stage, we brightened the translucent greyness slowly in 11 steps. In the fifth stage, the children were progressively acquainted with *Avtoportret* (Self-Portrait, Janez Logar, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 179.5 x 137 cm). This time, at the beginning, the children saw only a white rectangle the size of the painting. Within it, the artwork emerged by degrees in 15 steps, from above and from the right. In all phases the pace of change for the consecutive images was adapted to the dynamics in the group of children. In the sixth stage, the children became familiar with the painting *Poletje* (Summer, Ivana Kobilica, 1889-1890, oil on canvas, 180 x 142 cm). They saw the whole painting in the very first slide. They subsequently learnt about the author, at the third screen slide, the title of the artwork and with the fourth, the date of its creation. In the fifth screen image the children were also informed about its size, and in the sixth, they received all the remaining data. The children viewed the projected images while seated in front of the projection screen. To guarantee the validity of the non-standardized narrative group interview, we registered all the conversations, which will be presented in detail below. Thus, all the interpretations will have support in the collected material. For interpretation, we analysed the interviews according to the characteristics of the quality analysis, starting from transcription. Since this study was not focused on the way the children expressed themselves, but only on the content, we used the paraphrased form of transcription and copied the responses in accordance with orthographic rules of written language, yet as faithfully to the original as possible (Vogrinc, 2008).

Data processing procedures

The data gathered from the interviews were analysed using qualitative content analysis, which was conducted in two phases: (1) paraphrased transcription of audio recordings, (2) interpretation with the formulation of theory according to the research questions.

In the qualitative research, ethical practice was observed in all its aspects: voluntary participation in the study; informed participation; protection of individual identity; confidentiality and privacy, and respect for truth.

Results and interpretation

We gradually learnt about the artworks by five authors and talked about them with the children in both groups. The responses of children to the works being gradually uncovered were quite spontaneous. Each further step in revealing the artworks triggered new responses. Initially, these were to the large part

at the intellectual level and referred primarily to what could be seen thus, to the motif. Later some children associated the scene with their experiences, and so we could also talk about responses at the associative level. We observed emotional responses by some children in intermediate reactions, or upon perceiving the painting as a whole and during its internalisation. Owing to restrictions of space, we will present only some of the essential reactions of children and part of the paraphrased transcription of the group interview.

On presentation of the first painting, *Mrtvi kurent* (France Mihelič), the children quite quickly recognised the lying figure, first its face and then the *kurent* (a traditional Slovenian carnival figure) on the right of the painting. The attention and responsiveness of the children were remarkable. After further uncovering of the artwork, some associated the scene with the carnival and denoted figures as positive or negative. "That one hit him, so he fell on the ground," stated one child. The *kurent* scene evoked associations with a fight; a reaction was therefore triggered at the associative level. The children further named some of the depicted figures, e.g.: "How funny this one is!" for a costumed figure on the left the painting or, "What a funny hat!" pointing to one of the figures. When the last slide gave the title of the masterpiece, the question followed, "Why did he die?" Another child's answer was, "Because that one hit him." One of the children stood up and, pointing a finger at the supine figure, guessed who might have hit him. "This one hit him," indicating the figure standing with his back towards the viewer. When they heard that *kurents* chase winter away and that in doing this one of them had become exhausted, the response of the majority of the children changed. Spontaneous reactions such as "Poor *kurent*," or "How sad," demonstrate that the painting had aroused an emotional response in the children. In response to the question what colours they saw in the painting, the children pointed to most of the colours and named them. When they were told that the width of the painting was nearly a metre and a half, they showed with their arms how wide it was. The procedure for developing art appreciation by systematic uncovering of the artwork produced good results with children of this age. In each group the gradual uncovering of the painting and the accompanying conversation took about six and a half minutes. The intensity of the communication and active participation extended the attention span of children, who observed the changes on the screen throughout the presentation. The children experienced the painting and also knew how to verbalize their feelings.

At the next stage the children became acquainted with Rihard Jakopič's painting *Trnovo pozimi*. During the gradual thinning of the grey veil over the picture, they recognized trees in the lines in the foreground, while associating the forms in the background with various things: "That's a ship." In the second group of children, the response differed from the second slide: "I know what I

see. Snow, and houses," or, "I see fences, and trees, and landscape, and a road." The children stood up from their seats and pointed to the screen. At each new step, they wanted to show and tell what they had discovered. In this case, too, the responses were mainly at a formal, intellectual level. In the next observation phases the associations expressed in the comments were similar in both groups. They also related the scene to the season: "It is winter, because there is snow and it is a sunny day." To the question why, the answer followed: "Because there is a lot of sunshine; the picture is yellow." They designated other colours as light or dark. "A lot of snow has fallen, because it is all over the houses;" they pointed to very bright parts of the painting. Thus, they linked their own associations with the scene. At this point, they enumerated the seasons and observed that at the time of experiment spring. Because of the relatively realistic depiction of this motif, the presentation of this work of art only took four minutes, but with the children, it evoked a positive reaction. Such a method for developing art appreciation stimulated interesting communication and lively developments, including rushing towards the projection screen, as nearly all the children wished to tell and show where and what they had discovered. The children experienced and internalised the painting and expressed their feelings both verbally as well as with gestures.

Figure 2. Children exploring paintings by France Mihelič (A), Rihard Jakopič (B) and Azad Karim (C).

As the third artwork, the children of both groups explored Marij Pregelj's painting *Portret očeta*. Below, we present a paraphrased form of the recording of the conversation. We labelled the researcher's questions and conversational prompts as R, while the letters A, B, C, D, E and F denote the reactions of the six children in the second group. In the first slide the reproduction was completely covered. In the next slide only the left and right margins could be seen.

"R.: This image is different, though? What can we see here?

A.: I see something. A stone and something red. B.: And I see some dirt. C.: This is an uncle. A.: I know what's there.

R.: What?

A.: And there's a little more dirt behind. D.: I know what it is. Perhaps it's the kind of picture where the world cannot move.

R.: Perhaps. Let's go on and see what is hidden underneath.

C.: It's a sort of chair, perhaps. D.: This is something broken. A.: I know, I know. Perhaps this cannot move, perhaps they look like birdhouses, or something.

R.: Shall we reduce this greyness a bit further, so we can see more? What can we see now?

B.: I know now. D.: I know. B.: Maybe it's a man sitting down.

R.: Where?

B.: Maybe he's sitting on the chair. C.: Maybe it's a wall.

R.: Right, and what do you say?

E.: Perhaps it's a house. F.: Perhaps they are city walls. A.: I know what it is. Perhaps this is a house and a car behind or something like that." (Group interview II. A-F/15, P-10:15 to 12:46). [2]

In this part of the conversation, which took about two and a half minutes we gradually uncovered the artwork in four stages. The children stood up from the bench, approached the projected reproduction and underscored their statements by pointing. Since the largest part of the picture was covered, the visible parts of it evoked a range of associations in the observers. The reactions of the children were spontaneous and the associations personal, as in one case they were influenced by familiar forms, in another by colours that could be perceived. At this part most of the children were actively participating in the conversation, with two needing additional prompting.
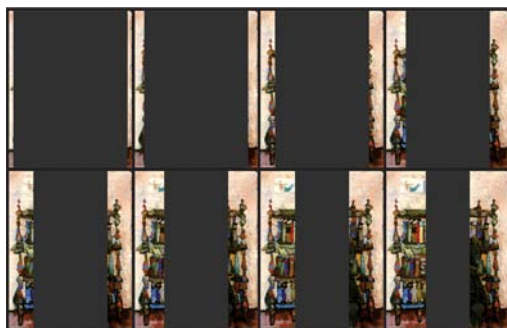
Figure 3. Gradual uncovering of the work of art. *Portret očeta* (M. Pregelj). The first eight phases.

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[2]   The numbers in parentheses refer to the transcription of the whole conversation. They are read in the following way: it concerns the second (II) group of children A–F that was carried out in 2015; the paraphrased form of transcription (P) was carried out with the time of the recording between minutes 10:15 and 12:46.

Below we present how the conversation unfolded between the researcher and the children in the next four phases of uncovering the work of art:

"R.: *Let's watch some more. Sit down and let's observe the picture well. What could this be?*

B.: *It's a bookshelf.*

R.: *A bookshelf? Where did you see a bookshelf?*

B.: *Here. E.: And I see a cupboard. It's a cupboard.*

R.: *What do you say?*

F.: *It's a kind of chair made of blocks. C.: And I see it looks like a cupboard with books on.*

R.: *All right, we can go on. He said he saw a cupboard on which there are books.*

A.: *And I think it looks like a table.*

R.: *And you think it is a table. Right. Let us look some more, so we can see what it is. Now you tell what you can see.*

B.: *It's a bookshelf. C.: Yes, I know what it is. It's a table and there's something on it. B.: Yes, it's a bookshelf. A.: Like a bookshop. A colourful bookshop.*

R.: *We will reduce this greyness a little more. Let's see what we can observe now.*

A.: *It's a house, and a roof, and there's another above there.*

R.: *Well, now you too say what you can see (encouraging the two children who had been more reserved).*

E.: *This is could be a bookshelf, or, perhaps also something else. F.: It's like there are books piled up."* (Group interview II. A-F/15, P-10:15 – 12:46).

After the eighth stage of the presentation, we can conclude that, for some children, associations linked to form have passed into identification of the subject. The previous act of guessing had already achieved a more concrete perception and for some children, a response at the associative level had become a response at the formal, intellectual level. The communication was very lively and the children identified with the conversation. At each new uncovering of the artwork, a child stood up, occasionally several children at a time, and pointed to a newly revealed image in the painting. They became so absorbed in the uncovering of the artwork that they seldom remained seated in their places.
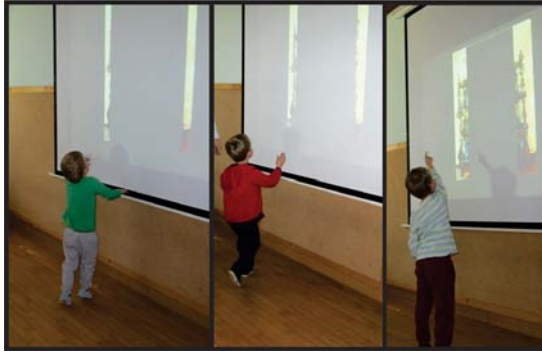
Figure 4. Children observe, explore and describe the visible part of the artwork.

We will now present how the conversation proceeded between the researcher and the children in the next four phases of uncovering the artwork:

"R.: Shall we continue looking? Right, let's go on.

C.: Now I can already see something up there.

R.: Yes, what do you think will be here? Shall we look a little further? Right, now you say what you can see.

C.: A bear in front of a bookshelf.

R.: Aha! So now we know it's a bookshelf. And this is a bear?

C.: Yes, a bear. B.: I know. An animal who's come to the library, well, maybe it's another bear or a fox. Or something.

R.: Now I'd like to know something. What would an animal be doing in a library? What would an animal do at a bookshelf? Well, let's look some more.

A.: Yes, if it found anything. I know already what it is. Like an animal. E.: And I think this is a lady sitting in the library disguised as a bear.

R.: Yes, interesting. And what do you think?

F.: I think it's a monkey.

R.: Right, shall we go on? Let's see what will be revealed.

B.: I know now. E.: Go on one more time. B.: Yes, I know, I know." (Group interview II. A-F/15, P-12:47 – 16:21).

At this stage of uncovering the artwork, the painting was nearly entirely visible. The children were able to recognize a shelf with books and increasingly responded at the formal intellectual level. The central, covered part of the painting still evoked various associations and responses at the associative level. They associated the dark mass in the middle of the painting with a range of animals. The lively response continued, with children getting up and pointing at the newly uncovered images in the painting.

Figure 5. Gradual uncovering of an artwork (M. Pregelj, *Portret očeta*). Last four phases.

After the twelfth phase of uncovering the artwork, the painting remained covered only by a narrow strip of grey. In the penultimate phase of the presentation, it narrowed even further. We present how the conversation unfolded between the researcher and the children:

"R.: Right. Let's go on. Well, let's take a look.

B.: I know what it is! A man with a hen's head sitting in front of books. A.: I know this is a man.

R.: Aha! You can see it's a man. Shall we look to the end? (last slide)

A.: Yes, it really is a man (joy)! C.: It's a man in front of a bookshelf.

R.: This is the image the artist painted. What do you think – who did the painter paint?

B.: I'd like to say something. The librarian.

R.: The librarian? Who else could the painter have painted? Who do you draw? Who do you love and you draw them?

C.: Mummy.

R.: Mummy? Is this a mummy?

C.: He drew a gentleman who is choosing books, and he painted him.

R.: Well, before you said mother. Who else could it be, if it is not a mother?

D.: I know. Grandpa. B.: Yes, because this man has exactly the same kind of cane. R.: Shall I tell you what the title of this painting is?

D.: Yes.

R.: Father's portrait. The artist painted his father sitting in front of a bookshelf.

C.: I see he painted something and that he was a painter. D.: I also draw my mother. C.: Me too.

R.: This painter is Marij Pregelj, who painted his father." (Group interview II. A-F/15, P-16:22 – 18:07).

The children reported that they, too, had drawn people, while the children in the first group reacted by saying that they had also drawn their family on a walk. In the conversation the children were also informed that photographers take portraits. They observed that most books in the painting were green or blue. "And there's a red one there," a child remarked, standing up from the bench and pointing to a book on the left of the upper shelf.

Figure 6. Children observe, explore and describe the visible part of the artwork.

The entire presentation of the painting with this group of children took a little less than eight minutes (7:52). In the first group the conversation about this painting was slightly shorter. We can see from the transcript that the initial response at the associative level developed into a more formal intellectual response. In the process of developing art appreciation, the final uncovering of the painting also evoked a response on the emotional level, as the children linked the content of the painting with their parents. Using characteristic vocabulary, the children also verbalised their internalised feelings.

In the next stage (the fourth) of the study, the children were presented with the painting *Babilonski fragmenti* (Azad Karim). For the presentation the painting was covered with a translucent film of grey, which we lightened slowly, in nine steps. This was the only abstract painting presented to the children in the study. The children's response demonstrated abundant imagination related to associations. The conversation flowed, and responses such as "I see some hair. This is a ship." or "This is a man with a mask. This is an aeroplane. This is like a car, like a swallow that has eyes like that, and it's smiling" indicate their skill at describing associations. Interestingly, in response to this painting the children in both groups experienced similar associations. In addition to tonal gradation of colour surfaces, the painting is internally structured with graphic symbols. They connected the forms unusual to them with the familiar:

"If this isn't a crab, it could be a spider." They skilfully verbalised a range of associations, repeatedly rising from the bench to stand in front of the projected picture, while pointing to images. "I see a bridge and also some beads. I see a spider." Describing an abstract painting, without a definable motif, brought them around to describing stories that emerged from their associations. "A little nose, and a spider, eyes, and mouth, and a blanket. And it has little legs. And it fell down and rolled. Here's something, and it cried, and there's some black hair." Via such associations, imagination elicited from the children emotional responses to artwork and to their own explanation of the content. Each of the children in both groups wished to present what they saw. When the painting was gradually uncovered, until completely presented, the children's responses remained close to their initial observations.

The associations "I see three windows and here's an entrance," or "It's such a strange nose. It is so strange, and it has an eye and a mouth. And that spider wants to catch it," indicate exuberant imagination activated by the presentation of the work of art. When the children were told the title of the painting, *Babilonski fragmenti* (Babylonian fragments) and given a short explanation of the painter's vision of the antique city in Mesopotamia, they mentally kept to their associations: "I see a little dragon." They pointed to bright colours in the middle of the painting and named the colours they could recognise. In each group the conversation took a little over four and a half minutes. With the abstract painting, the procedure for developing art appreciation left considerable room for the children's own interpretation. Using arm gestures, we showed the approximate size of the original painting. The children liked Azad Karim's work of art, which despite the title, left them their own associations; it allowed them their own perceptions, which they could verbalise in their own way.

In the fifth stage the children gradually, in 15 steps, became familiar with *Avtoportret* by Janez Logar. What they saw at the beginning was a white rectangle the size of the painting, which shrank from the right margin and from the top. In this way the work of art gradually became visible. We will present a summary of the conversation and part of the paraphrased form of the recording from the final stage of the presentation.

The children immediately recognized numbers; only one said, "It's a bird." During the rest of the presentation, they enumerated the numbers they saw in the picture. One of the children enumerated, "Four, five, five four, zero, zero," pointing to the overprints of the numbers. There are no zeros in the painting; the overprints in some places did, however, evoke a similar association with others. From this part of the conversation with the group of children, we can observe the children responding mostly at the formal intellectual level, as they saw only

numerical signs, and in the second part of the presentation their associations elicited new content. Further conversation dealt with their impression of the condensed and less frequent distribution of numerals in the painting. In a string of condensed numerals the children again recognised a number that does not actually appear in the painting: "There they are in the form of a seven." The children stood up from the bench and showed where the numerals were set more densely and where they saw the seven. With the gradual uncovering of the painting, their associations also became more diverse. "These numbers will make up a picture!" In the raster scheme of dense and infrequent numbers, the child recognised new content. Additional uncovering of the painting only intensified the imagination. "It seems to me it'll be a dinosaur. I see a dinosaur." To the question where he saw the dinosaur, the child ran up to the screen and pointed a finger: "Here's the horn. And here he has a leg, and he's standing kind of this way," and the child assumed a similar pose. In this part of the presentation of the painting, we can conclude that the children gradually passed from response at the formal intellectual level to response at the associative level. From perceiving individual numerals, they passed to their own interpretations.
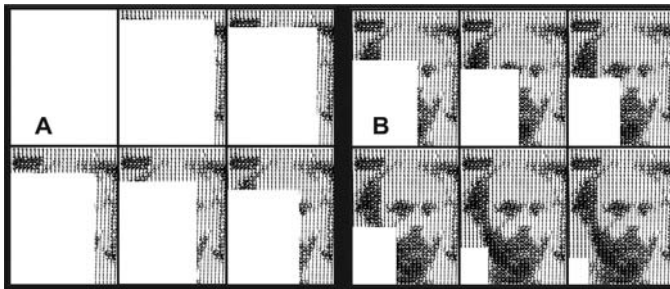

Figure 7. Gradual uncovering of Janez Logar's work of art (first six phases A and six second phases B)

Below we present the paraphrased transcription of the recording made during observation of this artwork. R indicates questions and conversational prompts by the researchers, and the letters (A, B, C, D and E) designate reactions by the five children in the first group:

"*R.: Let us now look a little further. Would you like to know what will emerge from this (presentation of the penultimate painting)? Let's now look with our eyes a little bit closed. Let's have just a tiny look, let's close our eyes a little. What do you see?*
B.: I know.
R.: Well, what do you see? Tell us.

B.: I see an eye, an eye, a smile. A.: There's a dinosaur, he's so strange.. D.: Look, a man, a face. A face (merrily). This is a face. The eyes, mouth, nose.

R.: And what do you see? You've been rather quiet.

E.: Some fish, and ……

R.: Show us where you see the fish. Come and show us.

E.: Here are two fishes and here's a dinosaur.

R.: And what do we see if we look at the whole picture?

C.: A head? D.: Our Mayor's head.

R.: Our Mayor's head?

D,: Yes (laughter).

R.: And what now? Let's look very closely (presentation of the last phase, the whole painting).

D.: A head. A head.

R.: Do you see one eye, and the other eye, the nose, and the chin, the mouth, the hair?

B.: It's a man. C.: A human face.

R.: This is the way the painter depicted himself. Using only numerals, he composed his face." (Group interview I. A-E / 15, P-5:16 - 7:07)
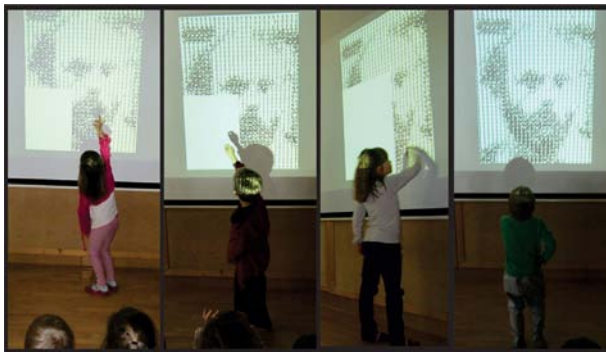

Figure 8. Children uncovering and describing Janez Logar's work of art.

The entire discussion about this painting took a little less than eight minutes. To the question whether they liked the painting, we received affirmative answers. Already familiar with the word portrait (from the discussion of painting # 3), the children now learnt what a self-portrait represented. In both groups the children reported that the artist had composed the picture from the numbers one to five. The procedure of developing art appreciation also proved to be successful in terms of encouraging communication, since by experiencing the painting fully, the children were able to verbalise their thoughts. The

intensity of the experience was also evident, as they approached the projected image, because in this way they experienced the scene more intensely and put what their observations into words.

In the last (sixth) phase, the children became familiar with the painting *Poletje* (Ivana Kobilica). The painting was presented as a whole, with sufficient time to observe it. In response to the question about what they could see, they described the scene: "It's a mother, and there are children," and "Children are playing, and they're playing hide and seek," were the responses on the formal intellectual level. The children were taken by the motif and described it in different ways. When asked whether a man or a woman had painted the picture, the responses were varied: "It's a man", or "A woman" and "A woman painter".

At the next stage of the presentation, they were told who the painter was. The question followed, "Which season of the year is depicted in the painting?" The children linked the painting to the current season. "It's spring!" To the question why they thought it was spring, the answer followed: "Because everything is green." The discussion was oriented around the seasons of the year, and a look through the window of the preschool showed that there were not yet so many leaves on the trees as there were on the trees in the painting. Linking the scene in nature to that in the particular painting led the children to the conclusion: "It is summer." In the next phase the children were told that the title of the painting was *Poletje* (Summer) and that it had been painted 125 years ago. "Such a long time ago," was the reaction of one of the children. They also learnt that it was a large painting, bigger than they, and they were also encouraged to look once more at what they could see in the picture. "There are five people in the picture." The children limited themselves to describing what was going on in the painting: "The lady is cutting flowers. The boy is picking flowers. A boy is climbing over the fence. The boy has a hat on his head. The lady also has a hat on her head," were all statements made while pointing at parts of the painting. They indicated that the dominant colour in the painting was green, they pointed out the brightest colour (a white dress) in the painting and reported seeing many different flowers of various colours. The description of the painting was extremely lively and took a little less than five minutes in the first group; in the second, it was just over half a minute shorter.

Concluding thoughts

In this qualitative empirical study, we explored the responses of preschool children to works of art and the communication skills demonstrated during this activity. Diverse procedures of developing art appreciation also evoked diverse

responses from the children. We found the children responsive to works of art on several levels, depending on the procedure for presentation, on the one hand, and on the work of art, on the other. The paintings with which we carried out the procedure for developing appreciation through gradual uncovering evoked the most diverse associations from the children, ones which they verbalised in their own practical way. In their imagination they played with combinations of parts of paintings, created new links between them, and changed them in such a way as to please their fancy. With additional incentives, the children acquired the ability to describe what they saw. They were clearly able to link the scene to the shapes and colours they knew, as in the discussion the children often used their repertoire of words. Through listening to each other's descriptions of associations, they also enriched their vocabulary. Response at a formal intellectual level prevailed in the case of paintings where a gradual uncovering of a translucent grey film was used in the procedure of developing art appreciation, and in the case of the final painting. They verbalised their observations by describing the motif, the shapes, and colours. In the formal analysis and interpretation of the artwork, appropriate situational language prevailed, given the age of these children. The fourth work of art presented was to some extent an exception, since the abstract painting triggered the most diverse associations and the most idiosyncratic interpretations. Even when they were shown the whole painting, they stuck to their description of the scene. To accompany this painting, contextual speech developed, as the children told whole stories in response to the painting (Starc et al., 2004). Frequently the final uncovering of the paintings also provoked response at the emotional level from most of the children. Thus, the responses of children to works of art passed from one level to another. The procedure: description, analysis, interpretation, and opinion (Barnes, 2002) was partly applied for the development of art appreciation in the last painting.

Children learn by looking at and describing what they see, so we did not expect these children to volunteer many answers regarding the proposed categories. In the discussion we did, however, provide meaning to their associations and linked their observations to the actual content in an unobtrusive way, one that was understandable and acceptable to them. At least equally important is the finding that active ways of developing art appreciation did encourage longer concentration in and activity on the part of children.

In this study we found that children's associations were quite diverse, that they described the scene in their own way, and that procedures for the development of art appreciation were suitable for learning and experiencing works of art. A level of conversation was also achieved, in which all children were included and which enabled development of their ability to verbalize what they had seen. The

words used in the descriptions were unpretentious, but the aim was achieved of invigorating the child's figures of speech and expression in such a way that they are sufficiently confident to talk about their ideas, as well as to discuss the works of art. This was achieved by having the discussions include the children's previous experience - explained and worded in a way that was consistent with the child's cognitive and emotional development and personal motivation. The movement of children in front of the projections of the artworks, their active comments with interpretation and description of what they had seen the experienced also provide insight into how children identify with a situation and make associations, which are personal and differ from child to child. The task of educators thus remains to find creative ways to realize the content of fine art in accordance with the modern paradigm of art education, which emphasizes as equally important the positive interaction between artistic creation and art appreciation. The resulting outcome should also be visible in other areas of education.

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Matjaž Duh holds a PhD in art pedagogy and is an Associate Professor of art pedagogy and art didactics at the University of Maribor. He lectures at the Faculty of Education: in the Art Department, the Department for Preschool Education, and the graduate programme for masters and doctoral studies at the Department for Elementary School Education. Within the framework of the programme Erasmus Teaching Staff Mobility, he cooperates with various universities, including Pädagogische Hochschule Wienna, Kunstuniversitaet Linz and Pädagogische Hochschule Viktor Frankl Klagenfurt in Austria; Artesis Antwerpen and Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel in Belgium;

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Between Teaching and Research: Challenges of the Academic Profession in Croatia

Marko Turk*[1] and Jasminka Ledić[2]

∾   Discussions about synergy or independence of teaching and research are present in many studies (Bilić, 2009; Brew & Boud, 1995; Enders & Teichler, 1997; Griffiths, 2004; Jakovljević, 2010; Jenkins, 2000; Ramsden & Moses, 1992). Humboldt's model introduced synergy between teaching and research, thus highlighting the importance of originality in scientific work and of the dissemination of the knowledge stemming from it. The synergy between teaching and research is also referenced in the education policy of the European Union, with the Berlin Communique (2003) introducing a request for the promotion of better synergy between European educational and research areas. However, studies reveal a different understanding of the teaching-research relationship between those who advocate their synergy (Brew & Boud, 1995; Jenkins, 2000; Neumann, 1993) and those who advocate their mutual independence (Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Ramsden & Moses, 1992).

Examining different perspectives of the teaching-research relationship, the research presented in this paper focused on understanding how academics see their dominant roles. Its objective was to examine how academics perceive their roles as teachers and researchers. A qualitative approach was used, with data being collected using a standardised semi-structured interview. A total of 60 interviewees participated in the research, all academics from Croatia. The results revealed that the research participants see themselves most frequently as teachers, then as teachers and researchers, and least frequently as predominantly researchers. Their identification is mainly determined by external factors, most frequently negatively connoted, which presents a challenge within the context of job satisfaction. Such results also point to legal, material, personnel and administrative difficulties in the Croatian higher education system.

Keywords: the academic profession, research, the teacher/researcher dichotomy, teaching

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Med poučevanjem in raziskovanjem: izzivi akademskega poklica na Hrvaškem

Marko Turk* in Jasminka Ledić

∽   V veliko raziskavah so predstavljene diskusije o sinergiji ali neodvisnosti poučevanja in raziskovanja (Ramsden & Moses, 1992; Brew & Boud, 1995; Enders & Teichler, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; Griffiths, 2004; Bilić, 2009; Jakovljević, 2010). Humbolt je s poudarjanjem pomembnosti izvirnosti znanstvenega dela in diseminacije znanja, ki iz tega izhaja, uvedel sinergijski model med poučevanjem in raziskovanjem. V Berlinskem komunikeju (2003) je bila predstavljena ideja o promociji boljše sinergije med evropskim izobraževanjem in raziskovanjem, kar je sinergijo med poučevanjem in raziskovanjem umestilo v edukacijske politike Evropske unije. Študije pa kažejo na različno razumevanje povezovanja med poučevanjem in raziskovanjem tistih, ki sinergijo zagovarjajo (Neumann, 1993; Brew & Boud, 1995; Jenkins, 2000), in tistih, ki poudarjajo njuno medsebojno neodvisnost (Ramsden & Moses, 1992; Hattie & Marsh, 1996). S preučevanjem različnih vidikov odnosa med poučevanjem in raziskovanjem smo se v tej raziskavi osredinili na to, kako akademiki vidijo svojo primarno vlogo. Namen je bil ugotoviti, kako zaznavajo svojo vlogo kot učitelji in raziskovalci. Uporabljen je bil kvalitativni pristop, podatki pa so bili zbrani s pomočjo standardiziranega polstrukturiranega intervjuja. Sodelovalo je 60 intervjuvancev, akademikov iz Hrvaške. Izsledki kažejo, da se udeleženci raziskovalci najpogosteje vidijo kot učitelji, manj pogosto kot učitelji in raziskovalci, najmanj pogosto pa primarno kot raziskovalci. Njihova identifikacija je večinoma determinirana z zunanjimi dejavniki, najpogosteje z negativno konotacijo, kar predstavlja izziv v kontekstu zadovoljstva na delovnem mestu. Ti izsledki kažejo tudi na pravne, materialne, osebne in na administrativne težave v hrvaškem visokošolskem sistemu.

Ključne besede: akademski poklic, raziskovanje, dvojnost učitelj – raziskovalec, poučevanje

Introduction

Teaching and research are traditionally regarded as fundamental academic activities, while also being viewed as the most important aspects in the academic system of career advancement. Both activities, their synergy and independence, are the focus of many studies (Bess, 1998; Braxton, 1993; Brew, 2006; Colbeck, 1998; Diamond & Adam, 1997; Geiger, 1993; Greenbank, 2006; Kogan & Teichler, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Locke & Teichler, 2007; Neumann, 1992; Ramsden & Moses, 1992; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000). The research results in this field point to the existence of a different understanding by those who support a close synergy between these two activities and those who advocate their independence. Ramsden and Moses (1992) indicated three possible conceptualisations of this relationship: completely integrated, which is based on the understanding that one needs to be an active researcher if one is to be a good university teacher; partly integrated, which is based on the understanding that research work and teaching need to be interrelated, not on an individual level, but on an institutional level (division/department); and independent, which is based on the understanding that there is a causal relationship between the two activities, but that they are mutually independent.

Similarly to the aforementioned authors, in a meta-analysis including 58 different research studies examining the relationship between teaching and research at universities, Hattie and Marsh (1996) speak of negative, positive and neutral relationships.

Discussing the negative relationship, Hattie and Marsh (1996) point out that academics who are more productive in research, who invest more time and energy in research activities, at the same time pay less attention to teaching and teaching activities, which leads to the negative correlation between time and energy invested in teaching and research. Within the context of their discussion on choosing between the academic activities of teaching or research, the authors point out that the teaching role, unlike the research role, is primary for most academics. In order to validate this claim, they refer to the results of research (Mooney, 1991, in Hattie & Marsh, 1996) conducted on a sample of 35,000 respondents from 382 universities, which reveals that 98% of the respondents judged that being a good teacher is the key element of academic activity, while 59% said the same of research. Discussions of the positive relationship are based on studies (Borgatta, 1970; Deming, 1972; Ferber, 1974; Halsey, 1992, in Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Jencks & Riesman, 1968; White, 1986) that argue that a positive correlation between teaching and research is evident and unambiguous, and that it is impossible to speak about the independence of these

two activities. Most of the academics who participated in these studies (Halsey, 1992, in Hattie & Marsh, 1996) claimed that one needs to be active in research in order to be a good university teacher. Jauch (1976, in Hattie & Marsh, 1996) offers research results showing that 91% of academics believe that research activity increases teaching efficiency, and that such activities are inseparable in academic discourse.

Discussions of the neutral relationship argue that research and teaching are two completely different academic activities, and that it is impossible to speak about their positive or negative correlations. Moreover, Rushton, Murray and Paunonen (1983, in Hattie & Marsh, 1996) revealed that the personality traits of teachers and researchers are orthogonal. Their research showed that researchers are more ambitious, resilient and dominant, demonstrate leadership skills and are more aggressive and independent, whereas teachers are more liberal and social, demonstrate leadership skills, and are extroverted, patient, objective, supportive and less authoritative.

Based on the results of their research, which revealed the dominance of negatively and neutrally correlated relationships, Hattie and Marsh (1996) conclude that belief in an inseparable relationship between teaching and research is a longstanding myth in the academic community, and that in the best case scenario there is only a weak connection between these two segments of academic activity.

Following the discussion of the previously elaborated authors, Kuh and Hu (2001) offer the results of their research on the relationship between research and teaching and confirm the conclusions of Hattie and Marsh (1996). However, the discussion by these authors was conducted within the context of research universities and is therefore strongly in favour of one segment of academic activities: the research segment. Teichler, Arimoto and Cummings (2013) point out that recent works on changes in higher education increasingly contain discussions about the strong research orientation of universities worldwide. The authors claim that research universities are therefore becoming more present in the international arena of higher education, and are thus pushing teaching activity aside.

Brew (2006), however, claims that the conclusions of Hattie and Marsh (1996) were subsequently rejected, as many later studies verified the necessary synergy of the two fundamental academic activities. He places teaching and research in a wider context that includes students as active participants in the teaching process and users of research results, the social environment in which students implement the new insights they have gained based on the research results transferred in the teaching process, and, in the long-run, the sustainability

of the community that is based on the research results acquired and/or learned through the teaching process. Enders (1999) mentions the conglomerate of teaching and research activities at universities, which are interlinked and form an inseparable whole. Cummings (2009, p. 39) also perceives teaching and research as "fundamental and inseparable activities of the academic life," while Taylor (2010), identifying one of the indicators of the crises of university and higher education in the US, expresses his concern with the escalation of a research orientation at American universities, which is why teaching and the education of students are being neglected. Gray (2012, p. 41) regards teaching and research as inseparable activities at universities, concluding that the "fundamental idea of every university is the quest and dissemination of knowledge; knowledge that stems from research results and is transferred to students in the teaching process".

Although various discussions exist about the relationship between teaching and research, it is evident that European educational policies establish the direction of their development on the basis of the inseparability and integrity of these two activities. Advocating a synthesis of knowledge and teaching as well as their functional synergy is one of the most important characteristics of the knowledge society concept that is one of the fundamental concepts of the Bologna Process. One of the basic principles mentioned in the *Magna Charta Universitatum* is that "Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge" (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988, p. 2). The Bologna Declaration on the European Space for Higher Education (1999) confirmed the principles of the *Magna Charta*, while the Bologna Declaration (2003) defined the synergy between European educational and research areas even more strongly (EHEA & ERA). Furthermore, in its document *Preparing Europe for a New Renaissance: a Strategic View of the European Research Area* (2009), the European Commission additionally strengthened efforts aimed at developing research and the subsequent generation of knowledge through the teaching process. Based on all of this, it is possible to conclude that universities perceive themselves as bearers of two inseparable activities: research (the creation of new knowledge) and education (teaching).

Apart from the teaching and research roles of academics, in the past two decades a significant number of discussions have appeared regarding their third role, arising from the third mission of universities: the role of community engagement (Boyer, 1990; Checkoway, 2001; Ćulum & Ledić, 2010; Ledić, 2007; Macfarlane, 2005). These authors follow the work of Ernest Boyer and his idea of scholarship of service (Boyer, 1990), as well as his later idea of scholarship of engagement (Boyer, 1996), and advocate the need to develop a wider view of

the contribution of university teachers and higher education to society. Such an approach advocates changing the traditional patterns of teaching and research with a stronger integration of community engagement in academic activities, in order for them to have a recognisable character of synergy with the community and society, as well as with perceived needs and problems. Macfarlene (2007) also contributed to discussions about the roles of university teachers in the context of public and active participation in society, claiming that the ideal university teacher and academic citizen acts through three components of the academic profession: political literacy, social and moral responsibility, and community engagement.

Apart from these roles, there are various other additional (new) roles required of academics, which are expected to become an integral part of their everyday duties: project preparation and management, collecting research funds, application of new teaching methods, etc. Čizmić, Crnkić and Softić (2013) claim that teachers and associates, as leading implementers of activities within universities, should have new competences and implement various activities, including recognising and using new opportunities, taking initiative, an innovative approach to business activities, understanding new processes and concepts, effective networking, and a number of other competences connected with the new organisational context.

The challenges of the teaching-research relationship have also been the subject of several studies conducted in Croatia (Kovač, 2001; Kovač, Ledić, & Rafajac, 1999; Ledić, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994). Within this context, it is important to mention Croatia's participation in the project *The Changing Academic Profession (CAP)*, which commenced in 2009 (Rončević & Rafajac, 2010).[3] As a result of this project, Croatian findings on changes in the academic profession have become comparable with those on an international level.

As in the CAP research (Höhle & Teichler, 2013), respondents in Croatia, according to Rončević and Rafajac (2010), expressed a relatively high level of satisfaction with their profession and a pronounced feeling of belonging to their discipline, institution and department. On average, their total weekly and teaching load correlates with those in other countries, while their evaluation of the quality of resources and working conditions is near the average in other countries. An analysis of the results in terms of attitudes regarding teaching

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3   The research, which examined attitudes of university professors regarding changes in the academic profession, was conducted using an online survey questionnaire (a partly changed and adapted CAP questionnaire, which still allowed comparative analysis) on a representative sample of 354 university teachers of all academic titles from all Croatian public universities. The objectives of this research were defined as a group of (smaller) research questions, including those concerning teaching and research.

activity revealed that university teachers in Croatia have a higher quantity of teaching obligations, having increased in the past three years, which is to the detriment of research work.

Such changes, along with the demands placed on academics, will trigger discussions about their traditions – teaching and research – and about the new, still unexplored competences that have been prompted by changes and the restructuring of fundamental academic activities.

Research objective, method and results

The research results regarding the synergy of teaching and research do not appear to yield an unambiguous solution to this relationship, a relationship that significantly effects the professional development of academics and the quality of teaching and research. Although the literature about the teaching-research relationship is relatively plentiful, how academics perceive this relationship is still underexplored. As demonstrated in the discussion above, the existing research studies mostly deal with the teaching-research relationship in academic institutions and, although some research results point to the independence of these roles, on the *policy* level, the idea of the necessary synergy between the two activities is accepted within the context of the mutual support they provide. It is equally important to mention strong trends towards giving priority to the research role of university. In reality, of course, it is academics who implement the established missions of academic institutions, and their attitude towards the dominant activities is therefore extremely important.

In order to understand how academics perceive their dominant academic roles, and to gain an insight into their reasons for such perceptions, new research was conducted, the results of which are presented in the present work.[4]

Within the framework of broader research, a standardised interview was conducted with 60 research participants, all members of the academic

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4   This paper presents the results of research on changes in the academic profession, which was conducted as part of the international collaborative project *Academic Profession in Europe: Responses to Societal Challenges (EUROAC)*, in which eight countries participated: Austria, Finland, Croatia, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Romania and Switzerland. The main objective of the project was to examine and make a comparative analysis of changes in the academic profession on the European level (Fumasoli, Goastellec, & Kehm, 2015; Kehm & Teichler, 2013; Teichler & Höhle, 2013). The Croatian research team participated with the national project *Academic Profession and Societal Expectations: Challenges for University Civic Mission.* The results of this research (Ćulum, Turk, & Ledić, 2015; Turk, 2015) were used in the preparation and implementation of one part of the project *Academic Profession Competence Framework: Between New Requirements and Possibilities (APROFRAME).* This project aims to determine how academics in Croatia assess the relevance of various competences, and how they assess, perceive and interpret the possession of the various competences that shape the contemporary academic profession. The project is supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the tender "Research Projects" from October 2013.

profession, and an interview protocol was developed in cooperation with an international team of researchers. The sampling strategy was harmonised with data on academics employed at public universities in Croatia and based on a database created for the purposes of quantitative research within the EUROAC project. Within the sampling strategy, due attention was paid to the organisation of the university (non-integrated (NI), partly integrated (PI), integrated (I)[5]), research field (participants were grouped into social and humanistic (S&H), natural and technical (N&T), and medical (M) research fields), position (research and teaching position (RT) – which includes distinguished professors and full professors, associate professors and assistant professors – and associate position (A), which includes junior researchers, assistants and senior assistants) and gender (M and F). Data on the research participants are presented in Table 1. Codes were assigned to the participants, and their identities, as well as the audio materials and transcripts generated from the recordings, are known and available only to the research team. On average, the interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes; they were conducted one on one and recorded using a voice recorder. Given the content of the questions, there was no need to "mask" the identity of the participants in data analysis and discussions.

Table 1. *Research participants*

Organisation of the university			Research field			Position		Gender	
NI	PI	I	S&H	N&T	M	RT	A	M	F
25	26	9	32	20	8	35	25	29	31

The question designed to gain an insight into how academics understand and explain of their own role was: *Do you consider yourself more as a teacher or a researcher, or both in equal measure?* The nature of this question thus directed the initial data analysis, establishing how participants primarily see themselves, and in initial analysis data were treated quantitatively on the level of the entire sample (as the frequency of repeated answers to a given question). Within the framework of the initial orientation, the answers were then analysed taking into account distinct groups (predominantly teacher, predominantly researcher, equally both), and an effort was made to explain the reasons behind choosing one of the offered possibilities.

5   Given the organisation of the university, the research participants were divided into three groups. Non-integrated, (University of Zagreb), partly integrated (Universities of Osijek, Rijeka and Split), and integrated (Universities of Dubrovnik, Pula and Zadar).

Analysis of the research participants' answers reveals that they see themselves most frequently as teachers, somewhat less frequently as teachers and researchers, and least frequently as researchers. Analysis of the research participants' answers points to some reasons why participants see themselves primarily as teachers. First of all, it is related to the number of students, which is too large and results in an increased teaching workload. Another reason is given as the insufficient level of teaching staff at institutions, as well as the fact that teaching is perceived as an ongoing responsibility, unlike research work. Research participants also mention the increase in administrative tasks connected with teaching, as well as the lack of funding required for research.

Thus, for example, one research participant, who had worked at the university for many years and who sees teaching as an ongoing everyday responsibility, stated that the circumstances of her work make her see herself as primarily a teacher:

"*Still, I see myself as primarily a teacher simply because that's a duty, part of my job that is ongoing, that takes a specific amount of time, so you mustn't fail. (…) teaching implies a much bigger workload – to prepare in time, to teach properly, then there's the evaluation of students, and it's not like you don't care whether you're a good or bad teacher. (…) In time, you simply end up feeling more as a teacher, less as a researcher*" (Full Professor, S&H). "Investment" in teaching, which is the result of the need to satisfy new teaching programmes and the large number of students, is also connected with the participants seeing themselves primarily as teachers: "*(…) since I've introduced a lot of new courses, I've spent the last few years investing a lot of time in preparation for class and for those courses, so I've probably concentrated more on that than on research*" (Full Professor, PI, N&T). "*As a teacher. In our conditions it is very difficult to be a researcher. There are not enough funds for any larger research. I've been in the system only for the past five years (…). As soon as I arrived, I noticed how things are, and that I can't engage in serious research if I want to be a good teacher, considering I have around 600 students annually (…). Only to glance at every one of those 600 students and write their grade in five places takes full time engagement*" (Associate Professor, NI, S&H).

The reasons why participants claimed to see themselves primarily as teachers are especially challenging among associates (assistants and junior researchers), since teaching duties and the resulting self-perception as teachers are connected with greater workload and an inability to engage in research work: "*At this point, teaching de facto consumes most of my work hours, as a*

result of the existing system, too many students, too many courses to assist at, the huge number of work hours that you must invest if you want to do your job right" (Assistant, NI, S&H); "*(...) teaching is dominant and all activities connected with it are a priority; research is pushed aside, so the whole idea of a research institution might be disappearing. (...) Statistics are most important here, more important than quality, which is why the number of students is more important*" (Junior Researcher, N&T); "*As a teacher. Although I came here because of research, the number of students and the administration prevent me from being a researcher in the proper sense*" (Junior Researcher, NI, M).

Analysis of the answers provided by research participants who see themselves primarily as teachers points to the conclusion that their self-perception is primarily influenced by external, negatively perceived factors (large number of students, teaching workload, ongoing everyday activity, investing effort in preparation for class, lack of money for research, etc.), while answers that would imply that participants prefer teaching are almost completely missing. These (isolated) examples are an exception: "*Because of my personal scientific appeal propensities, always as a teacher, my whole life. (...) in that context, when I think about the positioning of our university, which is unambiguously research oriented, with this [teaching] dimension being rather weak, I personally don't feel good*" (Full Professor, PI, S&H); or "*I'm mostly engaged in research, but I personally prefer my role as a teacher*" (Associate Professor, NI, S&H).

Apart from the example above, choosing the predominance of separate roles connected with the mission of the university is completely lacking. In other words, the organisation of universities and their missions do not appear to be factors that influence the perception of the dominant role. Moreover, the research participant who expresses the orientation of the university perceives her position as being in opposition to the proclaimed orientation.

Disregarding isolated examples that point to intrinsic motivation for teaching, the research participants' answers introduce discussion about the job satisfaction associated with the fundamental roles of the academic profession. While research results on changes in the academic profession (Rončević & Rafajac, 2010) point to a relatively high level of job dissatisfaction among academics in Croatia, the research participants' answers introduce a new perspective and problematise the already perceived problems regarding professional socialisation (Brajdić Vuković, 2013), where participation in the teaching process is shown as one of the basic barriers to professional socialisation for junior researchers. Furthermore, Rončević and Rafajac (2010), based on their research findings, stress that most teachers and associates in Croatia agree with the assertion of an equal level of interest in both components of academic work, with only a slightly

stronger inclination towards research. In addition, in comparison with answers from other countries where comparative research on changes in the academic profession has been conducted (CAP),[6] Croatian research participants were least supportive of the claim that they are primarily interested in teaching (Rončević & Rafajac, 2010, p. 58). Such research results partly contradict the results of the present research, whose participants see themselves most frequently as teachers, then as teachers and researchers, and least frequently as researchers. In national research on changes in the academic profession, Rončević and Rafajac (2010) point out that most teachers and associates agree with the assertion that they are interested in both components of academic work, with the slight tendency of a greater inclination towards research. In comparison with the answers from other CAP countries, Croatian respondents are the least inclined towards the attitude that they are primarily interested in teaching. However, within the framework of CAP research, Rončević and Rafajac (2010) discuss *interests* in teaching and research, while the data analysed and presented in the present research speak of *self-perception*, which is not the same, although it can be linked contextually.

In terms of correlated models of the teaching-research relationship (Hattie & Marsh, 1996), we could say that the research participants who see themselves primarily as teachers can be categorised in the model that points to a negative relationship between teaching and research, unlike the research participants who see themselves equally as teachers and researchers, whose attitudes reflect studies and policies that view the teaching-research relationship as positive, despite perceived difficulties regarding its achievement: "*As both equally. (...) we have quite a demanding teaching norm, and new processes and reforms of harmonisation with the Bologna demands require rethinking our role as teachers, but it can also be intriguing in terms of research. On the other hand, a university teacher must engage in research, otherwise university would be no different from two-year post-secondary schools. (...) Research groups are often groups that perform teaching activities, and then declare and carry out the unity of teaching and research work*" (Full Professor, NI, N&T); "*I see myself as both equally [teacher and researcher], since one includes the other. I think that serious research institutions must have high quality research that they transfer to their students through teaching. Without it, there is no difference between higher and secondary education systems. We are a research and educational institution; one cannot be separated from the other*" (Assistant, NI, S&H).

6   The research in question was implemented as part of the project *The Changing Academic Profession (CAP)*, which was implemented in the period between 2005 and 2007 in 19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Finland, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, the South African Republic, Canada, China, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Although in a minority, some of the research participants claim that they see themselves primarily as researchers. Their motives for such an orientation vary, but mention should be made of an intrinsic preference for the research role, which still contains the idea of the need to connect teaching and research: "*I consider myself primarily a researcher, because that is the impulse that drew me to this job. (...) Also, as a researcher and a responsible person in this society, I cannot and do not want to neglect that other segment, and I believe that one part of that research activity determines teaching. So I see myself primarily as a researcher, but because of my job, because of the young researchers we must educate, but also because of the young engineers who are being educated in this institution, it [teaching] should not be neglected. I believe that all those who ignore either of these two activities are wrong*" (Assistant Professor, PI, N&T).

When considering the teaching-research relationship, it is extremely important to keep in mind the external constraints that, as has been demonstrated, influence which role participants see as dominant, but at the same time demand an investment in research due to an evaluation system that gives priority to the research component: "*Well, even the nature of work requires us to be both equally. However, because of the evaluation system, I consider myself primarily a researcher. When it comes to advancement, evaluation and informal recognition, research results outweigh good teaching, so I invest much more effort and energy in the research part of the work, and not in teaching. So, therefore, I consider myself primarily a researcher*" (Junior researcher, NI, N&T).

Finally, it should be mentioned that only one research participant points to the importance of new dimensions in academic activities, which are seen as connected with international experience: "*I was lucky to start my career at a university in an environment that was very positive. I did my PhD abroad, and I've spent time at foreign universities several times during my career (...) I noticed that a university teacher has to be both a teacher and a researcher. I also noticed that third dimension that the university teacher must engage in, such as concern for the welfare of society, participation in the development of society, proposing, accepting projects, managing projects for the benefit of all*" (Full Professor, NI, N&T).

Conclusion

The results of CAP research conducted in Croatia (Rončević & Rafajac, 2010) reveal that academics are less interested in teaching, but mostly interested in both components of academic work, with a slightly stronger inclination towards research. The connection between CAP research and the findings of the presented qualitative research sheds new light on the analysis of this problem.

While CAP research participants demonstrated a weak interest in teaching, qualitative research demonstrates that a large portion of participants do in fact perceive themselves as teachers, but that, according to their answers, their self-perception is primarily under the influence of negative external factors that push them to predominantly engage in teaching (too many students, which results in an increased teaching workload; insufficient personnel at institutions; the perception of teaching as an ongoing responsibility, unlike research work; increased administrative tasks; lack of funding required for research work). In other words, it appears that there is a difference between what academics are interested in (the desirable, ideal situation presented in the CAP research results) and their perception of themselves primarily as teachers or researchers (forming their own identity). Judging from the results of the present research, self-perception is predominantly a consequence of a reality that gives primacy to the teaching function. It can be assumed that identification primarily as a teacher is not a matter of choice but of necessity, that is, of the given circumstances in which the respondents work. Still, research participants show a tendency towards the unity of the fundamental functions of the academic profession – teaching and research – pointing to the importance of good research, the results of which are then transferred to students through teaching, and to the unity of research and teaching activities as a characteristic of the higher education system.

The results of the conducted qualitative research point to challenges in teaching and research activities in academic work in Croatia. Although awareness regarding their correlation and the need to develop and support them equally exists, both are burdened with problems and contradictions; for example, the pressures related to teaching are connected with neglecting research and investing time in activities connected with teaching. On the other hand, the legal acts that regulate the higher education system stipulate dedicating an equal number of working hours to both, while academic promotion requirements give priority to research over (the quality of) teaching. Furthermore, support given to the improvement of teaching and research activities is negligible or non-existent, which represents a serious challenge for the quality and desired balance of the fundamental academic activities in the higher education system in Croatia.

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Rich, S. (Ed.) (2014). International Perspectives on Teaching English to Young Learners. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillian, 206 p., ISBN 978-1-137-02321-6

Reviewed by Barbara Lesničar

Edited by *Sarah Rich*, this book gives the reader a rich insight into a phenomenon that has appeared in the 21st century, the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL).

Sarah Rich has worked in the field of TESOL for more than 30 years. She is an experienced teacher, who has taught worldwide and holds an honorary fellow position at the University of Exeter. She is currently employed as an educational advisor for the Ministry of Education of Oman, where she is responsible for the in-service training of primary and secondary school English teachers.
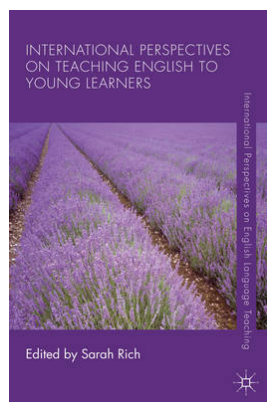
Contributors

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Mohammad Manasresh is an experienced language educator in Qatar. He supports teachers in their professional development at the Qatar University. He holds a master's degree in TESOL.

Shelagh Rixon has a career in English language teaching, teacher education and material writing. She spent 16 years at the British Council in various roles and has recently obtained a doctorate in the area of early literacy teaching to Young Learners of English.

Elzbieta Sowa is a graduate of the Warshaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities in applied linguistics. She has been involved in teaching English to young children for a number of years, and she is currently completing her doctorate at the University of Exeter in the UK.

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As mentioned above, TEYL has become very popular in the last fifteen years. The reasons for this range from purely economic issues to the fact that English has become the lingua franca of international communication in almost all areas of professional and private life. Teachers dealing with young learners in their pedagogic practice should therefore be aware of the fact that although dealing with this age group (6–14 years of age) is very demanding for

them as educators, this period of language instruction is crucial for foreign language learners.

International Perspectives on Teaching English to Young Learners is a volume of articles written by contributors with various professional backgrounds and rich experience in the field, enabling the reader to better understand precisely who young learners are. The different perspectives of a number of the articles in this volume also explain the emergence of TEYL as a global phenomenon, from the historical, political and economic reasons, to the fact that English is often a primary means of communication between linguistically and culturally diverse communities within many nation states.

The reader can find explanations of what an early start in foreign language learning can achieve, including certain potential long-term advantages, notably native-speaker-like pronunciation. In addition, particular emphasis is placed on appropriate pedagogy for TEYL.

The selection of practitioner inquiries into TEYL included in this volume meet certain criteria:

- they are representative of the enormously diverse nature of TEYL around the world;
- they represent contexts in which English is taught as a foreign language;
- they identify a wide range of issues and challenges facing TEYL educators around the globe;
- they generate innovative responses that are of broad interest to the global TEYL community;
- they stimulate debate for furthering our understanding of TEYL.

Organisation of the Volume

The nine chapters are written by professionals who have an investment in TEYL, whether as teachers, teacher educators, material writers or academics in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Their accounts focus on TEYL in early primary education through to the teaching of young adolescents of 13–14 years of age.

The topics covered in these chapters take into consideration important issues raised by the authors in the context of their own experiences. They are grouped into three main parts that reflect some of the key cross-cutting themes they cover.

Part I: Starting points for an inquiry into TEYL pedagogic practice

The first three chapters, by Arnold and Rixon, Chen and Wang, and Gaynor, deal with a critically informed understanding of TEYL practice.

Arnold and Rixon focus on teaching interventions that could accelerate young learners' development towards an ability to understand written texts. The authors address difficulty levels, the impacts of integrating an extended graded reading scheme, and the bridges we need to cross to build a culturally sensitive approach to literacy development. This process is illustrated by an extensive reading scheme undertaken with young learners of English in Hong Kong, who went from learning about sound-symbol correspondences, then moved to text-level work and finally changed learning to read to reading to learn. This chapter also identifies key issues and priorities in helping young leaners to read in English, distinguishing between learning to read in English as a first language (REL1) and learning to read in English as a second or foreign language (REYL). Research shows that in many contexts learners for whom English is a foreign language receive little support for their English reading development. On the one hand, there is a lack of ELT reading material, while, on the other hand, teachers need to invest more time in reading instruction.

Chen and Wang highlight the importance of interaction between teachers and learners. The findings of their research on interactional practices in EFL primary classrooms in China stress the benefits of good relationships between young learners and their educators, as well as the importance of interactional practices in a teaching context. The research involved teachers and children in years 1–6 in two primary schools in Beijing. For the purpose of the study, 11 lessons were selected to be transcribed and used as a representative sample. The learners were grouped into three stages according to their age (6–11) and grade (1–6). The data seems to reveal that the interaction between teachers and younger children (grades 1–2) is not of a very high quality. However, as the children's language develops, the interaction becomes more effective and encourages language creation.

Gaynor points out the tensions between language policy inspirations and practical classroom realities. He describes the situation in Japan, and in this context highlights homeroom teachers who are expected to plan their lessons and develop material at the same time. These teachers are also encouraged to make foreign language teaching motivating and at the same time challenging and relevant to children. Another issue mentioned in this chapter is the age of instruction and the ongoing concern in Japan that learning English will

affect students' Japanese language ability and sense of Japanese identity. The area in which the tension between policy and practice is most evident is the assumption concerning teachers' expertise. Teachers are responsible for course development, but, as the author claims, they in fact use text books and teachers' manuals. This is due to a lack of in-service training, as well as a lack of detailed pedagogical knowledge of teaching English.

Part II: TEYL in a globalised world: New opportunities and new challenges

The majority of chapters in this part deal with the ways in which globalisation influences TEYL educators. Due to the increasing flow of information, educators have to cope with interculturality, while at the same time dealing with the changing educational landscapes brought about by technology.

Jeon considers the ways in which increased globalisation, particularly via technology, has increased the amount of exposure to informal English learning opportunities for all EFL learners, including young learners. She describes the situation in Korea and shares the concerns of many educators and parents regarding the amount of time young learners spend in uncensored online activity. The results of the study reported in this chapter suggest the steps to be taken to identify out-of-class learning opportunities for young learners, and how curricula can take advantage of these new challenges, which include identities in gaming communities.

Sowa reflects on the importance of supporting teachers in promoting intercultural awareness-raising with young learners. Exploring diversity at home could be an important way to create meaningful intercultural encounters for young learners. She points out that these opportunities should be addressed in teacher education programmes. In her investigation, she mentions a number of possible ways to promote children's intercultural awareness, from European initiatives and the European Language Label Competition, to E-Twinning. Sowa describes these initiatives, as well as presenting four Polish teachers who have effectively exploited the resources and professional development opportunities.

Linse and Gamboa write about linguistic capital and how to respect children's plurilingualism in the English language classroom. Unfortunately, in many settings, plurilingualism is not currently included in national policy. In this chapter, the authors propose a framework that can benefit all stakeholders in children's ELT education, including parents, educators, policy makers, researchers and finally the children themselves. They justify the use of the framework with five main reasons: children's linguistic identity, the bond between

homes and schools, the use of varied linguistic contexts, contextual issues, and finally vital issues regarding young learners' linguistic capital and plurilingualism. The authors offer this framework as a means to help actualise plurilingual agendas in the young learner EFL classroom in a variety of different settings worldwide.

Part III: Introducing innovations in TEYL practice

The three chapters included in this part describe how educators around the world are trying to implement innovations in their practice.

Makalela deals with the benefits of a biliteracy strategy to encourage children's foreign language reading proficiency. He highlights the biliteracy print environment, creating partnerships between schools and parents as well as a sensitivity towards the local culture. In this chapter, he mentions the research evidence on how the native language supports foreign language reading development. His reading intervention study, which took place in a remote rural school in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, tries to demonstrate the importance of bilingual pedagogic strategies.

Bland mentions a number of different approaches to drama in the TEYL classroom. She argues that drama has considerable potential for bridging and bonding, as well as being able to energise teacher education. In this chapter, she describes the first interschool Drama Workshop and the subsequent Interactive Theatre project that she developed to help support student teachers' understanding of the value of drama with young learners in Germany.

Manasresh points out some ways of improving the use of ICT in TEYL in Qatar. He argues that using ICT has a number of documented benefits for young English learners. In his opinion, it is also essential to build a positive whole-school culture to ensure the effective implementation of innovations in teaching English to young learners. Manasresh conducted action research in schools in Qatar. The research comprised three main stages: planning, acting and evaluation. The purpose of the first stage was to develop a deeper understanding of the views and experiences of young teenagers (aged 13–14), the second was about intervention, and the last stage involved reflection on the ICT listening intervention and on the action research process. The intervention was designed to provide learners with an opportunity to develop their listening skills through ICT activities.

To Conclude

In the last 15 years, the teaching of English as an additional language to young learners has grown very rapidly. It has become a truly global phenomenon, with huge numbers of young learners. The fresh insights this volume offers will help teachers of young learners to cope with different challenges in their day-to-day practice. Several contributors also draw attention to the importance of seeking multiple-stakeholder perspectives in research into TEYL. Bearing all of the above in mind, it is evident that global dialogue about TEYL is not only necessary, but is also beneficial to our field.

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